Sample Essays for Composition I

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On Writing Mindset

Failure is Not an Option

By Allison D. Carr

Failure, so goes the dominant cultural narrative, is a sign of weakness. Of laziness. Of stupidity and bad breeding and busted bootstraps. Failure will ruin your life. In action, suspense, and sports films, failure is not an option. In real life, failure only happens to bad people. Or, more to the point in this context, to bad writ- ers. Failure in writing betrays dullness of mind, smallness of imag- ination. The failed writer—the one who cannot learn to write well (which is to say, according to accepted conventions of good writ- ing)—is discounted as dim, unprepared, non-serious, wacky, or weird, distracted, behind.

Or, failure is acceptable if we learn from it. If we can recuper- ate it, if it brings us virtue and strength and morality because what doesn't kill us makes us stronger. And if we never, ever do it again.

No. Stop with this. This is stupid, and the opposite is actually true: Failure should be welcomed, if not actively sought out, signal- ing as it does both the presence of creative, risky thinking and an opportunity to explore a new direction. To writing especially, fail- ure is integral, and I will go so far as to assert that the best writ- ing (and the best learning-to-write) happens when one approaches the activity from a mindset trained on failure. Failure represents a certain against-the-grain jettisoning of established ideas about what counts as good writing in favor of rogue, original, atten- tion-capturing, and intentional art. To fail willingly in writing is to be empowered by the possibilities that emerge. It is to trust oneself and one's ideas, a quality too rare in the age of hyper-achievement, in which the only progress that counts is progress that moves up.

A History of Failure

Broadly speaking, failure's bad reputation is an inherited relic of another time. Though it would certainly be possible to trace its origins back to many religious mythologies, I will in the interest of brevity go back only so far as the mid-19th century in America, when the economy shifted from one based in agriculture to one based in industry (closing, in theory, the opportunity gap between rich and poor). From this backdrop grew the recognition that literacy, the ability to read and write (and generally comprehend information), would be the bedrock of a thriving community. Thus, literacy took on the status of social necessity for the masses, not simply a luxury for the ruling class. By the middle of the 19th century, a system of common schools had been

codified, and central to its curriculum was grammar instruction and conventions of speech and writing.

According to literacy scholar John Trimbur, from whom I have been piecing together this history, reading and writing instruc- tion functioned “as both a means to regulate popular literacy and a social marker to divide the literate from the illiterate, the worthy poor from the unworthy, ‘us’ from ‘them.’” Given the then-cor- responding (perhaps correlative) rates of illiteracy among incar- cerated populations, success and failure in this realm came to be perceived not simply as an indication of intelligence or economic advantage, but as a matter of moral fiber. To fail in reading or writ- ing meant a failure of moral fortitude.

But cultural attitudes toward failure remain as sinister as ever, perhaps more so in the wake of standardized testing, No Child Left Behind, and Race to the Top. Failure continues to represent not just ill preparedness, but weakness in spirit and mind, stupidity, inadequacy, and a lifetime of toiling. And there is something about failure in writing that amplifies these judgments, suggesting that the subject somehow deserves to be judged and disadvantaged in these ways.

An Alternative View

What we have failed to grasp—why the idea that failure is bad needs to die—is the integral connection between failure and risk, creativity, and innovation, not to mention emotional and cognitive resilience. This relationship is well documented, making its tena- cious hold on cultural ideology especially confounding. For exam- ple, many of us use and benefit daily from innovations discovered by accident: penicillin, Corn Flakes, Post-it Notes, Corningware, WD-40, oral contraception, and potato chips. All of these were discovered when the discoverer was working on a different puzzle. And discoveries like these are the norm, not the exception. This is the primary activity of lab research, after all: A researcher may run hundreds, thousands of trials and experiments, each a failure in its own unique way (and some leading to accidental discover- ies) before landing on, say, the polio vaccine or the secret to the expanding universe. Likewise, in the tech industry, we need only look as far as Silicon Valley and the dozens of stories of failed start- ups to understand how integral failure is to the culture of innova- tion there (even when it is difficult to stomach). In fact, failure is so common and so prominent in tech, they’ve developed an entire annual conference around it, FailCon.

And though writing is not obviously about discovery of life-al- tering products, it is about discovery of a different sort and thus, the virtue of failure should be similarly celebrated. In fact, know- ing what I know about learning to write (as a writer and a writ- ing teacher myself), I would argue that it is impossible for one to develop anything approaching a good writing ability without years—decades, probably—of repeated failure. We aren’t born pen in hand, fully primed to write sonnets or political treatises as

soon as we get a grip on those fine motor skills. Writing is learned slowly, over a long period of time, and with much difficulty, and anybody who says otherwise is lying or delusional or both.

Consider the testimony of renowned journalist and public intellectual Ta-Nehisi Coates who, in an interview for The Atlantic's "Creative Breakthroughs" series, describes writing as a process of repeated failures that, with persistence, accumulate to create breakthroughs. "I always consider the entire process about fail- ure," he says, "and I think that's the reason why more people don't write." Similarly, novelist Stephen King speaks publicly (and repeatedly) about his impressively large stack of rejection slips before Carrie was finally picked up by Doubleday, thereby launch- ing his illustrious career (powered by persistence, no doubt, in the face of his continued fear "of failing at whatever story I'm writ- ing"). Pulitzer Prize winning novelist Junot Díaz writes memora- bly of his difficulty in writing his second novel, a years-long exer- cise in failure; it famously took Jane Austen fourteen years to write Sense and Sensibility; and Joyce Carol Oates, in her "Notes on Failure," reminds us that Faulkner considered himself a failed poet and that Henry James only became a novelist after a failed turn at playwriting.

There is much disagreement, or shall I say healthy debate, in the community of writing scholars about the best and most effec- tive ways to teach writing. The specifics in this case are immate- rial, because these scholars do agree on (at least) one foundational idea: that writing is a process, which is a coded way of avoiding the harsher truth: Writing—and learning to write—involves a great deal of failure. We start a draft; we get frustrated or stuck or side- tracked, or we discover halfway through that we're actually inter- ested in something else. We move to a clean sheet of paper or a fresh document and start again. And the process continues until we've made something cohesive, something that works. We schol- ars know this not only because we've researched it, but because we are writers ourselves, and we spend a great deal of time with people struggling to improve their writing.

Writing scholars don't use the word "failure" very often (or at all), but we should. There is something bold there, something that a dogged denial of failure closes off: permission to make a mess, to throw something away, to try thirty different ideas instead of toiling away on one. It's a reset button for the brain. That didn't work! Let's salvage what we can and try again! Scholars and teach- ers don't use this word, but we should—it is the most honest thing we have to say about writing.

Making Failure an Option

What should be clear is that failure is a significant part of the entire scene of learning, an assertion that, again, is borne out by widely respected research. Malcolm Gladwell isn't wrong when he insists upon the 10,000-hour rule, which, in suggesting that it takes 10,000 hours to truly master anything (shooting free-throws, play- ing an

instrument), implicitly builds in a generous rate of failure. It's true that writing is not stable in the way that chess is stable, but the broad message of Gladwell's limited theory—that to excel at anything takes a tremendous amount of practice and persistence— easily aligns with prevailing thought on what is central to develop- ment in writing: Writing is difficult and complex, and development is not linear. More recently, Carol Dweck's concept of growth mind- set suggests that people learn better when their efforts are assessed and praised as opposed to their autonomous being: "You seem to be working really hard" instead of "You're smart." Drawing on this learning paradigm, cognitive researcher Manu Kapur tells us that our brains are actually wired for failure.

Failure is integral to learning and development, more so than external markers of achievement or success. An avoidance of fail- ure in learning, or in writing, or in industry or parenting or any other human/community endeavor, represents an absence of creativity and an abundance of predictability, little to no risk, and perhaps even harmful or counter-productive thinking. This is not a mindset anyone should encourage or reinforce. Instead, teach- ers, scholars, mentors, and anybody involved in the conversa- tion about writing development should be taking concrete steps toward normalizing failure. This means rethinking the frame of the entire scene of writing, including what it means to learn how to do it and what it means to teach it. As my invocation of Gladwell above demonstrates, it is foolish to imagine writing as a discrete and stable skill that can be mastered, a mindset that unfortunately dominates much writing instruction (especially in this era of test- ing); instead, it is crucial that the project of developing as a writer is understood as an always ongoing process of learning and discov- ery and that writing classrooms should be thought of as labora- tories where experimentation and question-asking prevails over rule-memorization and formulaic discipline. Writing is not a list of dos and don'ts, nor is success in writing a universally acknowl- edged ideal. Writing is about risk and wonder and a compulsion to make something known. Failure—and a willingness to fail often in large, obvious ways—should always be an option.

Further Reading

To learn more about the correlation between organized writing instruction and the rise of industrial capitalism, see John Trimbur's essay titled "Literacy and the Discourse of Crisis" in the collec- tion The Politics of Writing Instruction: Postsecondary (Boynton/Cook), edited by Trimbur and Richard Bullock.

Cultural attitudes about education, learning, and literacy have been challenged in recent years, most successfully by advocates for a "growth mindset," which strives to distinguish learners' natural ability from learned and determined effort, ultimately empowering students in the face of struggle and failure. To learn more about this research, see Ingfei Chen's "New Research: Students Benefit from Learning that Intelligence is not Fixed" (Mind/Shift), Manu Kapur's "Productive Failure in Learning

Math” (Cognitive Science), and Katrina Schwartz’s “Growth Mindset: How to Normalize Mistake Making and Struggle in Class” (Mind/Shift).

Stephen King may be the most well-known writer to address failure, as evident in Lucas Reilly’s article “How Stephen King’s Wife Saved Carrie and Launched His Career” (Mental Floss) as well as Andy Greene’s interview with him (Rolling Stone). Outside the world of writing, the culture of failure thrives most prominently in technological innovation. For more, consider Rory Carroll’s “Silicon Valley’s Culture of Failure... And the ‘Walking Dead’ it Leaves Behind” (The Guardian), Kevin Maney’s “In Silicon Valley, Failing is Succeeding” (Newsweek), Bo Yaghmaie’s “A Case of Startup Failure” (Techcrunch.com), and “146 Startup Failure Post- Mortems,” compiled by the editor at CBInsights.com.

Keywords

basic writers, failure, growth mindset, productive failure, struggle, writing process

Author Bio

Allison Carr is an assistant professor of rhetoric and Director of Writing Across the Curriculum at Coe College. Beyond researching the intersection of failure and emotion for her doctoral disserta- tion, Allison considers herself a failure savant, leading her students by example toward riskier, frightening, and sometimes downright stupid undertakings. She tweets about food, politics, writing, and baseball @hors_doeuvre.

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Narrative Essay

My College Education

The first class I went to in college was philosophy, and it changed my life forever. Our first assignment was to write a short response paper to the Albert Camus essay “The Myth of Sisyphus.” I was extremely nervous about the assignment as well as college. However, through all the confusion in philosophy class, many of my questions about life were answered.

I entered college intending to earn a degree in engineering. I always liked the way mathematics had right and wrong answers. I understood the logic and was very good at it. So when I received my first philosophy assignment that asked me to write my interpretation of the Camus essay, I was instantly confused. What is the right way to do this assignment, I wondered? I was nervous about writing an incorrect interpretation and did not want to get my first assignment wrong. Even more troubling was that the professor refused to give us any guidelines on what he was looking for; he gave us total freedom. He simply said, “I want to see what you come up with.”

Full of anxiety, I first set out to read Camus’s essay several times to make sure I really knew what was it was about. I did my best to take careful notes. Yet even after I took all these notes and knew the essay inside and out, I still did not know the right answer. What was my interpretation? I could think of a million different ways to interpret the essay, but which one was my professor looking for? In math class, I was used to examples and explanations of solutions. This assignment gave me nothing; I was completely on my own to come up with my individual interpretation.

Next, when I sat down to write, the words just did not come to me. My notes and ideas were all present, but the words were lost. I decided to try every prewriting strategy I could find. I brainstormed, made idea maps, and even wrote an outline. Eventually, after a lot of stress, my ideas became more organized and the words fell on the page. I had my interpretation of “The Myth of Sisyphus,” and I had my main reasons for interpreting the essay. I remember being unsure of myself, wondering if what I was saying made sense, or if I was even on the right track. Through all the uncertainty, I continued writing the best I could. I finished the conclusion paragraph, had my spouse proofread it for errors, and turned it in the next day simply hoping for the best.

Then, a week or two later, came judgment day. The professor gave our papers back to us with grades and comments. I remember feeling simultaneously afraid and eager to get the paper back in my hands. It turned out, however, that I had nothing to worry

about. The professor gave me an A on the paper, and his notes suggested that I wrote an effective essay overall. He wrote that my reading of the essay was very original and that my thoughts were well organized. My relief and newfound confidence upon reading his comments could not be overstated.

What I learned through this process extended well beyond how to write a college paper. I learned to be open to new challenges. I never expected to enjoy a philosophy class and always expected to be a math and science person. This class and assignment, however, gave me the self-confidence, critical-thinking skills, and courage to try a new career path. I left engineering and went on to study law and eventually became a lawyer. More important, that class and paper helped me understand education differently. Instead of seeing college as a direct stepping stone to a career, I learned to see college as a place to first learn and then seek a career or enhance an existing career. By giving me the space to express my own interpretation and to argue for my own values, my philosophy class taught me the importance of education for education's sake. That realization continues to pay dividends every day.

Compare and Contrast Essay

Life After High School Around the World

In the United States, recent high school graduates have increasingly been focusing on college attendance. In recent years, about two-thirds of high school graduates are enrolled in college between their teen years and age twenty-four. About one-third of the same population primarily participates in the workforce, meaning that they are employed or are looking for employment (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). Of those who attend college, most (about 69 percent) are considered immediate enrollers, meaning that they begin college in the first fall academic term immediately after their high school graduation (NCES 2020).

Other countries, especially high-income nations in Western Europe, have similar trends in college education, but fewer students start immediately. Gap years, overseas experiences, or mandatory wait times all lead students to a wide array of pre-college destinations. In Denmark, for example numbers of students who take a "year out" are so high that the government has sought to give students cash bonuses for attending immediately (Anderson 2009). For several decades, only about 25 percent of Denmark's high school graduates enrolled in college right away, and that number continued to drop in the 2010s, with a record low of only 15 percent in 2018 (Ritzau 2019). Compare that to the U.S. numbers mentioned above, where over two thirds of the students enroll in college immediately. And note that in Denmark, college is almost universally free.

In the United States, this life transition point is socialized quite differently. Taking a year off much less common than some other countries, but has certainly picked up in recent years. In most cases, U.S. youth are encouraged to select a few target colleges or potential workforce options by their late teens, and to get started on those pathways soon after high school. As mentioned above, many U.S. students do not attend college, but most of those students are in the workforce (including the military).

Other nations have entirely different approaches based on available educational institutions, financial circumstances, and family needs. In some nations, students often go to college soon after high school, but do so in other countries (including the U.S.). Dozens of nations require military conscription—military service—for men, and a few (such as Sweden, Israel, Norway, Eritrea, and Venezuela) for women as well.

How might your life be different if you lived in one of these other countries? Can you think of similar social norms—related to life age-transition points—that vary from country to country?

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Researched Argument Essays

Why Rituals Are Good for Your Health

By Ari Honarvar

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I don't know if I could have survived seven years of my childhood without the soul-saving rituals of my Persian culture. I grew up amid the Iran-Iraq War, which killed a million people. Besides the horrors of the war, freedom of thought and expression were severely restricted in Iran after the Islamic revolution. Women bore the brunt of this as, in a matter of months, we were forced to ditch our previous lifestyle and observe a strict Islamic attire, which covered our bodies and hair. We lost the right to jog, ride a bicycle, or sing in public. Life seemed unbearable at times, but we learned to bring meaning into uncertainty and chaos by maintaining grounding practices and developing new ones.

It helped that in Persian culture we had ceremonies to turn to. We clung to 3,500-year-old Zoroastrian ceremonies that correspond to the seasons. Several of these rituals take place during the spring because the equinox marks the Persian New Year. Besides a thorough spring cleaning, we jump over a bonfire to cleanse our inner landscape and give our maladies to fire and gain vitality from it. On the longest night of the year, winter solstice, we stay up all night eating fruits and nuts, reciting poetry,

playing music, and dancing. This is to symbolize survival and celebration during dark times.

Rituals, which are a series of actions performed in a specific way, have been part of human existence for thousands of years. They are not habits. According to research psychologist Nick Hobson, a habit's inherent goal is different from a ritual's. With habit, the actions and behaviors are causally tied to the desired outcome; for example, brushing our teeth to prevent cavities and gum disease and exercising to keep healthy. Rituals, on the other hand, are "goal demoted," which means that their actions have no instrumental connection to the outcome. For example, we sing "Happy Birthday" to the same melody even though it isn't tied to a specific external result.

Cristine Legare, a researcher and psychology professor at the University of Texas at Austin, says, "Rituals signify transition points in the individual life span and provide psychologically meaningful ways to participate in the beliefs and practices of the community." They have been instrumental in building community, promoting cooperation, and marking transition points in a community member's life. And as strange as rituals might be from a logical perspective, they have evolved as distinct features of human culture.

While it's not clear exactly how they help, rituals reduce anxiety, improve performance and confidence, and even work on people who don't believe in them, research shows. In a University of Toronto study, participants who performed a ritual before completing a task exhibited less anxiety and sensitivity to personal failure than when they completed the task without first performing the ritual.

Additionally, rituals benefit our physical well-being and immune system. According to Andrew Newberg, the associate director of research at the Marcus Institute of Integrative Health, rituals lower cortisol, which in turn lowers heart rate and blood pressure and increases immune system function.

We live amid a loneliness epidemic where the lack of belonging and community has been linked to high suicide rates and an increased sense of despair. The United States has one of the worst work-life balance scores in the world, while more Americans have become disillusioned with organized religion, as a broad and rapidly rising demographic consider themselves spiritual but not religious. Perhaps with fewer opportunities for people to be in community, many shared cultural rituals are falling away and with them a grounding source for connection and mental health.

In Iran during the war, we found uses for rituals when we were faced with food rations. We gathered family and friends, reciting the ancient story of the poor abused girl who had run away from home and had a vision of being visited by three celestial bibis (matrons). The bibis instructed her to make a sweet halva and donate it to the poor. The girl said she didn't have any money, and the bibis told her to borrow or work for the ingredients. This worked well with food rations as each guest brought a few ingredients to make the halva. Like the girl in the story, each participant made a wish and took a bite of the halva. I walked away feeling calmer and more supported.

Stories, such as those told during the Jewish ceremony of Passover Seder, have become ritualized because they are recited in the same way each time. Rhythm and music play a similar role in ritual. Whether we're chanting in Sanskrit or singing the national anthem, "our brains tend to resonate with those around us, so if everyone is doing the same dance, hymn, or prayer, all of those brains are working in the same way," Newberg explains. "This can engender a powerful feeling of connectedness. It also reduces stress and depression through a combination of effects on the autonomic nervous system, which is ultimately connected to the emotional areas of the brain—the limbic system." According to one study, chanting the Sanskrit syllable "om" deactivates the limbic system, softening the edge of fear, anxiety, and depression.

Psychologist Hobson confirms that rituals aren't just a benefit to our mental health—they're actually essential. "We are an intensely social and ritualistic species," he says. "Take this piece out of our modern human narrative and you lose a piece of our history and our humanity."

I moved to the U.S. when I was 14. After living here for two decades, I became a mother and was confronted with the phrase, "It takes a village to raise a child." But where was that mythical village and the rituals that made it sane? For example, a pregnant woman in Iran had a rotating menu of dishes made for her by friends and family. A new mother was surrounded by people who took turns assisting with daily tasks. But in the U.S., she was expected to fend for herself and her baby immediately after childbirth. I observed that besides standard holiday traditions, community-building practices were lacking.

So after 20 years of living in the U.S., I decided to create my own community rituals.

I started with my family. At dinners we banned books and devices, lit candles, and discussed set topics of conversation. We held weekly family meetings with opening and closing ceremonies and used a talking stick to enforce respectful communication. At birthday dinners, we took turns saying, "I love you because …"

Candlelit dinners were no longer saved for a special occasion. Using a talking stick helped me listen more attentively and choose my words more carefully. Huddling together at the end of each family meeting provided me with a sense of accomplishment. Each ritual, no matter how small, anchored me in something bigger and provided a sense of belonging.

Then we began to build rituals within the larger community. First, we hosted a multigenerational Sunday potluck with friends and family. Each week, five to 10 of us gathered, shared food, and recounted what made us grateful. During each meal, I noticed I was lighter, more engaged with others, and laughed more.

Later, we built more community rituals into the week. I posted on Nextdoor, asking our neighbors to join us on Monday evening walks to the neighborhood park and back.

In this age of isolation, we need nourishing and uplifting means of creating community by bringing together members of different generations as our ancestors did. From my experience in Iran, rituals can be particularly valuable during hard times. In the U.S., we don't have to worry about bombs and food rations, but we still have challenges to our security that affect our mental and physical health. Rituals can help us, though, by offering our communities opportunities for healing and support.

Ari Honarvar is an award-winning writer, speaker, and performer. In her work, she explores poetry, parenting, rituals, and the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. Her website is rumiwithaview.com. This work was previously published in Yes! Magazine.

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English 1C

July 25, 2020

Why We Should Open Our Borders

Refugees, inequalities, economic instabilities...the fact that we are bombarded by news on those topics every day is proof that we live in a world with lots of problems, and many of us suffer as a consequence. Nations have tried a variety of solutions, but the reality has not improved. Yet there exists a single easy measure that could solve almost all of the problems mentioned above: an open-border policy. The current border and immigration practices, including border controls and detention centers, are unjustified and counterproductive. (Note: The first body paragraph gives background on the problem, opportunity, or situation.) This paper discusses the refugee problem, the history of open-border policy, the refutations for the current border policies on philosophical and moral grounds, and the arguments why this open-border policy will work economically.

Refugees are a problem of worldwide concern. Recently the biggest wave of refugees came from Syria, which witnessed an eight-year-long civil war. In an interview, a Syrian refugee expresses deep sorrows regarding the loss of her home: “My brothers, sisters, uncles, neighbors, streets, the bread ovens, schools, children going to schools ...we miss all of that, everything in Syria is precious to us” she says, with tears hovering in her eyes (Firpo). She also exposes the terrible living conditions there: “[W]e didn’t run away, Syria has become uninhabitable. Not even animals could live there. No power, no running water, no safety, and no security. You don’t know who to fight...even when you lock yourself away, you’re not safe...I was most scared of seeing my children die right in front of me” (Firpo). (Note: Moving refugee testimonies serve as evidence supporting the claim that their situation is one of great urgency.) As heart-breaking as it sounds, we should also know that this is only the tip of the iceberg: Gerhard Hoffstaedter, an

anthropologist at the University of Queensland, states that there are around 70 million displaced people in developing countries, which is the highest recorded number since the 1950s, causing the United Nations to call this world issue “a crisis.” The leading nations in the world do not offer enough support to displaced people living in abject conditions. Refugees at the U.S.-Mexico border and in Southeast Asia and Australia are constantly kept in detention centers. Many nations do not comply with the provisions signed in the 1951 Refugee Convention and the succeeding 1967 Protocol; they treat the refugees only as those in passive need of simply humanitarian aids (Hoffstaedter). In this crisis, it is our common responsibility as members of an international community to help those who are in need.

Historically, the large-scale control of the mobility of people is a relatively new phenomenon worldwide. (Note: This body paragraph starts with a definition argument to show that the current trend is new. This argument later becomes support for the idea that open borders are possible.) In the modern era, border signifies “ever more restrictive immigration policies” at the same time grants “greater freedom of mobility to capital and commodities”, as defined in the editorial “Why No Borders.” This creates a contradictory ideology that could cause potential harm to those who need to migrate (Anderson, et al.). John Maynard Keynes dates the beginning of this process only back to World War I in the early 20th century. However, this trend did not become widespread until after World War II. According to a historical outline created by Christof Van Mol and Helga de Valk, due to the booming in the industrial production in northwestern Europe in the 1950s, the local workers were increasingly educated and gradually became whitecollar employers, leaving vacancies in blue-collar occupations (Mol and Valk).

Thus, those countries started recruiting immigrants from other parts of Europe and even North Africa: for example, Germany and France started seasonal working programs to attract immigrants (Mol and Valk). Because of the lack of job opportunities in the other parts of Europe and North Africa and the need for workers in the industrializing countries in Northern and Western Europe, “international migration was generally viewed positively because of its economic benefits, from the perspective of both the sending and the receiving countries" (Mol and Valk). This early migration pattern within

Europe provides the basic model for the European Union that builds on the fundamental ideology of the free movements of goods and human resources. In recent days, the European Union has become one of the biggest multinational organizations, which can also serve as a successful example of this open-border ideology, at least on a regional scale.

Borders do not satisfy the needs of contemporary societies. From both philosophical and moral perspectives, restrictive border policies are not justified. First of all, borders divide and subjugate people. The editorial “Why No Borders” describes the border as being“thoroughly ideological” (Anderson, et al.). The authors argue that because border policies try to categorize people into “desirable and non-desirable” according to their skills, race, or social status, etc., they thus create an interplay between “subjects and subjectivities,” placing people into “new types of power relationship” (Anderson, et al.). This is what is identified as the ultimate cause of the divisions and inequalities between people.

Some fear that competition from immigrants would cause a reduction in the wages of local workers (Caplan). (Note: In this body paragraph, the author attempts to disprove the counterargument about a downside of open borders for local workers.)This is not an uncalled-for worry, but it is also a misunderstanding of the nature of the open-border policy. Nick Srnicek reasons that this kind of competition has already existed under the current trend of globalization, where workers in developed countries are already competing against those in developing countries that have cheaper labor. He argues, “Workers in rich countries are already losing, as companies eliminate good jobs and move their factories and offices elsewhere” (Srnicek). The border serves companies by making workers in the developing world stay where wages are low. Thus, “companies can freely exploit” cheap labor. In this sense, workers on both sides will be better off under an open-border policy (Srnicek). A recent study from the University of Wisconsin-Madison investigating the economic implications of immigration between rich and poor countries concluded that the benefits of an open-border policy far outweigh the cons and that “the real wage effects are small” (Kennan).

Although an open border could lead to minor reductions in the wages of local workers in developed countries, there is a simple solution. Since the labor market follows the economic law of supply, work supply and wages are inversely related, meaning that the lower the supply of labor, the more wages rise. (Note: This paragraph could be seen as a limit and a rebuttal because the open border would need to be combined with changes to labor laws in order to avoid a possible bad effect.) Nick Srnicek proposes, “a shortening of the workweek...would reduce the amount of work supplied, spread the work out more equally among everyone and give more power to workers ... more free time to everyone” (Srnicek). Thus, although the open-border policy is not perfect, its downside is easy to address. (Note: The author does not investigate how much time, money, and will an open border policy would need; the argument remains mostly theoretical because it doesn’t address feasibility.)

As an expatriate myself, I can truly relate to this type of thinking. Due to a variety of the political, economic, and social limitations that I came across in my home country, I was not able to achieve self-actualization. In pursuit of a better education and a more free living environment, I went abroad and finally arrived in this country a few years ago. It was not until then that I gained a vision of my future. Now I am working in hopes that one day the vision could become reality. Sometimes I cannot help wondering what could happen if I was not so lucky to be where I am today. But at the same time, I am also conscious of the fact that there are also millions of people out there who cannot even conceive of what it is like to actualize their lives. (Note: The conclusion humanizes the possible benefits of the proposed solution.)I am sure that one of the mothers who escaped her war-torn home country with her family has the sole hope to witness her children growing up in a happy and free place, just like any mother in the world. I am sure that there is one little girl whose family fled her country in desperation who once studied so hard in school, dreaming of becoming the greatest scientist in the world. I am also sure that there is a young boy who survived persecutions and wishes to become a politician one day to make the world a better place for the downtrodden. Because of borders, these children can only dream of the things that many of us take for granted every day. We, as human beings, might be losing a great mother, great scientist, great politician, or just a great person who simply wishes for a better world. But everything

could be otherwise. Change requires nothing but a minimal effort. With open borders, we can help people achieve their dreams.

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