

Before I had ever entered school, my mother and I used to spend countless hours in the front of our home, gardening and enjoying the beauty that nature surrounded us with each day. There is one particular day that I can very vividly recall; I was playing in the dirt, as every normal child would be, when a twitching in the plants caught my eye. A spider was wrestling a very weary butterfly, wrapping its spindly legs around it as the web constricted, tighter and tighter. My mother came over and joined me, and we both watched as the butterfly stopped fighting, and eventually stopped moving. "That's nature," my mother explained to me. "The spider is hungry, so he is going to eat the butterfly later."

Although this was probably incredibly accurate, I protested. My imagination had run wild, and I disagreed with my mom's claim. "It's not that he's hungry," I began, "but he wants a friend. The spider has always been disliked by the other insects, while the butterfly is so beautiful and popular. By capturing the butterfly, the spider is hoping that he will learn something about friendship. Maybe the butterfly will be his friend, too."

Looking back, this seems very comical because the butterfly was very obviously lifeless, but in my head there was a story beyond what I had seen. I knew nothing about the life of the spider, or the butterfly, and I was not quick to jump to the natural conclusion, but instead, spin a tale just as the spider had spun his thread.

From that point on, I knew I wanted to be a writer. I wanted to create a story that took the audience beyond what they had seen; I wanted to expand their imaginations. My mother and I worked on my spider story, creating a blueprint with images and words that lead to the climax of the spider's journey. As I grew, my imagination did as well, and I wanted to take my stories to a wider screen. My dedication to Apache News only revealed my passion for film as well, and thus my journey to screenwriting success had begun. My knowledge of the career was pretty limited to start off with; it all seemed very dreamy and unreal. It couldn't be possible that people get paid (decent money too) to write about whatever they wanted, appeal to others, and just overall enjoy themselves. Of course, my knowledge has grown quite a bit since I first decided I wanted to be a screenwriter. I am now aware of the struggles every writer faces: being heard. I don't want to transform into the stereotypical hipster writer, taking my Macbook with me to coffee shops and distributing my screenplays to anyone who would care to read. I want to be heard.

As the great John Steinbeck once said, "The writer must believe that what he is doing is the most important thing in the world." Writing has consumed my thoughts since childhood, and to me, it is one of the most important things in my world. One essential attribute that every person needs to become successful in the field of screenwriting is passion, and that is something that I possess. I fervently read and write until early morning, jotting down any thoughts that keep me awake. I consume books as fast as time allows me, and never hesitate to write wherever I am, whether I be enjoying the sun and unrelenting sun in Botswana or sweating in a heavily humid Thai night. The quality that holds me back from such a career is my ability to become easily frustrated, especially with my work. Additionally, I am very private about my writing and it is impossible to gain success without criticisms. Hopefully, through the process of this senior project, I can realize that confidence comes with success, feedback is healthy, and writing is forever, as shown by *Shakespeare*, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and *The Odyssey*. Despite being hundreds of years old, the work is continuously read and cherished, and that is what I hope my mom will someday become.

With this great career, I plan to change the lives of people. I want others to read my work and be moved, or see my film adaptations and hold the images in their minds for weeks after. I want the goose bumps on their arms to slowly rise, leaving a bumpy surface on their skin, or have their eyes water with a flood of emotions. Success isn't about the money, but about the imprint. Being remembered is important to me, especially in the form of shaping lives and causing reactions. And with my screenwriting, I plan to do those things and more.

The initial road to screenwriting success is a rocky and unpaved one. There is no concrete rule established in making a good screenplay, as any screenwriter could tell you, and "the competition is fierce in the field," (Foote-Smith 78). There is no boss to guide you in times of confusion, and no steady paycheck to reassure you when times become more difficult and intolerable. Despite this, there are no limits to one's imagination when it comes to screenwriting, which makes it such an appealing career choice. The screenwriter creates "the blueprint of the movie" (Foote-Smith 79) and once one has become a credible screenwriter, the possibilities extend even further.

A screenwriter must be savvy and technical by following the specific format of screenplays, yet still be able to describe wondrous worlds and characters, including dialogue that is realistic, convincing, and entertaining. These writing skills, which are necessary for a career in screenwriting, are taught in the English classes at Arcadia High School, but of course, I have not received enough knowledge yet to become a professional writer. As any writer may feel, you can never be too good of a writer; perfection is impossible, yet striving for it is absolutely necessary. Regardless of the level or amount of skills I've

acquired at Arcadia High School, I've understood that the lessons I've learned in my English classrooms are, generally, a good starting point for my future career. The strict MLA formatting I've so rigorously been taught relates to the strict screenplay formats I will use in the future. The imagination I use for my blog posts and creative writing assignments will assist in my pursuit of future stories. The speaking skills and confidence I have gained through oral presentations will eventually lead me to interviews and jobs. Overall, I've learned to be independent and reliable on myself for reaching my own deadlines and achieving, which is important in regards to screenwriting. Everything I have learned at this point is relative.

In one's pursuit of screenwriting stardom, it is not necessary to earn a college degree or even graduate from high school to become famed. Screenwriting is seen as a career of creativity, which doesn't involve a concrete base that needs to be further built up by education. In fact, the "three main qualities to become a screenwriter are: Ability, Broadcast, and Commitment," (Zuckerman 1), which don't involve education at all. However, in my own pursuit of screenwriting success, I will be attending college for further schooling. As stated before, one can never be too good of a writer, so one should always want to cultivate their minds and writing skills with further knowledge. By going to a four year school, I will be able to do this. Additionally, screenwriting isn't purely about skill, but also about, "[getting your script] read by those who can actually make a difference," (Zuckerman 1). It is essential to make connections in this competitive field; as they say, it's not about what you know, but who you know. At a large film school, which I plan to attend, I will be able to meet the proper people who will be able to guide me as well as my scripts. My professors can help me with connections and feedback, and my peers could potentially make a movie with me. Due to the fact that I will be around others who share my common interest, I will surely receive feedback and criticisms which will eventually enhance my work.

Admittedly, skill and broadcast are indispensable traits for screenwriters, but "curiosity, a broad range of knowledge, self-motivation, and perseverance are also valuable," (Bureau 4). Not only will these skills help in writing a memorable piece, but also in finding an actual job. According to The Writer's Guild, "40,000 screenplays are written each year, and only 500 or so are made," (Bureau 5). It is well known that screenwriting is not the easiest way to make money, which is why perseverance is so noteworthy in the development of a screenwriter. By having the traits that are stated above, it will be easier for a screenwriter to sell his or her script because he or she is knowledgeable and dedicated. If one's skills are apparent, the only thing stopping one's screenplay from becoming famous are the others playing the field, such as agents and managers. This is why perseverance is mandatory in this type of career. "You need to be able to weather the ups and downs," (Parriott) and one day, the talent will be noted and eventually produced.

Screenwriting branches off into different types of writing, so it is also possible for me to explore my talents in each area. The two main paths in screenwriting are television writing and film writing. "In television, your character is going to take weeks to develop, whereas in film, you have two hours to have your character go through multiple stages," (McGibbon). Additionally, film writing is seen as a less stable job, whereas television writing continues as your series progresses. It is possible to spread yourself into both fields, as my interviewees Josann McGibbon and Sara Parriott have done. It is also possible to focus on the one you find more interesting; for me, that is film writing. This I would only have learned by conducting my interviews, which have completely opened my eyes.

Although screenwriting is widely seen as an unstable career (I am often called optimistic for striving for this job), once one has become well-known, it is possible to make a steady stream of money. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics, "the middle 50% of screenwriters earn between \$38,150 and \$75,060," (Bureau 6). If that doesn't seem enough, the "highest 10% earns more than \$106,630," (Bureau 6) which is incredibly substantial (at least for me). The problem with a screenwriter's salary is that the places where screenwriters generally live, like Los Angeles and New York, are extremely expensive to keep and maintain. This is why it is unquestionably important for a screenwriter to acknowledge their surroundings and make smart decisions about their lifestyle. Despite this, I feel that I could easily live off the median annual wage of a screenwriter, which is \$53,070, as long as the unnecessary excess goods are cut out of my life. Freelance writers, which are "about 70% of writers in America" (Bureau 5), can also make their money from outside sources, such as individual projects. With this kept in mind, it is very possible to make a living, and a fairly comfortable one, with the income that screenwriters receive.

The job outlook for screenwriting may seem dim now, but "employment is expected to grow" (Bureau 5). Before, screenwriting was not a well-established career because movies are not an old invention; they are quite modern, seeing as they're barely over 100 years old. This means that there was not enough time for screenwriters to develop and build noteworthy reputations because the time simply has not existed. However, as time has progressed, we realize that films have influenced the future generation and economic growth. As technology has expanded, movies have become even more sensational and eye-catching. It has also led to significant events, such as the Oscars, which is viewed worldwide. Movies have shaped the way we think and perceive life. They can make us cry, laugh, provoke our thoughts, or be entertained for numerous hours on end. In fact, during The Great Depression, movies were seen as an escape from the devastating world

outside the theater walls. Our screenwriters have evolved since then; they've established their own Screenwriters' Guild and created a concrete structure for scriptwriting. Consequently, this progress and significance has contributed to the growth in screenwriters and employment for screenwriters. Nevertheless, screenwriting will always remain a competitive career because it requires reputation. In addition to that, many are attracted to this occupation because it involves the idealized glamour and fame of Hollywood, which is why the fight to be a screenwriter will always exist.

When I graduate from college, I will be a young and naïve screenwriter in a world full of professional veterans. However, in this type of business, it is a requirement that one is confident in their work and unrelenting, regardless of status. To 'fit in' to the mold of a screenwriter, I will have to remain persistent in selling my scripts, even if I am seen as an amateur (at first). As David Zuckerman stated, "You really do have to be a bit of a dreamer to make it as a screenwriter because what you're really selling is a dream," (Zuckerman 3). It can be seen as lucky or unlucky, but screenwriters, especially freelance ones, are given so much independence in their work. The responsibilities of writers all lie within themselves; if they can produce a well-written script and sell it, then they can reap their own hard-earned benefits. The process of development for a screenwriter is also flexible. If one has earned enough to sustain themselves for a long period of time, they can take as long as they need to produce a written script of high-quality. There is no duty to be earned, no responsibility to be handed, and no deadlines to really be met, unless you're working for television, which has outlines for their writers. Most of the time, you are your own boss and you are your own employee. You earn your cash, and also take it away. Your lifestyle, career, and salary all depend upon yourself, which can be both relaxing and stressful at different times.

As stated earlier, the demands of this career can be perceived as either relaxing or complex and frustrating. In this sense, one can dictate how they will lead their own lives, especially since there is no boss and commitment really involved. On one hand, you can choose to be extremely hard-working by going after every possible opportunity, writing for hours on end, and selling scripts to any agent who will read. On the other hand, you can choose a calming lifestyle with travel and luxuries in abundances. The issue all boils down to one thing: money. If money steadily flows into the grasps of a screenwriter, they can definitely choose to get married, start a family, and raise children, all while writing on the side and still garnering an income. They can travel to destinations they've dreamt of and write scripts based off what they see. However, if money becomes a problem, which it very possibly can be, then it'd be difficult to chase after the infamous "American dream." The unfortunate aspect of becoming a screenwriter is that the future is not foretold; you'll never truly know if your script is note-worthy enough to become an Oscar-winning film or a coffee table book, which is often substituted as a coaster. You'll never know when a writer strike hits and depletes your pay. Your success lies upon luck, perseverance, and agencies. The fortunate aspect of becoming a screenwriter is the free reign you are given. Your imagination can run wild and you'll never have to wear a uniform. It is the type of career that one can wake up to and think, "I love my job."

When graduation finally rolls around, I plan to attend Pitzer College and continue reading and writing every day. I will also submerge myself in films and television series by analyzing the writing and familiarizing myself with knowledgeable writers and directors. Luckily, I won't be too far from Los Angeles and will be able to network with my fellow Claremont College peers and professors, that will eventually lead me to my first screenwriting job. I want to be able to have my name heard and my scripts read by those who matter, who will help me in this industry. Thanks to this project, I have also had the opportunity to speak with three professionals in the industry, who are interested in hearing my success stories in the future. This research project has already helped me take a necessary step forward in the networking aspect of this career.

My eyes have been opened to unexpected things within this career field (like how intensely competitive it can be, how much self-reliance it involves, and the variety of screenwriting that exists). Despite this, I remain hopeful that I can take this career head on because I am known to be unrelenting when I want something. I am persistent and dedicated to my future, which makes me dedicated to continuously write, read, research, and network. With any luck, I will be able to weather the ups and downs of such an unsteady job.

After all the research I've gathered, it is safe to say that my interests in screenwriting have been fueled even further. I am very much enticed to pursue a screenwriting career, regardless of the difficulties and challenges I will face. As I was interviewing the professionals in this career field, all I could think was, "I cannot wait to get started." The possibility of one day being in their position, helping a young dreamer become more interested in such a creatively involved career, leaves a smile on my lips. Although this job is seen as insecure and can be overly demanding of one's mind, I cannot imagine myself swimming in the currents of another career.

As the spider had so carefully spun his thread, I will spin my own tales and weave them into a script worth producing. Instead of having my mother as my advisor, I will seek the help of managers and agents. My mother said it was natural that the spider consumed the butterfly; for me, it is natural to continue writing.

My ambitions in my first decade of life were just about as flighty as I was. Being the Disney fanatic that I am, my every penny and wishing opportunity went into seeking my goals of becoming a princess, flowing pink gown and all. By twelve, I wanted to be a teacher; by thirteen, a singer. After watching each episode of *M*A*S*H* in one summer, I wanted to be a doctor. Tack an auror onto the list (to satisfy my *Harry Potter* addiction).

My frustration entering high school stemmed from this dilemma: counselors alike pushed the idea that I was to choose a career, when I hadn't stuck with any ambition for more than a few months – I lack the stomach to be a doctor; my singing skills aren't up to par. I never received my acceptance letter to Hogwarts, eliminating any chance to become an auror.

Only when I picked up the fall 2007 issue of *Seventeen Magazine* did I get a start in the right direction. An Iranian woman, Nazanin Fatehi, faced death row as a consequence of stabbing one of three men attempting to rape and kill her. According to Iranian law, she was a murderer. I sympathized with Nazanin, a woman who had been victimized and left to bear the brunt of the consequences in a society whose legislature is against her.

And then 2010 happened. That spring, my grandfather passed away, and in the months following, we were forced to sell most all of his assets—the car, the house, his treadmill, etc. – so as to pay for my grandmother's nursing home arrangements. And once everything was gone, the U.S. Government, due to financial policies we were unaware of, took the money my grandfather willed to my family, a minimum of around \$30,000. The government took a dead man's money, and left his family with nothing.

That was the day that I considered becoming a lawyer.

I didn't want to allow other children to go through what I went through, or Nazanin, or the thousands of similar cases that go unreported each year. My becoming a lawyer has to do with issues far beyond self-redemption. My caring and protective nature pushes me to change how the judicial system deals with such circumstances, and I won't rest until that change is made. Such a goal can be achieved as a lawyer.

Lawyers are tough and rigid. According to the common stereotype, they are stealthy liars, accusers, and willing to go to any length to win their case. A lawyer attends trials, carries briefcases, and asks questions that leave suspects shouting “you can't handle the truth!” on a daily basis. In reality, the life of a lawyer is much more complex, much more mundane. Court attendance plays a relatively small part – less than 1%, according to Jeannie Nguyen – in comparison to the masses of required paperwork. “Mundane work depends on the kind of law you practice” (Nguyen) and requires that one be very well-informed in whatever the current case concerns itself with.

I embrace studying. Research is a fun pastime for me, and from my Advanced Drama Auditions to peaceful protests, I've had much practice in using my communication and “people skills.” I approach new problems and conflicts with confidence, searching for the “how” and not the “why.” I am a modern “Little Engine That Could” – I see my projects through to the end.

With these qualities, I don't doubt I'd make a good law student. My obstacle now is learning how to use these skills to my advantage. There are so many other aspects about law that I need to learn. How do I prepare court briefs? How does one defend a case he is against? More importantly, how does a woman practice this successfully while having a family?

The basic first action to obtaining the vast majorities of jobs and positions is, cheesily yet true, to go to college to obtain a BA or BS. Those within the field will agree that “though many may advise that the course of study in which the degree is earned is of no consequence; that is not exactly accurate. [One should] [c]hoose a major which will hone the skills you will require in the legal profession” (“How to Become a Lawyer.”). While taking Home Economics and acting classes are all in good fun, it's widely considered a smart decision to participate in courses with which Law Schools and Firms find helpful or relative to the area of practice, or courses that will provide some skill that will eventually be required in the legal world.

Law School is not much different from the process by which Undergraduate College systems operate. If one plans to dive straight into law after high school, they must submit their transcript, application, and LSAT scores to the schools they believe will provide the curriculum best suited to their individual standards. The second, less common route to Law School admission is the second career path. Offered at a cheaper rate by the less prestigious schools, a student must take all the “required classes that the Law School requires with a good GPA, and then [the college] just admit[s] you” (Nguyen).

In his first year, a law school student studies law's basic principles and theory, with subject matter ranging from criminal law to court procedure. To progress onto the second year, “[students] have to take the Baby Bar test,” a single-day exam that tests “all the subjects that are taught during the freshman year” (Nguyen). Only in their second year does a law

student begin to specify their intended field(s) of practice – in my own case, family law. At the tail end of their schooling, a student takes the famous Bar Exam, a three day Multiple Choice and Essay exam “on all the subjects that you take at the law school,” and “almost all other required subjects to graduate from the law school” (Nguyen). If passed – and statistics show that only a fairly small percentage of students do (“Lawyers: Occupational Outlook Handbook”) – one will become a full-fledged law practitioner.

Being a lawyer requires more than just briefcases and a degree. Generally, attorneys “act as both advocates and advisors [...] counsel[ing] their clients about their legal rights and obligations and suggest particular courses of action” (“Lawyers: Occupational Outlook Handbook”). More importantly, it is “the lawyer’s job to challenge the law [and] its legality [...] so that people can follow the law and be lawful”; to motivate himself to take on the challenges of a difficult case, and stay dedicated (Nguyen). If he is successful, he can sway public opinion and national law, embodying the constitutional belief that the people are in control.

However, this is merely scratching the surface.

Lawyers hold a great deal of responsibility to balance the power that they hold. Presentation is key to the manner in which court decisions sway. How he brings evidence to the table is just as important as what he brings, if not more. At the same time, family law calls for extremely difficult cases, ranging from child custody and marriage to domestic violence and inheritance. In these situations, an attorney is responsible not only for the well-being of their client(s), but must also “make sure that client’s kids are taken care of” (Nguyen), as well as all other affected parties, to uphold and maintain his or her high ethical standard.

A law firm is a private practice, and is thus subject to the same legal and financial burdens as any In-N-Out or Domino’s. “[Y]ou have income and expenses [in family law]. You have to find ways to generate your income for your firm and expand your horizons... and cut back expenses, market your skills to the right people” (Nguyen). By law, practitioners must find some means to efficiently operate and provide for employees, or face the penalties/sanctions. The most common and basic of these expenses are insurance and retirement plans. A firm, as an employer, must “cover most private sector employee benefit plans” and have “established and maintained [these] to provide retirement income or to defer income until [the] termination of covered employment or beyond” (“Employment Law Guide - Employee Benefit Plans”). Insurance is one of the many factors to take into question when determining if the path of a lawyer is one worth traveling – paying out of your own pocket or having another company pay it for you.

Family law deals with tricky situations, and thus it is a requirement that all lawyers practicing in this field hone in on and emphasize some of the most basic skills taught in school: writing. “You have to practice your writing” Nguyen says, adding that degrees and interviews play a relatively small role in the grand scheme of landing a paycheck. Nguyen added that “as a lawyer you write a lot”, from court briefs to contracts. With that said, law firms thus require that an applicant submit writing samples for judgment at the time of his/her application.

I feel that my writing skills are more than adequate at this point in life, although there is always room for improvement. I’ve been blessed with high quality teachers, and having a father work in business, I possess knowledge and have further developed skills than most other potential law students at my age. Yet even if my skills and qualities reached perfection, even if I was fluent in legalese, the most complex business form of modern English, I’m still at a disadvantage. I’m a young, white female. According to the American Bar Association’s lawyer demographics, of all registered lawyers in the year 2000, a strong 73%, were male. The average age in which a lawyer is most successful that same year was age 45 – 54, at a whopping 28%, as compared to 12% at 30 – 34 years. While people of Caucasian ethnicity are more likely to obtain these jobs, being a young woman breaks the typical lawyer stereotype, one that is so strong that it is near impossible to break. Adding insult to injury, the average modern female’s salary is only about 75% of her male equivalents.

After seeing these numbers, I realized that the modern world is against me. Societal influences have a strong impact on my success. The field itself has progressed in many tangible ways: technology has allowed for better access to communication, and provided easier means for a client to reach his lawyer, even overseas. New developments in science and forensics make for cleaner, more organized access to valuable information, as well as obtaining more accurate results. Today in age, reliable information is easily obtained via lie detector tests and polygraph scans. DNA testing as well has come so far in just 10 years’ time (“Lawyers: Occupational Outlook Handbook”). Yet despite all progress, family law has fallen trap to stereotyping into success: those who fit, stay; those who don’t are subject to searching for socially acceptable fields of study.

That is not to say it is impossible to become a female lawyer. Gloria Allred, Sandra Day O’Connor and Sonia Sotomayor, among others, have each found ways to reach respectable positions in this area, despite the disadvantages. To some, even, having a woman in the workplace is not an entirely horrible thought. They are considered risk-averse, tending to

steer a companies or businesses away from risky territory, especially during an economic downturn. “Women are good for business... [They] tend to be more collaborative, more inclusive, more flexible ...tak[ing] a more ‘holistic’ approach to doing business” (Bruzzese). Women’s management styles are what distinguish them from men, not their skills. While Bruzzese also states that women have much to learn in dealing with the ropes of business – better networking, doing their homework, and setting aside doubt – much remains to say that women are, overall, beneficial to a business’s or firm’s success.

Family law is a fascinating field, holding the widest array of subjects of study. One deals with matters concerning adoption, recognition or nullification of marriage, and all issues regarding family matters. Widely forgotten areas of practice even include rights to privacy and other related constitutional matters (Walker). Small, seemingly insignificant details are of great concern in court of law. Even matters regarding divorce are specific – one must name the pretenses to a divorce – yet, contrary to popular belief, “most divorces – probably more than 95 percent – do not end up in a contested trial” (“Separation, Annulment, and Divorce” 96). The same goes for other cases. Most of them never see court.

So how can _____, the teenage girl from Arcadia, rise to become a valued lawyer, or obtain an honorable status among the masses of people? According to society, it means she has to be an older male; according to modern principles, it means she must hone in and master her skills, think inquisitively, perform tons of research, and, above all, be confident in her abilities. By my own standards, I must remember to expect very little. “Judges can be pretty unfair” and it’s important to remember that they’re only human (Nguyen). Mistakes are made, and not always for the better. National law can be compromised by the Supreme Court itself when justices are predisposed to judge cases on the grounds of personal belief versus the concerns of public good (Kahan; Sherry).

Most importantly, however, I must be a counselor to my client; I must be the guardian they need during such difficult times. An air of compassion, a wave of comfort must be displayed in order to receive the job. A lawyer must be a friend.

And while the employment rate is the second highest rate in the U.S. (98.5%), and expected to rise by 2016 by about 4% (“Study Shows”), the job market is competitive. It’s difficult. I have to work hard if I hope to break the stereotype on lawyers and become successful, and to do so, I must remain passionate. I can never allow myself to be anything but that: myself, and cling to my morals and family values in order to make some sort of a difference in my client and their family’s life.

It takes a lot of stamina to be a lawyer. Just about every article, newspaper clipping, and statistic agree with this perspective. It takes a delicate balance between talent, knowledge and skill (communication, detail, dedication and a caring hand among them), to make a successful lawyer. However, a lawyer also needs time – time to be spend doing this research, contacting clients, reviewing court cases, etc. Many hours go into a lawyer’s day specifically set aside for work-related purposes, and very little for leisure time. Being the one who changes the law comes at a big, leisure-taking price, a sacrifice I am unsure that I am willing to make.

I’m young and passionate for a person of my young age. I enjoy leisure and fun much more than necessary, but I act exactly my age – mature when the situation calls for it, but more often than not, I think at the margin and do things “just for the heck of it.” And as I said, the odds are against me; despite my ambition, and though I may still want to pursue a career in this field, it will be very difficult for me to do so, more difficult than for most of my peers in my position.

Normally, looking at these factors that determine a good lawyer from a great one, I would still be head-strong at continuing down this path. However, one minor detail has strongly impacted my decision. My family is close-knit, and spends near every waking minute catching up on each other’s latest news. From Christmas Eve parties to NBA Finals barbecues, much of my free time has been dedicated to my ever-growing family. Nary a time have I missed the chance to visit my relatives and enjoy their company, drawing us closer to each other in just eighteen short years. This close-knit bond we’ve created has convinced me that somewhere in my future I want to get married and have a family of my own. I’ve long desired to one day be a mother and watch my young children grow into adults. I want to be a part of their lives, not watch from the sidelines. My kids should come before my clients. I’m sure I’d more than enjoy the life of a lawyer, but to miss out on precious time with family only to find myself sitting in an office for hours on end is a sacrifice I’ll need to take into much more consideration.

Not to say it can’t be done – many a woman has become a respectable leader in her field and still had a family, still had leisure time, still had fun. Gloria Allred did it. Jeannie Nguyen did it. So can I, if I so desire.

I still plan to look into this career. In just a few short months, I’ll be attending Pasadena City College as a member of its transfer program, hopefully to find myself a student at UC Berkeley, Irvine, Davis or Los Angeles (despite my Trojan fandom). While at PCC, I plan to look into taking classes that fit my interests, such as theatre, English literature and psychology, as well as a few pre-law courses.

My plan, as suggested by Jeannie Nguyen, is to obtain a bachelor's degree in a separate field, such as finance or business (or whatever fits my choosing), and make Law my second career. In this manner, I become an expert Lawyer; I'll possess knowledge beyond that of my competitors, putting me ahead of the game, while still branching out and expanding my horizons within my career. I can also avoid wasting the prime years of my young life swimming in court case studies and boring paperwork; instead, I'll enjoy my time doing something I love. I can worry about the boring paperwork as an adult, when my mental abilities can take on the difficult work load. I'll also save a good chunk of money on tuition by going to night school versus schools with "ABA Approved" status.

I may not be dead-set on which area of study I'll want expertise in, nor may I know when I walk across the stage gowned in cardinal come June 15th. What I do know, however, is that I am aware that I want to be a lawyer; that I am, in fact, suited for such a strenuous career. I control which cases I take on, I control my hours, I can control the way my life plays out better than if I were to enter medicine or teaching. I can abide by my own rules if I desire, or work for a private organization. My options aren't limited to strictly private practice.

This is the kind of job I've been searching for, lest my research has deceived me. I'll be able to maintain my interest, keep involved with my peers and the world around me, and remain busy, and yet never too busy to lose touch with my family.

Jeannie Nguyen told me during our interview that in order for one to be successful, they've got to be passionate, and in order to be passionate, one must love what he does. Yes, I have a vengeful underlying motive, but I've enjoyed where it has brought me. Just a few years back, I discovered Nazanin Fatehi's somber story, and took a course of action. Within a short time, near all the 8th grade class at First Avenue Middle School got involved, signing petitions and wearing armbands. When Nazanin was saved from execution, I was overcome with a feeling of pride and pure joy. I learned that I could make a big difference with one small action.

I love helping people. I love speaking up for those who can't, and if I can help save a life by getting people to put their names on a piece of paper, I look forward to what the law profession has in store for me.

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Wagging tails, flopping tongues, and eyes that shine when they catch sight of a jerky treat: I didn't know it when I was younger, but my passion for these four-legged bundles of energy and love can be channeled towards a career. Working with animals has always been a dream of mine, ever since I was first introduced to my neighbor's black and white Australian Shepherd mix and I realized how much I enjoyed being around him - I would run outside to play with him every time I looked out the window and saw a flash of white and black as he bounded around on their front lawn. This dream has slowly fermented in my mind and transformed into a goal that I am decidedly going to pursue, especially after three consecutive years of helping out at the Pasadena Humane Society and SPCA. At this nonprofit animal shelter, I not only help to socialize with dogs and cats of all behavioral levels, give baths, and take dogs on walks, but I also help out with the behavioral classes that they offer there. After being exposed to all different types of dogs, cats, and even people, I realized that this is the world that I want to immerse myself in.

And although I look forward to going to Pasadena Humane Society every Saturday to work with all these wonderful animals and people who share the same passion as me, I want to move past just volunteering at a shelter. I want to help animals in a much broader sense; I want to make it my everyday duty to treat patients in need. I want to turn this flaming passion into something that I can use to benefit others, as well as myself.

But I know it won't be a simple walk in the park to get to that goal though. This field of work is especially difficult and tedious, and extremely competitive. It's practically medical school on steroids. Everyone has passion. Everyone loves animals. Everyone wants to end up in a clinic somewhere and treat animals. But who will make it out on top? It's a scary thought. But what is even scarier is that this is just one of the many difficult aspects of trying to pursue this career. Sometimes, passion just doesn't cut it. There are so many more elements to take into consideration, like if I will be able to endure through difficult courses, or if I will even be able to see an animal die in front of me.

There are so many things that I don't know about this field of expertise that I'm interested in. For example, I'm not quite sure which classes I'm supposed to take, how many years of internship is required, or even what I'm supposed to do after completing my undergraduate requirements. To be frank, I don't know much about this career at all, except that I get to work hands-on with animals practically every day, which is what I have always wanted to do, and that this career is particularly competitive.

This project will probably help me to not only acquire new knowledge about my dream career, but it will also discard any false misconceptions that people have been feeding me over the past few years. I've heard everything from how people who become veterinarians only do so because they couldn't make it into medical school to how veterinary medicine is becoming increasingly popular.

I want to dig out the facts and truths of what this career has to offer me and what I have to do in order to succeed in this journey to this ultimate goal of mine. And this project will help me do just that. I want to know if patience and passion is enough, or will I have to be precise and quick on my feet too. I want to know if I will enjoy my classes, or if I will have to drag my feet through everything trying to keep my head barely above the water. I want to know what is required during and after I enter into an undergraduate program. And also what awaits me afterwards. By the end of all this, I want to know if I really want to try pursuing this career and if I will be suited for it.

Contrary to popular belief, veterinarians aren't just crazy furball-loving animal huggers. No, they're much more than that. They channel their love for animals towards bettering the lives of both animals and the humans around them. They devote to teaching and sharing not only their knowledge, but that irrepressible, burning passion within them. They strive for a world where everyone can achieve the same mindset as them and recognize the importance and complexity that is present in the interactions between man and animal. They want to allow for others to see things through their eyes. In short, they spread compassion, knowledge, and awareness. It's critical for a veterinarian to "love animals and be able to get along with their owners" (Bureau of Labor Statistics).

However, as much as veterinarians love animals, they don't always work directly with animals. Veterinarians don't necessarily always end up in clinics and treat dogs and cats because there are so many options for those who decide to pursue this career. It's just that "most veterinarians diagnose animal health problems, vaccinate against diseases, medicate animals suffering from infections or illnesses, treat and dress wounds, set fractures, perform surgery, and advise owners about animal feeding, behavior, and breeding" (BLS). However, some veterinarians also decide to utilize their knowledge and skill to research human and animal health problems and ultimately protect humans against diseases carried by animals. Others choose to get involved in food safety and inspection, where they "check live animals and carcasses for diseases that can be transmitted, advise owners on the treatment of their animals, examine slaughtering and processing plants, and enforce government regulations regarding food purity and sanitation" (BLS).

When I first realized that veterinarians actually had multiple career options besides just the typical clinic job, I was relieved and overwhelmed all at the same time. I was relieved to know that there were alternatives if I decided halfway through the training and schooling that I didn't want to become a clinical veterinarian. But I was also overwhelmed because of the vast number of different options that would be available to me. Dr. Boudreaux, my interviewee, mentioned that different vet schools "have certain tracks that you can take and you can specialize in small animals, or barn animals, or exotic animals, or you can do a mix of them." I decided to research into it and found that "according to the American Medical Veterinary Association, 77 percent of veterinarians who work in private medical practices treat pets. About 16 percent of veterinarians work in private mixed and food animal practices, where they see [...] some wild animals in addition to farm animals. A small proportion of private-practice veterinarians, about 6 percent, work exclusively with horses" (BLS). After extensive research and heavy consideration, I decided that as of now, I was more interested in treating pets in a clinical environment because I would prefer to directly interact with my patients, rather than stay in an office or laboratory and do research. Also, I would definitely be more comfortable if I work with pets rather than exotic or farm animals because they are more common, which means that I would have more opportunities to work with them, thus ensuring that I would have enough experience when having to deal with them on a day to day basis.

Most veterinarians who work in clinics "often work long hours in noisy indoor environments... [and may] have to deal with emotional or demanding pet owners." They also put themselves at constant "risk [of] being bitten, kicked, or scratched" by the animals that they work with (BLS). Sometimes, veterinarians may even have to treat or perform surgery on patients in unsanitary conditions. Also, they may be faced with the difficult decision to put their patient to sleep at critical times. Those who are more involved with research, or nonclinical areas, spend most of their time dealing with people rather than animals, who may be just as difficult and more emotional.

Thankfully, I "go to the shelter every Saturday and help out" to "get more experience" just as Dr. Boudreaux did when she was younger. Volunteering at the Pasadena Humane Society has exposed me to many opportunities that have allowed me to gain hands-on experience dealing with different types of animals in all types of environments. I've been trained to interact with all different types of dogs and cats and taught to read their body language in order to judge and determine what the most appropriate way to interact with them is. Also, I've had to interact with them in a variety of environments, such as concrete-floored kennels, tight-spaced cages, distraction-filled parks, wide-open training rooms filled with other squirming dogs, and

even in the dreaded “doggie-bath” room. No two cats or dogs will have the same personality. Therefore, no two cats or dogs can be treated the same; in a way, each need their own special treatment. And if you change up the environment, it makes all the difference and even more attention is required as to what each animal needs. Some dogs may be highly reactive towards other dogs and therefore would require more attention if they were in a dog park, while other dogs may not be as reactive and would therefore require less attention if surrounded by the same environment.

My volunteering experience at the Humane Society has even allowed me to practice interacting with different types of people because volunteers are also responsible for helping visitors at the shelter by answering their questions, in addition to caring for the animals staying there. This is particularly important because according to Dr. Boudreaux, to be a good veterinarian, you “definitely have to be sociable and a people person. You have to be able to communicate well and be articulate and explain things well. It’s a people business, even though you medically care for animals. You also have to be personable and open.”

Generally, I’m a very awkward person, but after years of interacting with all different types of people and practicing my conversational skills, I find it a lot easier to communicate with complete strangers now than before. Especially after enrolling to help out at the obedience classes offered at the shelter, I found that I had gradually even learned to approach people first, which was something that was deathly terrifying for me just a couple years earlier. I realized that I was making considerable progress and that I was even starting to practice socializing normally throughout my daily routine outside of the shelter. This gradual progress seems hopeful, since it seems to be coming to me more naturally. It’s especially so when animals are included in the equation. That’s why I have pure confidence that I will be able to interact confidently and professionally with people in the future, even if those people may seem more difficult, demanding, or even irrational. I find it natural and almost instinctive to connect with those who already have a common bond with me, like a shared interest in animals.

Still, passion and a little experience can only get you so far. Some people are paralyzed when it actually comes down to treating an injured animal. But it’s part of a veterinarian’s job to be able to treat patients in critical conditions, or even to put a patient to sleep if necessary. This may be extremely difficult for me personally. It’s heart-wrenching to see a dog at the shelter with damp, matted fur trembling with its tail tucked between its legs. But to see a dog’s life just fade out right in front of you would be heartbreaking.

Last summer, one of my sister’s friends, named Ellen Lai, came to visit my house while she was back for her summer break. She had just finished her first year at the University of California, Davis as an Animal Science major and I was eager to ask her a couple questions since I interested in applying for the exact same major at that particular university. I learned that there was a course that offered many hands-on labs, one of which required students to go to the campus slaughterhouse and witness a cow being slaughtered and processed. She described how it had caught many people off guard and even convinced some people to reconsider their original intent of becoming a veterinarian. She said that she was personally shocked too, but still jokingly added that she would never be able to give up those delicious steaks and ribs. Thankfully, I too, have been admitted into UC Davis as an Animal Science major. This will allow me to explore the various possibilities that will be offered to me there, as well as obtain that hands-on experience that I crave. Going there as an undergraduate could greatly help my chances of continuing on with the additional schooling needed to become a veterinarian because “most students admitted [into veterinary programs] have completed an undergraduate program and earned a bachelor’s degree. Applicants without a degree face a difficult task in gaining admittance” (BLS).

Those who seek to become a veterinarian must also submit test scores from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), or the Veterinary College Admission Test (VCAT) and graduate with a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from a four-year program at an accredited college of veterinary medicine. This would be easier, if there weren’t only twenty-eight colleges in twenty-six states that are approved and meet the standards set by the Council on Education of the American Veterinary Medical Association, or the AVMA (BLS). Fortunately, University of California School of Veterinary Medicine in Davis, California is one of the twenty-eight approved colleges, which is another reason why I excited to attend this particular university.

Pre-veterinary courses logically emphasize the sciences, such as organic and inorganic chemistry, biochemistry, animal biology, zoology, animal nutrition, general biology, genetics, vertebrate embryology, physics, cellular biology, microbiology, and systemic physiology (BLS). This may seem like an overwhelming number of emphasized courses, but I would’ve at least gotten a taste of biology, physics and chemistry, having taken AP Biology, AP Physics, and Chemistry Honors within my high school career. This would ensure that I at least have the basics covered before I even graduate from high school.

But in addition to the science courses, most veterinary colleges require calculus, statistics, pre-calculus, or college algebra and trigonometry. They also require some courses in English or literature, other humanities, and social sciences (BLS).

This would allow for a well-rounded student who will be able to write reports and communicate well with coworkers, patients and customers in the future.

Surprisingly, I discovered that more and more veterinary programs are now standardizing general business management and career development courses (BLS). This is due to the fact that “most veterinarians begin as employees in established practices” and once they have enough experience, they “set up their own practice or purchase an established one” (Veterinarian Careers, Jobs and Training Information). The business management and career development courses would prove useful to teach graduates how to efficiently run their own business in the future.

It surprised me when I found that this job was incorporated with business. I was definitely taken aback by it because business was definitely something I was not interested in. Ever since I was little, I knew that business, law, and politics were just not my thing. I was comforted though because Dr. Boudreaux actually had the same conflict. When asked about what kind of drawbacks the job had, she responded with:

When I went to vet school, I thought I was going to make a difference. But then I realized that it was more business oriented. Sometimes people can't afford the medications or operations that you suggest and you have to compromise. Sometimes I feel like the job is more like business because if you happen to work in a low income area, you have to work around money issues and sometimes people adopt when they can't support a pet.

She emphasized the fact that this was one of the factors that she did not enjoy about this profession. I then questioned her about whether she had ever considered starting her own private practice. And in the same assertive tone, she responded, “I actually don't want to because I'm not business-minded and I don't want the responsibility. But I guess now that I'm 23, I'm more open to the idea of it. I want to maybe buy it from someone who is retiring. I don't want to start from scratch.” I understood why she would want to do this because those who own private must “successfully manage their practice and employees and promote, market and sell their services” (BLS). If she bought the practice from someone else, she would be provided with a list of loyal customers and a solid reputation of the clinic from the very beginning.

Either way, I don't think that she would have too much trouble finding work because the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics claims that employment of veterinarians is expected to increase thirty-three percent from 2008-2018. This is due to the fact that “the number of pets is expected to show a steady increase because of rising incomes and the movement of baby boomers into the 34-59 year age group, for which pet ownership is highest” (The Veterinary Profession). Also, many pet owners are aware of the improved and advanced technology and medicine that can be used to treat animals now and are more willing to pay for it than in the past.

Becoming a veterinarian won't be an easy task because admission into veterinary school even after obtaining a bachelor's degree is extremely competitive (BLS). There are many prerequisites and courses to be completed and years of training and interning will be required. However, it seems as if it's something I would truly enjoy and the future prospect of this job seems to shine bright. I will have to study hard and constantly keep on my toes, even after I actually start working. In this field, there will be constant improvement and updating and to stay on top of everything, I will have to keep up with what's new.

Even though I'll have to keep on my toes and admittance into veterinary school will be extremely difficult and competitive, I'm still determined to fill all the requirements that are needed in order to get to the final destination, which is to become a veterinarian. After researching for this project, I feel even more convinced that this is a career path that would be best suited for me to pursue. My passion for animals is unlike anything else; I can't imagine myself trying to chase after any other profession with even half as much motivation and eagerness as I have for becoming a veterinarian.

It's true that the difficulties are daunting and the road won't be completely straight and smooth, but I have the drive to help me get to the shining beacon at the end of the road; having to stay in school for many years and passing the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), the Veterinary College Admission Test (VCAT), or the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) will just be small bumps in the road once I actually graduate and start applying my knowledge during work. It will all be worth it once I am able to wake up every morning and go to work knowing that I get to do something I love and change thousands of lives. After all, as Confucius said, “Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.”

Law is an integral part to the structure of our society, and its portrayal in type and television reflect that. As an avid couch potato, I can attest to this: I (and millions of others) flock to watch legal dramas with snappy dialogue and nail-biting

closing statements. Two favorites stick out, and strangely not for their focus on the courtroom or even on legal matters, but for their will-reading scenes: The novel *The Testament* and the movie *Gran Torino*. In both, a lawyer dramatically reads out an elderly man's last will and testament that leaves a surprising friend his treasures and his family nothing. For one story, it was the beginning of the drama; for the other, it was the denouement. For me, it was the beginning of a wonder of what goes behind estate planning and whether or not people actually write wills for a living. A wonder of what an estate lawyer really does.

So I looked. In law, everyone begins on the same path. Having completed my undergraduate requirements and earning a bachelor's degree, I would qualify to enroll in most law schools and likely take the LSAT (Law School Admission Test) to enter. I would be recommended to take courses in "English, public speaking, government, history, economics [or] mathematics," (Bureau of Labor Statistics) as those fields hold important applications in law, though any degree is permitted. For three years I would study general law while also being offered to choose between specialized courses from, "civil, constitutional or property law," to, "tax, labor or corporate law." While studying at law school, I would join in "school-sponsored court competitions," to help imitate the atmosphere of the practice trials, "under the supervision of experienced lawyers or judges." I would then take the bar exam, the main lawyer certification test, upon completing my studies. Lawyer certification is approved on a state-by-state basis, and I would start by taking the Californian bar, one that is commonly known as one of the most difficult in the nation, possibly due to the large urban populace (Wong). Only after passing it and being determined fit to, "represent and advise others," can I practice law in the state I tested in. From here, I will have to take more bar exams to practice in other states and, "continu[e] legal education," either annually or tri-annually in each state that I am certified in. I may seek to earn my doctorate or masters in the degree I majored in to augment my resume. Freshly certified, inexperienced, and burdened with the need to pay off student loans; this is the beginning. It's time to practice law.

"Law is broken into different components; it's very diverse. That's what makes it so great" (Wong). Beyond the fields of criminal or corporate law that are commonly popularized in legal dramas, "some [lawyers] do real estate [law], some do business [law, and others do] international law," to name merely a few. With, "the advent of technology," and the aging baby boomers come, "new[er] and new[er] areas that open up," from "social media" to "elder care" law. In facing the established and the "uncharted" areas of law, attorney-at-law Tim Wong advises that it's important to "just fall into it," by finding a subfield that complements one's personality; the key to being happier is to, "keep an open mind," and to, "know you want your field" of study. By finding a role that matches my passions and strengths, I wouldn't be trapped in the classic dead-end situation of, "I can't quit because the money's too good." With passionate energy comes good results, with good results comes good reputation, and with good reputation comes a successful career.

Despite the many different fields, all of them share the common aspects of general law. Lawyers are entrusted to "inform clients about business or personal issues," and, "counsel them about business or personal issues," that are law-related (Jones 10), while, "represent[ing] the client[s] in court, in trial" and, "outside of court." Lawyers are also ethically bound to keep conversations with their clients confidential, the notable attorney-client privilege. In contrast to the popularized portrayal of lawyers, "actual [courtroom] trials," are, "incredibly rare," even for trial lawyers. Instead, I would become well-acquainted with an eternal, mind-numbing task: paperwork. It is only through referencing "piles and piles" of documents that legal research can be done and an argument be supported. Other common tasks are "writing letters or briefs, filling out forms and making phone calls." For some, law "lose[s] its appeal," after the, "rigorous research," that it takes to become a lawyer and the seemingly mundane tasks that follow. But paperwork naturally accompanies professions, and Mr. Wong takes that idea in stride: "[There's] always work to do" (Wong).

The pharaohs should have hired estate planners. Contrary to what they believed, possessions do not follow the dead beyond the grave; possessions stay where they are, and it's up to those still living to figure out what to do with them. The job of estate planning is, for this reason, split into two parts. The pre-planning involves planning out the aforementioned trusts and wills, working with clients. The other side happens, "when there's a death," and then, "the administration of the estate," is carried out by referencing premade documents that say, "where the estate is supposed to go." From here whomever the client chose as the executor of the will must carry out the distribution of the estate as guided. Estate lawyers are also hired by clients' families to dispute the legitimacy of the will. "If nothing is planned out, [the estate] end[s] up going to probate," where the, "court distribute[s] the assets" (Wong). In the U.S. a person's possessions are, by default, distributed accordingly by, "[a state's] rules of descent and distribution that determine who gets what if someone dies" (Blackwell).

The importance of estate lawyers comes because these laws are designed to be one-size-fit-all and estates, the sum of a person's possessions and debts, are divided up evenly in King Solomon-style splitting between the deceased's closest living relatives. Amy Blackwell's *Law* summarizes the reasons to take the trouble and avoid the default:

[For] people with a lot of money or property, or those with complicated family situations, often want a more specific solution—they want particular people to get particular things, they want to create trusts to provide for

their children, they want their descendants to avoid heavy tax burdens- and that is where estate planning can be very valuable. (Blackwell)

It is from here that estate planners write up the proper legal documents to ensure that these pre-mortem wishes for a post-mortem future come true.

My great fear is that by choosing my occupation I would be dooming myself to living on the streets in some hillbilly shack somewhere. A law career, which can be promising, can't make promises. According the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average annual salary of a lawyer is \$112,760; a comfortable sized sum, but one that includes outliers like multimillion-dollar earning tort lawyers. Like most occupations in the tighter "Great Recession" era job market, law has felt the sting, putting pressure on many. A common problem is fresh law graduates joining the ranks of others, "who graduate with a law degree, pass the bar and have 150k in debt" (Wong). Lawyers are either paid through a salary or on a case-by-case basis. Salaried pay is reliable, but it means working for a firm or company, where today, "there's no job security." In the past, associates "would find another firm if you didn't make partner in 7 years," but nowadays even partners, "are asked to leave" if "they're not producing," good results. The alternate is working on a case-by case basis, taking in a number of different clients. Through these clients you agree to work by an hourly basis, an upfront payment or by contingency. The first option is convenient for the attorney, but represents a conflict of interest for some as it may encourage dragging out resolutions of trusts in order to bill more hours. The second option is the most common: A flat fee. It is neutral on the part of the lawyer, but some clients may choose the cheapest fee rather than the best one. In the case of the latter, the lawyer takes a percentage (1/3rd, for example) out of the client's final settlement as payment, potentially the most lucrative choice but one that puts the most stress on winning the case (Adamson, Morrison, 97). "With the budget setbacks" in California, "consolidations and crunching" of courthouses are prevalent, cramming more cases onto already filled dossiers. Most cases will take from "2 years" to "4 or 5," to actually reach court, and even "straightforward" estate cases can take up to 12 months to begin. The increasing delays are important notes to lawyers on contingency; it can take multiple years to receive pay. Above all these pay options, it is important to agree beforehand on the payment plan; doing so cuts away the ugly trouble of having to retrieve money from clients through legal action.

The prospects of estate planners are mixed. Wong states that some people dismiss the need for estate planners when it is possible to write one's own will with access to internet resources. This may be true, but they will, "get what they pay for," and a trained professional can tailor a client's wishes to adhere to differing state and federal laws (Wong). Wong stated that around 70% of Americans have no will, and a large percentage include aging baby boomers; 72% of an estate lawyer's clientele are age 50 or older, (Trends 3) a figure that is easily expected to grow. There will be a large need for estate lawyers in the coming decades, but the main obstacle is widespread ignorance of the importance of planning ahead.

I plan to enter private practice, one where I would not be hired by a government agency or firm, but work for clients independently. The major advantage of private practice is the personal freedom it allows - the classic freedom to be my own boss. The freedom I would have to make my own style would allow me to work professionally with a passionate personal flair. I would have control over my hours, which clients I accept, and how I choose to approach my workload. At a client's request, I can have much more leeway in communicating and scheduling. The downside is that if I work alone, I face everything alone, without direct support that an agency or law firm would provide. Self-employed lawyers must also put in extra effort to maintain their own practice and find new clients.

The job is additionally demanding in other ways. According to the National Association of Estate Planners & Councils, nearly half of an estate planner's time is spent drafting documents (Trends 6). That translates to loads of paperwork; so much so that there is always work to do (Wong). Hours are generally decided by the estate planner, but the workload implies long hours and busy weekends. Over 2/3rds of new clients arrive through referrals by clients or colleagues through word-of-mouth (Trends 7). The key to a case-by-case living is a good stream of clients and a good reputation. Offices must be rented out to create a base to work, and occasionally other workers are hired to aid in the workload or organization.

Professional integrity is also demanded. Clients must also trust their lawyers to have discretion, especially in sensitive actions through family because, "in estate planning, [most matters are] more personal" (Wong). This discretion comes in the form of being, "careful to represent the [client]" in all matters rather than the interests of his or her relatives, children or spouse (Hughes). Furthermore, it is instrumental to be, "a good, patient and understanding listener," to all parties (Wong). Yet this discretion does not mean getting "walked on" by others in litigation or negotiation; it means firmness to principles but willingness to compromise to create resolution.

Resolution is important. Drawn-out and emotionally charged cases can leave clients and their families, "torn apart," in fighting for possessions that shrink in value when legal costs add up. For clients, "it's going to cost a lot of money," and an,

“emotional toll” to dispute the will. “For estate planning, compromise is good,” because, “people can get on with their lives” (Wong).

Whenever my relatives would ask the classic “who do you want to be?” question, my answers would be: “Doctor. Why? I want to help others. And....money,” or, “Businessman. Why? I want to delve into the world of trading and negotiations. And....money,” or, “Psychologist. Why? Because I want to talk through issues with others. And...I want to sit on a couch and draw on my notepad.” Frankly, all these answers were empty: I didn’t really want to enter into my parent’s profession in medicine; I didn’t really want to try to enter the vicious world of business or the difficult job market in psychology. But there were slivers of truth in my reasoning behind each: To work with and help people, to be a negotiator yet have a relatively calm work atmosphere. The prospect of making a reasonable living helps too. Estate planning owns all these elements: Helping clients set out the future of their possessions for their family or friends, occasionally mediating between parties in probate and generally working self-sufficiently in an office.

I am confident that I can be trustworthy, patient and persuasive, but I’m not confident about being methodical with paperwork. I’ve found that my focus burns out often, and would have to find coping methods to refresh myself and my focus. To prevent burnout over the years, I would likely diversify and grow my private practice into a small firm and oversee others. Organization is often an issue for me, and I would likely work best with a hired aide. I’m not confident either in the prospect of starting alone and having to forage connections. In the past I’ve found making and maintaining a web of connections difficult, and in law (like many other professions) connections are everything: receiving clients through referral, receiving advice from colleagues, and knowing whom else clients should contact in both law and non-law services. Especially in private practice, I would have to sell myself and give good reason to work for prospective clients. In a National Association of Estate Planners & Councils study, 96% of responding estate planners ranked both, “drafting legal documents efficiently and effectively,” and receiving, “referrals from colleagues and other professionals,” as either “important,” or “very important,” so I would inevitably have to overcome these two sticking points in order to develop and sustain my business (Trends 13). If I mold a good reputation, I believe I can maintain it, but how I form one is the big question.

My outlook of estate law is generally positive. Contrary to my initial belief, it carries the many types of professional duties that I would want to do, and has the possibility of serving many roles to a client. It can mean a long and fulfilling career beginning straight out of law school. Law in general is facing the crunch and court cases take longer than ever to occur, but fortunately estate planning generally means little time in litigation. In private practice, it can mean a good earnings, personal freedom and fulfilling work by working on a personal basis with clients. On the other hand, I prefer job security, and private practice law is almost a Wild West in that sense: I make my money on a client by client basis and will be on the constant search for more. As one would expect from law, it means a lot of paperwork and, as a result, long hours. These are not things I am enthusiastic about, yet I would expect nothing less from the profession.

From where I sit today, I can see myself with a future in this career. To be frank, it is not the most glamorous of careers, but I see that many things that I romanticize as a child aren’t either. The challenges that I would face merely come with my need to mature and find focus and initiative. If my viewpoint changes as I mature, I can still find myself with many visible and viable options in law itself that hold similar duties and responsibilities that estate lawyers have. As I head off to possibly be a Gaucho, I do so with an undeclared major, the tell-tale sign of the desire to follow Mr. Tim Wong’s advice and, “keep an open mind.” I do so hoping to pick a major that I can apply to my future, and in thinking of that future I know I’ll have estate planning tucked in the corner of my sights.

The polling station was in chaos. Several volunteers ran around frantically trying to calm the impatient crowd of citizens, while others desperately clicked, tugged, and shook the polling machine, trying to get it to work again. Hiding in a corner, I tried to blend into the wall and avoid being yelled at by the angry voters. Looking around though, I realized that if something wasn’t done soon, the whole place would be shut down. Swallowing my nerves, I pushed some of my co-workers aside, and knelt by the machine. Twiddling a few buttons, and pulling a few wires, the machine hummed to life. Miraculously, I had fixed it. Seeing the machine running, the workers’ panic evaporated, and they quickly pacified the now angry mob. With disaster avoided, the polling continued.

When we’re young, often, adults like to ask the question: what do you wanna be when you grow up? For the longest time, I didn’t know what to say. I remember at some point during my elementary school years, I had a burning desire to be a doctor. Then a few years later, I started telling people I wanted to be a policeman. If you went back in time and tracked my favorite TV shows, you’d probably find a suspicious correlation. The one thing I did know was that I wanted to help people.

But I didn't know how. I was just a math nerd. Worse, during my childhood years, I was an underweight, under height- pretty much under everything- math nerd. When asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, I ended up asking myself: what could I be when I grew up?

I should credit my dad as the first person to really give me an idea of what I wanted to be. Growing up, there seemed to be nothing he couldn't help me solve. TV's not working? Call dad, and voilà, all better. Every homework assignment, whether it was math, science or even geography; take it to dad and BOOM, the answer would come rolling out. Even though it was due more to the simplicity of my homework than his engineering, that my dad knew how to help me, it was the first time I had an inkling of what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wanted to be like dad.

It was the fiasco at the polling station that solidified my idea of being an engineer. After fixing the machine, every time the voter saw their ballot drop into the machine, they either flashed a smile or said "thank you!" It felt really good. That's when it hit me. If I applied my skills of math and physics into mechanical engineering, I could create new methods of voting to prevent incidents like this...I could help people. It was a stray thought at the time, but the idea stuck.

From the surface:

Engineers are problem-solvers who...are needed in every field imaginable, from agricultural engineering, where they work to improve farming methods and increase food production, to civil engineering where they design bridges, highways, dams, and other large projects. Engineers work in fields involving electricity, pollution control, automotives, water resources, space exploration, and many, many others. (*Mathematics* 100)

Engineering breaks down in several large sectors, each dealing with specific issues. When I first started to research the different subjects, I couldn't decide which specific area I wanted to specialize in. I was intrigued by mechanical engineers who "plan and design tools, engines, machines and other mechanical systems that produce, transmit of use power" (*Engineering* 83) It was a perfect subject that suited my love for physics and math.

But at the same time, I don't want to be stuck crunching numbers on the computer. I want to do some field work, build something, maybe even add my own twist to the design. Civil engineers have the chance to "design and [construct]...the physical structures that make up our surroundings, such as roads, bridges, buildings, and harbors" (38). Although each category has specific aspects that interested me, none of them seemed to have it all. Luckily, I stumbled upon mechatronics engineering. (This project's paying off already!)

Hearing the word Mechatronics, the most common reply is "say again?" Even when I asked my dad, who's a physics major and works at JPL (Jet Propulsion Laboratory), he needed me to explain what it was. Through my research, I was able to discover and explain that it wasn't anything new at all. In reality, it's a "synthesis of [already known] engineering systems" created to deal with the advancement of our technology (SPSU). In short, it's the four central engineering studies, mechanical, electrical, control and computers, wrapped up into one with designing as the bow on top.

One of the most appealing aspects of Mechatronic Engineering is that it's an extremely new field of study. In fact, the first official class opened in the "fall semester of 2007" (SPSU). Because Mechatronics "incorporates the ideas of electronic and mechanical engineering into one entity and covers those areas of engineering which is concerned with the increasing integration of mechanical, electronic and software engineering into a production process", there is an extremely high demand for those who have studied in this field (Sharma). Most companies at the moment have to hire separate mechanical, design and electrical engineers to cover the many aspects one project involves. With a degree in mechatronics, one employee can handle all those fields, making them extremely valuable.

Another reason the recent introduction of this field is an enormous pro is because it leaves many jobs vacant. The amount of available workers is simply not enough balance the sheer amount of open spots, leading to a high demands for employees. In fact, "Rick Meyers, SE&A's [System Engineering and Analysis] Vice President of Business Development, said he would have hired 20 mechatronics Engineers in each of the last 2 years, if he could have found them" (SPSU). With the job instability caused by the fluctuating economy, this need for employees is near impossible to find elsewhere, and the demand is only increasing.

Living in California, there are many opportunities to earn a degree in mechanical engineering. For mechanical engineers "a bachelor's degree...is usually the minimum educational requirement for entering this field" so students can begin work right after college (*Engineering* 92). Although a master's degree is great, according to William Lien, a Mechanical-Design engineer at the fluid-mechanics company *Apricot Designs*, "some might say getting your bachelor's and getting out there for experience might be more worth than staying in school." Afterwards, I can work towards specializing in

mechatronics. This is an ideal course of action because my degree in Mechanical Engineering will not only provide me with base knowledge needed for my mechatronics studies, but also work before or while I'm working towards my master's degree. Furthermore, statistics show that, "mechanical engineers with a mechatronics background will have a better chance of becoming managers" (SPSU).

Besides simply having a wider scope of knowledge, I also really value the design aspect. For normal mechanical or electrical engineers, many of them will "use mostly math and the technical stuff", but having the design aspect incorporated, I would "actually [be allowed] to put some art into it" (Lien). The designing side of mechatronics isn't only for my pleasure though. It is actually highly recommended by most colleges for students to not just take courses in "trigonometry and calculus, [but also in] mechanical drawing [and] computer-aided design" (*Engineering* 110). With the introduction of more sophisticated designing equipment, more and more employers are looking for applicants who not only understand how to put the product together, but piece it together in a more appealing or more efficient structure.

While I can't claim to be artsy-fartsy, a creative streak has always followed close behind my love for math and physics. During junior year, besides taking AP physics and AP calculus, I also took Art. Surprisingly, I found almost just as much enjoyment in solving for the square root of infinite as I did in drawing and painting. To top it off, the designing side doesn't even have to be official. My interviewee's official job title was "mechanical-design engineer"; the mechanical coming from his college degree, but the design was nothing more than a "hobby on the side" (Lien). However, having the interest and the ability to be creative was more than enough to fulfill the designing aspect the job required.

Not only do mechatronics engineers need knowledge of engineering, but they'll also need to provide "innovation and new model designs" because the whole point is to be able to provide "higher efficiency" and create better solutions (SPSU). This fits me perfectly because I've never been one to stay inside the box. When I read about the amount of creativity needed, I automatically thought back to when I had used a couple of sticks and ropes to make a crossbow on the corner of my bed. With this career, I could keep working on projects like this, but also get paid for it!

It might not always be as fun as building crossbows, but it's the same idea. When I visited my uncle, who ran a company that designed water distribution equipment, he showed me the latest design. He explained to me how he had gotten the idea of the external shell from a *Starbucks* coffee maker, and had his engineers incorporate the design into his water machine. Like my uncle, thousands of other engineers are working on projects with goals to "improve energy efficiency [and] design improved models" to make life better (Braun 2-3). Mechatronics is everything me – _____ the math nerd, the wannabe artist, but most importantly, the _____ that wants to help people.

With all the great upsides to this study though, there are also some downsides. For one, because of how new this field is, most "undergraduate mechatronic programs" are located in "Europe and Asia" where mechatronics was first introduced (SPSU). In addition, the ones that can be found in the United States are "at the graduate level", and not appropriate for students right out of high school (SPSU). For most students, especially in California, one study of engineering is tough enough. Whether it be mechanical, electronic, or even traffic engineering, each sector is unique in its own way and has its own challenges. Mechatronics is a fusion of the four most prominent subjects and takes in all the unique challenges. Going directly into it after high-school is extremely difficult.

Although difficult, many other nations have students who seem to be up to the task. Countries such as Japan and the Netherlands have already begun pouring money to this field and hundreds of their students have started specializing in it. Recently "The European Commission [took]...3.8 million euros (about 5 million US dollars)" and funneled it into the "development of mechatronics systems [such as] Controllab Products" (Edelman). Controllab is one of the leading engineering companies designing and producing the newest engineering technology. There are "approximately 1.4 million engineers...employed in the United States" who are forced to use programs made by other nations (*Mathematics*). And it's going to stay that way until students here begin to step up to the plate. So why not start now?

Even though there is an extremely high level of base knowledge in "mathematics, science, and engineering", I'm definitely up for the challenge (SPSU). I remember the countless nights during junior year where I saved math homework for last (I know, I'm a nerd). It would be 1 in the morning, and I would find satisfaction in knowing that all that was left to do was math homework. It was relaxing, knowing that there would always be an answer, and no matter what, I'd be able to find it. Now throw in a bit of innovation. That's the field of mechatronics. There's a whole sea of ingenuity waiting to be sailed.

Beyond simply having a firm grasp on the basics of engineering, there is another difficult obstacle to overcome. When aiming for a post graduate degree in mechatronics, the student has to have a "B.E/B.Tech in the area of electrical engineering, electronics, instrumentation, mechanical, electronics and telecommunication" (Sharma). With the drastic increase in tuition fee, coupled with our struggling economy, the extra education could be very costly. According to Ferguson's 2nd edition of

Engineering the average engineer with a bachelor's degree earns around \$48,000 dollars (89). Having to pay gas, food, and housing, with school tuition on top of that could be close to impossible.

Close, but not undoable. Though I live in Arcadia, and have been lucky to have a relatively comfortable life-style, my parents have never let me take it for granted. Through-out my life, they've constantly taught me to be grateful for what I have, and only take what you need. My dad is the embodiment of this ideal. Just last Christmas, he came home with mistletoe. Mom was super surprised, not because she loved the gift, but because my dad had actually gone out to buy something extra. I don't think you can get much more frugal than that. Even if I'm not as stingy "as long as [I'm] not going on vacations every 2 weeks or something" (Lien), the salary is definitely enough, and according to Ferguson's 2008 edition of *Mathematics & Physics*, engineers can make over \$135,000 dollars in one year (100)!

Besides just being enough, the salary of an engineer is also stable. Wages may start low, but gradually "[build] up with experience" and stays very consistent (Lien). Most engineers also have the privilege of working on salary which provides many health benefits, as well as vacation time and weekends off. When asked what were the other benefits of working on salary and not on an hourly basis, Lien says:

When you work on salary, I would say you have more of a voice in the company. As an engineer, when you're on salary, it means you're more consistently working on projects, and you're the normal person, so you have more input and your ideas carry more weight. Being on salary usually means you're at a higher position. (Lien)

This stability is essential, especially in a time where the economy is so shaky.

Another difficult aspect of mechatronics is the growing popularity. Mirroring the constant rise in demand for engineers is the rise of students aiming to take those positions. Statistics show that "Mechatronics engineering is obtaining an increasing level of interest among college bound students" who realize the importance of this field (SPSU). This new subject is where the real stuff is happening. "We see the very edge of engineering" says Jan Broenink, professor from the University of Twente (Edelman).

With technology continuing to shoot forward, everything is becoming more complex. Just a few weeks ago, I went to UCI for a campus tour. During the tour, the guide showed us a room about the size of a normal classroom. She explained how when the school was first built, the whole room was dedicated to one computer. Continuing, she told the tour group that even though the computer took so much space, it still couldn't do nearly as much as what her Mac, or another girl's Iphone or even my Itouch could do. The world is changing fast, and this field was created to meet the challenge.

Competition is to be expected. Everyone wants to be in the thick of things, and maybe even be the first or second to come out with a new breakthrough. Maybe someone from this field will be the first to find a way to mass produce phones with holograms. Maybe another person will be the first to create self-driving vehicles. No one knows right now. So until someone does it, everyone is fighting to be the first to shake the world with their idea.

Every day, new inventions are being thought of and created. Engineers affect almost every aspect of daily life. And we know it. That's why thousands of students are clamoring over each other to study it. Even the professors are working non-stop in this field. Professor Jim Braun from Purdue University recently published reports on "Automated Diagnostics for Cooling Equipment...Intelligent Controls in Commercial Buildings...Environmentally-Friendly Cooling Equipment" and more (Braun 1-3). Engineers across the nation are tackling every subject trying to make improvements or bring something new to the table. Mechatronic engineers are here to bring it all together.

And I want to be next. This field is the tip of the technology spear, where everything is happening. Mechatronic engineers are stepping up to meet the challenge of staying on pace with technology- Just like I faced the challenge of calming the angry mob down. Maybe next time, the polling mess will never have to happen. By then, maybe I'll have designed a more efficient machine to count the votes, or maybe even find a way to vote online. Who knows? But I could be the one. This field is where I want to be, so all that's left is to:

Get ready.

Get set.

Go.