

SIXTH EDITION

# Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum

---

**Laurence Behrens**

University of California  
Santa Barbara

**Leonard J. Rosen**

Harvard University



**LONGMAN**

---

An imprint of Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

New York • Reading, Massachusetts • Menlo Park, California • Harlow, England  
Don Mills, Ontario • Sydney • Mexico City • Madrid • Amsterdam

question challenges a reader to agree or disagree with your response and thus also places the reader in an active role. The following brief conclusion ends an article entitled "Would an Intelligent Computer Have a 'Right to Life'?"

So the answer to the question "Would an intelligent computer have the right to life?" is probably that it would, but only if it could discover reasons and conditions under which it would give up its life if called upon to do so—which would make computer intelligence as precious a thing as human intelligence.<sup>16</sup>

### Speculation

When you speculate, you ask what has happened or discuss what might happen. This kind of question stimulates the reader because its subject is the unknown.

The following paragraph concludes "The New Generation Gap" by Neil Howe and William Strauss. In this essay, Howe and Strauss discuss the differences among Americans of various ages, including the "GI Generation" (born between 1901 and 1924), the "Boomers" (born 1943–1961), the "Thirteeners" (born 1961–1981), and the "Millennials" (born 1981–2000):

If, slowly but surely, Millennials receive the kind of family protection and public generosity that GIs enjoyed as children, then they could come of age early in the next century as a group much like the GIs of the 1920s and 1930s—as a stellar (if bland) generation of rationalists, team players, and can-do civic builders. Two decades from now Boomers entering old age may well see in their grown Millennial children an effective instrument for saving the world, while Thirteeners entering midlife will shower kindness on a younger generation that is getting a better deal out of life (though maybe a bit less fun) than they ever got at a like age. Study after story after column will laud these "best damn kids in the world" as heralding a resurgent American greatness. And, for a while at least, no one will talk about a generation gap.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, Howe and Strauss conclude an essay concerned largely with the apparently unbridgable gaps of understanding between parents and children with a hopeful speculation that generational relationships will improve considerably in the next two decades.

<sup>16</sup>Robert E. Mueller and Eric I. Mueller, "Would an Intelligent Computer Have a 'Right to Life'?" *Creative Computing*, August 1983.

<sup>17</sup>Excerpt from "The New Generation Gap" by Neil Howe and William Strauss. Originally published in *The Atlantic*, December 1992. Reprinted by permission of Ranaheel Sagalyn, Inc.

# 3

## Critical Reading and Critique

### CRITICAL READING

When writing papers in college, you are often called on to respond critically to source materials. Critical reading requires the abilities to both summarize and evaluate a presentation. As you have seen, a *summary* is a brief restatement in your own words of the content of a passage. An *evaluation* is a more difficult matter. In your college work, you read to gain and use new information; but as sources are not equally valid or equally useful, you must learn to distinguish critically among sources by evaluating them.

There is no ready-made formula for determining validity. Critical reading and its written analogue—the *critique*—require discernment, sensitivity, imagination, and, above all, a willingness to become involved in what you read. These skills cannot be taken for granted and must be developed through repeated practice. You must begin somewhere, though, and we recommend that you start by posing two broad categories of questions about passages, articles, and books that you read: (1) What is the author's purpose in writing? Does he or she succeed in this purpose? (2) To what extent do you agree with the author?

#### Question Category 1: What Is the Author's Purpose in Writing? Does He or She Succeed in This Purpose?

All critical reading begins with an accurate summary. Before attempting an evaluation, you must be able to locate an author's thesis and identify the selection's content and structure. You must understand the author's *purpose*. Authors write to inform, to persuade, and to entertain. A given piece may be *primarily informative* (a summary of the reasons for the rapid spread of AIDS), *primarily persuasive* (an argument on why the government must do something about poverty), or *primarily entertaining* (a play about the frustrations of young lovers); or it may be all three (as in John Steinbeck's novel *The*

*Grapes of Wrath*, about migrant workers during the Great Depression). Sometimes authors are not fully conscious of their purposes. Sometimes their purposes change as they write. But if the finished piece is coherent, it will have a primary reason for having been written, and it should be apparent that the author is attempting primarily to inform, persuade, or entertain you. To identify this primary reason, this purpose, is your first job as a critical reader. Your next job is to determine how successful the author has been. As a critical reader, you bring different criteria, or standards of judgment, to bear when you read pieces intended to inform or persuade.

### Informative Writing

A piece intended to inform will provide definitions, describe or report on a process, recount a story, give historical background, and/or provide facts and figures. An informational piece responds to questions like the following:

- What (or who) is \_\_\_\_\_?
- How does \_\_\_\_\_ work?
- What is the controversy or problem about?
- What happened?
- How and why did it happen?
- What were the results?
- What are the arguments for and against \_\_\_\_\_?

To the extent that an author answers these and related questions and the answers are a matter of verifiable record (you could check for accuracy if you had the time and inclination), the selection is intended to inform. Having determined this, you can organize your response by considering three other criteria: accuracy, significance, and fair interpretation of information.

**ACCURACY OF INFORMATION.** If you are going to use any of the information presented, you must be satisfied that it is trustworthy. One of your responsibilities as a critical reader is to find out if it is

**SIGNIFICANCE OF INFORMATION.** One useful question that you can put to a reading is, "So what?" In the case of selections that attempt to inform, you may reasonably wonder whether the information makes a difference. What can the person who is reading gain from this information? How is knowledge advanced by the publication of this material? Is the information of importance to you or to others? Why or why not?

**FAIR INTERPRETATION OF INFORMATION.** At times you will read reports, the sole function of which is to relate raw data or information. In these cases, you will build your response on the two questions in question category 1. More frequently, once an author has presented information, he or she will attempt to evaluate or interpret it—which is only reasonable, since information that has not been evaluated or interpreted is of little use. One of your tasks as

a critical reader is to make a distinction between the author's presentation of facts and figures and his or her attempts to evaluate them. You may find that the information is valuable but the interpretation is not. Perhaps the author's conclusions are not justified. Could you offer a contrary explanation for the same facts? Does more information need to be gathered before conclusions can be drawn? Why?

### Persuasive Writing

Writing is frequently intended to persuade—that is, to influence the reader's thinking. To make a persuasive case, the writer must begin with an assertion that is arguable, some statement about which reasonable people could disagree. Such an assertion, when it serves as the essential organizing principle of the article or book, is called a *thesis*. Examples:

Because they do not speak English, many children in this affluent land are being denied their fundamental right to equal educational opportunity

Bilingual education, which has been stridently promoted by a small group of activists with their own agenda, is detrimental to the very students it is supposed to serve

Thesis statements like this—and the subsidiary assertions used to help support them—represent conclusions that authors have drawn as a result of researching and thinking about the issue. You go through the same process yourself when you write persuasive papers or critiques. And just as you are entitled to critically evaluate the assertions of authors you read, so your professors—and other students—are entitled to evaluate *your* assertions, whether they are encountered as written arguments or as comments made in class discussion.

Keep in mind that writers organize arguments by arranging evidence to support one conclusion and oppose (or dismiss) another. You can assess the validity of the argument and the conclusion by determining whether the author has (1) clearly defined key terms, (2) used information fairly, (3) argued logically, and not fallaciously.

**CLEARLY DEFINED TERMS.** The validity of an argument depends to some degree on how carefully key terms have been defined. Take the assertion, for example—made in the 1930s by the official motion-picture production code—that no film should be made that will "lower the moral standards of those who see it." What do the authors of this code mean by "lower the moral standards"? The validity of their argument depends on whether or not they and their readers agree on a definition of moral standards and on a definition of lowered moral standards. If an author writes, "The public safety demands that reasonable precautions be taken to protect the public against infection from HIV-positive persons," readers need to know what, exactly, is meant by "reasonable" before they can assess the validity of the argument. An author who writes, "Some cultures are better than others" must be careful

to define just what she means by "better." (We may not agree with her definition, but at least it is now on the table, a subject for discussion.) In such cases, the success of the argument—its ability to persuade—hinges on the definition of a term. So, in responding to an argument, be sure you (and the author) are clear on what exactly is being argued. Only then can you respond to the logic of the argument, to the author's use of evidence, and to the author's conclusions.

**FAIR USE OF INFORMATION.** Information is used as evidence in support of arguments. When presented with such evidence, ask yourself two questions: The *first*: "Is the information accurate and up-to-date?" At least a portion of an argument is rendered invalid if the information used to support it is inaccurate or out-of-date. The *second*: "Has the author cited representative information?" The evidence used in an argument must be presented in a spirit of fair play. An author is less than ethical who presents only evidence favoring his views when he is well aware that contrary evidence exists. For instance, it would be dishonest to argue that an economic recession is imminent and to cite as evidence only those indicators of economic well-being that have taken a decided turn for the worse while ignoring and failing to cite contrary (positive) evidence.

**LOGICAL ARGUMENTATION; AVOIDING LOGICAL FALLACIES.** At some point, you will need to respond to the logic of the argument itself. To be convincing, an argument should be governed by principles of logic—clear and orderly thinking. This does *not* mean that an argument should not be biased. A biased argument—that is, an argument weighted toward one point of view and against others—may be valid as long as it is logically sound.

Here are several examples of faulty thinking and logical fallacies to watch for:

**Emotionally Loaded Terms.** Writers sometimes will attempt to sway readers by using emotionally charged words: words with positive connotations to sway readers to their own point of view; words with negative connotations to sway readers away from the opposing point of view. For example, look again at the two assertions about bilingual education on page 61. In the first assertion (by Jeffrey W. Kobrick), the terms "fundamental right" and "equal . . . opportunity" carry positive connotations intended to sway the reader to the author's pro-bilingual education view. In the second assertion, the terms "stridently" and "small group of activists" carry negative connotations intended to influence the reader to reject the anti-bilingual arguments with which the author associates them. The fact that an author uses such emotionally loaded terms does not necessarily invalidate the argument. Emotional appeals are perfectly legitimate and time-honored modes of persuasion. But in academic writing, which is grounded in logical argumentation, they should not be the *only* means of persuasion. You should be sensitive to *how* emotionally loaded terms are being used. In particular, are they being used deceptively or to hide the essential facts?

**Ad Hominem Argument.** In an *ad hominem* argument, the writer rejects opposing views by attacking the person who holds them. By calling opponents names, an author avoids the issue:

I could more easily accept my opponent's plan to increase revenues by collecting on delinquent tax bills if he had paid more than a hundred dollars in state taxes in each of the past three years. But the fact is, he's a millionaire with a millionaire's tax shelters. This man hasn't paid a wooden nickel for the state services he and his family depend on. So I ask you: Is *he* the one to be talking about taxes to *us*?

It could well be that the opponent has paid virtually no state taxes for three years; but this fact has nothing to do with, and is a ploy to divert attention from, the merits of a specific proposal for increasing revenues. The proposal is lost in the attack against the man himself, an attack that violates the principles of logic. Writers (and speakers) must make their points by citing evidence in support of their views and by challenging contrary evidence.

**Faulty Cause and Effect.** The fact that one event precedes another in time does not mean that the first event has caused the second. An example: Fish begin dying by the thousands in a lake near your hometown. An environmental group immediately cites chemical dumping by several manufacturing plants as the cause. But other causes are possible: A disease might have affected the fish; the growth of algae might have contributed to the deaths; or acid rain might be a factor. The origins of an event are usually complex and are not always traceable to a single cause. So you must carefully examine cause-and-effect reasoning when you find a writer using it. This fallacy is also known as *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* ("after this, therefore because of this").

**Either/Or Reasoning.** Either/or reasoning also results from an unwillingness to recognize complexity. If an author analyzes a problem and offers only two explanations, one of which he or she refutes, then you are entitled to object that the other is not thereby true. For usually, several other explanations (at the very least) are possible. For whatever reason, the author has chosen to overlook them. As an example, suppose you are reading a selection on genetic engineering and the author builds an argument on the basis of the following:

Research in gene splicing is at a crossroads: Either scientists will be carefully monitored by civil authorities and their efforts limited to acceptable applications, such as disease control; or, lacking regulatory guidelines, scientists will set their own ethical standards and begin programs in embryonic manipulation that, however well intended, exceed the proper limits of human knowledge.

Certainly, other possibilities for genetic engineering exist beyond the two mentioned here. But the author limits debate by establishing an either/or choice. Such limitation is artificial and does not allow for complexity. As a critical reader, be on the alert for either/or reasoning.

**Hasty Generalization.** Writers are guilty of hasty generalization when they draw their conclusions from too little evidence or from unrepresentative evidence. To argue that scientists should not proceed with the human genome project because a recent editorial urged that the project be abandoned is to make a hasty generalization. This lone editorial may be unrepresentative of the views of most people—both scientists and laypeople—who have studied and written about the matter. To argue that one should never obey authority because the Milgram experiment shows the dangers of obeying authority is to ignore the fact that Milgram's experiment was concerned primarily with obedience to *immoral* authority. Thus, the experimental situation was unrepresentative of most routine demands for obedience—for example, to obey a parental rule or to comply with a summons for jury duty—and a conclusion about the malevolence of all authority would be a hasty generalization.

**False Analogy.** Comparing one person, event, or issue to another may be illuminating, but it also may be confusing or misleading. The differences between the two may be more significant than the similarities, and the conclusions drawn from the one may not necessarily apply to the other. A writer who argues that it is reasonable to quarantine people with AIDS because quarantine has been effective in preventing the spread of smallpox is assuming an analogy between AIDS and smallpox that (because of the differences between the two diseases) is not valid.

**Begging the Question.** To beg the question is to assume as a proven fact the very thesis being argued. To assert, for example, that America is not in decline because it is as strong and prosperous as ever is not to prove anything: it is merely to repeat the claim in different words. This fallacy is also known as circular reasoning.

**Non Sequitur.** "Non sequitur" is Latin for "it does not follow"; the term is used to describe a conclusion that does not logically follow from a premise. "Since minorities have made such great strides in the last few decades," a writer may argue, "we no longer need affirmative action programs." Aside from the fact that the premise itself is arguable (have minorities made such great strides?), it does not follow that because minorities *may* have made great strides, there is no further need for affirmative action programs.

**Oversimplification.** Be alert for writers who offer easy solutions to complicated problems. "America's economy will be strong again if we all 'buy American,'" a politician may argue. But the problems of America's economy are complex and cannot be solved by a slogan or a simple change in buying habits. Likewise, a writer who argues that we should ban genetic engineering assumes that simple solutions ("just say 'no'") will be sufficient to deal with the complex moral dilemmas raised by this new technology.

### Writing That Entertains

Authors write not only to inform and persuade but also to entertain. One response to entertainment is a hearty laugh; but it is possible to entertain without laughter: A good book or play or poem may prompt you to ruminate,

grow wistful, elated, angry. Laughter is only one of many possible reactions. You read a piece (or view a work) and react with sadness, surprise, exhilaration, disbelief, horror, boredom, whatever. As with a response to an informative piece or an argument, your response to an essay, poem, story, play, novel, or film should be precisely stated and carefully developed. Ask yourself some of the following questions (you won't have space to explore all of them, but try to consider some of the most important): Did I care for the portrayal of a certain character? Did that character seem too sentimentalized, for example, or heroic? Did his adversaries seem too villainous or stupid? Were the situations believable? Was the action interesting or merely formulaic? Was the theme developed subtly, powerfully, or did the work come across as preachy or shrill? Did the action at the end of the work follow plausibly from what had come before? Was the language fresh and incisive or stale and predictable? Explain as specifically as possible what elements of the work seemed effective or ineffective and why. Offer an overall assessment, elaborating on your views.

### Question Category 2: To What Extent Do You Agree with the Author?

When formulating a critical response to a source, try to distinguish your evaluation of the author's purpose and success at achieving that purpose from your agreement or disagreement with the author's views. The distinction allows you to respond to a piece of writing on its merits. As an unbiased, evenhanded critic, you evaluate an author's clarity of presentation, use of evidence, and adherence to principles of logic. To what extent has the author succeeded in achieving his or her purpose? Still withholding judgment, offer your assessment and give the author (in effect) a grade. Significantly, your assessment of the presentation may not coincide with your views of the author's conclusions: You may agree with an author entirely but feel that the presentation is superficial; you may find the author's logic and use of evidence to be rock solid but may resist certain conclusions. A critical evaluation works well when it is conducted in two parts. After evaluating the author's purpose and design for achieving that purpose, respond to the author's main assertions. In doing so, you'll want to keep two considerations in mind.

#### IDENTIFY POINTS OF AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT

Be precise in identifying points of agreement and disagreement with an author. You should state as clearly as possible what *you* believe, and an effective way of doing this is to define your position in relation to that presented in the piece. Whether you agree enthusiastically, disagree, or agree with reservations, you can organize your reactions in two parts: first, summarize the author's position; second, state your own position and elaborate on your reasons for holding it. The elaboration, in effect, becomes an argument itself, and this is true regardless of the position you take. An opinion is effective

when you support it by supplying evidence. Without such evidence, opinions cannot be authoritative. "I thought the article on inflation was lousy." Why? "I just thought so, that's all." This opinion is valueless because the criticism is imprecise: The critic has taken neither the time to read the article carefully nor the time to explore his own reactions carefully.

### EXPLORE THE REASONS FOR AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT: EVALUATE ASSUMPTIONS

One way of elaborating your reactions to a reading is to explore the underlying *reasons* for agreement and disagreement. Your reactions are based largely on assumptions that you hold and how these assumptions compare with the author's. An *assumption* is a fundamental statement about the world and its operations that you take to be true. A writer's assumptions may be explicitly stated; but just as often assumptions are implicit and you will have to "ferret them out," that is, to infer them. Consider an example:

*In vitro* fertilization and embryo transfer are brought about outside the bodies of the couple through actions of third parties whose competence and technical activity determine the success of the procedure. Such fertilization entrusts the life and identity of the embryo into the power of doctors and biologists and establishes the domination of technology over the origin and destiny of the human person. Such a relationship of domination is in itself contrary to the dignity and equality that must be common to parents and children.<sup>1</sup>

This paragraph is quoted from the February 1987 Vatican document on artificial procreation. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, principal author of the document, makes an implicit assumption in this paragraph: that no good can come of the domination of technology over conception. The use of technology to bring about conception is morally wrong. Yet there are thousands of childless couples, Roman Catholics included, who reject this assumption in favor of its opposite: that conception technology is an aid to the barren couple; far from creating a relationship of unequals, the technology brings children into the world who will be welcomed with joy and love.

Assumptions provide the foundation on which entire presentations are built. If you find an author's assumptions invalid, you may well disagree with conclusions that follow from these assumptions. The author of a book on developing nations may include a section outlining the resources and time that will be required to industrialize a particular country and so upgrade its general welfare. His assumption—that industrialization in that particular country will ensure or even affect the general welfare—may or may not be valid. If you do not share the assumption, in your eyes the rationale for the entire book may be undermined.

<sup>1</sup>From the Vatican document *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation*, given at Rome, from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, February 22, 1987, as presented in *Origins: N.C. Documentary Service* 16(40), March 19, 1987, p. 707.

How do you determine the validity of assumptions once you have identified them? In the absence of more scientific criteria, validity may mean how well the author's assumptions stack up against your own experience, observations, and reading. A caution, however: The overall value of an article or book may depend only to a small degree on the validity of the author's assumptions. For instance, a sociologist may do a fine job of gathering statistical data about the incidence of crime in urban areas along the eastern seaboard. The sociologist also might be a Marxist, and you may disagree with her subsequent analysis of the data. Yet you may find the data extremely valuable for your own work.

## ▼ CRITIQUE

A *critique* is a *formalized, critical reading of a passage*. It is also a personal response; but writing a critique is considerably more rigorous than saying that a movie is "great," or a book is "fascinating," or "I didn't like it." These are all responses, and, as such, they're a valid, even essential, part of your understanding of what you see and read. But such responses don't help illuminate the subject for anyone—even you—if you haven't explained how you arrived at your conclusions.

Your task in writing a critique is to turn your critical reading of a passage into a systematic evaluation in order to deepen your reader's (and your own) understanding of that passage. Among other things, you're interested in determining what an author says, how well the points are made, what assumptions underlie the argument, what issues are overlooked, and what implications can be drawn from such an analysis. Critiques, positive or negative, should include a fair and accurate summary of the passage; they also should include a statement of your own assumptions. It is important to remember that you bring to bear an entire set of assumptions about the world. Stated or not, these assumptions underlie every evaluative comment you make; therefore, you have an obligation, both to the reader and to yourself, to clarify your standards. Not only do your readers stand to gain by your forthrightness, but you do as well: In the process of writing a critical assessment, you are forced to examine your own knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions. Ultimately, the critique is a way of learning about yourself.

### How to Write Critiques

You may find it useful to organize your critiques in five sections: introduction, summary, analysis of the presentation, your response to the presentation, and conclusion.

The box (page 68) contains some guidelines for writing critiques. Note that they are guidelines, not a rigid formula. Thousands of authors write critiques that do not follow the structure outlined here. Until you are more confident and practiced in writing critiques, however, we suggest you follow the guidelines. They are meant not to restrict you, but to provide you with a



## HOW TO WRITE CRITIQUES

- **Introduction.** Introduce both the passage under analysis and the author.
  - State the author's main argument and the point(s) you intend to make about it.
  - Provide background material to help your readers understand the relevance or appeal of the passage. This background material might include one or more of the following: an explanation of why the subject is of current interest; a reference to a possible controversy surrounding the subject of the passage or the passage itself; biographical information about the author; an account of the circumstances under which the passage was written; or a reference to the intended audience of the passage.
- **Summary.** Summarize the author's main points, making sure to state the author's purpose for writing.
- **Analysis of the presentation.** Evaluate the validity of the author's presentation, as distinct from your points of agreement or disagreement. Comment on the author's success in achieving his or her purpose by reviewing three or four specific points. You might base your review on one (or more) of the following criteria:
  - Is the information accurate?
  - Is the information significant?
  - Has the author defined terms clearly?
  - Has the author used and interpreted information fairly?
  - Has the author argued logically?
- **Your response to the presentation.** Now it is your turn to respond to the author's views. With which views do you agree? With which do you disagree? Discuss your reasons for agreement and disagreement, when possible tying these reasons to assumptions—both the author's and your own.
- **Conclusion.** State your conclusions about the overall validity of the piece—your assessment of the author's success at achieving his or her aims and your reactions to the author's views. Remind the reader of the weaknesses and strengths of the passage.

workable method of writing critical analyses that incorporates a logical sequence of development.

When you write a critique based on an essay in this text, you'll find it helpful to first read the Discussion and Writing Suggestions following that essay. These suggestions will lead you to some of the more fruitful areas of inquiry. Beware of simply responding mechanically to them, however, or your essay could degenerate into a series of short, disjointed responses. You need

to organize your reactions into a coherent whole: the critique should be informed by a consistent point of view.

## ▼ DEMONSTRATION: CRITIQUE

Read the following selection, "Total Surveillance" by Charles Ostman, which will be the subject of an example critique; and read also Irving Sloan's "Privacy and Technology," an excerpt from a book on privacy law that provides a larger context for Ostman's discussion. These discussions on the ways in which new technologies might be used to violate the privacy rights of individual citizens serve two purposes: first, they provide an occasion for the example critique on pages 81–86; second, they are meant to whet your appetite for Chapter 9, "Privacy and Technology," in Part II of this text.

Charles Ostman's thesis that we are quickly sliding into a "total surveillance" society is certainly arguable. It is based on points of logic, emotional appeals, and assumptions that you should read carefully and challenge. Draw on the preceding discussion to stimulate your responses to Ostman. Make notes in the margins: these will help you write a summary (be sure to underline the author's thesis, topic sentences, transitions, and important examples); notes in the form of questions and reactions can also help you to organize a critical response.

After you have read Ostman's article, read Sloan's for a much different perspective on the same issues. Then gather your notes and order them according to the five steps for writing critiques outlined above.

### Total Surveillance

CHARLES OSTMAN

*This article on surveillance technology first appeared in Mondo 2000 (Issue 13, 1995), a glossy magazine on cyber-culture. Charles Ostman is a former research engineer.*

Imagine a world in which every aspect of your life, past and present, is encrypted on a personal ID card and stored on a nationwide database. Where virtually all communications media—soon to be 100 percent digital—are automatically monitored by computerized phone taps and satellites from control centers thousands of miles away. Where self-training neural net and artificial intelligence data search systems scan for undesirable lifestyles and target *you* for automatic monitoring.

Personal privacy was once considered the most sacred of our constitutional rights; agencies were severely limited by law. All that's about to

change drastically thanks to a deadly combination of extremely sophisticated surveillance technology, ubiquitous digital information collection, and centralized interagency data exchange.

Until recently the “supersecret” National Reconnaissance Organization did not exist—even though it has the largest budget of any intelligence agency. They are responsible for the design, development and procurement of all U.S. reconnaissance satellites and their continued management once in orbit. Recently photos have surfaced in the press of its huge new complex being completed in Chantilly, Virginia (Senator John Warner—Liz Taylor’s ex—has described the one million square foot complex as a “Taj Mahal”) The NRO is eagerly implementing such technologies as ultrahigh storage capacity holographic films (allowing huge amounts of personal information to be present on your ID card) and self-training artificial intelligence software that tracks your personal data without human intervention. A new era of ubiquitous surveillance is dawning.

A struggling military-industrial complex searching for new markets for their technologies has merged forces with a government obsessed with ever tighter control over the activities of the general public. Congresswoman Barbara Jordan has proposed a “National Employment Verification Card” that will be required for all employment in the U.S. The card will, of course, have a magnetic data strip, and altering or counterfeiting the card will be a federal felony offense.

There is a dedicated and aggressive effort underway to chart various genetic features as part of one’s personal information set. The fed’s goal is to have the ability to screen individuals for everything from behavioral characteristics to sexual orientation, based on genetic information embedded in your personal (and required) national ID card.

Biometric signature technologies have been developing apace. There is even a technique available to translate human DNA into bar codes for efficient digital transmission between agencies.

Are these science fiction story lines or the ravings of a paranoid lunatic? I wish they were. As a former research engineer at Lawrence Livermore Labs and other government labs, I watched some of these mad schemes being hatched. This technology is on the street today or about to leave the labs and believe me, it goes way beyond Orwell’s worst nightmares. Listen up and hunker down.

A fundamental shift in the legal definition of personal privacy is occurring right now. A court-issued warrant used to be a universal requirement for personal surveillance, such as phone tapping, observing physical papers, and probing financial or medical records. Now, in this new age of AI-driven monitoring and data tracking systems, there are no pesky people in the loop.

A computer doesn’t need to seek a court warrant to monitor every aspect of your private life. A self-training automated surveillance system doesn’t need permission to observe your movements or communications.

Total data tracking is already commonplace for financial institutions

of us. The technical elements of a massive surveillance engine are in place. It’s just a matter of turning the key to fire it up. Let’s examine these elements and why you should be concerned.

### UNIVERSAL ENCRYPTION CHIP

It sounds logical. The feds want to preserve privacy, so their story goes, so they’ve announced that an encryption chip will go into all phones and computers that they buy. But what do they *really* want in the long run?

How about a government-issue encryption chip in all personal computers and communication devices? That way, the feds can deal with drug smugglers, terrorists, kiddie porn merchants, and other miscreants who use encoded messages.

Of course, they’d have to prevent tampering with the chip. In fact, the technology to do just that has already been developed at Sandia National Laboratory. Scientists there have developed an optical sensor that uses a powdered silicon optical absorption layer in an optical waveguide embedded in a chip. A micro photodetector detects even the slightest intrusion into the chip package by measuring a slight change in the photonic conduction through the waveguide. It can then send an alert via modem to a central monitoring system to notify an interested party that the device has been tampered with. Sandia is also developing a microchemical intrusion detector that would be sensitive to the chemical signature of human fingertips.

Is this all part of some master plan, or what?

In fact, in the near future, all encryption hardware and software will be subject to federal registration/authorization. Possession of unauthorized encryption/decryption capability will be punishable as a federal felony. In other words, if it doesn’t have a handy back door for NSA snoops, it ain’t legal.

We can further speculate that the feds will embed chips in all equipment sold for use in data transmission, digital phone calls and all other frequencies. Note: all new phone systems wired and wireless will be digital in the next three years.

### INTELLIGENT VIDEO

Nor would you know *what’s* watching you. Security cameras are becoming standard in corporate and government facilities. They may soon even be required. Why? Ostensibly because they want to recover losses in cases of theft, keep insurance premiums down, monitor peculant employees and keep intruders out.

But the new genre of video cameras now coming out of the labs do a lot more than that. They’re intelligent. They can recognize faces, motion, and other interesting characteristics. In fact, they behave a lot like a human eye, with intelligent processing capabilities.



Intelligent cameras are needed because a security guard or cop can't monitor the dozens or hundreds of video cameras in a large facility (or dozens of satellite video surveillance channels). Intelligent cameras use artificial intelligence-based object and motion recognition. They scan for what a trained security guard looks for: certain motions, clothing, faces; the presence of people in off-limits places. Instead of watching 100 cameras, only a few at any time send pictures. A single guard or computer can deal with that.

In fact, a steady data stream from multiple intelligent cameras can be uploaded to computerized monitoring facilities anywhere, coupled with other automated observation systems.

The next big thing in intelligent cameras will be "content-addressable" imagery. That means they'll automatically detect the content of sophisticated patterns, like a specific person's face, by matching it against a digital "wanted" poster, say. New software that can even run on cheap personal computers makes that possible. MatchMaker from Iterated Systems (Norcross, GA), for example, uses a fractal algorithm that converts image data into mathematical form, automatically recognizing and categorizing real-time "targets"—untouched by human hands and tied into a centralized monitoring facility!

A related technology called focal plane array sensors (FPA) discriminates objects at just about any distance. FPA makes it possible to use neuromorphic sensors, modeled biologically on the human eye, which are built into a camera to recognize a person or object by "associative cognition."

Carver Mead at Cal Tech has designed a broad-spectrum "human-eye" sensor using FPAs and 3D artificial neural network processors. To prove the viability of such concepts, Raytheon, under contract with the Guided Interceptor Branch of the Air Force at Elgin AFB, has developed "smart eyes" using FPAs for recognizing objects in flight, thus relieving the pilot of visual target recognition tasks while in a high-pressure combat situation.

This technology is inexpensive, easily reproducible, and will be part of standard equipment for fully automated, on-site visual and infrared surveillance in the near future.

Langley Research Center (Hampton, VA) in conjunction with Telero-botics International (Knoxville, TN) is taking a step further. They're developing an advanced surveillance camera system that's even more intelligent: it uses self-aiming and analyzes motion or other parameters. A fisheye spherical lens views a very wide field of vision while a self-contained image processing subsystem tracks several moving targets at once in real time. Video for suspect targets can be transmitted in real time to a security center.

These smart cameras are also getting incredibly tiny and low cost. The Imputer from VLSI Vision Ltd. (Edinburgh, Scotland) is a credit card-sized device that fits in the palm of your hand. It consists of a complete CCD video camera mounted on a circuit board plus an on-board DSP (digital signal processing) coprocessor for realtime image enhancement, feature

even an optional library of pre-stored feature data so that the camera can independently recognize a specific face or other security-oriented data. It can also download its captured visual data via telephone line to a data collection and processing facility.

With everything on a few chips, intelligent cameras can now be mass-manufactured like pocket radios. No need for security personnel—they can be linked to a computer surveillance monitoring and data base system.

That is where it gets really insidious. When the technology becomes so cheap, tiny, and powerful, and no guards are needed, they can sprinkle these things around like corn chips . . . secretly putting them on every street corner, in every waiting room, office, wherever.

Keep smiling, because you'll never know when you're on candid camera. And hey, relax, they've just captured your surfaces.

### BIOMETRICS

Where it really starts to get hairy is when we enter the brave new world of Biometrics. Biometrics is the process of gathering biological information and converting it into data that can be uploaded into automated systems for identifying you.

They can use your fingerprint (via automated fingerprint identification systems), retinal scan, voice or other personal signatures. Miros of Wellesley, MA, has recently introduced a system called Face-to-Face, using neural nets, that is particularly insidious. Unlike fingerprint or palm recognition, it identifies your face "non-intrusively" (that's technospeak for surreptitiously) with 99 percent recognition. It can even identify your face when you add glasses or change your hairstyle.

There are biometric service bureaus like TRW that provide immediate access to personal dossier information to prisons, banks, military bases, research facilities, pharmaceutical companies, etc. The client simply installs a retinal scanner or other device and transmits your image to a service bureau, which sends back your complete dossier. This is big business for these service bureaus. We're talking *billions* in government and corporate contracts.

What's next? We can expect intelligent scanning systems will be installed in supermarket checkout lines, lobbies, airports, stores, ATM sites, and so on in the near future. Known shoplifters will be tracked from the time they walk into the store. There'll be a *cordon sanitaire* around playgrounds and day care centers.

What happens when the FBI ties its fingerprint verification system at its National Criminal Information Center, with its library of over 250,000 fingerprints, into the national health care system, employment ID card, IRS, and just about everything else?

If the FBI has *you* listed as a radical or some other species of undesirable, will they be automatically notified whenever you appear at a doctor's office? Every time you use an ATM? What about when you buy a naughty

magazine or subscribe to a "politically incorrect" publication? Where does this stuff stop?

### SATELLITE SURVEILLANCE

It doesn't. Your image may be up for sale right now. Ten-meter-resolution satellite images of those strange weeds in your back yard are available to any buyer from the French company SPOT Image of Reston, Virginia 36

Even sharper images are available. Spy satellite images at two meters resolution are now available from World Map. About 30 other countries—particularly Germany, Israel, and China—are planning to launch satellite surveillance systems. 37

Producers of satellite and surveillance equipment and large database processing services like TRW have huge financial stakes in this \$8 billion market. They've put massive pressure on the CIA and DoD to loosen up control of satellite surveillance technology. Three of them—Lockheed, Orbital Sciences (which is launching Eyeglass), and World View—are launching satellites with resolutions from one to three meters by 1997. 38

Another recently formed U.S. company, Teledesic, is planning a vast \$9 billion global communication system using 840 geosynchronous orbit satellites, scheduled for 2001. There would be no single area on the planet that could not be "seen" on demand, and more importantly, virtually all digital communications could be linked through this universal transponder system. 39

Suddenly we're just one step from a universal monitoring system. The satellites could conceivably serve as platforms for multi-spectral, on-demand, visual and IR surveillance of any coordinate on the planetary surface. Note: both founders of Teledesic, Bill Gates and Craig McCaw, declined to be interviewed by MONDO on this topic. 40

### ROBOT SPIES

Unmanned robotic devices (airborne and land-based) are now here that can observe an individual or dwelling day or night from a distance. They can also monitor communications (using RF signatures) over a broad spectrum of frequencies. They can be activated from a distant control center thousands of miles away from the target; and surveillance data can be collected and examined in real time via satellite link. 41

For example, there's the SR2 Security Robot System from Cybermotion Inc. of Roanoke, Virginia. Designed to "replace human security personnel," the SR2 patrols a region of up to 15 square miles for 12 hour shifts (between charges), using ultrasonic, optical, and infrared sensors plus on-board "fuzzy logic" to navigate around complex obstacles and interpret data. An operator at a remote site controls and interacts with a group of these robots via bidirectional RF data link. 42

There's also NASA's High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) unmanned aircraft. HALE can stay airborne for days at a time, carrying CCD 43

optical and infrared camera systems. These light-weight stealth aircraft are flown by remote control, using a satellite data link to an operational command center that can be thousands of miles away. Perfect for kamikaze-style strikes.

And the U.S. Navy is soliciting proposals to develop a robotic, flyable platform for optical and infrared surveillance, designed for "riot control, border surveillance, and personnel detection" 44

A fuzzy logic based RF communications signal/signature analysis system has been solicited by the U.S. Navy. It will be able to recognize the content of any transmitted signal from anywhere, regardless of spread spectrum, encryption, or other electronic signal countermeasures. Commercial applications cited in the solicitation are "law enforcement, surveillance, drug interdiction, illegal immigrant control, etc." 45

Realtime monitoring by these robotic devices can be remotely activated from anywhere. No search warrants, no court authorizations 46

### MASSIVELY PARALLEL COMPUTERS AND OPTICAL STORAGE

All these surveillance systems generate massive amounts of information. Until recently this would have been impractical for millions of people. 47

Currently, massive optical data storage technologies coupled with extremely powerful, massively parallel processing computers are capable of very high-volume data storage and very high-speed data analysis. 48

The Department of Commerce is financing a joint project with Tamarack Storage Devices to develop a photo-refractive holographic data storage system capable of handling hundreds of terabytes (that's  $10^{12}$  bytes) of data for extremely large database processing operations. This is exactly the type of information storage/processing capability required for a nationwide population monitoring system. 49

Thinking Machines Inc., of Cambridge, MA has recently announced a massively parallel processing supercomputer, the CM-5, specifically designed for extremely huge database processing applications. It can access an astonishing 3.2 terabytes of data with a bandwidth of up to 4.2 gigabytes per second, distributed over a network of 16,000 processing nodes that can be located anywhere. 50

A handful of these systems can maintain an up-to-date population monitoring/data processing system for the entire country. 51

What do you think is going to be in that secret \$350 million National Reconnaissance Organization (NRO) building in Chantilly, VA? Hint: they're not watching Russia any more. 52

### NEURAL NETS AND AI

Of course, all these operations normally require huge staffs of trained experts. That's where neural nets and artificial intelligence come in. 53

Neural net processing systems can search for "behavioral tendencies" within a database and automatically flag certain individuals for surveillance. 54

and "attention" from interested enforcement agencies, employers, political researchers, etc. This is a rung up from knowbots and gobots.

A good example is the ominous Origin system (the U.S. base is Tampa, FL), a worldwide realtime, intelligent vision processing and networking database system designed for "intelligent security data base monitoring and observation" for law enforcement and government agencies. It uses Iterated Systems' Matchmaker software running on a global computer network. A surveillance camera or biometric sensor anywhere can feed signals into the network and get back a name of the person in seconds.

HNC's (San Diego, CA) DataBase Mining Workstation is a dedicated neural network processing engine designed to look for "interesting" data sets on its own. The user "trains" the system for topics or features of interest. Once effectively trained, the system automatically tracks anything (or anyone) that gets its attention and draws its own conclusions.

HNC also sells the Falcon neural net credit card "fraud and abuse" detection system. It automatically "learns" about unusual spending habits and related behavioral feature sets. Clients for this system include AT&T, Colonial National Bank, Eurocard Netherland, First USA Bank, Household Credit Services, and Wells Fargo Bank. HNC is also working on credit risk evaluation, bankruptcy potential, and other forms of financial activity pattern recognition.

Again, no need for pesky humans who can be held accountable for violation of privacy. "The machine did it!" Once this becomes routine, current legally defined barriers to privacy disappear totally.

### AUTOMATED VOICE RECOGNITION

In the good old days, they had to attach electronic clips to your phone and get court authorization. Not so today.

Let's say you're on a list somewhere based on your politics, reading, or drug or sexual habits. Zap: you're suddenly on a priority list for surveillance. You make a call and your voice matches the profile. The system starts to listen in to your vocal communications in real time. The voice data can then be digitized, stored, and added to your surveillance dossier by the computer.

If you've seen the movie *Clear and Present Danger*, you know how easily intelligence agencies monitor cellular phone calls, satellite phone calls, and anything else that's broadcast. (It's actually easy for anyone to monitor cellular calls with a scanner covering 870 to 896 MHz or a UHF TV receiver tuned to channels 80 to 83 and a good UHF antenna.) Then they digitize speech signals and convert them into text data, which can then be processed to search for specific words or phrases.

All this will be a lot easier when the telephone companies introduce Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM) communications in a few years. Virtually all communications, including data transmission and business and personal phone calls, will be routed through the same universal communi-

Dialogic Corp. (Parsippany, NJ) is developing "second generation" modular telephone call-processing and automated speech recognition system hardware and software. Uses include online automatic keyword and phrase recognition. That is, any word or word communication that may be "interesting" to an automated listening system can cue automated storage of an entire conversation for further analysis.

The Sprint voice-activated phone card is already in use. But several corporations including TRW have already taken it a step further. They can analyze and store voice signatures for every telephone caller in the country for a much larger market: voice recognition for phone credit card verification and voice-triggered ID security systems. Essentially, you'll be forced to use voice ID or no credit or access. It's a simple matter to adapt this kind of technology for a national tracking system.

The U.S. Navy wants to take it a step further. As evidenced by its recent FY 94 "Global Surveillance and Communications" technology solicitations (as per the SBIR development funding program), they are developing a "robust signal processing of speech" capability with "voice communications countermeasures and counter-countermeasures" as part of a comprehensive, speech recognition and processing system.

Sun Microsystems workstations include a microphone and speech recognition chip. A recent security alert from the Computer Emergency Response Team at Carnegie Mellon University disclosed that the workstations had been pre-programmed with a "world readable" status feature. That means any of these networked workstations could in fact serve as a remotely monitored microphone. A back door has already been built into this workstation. That means anyone can activate the microphone to listen in remotely from anywhere in the world.

### DESKTOP NSA

But all this massive power is not limited to giant computer centers. Even desktop computers are now becoming powerful enough to handle massive amounts of intelligence information.

Adaptive Solutions Inc. (Beaverton, OR) sells a \$7000 CNAPS/PC board that converts a 486 or Pentium computer into a massively parallel processing engine. The boards, each of which contains 128 processors, perform 2.56 billion multiply/accumulate operations per second. This means a 1000 times performance improvement in pattern recognition.

Companies are turning these powerful new surveillance tools on their own people too. For example, Microsoft has a secret project to monitor all keystrokes of its personnel to "improve efficiency" using neural net and artificial intelligence software. And Edify Corp. (Santa Clara, CA) is supplying "intelligent agent" software to BellSouth Communications Systems (Roanoke, VA). It will be built into BellSouth's Electronic Workforce software. Its customers will use it for interactive voice response and recognition, personnel and client workforce screening, efficiency monitoring, and

## PROBATION NATION

This is *not* another paranoid “1984” scenario based on some futuristic fantasy. For the first time in history, the technology is available to design and implement such a ubiquitous surveillance/monitoring system. The crisis climate created by the media—particularly television “news magazines”—is being used to *mandate* this horror

The political will to do this is here and it is being touted as an accepted solution to such problems as crime and illegal immigrants. The general public is not even remotely familiar with the technical details of how such a repressive system could be implemented and won’t wake up until they’re virtual prisoners in a totally automated Surveillance Society

## Privacy and Technology

IRVING J SLOAN

*The following selection is excerpted from a book that Sloan edited, Law of Privacy Rights in a Technological Society. Sloan’s legal background brings him to the same issues that worry Ostman, but from a far different point of view. This selection will help to create a larger context for your reading of Ostman.*

When the Federal Constitution and the Bill of Rights were written . . . government left the individual largely unrestrained, arbitrating between individuals only at extreme limits of conduct. Yet in the century and a half that followed, government’s role gradually shifted to promotion of the community welfare, even at the cost of individual property rights.

As technology advances, the problem shifts from the exertion of governmental authority over property rights to the potential for governmental intrusion on individual privacy rights. In the words of Justice [William O.] Douglas, “the central problem of the age is the scientific revolution and all the wonders and the damage it brings.” The machine, which Orwell once called “the genie that man has thoughtlessly let out of its bottle and cannot put back again,” has allowed new concentrations of power, particularly in government, which utterly dwarf the individual and threaten individuality as never before. “Where in this tightly knit regime,” asked Justice Douglas, “is man to find liberty?”

On the vital subject of privacy and its place in the society of the future, Justice Douglas remarked, “We are rapidly entering the age of no privacy, where everyone is open to surveillance at all times; where there are no secrets from government. The aggressive breaches of privacy by the government increase by geometric proportions.”

Justice [Louis D.] Brandeis, one of the fathers of the legal right of privacy, observed a similar development in his famous dissent in *Olmstead v.*

*United States.* When the Fourth Amendment was written, declared Brandeis, force and violence were the essential means by which privacy could be invaded. It was against such relatively simple evils that the constitutional guaranty was directed. With time, Brandeis noted, subtler and more far-reaching means of invading privacy have become available to the government. “Discovery and invention have made it possible for the government, by means far more effective than stretching upon the rack, to obtain disclosure in court of what is ‘whispered in the closet.’”

But it is in the area of non-wiretap electronic eavesdropping that the greatest scientific advances have occurred. The impact of these advances has been summarized by Justice [William J.] Brennan: “Electronic eavesdropping by means of concealed microphones and recording devices of various kinds has become as large a problem as wiretapping and is pervasively employed by private detectives, police, labor spies, employers and others for a variety of purposes; some downright disreputable. . . . These devices go far beyond simple ‘bugging,’ and permit a degree of invasion of privacy that can only be described as frightening.”

The potential for invasion is greatly expanded by recent developments in electronic surveillance such as parabolic microphones, which can pick up conversations at considerable distances, ultra-miniature wireless microphones no larger than a pencil eraser; recorders so small they can be built into cigarette lighters; and microwave-beam devices with a range of 1,000 feet or more, which can penetrate walls and other obstacles.

In his *Olmstead* dissent, Justice Brandeis foresaw the technological revolution that so transformed the field of communications and magnified the potential for electronic eavesdropping: “The progress of science in furnishing the government with means of espionage is not likely to stop with wiretapping. Ways may someday be developed by which the government without removing papers from secret drawers, can reproduce them in court, and by which it will be enabled to expose to a jury the most intimate occurrences of the home.”

The technological changes wrought by scientific progress have outstripped the law and legal commentary. Much of the [Earl] Warren Court’s protective jurisprudence may become completely outmoded by the seven-league strides being made in long-distance eavesdropping techniques. As Justice Brennan put it in his dissent in *Lopez v. United States* in 1963: “To be secure against police officers’ breaking and entering to search for physical objects is worth very little if there is no security against the officers’ using secret recording devices to purloin words spoken in confidence within the four walls of home or office. . . . If electronic surveillance by government becomes sufficiently widespread, and there is little in prospect for checking it, the hazard that as a people we may become hagridden and furtive is not fantasy.” One may now question how much of the concept of privacy itself will remain if, through the advances in applied science, the area of privacy remaining physically immune from official scrutiny were to all but disappear.

A major source of privacy invasion is the increasing use over the last several years by the federal government of "computer-matching" investigations to detect fraud, abuse, and waste in the administration of federal programs. These computerized general searches of personal data have been conducted in the files of welfare and medicaid recipients, draft-aged taxpayers, veterans, federal employees, persons entitled to supplemental security income, and thousands of other government files. The computer-matching technique is an effective way of combining personal data from a wide variety of separate record systems and using it to keep track of individuals.

Finally, for several years Congress has been considering a proposal to require all persons in the United States to carry a fraud-proof work authorization card in order to obtain and hold employment. The card, backed by a national databank of personal information concerning all persons lawfully in the United States, would constitute a secure national identification system that could block the employment of illegal aliens. The proposal has sparked controversy because the identification system could become a vehicle for the violation of civil rights if used by the police to conduct wide-ranging searches and investigations or by other government agencies to keep track of private, law-abiding citizens.

These examples demonstrate that the technological capability to collect, maintain, cross-index, and disclose vast quantities of information about private lives has far out-paced the legal protection of privacy in the United States. Many information systems containing sensitive data are being constructed to facilitate important social objectives, such as better law enforcement, faster delivery of public services, more efficient management of credit and insurance programs, improvement of telecommunications, and streamlining of financial activities. Nonetheless, these high technology systems are also being used at an increasing rate by large and public agencies to enhance their control of the lives of individuals.

Until this point, we have been talking about protection from government intrusion. In fact, however, the private sector has also rapidly increased its use of technology such as we have been describing here. For example, interactive cable television systems are capable of gathering vast amounts of personal data, not only on the viewing habits of consumers, but also on their buying and banking habits, as more services are added to the cable system. Cable companies, for example, offer burglar alarm systems which tell the company when a consumer is at home. This sensitive personal information is a valuable commodity which cable companies can sell to credit reporting companies and other interested buyers in order to finance their corporate growth.

Private companies as well as the federal government often require employees to submit to lie detector tests. Employees have no clear understanding of what rights, if any, they have to refuse to take a test, or to control the verification, storage, and dissemination of records generated by a test if they submit to it.

The technology for information collection, storage, and retrieval has outpaced the technology for safeguarding databanks of personal information. It is therefore increasingly compelling that the law and legislation reflect the citizen's rights and needs to protect his privacy from both governmental and private intrusions.

This growth of data banks and vast computerized pools of information about people in every aspect of their lives is probably the single most important element in the contemporary range of concerns about the right of privacy.

▲ ▲ ▲

Consider the following questions as you contemplate the ways in which one might critique Charles Ostman's "Total Surveillance":

- Ostman believes that a total surveillance state is inevitable. Why?
- Ostman makes frequent references to "they." To whom is Ostman referring, and what is the effect of these references?
- What are the positive uses of the technologies reviewed in this article?
- Given your reading of the excerpt from Irving Sloan's *Law of Privacy Rights in a Technological Society*, how do your views of Ostman's article change, if they change at all?
- What are some similarities and differences between Ostman's work and Sloan's?
- How does Sloan help to establish a larger context for Ostman's article?

In the following critique, one writer presents his responses to these questions. Thesis and transitional/topic sentences are highlighted.

They're After Us!

A Critique of Charles Ostman's "Total Surveillance"

What would life be like knowing that you were watched constantly: knowing that hidden monitors recorded private conversations; that supervisors at work read every keystroke from your computer; that for a service fee of \$150 anyone who took an interest could access your credit, health, educational, military, and legal histories? What would life be like? In a piece written for *Mondo 2000*, former research engineer Charles Ostman claims

that we'll soon know first hand, because we're barreling headlong into an Orwellian nightmare of "Total Surveillance."

Ostman devotes considerable attention to reviewing the technologies he says will be cobbled together to form a national, even international, surveillance net. From intelligent video cameras to biological probes ("biometrics") to satellites that can spot swimsuits on a clothesline to neural nets and more, the individual technologies of surveillance now being deployed are astonishing in their power to gather data. Combined, they present an unprecedented threat to individual privacy, according to Ostman. "For the first time in history," he writes, "the technology is available to design and implement . . . a ubiquitous surveillance/monitoring system." But exactly who would be spying on us and why Ostman never explains; nor does he question a core assumption: that the fact we have the technological know-how to build a super-spy system means, inevitably, that we will build and use it. Still, Ostman is both entertaining and informative. In the tradition of true paranoids, he surveys current trends and projects the bleakest of futures. The possibility that he may be right about surveillance technologies makes his article worth taking seriously--even if the threat he sees, for the moment, exists largely in his own head.

Many Americans have worried over privacy rights. In his dissenting view in the famous wire-tapping case Olmstead v. United States (1928), Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis wrote: "Discovery and invention have made it possible for the government, by means far more effective than stretching upon the rack, to obtain disclosure in court of what is 'whispered in the closet'" (qtd. in Sloan 79). Thirty-five years later, Justice Brennan argued that "if electronic surveillance by government becomes sufficiently widespread, and there is little in prospect for checking it, the

hazard that as a people we may become hagridden and furtive is not fantasy" (qtd. in Sloan 79). Brennan and Brandeis provide an authoritative cover for Ostman, the tone of whose Mondo 2000 piece could certainly be described as "hagridden"--or tormented. Surveillance systems already in place give reason enough for at least a modest amount of anxiety. According to recent media accounts, insurance companies are requesting the results of genetic screenings so that they can set premium rates more accurately; employers want to know our psychological profiles; credit agencies like TRW regularly update their dossiers on our financial dealings. Charles Ostman's fears have some basis in fact.

Ostman wants "Total Surveillance" to be an alarm bell that alerts readers to a "fundamental shift in the legal definition of personal privacy" in the United States. His main concern is with the ways in which hi-tech surveillance systems are circumventing our privacy rights. Until now, privacy law in this country has protected individuals (outside their places of employment) from being monitored without a law enforcement official's first obtaining a warrant. What worries Ostman is the development of sophisticated, inexpensive, and (therefore) soon-to-be-ubiquitous recording devices that activate themselves when, for instance, the on-board computer "recognizes" a certain voice, a phrase in conversation, or a certain face. The surveillance systems thus triggered require no human agent, no warrant, and no judge to determine the legality of the surveillance. Download the data generated on individuals to globally linked computers and we have an invitation to abuse.

Is Charles Ostman paranoid? A paranoid sees threats that have little basis in fact and then frets about them endlessly. Ostman, a former research engineer at Lawrence Livermore Laboratories, is at the very least a borderline paranoid.



He fears a threat to his and our privacy but cannot tell us with any precision *who* will be watching us--and why. Still, the threat's out there, lurking, and we had better "Listen up and hunker down." Early in the article, he names the enemy: the "feds," in cahoots with the "struggling military-industrial complex searching for new markets." Ostman subsequently refers to the government as a monolithic "they," a tactic that places all federal employees and elected officials under suspicion. This tactic is unfair. We've seen two examples of Supreme Court justices who would never agree to the government's sprinkling surveillance technologies "around like corn chips." Brandeis and Brennan have found the prospect of total surveillance repugnant. Others in government agree, as can be seen with Ostman's own example of the proposed national identity card. True enough, Congress recently debated issuing the cards--which, with their encoded data about our health, financial, and legal histories, would have Orwellian potential. But Congress defeated the proposal. Apparently, Ostman is so set on the idea that "they" are out to get us that he can't imagine elected officials joining forces to defeat a proposal that would threaten the privacy rights of Americans.

Nor does Ostman acknowledge that each technology he fears has a specific, legitimate use unrelated to domestic spying. The encryption chip, intelligent video, biometrics, automated voice recognition, and massively parallel desktop computing all have primary uses that do not involve the surveillance of law-abiding citizens. For instance, several of these technologies have been put to use fighting drug smugglers and terrorists. Obviously, hi-tech tools can be misused, just as low-tech ones can. Imagine the good and the harm a hammer can do. Given all the legitimate uses of the technologies he has noted, Ostman's obsession about the coming surveillance society is like fo-

ocusing on crimes that will be committed with hammers in the coming year. Yes, burglars and psychopaths will use hammers to break windows and break heads; but in overwhelmingly greater numbers, carpenters will use hammers to build homes and offices where people will live and work. The failure to mention these primary, productive uses in an article on hammers would be absurd--and this is precisely Ostman's error. Only in passing, and with irony, does he acknowledge that the hardware he has surveyed does have legitimate, legal uses.

Notwithstanding these problems, "Total Surveillance" demands our attention because it is built on an assumption about technology that many people share: the view that when we have the technical capability to build something, we build it; and once we do, we use it--whatever the consequences. Those who endorse this view of technological inevitability sometimes explain themselves by pointing to the Manhattan project. In the 1940s, the government invested millions to build an atomic bomb; once that bomb was built, the chances were slim that the government would fail to use its new technology since, after all, the bomb was sitting in New Mexico waiting to be used. Even though some military strategists close to the President questioned the necessity of dropping the bomb, Truman gave the order. And, thus, Ostman's case for technological inevitability: if we can build a total surveillance society, we will build it; and if we build it, we'll use it.

Is Ostman's nightmare state inevitable? He certainly thinks so; but technological capability need not mandate the future. The difference between the construction of the atomic bomb and its use and the construction of a total surveillance system involves a question of motive. In the early 1940s, the military needed a weapon to end the war and invested heavily. Today, we don't find agreement in the federal government on the issue of

closely monitoring citizens (as the defeated ID card attests). True, we can point to shameful examples of domestic spying. In the 1950s, suspected Communists were the targeted subversives; in the 1960s and 1970s, the FBI put anti-war protesters and civil rights activists under surveillance for nothing more than exercising their right to free speech. That the government spied on its citizens is an ugly fact. Would the government spy on its citizens today with ubiquitous surveillance technologies? We can't rule out the possibility; but neither can we assume that we'll inevitably slip into an Orwellian nightmare. The burden of proof is on Ostman to show that the threat is real. Instead of proof, he invites us into his paranoia with questions like "Is this all part of some master plan, or what?"

We may well be becoming a total surveillance society, and Ostman has done a service by alerting us to potential harm. But he provides no evidence that the federal government, today, has Orwellian intentions. Nonetheless, we would be wise to be vigilant. Supreme Court justices guard against intrusions on personal privacy, and so should we.

#### Works Cited<sup>1</sup>

- Ostman, Charles. "Total Surveillance." Mondo 2000 13 (1995):16-19.
- Sloan, Irving J., ed. Law of Privacy Rights in a Technological Society. Legal Almanac Series 54. Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana, 1986.



<sup>1</sup>These "Works Cited" entries refer to pagination of articles in their original sources. In-text citations in the example critique refer to pages in *Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum*

## Discussion

- In the first two paragraphs of this critique, the writer introduces his subject and describes Ostman's purpose in writing the article. The writer concludes paragraph 2 with his thesis: the article is worth our attention, despite problems in Ostman's argument
- In paragraph 3, the writer sets a larger context for Ostman's argument by drawing on the concerns others have had about privacy rights. This paragraph establishes that Ostman's topic is one worth taking seriously. With a brief reference to current surveillance technologies, the paragraph further supports Ostman's claim that we have reasons to be concerned about our privacy rights
- In paragraph 4, the writer summarizes Ostman's argument
- The critical evaluation of the article begins in paragraph 5, with the question, "Is Ostman paranoid?" The writer addresses a first weakness in the article: Ostman's broad use of "they" to refer to the entire government, which he sees as the source of the surveillance threat
- In paragraph 6, the writer challenges Ostman on a second point: his failure to acknowledge that the surveillance technologies in question have other, legitimate uses
- The main part of the critique is reserved for paragraphs 7 and 8, where the writer of the critique identifies and then examines Ostman's core assumption about technological inevitability. Ostman believes that since massive surveillance is technically possible, it is inevitable; the writer of the critique questions this inevitability.
- In the final paragraph, the writer summarizes his position: that Ostman has done well to alert readers to potential danger, but that he has failed to establish that the danger is a real one

# 4

## Synthesis

### WHAT IS A SYNTHESIS?

A *synthesis* is a written discussion that draws on two or more sources. It follows that your ability to write syntheses depends on your ability to infer relationships among sources—essays, articles, fiction, and also nonwritten sources, such as lectures, interviews, observations. This process is nothing new for you, since you infer relationships all the time—say, between something you’ve read in the newspaper and something you’ve seen for yourself, or between the teaching styles of your favorite and least favorite instructors. In fact, if you’ve written research papers, you’ve already written syntheses. In an *academic synthesis*, you make explicit the relationships that you have inferred among separate sources.

The skills you’ve already learned and practiced from the previous three chapters will be vital in writing syntheses. Clearly, before you’re in a position to draw relationships between two or more sources, you must understand what those sources say; in other words, you must be able to *summarize* these sources. It will frequently be helpful for your readers if you provide at least partial summaries of sources in your synthesis essays. At the same time, you must go beyond summary to make judgments—judgments based, of course, on your *critical reading* of your sources. You should already have drawn some conclusions about the quality and validity of these sources; and you should know how much you agree or disagree with the points made in your sources and the reasons for your agreement or disagreement.

Further, you must go beyond the critique of individual sources to determine the relationship among them. Is the information in source B, for example, an extended illustration of the generalizations in source A? Would it be useful to compare and contrast source C with source B? Having read and considered sources A, B, and C, can you infer something else—D (not a source, but your own idea)?

Because a synthesis is based on two or more sources, you will need to be selective when choosing information from each. It would be neither possible nor desirable, for instance, to discuss in a ten-page paper on the battle of Wounded Knee every point that the authors of two books make about their subject. What you as a writer must do is select from each source the ideas and information that best allow you to achieve your purpose.

### PURPOSE

Your purpose in reading source materials and then in drawing on them to write your own material is often reflected in the wording of an assignment. For instance, consider the following assignments on the Civil War:

*American History*: Evaluate your text author’s treatment of the origins of the Civil War.

*Economics*: Argue the following proposition, in light of your readings: “The Civil War was fought not for reasons of moral principle but for reasons of economic necessity.”

*Government*: Prepare a report on the effects of the Civil War on Southern politics at the state level between 1870 and 1917.

*Mass Communications*: Discuss how the use of photography during the Civil War may have affected the perceptions of the war by Northerners living in industrial cities.

*Literature*: Select two twentieth-century Southern writers whose work you believe was influenced by the divisive effects of the Civil War. Discuss the ways this influence is apparent in a novel or a group of short stories written by each author. The works should not be *about* the Civil War.

*Applied Technology*: Compare and contrast the technology of warfare available in the 1860s with the technology available a century earlier.

Each of these assignments creates for you a particular purpose for writing. Having located sources relevant to your topic, you would select, for possible use in a paper, only those parts that helped you in fulfilling this purpose. And how you used those parts, how you related them to other material from other sources, would also depend on your purpose. For instance, if you were working on the government assignment, you might possibly draw on the same source as another student working on the literature assignment by referring to Robert Penn Warren’s novel *All the King’s Men*, about Louisiana politics in the early part of the twentieth century. But because the purposes of these assignments are different, you and the other student would make different uses of this source. Those same parts or aspects of the novel that you find worthy of detailed analysis might be just mentioned in passing by the other student.

### USING YOUR SOURCES

Your purpose determines not only what parts of your sources you will use but also how you will relate them to one another. Since the very essence of synthesis is the combining of information and ideas, you must have some basis on which to combine them. *Some relationships among the material in your sources must make them worth synthesizing.* It follows that the better able

you are to discover such relationships, the better able you will be to use your sources in writing syntheses. Notice that the mass communications assignment requires you to draw a *cause-and-effect* relationship between photographs of the war and Northerners' perceptions of the war. The applied technology assignment requires you to *compare and contrast* state-of-the-art weapons technology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The economics assignment requires you to *argue* a proposition. In each case, *your purpose will determine how you relate your source materials to one another.*

Consider some other examples. You may be asked on an exam question or in instructions for a paper to *describe* two or three approaches to prison reform during the past decade. You may be asked to *compare and contrast* one country's approach to imprisonment with another's. You may be asked to develop an *argument* of your own on this subject, based on your reading. Sometimes (when you are not given a specific assignment) you determine your own purpose: You are interested in exploring a particular subject; you are interested in making a case for one approach or another. In any event, your purpose shapes your essay. Your purpose determines which sources you research, which ones you use, which parts of them you use, at which points in your essay you use them, and in what manner you relate them to one another.

## HOW TO WRITE SYNTHESSES

Although writing syntheses can't be reduced to a lockstep method, it should help you to follow the guidelines listed in the box on pages 91–92.

For clarity's sake, we'll consider two broad categories of essay (or synthesis) in the remainder of this chapter: the *explanatory* synthesis and the *argument* synthesis. We'll also consider techniques of developing your essays, including the techniques of *comparison-contrast*.

## THE EXPLANATORY SYNTHESIS

Many of the papers you write in college will be more or less explanatory in nature. An explanation helps readers to understand a topic. Writers explain when they divide a subject into its component parts and present them to the reader in a clear and orderly fashion. Explanations may entail descriptions that re-create in words some object, place, emotion, event, sequence of events, or state of affairs. As a student reporter, you may need to explain an event—to relate when, where, and how it took place. In a science lab, you would observe the conditions and results of an experiment and record them for review by others. In a political science course, you might review research

### HOW TO WRITE SYNTHESSES

- **Consider your purpose in writing.** What are you trying to accomplish in your essay? How will this purpose shape the way you approach your sources?
- **Select and carefully read your sources,** according to your purpose. Then reread the passages, mentally summarizing each. Identify those aspects or parts of your sources that will help you in fulfilling your purpose. When rereading, *label* or *underline* the sources for main ideas, key terms, and any details you want to use in the synthesis.
- **Formulate a thesis.** Your thesis is the main idea that you want to present in your synthesis. It should be expressed as a complete sentence. Sometimes the thesis is the first sentence, but more often it is *the final sentence of the first paragraph*. If you are writing an *inductively arranged* synthesis (see page 125), the thesis sentence may not appear until the final paragraphs. (See Chapter 2 for more information on writing an effective thesis.)
- **Decide how you will use your source material.** How will the information and the ideas in the passages help you to fulfill your purpose?
- **Develop an organizational plan,** according to your thesis. How will you arrange your material? It is not necessary to prepare a formal outline. But you should have some plan that will indicate the order in which you will present your material and that will indicate the relationships among your sources.
- **Draft the topic sentences for the main sections.** This is an optional step, but you may find it a helpful transition from organizational plan to first draft.
- **Write the first draft** of your synthesis, following your organizational plan. Be flexible with your plan, however. Frequently, you will use an outline to get started. As you write, you may discover new ideas and make room for them by adjusting the outline. When this happens, reread your work frequently, making sure that your thesis still accounts for what follows and that what follows still logically supports your thesis.
- **Document your sources.** You may do this by crediting them within the body of the synthesis or by footnoting them. (See Chapter 5 for more information on documenting sources.)
- **Revise your synthesis,** inserting transitional words and phrases where necessary. Make sure that the synthesis reads smoothly, logically, and clearly from beginning to end. Check for grammatical correctness, punctuation, spelling.

(continued)

*Note:* The writing of syntheses is a recursive process, and you should accept a certain amount of backtracking and reformulating as inevitable. For instance, in developing an organizational plan (step 5 of the procedure) you may discover a gap in your presentation, which will send you scrambling for another source—back to step 2. You may find that formulating a thesis and making inferences among sources occur simultaneously; indeed, inferences often are made before a thesis is formulated. Our recommendations for writing syntheses will give you a structure; they will get you started. But be flexible in your approach: expect discontinuity and, if possible, be comforted that through backtracking and reformulating you will eventually produce a coherent, well-crafted essay.

on a particular subject—say, the complexities underlying the debate over welfare—and then present the results of your research to your professor and the members of your class.

Your job in writing an explanatory paper—or in writing the explanatory portion of an argumentative paper—is not to argue a particular point, but rather *to present the facts in a reasonably objective manner*. Of course, explanatory papers, like other academic papers, should be based on a thesis. But the purpose of a thesis in an explanatory paper is less to advance a particular opinion than to provide a focus for the various facts contained in the paper.

Suppose you were writing a paper on the debate over welfare. (The welfare debate is, in fact, one of the subjects in Chapter 7, “Left, Right, Center: The American Political Spectrum.”) Below are eight sources you might have gathered on the subject. As you read them, try to formulate a conclusion based on your sense of *what the main issues in the debate are and how the opinions expressed in the various sources relate to one another*.

We have arranged the selections in chronological order of publication, just as you might review them as you prepare to write, in order to get some sense of the historical development of the issue. (In this case, the time period is relatively narrow, from 1993 to 1995, but you should still get a sense of which arguments have influenced others.) Note also that the positions represented in these sources range the length of the political spectrum. As explained in Chapter 7, people on the *right* of the political spectrum—known as *conservatives*—tend to believe that governmental authority (and taxes) should be reduced and that individuals should assume personal responsibility for their own lives. People on the *left* of the political spectrum—known as *liberals*—tend to believe that government should work actively to promote equality, fairness, and social justice. As you read for content, you might also

want to try placing the writers along the political spectrum, according to the positions they argue.

## *Ending Welfare as We Know It*

BILL CLINTON

*Bill Clinton, former governor of Arkansas, was elected President of the United States in 1992. The following speech was made before the National Governors' Association on February 2, 1993. Like all major presidential pronouncements, it was reprinted in the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents.*

I'd like to spend just a few moments today talking about something that many of us have been working on since the middle 1980s, the issue of welfare reform. 1

I've often spoken with many of you about the need to end welfare as we know it, to make it a program that supports people who have fallen on hard times or who have difficulties that can be overcome, but eventually and ultimately, a program that helps people to get on their feet through health care, child care, job training, and ultimately a productive job. 2

No one likes the welfare system as it currently exists, least of all the people who are on it. The taxpayers, the social service employees themselves don't think much of it either. Most people on welfare are yearning for another alternative, aching for the chance to move from dependence to dignity. And we owe it to them to give them that chance. 3

In the middle 1980s, when I was a Governor here, I worked with Governor Castle to try to work with the Congress to develop a national welfare reform program. With the support of people in the House and the Senate and with the support of the White House, the Governors had an unprecedented role in writing the Family Support Act of 1988, which President Reagan signed into law shortly before he left office, and which Senator Moynihan said was the most significant piece of social reform in this area in the last generation. 4

The Family Support Act embodies a principle which I believe is the basis of an emerging consensus among people without regard to party or without regard to their traditional political philosophies. We must provide people on welfare with more opportunities for job training, with the assurance that they will receive the health care and child care they need when they go to work, and with all the opportunities they need to become self-sufficient. But then we have to ask them to make the most of these opportunities and to take a job. 5

I want to tell you today that within the next 10 days I will announce a welfare reform group to work with you. I will ask top officials from the 6



White House, the Health and Human Services, and other agencies involved to sit down with Governors and congressional leaders and develop a welfare reform plan that will work. I have asked the best people in the Nation on this subject to come and help me do this

The day I took office I promised the American people I would fight for more opportunity for all and demand more responsibility from all. And that is a commitment I am determined to keep, with your help, by putting an end to welfare as we know it

Our working group will learn from and work with State officials, business and labor folks, and leaders from every walk of life who care about this issue. On welfare reform, as on health care reform, there are no top-down, made-in-Washington solutions that will work for everyone. The problems and the progress are to be found in the communities of this country.

But I do want to tell you the principles this morning that will guide my administration as we work with you to reform welfare. First, welfare, should be a second chance, not a way of life. I want to give people on welfare the education and training and the opportunities they need to become self-sufficient. To make sure they can do it after they go to work, they must still have access to health care and to child care. So many people stay on welfare not because of the checks. The benefit levels, as many of you know, in real dollar terms, are lower than they were 20 years ago. They do it solely because they do not want to put their children at risk of losing health care or because they do not have the money to pay for child care out of the meager wages they can earn coming from a low education base. We have got to deal with that.

I believe 2 years after a training program is completed, you have to ask people to take a job ultimately, either in the private sector or in public service. There must be, in addition to the full implementation of the welfare reform act of 1988, in my opinion, a time-certain beyond which people don't draw a check for doing nothing when they can do something. And there is a lot of work out there to be done.

Senator Boren and Senator Wofford have offered a bill to try to re-create on a very limited basis a pilot project that would take the best of what was done with the work programs of the thirties and try to throw them into the context of the nineties. We must begin now to plan for a time when people will ultimately be able to work for the check they get, whether the check comes from a private employer or from the United States taxpayers.

Today, about half the people on welfare are just the people welfare was meant to help. They fall on hard times, and they have to have public assistance. They're eager to move on with their lives. And after 5 or 6 months or 8 months they're right back at work again, struggling to make their way in the American way. About half the people on welfare stay on for over 2 years. But one in four persons, the people that we really need to try to help to break the cycle that is gripping their children and grandchildren, about one in four stays a recipient for 8 years or longer. Those are the folks that

7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12

Governor Wilder I know is now working on, that many of you have tried to address the problems of, and I want to help you with that

Second, we need to make work pay. We have to make sure that every American who works full-time, with a child in the home, does not live in poverty. If there is dignity in all work, there must be dignity for every worker. Therefore, I will propose an expansion in the earned-income tax credit which supplements the income of the working poor.

We can do that. We ought to be able to lift people who work 40 hours a week, with kids in their home, out of poverty. And we will remove the incentive for staying in poverty. It will be much less expensive than to have Government direct supplements to pay people to remain idle. And it will reinforce the work ethic. If we can do that and at the same time do what we discussed yesterday, control health care costs and expand coverage so that no one has to stay on welfare just to take care of their children's medical needs, I think you will see a dramatic breakthrough in our efforts to liberate people from their dependency.

Third, we need tougher child support enforcement. An estimated 15 million children have parents who could pay child support but don't. We need to make sure that they do. Parents owe billions of dollars in child support that is unpaid, money that could go a long way toward cutting the welfare rolls and lifting single parents out of poverty and money that could go a long way toward helping us control Government expenditures and reducing that debt. We're going to toughen child support enforcement by creating a national databank to track down deadbeat parents, by having the States go as far as they possibly can to establish paternity at the hospital when children are born, and if I can prevail up here, by using the IRS to collect unpaid support in seriously delinquent cases. I've said it before because it's the simple truth: Governments don't raise children, people do. And even people who aren't around ought to do their part to raise the children they bring into this world.

Fourth, we need to encourage experimentation in the States. I will say again what you know so well: There are many promising initiatives right now at the State and local level, and we will work with you to encourage that kind of experimentation. I do not want the Federal Government, in pushing welfare reforms based on these general principles, to rob you of the ability to do more, to do different things. And I want to try to flesh out a little bit of the idea we discussed yesterday about the waivers. My view is that we ought to give you more elbow room to experiment.

So I will encourage all of us to work together to try things that are different. And the only thing I want to ask you in return is, let us measure these experiments and let us measure them honestly, so that if they work, we can make them the rule, we can all adopt things that work. And if they don't, we can stop and try something else. That's the only thing I ask of you.

I think all of us want what most people on welfare want, a country that gives you a hand up, not a handout. We don't have a person to waste. We

13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18



need the talent, the energy, the skills of every man and woman, every boy and girl in this country

Of all the problems we have with competitiveness, whether it is the deficit or the level of investment or anything else, I think all of us know in our heart of hearts America's biggest problem today is that too many of our people never get a shot at the American dream and that if all of our people were living up to the fullest of their potential, we would surely have a much easier path in solving all the issues that we constantly debate about at these meetings

Of all my moments as Governor, one I remember with the most pride occurred here at a National Governors' Association meeting during that 2-year period when we were working on welfare reform. Governor Castle and I sponsored a panel, and I think 40 Governors attended. And we had welfare recipients from all over the country come in and talk to the Governors about what it was like to be on welfare.

A woman from Arkansas who was there, whom I knew but had not vetted for this conversation, started talking about her program and how she'd gone into a training program and she had gotten a job, all of that. And I did something lawyers are told never to do: I asked a question without knowing the answer. I said, "Do you think this program ought to be mandatory? Should everybody have to participate in this?" She said, "I sure do." And I said, "Why?" And she said, "Well, because if it wasn't, there would be a lot of people like me home watching the soaps because we don't believe we can make anything of ourselves anymore. So you've got to make it mandatory." And I said, "What's the best thing about having a job?" She said, "When my boy goes to school, and they say, 'What does your mama do for a living?' he can give an answer."

I think that moment says more than I will ever be able to say about why this is important, not just important for the poor but important for the rest of us. We must end poverty for Americans who want to work. And we must do it on terms that dignify all of the rest of us, as well as help our country to work better. I need your help, and I think we can do it.

## *The Coming White Underclass*

CHARLES MURRAY

*Charles Murray, a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, is the author of Losing Ground and co-author (with Richard Herrnstein) of the controversial Bell Curve (1994). This widely quoted article originally appeared in the Wall Street Journal on October 29, 1993.*

Every once in a while the sky really is falling and this seems to be the case with the latest national figures on illegitimacy. The unadorned statistic is that, in 1991, 1.2 million children were born to unmarried mothers, within a hair of 30 percent of all live births. How high is 30 percent? About four

percentage points higher than the black illegitimacy rate in the early 1960s that motivated Daniel Patrick Moynihan to write his famous memorandum on the breakdown of the black family.

The 1991 story for blacks is that illegitimacy has now reached 68 percent of births to black women. In inner cities, the figure is typically in excess of 80 percent. Many of us have heard these numbers so often that we are inured. It is time to think about them as if we were back in the mid-1960s with the young Moynihan and asked to predict what would happen if the black illegitimacy rate were 68 percent.

Impossible, we would have said. But if the proportion of fatherless boys in a given community were to reach such levels, surely the culture must be "Lord of the Flies" writ large, the values of unsocialized male adolescents made norms—physical violence, immediate gratification and predatory sex. That is the culture now taking over the black inner city.

But the black story, however dismaying, is old news. The new trend that threatens the U.S. is white illegitimacy. Matters have not yet quite gotten out of hand, but they are on the brink. If we want to act, now is the time.

In 1991, 707,502 babies were born to single white women, representing 22 percent of white births. The elite wisdom holds that this phenomenon cuts across social classes, as if the increase in Murphy Browns were pushing the trendline.

In raw numbers, European-American whites are the ethnic group with the most people in poverty, most illegitimate children, most women on welfare, most unemployed men, and most arrests for serious crimes. And yet whites have not had an "underclass" as such, because the whites who might qualify have been scattered among the working class. Instead, whites have had "white trash" concentrated in a few streets on the outskirts of town, sometimes a Skid Row of unattached white men in the large cities. But these scatterings have seldom been large enough to make up a neighborhood. An underclass needs a critical mass, and white America has not had one.

But now the overall white illegitimacy rate is 22 percent. The figure in low-income, working-class communities may be twice that. How much illegitimacy can a community tolerate? Nobody knows, but the historical fact is that the trendlines on black crime, dropout from the labor force, and illegitimacy all shifted sharply upward as the overall black illegitimacy rate passed 25 percent.

The causal connection is murky—I blame the revolution in social policy during that period, while others blame the sexual revolution, broad shifts in cultural norms, or structural changes in the economy. But the white illegitimacy rate is approaching that same problematic 25 percent region at a time when social policy is more comprehensively wrongheaded than it was in the mid-1960s, and the cultural and sexual norms are still more degraded.

The white underclass will begin to show its face in isolated ways. Look for certain schools in white neighborhoods to get a reputation as being unteachable, with large numbers of disruptive students and indifferent parents. Talk to the police; listen for stories about white neighborhoods where the incidence of domestic disputes and sexual violence has been

shooting up. Look for white neighborhoods with high concentrations of dry activity and large numbers of men who have dropped out of the labor force.

As the spatial concentration of illegitimacy reaches critical mass, we should expect the deterioration to be as fast among low-income whites in the 1990s as it was among low-income blacks in the 1960s. My proposition is that illegitimacy is the single most important social problem of our time—more important than crime, drugs, poverty, illiteracy, welfare or homelessness because it drives everything else. Doing something about it is not just one more item on the American policy agenda, but should be at the top. Here is what to do: . . . Human societies have historically channeled the elemental forces of human behavior via thick walls of rewards and penalties that constrained the overwhelming majority of births to take place within marriage. The past 30 years have seen those walls cave in. It is time to rebuild them.

The ethical underpinning for the policies I am about to describe is this: Bringing a child into the world is the most important thing that most human beings ever do. Bringing a child into the world when one is not emotionally or financially prepared to be a parent is wrong. The child deserves society's support. The parent does not.

The social justification is this: A society with broad legal freedoms depends crucially on strong nongovernmental institutions to temper and restrain behavior. Of these, marriage is paramount. Either we reverse the current trends in illegitimacy—especially white illegitimacy—or America must, willy-nilly, become an unrecognizably authoritarian, socially segregated, centralized state.

To restore the rewards and penalties of marriages does not require social engineering. Rather, it requires that the state stop interfering with the natural forces that have done the job quite effectively for millennia. Some of the changes I will describe can occur at the federal level; others would involve state laws. For now, the important thing is to agree on what should be done.

I begin with the penalties, of which the most obvious are economic. Throughout human history, a single woman with a small child has not been a viable economic unit. Not being a viable economic unit, neither have the single woman and child been a legitimate social unit. In small numbers, they must be a net drain on the community's resources. In large numbers, they must destroy the community's capacity to sustain itself. *Mirabile dictu*, communities everywhere have augmented the economic penalties of single parenthood with severe social stigma.

Restoring economic penalties translates into the first and central policy prescription: to end all economic support for single mothers. The AFDC (Aid to Families With Dependent Children) payment goes to zero. Single mothers are not eligible for subsidized housing or for food stamps. An assortment of other subsidies and in-kind benefits disappear. Since universal medical coverage appears to be an idea whose time has come, I will stipulate that all children have medical coverage. But with that exception, the signal is loud and unmistakable: From society's perspective, to have a baby

that you cannot care for yourself is profoundly irresponsible, and the government will no longer subsidize it.

How does a poor young mother survive without government support? The same way she has since time immemorial. If she wants to keep a child, she must enlist support from her parents, boyfriend, siblings, neighbors, church or philanthropies. She must get support from somewhere, anywhere, other than the government. The objectives are threefold.

First, enlisting the support of others raises the probability that other mature adults are going to be involved with the upbringing of the child, and this is a great good in itself.

Second, the need to find support forces a self-selection process. One of the most short-sighted excuses made for current behavior is that an adolescent who is utterly unprepared to be a mother "needs someone to love." Childish yearning isn't a good enough selection device. We need to raise the probability that a young single woman who keeps her child is doing so volitionally and thoughtfully. Forcing her to find a way of supporting the child does this. It will lead many young women who shouldn't be mothers to place their babies for adoption. This is good. It will lead others, watching what happens to their sisters, to take steps not to get pregnant. This is also good. Many others will get abortions. Whether this is good depends on what one thinks of abortion.

Third, stigma will regenerate. The pressure on relatives and communities to pay for the folly of their children will make an illegitimate birth the socially horrific act it used to be, and getting a girl pregnant something boys do at the risk of facing a shotgun. Stigma and shotgun marriages may or may not be good for those on the receiving end, but their deterrent effect on others is wonderful—and indispensable.

What about women who can find no support but keep the baby anyway? There are laws already on the books about the right of the state to take a child from a neglectful parent. We have some 360,000 children in foster care because of them. Those laws would still apply. Society's main response, however, should be to make it as easy as possible for those mothers to place their children for adoption at infancy. To that end, state governments must strip adoption of the nonsense that has encumbered it in recent decades.

The first step is to make adoption easy for any married couple who can show reasonable evidence of having the resources and stability to raise a child. Lift all restrictions on interracial adoption. Ease age limitations for adoptive parents.

The second step is to restore the traditional legal principle that placing a child for adoption means irrevocably relinquishing all legal rights to the child. The adoptive parents are parents without qualification. Records are sealed until the child reaches adulthood, at which time they may be unsealed only with the consent of biological child and parent.

Given these straightforward changes—going back to the old way, which worked—there is reason to believe that some extremely large proportion of infants given up by their mothers will be adopted into good

homes This is true not just for flawless blue-eyed blond infants but for babies of all colors and conditions. The demand for infants to adopt is huge.

Some small proportion of infants and larger proportion of older children will not be adopted. For them, the government should spend lavishly on orphanages. I am not recommending Dickensian barracks In 1993, we know a lot about how to provide a warm, nurturing environment for children, and getting rid of the welfare system frees up lots of money to do it. Those who find the word "orphanages" objectionable may think of them as 24-hour-a-day preschools. Those who prattle about the importance of keeping children with their biological mothers may wish to spend some time in a patrol car or with a social worker seeing what the reality of life with welfare-dependent biological mothers can be like

Finally, there is the matter of restoring the rewards of marriage. Here, I am pessimistic about how much government can do and optimistic about how little it needs to do. The rewards of raising children within marriages are real and deep The main task is to shepherd children through adolescence so that they can reach adulthood—when they are likely to recognize the value of those rewards—free to take on marriage and family The main purpose of the penalties for single parenthood is to make that task easier

One of the few concrete things that the government can do to increase the rewards of marriage is make the tax code favor marriage and children Those of us who are nervous about using the tax code for social purposes can advocate making the tax code at least neutral

A more abstract but ultimately crucial step in raising the rewards of marriage is to make marriage once again the sole legal institution through which parental rights and responsibilities are defined and exercised

Little boys should grow up knowing from their earliest memories that if they want to have any rights whatsoever regarding a child that they sire—more vividly, if they want to grow up to be a daddy—they must marry Little girls should grow up knowing from their earliest memories that if they want to have any legal claims whatsoever on the father of their children, they must marry A marriage certificate should establish that a man and a woman have entered into a unique legal relationship. The changes in recent years that have blurred the distinctiveness of marriage are subtly but importantly destructive.

Together, these measures add up to a set of signals, some with immediate and tangible consequences, others with long-term consequences, still others symbolic They should be supplemented by others based on re-examination of divorce law and its consequences

### VIRTUE AND TEMPERANCE

That these policy changes seem drastic and unrealistic is a peculiarity of our age, not of the policies themselves With embellishments, I have endorsed the policies that were the uncontroversial law of the land as recently as John Kennedy's presidency. Then, America's elites accepted as a matter of course that a free society such as America's can sustain itself only

through virtue and temperance in the people, that virtue and temperance depend centrally on the socialization of each new generation, and that the socialization of each generation depends on the matrix of care and resources fostered by marriage

Three decades after that consensus disappeared, we face an emerging crisis The long, steep climb in black illegitimacy has been calamitous for black communities and painful for the nation The reforms I have described will work for blacks as for whites, and have been needed for years But the brutal truth is that American society as a whole could survive when illegitimacy became epidemic within a comparatively small ethnic minority. It cannot survive the same epidemic among whites.

## Subsidized Illegitimacy

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

*Charles Krauthammer, formerly an editor at The New Republic, writes for numerous publications. This op-ed (opposite-the-editorial page) piece originally appeared in the Washington Post on November 19, 1993.*

"Sex Codes Among Inner-City Youth" is the title of a remarkable paper presented this week by University of Pennsylvania Professor Elijah Anderson to a seminar at the American Enterprise Institute. Its 40 pages describe in excruciating detail the sex and abandonment "game" played by boys and girls in an inner-city Philadelphia community, one of the poorest and most blighted in the country.

Anderson is a scrupulous and sympathetic student of inner-city life. *Streetwise*, his book on life in a ghetto community, is a classic of urban ethnography. Five years of intensive observation and interviews have gone into the sex code study. It is the story, as told by the participants, of family breakdown on an unprecedented scale.

It is the story of a place where "casual sex with as many women as possible, impregnating one or more, and getting them to 'have your baby' brings a boy the ultimate in esteem from his peers and makes him a man." As for the girl, "her dream [is] of a family and a home." But in a subculture where for the boy "to own up to a pregnancy is to go against the peer-group ethic of 'hit and run,'" abandonment is the norm

The results we know. Illegitimacy rates of 70, 80 percent Intergenerational poverty. Social breakdown.

Toward the end of the seminar, I suggested that the only realistic way to attack this cycle of illegitimacy and its associated pathologies is by cutting off the oxygen that sustains the system. Stop the welfare checks. The check, generated by the first illegitimate birth, says that government will play the role of father and provider. It sustains a deranged social structure of children having children and raising them alone and abandoned by their men. To quote Anderson: "In cold economic terms, a baby can be an asset,

which is without doubt an important factor behind exploitative sex and out-of-wedlock babies.”

It is a mark of how far the debate on welfare policy has come that my proposal drew respectful disagreement from only about half of the panel—including, I should stress, Prof. Anderson himself, who argued that the better answer is giving the young men jobs and hope through training and education for a changing economy.

In fact, the idea I proposed is not at all original. I was merely echoing Charles Murray, who in his book, *Losing Ground*, offered the cold turkey approach as a “thought experiment.” That was a decade ago. Two weeks ago in the *Wall Street Journal*, the national illegitimacy numbers having become dramatically worse, Murray dropped the “experiment” part and proposed it as policy.

Nor is this idea coming only from conservatives. Neo-liberalist journalist Mickey Kaus proposed a similar idea in his book, *The End of Equality*, though in a less Draconian variant: He would replace AFDC and all other cash-like welfare programs with an offer of a neo-WPA jobs program.

And last year, candidate and “New Democrat” Bill Clinton gingerly approached the idea with his two-years-and-out welfare reform plan. But “two years and out,” however well intentioned, misses the point. The point is to root out at its origin the most perverse government incentive program of all: the subsidy for illegitimacy.

Why? Because illegitimacy is the royal road to poverty and all its attendant pathologies. As the 1991 Rockefeller Commission on Children acknowledged, the one-parent family is six times more likely to be poor than the two-parent family.

The numbers simply translate common sense. In a competitive economy and corrupting culture, it is hard enough to raise a child with two parents. To succeed with only one requires heroism on the part of the young mother. Heroism is not impossible. But no society can expect it as the norm. And any society that does is inviting social catastrophe of the kind now on view in the inner cities of America.

The defenders of welfare will tell you that young women do not have babies just to get the check. Yes, there are other reasons: a desire for someone to love, a wish to declare one’s independence, a way to secure the love of these elusive young males and a variety of other illusions.

But whether or not the welfare check is the conscious reason, it plays a far more critical role. As Kaus indicated at the seminar, the check is the *condition* that allows people to act on all the other reasons. Take it away, and the society built on babies having babies cannot sustain itself.

Taking it away is the single most immediate and direct measure that government can take to break the cycle of illegitimacy and dependency. Moreover, society will not long sustain such a system. Americans feel a civic obligation to help the unfortunate. There is no great protest when their tax dollars go for hurricane relief or for widows and orphans. But by what moral logic should a taxpayer be asked to give a part of his earnings to sus-

tain a child fathered by a young man who disappears, leaving mother and child a ward of the state? Underwriting tragedy is one thing. Underwriting wantonness is quite another.

On October 19, Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan held a Finance Committee hearing on “social behavior and health care costs.” What he really meant by social behavior was illegitimacy. In his opening statement, he drew attention to the explosion of illegitimacy in the general population. It has now reached about 30 percent of all births, 5.5 times what it was 30 years ago. It is a tragedy for the people involved, a calamity for society at large. “Now then,” asked Moynihan, “what are we going to do?”

Try this. Don’t reform welfare. Don’t reinvent it. When it comes to illegitimacy, abolish it.

## Getting Off the Welfare Carousel

TERESA McCRARY

*Teresa McCrary is a student at the University of Montana. This article originally appeared as a “My Turn” column in Newsweek, December 6, 1993.*

I am a welfare mom, and I have one thing to say: stop picking on us! There are 5 million families on welfare in the United States, most of them single women with kids. Is this really such a major financial burden? I believe we’re targeted because we’re an easy mark. Because we have no money, there are no lobbyists working on our behalf either in Washington, D.C., or in local legislatures. I want to tell you who we are and why we stay home with our children.

The stereotypical welfare mom has 10 kids, including a pregnant teenage daughter, all taking advantage of the dole. I have never personally known such a woman. Most of the mothers I know are women who forgo the usual round of job searches and day care so they can mind their homes and children in a loving and responsible way. We may not have paying jobs, but any mother, married or single, working or retired, will tell you that motherhood is a career in itself.

Yet we are constantly told we should go out and get real jobs. Yes, most of us are unemployed; do we really have a choice? Last time I looked, the unemployment rate was more than 6 percent. If the unemployed can’t find work, where are we moms supposed to look? The only jobs open to us are maid work, fast-food service and other low-paying drudgery with no benefits. How are we expected to support our children? Minimum wage will not pay for housing costs, health care, child care, transportation and work clothes that an untrained, uneducated woman needs to support even one child.

Many of us take money under the table for odd jobs, and cash from generous friends and relatives to help support our families. We don’t report this money to the Aid to Families with Dependent Children, because we

can't afford to. Any cash we get, even birthday money from grandparents, is deducted from the already minuscule benefits. We're allowed between \$1,000 and \$3,000 in assets including savings and property, automobiles, and home furnishings. We are told that if we have more than that amount, we should be able to sell some things and live for a year from the proceeds. Can you imagine living on \$3,000 for a year?

As for child support, unless the money sent to the state by the father is greater than AFDC benefits, the family receives only \$50 monthly. This bonus decreases food-stamp benefits. We are told that the state intends to prosecute "deadbeat dads" for back support. Seldom do news stories mention that, in the case of welfare families, the state keeps collected back support. Although this reduces the tax burden, none of the money goes to the children. Outsiders are led to believe that the children will benefit, and they do not. No wonder some welfare moms—and their children's fathers—believe it's not worth the effort to try to get the dads to pay up. If we could have depended on these men in the first place, we would not be on welfare.

So what about family values? Those of us who do not have a man in our lives do the emotional job of both mother and father. My daughter says she should give me a Father's Day card, because I am just as much a father to her as a mother. On top of these two careers, we are told we should work.

We could hold down a minimum-wage job, unarguably the hardest work for the least amount of money, if we could find an employer willing to hire us full time (most low-wage jobs are part time). Unable to afford child care, we'd have latchkey children whose only good meal of the day would be school lunch. The whole paycheck would go to housing and job expenses. When we got home exhausted, we'd clean house, help with homework, listen to how the kids' day went—feeling relieved if none of them had been teased for their garage-sale clothes. We'd pray that nobody got sick, because we couldn't afford a day off work or doctor fees (welfare pays very little, but it has the important benefit of health care). We'd worry about getting laid off at any moment—in tough times, minimum-wage jobs are the first to go.

These fears cause stress that may result in child abuse. Many times we feel, no matter how hard we try, that in some way our children are being neglected if we are holding down a job. So we stay home. We've learned that we can depend only on ourselves. We don't enjoy living at the poverty level, but we can't see a minimum-wage job as the answer.

I believe that we single mothers must become self-sufficient through education and training. And that means both money and patience on the taxpayers' part. I'm in my fourth year at college. I, and the other welfare moms I know at school, maintain a 3.0 grade average or better. Are we exceptions to the rule? Maybe not; perhaps people in my circumstances are more motivated to make better lives for themselves. Fighting the low self-esteem brought on by divorce and poverty, we have taken the difficult step, usually without a support system, of going back to school. By carefully scheduling classes and studying late at night, I have been able to care for my kids while learning TV and radio production.

College may be out of reach for many. By raising tuition and entrance requirements, most colleges and universities are barring us from their campuses. Even President Clinton's proposed two-year training program may not help much. Vocational or technical schools mean training for low-paying jobs. Still, we'll be told to find work or lose our benefits.

If the government keeps decreasing or eliminating the programs we and the children depend upon for survival, here's what will happen: in a few years, instead of 5 million single women and their children on welfare, there will be 5 million single women and their children on the streets. I don't know how many starving millions the United Nations is trying to help in Somalia. But if people keep picking on us, the United Nations will have to help the United States feed us.

## The Character Issue

VIRGINIA I POSTREL

*Virginia Postrel is editor of the libertarian magazine Reason, where this article originally appeared in June 1994. Libertarians want to drastically reduce government power and authority and, according to their party platform, "oppose all interference by government in the areas of voluntary and contractual relations among individuals." See the material on libertarianism in the "Voter's Manual" and in Burns et al. in Chapter 7.*

Mrs. G. Harris Robertson is one of the most influential women in American history, though almost no one has heard of her and I couldn't tell you her given name. She is the mother of the welfare state, the progenitor of the nanny state and its resentful children.

A proper turn-of-the-century lady, Mrs. Robertson believed in full-time motherhood as both the greatest expression of feminine virtue and the strongest support for a healthy society; she campaigned for family values in a maternalist state. "Our government should be maternal, some may prefer to call it paternal, there is no difference," she said. "The state is a parent, and, as a wise and gentle and kind and loving parent, should beam down on each child alike."

With thousands of other clubwomen, Mrs. Robertson campaigned for "mothers' pensions," state subsidies to families without fathers. In a rousing 1911 speech that launched the National Congress of Mothers' successful crusade, she declared that such subsidies should even "include the deserted wife, and the mother who has never been a wife. . . . Today let us honor the *mother* wherever found—if she has given a citizen to the nation, then the nation owes something to her." (The campaign for a maternal state is sympathetically recounted by Harvard sociologist Theda Skocpol in her recent book *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*.)

Mrs. Robertson and her organized mothers couldn't vote, but they influenced those who could. Mothers' pensions swept the states, though they



were never as generous, and rarely as inclusive, as Mrs. Robertson had wished. When FDR came along, these mother-honoring state programs were rolled into the Social Security Act. They became Aid to Families with Dependent Children, a.k.a. Welfare As We Know It.

In her day, Mrs. Robertson faced the same objections to her favorite social program that Mrs. Clinton faces to hers, and she replied with a quainter version of the same rhetoric: "Do not rise up in indignation to call this Socialism—it is the sanest of statesmanship. If our public mind is maternal, loving and generous, wanting to save and develop all, our Government will express this sentiment. [E]very step we make toward establishing government along these lines means an advance toward the Kingdom of Peace."

Eighty-two years later, we are a long way from the Kingdom of Peace, and the public mind is anything but maternal, loving, and generous. We no longer believe that government policy can usher in a messianic age. Nor do we deem government aid an "honorable" payment for the service of raising a child.

To the contrary, Americans deeply resent both the welfare system and its beneficiaries—resentment that has shattered the empathy that led Mrs. Robertson and her allies to identify with poor mothers, resentment that feeds ethnic stereotypes and racial hatreds, resentment that is turning a culture of self-reliance and individualism into a culture of victimhood and nosy animosity.

The welfare state has expanded beyond widows and orphans (and the farm programs that inspired the mothers' movement) to include almost everyone in one way or another—through student loans, retirement money, ever-growing health-care benefits that the Clintons would expand even more. One in every 100 Americans works for a government social-service agency or hospital. Millions more depend indirectly on government transfers.

So your own business is now the public's: Cigarette smoking isn't a private vice but a public-health issue; after all, says anti-smoking activist Ahron Leichtman, "Who pays for these people when they're ill and they're indigent and they go in the hospital?" The same goes for riding motorcycles without helmets, for drugs and drink, for driving without seat belts, for crossing the border to have an American-born baby.

We have become like the workers in Ayn Rand's story of the Twentieth Century Motor Company, a factory in which work and wages were based on "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need." A fable drawn in broad strokes, it is nonetheless prophetic: "In the old days, we used to celebrate if somebody had a baby, we used to chip in and help him out with the hospital bills, if he happened to be hard-pressed for the moment. Now, if a baby is born, we didn't speak to the parents for weeks. Babies, to us, had become what locusts were to farmers."

Locusts to farmers

You cannot go a block in Los Angeles without seeing immigrants working; they bus tables and run shops, drill teeth and tend gardens, give

manicures and clean houses. They were noticeably absent from the hundreds of people lined up for post-earthquake food stamps at the welfare office I pass on my way to work. A few blocks away you could find Latin Americans by the side of the road: soliciting day work on construction sites, selling strawberries or roses. Farmers, not locusts.

But Mrs. Robertson's legacy makes us see mouths to feed, not hands to work, in every new American—every child, every immigrant. "At least in the short run, the large number of illegals in California, and the high birthrate they represent, also contribute disproportionately to the mushrooming cost of maintaining the state's public services: welfare, schools, prisons, health care," opines the *Sacramento Bee*.

Republican Assemblyman William Knight produced a less polite version of the same message, circulating a constituent's doggerel that read in part, "Sent for family, they just trash! But they all draw more welfare cash. We have a hobby, it's called breeding, welfare pay for baby feeding." He was denounced as a racist, but his message is conventional wisdom: Immigrants are locusts. A lot of Americans, mostly off the record, believe the same of blacks. The welfare state feeds their prejudices.

And locusts are popular in some quarters. Welfare's defenders often disparage work—especially low-paid and manual work—and the people who value it. They imply that anyone who does such work is a victim or a sucker.

A lawsuit filed to block New Jersey's welfare reform, which stopped the practice of giving welfare mothers additional money if they have more kids, complains, "It is designed to compel adult AFDC recipients to work." *Newsday* columnist Robert Reno blasts "the Giuliani approach to welfare reform: Draft the poor to clean up New York and fill its potholes. Too bad there aren't some salt mines handy to the city. [I]f New York has sunk to that level, what's the point of cleaning it up?"

We might ask the same question about our welfare state, about tinkering with reforms rather than scrapping a failed experiment. The fundamental issue behind welfare reform isn't whether the government should make welfare mothers work or whether it should deter them from having kids out of wedlock. It is what the welfare state, in all its manifestations, has done to all of us, how it has corrupted our character. Mrs. Robertson's legacy has proved to be a triumph of statecraft as soulcraft, and its results are not exactly the motherly love, lower crime rates, and humane citizens we were promised.

## *Eugenics Nuts Would Have Loved Norplant*

ALEXANDER COCKBURN

*Alexander Cockburn is a reporter and commentator who has written for The Village Voice, The Nation, The Wall Street Journal, and for the alternative press, as syndicated through the L.A. Weekly. Some of his*



columns were collected into *Corruptions of Empire: Life Studies and the Reagan Era (1988)*. This op-ed piece appeared in the Los Angeles Times on June 30, 1994.

“With bated breath, the entire civilized world is watching the bold experiment in mass sterilization recently launched by Germany. It is estimated that some 400,000 of the population will come within the scope of this law, the larger portion of whom fall into that group classed as inborn feeble-mindedness. It is estimated that, after several decades, hundreds of millions of marks will be saved each year as a result of the diminution of expenditures for patients with hereditary diseases.”

Thus in 1935 spake Dr. J. N. Baker, state health officer, as he addressed the Alabama Legislature on prospective laws for compulsory sterilization of a category vaguely sketched as the “feeble-minded,” but also including “any sexual pervert . . . or any prisoner who has been twice convicted of rape” or imprisoned three times for any offense. Similarly scheduled for sterilization were those “habitually and constantly dependent on public relief or support by charity.”

Before Hitler and his fellow Nazis (who said they learned much from U.S. sterilization laws) made the discipline unfashionable, eugenics and the prevention of socially unworthy babies were hot topics among American social engineers. The keenest engineers were not Southern crackers but Northern liberals. Eugenic sterilization was most energetically pushed by progressive politicians, medical experts, and genteel women’s groups. States pioneering sterilization laws early in the century included Robert M. LaFollette’s Wisconsin and Woodrow Wilson’s New Jersey.

It is conservatively estimated that between 1907 and 1960, 60,000 people were involuntarily sterilized. The science was bogus but its enthusiasts chanted that, within a few generations, society would be purged of imbeciles, criminals, the congenitally idle and other burdens on public patience and the public purse.

Today we are seeing a renewal of the same vile eugenic passions. Just as, at the turn of the century, vasectomy allowed eugenicists to abandon advocacy of crude castration, so today Norplant—capsules inserted in a woman’s upper arm, preventing pregnancy for up to five years and approved by the FDA in 1990—substitutes for grosser attacks on women’s fertility.

The argument of the social cleansers is that welfare mothers have babies to accrue more benefits. A few years down the road, they say, these babies ultimately repeat the cycle of dependency and insensate, benefit-related reproduction. Response: Curtail the babies by cutting the welfare benefits, end the cycle by ending welfare.

We are at a critical stage on the evolution of these policies. On April 25, Arizona and Nebraska both prohibited Aid to Families With Dependent Children benefit increases for recipients having further babies while on the dole, though in Arizona, the Legislature finally dropped an outright prohibition on welfare assistance for mothers with more than two children.

In Connecticut, a bill providing subsidies for AFDC recipients accepting Norplant (\$700 when it’s implanted, plus \$200 annually) recently died. New Jersey, a pioneer in the old sterilization crusade, is eliminating its tiny increases for mothers having children while on welfare. Georgia has done the same, and similar proposals are being considered in at least 21 other states. Wisconsin, another sterilization pioneer, is also experimenting with exclusions of children born on welfare.

Vicious myths about greedy overbreeders fuel this legislative craze, which ignores the truth: Welfare recipients average fewer than two children per family and fertility rates of AFDC recipients are lower than among the general population. The prospect of additional benefits is statistically insignificant as a factor in the choice of a mother on welfare to have a baby.

Beyond these, there is the profoundest myth of all, which blames young, poor, unmarried mothers for drug abuse, slums, poverty, a stagnant economy, and the falling rate of profit; as with the vasectomist’s knife, Norplant will turn society around. These are gas-chamber economics and social prescriptions.

At this fraught moment, strong leadership from the White House would surely help in putting the social cleansers to flight. But under the most recent draft of President Clinton’s welfare proposals, states will no longer have to seek a waiver from the federal government when embarking on a “child disincentive” program.

The door is swinging open and all the old filth seeping through. Wait for the social engineers to start insisting that poor black female teen-agers accept Norplant as a condition for probation or any form of social benefit, or for living in public housing, or for existing.

## *Newt’s Welfare: Think of It as a Homeless Drill*

ROBERT SCHEER

*Robert Scheer, a former national correspondent for the Los Angeles Times, now writes op-ed pieces. This piece originally appeared in the Times on February 12, 1995. “Newt” refers to the conservative Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich; “Bill” refers to President Clinton.*

Looking over the Republican welfare plan, I finally understood where I went wrong. It was back when I was a tiny fetus swimming around somewhere in the first trimester. I should have kicked real hard and put it to my mother straight: “Get a job or have an abortion; either way, show some personal responsibility.”

I didn’t do that, and as a result, I spent the first years of my childhood in the Bronx being deformed by welfare. My mother never understood what a burden this welfare put on us. She thought it was a good thing the

heat stayed on and we ate regular until she could get a job sewing sweaters again.

My mother was a registered alien, so under Newt's welfare plan she wouldn't have been eligible for aid. Mom came through, though, and after a couple of years on the dole she put in 25 more years in a sweatshop and always paid her taxes, as a good alien should.

Like Newt's and Bill's backgrounds, mine was not exactly Ozzie and Harriet. My father was a great guy but he had another family and divorces were difficult and expensive in Catholic New York. He also got laid off the day I was born. When he got his job back four years later, he went 15 years without missing a day of work until he suffered a stroke at his machine, and then the New York Knitting Mills gave him a posthumous award. My father provided as best he could for two families and yet helped raise me better than any orphanage could.

I know the Republicans wouldn't have wanted my mother to get an abortion, because they would have believed that her fetus was sacred, even though she was unwed. Sure, they liked me as a fetus, but the second I popped out they labeled me illegitimate.

I was still in diapers and already made to feel like I'd committed a crime. The fact that I've never been indicted and have paid taxes ever since I was 12 and joined the private sector delivering orders for Mairowitz's grocery store doesn't mean a thing, because the Republican Heritage Foundation has studies proving that we illegitimates cause all the crime.

Of course I was different. I was white. I knew how to use welfare as a springboard to a job. When I was 16, I hitched down to Camden, N.J., in the summer and got a union job making real money. I was in Camden a few years ago—it has the highest welfare rate in the country and you don't see those black kids there making real money getting union jobs at the Campbell Soup factory, or at GE or the shipyards; all you hear is the lame excuse that these places are all closed down.

Tough love, baby, you picked the wrong time to be a fetus and you can't expect the federal government to bail you out.

Like Newt says, the Federalist papers make clear this is a republic, not a democracy, and it's every fetus for itself. That's why the Republicans plan to eliminate aid for severely disabled kids. Sink or swim.

Another group of ex-fetuses that better watch out are the ones who pick teen-age mothers. After the Republican revolution, they get *nada*. Certainly not birth control or abortion counseling. Like Republican welfare guru Rep. E. Clay Shaw Jr. of Florida told the National Chamber of Commerce, "It is time for society to send a signal to our teen-agers: Do not sleep with someone and expect the taxpayers to bail you out if you have a child." And that goes for your baby, too.

It all gets back to my point about knowing where to be born. The right mother is important. But neighborhood, class, race and wealth ought not to be overlooked.

It's also going to be very important to be born poor only in upward

and the unemployment and welfare rolls go up, it's every poor kid for himself. Also, the soup pot is going to be a lot smaller. The Republicans are planning to cut welfare by \$40 billion over the next five years by sending block grants to the states, which they can use for other purposes. The states will no longer be required to provide a 50 percent match.

Maybe I'm being overly pessimistic. Perhaps the Republicans will create jobs by lowering the minimum wage. But jobs or no jobs, the Republican plan kicks the poor off welfare after two years. Where will they go? Don't get hung up on second-wave questions.

Think of the new welfare system as a two-year training camp for the future homeless. Yes, even the kids; they'll love it. Newt Inc. will package it as "Virtual Poverty—the Arcade Game." And if they don't like it? Tough love—they should have kicked harder in the womb. They had their chance.

## The True End of Welfare Reform

SUMNER M. ROSEN

*Sumner M. Rosen retired in 1993 as professor of social welfare at Columbia University School of Social Work. He is a founding member of the Jobs for All Coalition and Jews for Racial and Economic Justice. This article originally appeared in the Nation on April 3, 1995.*

The advocates for women and children are right; the Gingrich juggernaut's proposed changes in Aid to Families with Dependent Children will inflict serious harm. Welfare advocates argue correctly that reform should at a minimum include affordable daycare and medical coverage if welfare mothers are required to seek work or enroll in training programs. But the central question is jobs, not only for women but for the fathers of their children.

Race is the unacknowledged obsession of the welfare reformers. They fear, and hope to extirpate if they cannot change, what they see as black patterns of illegitimacy and disrespect for traditional standards of sexual behavior, lifestyle and work ethic. This is a classic case of blaming the victim, an effort to punish those who have lost the most in the economic changes of past decades. In New York, Chicago, Detroit and other cities with large concentrations of (mostly black) AFDC clients, earlier generations of black men married the mothers of their children because the men had steady jobs. No more. In New York City, for example, the recovery that began in November 1992 restored only one in five of the jobs lost in the 1989–1992 decline, and this modest improvement ground to a halt in the second half of 1994. Job prospects for those with little or no experience and limited skills and education are dismal. Manufacturing jobs rose modestly in the United States but continued to decline in New York.

The 1994 unemployment rate for young people age 16–19 in New York was 32.3 percent, but this vastly understates the real level of joblessness. The number of young black men either not in the labor force at all or

unemployed and seeking work in New York City came to more than nine in ten in 1988, a "prosperity" year, and there has been no movement in the other direction since.

The real purpose of the GOP's attack on welfare is not to improve an admittedly flawed program but to advance a broader conservative agenda. Welfare is a natural early target because it lacks a powerful lobby, and because the Clinton Administration offers only token resistance—indeed, it was Clinton who first let the genie out of the bottle when he started talking welfare reform during the 1992 presidential campaign.

An immediate goal of the right is to insure a continuing supply of employees for the low-wage service industries and factory sweatshops, which depend on a nonunionized, disproportionately female work force. These women will be even more vulnerable to exploitation under the proposed legislation. This pressure will be applied by a welfare bureaucracy, whose job will be to require welfare mothers to accept the unappetizing employment choices they are given, at the risk of losing support for themselves and their children. We already have a flourishing system of coercive treatment of young black men, who are in prison or on parole in record numbers; welfare reform will complete the circle.

The GOP has proposed spending a limited amount of money on welfare each year, which would end its status as an entitlement automatically guaranteeing benefits to anyone who meets the minimum requirements. This opens the door to an attack on other entitlement programs, like Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare. Conservative advocates have long had these programs in their sights; the cutbacks in welfare are a major step toward gutting others.

One of the weapons in the welfare assault involves turning AFDC over to the states, which opens the door to the ultimate elimination of the role the federal government has played since the New Deal: establishing and enforcing minimum standards that apply everywhere and to everyone. States already enjoy wide discretion in determining eligibility and establishing the level of AFDC benefit payments; the abandonment of all federal rule-making will expose women and children to the racism, indifference, and budget-cutting of conservative state governments.

Once federal standards are undermined in the area of welfare, those buttressing a whole range of other programs will become more vulnerable—occupational health and safety, affirmative action, union-management relations, provision of public housing, environmental protection and many others that have been enacted to meet basic human needs since the New Deal era. This New Deal heritage of an activist and caring government, armed with the tools to enforce the public will as expressed in federal legislation, is the real target of the welfare reformers.

But as the stakes go up and more programs come under attack, the prospects for resistance increase. Public opinion supports more jobs for the parents of AFDC children, a higher minimum wage, guaranteed health care, and quality daycare. As people come to understand the broader implications and effects of the attack on welfare, the base of opposition to it can

be expanded to include a wide spectrum of groups that share a stake in protecting the gains that Democratic administrations have made during the past half-century.



### Consider Your Purpose

Here, then, are eight sources on the debate over welfare in the United States. On what basis can you synthesize the material in these sources? Before you can even begin to answer this question, you must consider your *purpose*. Consider that three researchers, working with three different purposes, could read these same sources and write very different papers, each of which would satisfy their reasons for writing. What you write depends largely on your purpose in writing.

One purpose might simply be to survey, in some kind of order, the positions in the welfare debate. An exam question might require that you do just that. In such a case, your purpose can be satisfied by simple summaries of as many sources as you have space or time for, with an opening and a closing that say, in effect, here are some of the various positions on both left and right. Another purpose might be even more limited: to seek out specific proposals for dealing with welfare—from eliminating it, to reforming it, to leaving it pretty much as it is. In such a case, you would be looking only for those sections of the sources that had to do with specific proposals and passing over other sections that deal with, for example, the underlying reasons for what some (but not all) consider a social crisis.

Yet another purpose might be to take an informed position of your own on welfare. With such a purpose, you could lay out your own position, whether on the left, the right, or the center, using arguments from the sources to buttress this position and attempting to show the deficiencies of arguments with which you disagree.

But let us suppose—since we are presently concerned with *explanatory synthesis*—that your purpose is to present an overview of the welfare debate, not simply as a series of summaries, but rather as a coherent analysis. This would require that you resist the temptation to organize your synthesis by source, to devote, for instance, one paragraph of your paper to each of several sources. You do not want to write a paper that says, in effect: "I've read eight sources. Here's a summary of each." A much stronger approach is to organize your synthesis according to *ideas*. An acceptable explanatory synthesis requires that you see in your sources an interplay of ideas. Based on the interplay you see, choose from your sources selectively, in a manner that promotes your readers' understanding.

Let's return, then, to the questions we posed before presenting the sources: *What are the main issues in the debate, and how do the opinions expressed in the various sources relate to one another?* We've already suggested that one useful way to relate the sources to one another is to arrange them along the political spectrum, from right (conservative) to left (liberal). If

you view the sources in this light, you will soon conclude that Postrel, Murray, and Krauthammer are conservatives (of various kinds). They want to either drastically reform the welfare system or eliminate it altogether, in accordance with their underlying assumption that government should get out of the business of what they consider charity, and charity, moreover, that reinforces socially irresponsible behavior like having babies out of wedlock and staying on the dole rather than working. Rosen, Scheer, and Cockburn, on the other hand, would be classified as liberals. (Cockburn, in fact, would be classified as a radical.) While not explicitly defending the current welfare system, they attack those who call for its reform or elimination, accusing them of "blaming the victim," of wanting to perpetuate a sweatshop economy, and even of outright racism. McCrary, the only writer who is actually on welfare, attempts to counter the negative stereotype of welfare mothers with her own personal experience and observations. President Clinton, a moderate, calls for welfare reform, but of a much milder type than conservatives would find acceptable.

### Formulate a Thesis

The difference between your purpose and your thesis is a difference primarily of sharpness of focus. Your purpose provides direction to your research and focus to your paper. Your thesis sharpens this focus by narrowing it and formulating it in the words of a single declarative statement (Refer to Chapter 2 for additional discussion on formulating thesis statements.)

Since your purpose in this case is simply to present source material with little or no comment, your thesis would be the most obvious statement you can make about the relationship among these passages. By "obvious" statement we mean a statement that is clearly supported in all the passages.

Your first attempt at a thesis might yield something like this:

Many people are engaged in a debate over welfare.

While this thesis does identify the subject, it does not identify even in a general way the participants in this debate. The fact that the welfare controversy tends to split along liberal-conservative lines is significant. The first revision might therefore acknowledge this fact as follows:

Liberals and conservatives are engaged in a debate over welfare.

This thesis is a little better, more sharply focused, but it fails to indicate the nature of the debate. Even the most casual analysis of the above sources would reveal at least two major points of contention in this debate: Who or what is responsible for the current welfare crisis, and what to do about it? A further revision of the thesis along these lines might yield the following:

Liberals and conservatives cannot agree on where to lay the blame for the current welfare crisis or on how to fix it.

This is a considerable improvement over the first thesis. One further pass might refine it yet further through an acknowledgment that both liberals and conservatives agree that the current system does not work:

Liberals and conservatives in the welfare debate agree that the system is in need of reform, but they cannot agree on where to lay the blame for the current welfare situation, or on what the government should do about it.

### Decide How You Will Use Your Source Material

The easiest way to deal with sources is to summarize them. But because you are synthesizing ideas rather than sources, you will have to be more selective than if you were writing a simple summary. You don't have to treat *all* the ideas in your sources, just the ones related to your thesis. Some sources might be summarized in their entirety; others, only in part. Using the techniques of summary, determine section by section the main topics of each source, focusing on those topics related to your thesis. Write brief phrases in the margin, underline key phrases or sentences, or take notes on a separate sheet of paper. Decide how your sources can help you achieve your purpose and support your thesis.

### Develop an Organizational Plan

An organizational plan is your plan for presenting material to the reader. What material will you present? To find out, examine your thesis. Does the content and structure of the thesis (that is, the number and order of assertions) suggest an organizational plan for the paper? Expect to devote at least one paragraph of your paper to developing each section of this plan. Having identified likely sections, think through the possibilities of arrangement. Ask yourself: What information does the reader need to understand first? How do I build on this first section—what block of information will follow? Think of each section in relation to others until you have placed them all and have worked your way through to a plan for the whole paper.

Study your thesis, and let it help suggest an organization. Bear in mind that any one paper can be written—successfully—according to a variety of plans. Your job before beginning your first draft is to explore possibilities. Sketch a series of rough outlines: arrange and rearrange your paper's likely

sections until you sketch a plan that both facilitates the reader's understanding and achieves your objectives as writer. Your final paper may well deviate from your final sketch, since in the act of writing you may discover the need to explore new material, to omit planned material, or to refocus your entire presentation. Just the same, a well-conceived organizational plan will encourage you to begin writing a draft.

Based on the thesis he developed above, student Casey Cole developed a six-part paper, including introduction and conclusion:

- A. Introduction: the two contending points of view in the welfare debate
- B. The origin of the welfare system in this country; its current status
- C. The conservative point of view
- D. The moderate point of view
- E. The liberal point of view
- F. Conclusion: reiteration of the contending viewpoints

### Write the Topic Sentences

This is an optional step; but writing draft versions of topic sentences will get you started on each main section of your synthesis and will help give you the sense of direction you need to proceed. Here are some examples of topic sentences for selections based on Casey Cole's thesis and organizational plan. Note also that when read in sequence following the thesis, these sentences give a very clear idea of the logical progression of the whole essay. (Note also that the first topic sentence contains information found in one or more background sources not reprinted here.)

At its inception during the Great Depression, welfare had a clearly defined goal: to temporarily provide financial aid to needy mothers whose husbands had died or become unable to work, so that they could support their families.

Conservatives think that the government should either drastically cut back these welfare programs or get out of the welfare business altogether.

Moderates, seeing a continuing role for the federal government, also believe that welfare programs should be reformed, but less drastically than conservatives would like.

Liberals, insisting that the federal government has a continuing obligation to provide assistance to the needy, applaud the President's reluctance to end wel-

fare outright, but object to any provision for term limits on benefits.

Those who debate welfare disagree so vehemently that it becomes clear that deep-seated political viewpoints underlie the opposing positions.

### Write Your Synthesis

Here is Casey Cole's completed synthesis, the product of two preliminary drafts. In the following example, thesis and topic sentences are highlighted. Modern Language Association (MLA) documentation style, explained in Chapter 5, is used throughout. Note that for the sake of clarity parenthetical references are to pages in *Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum*. (Two background sources referenced in this essay, Sancton and Rector, have not been reprinted here.)

#### Welfare and the American Dream

In an economy where a full-time minimum-wage job can't support a single parent with one child, does government have an obligation to provide welfare benefits to families who have no other means of survival? Or should government abandon welfare, since those on the dole often use it as a crutch to support themselves and their illegitimate children while avoiding getting a job and taking responsibility for their own lives? Liberals and conservatives in the welfare debate agree that the system is in need of reform, but they cannot agree on where to lay the blame for the current welfare situation, or on what the government should do about it.

At its inception during the Great Depression of the 1930s, welfare had a clearly defined goal: to temporarily provide financial aid to single mothers whose husbands had died or become unable to work, so that they could support their families. Mrs. G. Harris Robertson, driving force behind the original welfare program, declared in 1911: "Let us honor the mother wherever found--if she has given a citizen to the nation, then the nation owes something to her" (qtd. in Postrel

105). One program stood out above all others and became the government's primary means of welfare: Aid to Families With Dependent Children. In recent years, however, welfare rolls have exploded (there were 4.7 million welfare households in 1992), and AFDC's price tag has grown to \$25 billion. And AFDC is only the tip of the iceberg. One estimate has the cost of AFDC and food stamps, also a welfare program, at more than \$40 billion (Sancton 45). Another estimate, by the conservative Robert Rector, shows about 80 major welfare programs at the federal, state, and local levels costing a total of \$324 billion in fiscal year 1993--a lot of money for a program that many believe doesn't work and that has created a permanent culture of dependency (B13). Add to the enormous costs of welfare the resentment felt by many at having to subsidize what they consider irresponsible behavior by those who have made welfare a way of life and one begins to get an idea of why welfare is considered a national crisis, crying out for reform. Addressing the National Governors' Convention in 1993, President Bill Clinton declared, "No one likes the welfare system as it currently exists, least of all the people who are on it" (93).

3  
Conservatives think that the government should either drastically cut back these welfare programs or get out of the welfare business altogether. They blame welfare recipients for the crisis, asserting that they lack the personal responsibility needed to get off the dole. These critics believe that as long as lower-class single mothers receive money from the government, they have no incentive either to work or to raise their children within the context of marriage in two-parent families. Charles Krauthammer, writing in the Washington Post, believes that this "Subsidized Illegitimacy" lies at the heart of the welfare problem. For Krauthammer, "illegitimacy is the royal road to poverty and all its attendant pathologies" (102). The solution, he ar-

gues, is to abolish the AFDC. "Take [welfare] away," he maintains, "and the society built on babies having babies cannot sustain itself" (102). Welfare recipients would be forced, in effect, to sink or swim. And how would they prevent themselves from sinking? First, of course, they would do this by not having illegitimate children. But if they did, they would have two options, according to Charles Murray, a fellow at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. Either a mother would put her baby up for adoption, or the burden of supporting mother and child would fall upon the women's relatives or upon private charities--thus making "an illegitimate birth the socially horrific act it used to be" (99). The social stigma attached to unwed motherhood, Murray claims, would deter young women from having children they can't support.

4  
Other conservatives focus on the corrupting effects of the welfare state. In her article "The Character Issue," Virginia Postrel, editor of the libertarian magazine Reason, claims that welfare debases both the givers and the recipients and leads to a devaluation of work and to increased prejudice. She compares the current welfare crisis to the situation in the Ayn Rand story in which babies are a pestilence, not a blessing. Later, she extends the metaphor, stating that many people believe that immigrants (who, they believe, comprise a large percentage of welfare recipients) are like locusts (106). Like Krauthammer and Murray, Postrel wants to abolish AFDC. Like them, she believes that the government should not be in the business of providing aid that should be provided--as it was provided in times past--by private charities and by relatives of the needy. Why, they ask, should the taxpayers be required to subsidize illegitimacy and personal immorality?

5  
Moderates, seeing a continuing role for the federal government, also believe that welfare programs should



be reformed, but less drastically than conservatives would like. They try to mix compassion with practicality. While agreeing with conservatives that single mothers should support themselves, they oppose an immediate cutoff of funds, believing that the federal government should gradually wean AFDC recipients off the dole. The expanding welfare rolls, they believe, should be blamed not on the irresponsibility of the recipients, but rather on a shrinking job market and a reduced economy combined with poor educational opportunities for the people living in poverty. President Clinton sympathizes with welfare recipients:

So many people stay on welfare not because of the checks. . . . They do it solely because they do not want to put their children at risk of losing health care or because they do not have the money to pay for child care out of the meager wages they can earn coming from a low education base. (94)

Welfare recipient Teresa McCrary, who is also a student at the University of Minnesota, echoes the President's words in defense of welfare mothers. If the unemployed are unable to find work, she asks, how can welfare mothers like herself with inadequate education or training be expected to find more than minimum wage jobs? And who is to take care of her children while she works? McCrary asks for both "money and patience on the taxpayers' part" while she completes the education that will enable her to get a decent job (104). Clinton's welfare principles would provide this breathing space. It would continue the federal government's support of child and health care for working mothers who enroll in federally sponsored job skills programs. But welfare benefits would end two years after completion of this program.

Thus, for both the President and the welfare mother, America should remain the land of opportunity where people can, through their own efforts--and with some help--lift themselves up to a better position in life.

Liberals, insisting that the federal government has a continuing obligation to provide assistance to the needy, applaud the President's reluctance to end welfare outright, but object to any provision for term limits on benefits. For them, social justice and compassion are paramount: all should have a fair shot at fulfilling the American dream. Liberals see conservative accusations that AFDC recipients lack responsibility as racial attacks and as examples of "blaming the victim." Sumner Rosen, retired professor of social welfare at the Columbia University School of Social Work, maintains that "[r]ace is the unacknowledged obsession of the welfare reformers. They fear . . . what they see as black patterns of illegitimacy and disrespect for traditional standards of sexual behavior, lifestyle and work ethic" (111). Other liberals point out that regardless of who is to blame for the welfare crisis (and they do not always admit that there is a crisis), it is the children of AFDC families who suffer when aid is cut off. These critics charge that conservative plans to abolish the AFDC are punitive to innocent victims--the children of welfare mothers.

Los Angeles Times columnist Robert Scheer recalls his own childhood in a family whose income was supplemented by welfare: "[My mother] thought it was a good thing the heat stayed on and we ate regular until she could get a job sewing sweaters again" (109-10). Scheer sees hypocrisy in conservative opposition to both AFDC and abortion: "[Republicans] liked me as a fetus, but the second I popped out they labeled me illegitimate" (110). Radical columnist Alexander Cockburn sees conservative attacks on AFDC as a direct attack on the fertility of poor women reminiscent of the sterilization programs in Nazi Germany (108). He describes a Connecticut bill that would have pressured AFDC recipients to accept subdermal Norplant (which prevents pregnancy for five years) as a condition of continuing to

receive welfare benefits. The conservative solution, Cockburn charges, is to "socially cleanse" poor women by keeping them from reproducing--just as the Nazis dealt with their undesirables in the 1930s. For the liberals, then, plans to cut back or eliminate welfare are cruel, racist, and sexist.

Those who debate welfare disagree so vehemently that it becomes clear that deep-seated political attitudes underlie the opposing positions. In conflict are two versions of our nation: one, with an activist and compassionate government in the spirit of the New Deal; another, in which every person is free to excel by his or her own efforts, unhindered--and unhelped--by big government. The former is the ideal America of liberals like Rosen, Scheer, and Cockburn, who feel that the government has a responsibility to provide assistance to citizens who have been left behind through no fault of their own. The latter is the ideal America of conservatives like Krauthammer, Murray, and Postrel, who believe that perseverance and strength of character are all one needs to be successful.

What is the role of the government in providing for the well-being of its citizens? That is the crucial question at the heart of the welfare debate.

#### Works Cited

- Clinton, Bill. "Remarks to the National Governors' Association," 2 Feb 1993. Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents 5 Feb. 1993: 125-28.
- Cockburn, Alexander. "Eugenics Nuts Would Have Loved Norplant." Los Angeles Times 30 June 1994: B7.
- Krauthammer, Charles. "Subsidized Illegitimacy." Washington Post 19 Nov. 1993: A29.
- McCrary, Teresa. "Getting Off the Welfare Carousel." Newsweek 6 Dec. 1993: 11.
- Murray, Charles. "The Coming White Underclass." Wall Street Journal 29 Oct. 1993: A14(E).

- Postrel, Virginia I. "The Character Issue." Reason June 1994: 4-5.
- Rector, Robert. "Welfare Is the 800-Pound Gorilla." Los Angeles Times 11 July 1995: B13.
- Rosen, Sumner M. "The True End of Welfare Reform." Nation 3 Apr. 1995: 456.
- Sancton, Thomas. "How to Get America Off the Dole." Time 25 May 1992: 44-47.
- Scheer, Robert. "Newt's Welfare: Think of It as a Homeless Drill." Los Angeles Times 12 Feb. 1995: M5.

#### Discussion

- Casey Cole devotes his first paragraph to introducing the two contending viewpoints on the welfare debate. He presents each viewpoint as a question and ends the paragraph with his *thesis*.
- In paragraph 2 Cole offers a brief account of the origin of the welfare system in this country and of its present scope and costs, and he quotes President Clinton on the need for welfare reform.
- In paragraphs 3 and 4 Cole presents the conservative viewpoint on the welfare debate—that the government must stop providing welfare benefits as a first step toward ending a culture of dependency—by considering the ideas of Charles Krauthammer, Charles Murray, and Virginia Postrel.
- Paragraphs 5 and 6 deals with the moderate viewpoint on welfare, covering the ideas of President Clinton, who promised to reform the welfare system, but in a less drastic manner than the conservatives advocate. Cole also quotes Teresa McCrary, who defends welfare mothers like herself from conservative critics.
- Paragraphs 7 and 8 consider the liberal viewpoint on welfare—that government has an obligation to continue welfare programs. Cole begins with the views of Sumner Rosen, who considers conservative attacks on welfare mothers as "blaming the victim." He also quotes Robert Scheer and Alexander Cockburn, who have nothing but scorn for conservatives who attack welfare families.
- In the final two paragraphs, 9 and 10, Cole returns to the philosophical differences—and visions of America—that underlie the contending viewpoints on welfare. The short final paragraph puts the essential issue in a nutshell.

Note that since this is an *explanatory* synthesis, Cole does not take a position on the welfare debate or even suggest which side (if any) he favors. His purpose in this essay is simply to explain as accurately as possible how people involved in the welfare debate cannot agree on the causes of the current crisis, or on the appropriate role of government in dealing with it.

## THE ARGUMENT SYNTHESIS

The explanatory synthesis, as we have seen, is fairly modest in purpose. It emphasizes the materials in the sources themselves, not the student writer's interpretation. Since your reader is not always in a position to read your sources, this kind of synthesis, if well done, can be very informative. But the main characteristic of the explanatory synthesis is that it is designed more to *inform* than to *persuade*. As we have said, the thesis in the explanatory synthesis is less a device for arguing a particular point than a device for providing focus and direction to an objective presentation of facts or opinions. As the writer of an explanatory synthesis, you remain, for the most part, a detached observer.

You might disagree with this, contending that the thesis we developed for the explanatory synthesis does represent a particular point of view: "Liberals and conservatives in the welfare debate agree that the system is in need of reform, but they can't agree on where to lay the blame for the current welfare situation or on what the government should do about it." To an extent, this does represent a point of view, but note that based on the sources we provided, no contrary point of view would be possible. Having read these sources, no one could disagree that liberals and conservatives argue over who or what is to blame for the welfare crisis and over what the government should do about it.

An argumentative thesis, in contrast to an explanatory one, is *debatable*. Writers working with the same source materials could conceive of and support other, opposite theses. So the theses for argument syntheses are propositions about which reasonable people could disagree. They are propositions about which (given the right arguments, as you formulate them) people might be persuaded to change their minds. Thus, the general purpose of the *argument* synthesis is to present your point of view—in a logical manner and supported by relevant facts.

### Consider Your Purpose

As with the explanatory synthesis, your specific purpose in writing an argument synthesis is crucial. What exactly you want to do will affect your thesis, the evidence you select to support your thesis, and the way you organize the evidence. Your purpose may be clear to you before you begin research, may emerge during the course of research, or may not emerge until after you have completed your research. (Of course, the sooner your purpose is clear to you, the fewer wasted motions you will make. On the other hand, the more you approach research as an exploratory process, the likelier that your conclusions will emerge from the sources themselves, rather than from preconceived ideas. For a discussion on the process of research, see Chapter 5.)

Let's say that while reading your sources, what impresses you even more than the arguments themselves (on one side or the other) is the vehemence

with which the debate is conducted. The writers are often angry, bitter, scornful of those they consider their ideological opponents. Welfare is one of those issues, like abortion or capital punishment, in which many people have a great moral investment because it goes to the heart of their own personal values. Should the government help out those in need? Should those in need help themselves? And why do they need help in the first place? Which is the better virtue—compassion or self-reliance? Of course, such questions oversimplify the issue, but the point is that questions like these seem to underlie many of the arguments in the welfare debate.

You decide to further pursue this matter. What do the sources show about the kind of arguments that are made over welfare? You are less interested in taking a side on the issue than in focusing on the manner in which the debate has been conducted—a manner that you have come to feel is ultimately irresponsible and self-defeating.

### Formulate a Thesis

Your discussion is organized and held together by your own thesis, which may have nothing to do with the thesis of any of your sources. For example, one of your sources concludes that welfare needs to be eliminated because it perpetuates a culture of illegitimacy. This conclusion will not be your thesis. But you may use that source to help demonstrate your point that inflammatory language is common among arguments on both sides of the debate. You may use a source as a strawman, a weak argument that you set up only to knock down again. Or the author of one of your sources may be so convincing that you adopt his or her thesis—or adopt it to some extent but not entirely. The point is that *the thesis is in your hands*: you must devise it yourself and must use your sources in some way that will support that thesis.

You may not want to divulge your thesis until the very end of the paper, to draw the reader along toward your conclusion, allowing the thesis to flow naturally out of the argument and the evidence on which it is based. If you do this, you are working *inductively*. Or you may wish to be more direct and *begin* with your thesis, following the thesis statement with evidence to support it. If you do this, you are working *deductively*. In academic papers, deductive arguments are far more common than inductive arguments.

Based on your reactions to reading the sources, you decide to focus upon what you consider the irresponsible and self-defeating manner in which arguments on both sides of the welfare debate have been conducted. After a few tries, you arrive at the following tentative thesis:

Those who are carrying on the welfare debate seem less interested in fostering a broad agreement on dealing with the situation than in giving way to emotionalism and irrationality and in making moral judgments about those they consider responsible for the problems.

## Decide How You Will Use Your Source Material

Your tentative thesis commits you (1) to explain the emotional manner in which the welfare debate has been conducted, (2) to demonstrate that differences in moral values underlie the different positions in the debate, and (3) to explain how the manner in which the debate has been conducted is not conducive to the formation of a broad consensus. The sources provide plenty of examples that will allow you to fulfill these commitments. The more extreme writers on both sides—Postrel and Krauthammer on the right, Scheer and Cockburn on the left—will provide ample examples of emotional arguments. And assumptions about values are readily apparent in all of the selections.

It may become apparent, as you prepare to write, that you need to consult additional sources to flesh out your paper. For example, you may need to locate statistics and other factual information about welfare for the introductory paragraph. You may also need to consult a source to pin down the differences in philosophy between liberal and conservative viewpoints. (The model essay that follows incorporates and references such sources, though they are not included here.)

## Develop an Organizational Plan

Having established your overall purpose, having developed a tentative thesis, and having decided how to use your source materials, how do you logically organize your essay? In many cases, including this one, a well-written thesis will suggest an overall organization. Thus, one part of the synthesis will be devoted to demonstrating the emotional nature of the arguments over welfare, another to showing how these arguments reflect differences in values. Upon further consideration, you may decide that the values issue is so fundamental that it precedes everything else (except for the introductory section). Your next task would be—through outlining perhaps—to subdivide the various sections of the paper. Such an outline does not have to be very complex—simply a series of topics. For example:

- A. Introduction Origin and present status of the welfare system.  
*Thesis*
- B. Opposing values of conservatives and liberals.
- C. Value judgments made by various commentators.
  - 1. Conservatives
  - 2. Liberals
- D. Emotional language of welfare debate
- E. "Bamboozling"—irrational rhetorical ploys
  - 1. *Argument ad hominem*
  - 2. Guilt by association
  - 3. Slippery slope
- F. Conclusion—polarization of the welfare issue prevents the formation of a broad consensus

## Write Your Synthesis

The second draft of a completed synthesis, based on the above outline, follows. Thesis, transitional, and topic sentences are highlighted; Modern Language Association (MLA) documentation style, explained in Chapter 5, is used throughout. Note that for the sake of clarity, page references in the following essay (with the exception of the reference to Sancton) are to pages in *Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum*, including the selections by Burns et al. and Cross in Chapter 7.

### The Angry Welfare Debate

Welfare in the United States began in 1935 as a means of providing cash payments to families in which the father had died or was unable to work. It continues to the present through such programs as AFDC (Aid to Families With Dependent Children), Medicaid, and food stamps. Many believe that welfare has reached crisis proportions, with more than \$40 billion a year being paid to 4.7 million households. Although this sum is considerably less (in adjusted dollars) than what welfare cost twenty years ago, it is still large enough that what to do about welfare—continue it, reform it, eliminate it—has become the subject of intense debate in this country in the halls of Congress, on radio talk shows, in editorials and magazine articles, and over millions of dinner tables (Sancton 45). But anyone seeking reasonable, logical discussions of the welfare issue will have to look long and hard. What is most striking about many of the pieces written about welfare is not so much the positions taken or the kinds of evidence used to support these positions, but how angry the authors are and how much scorn they display toward those with opposing views (and, for anti-welfare pieces, against many of the people on welfare). In fact, those who are carrying on the welfare debate seem less interested in fostering a broad agreement on dealing with the situation than in giving way to emotionalism and irrationality and in making moral judgments about those they consider responsible for the problems.

At the heart of the conflict are fundamental differences of values. These differences are based on the opposing ways that liberals and conservatives view the role of government. Liberals believe in "the positive uses of government to bring about justice and equality of opportunity . . . [and] stress the need for a compassionate and affirmative government" (Burns et al. 263). Conservatives, on the other hand, "prefer private giving and individual voluntary efforts targeted at social and economic problems rather than government programs" (Burns et al. 267). From these assumptions, grounded largely on moral values, it follows that liberals tend to favor welfare programs and that conservatives tend to oppose them. Liberals see welfare as a means of providing a financial safety net for mothers who have no other means of providing for themselves and their children. They consider conservative views on welfare as callous and cruel. Conservatives, on the other hand, see welfare as a means of creating a society of dependents who are able, at the taxpayers' expense, to avoid personal responsibility for their actions. They consider liberal views on welfare as irresponsible and expensive.

These moral attitudes are often hidden beneath arguments on what to do about welfare, but sometimes they come to the surface. Conservatives, for example, sometimes link welfare policies to broader cultural trends.

Charles Murray believes that the welfare crisis is a result of debased cultural and sexual standards. He blames the rising illegitimacy rate on a wrongheaded social policy that financially rewards single motherhood. Making welfare assistance contingent upon the mother's being married would help restore a society based on "virtue and temperance" (101). Another conservative, Charles Krauthammer, also objects to welfare payments to welfare mothers: "Underwriting tragedy is one thing," he says. "Underwriting wantonness is quite another" (103). Even President Clinton, considered a

liberal-to-moderate on welfare, argues that welfare mothers should be required to work, apparently implying that they prefer the dole to gainful employment (95). The most extreme value judgments of all the conservatives come from the libertarian editor Virginia Postrel, who cites Ayn Rand's comparison of immigrants on welfare to locusts, adding, "A lot of Americans, mostly off the record, believe the same of blacks" (107).

Liberal arguments on welfare are also filled with value judgments, though they tend to be value judgments about conservatives. In his own way as extreme as Postrel, Nation writer Alexander Cockburn compares opponents of welfare to Nazis. Cockburn is writing about proposals to require AFDC mothers to accept Norplant, a contraceptive technique. He compares such proposals, and the attitudes that devise them, to the sterilization programs of Hitler's Germany, as well as to similar programs in this country in the first half of the century. Cockburn maintains that those who advocate such programs are also racists: "Wait for the social engineers to start insisting that poor black female teen-agers accept Norplant as a condition for probation or any form of social benefit" (109). Somewhat less inflammatory is former social welfare Professor Sumner M. Rosen, who believes that in advocating welfare reform, conservatives want "to insure a continuing supply of employees for the low-wage service industries and factory sweatshops, which depend on a nonunionized, disproportionately female work force" (112). Rosen sees the real target of the welfare reformers as the entire heritage of New Deal programs that were enacted "to meet basic human needs" (112). Los Angeles Times columnist Robert Scheer adopts a bitterly ironic attack on conservative advocates of welfare reform. He accuses conservatives--who oppose abortion, but advocate cutting off funds to welfare mothers--of cruel hypocrisy. They vigorously support fetuses but have no qualms



about cutting them loose once they're actually born: "it's every fetus for itself. That's why the Republicans plan to eliminate aid for severely disabled kids. Sink or swim" (110).

When people are either promoting their own values or attacking someone else's values, their language often becomes emotional and even inflammatory. This is certainly the case with those debating welfare reform. Making his analogy of certain welfare reformers to Nazis, Alexander Cockburn writes of "vile eugenic passions" and "gas-chamber economics" (108, 109). He concludes his assessment of welfare reformers by asserting, "The door is swinging open and all the old filth seeping through" (109). Another liberal, Robert Scheer, writes that we should think of the proposed two-year limit on welfare payments as "a two-year training camp for the future homeless" (111). Sumner Rosen refers to the conservatives' plan as "the Gingrich juggernaut" (111). On the other end of the political spectrum, for Charles Krauthammer, to reform welfare is "to root out at its origin the most perverse government incentive program of all: the subsidy for illegitimacy" (102). Concluding his article with a final reference to black illegitimacy, Charles Murray turns to a disease metaphor in declaring that American society "cannot survive the same epidemic among whites" (101). Virginia Postrel refers to "Aid to Families with Dependent Children, a.k.a. Welfare As We Know It" (106). The term "a.k.a." (also known as), of course, is often used to identify aliases used by criminals. Thus, Postrel associates welfare with criminality.

Finally, it is clear that people on both sides of the welfare debate often abandon rational arguments in favor of some of the common rhetorical ploys that Donna Cross labels "bamboozling" (300). One of the most common such devices is the argument ad hominem, the attempt to discredit a position on an issue by attacking

the person who supports it. Thus, Sumner Rosen seems to consider those who call for welfare reform as racists: "Race is the unacknowledged obsession of the welfare reformers. They fear, and hope to extirpate if they cannot change, what they see as black patterns of illegitimacy and disrespect for traditional standards of sexual behavior, lifestyle and work ethic" (111). On the other hand, Charles Krauthammer seems to attack welfare mothers when he approvingly quotes ethnographer Elijah Anderson to the effect that welfare mothers look upon babies as economic assets, a means of getting additional welfare money (101-102).

Another favorite irrational argument of those writing on welfare is "guilt by association," the attempt to discredit an idea by linking it with another idea that has already been discredited. We have seen that liberal Alexander Cockburn tries to discredit welfare reform, or at least the Norplant proposals, by associating them with the despised Nazis. On the other hand, conservative Virginia Postrel writes that the welfare state has made our society resemble the one described in an Ayn Rand novel, in which wages were based on a philosophy of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need" (106). Since this quotation is one of the central tenets of Marxism, Postrel is clearly suggesting that the welfare state is like a Marxist state.

Yet another form of bamboozling is the "slippery slope" argument, the argument that once we make a single step (downhill) in a certain direction, we won't be able to stop until we slide all the way down. Thus, for Sumner Rosen, once we start the process of welfare reform, the conservatives won't be satisfied until we have totally dismantled the enlightened social legacy of the New Deal (112). For Charles Murray, unless we reform the welfare system, the country won't survive (101). Even Teresa McCrary, a welfare mother, concludes her

article (following a reference to United Nations aid to the starving people of Somalia) with an ironic slippery slope argument: "if people keep picking on us, the United Nations will have to help the United States feed us" (105).

Welfare is an emotional and value-laden issue, and it is unrealistic to hope that it can be treated in a completely rational and dispassionate manner. After all, trying to reform welfare is not like trying to debug a software program, a largely intellectual operation. Created originally out of a sense of compassion and good will, welfare involves attitudes and convictions that go to the heart of how human beings act toward and evaluate one another. Nevertheless, reading through a series of arguments on welfare leaves one with a feeling of frustration. Can't these people tone down their language? Can't they at least try to argue in a more rational manner? Above all, can't they see how counterproductive it is to polarize the issue into what is morally right and what is morally wrong? By attacking their perceived enemies so vigorously, by refusing to concede the good faith of those who disagree with them, they cut off the possibility of compromise. They prevent the formation of a broad consensus that could forge a new policy acceptable to the population at large. Unfortunately, that doesn't seem likely to happen. It's difficult to form a consensus with people who think of you as locusts, racists, or Nazis.

#### Works Cited

- Burns, James MacGregor, J. W. Peltason, Thomas E. Cronin, and David B. Magleby. Government By the People Basic Version 16th ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1995.
- Clinton, Bill. "Remarks to the National Governors' Association," 2 Feb. 1993. Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents 5 Feb. 1993: 125-28.

- Cross, Donna. "Politics: The Art of Bamboozling." Word Abuse. New York: Coward, McCann, 1979.
- Cockburn, Alexander. "Eugenics Nuts Would Have Loved Norplant." Los Angeles Times 30 June 1994: B7.
- Krauthammer, Charles. "Subsidized Illegitimacy." Washington Post 19 Nov. 1993: A29.
- McCrary, Teresa. "Getting Off the Welfare Carousel." Newsweek 6 Dec. 1993: 11.
- Murray, Charles. "The Coming White Underclass." Wall Street Journal 29 Oct. 1993: A14(E)
- Postrel, Virginia I. "The Character Issue." Reason June 1994: 4-5.
- Rosen, Sumner M. "The True End of Welfare Reform." Nation 3 Apr. 1995: 456.
- Sancton, Thomas. "How to Get America Off the Dole." Time 25 May 1992: 44-47.
- Scheer, Robert. "Newt's Welfare: Think of It as a Homeless Drill." Los Angeles Times 12 Feb. 1995: M5.

#### Discussion

- In the introductory paragraph, the writer explains the origin and present status of the welfare system (drawing partially upon an article, not included here, by Thomas Sancton), introduces the intense debate over the issue, and concludes with the essay's *thesis*: "In fact, those who are carrying on the welfare debate seem less interested in fostering a broad agreement on dealing with the situation than in giving way to emotionalism and irrationality and in making moral judgments about those they consider responsible for the problems."
- The body of the essay (beginning with paragraph 2) consists of seven paragraphs. The second paragraph sets up the opposing assumptions of liberals and conservatives. (This section is based partially on material from the Burns passage that appear on pp. 264-81, later in this book.) Paragraph 3 quotes and summarizes some explicit value judgments on welfare and welfare recipients made by conservatives (Murray, Krauthammer, Postrel). Paragraph 4 does the same for liberal arguments on welfare by liberals (Cockburn, Rosen, Scheer).
- Paragraph 5 cites examples of inflammatory and emotional language made by people on both sides of the debate (Cockburn, Scheer, Rosen, Murray, Postrel).
- Paragraphs 6-8 deal with various kinds of rhetorical ploys, classified by Donna Cross as "bamboozling" (Cross's article appears on pp.

300–314 later in this book ) Paragraph 6 deals with examples of the *argument ad hominem*, as practiced by Rosen and Krauthammer. Paragraph 7 deals with *guilt by association*, as practiced by Cockburn and Postrel. Paragraph 8 deals with the *slippery slope* argument, as practiced by Rosen, Murray, and McCrary.

- The writer concludes by conceding that welfare is an inherently emotional and value-laden issue, but asserting that the polarizing manner in which the debate has been conducted prevents the formation of a broad consensus for dealing with the problems.

Of course, many other approaches to an argument synthesis would be possible based on the sources provided here. One, obviously, would be to make the opposite argument: the parties to the debate are *not* being overly emotional and that they are saying just exactly what needs to be said, in the way it needs to be said. Another would choose to take a position of one's own on the issue of welfare and to use the sources to buttress or shape one's own arguments and to attack other positions. Yet another might be to assess the quality of the various statements according, for example, to the nature of the evidence provided or the type of logic employed. Whatever your approach to the subject, in first *analyzing* the various sources and then *synthesizing* them to support your own argument, you are engaging in the kind of critical thinking that is essential to success in a good deal of academic and professional work.

## TECHNIQUES FOR DEVELOPING YOUR PAPERS

Experienced writers seem to have an intuitive sense of how to present their ideas. Less experienced writers wonder what to say first, and, when they've decided on that, wonder what to say next. There is no single method of presentation. But the techniques of even the most experienced writers often boil down to a few tried and tested arrangements.

### Summary

The simplest—and least sophisticated—way of organizing an explanatory or an argument synthesis is to *summarize your most relevant sources, one after the other, but generally with the most important source(s) last*. The problem with this approach is that it reveals little or no independent thought on your part. Its main virtue is that it at least grounds your paper in relevant and specific evidence.

Summary can be useful—and effective—if handled judiciously, selectively, and in combination with other techniques. At some point, you may need to summarize a crucial source in some detail. At another point, you may wish to summarize a key section or paragraph of a source in a single sentence. Try to anticipate what your reader needs to know at any given

point of your paper in order to comprehend or appreciate fully the point you happen to be making. (See Chapter 1 for a discussion of summary.)

### Example or Illustration

At one or more points in your paper, you may wish to *refer to a particularly illuminating example or illustration from your source material*. You might paraphrase this example (i.e., recount it, in some detail, in your own words), summarize it, or quote it directly from your source. In all these cases, of course, you would properly credit your source. (See Chapter 5 on citation form.)

### Two (or More) Reasons

In his book *A Short Course in Writing*, Kenneth Bruffee presents some of the most effective ways of developing arguments. The first one is simply called *two reasons*, but it could just as well be called *three reasons* or whatever number of reasons the writer has. Here is this method in outline form:

- A. Introduction and thesis
- B. Two reasons the thesis is true
  1. First reason
  2. Second reason (the more important one)

You can advance as many reasons for the truth of the thesis as you think necessary; but save the most important reason(s) for the end, because the end of the paper—its climax—is what will remain most clearly in the reader's mind.

### Strawman

The next way of presenting an argument is called *strawman*. When you use the strawman technique, you present an argument *against* your thesis, but immediately afterward you show that this argument is weak or flawed. The advantage of this technique is that you demonstrate that you are aware of the other side of the argument and that you are prepared to answer it.

Here is how the strawman argument is organized:

- A. Introduction and thesis
- B. Main opposing argument
- C. Refutation of opposing argument
- D. Main positive argument

### Concession

Finally, one can use *concession* in an argument. Like strawman, you present the opposing viewpoint, but you do not proceed to demolish the opposition. Instead, you concede that the opposition does have a valid point but that

even so the positive argument is the stronger one. Here is an outline for a concession argument:

- A. Introduction and thesis
- B. Important opposing argument
- C. Concession that this argument has some validity
- D. Positive argument(s)

Sometimes, when you are developing a *strawman* or *concession* argument, you may become convinced of the validity of the opposing point of view and change your own views. Don't be afraid of this happening. *Writing is a tool for learning.* To change your mind because of new evidence is a sign of flexibility and maturity, and your writing can only be the better for it.

### Comparison and Contrast

Comparison-and-contrast techniques enable you to examine two subjects (or sources) in terms of one another. When you compare, you consider *similarities*. When you contrast, you consider *differences*. By comparing and contrasting, you perform a multifaceted analysis that often suggests subtleties that otherwise might not have come to your attention.

To organize a comparison-and-contrast analysis, you must carefully read sources in order to discover *significant criteria for analysis*. A *criterion* is a specific point to which both of your authors refer and about which they may agree or disagree. (For example, in a comparative report on compact cars, criteria for *comparison* and *contrast* might be road handling, fuel economy, and comfort of ride.) The best criteria are those that allow you not only to account for obvious similarities and differences between sources but also to plumb deeper, to more subtle and significant similarities and differences.

There are two basic approaches to organizing a comparison-and-contrast analysis: organization by *source* and organization by *criteria*.

1. *Organizing by source.* You can organize a comparative analysis as two summaries of your sources, followed by a discussion in which you point out significant similarities and differences between passages. Having read the summaries and become familiar with the distinguishing features of each passage, your readers will most likely be able to appreciate the more obvious similarities and differences. Follow up on these summaries by discussing both the obvious and subtle comparisons and contrasts, focusing on the most significant.

Organization by source is best saved for passages that are briefly summarized. If the summary of your source becomes too long, your audience might forget the remarks you made in the first summary while they read the second. A comparison-and-contrast synthesis organized by source might proceed like this:

- I. Introduce the essay; lead to thesis
- II. Summarize passage A by discussing its significant features.
- III. Summarize passage B by discussing its significant features.

- IV. Write a paragraph (or two) in which you discuss the significant points of comparison and contrast between passages A and B.

End with a conclusion in which you summarize your points and, perhaps, raise and respond to pertinent questions.

2. *Organizing by criteria.* Instead of summarizing entire passages one at a time with the intention of comparing them later, you could discuss two passages simultaneously, examining the views of each author point by point (criterion by criterion), comparing and contrasting these views in the process. The criterion approach is best used when you have a number of points to discuss or when passages are long and/or complex. A synthesis organized by criteria might look like this:

- I. Introduce the essay; lead to thesis
- II. Criterion 1
  - A. Discuss what author A says about this point
  - B. Discuss what author B says about this point.
- III. Criterion 2
  - A. Discuss what author A says about this point
  - B. Discuss what author B says about this point.

And so on. Proceed criterion by criterion until you have completed your discussion. Be sure to arrange criteria with a clear method; knowing how the discussion of one criterion leads to the next will ensure smooth transitions throughout your paper. End with a conclusion in which you summarize your points and, perhaps, raise and respond to pertinent questions.

### ▼ A CASE FOR COMPARISON AND CONTRAST: WHAT GOOD IS GOVERNMENT?

We'll see how these principles can be applied to the following articles by President Bill Clinton and Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich on what government does well and what it does badly. These statements appeared in *Newsweek*, on facing pages, on April 10, 1995.

#### *What Good Is Government . . . ?*

BILL CLINTON

One of my earliest political memories is from 1957, when I was 11 years old. Arkansas's governor, Orval Faubus, had used the National Guard to stop the racial integration of the Little Rock public schools. President Eisenhower then federalized the Guard to make sure integration happened. I was in a distinct minority among my friends in school because I thought Eisenhower had done the right thing. At the time, the Southern states were

using the doctrine of "states rights" to keep some people from having real opportunity

Even earlier, I saw this discrimination all the time at my grandfather's grocery store in Hope. Most of his customers were black, and many of them lived either behind the store or behind the cemetery on roads that were not paved. I was aware as a little boy that the government treated some people differently from others. My grandfather thought his customers were entitled to paved roads since they paid taxes just like the white people did. That unfairness really didn't change until the 1960s when the federal government stepped in with the Voting Rights Act, which enabled blacks to vote in large numbers. That forced elected officials to treat them with more respect

My grandfather also taught me about Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal. He believed Roosevelt gave the American people a chance to work and then protected them when they were in trouble or retired. Conditions in Arkansas during the Great Depression were just miserable. In this case, the lesson was that sometimes the free market did not work by itself.

So I grew up with a sense that the absence of a strong federal government did not necessarily mean that people had more freedom and opportunity. In fact, the national government had to affirmatively step in to make sure everybody had a fair chance.

But I started to develop a slightly different view about government when I returned to Arkansas to serve in public office. There were many times when I thought the national government was doing things that didn't make sense. When I was attorney general, for instance, I saw that because of federal law, the appeals process in death penalty cases took, on average, eight years. That was crazy, cost a lot of money and didn't serve the ends of justice.

It became clear to me that we had to constantly reform and "reinvent" government. A professor of mine at Georgetown University, Carroll Quigley, used to say that you had to build institutions to make a civilization work—but that institutions tended to become "institutionalized." In other words, they would abandon the original purpose for which they were established, and, instead, become more concerned about preserving themselves, their prerogatives, their position, their power.

At its worst, government can act just as a powerful monopoly does in the private sector—unaccountable, abusive of power and immune to change. Examples include the welfare system, a lot of public housing, and some of our public schools. The schools that don't work, for instance, have guaranteed revenues, guaranteed customers, and the shots are being called in the central office bureaucracy. That's why some of the more promising school reforms involve giving parents a choice of public schools or letting groups of teachers set up new "charter schools." These reforms instill a sense of competition, while preserving our historic commitment to public education.

Sometimes the government starts out fine but doesn't adapt to changing conditions. The Environmental Protection Agency was set up under

President Nixon. I believe if the government had not said there was a national interest in protecting the environment, we would not have made the great progress we have in cleaning up our air and water. But we don't need to approach these issues today the same way we did in the 1970s. Why? Because now businesses have figured out that environmental protection is good economics. Entire industries have developed to design products and techniques to make factories cleaner and more efficient at the same time. Now, we have to look at more market-oriented solutions. My EPA is cutting the paperwork burdens of compliance by 25 percent next year, and giving businesses that ask for help six months to fix their problems without being fined.

There are some things the government does quite well. One, of course, is national security. We have the finest military in the world. And with the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the crime bill that we passed last year, the government can help make people feel safer in our streets and schools.

The government is also good at what is known in the policy world as "income transfers." In other words, it's good at taking in tax money from the population as a whole and redistributing it to people with special needs. The Social Security system has worked quite well, with a very low overhead. Some argue that people could get a better rate of return if they invested the money themselves, but Social Security has basically been stable, always made its payments, and the administrative costs are low. Medicare has problems due to the general inflation in health care costs, but its overhead is low too and compares favorably with any system in the world.

Government has successfully set up institutions that protect economic markets from their own worst excesses. The Federal Reserve System, which regulates banks, and the Securities and Exchange Commission, which oversees the stock markets, have been crucial in fostering economic growth in this country. Some of the countries in the former Soviet Union have asked for advice on how to get their markets to thrive, and one of the things they've looked at is how to set up these institutions so their markets can flourish as ours have.

Carefully targeted government action can also work in other areas. Our family leave law, the Brady bill, the school lunch program, and the proposed minimum wage increase are good examples.

Finally, the government has done well when it set out to provide education to a broad base of Americans. Perhaps the single most important thing the government did to improve opportunity during my childhood was the GI Bill, which helped millions of young men go to college. Since then, other college loan programs, including our new direct loan program, have helped so many more students. And the Head Start program has helped disadvantaged kids become more prepared for school.

I've understood for nearly 20 years that big government is not the solution to every big problem. We have already eliminated or reduced 300 programs, and in my new budget I've asked Congress to eliminate or consolidate 400 more. The federal government now has 100,000 fewer people



than when I became president. But it is equally wrong to say that government is the source of all our problems. The difference between the Republicans and me is that I still believe that the federal government has an affirmative responsibility to help people to make the most of their own lives.

Today, government's job is to enable people to adjust to the changing economy. Technology and worldwide competition have depressed wages in the low-skilled jobs. Middle-class pay is stagnating and people must work harder just to stay in place. I don't mean to reduce everything to economics; we have deep problems of culture and of the spirit in this country. Still, many problems we face—the breakdown of family and community, the rise of crime and violence, anxiety about the future—are a direct result of economic changes. Parents have had longer work weeks, less sleep, less time for their children. We also have growing inequality of incomes based primarily on differences in education. We have to change that if we want to grow the middle class and shrink the underclass.

The most important thing government can do to achieve that goal is to help people raise their education and skill levels. We have to say to people, "We can't solve your problems for you—you have to go out and make your way in the private sector—but we're going to make sure you are empowered to make the most of your own lives." That's what I mean when I talk about the New Covenant: creating more opportunity but demanding more responsibility in return. You can see this in our efforts to reform a welfare system that has worked very poorly for people who are not self-motivated. Roughly half the people who get on welfare do so because they hit a bump in the road of life, and they get off quickly. But for those in the permanently dependent class, government has not done a good job because it has not demanded much from the recipients. That's why we want to require work and responsible parenting as we give people the help they need to get education and jobs. You can see it in our other efforts to give people the tools to make good lives for themselves: for example, making college loans available on good repayment terms or letting people earn college money by serving their communities in AmeriCorps.

I would love to go even further. We should collapse all the government job-training programs into one and increase the funding. That way people would know that they could always go back to school and get new skills and have a chance to raise their incomes. I would expand this direct college-loan program that we've started so that everyone would be able to benefit.

The role of government is not as simple and obvious as it was during the New Deal. At that time, the government helped working people directly by giving them jobs. The sorts of things we have to do now to create opportunity have major payoffs but you don't see them until later. Sometimes, because the connection of the policy to the job payoff is indirect, you don't see it all. For example, I believe with all my heart that our economic plan was in the best interests of America, bringing the deficit down, investing more in education and giving working families with incomes under

\$25,000 a tax break, to encourage work over welfare. But it's hard for people to see the connection between these policies and economic growth. The same is true on trade. NAFTA opened up markets in Mexico and Canada, and the GATT treaty increased trade throughout the world. They contributed to the creation of 6.1 million new jobs and the lowest combined rate of unemployment and inflation in 25 years.

I think the American people are torn about what role government ought to play. They say they can't stand big government and they want less of it—but they have huge aspirations for it. After so many years of stagnant income and rising social problems, they want immediate results. But the best solutions can take a long time to work because the problems developed over a long time, and because making progress on them depends not only on government but also on people taking more personal responsibility.

This debate about the role of government could be very important. The American people have to decide what they have a right to expect and, indeed, demand of us in public office—and what they still have to do on their own.

Political leaders in turn must state more clearly what government can and cannot do, what results the American people can expect, and when they can expect them. In this new era, a lot of people are angry and frustrated because prosperity and stability do not cover all who work hard and play by the rules, and because they feel that government is helping special interests and not holding everyone equally accountable. Instead of exploiting the public's anger, we should seek to unify our people in a common mission to keep the American dream alive for ourselves and our children. In this effort, I believe the role of government is to help create good jobs; to increase our security at home and abroad; to reform government, making it smaller and less bureaucratic; to demand more personal responsibility from all our citizens; and most important, to expand education and training so that all our citizens have the chance to make the most of their own lives.

If we do these things our best days are still ahead.

### ... And Can We Make It Better?

NEWT GINGRICH

I was born into a post-World War II world that was orderly, structured, and seemed to make sense. It was a time of the New Deal and the Marshall Plan; there was a great faith in systems, a belief in the grand designs of social planners. But then, when I was a young man, came the chaos of the 1960s, beginning with the Bay of Pigs and culminating in Watergate. The orderly system of FDR and Eisenhower began to disintegrate. David Halberstam's 1972 book, *The Best and the Brightest*, profoundly describes how the American elite led us into Vietnam. It shows how the rational and linear projections of bureaucracy are inherently due to fail in a world that is too complex and too human to be linear and rational. There's a vivid scene

in which Lyndon Johnson comes to see Speaker Sam Rayburn after his first cabinet meeting. LBJ is impressed by all the brilliant people from Harvard, but he says he'd feel more secure if any one of them had run for local sheriff in Texas.

As a political science major at Emory University in the early 1960s, I had read all these studies that had graphs and charts and analyses. But then I dropped out of college and ran a congressional campaign in North Georgia in 1964 and encountered real human beings. They didn't resemble my political science graphs at all. They were too complicated, too different, too idiosyncratic. I went back to college and began to read history, to learn how real people lived.

Because I am a conservative, people get the mistaken idea that I hate government. But one can't grow up on U.S. Army bases, attend graduate school on a National Defense Education Act Fellowship, and then go on to teach at a state college and have a hatred of government. My stepfather served in the Army for 27 years, and my dad served in the Navy and worked for the Air Force, fixing B-52s. I revere the United States government as the greatest institution of freedom in the history of the human race.

Government does some things very well. It defends the nation. It keeps the peace. It freed the slaves. It builds useful things, like the Panama Canal, and enables valuable research, like discovering the cure for polio. It can shape market forces creating the right incentives for saving or investing. Those are things government can do.

But government, as a general rule, does a very poor job at fine-grained, detailed decisions. It's too slow, too political, it just doesn't have the capacity. The idea of the government in Washington trying to decide where to put a bridge in a Georgia county is just crazy. It's insane. Government can run very small, very elite bureaucracies very well. But the longer government stays in charge of something, the more bureaucratic, the slower, the more cumbersome, the more inefficient it becomes.

Federal agencies that stay in touch with reality every day—the FBI and the military, the Treasury and the Federal Reserve—have a different rhythm, a different flavor, a different style. They have to be responsive to real-world problems in real time. They're worth keeping. But in the case of the ones that don't touch reality every day, we ought to consider whether they have served their purpose. In the Department of Labor, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Education, people sit around in large rooms reading paper reports from people they've never met on topics they've never seen involving towns they've never visited. Why would you think such a system could possibly work?

Our modern leaders have forgotten that government cannot substitute for private initiative, personal responsibility, or faith. The role of a national leader is, first, to nurture the culture, second to encourage civic duty, and third, to strengthen the private sector. Managing the bureaucracy comes last. Thomas Jefferson understood this; so did FDR. Where Lyndon Johnson went wrong was that he thought government could do it all. In the

1960s, government crowded out private sector voluntarism. Secular bureaucracy crowded out spiritual commitment.

What was the result? The welfare state, a vast structure which leads to 12-year-olds getting pregnant, 14-year-olds getting killed, 17-year-olds dying of AIDS and 18-year-olds getting diplomas they can't read. We have public schools in some inner-city areas that are basically union-controlled monopolies which largely fail to educate. We have a tax system for poor people that punishes them if they get married. We have a Medicaid system that punishes you if you try to acquire wealth. We have a welfare system that punishes you if you try to save. We have a public housing system in which a bureaucrat treats you like dirt because you're not a customer that he could lose, but rather a dependent client.

Yes, there was poverty and squalor before the welfare state. The transition from a rural to an urban state in the 19th and early 20th centuries was harsh. But a tremendous effort was made to rise above that squalor, and most people did it. Huge numbers of immigrants arrived not speaking English and without any money, and a generation later they were full citizens earning a good living and moving to the suburbs. Now, under the current system, they get trapped in poverty for three generations. They get more desperate, more hopeless. They feel they have no future. That is the fruit of the 1960s when the Great Society began to destroy the spirit of America.

Let's be clear here: The years 1965 to 1995 were not a complete wasteland in which nothing good happened. It was absolutely essential to eliminate racial discrimination, and I don't think that would have happened without a strong shove from the federal government. Predictably, government went too far and began discriminating in reverse; we should remember that Martin Luther King's goal was a colorblind society, not one in which racial preferences divide us.

As another example, the impetus behind environmental and safety laws in the 1970s was right. I taught environmental studies and participated in Earth Day in 1971. I believe we need to figure out how to manage the planet, since we're the dominant species. But we let environmental protection become a maze of mindless rules. How can you possibly support a process that takes the most expensive way to get clean air instead of the least expensive way?

I would replace this degenerative system. Let's restore our church- and synagogue-based system of volunteer help for the poor. Where government is still necessary to provide a safety net, I would return the responsibility to states and local government. There ought to be some safeguards. We ought to have federal oversight, and if we find that a state is a disaster, then we should change the law. But I'm like FDR. I believe we have nothing to fear but fear itself. Our current goal should be to experiment, and if it fails, to experiment again, and if that fails, to experiment anew.

With the proper leadership and incentives, we can turn around our culture. Gertrude Himmelfarb, in her book, *The De-Moralization of Society*, reminds us that in Victorian England they reduced the number of children

born out of wedlock by almost 50 percent. They didn't do this through a new bureaucracy. They did it by re-establishing values, by moral leadership, and by being willing to look people in the face and say "You should be ashamed of yourself when you get drunk in public. You should be ashamed if you're a drug addict." Marvin Olasky reminds us in *The Tragedy of American Compassion* that in the 19th century, there was a volunteer for every two poor people. They actually knew the person they were trying to help. An automatic reaction to a homeless person was to demand, "Are you willing to work?" If they were not, you had a moral obligation not to support them. If all you were doing was subsidizing their alcoholism or drug addiction, that itself was immoral.

Of course, it's not the 19th century anymore. But the principles of the past that worked are worthy of being re-examined. At the same time, we've also got to look forward. We are entering a new age in which we can harness technological forces to help us spread the idea of freedom and raise our standard of living—if we can just free these new forces from the coils of bureaucracy and excessive government regulation. The information revolution will speed and free commerce. It also allows leaders to reach the people instantly and directly.

Government redistribution of wealth has never worked in the past and will not in the future. It sets up a standard of grievance. It says, "You're successful, can I steal from you?" What you want is a standard of achievement. "How do I get to be successful?" Fifty black Bill Gateses would change the entire equation of American life. You either have a system where you say, "Would you like to learn how to be rich, would you like to learn how to be successful?" Or you have a system where you say, "Well, you really ought to feel envy and resentment, so let's see if we can mug them."

Instead, the new Republican majority will approach this differently: Instead of a huge, intrusive, unproductive government, we'll create a massive level of entrepreneurial incentives. We'll cut the bureaucracy and reduce the burden of taxation. I would eliminate the red tape that makes it impossible for the candy lady in public housing to open up a candy store. We'll make it easy and natural to follow an entrepreneurial instinct to go out, make money and become successful. Indeed, that was basically our system—until we began to lose our way.

I don't believe President Clinton and I are really that far apart on what needs to be done. I don't know any politician in America who has a better intuitive sense of reengineering government and society, of the world market, and of information technologies. When you talk to President Clinton, he gets it. I think if the president were a Republican, we could work together easily. But I think he is surrounded by Democratic allies in Democratic institutions. He thinks in parallel to us, but he acts differently. He talks like us, but the decisions of his administration could have come from Mondale or Dukakis. When you get to the bureaucracy and the cabinet and the Democrats in the House and the Senate, somehow it all seems to just veer

to the left. The words are terrific, but when you get down to decisions, it's the same old Big Government nonsense.

The President now has an excellent opportunity. He can work with us to redefine government on a grand scale. If he joins with us, instructs his aides to balance the budget and eliminate unnecessary federal agencies, we'll know he's serious. If, unfortunately, he flinches and decides he can't make his allies mad, we'll know he's not serious. The balanced-budget discussion this spring is very serious business. It's about more than just economics; it speaks to where we've been as a society, where we are and where we need to go as we approach the 21st century. Developing a balanced budget is the first essential step we need to restore an American civil society.

With or without President Clinton and the Democrats, the revolution will go on. We have accomplished a lot in 100 days. It may take a decade to accomplish the rest. But it will happen.



### Comparison-Contrast (Organized by Source)

Here is a comparison-and-contrast analysis of the Clinton and Gingrich statements by *source*. (Thesis and topic sentences are highlighted.) The thesis is as follows:

These two politicians represent not only opposing parties, but also diametrically opposed viewpoints about the roles of government in American society.

What's the Good of Government?

Is government the solution, or is it the problem? Many Americans believe that government plays an essential role in making our lives safer and our society more productive and more fair. But many others believe that government is too powerful and intrusive, and that it stifles personal initiative. Within the government itself, there are deep divisions, as evidenced in two recent articles by President Bill Clinton and Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich that appeared on facing pages in the April 10, 1995 issue of *Newsweek*. These two politicians represent not only opposing parties, but also diametrically opposed viewpoints about the role of government in American society.

that it becomes unresponsive to citizens' needs and to new realities. (Clinton cites his own "reinventing government" program to deal with such problems.) And he agrees with Gingrich that the government needs to do more to "demand more personal responsibility from all our citizens."

Despite these agreements, it is clear that Bill Clinton's and Newt Gingrich's views of government are fundamentally different. In fact, these kinds of differences often lead to gridlock in government. Contentious issues can block up the legislative process so that government becomes incapable of action. Either Congress and the President are at odds, or Congress itself is divided. Recently, Congress and the President worked for more than a year to reform health care, and finally came up with--nothing. The same may happen with welfare reform. However, as Winston Churchill observed, democracy is the worst form of government, except for all of the others. The alternative to democracy is one-party rule or dictatorship. Our form of government does invite fierce debate. It encourages citizens and legislators to argue their differences, rather than to suppress them. Often enough, these debates do result in compromises that opposing parties can live with. At the very least, they allow citizens to feel that their views are being heard, even when they are frustrated that they do not prevail. So let Clinton and Gingrich--and their followers--debate the role of government. The fact that they can do so, on more or less equal terms, is an indication of the fundamental health of our democracy.

### Discussion

- The writer uses the first paragraph to introduce the subject, the proper role of government in society, and the opposing views of President Clinton and Speaker Gingrich.
- In paragraph 2, the writer summarizes President Clinton's position.

- In paragraph 3, the writer summarizes Speaker Gingrich's position. Notice the transition from Clinton to Gingrich in the first sentence of this paragraph.
- In the fourth paragraph the writer points out that the two politicians do agree on some of the strong points and the weak points of government.
- In the fifth paragraph, the writer reiterates the fundamental differences between the two men, differences of the kind that sometimes lead to governmental paralysis. But the writer concludes that these kinds of debates are the essence of democracy and ultimately a sign of strength rather than weakness.

### Comparison-Contrast (Organized by Criteria)

Here is a plan for a comparison-and-contrast synthesis, organized by *criteria*. The thesis is as follows:

These stories, which lead off the President's and the speaker's debate, set the tone for the disagreements over the role of government that follow.

- A. Introduction: Personal anecdotes recounted by Clinton and Gingrich illustrative of their philosophical differences on government
- B. The effects of government in helping or hindering citizens
  1. Clinton's position
  2. Gingrich's position
- C. The effects of government in redistributing income
  1. Clinton's position
  2. Gingrich's position
- D. Clinton's and Gingrich's few agreements; reiteration of essential differences; weaknesses and strengths of a democratic system that encourages vigorous debate.

Following is a comparison-contrast synthesis by *criteria*, written according to the preceding plan: (Thesis and topic sentences are highlighted.)

#### More Government or Less?

Politicians love to tell stories that have morals, so we should not be surprised that when President Bill Clinton and House Speaker Newt Gingrich reach back into their pasts (as they do in a pair of articles in the April 10, 1995 issue of Newsweek), they recall anecdotes that illustrate their current philosophies on the role of government in American life. Clinton remembers

the time he was a boy in Arkansas when the federal government had to step in to compel his own state government to integrate the Little Rock public schools. For Clinton, this is an example of the federal government's "responsibility to help people to make the most of their own lives." Newt Gingrich remembers when he was a young man living in the "chaos of the 1960s"--the Bay of Pigs, Vietnam, Watergate. For him the breakdown of the rational, orderly world of the past was a direct result of a bureaucratic big government elite, remote from the common sense of ordinary citizens, gone out of control. In one story we find a federal government that actively promotes social justice; in the other we find an out-of-touch federal bureaucracy that generally messes things up. These stories, which lead off the president's and the speaker's debate, set the tone for the disagreements over the role of government that follow.

While the liberal Clinton believes that government should play an activist role, the conservative Gingrich believes that a bureaucratic government often does more harm than good. For the President, the most significant effect of government is the promotion of social justice and economic productivity. Clinton cites the federal government's role in putting people back to work in the Great Depression as well as its role in furthering civil rights in the 1960s. Today, Clinton believes, "government's job is to enable people to adjust to the changing economy." By promoting education (and educational loans) and training programs, the government helps prepare citizens for the jobs of the future and helps less fortunate citizens to lift themselves out of poverty and dependency. But to Gingrich such government programs have the effect of creating a massive, inefficient bureaucracy that stifles entrepreneurial initiative and that is detached from the needs and concerns of ordinary Americans. He asserts, "In the Department of Labor, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Education,

people sit around in large rooms reading paper reports from people they've never met on topics they've never seen involving towns they've never visited." Gingrich agrees that the federal government's efforts in promoting civil rights in the 1960s were needed; but he maintains that such efforts have gone too far and that the government is now "discriminating in reverse." Similarly, some environmental and safety laws are essential, Gingrich believes, but what we now have is "a maze of mindless rules." In sum, the speaker argues, we need a government that is less actively and less bureaucratically involved in the business of America.

The President's and the speaker's disagreements over how active a role the federal government should play extend, naturally enough, to the hotly contested topic of federal programs that redistribute the nation's wealth. Clinton argues that the government is good at "income transfers"; that is, "it's good at taking in tax money from the population as a whole and redistributing it to people with special needs." The President cites the examples of Social Security and Medicare, about which few people disagree. But it is significant that he chooses not to discuss welfare as an example of an "income transfer," since this is the kind of government program about which liberals and conservatives clash most sharply. An advocate of tax cuts, Gingrich asserts that "[g]overnment redistribution of wealth has never worked in the past and will not in the future." Gingrich believes that far from promoting social justice, income transfers and attempts to redistribute wealth have resulted in a massive welfare state, "a vast structure which leads to 12-year-olds getting pregnant, 14-year-olds getting killed, 17-year-olds dying of AIDS and 18-year-olds getting diplomas they can't read." Instead of government welfare, Gingrich proposes a return to voluntarism and private charity, and a shift of responsibility for social programs from



the federal government to the states and localities, along with a renewed focus on moral values and personal responsibility.

Clinton and Gingrich do agree on some important points. . . . [Remainder of essay is the same as that of the first comparison-contrast essay]

### Discussion

- In the first paragraph, the writer summarizes the opening personal anecdotes of the two politicians and explains how they illustrate their essential differences over the benefits and drawbacks of a powerful federal government.
- In the second paragraph, the writer focuses on the first major difference between Clinton and Gingrich: their conclusions *about the overall effects of an activist federal government*. For Clinton, the federal government at its best can put people back to work, guarantee their civil rights, and prepare them for a changing economy. But for Gingrich, a powerful federal government means an inefficient bureaucracy, remote from the average citizen, that mainly serves to stifle individual initiative.
- In the third paragraph, the writer focuses on the second major difference between the two politicians: *the role of government in redistributing income*. For Clinton, such "income transfers" are essential for helping people with special needs and lifting people out of poverty. For Gingrich, such government redistribution of wealth never works and has resulted in the creation of the welfare state. He believes government's role here should be handled by the private sector and by volunteers.
- In the fourth paragraph (identical to the fourth paragraph of the comparison-contrast by source essay), the writer points out that the two politicians do agree on some of the strong points and the weak points of government.
- In the fifth paragraph (identical to the fifth paragraph of the comparison-contrast by source essay), the writer reiterates the fundamental differences between the two men, differences of the kind that sometimes lead to governmental paralysis. But the writer concludes that these kind of debates are the essence of democracy and ultimately a sign of strength rather than weakness.

Within any one essay, you are likely to adopt several techniques of development. We have reviewed here a few of the common techniques: summary, example, two (or more) reasons, strawman, concession, and comparison and contrast. Certainly, *critique* (see Chapter 3) would be another method of development. A critical evaluation does not need to exist in and of itself; often, a

control of your paper. Understand the main points you wish to make, understand the general sections, or stages, in which you intend to make them, and then use the various methods of development available to you.

## THE RESEARCH PAPER

The process of preparing and writing research papers is discussed in Chapter 5. Many of the principles of research-based writing, however, have already been treated in this chapter on synthesis. (In fact, the example syntheses in this chapter are short research papers.) Once you have researched your subject, your tasks in writing a research paper parallel those outlined on page 90-91 on writing a synthesis: considering your purpose; reviewing your sources; formulating a thesis; deciding how you will use your source material; developing an organizational plan; writing your first draft; documenting your sources; and revising your paper. And like explanatory and argument syntheses, research papers involve not only multiple sources but also elements of summary, paraphrase, quotation, and critique.