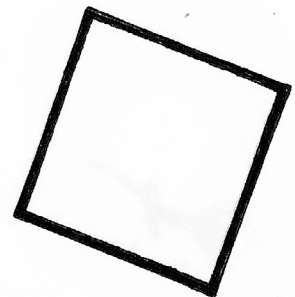
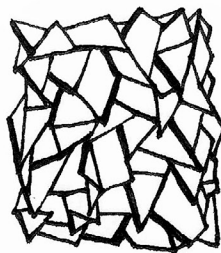
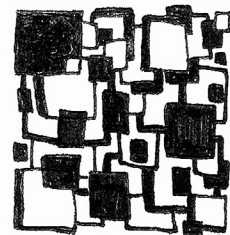
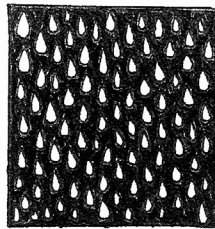
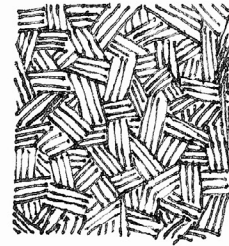
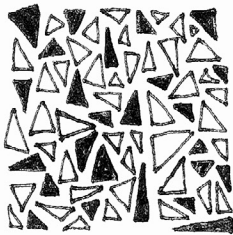


# IB HERALD

N°II / DECEMBER 2017

THE ISSUE OF GENDER





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## FROM THE EDITOR

I WONDER IF YOU HAVE WRITTEN ANYTHING just for the sake of recording your thoughts. In Hong Kong, compositions are a familiar component of English education. Yet they are often restrictive in style and content, and offer little room to exercise the creativity of the writer. They emphasise “doing the right thing”: get your grammar and spelling right, show a clear structure, incorporate some commonplace ideas (nothing too other-worldly!)—*voilà*, you’ll score high.

However, the value of writing, or indeed any form of artistic expression, is more than doing the right thing. These are media through which we take our original ideas and carefully craft them, to undertake intellectual exchanges. And the *IB Herald* provides a platform for DBS IB students to do just that. In every issue, we strive to showcase the intelligence and creativity of our contributors, without imposing excessive limits. Each issue is truly a collection of our contributors’ best work, with a diverse range of topics and forms of expression.

Looking forward, after transitioning to a biannual publication, we have had more time to develop each issue. Thus, quality is absolutely of the essence. If you would like to offer constructive feedback or comments, these are very much respected and welcomed. Please do not hesitate to contact us at [dbsibherald@gmail.com](mailto:dbsibherald@gmail.com).

Last but not least, I would like to thank our teacher-in-charge, Mr Vanderheiden, for his guidance; our talented team of writers and artists for their delightful contributions—and of course, you, our beloved readers, for your continual support of the *Herald*.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and see you in the next one!

© 2017 by  
Cyrus Chung

**On the cover:**  
Joshua So’s *Nine square inches*.  
More of his work  
can be found  
inside this issue.

Martin Yip, Editor in Chief



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# *HOW DOES SCHOOL SHAPE US?*

BY LO WAN KI & ANTHONY TSANG





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**S**CHOOL. Students have mixed feelings about it. Some attend school because they want to enrich themselves, to dive into the deep vast sea of knowledge that school opens up to them; some people attend school because their parents require them to; and some people attend school only because the law requires them to. In fact, schools are wonderful places where most of us spend years; and in them, friends are made, facts and principles are learned and developed, and dreams are realized.

Most people will often associate schools with words such as ‘learning’ or ‘fun’. However, people don’t realize that schools play a major part in shaping our personality, and our identity. This can be seen in our uniform, academics and extracurricular activities.

When we think about our school uniform, a white shirt, grey trousers and leather shoes always come to mind (don’t forget your belt, socks and tie). The definition of uniform is so deeply ingrained within our minds that if you were to ask, most students could more or less recite the “Rules on Uniform”.

But is that all? Is what we wear five days a week no more than expensive fabric?

**A**T ONE POINT OR ANOTHER, everyone has surely partaken in the debate “THBT school uniforms should be abolished.” An oft-quoted cliché is that the requirement prevents gaps in wealth of individual students from inciting jealousy. That is to some extent true. The significance of our uniform isn’t about its mere appearance. It’s about how each student is viewed.

By wearing a uniform, our appearances are kept relatively uniform. Distinguishing between students therefore becomes more reliant on other traits. As a result, we are more likely to judge and be judged by our acts and speech, instead of what we wear. In school, that is positive. By operating in a way similar to a meritocracy, the

school places greater emphasis on cultivating moral behaviour. Rather than drawing hasty conclusions from appearances, we have to observe before we know. This trains students and teachers alike not to judge a book by its cover.

Why is it important to avoid facilitating a judgmental atmosphere?

The human brain processes and responds to a deluge of signals from within the body and its surroundings each and every moment. As a testament to the brain’s efficiency, forming first impressions takes seconds. Within moments of meeting a person, we instinctively make an array of decisions and assumptions about him/her. This is driven by the emotional portion of our brain—the limbic system. The limbic system harks back to a more primal era when survival was decided by split-second reactions to predators. Making judgments about the surrounding environment, irrespective of logic, was its responsibility. Even though we no longer have to live in fear of a lion suddenly pouncing, the limbic system still makes near-instantaneous decisions, now primarily in forming first impressions. A person’s trustworthiness is established based on appearance within a tenth of a second, for example. This is all based on a person’s appearance, however, implying there are plenty of possible ways in which the brain is mistaken about a person’s character. Even if we are aware of this shortcoming of the brain’s survival instinct, the fact that it is rooted in emotion, which we are programmed to take note of, instead of logic implies that overcoming instinctive initial impressions can be a tall order. Given the potency of first impressions, using the uniform to minimize information on appearance that the brain can glean is a way to help make impressions less arbitrary and more based on the person’s character.

**A**CADEMICS ARE THE MAIN FOCUS OF school. Students generally attend school







to learn, and enhance their knowledge in order to raise their competitiveness in society later on. Usually when we think about the “best” jobs in Hong Kong, we think of doctors, businessmen and lawyers. Many Hong Kong students strive to get these jobs after they complete their education, and in order to increase their chances of success, they would choose to study in subjects related to these jobs.

If we’re simply aiming to successfully secure a position in the mentioned fields, then it would probably be a good choice to focus solely on the relevant academic subjects, but as a result, a large problem will emerge: the young people of our society would slowly, but surely start to lose their sense of individuality and lose their uniqueness. Do we want to sacrifice our individuality in exchange for a “good” job determined by society’s standards? The answer would probably be “no”.

Thankfully, schools provide students the opportunity to develop themselves, through offering them subjects that are not limited to those few that are related to the ‘best jobs’ in Hong Kong. Instead, school offers a large number of subjects ranging from languages such as English, Chinese and French, to humanities such as geography and history. Students have the freedom to choose subjects which suit them, and subjects which interest them, allowing them to be unique to others, and not to be restrained by the social norms, giving them the choice to be what they want themselves to be.

**By wearing a  
uniform, our  
appearances are  
kept relatively  
uniform.**

Giving students the opportunity to decide for themselves will result in a better, more diverse society. But in the end, it all boils down to whether the students survive whatever their parents throw at them in protest when they decide to pursue the interests and dreams, of course.

IT IS COMMONLY SAID of Diocesans that we spend more time outside the classroom than inside it. After the gruelling hours spent honing the more analytical areas of the brain, it is natural to feel a need to let off steam and focus on something else. This in turn affects our interests. Those with a love for basketball would go play, while those who love singing would sing. With the liberty to pursue our interests, these activities provide us with opportunities to bond with people outside of the social group created by classrooms and even for people we know, in a different light. We get chances to know people from different schools in joint-school initiatives, which is undeniably a great thing.

When students graduate, and make the decision of stepping into society to become an addition to the workforce, or to continue studying in a pursuit for more knowledge, a large and diverse social circle that can be built from these extra-curricular activities will most surely make life easier for them. It would be foolish to throw away the chance the school provides us to participate in these activities, after all, these activities shape the social side of our identity as we learn to interact with others.

It’s evident that schools have a large impact on each of our lives, having a significant influence on the development of our own identities. We all have our fair share of ups and downs, pleasant or upsetting memories associated with school. School may be gruelling and painful to current students, but we must give thanks for the opportunity to spend a large portion of our lives in them, as they have played a considerable part in making us who we are now. §



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# LATE-NIGHT BULL

**W**E'VE ALL BEEN THERE: working late night sitting on a creaky chair with piles of paper around your computer where the keyboard is slightly oily from the packet of crisps next to the cold cup of coffee. The wind blows, sporadically, and when you pause your typing, the slight ticking of a clock punctuates the silence as the deadline looms.

And then your chair creaks. You run your fingers through your hair and re-initiate your crusade, with renewed vigour, but your mind is now struggling to plod on after daintily skipping through the day's lessons, practices, and tutorials. You try harder ... but you end up zoning out, staring blankly at the screen while your feet jiggle involuntarily. You do eventually snap back, having vacated your train of thought, and start again drowsily, asking yourself, "Where was I?" Yeah, where were you?

Sometimes time is not our greatest enemy so much as our stamina. Well, at least for students, that is. And maybe athletes. And maybe everyone else. Anyway, you desperately need a pick-me-up to sound coherent again, and that cold cup of coffee that is now leaving a sour after-taste is just not cutting it.

I think this is perhaps one of the many ways Red Bull appeals to students: it satisfies a need for something quick, convenient, and effective. At least, it did in this way to me.

It's worth noting how Red Bull GmbH evolved from being your typical start-up, to breaking into the soft-drink business, to becoming an industry giant. Over the years, Red Bull

has been constantly sponsoring extreme sports such as mountain biking, snowboarding, rallying, and probably best known of all, Formula 1 racing. Its ubiquity goes into music and video games: Red Bull sponsors the "EmSee Battle Rap championships", featuring Eminem; in the video game *Worms 3D*, Red Bull is a boost that makes worms crawl faster. Red Bull even has its own island in *PlayStation Home*, and specifically advertises its products on billboards in the racing game *Wipeout XL*. These are all ongoing attempts to establish and equate Red Bull with bold adventurousness and render it synonymous with daredevilry; a mighty struggle to incorporate Red Bull into our daily lives as something that picks us up, dusts us off, and invigorates—hence, "Red Bull gives you wings"!

Perhaps unsurprisingly, everything Red Bull does online helps reinforce this image, impression, and association with the public. Take a quick scroll through their media platforms, and you'll see a meticulousness to equate Red Bull with dauntless, outdoorsy thrill-seeking over and over again. This is, in effect, very aggressive advertising that showcases the company's values, beliefs, and morals, in such a way that you find yourself at the bottom of their rabbit hole before you know it. Sure, you have to pay a premium, and at the end of the day, it really is just a sugary fizzy drink that makes your jaws cramp and your tongue go weird, but both are meant to pass straight through your head. The taste of Red Bull is of no importance—it's about how jittery you get; how your stamina, endurance and reaction times improve boundlessly; and how it gives you wings to conquer the world.

**R**ED BULL CONTINUES TO demonstrate its unbridled confidence with its extravagant, out-of-the-world sponsorships, endorsements, and most outrageous of all, events where people dive to earth from space, fly paper airplanes, and power home-made, human-powered flying





**Did you know?** Developed by Dietrich Mateschitz, the first Red Bull Energy Drink was sold in Austria in 1987.

machines. Red Bull is boldly pushing what is possible in the realm of fun, and they are doing so passionately, as an echo of what they believe in. They're willing to spend huge sums of money to brand things such as football stadiums, race tracks, and even a music academy. It's impossible to pass this off as a collection of hollow marketing stunts when they're pulling out the stops and over-delivering routinely for something that's sold in a cheap aluminium can.

But perhaps, what's most quaint about the product is that it works—*pshh*—just like that, and you chug it down like you would with any other soda. I had my first Red Bull during my first debate competition; I had crashed during lunch break, and slept in a chair after having two debates back-to-back. So I went and bought a can of Red Bull from the nearest 7/11. It was quick, convenient, and effective. I didn't care about Felix Baumgartner. All I needed was something to get me through the day. The rest, you might say, is history. I am typing this on an oily keyboard in the middle of the night, and in the drawer next to me, I happen to have a stash of Red Bull.

*Pshh.* You stare at the can wistfully as it softly hisses “DRINK ME”, and bring it to your lips. An apple-laced aroma hits you ever so gently, like the petrichor one finds suspended across pastures in the morning. You blink your eyes hesitantly, and proudly succumb to Red Bull's extensive marketing campaign: one that builds on emotions, associations, and preconceptions; one that has helped them forge and maintain a formidable spot in the already-saturated soft-drink industry. The yellow liquid flows into your mouth and fizzes down your throat, making your jaw cramp and tongue go weird. You set the can down, and after a while, you inexplicably find yourself working again tirelessly, soldiering on through the spaces of the dark, where midnight shakes the memory as a madman shakes a dead geranium. § JEROME CHAN





# Introversion: Asset or Handicap?

Andrew L.





**B**EFORE ADDRESSING THE MAIN topic, we must first understand what introversion is. Over generations, the psychological community has studied human personality extensively. One of the approaches towards understanding personality is the trait theory. Trait theory, as its name suggests, proposes that personality is made up of different traits—consistent patterns of thought and behaviour, such as “thoughtful” and “impulsive”. In order to understand the workings of human personality, trait theory psychologists assess the degree to which certain traits are shared between individuals. German-born trait psychologist Hans J. Eysenck believed that we all have an optimum level of arousal: when we are under-aroused (below our optimum level), we experience boredom; when we are over-aroused (above our optimum level), we feel anxious and nervous. Therefore, we normally tend towards maintaining our level of arousal at optimum (i.e. participating in activities that are within our comfort-zone). According to Eysenck, introverts tend towards having a relatively lower optimum level of arousal as compared to extraverts. Thus, they feel uncomfortable under high-arousal situations (such as having a conversation with strangers or public speaking) as they are over-aroused. This is also the reason why most introverts prefer a less stimulating lifestyle, as they do not require much external stimulation to reach their comparatively lower optimum level of arousal. On the other hand, extraverts, having a relatively higher optimum level of arousal, crave stimulating circumstances and high-pressure situations (e.g. actively striking up conversations and partying). This is because they require more external stimulation than introverts to reach their optimal level of arousal.

Because of their close resemblance at first glance, introversion is often mistakenly associated with other negative traits such as shyness and



social awkwardness. However, there is a major, definitive difference between introversion and shyness: the ability to choose. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the term *introversion* refers to the state of or tendency towards being wholly or predominantly concerned with and interested in one's own mental life. On the other hand, according to an article submitted to the Encyclopedia of Psychology, "shyness" refers to excessive self-focus characterised by negative self-evaluation that creates discomfort and/or inhibition in social situations and interferes with pursuing one's interpersonal or professional goals (Henderson). Therefore, although a shy person and an introvert might both stay away from the crowd in a party and lean against the wall, only the introvert truly wants to be left alone. Shy people are incapable of socialising even if they are forced to, because they lack social skills and/or have low self-esteem. On the other hand, introverts, as previously mentioned, actively steer clear of stimulating circumstances, e.g. partying, as they find it uncomfortable due to their lower optimum level of arousal. However, this does not mean that introverts are necessarily bad at socialising or developing interpersonal relationships, but they simply choose not to do so a lot, because they do not like it as much as extraverts. Introverts are not anti-social; they're just selectively social.

In today's society, being selectively social has its drawbacks. A study was conducted in 2009 in which more than 4000 managers were asked to complete personality assessments (Ones and

Dilchert 163–170). They were then grouped into three categories based on their levels of extraversion as reflected from their personality assessments: below average, above average, and very high. Overall, 50% of participants were considered introverts. However, as one goes up the company management hierarchy, the percentage of introverts plunged. At the apex of the management hierarchy, only 2% of top executives were introverts. Evident from the disproportionate ratio between introverts and extraverts in the study, introverts are far less likely to be promoted to high-ranking positions than extraverts. One of the main reasons why extraverts have an edge over introverts is because of their networking abilities. Due to their activeness in socialising, extraverts make friendly and charismatic impressions on co-workers and are typically more likeable and popular. Thus, extraverts benefit from the halo effect—their co-workers' perceptions of the extravert's character and abilities are, unbeknownst to them, influenced by the positive impressions given off by the extravert. This allows extraverts to receive more job opportunities than introverts.

Another disadvantage of being introverted is that it often carries a bad connotation. A personality test conducted in the UK and Europe recorded that around 90% of the participants said it was better to be an extravert, despite test results revealing that half of the population were, ironically, introverts (Barford). This goes to show that extraversion is a trait coveted by many. This is partly due to sociocultural influence—introversion is perceived as a sign of weakness and has negative connotations such as "timidity". As extraverts prefer to actively socialise, they tend to have a larger social circle. Introverts, on the other hand, prefer to focus inwardly and find socialising needlessly tiring. Thus, they generally have a smaller social circle. Since humans are social animals by nature, extraverts are more influential and therefore

**[I]ntroverts ...  
actively steer clear  
of stimulating  
circumstances**





due to the ionic current caused by neurons. By monitoring our brains' electrical activity and studying these fluctuations, psychologists can observe how quickly our brains pick up incoming stimuli and how we respond to them. In an experiment conducted in 2012, 50 introverts and 50 extraverts were instructed to look at computer screens that had sets of squares with different colours (Stauffer et al.). In each trial, a sample display with sets of multicoloured squares was shown, followed by a test image (the stimulus) one second later. In half of the trials, one square in the test image changed colour, while in the other half, the test image was the same as the sample display. Essentially, participants played a game of Spot the Difference and had to inspect every square closely. Detailed analysis of their brains' electrical activity led researchers to reach two conclusions: First, there were no extraversion-related differences in participants' performance to spot the difference; second, introverts showed more electrical activity (indicating they had used more mental effort) when receiving incoming stimuli; Therefore, although introverts may sometimes seem to be adrift in their thoughts, they are in fact silently observing the world around them in great detail; meanwhile, extraverts, who are more occupied with socialising, miss out on these intricate, tiny things of life.

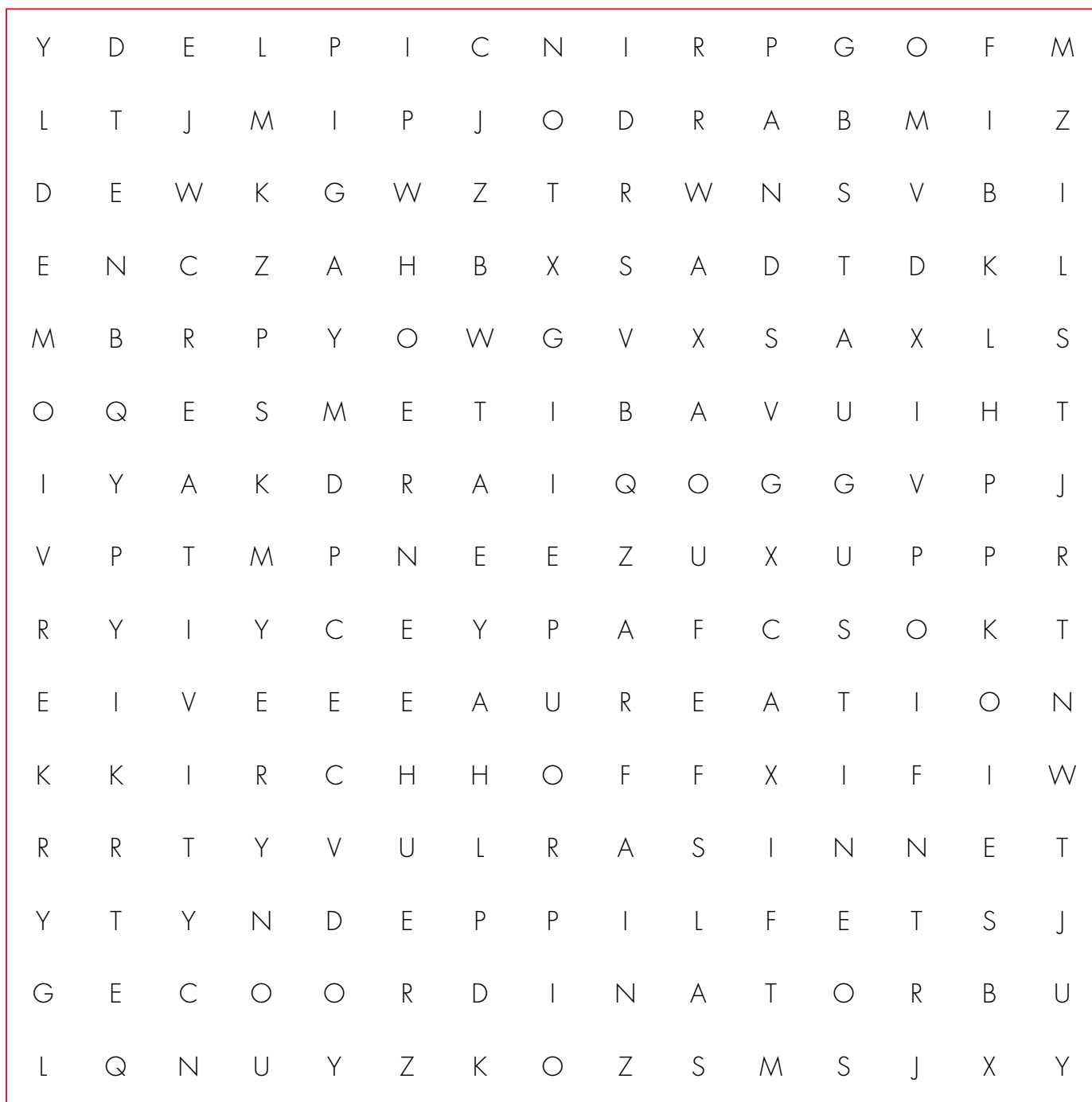
Another advantage of introversion is that introverts are better listeners than extraverts. As introverts tend to focus inwardly, they dislike small-talk and prefer to speak only when necessary, ensuring that their words are carefully planned and to-the-point. Thus, introverts tend to listen more than extraverts, processing the speaker's message mentally instead of verbalising it and competing for control of the conversation. In a study conducted by researchers from the University of Pennsylvania, 340 call-centre sales representatives were asked to fill out a Big Five personality test, placing them on a scale of

1–7 (1 being extremely introverted) based on their level of extraversion (Grant 1024–1030). Participants' sales revenue were monitored in the following 3 months. After comparing their sales revenue against their extraversion scores, introverts (participants who scored below 3.75) earned approximately 13,000 USD, roughly 1,000 more than extraverts (participants who scored above 5.50). The results show that, contrary to common belief, introverts make better salesmen. Although confidence and assertiveness are key in selling, extraverts often overdo it, giving customers the impression that they are being aggressively influenced, causing them to act more cautiously before purchasing the item. As extraverts crave the spotlight, some extraverts also put forth their thoughts and ideas too eagerly, leaving customers to feel that their own opinions and needs are being neglected. Introverts, on the other hand, listen closely to customers' preferences in order to carefully assess the situation at hand before giving any suggestions, as well as to allow customers to feel valued. Also, their speak-when-necessary policy helps them maintain a certain degree of control over the conversation without dominating it. Therefore, introverts make better listeners.

COMPARING INTROVERSION AND ITS complement, extraversion, it can be seen that they are not advantageous when compared to each other—each can be beneficial in some cases and a burden in other ones. Sadly, you are unable to switch between being introverted and being extraverted depending on the situation, since personality traits cannot be changed at the snap of a finger. Thus, whether or not your personality (be it introversion or extraversion) becomes an asset or handicap is entirely up to how you utilise it. As the saying goes, *nosce te ipsum*. The more you understand about your personality, the better you can use its unique merits to your own advantage. §



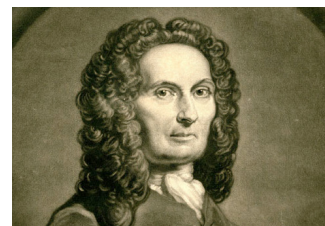
# WORD SEARCH



TENNIS  
CREATIVITY  
NAVIANCE  
ST AUGUSTINE  
KIRCHHOFF  
FLIPPED

PRINCIPLED  
DE MOIVRE ›  
AUREATION  
ZIMBARDO  
COORDINATOR

**Abraham de Moivre**  
(1667–1754) is a French mathematician who was a pioneer in the development of analytic trigonometry and in the theory of probability. He was also a close friend of Sir Isaac Newton.





# WHY DO WE MAKE THE SAME MIS- TAKES AGAIN AND AGAIN?

**T**HE TELEGRAPH once published an article discussing New Year Resolutions and how people consistently fail to follow through. According to the article, one can comfortably expect 42% of people who resolve to go to the gym to have given up in a year. However, huge numbers of people still go through the process of making a resolution, trying to maintain it, giving up, berating themselves for wasting money and time, yet repeating the process year after year (Iggulden). If one were to look elsewhere, similar cycles can also be easily found, from the battlegrounds of love to the campaigns of politicians. This phenomenon of consistent and repeated failure, even after it has been recognized as a problem, begs the question: why do people, knowing that they have failed, make the same mistakes over and over again? Intriguingly, two arguably connected explanations hark from our brains in the forms of emotions and stress.

**H**UMANS HAVE EVOLVED, over thousands of years, from primal hunters in Africa to a species found around the globe having overcome challenges of the environment with intelligent solutions. Ironically, in times of stress, we are prone to regressing to a simpler and more primitive mental state: the toddler brain.

The toddler brain, as implied by the name, refers to the state of mind one would likely find

in toddlers. Affected heavily by emotions, this state is developed very early and therefore is more ingrained within the brain than the regulatory processes of the frontal cortex that humans develop as they grow older, which is the adult brain. Impulsiveness, extreme emotions, and poor judgment are traits that can be observed as habits of the toddler brain. Generally, these traits become less common as we age and our frontal cortex regulates our behaviour. However, the frontal cortex can be overwhelmed by stress and excessive amounts of information, which leads to a retreat into the toddler brain. Then, since actions ingrained in the toddler brain are activated by emotions, emotions control actions.

The reason why this phenomenon is significantly linked to repeated mistakes lies in how humans react instinctively once operating with the toddler brain. When a toddler is angry, he / she has no ability to evaluate facts or consider consequences of actions; his / her instinctive and only reactions are throwing tantrums and crying. It is beyond the toddler's ability to imagine feeling differently at any time, past or future. Psychologists refer to this as state-dependent recall. Previous knowledge or memories associated with an emotional state dominate the mind, pushing out any other perceptions of the situation such that it seems the situation has always been worthy of one's hatred. An example is any time one felt angry towards one's parents and thought (irrationally) that they were terrible people, when in actuality they were loving parents; yet when feeling happy with them, one couldn't imagine anything bad about them. As a result, instinctive reactions that one's adult brain knows full well are unacceptable or inappropriate may surface whenever one feels stressed, leading to repeated mistakes (Stosny).

**F**ROM ENCOURAGING a child to do better in the next test to consoling a disappointed athlete after a crushing loss in a competition,

‘learn from your mistakes’ is a phrase often found on the lips of people after a demoralizing setback. Strangely, recalling mistakes and reflecting on them may be detrimental to overcoming the mistake.

The problem lies in the human learning process. Thinking about mistakes is almost equal to learning to make the mistake again as it reinforces ‘pathways’ in the brain, making it easier to recall the next time (Berman). A study published in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* details how participants were asked to recall times they had either resisted or fallen into the temptation to buy something on impulse before being asked ‘how much credit-card debt they’d be willing to incur in order to buy a coveted item’ (Nikolova). Intriguingly, despite thinking about the times they had failed to contain their impulse, those participants were willing to incur as much debt as the group which recalled successful instances; recalling the mistake had little effect on their behaviour. Further studies proposed that the reason the mistakes were repeated had little to do with how the mistake was viewed, but rather the experience of the mistake previously. When the participants bought items that they desired, they felt pleasure from a rush of dopamine in the brain for buying the item before likely berating themselves for succumbing to their instincts again. Each time a person recalls this mistake, its ‘path’ in the person’s brain is reinforced, making it easier to recall

this thought process. Thus, instead of avoiding the mistake, the person falls into the cycle of reflexively moving to buy an item on impulse for pleasure before berating himself/herself again in a vicious cycle.

**W**HILE THESE EXPLANATIONS make mistakes seem uncontrollable, there are in fact ways to counter such problems which any person can try.

The reason why humans retreat into the toddler brain is overwhelming stress and information. Some may be relieved to know that feelings and behaviour in the toddler brain are generally transitory and the adult brain regains control quite soon. While it may be impractical to cut off information flows given the interconnected society of the modern world, one can maintain serenity and control of the adult brain through methods of emotion regulation, such as meditation, to reduce instances where one may feel overwhelmed by circumstances.

While the adage ‘learn from your mistakes’ may be misleading and lead to detrimental habits, mistakes are certainly important in improving. Rather than focusing on how the mistake was made, it is better to think about the future and what can be achieved if the mistakes are avoided (Khazan). For example, instead of reprimanding yourself about how you kicked a football such that it moved in the wrong direction, it would be more effective to concentrate on how to kick it so it would move in the right direction.

Most people want to avoid mistakes, which is normal. The two explanations for repeated mistakes addressed in this article may seem abstract and complex, but they are two vital pieces to the puzzle of how to break free of such limitations. When mistakes occur, staying level-headed and being open to a shift in perspective may be more effective than expected in breaking a cycle of mistakes. § LO WAN KI

**[H]is / her  
instinctive and  
only reactions are  
throwing tantrums  
and crying.**



# THE ISSUE GENDER

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BY CYRUS MA (MALE)





**noun** /'dʒen.dər/  
the state of being  
male or female,  
typically used  
with reference to  
social and cultural  
differences rather  
than biological ones

Demonstrators  
gather in front of  
the White House in  
a pro-feminist rally  
in January, 2017

© 2017 by Emmad  
Mazhari on Unsplash





FROM THE ABOVE DEFINITION, there are two implications. Firstly, gender is traditionally defined to be a binary concept. Akin to the binary code, which only has two symbols, 0 and 1, or the black and white relationship with the absence of all shades of grey, gender is seen to be restricted to only two categories, “male” and “female”. Secondly, this concept is shaped by social constructions. Different from the concept of sex, which structures itself on the basis of biological features to distinguish males from females, the perceived difference between the two genders is built on societal norms: what behaviour and characteristics society expects each gender should display. Typical instances of these characteristics for boys in a traditional Chinese Confucian society might be to be strong, caring, and protective. They are to have short hair, and should be the one working to sustain the family. In Saudi Arabia, girls should act discreetly, never reveal their bodies and not drive any vehicles. Many in their society believe that women should be the ones to stay at home and take up the role of caring for the next generation instead of leaving the household for work.

Indeed, the two above examples are overly conservative and extreme. They show that the notions of gender in a social context are not always right and justified; rather, they are reduced to often biased stereotypes. Even in the example above, the norm concerning marginalized Saudi Arabian women, they are given fewer freedoms, and seem to be less worthy of these freedoms. According to that notion, just because one was born with a different body organ, one was to be treated differently. This article aims to address two main cases of the problematic issue on how harm is dealt to people on two different fronts, with the people in question being the general population and specifically females.

Therefore, how did the notion of gender come



Protestors in Vancouver, BC  
as part of Women's March on  
Washington in January, 2017

to be? What importance does it have in developed nations, where people are starting to value human rights, equal treatment and, most importantly, gender equality?

Let's start with their formation. Comparing the ancient times of primitive civilization and modernized society, the difference between the anatomies of the bodies of both sexes has never changed significantly. It has been consistent over the course of history that individuals of the M (male) sex are likelier to develop bodies with stronger muscles and are generally taller than their F sex counterparts. This allows males to conduct physical work with greater efficiency than females on a general level. On the other hand, physical work was the crux of civilization





for a long time after its dawn on humankind. With the lack of technology, automation, capitalization, and general high-quality education, people mainly sustained themselves through agricultural activities and hunting. Hence, behaving rationally, a conventional family would allocate physical responsibilities to the stronger, or in this case, the males. The remaining familial responsibilities were then delegated to the female contingent. Appealing to logic and practical concerns, the majority of the population accepted this idea. The basic notion of a member of a particular sex having a particular role in sustaining life within a family was thus regarded as orthodox in society; it was normalised.

But then, gender is not only about roles; it is

also about assigning traits. If you observe in detail, these traits are not related to morality that governs behaviour. With attributes being exclusively accepted on both sides, the weights of values stressed for each gender are not consistent. Whilst it has been conventional that traits such as masculinity have been emphasized for the male population, another story is said for females, where femininity has traditionally been proposed. Society has been keen on having these traits imposed on members of such genders. The reason behind this was that these traits had mostly to do with their actual gender roles. Males back in the old days were supposed to do the hard physical work, so they were encouraged to be masculine. Females, on the other hand, had generally pas-





sive roles in work such as being housewives and household related work, which embodied serving more than anything. Thus, the idea of being passive and feminine became their proposed value.

So why is this system of gender differentiation problematic in the world we know today? Because these characteristic definitions and roles are detrimental to equality and freedom of choice, basically principles all individuals should be equally entitled to. Being treated equally is important as it acknowledges that all humans are of equal value, that no one is intrinsically better than another and allowed to treat any others unfairly. Freedom of choice entitles people to bodily autonomy, and to live their lives however they wish so that they may make the most out of their lives, make the best decisions for themselves and become generally more satisfied without discrimination or condemnation. The concept of gender fails to uphold either of these values. With the norm being that an ideal person should act in a way that fulfills the gender “requirement”, it prescribes a “correct” decision for an individual in different situations. And it’s not as if the other options are wrong and infringe on the freedoms of others. These decisions are still viewed as incorrect as

they don’t help to shape the ideal companion in a relationship; thus, people are pressurized to choose particular options instead of making an informed, willing and free choice themselves. This displays a blatant lack of freedom. Focusing on equality, we see people of different genders are treated differently and exclusively according to how they act. For example, while boys would be seen as active and playful were they to move more on the streets, a girl would be criticized as one without etiquette, ladyship, or gentleness were she to do the same. This is extremely unfair as it means the range of choices a person can make depends on their gender. This further enhances the notion that people are born to have a different position in society and should inherently be treated differently, going fundamentally against equality as a result.

One may hear the argument that this norm is justified as what it did was to increase the compatibility of couples in order to construct more harmonious families, and reproduce more to maximize the chances of survival. Thus, the benefits of such a norm outweigh any other choices, essentially luxuries that one can live without. However, this hasn’t been for a long time and no lon-

ger will be. The structure of society has changed over time, and we now live in knowledge-based societies where physical production is aided by technology and physical labour is less valued. Now, with survival no longer our biggest concern, our focuses have turned towards obtaining equal freedoms for every man and woman alike, and generally to increase the quality of life. As such, it is no longer a practical necessity to have a family; rather than marrying out of need for labour and survival, people of the current generation more often than not marry out of emotional affiliation and choice. How is this true? The truth of this claim is shown in the rising marriage age and decreasing urgency of having offspring. In the USA, a developed country, the median age has been steadily increasing. From the age of 24 in 1980, the number has steadily risen to 29 by 2016. (Boyce). Even then, the world fertility rate on average has been slashed by half (World Bank, 2016). The implication of these results is that the general population no longer needs an abundance of offspring as a source of labour, resulting in less urgency for marriage as a means to reproduce and also fewer births in general. Hence, with people not reliant on marriage for survival, the choice of whether or not to appeal to what society wants from a prospective marriage partner no longer becomes a matter of productivity, in that it is not necessary to make this choice. By still making this option mandatory and necessary, all that has been done is to deprive people of their freedom of choice, their ability to make decisions best suited for them. Now, one is limited to a single set of mannerisms, and way of life.

SO HOW ARE CONSTRAINTS OF GENDER IMPOSED on individuals? The mechanism mainly has to do with hate and fear.

The point to be made is that in any society, people exclude and discriminate against those who do not identify with the same values. As people are brought up to believe in values in accordance

with the norm, these values are deeply ingrained within their minds and fundamental to their own identity. Thus, they believe that the values are right. When they see individuals who choose not to act in accord with the values they hold to be true, they find these people "incorrect", and society tends to support their judgment. With this difference being so prevalent, they may deny these people recognition within their community, label them as aliens, sick, or lesser beings, or even proceed to inflict physical harm on these marginalized individuals. In regards to gender, when a person of a particular sex does satisfy people's expectation of what characterizes their gender, or people's expectations of their behaviour, they are devalued and alienated from their identity. A very good example of this is transgender people, those who were born of a particular sex but instead find themselves identifying with the values of the opposite gender. A large portion of these people are subject to hate crimes, treated as mentally disabled and pressurized to be "cured". These people have done nothing morally wrong, legally wrong, or practically wrong, but due to their violating gender norms, society condemns their choices by branding them erroneous, and labels them as problematic individuals. It can be observed that these individuals are seen as lesser beings and their freedom of choice is stripped away from them. Or we can look at seemingly insignificant yet degrading cases, where a man is told that he is a "sissy", even a "female" if he is incapable of physical work, or on the opposite, a woman being told that she is too "careless" and not being lady-like enough if they were to become loud and active. These are examples where society degrades their identity to the point where they are not worthy of the identity. This is blatant discrimination.

The second point is mainly an after-effect of the first. While there are individuals in society who are social outliers and receive condemnation, there are also those who in avoidance



of such condemnation subject themselves to self-surveillance, effectively limiting their freedom of choice. Jeremy Bentham in the late-18th century designed a cylindrical shaped, coliseum-esque prison building named the Panopticon. Cells were built around a watch tower, from which all occupants of the cells around it could be observed, but so that the occupants do not know when and where they were being observed. Thus, occupants had no choice but to act in a manner as if they knew they were being watched, to avoid punishment for undesirable behavior. One might also refer to the telescreen, used by the inner party of Oceania in George Orwell's 1984 for another analogy. With it being a tool of unannounced observation, people were constantly in fear of being found out and vanishing from the face of the earth. So, they showed loyal behavior and no signs of free thought to evade capture. At this point, while there technically is a choice given to these occupants of what behavior they want to display, the choice is not legitimate. In face of the perpetual, likely threat to their own identity and physical safety, these people are coerced into choosing the unwanted yet safer alternative, which is to display behavior that their oppressors want to see. In a society where people actively segregate and condemn those who display unconventional behaviour, where a particular value is adamantly portrayed to be right, people have no choice but to follow the norm and display "socially acceptable behavior" at all times. In the case of gender, conforming individuals are forced into submission by fear of being segregated and alienated. In order to evade this destructive treatment, they are forced to constantly alter their own behavior to imitate that of the majority. In gender, this destructive treatment has a tremendous impact as most of it focuses on stripping one's identity and devaluing one. A teenage girl who wants to wear a basketball vest and shorts to school, is constantly pressured into choosing a blouse and a skirt instead for her fear

of being seen less as an ideal relationship partner at school, of being called as subpar, isolated from the mainstream group of students, and alienated as a result. Or a boy, who wants to keep his hair length to his elbows, goes to the barber to cut it off as he fears the condemnation from the elderly and his classmates about him not being masculine enough as a boy. At the end of the day, these people are suppressed, and forced to live life a certain way in fear of harm to them. The choice they make is not out of their own will—it was forced upon them. Their freedom has been stripped away.

HOW DID THE DIFFERENTIATION OF ROLES come into play? It had to do with how survival worked. In very ancient civilization, people lived in the wild, and had access to many types of foods found on vegetation. Due to the task being relatively simple, people of both sexes were not impaired from doing so. Also, as women were able to carry their offspring around as they gathered food, their role was not hindered and thus responsibilities of fending for the family's survival were generally shared amongst the two members. However, as the climate became hotter, and people had to either plant food or hunt, the act of getting food became more physically demanding, and it was no longer possible for one to nurture and care for a baby whilst getting food at the same time. So, as women were more physically attached to the baby after birth, and males being likely to be biologically stronger, the most productive households had women stay behind to care for the children while the men went out to find food. This division of responsibilities, as such gained its original form preceding the current system. Men were brought up to learn about hunting and planting, whilst women were brought up to nurture the next generation.

As time passed, and people gained exposure to new strategies and technologies, the nature of the work of males became wider and more

knowledgeable. The most productive men would use tools and strategies to increase the production of food, and further develop said methods. However, due to women having less exposure to the outside world because of their child-bearing duties, and that the nature of their work being not prone to change, their duties did not expand to include this new-found knowledge. Therefore, as humans came into possession of certain technologies and knowledge, it was mostly the men who got to have the full use of it, while women were mostly excluded.

It would then be a point where these advancements in knowledge started to make changes in the structure of society, in that new knowledge related occupations, such as leadership and medicine became true. As this change occurred however, the men were more prepared and suited for the change, as they were educated based on such knowledge that drove the change. They knew what was happening, and they knew what to do to progress the situation. Their roles of being the one who sustains the family only bolstered this belief. On the other hand, women were less exposed to such knowledge. One might argue that women could simply just learn all of the knowledge and become part of society which drove change, the notion of women having the role of caring for the children was then already so concentrated and the norm. It would be hard for women to firstly change from their nurturing education to that what the males were receiving, and secondly even if they managed to make the change, society wouldn't be supportive and accept them anyway. Thus, they were unable to learn more to help drive the new change.

WHAT EFFECT DID THESE WRONG PERCEPTIONS and allocation of roles have on society? The combination of all these became the fundamental basis for a patriarchal society, where the system is based on including males and excluding females. One might notice that throughout histo-

ry, politics was a thing usually exclusive to that of the males. Most dictatorships had male leaders, whilst the constitutions within themselves were comprised of exclusively males. Aside from that, education is a matter of concern. As societies grew, males predominantly received conventional education on liberal arts or applied subjects. For them, education was stressed and success in it was encouraged. Looking at the other side of the picture, females only started receiving education in more recent times. Or we might look at the development in the nature of their work. Until the recent centuries, most women stayed home to care for their children. Even as society developed to become more capitalistic and money became a greater determinant of one's survival, the jobs women had were mostly based on service, for example being a maid, servant, or waiter. On the overall, the occupation of women never really deviated away from serving the household. It was unlikely that they found jobs that the men did, which was more societal and productive to societal output. Men on the other hand would either have jobs pertaining to labour and production, like factory work or transportation, or work that concerned itself with leadership and knowledge, like being a doctor, teacher, mechanic, or politician. At this point, it can be seen that society was systematically enforcing the divide between the abilities of the man and the woman. That's why people seemed justified in making claims that women were inherently less capable than men and should stay in their households, for the evidence supporting the claims was constantly enforced and made stronger by the patriarchy.

How did it come to be that females were valued less than males and had less social power? The answer could be found in the nature of their work, or the contributions to society. Generally, women's household-based work was limited in that it was unable to make a big impact on society. Household work generally does not increase societal output in any noticeable manner,



and does not allow for a large social presence. By contrast, the occupations males mostly have are closely linked with societal output—saving lives as a doctor, developing technology as a mechanic, being involved in politics as a politician: these occupations make major contributions to and impacts on society, and hence were largely respected. The involvement of such occupations on a social level increased the social presence of the ones who had the jobs, or the males. As such, when an overwhelming majority of people in such positions were males for generations and centuries, the idea of males being more able to contribute to and make an impact on society became normalized. Thus, they were seen to be socially more powerful than females.

Or we might look at marriage, in polygamy and monogamy, to see the disparities of the values of female/male. Before the 19th century, which was when the notion of marriage out of love became widely accepted, marriage was used mainly to cement social power and bring families together. In the sense of polygamy, it was common in many Muslim countries before, and some of them still allow it now. More often than not, the males were the ones who had multiple spouses, and that the number of spouses one has actually plays a part in determining how much social power and influence one has in society. This relationship displays an imbalance between the genders, where one male can actually be worth multiples of females. Or look back to the ancient civilization Mesopotamia, where the authority and social status of the family of the female was crucial to the determination of the male's status. From these two examples, it can be realized that males were always the active stakeholder, whilst females were the passive stakeholder and are signs of the power of other people. It can be seen that women has for long not been seen as an equal to men in the system of unionization; they are considered to objects and conquests with which one can gauge their social power on. They are objectified rather



than seen as people with actual power and authority to impact society.

The issue of society having defined a woman's role in such a restrictive manner is that it causes the situation to arise in which people assume that women are objects primed for reproduction, and are less likely to be entirely functional. There even goes the case where certain men in high social positions abuse their authority over these women through discriminatory decision-making power, as in laws which actively discriminate against women and put them in disadvantaged positions. In Pakistan, women's testimony on certain civil matters is less impactful than that of a male's. Or, in the United Arab Emirates, women can only inherit half as much as men when there are both female and male heirs. While it is true that instances of societies being active patriarchies were dominant and common in the past, many examples of them exist in today's world. We have Saudi Arabia, whose dictatorship consists solely of men of royal descent in the making of political decisions, and has laws which are discriminatory against females. In Saudi Arabia, women are not allowed to drive, expose their bodies, or mix with men in society, or face severe penalties if they do. It was only recently that they obtained their rights to vote and voted several female politicians into the political circle. These individuals are seen as lesser beings, and are "logically" entitled



◀ Despite its per capita GDP is on par with those of leading West European nations women's rights are still to be fully recognised in UAE.

to lesser rights.

In the status quo, when many are still under the impression that women and inherently weaker than males when it comes to knowledge-based ability, and value them less. As such, there are incidences of imbalanced pay for equal jobs of same pay grade, such as in America where women earn 6% less than men. Some still assume that males will become more competent in the long run, and thus offer them more promotion opportunities. The existence of such disparities represents society's value of women being lower than men. This difference is even more highlighted when in America, some transgender males experienced a slight, yet visible boost in their income since their transition from a female to a male. On the other hand, transgender females experience up to a third reduction in their salaries after their transition (Burns). This serves to show even when intelligence and ability is kept essentially on the same level, a shift in characteristic, natural definition which has no relation with actual productivity, can actually result in a decrease in value. This is heavily discriminatory in that one's intrinsic value is predetermined by nature, and unjust in that the resulting treatment is not reasonably justified.

From the above examples, it can be seen that this issue is far from simple as a communication error or a simple misunderstanding. In the past,

societies were patriarchies where males held the majority of positions of power, whilst women were largely excluded from it. Although modern society has since progressed from this flawed state, large parts still remain as such. We might look at America, the epitome of liberty and equality, as TIME reported back in 2016, that female representation in government only stood for 23% of the total graph. Or in the year 2015–2016, catalystl.org reported that only 16.3% of CEOs worldwide were women. As such, such discrimination no longer exists solely on the field of daily life interaction. When cultural systems keep telling people that males should be the ones working and women should stay home, when pay gaps between sexes due to false and inaccurate gender perceptions are endorsed by a majority of powerful males, the discrimination is actually institutional, structural and systematic. It underlies the political system and disadvantages women from the outset.

THE ISSUE OF GENDER IS UNDENIABLY problematic. As a socially and inconsistently defined construction, which characterizes how people should live their lives based on a set of traits, it highly limits the freedom of choice of marginalized groups of population. It places inconsistent standards on the two sexes, limits different freedoms and is unfair to both sides. The most troublesome features of this status quo how it has been the foundation for the construction of our society, and is so fundamental within a person's identity and knowledge that it simply is too hard to erase. What we should be doing as progressive and liberal individuals is to ignore the notion of gender as a whole; that we should start accepting the notion that everyone, as a human, has as much value as anyone else, and not to use different, inconsistent standards to judge people. It is when we purge ourselves of these unjustified and out-of-date concepts that we can start to edge ourselves towards equality. §



A photograph of Trump Tower in New York City, viewed from a low angle looking up. The building's facade is a grid of windows, and the word 'TRUMP' is prominently displayed in large, dark letters at the top. The sky is a clear, bright blue. In the foreground, the tops of palm trees and streetlights are visible.

TRUMP

# The Cause and Effect Of Populism\*

\*Which  
Is Bad  
For You

An analysis of the  
perils that it poses  
to democracy

BY DAVID WONG



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**A**S RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR Putin has pointed out, “Political populism always poses a great danger because it disorients people, creates excessive expectations; or, on the contrary, prioritizes objectives that are clearly not priorities or are simply impossible to achieve.” Neglect Western anti-Russian propaganda for a moment, for Putin has said something constructive: populism stands as a threat to the people themselves.

What is right-wing populism? Populism refers to politicians that pose as “outsiders” of the established political system and run anti-establishment campaigns in an attempt to appeal and pit the “ordinary man” against the “privileged ruling elite”, in the process of which making use of emotion rather than logic and reason to appeal to the majority. Take Trump for example, who has been positioning himself as an outsider to politics with the aim of “Making America Great Again” through “America First” policies. A look at history textbooks would show fascists such as Hitler carrying populist themes such as antisemitism (the threat of Jewish Bolshevism) and “the great renewal of Germany”. By no means is Trump the next Hitler (not yet at least), but the striking similarities in terms of populist characteristics can be identified instantly.

Populism has taken world politics by storm, from the Brexit Referendum to the American Presidential election to the campaign of Marine Le Pen and the far-right *Front National* in France etc. In the case of the Brexit referendum, Vote Leave campaigners, most notably Boris Johnson and Matthew Elliott, advocated that “a vote for leave” equated to “a vote to cut immigration”; similarly, Trump labelled Muslims as “terrorists”, Mexicans as “rapists”, and went as far as to push for a “Muslim ban”. It is not difficult to identify why both populist movements gained momentum to ultimately emerge victorious: in both scenarios, the two appealed

to nationalist sentiments of “national identity and pride” over disillusioned globalist sentiments, sweeping votes from the lower income blue-collar class and the older generation. The focus here is not how it happened, but rather, why it happened.

The two main areas in which populism hijacked Brexit can be narrowed down to sovereignty and the economic issues surrounding the European Union. It is certainly ironic that British voters voted Leave. For all the arguments against immigration advocated by the Leave camp, Britain was and is nowhere near being the worst affected country by the Syrian refugee crisis, with 14 EU member states accepting more refugees than Britain per capita. In addition, Britain’s economy grew by 3 percent in 2015, far more than near-stagnant countries in the Eurozone. At the same time, economic theory concretely shows that the British economy could more likely benefit from membership in the single market than not, for which membership in the EU is a prerequisite. Bearing the above statistics in mind, it is not surprising to see why people around the world were stunned by the referendum result, especially since the result came at a time of relative stability Europe. It can be identified that Leave campaigners leaders capitalized on and marginalized the economic independence and flexibility of Britain, exaggerating the benefits of a “truly” sovereign Britain, coupled with provoking the fear out of the disillusioned working class with regard to the refugee crisis. Simply put, the Leave campaign used the emotional sentiments of voters regarding “Great British people”, rather than pragmatic, logical consequences of Brexit, to appeal to the common British man.

Throughout the referendum, the Leave campaign downplayed the economic consequences of Brexit and undermined the political consequences it would have on the United Kingdom as a whole. As ironic as it may seem, the first



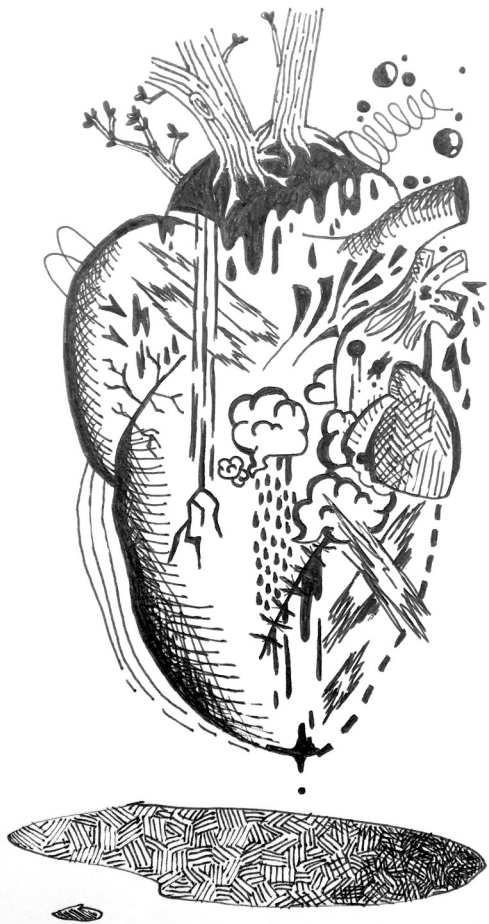
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and foremost victim to suffer from the disenfranchised British voters was the United Kingdom herself. Regardless of the latest setbacks of the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) in the 2017 election, Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, has repeatedly voiced her desire to hold a second referendum on Scottish independence, with the call for a new referendum mainly supported by the fact that 62% of Scottish voters voted against Brexit, going against the 53.4% of English voters that opted for Brexit. So far, the Leave campaign's pledge of "giving the National Health Service (NHS) the 350 million the EU rips from the UK every week" has not been put into motion, and even if such a policy is put into motion, only 161 million could be diverted to the NHS. To begin with, the sum of 350 million has been reported to be false, and even if we take this sum to be true, the Leave campaign would have known that the "divorce fee" of €30 billion would have prevented the model from being put into place. The question then comes down to why the voters chose to put faith in the Leave camp when the model put out was simply infeasible and impractical. Two layers of analysis here. We see the rhetoric that EU is "ripping" money away from Britain has been amplified on one hand by the Leave camp, and on the receiving end, those "left behind" would rather put faith in these competent leaders than to simply

**By no means is Trump the next Hitler (not yet at least), but the striking similarities in terms of populist characteristics can be identified instantly.**

"face the music".

Why is populism a bad thing? It leads to political polarization, since populist leaders hold black-and-white views with an uncompromising stance. While populism does not completely destroy democracy from the inside, it does pose both a threat and challenge to democracy. Populist leaders, such as Viktor Orban in Hungary and Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, have either pushed for a constitution or used illegal means to arrest supposed "criminals" without any judicial trial, both significantly undermining the checks and balances of their respective countries. As a result, the executive is able to overuse the power to the extent where there is an abuse of power. Such leaders also take an uncompromising stance on issues. Trump is a good example: he takes an uncompromising stance on allowing Muslims into the US, and he has asked for Obamacare to be repealed, in the face of opposition by both Democrats and Republicans, including John McCain, who cast his decisive vote against Trump. Political polarisation is more extreme and evident than ever before. If Populist leaders such as Duterte took the "common man's" interest in mind by heart, they would be not be challenging the pillars of democracy itself through attempting to merge the legislative and executive branches together, let alone executing "drug lords" without a trial. If President Trump genuinely cared for the American people, he would not be pitting non-muslims against the Muslim population, let alone using emotion instead of logic to convince and persuade the general public that building a wall along the Mexican border was justified on the basis of national security, neglecting the possible sky-high costs by suggesting the somewhat impractical solution of "having Mexicans pay for it [the wall]". As seen after the first 100 days of Trump's administration, Trump has blatantly ignored his campaign pledge, with the rhetoric of the necessity of a wall disappearing without a



◀ So, Joshua. *Weathered*. 2017, ink on paper

trace. This is not to say that populism is 100% bad—while populism does carry some merits in terms of appearing to cater for the needs of the people, we see that the harms outweigh the benefits, especially when we take into consideration the instability that a populist government can bring when it isolates one particular minority and manipulates the majority's hatred towards these minorities.

This essay ultimately boils down to two inevitable questions: why are the people still voting for populists? And how do we enhance voter awareness? As stated previously, populism thrives at a time when people, the majority, feel “left behind” by globalization. It is when the populists are able to exploit cultural and economic concerns and resentments to create a false illusion of “a country in crisis” that voters desire a strong, in-control and competent leader. Bearing in mind the above as a prerequisite, the voters will then come to believe that a man that would go to the extreme regardless of costs would be the person most suitable to solve the crisis. Institutions and expertise are replaced

by ignorance and arrogance. This is what mainstream politicians fail to provide. This is why voters still vote for populists. So what is the solution to this flaw in the democratic world? I see the solution lying in education to increase general voter awareness, which includes more widespread and transparent campaign platforms, making voters less susceptible to populist rhetoric. However, even if we are to enhance voter vigilance there is still no guarantee of success—the people will typically choose to put faith in the competent outsider rather than the seemingly experienced politician. To a lesser extent, mainstream parties have to step up their game, regaining the confidence of the public. Nowadays, with political parties giving the general impression that they are being blinded by political agenda, the distance between the people and these mainstream political parties seems ever more distant.

In the age of media sensation, voters no longer hold the history of political parties with much regard. The fact that not one French Socialist or Republican candidate exceeded the vote count of Le Pen proves this. Maybe it is time for these parties to reinvent themselves, perhaps by bringing in the younger generation for a start. Maybe it is time for parties to stand for the interests of the majority. Note that populism cannot be eliminated, but can be weakened through increased voter awareness and mainstream parties stepping up, since populism makes use of voter ignorance. Thus, in the end, all “solutions” can only, at best, serve as a deterrent against populism, failing to be an efficient long-term solution, bearing in mind that the when the country is in crisis, whether indeed so or made-up by the populists, the “go-to guy” for voters will most likely than not be the competent outsider since the experienced have failed to solve the deeply rooted issues in the country. Regardless, the will of the people is to be respected, not to be exploited. §





# THIS TOWN NEEDS LIVE

**I**N THE JANUARY OF 2009, the first incarnation of Hidden Agenda was opened in the industrial district of Kwun Tong. On 12<sup>th</sup> September 2017, a fifty-thousand dollar crowdfunding campaign was reached for Hidden Agenda's fourth and latest generation. On 7<sup>th</sup> March 2017 live house Hidden Agenda was raided by police and FEHD and Lands Department officials. On 7<sup>th</sup> May 2017, the three members of This Town Needs Guns and solo artist Mylets were arrested at Hidden Agenda. Though controversy has been sparked by these incidents, discussion of any of my moral scruples regarding the



legality of this situation is not my intent. For whatever reason, the impending BLAH of Hidden Agenda may leave this niche nothing more than a vacuum, and the once pulsating stage stagnant.

I am not going to pretend that I have been to that many local shows, but that is beside the point. Of all the bands that I have seen live, there are only a handful of local ones that I can name off the top of my head, none of which were headliners. Granted, these bands were not in any way bad (I am not going to pretend to be an expert at music either). Take Smoke In Half Note, a local post-rock band that performed

as a supporting act for a show I went to last September. The reverberating warble of guitars and falsetto vocals reminiscent of the iconic shoegaze sound, coupled with op art-esque stage visuals, sent me into a auditory trance-like state, and the aftermath in the form of ringing tinnitus lasted for days. For these aspiring musicians that value creative control but don't have the luxury of free publicity through major record labels or fancy, high-profile competitions, the logical decision would be to go independent. Nobody in their right mind would give niche genres a second thought. And that is where Hidden Agenda comes in.

At most of the shows that I have attended, local indie outfits were paired up with groups that came from faraway lands, forming something of a sibling dynamic not only on stage, but also in the industry. Having organised shows for local and international acts alike for the past eight years, Hidden Agenda has played an integral part in Hong Kong's alternative arts scene. The biggest reason for this is that by having them open for touring big-name acts, Hidden Agenda allows local bands to draw a larger audience as well as potential fans. However, Hidden Agenda's illicit title as the face of the scene transcends its label as a mere event organiser. Events in recent months have caused this title to undergo a transformation of its own, from blessing to burden. The fact that the continuation of Hidden Agenda itself is such a consequential aspect for the survival of the scene explains why Hong Kong's alternative musicians tread the thin line between the state of mere existence and becoming non-entities.

You can feel free to celebrate or bemoan Hidden Agenda's imminent undoing, but either way, it is safe to say that our indie scene perfectly embodies the saying "you don't know what you've got till it's gone." Having been slipping in and out of limbo for the past few years, and having witnessed the arrests of their peers, the scene can only pluck away at their strings and tap-tap-tap away at their cymbals with the constant glissando of oblivion on its mind, which gives them all the more reason to play while they can, as loud as they can.

□ JAMES LEE









# Through the eyes of an impressionist

□ JOSHUA SO

**I**T WASN'T VERY LONG AGO when a young French artist in his 20s called Claude Monet began trying out a new style of painting when travelling to Paris. At that time, the rise of photography brought hyperrealism to another level. Detailed self portraits were beginning to feel inferior to the time-saving and effortless process of taking photos. This young man decided to try out new techniques of painting with light strokes, and instead of people, began to tackle scenery and landscapes. It was in Paris where he met with aspiring artists such as Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Édouard Manet, and Alfred Sisley. That was when he discovered a group of people who wanted to create a new imagery of nature, rather than historical figures or mythical beings.

Young people have a thing for striving towards their dreams, it's just in their nature. Some may see this as an inconvenience to society, but the most ambitious and passionate young people have achieved the world's greatest discoveries and inventions; these young French artists were no exception.

IN THE 1860S, these pioneers were heavily criticised for their style and were shunned by art institutions and reviewers. Their artworks were sadly rejected for their seemingly unfinished design, labelled "brief" and 'amateur'. Disappointed by the criticism,

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◀ Fanti-Latour, Henri. *Un atelier aux Batignolles*. 1870, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris. In this group portrait of future Impressionists, Manet (sitting at the easel), Auguste Renoir (wearing a hat) and Claude Monet (on the furthest right) are among those depicted.

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Monet and his friends decided to start a new art movement. They were keen on influencing society. Over time, many young artists became fascinated with their style and joined in what we now call the Impressionist Movement.

However, there was a time before that when it went about with no name. Claude Monet's paintings utilised a soft colour palette and strayed away from using hard, clean strokes of brushing, instead going for more unusual visual angles. These techniques gave his artworks a dreamlike filter. This created a visualisation of movement. Light, in particular, was transformed into a tangible medium. The brushstrokes mimicked lightwaves and how they altered, under wind, water and other natural mediums.

The paint was applied mostly on a white or pale-coloured ground, as opposed to older styles of using dark background colours. This made the art less grim and more lively. The colours also bounce off each other in reflections. For example, small amounts of yellow can be seen in the pale blue dress of the woman in *Woman with a Parasol* as reflections of the sunlight. Lastly, to enhance the hazy effect of the painting, artists wouldn't wait for the paint to dry before adding in more colours. Wet paint application blended the colours more.

The emphasis on lighting and loosened brushing compelled art critic Louis Leroy to call this art style Impressionism, in reference to Monet's early work, *Impression, Sunrise*. The artists themselves were happy with this supposed slight, and called themselves impressionists.

There is a mystery within Impressionism because it never told the full story, but only provided suggestions of objects and scenery through things such as

light, wind, and water. There were no concrete lines, there were no distinct separations between objects, but somehow this art style managed to captivate a large audience. Slowly but steadily, Impressionism spread from Paris to the rest of Europe, and from Europe to America in the 1880s. How was this possible?

Many speculated as to why 'Impressionism' made such a lasting impression (so to speak). One solid way to describe the art of Impressionism was the attempt to recreate perspective. By painting imperfections in surroundings, the artists were essentially portraying what the eye would perceive directly, an image in its raw form. This feature of Impressionism exploits some areas of optometry. When people see something, the brain makes sense of what the eye sees and clarifies the object or scene. Yet, Monet and the others wanted to capture the sensation of seeing, disregarding the clarification process by the brain.

A good way to explain this would be to compare this 19th-century style with an earlier counterpart, the Renaissance art style of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Back in

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Light ... was  
transformed into a  
tangible medium.



the Renaissance days, people would paint muscular human figures in heroic poses and depict higher powers in forms of great elegance. Emphasis at the time was put on exaggeration of the imagery: making things more magnificent than they actually were. The older form of painting is more of an interpretation than a depiction. The impressionist style, in comparison, focused on ordinary scenery, portrayed in new ways. They were painted in a way that one would be able to see a complete landscape within the frame of the painting. Yet, the watery motions created by those light strokes never gave away the full story. It never reveals. This left imaginary space to conjure interest.

Take a look at Monet's *Impression, Sunrise*. Notice how the painting's centrepiece is the rising sun—not only the sun itself, but also its reflection in the water. There is also a great area of the painting dedicated to the cloudy morning sky, which of course was painted with light strokes. Those consistent lateral strokes created a foggy effect, a lack of clarity which shrouds the scene in ambiguity. Monet's paintings were vague, but his ideologies were still laid beneath the gentle paint application—*Impression, Sunrise* was an expression of hope, and interpreted as a metaphor for the renewal of strength and life for the French people. Contrary to some paintings that acted as more of a hyperbole in magnifying a particular emotion, Monet's work wasn't bold in that sense: it was hopeful but not in full glory. Through his work, Monet not only told a story, but created a perspective for people to experience it for themselves. As a result, people were intrigued. They were involved in the artwork more than before. That was the beauty of Impressionism—its ability to take something ordinary, and illustrate it in a whole new light.

JUST AS PHOTOGRAPHY pressured artists into taking advantage of colours and texture in their paintings, Impressionism compelled people to think more about what they were looking at. This newfound art style was alluring, it was intriguing, and soon there was a large following for Impressionism. Music also

started changing, led by French composers such as Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel.

Debussy and Ravel disliked having this term applied to their music, although some others still see their music as essentially impressionistic. The composers argued that the term wasn't appropriate to describe music, rather understanding their compositions as works of Symbolism. Their expressive use of *rubato* and chromatic structures give freedom to their compositions, while long sustaining pedals give reverberations to the song. Together, these features created a musing atmosphere, evoking a strong emotional connection with the listener, as opposed to classical methods of establishing strong motifs and themes. Thus, their works are symbolic of imagery and emotions.

A comparison of Impressionism in both art and music, shows that they both end up dominantly representing a sensation or an experience, portraying a blurred observation of settings. Personally, I find in Impressionism a recollecting sense, as if reaching into our memories. Whenever I listen to *Reverie* by Debussy, or stare at Monet's *Woman with a Parasol*, I'm always quickly transported into a daydream. Perhaps the human mind is always fascinated with the unknown, hence leading many to develop an interest towards the ambiguous nature of Impressionism.

This observation brings us full circle and back to how Impressionism can tell people more than what something is on a superficial level. The deliberate use of brush strokes and vibrant use of colours manages to conjure feelings and images that make us view the world in different ways. The emergence of Impressionism not only accomplished in developing something aesthetically pleasing and intellectually refreshing, but also paved the way for future art styles. It is a perfect example of evolution in the way humans think and perceive the world. By tapping into sensual elements, especially on an optical level, the Impressionist artists had come up with a revolutionary method of painting. They have forever changed the way we observe nature, and have broadened the horizons of human perception. ◻



# Mr Ben Chui is currently teaching economics in the IB division.



**Are you involved in any extra-curricular activities this year?** No, not really. I'm not in charge of any particular club or society in the school.

**I see. But what activities are you engaged in yourself, outside of school?** I have several interests. Firstly, I play squash on a regular basis. I know that there is a squash team at DBS, and I find it pretty interesting. Secondly, sailing is another hobby of mine. I also like to play chess.

**What do you think IB students most commonly struggle with when learning economics?** I think most students come into the classroom thinking that there is an absolute answer in economics. In subjects like maths and physics, there are clear-cut, "model" answers. Whereas in economics, especially in analysis, there can be multiple perspectives, which are all valid. I think that economics also involves a lot of judgment and explanation, which is what makes the class interesting but challenging at the same time.

**So, with so many perspectives available, what teaching style or method will you adopt to help students learn economics?** I think my teaching style involves getting my students to learn together. I try to encourage discussions and carrying different viewpoints because us as individuals have our own viewpoints, many of which are valid. By voicing out opinions, we can all see a certain issue from multiple angles, instead of being confined to our own. I cannot just share my own point, because students will usually think it is the default answer. I try to tell my students that there are a lot of possible answers—I just happen to have one of them.

**Moving on to your personal experiences, what were you doing before you came to DBS?** Before teaching, I was in the private sector, for most of my life.

**What in the private sector?** I started off at a consulting firm right after college. Afterwards, I have been involved in investment, venture capital, and management.

**Is your career a "good" choice? Was it enjoyable?** I think it is up to each student to understand their career possibilities and get a feel of which industry would be a good fit for your personality, character, and work your way towards that. There's no "superiority" involved, because all jobs nowadays are exhausting. When it comes to career decisions, many people take advice from their peers. A friend of his says, "Oh, I wanna be a doctor." And, suddenly, he wants to become one too. They should think about it for themselves, and consult professionals in that field, in order to determine their suitability for the job.

**So how did you end up in a school?** It was a relatively recent career change that saw me transition to the educational sector. In fact, I was teaching at West Island School before I came to DBS. At WIS, I had the opportunity to teach both the IB and IGCSE programs, and I particularly enjoyed working with the IB students, who were more mature and of higher

calibre. When the option to focus only on the IB program arose at DBS, I thought, “Gee, this is exciting!” So I came to this school.

**So are you suggesting that, somehow, IB students are better than IGCSE students?** Not really. I feel like students are shaped by the curriculum. The IB goes into much more depth and involves more critical thinking. Therefore, the prerequisites to take IB are very high—you wouldn’t enter the IB if you hadn’t met the benchmark criteria, would you?

**Did you have an initial impression of DBS boys before you came here?** Of course I’ve heard a lot. I know you pride yourselves as the best of the best, and that you perform well academically, in sports, and in music.

**Has your perspective changed since you’ve been here?** After starting at DBS, I can confirm that my initial impression on academics is correct. Overall, my IB students are diligent and they turn in work of a high level. I can’t say much about sports and music

though. Maybe one day a student will challenge me in squash—we’ll see then!

**Do you think we have, to a certain degree, freedom of speech in DBS?** In the classroom, there is a lot of freedom of “expression”. My students are now discussing the central-market economy. I encourage them to debate the pros and cons of these two. In that sense, they are most welcome to share their opinion, as long as there is no swearing or personal attacks involved. You can be a champion of the free economy because of certain aspects, you can rally for the other because you think otherwise.

**I see. So do you feel that freedom of expression is worth preserving in a school setting?** Within the right context, constructive expression is useful and sorely needed.

**How would you assist a student who has done poorly academically and comes to you to ask for advice?** I would help them analyse the root of the problem: what is leading to his failure? Is it a lack

of effort? Has he been approaching the subject ineffectively? It also depends on his year: if he’s in Grade 10, maybe the subject does not suit him. If he’s in Grade 11 or 12, maybe he needs a change in attitude or learning style.

**If you could add one trait to the 10 traits in the IB Learner’s Profile, what would it be?** To start off, I must say these traits are already very representative of how an IB student should be. But I think most students nowadays can do with better people skills. Or “interpersonal skills”. I think this is very important for a person to succeed in society in the future.

**What is your motto for life?** I’m still trying to figure that one out. But I like to realise that in life, regardless of age, there will be setbacks. Even in a game of chess, in a match of squash, struggles arise. The question is how you stays focused, not letting your setbacks derail you, and achieve the best you can.

**Finally, can you describe DBS in one word or phrase, and tell us the reason you chose that?** “Excellence”. I can see that everyone in the school—staff, management, and students likewise—have a heart of excellence. They all strive towards perfection in their own way, and for a new teacher like me, this is very motivating to see. **□ MICHAEL LAU & JEFFREY LAU**

When it comes to career decisions, ... they should think about it for themselves.



## Ms Sharon Chan is a part-time teacher of Chinese in the IB division.



**Outside of the classroom, are you responsible for any extra-curricular commitments for the school?**

Since I am a part time teacher, the school hasn't given me any extra-curricular activity posts for now.

**What do you think the most common struggle is for students studying Chinese?**

I think the core problem is that students are inclined to believing that Chinese is difficult and boring, especially when it is known as the “death subject” in DSE. Everyone subjectively rejects this subject.

**So it is a problem with their attitude?** Yes, it is very much a problem with the mindset. As for practical work, I think writing is especially difficult. Reading and speaking are relatively easier to learn, but when it comes to writing, the quality of work is more mixed.

**But IB students write a lot of assignments, including IAs and EEs. Do you think IB students are better in writing?** I haven't really read a lot of submissions from

you guys, but I've seen a few pieces of work that other teachers have shared with me, and those were outstanding. They had rich content and were very detailed.

**So, to tell us more about yourself, what were you doing before you came to DBS?**

I was working in a secondary school in Sheung Shui before coming to DBS. It is also a very historic school, much like DBS. I think it might be the largest school in New Territories, with a lot of natural landscape, which explains why their school campus is larger than yours.

**Even though DBS is smaller, what was it that attracted you to come teach in our school?**

The main reason is because I like the IB program. The traditional NSS system is not ideal for my taste, teaching and learning likewise. There is more freedom for teachers to decide on their teaching content, material, and style. This allows for classes to be more interactive and fruitful, something which the NSS cannot provide with its rigid structure.

**I see, so before you came to DBS, did you have any initial impressions of DBS boys?** Of course, DBS is such a renowned school! From the media or the public, I've heard that this is a very outstanding school, and has had a lot of alumni working in different professional fields. Most of what I've heard is positive, whether in academics, sports or music, and I've rarely heard about negatives to be very honest.

**Well, now you've been here for around two weeks, has this impression changed?** Well, I think those impressions mainly hold true, especially in the IB section, because a lot of students here are outstanding in multiple aspects: they care for their academics, for their peers, and have high standards for themselves. However, I feel that some students aren't that confident at times. Perhaps this is due to the competitive environment they have grown up in since a young age. Hence, sometimes, they might feel insecure, and even a bit “sensitive” and “fragile”. They unconsciously

show this sensitivity in a way that they care a lot about how others see them and what other people think. Maybe being in an all-boys school plays a part in this too.

**But do you think we students would become more confident as we age?** You should. But sometimes it seems to me that a mixed school would provide a better setting for interactions.

**Do you feel students in DBS have a lot of freedom of speech?** I feel that the level of freedom of speech in DBS is pretty adequate. One thing that left a deep impression on me is your assembly. In the school I taught in previously, teachers were at a “higher” position than students, and they seemed to be leading their students in many ways. But in DBS, students seem to be more trusted, for example, the prefects are responsible for the discipline of their juniors. Hence, the feeling of trust and collaboration is stronger in DBS, and most matters are carried out by student leaders.

**Do you think this type of freedom of speech should be preserved?** Definitely. I think it is certainly beneficial to provide students with a platform to express their

opinions, because if you don’t let them speak, they will think of other methods to express themselves, and those methods might not be appropriate. I agree that there has to be a bottom line, or at least a certain kind of mutual respect and understanding. Some things are best left to be expressed in other occasions, but within the appropriate context, why not let them speak up?

**So, back to the classroom. Do you have a particular teaching style in class? How does this help students learn?** I’m not a very strict teacher. Instead, I am more compassionate, provided there is mutual respect between me and my students. I like a more close and friendly classroom atmosphere. As for teaching style, I adopt a more multi-modal approach, and I try to talk less and let students take over. I’ve also tried different activities to engage my students: group discussions, videos, debates, character role-playing, and many more. I use these to make a Chinese lesson more interesting, because listening to a teacher talk about Chinese for an hour, honestly, is very frustrating and boring. It’s also a “lose-lose” situation when the teacher has to prepare lots of teaching material

but the students are not enjoying the class. So having more activities and a relaxing classroom atmosphere to guide the lesson can lead to more effective learning.

**Aside from teaching, what hobbies or interests do you pursue in your spare time?** The four arts of the Chinese scholar! Music, chess, calligraphy, and painting.

**Really? Are you skilled at them all?** Of course not. At least most people think that Chinese teachers have to be adept at these four items. For me though, I like reading, and I like to write prose. But my largest hobby is cooking, especially making desserts. It is really relaxing when I focus on my cooking. It brings me away from my teaching work, and I can even share my products with friends and family, which is rewarding.

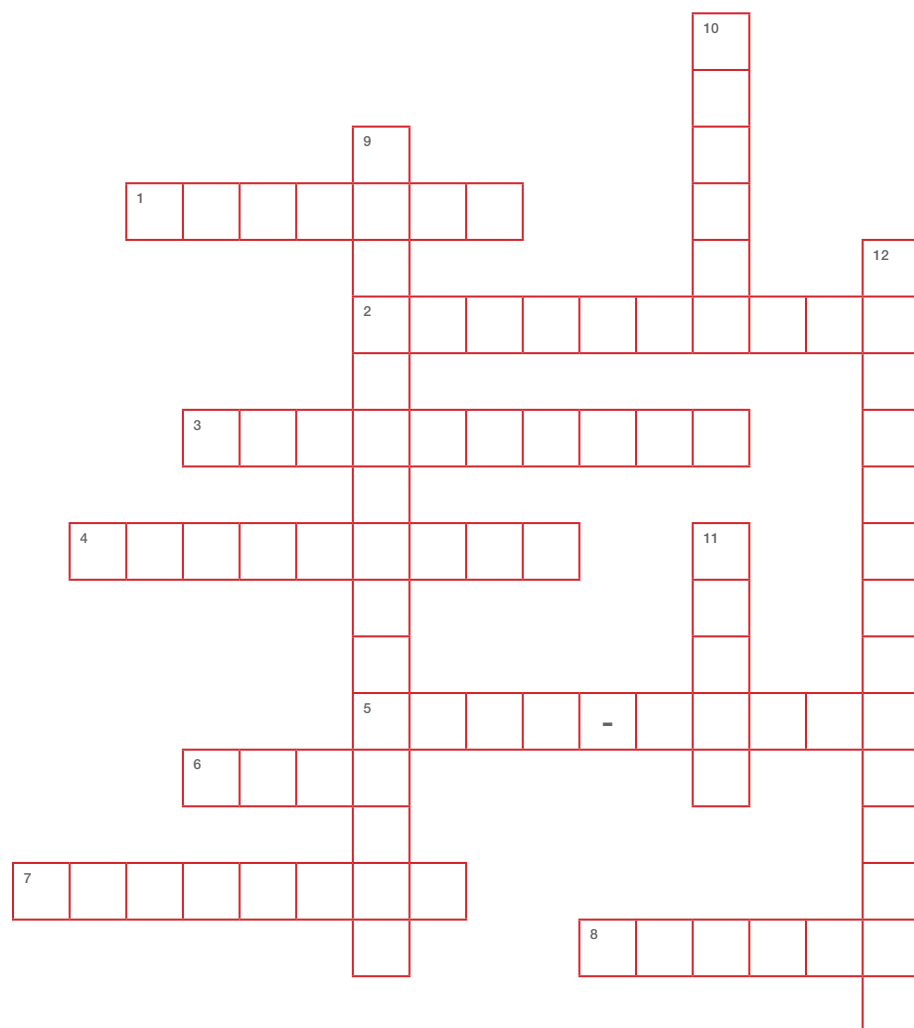
**Which dessert do you think you are best at?** Erm ... I’m pretty confident with my cheesecakes and mousse cakes. I’m also quite good at making Chinese desserts.

**We would love to try your cakes soon, but we would like to know if you have a motto for life?** Not really anymore. My personality has changed a bit, and since I’m more relaxed and open, I don’t feel the need for a motto to restrict my lifestyle. Now, believing in *carpe diem*, I just want to enjoy life. □ **MICHAEL LAU & JEFFREY LAU**

[T]hey care a lot about ...  
what other people think.



# CROSSWORD



- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Resident dog of G01                  | 7. Economics textbook writer       |
| 2. Mr So's job                          | 8. The dog, not you                |
| 3. Subject for skipping assembly        | 9. No, it doesn't mean point guard |
| 4. Infinitely superior to eClass        | 10. Not for the faint hearted      |
| 5. Best trait on the IB Learner Profile | 11. Extended ...                   |
| 6. Controversial team                   | 12. You thought it was a big deal  |

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