The Identity Issue

WHO WE ARE.
WHO ARE WE?

From the cell to the pixel, explore how we understand ourselves in the modern world.
Viet Thanh Nguyen’s 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction puts him in the illustrious company of such doyens of American literature as John Steinbeck, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Saul Bellow and Toni Morrison—all previous recipients. Nguyen won for his first novel, *The Sympathizer* (Grove Press, 2015), which explores the Vietnam War from multiple perspectives through the lens of his conflicted protagonist, an American-educated spy for the Viet Cong.

“I went into this novel wanting to write without compromise, without worrying about what other people would think. The novel is meant to be provocative and critical of all sides involved in this war, so there is something here for everyone to dislike,” Nguyen said. “It’s also meant to be as honest, truthful and painful a novel as I could write, and there was no way I could do that if I had to worry about what an audience would think.”

Nguyen said winning the Pulitzer felt like a victory. “I think this award marks the necessity in American literature for paying attention to diverse voices that will illuminate American history in important and challenging ways for American audiences.”

Nguyen hopes readers reflect on the idea that nurturing a single-sided viewpoint is what draws us into conflict and war.

*Photo by Bob Cha.*
Our Un-labelable Selves

As a linguist, I study the diverse ways that the world’s languages mark and identify attributes such as gender and social standing. Categorizing individuals, and the associated labels we assign, is an inevitable part of our cognitive system as humans. But labels do not immutably create, define or cement identity.

In this issue of USC Dornsife Magazine, we consider varied perspectives on identity. It’s important to recognize, as a counterpoint to this, that identity is not static. Discovering our myriad identities as our lives unfold is a constant exploration rather than a problem to be solved or a fact to be discerned. I identify as a teacher, a mediator, a mother, a wife, a sports fan —

But more foundational than these multifaceted identities is the anchoring sense of self upon which they are built — an underlying system of core values and ethics. Or what New York Times columnist David Brooks calls “a settled philosophy of fundamental things.” I believe we craft this sense of self through the human connections we forge with parents who profoundly shape our expectations and priorities, professors and mentors who expand our perspective, friends and partners who challenge our beliefs, or even (or perhaps especially) those we encounter through chance interactions.

Young adults leaving home, perhaps attending college, are flooded with opportunities for these defining relationships, many of which are inspiring and even frightening. They contemplate identities they have long carried, or to which they newly aspire. So while labels do not immutably create, define or cement identity, the as- sociated labels we assign, is an inevitable part of our cognitive system as humans.

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Spring / Summer 2016
First-generation students and alumni for USC’s inaugural First in the Family program gathered last week for a reception and workshop to help improve academic success and engage the community.

A "First in the Family" scholarship is named for first-generation students whose families have never attended college and is available to first-year students and seniors. The scholarship has a value of up to $2,000 and is renewable for six years or fewer.

The fund is designed to support students who may experience financial barriers that may not be addressed by their families.

The fund offers academic support services to students, including academic advising and assistance with applications to graduate school.

The fund is committed to supporting first-generation students and alumni for USC’s inaugural First in the Family program.

Last fall’s class of first-year students at USC had an opportunity to experience the tumult of the last 200 years of Chinese economic and political history firsthand — through a new course in the general education program. Taught by Brett Sheehan, professor of history and director of the East Asian Studies Center, the course is designed to help students understand the role of China in the world and how China has changed over time.

As in 2010, the tomb discovered last year was found with intact remains. A Guatemalan archaeologist was cleaning off a low platform when it gave way, opening a small void. Although untouched by humans, its contents had been looted by rats.

The furry intruders consumed and destroyed everything organic, but they left intact four beautiful polychrome bowls. One bore the name of a king: Bakab K'inich, which translates roughly from Maya as "the sun god who is first in the land."

With mere days left in the excavation season — before heavy rains transformed the already muddy roads that lead to El Zotz into an impassable sludge — Garrison and his colleagues brought the intact tomb of a Maya king beneath the Temple of the Night Sun. The tomb was in a pyramid known as El Diablo perched atop the royal hill.

National Geographic would later name the find one of the "discoveries of the year."

Based on the design of other, contemporaneous Maya temples, researchers theorized that there might be a second tomb in front of the original chamber, and Garrison spent the first part of the field season in search of such a tomb. An excavation of its theorized location ultimately found nothing, but the team continued searching the site.

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THE HOTMAN

From Pleasant, W.Va., 1967

In the mid-1960s, whispers of a 7-foot-tall humanoid creature with large wings and red eyes began circulating in the community of Point Pleasant, W.Va.

Few residents gave the sightings credence. That was, until the Silver Bridge collapsed.

On Dec. 15, 1967, 37 vehicles and 46 victims plunged into the murky Ohio River. Engineers say the suspension bridge fell due to a 2.5mm defect in a single eyebolt; however, some witnesses contend they saw the creature — by then known as "the Mothman" — atop the bridge before it gave way.

Tales of the Mothman have spread widely and the creature is now considered a harbinger of death. Mothman sightings were reported after the 1952 Mexico City earthquake, the 1966 meltdown at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant and the 2009 H1N1 flu outbreak in Chile.

In addition to the museum and life-size statue along Point Pleasant’s Main Street, the legend of the Mothman is alive in USC’s Digital Folklore Archives, which support USC Dornsife’s interdisciplinary minor in folklore and popular culture.

“USC showcases an innovative, open access digital twist on the classic folklore archive,” said USC resident folklorist, Telia Thompson, associate professor (teaching) of anthropology and communication.

“USC’s folklore archives comprise folklore collected mostly by USC folklore students, and includes examples of multiple genres from all over the world — from Esquimaux riddles to Taiwanese ghost stories... and even stories and rituals that take place at USC.” —David

According to legend, the Mothman was first spotted in a West Virginia bog in 1966.

Nuclear Repair Agent

Once thought to be only a boundary for the cell’s nucleus, the nuclear membrane actually repairs DNA.

Scientists have found a new function of the nuclear membrane, the envelope that encases and protects DNA in the nucleus of a cell — fixing potentially fatal breaks in DNA strands.

The nuclear membrane previously was thought to be mostly just a protective bubble around the nuclear material, with pores acting as channels to transport molecules in and out. But in a study published in Nature Cell Biology, a research team led by Irene Chiolo, Gabi Assistant Professor of Biological Sciences, documents how broken strands of a portion of DNA known as heterochromatin are dragged to the nuclear membrane for repair.

DNA exists inside of a cell’s nucleus in two forms: euchromatin and heterochromatin. Euchromatin is not only essential for chromosome formation, but it is the ‘dark matter’ of the genome.

“Scientists are now starting to pay a lot of attention to this mysterious component of the genome,” said Chiolo. “Heterochromatin is not only essential for chromosome maintenance during cell division, it also poses specific threats to genome stability. Heterochromatin is potentially one of the most powerful driving forces for cancer formation, but it is the ‘dark matter’ of the genome. We are just beginning to unveil how repair works here.”

The reason why we don’t experience thousands of cancers every day in our body is because we have incredibly efficient molecular mechanisms that repair the frequent damage occurring in our DNA. But, those that work in heterochromatin are quite extraordinary.

“Fourth-grader Lexi Stevenson was proudly clutching her first flash drive — a gift to each student participating in the computer workshop organized by the Joint Educational Project’s (JEP) Young Scientists Program (YSP).”

One of 50 fourth- and fifth-grade students from Lenaica B. Werner Elementary School who participated in the workshop, Stevenson, who said she’d like to study science at USC when she grows up, was brimming with enthusiasm.

Students learned how to write computer code, design games and control robots through instructions sent wirelessly to a computer. They also listened to a talk by simula-tion supervisor Claudia Chung Baxa from Walt Disney Animation Studios, who explained how she uses computer science to create realistic clothing and hair movement for animated characters.

Tammara Anderson, executive director of JEP, said YSP’s most important mission is to help kids overcome fear of math and science. “Our job is to make STEM subjects exciting so they want to delve deeper. Then, when they get to college, they’ll be ready to go, they won’t be afraid.” —J.E.
An analysis of coral fossils and mollusk shells from the Pacific Ocean reveals there is no link between the strength of seasonal differences and the climate pattern called El Niño. The finding contradicts the top nine climate models in use today, which associate exceptionally hot summers and cold winters with weak El Niños, and vice versa.

"The idea behind this link is based on very well-established physics, so it's appealing to think that nature works this way. But our analysis shows that it's not that simple," said Julien Emile-Geay, professor of earth sciences.

Emile-Geay checked the models against data collected by his co-authors on shells and fossil corals spanning the last 30,000 years. Because shells form by crystallizing calcium carbonate from the surrounding water, they record information such as the prevalence of various isotopes of oxygen, which varies with temperature.

Analyzing specimens taken from locations throughout the ocean, the team was able to reconstruct a detailed history of climate in the tropical Pacific.

"In fashion, we really crave runway shows. It's an industry where we see such change four times a year — designers are putting out new collections, different points of view. I think it's a part of the thing that I'm drawn to. I'm always looking for something new. Sometimes, it's almost like a visual restlessness, always wanting, craving, seeing things that are new and inspiring," she said.

"I was always attracted to fashion because it's the first step into the fashion world. The goal is to get the nod of approval from the best designers around the world and to work with the best designers," she said.

"When I started, I would have to write about style as a contributing editor at Vogue, where I pens events in fashion, and to write about style as a contributing editor at Vogue, where she pens articles on the London House, "Voguepedia," "Urban Glamoro" — the list goes on. "I work in a world where we see such change four times a year — designers are putting out new collections, different points of view. I think it's a part of the thing that I'm drawn to. I'm always looking for something new. Sometimes, it's almost like a visual restlessness, always wanting, craving, seeing things that are new and inspiring," she said.

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Lexicon

FROM THE HEART OF USC

Word

IN THE NEWS QUOTABLES

“..."If there were financially sound ways to beat the lottery, hedge funds and the rest of Wall Street would have been all over it long ago.”

KEN ALEXANDER, professor of mathematics, in an Jan. 12 Forbes article on the odds of winning the lottery.

“As an economist, my training in how individuals treat during times of uncertainty leads me to a much different prediction: America’s coastal cities are going to adapt, get ahead of climate change and be just fine.”

MATTHEW KAHN, professor of economics and spatial sciences, in an Jan. 12 Forbes article on the odds of winning the lottery.

“Prayer is a ritualized way in which people are able to bring those four elements of religion together [community, rituals of hope, moments of personal transcendence and deeper purpose] and really shape meaning and create community when things feel out of control.”

SHEILALYN RUSSELL, executive director of the USC Dornsife Center for Religion and Cultures, in a Dec. 4 VPC-ON interview about why people pray following tragedies such as mass shootings.

Lexicon

Literary Triumph

Ph.D. student Robin Coste Lewis garners a National Book Award for her debut book of poems. By Susan Bell

USC Dornsife doctoral candidate Robin Coste Lewis was named winner of the 2015 National Book Award for Poetry — one of the nation’s most prestigious literary prizes. A Provost’s Fellow in the Ph.D. in Creative Writing and Literature program and a teaching assistant in the Thematic Option program, Lewis won the award for her debut book, *Voyage of the Sable Venus and Other Poems* (Knopf, 2015) — only the third time in the award’s 65-year history that a debut collection has taken the top prize. The last occasion was in 1974. Lewis said she was stunned and astonished by the award, adding that personally she was “overwhelmed with joy and incomprehension” at the honor, which has gone to some of the nation’s most celebrated poets.

Lewis’ book is a triptych with the title poem, the 79-page *Voyage of the Sable Venus*, bookended by two sections of autobiographical and elliptical lyrical poems. She edited the book during her first year at USC Dornsife.

“All three sections either address visual culture and various projections onto black female bodies, or they deal with desire and race — how history impacts or ruptures those experiences,” Lewis said.

Her poetry has received widespread critical acclaim, including a glowing review from *The New Yorker*, which described her “arresting book” as “a many-chambered and remarkable collection.” The book also received a coveted starred review from *Publishers Weekly*.

David St. John, University Professor of English and Comparative Literature and chair of English, said the intellectual edge of Lewis’ book “pares away at our cultural texts and those assumptions that have helped to frame a historical justification and sustained tolerance of racial injustice.”

Currently, Lewis is writing her doctoral dissertation on the visual representations of Oscar Wilde in the United States. She won the 2013 Anne Friedberg Memorial Research Grant from the Visual Studies Research Institute for the most outstanding and interdisciplinary graduate student research proposal. She is also working on a new book on the interrelation of the history of black photography and black poetry.

Phubbing

*(vb., *phubbing*, *fəb-ing*, *fəb-ing*)

The act of enabling a person in a social setting by looking at one’s mobile phone instead of paying attention to the person.

Origin: This modern neologism arose from a publicity campaign by Australia’s Macquarie Dictionary. In 2012, McCann-Erickson, the advertising agency behind the campaign, solicited a group of linguists, authors and poets to coin a word to describe the behavior of ignoring someone in favor of interacting with a phone. The term, further published by the “Stop Phubbing” campaign created by McCann, has since appeared in media around the world.

Usage: “The constant need to check our phones is like the 21st-century version of daydreaming. People use it to step out boredom or to alleviate anxiety about transient social interactions. In intimate social situations, such as family dinners or dates, ‘phubbing’ can be even more detrimental, sending an implicit message that we are uninterested or emotionally unavailable. I’ve had friends return from a date thrilled, telling me, ‘Wow! He didn’t look at his phone once.’”

Karen Sternheimer, associate professor (teaching) of sociology, studies media and social change. Her research foci are issues related to popular culture and youth, particularly anxiety surrounding both.
China in Miniature

Doctoral student Di Luo is shedding light on mysterious miniatures used to ornament Chinese Buddhist temples.

An unseen war raging among the ocean’s tiniest organisms once thought to live only in extreme environments has been shown to help trigger the blooms, but they remain unpredictable.

Neerdham and Fuhrman’s findings also have bearing on finding it in non-Chinese art.” — Doctoral student Di Luo

“Instead they were built piece by piece, just like real structures,” Luo said. “Instead they were built piece by piece, just like real structures.”

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Europe’s Refugee Crisis

As Europe struggles to cope with the largest flow of refugees since World War II, USC Dornsife experts explore the issues surrounding this unprecedented migration. By Issuen Bell

More than a million refugees and migrants arrived in Europe last year — most from the Middle East, particularly war-torn Syria. They were the lucky ones: More than 3,400 died attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea in 2015.

“One thing we’ve seen about most migrants who make these difficult journeys is that in many cases they simply reach the destination where they feel it’s no worse to die than to remain where they were living,” said Laurie Brand, Robert Grand—Wright Professor and professor of international relations at the Middle East Studies Program.

“The starting point is fragile, so it’s not a solid state,” said Robert English, associate professor of international relations, Slavic languages and literatures, and environmental studies, and interim director of the School of International Relations.

Meanwhile, Europe is struggling to cope. Images of the continent’s woefully inadequate refugee camps are in brutal contrast with September’s heartwarming footage showing cheering Germans welcoming weary and grateful refugees.

Some European countries offered to absorb limited numbers, while others balked at taking any. Even Germany, alarmed by migrant flow across its borders, made a U-turn last November. And in a move condemned by other European leaders, Hungary erected bathed wire fences along its border with Serbia and Croatia.

“One of my future research directions would be to consider the impact of climate change on finding it in non-Chinese art.” — Doctoral student Di Luo

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“One of my future research directions would be to consider the impact of climate change on finding it in non-Chinese art.” — Doctoral student Di Luo

“Instead they were built piece by piece, just like real structures.”

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“Instead they were built piece by piece, just like real structures.”

Europe struggles to cope with the largest flow of refugees since World War II, USC Dornsife experts explore the issues surrounding this unprecedented migration. By Issuen Bell

More than a million refugees and migrants arrived in Europe last year — most from the Middle East, particularly war-torn Syria. They were the lucky ones: More than 3,400 died attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea in 2015.

“One thing we’ve seen about most migrants who make these difficult journeys is that in many cases they simply reach the destination where they feel it’s no worse to die than to remain where they were living,” said Laurie Brand, Robert Grand—Wright Professor and professor of international relations at the Middle East Studies Program.

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DENNYTTING SOUR

The five basic tastes, sour remains the most mysteri-
ous—to the point that the tongue’s sour receptor still has
not been identified, and the ways in which it receives sour
stimuli remain the object of intense research.

“Before sour, we didn’t even know definitively which cells
detect sour tastes,” said Emily Liman, professor of biological
sciences, who recently discov-
ered a new way in which taste
cells discern sourness.

In 2010, Liman identified one of the molecular pathways by
which acidic substances trig-
ger the sour taste sensation.
Hydrogen ions released by
acids directly enter taste cells on your tongue, triggering an
electrical signal to the brain.

MORE THAN PH
If that were the only way that sour taste was produced, then
the lower the pH, the more sour something should taste. How-
ever, some substances — such as vinegar — taste more
than one would expect based on their pH.

A substance’s pH is just part of the equation. The concentra-
tion of weak acids — such as acetic acid found in vinegar — plays a
significant role in how sour they taste, according to a study
published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of
Sciences by a research group led by Liman.

Previous studies also showed that the concentration of a weak acid, in addition to the pH, determines its sourness.

By marking sour taste cells with a fluorescent protein, Liman discovered that there’s another way to detect sour tastes.

There is a potassium channel that makes sour taste cells
extremely sensitive to changes in the cell’s intracellular pH.

THE FIVE BASIC TASTES ARE:
• sweetness
• sourness
• bitterness
• umami
• saltiness

Liman’s co-authors include researchers from USC, the
University of California Medical
School and the University of
Vermont. This research was
supported by the National
Institute of Health.

THE SCIENCE:
Making the cell more acidic, too
Like strong acids, weak acids release hydrogen ions that
push through proteins in the cell membrane, triggering a
sour sensation. However, weak acids can go even further,
crossing the cell membrane on their own to acidify the fluid
inside the cell.

“Taste represents a fairly di-
rect link between sensation and
perception, so it’s an interest-
ing window into how our body
and mind are connected,” Liman
said. “The mechanism that we
discovered not only explains
why weak acids taste more sour
than strong acids, but it may
e also explain how we can detect
relatively low concentrations of
protons because it predicts that
there would be an amplifica-
tion of the initial signal.”

The lowest tongue in a 2,000-10,000
Number of taste buds humans have

Three Dimensions of
Well-Being

A new interdisciplinary doctoral program addresses
modern health-care challenges.

Spatial science has grown rapidly in recent years, becoming
crucial to understanding the role and significance of place
in human well-being—a major research focus for the next
two decades.

To address these issues, the Spatial Sciences Institute
(SSI) at USC. In 2013, USC launched an interdisciplinary Ph.D.
program in population, health and place jointly with the
Department of Sociology and Keck School of Medicine of
USC’s Department of Preventive Medicine.

“Our primary goal is to position our graduates among the
leading scholars and practitioners working to clarify the role
and significance of place in shaping future human health
and well-being,” said SSI director John Wilson, professor of
sociology, civil and environmental engineering, computer
science, and architecture.

The new doctoral program is designed to create scientists
with deep knowledge and skills in one discipline and excel-
lius working knowledge of the other two.

“The multidisciplinary and research provided by
the program will produce cohorts of scientists ready to...
capitalize on the growing field of spatial science as it applies
to improving the public’s health,” said Myles Cooksill, professor of preventive medicine and spatial sciences.

The program capitalizes on the variety of world-leading
experts in population, place and health that already exists
at USC.

“Taste perception fades with
age; we lose almost half of
what we experience as taste is actually smell.

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80%
if we know what it is.

90
10-14 Number of days taste buds live

Each taste bud has 50 to
100 receptor cells. Sticking
out of these receptor cells are
tiny taste hairs that assess
the food chemicals in your
saliva then send a signal to
your brain.

80% of what we experience as taste is actually smell.

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A student living in Beijing in 1995, Joshua Goldstein was fascinated by the throngs of people who passed him every day on bicycles piled high with what appeared to be every kind of trash. One afternoon, he heaped on his bike and followed them. The short trip led to an erratically organized garbage heap, where vendors paid a pittance for paint cans and empty bottles sorted according to what they had once contained — soy sauce, here, vegetable oil there.

At the time, Goldstein was now an associate professor of history and East Asian languages and cultures — was conducting research for his dissertation on Peking Opera. But he has always been drawn to studying homelessness and poverty, holding hope that he can raise awareness of this intractable worldwide problem. He has published several articles on his research.

“I was interested in the situation of migrant workers who came to cities from the countryside to participate in this recycling process for subsistence,” Goldstein said. “There were lines of stalls going on forever where people purchased different recyclable products, but in the ’90s the conditions were awful. It looked as if they lived in giant trash heaps.”

As time passed, Goldstein noticed a peculiar evolution take place. “The vendors were more and more well-off,” Goldstein recalled. “The Beijing government wanted to maintain control — kept clamping down on them, but could never stop them.”

According to research, China’s underground recycling business is now among the country’s largest industries. “I argue that the government should work with the informal sector to help mitigate the health and environmental damage,” Goldstein said. “Because they have the materials and the labor, China is in an ideal position to create a safe and sustainable recycling industry.”

Goldstein is the author of “Passion for Trash: Joshua Goldstein and East Asian languages and cultures studies the underground recycling industry in China.” By Lizzie Hodrik

Gender Inequality in Aging

John Tower of biological sciences finds evidence supporting the theory that the sexes age differently.

What helps her live longer might be harmful to him, according to a study that sheds light on how and why organisms age.

Analyzing years of research involving fruit flies and mice, John Tower, professor of biological sciences, and his colleagues showed that aging interventions can have opposite effects in males versus females. The findings appear consistent with data gathered on humans as well, Tower said.

The researchers found that treating flies with the steroid hormone mifespristone/RU486 decreased egg production in females while increasing longevity. Similar effects were seen by tweaking the diets of flies and mice, but the effects were sometimes opposite in males versus females.

Increasing lifespan also increased the acceleration of the age-dependent mortality rate of the population. In other words, a small number of individuals die here and there when the group is young, typically due to infections or pathogens. That's non-age-driven mortality. Then, as the population ages, the mortality rate rises exponentially until the last individual dies. This acceleration of mortality is thought to represent true aging — the inexplicable breakdown of the body over time.

“One does really figure out what the cause of that acceleration is,” Tower said. “Our results show that dietary and genetic interventions sometimes have opposite effects on that acceleration in males versus females.”

Tower’s study supports the idea that sexual antagonistic pleiotropy — where a gene benefits one sex but has a detrimental for the other — keeps genes in the genome that shorten the life span of both sexes. — P.R.

Anxiety = Dementia?

Psychology researchers find that anxiety may be a significant factor in memory loss.

People who experienced high anxiety any time in their lives had a 48 percent higher risk of developing dementia compared to those who did not, according to a study led by postdoctoral scholar Andrew Petkus of psychology. The findings were based on an examination of more than 1,200 twins from the Swedish Adoption Twin Study of Aging, overseen by the Karolinska Institute of Sweden.

People who have high levels of anxiety tend to have higher levels of stress hormones, including cortisol, which can damage parts of the brain responsible for memory and for high-level thinking, according to Petkus.

The subjects with anxiety who later developed dementia are people who experience more than usual symptoms of anxiety, said study co-author Margaret Gatz, professor of psychology, gerontology and preventive medicine. “They are frantic, frazzled people.”

The researchers also found that the anxiety-dementia relationship was stronger among fraternal twins of whom only one developed dementia than it was among identical twins. They said this finding shows that there may be genetic factors shared by anxiety and dementia that account for the anxiety-dementia risk. — K.G.
The Nazis systematically confiscated personal belongings from their victims, including thousands of books and art. While many were destroyed, some were saved by soldiers who helped fellow inmates and minimized harm,” said Siegel, Dornsife alumnus and Resistance Studies in Austria.

“The key to Samuel’s story is that in the absence of a clear position, which they found themselves,” Dhanaphatana said. “It seemed only natural that Brisbin should end up at USC. It was the first time dissolved oceanic iron was measured, dating back some 2,500 miles from the East Pacific Rise. It was the first time dissolved iron had been found to travel as far through the ocean. The finding reinforces previous research suggesting that it could be a significant factor for global processes suggesting that it could be a significant factor for global processes.”

**Now for a couple of highlights from the week:**

- **Between Coercion and Resistance**: Doctoral student San Siegel is pioneering research into Jewish prisoners in Nazi camps.
- **Defending the Invisible**: Human and civil rights lawyer Anna Walther ’04 defends those on the fringes of society who are made more vulnerable by their social invisibility.

Grape pickers in California’s San Joaquin Valley say that for years, they were obliged by their employers to arrive up to 30 minutes before their shift started and work “off the clock.” Alanna Alvarado is representing more than 20,000 of these farmworkers in a multiyear class-action lawsuit against their employer for the unpaid work they alleged they were required to perform over a four-year period.

A lawyer at Martinez, Aguilasocho & Lynch APLC in Bakersfield, Calif., Walther represents agricultural workers in class-action lawsuits and also provides legal counsel to the United Farm Workers of America, the labor union founded by activist César Chávez in 1962.

“Even at minimum wage, those grape pickers would have been shorted $3–$4 per day.”

“Over years, employers are accumulating all this extra unpaid work, and these very small amounts become huge sums of money they are basically stealing from some of the lowest-paid and hardest-working people in this country,” said Walther, who earned bachelor’s degrees in international relations and German from USC Dornsife.

Walther has now heard from San Joaquin Valley workers that many local employers aren’t requiring off-the-clock work anymore. “Real change is ongoing,” she said, “but the fact that employers have taken note is an improvement that cannot be measured in a damages win on a lawsuit.”
The biggest generation since the boomers, U.S. millennials — those born between 1980 and 2000 — are the most technologically advanced and racially and ethnically diverse group in history. They are arguably also the most maligned, frequently depicted by older generations as disengaged, social-media–obsessed job hoppers with an insatiable thirst for constant validation. Are these characterizations justified, or are millennials just misunderstood?

“I think it’s very easy to stereotype and dismiss millennials in this way because so much of their lives are tied to social media, and this is also a trope that popular TV shows generally rely on to characterize the millennial generation,” said Jody Agius Vallejo, associate professor of sociology.

“But it’s also very easy to contradict these stereotypes when you actually stop looking at millennials as a homogenous or monolithic population and start examining heterogeneity within the millennial population,” she added.

William Deverell, professor and chair of history and director of the USC-Huntington Institute on California and the West, concurs but said generational stereotyping is nothing new.

“We’re familiar with the greatest generation, baby boomers, generation X and now millennials, but generational assumptions probably existed in the broader culture in the 1920s, the Gilded Age and even as far back as the Civil War era,” he said. “Some of these generational definitions speak to a certain nostalgia and incorporate naive, if understandable, assumptions that the past was simpler than the present. And that’s never true.”
While Deverell agrees that generations can be roughly identified by certain cultural predilections, he suggests that assumptions about generational identity may also reveal a lot about the generations doing the identifying. “I believe we oftentimes write our greatest fears and ambitions on the backs of those who aren’t us,” he said. “So in some respects we might actually be holding up a mirror.”

And let’s hold up a mirror now to those whom Time magazine dubbed “The Me Me Me Generation” and take a critical look at the various epithets so widely used to describe them. And while we’re at it, let’s get a glimpse of how that criticism sheds light onto their parents — the original “Me Generations” — the baby boomers.

LATER

In a 1992 study by the nonprofit Families and Work Institute cited by Time, 80 percent of people under 23 wanted one day to have a job with greater responsibility; 10 years later, only 60 percent did. It’s one of the most persistent criticisms directed at millennials, yet no one could accuse USC Dornsife alumnus and entrepreneur Adam Goldston of being lazy. With his twin brother, Ryan, Goldston worked tirelessly to bring their online women’s shoe company, ShopBop, to market after launching the company in their dorm room. This year, the brothers made Forbes ’30 under 30’ list for their achievements in retail and e-commerce. They now employ 15 people — almost all millennials — while their shoes are sold around the world in upscale retail outlets.

Goldston believes older generations’ perception of millennials as lazy stems from how technology has revolutionized traditional business practices. “When we started the company, my dad said, ‘Go to the office every single day, from 9 to 5. Get into a routine, you don’t want to be seen as lazy,’” remembered Goldston, now a globetrotting business executive. “Since then the world has changed dramatically. Now I spend more time out of the office than I do in it. The old guard doesn’t necessarily realize that the same thing you can do sitting at a desk, you can achieve anywhere today on a cell phone.”

Goldston notes another reason his generation might be perceived as lazy by older generations is their preferred work environment. “The office boasts a pingpong table and mini-basketball hoop, and employees pump up their adrenaline line or let off steam with Nerf gun battles in the hallways.”

“From the outside looking in, older people may not take some of the things we do seriously, but they contribute to the company dynamic,” Goldston said. “Ryan and I didn’t come up with our initial idea by being constrained to old-guard thinking. We were students who got our big idea playing basketball. So I think a lot of the great ideas we and our employees have come to us when we’re doing fun things.”

“When we’re 60, it will probably be hard for us to understand what the 20-year-old culture is like then,” Goldston added, with a laugh.

USC Dornsife Board of Councilors member and alumnus Martin Irani is chair of USC Dornsife’s Gateway Internship Program, which aims to prepare undergraduates for their careers by offering paid summer internships and mentoring from distinguished professionals. His experience with millennials, both through the program and as vice president of Hancock Park Associates, a private equity firm, has given him insight into another misunderstanding that can lead to misperceptions of millennial laziness — their rejection of traditional business rules in favor of working faster and, in their opinion, smarter and more efficiently.

“Millennials want to do things the way they’re used to doing everything — fast. But, to older generations it makes millennials seem lazy because they don’t want to take the long route,” Irani said. “Millennials need to slow down,” he added, “be a bit more deliberate and thorough, and be willing to take on any task they are asked to do, even if it’s menial, because they won’t be perceived as team players if they don’t.”

“AS MILLENNIALS, WE WANT TO ENJOY EVERY ASPECT OF OUR LIVES.”

JOb Hopping

Millennials are often derided for being “job hoppers.” The median tenure for millennials is 24 months compared to seven years for a baby boomer. But Irani, who earned his bachelor’s degree in economics in 1987, followed by an MBA from USC Marshall School of Business in 1991, notes that old taboos surrounding the practice are no longer valid.

“The world has changed since I was younger, when changing your job often was seen as a negative,” said Irani, who also serves on the board of the USC Alumni Association. “Now it’s more acceptable and you see millennials switching jobs every two years.”

Goldston believes one reason millennials switch jobs so frequently is because they care so much about their day-to-day work experience. That’s another reason his company fosters a fun work environment. “As millennials, we want to enjoy every aspect of our lives. So when people come to work for us, we want to make it enjoyable, not an arduous task.”

Irani offers this tip to older generations who want to motivate millennial employees to stick around longer. “Millennials need to feel they’re making a difference. Older people need to show them what they’re doing is important to the community. If the company has a purpose, millennials may stay longer.”

To avoid friction with older generations at work, Irani advises millennials to seek their advice, spend time with them, listen to their stories and give them respect. “Don’t dismiss the older generation just because they don’t do Snapchat,” he tells Gateway participants. “They have other gifts to teach you that are just as valuable.”

ENTITLED

Millennials received so many participation trophies growing up that a recent study, cited by Time, showed that 40 percent believe they should be promoted every two years, regardless of performance. Statistics like this feed into the cliché of millennial entitlement.

But one need look no further than USC, and in particular to first-generation students, to explode such stereotypes, noted Vallejo. Her research investigates the mechanisms that facilitate social and economic mobility, and entry into the middle and upper classes, for Latino and Asian American youth. Those mechanisms include policies, access to education, mentors, and family and community wealth. “Many first-generation students come from low-income or...
“We have to remember that social media is natural to millennials, they grew up with it.”

NARCISSISM: THE PROS AND CONS OF THE SELFIE GENERATION
According to the National Institutes of Health, the incidence of narcissistic personality disorder is nearly three times as high among those aged 25-54 than among those aged 55 or older. Like many experts and millennials themselves, Marta Electro Delghini, assistant professor of psychology and computer science, blames social media for the pervasive increase in narcissism and resultant need for validation among millennials.

“Social media is not an entitlement, but rather a tool that can be used to connect with others and share our lives,” she says. “However, if we use it inappropriately, it can become a means of self-expression and validation.”

Indeed, when millennials engage on social issues they tend to do so primarily through social media. Social media can effectively spread information and rally followers around a cause, but millennials’ reliance on social media can also create a sense of detachment and disconnection.

“Social media can be a powerful tool for social justice and civic engagement,” says Shaeffer. “However, it’s important to be mindful of how we use it and to engage in meaningful ways.”
at every university around the country that are active and involved, he also admitted that he’s familiar with millennials who aren’t politically or civically active.

“I know many people who simply aren’t engaged because they feel they’re not listened to, and I think that’s a perception that’s been propagated by older people in this country,” he said. “It’s a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy.”

As for her generation’s alleged unwillingness to rebel, Maria Jose Plascencia, a senior majoring in American studies and ethnicity and the daughter of a single mother who is a restaurant worker in Tijuana, Mexico, put it down to general contentment with the status quo.

“We’re not as brave as previous generations and I think that comes from feeling we don’t have as much to lose because we’re at a privileged point in history,” said Plascencia, who plans to earn a Ph.D. in history.

“HELIICOPTER PARENTING”

Much of the blame for millennials’ allegedly needy and entitled behavior has been laid at the feet of their baby boomer parents, widely accused of overparenting, over-scheduling and overpraising their offspring.

Vallejo notes that in the last few decades there has been a shift in parenting among middle- and upper-class parents.

These so-called “helicopter parents” adopted what celebrated sociologist Annette LaRose termed “concerned cultivation” in an attempt to foster their children’s prospects.

“As a result, many youth today from middle- and upper-class backgrounds have a monstrous skill set that allows them theoretically to compete and have an advantage in middle- and upper-class social and economic spaces that some other students haven’t had the opportunity to experience,” said Vallejo. “However, sometimes it can be difficult when they come to college and their parents aren’t there to solve their problems. That’s why college can be an extremely important growth experience for many students.”

Shaffir, who said her middle-class parents consciously chose not to be helicopter parents, has a certain sympathy for those students whose parents opted to follow that child-rearing style.

“If you’ve been in an environment where you’re constantly told where to be and what to do, when you get to college the freedom must be almost overwhelming,” she said. “If this is your first time at deciding whether to go to the movies with friends or study for that exam, then it’s much harder to make your first take at deciding whether to go to the movies with friends or study.”

Vallejo stressed that millennials from less affluent backgrounds are less likely to have been raised by helicopter parents.

“It’s a different parenting model from that occurring in lower-income or working-class families who engage in what LaRose calls ‘natural growth,”’ Vallejo said.

“Students who grow up in low-income or working-class families have a very different appreciation for the opportunities they are given or experience because they don’t see them as something that should be automatic. Students from lower-class and disadvantaged families are often more entrepreneurial because they frequently have to figure things out for themselves.

“Those kinds of responsibilities translate into all other aspects of their lives. They don’t have that sense of entitlement, and I think that’s very important for people to understand when thinking about the millennial generation.”

NEW CHALLENGES IN AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

The rise of technology and student debt, and an uncertain economy, mean that millennials have to face additional pressures that their baby boomer parents did not.

“We have to live up to these ideas that we should be millionaires at 18, that we should invent an app and strike it rich, and that puts a lot of unfair pressure on our generation,” Culley said. “These are all pressures that didn’t exist before the Internet, or not to this extent.

“Many millennials feel they were dealt a bad hand. It’s hard to find anyone of my generation who doesn’t believe in climate change and who isn’t scared by it on some level.”

“My suspicion is that they will change that world significantly, and my hope is that it’s for the better.”

Trinidad agreed.

“Millennials are more outspoken than other generations, and they have a right to be because they’re the generation that’s the most educated and the most underpaid,” he said.

“For the previous generation to criticize this generation is faulty because they didn’t face the same challenges we do to secure a job and an education. Being outspoken is necessary and justified. I don’t think it should stamp us as a group that’s entitled, narcissistic and demanding. That’s unfair.”

Goldston believes much of the criticism of millennials stems from older generations’ mistreatment to change.

“Change is uncomfortable but it’s a necessity. Whether or not current or older generations like it, things are going to evolve,” he said. “Millennials are setting the tone for what the future’s going to be because we’re going to control it.”

Deverell stressed the importance of looking beyond caricature and name-calling in generational conversations.

“Older generations may say, ‘We created this world for you, why are you taking it for granted?’ and millennials may respond, ‘Yes, you created this world for us and it has so many problems. Yes, the world that’s being inherited now is utterly described by limits and finite boundaries of opportunity, resources or nature, but that’s true across generations. It’s not simply the generations that are coming of age that are frustrated by that. Those challenges can bind us together, too, out of a need to engage with not just one generation, but two or three or four, in order to solve these problems.’

“Let’s not forget that the world millennials are stepping into is not a world they created,” Deverell concluded. “My suspicion is that they will change that world significantly, and my hope is that it’s for the better.”

Vallejo agreed, noting that because they represent so much variety in terms of place, ethnicity and class, millennials bring a multitude of experience and solutions to key issues affecting our society.

“Millennials are civically engaged, optimistic and concerned about social and economic issues,” she said. “Older generations tend to lament changes they see occurring in attitudes and behaviors among the younger generation, but many millennials are striving to change society for the better. Instead of dismissing millennials, that’s something older generations need to validate.”

SO EMOJI ON-XAL

So-called “helicopter parenting” has been blamed for producing a generation that is accused of being needy and unable to take criticism.
Already the largest generation in the United States, millennials are poised to reshape the economy and to take over in the workplace and at the ballot box. Tech savvy, the first inherently digital generation has never known what it is like to live without having the world’s knowledge at their fingertips. Despite widespread criticism, millennials are also considered to be optimistic, motivated, confident, and goal-oriented.

**Millennials** (also called Generation Y), the first generation to come of age in the new millennium, were born between 1980 and 2000. Generation X (also called iGen) was born between 1977 and 1995. Often dubbed the MTV or latchkey generation, Xers are often depicted as savvy, entrepreneurial loners.

**Generation Z** was born between 1995 and 1997. Often dubbed the MTV or latchkey generation, Xers are often depicted as savvy, entrepreneurial loners.

The silent generation, born between 1925 and 1945, describes children of the Great Depression and World War II. The greatest generation, born between 1913 and 1924, “saved the world” — to use President Ronald Reagan’s memorable phrase — by fighting and winning World War II.

Millennials were a major factor in electing our president — 61% voted for Obama in 2012, 64% in 2016. Millennials were also the most likely voters in 2012; 66% in 2008.

In 2015, millennials’ average, worldwide purchasing power is expected to be $2.42 trillion. By 2018, they will eclipse boomers in spending power at $3.35 trillion. Although we are all familiar with more recent generations, titles such as the baby boomers and Generation X, Professor and Chair of History William Deverell, director of the USC- Huntington Institute on California and the West, reminds us that the attribution of generational assumptions in the U.S. stretches back to the Gilded Age, the Civil War era and probably beyond.

65% of millennials say losing their phone or computer would have a greater negative impact on their daily routine than losing their car. Just six in 10 millennials have jobs; half work part-time. 40% of the electorate will be millennials by 2020. More than 1 in 3 adult Americans will be millennials by 2030. 84% of millennials say helping to make a positive difference in the world is more important than professional recognition. 75% of millennials do not believe that Social Security will exist when they reach retirement age.

Millennials will make up as much as 75% of the U.S. workforce by 2025. 46% of millennials would rather make $40,000/year at a job they love than $100,000/year at a job they think is boring. They have donated money, goods or services. Millennials account for more than $1 trillion in U.S. consumer spending — but have amassed $1 trillion in student debt. 40% of millennials say marriage is becoming obsolete, compared with 35% of boomers who feel the same way.

$1 trillion

83.1 million

Number of millennials in the United States

1.8 billion

Number of millennials worldwide


According to the Brookings Institution, “The Gilded Age extended from the 1870s to the 1920s. It was marked by great material affluence... The current era is similarly complex and multidimensional... [It] is appropriately labeled the Gilded Age.”

The Gilded Age stretches back to the Gilded Age, the Civil War era and probably beyond. For example, Martin Luther King Jr. and World War II. Between 1913 and 1924, “saved the world” — to use President Ronald Reagan’s memorable phrase — by fighting and winning World War II.

By Susan Bell

The Greatest Generation, born between 1913 and 1924, “saved the world” — to use President Ronald Reagan’s memorable phrase — by fighting and winning World War II.

Although we are all familiar with more recent generations, titles such as the baby boomers and Generation X, Professor and Chair of History William Deverell, director of the USC- Huntington Institute on California and the West, reminds us that the attribution of generational assumptions in the U.S. stretches back to the Gilded Age, the Civil War era and probably beyond.

Millennials were a major factor in electing our president — 61% voted for Obama in 2012, 64% in 2016. Millennials were also the most likely voters in 2012; 66% in 2008.

In 2015, millennials’ average, worldwide purchasing power is expected to be $2.42 trillion. By 2018, they will eclipse boomers in spending power at $3.35 trillion. Although we are all familiar with more recent generations, titles such as the baby boomers and Generation X, Professor and Chair of History William Deverell, director of the USC- Huntington Institute on California and the West, reminds us that the attribution of generational assumptions in the U.S. stretches back to the Gilded Age, the Civil War era and probably beyond.

65% of millennials say losing their phone or computer would have a greater negative impact on their daily routine than losing their car. Just six in 10 millennials have jobs; half work part-time. 40% of the electorate will be millennials by 2020. More than 1 in 3 adult Americans will be millennials by 2030. 84% of millennials say helping to make a positive difference in the world is more important than professional recognition. 75% of millennials do not believe that Social Security will exist when they reach retirement age.

Millennials will make up as much as 75% of the U.S. workforce by 2025. 46% of millennials would rather make $40,000/year at a job they love than $100,000/year at a job they think is boring. They have donated money, goods or services. Millennials account for more than $1 trillion in U.S. consumer spending — but have amassed $1 trillion in student debt. 40% of millennials say marriage is becoming obsolete, compared with 35% of boomers who feel the same way.
In a culture of increasing awareness of — and openness toward — the transgender community, how can we better understand the nuances of gender identity and help to ensure equal rights for all?

By Laura Paisley

It’s a moment that most of us experience several times a day. And when we’re in public, most of us proceed almost without thinking to the nearest door bearing our corresponding gender signifier, the all-familiar A-line skirt or the pants. Simple, right?

Not necessarily. For transgender individuals — those who identify with or express a gender identity that differs from their sex at birth — the reality of using a public restroom is much more complicated. It can quickly become a minefield.

Chris Cervantes, a senior at USC Dornsife double majoring in gender studies and sociology, knows this firsthand.

“Until recently, USC didn’t have many gender-neutral bathrooms,” said the Los Angeles native. “Often there are none where my classes are located, so when I need to use the bathroom, where am I supposed to go?”

Cervantes identifies as gender nonconforming.

“I feel like the traits I exhibit and the way I carry myself can hold space both for masculinity and femininity without identifying as a man or a woman.”

Cervantes recalled instances of entering the women’s restroom and being questioned or harassed.

“People say things like, ‘You’re in the wrong bathroom,’ or ‘Excuse me, sir, do you know this is the women’s room?’ And I’m thinking, ‘I’m not going to do anything to you or anyone else — I just really need to use the bathroom.’”

These day-to-day challenges are part of a larger struggle for transgender people, one that is not always adequately addressed amid the celebrity-centric representations in today’s media. Legal discrimination and violence remain serious issues for the transgender community, and neither can the impact of race and class on their experience be ignored. But lately, personalities like Caitlyn Jenner, Laverne Cox, Chaz Bono, Janet Mock and teen advocate Jazz Jennings have brought the movement to mainstream public attention like never before. In June 2014, actress and activist Cox became the first transgender person to appear on the cover of Time magazine. Popular television shows like Transparent and Orange Is the New Black have humanized the transgender experience for new audiences.

At times it feels like a breakthrough moment — like we’re at a “tipping point,” as Time put it. But how did we get here and what lies ahead? USC Dornsife experts from sociology, political science, history, gender studies and psychology offer a variety of perspectives on the transgender experience, from the belief that the transgender movement is rooted in civil rights to the conundrum of the transgender athlete, how hormones relate to gender and social behavior, and the controversy regarding gender neutrality. Taken together, these perspectives — along with some of Cervantes’ own personal experiences — offer us a deeper understanding of what it means to be transgender.

THROUGH THE MIRROR

In a culture of increasing awareness of — and openness toward — the transgender community, how can we better understand the nuances of gender identity and help to ensure equal rights for all?

By Laura Paisley

Though much has been done to raise awareness and increase acceptance of the transgender experience in recent years, one thing is clear: The transgender movement is anything but new.

“There was a tremendous amount of groundwork laid before Caitlyn Jenner came on the scene,” said Michael Messner, professor of sociology and gender studies, and chair of sociology. “The women’s and gay and lesbian movements over the past 40 or 50 years — all of that has created a fertile ground for greater acceptance of transgender people today.”

Jack Halberstam, professor of American studies and gender studies, cultural studies, comparative literature and English, agreed with Messner.
“Change is slow,” he said, “but when it happens it feels like it takes place overnight. Of course, the media loves the idea of ‘once we were intolerant people and now we’re not.’ But in fact, people have been working on issues around gender justice for a very long time. The amount of attention has just reached a critical pitch where people in general are seeing what people used to see only in queer communities — that there are multiple genders across the culture.”

Our contemporary understanding acknowledges that gender identification doesn’t automatically correlate with sexual orientation — gender and sexuality are separate. A hundred years ago, same-sex desire and cross-gender identification were thoroughly entwined, said Alice Echols, Barbara Streisand Professor of Contemporary Gender Studies and professor of history and gender studies. Her research expertise encompasses the history of sexuality, second-wave American feminism, and the social and cultural history of the 1960s and 70s.

By the advent of the 70s, things were beginning to shift. The first gay rights groups began to emerge, and a growing number of gays and lesbians were presenting themselves in a gender-conforming manner. Moreover, 1933 witnessed the emergence of America’s first transgender celebrity, Christine Jorgensen, who in 1952 revealed to the world that she had undergone a “true sex-conversion” from man to woman.

“What had been happening gradually is becoming more obvious, this disaggregation of same-sex desire from cross-gender identification. By the time we get to the 1970s disco era, this really ramps up,” Echols said.

In the 70s, the women’s and gay liberation movements were in full swing, though relations between feminists and trans women were at times contentious. Some feminists were in full swing, though relations between feminists and trans women were at times contentious. Some feminists were open and interested in thinking and talking about transgender issues, said Echols, and others felt threatened by them, questioning the validity of their claims to “womanliness.” For some, these tensions persist even today.

TRANSGENDER: THE NEW CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT?

On June 26, 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled by a 5-4 vote that the Constitution guarantees the right to same-sex marriage. For many in the LGBT movement, it was seen as monumental — the hard-fought attainment of a civil right.

“One thing that often occurs after a particular social movement has gained a significant victory is a reflection, a looking inward that asks, ‘What are the next sets of challenges?’” said Ange-Marie Hancock, associate professor of political science, gender studies and sociology.

In 2016, this reflects the push for transgender-friendly public policy, including gender-neutral public accommodations and protections against discrimination in housing, employment and health care as well as transgender-based violence.

“These kinds of policies are coming to the forefront because we’re in the midst of this cultural shift,” Hancock said, “but also because people within the LGBT movement are more open to hearing it now that the major milestones of marriage equality have been achieved.”

Nationally, only 17 states have anti-discrimination laws for housing and workplace protection, public accommodations or both. California is one of the more progressive states in terms of advancing health-care, workplace and school policies that support transgender people, and create precedents for the national policy agenda, Hancock said.

“California is currently working toward providing gender-neutral facilities for public employees, allowing people to choose the bathroom of the gender they identify with rather than their biological sex,” said Hancock.

“I think 10 years from now things are going to be quite different,” regarding men’s and women’s bathrooms, said Chloé Freeman, professor (teaching) of English. He regularly teaches the course “Transgender Studies” at USC Dornsife and believes that having this subject matter in the curriculum is crucial. College is where students really think about and discover these issues.

“Looking at transgender issues through the literary lens removes it from the purely personal,” he said. “It lets you think about how an artist constructs that world, that identity and those challenges.”

Freeman sees an analogy between the push for gender-neutral bathroom access and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, a civil rights law designed to protect against discrimination. It enforced architectural accommodations in public buildings for disabled people, including wheelchair ramps, elevators and reserved parking spaces.

“These did not exist 40 years ago — it was an architectural accommodation of a law,” he said. “I think the whole concept of connecting gender to where you go to the toilet will soon be a thing of the past.”

Another issue related to civil rights is violence. The transgender community — particularly trans women of color — faces an epidemic of physical and sexual violence. According to transequality.org, more than one in ten transgender people has experienced a bias-driven assault, and in the LGBT community the homicide rate is highest among trans women.

Mencher’s book Some Men: Feminist Allies and the Movement to End Violence against Women (Oxford University Press, 2013) discusses how the movement against gender-based violence is now broadening to include transgender activists.

“Ending violence against women remains the centerpiece of the anti-violence movement,” she explained, “but the increasingly popular term ‘gender-based violence’ reflects a growing understanding of the need to recognize and confront LGBT violence.”

Ending violence against transgender people is a social justice issue at its core, and the laws must reflect this. But legislative gains are only half the battle.

“It’s not that California doesn’t have strong hate crime laws,” Hancock said, “it’s also about making sure they are enforced equally across different populations.”

TRANSGENDER LIVES AT THE INTERSECTION

Intersectionality is a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power. The subject of Hancock’s newest book, Intersectionality: An Intellectual History (Oxford University Press, 2016), intersectionality is a theoretical framework that views race, gender, class and sexuality as co-constructing agents rather than isolated factors that run on parallel tracks.

“Talking about Caitlyn Jenner or Laverne Cox, there are different combinations of privilege and disadvantage based on how these categories co-construct each other,” Hancock explained. “One of the things intersectionality teaches us is that Cathy has a particular combination of privileges and disadvantages. Yes, she is transgender, and this is a new experience she’s navigating. But there’s the additional privilege of being wealthy and white that affords her a certain benefit of the doubt.”

As another example, because trans women were born
awareness of binary transgen- 

While there is increasing 

challenges.

The transgender athlete has become a really interesting 

issue, both legally and in terms of national and interna-

tional sports organizations,” he said. “Sports is one of a few 

categories in which you can have a clear separation between 

male and female — one that starts right at the beginning based 

upon a dichotomous assumption that every individual fits 

into category A or B. 

Messner has studied Little League Baseball and the 

American Youth Soccer Organization. He notes that girls 

and boys are allowed to play if they all, but higher levels are 

separated, with boys routed into baseball and girls into 

softball. Some soccer leagues enforce a similar division. 

The transgender athlete — and this is happening in 

sports, youth high school and elite international competi-

tions — is bringing a big modern twist into that dichotomous 

organization of gender,” Messner said.

When the United States Tennis Association barred Renee Richards, one of the first openly transgender athletes, from competing in the 1976 Women’s U.S. Open Tennis Championships, Richards fought the ruling all the way to the New York Supreme Court, which ruled in her favor. “If you're a transgender athlete and you have followed her, but not without obstacles. The recent controversy around South 

African Olympic runner Caster Semenya, who is intersex and doesn't fit the binary definitions of male and female, was highly publicized.

"The experience like the International Olympic Commit-

tee are in a quandary,” Messner said. “For a number of years 

they tried to enforce so-called sex tests for women athletes, but at the time it was a complete failure in terms of biological differ-

ence within the category of what we call women. There are 

people with chromosomal differences, there are intersex 

women, there are women with their hormones suppressed. 

Some women's levels are naturally high. Most organizations 

have now moved away from that as a standard practice.”

The biochemistry of gender and social behaviors is a really new field, and one that many psychologists find intriguing.

"Once you start to think about how different social behaviors actually influence hormones. We usually think of hormones as 

drivers of behavior. In hormonal explanations for men's greater aggression and dominance, people assume that men have higher levels of testosterone, which facilitate these behaviors. But even the original animal models of testosterone derived from animal husbandry recognized that social behavior influences levels of the hormone.

For example, if you're an athlete getting ready for a competition, testosterone levels rise — regardless of sex.

And for both new mothers and fathers, levels of the hormone 

a competition, testosterone levels rise — regardless of sex.

It is known that gendered behavior — acting in commu-

nity, supporting, feminine ways or dominant, assertive, mas-

culine ways — is socially reinforcing. The social environment 

in which we move through 

the world.

Remaining mindful of 

social and gender catego-

ries may also be important to thinking about the power of 

social behaviors. For example, in our own lives, interac-

tions with different social constructs of masculinity and femininity are in a sense transcended — and yet 

they are in a quandary,” Messner said. “For a number of years 

we have been thinking about the power of social constructs of 

masculinity and femininity. It is not just the binary or the distinction between men and women. The transgender movement is a social justice movement — and we are playing 

off:

omen’s U.S. Open 

press conference.

Cervantes is deeply committed to gender justice. At USC, the senior has been involved with the Women's Student Assembly, a student group that sponsors educational and 

community events while advocating for students around gendered issues.

Together with other student leaders on campus, Cervantes formed a coalition called RISE: Reform, Inform, Speak Out and Empower.

“Our goal is to communicate with university administra-

tors about the issues we see on campus around sexual 

violence and gender-based harm, policy reforms, and how 

resources are allocated and made available to students,” Cervantes said.

For the senior, despite an expanding conversation around transgenderism, certain frustrations still remain.

"With the media coverage, people are only thinking about binary trans identities — those who identify as a woman or a man. But to me, gender isn’t that simple.”

At USC and other universities, there’s also the issue of 

language. Transgender students face the question of what name and gender will appear on their transcripts, their student IDs and the roll-call lists in their classes. These legal identities might not correspond to a student’s gender identity.

Ultimately, it will take time for society to adapt to the idea that the existing system, the notion of gender as a binary, has 

set sail. This may be a "transgender moment," but there are many moments still to come. At its core, the transgender movement is a social justice movement — and we are playing the long game.
DNA was first identified in the late 1860s by Swiss chemist Friedrich Miescher, but nearly a century would pass before the famous three-dimensional double-helix structure would come to the fore. Fast forward another six decades to the present day, and science has laid bare the human genome in its entirety, giving researchers, clinicians and each of us extraordinary access to our genetic blueprint — and the promise and problems that come with it. By Darrin S. Joy
Serendipity and circumstance — and the consequences of a lifetime of decisions — all shape us to varying degrees. And the environment undoubtedly plays some role. But, at the core of it all is our genetics, the foundational biologic blueprint of our physical and psychological being.

Carried forward through the eons, each person’s DNA, copied from the preceding generations’ template, conveys a host of traits — simple features such as eye and hair color, and complex characteristics ranging from intellectual acuity to predisposition to disease. And now, aided by unprecedented technology stemming from the Human Genome Project, each of us has access — at least in part — to the living source code behind our identities.

But are we ready to open this Pandora’s box? The mapping of human sequence information in the first complete sequence of those base pairs in 2003. It has answered. And concerns about the uses and utility of the genome to that of Neanderthals, and showing the two species interbred. The findings sparked interest among the public and scientists alike, including Michael Waterman, University Professor and USC Associates Chair in Natural Sciences.

The plummeting cost of sequencing a genome may quicken the pace. An astronomical $10 million in 2006, the price tag is only about $3,000 a decade later. This increased cost-efficiency, driven by evolving technology, is allowing ever-increasing returns on the project’s initial investment of $2.7 billion, which was justified by the promise of near-unlimited improvements in human health.

The code within

In humans, the genome comprises about 3 billion couplets of information called base pairs. Distributed among 46 chromosomes — arranged in 23 pairs — they encode the genes that control our biological processes, from the cells up. The Human Genome Project, launched in 1990, gave the first complete sequence of those base pairs in 2003. More than a decade later, vast amounts of information — disease markers, common traits, even surprising links between humans and other hominids — have surfaced.

For example a multinational group of researchers published surprising results in 2010 comparing the human genome to that of Neanderthals, and showing the two species interbred. The findings sparked interest among the public and scientists alike, including Michael Waterman, University Professor and USC Associates Chair in Natural Sciences.

"I used to find human evolution really boring," said Waterman, professor of biological sciences, computer science and mathematics. "I was just totally indifferent to it. But getting the Neanderthal sequence and realizing we had these percentages of it floating around in our genomes, now I’m absolutely fascinated with this." A founder and leader in the computational biology field, Waterman co-developed the Smith-Waterman algorithm for sequence comparison and the Lander-Waterman formula for physical mapping, two fundamental algorithms used for the mapping of human sequence information in the Human Genome Project.

Subsequent work suggests humans harbor genetic traces of a second or even third species, and despite striking findings such as these, Waterman believes we are just beginning to touch on the knowledge within our genomes.

"Oh, I think we’re just scratching the surface," Waterman said. "We’ve learned so much compared to what we knew 20 or even just 10 years ago, but compared to what there is to learn, we are just babes.”

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Further, the technology is now within range of many consumers’ financial means, allowing them to catch a glimpse of their molecular selves, including their risk of disease. For many, this is the where the real payoff begins.

"We’ve learned so much compared to what we knew 20 or even just 10 years ago, but compared to what there is to learn, we are just babes.”

The Right to Know — AND HEAL — YOURSELF

Rick White is effusive. His passion for the information held within the human genome — and its potential for saving lives — is nearly palpable. "This is something that we had to do," he said. "This is something that we’re compelled to get out into the world and champion to make it happen."

White, who earned his bachelor’s degree in anthropology from USC Dornsife in 1989, is co-founder of SureGenomics, a start-up company launched in 2013 that offers genomic sequencing services. An entrepreneur who found success as an Internet software designer, he saw an opportunity to use his background not only to provide people with information about their genome, but to educate them and give them a useful system for understanding what the information means and how they might use it.

"We run marker analysis, we put it on a 3-D representation of sections of the body, then as you browse different categories of health and wellness — whether it’s kidney and urinary systems, lungs and breathing, immune system, whatever it is — you’re able to drill down on that area and create this personalized education platform," White said. "The whole notion is that you don’t need to understand all of the science but you can understand what’s relevant to you.”

While this approach seems at face value to be a boon to personal health, providing this kind of information is not without controversy. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has expressed concerns about companies delivering genetic risk information without getting clearance first, even going so far as to ban some firms from doing so, though they have since partially lifted the ban.

White and his business partners remain convinced the information is important for consumers to have — and it’s their right to have access.

"If you look in a marketplace of ideas, as Thurgood Marshall put it, and the ideas provided are wholly truthful

LIFE’S INSTRUCTIONS

Genomic technology is revealing our molecular blueprints, granting unprecedented insight into our ancient past while opening new doors to our future well-being.
representations, you can't disrupt an individual's ability to look at that information. That's called censorship. That's a First Amendment rights violation," White said. "You heard the same thing when WebMD first came out. 'Oh, people shouldn't really have this information.' But they couldn't stop WebMD from putting that information out because doing so would be a First Amendment rights violation."

Ralph Wedgwood, professor of philosophy, agrees with White's position to some extent, but sees both sides of the issue. "Though not a medical ethicist, his studies explore ethical theory as well as the implications of making rational decisions.

"Let's suppose, just for the sake of argument, that this really is pretty useful information that can make a big difference to the kinds of treatments people can be given, to the kinds of plans people can make," he said. "Then in general it looks like one simple point is just that this information is good; we should get it."

At the same time, Wedgwood understands that humans are not always prepared to cope with information appropriately. "If they were the fantasy individuals of economics, who are perfectly rational and always judge the information with a cool, dispassionate eye, then it would be fine. But people might be vulnerable because we do panic and get anxious about our health."

Part of the issue may lie in the inherent uncertainty of most genomic information. "The presence or absence of genetic markers might motivate a person to make a medical choice when in fact those markers do not ensure a given outcome — they only speak to a level of risk."

This uncertainty is especially apparent for markers associated with behavioral traits.

MOLECULES TO MIND

Laura Baker is professor of psychology and director of the USC Twin Project. She investigates how heredity as well as the environment affect individual differences in human behavior as well as the genetic bases of reading disabilities, attention deficit disorders and conduct behavior problems in childhood and adolescence.

According to Baker, a shift in the 1970s and '80s turned the psychology community toward recognizing the importance of genetic factors in shaping behavior. "From intelligence and cognitive abilities to personalities and attitudes, and whether or not you're conservative or liberal in your attitudes, it's all influenced by genetic factors."

"Most of the things that we look at in psychology are what we would call multifactorial," Baker said. "If these are genetic factors involved, it's probably many genes acting in concert, maybe sometimes even interacting with each other, maybe even interacting with the environment. So genetic influences are not simple, they're complex."

Even so, Baker remains confident that eventually the information will prove highly useful in the field. "This emphasizes the reality of tailored interventions. We want to find what the genes are and how they work, and maybe there are certain treatments that work better for some than others in the same way that we think of certain drugs that are maybe more efficient or effective for people of a certain genotype. Ultimately, we could think of doing genetic screening and tailoring treatments based upon those results."

This concept and its promise of better health care is in part what drives White to continue his efforts.

THE ULTIMATE ANSWER?

White's belief that genetic information can improve or even save lives compels him to fight the current model of what he calls "standardized medicine."

"In standardized medicine, you get sick, you take a drug, you get a cut, we sew it up. It's a reactive model. We started to think, 'Hey, if you actually had some of these data points, you could start to re-route yourself around the problem.'"

White in particular emphasizes concerns about adverse drug reactions. For him, it's personal. "My mom had an adverse drug reaction, and she passed away. And the thing is, there is knowledge that exists that could allow people to avoid that. There are 2.1 million adverse drug reactions in hospitals alone. It translates to 108,000 deaths every year.

"If we have pharmacogenomic information that allows you to know how you metabolize drugs — data that could protect you — that should be something that everybody has. So when you're sick, they know what they can give you and what they can't. It shouldn't be, 'Hey, here, take this drug. Oh, it didn't work? Okay, here, try this one.'"

White ultimately sees genomic data becoming part of each person's health record. "Absolutely. Centerpiece."

Waterman agrees. "At some point our genome is just going to be part of our health-care record. It's inevitable."

For White, that's the ultimate power of knowing yourself at the genetic level. "That's what turns standardized medicine from a money sink into something that's efficient and personalized and terrific. But you have to start building it, and you have to give people access, and you have to give them tools that allow them to comprehend and learn about genetics."

"Ultimately, genomics saves us."

COGED PSYCHE

Genetics holds away not just over our bodies, but also our minds. Information revealed through genomic sequencing may soon improve psychological therapies just as it has medical treatment.
THE CRAFTSMAN

For filmmaker Edoardo Ponti, poetry was the key to unlocking his talents as a cinematic storyteller. By Michelle Salzman Rhee
Voce Umana

La Voix Humaine

on Jean

directed the short film based

on Sophia Loren, on the set of

Dino Risi and his mother,

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octeau’s 1930 play

Take

booth at the Soho

Edoardo Ponti’s eyes lit up.

aking a break from his work to talk about filmmaking,

c

iply. I was next to him playing with my cars and little toy

ships using his music as the musical score to my scenes.

octane, I switched to a car chase.

playtime, is now a composer and orchestra conductor.

influence is most evident in his eyes, the same vivid hazel as

in his profile, which echoes that of his late father,

m movie producer Carlo Ponti. (His brother, Carlo

Ponti Jr., whose practice provided the score to Edouard’s

playtime, is now a composer and orchestra conductor.)

However, Ponti, whose films have been shown and

honored at the Cannes, Venice, Tribeca and Toronto film

festivals, has forged his own path in Hollywood. He has

written and directed the feature films Between Strangers

(2002) and Coming & Going (2011), and has also written,

directed and produced several stage plays, as well as an

opera. Most recently, Ponti adapted Jean Cocteau’s 1930

opera. Most recently, Ponti adapted Jean Cocteau’s 1930

play

Coming & Going

Feeling that he had made a mistake,

Ponti switched his major from film to creative writing

and poetry the focus of his studies.

Ponti’s work is always a study in form.

Ponti described his earliest poems as incredibly long,

and made poetry the focus of his studies.

When I was 4, my brother who is four years older

shifted in his seat and thoughtfully pulled at his closely

trimmed salt-and-pepper beard. “I remember very specifi-

cally. I was next to him playing with my cars and little toy

ships using his music as the musical score to my scenes.

When he played a dramatic piece, I would use that to have

my ships sink; when he practiced something more high

octane, I switched to a car chase.”

Ponti switched his major from film to creative writing

and poetry the focus of his studies.

“You've always written poetry, so for me it was a very natural

cly. Poetry is about getting at the core of things. It’s about the universe of the detail but

also about rhythm. And film is also about rhythm, detail and finding the essence in a scene.

Ponti eventually returned to study film, earning his mas-

ter’s from the USC School of Cinematic Arts in 1998. But

studying poetry helped Ponti build his toolkit.

“When I write poetry I’m at my finest,” Ponti said. “It has

become an amazing way to express anything I want without

the confines of a narrative. Whatever I want to say, I can say in poetry.”

Ponti described his earliest poems as incredibly long, and

very personal. It was when he began to direct his writing into

short, focused narratives that a light bulb went on for

him as a storyteller.

“It liberated me,” he said. “I could pack as much meaning into a vehicle that was much shorter. And that really has to do with discipline and rhythm. Finding the right rhythm for the right message was something that I really learned in poetry. And that, in film, is enormously important because that’s one of the ways you start thinking of tone.”

Ponti counts David John, University Professor of English and Comparative Literature at USC Dornsife, as one of his most esteemed mentors.

Ponti recalled that in his writing workshops, St. John

would both be very objective and sharp in his feedback but,

at the same time, very gentle and human about it.

“You would allow yourself to listen to his criti-

cism,” Ponti said. “You were elevated by it. And that was

a wonderful way for all of us to come together to share

our innermost feelings in a safe, nonjudgmental environ-

ment—an environment that really helped us sharpen that skill through intelligent, constructive criticism.”

In this day, when I write a poem, it is David’s voice that I hear. If it sounds like St. John could read his poem — that the

work fits his vocal pattern — Ponti will keep it. He called St. John his “aural litmus test of whether or not a poem works.”

The Magic in the Mundane

Studying poetry also reinforced for Ponti the fact that disci-

pline is essential for success, especially for someone working in a creative field. That means tapping into inspiration as

time allows, not just waiting for the muse to strike.

“That’s what being a professional means: You can switch on inspiration,” Ponti said. “If your schedule only allows you to write between the hours of 1 and 6 p.m., what happens if inspiration strikes at 6:30? You missed that train and that can’t happen, so you have to be able to access inspiration almost at will. It becomes a muscle. The more you use it, the better you get.”

As an undergraduate, he would “switch on” his inspira-

tion using the commute from USC to his home 40 miles

north of Los Angeles to write a poem every day.

“I had this self-imposed exercise in college. I’d take me around one hour to drive back home from USC and I would use that time to compose a poem. I would create it in my mind as I was driving, repeating the lines I liked, and adding to those verses. I never used a Dictaphone. And when I got home, I had a poem that I would transcribe. I wrote countless poems like this, in my head, stuck on the 101 freeway. You could say that the 101 became my muse!”

The time Ponti spent mulling over his words became an

important blueprint for his creative process.

“It’s about sharpening your ability to envision something before it exists,” he explained. “That period of gestation is very important because that’s how your inner life and your experiences are allowed to merge.”

“I’VE ALWAYS APPROACHED FILM AS A CRAFT. THAT MEANS PRACTICE, DISCIPLINE AND NOT BEING AFRAID TO TAKE RISKS.”

However, Ponti embraces the moments when his creativ-

ity is sparked organically. After all, a storyteller’s antennae

are always up, he said.

“If writing or telling stories is your passion, you don’t even do it consciously. That part of you is always on, seeking out the next story or image or moment from the most mundane detail in life. The trick is to uncover the magic in the mundane.”

USC Directv

Spring / Summer 2016  47
A LIFELONG PROCESS

Ponti’s first term at USC’s film school was intense but incredibly fruitful.

He recalled fondly that he focused on “surviving because they threw the camera at you and say, ‘Now, go make a movie.’” The emphasis quickly shifted to developing his voice as a storyteller.

“This is a lifelong process, finding your voice,” Ponti said.

“It’s about tone; it’s about the themes that interest you; it’s about where your eye goes in a room; it’s about what life moments touch you, what music makes you cry. Finding your voice is understanding who you are.”

Revelation struck the first time he watched the Three Colors trilogy — the films Blue, White and Red — by renowned art-house director and screenwriter Krzysztof Kieślowski.

“POETRY IS ABOUT GETTING AT THE CORE OF THINGS. IT’S ABOUT THE UNIVERSE OF THE DETAIL BUT ALSO ABOUT RHYTHM. AND FILM IS ALSO ABOUT RHYTHM, DETAIL AND FINDING THE ESSENCE, IN EVERY MOMENT.”

“Every filmmaker, every writer needs to find that person who speaks to the deepest part of themselves. For me, Kieślowski was the one,” Ponti said. Kieślowski’s ability to shoot a drama with the tension and suspense of a thriller, coupled with his attention to human detail, inspired Ponti.

“When I saw his films — in the humblest of ways — I saw myself in them, they gave me the courage to tell my own stories.”

Ponti has since been exploring the themes that pique his interest as a storyteller. The one theme that he sees recur throughout his own work is resilience — evident from the moment he learned of his betrayal.

“Translating the text reinforced the female character,” explained Ponti, who is himself a polyglot fluent in English, French and Italian. “French is a very intellectual language, a language of the mind, and Neapolitan is a very visceral language, born in your abdomen — in your gut. So when the character speaks Neapolitan, without changing the words she gains an inner strength that she really didn’t have in French.

“It was quite amazing seeing the transformation of a character just by shifting the language. Languages reside in different parts of you, and a language that resides in your head is very different than a language that resides in your gut. It affects the power and the impact of a character enormously.”

The film ends with the inscription: “per mamma” — “for my mother.” Ponti, who had previously directed his mother in the feature film Between Strangers, called working with her on such an intimate project an “amazing process.”

“She was very nervous to do this movie because it’s really a litmus test for all the greatest actresses in the world,” he said. The two rehearsed the piece for six weeks before shooting began.

“It was me and her sitting in a hotel room, face to face going through every line, every nuance, every color of the emotional journey that this woman was going through.”

The piece garnered acclaim, screening at the 2014 Cannes Film Festival, the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival and the 2014 HollyShorts Film Festival. Loren won a 2014 David Di Donatello Award, Italy’s top film honor, for her performance. Last April, Voce Umana debuted on Turner Classic Movies as part of a mini-series tribute to the actress.

FINDING BALANCE

Film school had another profound impact on Ponti’s life. It’s where he met his wife, actress Sasha Alexander, who plays chief medical examiner Maura Isles on the popular TNT television series Rizzoli & Isles. At USC, the two would run into each other in common areas on campus between classes.

“We were just friendly. And then, 10 years later, we bumped into each other and the rest is history,” Ponti smiled. They have been married for nine years and have two children together.

Ponti is comfortable moving between the different roles he inhabits — writer, father, husband and filmmaker.

“Ideas come when you least expect them. It’s like magic. I’ve never really produced anything. I’m just an idea guy. I produce ideas,” he said.

“People think, ‘Oh, I haven’t allotted enough time to writing because I was busy being a father.’ But the truth is they’re not mutually exclusive. Being a father enriches you as a writer and vice versa,” he explained. His philosophy is that everything balances out.

“You must not taking anything away from one part of you when you focus on another facet of your life. Each facet feeds into the other, deepens the whole. You take the lessons from every part of you and apply them to all of you.”

Ponti reached for his computer. After all, it was the middle of the work day. A cool breeze drifted through the open windows nearby. With the laptop open on the table in front of him he leaned back in his seat and paused for a moment, ever the composed wordsmith. He concluded, “If you understand that everything is connected in your life, you’ll be fine.”
Social media and other digital channels are providing platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Snapchat, where nearly anyone can make his or her voice heard. The result is ample opportunity for each of us to reap the rewards — or consequences — of our online identities.

By Darrin S. Joy

The virtual nature of the online world can lull users into a false sense of security. But the dangers are real, and cyberspace can leave a lasting mark on incautious visitors.

For many parents, the inexorable approach of puberty and those awkward teenage years sends a clear signal that it is time for “the talk.” The conversation in mind, however, has nothing to do with birds or bees.

The discussion centers instead on the dangers they and teens face from a near ubiquitous source: one that they, having first encountered it as adults, are themselves struggling to navigate — the Internet.

Aside from the more obvious sinister threats — bullying and cyber-stalking among them — incautious travelers through the online world face the possibility of damaging their own real-world reputations through missteps in the digital realm.

For the Record

In 2011, a student attending a public university in California found out just how swiftly a mistake can escalate to character-crushing levels when she posted a racist rant admonishing Asian students for speaking on cell phones in the library. The short and extremely cringeworthy YouTube video quickly went viral, garnering extensive coverage through the news media, as well. The student soon began receiving all manner of hostile messages, including threats against her life.

Despite removing the video from the Web and apologizing, the third-year political science major soon left the university to escape the negative attention. She has remained (wisely, one might agree) absent from the Internet and the public eye ever since.

While her motivations for posting the rant in the first place were never confirmed, it may be that she, like many of her peers, viewed YouTube as a platform for gaining some level of celebrity, even if only among her friends.

“There’s a whole layer of identity that people are encouraged to create online,” said Karen Sternheimer, associate professor (teaching) of sociology. Sternheimer’s research includes studies of the construction of celebrity culture and how celebrity has been manufactured from the early 20th century to the present. Her book Celebrity Culture and the American Dream: Stardom and Social Mobility (Routledge, 2011) considers how celebrity culture in the 20th and early 21st centuries reflects and reinforces notions of social mobility.

“I would guess that it’s not the majority of people who are...
really looking for fame," she said. "I think for me, I'm on Twitter a lot, but the people I know you because of the way that you share online.' So it's said to me, 'I don't see you that often in person but I feel like I know you because of the way you put yourself out there online.' So it's a blend.

In the end, she said, "the Internet is more human and face-to-face than a lot of people think or believe it is. There are still so many relationships that are deepened offline." It may just depend on how you present yourself out there online.

FEAR OF THE NEW IS NOTHING-NEW

So then, are parents, as they prep for 'the talk,' justified in their fears about their children's digital well-being? Sternheimer sees this as a new spin on an age-old question that, as is usually the case, will take time to answer.

"I think we've had changes in the past, and we've had changes in the future, and we've had changes in the way we think about new things," she said. "I think that something isn't a threat takes a little while."

And people are more likely to behave ethically when that happens, as well. "I think in some sense Facebook's total record of your entire history as a person may give you the sense that you do exist across time and it's worth investing in your future exactly because you don't only exist in the moment."

Ultimately, that insight draws people back to their "real-world" lives.

"Your backstage behavior is no longer just a fleeting moment; it can live on forever."

And people are more likely to behave ethically when that happens, as well. "I think in some sense Facebook's total record of your entire history as a person may give you the sense that you do exist across time and it's worth investing in your future exactly because you don't only exist in the moment."

Savvy users are learning to turn the seemingly limitless ways to connect to their advantage, building relationships — in an increasingly tech-oriented world.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Alumna Erica Berger is a writer, journalist and entrepreneur with extensive expertise in digital media. Named to Forbes magazine’s "30 Under 30" list in 2012, she credits her use of digital platforms for helping her launch her career. "Of course, I've met a lot of the people whom I work with as well as friends online, but then it's our offline experiences together that create trust," she said. "Somebody the other day said to me, 'I don't see you that often in person but I feel like I know you because of the way you put yourself out there online.' So it's a blend.

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Before joining the USC Dornsife Department of Psychology in 1940, Joy Paul (J.P.) Guilford served as interim director of the psychology clinic at the University of Nebraska. There he administered intelligence tests to children. Having grown up comparing his own brothers’ unique skills and abilities, Guilford was curious about what, exactly, defines intelligence. IQ is determined by a test, but how does that accurately when people’s intellectual strengths vary so tremendously?

Out of these questions emerged Guilford’s “Structure of Intellect” (SII) theory, which proposes a three-dimensional model of intelligence. “He had always believed that there are many important and relatively independent mental abilities,” wrote Andrew L. Commeny in his biographical memoir of Guilford (National Academy of Sciences, 1993). “Guilford was particularly aware of the absence of creativity education. “When Guilford began his research, intelligence was the IQ, a menu,” wrote Commeny. “Now, in large measure as a result of the research, intelligence has been shown to be incredibly complex. The hereditary limitations placed on human intelligence are now seen to be far more restrictive than previously assumed. Guilford’s concept of intelligence, if adequately broadened, will have a profound impact in the future on public perceptions about individual potential and upon the education of children.”

Joy Paul (J.P.) Guilford’s “Structure of Intellect” theory proposes a three-dimensional model of intelligence, with added emphasis on creativity and critical thinking.

Faculty News

GIAN MARIA ANNOYI, assistant professor of French and literatures and gender studies, received a grant from The Creative Capital/Andy Warhol Foundation Arts in the Iron-Giant Program.

ANDREW BACON, assistant professor of philosophy, won the Sanders from Michigan Press.

Professor Emerita of History LOUISE WANG, department of psychology and religion, was awarded a Fulbright Distinguished Chair at the University of Uppsala in Sweden.

LISA BIRTE, professor of history and religion, was elected a fellow of the Medieval Academy of America.

YAO-YI CHANG, assistant professor (research) of spatial sciences, won first place at the Computing Community Consortium-sponsored Blue Sky Ideas Track Competition at the ACM SIGMETRICS and International Conference on Advances in Geographic Information Systems 2019.

IRENE CHIOLO, Golden Assistant Professor of Biological Sciences, was awarded an International Scholar Award from the Research Corporation for Scientific Advancement.

GERALD DAVIDSON, professor of poetry and philosophy, received the 2019 Outstanding Junior Scholar Award of History.

JAHAN DAWLATY, assistant professor of chemistry, received a Coulter Scholar Award from the Research Corporation for Scientific Advancement.

STEVEN FINKEL, professor of biological sciences, was elected a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

BANA GORG, Judge Witney, professor of forensic and public culture, was named California poet laureate.

ANDREW LARKO, associate professor of sociology, was awarded a fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS), at Stanford University.

STEVEN LANDY, professor of international relations and vice dean for academic programs, has been named in the Academic Advisory Board of the Warrior Project.

PETER MANCEAU, Andrew W. Mellon Professor of the Humanities, Linda and Harlan Hormansky Director of the Early Modern Studies Institute, and professor of history and anthropology, and vice dean for the humanities and social sciences, received a Dyson Fellowship from the University of Melbourne in Australia to support a project titled “Culture Clashes in Shrew: World, Exploration and Encounters between Europeans and Indigenes.”

BRENT MELOT, assistant professor of chemistry, received a Coulter Scholar Award from the Research Corporation for Scientific Advancement.

MICHAEL NEMIHER, professor of sociology and gender studies, and chair of sociology, was honored with the P&I Sociological Association’s new Distinguished Scholarship Award.

ANY ODAKA, professor and chair of art history, received the Society of Architectural Historians’ James David Hetchcock Book Award for Designing the Crowne Plaza: Myths and Motifs in Midcentury America (University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

JENNIFFER EWERT, assistant professor (teaching) of spatial sciences, was included into the 2019–2020 Women of the Year Circle by the National Association of Professional Women.

DOUG CAPONI, William and Julie Wrigley Chair in Environmental Studies, and professor and chair of biological sciences, received the John H. and Maryianna Quarmby Chair in Marine Biology.

STEVEN FINKEL, professor of biological sciences, was elected a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

G. K. SUSY PRAGASAM, George A. and Judith A. Olah Nobel Laureate Chair in Hydrocarbon Chemistry and professor of chemistry, received the 2019 Jiang Mien-Mei Prize for excellence in fluorine chemistry.

OLEG PREZHILOV, professor of chemistry and astronomy and physics, was awarded a Humboldt Research Award.

RENO BONE, associate by a linear-model of biological sciences, chemistry, physics and astronomy, and computer science.

HERBERT SCHWARZ, Provost Professor of Psychology and Marketing and founding co-director of the USC Dornsife Mind and Society Center, has been named the 2019 Oswald Kippe Prize by the University of Wurzburg in Germany.

JACOB DOLL, professor of history and accounting, was named among the Accountant magazine’s Trillion Accountancy 400.

JENNIFER EWERT, assistant professor (teaching) of spatial sciences, was named among the Accountant magazine’s Trillion Accountancy 400.

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Life at the Intersection

Through an authoritative new book, Ange-Marié Hancock offers a comprehensive intellectual history of intersectionality.

The United States, though led by an African American president, has witnessed the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. In Scandinavia, known worldwide as a progressive, socially oriented and egalitarian region, violence against women still persists. How do we reconcile these types of paradoxes?

Intersectionality, a framework for thinking about the ways in which inequalities related to race, gender, class and sexuality develop, is an excellent place to begin to understand the different factors involved, according to Ange-Marié Hancock, associate professor of political science, gender studies and sociology.

Hancock, who has been exploring the subject for nearly 20 years, provides an in-depth look at the issue in her new book, Intersectional: An Intellectual History (Oxford University Press, 2016).

“I think one of the reasons intersectionality is compelling is because it gives us a contempora- ary language to talk about why so many things have changed and yet so many things stay the same,” she said.

In our society, social and political power is conferred through categories of identity. Rather than simply looking at inequality as a relationship between those at the center and those on the margins, Hancock said, intersectionality maps the relative ways in which identity politics creates power.

In most popular usage, intersectionality is equated with a notion of individual identity, but Hancock said it’s also about how people in general interact with others and with institutions and structures. Identity politics is just the beginning.

“I wanted to start a conversation so we could really start to think about putting some boundaries around what is intersectionality and what is not,” she said.

Hancock believes that intersectionality is a hopeful framework that contributes to soli- darity among groups.

“When you start looking at combinations of privilege and disadvantage, you start to overcome your own willful blindness that doesn’t see how other people might be in a position to be in solidarity with you. You see that people you never thought you’d have anything in common with are actually suffering substantially from the same kind of issue, and it starts to reveal unlikely allies.”

Hancock’s book is the first in a series of two. The second book, Scaling up Stereos for Justice, will explore the use of stories and narrative in building social movements for change. — L.P.
Soul of the Machine

Poet and English alumna Barbara Duffey explores the intersection of literature and science.

Winter Barbara Duffey ’92 has long been mesmerized by machines: it’s the gears and levers as well as the motor, warm-blooded kind.

Her work explores both the universe of the body and the larger cosmos. Her essays and words have both the power to pose and to explore incisive life questions.

“The things that tend to inspire me often come from science,” she said.

Duffey studied with Professor of English and former California Poet Laureate Carol Muske-Dukes — an experience she characterizes as transformative.

“I learned that poetry can be beautiful at the sonic level. You can use simple words and put them in the right order,” she said.

Now assistant professor of English at Dakota Wesleyan University, her recent book, Soul of the Machine, is a new project, one inspired by her struggles to have a child.

The work explores both the universe of the body and the redemptive power of art.

Duffey plans to use some of the fellowship time to start a new project, one inspired by her struggles to have a child.

“Right now, I imagine that the book is going to be a fascinating place to be a novelist,” he said.

“With a psychologist, I was interested in developing predictive rules about human behavior. As a crime novelist I’m interested in people who transgress those rules.”

Kellerman’s novels mostly take place in L.A. — some scenes even set at USC. People come to L.A., he explained, “to reinvent themselves, making it a fascinating place to be a novelist,” he said.

One reason the city is the setting for so many iconic crime novels, Kellerman argues, is its legendary climate. “Even criminals stay indoors when it’s cold outside,” he said. “In L.A., you can get into trouble 365 days a year.” — E.B.
There is a source error in the middle of the text. It seems to be missing some content. Here is a corrected version:

**Activist Actress**

Alumna Denise Nicholas’ involvement in the civil rights movement led to a career as an actress and writer.

Denise Nicholas was 19 years old when she interrupted her studies at the University of Pennsylvania to travel to the Deep South to join the civil rights movement. The year was 1964 — Freedom Summer — and she joined the Hugoton Free Southern Theater to act with an emphasis in drama two years later.

Her experiences gave rise, years later, to her novel *Freshwater Road* (Agate Publishing, 2005), which tells of a young woman who registers voters in the 1960s South.

She went on to write something focused on the civil rights period started a long time ago, Nicholas said. “I was so braced by my experiences and all I learned while living down there.”

Nicholas had previously enjoyed a decades-long career in television, film and theater, including roles in the popular TV series *They Say It’s Me* and *The Year of Living Dangerously*. In addition, she received a master’s degree in history from the University of Wisconsin, and her Doctor of Laws degree from Columbia University.

Despite these achievements, Nicholas was committed to finishing the college degree she had started two decades earlier. In 1985, she enrolled at USC Dornsife, earning a degree in history. “I was trying to return to the work I really love while still teaching elementary school and elementary teaching credential while raising her family,” she said in a recent interview with the Los Angeles Times. “I was really excited to be working with children and at the same time teaching.”

**Weddings and Births**

SUSAN E. SMITH (B.A., history, ’12) and Peter G. S. Smith were married Aug. 17, 2015, in San Diego. The couple plans to reside in Virginia.

Nancy C. Smith (B.A., history, ’12) and Steven T. Smith were married Aug. 29, 2015, in Seattle. The couple plans to reside in California.

**County Bar Association**

Ms. Nicholas was welcomed son Henry Thomas on June 28, 2015. The couple plans to reside in California.

**Obits**

Susan E. Smith (B.A., history, ’12) and Peter G. S. Smith were married Aug. 17, 2015, in San Diego. The couple plans to reside in Virginia.

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I was delighted to hear of Professor Douglas’s passing. He was a true giant in the field of mathematical psychology, and his contributions will be remembered for generations to come.

With kind regards,

Professor Emeritus of Mathematical Psychology

Dr. Eugene Cooper

Department of Psychology

University of Southern California

Los Angeles, CA 90089-0111
Never Too Late

Alfonso Gonzalez reflects on being a member of the Class of 2016 and becoming USC’s oldest graduate.

Here he tells his story to Susan Bell.

My first memory is of my grandmother. I’m 4 years old and she’s wearing a long dress and cooking tortillas in the boarding house she ran in the Lompoc, Calif., mining camp where I was born.

Now, I am four years shy of my 100th birthday. But — unexpectedly — I’m a student again. I thought “elusive college degree” will inspire younger students to keep learning; it’s never too late. If you have knowledge, no one can take it away from you. That’s worth more than money.

University is about leadership, and USC students will become the leaders, not only of the United States, but of the world.

I’ve seen many changes in my lifetime, the biggest being the advent of computers. We didn’t have them when I was a student the first time around. We had to take notes and use a dictionary. When I first saw cell phones, I said, “This isn’t going to last, it’s a fad.” But it wasn’t a fad. I made a big mistake. Now you kids have the world’s knowledge at your fingertips. The technological revolution is amazing. And it’s just beginning. I’m excited to be here to witness this.

I hope seeing me at 96 years old trying to complete my “elusive college degree” will inspire younger students to keep on learning; it’s never too late. If you have knowledge, no one can take it away from you. That’s worth more than money.

Youngsters are optimistic, but older folks sometimes aren’t. We grew up in a different time when there was always an enemy. The only real enemy is ignorance. But thanks to USC students, I’m optimistic about the world. I know it’s in good hands.

A firm believer in lifelong learning, Alfonso Gonzalez completed his degree in zoology by taking a specially crafted one-unit elective: a guided autobiography in which he explored self-identity while writing his personal story.

IN MY OPINION

IN MY OPINION

IN MY OPINION

IN MY OPINION

IN MY OPINION
Life Moment

Photo by Andrew Walker

LAUREN SANTO DOMINGO ’98 (SEE PAGE 10)