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# INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL



## The 26th Edition

*The John Locke Institute, which organizes one of the world's most prestigious essay competitions, described the publication of their alumni's articles in Inspire Youth Journal as a "success" and a "fantastic achievement."*

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## BRAIN DRAIN: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN GLOBAL TALENT MIGRATION

Lan Dao

**H**uman capital flight, an early expression for brain drain, first emerged as a major public concern in the 1940s, when high numbers of European experts emigrated to the United States and the United Kingdom. Today, the phenomenon remains deeply consequential. In the worst-affected countries, more than 80% of skilled professionals are emigrating abroad, as seen in nations such as Haiti, Jamaica, and several small states with workforces of fewer than one million people. Around 20 other countries are losing between one-third and one-half of their college graduates, most are located in sub-Saharan Africa (including Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Somalia) or Asia (such as Afghanistan and Cambodia). The majority of developing countries are affected by brain drain, often due to fewer local opportunities for education and career advancement. Regions most commonly experiencing brain drain include Africa, Central America, and the Caribbean.

***According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), high levels of skilled emigration slow economic growth and adversely affect those who remain. As a consequence, there is a high likelihood of increasing inequality and poverty.***

There are two main causes identified as to why workers are emigrating to more developed countries: unfavorable economic conditions and political instability, including conflict and persecution. Economically, the salary for comparable professions are higher in advanced economies compared to developing economies. Secondly, advanced economies offer a higher standard of living than less advanced economies. Thirdly, due to their advanced industries and technologies, advanced economies often seek out skilled workers from all across the globe, which furthers the talent outflow in developing countries. For example, since Greece's near bankruptcy in 2010, life has been particularly hard for the country's young people. Although there are finally some tiny signs of recovery, with the economy growing by 1.6% in 2017 and the country expected to exit its bailout program later that year, unemployment for those under 25 remained close to 45%. It's no wonder, then, that up to 180,000 graduates have left Greece to seek work elsewhere in the last eight years. Surveys further suggest that up to 76% of teenagers are considering studying or working abroad. Finance graduates have gone primarily to the U.K., medical graduates to Germany, computer science graduates to the United States, and engineers to the Middle East.

Regarding political reasons, a lack of peace and stability in a country significantly undermine individuals' confidence in their safety and long-term prospects. Moreover, military conflicts create political instability in countries that surround and participate in the conflicts.

***These conditions reinforce the desire among skilled workers to seek stability and opportunity elsewhere.***



## BRAIN DRAIN: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN GLOBAL TALENT MIGRATION

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Despite these challenges, brain drain does not only produce negative impacts. Under certain conditions, it can be converted to what is often termed “wisdom gain.” Foreign professionals could be used to develop innovative graduate education opportunities in their home countries through knowledge transfer, technological innovation, and national priorities for research and development. Ultimately, involving individuals who are living abroad in creating opportunities at home favors both the retention and eventual repatriation of national talent. Building enlightened leadership and a national scientific community, with the help of expatriate citizens, can promote the coherent development of scientific and technological capacity in developing countries.

Indeed, brain drain significantly slows down a country’s economic growth and exacerbates inequality and poverty in many developing nations, where limited local opportunities and political instability drive skilled workers abroad in search of higher salaries, better living standards, and greater professional prospects. While the loss of talent poses undeniable challenges, it is not entirely irreversible. With strategic engagement, professionals can contribute to knowledge transfer, innovative education initiatives, and targeted technological development back home, potentially transforming brain drain into a form of “wisdom gain” that fosters retention and mutual benefit.

***Ultimately, addressing the root causes of brain drain remains essential to mitigate its adverse effects while harnessing its potential advantages of global talent mobility in our interconnected world.***

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## THE INNER WORKINGS OF THE GLASS CEILING

Lucie Kealey

**T**he concept of a glass ceiling (the idea that women are excluded from the same opportunities as men as a result of a shared social prejudice) has been prevalent since the beginning of time. For ages, men have been perceived as breadwinners: the ones in the family who are able to climb the corporate ladder of success. Think about some of your favourite movies. *Pride and Prejudice*. *The Great Gatsby*. Even modern-day adaptations such as *The Housemaid*. In each of these films, women take the role of the caregiver, working minute jobs whilst men exhibit traditional masculinity, taking fortune and employment success as if it is in their nature. But is this changing against the backdrop of postmodernism?

### Financial Barricades

Whilst the issue has been revisited on several occasions, a colossal gender pay gap still continues to subsist between women and men in the same industries. Despite decreasing globally from 13.4% in April 2024 to 12.8% in April 2025 (presumably the same as the current bridge), this disparity continues to prevail. Analysis from the Trades Union Congress (TUC) has revealed that this pay gap is equivalent to forty-seven days a year without pay - a substantial decrease in annual income. On average, this corresponds to a loss of £2,548 per year for women in comparison to men: the difference between living a financially self-sufficient life and being in a constant feud with the government.

### Autogenic or Assisted Creation?

Speculation around the notion of a glass ceiling leaves some to wonder whether this invisible structural mechanism has been built by women themselves, or if men, or even pre-existing forces lead the production. Gassam (2019) posits that women actually create their own barrier to the job market, arguing for the presence of a self-fulfilling prophecy; women have internalised the constant negative outlooks which make them subordinate to men, leading them to subconsciously adhere to these beliefs. They believe themselves that they are not as equipped as men. This perhaps leads women to intentionally stay in more reserved roles within the workplace, not actively fighting men for top promotions because of the internalised fear that they are not as good as their male counterparts. This is most closely connected to a lack of self-confidence and presence of the imposter syndrome; if women already lack confidence at work, why would they try to progress?

### *But what if it is men that create the glass ceiling?*

Men have historically had the societal upper hand compared to women, from the middle ages through the modern day: in the workplace, in the way they are perceived, in societies' belief in their professional endeavours. Or perhaps men have their own glass ceiling? Could it be that socio-cultural macro-factors produce a glass ceiling for the male species in which they are unable to achieve a 'cultural masculine script'; it is a self-descriptive mechanism in which men cannot reach the level of masculinity which they desire.



## THE INNER WORKINGS OF THE GLASS CEILING

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### The Glass Cellar

Thus, whilst women face resistance to progress in roles where they are able to excel financially in comparison to men, males encounter a separate invisible barrier in which they are trapped in the most hazardous roles, facing criticism for practicing 'soft skills' or being vulnerable emotionally. In this way, male overrepresentation in perilous physical occupations is mirrored by female underrepresentation in financial and politically advanced fields.

### Systematic Regulation

Or is it that neither women nor men are themselves the facilitators of a barrier in the workplace, but this is instead instilled by society, forcing both genders to adhere to a self-fulfilling prophecy in which they govern their vocational advancements around a societal consensus? In this way, there is a systematic notion in which social norms have prescribed an automatic belief in both genders that they are unable to progress in the job market; for women, this is difficulty excelling into higher financial positions, for men, their inability to escape the drive for masculinity in society. It is clear that the glass ceiling and the glass cellar have permeated society over time, with women and men struggling to break what almost feels like a bulletproof barrier.

### *Will this glass ever be shattered?*

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## HOW DOES PRESSURE AFFECT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG HIGH-PERFORMANCE ATHLETES?

Sofia Castro Figueredo

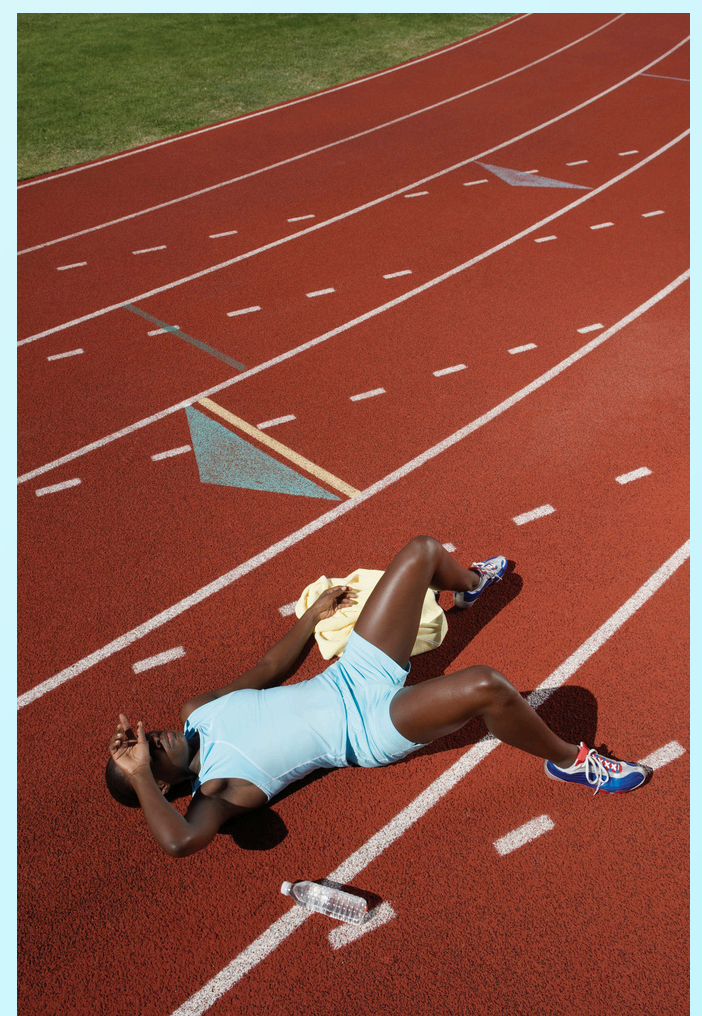
**S**port is known as a positive activity that promotes discipline, health, and personal growth. For many young people, it is also an opportunity to fulfill personal goals and achieve important dreams.

However, in the high-performance environment, where continuous excellence is demanded, sport tends to become a source of intense emotional pressure. When physical development receives much of the attention, young people's mental health takes a back seat, despite being one of the essential parts of an athlete's long-term well-being and performance. According to a recent review, elite youth athletes experience psychological symptoms such as anxiety and depression associated with their competitive environment.

From an early age, high-level competitive athletes face intense routines that include hours of intense physical training, continuous competitions, and high expectations from coaches, families, sports institutions, and even themselves. In many cases, these intense routines reduce the time available for development in other areas, such as rest, social life, and studies. Gradually, young athletes begin to feel that their lives revolve around sport, which leads to a heavy emotional burden and a strong sense of responsibility to always perform at their best, as they feel that their whole lives depend on it. Research has identified that the sports development environment can affect the prevalence of anxiety, depression, and sports burnout in young athletes, with up to 19% reaching clinical levels of anxiety or depression.

One of the most common effects of this pressure is emotional exhaustion, or what is better known as "sports burnout." This syndrome appears when prolonged stress and continuous demands exceed an athlete's ability to adapt. It manifests itself through extreme fatigue, demotivation, irritability, and loss of passion for the sport. Many athletes begin to train reluctantly, feeling that sport is no longer a passion but just another obligation. It can lead to premature withdrawal from sport and decreased self-esteem. The impact of "sports burnout" has been documented in studies that link it to prolonged stress and negative emotional effects.

Anxiety and depression are common among young athletes who reach a high level of performance. Anxiety goes beyond the common nerves caused by the fear of failing and not meeting the expectations of others and/or oneself. It can cause long-term problems, such as lack of sleep, difficulty concentrating in other areas, and negative thoughts that impact mental health and performance. Depression is also a risk, as injuries, defeats, or the feeling of not progressing enough can affect a young athlete's self-esteem and identity, causing sadness, isolation, and loss of interest in activities they once enjoyed. Studies show that although sport provides psychological benefits, high-performance environments can be associated with anxiety, depression and prolonged stress, making it crucial to address the mental health of young high-performance athletes.



## HOW DOES PRESSURE AFFECT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG HIGH-PERFORMANCE ATHLETES?

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One of the biggest obstacles to addressing mental health issues among young athletes is the culture and tradition of strength present in many sporting environments, which promote the idea that athletes are trained to be strong, resist pressure, and not show emotions. As a result, many young people prefer to remain silent about how they feel for fear of being judged, losing their place on the team, falling behind, or being considered weak or unfit for that level of sport, which prevents them from seeking the necessary help in time. This issue is reinforced by the approach of many sports institutions that prioritize physical performance and visible results in competitions. When coaches and managers lack training in mental health and do not identify warning signs such as changes in behavior or performance, athletes find themselves lacking motivation or feeling isolated.

To improve this situation, it is essential to adopt a broader and more comprehensive view of sport. Mental health must be treated with the same importance as physical health. Sports organizations can implement group and individual psychological support programs for teams. Likewise, emotional skills education, such as stress management, resilience, and self-esteem, must be improved for athletes who have to face demands of high performance so that it is healthier for them and their environment.

Coaches play a crucial role in this process. Fostering an environment of respect and support, where effort is valued over results, can reduce pressure on young athletes. It is also essential to convey that a balance between sports, family, and studies is crucial for the overall development of the individual, beyond just the athlete. Families, for their part, can help by providing emotional support and prioritizing their children's well-being over athletic achievements. All of these strategies are aligned with research that emphasizes the role of social and professional support systems in safeguarding the mental health of young athletes.

In conclusion, although high-performance sport offers opportunities for growth and success, it also exposes young athletes to psychological and physical challenges such as anxiety, burnout, and depression. Creating sporting environments that prioritize mental health is essential for developing athletes who are physically and emotionally strong.

***True success should not be measured solely by medals and trophies, but by the health, balance, and happiness of those who participate in sport.***

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## THE FORGOTTEN SLICES OF HISTORY: HOW FOOTBALL UNCOVERED A PERIOD OF TURMOIL WITHIN CENTRAL AMERICA

Huynh Le Hai

### **W**hen sports turned deadly at the wrong moment

For decades, football was not just a sport; it was a staple of culture. People would turn on their television to celebrate and cheer for their favorite football players. But behind the scenes, one organization was leading the pack. The Federation Internationale de Football Association, or FIFA for short, was the official governing body of football and its related variants such as futsal or beach football. Every 4 years since 1934, FIFA hosted their World Cup, a grand championship of talent and skill, popular among fans worldwide. But no one knew that, in the follow-up to FIFA's 1970 World Cup in Mexico, it would bring two Central American nations into a brutal conflict.

### **Politics might have played a big role--here's how.**

The two nations in question - Honduras and El Salvador - had a long-standing rivalry dating back to the 19th century, when Salvadorans began immigrating up north to Honduras to escape from their overpopulated home and find new economic opportunities. That would soon become a problem: by 1969, over 300,000 immigrants called Honduras home, leading to stringent measures taken by Honduran president Oswaldo Lopez Arellano, who was already controversial at the time, surrounded by frequent coups and scandals. In one of those measures, blocking the renewal of the 1967 Bilateral Treaty on Immigration, he sent most Salvadorans back home, eventually driving the involvement of Salvadoran head-of-state Fidel Sanchez Hernandez. Tensions were further complicated with frequent border skirmishes and the seize of control of the banana and coffee oligarchy in Honduras through the United Fruit Company, eventually heightening societal instability, even related to football.

As the 1970 World Cup qualifiers came to Central America, both Honduras and El Salvador finished top of their groups, and were set for 3 matchups. It was at this point that the risk of conflict between the two nations became increasingly apparent. The first match was dotted with merciless fighting, mocking, and harassment from fans, with Honduras winning 1-0 over the exhausted Salvadorans. A week later, the next match saw increased conflict, as aside from the usual mocking and fighting, the Hondurans raised a dirty rag instead of the Salvadoran flag. Nevertheless, El Salvador won 3-0. Eventually, the final play-offs marked a 3-2 win for El Salvador's national football team.

### **Known as the "Football War" or the "100 Hours War", this incident marked the high-point in the nations' rivalry.**

The Football War was marked with widespread riots, military intervention, air raids and persistent harassment between Hondurans and Salvadorans, starting when three Salvadoran fighter jets flew over Honduran airspace after the second playoff match. Accounts by Jack R. Binns, a staff member of the Honduran US Embassy, along with Edward M. Rowell, a political advisor in Honduras at the time, spoke of the chaotic scenery of the militaries. "They (the Salvadoran soldiers) simply put their weapons on full automatic when they crossed the Honduran border and fired at anything they saw, and there wasn't much there," Rowell recounted. When vigilante groups attacked Tegucigalpa, curfews were added and blackouts became a necessity. Finally, nearly 4 days later, the Organization of American States intervened, and a truce was signed. Still, over 3000 people had died, and tens of thousands more were left injured and/or displaced.



## THE FORGOTTEN SLICES OF HISTORY: HOW FOOTBALL UNCOVERED A PERIOD OF TURMOIL WITHIN CENTRAL AMERICA

Huynh Le Hai

*But people didn't take the war seriously, because it was part of a wider picture of instability.*

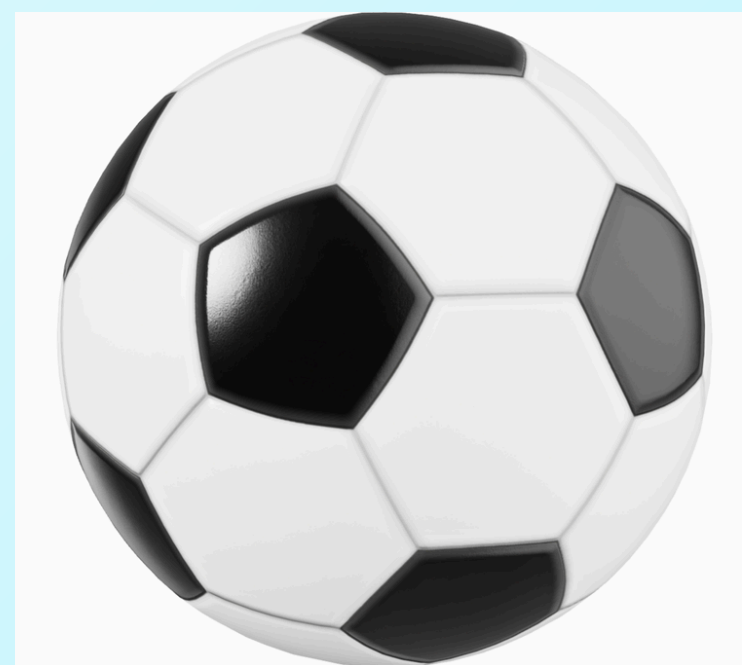
After the war ended, Honduras left the Central American Common Market and blocked trade with El Salvador, largely affecting the region's economy for years and subsequently causing many regional conflicts, including the Salvadoran Civil War a decade later. Plus, the two warring nations still had unresolved issues, including a dispute over the Gulf of Fonseca, an internationally-closed sea, which would be solved in 1992 through an International Court of Justice ruling. Immigrants also became more unwanted, being unwelcomed by the Salvadoran government and causing extreme overpopulation and poverty - a situation that could also be seen in Central America's Northern Triangle, consisting of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, which was founded as an aftermath of the Cold War-fueled Central American crisis. This particular region is dotted by graft, mass violence, gangs, mass immigration to North America, political instability, corruption, marginalized neglect and more. A new generation of 21st century leaders have tried keeping the struggle down, including Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega and El Salvadoran leader Nayib Bukele, however both were only partially-successful (with the exception of Nayib Bukele, who implemented a large crackdown on violence around 2019-2022 and fell the nation's homicide rates by 50%), drowned their country with a strong descent into authoritarianism, and highly discouraged press freedom, alarming major world organizations and powers, including the USA, the United Nations, Amnesty International, Reporters Without Borders, and many more.

*The conclusion is clear: the Football War wasn't a major catalyst of Central American instability, yet it raised worldwide recognition of the region's uncooperative crises.*

The Football War was a clear example of unreliability within Latin America, but was a tiny pixel within a big picture. It showed how regional issues stemmed not just from inhumane acts or poor living conditions, but also from greed, economic ruin, civic crises and impatient decision-making. The conflict was a symbol of sensitivity within Latin America and the world itself, bringing more attention towards world peace and highlighting the vulnerability of the marginalized.

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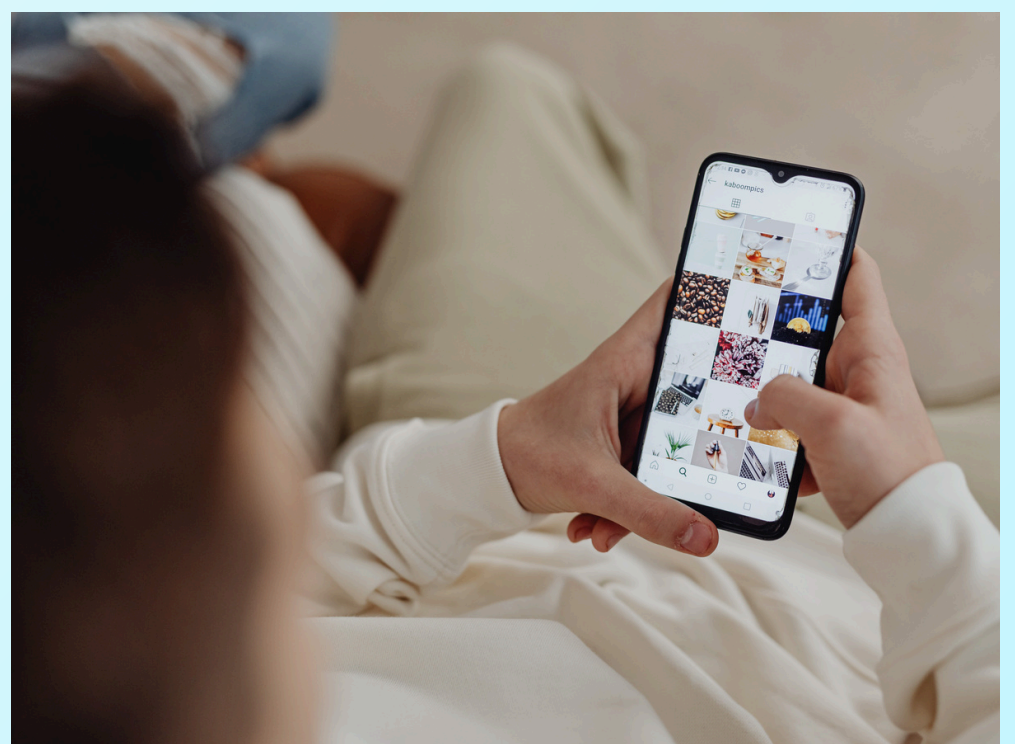
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## TEEN PRIVACY IN THE AGE OF SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM

Ngan Le

**T**eenagers nowadays spend a significant portion of their daily lives on digital platforms designed to analyze user behaviour in real time. Each interaction with content, such as likes, pauses, searches, and scrolls, produces data that is used to refine future content. For most teen users, this process operates invisibly, reshaping their online experiences without their explicit awareness or informed consent. The term 'surveillance capitalism' was coined by Harvard professor Shoshana Zuboff, who gave a description of three steps in its historical development and normalization. She argued that in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, companies had started to implement "incursion", which identifies how to profit from online human behaviour such as creating a Facebook profile or looking up on Google. According to Zuboff, companies then promoted 'habituation', through which consumers became firmly established in online behaviour and competition eroded. The last step of surveillance capitalism is 'adaptation', where companies use data in an attempt to modify users' behaviour to maximize their profits. A particularly revealing example of this process is Instagram's introduction of the Reels feature, which prioritises short-form, emotionally engaging videos optimised for prolonged attention. Internal Meta research reported by the Wall Street Journal has shown that the platform's recommendation system rapidly adapts to users' viewing behaviour, often amplifying content that provokes strong emotional responses in order to maximise engagement time. For teenage users, whose impulse control and reward-processing mechanisms are still developing, this design intensifies susceptibility to compulsive use and behavioural reinforcement. Although Instagram frames such personalisation as a means of improving user experience, the underlying objective remains the extraction of predictive behavioural data to sustain advertising revenue. This illustrates Zuboff's concept of "adaptation"; platforms do not merely respond to user preferences but actively shape them in ways that align attention with commercial interests. The special case of teens in surveillance capitalism is because of their unique online behaviours and the heightened risk of data misuse. Teens often participate in online activities that are not only personal but also highly visible, such as social media interactions, gaming, and online shopping. This visibility can result in targeted advertising and affect their behavior and decisions. Moreover, teenagers are still undergoing cognitive and emotional development, they often have a limited understanding of privacy and data collection practices, which makes them more susceptible to behavioural influence and commercial exploitations by platforms that continuously monitor their online activity. Data collected during this formative stage may be retained and reused over time, allowing early digital profiles to shape content exposure and commercial targeting well into adulthood. Instagram provides a clear example of how surveillance capitalism operates in platforms heavily used by teenagers.



## TEEN PRIVACY IN THE AGE OF SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM

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This platform continuously collects data from user interaction, including likes, comments, shares, viewing duration, and patterns of engagement. This data is processed by algorithms that personalize content feeds and allow highly targeted advertising, aligning user attention with commercial interests. Despite the introduction of privacy and safety features for teenagers, such as restrictions on explicit content and controls over messaging, the underlying collection and analysis of behavioral data remains. Consequently, teenagers' online activities remain an abundant source for prediction, personalization, and profit within the platform's business model. The outcomes of surveillance capitalism are multifaceted and far-reaching. It undermines personal autonomy, erodes democracy, and poses significant risks to individual dignity and freedom. The commodification of personal data by corporations leads to a loss of privacy and control over one's own information. Hence, this phenomenon not only affects but also has broader implications for society, as it shapes how we interact with technology and the world revolving around us. Regulatory efforts such as the UK's Age-Appropriate Design Code and the EU's General Data Protection Regulation aim to strengthen protections for young users by limiting data exploitation and increasing platform accountability. However, enforcement remains inconsistent, and many platforms continue to prioritise engagement-driven models that rely on extensive behavioural tracking. This gap between regulation and practice highlights the need for stronger oversight and structural reform. To conclude, tackling surveillance capitalism and its impacts on teenage privacy requires more than individual awareness. Meaningful protection depends upon coordinated action, which includes effective regulatory frameworks, alternative ecosystems and public opinion mobilization. As digital technologies continue to shape teenager life, safeguarding teen privacy is essential not only for protecting individual autonomy but also ensuring a more equitable digital environment.

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## BETWEEN PAPER AND PIXELS: AN ARTIST'S SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

Bao Chau Hoang

**A**rtists are often asked the question, "What kind of artist are you?"

At first, the question sounds simple. However, it often carries the expectation that artists must choose between traditional and digital art. This way of thinking reduces a complex creative process into a single label.

This question appears frequently in art communities, classrooms, and online spaces. It reflects how people often prefer clear labels over flexible identities. While this approach may make discussions simpler, it does not reflect how artists actually work in practice, where experimentation and change are common.

Art has never been fixed or limited to one form. It constantly changes as artists explore new ideas and tools. For artists who work with both traditional and digital mediums, being forced to choose one can feel unnecessary. Each medium offers something different, and neither exists to replace the other.

### Between Paper and Pixels

Traditional art is created using physical materials such as paper, pencils, ink, and paint. Every line is permanent, and mistakes cannot be easily removed. Because of this, artists often learn to adapt and work with imperfections rather than erase them. This process encourages patience and careful decision-making.

Traditional art also requires physical preparation and maintenance. Materials can run out, tools can wear down, and working conditions are not always ideal. These limitations often influence how artists plan and execute their work.

Digital art is created using electronic devices and software. Artists can undo mistakes, change colors, and experiment with different tools quickly. This allows for flexibility and exploration, but it also creates new challenges, such as knowing when a piece is finished. Additionally, digital art relies on technology that must be learned and updated. Software interfaces, hardware performance, and file management all affect the creative process. These factors show that digital art has its own set of technical challenges. While the tools are different, both forms require skill, practice, and creative thinking.

### Criticism and the Pressure to Choose

Artists often face criticism no matter which medium they use. Traditional art is sometimes described as outdated or impractical in a digital age. On the other hand, digital art is often seen as too easy or as "cheating" because of features like undo buttons.

These criticisms are usually based on misunderstandings. The effort behind an artwork is not determined by the tools used, but by the choices an artist makes. No matter how meaningful a piece is, there will always be people who question the method behind it rather than the work itself.



## BETWEEN PAPER AND PIXELS: AN ARTIST'S SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

Bao Chau Hoang

### The Creative Process Behind the Work

Creating art is rarely easy. Artists constantly make decisions, revise their work, and question their choices. Doubt is a natural part of the process and exists in both traditional and digital art.

What often affects artists more than this inner struggle is external judgment. When artists are criticized for how they create, rather than what they create, it can take attention away from creativity itself. Art does not exist to meet everyone's expectations. Its purpose is to express ideas, explore possibilities, and communicate meaning.

### Skill Matters More Than Tools

Having expensive tools does not automatically make someone a good artist. A high-quality camera does not guarantee a great photograph, just as advanced software does not guarantee good digital art. What truly matters is creativity, practice, and understanding basic artistic principles.

Throughout history, new artistic tools have often been criticized. When photography was first introduced, many believed painting would lose its value. Impressionism was also heavily criticized when it first appeared. Over time, these views changed as people learned to understand and appreciate new forms of art. Technology does not remove skill from art—it changes how skill is applied.

Similar reactions can be seen with other developments, such as digital illustration, animation software, and AI-assisted tools. Each innovation raises concerns before gradually becoming part of accepted artistic practice.

### Continuing Between Paper and Pixels

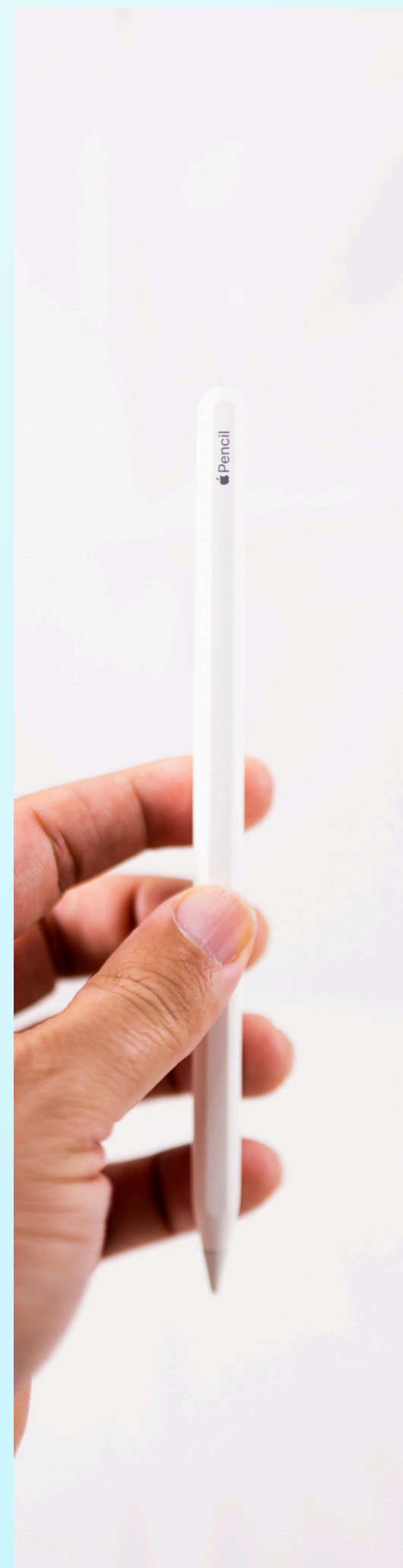
Sharing art publicly often invites criticism, but not all criticism reflects the value of the work. Many artists eventually stop trying to fit into clear categories and instead focus on continuing their practice.

Rather than choosing between traditional and digital art, artists continue to work between paper and pixels. In doing so, they show that art does not need to be limited by labels.

The discussion surrounding traditional and digital art often focuses on difference rather than purpose. Both exist to support creative expression, not to compete for legitimacy. Understanding this allows art to be viewed as a practice rather than a category.

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## THE ARCTIC: BEHIND THE MELTING ICE LIES AMBITION AND SYSTEMATIC INJUSTICE

Hoàng Linh

**F**or centuries, the Arctic was defined by its silence-- an endless, clean white land ruled by the polar bear. When we think of the North Pole, we often imagine peaceful nature scenes. However, the Arctic today is far from calm. The silence is breaking, not just by the cracking of ice, but by the loud noise of industrial machines.

***Behind the receding ice lies a turbulent transformation, where the economic ambitions of global powers are colliding directly with the survival of Indigenous communities and a fragile ecosystem teetering on the brink of collapse.***

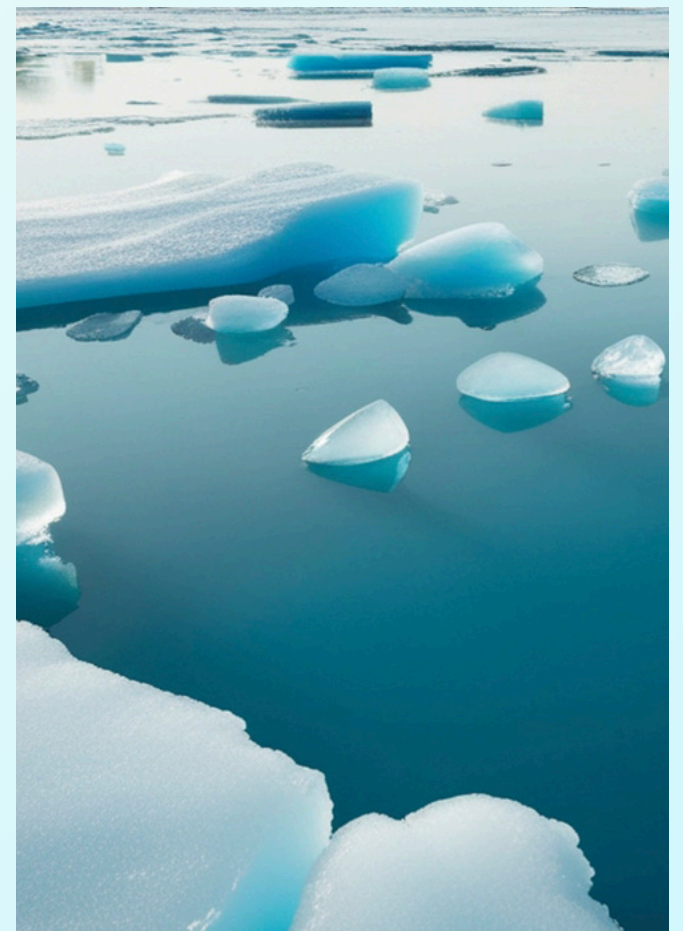
Losing sea ice is not just a climate event; for global superpowers, it represents a "golden opportunity." What scientists see as a planetary emergency, nations such as Russia, the United States, and China see as a new strategic game board. New shipping routes across the Arctic promise to cut travel time between Europe and Asia, potentially changing the map of global trade. Yet, the main reason for this renewed national interest is not just shipping; it is the huge amount of resources buried under the sea.

According to energy reports, the Arctic is estimated to hold up to 13% of the world's undiscovered oil and 30% of its unused natural gas. The irony is striking: nations are rushing to dig up the very fossil fuels that caused the ice to melt in the first place. As global powers race to claim land and send icebreakers to explore, they put money and power above everything else. However, in these big plans, the voices of the Indigenous people (the Inuit), established guardians of this land, are often pushed to the bottom of the list. The wealth of distant cities is being built by destroying local nature and the lives of those on the front lines.

On social media, photos of skinny polar bears on broken ice often go viral, touching the hearts of the public. While these images make us feel deep sympathy, they hide a much harsher reality: the growing conflict between humans and animals. As their natural hunting grounds for seals disappear, starving polar bears are forced into Indigenous villages. They are no longer just symbols of climate change; they are desperate predators looking for food in trash dumps and breaking into homes.

This is where the true tragedy happens. The Inuit communities that live in harmony with nature and create very little pollution are the ones facing immediate physical danger in their own backyards. This shows a clear global unfairness. While people in developed nations continue lifestyles that speed up climate change, the Inuit and the polar bears are left to face the consequences in a "one-on-one" battle for survival.

***It is a cruel fact that those who did the least to cause the crisis are the first to suffer from it.***



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The main issue of the Arctic is not how much we "love" the environment, but whether we dare to put human life above the value of oil barrels. As long as the sound of industrial drills drowns out the voices of local residents, all their environmental messages remain empty. We cannot claim to be saving the planet if we are destroying the people who know it best.

The solution to the Arctic dilemma does not lie in choosing between oil and polar bears, but in choosing fairness. We cannot chase 'development' by taking away a people's right to safety. Climate justice only exists when the voices of the Inuit carry as much weight as big energy companies in international negotiations related to the Arctic. We must let compassion guide our laws, not just our social media trends.

***The Arctic does not need more empty words of sorrow; it requires a real commitment. As the old Cree prophecy warns us: "Only when the last fish has been caught, will we realize we cannot eat money." Let us not wait for the ice to disappear to learn that lesson.***

The time has come for the world to view the Arctic through a clear and realistic lens. Real compassion is not found in a social media "like," but through fairness in international policies. The Arctic does not need more empty words of sorrow; it requires a real commitment: that the survival of human beings and the polar ecosystem will not be sacrificed for the short-term economic profits of any nation.

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## BEYOND THE SPOTLIGHT: CELEBRITIES QUIETLY CHANGING LIVES

Anh Thai Bao

**A**s Oprah Winfrey said: "Being good to people is a wonderful legacy to leave behind."

It is not uncommon for celebrities to make major moves without the general public being made aware. Many people think of a celebrity as someone who has fun, lives lavishly, and becomes famous through their projects. However, many celebrities quietly offer assistance to others without being recognised. The degree to which this has been done may not be viewed as significant; however, it does have a positive effect. Public charitable acts may not provide substantial proof that a person is dedicated to their cause; real dedication is shown through the performance of acts of kindness for no reason at all.

***Given our society's great value on visibility, it's worth examining whether doing "good" still holds true when no one is watching.***

Currently, individuals share acts of charity through social media platforms. When acts of charity spread virally, they dissipate rapidly and are promoted through hashtags and headlines that imply importance. Young people tend to act without hesitation when they read such posts; this way, an individual's charitable act can gain increased attention within a short time frame. Charitable acts through public engagement can help raise awareness of a cause or issue; however, the act or event does not yield sustainable change. The majority of high-level donations provide immediate assistance, but larger issues will persist after public interest in the donations dissipates. When discussing celebrity charitable efforts, it is important to distinguish between the two in terms of visibility and lasting impact.

Over the years, some celebrities have created charities to help from their goodwill. One example is Taylor Swift, who has helped with food security, disaster relief, and education. During the Eras Tour, she donated to local community food banks for several months. She donated 1 million to the Middle Tennessee Emergency Relief Fund and 1 million to them again, as well as doing the same for Louisiana in 2016 after the flood. She also helped fans with medical bills and student loan payments through "Swiftmas". Instead of just promoting donation through ads, she helped people, and many of those people helped spread the word about her. Another example is Angelina Jolie, who has been involved in humanitarian causes for more than 20 years. After traveling to Cambodia in 2001, she worked with UNHCR and established the Maddox Jolie-Pitt Foundation, which works on nature conservation, education, healthcare, and rural development. In the refugee camp of Kakuma, Kenya, she constructed schools for refugee girls. Instead of relying solely on public appearances to spread her cause, she remains committed to long-term under-the-radar projects. She may be a public figure, but for the most part, her work is through organized programs rather than publicity campaigns.



## BEYOND THE SPOTLIGHT: CELEBRITIES QUIETLY CHANGING LIVES

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Why do some well-known individuals decide to donate without seeking recognition? They may place a greater value on long-term change than on immediate attention. Sometimes, celebrities promoting charity can divert attention from people who are less well off. Continuous, private assistance may demonstrate dedication rather than showiness. In certain situations, vulnerable groups that value privacy, like refugees or abuse survivors, can actually be put in danger by public attention. Because they understand that privacy preserves the dignity of people they assist, some celebrities carefully plan their endeavors and operate in secrecy. By keeping some projects out of the public eye, support is given without the expectation of a reputation-boost.

In contrast, ego-driven impact from celebrities for charities is generally detrimental, as it prioritizes self-aggrandizement over positive influence and authentic action, promotes materialistic values and shallow ideas, and leads to poor body image, or doesn't solve the core issues faced by vulnerable communities or individuals. It also affects adolescents who are these celebrities' fans since they may adopt dangerous habits to emulate the perfect lifestyles they see online.. True support, through quiet giving, can bring significant change to many people and communities, promoting progress and even continuity. It's a way of truly earning honor from people, since a single transformed life can spread outward-- youth can build on the cause. The details may not always be widely shared or attract much attention, but what matters is that those who received help and now live better lives will never forget these good-hearted celebrities. You don't need millions of dollars to matter; influence starts where you stand.

***It is deeply inspiring to see celebrities who do charity in silence, because it shows that money and reputation is not necessary to make an impact. Even when celebrity volunteering does make it to social media, there is still sincerity in their charities.***

We can only protect communities and credibility if there is clarity about where money goes, clear goals for charities, and measurable results, following the lead and mirroring the work of celebrities who do charity work behind the cameras.

In the end, we should remember the real outcomes that sincere charities from celebrities can achieve, not just what they do in posts, pictures, or in front of cameras. Students around the world can continue their education because famous people helped fund schools; patients still receive care because a clinic was funded; families have gained stability.

***Sustained impact from charities is what really matters. True commitment often changes systems, but short-term attention only changes the headlines.***



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Anh Thai Bao

*Beyond the spotlight, this discussion is not only about fame but about responsibility. This leaves us with some important questions: if you yourself have power, even when the spotlight fades, would your work carry on? Do we reward noise more than commitment, and what matters more?*

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## THE MIRAGE OF PROTECTION: HOW THE ONLINE SAFETY ACT COMPROMISES THE GENERATION IT IS MEANT TO PROTECT

Nguyễn Phú Văn

**E**nter any coffee shop in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and you might witness the digital landscape in action: Tables of teenagers are bent down with their phones and tablets in their hands. For this generation, communal spaces like malls and coffee shops have now turned into spaces of digital consumption rather than spaces for face-to-face interaction. This scene in Vietnam is not unique, but rather a global reality. Faced with this concerning reality, a global legislative movement led by the Australian Online Safety Amendment Act, founded in 2024 and made effective on December 10, 2025, is threatening to terminate this digital life for everyone under 16. Despite being portrayed as a shield for the mental health and well-being of Australian children under 16, it may incentivize children into a more dangerous space, namely, the confined dark web, where they may face intrusion of biometric privacy through mandatory biometric verification, and the unnecessary postponement of the development of digital literacy in an era characterized by ubiquitous internet presence.

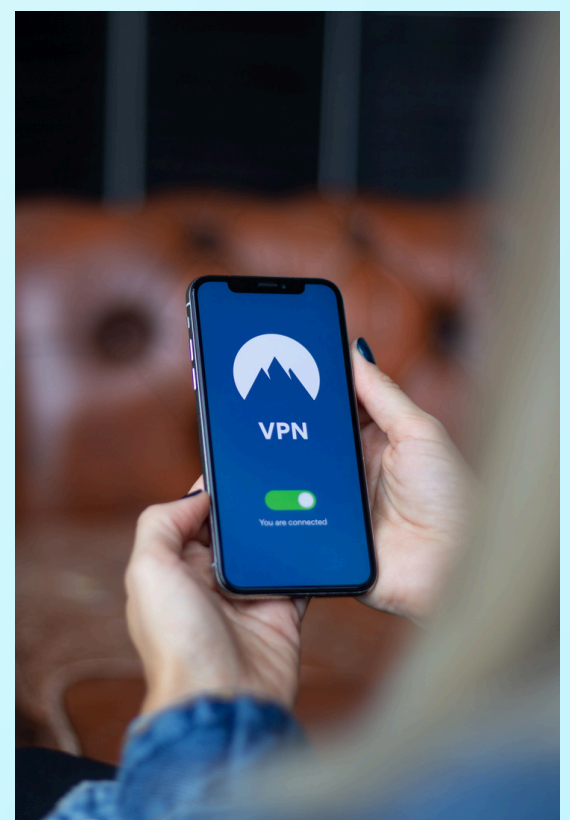
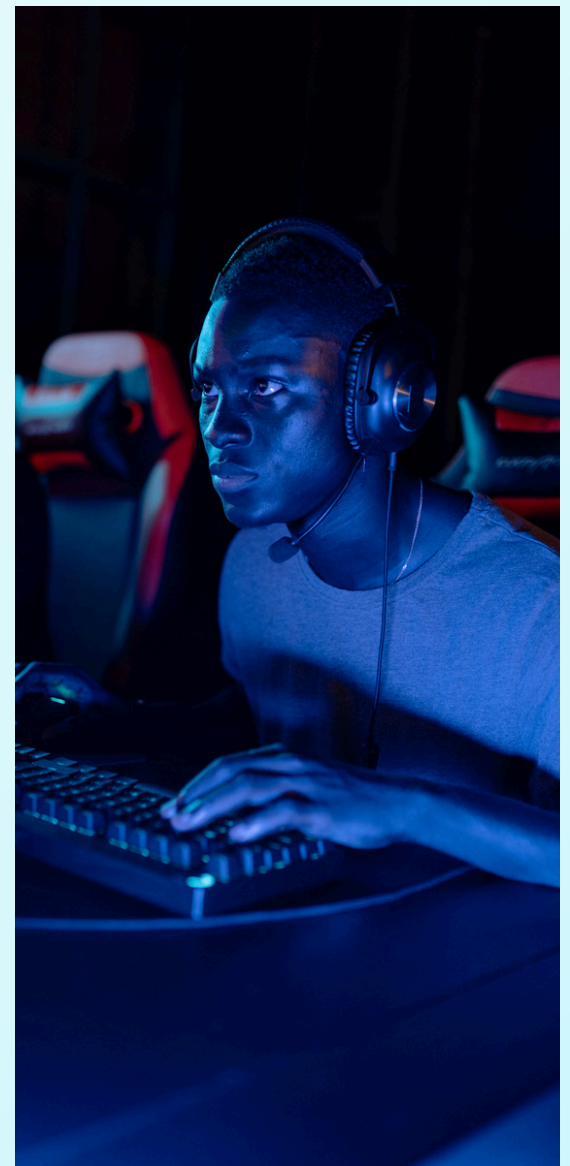
### The Mirage of Protection

The Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024 specifically targets platforms like TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Threads, X, Snapchat, Twitch, Kick, Reddit, and YouTube. It works perfectly on paper, but in reality, that is not the case. In the era of popularized digital literacy, many teens now possess the incredible ability to circumvent current restrictions by using a different VPN (Virtual Private Network). Live research from Top10VPN has shown that following the final week leading to the implementation, demands for VPN from Australia spiked 103% as teenagers prepared for the lockout. This VPN surge perfectly emphasizes the law's primary failure: You cannot strip away a digital generation's desire for connection. When the front door is locked, they simply turn to the rear window.

By enforcing this ban, the government is inadvertently teaching an entire generation to disguise and operate in the shadows rather than broad sunlight by forcing users to fake their location in order to access these services. This creates a more harmful landscape for teenagers, where they are using unauthorized, mostly "free" VPN services that steal their data and implant malware into their devices. Additionally, when a child is browsing the web from another country's location, that means they lose the protection of the Australian internet safety laws and filters-- leaving them more vulnerable than before the ban existed.

### The Legal and Democratic Failures

The enforcement not only has to cope with technical circumvention but also fierce resistance from platforms and Members of Parliament. Reports from Reuters have indicated that Reddit is taking the Australian government to the High Court of Australia, citing claims of infringement of free political discourse for under-16s that will eventually inform their voting choices. While the High Court has yet to deliver a verdict, New South Wales parliamentarian John Ruddick, who argues that the government cannot strip away a whole generation's voice, has pioneered the Digital Freedom Project and is bringing a constitutional challenge of the law to the High Court, reports the Government of South Australia.



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### The Biometric Paradox

Enforcing this law means requiring all platforms to undergo mandatory age-assurance technology. Theoretically, that means all users of the platform, children and adults alike, will have to submit government IDs like passports or undergo facial recognition. The safety paradox is the most glaring irony of the safety mandate. The Electronic Frontier Foundation argues that these requirements create massive “data honeypots” for numerous swarms of hackers to invade. By forcing platforms to collect and archive the data of an entire generation online, the government is essentially creating a goldmine for identity thieves and hackers to infiltrate, as no system is invincible. This also demonstrates a hypocrisy in our world: We ask the tech giants we distrust to act as guardians of our private biometric data.

Not only that, but this policy also creates a glasshouse with no curtains. In the status quo, tech companies have already been selling our data to third-party providers, suggests the Privacy Journal. This means teenagers’ data is transferred to other companies through a chain of varying levels of security.

In a rush to shield our children from the mental and psychological health risks of social media, we overlook safety and subject our children to a lasting, unchangeable risk of data exploitation.

### The Literacy Cliff

Beyond the stakes mentioned earlier, these mandates create an insidious “literacy cliff” that leaves adolescents unprepared for the digital reality they will eventually face. You do not teach a child how to cross a busy road by banning the sidewalk; you teach them through supervised interaction. MIT Media Lab Professor and creator of Scratch, Mitchel Resnick, suggests that “we should not be trying to keep kids away from the digital world, but rather helping them become ‘fluently’ digital, so they can express themselves and their ideas.” The idea is further reinforced by the Brookings Institution, which explicitly warns that bans may deprive teenagers of digital literacy skills, which are a vital skill in the 21st century. This not only strips teenagers of their digital literacy skills, but it also makes them unprepared the moment they turn 16, when the ban should be lifted. They enter the digital sphere with no critical nuance or competency in identifying call scams and misinformation, but it also renders them useless in managing privacy settings online. Instead of levying a mandate, governments should transfer the burden of child safety to tech corporations rather than advocating for a legislative movement that causes more harm than good.

### Conclusion

The rush to introduce a social media ban for under-16s tried to solve a complex, multi-faceted issue with a blunt legal sledgehammer. This approach reverses Blackstone’s ratio, the principle that ten guilty persons should escape rather than for one innocent to suffer, by treating every youth as a suspect who must be regulated, sacrificing the youth in a desperate effort to catch the guilty. In response to the risk of the online world, they have opted for the scorched earth policy, with privacy and digital literacy sacrificed. The issues to be dealt with include the lack of precision of the supposed authority, how to check age without stealing privacy, how to effectively protect youth, and finally, how to achieve and maintain digital literacy in a digital era. But we can't simply delete the digital world for under-16s; we can choose on behalf of those children whether or not they enter the digital world prepared



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Returning to coffee shops in Ho Chi Minh City, the best resolution is not a complete ban on social media for under-16s; it may be demanding a safety, in-design standard on platforms. As opposed to “blanket” bans, we could instead levy a mandate that platforms reform engagement-based ranking and a design that resolves the most chilling risk: predatory solicitation. Companies have to enforce proactive safety features. This implies end-to-end encryption that doesn’t shield predators, automated detection of suspicious grooming patterns, and ultimately robust, human-led moderation. Only by prioritizing digital resilience over a total restriction can we ensure the next generation isn’t just seen and heard online, but truly protected.

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## BRIDGING BORDERS, BUILDING STABILITY: THE DIPLOMATIC POWER OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Nguyễn Ngọc Diễm Quỳnh

**F**or many young people today, studying abroad is often seen as a personal milestone – an opportunity for academic advancement, career expansion, or self-discovery. However, as we observe more and more young people preparing to venture out into the world and reflect on their own educational journeys, it becomes clear that international education holds significance far beyond personal goals. In discussions of global policy, the concept of “stability” is often linked to military power, economic leverage, or strategic alliances between nations. Governments spend billions on defense and trade negotiations hoping to maintain lasting peace. However, alongside these tangible tools of power exists a less-noticed force, operating silently but with enduring influence: international education. Not present at diplomatic negotiating tables, this force is formed through transcontinental flights, multinational lecture halls, and dormitories where students from diverse cultures live and study together.

In the context of rising nationalism and digital platforms increasingly reinforcing “information loops” that expose people only to viewpoints similar to their own, cross-border learning has become a crucial balancing mechanism. Political scientist Joseph Nye once argued that “soft power lies in the ability to shape others’ choices through attraction, not coercion.” Universities, naturally, are contributing to this form of power, not through political slogans, but through real-life experiences. As students study and grow in international environments, they not only acquire knowledge but also gradually change their perspective on the world and on their own society. Therefore, international education is often misunderstood as a personal learning decision, while in reality it is a collective diplomatic process that takes place at the human level.

***Every small interaction between students is an exchange of value and understanding, gradually accumulating into broader social trust.***

Unlike traditional diplomacy between governments, international education operates through everyday relationships. Each international student, even without a diplomatic title, inadvertently becomes an “unofficial ambassador” of their country. They bring with them their own culture, language, and perspective, and learn to understand another society from within. While the media sometimes widens the gap or antagonism between nations, personal experience creates the opposite: transforming abstract concepts into real people. UNESCO emphasizes that education plays a central role in fostering intercultural dialogue and strengthening social cohesion. This doesn't come from political pronouncements, but is formed through very ordinary moments – a class discussion, a group project, or simply a conversation between strangers who gradually become friends. Over time, these relationships develop into transnational networks based on shared experiences, creating a social foundation for lasting international cooperation.



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Furthermore, the strategic importance of international education is also evident from an economic perspective. According to the National Association of International Educators (NAFSA), international students contributed nearly \$43 billion to the U.S. economy and supported more than 355,000 jobs in the 2024–2025 school year. These figures demonstrate the direct financial value of cross-border education, but the deeper significance lies in the global networks formed through shared learning. Many former international students later assume leadership positions in government, businesses, and social organizations, bringing with them the intercultural understanding honed through personal experience. The Council on Foreign Relations also points out that leaders with international experience tend to handle complex geopolitical issues more effectively, as their decisions are based on firsthand understanding rather than preconceived notions. While international education cannot completely eliminate competition between nations, it helps maintain channels of dialogue and reduces the risk of escalating conflict due to misunderstandings.

Admittedly, international education is not without challenges. Access remains unequal, and concerns surrounding affordability, mobility restrictions, and potential “brain drain” continue to shape policy debates. As universities increasingly compete within global education markets, higher education risks being viewed purely through economic lenses. Yet even within these limitations, the human connections created through international learning retain enduring diplomatic value. Communities of students and alumni evolve into bridges linking economies, research institutions, and policymaking environments across borders. These networks operate quietly, without formal authority, yet they contribute to global stability in ways that traditional diplomacy alone cannot achieve.

With today's young generation navigating between cultures, studying abroad may begin as a personal journey. However, each friendship formed, each collaborative project completed, and each moment of cultural understanding contributes to a broader architecture of peace. Global stability is not built solely through treaties or institutions; it is also shaped by individuals willing to step beyond familiarity and engage with difference. In this sense, international students are not only learners but participants in an ongoing diplomatic process.

***The classrooms of today may therefore serve as the training grounds for tomorrow's diplomacy - not defined by titles or negotiations, but by shared experience and mutual understanding.***



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## THE TRADWIFE PHENOMENON: A TREND DISGUISED AS A RESURFACED WARNING

Minh Anh (Sofia) Ta

**D**efining female culture is a multifaceted concept. Women are expected to achieve many feats and accolades which, in the past, would be labeled as heterodox, and would instigate discriminatory and legal action against them. Our generation's female population is empowered by the increasing recognition and more liberal attitudinal shifts of societal norms - a trend advocated by the majority of surveyed individuals. Nevertheless, the very societal expectations imprinted on women have led many to deviate from the modern normalcy and pursue a more traditional lifestyle - called, in slang, the Tradwife life.

***A "Tradwife" is the abbreviated form of the phrase "traditional wife" referring to those who consider themselves housewives and embrace and promote this lifestyle on the Internet.***

A striking similarity can be drawn between the Tradwife and the conventional housewife, which has roots in the patriarchy - thus, it is fundamental that its past be understood. While being a housewife is now a lifestyle which women have the ability to pursue based on their own needs and preferences, it was previously a lifestyle that was indoctrinated into young, impressionable women, molding beliefs on what a wholesome and rightful way of living should be. Women are expected to continuously uphold a ceremonious attitude and a prim and proper lifestyle which can be considered restrictive, even without countless household and family duties.

The reasons behind this shift in mindset, and why it has been gaining traction so rapidly, are not shocking. First and foremost, a large number of societies still hold the principle which dictates that women must prioritize their family's needs and remain submissive to their spouse - to do otherwise would be considered unorthodox. Beyond this, in a career and economically driven society which places an insurmountable level of importance on independence and success, women are pushed towards predictability over autonomy. Yet, what was once a simple coping mechanism for the demanding nature of modern society, has now converted into a complete, social-media-promoted lifestyle where women choose to be family-oriented, to submit to their husbands, and glamorize patriarchal gender roles.



## THE TRADWIFE PHENOMENON: A TREND DISGUISED AS A RESURFACED WARNING

Minh Anh (Sofia) Ta

While it is highly encouraged that women base their life's decisions without ceding control to society's opinions, the Tradwife phenomenon reveals a different trend. According to Shiyu Yuan, Research Assistant at King's Global Institute for Women's Leadership: "Many younger women engaging with Tradwife content may have little historical awareness of the realities faced by women in eras when financial dependence left them vulnerable - without legal or economic power and often trapped in relationships marked by inequality or even domestic abuse. [...] The growing popularity of Tradwife content should not be dismissed or trivialised as something pertained to young women and their light frivolous interest." The Tradwife life reflects women's plea for escape from a society where they are inundated with burdens, responsibilities and the expectation to be mentally-firm through any hardships. Professor Heejung Chung, Director of the Global Institute for Women's Leadership adds: "If not properly responded to, we risk pushing an entire generation of women toward authoritarian visions of family that promise escape from impossible choices, whilst in reality, restricts women's hard-earned autonomy."

In brief, while some regard the Tradwife lifestyle as an idyllic way to escape the overwhelming pressures of society, others consider it an attempt to restrict women's rights and limit their potential. The Tradwife lifestyle is subjective and continues to remain a contentious topic. Where predictability commensurates with peace of mind, the Tradwife lifestyle is a shining reflection of how economic burdens and instability prompt individuals to rewind to past norms.

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## BENEFITS OF EDUTAINMENT

Elza Elif Mehdiyev

**E**dutainment, also known as Educational Entertainment, refers to a method of education which blends learning with entertainment. Examples of edutainment can be observed throughout history: Comenius' motto of "school by play" in the 17th century, Benjamin Franklin's yearly publication of "Poor Richard's Almanack" in the 18th Century, Walt Disney's productions in the 20th century. With the technological developments of the past decades, opportunities for edutainment have expanded. Currently, content creation, virtual reality experiences, and online learning games are being used to foster education through entertainment.

***Edutainment is beneficial for learners because it is associated with higher motivation, enhances information retention, and offers flexible learning methods.***

### Edutainment and Motivation

Blending education with entertainment is associated with higher motivation. Anh Thi Van Pham, Nam Van Kieu, and Thao Thi Thu Vu's 2022 survey of students enrolled in online courses showed that the majority of students felt more motivated and driven by gamification. Their study found that leaderboards were the most effective way to motivate students. 70.3% of participants reported feeling motivated or very motivated by leaderboards, and some participants specifically noted that seeing their names on the game's leaderboard gave them more energy and determination to learn.

Similarly, according to Charos Adilova's 2025 survey, students who were exposed to edutainment technologies showed increased motivation; their average motivation score was 4.3 out of 5, whereas those from traditional learning environments reported an average score of 3.2. The impact of edutainment on motivation was supported by the regression analysis, which revealed that edutainment technologies accounted for 62% of the variance in motivation scores.

These surveys indicate a consistent positive correlation between educational learning and motivation.

### Edutainment and Retention

Edutainment enhances information retention. Maureen Leming from the Hun School of Princeton writes that when learning is enjoyable, dopamine is released in the brain, which increases attention and activates memory. She states that students who are having fun are more likely to remain engaged and focused on the material. This helps them absorb more information and retain it effectively. Since edutainment is centred around fostering education through entertainment, it helps students learn and recall the material.

Research supports the positive correlation between edutainment and information retention. For example, a 2012 study by Erin M. Steffes and Philippe Duverger found that hedonic (humorous) videos that are congruent to the studied material have the potential to increase retention by an average of 6%, which for many students might correspond to half a grade increase.



## BENEFITS OF EDUTAINMENT

Elza Elif Mehdiyev

### Flexibility in Edutainment

Edutainment can appear in various ways, enabling flexibility and adaptability in the learning process. To name a few, edutainment can appear in forms of TV Shows such as “Sesame Street,” YouTube Channels such as “Bill Nye the Science Guy,” board games or video games such as “Scribble” or “Minecraft Education”, or learning games like “Kahoot.”

The plethora of options available gives educators or independent learners endless options to craft a learning experience that best suits their needs in accordance with age, interest, grade level, access to technology, or different learning types. This makes edutainment a flexible and adaptable method of learning.

### Conclusion

Edutainment has been used as a method of education for centuries, and recent technological developments have created further opportunities for its implementation. Upon first glance, it might appear unusual compared to traditional methods. However, edutainment has various benefits: it is associated with higher motivation, it enhances learning, and can be adapted in various ways to meet the unique needs of learners.

***All things considered, edutainment has countless possibilities to improve learning in meaningful ways.***

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## HOW THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION INFLUENCES SOCIAL MOBILITY IN MULTILINGUAL NATIONS

MD ALID BHUIYAN

**W**here people speak many languages, schools picking one for students to speak affects them significantly. Across places like Asia, Africa, and even corners of Europe, kids bump into a split - instead of taking lessons in what they grew up speaking, they are asked to speak outside their tongues, such as English or French.

*Even though leaders say using those major languages helps money matters later, studies point another way: how rules treat speech in class might narrow gaps, or widen them.*

Advancement in life is closely tied to how much schooling a person has completed. However, starting class in an unfamiliar tongue puts many kids behind early on. Backed by UNESCO findings, lessons in a child's first language lift reading skills, understanding, and grades over time. Grasping what teachers say helps learners move forward without stumbling later. Then, stronger school outcomes open clearer paths to jobs down the road. Still, language matters when it comes to money-making worldwide. Take English as an example - it links people across borders in trade, research, and college halls. Studies by the World Bank show that speaking dominant languages can mean larger paychecks and more jobs for people living in poorer nations. Because of this, wealthier households tend to send kids to pricier schools where lessons happen in English, helping them later get into top universities or land sought-after roles.

A gap forms in the system. Kids whose families have more money often learn in widely spoken languages, with extra help available for them even outside the classroom. On the flip side, those from villages or poorer homes might go to schools lacking support, where lessons could be taught in a tongue they do not speak daily, or that may not be useful to them in the future, and nobody is there to guide them. According to the OECD, falling behind in studies is closely linked to speaking a different language at home than at school, and this gap worsens if cash is tight. What happens outside classrooms shapes what unfolds within.

One big challenge schools face sits at the crossroads of fairness and performance. Instead of choosing only local speech or global tongues, some systems mix both. A path forward shows up in dual-language classrooms. Findings from UNESCO show kids learn new languages faster when they start by reading and writing well in their home language.

*With roots in heritage expression, learners also reach into worldwide opportunities. Balance comes not from picking sides, but letting multiple ways of speaking grow together.*



## HOW THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION INFLUENCES SOCIAL MOBILITY IN MULTILINGUAL NATIONS

MD ALID BHUIYAN

Singapore and Rwanda tried teaching in more than one language, yet results differ across both places. How rules are shaped, plus how teachers learn, matters a great deal here. Strong bilingual classrooms depend on clear lesson plans, skilled instructors, and slow moves between languages instead of sudden switches. If done poorly, changing the classroom tongue might deepen gaps rather than close them.

What gets taught in classrooms does more than transfer knowledge - it nudges how people view themselves. Seeing one's own language used in lessons sends a quiet message: you belong here. On the flip side, brushing aside regional speech pushes some kids to the edges. That silence echoes old power splits - colonial rules or top-down control - that still hum beneath today's systems.

Language in schools can open doors. When leaders want fairer outcomes, they look at test scores today along with jobs tomorrow. Starting lessons in a child's first language, then adding wider ones step by step, builds a steady route up. This kind of setup - thoughtful, layered - helps balance the playing field over time.

***One word at a time, speech shapes who gets ahead. Depending on classroom choices, tongues either open doors or shut people out. When rules follow real data, schools in diverse countries start lifting lives instead of locking them down.***

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## ECHOES OF THE PAST: WHEN MEMORY OUTLIVES MERCY

Hà Ngô

**F**or most of human history, forgetting has functioned as a biological safeguard. Cognitive science suggests that memory is selective by design; the brain does not preserve every detail because adaptation requires abstraction and renewal. Forgetting allows individuals to revise their identities over time, distancing themselves from earlier errors and immature judgments. However, in an era defined by Big Data and Large Language Models (LLMs), this natural process of renewal faces an unprecedented challenge. The digital environment increasingly operates as a form of “Digital HSAM” (Highly Superior Autobiographical Memory) - a system that persistently records, aggregates, and analyzes personal data at scale. Unlike human memory, the internet does not forget.

This shift raises a fundamental ethical question: should individuals retain the right to meaningfully separate their present identity from historical digital records? The concept of a “right to be forgotten” gained legal recognition under Article 17 of the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation. Initially, this right primarily addressed search engine indexing. Yet generative AI complicates the issue. When personal data is incorporated into model training processes, it may influence statistical patterns within the system in ways that are difficult to isolate or remove.

Researchers in Machine Unlearning have demonstrated that selectively removing specific training data from neural networks without retraining entire systems presents significant technical challenges. This creates what might be described as a form of “digital anchoring”. Even if original content is deleted from public platforms, traces of its informational influence may persist in AI-generated outputs. The result is not a permanent record in a traditional database sense, but a probabilistic echo that may continue shaping associations.

The psychological implications are substantial. In *Delete: The Virtue of Forgetting in the Digital Age*, Viktor Mayer-Schönberger argues that societies that preserve every record risk discouraging experimentation and intellectual risk-taking. Empirical research in social psychology similarly suggests that perceived surveillance can alter behavior, reducing openness and increasing conformity.

If individuals believe their past mistakes will indefinitely define them in searchable and generative systems, they may become more cautious, less exploratory, and less willing to evolve publicly.

At the same time, unrestricted digital erasure presents its own risks. The 2014 case of *Google Spain v. AEPD* established that privacy rights must be balanced against freedom of information. Historical accountability remains essential, particularly when public officials or institutions are involved.

***A system that allows indiscriminate removal of digital records could enable the concealment of misconduct and undermine democratic transparency.***



## ECHOES OF THE PAST: WHEN MEMORY OUTLIVES MERCY

Hà Ngô

The challenge, therefore, is not whether society should remember or forget, but how it should design mechanisms that distinguish between private growth and public accountability. Potential approaches include stronger data minimization requirements, clearer limitations on AI training data derived from personal information, and regulatory frameworks that require demonstrable machine unlearning capabilities for sensitive data categories. These measures would not guarantee perfect erasure, but they would move digital infrastructure closer to reflecting the human capacity for contextual judgment.

Ultimately, technological systems shape the conditions under which identity develops. If identity is understood as dynamic rather than fixed, then digital architectures must allow for revision rather than permanent definition. A society that remembers everything may achieve informational completeness, but it risks sacrificing the moral and psychological space necessary for change.

***Progress requires not only the ability to store knowledge, but also the discernment to decide when persistence becomes harm.***

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## THE "MORE" TRAP: HOW OVERCONSUMPTION IS RESHAPING VIETNAM'S YOUTH

Gia Phong Nguyễn Vũ

**T**he scene repeats itself daily across Vietnam's cities: A student grabs breakfast wrapped in plastic at the school gate. A young professional orders milk tea - which uses a cup, lid, straw, plastic bag - three times a day. A family stares at a refrigerator overflowing with uneven Tet leftovers, wondering how much it will end up in the trash.

We are the "more" generation. More food, more clothes, more items. But what happens when "more" becomes too much? Vietnam faces a hidden crisis of overconsumption, food waste, plastic pollution, and unsustainable spending -- and young people are at the center of it all.

### The 8 Million Tons Problem

Vietnam ranks second in the Asia-Pacific region for food waste, discarding over 8 million tons annually - worth about \$3.9 billion USD and nearly 2% of GDP. Rice and noodles make up 68% of waste, followed by meat and fish (53%) and vegetables (44%).

Why do we waste so much? For many families, waste comes from the practice of cooking "just in case." As Ms. Nguyen Thanh Ha in Hanoi shared: "My family often cooks a lot because we're afraid of not having enough. There are days when we can't finish eating, and it's a pity to throw it away."

Buffet culture makes it worse. Diners pile plates high, then leave mountains untouched. The environmental cost is staggering: decomposing food produces methane, a greenhouse gas 28 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Globally, food waste generates 8% of total greenhouse gas emissions.

### Drowning In Plastic

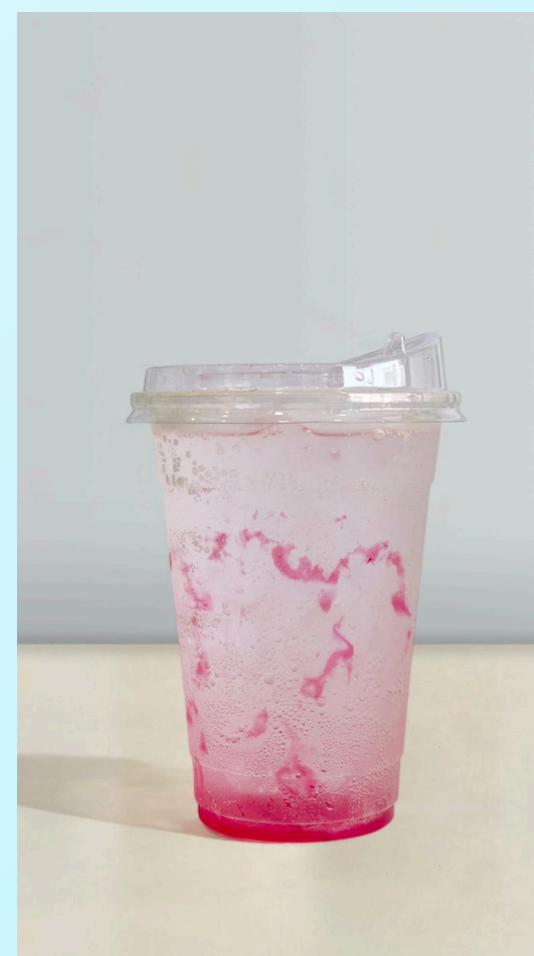
Vietnam generates approximately 1.8 million tons of plastic waste annually, yet only 27% is recycled. The rest is buried, burned, or leaks into waterways.

Ha Thi Phuong Linh, 20, a Hanoi university student, relies on takeaway food due to her busy schedule. "I can bring home four or five plastic bags a day without even noticing", she says. "They are convenient - you use them and throw them away. But when I collect the rubbish at the weekend, I'm shocked at how much plastic I've accumulated".

Milk tea culture also amplifies the problem. Le Ngoc Nhi, 22, orders multiple drinks via delivery apps. Each arrives with a plastic cup, lid, straw, carry bag - plus extra packaging from drivers.

The health threats are real. In Ho Chi Minh City's Phuoc Hiep landfill area, microplastic deposition reaches 1,367 particles per square meter per day - 50 times higher than that in Paris. These particles enter the food chain and are linked to respiratory and cardiovascular disease.

Environmental expert Vu Thanh Ca explains: "The damage costs by plastic waste isn't included in production costs. That's why plastic appears cheap, and consumers never see its real price."



## THE "MORE" TRAP: HOW OVERCONSUMPTION IS RESHAPING VIETNAM'S YOUTH

Gia Phong Nguyễn Vũ

### The "Virtual Life" Spending Trap

Social media has transformed shopping from necessity into performance. Young people spend more than they can reasonably afford to protect a curated identity built on luxury brands, expensive meals, and constant upgrades.

Dang Phuong Anh, 30, earns about 10 million VND monthly but routinely increases expenses paid on her credit cards. "Clothes, cosmetics, accessories... are constantly ordered online. Many items are only used once and then discarded."

Nguyen Tuan Anh, a university student in Hanoi, admits: "I always like the feeling of standing out thanks to shoes, glasses, or backpacks from big international brands."

Experts estimate 90% of young Vietnamese people lack saving habits. "Buy now, pay later" schemes target youth, making overspending dangerously easy.

Sociologist Dr. Le Ngoc Mai warns: "When young people only focus on themselves without thinking about their family or community, they lose their responsibility to society."

### When Excess Peaks: Tet

Nowhere is overconsumption more visible than during Tet. The folk saying "Hungry on the anniversary of the father's death, full for three days of Tet" captures the cultural emphasis on abundance during Tet.

Yet Tet has become an occasion for "showing off". Social media floods with lavish decorations and new ao dai (traditional wear). Ngoc Anh in Hanoi confesses: "I spent nearly 3 million VND to buy 2 ao dai sets before Tet just because I saw everyone had new ao dai...After Tet, who will wear ao dai anymore? I know it's a waste but I still buy it."

### The "Knowing Enough" Movement

Despite these challenges, mindful consumption is growing. Le Van Lap, 28, offers wisdom: "The more mature I become, the more I realize that each person only needs to live up to their own values, without comparing themselves to anyone."

***Starting January 2026, certain non-biodegradable plastic bags will be banned, and by 2030, single-use plastics will be phased out entirely.***



## THE "MORE" TRAP: HOW OVERCONSUMPTION IS RESHAPING VIETNAM'S YOUTH

Gia Phong Nguyễn Vũ

### What You Can Do

For food: Plan meals, buy only what you need, repurpose leftovers, take only what you can eat at buffets.

For plastic: Carry a reusable water bottle, refuse free plastic bags, say no to straws.

For spending: Distinguish needs from wants. Wait 24 hours before non-essential purchases. Ask: "Am I buying this for me, or for my 'virtual life'?"

For Tet: Celebrate connection, not consumption. As one observer beautifully put it: "Tet is full when we know enough".

### Conclusion

Overconsumption isn't just about trash and money - it's about mindfulness. Every plastic bag refused, every meal not wasted, every purchase questioned is a vote for a different future. In a world constantly telling us to want more, the most revolutionary act might be learning to say: "This is enough".

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## THE EVERGRANDE FINANCIAL CRISIS

Minh Giang Thi Tran

**H**umans are always attracted to outward appearance. When the attraction is applied to economics, coupled with the expectation that prices will rise indefinitely, it is not only beautiful but also leads to the creation of an economic bubble that could burst at any moment. In China, where the real estate sector accounts for nearly 29% of GDP and is widely believed to be the safest path to wealth, the system became “too big to fail”. Therefore, when The Evergrande Group began to collapse, the tremors exposed what a massive bubble it had become.

China Evergrande Group was established in 1996 in Guangzhou (Guangdong Province, China). It was once one of the three largest real estate companies in China with enormous capital. Operating capital mainly came from bank loans, financial credit, corporate bonds and homebuyers’ down payments. When companies are compelled to increase revenue to meet their financial obligations, raising real estate prices to offset costs may trigger a deflationary spiral. In order to prevent the real estate bubble, the Chinese government implemented the “Three Red Lines” policy in August 2020. The policy set limits on debt-to-equity, debt-to-asset and short-term debt ratios that Chinese property developers were required to meet before gaining access to new financing. Hence, Evergrande, which once ranked number one in total debt, quickly lost its ability to raise new capital. The Evergrande Group had to slash apartment prices to accelerate sales and generate cash, while suspending certain projects in order to conserve cash. Nearly 800 of The Evergrande Group’s projects were suspended, even after the company implemented 25-30% price reductions to stimulate demand. This happened because China was experiencing a wave of COVID-19, which caused an economic downturn and reduced people’s incentive to purchase homes. In addition, according to the financial statements, the value of unfinished properties was only estimated and not entirely reliable.

***Thus, at the end of 2021, the Evergrande Group defaulted on its international debt due to its inability to meet bond repayment obligations, with total liabilities estimated at over \$300 billion.***

The collapse of The Evergrande Group triggered a chain reaction of negative impacts on enterprises, the labor market, and investors. Firstly, when Evergrande was forced to liquidate assets to ease its liquidity pressure, the sudden surge in property supply pushed housing prices downward. In this environment, other property developers also faced mounting pressure to cut prices in order to stay competitive and clear inventory, ultimately triggering a broader downward spiral across the real estate market. Secondly, millions of Chinese lost money on unfinished properties and Hong Kong investors suffered heavy losses (Evergrande stocks lost 99% of their value). The Chinese economy slowed down and house prices continued to fall despite government support measures such as interest rate cuts and eased mortgage regulations.



## THE EVERGRANDE FINANCIAL CRISIS

Minh Giang Thi Tran

However, unlike they did in previous financial crises, the Chinese government did not step in with a large-scale bailout. Rather than giving strong and unconditional support, the authorities seemed to let the restructuring process continue in a more conservative way. This may show that policymakers saw the downturn not only as a crisis that needed immediate rescue, but also as a necessary adjustment to reduce risks in the property sector. At the same time, China's economic priorities had been gradually shifting.

***Rather than relying heavily on real estate, an industry increasingly associated with leverage and default risk, the government has been promoting sectors such as artificial intelligence, high-tech manufacturing and electric vehicles.***

Nearly five years after the Evergrande Group crisis happened, we can look back on it not just as a financial shock, but as a major lesson in growth models and risk management. For businesses, the clearest lesson is that rapid growth based on high debt cannot last forever. Scale does not equate to safety. When cash flow is disrupted, an unsustainable financial structure will quickly reveal its weaknesses. Therefore, liquidity management, leverage control, and maintaining market confidence must take precedence over overly ambitious expansion. For individuals and investors, this event shows that risk always exists, even in businesses that seem "too big to fail." Diversifying assets, carefully assessing the safety of investments, and not relying on the assumption that the government will always intervene to bail them out are crucial lessons.

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## KINTSUGI: THE JAPANESE ART OF RESILIENCE

Hoang Bao Tran Luong

**J**apan is not only being recognized as an economic powerhouse but also for the immense resilience of its citizens. Living in a country that is frequently affected by natural disasters, the Japanese have become used to living with fluctuations, a lifestyle that forms a strong ability to pull through difficulties in every person who lives it. Instead of being defeated, many Japanese follow an inspiring life philosophy - Kintsugi.

In the fifteenth century, there was a military ruler who decided to have his broken tea repaired in China. However, he was not satisfied with the final outcome, so he had it aesthetically repaired another time by a Japanese craftsman. The result was so distinctively beautiful that it laid the foundation for a well-known life philosophy, Kintsugi, a form of art that has existed for more than 5 centuries. By using a mixture of resin with gold, silver, or platinum powder to weld the cracks together, they create an aesthetic work of art. The cracks are recognised as part of the bowls instead of being hidden away.

Kintsugi provides a thorough insight into the personal resilience process. It is not simply bringing us back to our normal status, but creating a person who is stronger and more brilliant. Moreover, completely repairing a broken cup needs time; this reflects that emotional healing and personal recovery need lots of time and effort. A common misconception about effective resilience is that one needs to instantly return to a normal status, immediately posting happy images on social media to pretend to be fine, or going back to a high working intensity, all while ignoring the real healing process necessary.

***However, the process of achieving true resilience requires time to reflect and learn from mistakes. Therefore, adherence to the recovery pace is essential in rebuilding oneself stably.***

In Japanese Zen Buddhism, Kintsugi reveals important philosophy in social life. The first associated belief is to respect the old and simple things. It discourages users from saving up to purchase mainstream products and discarding the old ones. Instead, they should buy what is truly essential and preserve it as long as they can. Another recommendation is to find beauty beyond imperfections. Imperfections reflect historical value and efforts of making the objects and the nurturing behind every person. In practical terms, it encourages people to accept the imperfections inside themselves and learn from every mistake.

***By viewing every obstacle as a chance to learn, each person is improving themselves - they are finding the beauty inside imperfections.***



## KINTSUGI: THE JAPANESE ART OF RESILIENCE

Hoang Bao Tran Luong

In 2025, Pinotti and colleagues published a research study called “Kintsugi, Mending with Gold - A Psychotherapeutic Technique” which suggested that the principles of Kintsugi can be effectively applied in modern psychological therapy. They required every participant to face up to personal trauma and actively deal with it instead of ignoring or repressing it. The results show an obvious increase in happiness levels, which indicates that when people learn to accept the imperfections inside themselves, they feel more cheerful and peaceful. Although the duration was just between four and six sessions, it highlights that effective healing is more about reforming emotion than erasing it.

Under these social values and scientific research, it is obvious that Kintsugi can be highly relevant to our lives. It indicates that healing and resilience take time to develop gradually, and can be best achieved through the process of accepting and reflecting on mistakes.

***By respecting old and simple things, then finding beauty in flaws and valuing the time needed for recovery, Kintsugi teaches people to face obstacles in a calm and effective way.***

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## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF POST-HOLIDAY EMPTINESS: WHY THE DAYS AFTER TẾT FEEL HEAVIER

My Hanh Truong

**The Lunar New Year arrives in a burst of color and sound:**

fireworks splitting the night sky, red envelopes exchanged with laughter, family meals stretching long into the evening. People start their holiday preparations through house cleaning, gift selection, and schedule planning. The celebrations bring a festive mood, but this atmosphere will change three days after the last event. The house grows quiet, social media activity slows, and students return to school while adults resume work. People experience an emotional weight that they did not expect to encounter. The feeling of emptiness that follows Tết demonstrates one of the most common psychological responses to the cycle of anticipation and social overstimulation and sudden changes to regular life.

**The psychological phenomenon known as “build-up effect” creates an emptiness that persists after Tết celebrations.**

Research by Van Boven and Ashworth (2007) demonstrates that people experience greater happiness when they anticipate upcoming occasions than when they actually attend those occasions. Anticipation activates reward-related processes in the brain, which include dopamine release, that heightens both motivation and positive emotional states. Tết celebrations create an extended period that lasts for several weeks because people engage in festive activities such as shopping for new clothes, home decoration, reunion planning, and year-end countdowns. The mind focuses on things that people consider to be exceptional and important. The event creates anticipation that people feel until the event finishes. Preparation activities create excitement, which drives dopamine levels to rise, but all of that excitement begins to fade away when people reach their highest emotional state. People experience excessive weight from post-holiday days because they experience a contrast between their anticipated experience and their typical day.

**Social overstimulation serves as a second contributing factor to this issue.**

Tết functions as more than a personal holiday because it creates social density through family gatherings, relative visits, community meals, and nonstop social contact. The activities that people participate in bring them happiness, but they also create mental challenges that require psychological effort to deal with. The American Psychological Association has found that holiday celebrations bring increased stress to people, which becomes apparent during the holiday period, according to their research. The festive period creates a situation where social responsibilities, financial obligations, and performance expectations, which include academic success and career advancement requirements, begin to build up for people. Tết functions as a hidden assessment for most people, who are especially teenagers, because they face difficulties with self-discovery and social comparison. The social atmosphere demands that people maintain their emotional strength throughout the entire duration of the event. The body system moves from a state of high excitement to a period of low activity after the holiday period ends. People experience an emotional crash, which feels like exhaustion to others because it creates an empty emotional state.



## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF POST-HOLIDAY EMPTINESS: WHY THE DAYS AFTER TẾT FEEL HEAVIER

My Hanh Truong

***The emotional decline becomes more severe when people lose their structural support.***

Tết brings a holiday period when people stop their normal activities. The school system interrupts its academic timetable while postponing assignment deadlines, which causes a complete alteration of time. Psychological research on post-vacation blues, discussed in sources such as Psychology Today, indicates that breaks from routine introduce novelty, autonomy, and flexibility—elements associated with short-term increases in well-being. The structured environment of work tasks creates a situation where people must complete their assignments. The brain needs to return to its normal state after experiencing new things and working freely. The transition produces a feeling of unexciting daily existence, which occurs despite all events remaining completely normal. Students about to take exams or complete extended school periods will find it difficult to switch their focus from festive activities to their academic duties.

***The Tết celebration exists beyond its biological and structural roots because it possesses deep cultural and emotional significance.***

Tết functions as a holiday that people remember from their childhood, while it establishes their family ties through a process of renewal. Tết celebrations evolve through time as people progress through different stages of life. The magical quality associated with childhood—receiving red envelopes without responsibility, experiencing wonder without pressure—gradually gives way to adult awareness of logistics, finances, and social expectations. Wildschut et al. (2006) discovered through their nostalgia research that people who nostalgically reflect on their past have a better understanding of their current life while they face heightened awareness of time movement. People who assess current celebrations against their remembered past create a feeling of slight sadness that relates to their earlier life stages. The feeling of emptiness after Tết ends exists because people experience two things: the holiday ending and their understanding that time continues to progress.

The experience of post-holiday emptiness needs psychological understanding to be understood. The emotional dip after Tết shows neither ingratitude nor emotional deficiency. People experience this condition as a typical result that develops from their excitement cycles together with their social activities and their broken daily patterns, which receive additional strength from their cultural traditions and their feelings of nostalgia. People can handle situations better when they understand these processes. A person can establish smaller celebrations, which they call "micro-celebrations," while keeping important relationships throughout the year and slowly building back their normal daily activities instead of doing it all at once. The period after fireworks stop shows that people experience their mind's natural process of happiness restoration, according to psychological studies.

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## AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN COLLEGE ADMISSIONS: DOES IT PROMOTE SOCIAL EQUITY OR DOWNPLAY ACADEMIC INTEGRITY?

Teu-Khanh Phuong

“**11**th grade is perfect timing to start building your profile for future university applications.” This advice has been continuously reinforced by parents, school counselors, and peers throughout my first year in high school, attempting to ensure my preparedness for long-term personal growth. That’s when a crucial question emerges: “What potentially makes one’s admission form stand out from a vast number of students from a broad cross-section of society? Evidently, over the last two decades (1995-2020), college admissions has shifted substantially, from a more rigorous selection process to the introduction and application of affirmative action to foster diverse student populations, implying the necessity of creating an application that outshines others academically while also demonstrating personal uniqueness beyond excellence. Notably, with a dramatic increase in applications across multiple elite universities, the amount of time spent reviewing each enrollment form by college admission officers gradually lessened. KD College Prep (2020) reported, “Some schools, like Stanford University, openly state that very few applications get reviewed more than once,” opening up further discussions on academic integrity and fairness in admissions decision-making.

For the longest time, academic integrity has remained a cornerstone in college admission, especially with elite universities whose reputation is of utmost importance, ensuring educational quality and social equity to the most capable and deserving minds. Efficiently achieving admission fairness lies in stringent methods when evaluating students’ overall performance and personal capabilities, which includes one’s GPA, standardized test scores, personal essay, letters of recommendation and other extracurricular achievements. In this sense, prioritizing merit and talents ensures complete transparency, further contributing to an equitable society where academic honesty is accurately upheld. However, critics would argue that admission fairness also involves diversity and equal representation of marginalized groups, specifically for those who are disadvantaged, underrepresented, and from multiracial backgrounds. The central question regarding academic integrity in college admissions remains: Is it fair to include race-conscious policies in highly selective or prestigious universities so that minorities are better represented on university campuses? This question plays a vital role in addressing the controversy of affirmative action in education on whether such policies contribute to the “Upward Mobility Framework” or perpetuate racial discrimination in society.

Affirmative action has been a long-established policy for around 60 years in the United States, being carried out not just in educational settings but also in workplaces, mostly directed at individuals from different ethnic communities. One of the first ever recorded cases of affirmative action was President John F. Kennedy’s executive order 10925, stating that employment practices of federally funded projects must be bias-free under the Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity. Affirmative action continued gaining approval from numerous presidents in employment and admissions policies, with the sole aim of granting minorities equal opportunity.



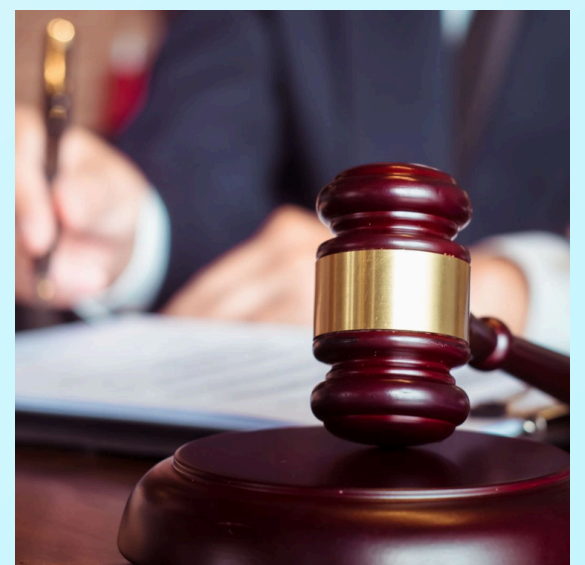
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Undeniably, affirmative action has allowed universities worldwide to include race as a supplementary consideration in the criteria for admission, potentially eliminating the exclusion of and bias against Black students and other diverse groups. This reflects the education system's strengthened focus on creating more diverse student bodies, significantly enhancing outcomes for ethnic groups. During the 1970s, universities began incorporating race-consciousness in their admissions policies. According to the Guardian (2023), "In 1965, Black students accounted for roughly 5% of all undergraduates. And between 1965 and 2001, the percentage of Black undergraduates doubled." Even with affirmative action policies introduced in college admissions, some schools still struggle to factor in students that represent social diversity, namely North Carolina, a state with 21% Black population, but where only 8% had an undergraduate education, signifying the need for immediate actions to improve students' education prospects. According to many, not only does this additional criterion promote racial equity (a long-marginalized concept in educational discourse), but it also motivates those from disadvantageous backgrounds to strive academically under a just and inclusive system.

However, the practice of factoring race has faced constant opposition by critics who favor race-neutral or "color-blind" policies. During a conservative era in 1998, the majority of California voters were opposed to affirmative action policies, so they were removed from governmental agencies and the university system. After this abandonment, eight other states had also turned against the idea of race-consciousness in admissions. Historically, the Supreme Court had supported the use of affirmative action in college applications for over 40 years, with justice leaders upholding the limited use of race for campus diversity. The major ruling of Grutter v. Bollinger (2003) explicitly exemplifies this advocacy: it stated that factoring race into admissions policies of educational institutions with the sole objective of promoting a diverse student population isn't a violation of the 14th Amendment's Equal Protection Clause, so long as a holistic evaluation is applied in the application process. However, a new directive in 2023 completely reversed this precedent, with the court's ruling against two elite universities' race-conscious policies (Harvard and UNC-Chapel Hill) for violation of the aforementioned clause. This ruling proves the Supreme Court's alignment with impartial and stringent candidate evaluation in modern education, where students receive equal opportunity irrespective of race and socio-economic background.

Notably, Chief Justice John Roberts, who is a prominent critic of affirmative action programs, specifically stated his approval of colorblind criteria in his statement: "Many universities have for too long concluded, wrongly, that the touchstone of an individual's identity is not challenges bested, skills built, or lessons learned but the color of their skin." This claim underscores the belief that merit is a defining factor in admissions decisions, reinforcing the principle believed by many that opportunity should be achieved through effort and talent rather than predetermined by ethnicity



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Prominently, there's a risk of reverse discrimination involved, as excessive focus on race in college admissions significantly erodes public trust, leading to favoritism, inconsistency in evaluation and bias. Justice Lewis Powell further claimed that fostering inclusion and embracing diversity as mere goals precisely depicted "compelling government interest", in which educational institutions appear to be filling in the educational gap instead of actually celebrating talents and merit.

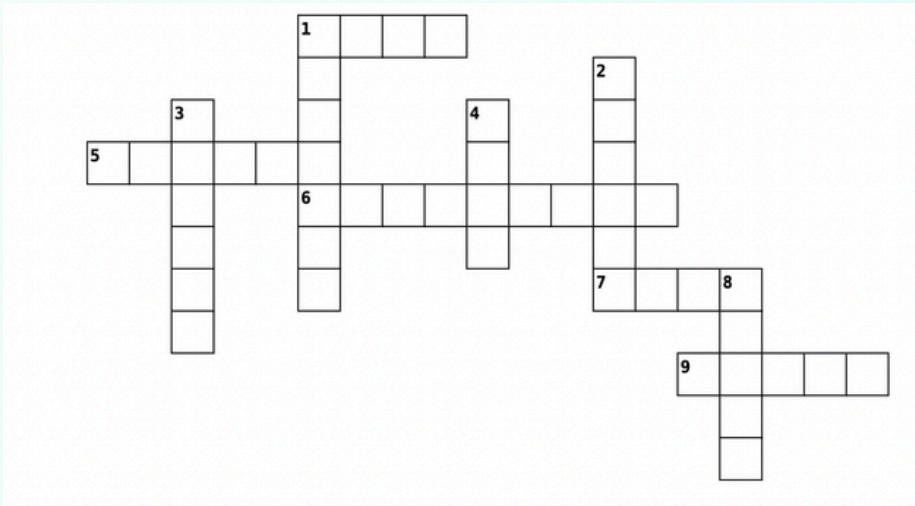
The abolishment of affirmative action policies in some states resulted in a drastic drop in applications from diverse backgrounds in top-tier universities, exemplifying just how impactful race considerations had been in promoting inclusivity. An option that would provide a better approach to racial equity, namely merit-based financial aid directed at qualified and capable students, but less fortunate backgrounds, could be carried out. In this way, academic integrity may still be upheld, together with careful considerations towards those from low-income households or ethnic backgrounds.

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## Crossword: Spring has Sprung!



### Across

- 1. Frequent spring weather that helps plants grow
- 5. Place where people plant flowers and vegetables
- 6. Insect often seen around spring flowers
- 7. Where many birds lay eggs in spring
- 9. Flowers opening in spring

### Down

- 1. Colorful arc that sometimes appears after spring rain
- 2. Fine powder that plants release in spring
- 3. Gentle wind common in mild spring weather
- 4. What plants grow from in spring
- 8. A brightly colored spring flower

## Word Search: Birds



### Word Bank:

- Robin
- Sparrow
- Bluejay
- Cardinal
- Hummingbird
- Eagle
- Owl
- Hawk
- Parrot
- Swallow

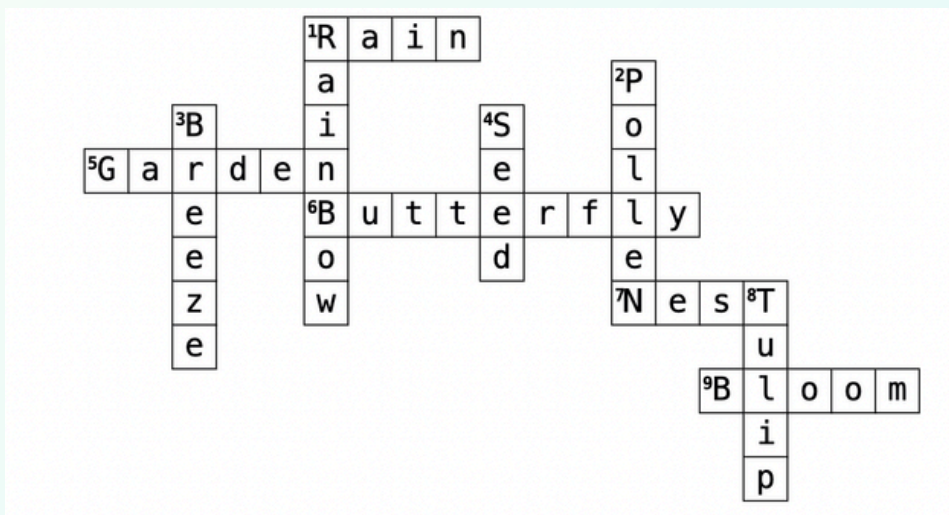
## Crypto-Quote: Women's History Month

"XPNFO CFMPOH JO BMM  
 QMBDFT XIFSF EFDJTJPOT BSF  
 CFJOH NBEF. JU TIPVMEO'U CF  
 UIBU XPNFO BSF UIF  
 FYDFQUJPO." - SVUI CBEFS  
 HJOTCVSH

### Instructions:

Figure out the quote from one of these articles by figuring out a simple code. In this code one letter will replace another, (it will be the same letter throughout the puzzle). Example: KLFRLF = SYNONYM. Solution is found through trial and error.

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## Crypto-Quote: Women's History Month

"WOMEN BELONG IN ALL PLACES WHERE DECISIONS ARE BEING MADE. IT SHOULDN'T BE THAT WOMEN ARE THE EXCEPTION." - RUTH BADER GINSBURG

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