



Judgment

November 2010

The Verdadera staff encourages you to discuss and explore the issues and stories, as the publication aims not only to offer an outlet for expression, but to improve our lives. Keep in mind that the emotions that flow through the text and the feelings behind the words could be those of your child, your classmate, or your best friend.

Things to consider:

- *Why do people judge? Is it ever okay to judge others?*
- *How do your judgments shape your actions?*
- *How do you react to yours and others' judgments?*

Student Submissions

As a senior, college applications are undoubtedly one of the most stressful, nervewracking things I will encounter this year. Everything that I have accomplished in life comes down to the checkboxes I mark and the 500 or so words I write. An admissions officer, maybe two if I'm lucky, will look at the pixels on the screen that make up one in thousands of applications, and judge me in the few minutes they have. And then I'm either in or I'm out, and the next four, then more, years of my life have been laid out for me.

It's disheartening to think how much judgement goes on in life. It's inevitable, yes, I know, but there is still some hope I hold on to, however fleeting and transient that sometimes people will see the everything, the true, and not judge based on what they have. Will college admissions officers ever find out about the days I stayed up with a friend when her heart was breaking or the nights I fell asleep on the couch, tired after a day of fulfilling other

people's responsibilities just because I cared more than they did about things that in the end wouldn't come up on my resume? And then there's also the judging that goes on just being a high schooler. Just because I'm of a certain race or wear certain clothes or am in a certain class doesn't define me or my abilities.

I guess that's why they say, we're always playing this game, this game called life.

"Judgment keeps people from seeing the good that lies beyond appearances."

~Wayne Dyer

Walking around campus, being of Indian descent, I hear a lot of jokes about my race. At first it really bothered me. I thought that we lived in a country where everyone was equal. After a while, I really just stopped caring. I sort of just tuned out and ignored all those stupid

jokes, just saying "haha very funny" in response to all of them. But now that I am thinking about it, is it really ok that I get made fun of constantly? I don't think so. I may have learned to ignore it, but that definitely does not mean that I've learned to ACCEPT it. So to all you racist chums that I interact with everyday, shut up because it's not funny, and p.s. I DON'T EVEN EAT CURRY.

"The tendency to turn human judgments into divine commands makes religion one of the most dangerous forces in the world."

~ Georgia Harkness

judgement. i'm not talking about law and the courts, i'm not talking about heaven or hell. i'm talking about the earthly kind. now with 1.5 months of college under my belt now, i think i can assert that judgement, and different types of judgement for that matter, go through different phases depending on where you are in your life. i remember in middle school i wasn't ever ok with any negative judgement from anyone - and i constantly punished myself for it. it was a phase in my life where i refused to instill any true confidence in myself and let every petty, superficial statement be taken to heart. and thats where it all started. being diagnosed as depressed, i went through 3 years of counseling and 1 year of going to a psychologist. then, i decided to clean up. in high school, i wanted more than anything to create a new self, what i could be - i wanted to be the headstrong person and overturn everything that happend to me before. if i could reinvent myself and deny what i did to myself in a "past life" (if you would call it) in order to strive to become a perfect person. it's all i wanted - to be a perfect person. i guess in some ways i still want it now.

but what i realized, being a class officer for three years, having the privilege of being on the ASB team, doing track, volleyball, Model UN, and possibly 50 million other things in the world, everything i strived for i was able to get but it was far from easy. i was criticized for everything i did, just like everyone else. and i was sensitive about it, feeling down for the smallest things. not saying that i was someone particularly special, but sometimes feeling like there's a spotlight on you it invites others to criticize and/or judge you. but in generic terms, this comes in both ways. i remember having an emotional breakdown pretty much everyday because of what people were saying. that maybe i made a mistake running for class office. that maybe i wasn't supposed to be vice president, someone who really had their s*** together deserved it a lot more than i did. every little thing i did, the way i acted, the things i did, something always seemed wrong in somebody's eyes.

i'm sure the ones reading this have felt this before. so my roommate is a girl from MV (we requested each other, and it's awesome so far), and we were aquaintence/friends pretty much all of high school. while sitting in her bed, we were talking about high school and all of its glory. as our minds brimmed with nostalgia, i asked her about what she had thought of me - because she had always told me she was a bit nervous about the whole living situation (reader, i'm sure you've heard/read roommate horror stories) while i on the other hand had never thought much about it. i asked her about her impression of me throughout high school, just to compare and contrast the experiences now that we're the female equivalent to a "bromance" now that we live together. she turned to me and said, "well, you were always one of the popular people. and you know how popular people are portrayed. only talk to other people who are popular, you know. but you weren't quite like that and it surprised me. you actually talked to me." during my four years in the home of the matadors, i tried to be the person that anyone and everyone could talk to. i believed (and still believe) that being a representative meant the social circle no longer existed, there was no exclusivity. i took my position to heart, or at least attempted to and i couldnt help but wonder how many people still saw me as a living caricature of "mean girls". which is really funny since i played myself as a mean girl in MVSNL last year. but everyone has their own judgements, their own opinions and assertions and whatnot and there's only so much one can do about it and change what other think. but when did other people help you determine your level of self-confidence? what does it matter in the long run? i learned that pretty quickly the day i moved in here, that i'm coming into a big school with a fairly clean slate, and none of the "old reputation" matters in the long run. sometimes i can't believe that it took me so long to figure out that you always take everything with a grain of salt. although when you put yourself in these sorts of positions (or even lack of) it's never a bad thing to have a little bit of thick skin.

but i also don't believe it's supposed to be a purely negative connotation, or just purely negative for that matter. i had to go through all of the goods and bads and inbetweens (limbo, if you will) to make me the person i am today. judgement is important for what i like to coin the term "emotional puberty"; having others may help assist the process in finding who you are, who you want to be, whether you want a type or label or not. but ultimately it comes from you, and whatever happens and what people say, it is rather a test of character. and character is a definition and reflection of you. hopefully that was relevant

and eloquent enough for those of you possibly even seeking advice.

“Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear.”

~ Ambrose Redmoon

My mom judges people all the time. Like, ALL THE TIME. It drives me up the wall because it's just not fair- she says things about people like she's better than them, and when it comes to the way they speak or dress, trust me, she's not. People have different styles of dressing, and no, I'm not some crazy person who thinks that dressing like Kesha to school is okay, but some people just wear sweatshirts, some people like tank tops and shorts, some people like to be girly, and some people like being a little indie. No matter what, my mom will ALWAYS have something to say about them. It is so, so, rude, and I wish that she'd just accept people. She's homophobic too, which isn't a surprise given my ethnicity (was that a judgment right there? haha.), and she calls gay people weird and says that it's gross and they shouldn't be allowed to marry because "who wants to see that? nasty." So she has an opinion, and I know there's nothing I can do to change that, but I wish she wouldn't voice it! She also says racist things about how all black young men are dangerous, how all Chinese people are horrible drivers, and how European people are so stuck up because they never smile- which is a cultural thing, but she'd never understand that. My problem is that she says stuff like this in front of my little sister. I'm worried that it'll leave a mark on her and no matter what I say, my sister won't realize that it's not right or moral to say or believe things like that. So to all the parents out there, yes, I know that our generation is more liberal than yours was. I know that ALL of our friends look like they're either bad influences or bound to have Ivy Leagues begging for them. But please, please don't judge people, especially in front of younger children. Because their generation is going to be even more accepting that ours is, but they will absolutely not accept intolerance.

“If you judge people, you have no time to love them.”

~ Mother Teresa of Calcutta

How you judge a person is how you see them. The problem is that most people just judge others on what they hear or how the person looks. This instinct of choosing how people look or what you hear may not be true at all. Rather than then opening your mind to different possibilities you only choose people are similar to you. Since you do not talk to the people you judge to be not your

type of friend, you don't not get to know them for who they are. If you could get to know everyone instead of being selective of people, maybe you would see that the person you thought was an annoying, popular person was actually a really nice and non-superficial person. In this circumstance I have found that my first judgments of some people were wrong and that I should keep my ideas open to new people that I may not know. When I was in elementary school there was this girl that I thought was a “nerd”, someone I would not like to hang out with because all I thought she would talk about was homework and school. I was planning to hang out with one of my friends at school when I find out she invited the nerdy girl too. I wondered why such a loser was invited. We were forced to hang out and fortunately I got to know her better. We had a water gun fight and the nerdy girl accidentally broke my water gun, but I realized I wasn't mad because over the course of the day I had we had really clicked. I'm glad that my bad judgement didn't completely cloud my vision because today that "nerd" is my best friend.

“Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.”

~ Carl Gustav Jung

Judgment. Judging someone on their beliefs, ethnicity, behaviors, customs, etc. Who does that? Oh wait, I do. I mean, who doesn't crack a racist joke once in a while? We just need to know when to stop. I remember this one time when I made a Jew joke about one of my friends. She started crying. I didn't realized how it can really affect people until then. Though we all know that it's all out of fun and laughs, it doesn't mean that it's alright and harmless. As long as we are conscious of what words are coming out of our mouths and who those words are directed to, everything should be A-okay. We all know that most of us teenagers probably won't put that much thought into our actions, so until then, sorry.

“Never judge a mans actions until you know his motives.”

~ Anonymous

I have bad judgement. Period. I'm guilty of judging situations too early or occasionally shallowly judging people based on their appearance. Obviously my judging affects my life since judgements affect decisions, decisions result in actions, and my actions are what decide my future. That's why all my decisions suck because of my bad judgement, and I'm very guilty of misjudging or judging too early. Like once I wrongly judged a person too early because they left an impression on me that they were

annoying. Through getting to know the person, this person pretty much became one of my closest friends. For all I know, some of the people today who I still find annoying could very much be my potential soulmate. Not that I'm often in situations where I must judge for myself; my parents do that for me--judging my friends, judging my worth, etc.

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"It took me a long time not to judge myself through someone else's eyes."

~Sally Field

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"A formal utterance of an authoritative opinion", that's Webster's definition of judgment. I don't care what you call it, but in my mind judgments, especially in regard to people, relates to only one word- gossip. It doesn't matter who you are, but whenever you hear any opinions about other people, you judge them in a different light, for better or for worse. Now, I'm speaking from personal experience, in fact I just recently decided to ask a good friend of mine to homecoming, which obviously sparked a truckload of gossip on my behalf. It really wasn't supposed to be a big deal, but then again, what isn't a big deal in high school? I felt that people would be judging me based on who I decided to ask, and I can tell you right away it creates a tremendous amount of pressure. My advice would be to forget about what people might say, and do what you want to do, with who you want to. That's exactly what I did and it worked out fine, and even though some people were shocked and upset, I was still content because let's face it, you can never please everyone. In the end, people will judge others by their decisions, and they should respect whatever choice you make, at least, that's the hope.

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"Prejudice is an opinion without judgment."

-Voltaire

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We all judge, subconsciously or not. Contrary to the saying "don't judge a book by its cover," we often DO judge books by their covers. We make assumptions and judgments of people, for better or for worse, with or without knowing. Just because someone is on an athletic team doesn't mean they're athletic, just because someone is in a certain club doesn't mean they're dedicated. I mean come on. If you see a kid with worn athletic shoes, a roller backpack, waterproof pants that reveal skinny ankles, and a bowl cut, you will probably automatically judge. I know I have. Isn't that what beauty pageants are all about? Girls who feel insecure about walking out the door without makeup are scared to be judged for what they look like underneath all the powder and eyeliner. There is a fine line

between being well groomed for yourself and for others (for the sake of being judged in a positive way). Is there even a difference? I don't wear makeup, but I do dress in skinny jeans and gladiator heels with a top from Forever21, as does most other girls, because I don't want to be judged in a negative way. The good thing about Monta Vista is that most people don't judge us on ethnicity or religion, and seldom are we judged based upon our economic situations, directly at least. Instead we are judged on grades, the clothes we wear, the friends we make, the clubs we're in, the cars we drive. But I guess that's typical teenager behavior. But as long as I have the support that I'm blessed with and the self confidence, then I don't really care about all the "haters" out there. It's human nature to judge, and people do it all the time, myself included. I think judgment is just thoughts and the key is to know when it is appropriate to say your thoughts out loud. After all, if you don't have anything nice to say, then don't say it at all right?

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"Good judgment comes from experience. Experience comes from bad judgment."

~Bob Packwood

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Recently I divulged some information to a group of people whom I trusted. I opened up and told them some of stuff that I wouldn't usually tell them about. More specifically, my activities with boys. I hoped that they would be understanding people yet, afterwards I felt so judged and hurt. I don't think I can give away too many specifics without making the incident blatantly obvious. But let's just say I have never felt so judged on my morals or decisions and will not be as likely to open up in the future.

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"You can't depend on your judgment when your imagination is out of focus."

~Mark Twain

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I hate it when people call me smart. It's not that I don't like compliments, but when people see my grades they automatically deem me a snob. People hate on me for my good grades. And they don't even know the hours of hard work I put into studying for a test or making sure a project is perfect. I hate that people go behind my back and talk about how I don't deserve the grades I get. FYI. They are the ones who ask me what my grade is, and what am I supposed to say if not the truth.

A typical conversation:

"Hey man, what did you get?"

"Uh... I'd rather not say."

“C’mon. Just tell me.”

“I got a 97%.”

“S*** man, I hate you.”

“Uh...you asked”

“Dude, you’re such a asian nerd.”

“Well I studied hella hard...”

“Don’t be a dick.”

In my mind: What the f***. Those long hours of studying and this is what I get. I hate how people judge me for being smart without looking at the whole picture. Even though I’m of Asian decent doesn’t mean I have a genetic surplus of knowledge. I’m just a guy who tries hard to do the best he can. But somehow people always over look it and look down on me. It makes me feel like I should just f*** up a test for my own peace of mind.

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“Judge of your natural character by what you do in your dreams.”

~Ralph Waldo Emerson  
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Judgment

by Lindsay Smith, LCSW

Everyone judges. We judge automatically and most of the time without giving it a second thought. Each one of us judges people, things, and situations through our own unique lens or worldview, which is developed and refined through our individual life experiences. Because we all have varying life experiences, the way in which we judge others varies as well. We use judgment to determine how we fit in and to make sense of the world around us as we categorize people, things, and situations in a way that creates order according to our individual worldview.

Why do we judge? On one hand, making judgments can be helpful. Judging can be instinctual and plays into the fight or flight survival mode which means it can protect us and keep us safe. Judgment (think discernment) can motivate us to leave an unsafe situation or help us decide not to hang out with people who may be a bad influence. However, judgment typically has a negative connotation. We often judge others in a negative light to make ourselves feel better. In our eyes, we build ourselves up by putting others down. It is common to notice qualities in others that bother us about ourselves. For example, if you think you are too tall, you might notice and judge others who are also tall. Or if you judge someone else to be less athletic, less attractive, or less intelligent than you it makes you feel better.

How do we judge? In judging others, we look at the ways that people are similar to or different from ourselves. These first impressions are formed quickly and can be difficult to change. Judgment typically begins with outward appearance – what someone looks like, what clothes he or she is wearing, what type of car he or she is driving, and/or who he or she is hanging out with. Judgment can also be based on things we hear about a person (gossip) or what we observe a person doing. We can also judge a person for something they do not do, for example not submitting to peer pressure. Everyone faces judgment which means no one is immune. We are judged for being too smart or too dumb, too rich or too poor, for drinking alcohol or for not drinking alcohol. No matter what choices we make, someone will judge us at some time or another and it is impossible to meet everyone's standards.

What are the effects of judgment? The effects of judgment vary based on whether the judgment is made public or not and on how the person being judged chooses to receive this judgment. Some people choose to keep their opinion to themselves in order to be nice, to practice tolerance, or to avoid being judged on their judgment! Others make their opinions known through their words and actions. In this case, people are treated differently based on how they have been judged; they may be excluded or not given a chance to show others who they really are. People who have been negatively judged may stop participating in certain activities or stop associating with certain people, possibly becoming withdrawn and losing self-confidence.

How can I avoid negatively judging others? Acknowledge that you are making negative judgments and that you do not want to continue making them because they can be hurtful. Be aware of your judgments; pay attention to who you are judging and why. Remember, differences are not necessarily “wrong” or “bad.” Look for the good in others. We all want people to see the best in us and this begins with us looking for the best in others. Look to a person's needs rather than their faults and be sensitive. You may think the racist/sexist joke you are telling is funny, but one of the people pretending to go along with it may really be hurting inside. Remember that people can change; you can change and become less judgmental and the person you are judging can change and often does if he or she is treated respectfully and offered friendship.

To students:

You get to choose how you let judgments affect you. If you agree that a judgment has an element of truth, you can choose to accept the judgment, take it as feedback, and grow from it. If you do not believe the judgment to be true and/or do not trust the source of the judgment, you can choose to reject the judgment and allow it pass without further thought. Unfortunately, we often do not realize that we have the choice to accept or decline a judgment, and as a result we internalize it in a way that creates self-doubt and lowers self-esteem. You don't have to let this happen to you! Remember, you have control over how you let judgments affect you.

Be yourself. There is a lot of pressure to fit in and often this causes us to try to change who we are and to strive to be someone we are not. We are afraid of being judged and becoming isolated or outcast. This fear keeps us from sharing what is imperfect within ourselves and in our lives because we think people will not accept us as we truly are. Learn to love yourself for who you are and find a couple of people who you feel like you can really trust to gradually reveal your true self to. You may be surprised at how liberating this is and at how open others are with you in return. If you don't trust anyone your own age, start with an adult you trust.

Find true friends. You do fit in somewhere! Be the kind of friend you want to have and you will attract true friends. Find friends who allow you to be yourself and who will support you. Surround yourself with people who encourage you, lift you up, and accept you for who you are. That does not mean they will always agree with you or like everything about you, but it does mean that they will accept you and be there for you. Be open to constructive criticism from those you trust. We all have areas in which we can grow. It is important to fit in, but do not settle for “friends” who treat you badly or cut you down in order to build themselves up.

Increase your self-esteem. Higher self-esteem makes it easier to reject judgment. If you are being yourself and surrounding yourself with true friends who support and encourage you, you are off to a great start. Learn to be assertive so that you can tell others how you feel, what you believe, and what you want in a firm, yet kind manner. If you are not used to this, it may seem uncomfortable at first, but over time you will feel heard and validated. You can also increase your self-esteem by finding and participating in activities you enjoy.

To Parents:

Accept your teens for who they are. Although your teen may not admit it, they want and need your acceptance. Love your children unconditionally and tell them often. Remember that each child is an individual with unique talents and strengths. Do not compare and judge siblings to one another. Do not judge yourself based on what your teen is doing or not doing; this puts an unnecessary burden on your teen to designate your happiness, which is too much pressure. Encourage open conversations; your teen wants to tell you things, but may hesitate because they do not want to feel judged by you. Keep an open mind at all times.

Foster high self-esteem. Encourage your teen to do well in what they enjoy. Allow them to pick activities that are fun and that make them happy. Tell them what you like about them on a regular basis and do not expect perfection. Allow for mistakes and teach your teen to be open to constructive criticism.

Accept your teen’s friends. Establishing a group identity is the primary developmental task in adolescence. At this point, your teen’s friends are likely the most important part of their world. Although your teen is looking for where he or she fits in, your teen does not necessarily do everything that his/her friends do. Do not judge your teen based on their friends. Instead, trust that your teen has retained the morals you raised them with and be flexible as your teen changes groups of friends to find where they fit in best. When you judge your teen’s friends because of how they look or what they wrote on Facebook, it encourages them to keep secrets from you. Be open and talk to your teen about their friends without imposing judgment by listening to why they chose that person as a friend. You may be surprised by the fact that your daughter has remained friends with “Lisa,” who parties, because she wants to look out for her safety and well-being. But also remember that they may not always have a reason for everything they are doing, beyond just trying to fit in. Show your teen that you trust their judgment by accepting their friends.

Lindsay Smith is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker working in private practice in Los Gatos. She provides individual, group, and family therapy to teens and young adults. She is certified as a Trauma and Loss Clinical Specialist. She also works for Santa Clara County’s Department of Alcohol and Drug Services at Juvenile Hall. Please see her website for more information: www.LosGatosTeenTherapy.com.

Upcoming Issues and Submission Deadlines

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
Loneliness	6pm, Saturday, December 4 th
Love	6pm, Saturday, January 8 ^h

Ways to Submit

1. Visit us at www.verdadera.org. You can submit stories here, learn more about Verdadera, and meet staff members.
2. Stories can be turned in to **any staff member** – hardcopies or emails, anything is welcomed. Staff members are also there to help answer your questions about issues, topics, anything.
3. Email it to verdadera.entries@gmail.com



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Verdadera is a publication created by and for Monta Vista students for the purpose of instigating communication concerning the reality of high school within the community. Each month, an issue on a topic relevant to the lives of our students is sent home for reading by both parents and students. While we do not edit submissions, we aim to publish personal experiences, not opinion articles. Please utilize all the resources present and feel free to email comments and feedback.

Staff: Christina Aguila, Thomas Barber, Jackie Barr, Kevin Chang, Kriti Garg, Puja Iyer, Amy Kahng, Karishma Mehrotra, Timur Mertol, Anushka Patil, Kevin Tsukii, Emily Wong

Advisors: Hung Wei, Carol Satterlee

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