Student Media Housing Fair
November 3-4, 2021
Memorial Union/Cady Mall
Tempe Campus
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Are you looking for a place to live?  
Come to the Fair!

The bi-annual ASU Student Media Housing Fair features services that can assist with your transition to off-campus living. Representatives from a wide range of residential communities and businesses on and off campus will be available to answer your questions. Come by for free food, giveaways, & more!

Join the ASU Off-Campus Students Group on Facebook to connect with students.
Editor's letter

After disaster, comes transformation — a process distinctly different for each person and each stage of their life. In isolation, one is forced to reconcile with the patched-up wounds they once hid. Victims of sexual violence seek to transform the means for attaining justice. Tech experts grapple with building ethical frameworks for their tools. Immigrants revel in new-found freedoms after long immigration journeys. And entomologists preserve and persevere in the midst of mass insect extinction. On all fronts, internal change serves as a catalyst for systemic change.

We’ll never be the same again. So let’s sit and be with the version we have now.
The wooden drawers look modest at first. With a light pine stain, a metal handle and a small, metallic framed label, they sit stacked in seemingly endless rows and columns.

But to open any one of the drawers is to unlock a microcosm — a cosmos of colors, patterns, eyes, wings, antennae, abdomens and thoraxes, all pinned in neat, white boxes.

The Hasbrouck Insect Collection at the School of Life Sciences flourished from a small research depository to a menagerie of over 2 million pinned insects.

The collection continues to serve as a rich resource physically and, more recently, virtually as ASU researchers spearhead new adaptations for cataloging specimens online.

“Tt’s like a hidden treasure,” collection manager Sangmi Lee said.

Contemporary collection
Housed in a quiet building about two miles from campus, ASU’s biocollections camouflage into surrounding office plazas and industrial parks.

The Hasbrouck Insect Collection sits behind a glass-encased lab right around the corner from the entrance.

Past the microscopes and lab tables, large safe-like containers hold 2,800 drawers of pinned insects. Holdings at the collection cover at least 25 orders, 390 families, 3,500 genera, 12,000 species and 1,240 subspecies of hexapods.

Moths, butterflies and beetles are among the most well represented. But all specimens vary vastly in appearance, size and species.

Some particularly captivating specimens include holographic beetles, reflective sapphire butterflies, moths with hypnotizing six-eyed wings, and specimens so small they fit on top of a pin.

Prior to 2011, access to the collection was tough to come by without at least a graduate-level grip on entomology. But now, it’s open to anyone.

Lee became collection manager in 2012. She oversees day-to-day operations and works closely with students, volunteers, researchers and visitors to ensure there are enough bugs to go around.

Now, around 40 staff, students, volunteers and other researchers work with the specimens and data on a weekly basis.

Lee has even pinned Polaroid photos of past members involved in the lab on the side of a filing cabinet outside her office, each name handwritten on the bottom.

Since the collection opened its doors, Lee has seen greater research and community outreach opportunities. It’s also given undergraduate entomology students the chance to work one-on-one with specimens, some dating back decades.

Ethan Wright, a junior biological sciences student, volunteers in the lab daily, assisting in pinning, preserving and curating specimens.

He got into entomology after owning arachnids, isopods and millipedes as pets and continues to grow his knowledge and interest in insects through working in the lab.

“I’m constantly seeing new things,” Wright said.

And those in the lab are just the start. The collection welcomes visitors ranging in age from 5 to 75 through community outreach events.

“People are really afraid [of] the insect, especially when they see the live ones,” Lee said. “But after they see them preserved in the collection, they look at them and know that they are one of the beauties in the world.”

With the newfound accessibility to the collection, Lee sees the benefits to both the
The most recent trip in early September took students, researchers and community members to the Patagonia Mountains in Coronado National Forest to look at the explosion in insect populations after this summer’s particularly wet monsoon season.

**Digitizing the assortment**

Surprisingly enough, going out into the field, or even into the lab, is no longer necessary to see and engage with insects. The trend of accessibility continues as the collection goes digital through two platforms.

SCAN, or Symbiota Collections of Arthropods Network, hosts over 200,000 individual specimens and 10,000 species from the collection. Each listing contains a photo, the species, and information on when it was collected, where it was collected and who collected it.

About 98% of the uploads include precise coordinates. Franz said location data leads to both historical as well as dynamic snapshots and dashboards of where insect species occur, and how their distributions respond to global and regional change.

Data is also tracked on NEON, or the National Ecological Observatory Network Biorepository Data Portal. The global platform compiles and makes available widespread research on ecological change.

Andrew Johnston, invertebrate collections manager for NEON ASU, believes NEON and SCAN are invaluable resources for researchers and students everywhere.

“They’re able to interact with our collections and with this data just from a laptop connected to the internet,” Johnston said.

Accessibility becomes especially important when tracking what entomologists are calling the “insect apocalypse,” or the swift decline of insect populations globally.

Experts from around the world are urging action against the biodiversity crisis, largely brought on by climate change and pollutants.

“We seem to be losing massive amounts of insects,” Johnston said. “It is incredibly important that we document this, that we preserve things while they are here.”

The process of digitizing a specimen takes a little over a half an hour. Digitizing is primarily done by researchers, volunteers and paid student workers.

First, they pull out a drawer, pick a specimen and write down information on each individual label.

The cataloger then starts the time-intensive process of readying the bug for their close-up. Because the subjects are often small or even micro, it takes specially trained foci and lenses to capture the entirety of the specimen.

Johnston said this is one of the biggest constraints they face in digitizing the collection. He hopes technology and automation will catch up with the need sooner rather than later.

“If we didn’t have to spend so long digitizing these records, two or three of us could go out and collect another 50,000 specimens a year and we could grow even more,” Johnston said.

“It’s not hard to go out in the field with experts and collect and bring things into the museum, but how do we make that data available?”

Johnston estimates they grow at around 50,000 specimens per year. They’ve totalled around 220,000 but it only puts the database at around 10% of the collection.

But despite slight time hang-ups, researchers and digitizers remain undeterred and driven by passion.

“We just love nature,” Johnston said. “We love bugs.”
State Press Magazine spoke to university students who experienced inner growth, positive change and exciting revelations within themselves due to the quarantine and isolation from the COVID-19 pandemic. Time away from the pressures and stares of society has given students the chance for introspection and discovery. More excerpts from our conversations with them can be found on our Instagram.

**Justin Lavilla**

“I think what I sort of realized during that time, like creatively, was fashion. I really like fashion, but seeing it as a form of art and as an extension of your true self. And so I feel like my fashion sense coming into the pandemic and out of it – like when we’re outside and doing things – is very different now. I feel now I get to express myself through the clothing that I wear. And that’s why I like to wear more feminine stuff, and not really care so much about the expectations of the patriarchy in our society – because it’s literally falling apart right in front of our very eyes. So why do I have to satisfy these expectations of myself when I can just do myself and do what I want to do?”

Justin Lavilla is a junior studying architecture. Lavilla works as an intern at Blerr Magazine.

**Kendall Jade**

“As artistically inclined people we have to get very serious when we’re introspective — like this is what puts my thoughts and my being into action and immortalizes them… I can understand myself through a creative outlet. And I already took myself relatively seriously and my practices and stuff like that. But I realized that, no, I actually have to get somewhere, I have to do something with who I am, what I am. All of that combining and then with what I was dealing with at home… the more serious things that I experienced in quarantine and being isolated revolving around creativity and reflection to the world around me. I wasn’t too worried creatively, but I realized I could not control things – things change, people change too, but I can’t change them, I can’t control them. I’m left up to how I influence things and that’s as much as I can change anything, and I would have to do that through my creative forces. I’d have to take myself more seriously, I’d have to put more brain power and love into it, in order for it to be effective.”

Kendall Jade is an artist and sophomore at ASU studying Financial Math.
Derek Scott

“I’m still a slut for that YA fantasy s---. It’s so good. And every book has this rogue scoundrel Han Solo type — but not a bad Han Solo sort of vibe — just that one dude who’s super expressive. Like the gunslinger, a cool dude. And so just trying to read a lot, I was like, ‘I want to be more like that.’ So let’s just get weird with it, you know? Let’s just have some fun with it… I spent so much of my life worrying about how I was perceived. And even on the internet if I posted, how it would be perceived by people, even though it’s maybe 10 people who are interacting with it. So it’s funny. And so I just spent so much time worrying about that in my life so [when] it was at a point where I was literally getting zero attention from anyone outside of two people over the span of like six months, I was like, ‘I can kind of just hit f--- it and do whatever I want at this point.’ Then I realized just being more open, it was a lot more fun. And I felt like I was more enjoyable to be around after that because I said more of what I feel, I did more of what I wanted to do… I just started experimenting a lot more in art and in presentation. I basically just threw a bunch of shit at the wall and started realizing there’s a lot more things that stick than I thought.”

Derek Scott is a senior studying screenwriting. He is one half of the band Space Sluts. You can hear a performance from the band and extended interview on The State Press Center Stage podcast wherever you listen to podcasts.

Sam Johnson

“I lived in a really toxic household when it came to masculinity and femininity. I have two siblings, my older brother came out as lesbian — he’s trans now — but when he came out as a lesbian it shook my whole family. We got shunned from our church. It was a really big deal. And then my little brother came out as gay too so it was me left and everyone was like ‘oh, you’re their last hope.’ I mean my family would tell me, pretty much everyday ‘you’re our last hope,’ and I’m so happy that we get at least one kid to have a good wedding, or one kid to have two kids,’ and people at school were telling me that same thing. I think with the pandemic one thing I realized was how disappointed I was in myself that I wasn’t masculine enough to be straight for them… and kind of just battling that. And then once you get over that, like ‘it’s okay, it’s not my fault.’ It’s their fault for putting these expectations on me from the beginning, and really enforcing them onto me… I mean, I knew I was gay for forever. But I didn’t come out until freshman year, sophomore year of college... It was a long journey and I think the pandemic was one of the things that helped me figure that out and be okay with starting to dress feminine. And now I like dressing more masculine too because it helps me reclaim that for myself.”

Sam Johnson is a junior studying fashion design. Johnson works as an intern at Blerr Magazine.
Transforming survivor justice

Policing and prosecution are not solutions to the problem of campus sexual assault

by Alexis Moulton

Content warning: This story discusses graphic sexual assault.

The problem of campus sexual assault is well understood in the United States. In our media, our consent education campaigns, and even in the ways students talk behind closed doors, sexual assault is often considered a part of the college experience.

The process of reporting campus sexual assault — and all the harm that comes with it — is discussed far less often.

When former ASU student Alayna, who asked her last name be omitted due to privacy concerns, was sexually assaulted on the Tempe campus, she called the ASU Police Department the next day.

She figured if she acted quickly and decisively it would be easy to file criminal charges and get the help she needed.

“I thought, ‘oh, if I go get a rape kit right now there’s no way I won’t get justice,’” Alayna said. “And that’s unfortunately not how it works.”

Over the following months, both ASU police and administrators repeatedly ignored, dismissed and harassed Alayna. In a video narrating her experience, Alayna said the seven-month investigation process felt like “Arizona State University raped me every single day.”

Unfortunately, Alayna’s experience is far from unique. There is a documented pattern of ASU students looking to the University’s legal system for justice, only to be belittled, incriminated and retraumatized.

Perhaps this is why few college students feel police keep them safe. Though campus sexual assault is a nationwide problem, studies repeatedly show a lack of student confidence in police responses to sexual assault.

A 2020 survey conducted by the Women’s Coalition found nearly three times as many students considered “walking with friends” a safer resource than the ASU police.

But the injustice runs deeper: Police responses do not typically produce any semblance of accountability or retribution. Of the 68 incidents of sexual assault reported to the ASU Police Department from 2017 to 2019, 42 were investigated, only 12 were cleared and none were prosecuted.

This is not because select University administrators and police detectives are underperforming. This is because the University, and policing itself, are failing.

Police and administrators consistently inflict harm on survivors and protect perpetrators. If the problem of campus sexual violence is to be addressed, something new must be built in their place.

Are there alternatives to policing?

Police departments’ responsibility in handling cases of sexual and domestic violence is a relatively modern phenomenon. Contemporary scholarship shows emerging feminist anti-violence movements in the 1970s were effectively assimilated into “tough on crime” policies in the ’80s, prompting the creation of “special victims units” and pro-arrest policies.

At around the same time, the U.S. saw the birth of campus police. Many universities solidified their own police departments to address the unique environment of the college campus throughout the ’80s and ’90s.

This led to a reliance on the criminal justice system in combating sexual assault, producing a subset of feminist thought some academics and activists have dubbed “carceral feminism.”

Victoria Law, an author who writes about incarceration, gender and resistance, calls carceral feminism “the idea that you can somehow police and imprison your way out of gender violence.” According to Law, this idea focuses on retributive reactions to the problem of gender violence without looking at root causes.

“If this approach actually worked, we would not have as much gender violence, if any gender violence, in the United States,” Law said. “But we see again and again that this doesn’t work.”

Carceral feminist rhetoric often erases the work of trailblazing anti-violence advocates who have fought for spending on social services and community infrastructure instead. Jasmine Lester, founder of Sun Devils Against Sexual Assault, is one of those advocates.

Lester is an ASU graduate and survivor herself. When she began researching other universities’ sexual assault advocacy, she realized how outdated ASU’s approach was. She said one advocate from University of Cal-
"Of the 68 incidents of sexual assault reported to the ASU Police Department from 2017 to 2019, 42 were investigated, only 12 were cleared and none were prosecuted."

“Ifornia, Santa Barbara called ASU’s policies “archaic.”

In January 2021, Lester presented the Campus Assault Advocacy, Resources and Education (CAARE) Center proposal to ASU administration. The open-access document outlines a model for a non-police survivor advocacy center outside the University’s administrative control.

The proposal includes recommendations for nine full-time confidential advocates, among other paid positions, and a survivor fund for students’ legal and medical expenses. Since January, 53 student organizations have endorsed the proposal, including the student government of each ASU campus and the Women’s Coalition.

“We need to work toward a better system,” Lester said. “The CAARE proposal kind of does work toward that better system, shifting the focus to actually caring about survivors.”

Policing sexual violence

Reporting sexual assault, though presented as an avenue for justice, often sets in motion a process survivors have little control over.

Although rapists are typically depicted as strangers, the vast majority of sexual assault is committed by friends and family. In the U.S., 8 in 10 rape victims know their rapist before the incident of assault.

This dynamic creates a horrifying dilemma for survivors. Stigmas which invalidate relationship violence can discourage some survivors from acknowledging and reporting their assault. Others may be socially or financially dependent on their abuser and hesitant to see them arrested or jailed.

“With prosecution the focus is on the punishment of the perpetrator, and there’s little to no focus on how the victim wants the harm to be healed,” Lester said. “A lot of times that doesn’t involve sending someone to jail, and actually the thought of sending someone to jail can discourage (reporting).”

In other cases, survivors are punished instead of their assailants in what’s been called the “sexual abuse to prison pipeline.” According to a 2016 report, around 86% of incarcerated women have been victims of sexual or domestic abuse.

Law argues there is never a “perfect victim” especially in the eyes of a frequently discriminatory legal system. Police investigative procedures can decontextualize violence, effectively criminalizing, arresting and jailing women — especially poor women of
"1 in 5 women are sexually assaulted while in college"

color — for self-defense.

“We also have to remember that the criminal legal system itself is a huge purveyor of sexual violence,” Law said.

The prevalence of sexual abuse perpetrated by police has been described as an “epidemic,” with Phoenix in particular receiving national scrutiny for mishandling accusations. A 2015 investigation conducted by Buffalo News determined a police officer is accused of sexual misconduct at least once every five days in the U.S.

Law also points to routine police procedures, like strip searches and abrasive post-assault examinations, which some survivors have described as invasive and traumatizing.

“Prisons, police precincts, jails, immigration detention, all these places of confinement enact sexual violence every day, just by their practices alone,” Law said. “And then they become innovators and hotbeds of other types of egregious sexual violence they supposedly are around to combat in the first place.”

These factors, compounded with the appalling prevalence of assault among college students — 1 in 5 women are sexually assaulted while in college — have encouraged a culture of silence, complicity and hopelessness. A 2015 report from the National Sexual Violence Resource Center found 90% of victims on college campuses do not report their assault.

“The system is working how it was designed to work,” Lester said. “It was designed to protect abusers. It was designed to retraumatize survivors and silence survivors.”

**Survivor trauma, administrative abuse**

Alayna was unaware of the potential danger and mistreatment she might face when she decided to report her assault to ASU PD. Today, she said she sometimes wishes she had not reported at all.

Alayna said police and University advocates withheld important information and failed to educate her on the investigation process. When she agreed to meet with the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR), the meeting was scheduled in the same building she had been assaulted in.

“It was pretty clear that they hadn’t done any research on it,” she said. “Or maybe they had, and they were trying to scare me.”

Alayna described the six-month investigation as brutal and isolating. The process eroded her trust in the University and disrupted her previous belief that police were there to protect her.

“It was like a betrayal constantly,” she said. “I had given so much to them, I felt like I was a part of their community and they ripped every part of my life away from me.”

Alayna’s assaulter was never prosecuted.

Leah Henthorne, an undergraduate student in the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, had her doubts when reporting her assault. She had previously heard horror stories of other women’s reporting experiences.

“Everything was kind of swaying me away from reporting,” Henthorne said. “But I finally decided to report it because … I thought maybe mine could have had a different outcome.”

Unlike Alayna, Henthorne reported to SRR first. She felt miserable throughout the investigation, describing it as “months of frustration, waiting, and just a lot of anger...
building up inside of me.”

Henthorne said she has “so much trauma” from the night of her assault. “I also had to relive all that trauma whenever I would go into the Student Rights Office. They made my story feel so invalid.”

Henthorne’s assaulter was never prosecuted. The University allowed her assaulter to continue attending a shared class with her during the investigation.

“I don’t trust ASU in general,” she said. “I don’t believe they’re going to protect me, after what they’ve done to me and so many others.”

The question of funding

Many University administrators have belittled the vision and strategy of CAARE Center advocates, arguing instead for the reform and enhancement of existing policies.

In a February interview with The State Press, President Michael Crow dismissed the CAARE proposal and said he is more interested in improving existing services by enhancing response times and further educating police.

In a USG student forum on Sept. 21, Vice President of Student Services Joanne Vogel claimed services had since been “modernized, enhanced and expanded,” through the consolidation of a few departments and a new website which simplifies the process of connecting with existing services. Neither Crow nor Vogel mentioned the CAARE Center once.

“I’ve literally been trying to talk to (Michael Crow) about this for 10 years and he won’t even have a meeting with me about it,” Lester said. “I think it’s pretty clear that he doesn’t actually care about this issue.”

The CAARE proposal is an opportunity for the University to take accountability for enabling and neglecting to acknowledge a culture of sexual abuse.

Rather than insisting a system proven to be dysfunctional and harmful can be optimized to ideal functionality, ASU could show its commitment to student safety by honoring the expressed needs of survivors. If the University was sincerely interested in ending campus sexual assault, why would it not jump to fund new strategies proposed by the most affected students?

“I honestly don’t think this administration will ever do it because I don’t think they care,” Lester said. “They don’t have compassion for survivors.”

Some survivors think the University is dismissing the CAARE proposal to protect its reputation.

“They have an image and they’re unwilling to admit that there is a rape crisis,” Alayna said.

Advocates like Lester and Alayna are right to emphasize the question of funding and resources. While any institution can make statements of advocacy and intent, its true priorities are revealed in the pages of its budget books.

Survivor advocates fight to defund the police and instead fund systems of care, like the CAARE Center, because they are historically informed. It is the status quo of policing and prosecution that has allowed sexual assault at ASU to become so ubiquitous in the first place.

The CAARE Center proposal is a visionary challenge to change the status quo. If the University cannot accept the challenge, then it will continue a cycle of ineffectual reform in the process.
TECH'S ETHICAL QUANDARY

Crafting ethical paradigms for emerging technology proves to be arduous

by Sam Ellefson

Illustrations by Sara Windom
Contemporary American living is increasingly defined by our intimate relationship with ever-flourishing technology. As humanity develops, so does our technology, growing to be more pervasive and omnipresent. Amid this whirlwind of technological change, researchers and developers are tasked with tackling the litany of ethical dilemmas that crop up. We look to the technocrats for guidance in our plugged-in world, but there are major discrepancies in how, or if, these novel technologies fit into ethical frameworks.

Artificial intelligence, perhaps one of the most ethically volatile of the emerging technologies, is not nearly as new as it seems. Decades of conceptualization of machine autonomy culminated in 1951 when Christopher Strachey developed an AI program capable of playing checkers, and in 1956 with Logic Theorist, the first computer program developed to mimic human thought.

Since then, the field boomed, ensuring a societal thrust into the age of big data, talking robots and too many ethical concerns to count. Artificial intelligence has meshed with our daily lives, sometimes abruptly, but mostly seamlessly. AI has also displayed programming biases relating to race, sexuality, gender, religion and disability.

Similar ethical concerns plague augmented and virtual reality, two tools used in environments ranging from video games to nonfiction storytelling. AR, technology that superimposes an image onto the viewer’s existing perspective, and VR, a computer-generated, three-dimensional image that immerses the viewer in a new perspective, have been growing for decades.

Akin to artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality have their beginnings in visionary thought incongruous with existing technology of the early 20th century. VR’s breakthrough came in 1960 when the Telesphere Mask, a wearable virtual reality headset similar to those used in Oculus games, was patented by Morton Heilig.

A handful of ethical questions persist in the fields of augmented and virtual reality, including how to prioritize user security, the ethics of VR porn, and, in journalism, determining what is truthful representation and what should be included or excluded.

**Immersive media**

Retha Hill, the executive director of the New Media Innovation and Entrepreneurship Lab in the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, said these ethical dilemmas are not new, but have been amplified by the explosion of technology and the newfound ability for anyone to manipulate them. Hill implores her students to examine how and why they use the tools available to them to tell stories while minimizing harm and delivering truthful messages. The lab focuses on exploring cutting-edge immersive technology and its ability to deliver information to viewers.

Hill said before focusing on ethical tenets specific to technology used in the lab, she asks students to consider core journalistic...
principles and apply them to subjects they are representing. Contrary to some popular opinion, Hill said journalists working in immersive media adhere to strict principles of truth and fairness. “We always make sure we’re true to the scene we’re trying to simulate.”

Hill recounted a student who wanted to create a news game focusing on sex trafficking in Miami during the Super Bowl. The locale and bystanders had to be representative of Miami from a first-person gameplay perspective, and Hill and her student had to be wary not to use any broad stereotypes of people in their depiction. The purpose of the news game was to make players aware of the signs of sex trafficking and give them an opportunity to practice reporting suspicious behavior to an authority figure.

Accurate and truthful representation of sources in computer generated journalism is critical to ensure misinformation doesn’t spread like wildfire, Hill said. As a long-time journalist with continued interest in exploring emerging media technology, Hill explained how artificial intelligence has grown over the years to allow anyone to portray public or private figures as they please.

“We have the capability of using tools like deepfakes and voice modification, voice imprinting, we can do all of that now that we didn’t have back then,” she said. “If we wanted to have a voice of somebody saying something we’d go hire a voice actor … but now we can go and sample a person’s voice and we can have that person say whatever.”

Nonny de la Peña, the founding director of ASU’s Center for Emerging Media and Narrative who has been dubbed the “Godmother of VR,” said she takes the ethical principles she learned as a print journalist and applies them to her work with VR and AR. For de la Peña, the ethical questions stem from editing choices made while creating an immersive piece, which is “really no different than editing film.” What’s different in immersive pieces is the viewer’s part in the story. When designing an augmented or virtual reality simulation, what to include, and how to include it, is constantly scrutinized.

“In written words, we’re quite happy to describe things very graphically,” de la Peña said. “But then when we get into making something visually, we’re much more careful about it. I’m not saying that’s a bad thing, but it’s the truth.”

Jayson Chesler, a former student of Hill’s
and journalist working with emerging technology, said ethical decisions vary depending on technology, representation choice and how one seeks to portray it. In April 2020, Chesler and his former McClatchy colleague Theresa Poulson created “A Guide to Immersive Ethics.” The guide presents questions and case studies to be considered when capturing and digitally recreating a person or event.

“You really have to factor in, how am I deviating from reality, how can I most accurately get back towards reality, how can I make this 3D representation as real as possible,” Chesler said. “And then beyond that, if I’m forced to make choices that are detached from reality … how do I minimize the harm of that, both in how I’m representing my source and how I’m communicating that inaccuracy to my audience.”

Emerging technologies have found their foothold in visual storytelling spaces and are flourishing in other fields as well. Academics and researchers at ASU and institutions across the nation are delving into machine learning, computer vision, robot-human cooperation and more.

Ensuring autonomy

Lixiao Huang, an associate research scientist at CHART, the University’s Center for Human, Artificial Intelligence and Robot Teaming, researches collaborative opportunities between humans and robots. The center also looks at ethical and legal issues in emerging technology.

One ethical concern in the field of robot teaming sounds like it was pulled from a dystopian sci-fi blockbuster. Nancy Cooke, a professor and director of CHART, said “with physical robots … you don’t want them to be strong enough to kill you, or to make stupid mistakes.” However, the bigger problem, Cooke explained, lies in AI and machine learning. In medicine and defense, having biased results can present major hurdles, and autonomous machines as consumer products lacking transparency regarding their limitations — namely self-driving vehicles — have dangerous possibilities.

“Who’s to blame when the vehicle kills somebody?” Cooke said. “We’ve already seen this problem. Is it the manufacturer of the vehicle? Is it the programmer? … Was it the driver?”

While many researchers preemptively consider the ethical implications of the technology they’re creating, some are “bent on building the technology because you can, not because you should,” Cooke said. “The danger is they build things and then you have to work out the bugs after the fact. Well if those are bugs that are going to kill people, that’s a pretty big deal.” The question stands, as Cooke sees it, “how do you have ensured autonomy?”

Huang sees debates regarding the “hot topic” of AI and ethics in self-driving cars habit-
Equality is flawed.
Now people aren’t talking about equality so much as equity.

Equality versus equity

Unlike how journalists have standards for employing emerging technologies, there isn’t an established framework for approaching ethical dilemmas in artificial intelligence and robot teaming, Huang said, but she added there will be some regulatory code eventually.

How it stands now, lawmakers rely on ethics researchers to create case-by-case laws or guidelines for companies engaged in this work. However, because artificial intelligence and robot teaming are relatively niche and constantly evolving, it makes it difficult to craft legislation encompassing all the ethical questions plaguing the field.

Proposed ethical paradigms, both utilitarian and egalitarian, present their own problems, Turaga said. “The greatest good for the greatest number of people can often mean marginalizing the minority because, ‘hey, I can’t inconvenience the majority,’” they said. “The other ethical system is quite the opposite, which is, ‘everybody needs to be treated equally.’ That brings in its own issues, which is that everybody can’t be treated equally.

“Equality is flawed. Now people aren’t talking about equality so much as equity.”

- Pavan Turaga, Director of ASU’s School of Arts, Media and Engineering
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A mere 17 and a half years

Immigrating to the U.S., let alone becoming a naturalized citizen, can be a long and expensive process

by Camila Pedrosa

Everything I’ve ever known has been at the discretion of the U.S. government. It would take 17 and a half years and tens of thousands of dollars before I would finally feel fully integrated into the country I grew up in, basking in the rights and freedoms its citizens enjoy.

Much of what my parents did during those years to attempt to gain citizenship happened behind closed doors; I was far too young to be worried about legal processes.

All I needed to do was tag along to the dozens of United States Citizenship and Immigration Services office visits — a tedious process involving fingerprints, identification photos and doctors’ offices over the years — while my parents tirelessly dealt with USCIS, raised two kids and worked full time.

My mom has always impressed me. At 26, she successfully wrote and defended a doctoral thesis in organic chemistry while pregnant with her first child — I was born weeks before her graduation. She moved her young family across the world only a year later and built a life from the ground up.
My family emigrated from Argentina to the U.S. in order for my mom to participate in a fellowship in Washington, D.C. at the National Institutes of Health after she received her doctorate.

My parents and I were escorted to the airport that morning by our entourage — my grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Despite support from our family, it served as a reminder that we would be embarking on this journey on our own.

In order to enter the U.S., my mom had to obtain a J-1 visa. The visa allowed her to remain in the country for the duration of her fellowship, so long as she proved she was advancing in her career.

The J-1 visa is one of the two most common visas used by international students at ASU. The other, F-1, is meant strictly for full-time enrollment in U.S. academic programs.

Despite the issuance of more than 750,000 F-1 and J-1 visas annually, international students face hurdles throughout their time in the U.S.

According to ASU law professor Evelyn Cruz, international students cannot enroll in a University program while visiting on a B-1 or B-2 visa. They must be approved for a specific status change from a visitor visa to a student visa prior to enrolling.

Eventually, all visas expire and petitioners need to either renew theirs or find a new one.

At the end of their program, J-1 recipients must bring skills back to the countries they hail from and remain for at least two years. My mom learned a way to avoid this contingency: receiving a No Objection Statement from Argentina.

The No Objection Statement waives the return policy, essentially allowing the applicant to stay in the U.S. because their skills are not needed in their country of origin.

But either way, my mom couldn’t keep her J-1 after finishing the fellowship, so she needed to find another that would allow her to work and live in the U.S.

She decided to apply for an O-1 visa, meant for individuals with extraordinary ability, a hefty feat for an organic chemistry researcher with less than 10 years in the field.

There are two options for proving exceptional ability in science.

One is receiving a Nobel Prize. My mom obviously doesn’t have a Nobel Prize, so she had to use the second option: presenting a significant amount of published material in scientific journals along with letters of recommendation from professors and peers proving she is among the top in her field.

After receiving 10 letters of recommendation, most from scientists she barely knew, her work was deemed worthy of a Nobel Prize-adjacent visa by the USCIS.

Eleven years after arriving in the U.S., marked the beginning of stability for my family. We were granted our green cards, ensuring we would be allowed to live, work and study freely in the U.S. for at least 10 years.

I have never seen my dad as excited as the moment he opened the three letters from USCIS and read our permanent residency application approval.

The process of applying for and receiving a green card is incredibly frustrating. My
parents like to say if the person approving applications woke up on the wrong side of the bed that morning, an application would get denied.

My mom applied for a second preference immigrant worker green card, almost the same as an O-1 visa, three times before being approved. She claims the only reasons behind her final approval were corporate connections and dumb luck.

The vast majority of worker green cards require employer sponsorship, meaning an employer must submit the application on the employee’s behalf and prove this employee is more qualified than any American to do their job.

The first company my mom worked for after the fellowship wasn’t too enthusiastic to sponsor her green card. With her O-1 visa, she had to stay with that specific company unless USCIS approved an employer change, but with a green card, she could freely work anywhere.

They agreed to sponsor her, but the application was denied. Typically, employers will appeal a denial, but my mom never heard any information about an appeal from the company’s lawyer.

She applied using the exact materials that granted her the O-1 visa, so she hired a private immigration lawyer to find out what happened and advise her on how to proceed.

It turns out, the company never filed the proper appeal paperwork and let her application fall through. The lawyer said this was a common tactic for companies to retain employees who cannot switch jobs, like my mom. She was now stuck with a visa and had to restart her green card application from square one.

On her lawyer’s advice, she requested a switch from her O-1 visa to an H-1B, a skilled worker visa which doesn’t tie an employee to a company, and quit as soon as possible. This was her second attempt at an H-1B visa, as she tried to obtain one after the J-1, but was unable to.

The H-1B visa has a cap of 65,000 issuances per year, which are currently given out in a yearly lottery system. My mom believes the system was set up to favor applicants who had access to lawyers who charge thousands of dollars per hour for their services.

Her next employer was far more cooperative with the sponsorship process, since her visa status already allowed her to switch employers. However, because they were a very small company, they didn’t have the adequate connections to secure her a green card.

In a stroke of luck, the small company was acquired by a massive science corporation, instantly granting my mom access to some of the best immigration lawyers in the U.S. and securing her coveted title of “permanent resident.”

Throughout my mom’s various struggles with visa and green card applications and statuses, my dad and I’s statuses altered accordingly. The three visas and one green card my mom obtained each had corresponding family visas, so my dad and I never had to figure out which category we would fall under.

Unfortunately, the family visa corresponding to the O-1 visa does not permit employment, so my dad was not able to work while we held that status. This often means immigrant families can only have one extraordinary breadwinner.

Sunday, Sept. 19, 2021, 3:45 pm

After five years of living in the U.S. as permanent residents, my parents were eligible to apply for citizenship in February 2020. At this point, I was still 17, ineligible to apply for citizenship on my own and forced to wait. Either I would turn 18 and apply or my parents would get their citizenship first, which automatically grants citizenship to their children.

The latter would soon prove impossible, and I filed in January 2021.

Ironically, my process moved much faster than my parents’, and I will be receiving my citizenship on Oct. 4, while they have yet to receive their appointment notice letter. They’ve been waiting a year and a half.

The application and lawyer fees amounted to approximately $35,000, most of which my family didn’t have to pay for — most of the fees were covered by

Photo by Alex Gould
my mom’s employers.

The steep cost is a severe financial barrier for low-income immigrants, many of whom are people of color. Restricting access to citizenship in turn restricts access to citizen rights for millions of immigrants.

The financial obstacle of naturalization blocks large groups of immigrants from voting and helping family members legally immigrate to the U.S. The majority of non-citizen immigrants are people of color. Because naturalization is obtained through U.S. citizenship parents, it demonstrates systemic disenfranchisement and a limiting pathway to legal immigration and citizenship for the family members of those potentially eligible for naturalization.

Armando, a senior studying psychology who asked his last name be omitted due to privacy concerns, immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico when he was seven.

“[Becoming a citizen] is something that I wanted to do before, but it’s a lot of money,” Armando said. “I just want(ed) to concentrate on paying for my tuition and college.”

Despite financial struggles, Armando’s father helped pay for a service in Yuma County called Montes Multiple Services that would file Armando’s citizenship application and handle everything on his behalf.

According to Armando, the company is very popular in his community, as their immigration services span from helping with USCIS forms to providing an interpreter in a community where over half of the population speaks a language other than English at home.

A significant portion of the U.S. citizenship test requires the test taker to speak, write and read in English, despite the country lacking an official language. This is yet another problematic barrier to receiving rights reserved for citizens, raising the question: Who does the U.S. actually want as its citizens?

I’m aware my situation is highly uncommon, and I’m privileged to have parents with good connections who assisted in granting my citizenship in a mere 17 and a half years. I feel extremely grateful for the relative ease with which my application went through.

I’m thankful I wasn’t cognizant enough to understand what was going on while I was a child. I now have a deeper respect for adults who navigated the process, especially those whose first language is not English and are experiencing financial struggles.

As this process comes to an end, I’ve taken time to reflect on the consulate trips, medical exams and excruciating waiting periods that defined much of my childhood.

Each person’s citizenship process is just like the fingerprints frequently provided to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services — completely unique.
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