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# Youth Truth



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## Common Knowledge

*Jeremy Hollings*

Don't supervise your kids when they're in the swimming pool. Studies this past summer have revealed that 90% of children's drownings occur when a parent is within sight. Kids, therefore, are safer when no parent is around.

That's what reporters *might have* concluded from this (true) statistic. Of course, this would be nonsense. The logical conclusion is that most children at risk for drowning always swim with parents nearby. Since supervised kids make up a large majority of swimmers, they will also be a large majority of drowning victims. The statistic also probably shows that it is not enough for parents merely to remain at poolside, but must be alert and ready to act quickly, since drowning can happen without any loud warnings or distress signals.

In *this* case, the more likely, rational interpretation is also the one that is expected and acceptable. Parental supervision is so politically correct these days that no one would've dared to advise against it, no matter *what* the evidence showed. But what if our prevailing view called for children to be self-reliant at very young ages (as was more widely believed in the past). Reporters might then have made the above recommendation ... and the public might have bought it, hook, line and sinker! Legislators probably would've started introducing bills to keep parents away from pools where their children swim.

When studies don't produce the expected results, or when the results can have more than one interpretation, researchers and "interest groups" are likely to look for ways to make the data conform to their pre-existing assumptions.

For example, in a study released in August 2004, researchers at the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University conducted 1000 interviews with 12- to 17-year-olds, asking questions about religion, school, dating, violence, drug and alcohol use, smoking, internet use, and relationships with parents. Among the findings:

- 63% reported spending 1 hour per day or less online
- 80% reported no involvement in physical fights
- 66% had never had a drink
- 79% had never smoked a cigarette
- 52% had never seen illegal drugs being used at their schools

These findings (and other similar ones) were especially striking since the majority of these wholesome kids were 15 or older. So what did the public hear about the study? A typical item at [http://abclocal.go.com/wls/news/111004\\_cwk\\_olderboys.html](http://abclocal.go.com/wls/news/111004_cwk_olderboys.html) carried the headline "Young Girls Date Older Boys." But 84% of the girls interviewed weren't asked about their boyfriends' ages because they weren't even dating. Of the 11% who did have older boyfriends, 60% of the boyfriends were no more than a year older than they were. The news all focused on the small minority of girls two or more years younger than their boyfriends—perhaps 21 out of the 1000 respondents. In this tiny subgroup, "bad" behavior was a bit more common:

- 58% (about 12 girls) drank alcohol
- 50% (about 11 girls) smoked marijuana
- 65% (about 13 or 14 girls) smoked cigarettes

There was no evidence that the "older" boyfriends *influenced* the girls' behavior, but the media readily concluded that they did. So instead of reporting how amazingly law-abiding and prudent American kids seemed to be, the media warned that "older" boyfriends cause girls to "abuse" drugs and alcohol.

Even when researchers try to make their results crystal clear, reporters often insert their own interpretations. An article at <http://www.indystar.com/articles/2/194633-8642-009.html> told of research at Indiana University on violent video games, the brain, and performance on certain tests. The researchers insisted that the relationship between test performance or brain activity and the amount of exposure to the video games should not be seen as "cause and effect." In other words, it could be

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# Redirect

Contrary to what you may have heard, participation by young voters on November 2, 2004 *did* increase—a lot—compared to November 2000; see <<http://www.denverpost.com/Stories/0,1413,36~417~2558673,00.html>> for some numbers.

Adults certainly don't seem to be voting—or behaving—with their children's interests at heart, opines a columnist at <<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/view.html?pg=5>>.

Since kidnapped children usually know their abductors, the concept of “stranger danger” should be abandoned, declares Dr. Daniel Broughton of the Mayo Clinic. The article at <<http://www.forensicnursemag.com/hotnews/4ah484851.html>> recommends instilling confidence in children, rather than fear.

Children's exposure to violent ideas or imagery “is not a new phenomenon,” says the lead author of a somewhat satirical study examining the content of nursery rhymes and fairy tales. The study, published in the *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, is described at <<http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/arizonaliving/articles/1123nurseryrhymes1123.html>>.

If Halloween events or displays seem to celebrate witchcraft, some parents condemn them as “satanic.” But just try to ban Halloween as “offensive to Wiccans,” and the same parents defend the holiday as “good clean fun.” One mom describes the phenomenon at <<http://www.zmag.org/043.htm>>.

Realistic parents trying to keep their kids safe are hampered by unrealistic drinking age laws, explains <[http://www.azcentral.com/families/articles/0915fam\\_teendrinking.html](http://www.azcentral.com/families/articles/0915fam_teendrinking.html)>.

Internet filters required by the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) don't protect kids, but may prevent them from finding what they need to know, says <<http://www2.townonline.com/watertown/opinion/view.bg?articleid=143692>>.

A proposed Illinois law that would require periodic mental health exams for all children and pregnant women in the state has Phyllis Schlafly mighty upset; her concerns are at <<http://www.eagleforum.org/column/2004/nov04/04-11-24.html>>.

Former teacher John Gatto recently spoke at the tenth annual conference of the Alliance for the Separation of School and State, described at <<http://www.enterstageright.com/archive/articles/1204/1204sepcon.htm>>. His latest book, *The Underground History of American Education*, is now online (free!) at <<http://www.johntaylorgatto.com/underground/index.htm>>.

Back in his childhood, recalls columnist Bill Page, an adult who tried to horn in on kids' games would've just seemed “weird.” Now all the adults have turned into weirdos. His commentary at <<http://www.kcchronicle.com/MainSection/page/286264756355952.php>> urges grownups to leave those kids alone.

Unlike the United States, England did sign onto the United Nation's *Convention on the Rights of the Child* 13 years ago, so it really *should* have banned corporal punishment by now. An article at <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/3866747.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3866747.stm)> examines England's failure to live up to the treaty, and corporal punishment laws in other nations.

Think you'll be treated like an adult once you move away to college? Not anymore, says an article describing the rise and fall of student freedom on college campuses nationwide, at <<http://www.reason.com/0410/fe.dw.welcome.shtml>>.

A 19-year-old student praises Canada's lower drinking age at <[http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial\\_opinion/oped/articles/2004/12/11/get\\_real\\_on\\_teen\\_drinking\\_part\\_2](http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2004/12/11/get_real_on_teen_drinking_part_2)>.

If imbibers and abstainers stopped condemning one another, proposes a Harvard student at <<http://www.thecrimson.com/article.aspx?ref=504863>>, maybe they'd find they could get along and even enjoy partying together.

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# News Links

## **Education Loses, Abstinence Wins**

The long overdue budget bill pushed through Congress at the end of November, reportedly full of pork-barrel projects for states, gives little to education, say two overviews at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/us/latest/story/0,1282,-4627310,00.html> and <http://www.registerguard.com/news/2004/11/20/a1.congbudget.1120.html>. But according to <http://www.news-leader.com/today/1126-Abstinence-235387.html>, the budget gives *abstinence* education programs a “vote of confidence.”

## **Budget Mandates “Constitution Day” for Schools**

Senator Robert C. Byrd slipped into the budget a requirement that any educational institution which receives federal funds—elementary to college level—must offer a program on the U.S. Constitution every year on September 17, the anniversary of its signing. A report (and criticism) is at <http://noleftturns.ashbrook.org/default.asp?archiveID=5590>.

## **Mental Screening Restriction Dropped from Budget**

In September, Representative Ron Paul of Texas tried and failed to kill funding for President Bush’s “New Freedom Initiative,” supporting widespread mental health screening for children. In November, Paul added an amendment to the omnibus spending bill in Congress preventing federally-funded screening from being done without parental consent. An article at [http://worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=41606](http://worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=41606) speculates that pressure from “drug companies and the psychiatric establishment” killed the amendment in the Senate.

## **Illinois Argues Over “New Freedom Initiative”**

Last year, the Illinois legislature voted overwhelmingly to create an agency to implement the recommendations of President Bush’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. But when the agency released its plan on July 16, many were shocked by its sweeping invasions of privacy. The controversy is discussed at <http://www.psychiatrytimes.com/p041001a.html>.

## **Abortion Notification May Now Pass in Florida ...**

Florida voters purged youth privacy protections from their state constitution, clearing the way for laws requiring parents to be notified before their minor daughters get an abortion. A 1999 “parental notification” law, says <http://www.hernandotoday.com/MGBIVL4OF1E.html>, was found unconstitutional by the state’s Supreme Court; new laws won’t have *that* problem.

## **... But Is Struck Down in New Hampshire**

Health, not privacy, concerns led a Federal Appeals Court to strike down New Hampshire’s law requiring parental notification before a minor can get an abortion. An ACLU press release on the decision is at <http://www.aclu.org/ReproductiveRights/ReproductiveRights.cfm?ID=17074&c=143>.

## **Abstinence Programs Telling Lies?**

Representative Henry A. Waxman looked at teaching materials commonly used in federally-funded abstinence education programs and found “false, misleading, or distorted information.” The programs, says <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/6633542/> may be teaching millions of children that half of all gay male youth have AIDS, or that intimate touching causes pregnancy.

## **Bush Education Nominee “Low-Profile” Aide**

Who is Margaret Spellings? Articles at <http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/11/16/education.secretary/> and <http://www.chron.com/cs/CDA/ssistory.mpl/metropolitan/2902848> look at the woman chosen to replace outgoing Secretary of Education Rod Paige. Among other tidbits, we learn that she has no education degree (her major at University of Houston was political science) and the National Education Association doesn’t seem to like her very much.

## **Dropout Picked, Rejected for Top Post**

Before he was forced to withdraw his name from consideration over “illegal nanny” tax problems and other concerns, it looked as if a high school dropout might become this country’s next head of the Department of Homeland Security. An article at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6643494/> describes Bernard Kerik, President Bush’s first pick to fill the job.

## **Personal Information Left Out In the Open**

On September 29, Florida’s Department of Children and Families shut down its web site after discovering that messages to and from social workers (often including information such as addresses and social security numbers of children, and passwords needed to access more information) could be freely viewed by anyone online, according to <http://www.kansas.com/mld/kansas/news/local/9800196.htm>. And in November a New York *Daily News* reporter found passersby rummaging through 11 boxes of old student records left in an alley in the Bronx; these too, says <http://www.nydailynews.com/front/story/252879p-216526c.html>, contained personal information such as social security numbers. Oops.

## **Strapped States Limit or Redefine Medicaid**

Various states are looking for ways to cut Medicaid costs by charging premiums, requiring co-payments, imposing caps on benefits or participation, or redefining “medical necessity.” For more than 17 million children who rely on Medicaid for health coverage, this is a worrisome trend, says an article at <http://www.voicesforamericaschildren.org/Template.cfm?Section=Home&CONTENTID=4020&TEMPLATE=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm>.

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# News Links

## **Memphis Schools End Violent Punishments**

It all started on September 6, 2003, when 13-year-old Wesley Martinez tossed a packet of ketchup on the cafeteria floor. He'd been assigned to sweep up the floor anyway that day, but he never got the chance; he was hauled away and paddled so severely that he had to be treated for torn muscles, says [http://www.tennessean.com/education/archives/04/09/59184183.shtml?Element\\_ID=59184183](http://www.tennessean.com/education/archives/04/09/59184183.shtml?Element_ID=59184183)>. Faced with a lawsuit, the district rethought its policy. Last summer, says <http://www.newsday.com/news/nationworld/nation/ny-uspad284058324nov28,0,2773337.story?coll=ny-nationalnews-headlines>>, a high school basketball coach who paddled team members for playing badly was relieved of coaching duties and transferred to a different school. On November 22, reports <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/6575799/>>, the Memphis, Tennessee school board at last voted to ban all corporal punishment.

## **Paddling Gets Coach Fired**

Corporal punishment is allowed in Gary, Indiana schools, but not the way “Coach T” practiced it. After three members of his basketball team had to be hospitalized, the coach, who punished every shot missed during practice with a “swat,” was fired, reports <http://www.nospank.net/n-n59r.htm>>.

## **Anti-Spanking Resolution Narrowly Fails**

At a November 24 town meeting, Brookline, Massachusetts residents defeated a resolution discouraging parents from using corporal punishment on their children. The vote, says <http://www2.townonline.com/brookline/localRegional/view.bg?articleid=133827>>, was 73-75.

## **Holland Plan to Stop Corporal Punishment**

Dutch Minister of Justice Piet Hein Donner has proposed a change to his country's civil code to abolish “smacking” of children. Under Donner's plan, explains [http://www.expatica.com/source/site\\_article.asp?subchannel\\_id=1&story\\_id=14402&name=Minister+wants+ban+on+smacking](http://www.expatica.com/source/site_article.asp?subchannel_id=1&story_id=14402&name=Minister+wants+ban+on+smacking)>, parents who continued to mistreat their children could lose custody and be banned from the family home, but would not be jailed.

## **Third-Grader Handcuffed, Jailed**

Basketball coaches in Tennessee and Indiana may lose their coaching positions for hitting players repeatedly with paddles, but in Espanola, New Mexico, eight-year-old Jerry Trujillo was arrested, handcuffed, taken from his school, and jailed, all for hitting another boy with—get this—a *basketball*. The article at <http://www.thenewmexicochannel.com/news/3990490/detail.html>> says that someone has filed a lawsuit against the school and the police on Jerry's behalf.

## **Paddles Passé, Time for Tasers**

Birmingham, Alabama's School Superintendent Wayman Shiver recently authorized taser-carrying police in his schools. His decision is questioned in an editorial at <http://www.al.com/news/birminghamnews/jarchibald.ssf?/base/news/109757270033170.xml>>. The Miami Police Department has been criticized for tasing two children in less than a month: an article at <http://www.cbc.ca/cp/world/041113/w111338.html>> tells of a cop who used the 50,000-volt device on a 6-year-old boy on October 20, and on November 5, a 12-year-old girl was jolted. Also on November 5, a 17-year-old boy was tasered in San Jose, California; that story appears at <http://www.officer.com/article/article.jsp?id=18418&siteSection=5>>.

## **Georgia's Tough Policy for Not-So-Tough Kids**

For the past decade, Georgia judges have sent truants, curfew violators, and kids charged with minor, first-time offenses to mean, nasty boot camps or youth prisons for terms of 90 days. The state's juvenile justice officials now want to stop the practice, says [http://www.accessnorthga.com/news/ap\\_new\\_fullstory.asp?ID=49907](http://www.accessnorthga.com/news/ap_new_fullstory.asp?ID=49907)>, but finds that some judges won't go along, at least not until other sentencing options—such as community programs—are in place.

## **Jersey Juveniles Jammed in Jails**

With no room in residential treatment facilities and not enough foster homes, many New Jersey kids who committed no crime are being sent to the only facilities that won't turn them away—juvenile detention centers. Placements in the overcrowded jails, says <http://www.newsday.com/news/local/wire/ny-bc-nj--childwelfare-refo1122nov22,0,2076690.story?coll=ny-ap-regional-wire>>, are especially harmful to mentally ill youth, who are deprived of desperately needed care and treatment.

## **Aggression In, Aggression Out**

A Canadian longitudinal study found that “punitive” parenting is associated with future aggressive behavior by children. But for parents locked in a vicious cycle of aggression and more punishment, there is hope—if parents become less punitive, the kids mellow out too. The study is at [http://www.statcan.ca/cgi-bin/IPS/display?cat\\_num=89-599-MIE2004001](http://www.statcan.ca/cgi-bin/IPS/display?cat_num=89-599-MIE2004001)>.

## **Drugging of Toddlers Shocks Texas Official**

Texas State Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn plans to investigate widespread prescriptions of psychotropic drugs to foster kids on Medicaid. A press release at <http://www.window.state.tx.us/news/41112drug.html>> says that Strayhorn suspects the drugs are prescribed “to make our foster children more submissive, or to line the pockets of unscrupulous and uncaring doctors and pharmaceutical companies, or both.” Another report appears at [http://www.valleystar.com/local\\_news\\_more.php?id=55620\\_0\\_19\\_0\\_M](http://www.valleystar.com/local_news_more.php?id=55620_0_19_0_M)>.

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## Let's Go Crazy

by Daniel X.

Okay, I admit it. I'm maladjusted. I don't love school—or home, either, particularly. I'm not happy in my “role.” I don't like being ordered around; it ticks me off. Also, I feel like everybody's against me, so I guess I'm paranoid, too.

There's a lot of this going around ... it's an epidemic, you know.

Funny thing though ... when we used to talk about crazy people, we thought of people who were really out of it, or couldn't control themselves at all, or who just talked and acted crazy. And I actually do know one kid who is kind of like that. But I know some other kids who have some kind of diagnosis, and get meds for it, and aren't what I think of as crazy at all. As far as I can tell, they never were, even before they got medicated. There might even be a lot more “crazy” kids that I don't know about, who seem perfectly okay to me.

### Brothers Muted

Matt Kinsey, 16, whose dark, violent poem frightened a teacher, and his brother Killian, 14, whose snappy answer to a fellow student's remark about killing someone was reported to school authorities, were both sent home on November 11, suspended. The two brothers, according to <http://www.macon.com/mld/telegraph/news/local/10228781.htm>, were both made to sign contracts promising to refrain from any “communication that pertains to causing harm” or that would “cause another individual to feel unsafe or threatened in any way” before being allowed to return to their classes.

### Today's Assignment: Naming Names

On November 18, two Colorado students complained to their school board that teachers had told their classes to make lists of students they thought might be using drugs. Two students were later suspended, says <http://www.denverpost.com/Stories/0,1413,36~53~2547003,00.html> for sneaking into a teacher's office to photograph the lists.

### Magistrate Says Web Sites Disrupted School

Agreeing with school administrators that anti-school comments and cartoons on web sites cause “disgruntlement” and disrupt the “harmony of the school,” U.S. Magistrate Beverly Stites Jones ruled on September 28 that the three-day suspensions of Arkansas students Ryan Kuhl and Justin Neal were justified. The case, says [http://www.splc.org/newsflash\\_archives.asp?id=878&year=2004](http://www.splc.org/newsflash_archives.asp?id=878&year=2004), will now proceed to a district court, which is expected to disagree with Stites' ruling.

## Perspective

So here's what I think we should do: if there's really some kind of “epidemic” of mental illness among youth, we ought to start acting like it. I mean, what kind of epidemic is it if everybody goes around acting perfectly normal? Waiting for the crossing guard, lining up outside the lunchroom, raising their hands in class ... is this any way for disturbed people to behave?

What we think and want is already ignored, just because we're “too young to know what's good for us.” Acting “mature” or “responsible” won't make you any older, so why bother?

If just honestly speaking your mind will get you put on a drug to make you love your lousy life—in short, turn you into somebody you don't even recognize as yourself—then why stop at just speaking your mind? Why not try out what mental illness could *really* be like ... before they cure you of it?

## News Links

### Poetry Coach Gets Settlement

On August 1, teacher Bill Nevins said he'd accepted a \$205,000 settlement from a New Mexico school district, and called off his lawsuit for wrongful dismissal. According to [http://www.abqtrib.com/archives/news04/080204\\_news\\_nevins1.shtml](http://www.abqtrib.com/archives/news04/080204_news_nevins1.shtml), Nevins claimed he was fired for letting his poetry team read their anti-war poems on the school's closed-circuit TV system.

### Can School Papers Report News?

On November 12, Chad Tuley, an English teacher and adviser to an Indiana high school paper was suspended from his job following the publication of a student reporter's brief item about a fellow student's arrest on a murder charge. According to [http://www.splc.org/newsflash\\_archives.asp?id=909&year=2004](http://www.splc.org/newsflash_archives.asp?id=909&year=2004), Tuley said he was told by the principal that the school newspaper should focus on “promoting the school” rather than reporting “serious news.”

### Yes, School Papers Can Report News

At long last, a Michigan high school will have to publish an article banned from its school paper over two years ago, about a couple's lawsuit against the school district. School officials had said the article was unsuitable for publication because of “journalistic defects,” but on October 12, U.S. District Judge Arthur Tarnow called the school's position “indefensible,” says <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/news.aspx?id=14186>.

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# News Links

## **Charter Schools Struggle With Standards, Budgets**

A study of charter schools in five states finds that they're less likely than public schools to meet their states' performance standards. A report at <http://washingtontimes.com/national/20041122-114955-7130r.htm> suggests the schools are doing badly because they have so many of the "lowest-achieving, most academically deficient" students. And in Florida, an audit revealed that nearly 30% of the state's charter schools were experiencing "budget deficits, a lack of fiscal safeguards and problems with basic accounting," according to <http://www.local6.com/education/3950795/detail.html>.

## **Schools Not Counting Everyone**

A November "News Hour" segment found struggling students referred to GED programs, which some do not attend, to avoid counting them as dropouts or keep their test performance from hurting school scores. A transcript is at [http://www.pbs.org/news/hour/bb/education/july-dec04/dropouts\\_11-30.html](http://www.pbs.org/news/hour/bb/education/july-dec04/dropouts_11-30.html).

## **Prodigy Denied Suitable Free Education**

Levi Levy, who passed his California High School Proficiency Exam at the age of 9, is now 14 and enrolled at UCLA. His mother, struggling to pay the bills, is suing the state to pay for his college education, the only kind of education suitable to her son's needs. In a November 15 press release at <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2004/11/prweb178132.htm>, Levi's attorneys note that the state *requires* school attendance until one is 16, and argue that the state should provide at least the same amount as is spent on its public school students.

## **School or Jail for Ontario Youth**

Legislation may be introduced in January to raise the age of compulsory education in Ontario, Canada from 16 to 18, says [http://www.cbc.ca/story/canada/national/2004/11/06/education\\_mcguinty041106.html](http://www.cbc.ca/story/canada/national/2004/11/06/education_mcguinty041106.html). Truancy, now punishable by a fine, could land students in jail under the planned law.

## **Parents to Pay for Truancy**

Fining or imprisoning parents, as well as punishing kids, for school-skipping was already an option in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but now, warns <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/04274/388000.stm>, the schools plan to start enforcing it, big time.

## **Kids' Movements Monitored**

An article at <http://www.heraldtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20041117/ZNYT02/411170700> describes the use of badges with computer chips, the same as those "used by companies like Wal-Mart to track pallets of retail items," to keep tabs on students in Texas, Arizona, and New York.

## **Drug Czar Listens to (Some) Students**

From the story at <http://www.theledger.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20041028/NEWS/410280398/1004>, it sounds like most kids are fairly happy with the idea of drug testing. U.S. Drug Czar John Walters says he gets "calls for expansion of drug testing programs whenever he visits the programs"—although the article reveals that only ten students were present at his October 28 meeting at a Florida high school.

## **Dogs to Sniff Canadian Lockers**

A school district in British Columbia plans to use drug-sniffing dogs—but only after school hours, when students are gone, says <http://www.canoe.ca/NewsStand/EdmontonSun/News/2004/11/22/725371.html>. The British Columbia Civil Liberties Association has raised concerns about false accusations, claiming that 20% of drug dogs' alerts are "false positives."

## **Even Voluntary Testing Not Universally Welcomed**

Mid-Pacific Institute in Manoa, Hawaii, is about to start what seems to be a *truly* voluntary drug testing program. Under the school's plan, says <http://starbulletin.com/2004/11/15/news/story3.html>, students may be tested "only if they and their parents consent." But some are opposing the plan anyway, citing the ineffectiveness of testing and the risk of false results.

## **Fun With Helium Is Drug Abuse**

In Arizona, inhaling helium from balloons at a school dance got two students suspended, says <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/local/articles/1118edzerotolerance18.html>.

## **Badges Distinguish Students from Teachers**

A petition drive is underway to stop one Missouri high school from requiring all students to wear ID badges on campus. An assistant principal is quoted at <http://www.cnn.com/2004/EDUCATION/11/02/school.badges.ap/> as saying, "We need to be able to identify people without having to walk up to them and ask if they are a student or a teacher." (Why?)

## **Zero Tolerance Reconsidered**

In November, the disciplinary committee for Glenbrook, Illinois schools met to discuss lifting severe mandatory penalties for student misconduct and giving administrators more discretion in dealing with offenders. The school board, says <http://www.pioneerlocal.com/cgi-bin/ppo-story/localnews/current/nb/11-25-04-445394.html>, must vote on their recommendations.

## **Girl Arrested for Possession of Scissors**

A ten-year-old girl was handcuffed and taken from her elementary school to the police station after scissors were discovered in her backpack. According to [http://abclocal.go.com/wpvi/news/121104\\_nw\\_scissors.html](http://abclocal.go.com/wpvi/news/121104_nw_scissors.html), the police filed no charges and let her go, but she could still face school discipline.

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# News Links

## **“Gulag Schools” Invest In Politicians**

Since 2001, reveals <<http://www.harktheherald.com/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=34937>>, the founder of the Utah-based World Wide Association of Specialty Programs and Schools (WWASPS) and owners of WWASPS-affiliated schools have given over \$1 million in political contributions. Could there be a connection, the article asks, between the large donations and the lack of regulation or investigation of WWASPS notoriously-abusive programs?

## **School Sued for Abuse**

Parents who sent their sons to Pennsylvania’s Bethel Boys Academy are now suing the school, saying their sons were severely beaten and forced to work like slaves. The story at <<http://www.clarionledger.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20041103/NEWS01/411030359/1002>> says a girl’s academy under the same ownership is also being investigated for abuse.

## **Spring Creek Opens Up After Suicide**

Spring Creek Lodge, a Montana behavior-modification school once considered among the worst, issued a press release at <<http://www.strugglingteens.com/news/kenkaystmt-scl041009.html>> following the October suicide of a resident. The following month, reporters from *Time* were allowed in; their story, “How to Save a Troubled Kid,” appears in the November 22 issue. Could this institution be worried about its image?

## **Government Panel Confirms Old News**

It’s been known for many years that harsh interventions like Scared Straight and boot camp programs are *not* effective in changing kids’ behavior. On October 15, a panel of experts convened by the National Institutes of Health re-announced this common knowledge as if it were new; see <<http://www.healthcentral.com/news/NewsFullText.cfm?id=521817>>.

## **West Virginia Youth Lose Shelter**

The Time Out Youth Shelter in Huntington, West Virginia—one of only two places for runaway and homeless youth in the state—was forced to close on November 12 due to loss of funding. According to <<http://www.herald-dispatch.com/2004/November/27/LNtop1.htm>>, supporters are working on getting alternate funding to reopen the shelter early next year.

## **Town Tries to Bring Everyone Together**

In November, the mayor of Deerfield, Illinois proposed merging the town’s “Youth Council” (formed in 1963 to address the “juvenile problem”) with its “Human Relations Commission.” According to <<http://www.pioneerlocal.com/cgi-bin/ppo-story/localnews/current/de/11-25-04-443675.html>>, the newly-formed “Community Relations Commission” would work to improve lives and relationships among all the town’s residents “regardless of age, economic status, race, religion or ethnic origin.”

## **New Year Brings New Curfew Law**

On January 1, 2005, Pendleton, Oregon’s new daytime curfew will go into effect. According to <<http://www.oregonlive.com/newsflash/regional/index.ssf?/base/news-8/1101719042288130.xml&storylist=orlocal>>, the ordinance prevents all minors from being out in public during school hours (so presumably Oregon requires school attendance up to age 18 ... or else minors who drop out must leave town to get jobs). The article quoted one fickle 18-year-old who “would have opposed the curfew last year,” but has now (surprise!) changed his mind.

## **Kids’ DNA Placed in Kits**

All the material is turned over to parents, so nobody worried much on October 22 as kids in one Massachusetts town, like thousands before them, submitted to videotaping, swabbing, fingerprinting, and dental impressions. The article at <[http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2004/11/04/child\\_id\\_kits\\_aid\\_police/](http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2004/11/04/child_id_kits_aid_police/)> didn’t say whether any law would prevent police from demanding the kits as evidence, in the future.

## **Teacher Jailed for Assaulting Mother**

On October 21, a Georgia elementary school teacher allegedly hit a student’s mother in the back with a chair and then started punching, in front of all the students, says <<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/10/22/national/main650885.shtml>>.

## **Coach Beats Up Ref**

The coach of a California soccer team for 8- and 9-year olds allegedly severely attacked a referee who disqualified his team, says <<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/chronicle/archive/2004/11/23/REFEREE.TMP>>.

## **Mom Demonstrates Bullying**

At a September 14 school open-house in Anchorage, Alaska, a mother complained that not enough was done about bullying, and to illustrate her point, says <<http://www.ktuu.com/CMS/templates/master.asp?articleid=4780&zoneid=4>>, she allegedly “body-slammed” the assistant principal, seriously injuring him.

## **Decision on Testimony Against Parents**

A Massachusetts Superior Court judge has ruled that a state law protecting a child from having to testify against a parent only applies to a child who *lives* with the parent, reports <<http://news.bostonherald.com/localRegional/view.bg?articleid=58856>>. The judge might have felt this was comparable to protecting a spouse (but not an ex-spouse) from having to testify, but one could argue that it’s not: children’s custody or place of residence, which are not chosen by them, might have little to do with the nature of their relationship with a parent.

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# News Links

## **Few Complaints, Hefty Fines**

How many prudes does it take to get the FCC to punish a broadcaster? The answer is 23, says an article at <http://www.rep-am.com/story.php?id=13111> ... but only three of them have to write their own letters. Former TV Guide critic Jeff Jarvis filed a Freedom of Information request and learned that the \$1.2 million fine imposed on Fox for “sexually suggestive” content in the show *Married By America* was the result of just *three* original letters of complaint, along with 20 duplicates of one of the letters. Jarvis’ description of his research appears at [http://www.buzzmachine.com/archives/2004\\_11\\_15.html](http://www.buzzmachine.com/archives/2004_11_15.html).

## **Serbs Don’t Want Creationism in Schools**

One week after announcing that Serbian schools could no longer teach evolution without also covering creationism, Serbian Education Minister Ljiljana Colic resigned amidst “a storm of protests.” Colic’s mandate, says <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3663196.stm>, has been reversed.

## **Parents Challenge “Equal Time” for Religion**

On December 14, eleven Pennsylvania parents filed a lawsuit against their school district to end the teaching of “intelligent design” along with the theory of evolution, reports <http://ydr.com/story/doverbiology/52593/>.

## **Faith and a Federally-Funded Web Site**

Two years after a district court ordered Louisiana to stop using federal funds to promote religion through its “Governor’s Program on Abstinence,” the ACLU says religious products, articles, and links are still on the program’s web site, and is threatening to sue the state again, says <http://www.christianpost.com/dbase/society/1202/section/1.htm>.

## **Off-Duty Teacher May Preach**

A South Dakota third-grade teacher is once again in charge of an after-school religious club, after being forbidden to run the club by her school district. In October, according to <http://www.aberdeennews.com/mld/aberdeennews/news/9957985.htm>, an appeals court ruled that the teacher had a First Amendment right to participate in the club on her own time.

## **Are Homeschoolers Safe At Home?**

Because of insufficient data, it is impossible to say whether homeschooling makes kids safer or puts them at *higher* risk of abuse, admits an article at <http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/living/education/10204361.htm>. But because of the extreme isolation some homeschoolers may experience (and a few really bad horror stories), some people are worried about the trend, and want to require some outside intervention.

## **Video Games Attacked Again**

On December 17, Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich announced his plans to prohibit minors in the state from buying violent or sexually-explicit video games, and to punish stores that sell them to anyone under 18. An article at <http://www.southernillinoisan.com/articles/2004/12/18/top/doc41c425db2c0f5182262570.txt> wonders whether these laws could survive a court challenge, since similar laws in other states, such as Arkansas and Washington, have been struck down on appeal (see <http://www.mediacoalition.org/legal/> for more such cases).

## **With Nonbeliever Away, Teachers Still Can’t Pray**

On August 24, an appeals court upheld and clarified a lower court’s ruling on prayers at mandatory school staff meetings at an Arkansas school. The higher court, explains <http://www.cnn.com/2004/LAW/08/24/religion.school.ap/>, saw the practice as an official endorsement of religious belief, and therefore inappropriate even if no one present objected to it. Another court case involving graduation ceremony prayers in the same school district is described at <http://www.katv.com/news/stories/1104/185279.html>.

## **One Senior’s Hobby Not Allowed in Yearbook**

For yearbook photos at one New Hampshire school, seniors may pose with musical instruments, sports equipment, or cars, but the school drew the line at a pose with a shotgun. One senior, says <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,138671,00.html>, is now suing to get his favorite picture printed.

## **School Censors Comments on Censorship**

Last spring, an Illinois high school nixed the publication of two controversial articles in its award-winning student paper, and an English teacher lost his position as the paper’s editor. This October, says [http://www.highschooljournalism.org/students/news\\_story.cfm?newsid=195&news=1](http://www.highschooljournalism.org/students/news_story.cfm?newsid=195&news=1), the school banned an editorial about the censorship issue.

## **History Censored in One Class**

A fifth-grade teacher has sued a San Francisco area school for discrimination. The school, according to <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6578096/>, forbids the teacher from using any instructional materials containing the word “God,” including such documents as the Declaration of Independence. Sounds silly ... but the school’s side of the story has yet to be heard.

## **Catcher Challenged By “Open-Minded” Parents**

A Maine couple, insisting that they’re not prudes or censors, is arguing against the use of *Catcher in the Rye* in their son’s freshman high school English class. They go on to say, at [http://www.fosters.com/December\\_2004/12.13.04/news/mn\\_leb1213a.asp](http://www.fosters.com/December_2004/12.13.04/news/mn_leb1213a.asp), that the main character’s smoking, drinking and swearing is not appropriate content for a class of 14-year-olds.

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## Nancy Larrick Crosby

Nancy Larrick Crosby, teacher, editor, and writer, who died on November 14 at the age of 93, believed that children “can hear the rhythm of beautifully turned phrases and follow the suspense of a good story line.”

As an editor of children's books for Random House in the 1950s, she compiled anthologies of poetry. In 1958 she wrote and published *A Parent's Guide to Children's Reading*, which was reprinted six times to satisfy popular demand for the work. In 1965, her article “The All-White World of Children's Books,” published in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, helped to call attention to the need for more diversity in children's literature. Crosby co-founded and served as president of the International Reading Association, a literacy group that today has 80,000 members in about 100 countries. Children were invited to speak at the group's conferences.

### **Too Bad Pete Coors Didn't Become Governor**

The president of Colorado State University banned beer sales in the stadium just before the first home football game this fall. Since then, a wave of binge-drinking deaths and hospitalizations, described at [http://www.casperstartribune.net/apdata/wire\\_detail.php?wire\\_num=102639](http://www.casperstartribune.net/apdata/wire_detail.php?wire_num=102639) has the president reconsidering his decision. Among the recommendations of an emergency task force is lowering the state's drinking age to 18, but according to <http://vh10228.moc.gbahn.net/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20041210/NEWS01/412100305/1002>, the head of the task force (Colorado's Lieutenant Governor) does not want that idea included in the task force's report.

### **Smoking Age Raised in New York County**

On December 7, Suffolk County lawmakers voted to raise the age to buy tobacco to 19; Nassau County, says <http://www.newsday.com/news/local/longisland/ny-lismok1208,0,71476.story?coll=ny-liminate-headlines>, may soon follow suit.

### **Valuable Safety Measure? Or Waste of Money?**

A padded headband being promoted as protection for soccer players hasn't impressed many soccer players or league officials, but Omer Doron, executive director of the New York State West Youth Association, bought the company's pitch and has mandated its use for all affiliated players under the age of 14—about 40,000 players. At <http://www.timesunion.com/AspStories/story.asp?storyID=301223&category=SPORTS&BCCode=&newsdate=11/3/2004>, the founder of New York's thirty-year-old Clifton Park Soccer Club was quoted as saying, “Head injuries are few and far between .... I'm a little shocked that a state association would mandate the use of this stuff.”

## Obituary

To youth rights supporters, these accomplishments may not seem as though they really did much to improve the lives of young people. But when you look back to the days before Dr. Seuss, to the pathetic boring primers for beginning readers, you might say that kids's intelligence really wasn't respected very much. However Crosby may have felt about the proper role of children, she did credit even the youngest of children with the ability to appreciate material more challenging than “see Spot run.” Her guides and reviews promoted books that would entertain their readers. And that, at least, is something.

Obituaries can be seen online at <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/local/articles/1122larrick-obit22.html> and [http://www.winchesterstar.com/TheWinchesterStar/041116/Area\\_READ.asp](http://www.winchesterstar.com/TheWinchesterStar/041116/Area_READ.asp).

## News Links

### **Soft Drink Study Criticized**

A recent study linking soda to obesity and diabetes is examined at <http://www.cato.org/dailys/09-10-04.html> and [http://www.consumerfreedom.com/news\\_detail.cfm/headline/2665](http://www.consumerfreedom.com/news_detail.cfm/headline/2665).

### **Scottish Teen Wants Safety Regulations**

Having endured years of isolation and numerous operations to correct the disfigurement caused by being scalded as an infant, a 17-year-old mechanic in Scotland wants regulations on hot water heaters to prevent such accidents from happening to others; see <http://www.theherald.co.uk/28647.shtml>.

### **Australia's Drug Problem: Gasoline**

According to [http://www.abc.net.au/news/news\\_items/200411/s1248386.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/news/news_items/200411/s1248386.htm), some communities Down Under are just full of kids sniffing petrol fumes. A “high-free” gasoline is being distributed to some gas stations to deter theft and siphoning.

### **Dutch Doctors Debate “Deliverance”**

Admitting that many doctors in Holland practice euthanasia on dying newborns, the country's main medical association has proposed that the practice be legalized for *all* terminally-ill people unable to express a preference. However, the article at <http://www.canada.com/health/story.html?id=ccacbf5f-bf1-4216-b91c-5937bc3280f0> mentions the doctors' troubling inclusion of “children” among those felt to have “no free will.” Profoundly retarded children? Maybe. Children in a coma? Probably. But if we believe that “free will” exists, don't we see evidence of it even in children too young to speak?

## Sue's Review

Susan Wishnetsky  
Secretary, ASFAR  
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Westman, Jack C. *Licensing parents : can we prevent child abuse and neglect?* Cambridge, Mass. : Perseus Publishing, 1994.

I try to review books while they're still "hot off the press" (or at least warm). This old one has been sitting on my shelves for quite awhile, and now that a brand-new "parent licensing" book has come out, I figure it's a good time to catch up.

In his foreward to *Licensing Parents*, superior court judge Charles D. Gill says he used to joke about requiring licenses for parents, but that *this book* made him a believer. Funny—it had the opposite effect on me. I'm now convinced that this idea, which once seemed to me so sensible, necessary, and minimally intrusive, wouldn't solve anything at all.

A child psychiatrist, Westman says he's "worked with abused children and their parents for over thirty years." His world-view has clearly been shaped—warped, one might say—by his experience. The first sentence of chapter 1 sets the tone: "What is happening to our country?"

The author then launches into a lengthy recitation of horror stories and statistics, on poverty, "children having children," drug-soaked neighborhoods, welfare-dependency, predatory crime—all the usual fodder for newsmagazine stories. And from where he sits, it's largely due to abusive, neglectful, or otherwise incompetent parents, who shouldn't have anything to do with kids, let alone have custody of them.

Like so many of our citizens, he believes that the behavior of our nation's youth is continually worsening, and compares the U.S. to the Roman empire: "... the failure to prepare the next generation for the responsibilities of citizenship contributed significantly to the fall of Rome."

Westman says his own town (Madison, Wisconsin) became much more dangerous during the 1980s, so much so that he felt the need to install a home security system and worry about drive-by shootings. His neighborhood might have changed, but I suspect Dr. Westman changed, too: he became wealthier and more protective of his property; he had kids and found that he feared giving them freedom; he internalized and magnified what he heard on the local news, as so many people do.

Dire warnings about crime, irresponsibility, and incivility have been around since the beginning of humankind. These problems have generally improved (at least in our country) throughout our history, in spite of the persistence of terrible parents.

In fairness, Westman does state repeatedly that it is a small percentage of people who threaten society. But his solution would affect many, many more. To stop incompetent parenting before it does its damage, parents would have to be certified as competent. Why not, he asks? We license drivers, physicians, lawyers ... even marriages! Teachers are required to be trained and certified. Prospective *adoptive* parents are thoroughly questioned, screened and checked out. But any idiot who is able to have sex and conceive a child can "own" his or her kid.

Prospective parents might have to demonstrate general reliability and financial responsibility; they'd be quizzed on child development and health issues, the need for affection, and appropriate forms of discipline. They'd have to have a high-school diploma. Free parenting classes, drug treatment programs, and other support services would be available to help

parents qualify. Underage parents might receive a "provisional" license. Failure to qualify or license revocation would mean denial or termination of parental rights.

Westman addresses many of the arguments against his plan, most importantly the question of *how* to decide what constitutes good and competent parenting? His response is adequate: licensing is intended to exclude only the very worst, irremediably bad prospective parents. Appeals systems would be available to reduce the chance of bias against certain applicants. He admits that mistakes are possible, but thinks it better to wrongly deny some potentially decent parents than condemn a child to an existence under the total control of a bad one.

*Total control*—that's where my problem lies. I agree that abusive, neglectful, and irresponsible parents are the source of many kids' (and adults') problems. But it's not just the rottenness of the parents, but the fact that kids are *stuck* with them, that causes anger and frustration. They don't just *feel* trapped—they *are* trapped. Even a *good* home is a prison if one is forced to live in it. Parents can send their kids elsewhere to live, or even legally relinquish custody, but kids who run away are returned home by the police. They are helpless, and Westman's approach would do nothing to change that.

Licensing can only serve to increase the elements of control and domination within the parent-child relationship. By turning parents into agents of the state, certified managers of other human beings, licensing would further dehumanize what should be a loving relationship between people who care about one another.

## Sue's Review

Susan Wishnetsky  
Secretary, ASFAR  
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Title, Peg, ed. *Should parents be licensed? debating the issues.* Amherst, N.Y. : Prometheus Books, 2004.

*Should Parents Be Licensed?* is quite a fearless and wide-ranging collection of essays, which often stray far from their primary subject into the topics of forced contraception, assisted reproduction, and genetic engineering. The authors don't mince words in discussing controversial issues such as disabilities and eugenics, but, while constantly invoking "children's rights," none of them ever raise the possibility of allowing youth emancipation or self-determination.

Some essayists seem to be engaging in a purely academic exercise; others take the issues very personally. I spotted one big factual disagreement between them: do mothers commit more child abuse (p. 105), or is it fathers (p. 132)?

Writing styles range from ponderously obscure (sprinkled with "ceteris paribus" and "a fortiori") to comically blunt ("We pay for what we get, always. Choosing high-quality fetuses and rejecting low-quality ones is not [a] tragedy"). Two futuristic fantasies appear, imagining a permanent contraceptive called Lock (reversible only by its antidote, Unlock), and a future in which left-handedness is proposed for elimination as a genetic deficiency. One essay offers a "thought experiment": suppose you learned that you had been genetically engineered?

Interesting points are raised throughout:

... having a child is not a need in any sense comparable to the need for lifesaving treatment, food, water, oxygen, sleep ... (p. 250)

According to Plato, the desire for children is natural as a desire for immortality .... The fact that Plato ... felt obliged to suggest penalties for non-participation in the enterprise suggests that it may not be as natural as it is cracked up to be ... (p. 238)

... it might be ... that licensing would contribute to the attitude that children are the property of their parents .... licensed parents might well think of children as a prize they had earned. (p. 137)

There is a chance ... that the more wanted a child is, the more it will be expected to fulfill the parents' egoistic wants. (p. 16)

... the responsibility [for bringing children into the world] must rest on all who participate .... The complaint that fertile people are not ... subjected to parenting evaluations should not hold sway: fertile people are not asking for assistance. (p. 253)

[Regarding disabilities] ... to value some characteristic isn't necessarily to look with contempt upon those who lack it. (p. 153)

... while one can agree to be married, no one can consent to being born .... since one can have a relational right ... only if all parties ... consent ... it follows that there is no relational right to be a parent. (p. 231)

These scholars seem to take nothing for granted, questioning everything—one essay even discusses whether survival of the human race can be considered a "good." So the absence of any discussion of youth autonomy in this book is truly disappointing. How could all these authors accept as gospel truth a concept of "childhood" which thousands of us—ASFAR members and other youth rights supporters—wholly reject?

If a married woman, for whatever reason, runs to a friend's house to spend the night, and the friend is willing to have her, she can stay. No policemen will force her to go back home. If she decides to leave permanently, she has a right to do that too, even though she entered into the marriage voluntarily. Why can't children, who never chose their parents, do this?

Since women have the freedom to walk out, husbands are likely to compromise.

Those who are truly abusive are likely to beg for forgiveness afterward. Sure, they may do it again, but they know if the wife decides to leave, the law will be on her side. This may motivate them at least to try to change their behavior. Why can't it work that way with children?

Suppose a child's home is too noisy for sleeping or learning. Suppose a friend lives in a better environment, with room for one more and parents willing to take in that child for awhile. Why should the law interfere and take the child back to an inferior home? If a child is not property, and the law means to serve the child's "best interest," then why?

In the classic movie *Night of the Hunter* (1955), the kindly Miss Cooper took in runaway children, no questions asked—including John and Pearl, fleeing their psychopathic stepfather Harry Powell. Miss Cooper believed the children and defended them against Powell with her shotgun. If parental licensing had been in effect, Powell would have failed the criminal background check—but he surely would've known that, and could have remained a threat to John and Pearl *without* marrying their mother (like many boyfriends of single mothers). With or without parental licensing, under today's rules, John and Pearl would be dead and the other children would be in institutions. Why is it wrong for children to find shelter in a welcoming home, just because it is not their official guardians' home?

Licensing won't turn bad parents into good ones. Only when children have real alternatives to their parents' homes, and are free to leave, will people learn how to be the parents their children truly need.

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## Common Knowledge

*continued from page 1*

that people with certain kinds of brains or abilities are *drawn* to violent games, rather than the games *causing* changes in people's brains or abilities. Perhaps an unknown factor is responsible for *all* the observed phenomena: brain patterns, game playing, and performance levels. We don't know what causes what, and we shouldn't assume any more than the facts tell us. The reporter dutifully quotes this caveat—then goes right on discussing the harmful “effects” of the games.

False assumptions of cause-and-effect relationships are common. For example, studies show that teens who work more than 20 hours a week get lower grades in school than those who work less or don't work at all. Parents, lawmakers and psychologists use this correlation to conclude that too many hours of work are bad for students, *causing* them to neglect their schoolwork. But many researchers find it more likely that teens who are *already* struggling in school are the ones who choose to work more, since their school experience gives them so little satisfaction or hope for their future.

Sometimes researchers design studies to produce the results they want. A recent study called “Comparison of Drinking Rates and Problems”, posted at <http://www.udetc.org/publications.htm>, claims to prove that the drinking age of 21 is good for American youth, since more European than American youth drink alcohol. However, as an article at <http://www.reason.com/0410/fe.dh.age.shtml> points out, the “European countries” in the comparison seem to have been carefully chosen, *excluding* France, Germany, and other countries that might've made Europe's liberal drinking age laws look better. Further, the publicity focused on the fact that more young people drink in these European countries (where it is often legal for them to do so), but ignored the fact that the European youth drink *more moderately* than the Americans.

The conclusions we draw from what we see and read are powerfully influenced by our beliefs and those of our society.

Biases are so deeply and imperceptibly woven into our “knowledge” that it can be difficult, even for scientists, to root them out. We automatically interpret new information to validate pre-existing assumptions. If we're unable to “spin” the data so that it can be reconciled with our beliefs, we may simply reject it.

This may be done deliberately, even with malicious intent. If a study's results threaten certain people's reputations or financial interests, they may knowingly try to conceal or discredit the study. If research is funded by a special interest group, it may be engineered to produce the desired results.

But more often, distortions arise from our need for certainty and stability. Like our ancestors who believed the earth was flat, we embrace research that confirms our beliefs, and ignore or condemn that which challenges them. We believe that what we now know, once debatable, is settled, once and for all. It's hard to reopen old debates. But we must. We must never be too sure of ourselves. We must continue to re-examine what we think we know, if we care about truth.

## News Links

### Parental Snooping Inadmissible

On December 9 the Washington State Supreme Court ordered a new trial for a 17-year-old convicted of robbery, because, says <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,141045,00.html>, crucial testimony provided by his girlfriend's mother had been obtained by eavesdropping on her daughter's phone call.

### Illinois May Lower Tattoo Age

The age at which one can consent to a tattoo in Illinois is, ridiculously, 21. Last spring, says <http://www.rstar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20041111/NEWS0107/411110321>, the state House of Representatives passed a bill to lower the age to 18, and the Senate may consider the measure now.

### Grab That Cash With Both Hands

More than 12 million copies of Pink Floyd's album *The Wall* have been sold since its 1979 release, but the students who recorded vocals for its hit song received no payment. Now, says <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/music/4047533.stm>, “those kids” are claiming a share of the royalties.

### Hurricane Creates Work Opportunities

Schools in Charlotte County, Florida have far fewer students since Hurricane Charley hit; an article at <http://www.newsday.com/news/opinion/ny-vphac124081258dec12,0,4385067.story?coll=ny-view-points-headlines> speculates that many were lured away by construction jobs offering good pay.

Please Please Please!! Don't discard this issue.  
Instead, pass it along to someone else.

