

# Opinion

## That disturbing grey area

I saw some pretty strange things last week. Yup, pretty strange. Odd, even. Driving west on Main Street, I saw a pickup. Not too unusual you say. Well, it had a gun rack and a flag draped across the back of the cab.

So, the usual accessories, what's the big deal? Well, it wasn't the rebel flag, otherwise known as the stars and bars, or as the Confederate flag, now a symbol of rednecks everywhere. No, it was the Union Jack.

We're talking proper English rednecks. "Yep, were heading up to the Lake District, gonna plug us a few o' them Ro-mant-ic Po-ets. The hills is full o' 'em. Me an' Zeke, we ain't coming back 'til we bagged us the limit."

Of course, he might have fooled me and been one of theirs. "I say, jolly good fun, crashing 'bout the countryside with a bloody big gun. No queues to deal with, though all the dirt is just a tad disconcerting."

The Union Jack just struck me as a little odd in that context. I suppose the French tricolour or the Soviet hammer and sickle would be just as strange, but it wasn't one of those national flags that I saw.

### Drawing the line

The second odd development occurred when a number of coworkers noticed an announcement regarding a certain pizza chain which guarantees fast delivery. They let it be known that on Halloween night their guarantee wasn't in effect in order to protect the hordes of tiny trick-or-treaters from the dangers of their delivery cars.

Of course, this begs a question regarding the remaining 364 days. The announcement was tantamount to admitting pizza drivers may be reckless in pursuit of self-imposed delivery deadlines. It also suggested the company feels the usual conduct of its drivers is acceptable.

They realize what they normally do is



**Reaume  
With a View**  
with  
BRAD REAUME

wrong, but doing it on Halloween is really wrong. So that's where they draw the line.

In some sense the whole of society functions like this. A thing becomes right because it isn't as wrong as the alternative. Let's face it, the world is full of shades of grey rather than things that are definitely right or wrong. It's pretty easy to rationalize the degree of wrongness.

The strange part is that the company is doing its rationalization in public. Imagine if they advertised their feelings about a lump of cheese that was forgotten on a countertop for an unspecified amount of time. Do they automatically throw it out? If it's still sort of cold, is it alright? In business, any business, there are thousands of these decisions to make.

You've all heard people who once worked in a restaurant say they would never eat there. Is that because in the desire to maximize profits restaurants inflict things on people which individuals would not do to themselves?

Not that any of the things they do are evil. They are in the spectrum of grey. A half rotten tomato might find its way into a salad after the bad part is removed. At home, away from the profit motive, most individuals merely throw the whole thing away, not because it is bad but because it's suspect.

In society grey spectrum choices are prevalent, but subtle. People rarely think twice about the implications. They merely accept the judgments.

## An evening of show and tell

Who would have guessed it would come off so well?

Last September, I began teaching an evening course in English. Most of the 20 adults were taking English because it was a prerequisite for their courses in business administration, the technical trades and early childhood education. In other words, they had not willingly enrolled in it. The department head gave me an outline of the curriculum, then left it to me to cover the topics, however and whenever, over the 12-week session.

During that time, the students were to give a five-minute speech. In thinking about this future assignment, I came up with the idea of having an evening of show and tell. The students, I reasoned, would gain confidence in speaking in front of a group, using their show-and-tell item as a prop to help them along.

Penny arrived first that evening lugging a white kitchen-counter appliance — a home baker. All you needed to do, Penny said, was dump the bread-making ingredients into a square pail inside the machine, close the lid and let the machine mix, knead and bake the bread. Every morning, her family woke up to freshly baked bread.

Roy, the class wisecracker but also a machinist, proudly showed us a cast-aluminum meat tenderizer he had made.

When Frank was a boy, he collected hockey cards. He brought us a Bobby Orr card from that player's second season. Frank recently learned the card was worth \$500 to collectors. And he trusted us enough to pass it around.

Sandra held up two souvenirs her husband had brought back from Russia. For a black fur hat and a beautifully lacquered box, he had traded his sweatshirt.

Since Raymond had been absent the week before, he was unaware of the assignment, so he showed us the calculator he used in his math class. After the break, he eagerly



**On the  
Home Front**  
with ESTHER CALDWELL

presented a second show-and-tell item — a little bell he attached to his fishing line so he could tell when a fish was biting.

Sienna removed a small gold band from her finger. Her sister had given her the engraved ring when Sienna had left her home in Hong Kong. Although it was not a valuable ring, she cherished it. Krystyna, also a new Canadian, held up her Polish passport. Although it was no longer valid, she kept it as a memento of her homeland. She said it took her two years to get out of Poland, and her husband five.

As a youngster, Tracy had been dragged to her older sister's class for show and tell, so Tracy figured her sister should reciprocate. Her sister disagreed, so instead, Tracy brought photos of her sister's spring wedding.

Frank spent six months hitchhiking to B.C., then back to Ontario. He had time, while waiting for rides, to press the foil wrapping from his packs of cigarettes into a heavy, baseball-sized ball. We were surprised by its weight.

Adrian, who knows everything there is to know about cars, brought the flashy, radio-controlled model he races professionally. I watched nervously as this car, worth hundreds of dollars, was passed around the room.

That was the last time I saw my class. A sudden family move whisked me many miles away from them, making it impractical to continue teaching. I won't for a long time forget that evening of show and tell when these 20 adults told me more about themselves than they ever imagined. I miss them.



## Shock therapy does have a place

Sandy was a nine-month old infant who had been hospitalized three times already, because of persistent vomiting. Tests had been done, exploratory surgery had been performed, but no one could find the cause of her problem. Many treatments had been tried, without success.

The child was just skin and bones, in critical condition, fed through tubes in her nose that went straight to her stomach. Her life was in "imminent danger".

Since no physical basis for the illness could be found, psychologists were brought in to see if they could help. After a thorough review, they recommended a form of electrical shock therapy.

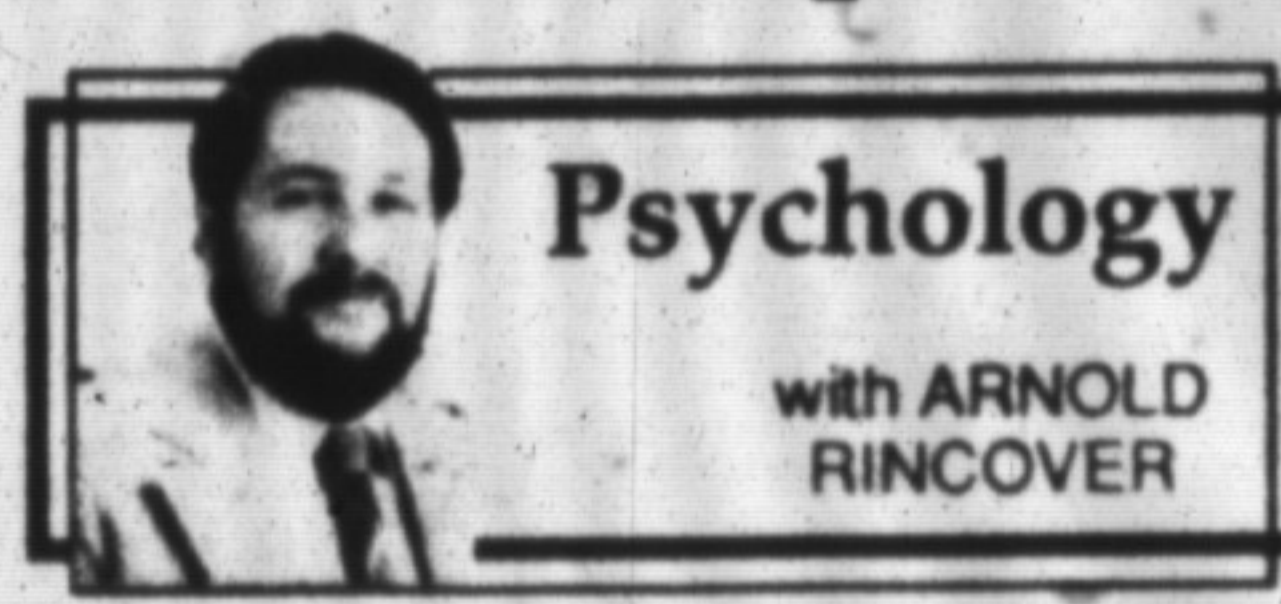
The infant received a shock lasting one second, to a calf, each time she began to vomit. The shock could not cause any physical damage to the skin or body, yet it would sting.

After only two sessions, shock was rarely needed. Sandy had quickly learned to stop vomiting in order to avoid the shock. By the sixth session, she was falling asleep right after feeding.

Two weeks later Sandy was discharged. The life-threatening problem was gone. A month after that, Sandy was up to 21 pounds and considered by her doctor to be "recovered". Four months later she weighed 26 pounds and was "completely normal", both physically and psychologically.

Few question the effectiveness of shock any more yet despite the successes it remains highly controversial. It is, of course, subject to many ethical and legal constraints, as well it should be. After all, it should not be used without a thorough review of the alternatives. It should be a last resort.

On a very few occasions, however, it is the only resort left. I have seen profoundly retarded and autistic children who have chewed fingers down to the second knuckle. Others, if you removed their restraints, would hit themselves in the head 100 times per



**Psychology**  
with ARNOLD RINCOVER

minute or violently ram a finger through an eye. Some say these are only the extreme cases — of course they are. It is only for extreme cases that anyone would use shock.

There are some health care professionals who say shock is not needed, that positive approaches will work for anything. Yet, when you ask them to treat a particular patient, they are too busy. They find self-injurious patients for whom shock is not necessary and conclude it isn't ever necessary. In fact, shock is not necessary for 99 per cent of patients, but it is all that is left for the other 1 per cent.

There are those who on "ethical" grounds would deny a shock program even when they can provide no alternative. Yet, withholding shock is nothing less than withholding treatment.

It is relegating patients to restraints. They lie on beds with their arms tied down and their muscles atrophying. They have no chance to participate in an educational program, or even just go for a walk. Some philosophers define freedom by the number of response alternatives a person has — if so, a shock program represents freedom to these people.

Bruce Martin, who holds degrees in law and psychology, may put it best. To him the question is not whether to use shock, but when it can be used.

If "it can save the individual from immediate and continuing self-injury, when it allows freedom from physical restraints, when it will be administered only a few times, and when its goal is to make other therapies possible", it is warranted, he believes.

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