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High School Ethics Bowl
Regional Ethics Bowl Cases
Season 2013-'14

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1. One Child Too Many

Recently, Zhang Yimou, a Chinese film director and organizer of the 2008 Summer Olympics, was accused of violating China's One-Child Policy, allegedly fathering seven children with four different mothers. The One-Child Policy – enacted in 1979 to address China's social, economic, and environmental problems due to overpopulation – limits a couple to having only one child because there is not enough space, natural resources, and jobs to accommodate the booming population.¹

However, some consequences of enforcing this law include forced abortions, female infanticide, higher female suicide rates, and a gender imbalance ratio of 118 boys for every 100 girls. Journalist Ma Jian describes the policy as reducing "...women to numbers, objects, [and] a means of production; it has denied them control of their bodies and the basic human right to determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children."² Furthermore, some feel that the policy is unfair because the rich can afford to pay the fine for violating the policy.

In contrast, the United States does not have such a policy, and its citizens enjoy the liberty of having as many children as they like. Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar have nineteen children; the family stars in the TLC's reality TV show *19 Kids and Counting*. With income from real estate investments and their TV show, and by living frugally, the Duggar family is able to support themselves without government assistance.³ Nadya Suleman, the famous "octomom," used reproductive technologies to have octuplets and six older children, totaling fourteen children. Suleman is currently under investigation for welfare fraud.⁴ Orlando Shaw has twenty-two children with fourteen different mothers, and has been sued for child support.⁵

Study Questions:

- (1) Under what conditions, if at all, should a government be allowed to limit the number of children parents can have or interfere with one's liberty to reproduce?
- (2) Should the government be allowed to limit or prohibit the use of reproductive technologies available that increase the chances of multiple births?
- (3) What is the media's responsibility in covering these stories?

¹ <http://aldossary-f.blogspot.com/2007/08/chinasoverpopulation.html>

² http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/22/opinion/chinas-brutal-one-child-policy.html?_r=0

³ <http://shine.yahoo.com/financially-fit/duggars-support-nineteen-kids-live-debt-free-180400323.html>

⁴ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/10/octomom-welfare-nadya-suleman_n_3415963.html

⁵ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/06/orlando-shaw-father-22-children-14-women_n_3397397.html

2. Frankenburger

Have scientific advancements enabled us to stop farming animals for food? Dr. Mark Post at Maastricht University in the Netherlands has created a five-ounce burger in the laboratory. The synthetic meat is formed from stem cells using tissue-engineering techniques and consists of about 20,000 thin strips of cultured muscle tissue. Dr. Post claims that the burger “tastes reasonably good,” but it costs \$325,000 to produce.¹

If we can safely and affordably develop meat in a lab, some argue, we should stop farming animals for food. Not only will animals not be harmed, they claim, but synthetic meat may also be healthier for us and can be produced more efficiently than farm-grown meat. A journal study published in *Environmental Science and Technology* claims that synthetic meat reduces greenhouse gas emissions and requires less use of land, water, and energy.²

Others, however, argue that if synthetic meat replaces farm-grown meat, this would negatively impact the animal farming industry that depends on raising animals as income. In addition, the idea of “test-tube” meat may turn off many meat-eaters, who may view synthetic meat as unnatural. In addition, there is no evidence that the test-tube meat is safe for consumption. Since synthetic meat can be genetically engineered to enhance desirable traits, synthetic meat is subject to the same criticisms as other genetically modified foods.

Animal rights activists are split on this issue. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), for example, is offering a \$1 million dollar prize to the first scientist to bring synthetic chicken to the market because its “primary interest is in replacing *chicken* factories, transport, and slaughter [since] more than 1 million chickens are eaten every hour in the U.S. alone.”³ Other activists argue that those who support synthetic meat “...are supporting the use of animals in research, the continued (reduced or not) exploitation of animals, and are ignoring the use of animals for other purposes.”⁴

Study Questions:

- (1) Should we support the research and development of synthetic, genetically-engineered meat?
- (2) If test-tube meat can be safely mass-produced and kept affordable, would it be ethically permissible to kill animals for food?

¹ http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/14/science/engineering-the-325000-in-vitro-burger.html?_r=0

² Tupmisto, H. L. and Teixeira de Mattos, M. J. (2011). Environmental Impacts of Cultured Meat Production. *Environmental Science & Technology*, 45 (14), 6117–6123.

³ <http://www.peta.org/features/In-Vitro-Meat-Contest.aspx>

⁴ <http://www.examiner.com/article/in-vitro-meat-has-no-place-animal-rights-campaigns>

3. Forgiving Political Sex Scandals

Do politicians – the leaders and lawmakers of our country – need to have good moral character? Sex scandals used to end political careers, but within the past few years, several scandal-tainted politicians have made comebacks. In 2009, Mark Sanford admitted to having an extramarital affair with an Argentinian woman and was under investigation for using government funds for his trips to see her. Sanford won a special election in 2013 to become a South Carolina House Representative.¹ Anthony Weiner, a married man infamous for sexting with other women on Twitter, is running for mayor in New York City.² Former New York Governor Eliot Spitzer, who allegedly used tax dollars on travel and hotel rooms to meet with prostitutes, is running for New York City Comptroller.³ On the *The Colbert Report*, July 18, 2013, Stephen Colbert asked Eliot Spitzer if it seems that voters are more forgiving than they used to be and if they were, would this forgiveness signal “progress for our country or the slow decay of our moral values?”⁴

Historically, European politicians survive scathing sex scandals. This implies that many Europeans believe that how a politician acts in the bedroom does not affect how he or she governs. Many U.S. voters claim to feel similarly. When given the choice between voting for a candidate with the same political values but lacking in moral character and a candidate with different political values, many U.S. voters say they will choose the candidate with the same political values despite moral character.

Study Questions:

- (1) Should personal character be taken into consideration when electing public officials?
- (2) To what extent, if at all, should sexual indiscretions of politicians be forgiven?
- (3) Is forgiveness of sexual indiscretions a demonstration of social progress or an erosion of ethics and values?
- (4) Should scandal-tainted politicians run for public office even at the expense of their political party’s potential success at the polls?

¹ http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/08/us/south-carolina-election-a-referendum-on-sanford.html?_r=0

² <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2013/07/24/pressure-mounts-on-anthony-weiner-to-quit-nyc-mayoral-race-after-sexting/>

³ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/03/12/spitzer-prostitute-detail_n_91116.html

⁴ <http://www.colbertnation.com/full-episodes/thu-july-18-2013-jeff-bridges>

4. Compensation for College Athletes?

Former Duke player and current college basketball analyst Jay Bilas is an outspoken critic of the NCAA's stance on student-athlete compensation. In a 2012 opinion piece for the *New York Times*, Bilas argues that although "It is not immoral for the NCAA to make money off of athletics," it is "profoundly immoral for the NCAA to restrict athletes from receiving compensation while everyone else profits."¹ He is referring to the fact that while high-profile college athletes provide universities, corporations, and the NCAA itself with windfall profits, the athletes themselves are not compensated except through scholarships.

In his book *The New Plantation*, Dr. Billy Hawkins of the University of Georgia draws attention to another reality: the majority of athletes generating revenue for the NCAA and other institutions are African-American while the majority of people running those institutions and reaping the economic benefits are predominantly white.

Proponents of compensation for student athletes point out that even when the student-athletes' scholarships are factored into the equation, these students still generate much more money for the university than they receive. Additionally, because these students compete at such a high level, they spend more time training than focusing on academics. In short, student-athletes sacrifice their own well-being for the benefit of the university and receive relatively little in return.

Opponents of compensation for student athletes, however, point out the difficulty that would come with paying athletes. Who gets to decide how much each athlete is paid? Would all athletes be paid the same? Or would athletes be paid according to how much revenue they bring in to the university? How would such a figure be determined? In addition to problems dealing with compensation, some argue that paying amateur athletes would ruin the spirit of college athletics. Love of the game and pride in representing one's university and community may be diminished, opponents say, if athletes were compensated.

Study Questions

- (1) Do scholarships, free room and board, and stipends provide adequate compensation for student athletes?
- (2) Should college athletes be paid? If so, should their scholarships and other benefits be eliminated?
- (3) Is the current structure of NCAA sports exploitative?

¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/03/13/ncaa-and-the-interests-of-student-athletes/college-athletes-should-be-compensated>

5. Compensation for Non-Profits

In April 2013 the *Huffington Post* ran an article titled, “10 Insanely Overpaid Nonprofit Execs.”¹ The subject is receiving a great deal of attention. New York and North Carolina have both launched inquiries into the salaries of non-profit executives working for organizations that receive state funding, arguing that the non-profit sector is not a place for executives “to line their own pockets” but to help citizens.² North Carolina has even considered a proposal to put a \$100,000 cap on the salaries of non-profit executives whose organizations receive state support.

According to this argument, those looking to earn top salaries shouldn’t seek employment in charitable organizations. People in the non-profit sector should focus on helping other people, not advancing their own self-interest. The money that now goes to high-paid executives should be spent on those causes the organizations are addressing, such as alleviating poverty or educating voters.

Dan Pallotta, who created the successful AIDS Rides and Breast Cancer 3-Day events, disagrees. In a recent TED Talk, Pallotta argued that as long as the non-profit sector is forced to play by different rules than the private sector, it will inevitably be less successful. Although the average salary for the CEO of a hunger charity is \$80,000, the average salary for someone who has an MBA and ten years of experience is \$400,000. Pallotta argues that we cannot expect the most talented and driven people to work for non-profits when they could make so much more working in the private sector. Furthermore, those causes and charities that are not able to recruit the top talent will inevitably suffer. Pallotta thus recommends that to remain effective and vital, non-profits need to pay their leaders competitively.

Study Questions

- (1) Should non-profit executives be paid competitive salaries?
- (2) Is it unethical for executives of state-subsidized non-profit organizations to earn \$100,000 or more in annual salaries?

¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/08/10-insanely-overpaid-nonp_n_3038162.html

² <http://www.indyweek.com/indyweek/lawmakers-consider-cap-on-nonprofit-salaries/Content?oid=3619669;>
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/05/new-york-governor-andrew-n_919642.html

6. Legalization of Marijuana

The legalization of marijuana is gaining traction in some states: Colorado voters, for example, recently approved a measure that makes it legal to smoke marijuana.¹ Supporters of marijuana legalization often pose an economic argument. Because of the increasing cost and ineffectiveness of the “war on drugs,” states could tax and regulate marijuana thus making it safer for use while simultaneously creating significant revenue for state and local governments.

Supporters of marijuana legalization also claim that it is an issue of racial justice. Because African-Americans are disproportionately arrested and incarcerated for drug use, some feel that our current drug laws facilitate the mass disenfranchisement of African-American males. This disenfranchisement, they argue, results in forms of social control that are similar to those in effect during the Jim Crow era. According to advocates of legalization, the fact that these drug laws so disproportionately affect African-Americans is a gross injustice.

Those who oppose the legalization of the drug, however, argue that the government has an obligation to create active and productive citizens and that legalizing marijuana harms the attainment of that goal.² Former President Jimmy Carter recently said, “We must do everything we can to discourage marijuana use, as we do now with tobacco and excessive drinking.”³ Perhaps even more importantly, opponents argue that marijuana legalization is a “slippery slope” that could lead to the legalization of drugs such as cocaine and heroin. “Legalizing marijuana ... has the potential to set a dangerous precedent,” wrote Josh Divine, a recent graduate of the University of North Colorado, in an editorial for UNC’s student newspaper *The Mirror*. “Already, the legality of alcohol is used as an argument for legalizing marijuana. If marijuana is legalized, it too may be used to incrementally legalize more dangerous drugs. Once society grants one thing, it is not too far off [from granting] legality to something slightly more damaging or controversial, which can then be used to advocate for the legalization of still something worse.” “Keeping marijuana illegal,” Divine wrote, firmly “shuts the door.”⁴

Study Questions

- (1) Should the fact that African-Americans are more likely to be arrested on non-violent drug charges affect state decisions to legalize marijuana use? To what extent should this factor be considered?
- (2) How much weight should state legislators give the “slippery slope” argument (i.e. that legalizing marijuana could lead to the legalization of dangerous drugs such as cocaine and heroin) when considering proposals to decriminalize recreational marijuana use?

¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/05/colorado-is-new-amsterdam_n_3390123.html

² http://www.stltoday.com/news/opinion/columns/not-so-fast-a-case-against-legalizing-marijuana/article_4b7ffc76-5cab-5569-a101-fbda63e2c14.html

³ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/17/jimmy-carter-marijuana-legalization_n_3293861.html

⁴ <http://www.uncmirror.com/opinions/column-marijuana-legalization-fully-ripe-for-unneeded-slippery-slope-1.2848905>

7. Forced Fatherhood

The debate over abortion rights almost always focuses on women. Conservatives tend to argue that abortion is unjustified, while liberals often contend that women have a right to privacy and to control their own bodies. But what about the men who caused the women to become pregnant? Prospective fathers are frequently absent from these discussions.

Because of this omission, some men feel forced into fatherhood. If a pregnant woman decides that she wants to have the child, then she is able to do so, even if the man does not want the child. In some cases, he is then expected to pay child support. In short, it seems as if women have options men don't: women can choose to abort or carry a fetus to term regardless of men's wishes. It seems only fair, the argument continues, that in the latter case, men should not have to pay child support for an unwanted child.¹

Those who argue that men ought to be held responsible for child support, however, point to historical and current gender inequalities that affect income and job opportunities. Furthermore, some women's rights advocates contend that even though the father may be forced to pay child support, he is not obligated to raise the child, a responsibility that falls to the mother and is much more burdensome than paying child support. In this view, paying child support is the least a father can do. Even when a father does so, gender inequalities remain. If men were no longer forced to pay child support, this would only serve to make gender inequalities even worse.

Study Questions

- (1) Is it ethical for men to be held financially responsible for children they did not want while women have the ability to get an abortion?
- (2) Should gender inequalities affect forced fatherhood?

¹ <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/12/is-forced-fatherhood-fair/>

8. Endangered Animals on the Loose

At 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 19, 2011, Sheriff Matt Lutz of Muskingum County, Ohio, received the first of several 911 calls indicating that something was wrong at the private 73-acre Thompson wildlife preserve. These calls were not unusual. Terry and Marian Thompson, the property owners, were known exotic animal collectors. Described by friends and neighbors as somewhat reclusive, Mr. Thompson had faced a series of problems with law enforcement officers over taxes, gun permits, and animal safety issues. For the next several hours, 911 calls continued to come in with reports of wild animal sightings – including Bengal tigers, lions, bears, wolves and monkeys – along Zanesville’s roads, at local farms, and on other public and private properties. One woman reported to the 911 operator, “There’s a bear and a lion out. Right up behind us. They’re chasing Terry’s horses!”¹

When deputy sheriffs arrived on the Thompson property just a few miles west of downtown Zanesville, they discovered a chaotic and bloody scene. Mr. Thompson, aged 62, lay dead in his driveway from a self-inflicted gunshot wound and the cages, previously holding the Thompson’s 56 exotic and endangered animals, were open. Deputy Sheriffs concluded that Thomson decided to “free” the animals before ending his life. Recognizing the danger to public safety, Sheriff Lutz ordered all roads near the property be shut down and requested that all Zanesville schools be closed the following day while steps were taken to control the situation. His next decision, however, outraged many animal rights activists and Americans across the country.

Describing the freed animals as “mature, very big, [and] aggressive” with “high potential for being dangerous to humans,” Lutz gave his deputies a shoot to kill order. “We are not talking about your normal everyday house cat or dog,” Lutz said. “These are 300-pound Bengal tigers that had to be put down. We could not have [these] animals running loose.”² By Wednesday afternoon deputy sheriffs had shot and killed 49 of the 56 animals, including the 18 endangered Bengal tigers, 17 lions, and 8 bears. Six of the 56 animals were spared through the use of tranquilizer darts; only one animal - a monkey - remained unaccounted for.

Many who opposed Lutz’s order said that more tranquilizer darts should have been used and the animals died needlessly. Will Travers, CEO and co-founder of the *Born Free Foundation* agrees but goes one step further, strongly objecting to private possession of exotic animals. “What happened in Ohio is appalling,” Travers said. “All those animals [were] imprisoned for no good reason All those wandering animals, confused by their sudden and unfathomable “freedom,” were shot dead as though they were alien invaders. None of that had to happen. Private possession of exotic animals is inexcusable and puts human lives at risk.”³ Travers now actively campaigns to make private possession of exotic animals illegal.

Study Questions:

- (1) Should state and local authorities do more to regulate private animal collections in order to ensure the safety of local citizens, as well as ensuring the safety and care of the animals collected?
- (2) Is it ethical for private citizens to maintain “exotic” or “endangered” animals on their private property?

¹ http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/20/us/police-kill-dozens-of-animals-freed-from-ohio-preserve.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

² http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/19/zanesville-ohio-exotic-animals-killed-_n_1019884.html

³ <http://www.cnn.com/2011/10/19/opinion/travers-escape-wild-animals-ohio>

9. Security versus Privacy

Americans were shocked this past June when Edward Snowden, a previously unknown U.S. security contractor, announced that the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) was collecting millions of private communications – emails, texts, and telephone records – from thousands of unsuspecting U.S. citizens each day. Snowden leaked top-secret documents to *The Washington Post* and *The Guardian*, a London based newspaper, in support of his shocking allegations.¹ The records collected (referred to as “metadata”) were not the overseas communications authorized for collection by the 2001 U.S. Patriot Act or Patriot Extension Act of 2011 but, according to Snowden, were the daily communications of ordinary U.S. citizens with friends, families, employers, co-workers, and even romantic interests here in the United States. Snowden shocked the American public even further by claiming that he could easily tap into any private email – including President Barak Obama’s – without having to demonstrate probable cause or even obtaining a warrant.²

Reactions in the United States were strong, immediate, and mixed. Some hailed Snowden as a “hero” and “whistleblower” who willingly sacrificed himself to ensure Americans knew the truth about their government. Others, however, reviled Snowden as an “opportunistic traitor,” claiming that a “real hero” would have hired U.S. attorneys and then made his revelations to U.S. Congressional representatives rather than fleeing to nations with historically strained U.S. relationships. Snowden flew from Hawaii, where he had been living, to Hong Kong a month before the allegations were made public; he subsequently flew to Moscow where he has received temporary political asylum. The Department of Justice is now asking for Snowden’s return in order to prosecute him for violations of the Espionage Act.

As inquiries continue, the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, sent a written apology to Congress for what he termed a “clearly erroneous” statement, he had given under oath, March 12, 2013. During his testimony Clapper denied the existence of any metadata collection on U.S. citizens. His denial was false.³ Shortly after, Thomas Drake, a former NSA senior executive, stated that certain parts of the government “have become a criminal enterprise” and Snowden’s only option “was to escape the United States of America.”⁴

Study Questions:

- (1) Is it ethical for government employees to reveal classified information entrusted to them?
- (2) Is it ethical for government agencies to collect private communication records between U.S. citizens?

¹ <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2013/07/26/edward-snowden-fbi-russia-nsa/2589319/>

² <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/06/12/former-nsa-director-michael-hayden-responds-to-edward-snowden-claim.html>

³ <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2013/07/03/dni-chief-clapper-apologizes-for-erroneous-answer-on-nsa-surveillance/>

⁴ <http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/washington-whispers/2013/07/25/nsa-whistle-blowers-defend-snowdens-decision-to-flee>

10. Indian Child Welfare Act

In a June 2013 child custody case that one justice called “heartbreaking,” the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that 3-year-old Veronica, a native American Indian girl, should not have been taken away from her adoptive parents, Matt and Melanie Capobianco. Baby Veronica had lived with the Capobiancos in South Carolina for nearly two years when her biological father, Dusten Brown, a member of the Cherokee Nation, sued for custody and won by invoking the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).¹

According to the American Bar Association (ABA), the ICWA was enacted in 1978 to curtail the high rate at which Indian children were removed from their traditional homes and essentially from Indian culture as a whole. “Before 1978,” the ABA reported, “as many as 25 to 35 percent of the Indian children in certain states were removed from their homes and placed in non-Indian homes, by state courts, welfare agencies, or private adoption agencies.”² Although Brown had previously renounced his parental rights via a text message, Brown stated that he had changed his mind and believed that Veronica would be better served living with other native American Indians. Immediately after winning his case in South Carolina, Mr. Brown took custody of 27-month-old Veronica and moved to Bartlesville, Oklahoma, a city neighboring the Tahlequah-based Cherokee Nation. According to Melanie Capobianco, she and her husband Matt were devastated but vowed to regain legal custody by appealing to the U.S. Supreme Court.

After the Supreme Court decided in favor of the Capobiancos, the Supreme Court of South Carolina ordered a family court to finalize Veronica’s adoption. The justices noted that they have “consistently found that the biological father’s parental rights had been terminated” and that he [Mr. Brown] “had no standing to contest the adoption proceedings.”

In reaction, several Indian groups are planning to file a federal lawsuit to “protect Veronica’s interests” and called the case “an alarming failure of the judicial system.”³ The Capobiancos, on the other hand, say that this decision will prevent the “tragic disruption of other adoptions.” They also note that according to court papers filed by Mr. Brown, Baby Veronica is only “1.2 percent (3/256) Cherokee Indian.”⁴

This case has brought national attention to the rights of native American Indians, the rights of adoptive parents, and ultimately to the rights of children to be brought up in the best of all possible conditions: financially, culturally, educationally, and emotionally.

Study Questions:

- (1) Should Veronica be returned to her adoptive parents or remain with her biological father?
- (2) What criteria should be used for determining custody in disputes between adoptive parents and biological parents? What agency, person, or persons should have the authority to make that final decision?

¹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/06/25/us-usa-court-custody-idUSBRE9501AO20130625>

² http://www.americanbar.org/content/newsletter/publications/gp_solo_magazine_home/gp_solo_magazine_index/indianchildwelfareact.html

³ <http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/sc-denies-requests-rehear-adoption-case-19766137>

⁴ <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/06/26/close-call-for-indian-rights-in-baby-girl-ruling.html>

11. Déjà vu: Arming Present Day Friends

During the past 35 years the U.S. has armed “freedom fighters” in Nicaragua, revolutionaries in Angola, and other international military forces the State Department believed would advance both U.S. interests and the interests of our allies. The reasons given for providing such military aid and weaponry often include “liberating” a nation’s citizens from “oppressive regimes” or to “repel invaders” from sovereign territories. These actions, at times, have benefitted U.S. interests and at other times have not. In some cases, the Department of Defense has discovered that billions of dollars in U.S. aid and weapons were later used against our own U.S. military forces, once mutually advantageous alliances had disintegrated.

For example, during the 1980s, the United States armed the Mujahideen in Afghanistan to fight Soviet invaders. Convinced that the Soviet Union was running out of oil and had their eyes on OPEC’s middle-eastern oil fields, “... the CIA began one of its longest and most expensive covert operations, supplying billions of dollars in arms to Afghan guerrillas fighting the Soviets.” The arms shipments included hundreds of “stinger missiles” that were used with “deadly accuracy against Soviet helicopters” and “among the rebel recipients of U.S. arms [was] Osama bin Laden.”¹ In Iraq, the Reagan and Bush administrations supplied the government of Saddam Hussein with billions of dollars in aid and equipment during its nine-year war with Iran.² Just three short years later U.S. forces reported encountering U.S. weapons systems and equipment during the Gulf War and Operation Desert Storm.

Again in 2012, U.S.-approved weapon systems likely ended up in the wrong hands when the U.S. helped Libyan rebels oust Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi from power. According to a December 5, 2012 *New York Times* report, the U.S. relied on our allies in Qatar to provide the hardware: “The Obama administration secretly gave its blessing to arms shipments to Libyan rebels from Qatar last year, but American officials later grew alarmed as evidence grew that Qatar was [also] turning some of the weapons over to Islamic militants.”³

In 2013, the State Department is considering arming Syrian rebels fighting the regime of President Bashar al-Assad. According to a July 12, 2013 *Reuters* report, “Republicans and Democrats on the House and Senate Intelligence Committees have expressed worries that the arms could end up in the hands of Islamist militants in Syria like the Nusra Front,” but may still go forward with the plans. According to the *Reuters* report, House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rogers indicated “strong reservations” but believes “the committees were persuaded and we will be able to move forward.” Supporters of the plan hope that deliveries of U.S. provided arms will begin before 2014.⁴

Study Questions:

- (1) Is it ethical to arm rebels and revolutionaries in countries we are not at war with?
- (2) What criteria should be used to determine if a rebel or revolutionary faction receives U.S. military aid and/or financing? What organization, person, or persons should have the authority to make that decision?

¹ <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,450997-92,00.html>

² <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/washingtonpost/access/74038683.html?dids=74038683:74038683&FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS:FT&fmac=&date=Jul+22%2C+1992&author=R.+Jeffrey+Smith&desc=Dozens+of+U.S.+Items+Used+in+Iraq+Arms>

³ <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/06/world/africa/weapons-sent-to-libyan-rebels-with-us-approval-fell-into-islamist-hands.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

⁴ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/23/us-usa-syria-arms-idUSBRE96L0W520130723>

12. The After Party

Regina is throwing the junior class post-prom party at her house and invites Tom and Christine who have been dating for almost a year. Tom and Christine know that some of their other classmates will probably choose to drink while at the party but decided that if their parents give them permission to go, they will respect the law and their parents' rules and not consume any alcohol.

After much discussion with their parents, Tom and Christine (who cannot yet drive) get permission to attend Regina's party, on two conditions: Tom and Christine must not drink, and they must leave the party at 1:00 a.m. when Tom's father, Scott King, will arrive to pick them up.

Tom and Christine have a great dinner at the country club, take lots of pictures with their friends, and dance the night away. After the dance ends at 11:00 p.m. Tom and Christine hitch a ride with Regina to her house where the after-prom festivities begin.

After finishing his fifth straight vodka martini, Mr. King gets into his car at 12:45 a.m. to drive to Regina's house. Fortunately, he arrives safely despite his high blood alcohol content. The kids leave the party on time and both slide into the backseat of Mr. King's SUV.

As Mr. King makes small talk with the kids, Christine smells alcohol on his breath and thinks he is slurring some of his words. Tom doesn't act as if anything is wrong and Christine is unsure what to do. She feels like Mr. King may not be sober enough to drive them home, but she knows that it's legal for adults to consume some quantity of alcohol and still operate a vehicle. Christine had been taught the dangers of drunk driving by her parents, but this is not a situation she ever imagined facing. Although she always knew better than to get into a car with a drunk teenager driving, she'd never faced this situation with an adult.

Christine doesn't want to defy Mr. King's authority or disrespect him, but she also wants everyone to get home safely. Unfortunately, Christine and Tom are the only sober party-goers, and neither has a license to drive.

Study Questions:

- (1) Does Christine have a duty to look out for Tom and his father and make sure they return home safely as well?
- (2) If there were no way for Christine to communicate with anyone other than the party-goers, what should she do to ensure everyone's safety?
- (3) Should adults and teens be held to the same ethical standards, despite the differences in their respective authority?

13. Physician-Assisted Suicide

Ethan Rimmel, a 41-year-old psychology professor and father of two, took a lethal dose of prescription sedatives June 13, 2011 and died shortly after. Ethan had been diagnosed with terminal cancer one year earlier. Deciding that he would control the time and place of his death, he contacted physicians in the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance (SCCA) Hospital's "Death with Dignity Program." Once Ethan received additional medical opinions confirming that his cancer was indeed terminal, received counseling, and signed waivers, the SCCA provided Ethan with the lethal mix of prescription medications that would painlessly end his life after he ingested them. Explaining Ethan's decision and actions, Grace Wang, his former partner recalls that, "One of the things Ethan kept saying is he didn't want to deteriorate to the point where he couldn't interact with his kids." Dr. Elizabeth Loggers, Medical Director at SCCA, indicated that Ethan's wishes were not unusual. "If you look at the way most Americans say they want to die, it is in their home, with their family members present, not in pain, and with their mental faculties intact," she said.¹

Since the passage of Washington state's 2009 Death with Dignity Act, Ethan and 240 other terminal patients within the state have chosen physician-assisted suicide (PAS) as a viable option for ending potential suffering and ensuring their deaths occurred peacefully, as pain-free as possible, and at a time and place of their choosing. Montana, Vermont, and Oregon are the only other states where PAS is legal. In 1994 Oregon became the first state to legalize PAS. Since that time, 1,050 terminal patients in Oregon have requested lethal medication and 673 have died using it. According to Loggers, the most common reasons for patients to request PAS are, "loss of autonomy, an inability to engage in enjoyable activities and a loss of dignity." Loggers asserts that patients are not making these decisions lightly. "Each year," she says, "there are over 50,000 deaths in Washington state, and cancer is the second leading cause of death. The number who chose to participate in the Death with Dignity program is miniscule."² Six other states including Pennsylvania, Hawaii, and Massachusetts are also considering Death with Dignity provisions.

Opponents of PAS programs, however, see "Death with Dignity" laws as a "corruption of the ethical code of the health care profession going all the way back to the Hippocratic Oath." A physician's job is to save lives, not end them, opponents say. "I believe it's God's job to decide when someone should pass away," said Edward Chase, an outspoken opponent of PAS in Vermont. Others, however, fear that incorrect diagnoses could lead to unwarranted PAS procedures. Erica Reill told Vermont Senate committees that she had been diagnosed with a "terminal illness" only to learn later that the diagnosis was incorrect. "How many other people are getting wrong diagnoses?" she asked.³ Other opponents worry that terminal patients may be pressured into PAS procedures by family or friends who are unable to deal with the lingering demise of a loved one. On May 20, 2013, Governor Peter Shumlin signed Vermont's "Death with Dignity Bill" making Vermont the fourth state where PAS is legal.⁴

Study Questions:

- (1) Under what conditions, if any, should physicians have the right to assist patients with suicide?
- (2) Should states legislate PAS or should end-of-life decisions be left entirely to patients and their doctors?
- (3) What circumstances, if any, could justify suicide of any kind?

¹ <http://www.nbcnews.com/health/doctor-assisted-death-dads-choice-sheds-light-national-issue-1C9299977>

² <http://health.usnews.com/health-news/news/articles/2013/04/10/physician-assisted-suicide-program-rarely-used-study-finds>

³ http://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/article/20130129/NEWS03/301290015?source=nletter-top5&nclick_check=1

⁴ <http://ncronline.org/news/politics/vermont-now-death-state-doctor-assisted-suicide-law-bishop-says>

14. Conscientious Objection

Although the United States has not imposed conscription since 1973, the government can still legally do so. Currently, all male U.S. residents and citizens must register with the Selective Service, upon turning eighteen, providing a record that can be used in future drafts. However, exemptions can be made for those found physically unfit for combat or those who are found to be “conscientious objectors” to war and morally opposed to combat. Those exempted may serve in roles that do not require using weapons (such as providing medical aid) or participate in other forms of national service such as “conservation, caring for the very young or very old, education, [or] healthcare.”¹ Those who object to even these forms of service can face time in prison.

Throughout U.S. history, the requirements for having one’s “conscientious objector” status recognized have varied.² Since the beginning of military service in local militias, exemptions were provided for those who were members of certain churches that obligated pacifism, such as the Mennonites, Amish, Quakers, and the Church of the Brethren. Although members of non-Christian religions that prohibit participation in combat were also exempted from conscription, potential objectors still had to carefully describe the creed or official statements of their religion, sect, or organization that prohibited participation in combat.

Stephen Carey, born in Philadelphia in 1915 to a Quaker family, received a draft notice in 1942, in the midst of World War II. He claimed and obtained conscientious objector status because of his religious beliefs, and served in civilian work camps throughout the war.

In 1970, during the Vietnam War, the Supreme Court significantly expanded the number of people who could legally be exempted from military service. In *Welsh v. United States*, the Court ruled that the defendant, Welsh, who had refused to be inducted into the military because he opposed all actions in which people killed others – including war – could be exempt from military service for purely secular reasons. Non-religious conscientious objectors could be recognized as long as their moral views were “held with the same strength of traditional religious convictions.” A second Supreme Court case in 1971, *Gillette v. United States*, established limits to the liberalized conscientious objector status laws.³ That decision affirmed that exemption from military service could be granted for secular reasons but could not be granted to those whose objections were based solely on their perceived “justness” of the war in question.

Stephen Carey would probably have agreed with the finding in *Welsh*, but he may have taken issue with the finding in *Gillette*. “I have no illusions that my pacifist views are going to prevail, none at all,” Carey said. “But every great change in expanding the dimensions of human freedom has come from very small original beginnings: somebody said no.”

Study Questions:

- (1) Under what circumstances, if any, should someone be able to object to military service?
- (2) Can one legitimately object to serving in a “just war”? How would a “just war” be defined?

¹ <http://www.sss.gov/FSconsobj.htm>

² <http://www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/conscientiousobjection/co%20website/pages/HistoryNew.htm>

³ <http://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/401/437/>

15. Trayvon Martin and the Use of Lethal Force

The shooting death of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed African-American teenager, by George Zimmerman, a volunteer neighborhood watchman of Hispanic and Caucasian descent, sparked public discussion about racial profiling, concealed carry permits, and self-defense laws across America.

Almost as soon as the February 26, 2012 incident was reported, public figures began speculating that Martin had been pursued and gunned down without justification, in part because of his race. Though recent nearby burglaries had given Zimmerman some reason to scrutinize suspicious behavior, Martin was simply out for a leisurely stroll – on his way home after a trip to the market. Many assumed this was a clear case of murder, especially when a 911 tape surfaced in which the operator asked Zimmerman to discontinue his pursuit of Martin, and another in which a voice is heard screaming for help, followed by a gunshot.

However, at trial Zimmerman's defense attorneys argued that while Zimmerman had followed Martin, Martin punched Zimmerman without provocation, gained a dominant position in a ground struggle, and slammed Zimmerman's head on the sidewalk until he was nearly unconscious. In a police video recorded the day after the event and played at trial, Zimmerman claimed that when his holstered handgun became visible during the struggle, Martin exclaimed, "You're going to die tonight [expletive]," and reached for the weapon. Fearing that Martin would use it to kill him, Zimmerman drew it from his holster and shot Martin once through his chest, ending the struggle in a way Zimmerman claims he felt necessary to defend his life.

Witnesses proved unhelpful to the jury, providing contradictory accounts of the event. Some claimed that they saw Zimmerman on top of Martin. Others claimed they saw Martin on top of Zimmerman. Martin's mother testified that it was her son's voice screaming for help on the 911 recording. Zimmerman's mother testified that it was instead her son's voice screaming for help.

A medical examiner testified that the only trauma to Martin's body other than the gunshot were scuff marks on his knuckles. But while police photos and a medical report confirmed that Zimmerman suffered cuts to the back of his head and a broken nose, a physician testified that the injuries were not life threatening.

Though the jury found that the state did not prove Zimmerman guilty of manslaughter or murder beyond a reasonable doubt, juror B29, seemingly frustrated with Florida's self-defense law and the technical legal definitions of "murder" and "manslaughter," said afterwards that she felt Zimmerman "got away with murder." On the other hand, juror B37 said afterwards that while she believed Zimmerman shouldn't have pursued Martin as far as he did, once the struggle was underway, Zimmerman was within his rights to respond with deadly force. "If he felt threatened that his life was going to be taken away from him," she said, "or he was going to have bodily harm, he had a right."

Study Questions:

(1) Under what circumstances, if any, is it morally permissible to use deadly force against another person? How does this standard apply to the Martin/Zimmerman case, based on the various versions of events presented by the prosecution and defense?

(2) Shortly after the trial Zimmerman was pulled over by police in Texas for a traffic violation. Video footage of the stop suggested that Zimmerman had a handgun in his glove box, which the officer allowed him to keep, presumably because Zimmerman continues to hold the Florida concealed carry permit he held at the time of the Martin shooting. Should Zimmerman be allowed to legally carry a concealed weapon?

- (3) Zimmerman was accused by some of determining that Martin looked suspicious, at least in part, due to his race. Is racial profiling ever morally permissible? Explain.
- (4) All but one of the jurors in the Zimmerman trial were Caucasian. What does it mean to have a 'jury of your peers,' and should race play a role? What are the ethical implications of that?
- (5) In what ways do the roles of attorneys and jurors differ from the roles of ethics bowl participants? In what ways are they similar? Explain.

¹ The video can viewed at <http://newsfeed.time.com/2012/06/21/watch-video-shows-george-zimmerman-reenacting-fight-with-trayvon-martin/>.
Warning: Zimmerman uses some expletives when recounting the event.

² <http://abcnews.go.com/US/george-zimmerman-juror-murder/story?id=19770659>

³ <http://www.cnn.com/2013/07/15/justice/zimmerman-juror-book>