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THE HILLTOP REVIEW

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A Journal of Western Michigan University Graduate Students' Research

The Hilltop Review: A Journal of Western Michigan University Graduate Student Research

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The Hilltop Review

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Notes from the Editor

Dear Bronco Graduate Students and readers of *The Hilltop Review*,

I am grateful to have been asked to step into the role of Director and Editor of *The Hilltop Review* for the Spring 2018 issue. I am happy that we were able to produce it. This issue reflects the Graduate Student Association's commitment to supporting graduate students' research. In addition to highlighting excellent research among graduate students at Western Michigan University, this journal is an excellent opportunity for students to work with a peer-reviewed journal, an experience vital to professional research careers. Thanks to all who submitted papers to this journal for the Spring 2018 Issue. We are grateful that you continue to work hard as you develop into better writers and researchers.

Special thanks to the reviewers who worked with us to ensure that we maintain the standards of *The Hilltop Review* in yet another great volume. Thanks to the Editorial Board who made suggestions and provide directions on the future of the journal. Thanks to the incoming Editor Adam Waggoner for his support in reviewing papers and making suggestions to improve this issue. Special thanks to one of our past editors, Zahra Ameli Renani, who made herself available as a resource for this issue. Special thanks to Maria Bundza, Scholar Works Librarian and Associate Professor of University Libraries, for her training to navigate our submission and review portal.

The Hilltop Review continues to make a significant contribution to the research of graduate students both locally and globally. The journal has been led by student researchers who understand the value of interdisciplinary discourse and are actively engaged in the process of research, innovation, and discovery. This volume captures several social issues within our society that are worth highlighting. I hope the readers will find the information valuable to further their own research or use practically in their delivery of services to a diversity of populations.

Congratulations to the winners of the Spring 2018 issue of *The Hilltop Review* Awards: Tristan McBain will receive \$500 in first place for “**Problems Facing the Working Poor: Implications for Counseling**”; Christine E. Strayer will receive \$250 in second place paper for “**Gender Nonconformity: The Social Construction of Gender Transgression**”; Katarina Hasit will receive \$150 in third place paper for “**Medical Tourism and Its Effect on United State Healthcare Industry in a Highly Connected Global Landscape**”; and Stephanie Bobbitt will receive \$250 for the best artwork, entitled “New Growth” and featured on the cover.

The Hilltop Review looks forward to receiving your papers, artwork, and creative writing submissions, as well as applications for reviewing your graduate colleagues work, for the Fall 2018 issue. Once again, thanks to all the individuals who have made this issue possible.

Damon Delano Chambers
Director and Editor, *The Hilltop Review*

Articles

Problems Facing the Working Poor: Implications for Counseling

Tristan McBain

Poverty is a concerning problem for people in the United States. Historic trends in poverty rates demonstrate that poverty fluctuates with economic cycles, thus growing during recessionary ages and declining during times of economic growth (Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2016). In 1964, there were 36.1 million Americans living in poverty, but this number decreased to 23 million by the early 1970's due to economic expansion and higher wages (DHHS, 2016). By the early 1990's, the number of people in poverty had risen to 39.3 million but declined to 31.6 million by the year 2000 (DHHS, 2016). Then, the official poverty rate began to rise in 2001 and continued to rise through most of the 2000's, growing more rapidly with the Great Recession in 2007 (DHHS, 2016). The number of people in poverty reached 46.3 million in 2010 (DHHS, 2016) and 46.6 million in 2014 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Since 2014, the number of people in poverty has declined and as of 2016, the most current year for which data is available, there were 40.6 million people living in poverty in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). While decreasing numbers is hopeful news, it is likely that historical trends will continue and the poverty rate will increase again with continued fluctuations in the economy. Furthermore, while nearly all demographic groups saw a decrease in the number of people in poverty from 2015, adults aged 65 and older saw an increase (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

For the 40.6 million people still living in poverty, their lives continue to be affected despite efforts to rise above the poverty guideline. The 2018 poverty guideline for an individual person is \$12,140 and \$25,100 for a family of four (DHHS, 2018). American culture embraces the perception that with hard work, one can achieve financial stability and gain momentum for building a better life (Slack, 2010). However, many families find that despite a willingness to work they encounter obstacles that perpetuate a life in poverty. As

many as 8.6 million people in the United States are estimated to be amongst this population, known as the working poor (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

Living in poverty for an extended length of time can have adverse effects, and poverty can even be a risk for mental illness (Kuruvilla & Jacob, 2007; Murali & Oyebode, 2004). The prolonged stress of barely making ends meet can lead to frustration, sadness, and hopelessness. Counselors and counselor educators have a professional and ethical obligation to develop their competence for counseling diverse populations (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014), and this includes the working poor. The counseling ethical code (ACA, 2014) requires that counselors work within their boundaries of competence, with multicultural counseling competence further developing through experiential work with diverse clientele. This necessitates counselors to work deliberately with the working poor in order to gain exposure to the problems and issues facing this population. Unfortunately, the counselor education literature is severely lacking in articles focused on counseling the working poor. An advanced search in PsycInfo for peer-reviewed articles pertaining to both the working poor and the field of counselor education netted virtually no results. Furthermore, there are no specific guidelines for how to prepare prospective counselors on how to best respond to and support clients who are the working poor (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2016). Thus, the purpose of this article is to explore the problems the working poor face today and discuss implications for counselor education and counseling practice.

Who Are the Working Poor?

While it is assumed that the working poor are able-bodied individuals, worthy of an above-poverty standard of living, there are varying definitions of what classifies a person as part of the working poor (Slack, 2010; Wicks-Lim, 2012). Theoretically, anyone who

is formally employed and earns an income that cannot support them above the poverty guideline (e.g. \$12,140 for an individual and \$25,100 for a family of four) is within the working poor population (Slack, 2010).

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017) classify the working poor as people who spent a minimum of 27 weeks of the year working or looking for work, and still had an income level that fell below the poverty guideline. Measuring by this standard, roughly 8.6 million people identified as the working poor in 2015 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). This includes both full time (3.4%) and part time (14.1%) workers, and teenagers as young as sixteen, assuming that they work at least half of the year. This number also includes 4.6 million families, with families that had children under the age of 18 living in the home being five times more likely to be living in poverty than families without children; 11.1% and 2.2%, respectively (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). For the families with minor children, the working poor rate was higher for those households maintained by women (24.8%) than by men (15.3%), but the lowest rate was households with married-couple families at 6.2 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Additionally, not only are women more likely to be among the working poor than men (6.3% compared to 5.0%), but so are racial minorities (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). In 2015, African Americans (11.2%) and Hispanics (10.1%) continued to have working poor rates more than twice that of Asians (4.1%) and White Americans (4.8%) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017, Wicks-Lim, 2012).

The likelihood of living in poverty as a member of the working poor decreases as educational attainment increases (Boushey, 2005; Fouad et al., 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017; Wicks-Lim, 2012). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017), those with a high school diploma had a working-poor rate less than half (7.6%) of those with less education than a high school diploma (16.2%). Those with a college degree

had the lowest working-poor rates, with 3.8% for an associate's degree and 1.7% for a bachelor's degree or higher. Women were more likely than men to be among the working poor in all levels of educational attainment with the exception of those with a bachelor's degree or higher, at which their likelihood of being among the working poor was the same (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). African Americans and Hispanics were generally more likely than Whites and Asians to be among the working poor with the same level of education attained (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

Labor Market Issues Facing the Working Poor

The working poor are typically employed in manual, blue collar jobs (Fouad et al., 2012; Lautsch & Scully, 2007; Siegel & Abbott, 2007) that usually do not require high levels of educational attainment and receive low wage earnings (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017) reported on five occupational categories with the following working poor rates for 2015: Management, professional, and related occupations (1.8%), service occupations (11.6%), sales and office occupations (5.5%), natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations (6.9%), and production, transportation, and material-moving occupations (5.7%). The largest working poor rate was found within the natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupation sector, which was farming, fishing, and forestry occupations at 14.1 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Of the five occupational categories, the service sector had the highest working poor rate at 11.6 percent and employs 38 percent of all those who are classified as the working poor (Siegel & Abbott, 2007; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017; Wicks-Lim, 2012). Service occupations include jobs such as cooks, waitresses, hairdressers, child care workers, nursing aids, receptionists, and janitors. These and many others with high working poor rates generally do not offer much opportunity for advancement and may not be as rewarding as

other types of occupations often held by the middle class (Fouad, et al., 2012).

There are three major labor market problems that may inhibit one's ability to rise above the poverty threshold (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). The first is low wages. As previously noted, it is typical for these workers to be paid a low-wage (Siegel & Abbott, 2007; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017), but in 2015, 68 percent of the working poor identified low wages as the most common problem they experienced, either as the sole problem or in conjunction with other labor market issues (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). The two other major labor market problems are involuntary part time hours and periods of unemployment (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). In 2015, 31 percent of the working poor experienced unemployment as the main problem or in combination with another problem (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). It is clear to see how these problems are intertwined. Increasing work hours alone is not a soluble solution, as most people would remain under the poverty guideline even if they worked full time due to the low wages they are paid (Wicks-Lim, 2012). In 2010, more than two in five poor workers had full time, year-round jobs, and they were still unable to attain adequate income to make ends meet due to low wages (Wicks-Lim, 2012). Additionally, Boushey (2005) found that more than one third of workers are still employed in a minimum wage job after three years, and have few opportunities to advance.

While many contingent workers and those in the service sector find that they cannot get enough hours, some workers in factory settings find themselves dealing with the impact of overtime. Lautsch and Scully (2007) found that members of the working poor identified benefits to working overtime, such as providing a basic standard of living. The tradeoff was missing out on time with family, but these workers often saw this as a worthwhile investment because their families needed the extra income. However, exhaustion

and stress often accompanies extreme work schedules (Dyk, 2004).

The labor market issues do not end there. The jobs of the working poor are often high in insecurity and low in overall satisfaction and trust in the organization (Siegel & Abbott, 2007). Transportation and access to child care are other barriers to seeking or keeping employment (Dyk, 2004; Siegel & Abbott, 2007). Some workers must face the reality that in the event they must call in due to illness or lack of childcare, they run the risk of losing their jobs. These barriers to employment are additional problems that the working poor face.

Mental Health Issues

Individuals and families living in poverty are at a higher risk for chronic and uncontrollable distress than the general population (Ennis, Hobfoll, & Schroder, 2000) due to financial insecurity, unrewarding or stressful work, lack of opportunity, reduced accessibility to resources, exposure to violence, conflict among family members, and frequent transitions such as moving (Kuruville & Jacob, 2007; Murali & Oyebode, 2004; Wadsworth et al., 2008). Working poor parents find it difficult to attain paid work leave or flexible hours that would permit them to be available for the educational or health needs of their children, leading to the additional stressor of managing work-life balance. These persistent stressors increase the risk for anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder (Cunradi, Caetano, & Schafer, 2002; Wadsworth et al., 2008). Deficits in cognitive skills and educational achievements in children are strongly associated with poverty (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997).

The working poor are a marginalized and stigmatized population. A popular social construct within American culture is that with hard work and self-discipline, one can achieve financial security. This notion inherently preserves the ideal that not being able to make a living wage comes down to individual shortcomings rather than structural and systemic factors (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, &

Tagler, 2001). This individualistic value leads public attitudes toward the poor to include traits such as lazy, stupid, and dirty (Cozzarelli et al., 2001). Lott and Saxon (2002) confirmed that these beliefs extend to the working class. Perceptions about the poor can illicit the same type of unconscious responses as race- or gender-related biases that are deeply acculturated and lead to a perceived separation between the poor and the rest of society, an effect that Lott (2002) called cognitive and behavioral distancing from the poor. These negative messages and stereotypes about being poor negatively impact identity development and lead to further social exclusion of low-income individuals.

Implications for Counseling

The working poor are a population of individuals who need access to counseling services given the complexity of the mental health issues they encounter. However, there is a high instance of underutilization of counseling services and premature termination for those living in poverty (Coiro, 2001; Gonzalez, 2005). Community mental health agencies are likely to be the places sought out by working poor individuals for counseling services (Gilens, 1999). The results of a survey administered by Sohn, Barrett, and Talbert (2014) at fourteen outpatient community mental health centers indicated that clients were found to be generally satisfied with services if they positively evaluated their services in regard to access, quality, and participation in treatment planning. Based on these results, it is possible that working poor clients may feel more content with the counseling they receive, and therefore be more likely to remain in counseling for the duration of treatment, if they are able to attain services and feel their needs are adequately being met.

Access to counseling services proves to be a difficult barrier to overcome. Cost of services, lack of insurance, childcare, transportation, and location are all identified barriers to mental health treatment for people living in poverty (Davis, Ressler, Schwartz, Stephens, & Bradley, 2009; Snowden &

Thomas, 2000). Santiago, Kaltman, and Miranda (2012) assert that intensive outreach on behalf of the clinician, such as building trust by phone prior to visits, increases service utilization. They also suggest that communicating cultural sensitivity improves engagement into services. Concern has been expressed that traditional psychotherapy paradigms are not relevant for the poor or working class because they were created based on experiences of the White middle class and may inadvertently direct clinicians toward culturally specific middle class values and assumptions (Kim & Cardemil, 2012; Sue & Lam, 2002). Clients living in poverty, including the working poor, need to feel that their experiences are understood for counselors to expect that they will continue services.

Financially struggling families often live in present-time orientation (Campbell, Richie, & Hargrove, 2003; Foss, Generali, & Kress, 2011), meaning that issues that need addressed *today* take priority over goals in the long term. These clients are focused on identifying where the next meal will come from, how the rent will get paid, or securing transportation for work, in addition to typical struggles of the average parent or employee. Counselors who are not aware of the lens through which these clients view their world, and how this influence daily decisions, may be perceived as unhelpful and thus, counselors must incorporate management of present time issues into counseling. Elements of solution focused brief therapy (SFBT) may be a successful intervention to achieve this ambition. The solution focused model acknowledges both the present and the future and is typically brief in nature. The process of SFBT includes finding what clients want rather than what they do not want, not labeling clients with pathology, encouraging clients to do what does work, not what does not work, and keeping therapy brief as if each session were the last (Walter & Peller, 1992). This approach to counseling the working poor may be effective because it can help the client work within their own strengths, instills hope, and

maximizes each session, factors that are all important to the working poor population, given that their access to consistent services can be obstructed. Solution focused therapy is also considered to be cost effective because of the short duration of services (Corcoran & Pillai, 2009), meaning that it may be more affordable, and therefore a more realistic choice for working poor individuals, over other counseling strategies. Finally, the SFBT interventions can also be tailored to the unique needs of individual clients (Murphy, 2008), meaning the contextual factors for working poor clients will be taken into consideration.

In addition to counseling working poor clients from a solution focused orientation, counselors may also look at models developed specifically for counseling clients living in poverty. Cholewa and Smith-Adcock (2013) propose a strengths-based approach to conceptualizing and discussing poverty. The authors described finding strengths within the family as a *treasure hunt* which includes elements of counselor reflection, client advocacy, building therapeutic relationships, unassuming curiosity, and constructing a new family story that emphasizes how challenges have been overcome (Cholewa & Smith-Adcock, 2013). Another article by Foss et al. (2011) describes the CARE model. Rooted in a humanistic and social justice framework, the CARE model considers both intrapersonal and individual issues when counseling poor clients. The CARE model emphasizes the importance of *cultivating* positive relationships with clients, *acknowledging* the taxing reality poor clients regularly face, *removing* barriers for healthy functioning, and *expanding* the personal strengths of poor clients (Foss et al., 2011). Foss-Kelly, Generali, and Kress (2017) more recently expanded the model to I-CARE, with the addition of *internal* reflection on behalf of the counselor to examine personal experience, beliefs, or biases about people living in poverty. The model recognizes the convoluted and multidimensional impact that is the culture of poverty and attempts to bridge both the individual and societal contexts (Foss et al.,

2011; Foss-Kelly et al., 2017). While additional research needs to be conducted to verify the effectiveness of the I-CARE model with the working poor, it is a pioneering model for counselors who serve this population.

Beyond the attempts to address barriers to counseling and implementing effective counseling interventions, training for counselor educators could also be enhanced. Currently, there are no outlines specifying criteria related to learning about poverty or the working poor in counselor education (CACREP, 2016), meaning that counselors receive varied training in this area. Consideration needs to be given for incorporating strategies for counseling the working poor and those living in poverty into counselor education programs. An article by Krumer-Nevo, Weiss-Gal, and Monnickendam (2009) presents a conceptual framework for education and training of students in social work to work with clients living in poverty. Their model proposes that students will acquire theoretical knowledge regarding poverty theories and social policy, students will use self-reflection to recognize their own attitudes about people living in poverty in an effort to avoid othering, students will gain practical knowledge about current programs and be able to critically assess the welfare system, and finally, students will gain practical experience from the individual to the policy level and move toward integrative work and perceptions. Krumer-Nevo et al. (2009) make three recommendations for incorporating their proposed framework into social work training: 1) integrate study about poverty into general student curricula; 2) develop courses specific to the topic of poverty for the general student population, and; 3) improve concentrations on the topic of poverty for students seeking specialization. This framework provides an excellent model for how to include poverty education into social work training and details why this would benefit students and the social work field. Counselor education programs could construct a similar process that includes providing

counseling students an opportunity to learn about working poor clients in their core courses or through specialization classes. This training would assist counselors in becoming more informed of the lived experiences of the working poor and ultimately ensure they are better prepared for servicing working poor clients effectively. A qualitative study by Thompson et al. (2015) found that mental health treatment providers (which included an unspecified number of counselors) believed they had not actually been trained to work with low-income clients and felt unprepared to assess and implement individualized treatment to meet the needs of their clients. In another qualitative study by Smith, Li, Dykema, Hamlet, and Shellman (2013), ten therapists, including three self-identified mental health counselors, were interviewed about their work with poor clients. These therapists indicated that their graduate training programs did not adequately prepare them to assist clients living in poverty with the material and social stressors they experienced. The therapists were left to find their own ways of coping with the challenges and reported a desire for more supervision. Additionally, the participants revealed that the development of their own self-awareness on previously held biases and stereotypes was a critical piece missing from their training (Smith et al., 2013). These studies point toward the need for more visibility and training in counselor education programs on how to work with the working poor and other clients living in poverty.

Finally, counselors must take all intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, and social class into account, as failing to do so directly conflicts with the practice of multicultural counseling (Constantine, 2002). This means that counselor education programs need to be training counseling students about intersectionality so that students better understand client experiences based on their cultural identities. A thorough history and conceptualization of racism, oppression, and privilege in the United States should be integrated in core classes beyond the

multiculturalism course. Conversations that emphasize adequate awareness and attention to social class (Thompson et al., 2015) and meritocracy are needed. These discussions will help counselors to identify their own perceptions about the American dream and provide context about social and economic injustices when counseling the working poor.

Summary

The working poor are affected by problems in the labor market and mental health issues. In order to successfully help working poor clients, counselors must understand their expectations and needs by joining both individual and contextual challenges into counseling services. Barriers and limited means to accessing services can create limitations on whether counseling is pursued and maintained. Counselors must remain aware of the financial restrictions placed upon working poor clients and how they might impact attendance and consistency in counseling. Even a small co-pay could become a treatment barrier for a client who still is trying to figure out what they are going to feed their family for dinner that day. It is important for counselors to understand that many of their working poor clients will operate with a present-time orientation. This necessitates counselors to use brief counseling techniques and models while also utilizing client strengths and resiliency.

Counselor education programs can better prepare counselors for servicing the working poor by incorporating theoretical knowledge about poverty into general curricula, developing courses that specifically address counseling clients in poverty and working poor clients, and improving practical skills for counselors through practicum or internship experiences. Counselor education programs can also incorporate more intersectionality in core classes to assist future counselors in developing accurate conceptualizations of the problems facing this population. This will empower them with the ability and competence to incorporate interventions from a multicultural perspective.

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Gender Nonconformity: The Social Construction of Gender Transgression

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More than any other underlying social framework in Western culture, the concept of gender has effectively served to demarcate deeply guarded boundaries of social power and privilege. So culturally ingrained is this particularly divisive construct, that any actions taken to challenge the binary of woman and man has historically been met with a range of negative and often violent responses with the intent of neutralizing the gender nonconformity. In fact, the assumptions regarding the ‘natural’ occurrence of feminine or masculine genders being mapped onto the presumed “opposite” sexes of female and male, respectively, was not problematized until the middle of the twentieth century, by postmodernist and feminist theorists, and later queer theorists (Beauvoir, 2009; Bourdieu, 2001; Butler, 1990; Connell, 1987; Derrida, 1982; Foucault, 1978; Wittig, 1992).

Instead of a natural enactment of biological sex, gender began to be interrogated as a social construction. This significant shift in theoretical perspective laid the groundwork for exposing the underlying power structures, embedded in reified social norms and public policy, which have aggressively preserved the gender binary. Given the patriarchal legacy in Western society, it is not surprising that these social mechanisms have constructed ‘traditional’ masculinity as the referent gender category, thereby placing all others in a derivative gender category of non-male or non-masculine (Connell, 1987; Connell, 2005; Kimmel, 1998; Wilchins, 2014). Any actions taken in perceived defiance of the boundaries of ‘traditional’ masculinity have been met with derision and stigmatization. Both public policies and sanctioned rhetoric in Western society, in essence our language and discourses, cast gender nonconformity as one of the worst social transgressions or acts of moral deviance an individual can commit.

There are individuals in our society who do not and cannot adhere to the constraints of the socially mandated gender binary, and the stigmatization of gender

nonconformity seems to be a distinct reaction to questioning the power structures which defend and protect the ‘natural’ enfranchisement of the traditional masculine gender. Given these circumstances, a critical examination of the construction of manipulating gender, particularly masculinity, as a form of social transgression or moral deviance seems warranted. Using the theoretical lens of postmodernist and queer theoretical perspectives of gender, this paper explores social mechanisms which serve to construct and reify the social stigma associated with gender nonconformity in Western society. The primary research question proposed for analysis in this paper is: *How are acts of gender nonconformity, particularly the manipulation of masculinity, socially constructed as acts of transgression or deviance by language and discourse?* Emphasis is placed upon the sociological purposes of a socially-constructed gender binary as well as the complex conceptual framework of traditional masculinity as the referent gender category. The concept of manipulated masculinities is also briefly explored as an affirmation of the problematic nature of the gender binary. Finally, the concepts of language and discourse are utilized to consider how acts of gender nonconformity are socially constructed as forms of gender transgression.

Postmodernist, Feminist, and Queer Theoretical Lens on Gender

As previously indicated, postmodernist, feminist, queer theorists are recognized as the first to problematize the concept of gender as a manifestation inherent to one’s assigned sex at birth. These theorists began to challenge the notions that the male and female sex were in some way “oppositional” biological ‘truths,’ as well as the notion that gender is a natural set of behaviors that are inherent to their prescribed sex identity, males are masculine and females are feminine (Beauvoir, 2009; Connell, 1987, Butler, 1990; Wittig, 1992). Instead, postmodernist, feminist, and queer theorists argued that gender is purely a social construction that has been created and curated

to maintain a social power dynamic which sanctions domination and denial of social power and prestige based upon one's ability to dominate others.

Theorists such as Wittig (1992), Connell (1987), and Reynaud (2004) argue that regardless of what sex category one is assigned at birth, based upon one's genital physicality, gender is a social creation, which has constructed a system of unequal, shifting, and contested power relations between women and men. Although Simone de Beauvoir's (2009) work focused on the social construction of 'woman,' her assertion that any human who is born with female genitalia is not inherently a woman, but becomes one by enacting gender behaviors in response to a social or cultural compulsion to do so, certainly speaks to the notion that humans are subjected to a set of social expectations rather than biological processes, both male and female. Judith Butler (1990) goes even further in her analysis of gender, in response to Beauvoir's (2009) work, when she suggests that not only is gender a social construction but because our bodies have already been "interpreted by cultural meanings," considering sex to be a fact of biology is false. "Indeed, sex, by definition, will be shown to have been gender all along" (Butler, 1990, p. 8). If the construct of 'sex,' an artifact of immutability, is determined to be an arbitrary distinction based upon perceived differences, then the driving question becomes *what purpose do such distinctions serve?*

Postmodernist, feminist, and queer theorists suggest that the emphasis on difference effectively reifies the Western notion that universal truths are the foundation for what is 'real,' thereby preventing and avoiding social and cultural ambiguity. In an obscure 1965 speech at Johns Hopkins University, French philosopher and postmodernist, Jacques Derrida expressed his anger toward the Western way of thinking and practices of creating difference as opposition, which serves to marginalize or "suffocate alterity," calling instead for a "de-centering of knowledge" (as cited in Wilchins, 2014, p. 49-

50). If, in fact, the concepts of "opposite sexes" and subsequently "opposite" genders are, indeed, social constructs that serve to advantage those who conform and to silence or marginalize those who do not, Wilchins's (2014) assertion that "postmodernism is a philosophy of the dispossessed, perfect for bodies and genders that are unspeakable, marginalized and simply erased" (p. 50) seems quite fitting.

Purpose and Power of the Gender Binary

Simply defined, the concept of the gender binary is a construct that suggests that there are only two genders, and they are relationally defined and embedded with heteronormative assumptions. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) aptly observes that "the extent that gender definition and gender identity are necessarily relational between genders [in any gender system, is the extent to which] female identity or definition is constructed by analogy, supplementarity, or contrast to male" (p. 31). This foundational dichotomy creates a mandate of gender definition or identity that serves to erase any other forms of gender alterity, while also serving to preserve the structural integrity of heteronormativity. Butler (1990) posits means by which the "binary frame of sex" is internally stabilized and secured is to contextualize the 'sex' dichotomy as prediscursive, which "ought to be understood as the effect of the apparatus of cultural construction designated by *gender*" (p. 7). The concept of "opposite sexes" has been so deeply embedded in Western society as a 'truth' that precedes societal construction, that it has been placed in a prehistorical domain, shielded from critical examination.

One critical component of this conversation of sex and gender is the bias toward heterosexuality and the relational nature of gender. There are prescribed notions of appropriate sexual behaviors for both men and women, specifically that women will have sex with men and vice versa. Nonconformity to this framework is perceived as a threat to the 'sanctity' of the 'natural' relational order that exists between men and women. Sedgwick

(1990) acknowledges that “the ultimate definitional appeal in any gender-based analysis must necessarily be to the diacritical frontier between different genders. This gives heterosocial and heterosexual relations a conceptual privilege of incalculable consequence” (p. 31). While heteronormativity is most assuredly the socially sanctioned framework under which men and women are expected to engage socially and sexually, the question of its significance to societal stability remains. *What purpose does the gender binary serve, and what is threatened when it is problematized?*

As previously indicated, postmodernist, feminist, and queer theorists perceive the construct of gender and its binary framework as means to maintain systems of power, enabling men to dominate women and other men. “The particular strength of the masculine sociodicy comes from the fact that it combines and condenses two operations: it legitimates a relationship of domination by embedding it” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 23). These systems of power are often characterized as ‘traditional values’ in Western society to place social pressure on both men and women to conform to such concepts, such as the closely guarded construct of the heteronormative nuclear family. Some theorists, such as Foucault (1978), argue that the gender binary and subsequently the traditional nuclear family are economically integral to capitalist society, as the most desirable unit for maximal consumption.

Others characterize the binary system in more sinister terms, as a means to expressly privilege gender conforming men at the expense of anyone who does not align with the traditional Western definition of what it means to be a man. Tolson (2004) suggests that the connotative meanings mapped onto the gender binary are divisive, trapping both women and men in a polarized gender framework, with implications of positive versus negative characteristics, such as “‘assertive’/ ‘submissive’; ‘decisive’/ ‘uncertain’, ‘detached’/ ‘dependent’” (p. 72). Similarly, Jacques Derrida’s criticism of the over-reliance

in Western society on using simplistic binary relationships to create meaning to interpret difference was that most of these binaries are skewed toward covert implications of seriated ‘good/bad’ relational dichotomies, in which one is referent and the other merely derivative (1982). When the implication of ‘good/bad’ is understood as a moral or qualitative measure, the power dynamic is revealed. If one possesses the referent ‘good’ or desirable traits, then all others who do not possess those traits are definitionally ‘bad’ or the lesser. If we were to only consider this regarding men and women, the socially sanctioned opportunity for men to exercise power over women is evident. When we step beyond the framework to consider that there are individuals in society who do not or cannot conform to the binary serves to effectively delegitimize, silence, and erase nonconforming identities and subsequent behaviors.

Traditional Western Masculinity

The gender binary, as constructed in the context of patriarchal Western society has created a ‘traditional’ form of masculinity or manliness that determines the qualifying characteristics for possessing and enacting social power over all others who do not adequately enact this type of traditional masculinity. For this reason, this Western conceptualization of traditional masculinity and its status as the referent category of gender is a dominant focus for this analysis.

Male as the Referent Category of Gender

A great deal of literature regarding masculinity has focused on the concept of Connell’s (1995) hegemonic masculinity because it definitionally encapsulates the relations of power and domination enmeshed within the gender framework. “Hegemonic masculinity [is] a question of how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance” (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 2004, p. 154). While important to recognize this seminal concept in the masculinity literature, we will move beyond the existence of the

power differential to consider the mechanisms and forces that create, preserve, and protect the power vested in the identity of traditional masculinity in a more specific context. For this, I will rely on Michael Kimmel's (2004) characterization: "Within the dominant culture, the masculinity that defines white, middle class, early middle-aged, heterosexual men is the masculinity that sets the standards for other men, against which other men are measured and often, found wanting" (p. 184). Although his definition is like Connell's (1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity, Kimmel's work has focused on the societal mechanisms which reify as well as compel masculine enactments in a specifically American social context.

The concept of a man's 'manhood' is essential in understanding the relationship between gender and power inequality. Western society has equated manhood or manliness with power, and a man's ability to effectively enact the mandated behaviors of traditional masculinity determines his privileged social status (Kimmel, 2004). "For men [...] their category symbolizes their power; and everything which defines them as 'masculine' is valorizing, even to the extent that men do not generally see themselves as a separate group, but rather as a reference for the species" (Reynaud, 2004, p. 139). While membership in this referent category of gender is essentialized for most men, it is also a relentless quest to accomplish one's masculinity to acquire "those cultural symbols that denote manhood" as well as enjoy greater access to "cultural resources that confer manhood" while limiting or denying access for others (Kimmel, 2004, p. 184-185). Thus, one's manhood is not simply demonstrated by behaving according to inherent characteristics determined by biological sex, rather it is an evaluation of a male's ability to meet the social mandates associated with being a 'real' man.

Central to the concept of manhood is the "othering" of women. As Sharon Bird (1996) astutely asserts, "Being masculine [...] means being not female" (p. 125). The

quintessential measure of one's manhood or masculinity is the unrelenting demand that regardless of other social differences such as age, race, class, or sexual orientation, a man must not be like a woman. This is, of course, referring to socially sanctioned heteronormative behaviors for men and women. In this dynamic, men must be perceived as the universal or referent gender, thus woman then becomes the 'other' or derivative gender, having no meaning outside of the relational framework of man and woman. While this clearly provides social power to men who successfully and convincingly enact traditional masculinity, there are several elements of this framework that must be acknowledged. First, "[Western] masculinity is a relentless test" (Kimmel, 2004, p. 185). This reflects a heightened level of fragility and threat to a man's sense of masculinity, as he is under constant pressure to meet social gender expectations. Additionally, the constant fear of failing to enact traditional masculinity, helps to provide some explanation for the prevalence of sexism and misogyny in society, as femininity and vulnerability have been cast in opposition to manhood (Wilchins, 2014). This, of course, is only one of several criteria that 'real' men are compelled to demonstrate.

Social Mandates of Traditional Masculinity

Beyond defining traditional masculinity as the absence of femininity, there are several salient mandates that frame traditional masculinity. Bourdieu (2001) observes that "manliness, understood as sexual or social reproductive capacity, but also as the capacity to fight and to exercise violence (especially in acts of revenge), is first and foremost a duty" (p. 51). Themes of violence, force, aggression, dominance, and heterosexuality are pervasive across the masculinity literature. Of interest, is that these definitively masculine behaviors are associated with public and social interactions (Bird, 1996; Bourdieu, 2001; Hoch, 2004; Kimmel, 2004; Kimmel, 2012; Pascoe, 2007). Through homosocial interaction, men enact

and reify traditional masculinity for other men to acquire approval from other men, thereby securing and attempting to preserve their social power. Thus, men live within the constant tension between proving their manhood and avoiding the constant threat of emasculation. This is characterized in Bourdieu's (2001) assertion that masculinity is a process of mutual validation in which "manliness, it can be seen, is an eminently relational notion, constructed in front of and for other men and against femininity, in a kind of fear of the female, firstly in oneself" (p. 53). Kimmel (2004) also captures this constant tension between proving one's manhood and risking gendered failure of being 'womanly' in his observation "we are under the scrutiny of other men, Other men watch us, rank us, grant our acceptance into the realm of manhood. Manhood is demonstrated for other men's approval" (p. 186). In the context of homosocial interaction, men preserve the central tenets of Western traditional masculinity, such as emotional detachment, competition, and the objectification of women, while simultaneously discouraging nonconformity of these masculinity norms through threat of social isolation or exclusion (Bird, 1996).

Responding to Fears of Emasculation

This aspect of traditional masculinity, under which men are constantly at risk of having their masculinity denigrated creates an incessant fear and anxiety of emasculation for many men. The fear of such social consequences often leads men to deflect perceived attacks on one's own manhood by attempting to emasculate other men. This tension is exemplified in Bourdieu's (2001) contention that "male privilege is also a trap" as men will go to the absurdist of length to demonstrate his manliness in all contexts for fear of not fulfilling the duties imposed upon him by society. So deeply ingrained is the compulsion to maintain one's status of traditional manhood that any loss of that power is perceived to be a "crisis of gender-identity" (Tolson, 2004, p. 78). To avoid such

crises and run the risk of being revealed as lacking, men often engage in a set of behaviors which embellish or exaggerate their masculine enactments, while calling the masculinity of others into question. "Being unmanly is a fear that propels American men to deny manhood to others, as a way of proving the unprovable – that one is fully manly" (Kimmel, 2004, p. 193). As Pascoe (2007) aptly suggests, "achieving masculine identity entails the repeated repudiation of the specter of failed masculinity" (p. 5). The most prevalent means of denying other men their masculinity is implications of questionable virility or homosexuality.

As previously discussed, heterosexuality is the only sanctioned sexual practice within the gender binary framework. Central to this conceptualization is that men only engage in intercourse with women; men actively penetrate women, while women are passively penetrated. Any deviation from this model, such as homosexuality, suggests gender nonconformity and is heavily stigmatized. For many, the mere implication of being either passive or penetrated is perceived as the greatest violation of masculinity (Bourdieu, 2001). Playing upon this stigma, men and boys frame one another with the pejorative term of 'fag' to deflect social suspicion from themselves to another, relying upon the social power to taint another with implications of homosexuality. This practice has become so pervasive that "The fear of being tainted with homosexuality – the fear of being emasculated – has morphed into a generic putdown. These days, 'That's so gay' has far less to do with aspersions of homosexuality and far more to do with 'gender policing,' making sure that no one contravenes the rules of masculinity" (Kimmel, 2012, p. 270). If the mere suggestion of being perceived as effeminate is a source of such visceral attempts to protect one's manhood, it should not surprise us that nonconformity to the gender binary, whether through sexuality or gender enactment, represents a dire threat to the foundation of Western traditional masculinity.

Gender Nonconformity Constructed as Transgression or Deviance

It is not difficult to understand why challenges to the gender binary are characterized as violations or transgressions, given the primary status of traditional masculinity in the gender binary and the power and prestige associated with that successful gender enactment. The preservation of the gender binary and subsequently the systems of unequal power is so deeply embedded in Western culture that attempts to problematize this social construct often generate vitriolic responses.

Hierarchy of Masculinity

Even among men who adhere to the mandate of heterosexuality, there is an established hierarchy. “Our definitions of masculinity are not equally valued in our society” (Kimmel, 2004, p. 184). These various definitions of masculinity are framed by their relationship to hegemonic masculinity and the access to power each one enjoys. Connell (1995) refers to these variations as complicit masculinity, subordinated masculinity, and marginalized masculinity. Men who reap the benefits of hegemonic masculinity are ‘complicit,’ while men who are ‘subordinated,’ such as gay men, are oppressed by the definitions of hegemonic masculinity, and men who enjoy power due to gender but not due to class or race are considered ‘marginalized’ (Connell, 1995). These categories as well as Kimmel’s (2004) definition of the dominant form of Western masculinity, previously discussed, clearly articulate the idea that manhood is reserved for a select few and inherently denied to others. Historically speaking, American manhood, a white, middle-class male identity, has been constructed “by setting our definitions in opposition to a set of ‘others’ – racial minorities, sexual minorities, and, above all, women” (Kimmel, 2004, p. 182). In this paradigm, social power is a finite, coveted resource, and limiting access to that resource is heavily contingent upon a stable gender framework. Suggesting that the gender binary is arbitrary and challenging those

categories, as when definitions of traditional masculinity are manipulated, clearly threatens that system of power.

Manipulations of Masculinity – Challenges to the Gender Binary

While there are numerous ways in which the concept of gender, specifically masculinity, may be manipulated, the focus of this paper is not to conduct an exhaustive examination of each of those enactments. For clarity, a brief overview is provided of several prevalent forms of manipulated masculinity that have been subjected to various social discourses, which have worked to characterize these manipulations as gender transgressions.

The first of these is *gay masculinity*, which refers to the range of behaviors associated with homosexual men who seek to enact their manhood. The integral element of heterosexuality that is embedded in traditional masculinity inherently categorizes gay masculinity as what Connell (1995) refers to as an ‘oppressed’ masculinity. Through the lens of traditional masculinity, “homosexuality itself is the most profound transgression of the primary rule of gender” (Wilchins, 2014, p. 20). Clearly, gay men represent a significant perceived threat to the integrity of traditional masculinity. Kimmel (2004) argues “the great secret of American manhood: *We are afraid of other men*. Homophobia is a central organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood. Homophobia is more than the irrational fear of gay men, more the fear that we might be perceived as gay” (p. 188). While this is a highly provocative assertion, it provides explanation for virulent public rhetoric that characterizes homosexuality as deviance, perversion, and criminal (Carrigan et al., 2004; Connell, 1995; Kimmel, 2012). Interestingly, in the last several decades, the stigmatization of effeminate behaviors of homosexual men has had a compelling effect the enactment of gay masculinity. Messner (1997) and Wilchins (2014) posit that to gain social acceptance, many men in the gay community have subscribed to a hyper-masculine form of gender enactment, thereby

serving to reify the gender binary as well as the core markers of traditional masculinity. Consequently, the enactment of gay masculinity in its contemporary form, has made many gay men complicit in stigmatizing individuals who do not conform.

The second manipulation of masculinity discussed here are enactments which take place outside of male bodies, *trans masculinity* and *female masculinity*. For this brief discussion, *trans masculinity* is defined as the form of masculinity enacted by someone who was born with female genitalia but identifies oneself as a member of the male or masculine gender and often seeks to subscribe to masculine gender performance (Wilchins, 2014). When thinking about *female masculinity*, we are discussing an individual who has female genitalia and perceives one's gender to be female, although modified, but enacts varying degrees of masculine gender performance. In both cases, sexuality is not contingent upon the individual's gender identity or performance (Halberstram, 1998). These forms of manipulated masculinity are essential illustrations of the arbitrary nature of gender categorization according to biological genitalia, inherently problematizing the entire conceptual framework of the gender binary. If masculinity does not occur at the culturally sanctioned site of the male body, then theoretical denial of gender as a social construction is wholly nullified. Clearly, this is a provocative consideration, given how deeply ingrained the gender framework is in Western thought. However, it must be acknowledged that despite this realization, traditional masculinity is still the cultural conduit through which to acquire significant social power. Thus, one of the primary goals of enacting these forms of masculinity is to 'pass' as a man, according to the tenets of traditional masculinity (Carrigan et al., 2004; Halberstram, 1998). Regardless of the body enacting the masculinity, the masculinity is constructed to imply the existence of male genitalia and thus imply legitimate right to gender-associated social power. Ironically, despite the fact that

masculinity enacted by female bodies does not conform to the gender binary, the behaviors enacted by these female bodies does subscribe to the standards of traditional masculinity whenever physically possible.

Constructing Transgression through Language and Discourse

Thus far, gender as a social construction, the purpose of a culturally entrenched gender binary, the creation of traditional masculinity as the referent gender category, and manipulated forms of masculinity that further challenge the natural primacy of the gender binary have been examined. We will now turn our attention to consider two social power mechanisms, language and discourse, that consistently leverage themselves against individuals to maintain the social order of the gender binary. As previously discussed, gender nonconformity is the cite of consistently vitriolic public rhetoric. Wilchins (2014) suggests that "it is now acceptable to be gay, but it's still not okay to be a fag. You can be a lesbian, but not a dyke" (p. 24). As the public discourse surrounding sexuality has shifted toward biological mandate, the discourse surrounding gender nonconformity has remained characterized as rebellious challenges to the social order. At this point, it seems pertinent to consider the power of language and discourse in creating the social positioning of those who do not 'authentically' conform to the gender binary.

Language

Derrida (1982) argued that gender is a language, creating symbolic meaning as well as establishing mandates, restrictions, privileges, and consequence for how the meaning and symbols are employed in the context of the interaction between power and sexuality. We rely upon this system for meaning within ourselves, to interpret our bodies, and to engage in the world among and with other bodies. If it is as Derrida suggests, language controls our very existence at the most intimate levels. The exercise of power and domination through our daily linguistic exchanges is aptly

described in Wittig's (1992) observation that "language casts sheaves of reality upon the social body, stamping and violently shaping it" (p. 78). She further suggests that through language, society creates the desired reality of our behaviors and interactions, engineering our gender and enforcing our sex through mandates of limiting personal pronouns (Wittig, 1992). Thus, language also serves to repress that which is perceived as socially undesirable or that threatens societal power structures, such as the gender binary.

Although Foucault (1978) focused his attention on sexuality rather than gender, his assertions regarding the societal creation of definitions to repress individuals' desires to challenge or deviate from prescribed heterosexual models is useful in framing the linguistic creation of transgression regarding deviations or nonconformity to the gender binary.

First, society creates what is 'real' through the act of naming, but that which society does not recognize as 'real' goes unnamed and therefore does not exist. According to Derrida (1982), this Western tradition of privileging language has led to the cultural mistake of equating language with reality. Thus, language is at the core of defining that which is *Man* in opposition to that which is *Woman*. Having established the oppositional dichotomy of codes and meaning, language is also utilized to characterize that which society does not sanction or deem legitimate outside of those codes and meanings. Wilchins (2014) posits that gender, under the primary social privileging of linguistic reality, has suffered greatly as most "non-normative experiences of gender are excluded from language, and because what little language we have for gender transcendence is defamatory. Moreover, all of gender that is not named is also assumed not to exist, to be make-believe" (p. 44). In fact, Western language has an abundance of pejorative and negative insults to apply to those who do not fit gender norms, but not one "positive, affirming, complimentary" or even neutral word exists for individuals who do not

conform to gender norms (Wilchins, 2014, p. 43). As further confirmation of the previous discussion of manipulating masculine gender enactments being perceived as one of the worst social transgressions, Wilchins (2014) observes that Western language has more negative words associated with men who enact femininity than for women who enact masculinity. Abandoning masculinity for femininity is viewed as an affront as well as threat to the unequal power systems embedded in the gender binary.

Discourse

The second social mechanism that will be discussed as it relates to the creation of gender nonconformity as social transgression is *discourse*. Gender is an extremely powerful social construct which is foundationally bound to unequal power systems between constructed and socially reproduced men and women. Wittig (1992) also reminds us that "gender, as a concept, is instrumental in the political discourse of the social contract of heterosexuality" (p. 77). For this discussion, Foucault's (1978) concept of *discourse* is useful; it refers to a form of powerful social dialogue or discussion that establishes, utilizes, and enforces rules regarding how a society makes meaning, produces knowledge, and sanctions the desired articulation of those discourses. When considering gender norms and gender nonconformity, discourses are exceptionally instructive about how society constructs nonconformity into transgression. There are three primary discourses that create this gender transgression: legal discourse, medical or psychiatric discourse, and feminists or academic discourse. Each of these discourses are embedded with pronouncements of authority, such as methods of documentation, specialized vocabulary, professional procedures, which all leverage institutional power to expose nonadherence to gender stereotypes (Wilchins, 2014). Returning briefly to Derrida's (1982) idea of language defining reality, Western thought equates 'Reality' with 'Truth,' and consequently, the 'Truth' of gender is presumed to align with the gender

binary. This an important underpinning to understand when interrogating the purpose that these discourses serve.

By subjecting people to these discourses, the documentation, vocabulary, and procedures ‘speak’ in terms of pathology and deviance, presenting those who do not conform as “suspect populations” (Wilchins, 2014, p. 67). These social discussions do not focus on revealing how the system works to silence difference and delegitimize ambiguous identities, but rather the discourses emphasize what is culturally sanctioned as ‘real’ underneath the gender artifice that is presented. “There is an emphasis on *real-ness*, *imitation*, and the ownership of meaning (*male mannerisms*, *women’s clothes*) that re-centers and restores the Truth of binary gender” (Wilchins, 2014, p. 68). In this way, it is not the gender binary that is subjected to examination, but rather the gender transgression. Every aspect of our gendered existence is curated by a complex and pervasive interaction of language and discourses, causing us to engage in what Foucault (1977) referred to as *discipline*. He posited that the same techniques utilized in the modern prison have been covertly employed by contemporary society to foster complicit conformity in people, encouraging individuals to judge, regulate, and police our own behaviors to avoid the social consequence of being policed by others. In this way, both our gender identity and gender performance are simultaneously repressed and produced, as we are policed from within and without.

Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this analysis clearly provides strong support for the idea that Western societies engage in both covert and overt practices to reify and reproduce the gender binary. The postmodernist, feminist, and queer theoretical perspectives regarding gender as a social construction are extremely valuable in illuminating the power structures that are entrenched within the framing of gender as an oppositional, binary construct. Once the element of historically patriarchy is also acknowledged, the highly complex nature

of traditional masculinity becomes more clearly revealed. There is definitive agreement across the literature on masculinity that meeting the social mandates of traditional masculinity is fraught with constant competition, homosocial policing and regulation, and fears of emasculation. The effect of this intensive pressure is ultimately manifested in attempts to deny other men of their masculinity as well as aggressive and forceful reactions toward those who do not conform to the gender binary, particularly individuals who attempt to manipulate or alter the boundaries of traditional masculinity.

The primary research question for this analysis is *How are acts of gender nonconformity, particularly the manipulation of masculinity, been socially constructed as acts of transgression or deviance using language and discourse?* Derrida (1982), Wittig (1992), Wilchins (2014), and Foucault (1978) offer strong arguments in response to this question. In the case of language, the power structures of gender are maintained by either excluding undesirable or different gender identities or creating pejorative terms to denigrate and de-legitimize. As Derrida (1982) tells us, Western society equates that which is named as that which is ‘real.’ If no language, or only negative language, is used to interpret or assign meaning to nonconforming gender identities then those identities can be silenced, marginalized, and erased. With consideration given to manipulating masculinity, Wilchins (2014) points out that the severity in the transgression can be measured by the higher number of negative words associated with men who alter or abandon their masculinity. When considering discourses, Foucault (1978) provides important critique of how society contextualizes the social discussion of gender nonconformity as problematic or deviant. When the foundational perspective of these discourses is to reveal the ‘real’ in contrast to the ‘imitation,’ then gender nonconformity inherently becomes the transgression away from sanctioned forms of gender enactment. Although the question posed has, at least, been initially answered, that seems hardly

satisfactory given the perpetuation of a social structure that serves to viciously protect and reproduce social inequality in significant and destructive manner, while justifying the inequality through deceptive public discourses regarding sex and gender. The next question to pursue would seem to be: *How might new language and discourses be created to socially de-construct the gender binary, release both men and women from compulsory gender norms, and equalize power structures?* While attempting answer this

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question will likely take more than a lifetime, perhaps the first step is to reveal these constructs as well as how we are all trapped by them, to a greater or lesser extent.

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Medical Tourism and Its Effect on United State Healthcare Industry in a Highly Connected Global Landscape

Katarina Hasit

Executive Summary

For centuries people have traveled to other countries to obtain the best healthcare. Traditionally these popular destinations were highly developed countries; the trend of people traveling to less developed areas for treatment is relatively new. The average person is more connected to the world around them than ever before through globalization. Information about the best practices are more widely available than ever before. The importance of physical barriers to business such as geography and time are being eliminated. Due to this “flattening” per Friedman, the competition and expertise for areas in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) can be shifted overseas. The availability of information boosts the quality of hospital care in developing countries to a level of care rivaling that of developed countries, but without the excessive cost associated.

The hospitals and healthcare infrastructure of the United States are not ready to compete on this global scale of healthcare. A lack of transparency of costs, high administrative costs, and little proactive planning of infrastructure to accommodate to the trend each contribute to the United States falling behind in this competition. Increasing transparency and decreasing administrative costs can help improve the long-term infrastructure of the healthcare system to diminish the potential financial impact of people traveling abroad for cheaper but high-quality procedures. A medical facilitator could be incorporated into the hospital infrastructure to help retain some of the lost earnings. The facilitator would work with foreign hospitals and centers of excellence to coordinate travel, accommodations, translators, and after-care back at the domestic hospital. Legal liability would then be mitigated through education of the patient from the medical facilitator instead of a physician recommendation. By offering these services for the patient, the hospital can still receive a portion of the income and improve customer satisfaction rather than lose

out to customers traveling on their own or opting not to have the expensive procedure all together.

History of Medical Tourism

The concept of medical tourism is not a new age topic in the healthcare field. Greek pilgrims were among the first recorded occurrence of medical tourism when they traveled from the Mediterranean to Epidauria, a small territory in the Saronic Gulf (Tsolakidou, 2012). The area was the sanctuary of the healing god Asklepios and Hygeia; the healing abilities of these holy hot springs were widely believed (Tsolakidou, 2012). People were drawn to these locations in large numbers, and locations that wanted to differentiate themselves from their competition would incorporate activities such as gambling casinos, dancing, or other social activities (Weisz, 2011). Therefore, for more than 2500 years the idea of travel for health of the body and mind has been around.

During the early 1900s, Europe and the United States were known for their very progressive and forward thinking medical field. Many people from developing countries traveled for treatment in developed countries for their ailments that were beyond the medical capabilities in their home country. Due to “rapid scientific discovery and medical progress in the ensuing decades stimulated a proliferation of medical facilities in developed nations, making the latest clinical techniques and technological innovations increasingly available to the citizens of these countries” (IMTJ, 2008). These same treatments were unavailable or offered at a lower quality to those in the developing country, so people living in these countries were traditionally forced to travel for top of the line medical care. This line of thinking illustrates the traditional view of medical tourism.

Shifting Trends in Medical Tourism

Comparative to ancient times, medical tourism in recent years has changed with the global trends. In Friedman’s “World is Flat” paper, he stated that many events from 1989 to around the year 2000 lead to a flattening of the

world. His definition of a flat world refers to the ability for the anyone in the world to be able to collaborate and transfer ideas in real time no matter their geography, distance, and potentially language (Friedman, 2005). These traditional barriers to the transfer of information are becoming less significant. Information about healthcare procedures, quality, and qualifications of doctors can now easily be looked up and compared using the internet. Global competition for talent and resources will only increase if this trend continues.

Friedman suggests that in modern America, we have three issues that are causing gaps between the United States and other parts of the world. These are ambition, numbers, and education (Friedman, 2005). American children may feel a sense of entitlement when compared to other people their age in different areas of the world. The average American child then lacks ambition and devotion to do as much when compared to children in China or India and their drive for self-betterment, creating the first gap. Compounding this issue is the number gap. This refers to the number of children in the United States who are not going into STEM fields. When compared to other countries, there are less qualified people domestically in STEM fields. We are creating a shortage of these jobs within the United States, so companies are forced to look elsewhere to fill these positions. Friedman suggests that companies can get better-skilled and more productive workers, sometimes for less pay than American workers (Friedman, 2005). It is theorized the education gap is due in part to the first two issues along with less emphasis placed on the content of the United States STEM fields in lower education. This could have a major impact on the healthcare system since it falls into the STEM category.

Another reason for the shift toward medical tourism is the increase in access to higher education for people in developing countries. Many opportunities for postgraduate medical education for those living in developing nations involve travel to

industrialized countries in North America and Europe. Upon finishing medical school, some certified physicians stay in the developed country to practice medicine. Others return to their home country to practice medicine and improve the current trend of healthcare in their home country (IMTJ, 2008). Through increased access to education due to globalization, physicians in developing countries can work to meet and potentially exceed international qualifications and board certification while serving domestic and international patients.

Reversal of Medical Tourism

Many medical patients in traditionally developing countries are no longer forced to travel to the United States or Europe to have more advanced procedures performed. Instead, the medical travelers now come from developed countries seeking out better value with faster treatment times and cheaper costs in less developed countries. (IMJT 2008). The traditional drivers of medical travelers of high quality procedures have been diminished. Many hospitals around the world in multiple countries are in competition on the global scale, raising the total quality offered to patients in their care. Today's conscientious patients are increasingly balancing "health needs against many other considerations, and medical concerns may even be subordinate to other issues such as allocation of personal resources (IMJT 2008)". If a patient cannot afford to pay for a treatment in the United States, the patient may settle for a cheaper procedure somewhere else that may not be top in their field, but still safe.

Drivers of New Age Medical Tourism

Costs may be the main reason for the reversal of the medical tourism trend. A movement toward free access to healthcare has recently gained support to alleviate the motivation to travel to other countries for medical procedures. While the primary driver of medical tourism would be voided, another driver would just compound the higher efflux of people that would want to travel due to avoid long wait time. To quantify the

difference in wait times: in 2005 if a person received a referral for a hip or knee replacement, they could receive treatment within a couple days if at a medical tourism destination. The same person in British Columbia, Canada would have to wait 21.8 and 28.3 weeks for a hip or knee replacement respectively (Asian Pacific Post 2005). The promptness of a cure can help prevent long term injury in the case of many medical issues. Traveling to reduce wait times can be more beneficial for the patient's health for these scenarios.

The motivation for medical tourism is further extrapolated by people who are underinsured or not insured at all. If the patient's insurance does not cover all the expenses, or the patient doesn't have insurance, the patient is more likely to seek low cost medical treatments abroad (Horowitz and Rosensweig 2007). Options for people with little to no medical insurance were to pay the excessive costs and go into debt or not getting the procedure done promptly and gamble that their health condition will not deteriorate while they come up with the difference. Through medical tourism, patients could get the procedure they need at a portion of total cost.

An additional driving force causing people to travel from developed countries to developing countries for procedures is the domestic inaccessibility of certain medical treatments. These medical treatments could be elective surgeries not covered by insurance or controversial operations that have legal barriers. These treatments could include stem cell therapy, joint resurfacing, disc replacement, reproductive therapy, and sexual reassignment surgery (Horowitz and Rosensweig, 2007). Many of these procedures are not viewed as necessary by the domestic insurance company. People who are willing to travel to a certified developing country's hospital will save money in travel costs and in the out of pocket cost of the procedure.

Medical Tourism Quality

Many people mentally associate medical tourism with high risks and unsanitary

conditions. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warns about general risks that patients traveling around the world may face with medical tourism but specific risks are based on the area being visited. The CDC identifies risks including a communication barrier if you don't speak the native language and do not have an interpreter, counterfeit medication, increase risk of blood clots from flying after surgery, and increase risk of antibiotic resistant bacteria. (CDC 2016). The CDC also recommends checking the qualifications and credentials of the facility where the procedure will take place. Travelers need to remember that the standard of care in the United States may not be the same when traveling to other institutions around the world. The Joint Commission International, DNV International Accreditation for Hospitals, and the International Society for Quality in Healthcare are among the few accrediting agencies that have lists of standards that facilities need to meet to be accredited (CDC 2016). When choosing a facility abroad for medical treatment, it is imperative to look for international high caliber accreditations to attempt to reduce the risk of low quality operations.

Centers of Excellence Example

Many accreditation organizations have given accreditation to locations around the world known as Centers of Excellence. One such center is Bumrungrad International Hospital in Bangkok, Thailand. Bumrungrad opened its main facility in 1977 and outpatient clinic opened in 2008 (Bumrungrad 2017). Their website is easy to navigate and offers multiple services for medical tourist. Their special international services include "over 150 interpreters, international/airport concierge service, embassy assistance, VIP airport transfers, e-mail contact center, international insurance coordination and international medical coordinators, visa extension counter, and Muslim prayer room (Bumrungrad 2017)". The hospital was the first Asian hospital accredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI) which also accredits

hospitals in the United States. Bumrungrad International Hospital was accredited in 2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, and 2014. Furthermore, Bumrungrad International Hospital was awarded “Best Website for International Medical Travel” award during the 2008 Consumer Health World Awards, USA.

Bumrungrad International Hospital is also recognized as a referral center. Their medical coordination office is open 24 hours a day to assist with referrals from around the world. Their team of seven doctors and 12 nurses work to coordinate schedules and procedures, family questions during treatment, and follow-up care planning. (Bumrungrad 2017). By having interpreters for many different languages, the communication risk is reduced for the medical tourist. Medical tourists who travel to centers of excellence know they are in good hands based on the communication, certification, and transparency of care.

Tourists should research into the country, hospital, and doctors to help mediate some of the concerns of lower quality care that occur abroad. Through research, tourists can learn that the Bumrungrad International Hospital is an excellent example of the capable services offered overseas. Having the misconception that the quality of medical care is the same no matter where patients go within another country can have detrimental lasting effects on their medical health. Other hospitals in Thailand may try to compete for traveling medical customers but may not have the same qualifications. Therefore, the patient needs to be cautious when making the decision to seek professional medical attention abroad.

Medical Tourism Association

The Medical Tourism Association (MTA) is a nonprofit international organization to help people interested in medical tourism. MTA works with “healthcare providers, governments, insurance companies, employers and other buyers of healthcare-in their medical tourism, international patient, and healthcare initiatives. (MTA 2017)”. MTA wants to see an increase in consumer awareness

about their international healthcare options and an increase in the number of medical tourists.

MTA Educational Curriculum Collaborations

The MTA offers education and certification to people and colleges who are interested in incorporating the medical tourism industry into their curriculum. MTA specifically offers cross-training programs for educational institutions for multiple academic paths including medicine and healthcare, tourism and hospitality, wellness and business (MTA 2017). Some programs can be on topics detailing physician leadership, quality improvement, patient safety, cultural competence and patient experience. As more universities across the country see the increase in the industry of medical tourism, the demand for these kinds of programs can be inferred to increase.

MTA strategic alliance Global Healthcare Accreditation

Global Healthcare Accreditation (GHA) Program is an accreditation for hospitals, dental clinics, ambulatory centers, or independent practitioner offices when serving medical tourist and medical travelers (MTA 2017). The GHA evaluates overall performance and streamlined function for an overall positive experience for patients and their families. GHA suggests “the rising health tourism and medical travel industries provide opportunity for many medical institutions to develop strong profit centers around services offered to traveling patients and health and wellness seekers (MTA 2017)”. As people share their experience at facilities specializing in international health such as at facilities like Bumrungrad International Hospital, more people will follow suit.

Recommendation for United States Hospitals

Centers of excellence such as Bumrungrad are becoming an increasingly viable option for those living in the United States. Domestic hospitals may face a decrease in profits from elective procedures because of

this. A study done by Gill and Singh explored the interest in medical tourism in the United States travelers. The study identified three main factors when deciding to receive care domestically or abroad: competent doctors, high quality medical treatment facility, and prompt medical treatment when needed (Gill and Singh 2011). The first two factors can easily be found in the United States at facilities such as John Hopkins or other top medical facilities. These international centers of excellence must compete internationally for clients in the modern era of globalization. The competition and comparison of “competent” doctors and “high” quality is necessary not only with other domestic hospitals, but in comparison to Bumrungrad and similar competitors. The quest for quality and competitive advantage must continue to innovate and push the expectation to retain and potentially gain clients as international locations become more a more feasible option.

Long Term Solution for Hospitals in the United States

If the international standard of quality is similar, many people may not want to pay for a heart bypass that could cost around \$123,000 in the United States when patients could go to facilities in Thailand and receive the same treatment for \$13,000 (Lunt et al, 2011). In the United States, the per capita healthcare costs are far beyond those of any other nation in the world. In 2002, the cost per person for healthcare in the United States averaged \$5267 (Bodenheimer 2005). Thus, if the quality of the hospitals is similar, the wait time is probably less, and the procedure is around a tenth of the cost, the international option in Thailand is a feasible option. Furthermore, the patient can usually bring their family and have a mini-vacation in another country while they are healing post-operative. Domestically the hospitals need to do something to combat the potential loss of revenue as more people start to see the viability of this option.

Medical Reform

The medical care system of the United States must be reformed to lower costs. The

United States faces a growing loss in patient numbers as more people are traveling out of country for medical treatment than those traveling to the United States from other countries. The excessive costs associated with medical care is one of the main reasons medical tourists look outside the United States for medical treatment (George 2013). While many blame the pharmaceutical companies, around 14% of healthcare costs in the nation were administration costs. Of that 14%, around half was estimated to be wasteful, or around \$180 billion annually in 2012 (Wikler et.all 2012).

Completely free access to healthcare will not fix the drive for medical tourism, but lowering the costs may deter some people from the cost savings for the inconvenience of traveling. The difference of \$110,000 for similar quality of care in heart bypass costs is an easy decision, but if the difference was only \$5000 or so the drive would not be as strong. According to patient behavior, customers of the healthcare industry are savvier when spending their own money instead of insurance companies’ (Herrick 2003). This means that if the patient is fully insured and not spending their own money, they are more likely to accrue the \$110,000 extra cost compared to if they had to pay that out of pocket. By using a third-party payment method through an insurance company, employer, or government, cost analysis is reduced for the consumer when seeking quality of care.

Transparency

Another reason why customers also may not seek the best costs is the lack of transparency in medical costs. For example, when people in the United States think of the last time they had to go for a doctor visit, they usually go somewhere that has been recommended by others and takes their insurance. Rarely do people compare what the cost difference between doctor offices are when making decisions. The MTA is working towards a Quality of Care Project that will look for one methodology to quantify healthcare cost reporting. The program would allow multiple stakeholders such as insurance

companies, employers, and patients to compare international hospitals' quality of care with others around the world (MTA 2017). The research will also allow patients to obtain information about quality, costs, patient volumes and patient safety. Through an increase in transparency, the global market can be completely open to competition for top quality doctors and affordable costs.

Short term solution

Policy reform and changing infrastructure for the healthcare system will take significant time and planning. In the meantime, the healthcare industry is potentially still losing the race for healthcare quality at affordable prices in the global market. Currently, the medical tourism threat is not pressing enough to give many hospitals cause for alarm. Instead of waiting until it is too late, hospitals in the United States should begin to implement changes to be proactive in the global market of healthcare. One potential avenue is expanding options in the hospital to include a medical facilitator office.

Medical Facilitators

The role of a medical facilitator is to work to bridge patients who are interested in being medical tourists with facilities rated for high quality and patient safety (Synder et. All 2011). Their role can include: "booking transportation and hotel accommodation; arranging for medical services and tourist packages; transferring medical records and arranging for follow-up care in the home country (Synder et. All 2011)". Because the role of the facilitator is to work with hospitals and patients around the world, one can infer that medical facilitators would have the ability to screen the facilities with inadequate quality to increase the likelihood of a positive experience for the patient in comparison to the patient researching the topic on their own.

There are multiple ethical dilemmas that come from the role of medical facilitators. One of the main concerns is commission received from sending patients to facilities paid by third-party sources (Synder et. All 2011). Some third-parties may pay more as

commissions for medical facilitators that they have worked with in the past. Therefore, a medical facilitator may face an ethical dilemma to channel patients through that third-party to certain programs instead of a program that may be better for them. Patients may trust the facilitator to have their best interest at heart, but the medical facilitator could be sending the patient to the place that will pay the biggest commission instead of the best quality for the patient.

If a hospital was to incorporate a medical facilitator branch into the hospital infrastructure, the hospital can help mediate people coming to the United States for treatment. Furthermore, the facilitator branch can help patients who are interested in traveling abroad for medical care. The idea may seem counterintuitive to offer information for sending patients away from the institution, but a partial payment is better than receiving a net income of zero from the patient who travels for the procedure. Furthermore, the hospital can create a culture of improving care to customers that may not be able to afford the procedure at the hospital. These customers may be the underinsured or the unemployed. The hospital can make a contract and liability waiver for the patient who will travel to another country for the procedure and the hospital can perform the aftercare on the patient. Therefore, the hospital will net a portion of the administrative costs that would normally be received from the medical facilitator office outside the hospital infrastructure and make money on the post-operative care received by the patient upon their return home.

The benefits to incorporating a medical facilitator to domestic hospitals go beyond building relationships with patients and customers. Hospitals can build a positive working partnership with other hospitals around the world. They can share best practices and work to continue pushing the standard of care. Innovation can flourish with positive competition, and such a partnership would allow the correspondence of ideas

across nations. The ethical dilemma would be reduced from the biggest commissions since the medical facilitator's job would be a part of the hospital infrastructure. A pay schedule with a lowered focus on commission would lower the risk of an ethical issue of sending someone to a lower quality location for a higher pay check.

Case Study (Weiss et. all 2010)

The following case study published in the journal *Surgery* in 2010 can emphasize the importance of having a medical facilitator within the hospital to move the decision of a referral from a surgeon to the facilitator. With the suggested new infrastructure, the patient will still receive the best care and the surgeon can focus on medicine instead of tourism, advice that the surgeon may not be fully aware of all the aspects.

A surgeon was presented with an ethical dilemma from a 45-year-old underinsured man under consideration for bariatric treatment for morbid obesity. The surgeon recommends a gastric banding procedure that was denied multiple times by the man's insurance company. The insurance company offers the option for the man to travel to Bangkok for the procedure that would also include 4-star accommodations for the man and his wife at a seaside rehabilitation center. The man asks his surgeon for his medical opinion for what he should do. (Weiss et.all 2010).

The surgeon can either give a positive or negative recommendation. The case study identifies four options that the surgeon can do. The negative recommendation can be due to bad medicine from medical tourism or that medical tourism is bad for Thailand's healthcare system. The positive recommendation is to say yes and agree that the surgeon will resume care upon return. Furthermore, the surgeon can decide if they should require a release form or not to waive liability of any faulty medical work done in Bangkok. The main predicament for this case study is that the morbidly obese man has tried multiple times and simply cannot afford the

procedure in his home country. He seems out of options and is looking for assurance from his surgeon.

Option One

If the surgeon says that medical tourism is bad medicine, the logic may be in line with the ethical principle of non-maleficence. Non-maleficence means that physicians should not inflict avoidable harm, or set a patient in harm's way (Weiss et.all 2010). This ethical principle can arguably be avoided by the potential location of the hospital that the man is considering. For example, if the man went to the Bumrungrad Hospital in Bangkok, Thailand that advertises the accreditations the hospital has through internationally acknowledged organizations such as Trent International Accreditation Scheme or the (JCI). The idea of potential harm would be mediated by the standard of care offered compared to another hospital in the region that may not have the same standards.

Furthermore, if something happened to the patient, there lacks a precedent for suing an insurance company for directing a patient to acceptable care that has the potential to be suboptimal care for either a domestic or international case (Weiss et.all 2010). Instead there are precedents for suing a health maintenance organization for going against a consulting surgeon's recommendation that results in adverse effects for the patient. Consequently, the patient may push to sue the surgeon instead of the insurance company if there were any issues with the gastric banding procedure because the surgeon gave his recommendation. Therefore, the surgeon could have legal liabilities of a referral if something went wrong.

Option Two

The surgeon does not give his recommendation due to medical tourism being bad for Thailand's healthcare system. The ethical principle of justice is under consideration for option two. Justice related to how the healthcare resources be allocated in equitable fashion (Weiss et.all 2010). This argument takes into consideration the effect of

crowding out that can occur when too many travelers are coming around the world to one location. These travelers can inadvertently be taking resources away from the domestic population in need of high quality health services. Why should one person be favored for international medical tourism instead of the population of the home country if healthcare resources are in high demand? For example, if the gastric banding appointment takes precedence over someone in Thailand there may be cause for concern of injustice to the domestic population.

Some argue that medical tourism spurs a trickle-down effect for both economic and technological advances while enhancing the quality care centers in the home country by operating at (or beyond) Western medical standards. The opposition to this idea is that the benefits to medical tourism do not outweigh the costs to the local populations. These costs could be as simple as “brain drain”, implying that the trained professionals time and efforts are diverted from local patients to those abroad. Furthermore, that the trained professionals could get worn out from the excess amount of work from medical tourist and then lower their quality to all visitors to their clinic. (Weiss et. all 210). The main two questions then become “are the global economic strategies put forward by prosperous nations also in the best interest of the rest of the world’s people” and “do the economic benefits of medical tourism accrue to local populations” (Weiss et.all 2010). During an evaluation of Thailand’s medical tourism, Ramirez de Arellano found health personnel moving from the public to the private sector is already occurring, which resulted in the reinforcement and worsening of a health-care system that was two-tiered. His claim is currently being evaluated by international organizations. Among them are the World Health Organization and the World Bank. (de Arellano 2007)

Option Three

The surgeon agrees to give his recommendation and agrees to resume care to

the man upon his return from Thailand. The ethical principle in option three that is under debate is beneficence. Beneficence means that the surgeon should promote wellbeing and what is best for the patient (Weiss et.all 2010). This recommendation recognizes the patient’s autonomy. This decision would support the American Medical Association and American Cancer Society guidelines for medical tourism that clearly states that patients must be able to pursue care at a location of their choosing (Weiss et. all 2010)

An article by Rhodes and Schiano dealing with the ethics of transplant tourism claims that surgeons have a fiduciary responsibility for their patient instead of all other individual opinions, political agendas, or justice for the medical system. For a physician to be acting ethically per this article, the physician must choose to act within the ethical principle of beneficence for the patient instead of any personal reasons to decide differently. The physician then may be advocating for the patient potentially at the cost of personal beliefs for the physician.

Advocating for the patient may include education for the patient themselves. The patient must be educated on the requirements for post-operative care and what the doctor would need from the foreign surgeon. The foreign surgeon would have to send copies of records, images, and potential treatment plan to the physician in the patient’s home country. The transferring of documentation has the potential for communication issues from cultural differences, language barriers, or what seems like small misunderstandings, which could be a determinate for the patient. The patient would have to be aware of the potential for miscommunication when deciding where to have the post-operative care. (Weiss et.all 2010).

Option Four

The surgeon agrees to give his recommendation for the surgery abroad and offers to continue follow up care for the patient if they sign an informed consent document. The compromise in option four

allows the physician to satisfy both the ethical principles of beneficence and physician autonomy. The physician would follow the same discussion about follow up care as with option three, but option four limits the liability to the physician if the patient had some issues with the foreign surgery. This option primarily differs from the previous in legal terms rather than a difference in medical procedure. The jurisdiction for issues concerning medical care is the location of the hospitals and the physician, not the patients' national origin (Weiss et.all 2010). The level of compensation for cases of malpractice is a lot lower in developing countries than in the United States. Thus, if the surgeon chooses option four, an ethical surgeon would explain the potential for compensation for a serious case of malpractice abroad would be insignificant compared to what the patient would receive from a domestic case. The ethical surgeon's pursuing beneficence might require support of an operation in a foreign country, then the prudent surgeon must understand the legal implications of shifting the decision to the patient (Weiss et.all 2010).

The informed consent document should be provided for the patient before the patient decides to have the surgery abroad instead of within the United States. The document should contain an explicit list of likely and unlikely risks involved in foreign medical care, the surgeon's lack of control or potential lack of knowledge in qualifications of the foreign doctor or hospital staff, and potential for the surgeon not being able to fix any issues involved from the surgery if a case of severe malpractice occurs (Weiss et.all 2010). A very detailed document would likely prevent the surgeon from being liable in a U.S court; informed consent documentation does not offer protection from being named in the lawsuit. In consequence, the surgeon could have indirect costs from another surgeon's malpractice because he gave the recommendation for the patient. (Weiss et.all 2010).

Conclusion

If the current trend of medical tourism continues, the health care system in the United States needs to make changes to be able to effectively compete on the global scale. The United States needs to actively be increasing transparency of costs while lowering administrative costs to decrease inflation of overall costs. Customers can now travel abroad for the same high quality procedures that are performed in the United States, potentially leveling the playing field of competition. The healthcare industry must increase productivity and quality after reducing costs to stay globally competitive.

On a short-term scale, hospitals should move to adding medical facilitators to the infrastructure of the healthcare system. This will allow legal liability to shift from physicians and help advocate and educate patients who are in need of a procedure that is difficult to obtain in the United States for a variety of reasons. Instead of having patients go through third-party facilitators to find information and resources for your competitors, maintaining them within the hospital can help retain some revenue and build partnerships around the world with centers of excellence.

The healthcare system in the United States can continue to be successful in the globally competitive, modern world by working on both a short-term and long-term scale toward solutions. Medical tourism will only continue to increase in popularity as more people hear and share positive experiences compared to the costs found domestically. The United States must be productive and proactive in making changes in the healthcare system before they lose revenue and customers for elective surgery abroad.

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African American Adolescent Males' Experiences within the Education System: Implications for School Counseling Practice

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Abstract

This article examines the literature on the experiences of African American adolescent males in the education system. The primary focus of the article is to explore the following: historical accounts dating back to the transatlantic slavery era; Disciplinary Disparities within the education system Postsecondary opportunities. Implications for counselor education and practice are discussed. The author concludes with recommendations to improve the experiences of African American adolescent males within the educational system.

Key words: African American adolescent male, education disparities, negative racial stereotypes.

Introduction

Throughout history African American men and women have been forerunners in the strengthening of the United States. These accomplishments include but are not limited to new inventions, leading multiple reforms, overcoming obstacles and breaking down barriers, all of which impede a safe environment (Franklin & Moss, 2001). One of the most widely discussed topics since the 1970's has been African American adolescent males' place in society. Issues surrounding this topic include overrepresentation in special education and the school to prison pipeline, high school dropout, unemployment, incarceration and homicide rates. These sub-topics have placed African American adolescent males in the headlines as social scientist question if black males are at risk for danger within our society (Garibaldi, 2007).

Research shows that African American adolescent males are falling behind their female counterparts on most educational performance measures. This disparity includes low high school graduation rates and low college enrollment. When compared to other racial and ethnic groups, African American

adolescent males are losing educational and economical ground (Bailey & Paisley, 2004). Most schools in the United States have failed to address the systems in place that create struggles for African American adolescent males. Historically, educational institutions and educators have been among the most active and effective instrument for oppression of African Americans (Thomas, Coard, Stevenson, Bentley, & Zamel, 2009). Schools and teachers need to be supported in meeting the needs of African American adolescent males. A critical competent of support includes increasing the ability of the school to contribute to African Adolescent males' development.

Researchers state that the achievement gap is both an observable and measurable discrepancy between the academic performance of African American Students and the performance of their Caucasian counterparts (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003, p. 120-147). According to one study, Research Center on Academic Success (2005), this gap can be observed and measured using a variety of variables, one such example is by examining grade point average (GPA). Pervious research has accurately documented the persistent patterns of negative educational outcome amongst African American adolescent males (Haycock, 2001; Ogbu, 2003). Additional related research has shown that psychological dysfunction is directly related to academic underachievement in African American Adolescent males (Gougis, 1986).

The experiences of young African American males in general are not being discussed or disseminated in the school counseling literature. As one conducts a survey the Journal of counseling and Development within the last 15 years, using "African American Adolescent males" as key words in publication title search, only 10 articles were the focus of attention. The same search was conducted via Professional School Counseling Journal and only one article was found. This

lack of information is an issue because the ethical guidelines states that school counselors should serve as an advocate for all students in accessing resources and postsecondary opportunities.

This is a further issue because there has been discussions in college and career readiness initiated by the White House on the urgency of African American education. There is a need for school counselors to be on board with this current movement. The basic experiences of African American Adolescent males within the education system are missing. The purpose of this article is to discuss the experiences of African American Adolescent males in our education system in the United States. Implications for the counseling profession will be discussed.

Literature Review History of African American Adolescent Males

The lived experience of slavery continues to oppress the lives of African American adolescent males today. Although the interaction and intermixing between Europeans and Africans is a long-complicated affair, the racial constructs of masculinity from the transatlantic slave trade are still present today (Palmer, 2006). Wallace (2007) asked the question, "Are we MEN?" but later answered through the history of racial reform by prominent figures within the black male community. These prominent men demonstrated independence, political literacy, ownership of property, and attainment of social degree through inheritance (Wallace, 2007). African American youth's history of hardship, inferiority and lack of educational opportunities are linked back to the transatlantic slave trade.

There was a turn in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries of how black males are viewed. This was due to their outstanding performance in sports, popular music, politics, the military and the entertainment industry. Palmer (2007) captured this revelation of the perception of "Good Negros" who demonstrated competence in alliance with their white

counterparts. This positive media attention did not last very long as white men were threatened by black males who were making a difference in society. Soon the media would begin to portray black males as a community in crisis. Black males were now reported to be performing at lower educational levels, missing from the family structure (as evidenced by a high rate of female-headed black families), and were seen generally as drug addicts, as having high rates of suicide, and responsible for initiating the AIDS epidemic. These issues and others placed black males in a category of being perceived as problematic and as a liability to society (Palmer, 2007).

In a study conducted by Campbell, (2006) he states that women and children comprised 25 % of the slave workforce of the North American Colonies. He further recorded that healthy children were highly sought after to be slaves in the United States and other regions of the Americas, as they were more likely to survive the Journey when compared to adults. According to Pargas, (2011) the reality for children born to African American Slaves was different. He states that slave children spent much of their time playing among themselves or with their white counterparts. As they grew older some were assigned minor chores. Pasierowska, (2016) study states that things started to change around age 10 for an African American Child. Some scholars have evidenced that other African Americans start working in the field as early as age 8 (Campbell 2006; Pargas 2011).

Some of the changes experienced by African American children during slavery, as they grew older, they were task with taking care of their younger infant brothers and sister, working for the slave master by sleeping on their bedroom floor or even performing light chores like collecting trash and stones on the estate (Paragas 2011). Some children were initially valued as quarter or half –hands, but as they grew older they were substitutes for adult workers and eventually replaced them. Children were seen as the property of slave owners and were subject to authority

punishment and possible separation from their parents.

Children became immune to separation as the cycle continues throughout their youthful days. Pasierowska (2016) states that at age 10 some African American Children begin to question their identity when they perceived that they were slaves. This psychological journey for enslaved children led to believe that they were inferior from their white playmates. Many children see themselves as different when white children attended school for the first time and leave them behind. Campbell (2011) states that slave children experienced feelings of difference and inequality, which is a common instance when children realized they were enslaved. This realization prompts enslaved children to enter a transition from innocence to recognition of not being a free individual but a slave (Pasierowska 2016).

The views of education during slavery for enslaved children continue to have implications today. Since going to school was not an option for enslaved children, they were often found learning from their white playmates that taught them how to read (Campbell 2006). This was not an option for everyone since boys were less likely to be assisting in the house. Girls were more likely to learn how to read and were often found with books on the plantation (Pagaras 2011).

Education for slave children was a huge topic entering the Nineteenth Century. According to Henry (2013), the passage of Brown V. Board of Education placed African American children at a disadvantage when compared to their white counterparts. May 17, 2016 will mark 60 years since the inception of segregating public schools by race. This history of segregation continues to contribute to the experiences of African American adolescent males. According to Rothstein (2014), black children are more racially and socioeconomically isolated today than at any other time since 1970. He argues that inequalities still exist, although the numbers may be smaller today than 46 years ago. African

American children are exposed to segregation because some communities in which schools are located are segregated (Rothstein, 2014).

Historically, low expectations for academic achievement of black males by classroom teachers have also contributed to the challenges faced by African American adolescent males today. In a study conducted in New Orleans Public Schools during the 1986-1987 school year, African American males accounted for 65% of total suspensions, 80% of all expulsions, 58% of non-promotions and 45% of dropouts (Garibaldi, 2007). A similar study conducted in 2009 in the Chicago Public School system found African American males had a 35% lower graduation rate than whites and Hispanics, and a 61% high school dropout rate respectively (Mezuk, 2009). This same study found that 25% of African American males researched read below the basic level and nearly 40% of those who graduated high school lacked literacy skills required by employers. These findings have laid the groundwork for further ridicule from the media and others in society. For some, this is a confirmation of their views on African American adolescent males within the educational system (Knapp, Reid, Grinder, 2009).

Disciplinary Disparities

Teacher's student relationship of African American students in secondary school setting that are viewed as dysfunctional is not a small issue (Neal, McCray, Webb- Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003). Hunter (2015) gives several examples of teachers bias in the classroom toward African American students. She states that school discipline procedures have a direct connection to hierarchies of race and color. Further, Thomas, Coard, Stevenson, Bentley, & Zamel, (2009) state that teachers' racial bias has led to the disproportionate reports of behavioral adjustment problems in the classroom for African American males. The same study pointed out that teachers' negative perceptions and expectations of African American males have led to rating higher in

behavioral and academic problems when compared to White children.

Many researchers have highlighted a plethora of inequalities that exist in the discipline of African American boys in schools. For example, Kim, Losen, & Hewitt (2010) states that African American boys are more likely to be removed from the classroom, more likely to experience school suspension and more likely to be expelled from school all together. Moore (2009) emphasized the increased use of school police at Black and Latina/o schools to re-enforce juvenile justice policies passed by legislature. He argued that this practice has significantly increased the disproportionate discipline of students of color. There is evidence that these school disciplinary procedures are linked to the juvenile justice system. According to (Ferguson, 2000) imbalanced school discipline rates have overwhelming implications for the incarceration rates of students of color. Students who experience formal discipline at school are significantly more likely to be incarcerated in the adult criminal justice system (Civil Right Project, 2000).

African American Adolescent males have been subjected to racial bias and racism in general within the school system, which causes psychological stress. According to Harrell (2000) race related stress is the direct result of chronic and continuous exposure to racist events and interactions. African American Adolescent males who are constantly exposed to an atmosphere with racially threatening stimuli are likely to experience mental and emotional stress related symptoms. It has been empirically documented by past researchers that race related stress has a direct link between psychological distress (Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003). When elevated stress is experienced, the result has a direct relationship on adolescent behavior. Nyborg & Curry (2003) espoused that African American adolescent males who reported being exposed to constant racism regularly are diagnosed with several mental health issues.

Post-Secondary Opportunities

The debate over what can be done to make education equal for all students, especially African Americans who continue to struggle, is a major topic in many circles. The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans, an executive order issued in 2012 from President Obama, provides a trajectory in the form of a national policy regarding African American education. Some of the missions of the policy include: a decrease in the disproportionate number of referrals of African American children to special education; a reduction in the dropout rates of African American students, coupled with effective support to help them graduate high school; increasing college access for African American students; and enhancing the educational and life opportunities of African Americans through family and community. (*White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans*, 2012)

This initiative, has increase a surge of research interest and momentum around the potential for change. One such leading notion is that of college and career readiness. According to Bryant (2013), College and career readiness will require changes within the education system. It has been identified through research that the education system is not currently doing the best job in ensuring equality for all children. This is particularly true for high-poverty and high-minority schools, which contain high rates of African American males. In 2014, Barber's study states that college and career readiness programs are still using traditional high stakes testing which has historically served to eliminate students of color from college enrollment opportunities, especially African American males. This tradition of testing as an indicator for readiness is supported by the dominant culture.

Equalizing college and career readiness opportunities continues to be a major focus of the education reform movement. Although this remains true, racial disparity is still an issue. According to the US Department of Education, the percentage of Black students enrolled in college between 1976 and 2012 rose

from 10 percent to 15 percent, compared to white students whose enrollment numbers decreased from 84 percent to 60 percent. The discussion on lack of college and career readiness for African American students is placed on the students' families and attributed to communities' deficits. Bryant (2014) argues that equal discussion and focus should be given to the impact of deficiencies and disparities of the school systems, especially those with high-minority students, not only laying this responsibility at the feet of families and communities.

School counselors have also adopted programs geared toward college and career readiness. The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) is on board through the development of mindsets & behaviors for student's success. According to *ASCA* (2014), these mindsets and behaviors are based on review of research and college and career readiness documents throughout the years with suggested strategies to improve students' achievement. However, there is no evidence that suggests that these mindsets have made a significant change in the lives of African American students. Schiness & Todd (2014) state that findings suggest that stakeholders of our education system should be helped to understand the importance of early interventions in the expectation and preparation to enter college. As school counselors, ongoing data and the ability to analyze the results can produce much change in the student body (Notestine, 2015). Lack of preparation for postsecondary opportunities places African American Adolescent males at a disadvantage when compared to other racial groups.

Discussion

This article has examined the literature regarding the experiences of African American adolescent males in our education system. The literature reveals that while several solutions have been suggested, educators have not followed through to achieve success. African American adolescent males are told that there are boundless opportunities and that they must

play by the rules to achieve them. It is clear throughout the literature that the ancestral experience of slavery continues to impact young African American males creating current experiences of oppression, marginalization, and racism.

The high school dropout and unemployment rates of young African American males continue to be a major concern. Many are not able to sustain jobs because they lack the skills employers require. It was clear from the literature that this is one of the main frustrations within the young African American male population. This finding underscores that African Americans are not provided with even ground from the start. Lack of advocacy, insight, and poor leadership in governmental economical strategies to alleviate the cause has led to the repetitive production of inequality and an uneven playing field for young African American males.

Institutional racism can be dismantled with all hands-on deck. The data has proven that young African American males are in crisis, and plunging deeper each day. It is clear in the literature that cultural awareness of those who work in institutions that can produce sustainable change should be examined, and in most cases, improved. One place to start is to understand what many of these students encounter in their daily lives. The earlier in life this is started, the more likely it is to decrease the levels of worry about being victims of violent crimes, being treated unfairly by the police and being victims of racial discrimination. Education plays a significant role in economic stability of any individuals who have equal opportunities to what it offers. Many researchers in the literature alluded to the disadvantages young African American males face without a solid education.

Implications for Counselor Education Research and Practice

The literature review revealed that the lives of some African American adolescent males are not improving in general due to many variables beyond their control. Racism and

marginalization have had a severe impact on their social and emotional well-being. It is from this background that many seek the help of school counselors when they feel hopeless and helpless in the school setting. Those who are high school dropouts or in post-secondary categories may seek counseling from other community agencies where accessible. Counselors have an ethical responsibility to provide treatment in a nonthreatening, nonjudgmental environment so as not to cause harm to clients. School counselors are ethically bound to provide advocacy for policy changes to address the experiences of all students in the education system.

School counselors are in a position of power to lead the charge to advocate for equality and social justice for all students. Lack of knowledge of African American cultural norms and multicultural incompetence among counselors in general creates the risk of misdiagnosis. Clients are aware when counselors are uncomfortable and unwilling to uncover or probe for problems that are below the surface.

School counselors should be aware of the impact of the negative historical legacy on African American children who are seen as inferior and not possessing higher order thinking. These beliefs must be challenged through leadership and advocacy through assessment and evaluation of their daily functioning. School counselors must watch for warning signs of distress among young African American males and render practical solutions to help bring about stability and balance. It is important for counselors to challenge their own value systems, attitudes and inaccurate negative stereotypical perceptions of African American adolescent males. Counselor competence is important when working with this population to ensure information is communicated in ways both culturally and developmentally appropriate and avoid harm and value imposition.

Counselor educators who are engaged in training of emerging counselors should be aware of the issues faced by African Americans

adolescent males and explore collaborative ways to address these issues within our schools. Counselor educators should ensure that Counseling students are aware of disparities within the system and help students develop intentional goals to address this problem when hired as a counselor in the school system. Counselors within our schools must build trust for sharing of stories to take place between them and African American adolescent male students. African American adolescent male student voices are missing from the literature. School counselors need to be supported to contribute to the needs of Black male development.

Conclusion

This study has not described all the experiences of African American adolescent males, but has highlighted some salient points for counselors and educators to consider. The state of African American adolescent males deteriorates each day that passes without an intentional roadmap to address and correct these issues. It is recommended that more studies be done to capture the lived experiences of African American adolescent males to collectively establish their voice in the counselor education literature and in society in general.

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The Ethical Dilemma of Blowing the Whistle

David Sottile

Introduction

It is an unfortunate fact that scientists engage in research misconduct for their own personal benefit. As the scientific process has become more profitable, the number of scientists that engage in research misconduct has increased. Some of the more severe cases of research misconduct have become common knowledge across disciplines and within public spheres. For instance, many people outside of autism services and their families are aware of the Wakefield incident (Flaherty, 2011). What has become apparent in recent years is that more scientists are aware of research misconduct committed by their colleagues and do not report it.

Fanelli (2009) was a meta-analysis of many surveys taken by scientists regarding their colleagues and their own research misconduct. This study found that an estimated 1.97% of scientists surveyed admitted having fabricated, falsified, or modified data. In addition to this, 33.7% of the same sample of scientists admitted having engage in other questionable research practices including data falsification. An estimated 14.12% of this study sample admitted to having personal knowledge of a colleague who fabricated, falsified, or modified research data and an estimated 28.53% had knowledge of colleagues' questionable research practices. More pertinent to the scope of this paper is how often this research misconduct is reported by the scientists that had personal knowledge of these incidents of misconduct. The meta-analysis reports that only 46% had taken some action to verify their suspicions of fraud or to remedy the situation.

More recent as well as more troubling evidence of research misconduct occurring with the knowledge of other scientists comes from China. Last year, the Chinese State Food and Drug administration (SFDA), found that more than 80% percent of data from 1,622 clinical trials evaluating new pharmaceutical drugs had been fabricated (MacDonald, 2016). More troubling is that the extent of this data fabrication was apparently well known within

the industry itself. Normile (2017) discusses problems in the peer review process in the Chinese scientific community as well. 107 papers by Chinese authors were retracted due to misconduct during the peer review process. These articles have appeared in the same journal, *Tumor Biology*. 521 academics and physicians were linked to these papers with varying degrees of responsibility. This included 314 authors that did not appropriately observe their colleagues' behavior throughout the process and 70 authors that carry secondary responsibility. Within these 384 authors, it is likely there are some that were aware of this research misconduct despite not directly participating in the fraud itself. While the Chinese government is taking a greater effort to hold researchers accountable for these instances of misconduct, an exploration of research misconduct and those indirectly involved could benefit the scientific community at large.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the ethical concerns of research misconduct and why the whistle is not blown for all instances of this behavior. This will be done by describing a well-known instance of research misconduct followed by a discussion of the principles it violates, why research misconduct occurs, what strategies are currently in place to prevent this behavior or curb its effects, and why these strategies are not always effective.

The Stephen E. Breuning case

The Stephen E. Breuning case is one of the better examples of research misconduct (Scott, 1988). Stephen E. Breuning became a well-known researcher for his studies with developmentally disabled children. Breuning was claimed to have conducted several studies that showed promising results for the use of stimulants to treat self-injurious behavior within this population. Prior to this, the standard care for treating self-injurious behavior had been neuroleptic medications which have tranquilizing effects.

Breuning was reported for research misconduct by colleague Robert L. Sprague. Sprague (1993) details the entire process of

reporting Breuning's misconduct. Sprague began to have his suspicions regarding Breuning's practices in 1983 during a visit where Breuning's housemate claimed that Breuning had an inter-observer agreement of 100% for a behavior exhibited by children taking part in a study at a nearby developmentally disabled facility. Sprague's investigation revealed enough evidence of misconduct that he sent a letter describing all this evidence to NIMH. It would take years before anyone would take any action against Breuning despite an admission from Breuning regarding a portion of the data falsification. Breuning would eventually be the first federally funded scientist with a criminal conviction on charges of scientific fraud.

Stephen E. Breuning is a very common name to hear on Western Michigan University's campus in the context of research misconduct. Two of Breuning's former collaborators, Wayne Fuqua and Alan Poling, who were affected by Breuning's misconduct were and still are professors in the university's psychology department. Fuqua was a co-author on one paper with Breuning for one of Fuqua's graduate student's dissertation work. During the process of determining which of Breuning's papers should be retracted, the paper co-authored with Fuqua was found clear of research misconduct. Poling, who co-authored a total of ten publications with Breuning, would have one of his articles retracted. Neither Fuqua nor Poling were aware of Breuning's research misconduct until the case became public. Breuning's case example is used several times within a graduate level ethics course to illustrate the issue of research misconduct and its implications.

Contributing Factors

Why did Breuning do this? While we do not have a direct answer from Breuning, the consequences for successfully modifying data undetected are apparent. Many academic researchers' jobs are dependent upon whether their research studies show significant results. In addition to this, publishing a greater number of studies is also highly valued during the

process of obtaining tenure. The desire for prestige within the field may also be a contributing factor. Breuning's work became so well-known and influential that the policy of treating the developmentally disabled changed in Connecticut. Prestige also comes with greater monetary incentives as a well-known researcher is more likely to be invited to speak at conferences and other events held by their scientific community.

While these previous considerations assume a large degree of data modification this is not always the case. Changing or adding a few or even just one data point can also occur. In this circumstance, a contributing factor could be a confirmation bias held by the researcher. The researcher believes that the data must be caused by a confounding variable of some type and therefore must be discredited. This can occur because the researcher was already convinced of their hypothesis prior to any type of data collection. The idea of expectations can also affect the consumers of this scientific literature.

It is important to note that the results that Breuning were reporting were not unbelievable but expected by some members of the community. During an interview with the author of this paper, Dr. Alan Poling stated that he along with many others expected that stimulants could be more successful than neuroleptics for treating SIB in developmentally disabled children at the time of Breuning's work. By choosing to report results that were in line with the expectations of others in the community, Breuning reduced the probability that his study would be questioned at all let alone replicated. It wasn't until the data Breuning reported became too good to be true that Poling began to be suspicious. Sprague had begun the process of whistleblowing before Poling had the opportunity to confirm his suspicions.

Research misconduct and ethical principles

Scientists typically belong to professional groups pertaining to their discipline. These professional groups often

have a code of ethics for both clinical practice as well as scientific research. These codes of ethics are designed to guide the members of the organization to both protect the individual and those their work affects but also to protect the organization itself. In the case of Breuning, the most relevant professional organizations are the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) and the American Psychological Association (APA). While the BACB was not in existence at the time of Breuning's work, their scope of focus is like Breuning's as well.

Research misconduct, especially in cases regarding the treatment of a vulnerable population such as Breuning's, violate that the BACB and the APA stand for. The core ethical principles of behavior analysts as described by Baily and Burch's "Ethics for Behavior Analysts" are all about how a behavior analyst should treat themselves in with clients (Bailey & Burch, 2016). The three principles that are most apparently being violated when engaging in research misconduct are being truthful, pursuit of excellence, and accepting responsibility. As research misconduct involves a degree of deception, being truthful is impossible when one is falsifying data. Behavior analysts cannot pursue excellence if the information being provided by their researchers is false. There is no space for real evidence based treatments if a false treatment is being disseminated. In Breuning's case, policy in Connecticut was changed for how developmentally disabled children are treated. Accepting responsibility is also obviously ignored when someone deceives the public. The APA maintains a code of ethics as well that was violated in Breuning's work. The two principles of APA code that are clearly violated are principle B, fidelity and responsibility, and principle C, integrity. Fidelity and responsibility have clear connections to the behavior analyst's accepting responsibility while integrity has the same relationship with being truthful.

These ethical principles are not only being violated by the individual engaging in research misconduct but also by the individual that does not inform the proper authorities of

research misconduct. The results of the misconduct remain the same through the second individual's inaction. Therefore, there is a degree of responsibility on scientists to evaluate their collaborator's work.

Strategies of prevention and their limitations

There are several methods of detecting and reporting research misconduct. One method is preventing research misconduct from ever occurring in the first place. This can be done through proper ethical training in our undergraduate and graduate curriculum. Stressing on the importance of proper research and the dangers of misbehavior could stop someone who is at risk from this behavior from ever engaging in it. Unfortunately, no all people are responsive to this and not all ethical training is of the same high caliber.

The peer-review process is way of detecting low quality and fraudulent research publications. It involves the editor of the journal inviting three established researchers in the same field of study as the publication of concern to evaluate the manuscript prior to publication. A meticulous approach taken by these peer-review editors can reveal research misconduct sometimes. Most well-respected journals have a peer-review component in their process of accepting manuscripts for publication. Unfortunately, sophisticated delinquent researchers can hide their data in such a way that it cannot be detected through their manuscripts. In addition, some journals have questionable practices when choosing their reviewers. In the case of Normile (2017) discussed in the introduction to this paper, the editors of the journal allowed authors to nominate reviewers that were experts in the topic of their manuscript. The authors that engaged in research misconduct would secretly nominate themselves or other conspirators to write recommendations and reviews of the manuscript. This newly discovered method of subverting the peer review system is troubling as much of academia uses this as a primary method of evaluating new submissions.

Most universities have personnel that faculty can report their concerns to. This may be as large as an entire staff of people hired to handle a wide range of research issues besides research misconduct. There are protections in place for reporters of research misconduct such as anonymous ways of reporting and confidential meetings if anonymous tip is not sufficient.

Unfortunately, the information on how or who to contact is sometimes not sufficiently disseminated for appropriate use. Additionally, not all faculty members feel comfortable reporting their colleagues to begin with. Issues of trust and loyalty may take precedence over their suspicions when considering whether to blow the whistle. They may be concerned about how this person's research misconduct may affect their own work regardless of whether they have any collaborative work with the suspected offender. They may also be concerned about being incorrect in their accusations. While promises of anonymity can mitigate this concern, it may be severe enough to persist.

Another concern that should be noted is retracting fraudulent scientific publications from the literature. The journal where the publication was made can issue a retraction of said publication. An author on the paper can issue a retraction themselves either through the same journal or other media outlets. Databases which house the scientific literature following publication, either online or offline, can note the retraction in the original entry or simply remove access to it. Not all of these always occur for detected fraudulent research. Of specific concern, one of Breuning's research papers that had been officially retracted was cited in a paper 24 years later (Korpela, 2009).

Conclusions

Research misconduct is a complicated issue and cannot be easily solved. With the powerful incentives for engaging in research misconduct it is unlikely that we will eliminate misconduct entirely. With an imperfect detection system in place it is even more likely that some scientists will continue misbehave in

this fashion. Even though consequences are in place for gross research misconduct, they are not as severe for minor research misconduct if it even is reported. Even if scientific misconduct is detected and report, it can still take a long time for the literature to purge itself of these fraudulent studies.

Regardless of the difficulty we must continue to pursue excellence in our research standards. The damages are not limited to the scientific community and their reputations. Cases such as Breuning demonstrate the large amount of potential harm that can occur for vulnerable populations if we do not. Although in Breuning's case no harm has ever been discussed that came from using his techniques, the Wakefield incidence is an example of when this harm has come to pass.

The heads of academic departments and research institutions must take the lead in promoting an environment where integrity in research is encouraged and proper ethical training is being delivered. Faculty members must in turn encourage those in their spheres of influence to do the same. Graduate students and even undergraduate students can do the same with their research collaborators. The scientific community must continue to be vigilant against those who place the value of money and fame over knowledge.

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**Fine Southern
Gentlemen: The Three
Beaux of Edna
Pontellier**

Keli Masten

After its rediscovery, Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* has been heralded as a masterful work which appeals to concepts of feminism, individuality, naturalism, and as a snapshot of Creole culture in southern Louisiana at the very cusp of the twentieth century.¹ This was not always the case. The novel was initially considered distasteful and was virtually crucified by the literary critics of the time who disregarded the delicate construction of prose and metaphor and simply saw it as a sex book, fiendishly seeking to dismantle the moral code of society.² Only recently have scholars come around to appreciating the complexity of the work and the messages woven within it.

Understandably enough, much of the literary criticism has focused upon the main character, Edna Pontellier, and her journey of self-discovery, but the surrounding cast is rich with personalities as diverse and enlightening as Edna's own. While most of the characters seem clearly defined as to their values, desires, and how they reconcile any dissonance they might face, and Edna Pontellier might seem like the only character suffering the torment of this discord, each character is negotiating a careful playing field replete with rules, regulations, and strict penalties if one is to run afoul. In seeking an alternate route to understanding this masterful work, I intend to explore the function gender roles play with regard not to the women in the story, but to the men. In reviewing the circumstances

surrounding the events which take place in this upper middle class, Creole, white community, I seek to explain how the sociocultural demands and expectations placed upon the men are equally as divisive as those placed upon the female characters of the same social status.

The novel takes place in two parts, the first upon Grand Isle and the second in New Orleans, Louisiana. The protagonist, Edna Pontellier, first referred to as Mrs. Pontellier and only later shifted to the more intimate Edna, is a woman on the verge of discovery who comes to realize that her Kentucky Presbyterian roots have ill-prepared her for life among the sensuous Creole culture to which her husband is so well-adapted.³ In vacationing on Grand Isle, she is continually surprised and often amused by the difference between her own background and the rules of play followed by the men and women around her.⁴ She is struck by how the ladies have an "entire absence of prudery" while also maintaining "a lofty chastity which in the Creole woman seems to be inborn and unmistakable" (12). Despite this surprising contrast in their nature, Edna feels at home among them and has no trouble forging relationships with the ladies which blossom into highly influential friendships, especially between Edna, Madam Ratignolle, and Mademoiselle Reisz. Although the women are opposites, they each appeal to the different aspects of Edna which are

¹ Marlene Springer relays the process by which Kate Chopin's writing returned to the public consciousness around 1969 with the publication of Per Seyersted's *The Complete Works of Kate Chopin* and experienced a resurgence in critical interest, mainly due to its feminist themes, authentic Louisiana regionalism, and the subtle means by which the stories are told.

² Priscilla Allen traces the critical responses to *The Awakening* published from 1956 through 1971, by George Arms, Werner Berthoff, Kenneth Eble, Lewis Leary, Per Seyersted, George M. Spangler, Edmund Wilson, and Larzer Ziff, discussing common themes explored among and between the critics' published works.

³ Emily Toth and Per Seyersted quote a letter from Chopin defending her novel in the face of harsh

criticism, saying: "Having a group of people at my disposal, I thought it might be entertaining (to myself) to throw them together and see what would happen. I never dreamed of Mrs. Pontellier making such a mess of things and working out her own damnation as she did. If I had had the slightest intimation of such a thing, I would have excluded her from the company. But when I found out what she was up to, the play was half over and it was then too late" (296).

⁴ Describing the use of free indirect discourse by Kate Chopin, Xianfeng Mou illustrates how Chopin "is concerned with representing the emotional, battling against prevalent cultural norms of wifehood, motherhood, romance, seduction, and conventions of female writing" (104).

struggling to break to the surface of her psyche. In this way, Madame Ratignolle represents the mother-woman side of Edna and her matrimonial, familial and motherly responsibilities, and Mademoiselle Reisz represents the warring notion of self-reliance and independence from domestic drudgery.⁵ Together, the three women create an intricate triangle of feminine values which cannot exist in harmony without some violation of societal norms.

The women of the island of course do not exist in a vacuum, and their male counterparts are equally as impactful in the 'awakenings' Edna experiences.⁶ In the first scene, Edna and Robert Lebrun are walking slowly up a path together as Léonce Pontellier watches them approach. It is understood that Robert intends to amuse and entertain Edna as he does each year for a female resident in his mother's rental cottages. Feeling no jealousy, but instead a sense of ownership, Mr. Pontellier chastises his wife for risking her beauty by allowing herself to become "burnt beyond recognition" as a "valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage" (3). Edna is later introduced to Alcée Arobin, the lover who is often credited for sparking the fire which ultimately consumes her. There are several additional male characters such as Dr. Mandelet, Mr. Highcamp, and Robert's brother Victor, but the former three are the primary influences felt by Edna throughout the novel. The power they hold over her shifts in various and interesting ways before she commits the ultimate act of

reclaiming ownership of herself, and thus emancipates herself from any demands which might be placed upon her.⁷

These are the generally accepted conditions under which the novel takes place. There is a very definite divide between the world of men and the world of women which has very specific cultural circumstances under which the two groups might interact. The Creole society in which the novel is placed is very typical of the time. Nancy Walker explains that Creoles may have had diverse economic conditions, "but all were bound by Catholicism, strong family ties, and a common language (French) into a cultural subgroup which has little in common with – indeed, was often in conflict with – Anglo-American society" (97). It is no wonder that Edna suffers from feelings of displacement despite the warm welcome she receives and the appeal of exotic difference. However, Walker continues, "by succumbing to the sensuality of the Creoles, [Edna] is denying what she has been raised to believe, so that in some ways the novel deals with the clash of two cultures" (99). Indeed, this clash of cultures is what begins to nudge Edna's slumbering subconscious into life, constantly making comparisons between who she was when she arrived on Grand Isle, and who she will be when she leaves it.

Southern Hospitality

In this setting, Chopin seems to be at her most confident and illustrative. Having lived among Creoles in St. Louis, Missouri and later in Natchitoches, Louisiana with her French-Creole husband, Oscar Chopin, she

⁵ In her article "The Nullification of Edna Pontellier," Katherine Kearns states that "Reisz, playing Chopin, frees from the [piano] a sublime music for which there is no embodiment, teaching Edna the golden rule of masculinist art and life: that what she must value is exactly that which is unattainable by a woman" (82).

⁶ Otis B. Wheeler suggests that Edna actually undergoes five separate awakenings related to the stigmas attached to physical love and sex by Victorian culture: a sense of personhood, a sense of true love as self-consecrating, the awareness of sensuality independent of love, the discovery that love is only a

biological trap, and existential despair – the conclusion that there is no exit but self-destruction (123).

⁷ In his "The Awakening: A Partial Dissent," George M. Spangler lauds the literary mastery which was the force behind the novel but pursues a much more critical response to Edna's final act of self-destruction, saying "Mrs. Chopin asks her reader to believe in an Edna who is completely defeated by the loss of Robert, to believe in the paradox of a woman who has awakened to passionate life and yet quietly, almost thoughtlessly, chooses death" (254).

has been lauded as a skilled naturalist in her depictions of the people and their traditions. Within these traditions is an unspoken, unwritten set of rules which are inherently known by insiders but must be learned and acclimated to by newcomers such as Edna Pontellier.⁸ With the region's deep roots in French and Spanish conventions, many of their practices seem uncommonly intimate when compared to the relative frigidity of Anglo Protestantism. The idea of self-restraint is abandoned in the confines of this sultry, isolated little strip of land at the southern coast of Louisiana, only to be replaced with Creole gentility and warm camaraderie. In this context, Edna becomes intoxicated by their embracing of experience in lieu of discipline or distance, "living for the day in the Creole manner. And like that of a new convert, her devotion to this way of life is often extreme" (Walker 102).

Among the expectations for decorum are vastly different rules of engagement between men and women. Throughout the novel, Edna reflects upon the nature of the women who surround her, observing their various coquetry, acquiescence, and the ways in which they interact with one another. She is particularly bemused by her friend Madame Adèle Ratignolle's behavior as she selflessly devotes herself to her family, husband, and

children, and the ideals of motherhood in its most elevated forms.⁹ She claims to suffer from a "condition," which Edna observes is "in no way apparent, and no one would have known a thing about it but for her persistence in making it the subject of conversation" (12). All of this exceeds the boundaries of femininity which Edna can realize, but she admires her friend anyway, seeking to please her and basking in the womanly glow of her affections. To her, Adèle Ratignolle is the ultimate mother-woman, emblematic of all the Creole pride in heritage and delicate grace and an exemplar all women should seek to follow.¹⁰ However, Edna also believes that her friend is trapped; trapped by her husband, confined by her children, and deprived of a real sense of self with so much of her shared between the many recipients of her love. How can a heart so divided continue to beat with any real strength left in it?¹¹

The men of Grand Isle adhere to a similar series of constructs which dictate how they expend their efforts for maximum return of investment, in Wall Street parlance. For instance, although Léonce Pontellier is a worldly 40-years old, he observes many Creole social conventions, including defining his personal worth by the prestige of his home life, wife, and children, and by the wealth which he can accumulate and display for public

⁸ Paula A. Treichler provides an informative analysis of the different forms of linguistic ambiguity on the part of the characters in the book as well as those made in the narrative comments. This absence of specificity presents Edna as existing in a state of active passivity evidenced by her "profoundly ambivalent" final act of suicide.

⁹ Ivy Schweitzer's "Maternal Discourse and the Romance of Self-Possession in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*" compares the novel to Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* exploring the love of self versus the maternal love of a child, stating that "Motherhood and individuality seem mutually exclusive; thus, Edna's struggle for autonomous selfhood entails a rejection of her responsibilities as mother, an interpretation the text itself advances" (162).

¹⁰ In her article on "Southern Women in Fiction," Marie Fletcher touches on the permanence of the gendered notions of femininity in the south, indicating

that "Mrs. Chopin's heroines are seldom drawn from the plantation aristocracy of the Old South... yet even the women and girls in her fiction who are poor... follow the same ideals of faithfulness, loyalty, and chastity honored by the ladies of wealth and social prominence in the sentimental and historical fiction of pre-war days. They are indications of how thoroughly Southerners of all classes, past and present, have usually agreed on things" (130).

¹¹ Amanda Kane Rooks argues that "the provocative nature of *The Awakening*, in terms of persistent Victorian discourses of motherhood and women's sexuality, lies in its acknowledgment that the figure of the Madonna is merely an extension of the Great Mother archetype, that this paragon of virtue cannot exist in such flawless illumination except in relation to her dual aspect, the Terrible Mother," and so Edna is likely to be interpreted as falling into the latter category, despite the impossibility of attaining the former (124).

observation on the island and in his home of New Orleans. For Mr. Pontellier, public perceptions are incredibly important, and he is willing to do anything to avoid the shame of critical public scrutiny. This point of view is shared by Robert Lebrun, who flees from the escalation of amour between himself and Edna by disappearing to Mexico where he seems to hope he will escape from the complications an actual affair might cause. For Robert, the weight of public perception even exceeds the satisfaction of true love.

Only Alcée Arobin possesses the wherewithal to reject public opinions, scoffing at them even, and operating to satisfy his own desires regardless of the consequences. He embodies the most radical of Creole notions in truly living for the day, come what may, and taking full advantage of opportunities to entertain women who share his rash outlook. Edna becomes caught up with him largely due to his air of abandon and her subconscious desire to reject all the restrictions of her former life in favor of absolute independence and fullness of experience. Although the culture does encourage a certain reckless flirtatiousness, there are boundaries involved which are understood by those who grew up with them. Unfortunately, as an outsider, Edna shares no such understanding. Instead, she becomes lost, out of control, and finally disintegrates under the weight of her desires.

With all the factors listed here at play within the narrow confines of Grand Isle, and later New Orleans, a scene is set to observe the results of cultural integration gone wrong.¹² Due to their own personal limitations, the men

with whom she interacts do not fully comprehend the extent of Edna's state of mind, and they lack the ability to respond to her in any way other than that which they have chosen. To adhere to the strict social conventions in which they operate is mandatory, yet they, too, may yearn to break the boundaries of acceptance in favor of greater personal satisfaction. However, none of them quite measures up to their own ambitions.

The Husband

A man of taste and sophistication, Léonce Pontellier outwardly seems to be the ideal husband for any young woman. He has a handsome income from his profession as a stock broker, and he provides a home of sumptuous comfort for his wife and two sons. In selecting his wife, he has carefully chosen the woman he felt would best accentuate his success and best represent his values to the world through her grace and beauty.¹³ Little care seems to be given to the substance of the individual if she represented what he felt was most important to be publicly displayed. Introduced as a man of forty who "wore eye-glasses" was "of medium height and rather slender build" and who "stooped a little," he is hardly the image of a spontaneous, passionate lover, but more emblematic of a solid, dependable married man (1).

When first confronted with his wife's want of interest in domestic matters, he tries to reach out to her. Lacking the language to express himself, he instead accuses his wife of inattention to their sons:

¹² In Lewis Leary's *Southern Excursions: Essays on Mark Twain and Others*, he posits that if the novel "seems to inevitably invite questions, these are subsidiary to its purpose, which is to describe what might really happen to a person like Edna Pontellier, being what she was, living when she did, and where" (174).

¹³ According to Hugh J. Dawson, Pontellier has failed miserably in his endeavors to choose a suitable wife who will aid in his lofty aspirations of societal greatness, instead selecting Edna, "a headstrong personality whose growth has been sadly stunted, but

much more by her own unacknowledged choices as by others' decrees. Having adamantly refused to be roused from her childhood dreams, she feels unequal to the less-than-onerous demands of her adult situation" (17). This opinion is hotly disputed by Joyce Dyer who claims that *The Awakening* "recorded with bold truth what one woman's attempt to join the twentieth century would entail, and it anticipated the journeys of the millions of other women, real and fictional, who would follow her" instead positioning Edna as a woman before her time (13).

Mr. Pontellier returned to his wife with the information that Raoul had a high fever and needed looking after. Then he lit a cigar and went and sat near the open door to smoke it.

Mrs. Pontellier was quite sure Raoul had no fever. He had gone to bed perfectly well, she said, and nothing had failed him all day. Mr. Pontellier was too well acquainted with fever symptoms to be mistaken. He assured her the child was consuming at that moment in the next room.

He reproached his wife with her inattention, her habitual neglect of the children. If it was not a mother's place to look after children, who's on earth, was it? He himself had his hands full with his brokerage business. He could not be in two places at once; making a living for his family on the street, and staying at home to see that no harm befell them. He talked in a monotonous, insistent way. (7)

Although it would seem more effective to reach out to his wife in a gentler fashion, Mr. Pontellier is under the distinct impression that she is mother to her children first, Mrs. Pontellier second, and only herself, Edna, in the third place. He never makes it past his own perceptions of who she is to isolate the real issue, and in this way, he cheats himself out of the domestic bliss he so genuinely craves.¹⁴

Léonce Pontellier is incapable of thinking outside of the parameters of understanding he holds on the female condition. He believes himself to be the leader of the family, the provider, and the patriarch to a lineage which bears the imprint and esteem of his own father's name. He "has the polished and distanced demeanor of a sophisticated proprietor" and considers his family members

among his wares (Jacobs 82). Completely at a loss on how to deal with his wife's bizarre transformation, he seeks guidance from (shockingly) another man, to determine the best way to handle her. Dr. Mandelet, he of great middle ground who "bore a reputation for wisdom rather than skill," accurately points to Edna's discontent, seems to understand both the male and female perspectives and the gendered demands placed upon them, and advises Pontellier to leave his wife alone (87). Nancy Walker posits that "The Creole doctor embodies his culture's acceptance of human peculiarity, and Léonce agrees to follow his advice" (100). By advising him within the confines of his own comfort zone, the doctor puts Pontellier's mind temporarily to rest.

Soon, Edna brings their relations once again to a head. She has determined to rent the smaller "pigeon house" around the corner from their palatial home, and live alone inside it. Completely at a loss for this turn of events and scrambling to retain his public persona in the eyes of the neighborhood, Léonce Pontellier makes another tragic misstep. Instead of attending to the root of his wife's bizarre behavior, he continues to operate on a purely surface level:

he immediately wrote her a letter of unqualified disapproval and remonstrance. She had given reasons which he was unwilling to acknowledge as adequate. He hoped she had not acted upon her rash impulse; and he begged her to consider first, foremost, and above all else, what people would say. He was not dreaming of scandal... He was simply thinking of his financial integrity. It might get noised about that the Pontelliers had met with reverses, and were forced to conduct their ménage on a humbler scale than

¹⁴ In her article "The Woman's Novel Beyond Sentimentalism," Elizabeth Nolan states that "Symbols of entrapment abound, and the novel's demarcation of gendered spaces serves merely to provide a series of

boundaries for its transgressive heroine to exceed. Edna is often found in the liminal space of the porch, a site from which she mounts small rebellions against her husband's authority" (575).

heretofore. It might do incalculable mischief to his business prospects. (125-126)

So instead of seeking to resolve the problems which have arisen in their home, Pontellier is most concerned with the profitability of his business and the impact it might have on the future. This may seem cold-hearted, but when one considers a man's role at the time, his concerns are very real ones. His success as a businessman is the only thing keeping his family off the street. He has no precedent for a wife to earn her own living, and so Pontellier is understandably alarmed at the prospect of suffering financial reverses because of what he considers to be a temporary malady on the part of Edna.

Pontellier believes that if he can maintain a respectable façade, he will eventually outlast his wife's impulses and return to the state of domestic tranquility which he has enjoyed for several years.¹⁵ His actual response to his wife's intended action is to fabricate a home renovation. This will save his reputation and create the impression that their wealth is such that even the splendor of their current home is insufficient and demands refining. In the same mailbag which carries his letter to Edna, Pontellier also sends off "the most minute instructions" on the remodeling of their home to a well-known architect (126). He is confident that his own cleverness and business acumen will put an end to the disruption caused by his wife's revolt. He is too limited in insight to realize that maintaining appearances is the last thing Edna values, and

¹⁵ According to Joyce Dyer, in *New Orleans*, marital relations were regulated under the "Louisiana Code" established in 1808 which was still followed at the time the Pontelliers were living there. This set of laws "established the husband as the head of the family" and stated that "married women, along with babies and the mentally deranged, were declared incompetent" and thus reliant upon the husband/father figure to make their decisions for them (10-11). At a loss of how to proceed, Léonce Pontellier elects to "wait and see" how best to instruct his wife.

so again, he misses the opportunity for a reconciliation in favor of adhering to the strict gendered code of conduct he knows so well. Although succeeding by popular opinion, he fails in his own, far more personally significant, domestic sphere and loses his wife entirely.

The Companion

From the moment he is introduced, Robert Lebrun is portrayed as a very different sort of man from Léonce Pontellier. He is seen lounging about and giggling with Edna rather than taking Pontellier up on his offer of a trip to the men's club he so frequents. Instead, "Robert admitted quite frankly that he preferred to stay where he was and talk to Mrs. Pontellier" (3). With the growing closeness of the two and Edna's apparent preference for the younger man, the contrast between Pontellier and Robert grows more striking. Chopin even refers to them variously as "Mr. Pontellier" and "Robert" throughout the book, creating a formality surrounding the former and a casual familiarity of the latter which the reader cannot help but espouse as well. Even Edna is not referred to exclusively by her Christian name until near the end of the novel. But despite their differences, they are both products of their time and environment and may be more similar than it seems at first glance.

Robert Lebrun is nearly as ambiguous a character as Edna herself.¹⁶ He prefers and seeks the company of women, but those women are often unavailable romantically. Rather than spending his time in the pursuit of eligible young women, he instead showers attentions on those who have no possibility of reciprocating in any meaningful way. This is

¹⁶ Although he ultimately does love her, Xianfeng Mou indicates that "Robert does not understand Edna. He is fortunate enough only to be around to witness her tumultuous changes. But Edna mistakenly transfers her awakening onto Robert and falls in love with him," which he is unable to fully comprehend or manage according to the social constructs surrounding them (110). For Robert, it is necessary to remain aloof or face the societal consequences.

puzzling. There seems to be no shortage of marriageable women, but nobody questions Robert's motivations in disregarding them. It is even discussed openly how he had pined after the Madonna-like Madame Ratignolle, but only because his previous *objet d'amour*, Mademoiselle Duvigne, had died suddenly. As they sit together talking one day, Robert bemoans the offenses of Adèle Ratignolle against his own tender, smitten heart, "Could anyone fathom the cruelty beneath that fair exterior?... She knew that I adored her once, and she let me adore her" (14).

Watching this "serio-comic" display is Edna, who "never knew precisely what to make of it; at that moment, it was impossible for her to guess how much of it was jest and what proportion was earnest. It was understood that he had often spoken words of love to Madame Ratignolle, without any thought of being taken seriously" (14-15). Since she has now apparently surpassed her friend in Robert's esteem, Edna cannot help but attempt to make sense of the differences between them as well as the differences between Robert and herself. However, this is extremely difficult due to the social norms adhered to in that place at time.

Referring to the code of conduct adhered to by middle-to-upper-class Creole men at the turn of the twentieth century, there was an expectation of a certain amount of chivalrous treatment of women by men in society. In addition, although perfectly forthright in their discussion of certain matters otherwise considered taboo, such as Madame Ratignolle's relaying the nitty-gritty details of her *accouchements*, it was considered far less acceptable regarding matters of the heart. Any open discussion of their feelings for one

another, or the lovelorn feelings Edna was trying to sort through personally at the time, would have been problematic to say the least.¹⁷ In fact, Robert is so distressed by the situation, that he leaves for Mexico with hardly a moment's notice to his family and friends on Grand Isle. Edna, ever the outsider, takes this as a personal affront, and grieves for the inexplicable loss of her companion. A good deal of pain has been suffered due to the extreme restraints placed upon communication between the sexes¹⁸.

If relations between men and women are fraught with peril, consider also those which occur exclusively between men. Robert is just as unlike any other man in *The Awakening* as he is from Léonce Pontellier. He has a certain misfit quality which manifests itself in several different ways. With Madame Ratignolle he is the jester, with Mr. Pontellier he appears more reserved. With Edna he is attentive and kind, and with Arobin his manner is stiff and withdrawn. In the presence of his mother, he is in every way the doting, affectionate son, but with his brother, Victor, his manner is puritanical and harsh, "ready to thrash any amount of reason into him that he's able to hold" (29). Who is Robert Lebrun, really?

One explanation for the strange behavior on the part of Robert is that he might not actually be interested in women at all, but rather that it is the companionship of men that he seeks. Through attaching himself to unattainable women, Robert also makes himself unavailable to those who are marriageable, thereby relieving himself of the responsibility of actual courtship. In her acclaimed book on Kate Chopin, Emily Toth

¹⁷ Although he loves Edna, Robert cannot help her through the various changes of heart she is experiencing. Described by Maria Anastasopoulou as "rites of passage," Edna ultimately fails in her efforts to complete the passage from a man's property to an independent woman of her own.

¹⁸ Donald Pizer indicates that "Robert realizes that his relationship with Edna will soon shift from that of a

permissible flirtation with a married woman to that of an impermissible affair with a married woman – permissible and impermissible, that is, within the Creole code of a gentleman, which is Robert's operative code. He therefore precipitately departs for a lengthy stay in Mexico to signal clearly to Edna that he is not prepared to violate this social code" (8).

explains this point of view regarding the events following Robert's return from Mexico:

[Robert] has a pouch embroidered by – he says – a girl in Vera Cruz. But homosexual male Americans frequently went to Mexico for sexual alliances with boys (“Vera Cruz” is an easy pun on cruising). Robert may very well love Edna, but when she grabs him aggressively in their last scene together, her gesture tells him that he will have to perform sexually, as a man with a woman. And so (at least according to modern queer readings), if Robert is a gay man, recognizable to other Creoles as gay, he must run away. (213)

This is a very interesting supposition when one considers the reticence with which anyone falling outside the norms might be received by their peer group. If Robert were to reveal himself openly as a gay man, he would be met with outright hostility, maybe even personal danger. But in this there is also an element of hypocrisy, since it is Robert's very “harmlessness” which allows him to spend so much time with other men's wives. If he is gay, that harmlessness would not be dissipated in the least, and yet his rejection would likely be absolute, perhaps even on the part of the women whose company he so enjoys.

This prevalence of things understood but rarely voiced adds to the complexity and ambiguity of Robert's character. If he is a straight man, why does he avoid meaningful female contact? If he is a gay man, why does he

not align himself with another man of similar mind? It is too easy to dismiss him as an enigma without really considering all the facts given by Chopin. It seems more likely that Robert is not gay, but he suffers from a similar sense of displacement which he cannot reconcile with any of the acceptable masculine cookie-cutter solutions available to him as an up-and-coming Creole man in society. He obviously does not care to pursue a career in business like Mr. Pontellier, but he is above such disreputable pastimes as the profitable horse-racing of which Arobin, and later Edna, are so fond. It is alluded to that he is pursuing opportunity in Mexico, but the details are vague and never pan out over time.

Robert is adrift as a man who does not fit in. In many ways, he is referred to as a child might be, drifting about with Edna or socializing with other friends on Grand Isle. He is a man of spirit and wisdom, but often seems more thoughtful and introspective than he really is. Edna attributes much of her awakening to her love for Robert, believing that there is something uniquely powerful in him which has elicited this kind of response in her cold, slumbering consciousness.¹⁹ But ultimately, this emotion has been summoned in error, and Robert is perplexed how their intimacy had gotten so out of hand so quickly. He had been merely following the established mode of behavior to which he had adhered for so long, but with vastly different results. The rush of affection which follows frightens him, and he is ill-equipped to deal with the passion of a suppressed heart.²⁰ Although he never fully possesses Edna's body as well as her soul, there is an undeniable power which is being

¹⁹ In the words of Donald A. Ringe, rather than focus upon the relationship she is cultivating with Robert, it would behoove Edna to instead look to “the relation of the individual self to the physical and social realities by which it is surrounded, and the price it must pay for insisting upon its absolute freedom” to weigh the benefits and consequences of the decisions she is to make (588).

²⁰ In his pivotal work on Chopin and *The Awakening*, Per Seyersted observes that Edna “cannot give up

Robert, and while realizing that he might consider her ‘unwomanly,’ she takes the initiative toward him when they next meet, giving him the voluptuous kiss which sets him on fire. Refusing to be what she regards as the inessential adjunct to man, she has something of the emancipated woman who wants to play the man's role as a taker. It is not his role *per se* that she wants, however, but only those aspects of it which make the creation of one's own essence” (143-144).

exercised over both and which plagues Edna to her dying day.

Why couldn't their love be perfect? Was it really love at all? As she approaches the fateful beach where she will spend her last moments, Edna reflects sadly that, "There was no human being whom she wanted near her except Robert; and she even realized that the day would come when he, too, and the thought of him would melt out of her existence, leaving her alone" (154). Was it really Robert that she loved, or the social façade that he adopted to navigate the treacherous waters of male-female relationships? Did the Robert she loved even exist? It is impossible to be sure, since the opinions held by those around him vary in so many ways. Like Edna, it is difficult to understand what drives him, and so he remains difficult to truly know. It is entirely possible that Robert is even more false than he appears, and his dalliances with women each summer are not as harmless as they outwardly appear. Who is to say that he has not feasted upon the pleasures of the flesh more often than anyone might expect, including the exotic and earthy Mariequita whom Robert and Edna encounter on their ferry ride? With all the mystery surrounding him, it could turn out that the animosity between brothers is really evidence of Victor's superior understanding of Robert's true character. In any event, the possibility remains that Edna's high opinion of Robert is not warranted, or at least not based entirely in reality. After all, she is swept up in a sea of troubles of her own, fighting desperately to stay afloat and gain the wisdom necessary to move forward.

The Lover

If ever there were a man put on this earth for the simple art of seducing women, Alcée Arobin is that man. His name is first bantered about by Robert when he is speaking to Madame Ratignolle, "and he related the story of Alcée Arobin and the consul's wife; and another about the tenor of the French Opera, who received letters which should never have been written; and still other stories, grave and gay" (27). He seems to be the most

legendary cad alive, and when Mr. and Mrs. Pontellier have shared a delightful day together in his company, Léonce fears that he may be the cause of Edna's sudden change of character, muttering to himself, "I hope it isn't Arobin... I hope to heaven it isn't Alcée Arobin" (95). This is a rather shocking turn of events, as Chopin has told us earlier that "the Creole husband is never jealous; with him the gangrene passion is one which has become dwarfed by disuse" (14). Taking this popular opinion into consideration, Arobin's presence can certainly expect to be followed by a disturbance of the peace.

But when Edna accompanies Mrs. Highcamp to the races in Arobin's drag, she is surprised by what she finds. In contrast to both Léonce and Robert, Arobin is a young man about town, "a familiar figure at the race course, the opera, the fashionable clubs. There was a perpetual smile in his eyes... His manner was quiet, and at times a little insolent. He possessed a good figure, a pleasing face, not overburdened with depth of thought or feeling; and his dress was that of the conventional man of fashion" (99). While all of this is certainly appealing, it is the way he "admired Edna extravagantly" which ultimately caught her attention (99). As she attempts to work through the sudden change in her feelings and the flattery she receives from Arobin, the absent Robert remains at the back of her mind. She sees her friendship with Alcée as a greater threat to her relationship with Robert than that with her husband. The lines of reality have become blurred, and Arobin contributes greatly to the discord inside of Edna, with his worldly ways of dealing with women. She is no match for his experience, and his guile in obtaining his desires "was so genuine that it often deceived even himself" (104).

However contemptible Arobin might seem from the outside, he has a clear sense of who he is, and he follows a set of rules of his own devising. Abandoning social conventions and scoffing in the face of public opinion, Alcée Arobin is the one man in the novel who disregards society and instead pursues his own

interests. He has complete freedom from the social constructs which so relentlessly bind other men. Having a keen insight into the mind of his auditor, “He sometimes talked in a way that astonished her at first and brought the crimson into her face; in a way that pleased her at last, appealing to the animalism that stirred impatiently within her” (105). Finally, Edna has met her match in a man who has the same disdain for modern society and wishes to defy the authority of the public eye while also enjoying all the pleasures that life has to offer. Dorothy Jacobs describes Arobin as “gracefully accommodating yet skillfully exciting... never demanding” (85). Rather than stiffly attempting to make sense of Edna’s actions like her husband, or eliciting romantic impulses with no intention of carrying them through as Robert does, Arobin takes possession of Edna, body and mind, although he cannot seem to capture her heart. But this is not his objective. He prefers to remain the ideal lover, always available when he is wanted, but never oppressing her with his own needs.

Just as Edna might be considered cold and unfeeling toward those she “should” love best, so, too, does Arobin remain comfortably outside of the accepted norms of love where Robert dares not tread. When Robert and Edna finally admit their love for one another in her little house, his only understanding of how to be a man with a woman is to possess her. When he confesses that he “forgot everything but a wild dream of [Edna] some way becoming my wife,” Edna is shocked (144). Obviously, he did not understand that she didn’t mean to fall into the same trap from which she was already

struggling to free herself.²¹ Arobin makes no such demands upon Edna. Rather, “he had detected the latent sensuality, which unfolded under his delicate sense of her nature’s requirements like a torpid, torrid, sensitive blossom” and he was content merely to enjoy the moments they shared together without bothering over what might come next (140). He understands that it is not he who has caused the change inside of Edna, but rather that he could help contribute to that change by creating an awareness of herself which Edna had heretofore been denied. Although looked down upon by society, Arobin sets her free in ways that other men would only use to confine her, and thus he emerges in unlikely ways as the worthiest recipient of her affection.

The Opening of Doors

While the condition of Edna Pontellier is in no way ideal, she shares her plight with the men who appreciate her. Southern men are also lost in the attempt to realize an ideal version of themselves, whether through financial success, adherence to a gentlemanly code of chivalry, or through the pursuit of earthly delights.²² The same rigorous code of conduct looms over them all, creating a maze they must navigate to earn and maintain the esteem of those whose opinions matter.²³ The Creole culture especially valued family, and maintaining the honor of the family name was extremely important, especially to men. That was the name that they would bestow upon their sons, and their sons’ sons, into perpetuity, and if that name should suffer some blight... Perish the thought! The honor of the family name came only slightly above a gentleman’s

²¹ Maria Mikolchak believes that, “For Edna, marriage is out of the question” and that “Edna is, in fact, able to foresee that marriage to Robert will deprive her of her newly found autonomy, something that other adulterous heroines only learn by trying it out” (36).

²² John Glendening uses Darwinian Evolutionary Theory to examine the motivations of the characters in the novel, especially Edna Pontellier, and carefully scrutinizes their state of mind and psychology while making comparisons to Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, a recent predecessor to *The Awakening*

which also received mixed criticism due to its questionable subject matter.

²³ In her book *Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives*, Susan Koppelman Cornillon observes that “Those of us who mistake our transformed selves for our real Self are destined to a schizoid experiencing of life, destined to perpetual and intensifying disappointment in our situations and in our relationships. We constantly feel cheated and deprived. Our lives are never real to us when we mistake a cultural stereotype for our self” (118).

own honor, which should proudly be protected at all costs.

When a man falls in the estimation of his male peers, it casts a powerful blow to the man himself. Sociologist Catherine Taylor asserts that

Given the importance of masculinity, its tenuousness, and its relationship to social status, men are likely to be wary of what might be called *the stigma of failed manhood*... Men who fail at manhood are: labeled and associated with negative stereotypes; set apart from others; experience discrimination and loss of status; and aversion to the stigma of failed manhood serves the function of norm enforcement. (52)

The fear of breaking the “man code” serving as the gender police is certainly nothing new, but it is often overlooked as a serious source of frustration for the men who experience it. Indeed, if men color outside of the lines, so to speak, they run the risk of being labeled and rejected by their male counterparts as weak, feminine, or gay. Their sense of self-worth is highly involved in their understanding of what it means to be a man and the rigidity with which they observe their adherence to that standard.

In the environment where the novel takes place, the men are very concerned with their families and how they are perceived by society. They are aware of specific rules of discourse which have clear boundaries toward intimacy and restraint. They are aware of consistent gendered expectations of the ways

in which men and women should behave. Into this mix is thrust Edna Pontellier as a catalyst for change when she is unable to function according to rules she does not know.²⁴ Léonce and Robert attempt to interact with her while also maintaining their own sense of decorum and preserving their male pride. It is this dividing of their attention which ultimately causes them to suffer the loss of the woman they adore. Particularly in the southern states, “masculinity in the U.S. is associated with status, power and competence” (Taylor 57). Léonce and Robert cannot meet Edna on her own level without abandoning their masculine pride, and they are not willing or able to break the rules of decorum to make things right.²⁵ They don’t understand that there is any other way to behave; it is ingrained in their minds. Just as a man might instinctively open a door as a woman passes through it, so, too, will he adhere to other social norms as though they are not just expected, but required.

The only male who seems to have a clear handle on the truth of the entire situation is Dr. Mandelet. Although not a main character in the book, he is the man other men turn to for advice (accepted as a valid male peer), but he is also able to step outside of himself to empathize with the feminine situation in a way no other man appears able to do (accepted as an advisor to females).²⁶ The doctor is confident in issuing his advice to Léonce Pontellier to “let your wife alone for a while. Don’t bother her, and don’t let her bother you. Woman, my dear friend, is a very peculiar and delicate organism... And when ordinary fellows like you and me attempt to cope with their idiosyncrasies the result is bungling” (89).

²⁴ This position of a woman as lost or behaving counter to societal norms was a strong theme in nineteenth century American literature, and Maria Mikolchak compares *The Awakening* to other contemporary works, such as Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (1857), Leo Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* (1876), and Theodor Fontane’s *Effi Briest* (1895) to examine their common themes.

²⁵ In the words of Katherine Kearns, the characters in the novel have become “caught in the labyrinthine walls of a codified (essentially masculine) subjectivity

which poses as cause and effect” effectively trapping them all and hindering their movements, regardless of their personal desires (69).

²⁶ Manfred Malzahn reminds us that on Edna’s final walk down to the beach, “Only the thoughts of her beloved Robert and the sympathetic adviser Dr. Mandelet reawaken her for a moment, reintroducing the possibility of salvation, if not through love then through understanding” (35).

Pontellier respects Dr. Mandelet and values his opinion, so he follows this advice and allows Edna to continue to moon about without too much intervention. While Léonce seems unable to connect with his wife on a higher plane, at least his willingness to no longer seek to obstruct her designs is a step in the right direction for the salvaging of their marriage. He may not be perfect, but he is at least trying as hard as he can to understand and make things work.

Later, in their final scene together, Edna meets Dr. Mandelet as she is walking home from the Ratignolles. She is obviously flustered and struggling to explain to the doctor how she is feeling and what she is thinking, but with little coherency. Intuiting her meaning, Dr. Mandelet tells her that “youth is given up to illusions. It seems to be a provision of Nature; a decoy to secure mothers for the race. And Nature takes no account of moral consequences, of arbitrary conditions which we create, and which we feel obliged to maintain at any cost” (149). This grabs her attention and she sputters a reply, attempting to agree with him and elaborate further, but her mind is spinning so fast that she can’t properly express herself. The whirlwind of her thoughts, of Robert, her children, Léonce, Mademoiselle Reisz, Arobin, and Adèle Ratignolle have overtaken her means of expression, and she is stifled by the sheer volume of what she feels. Sensing this internal cacophony, the doctor murmurs to her soothingly, “you seem to me to be in trouble. I am not going to ask for your confidence. I will only say that if ever you feel moved to give it to me, perhaps I might help you. I know I would understand. And I tell you there are not many who would—not many, my dear” (149-150). And he is right. In this Creole culture of high-society in the American south, there are very few who possess the strength to

look outside of what they understand to be true, and seek to better inform themselves.

Final Thoughts

Many readers of Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* will agree that it tells the tragic story of a woman who has attempted to express herself and understand herself outside the boundaries of commonly accepted social norms.²⁷ Her complete rejection of her role as a wife-mother or mother-woman was nearly unheard of at the time of the publication of the novel, and it created a stir not just for the characters within it, but in contemporary society as well. Chopin’s career was nearly destroyed by admitting that women like Edna did exist and that their worth was just as valid as that of women who chose to conform to the rigidly established gender norms.

However, there is another tragedy taking place. That is the condition of the men Edna is close to. They are equally as trapped in a quagmire of often unrealistic and unachievable gendered norms for behavior and decorum which inhibit their growth and flourishing. If only Robert could act in ways that were natural to him, that he dictated and felt comfortable following. Whether straight or gay, conforming or nonconforming, he deserves to live a fulfilling life without the need to posture and pose as something he is not. The same is true for Léonce Pontellier. Although he is much older than Robert, he is none the wiser. In fact, his entrapment in social expectations and demands is far greater than any other man we see in the novel, constrained to the point where he feels entirely out of control of his domestic situation and instead is only able to focus on the superficial opinions of those who matter little to him in the big scheme of things. He cannot keep his wife because he cannot even manage himself properly without encroaching on Edna’s rights or treating her as an owned object.

²⁷ Seyersted comments that Chopin “seems to have realized that in the patriarchy, man would not willingly relinquish the role of the conqueror, nor woman that of the conquered. To her, man’s instinct of mastery, and

the ‘contestant rebuff’ which a man feels if a woman lacks ‘the coquettish, the captivating, the feminine,’ as she expressed it in a story, were enduring realities” (148).

The last act of the tragedy is only alluded to and follows the end pages as one closes the book. That is the plight of Raoul and Etienne Pontellier. Throughout the story, Edna is variously attentive and inattentive, as is their father. They are largely overseen by a lady quadroon, and spend much of their time visiting with Léonce's mother. While often alluded to, they are seldom seen, although eventually they inhabit a large part of the thoughts rushing through Edna's mind. What does their future hold? Edna has made the ultimate, final choice for herself, leaving her boys behind to be raised by their father who clearly loves them but struggles to make any real connections with another human being. In addition, if all Léonce knows is how to replicate the harsh structure of societal gender norms, this cycle will repeat itself ad infinitum.

While the ideas behind *The Awakening* speak to the strong undercurrents of feminism and realism, it is the latter which stands out as the most elegant, poignant, and powerful effect upon the reader. The conditions which existed on Grand Isle that fateful summer were being fostered within several of the southern United States as the culture stood on the very cusp of the twentieth century and the change that Chopin herself could foresee on the horizon. The shackles which constrained men and women, particularly the Creole folks with whom she interacted most, were being stretched to their limits, and it was only a matter of time before they shattered under the stress of social progress. This novel is an important benchmark in the timeline of America both for its depiction of southern Creole values, but also the delicate balance of the gender binary which was about to be disturbed by the Women's Suffrage movement. By challenging this limiting status quo, Chopin proves a keen observer of the harm resulting from these restrictions and the liberating quality of their abolition. In the words of Chopin's most ardent biographer, Per Seyersted, Edna's "basic existentialist quest is as modern now as it probably will be in a still patriarchal tomorrow" (163). And so, it is.

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Passion through
Slander: Saintliness,
Deviance, and
Suffering by Speech in
*The Book of Margery
Kempe*

Connor Yeck

In an age of religious devotion and determined purity of faith, the role of the mystic or seer is undoubtedly a precarious one. Such voices, in their capacity as “transmitters” of a divine message or vision, invite a host of reactions from any encounter—scorn, reverence, hatred, adoration, confusion, or disgust. Given Margery Kempe’s stunningly emotive form of worship seen throughout her titular text, it’s no surprise then that she quickly becomes a figure held in contempt. While we come to witness episodes of kindness and charity by those who recognize Margery as an individual in touch with the divine, one of the most common narrative threads is a reoccurrence of public derision. During bouts of near-violent sobbing, or merely on her arrival in some new locale, *The Book of Margery Kempe* frames our “creature” as navigating a daily space filled with malicious speech and hostile interpersonal relations. These vary from fellow worshippers who may simply stare or “grutchyn” (grumble) as Margery loudly weeps beside them in a church, to those who outright accuse her of heresy and being under the sway of some devilish force. Through such force, we can witness how the unique mechanics of accusatory speech (slander, slur, rumor, rebuke) take on new and interesting dimensions. Furthermore, we gain insight into the evolving oral cultures of fourteenth and fifteenth England and their manifestations in Margery’s life. Such transgressions of speech—words both uttered by and about Margery—become a foundation for her own perceived suffering. She must make her way through a populace often deaf to her believed purpose and who doubt her claims to an impossibly intimate bond of faith. Here is her earthly torment and the ultimate struggle of devotion beyond which Christ promises she will have “noon other purgatory” (Kempe, Bk. I, 1168).²⁸ Perhaps most striking, thought, is the

realization that through these trials Margery is seen to inhabit a role that mirrors the virgin martyrs of early legend, and that *The Book* therefore treads the line of hagiography in its own peculiar way. Within her historical context, Margery is an unwavering embodiment of the persecution, piety, and sparring with malicious powers we expect of saint narratives. This embodiment, however, when presented in the late medieval era, is cause for additional degrees of upheaval. In her choice of actions, Margery comes to represent a confluence of “sacred past and social present” (Sanok, 116). She is a revelatory voice among those who would attack her practices, and like the virgin martyrs, will not only suffer such hostilities, but directly engage them in defense of an unwavering faith.

Sins of the Tongue: Deviant Speech and Spoken Dangers

The consistent mentioning of slander and rumor in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, as well as the weight assigned to personal communication, warrants an initial exploration into such terms and their perception in England’s late medieval oral culture. This is especially useful when considering the diminished severity such terms might carry in our own modern reading. By way of Christian tradition, it’s not without good reason to wager that malicious forms of speech would be met with visible disapproval, and hold the occasional attention of sermons or religious lessons (honesty and falsehood simply being pillared issues of morality). On further reading, however, it’s clear that the day and age in which Margery experienced her tribulations was exceptionally aware of verbal trespasses, and contained forces that were actively drawing attention to the spiritual threat of spoken dangers. This fascination with “sins of the tongue” is said to be partially rooted in renewed thirteenth and fourteenth century efforts to tackle numerous issues of faith

²⁸ The text used in this analysis is the slightly modernized 1996 TEAMS Middle English Text Series publication of *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Passages are

cited by line, and when appropriate, with additional distinctions (i.e., Bk. I, Bk. II for specific books within the larger work).

among the Church's flock. This took the shape of an expected "mandatory" knowledge of various key Christian tenets after the Fourth Lateran (1215) and Lambeth Councils (1281), and included the Ten Commandments, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Twelve Articles of Faith, and the Seven Chief Virtues and Rewards. Outside of a reinvigorated mindfulness toward the piety expected to guide daily life, a primary goal of this undertaking was likewise to "regulate the tongues of Christian laity" (Mongan, 28-29). Speech, then, as the base fabric of community, social structure, worship, and communication, is understood to be a crucial yet previously underestimated factor when considering public integrity. During this time, there was also a growing body of pastoral literature, which found a welcome home in an intensified focus on "deviant speech." Edwin Craun offers an extensive survey of such works, and particularly highlights the appearance of numerous French and English instructional texts, including Peyraut's *Summa de vitiis*, d'Orlean's *Somme le roi*, de Bourbon's *Tractatus de diversis materiis predicabilibus*, as well as John of Wales' *De lingua* and *Communiloquium* ("Lies, Slander, and Obscenity," 14-24). Of note is the fact that these authors belonged to either Franciscan or Dominican orders, and that this should be understood as a direct reflection of an increased emphasis on the "catechetical and evangelical speech of preaching and confession" (21) whose aim was "to move the laity (and, sometimes, other priests) to contrition" (14). Just as Margery travels as a divinely inspired voice among the common people of England, so is there a renewed importance placed on the role of local clergy, and the direct influence they should hold over their parish and worshippers.

Considering the degree of verbal hostility Margery encounters in her travels, and the numerous phrases used against her—slander, falsehood, or wicked words—an assumption that the Church's effort to control deviant speech was done in sweeping generality would not be ill-conceived. That is, simply

considering the endless complexities of speech, there would be certain generalized verbal acts that were obviously ill-meaning, and should be avoided, reported, and chastised in everyday affairs. While an overall shunning *is* perceived, the immediate historical context of Margery's day is soon learned to be a community that was stunningly invested in the minutiae of deviant speech. Perhaps in consideration of transforming such speech into a more fearsome form of wrongdoing (and one which would demand greater vigilance on the part of common Christians), we find that deviant speech is continually organized into lesser and higher orders of sin as we would expect other grave offences to be. This, Sandy Bardsley offers, has the application of legitimizing the clergy's response to deviant speech, in that "priests needed something of a taxonomy of sins, locating each in relation to others in a hierarchy of evil" (146). Therefore, we are treated to a deluge of possible trespasses, including boasting, hypocrisy, flattery, cursing, insult, quarrelling, murmur, loquacity, base talk, lying, rumor, blunt threats, chiding, rebellion, and silence, which, through exploratory texts, are all given the phylogenetic treatment of sets, and subsets (Craun, "Lies, Slander, and Obscenity" 15-20). In late medieval England itself, there emerged several new classifications to reflect societal shifts, giving us terms such as "jangler" (those who spoke too much, and usually on poor occasions) "backbiter" (those who spread rumors or falsehoods), "praters" (those who boasted, or were excessive), and those who practiced "barratry," or a wasting of a court's time with frivolous cases (Bardsley, 149). These developments, coupled with an outright religious awakening to sinful speech, gives one line of credence to *The Book's* large focus on Margery's verbal suffering. Here is an age where deviant speech as a serious offense is said to at last leave the confines of church and government, and experience a proliferation among "authors of treatises, poetry, ballads, and plays, and by manuscript illustrators, wood and stone carvers, and painters of church walls and windows" (147).

It is an era of perceived instruction on the follies of speech, and reflects what Craun cites as Peyraut's reasoning behind his *Summa de vitiis*, that "vices ought to be shunned with the greatest effort and attentiveness, but they are not to be shunned unless first known" ("Lies, Slander, and Obscenity" 15). In turn, deviant speech and suffering by ill-spoken words becomes a formative interaction of Margery's as she navigates the greater world. It is a way for her to visualize the faults of her day and age, and glimpse both the heights and depths of human response to her emotive ways of worship—anger or kindness; skepticism or attack. And, perhaps most interesting, we're given "firsthand" entry into the world of a mystic who might defy exact religious categorization. We witness the reaction Margery demands from those around her, and just as crucial, we see how these episodes aid in the construction of a narrative journey based on suffering, piety, and the image of female Christian legends.

Slander, Gossip, and Margery as Public Figure

At times, *The Book of Margery Kempe* might provide a sense of repetition to its reader. Beyond the major punctuating points of her life—pilgrimages, public trials, and spiritual dialogues and visions—we come to expect several occurring details in the body of the text. Margery will meditate on, or witness some religious affair, and, being moved, will begin to cry, a near-violent process of "swemful teerys" (Kempe, Bk. I, 1181-1182) and "sor wepyng and [boisterous] sobbyng" (2527), often ending in physical collapse so she had "fel down and wrestyd wyth hir body and mad wondyrful cher and contenawns" (906-907). Alongside this behavior, Margery also embodies the vocal presence of a semi-preacher, and is further burdened with a Christ-ordered directive to wear white clothing—a move that "[expressed] her divine spouse's wish to distinguish her" and that invited general scorn by those she encountered (Erler, 17). These interactions, while continuous, offer their own variety of

interpretations as to what exactly is said of Margery, and how the text engages such commentary. Take for instance the shift to naming various harmful accusations as "slander" in later sections. Within the first pages of *The Book*, we witness Margery suffer far more earthly struggles in the form of a failing brewery. Naturally, the town has begun its talk, and we're told that "Anoon as it was noysed...that ther wold neythyr man ne best don servyse to the seyd creatur [and that] sum seyd [one thing]; and sum seyd another" (Kempe, Bk. I, 231-234). While these rumors are not directly linked to the concept of slander, those in the following passages that criticize Margery's newfound piety *are*, the reader being flatly told "sche [was] slawnderyd and reprevyd of mech pepul for sche kept so streyt a levynge" (276-277). This distinction represents a nuance of late medieval speech; that there is a gulf between what we would classify as rumor or gossip, and forms of talk that are simply "uncharitable reproof...[moving] from active fault-finding to assaulting [one's] reputation" (Craun, "Fama and Pastoral Constraints," 194). The role of slander is unique in *The Book* as our narrative is internally oriented; that is, we can witness the unorthodox actions of Margery, her evolving spirituality, and her internal rationale all within a reader's context. This is obviously lacking among the general populace of outsiders who see Margery as a bizarre figure inhabiting a role perceived as either harmful or harmless, depending on the circumstance. And here lies the major rhetorical strength of *The Book*, and Margery's place as sufferer. The judicial and religious culture of late medieval England is understood to have been well agreed on the severity attached to defamation, of which VanGinhoven notes "Margery, as well as the wider fifteenth-century English public, was...certainly acquainted with... its legal and communal implications" (22). Seeing as Margery does not explicitly put forth efforts to "clear her name" in a legal sense, we might hold her tribulation as essentially being twofold. First, she will suffer the insults of commoners

who cannot understand her actions on earth; she actively reimagines her entire life to mirror a pious ideal, and is misunderstood or despised at every turn. And second, this process is seen to unfold within a greater society *supposedly* focused on combating false speech, and has structures in place to preserve the reputation of its inhabitants; yet all the while, Margery suffers endless fabrications, and witnesses her respectability erode over time with false claims. This gauntlet is part of the narrative structure that will help place Margery in line with various saintly figures, and fashion her trials considering earlier tests of faith. As previously noted, specific instances of verbal conflict are ubiquitous in *The Book*, and their examination does much to add to our understanding of Margery's place in a struggle perceived to go far beyond the "talk of the town."

If the host of falsehoods uttered about Margery were ever to be proven true, we would be forced to commend her capabilities as a prolific sinner. Olga Mongan catalogues the wealth of lies spread throughout *The Book*, and the list speaks greatly of the numerous spaces Margery was seen to inhabit (or, would be diminished by mere association with). Therefore, by text's end, she has effectively been accused of being:

a hypocrite...a heretic ...a false prophet...a Jewess...a well-known lollard...a strumpet...a daughter and a spy of Sir John Oldcastle...a mother of an illegitimate child...a woman who cannot keep her vow of chastity...an agitator who is bent on the destruction of other people's matrimonial bonds...and a wife who surreptitiously engages in sexual dalliances with her husband in the woods. (33)

Such insults are unique in their variety, but also their individual context. Margery becomes an obvious distraction to those around her as she begins her meditative weeping, and the annoyance of other worshippers, while constant, is often overshadowed by particularly

memorable run-ins with certain figures, or larger communities. Take for instance Margery's initial encounter with a group of monks in Canterbury. We're told she is "gretly despysed and reprevyd" (Kempe, Bk. I, 621) by local religious figures for her crying, so much so that an elder monk eventually offers "'I wold thow wer cloyd in an hows of ston that ther schuld no man speke wyth the'" (629-630). Later in this exchange, we come to a major thread of Margery's perceived indecency, as a second, younger monk comments, "'Eythyr thow hast the Holy Gost or ellys thow hast a devyl wythin the, for that thu spekest her to us it is Holy Wrytte, and that hast thu not of thiself.'" (632-633). Directly mirroring these monks, the Steward of Leicester is likewise most concerned with the origin of Margery's speech, narrowing her possible replies to either "of God er of the devyl (2660). In her life, Margery is subject to constant doubt and verbal assault on two rather expected fronts—the spiritual, as well as the earthly. Uncommon religious knowledge is seen to be of paramount concern, especially given the immediate historical culture of late medieval England; and adding to this, Margery herself appears at first glance (and by rumor) to be a self-styled preacher, a profession at the time only permitted by church license. In moments of accusation, then, we find Margery attributing her persona—her commentary, admonition, and textually based wisdom—to some higher power. This naturally adds an additional layer to Margery's understood suffering. In relaying these "mystical utterances" through everyday life, she is fashioned "not as [their] originator...but as their transmitter" (Mongan, 34). Like any prophetess or mystic of old, she is without fault, and is merely the human vessel offering these higher teachings. Ignorance or unwillingness to accept such is therefore not a refusal of Margery, but of God; a God who laments that Man "wyl not levyn my wordys [or] knowe my vysitacyon" (Kempe, Bk. I, 1104-1105). Likewise, any direct insult on the human speaker is magnified, insomuch that "thei that despysen the... despysen me.... [for]

I am in the, and thow in me” (513-514). Beyond her position as a “voice” of some other being—good, or evil—Margery simultaneously draws comparisons to various dissenting movements of the day. Lollardy appears as a key underlying community, whose emphasis on “lay readership of scripture and preaching” (Gertz-Robinson, 28) would not appear far removed from Margery’s movements in the public eye. While terms such as “heretic” and “Lollard” contain their own evolutions of historical meaning, at their core, they remained “attributable to the general sense...[of] the social ‘other’” (VanGinhoven, 26) during Margery’s immediate era. This, then, when considering the multitude of terms and great scrutiny applied to Margery, helps create a sort of holistic image. By understanding her first as a mystic, we must recognize her place as an outsider within a larger context. With every falsehood applied, we see a distancing of Margery from some accepted normality. In her emotional demonstrations of worship, her ability to engage other critical (usually male) speakers, and her ever-changing lifestyle, she is inherently misunderstood as some “other.” She is cause for refusal, examination, and naturally in some cases, reverence.

Believers and Accusers: Impressions of Runaway Rumor

Controversial figures such as Margery will of course generate much in the way of visibility and discussion in local societies. Margery herself is seen to be quite well-traveled, and in turn, *The Book* gives us additional insight into the presence of rumor among medieval communities that are physically separated; that is, the perceptions of Margery in distant towns or villages she might not frequent. Naturally, word-of-mouth and firsthand communication come to be major factors in establishing any credible public persona, and for a mystic or religious outsider, this is doubly so. In her life’s movements, we witness Margery’s struggle to not just maintain an acceptable personal image, but to ensure the integrity of herself as a divinely guided “voice.” Through this, we view a at times crestfallen

figure who sees the terrible damage malicious speech is capable of, and the peculiarities of legitimization. Take for example the incident of Margery being struck, without serious injury, by falling wood and stonework in the church of St. Margaret. We’re told that God intended this to be a miraculous event, and that “yyf the pepyl wyl not levyn this, I schal werkyn meche mor” (Kempe, Bk. I, 494-495). Rather than remain centered on this Divine action, however, the narrative focus shifts to a far earthlier matter in the form of the White Friar Master Alan. Truly believing Margery’s survival to have been a miracle, and wishing to prove it as such, he undertakes an empirical examination of the incident (weighing the offending stone and wood) before declaring the “Lord was heyly to be magnyfied for the preservyng of this creatur” (500-501). He then goes even further, directly entering the public conversation surrounding Margery. Among the community, he champions this apparent miracle, even though “mech pepyl wold not levyn it, [and] rathyr levyd it was a tokyn of wreth and venjawns” (501-503). This occasion of split reaction (Margery being a figure deserving of either a blessing or curse) is emblematic of the divided opinion surrounding her every action. She is a figure who, beyond petty rumors, is somehow assuredly in the sights of greater powers, thereby forcing us to view her “adversities as a God-given call” or “manifest punishment...for something culpable” (Craun, “Fama and Pastoral Constraints,” 194). While the anecdote of Master Alan does not appear to create widespread legitimization of Margery as a devout figure, it does partially reveal the framework surrounding any such progress. Given the previously noted internality of Margery’s narrative, the unknowing public (and perhaps ourselves as readers) require secondary voices; that is, beyond the guiding presence of both Christ and God within Margery’s soul, we benefit from ulterior recognition of such divinity. This may be as simple as an interjection, such as that of the man who during Margery’s arrest in Leicester offers that

“Forsothe...in Boston this woman is holdyn a holy woman and a blissed woman.”(Kempe, Bk. I, 2639-2640). Or, more dramatically, a public exchange, as when a friar in Lynn denounces a crowd’s harassment of Margery during a Lenten sermon, commanding, “Frendys, beth stille, ye wote ful lityl what sche felyth,” (3958-3959). And likewise, we’re given the passing detail that some of those who despised Margery’s weeping would ask for her to do so on their deathbed: a final recognition of spiritual importance that was otherwise mocked in day to day affairs (4906-4907).

These supportive voices, while often scarce, function at times to demonstrate a certain guardianship of Margery through her tribulations. We’re told how she occasionally encounters “good maystyschep” (3949-3950), or patronage, and is promised by God that “I have frendys in every cuntré and schal make my frendys to comfort the” (2166-2167). One of the more striking instances of this is a priest who, at the urging of his mother, approaches Margery and comes to read her a wealth of theological texts over several years. This experience—essentially helping cement Margery’s understanding of religious philosophy—is said to be a fulfilment of an earlier prayer for exactly such (3389-3400). One additional consideration for these acts of kindness is their occurrence in relation to foreign strangers. In viewing her many travels, it’s soon discovered that Margery is not to be a sought-after companion for any extended journey. After witnessing her behavior, there are those who declare they will simply not go on with her for any sum of money (1784-1785), or purposely walk at a quickened pace so she might fall behind (Bk. II, 324). Beyond this, though, we find Margery receiving some gestures of charity in those lands where she is not known and is alienated by her tongue and origin. We glimpse Saracens and friars who offer aid “whan hir cuntremen wolde not knowyn hir (Bk. I, 1723-1724), and other pilgrims in the Holy Land who provide food, drink, and rest. In Rome, she encounters similarly brief moments of generosity, causing

her to “[thank] owr Lord that sche was so cheryd and cherished” (2184-2185). These moments, when considered alongside Margery’s experiences in her homeland, might be partially indicative of the ways information and rumor are spread in distinct communities. To pilgrims and wanderers, Margery is a fleeting interaction, a figure whose spiritual qualities are seen, if not understood, and so she is treated with kindness if only for the sake of others being unsure exactly of the position she inhabits. As would then be expected, we find the most visible networks of preconceived falsehoods existing in and around the locality of her own England. Here is an entrenched system of rumor and speech that is centered on Margery’s presence as a controversial figure, and ranges far and wide ahead of her immediate person. Here then above all we can view Margery through the eyes of observers, and find the negative images that have come to comprise her reputation.

As with any public figure, especially those determined to be controversial, there exist two distinct spheres of personal identity. For Margery, these are the firsthand interactions she might immediately control or at least take part in, and then those created narratives that go beyond her and lack any possible attempts at influence. On numerous occasions, we see how these malicious narratives cost Margery certain relations, and quickly become their own breed of suffering. We witness the internal struggle of individuals caught between “believing” in either of Margery’s two competing identities, such as the anchorite at Lynn who tells her she had “herd mych evyl langage of yow syth ye went owr” and was “sor cownsel to leve yow and no mor to medyl wyth yow” (856-857). While in this case such rumors are resisted, other interactions are terminated before they might ever begin, solely on what has been heard second hand. These, perhaps most hurtful of all, are individuals who had previously admired Margery, but with distance and time, have their opinions altered. For instance, there is the anchorite monk of Norwich, who “befortyme

had lovyd this creatur [very much]” but due to the “evyl langage that he herd of hir he turnyd al agens hir” (2416-2417), particularly for the rumor that she’d given birth while on pilgrimage. Similarly, the anchoress at York, who Margery had “lovyd...wel” prior to visiting Jerusalem, “wolde not receyven hir, for sche had herd telde so mech evyl [about her]” (2807-2811). In both instances, Margery’s prolonged absence provides fertile ground in which falsehood might take hold and then spread unopposed. Such refusals are not merely insulting, but are sometimes cause for physical hardships, such as the Englishwoman in Aachen, who, despite Margery’s understanding that she would be a traveling partner, tells her flatly “I wyl not medelyn wyth the” (Bk. II, 474-475), leaving her alone in a foreign city. A similar situation unfolds as Margery encounters the hermit Reginald near the end of the text and begs to be led back to Lynn. We learn Reginald suffered abuse after he had escorted Margery at the start of her journey (disobeying her confessor), and that “I was blamyd for yowr defawte (649).

One of the most memorable instances of malicious speech, rumor, and the power of public perception is that of the traveling friar at Lynn. Given his reputation of being a “holy man and a good prechour” (Bk. I, 3507), Margery is seen to be extremely invested in hearing his sermon; and, knowing full well how she would react, the friar is warned beforehand that a woman will most likely begin to cry. When this occurs, the friar is irritated by Margery and asks that she be removed, even after a “worshepful doctowr of divinité” (3550) and a “bachelor of lawe” (3553) argue in favor of her spirituality. The friar, ignoring such claims, reveals that he is “trustyng mech in the favowr of the pepil” (3562-3563), and refuses to see her tears as sent from God. While Margery keeps herself from the friar’s sermons, we learn that her public presence is firmly in place. The friar continues to speak poorly of Margery in a roundabout manner, so that those in the crowd who believed in her were “hevy and sorweful...[and] desiryng that thei had not

a herd hym” (3600-3601), and would come to distance themselves from her for a time. Margery, as a targetable figure—an outsider, a stranger—is once more given scrutiny in the public forum. What she stands for (or is believed to stand for) far outweighs her immediate presence, so that the friar is said to “alwey...in hys sermown have a parte ageyn hir, whethyr sche wer ther er not” (3647-3648). In this moment, the friar is a sort of polarization of the legitimacy that Margery’s narrative often seeks. Like those few figures who understand the divinely inspired actions of a mystic, voices like that of the friar work to solidify otherwise scattered criticisms, such as how in attacking Margery, he appears to energize certain elements of the crowd who through their own negative speech seemed “mor bolde, for hem thowt that her opinyon was wel strengthyd er ellys fortified” (3537-3539). This secondary layer of criticism is a core element of the cycle at hand: rumors and lies that, once spoken, can only be worsened and never controlled. This is a primary concern of Margery, who quite early in the text understands that those who speak poorly of her “had no knowlch of hir maner of governawns” (994-995) and instead derive their abuse from the “jangelyng of other personys” (995) and the “pervertyng...of trewth” (996). Such an endless march of abuse comes to form the basic structure of any spiritual struggle. Coupled with key moments of trial rhetoric and revelatory dialogue within the Margery’s own soul, we at last begin to understand her perceived role as mystic, as well as willing sufferer.

Suffering, Saintliness and Margery-As-Martyr

Within the anecdote of the friar at Lynn, we receive a stark summation of Margery’s earthly trials: “Thus was sche slawnderyd, [eaten], and [gnawed] of the pepil for the grace that God wrowt in hir of contricyon, of devocyon, and of compassyon, [through] the gyft of wech gracys sche wept, sobbyd, and cryd” (3650-3653). This imagery, provided during Margery’s life as mystic,

closely mirrors the words spoken by Christ at its beginning: “Thow schalt ben [eaten] and [gnawed] of the pepul of the world as any [rat gnaws] the stokfysch” (382-384). Margery is diminished, violated, and wholly at the mercy of those who would speak ill of her. The viciousness of foul language is clear, and given the era’s focus on deviant speech, we as readers are invited to view it with equal severity. Such harassment might as well be physically inflicted on a pious figure, and in a way, recalls medieval warnings against the act of cursing, as it was believed in some circles to have “[torn] at the body of Christ” (Gill, 138). Margery’s suffering is predestined, and plays a nonnegotiable role in her narrative. And, as we might expect, this suffering is understood as pleasing to God, who explains the “thyng that I lofe best thei lofe not, and that is schamys, despitys, scornys, and reprevys of the pepil” (Kempe, 3747-3748). Through these experiences, Margery undergoes her own prolonged Passion, or comparable test, and in one shape or another, commits to a form of *imitatio*. This might be of Christ himself, who, in declaring that “I schuld be newe crucified in...schrewyd wordys” (1989) creates debate on Margery’s understanding of her relationship to Christ, and reveals how on one front, “slander allows Margery to appropriate Christ’s voice, to become Christ herself, and...[substitute] his body with her own” (Mongan, 52). This willingness to suffer is furthered by an earlier mentioned refusal to combat defamatory speech in any legal context. In other words, Margery’s experience of “actionable defamations yet refusing to seek any public recompense for them [is] a primary method of establishing her public ‘martyrdom by slander.’” (VanGinhoven, 38). These considerations also simply place Margery within a higher tier of assumed piety and religious devotion. She is acting out her own defining Christian narrative, and throughout the text, this nearness to the spiritual is amplified with every anecdote. One noticeable trend is, just as Margery’s speech is derived from God (and questioned as being that, or its

opposite), those who speak against her are effectively mouthpieces as well. We’re told of those who had “forsokyn hir, and ful falsly...accusyd hir [through] temptacyon of the devyl of thyngys that sche was nevyr gylty in” (Kempe, Bk. I, 741-742) and how such evil words “wer fowndyn of [him, father of lies] and born forth of hys membrys, [who were] fals [and envious] pepil” (Bk. II, 557-560). The presence of the Devil or some demonic force acting behind speech places Margery at the center of spiritual conflict, and makes all irregular speech simply that much more damning. Susan Phillips draws attention to such imagery in her consideration of medieval views on what was known as “idle speech.” Categorized as the presumably innocent act of speaking during sermon, Phillips claims that such speech was not truly idle, but rather “full of cost, full of harm, full of danger, [and] full of vanity” (65), as it represented a rampant distraction, “hindering the common profit by preventing other parishioners from receiving the word of God” (63). Additionally, there is the notion that speech is an unalterable part of one’s life-record, and will be considered during any spiritual judgment. This partly mirrors God’s promise to Margery that, when those who mocked her pass from the world, he will reveal, “Lo, I ordeynd hir to wepyn for hir synnes, and ye had hir in gret despite, but hir charité wolde nevyr [cease] for yow” (Kempe, Bk. I, 3757-3758). In this area, Philips considers several narratives focused on demons whose sole tasks were supposedly to “collect” sinful speech—either “words skipped by clerics” or “lay verbal transgressions” (71). In any case, speech is once more held to its highest standard; it is a measure of purity as well as corruption. Margery’s experience, then, again goes far beyond her perseverance while the subject of rumor. She is exposed, attacked, and perseveres in service of her personal faith. And, as Gail Gibson succinctly offers, “if martyrdom by sword was not available to qualify her for sainthood, martyrdom by slander was, and Margery’s *Book* seems quite

conscious of the validating implications of such suffering” (47).

A final consideration in Margery’s tribulations is the question of sainthood itself. While *The Book* clearly links her to Christ, much conversation has been devoted to a likewise *imitatio* of the virgin martyr archetype. This analysis yields much in the way of attempting to grasp Margery’s framing of herself in her own historical and societal context. Legendary figures such as Saint Catherine, Saint Margaret, and the Apostles are referenced in the text, and help establish a passing congruency between Margery and those who have previously suffered for the faith. Considering the narrative arc of virgin martyr stories, as well as Gibson’s commentary, we find that while Margery is threatened with physical violence (burning), and does find herself impoverished and imprisoned, she is spared the bodily torture so prominent in earlier tales. This violence is subsequently transmuted into the more-than-prominent verbal assault she encounters through daily life. In regard to speech Margery is seen by some to inhabit the role of the female martyr most clearly through her participation in trials. These occasions are significant in the tales of virgin martyrs and offered a framework that highlighted a sole female figure denying male authority and proving her devotion surrounded by a pagan “other.” Throughout *The Book*, Margery takes part in two particularly noteworthy trials in Canterbury and York. These instances allow Margery true moments of public rebellion, and, just as important, they are a regimented medium by which she is able to offer her thoughts without the clamor of a common crowd. Some have pointed to Margery’s presence in these trials as striking moments of subverting religious structures, especially when focused on her appearance as a “female preacher.” For instance, Margery plainly denies preaching on the technicality that she has no pulpit, yet immediately afterward, launches into “recognizable sermon rhetoric such as scriptural quotation and exemplum, effectively undermining her claim” (Gertz-Robinson, 31). She exists both within and

without established constraints and at times redirects the very narrative of her own trial—telling the parable of the bear and the pear tree, or critiquing the clergy’s fine clothes—so that before it is realized, an initial interrogation has become “an open forum for a laywoman’s spirituality” (Sanok, 124). This shift in power holds true to the conventions of trials of legendary Christian women, who, through a brilliance of dialogue, undermine pagan worldviews. This inhabitation of a historically distant image further blurs our understanding of Margery as a late medieval figure. She is understood to offer an entirely unique committal to the role of female mystic, especially when compared to her contemporaries. The medieval occupation of mystic or holy woman possessed its own set of expectations—living as an anchoress or equally cloistered figure devoted to contemplation—and reflects the era’s understanding of female spirituality. Osborn Bokenham for instance, who is believed to have written commissioned texts within a decade of Margery’s *Book*, explored the myth of Mary Magdalene, suggesting in his rendition of the tale that women should “seek the grace that Mary Magdalene enjoys, not by imitating her extravagant weeping or her itinerant preaching nor even her embracing a life of chastity, but through the far more socially acceptable practice of devotional reading” (Sanok, 130). Margery, of course, exhibits all these emotive qualities, therefore breaking any accepted traditions. This refusal in a way would explain the public upheaval and attack Margery suffers, and while most research would attach all seriousness to *The Book*’s narrative, some have pointed to its inherent, stubborn humor. Larsen and Curnow offer that in reading Margery’s story, we must recognize the righteousness and improbability of her task of attempting to mirror early Christian sainthoods several centuries removed. We’re told that “Margery reads with no sense of the boundary between her own late-medieval context and that of the early Christian literary narratives” (288), and that humor primarily “emerges from

[her] adherence to a mechanized hagiographic script...regardless of the ever-changing demands” (285). From this analysis, we find Margery to be a somewhat unanchored figure, exploring both past and present, and ignoring the gulf between the “ethical paradigm of traditional legends and late medieval expectations for laywomen’s religious and social practice” (Sanok, 123). In her own eyes, then, regardless of public perception, scrutiny, or the doubting of her purpose, Margery is not merely mimicking the role of an early Christian martyr—she is legitimately attempting to possess this station in all its assumed hardships and peculiarities.

Conclusion

The Book of Margery Kempe presents a world rife with the potentiality of language. Gossip, rumor, slander, defamation, accusation, and idle speech all play crucial roles in not only lay society, but in greater debates of personal and collective faith. In this context, Margery’s appearance as a traveling mystic—one so visible, as well as wholly vocal—creates a framework by which language becomes a method of hagiographic suffering. At every stage of her journey, the holy woman plays out a struggle between competing forces: maintaining herself as a vessel of the divine while being met with scorn, disgrace, and shame; and seeing herself as a figure in a spiritual conflict played out in the very minds and mouths of those around her. She defies expectations of female spirituality and religious agency and in considering images of early Christian martyrdom appropriates such narratives as a framing device through which we see her own late medieval reality. Margery comes to be a figure who might often appear to “[slip] from the historical and geographical place she inhabits”(Sanok, 132), and such an observation could not be closer to the truth. In the end, her text explores (and condemns) the oral culture of her time, yet explores a far deeper past. In doing so, we find our world will always have much to say about the appearance of “outsiders,” and that such speech, when

reconsidered, might have its own defining role to play.

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Communication in Divorced Families with Children: A Review of the Literature

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Love, hope, children, and security: While not by any means an exhaustive list, these are all reasons people get married. According to the U.S. Census (2012), in the United States 53.9 percent of people were married in 2011. There are many communication strategies that can be used to help a marriage survive and thrive, but what about communication strategies for divorce? According to the American Psychological Association (2016) 40-50 percent of marriages in the US end in divorce (Marriage & divorce, n.d.). When children are not involved, couples have the ability divorce and live separate lives. However, according to the US census in 2011, 41 percent of married couples had at least one child under the age of 18 (Jacobsen, Mather, & Dupuis, 2012, p. 4). When a couple has living minor children, they are often unable to live their lives without needing to communicate with each other after the dissolution of the marriage.

Divorce can have profound and lasting impacts on children. Children of divorced families are not only more likely to be divorced themselves as adults, but are at a higher risk for emotional and physical health problems, peer relational issues, and suicidality (Child and Divorce Statistics, n.d.). A marital status transition “can lead to depression, behavioral problems, poor school performance and separation anxiety” (Portes, Lehman, & Brown, 1999, p. 38). These children “tend to be less self-efficient, have a lower self-esteem and have less effective coping skills (Portes et al., 1999, p. 38). To help reduce the risk of a child becoming a statistic in one of the prior mentioned categories, it is important that the child can adjust to and process the divorce in a healthy and productive manner. There are several key components to this, but many revolve around the parental units and communication. This paper will explore both parent and child communication and co-parent communication.

There are many aspects to communication during and after divorce, and

the small list of various aspects discussed in this paper are not an exhaustive list. First, the different types of family conversation and conformity dyads will be reviewed. Second, the researcher will explore ambiguity and competency in parent-child communications. Next, child adjustment in separations and divorces will be explored. Finally, the researcher will discuss post-divorce communication between the child and both the custodial parent and non-custodial parent, as well as, between the co-parents, and how technology is used in these relationship groups.

Method

Data was pulled from nine studies published in academic journals across the country, as well as, various internet based psychology and census sources. All studies were done within the United States and were primarily in the northern part of America. It is important to note that while some studies had more diverse participant groups, most study samples were primarily Caucasian families with the mother as the custodial parent. Ages of children varied, but the focus was almost exclusively on children under the age of 18. Co-parents within these studies were all biological parents, with second families rarely explored except in terms of peer-to-peer communication. One study included families that were recently separated or in the process of getting divorced, but were not legally divorced yet.

Conversation and Conformity Dyads

Families are made up of a conversation and conformity dyad. Families that highly value communication would be considered as having a high conversation orientation, while those who do not highly value communication would be considered low conversation orientation. According to Schrodts and Skimkowski (2015), “Parents of high conversation oriented families believe in the importance of open communication as a means of teaching and socializing their children” (p. 3). For high conversation oriented families, open dialogue is encouraged and a part of daily life. For low conversation

oriented families, there is less verbal communication back and forth and conversation may only be surface topics. Low conversation families are less likely to discuss topics that revolve around opinions, feelings, and emotions.

The other side of the dyad is conformity orientation, which also comes in both high and low values. High conformity orientation families value “uniformity and obedience” (Schrodt & Skimkowski, 2015, p. 3) more than opinions and personal desires. Schrodt and Skimkowski (2015) state that, high conformity families “tend to have uniform beliefs and values, a hierarchical family structure, and they place family interests before those of individual family members” (p. 3). While high conformity oriented families do not offer much room for individualized growth outside of the family value set, those with low conformity orientation value personal beliefs and interests. These families allow and encourage individual growth without dependence on the family core image or value set, but that is not to say that some family values are not expected to be followed.

These two orientations in their polarities, form four dyads of different family types. Families that are both low conformity and low conversation are laissez-faire families, high conformity and low conversation are protective families, both high conformity and high conversation are consensual families, and low conformity with high conversation are pluralistic families. In the study done by Schrodt and Skimkowski (2015) it was found that “conversation orientation significantly predicted perceptions of both supportive and antagonistic coparental communication” (p. 9). Families with high conversation orientation had healthier coparenting practices. This is in part due to “parents who believe in the value of open and unrestrained interactions on a wide variety of topics may be more likely to support each other, and less likely to compete with each other, in their parenting efforts with the children” (Schrodt & Skimkowski, 2015, p. 9). Regardless of conformity orientation, those

with high conversation orientation, had relationships that were perceived by children as supportive.

However, conformity orientation does still affect the relationship and perceptions of it. “High conformity orientation is likely to impede the ability of parents to resolve conflict and model healthy conflict resolution skills for their children...encourages conflict avoidance in parenting” (Schrodt & Skimkowski, 2015, p. 10). This conflict avoidance may lead to parents either acting as individuals instead of as a coparenting team, or one parent being dominant in making decisions for children even after divorce. Either way, the message and lesson to the child is not healthy communication and may lead to poor coping skills with the divorce and other elements later in life.

Despite the possible negative effects of being conformity oriented, it may be less of a concern if paired with high conversation orientation to form a consensual dyad. Schrodt and Skimkowski (2015) found that “it may matter less to supportive coparenting practices if parents have established a relatively strong conversation orientation within the family” (p. 9). While children in protective families may have a hard time adjusting to divorced life in terms of stress and communication, pluralistic families will struggle as both parents feel free to set the terms that they feel are important. Unless both parents openly communicate about rules and expectations with one another, and not just with the children, this family type could send mixed messages to children. Consensual families can rely on their conversation orientation to coparent and relay the same expectations to children within households that value obedience and family values.

Ambiguity and Competency in Parent-Child Communication

One who is communication competent possess the ability to effectively communicate the desired message in an appropriate way for the receiver to understand. Being competent in communication has both potential positive

and negative effects on the parent child relationship. McManus and Donovan (2012) found that “openness contributed to cohesive, healthy functioning post-divorce families” (p. 269). However, if parents withhold information or are perceived as doing such, it negatively affected the relationship between that parent and the child. McManus and Donovan (2012) state that “when parents were viewed as more communicatively competent, parents’ ambiguity had greater effects on young adults’ psychological well-being” (p. 269). This is especially important since children may expect parents to possess this competency due to experience over life, despite this topic being different than most conversations, and may misjudge ambiguity as deliberate withholding.

While being ambiguous can be harmful, children may feel trapped or caught with parents who are not as competent or are intentionally manipulative. Feeling caught is the “experience of triangulation arising from when parents involve children in their disputes, request that the child take sides, mediate the conflict” (McManus & Donovan, 2012, p. 260), or even relay messages back between parental parties. When children feel, manipulated or like they are caught in the middle of fighting parents, there are negative effects on the child psychologically. Communicating about divorce stress is healthy, unless it negatively affects the child’s relationship with either parent, or has a negative effect on the child’s own coping skills. In essence, it may not only be how you say something, but what you are saying. An inability to communicate about divorce stress, mixed with direct conflict avoidance may be a trait that is found in low conversational families that are experiencing the sudden power dynamic change.

While young children may not be able to read parental conflict as easily, Portes, Lehman, and Brown (1999) state that an adolescent child’s “ability to rationalize and understand may prove detrimental to the adolescents involved” (p. 38), as they are gaining the ability to “see when they are being

manipulated by their parents, which may increase their anxiety and levels of frustration and anger with their parents” (p. 38). This realization forces children into a state of feeling caught, which can be detrimental to their psyche.

Child Adjustment in Marital Transitions

Divorce does not always have long term negative effects on children and family units, but in Linker, Stolberg, and Green (1999) state that as of 1991, “approximately one-sixth of children from divorced families experience long-term adjustment problems” (p. 84). For children with high conversational oriented families, or a high conversational custodial parent, divorce can help them develop the ability to problem-solve, cope with stress, and adjust to adverse situations. Afifi, Huber, and Ohs (2006), state that “the amount of affection and empathy a parent communicates to a child when the child is talking about his/her stress could promote a climate of acceptance and openness about the stress and, thus, contribute to his/her ability to cope with it” (p. 3). Including children in family communication and helping them determine what is stressful for them and how they feel they should deal with it can have lasting effects.

For many children, the divorce will have negative effects, even if briefly. Children who do not adjust well may exhibit behavioral problems, suffer from depression, develop emotional problems like low self-esteem, and have poor coping skills to use later in life. Child maladjustment has several variables, but 23% are related to “social support, residential and non-residential parent-child relationships, and interparental conflict” (Linker, Stolberg, & Green, 1999, p. 84). According to Afifi, Huber, and Ohs (2006), “substantial changes in custodial parent-child interactions often occur after divorce and that many of them are detrimental to the child...at least in the initial years” (p. 4). Children will need some information about the divorce, but it is always important to help them understand this information and process it in a way that is best

for them, instead of telling them how to process it.

In divorce families will often experience changes in communication, changes in amount of physical time spent together between parental units and children, changes in family roles and the types of duties that each party is responsible for, and possible co-parent conflict. According to Linker, Stolberg, and Green (1999), parental conflict has “one of the most influential effects” (p. 85), which can be made worse when “altered communication patters makes co-parenting tasks more challenging and less efficient” (p. 86). Even in families with high conversational orientation, daily life may not be discussed even though major choices are available. This challenge is exhibited more strongly with the noncustodial or nonresidential parent.

Post-Divorce-Parent-Child Communication and Technology

For parents who are not the custodial or residential parents, time with children is cut substantially. While more families are doing equal joint physical custody today, it was not always the norm and in many cases still is not possible. Some parents have jobs that require the following: travel or be deployed; some jobs may result in a parent living a long distance from children; some parents may be incarcerated or have other court related orders restricting physical visitation time with the children; some parents may not wish to reach out to their children, etc. To this day when there is a non-custodial parent, it is often the father, thus most of the research discussed was done with a non – custodial parent family type.

Non-custodial parents often miss-out on the day to day life of their children. While it may seem menial, research has found that “relationships are maintained (or “talked into being”) through regular talk and interaction, both the strategic and the mundane” (Rodriguez, 2014, p. 1135). Some non-custodial parents are fortunate enough to have a good co-parenting relationship with their ex and be geographically located closely, with a job that allows the time and income, to see

their children on days that are not their assigned days. These parents can attend sporting events, artistic and academic events, and interact with the children on a more regular basis than those who either do not have a good relationship with their ex or are not geographically located where they can increase physical visits to their children.

Due to non-custodial parents, not being as present as custodial parents, others mean can be used to communicate regularly, often technology based means. Parents can use the telephone or internet to communicate with children. For some the internet may be skype, email, or chat. Since non-custodial parents tend to feel like that they “miss out on the basic, mundane details of their children’s lives” (Rodriguez, 2014, p. 1141), using technology to communicate can ease this feeling. This may require more prompting than normal for a conversation, as children may be more apt to share details that they feel are significant, while not sharing the rest of the day.

One participant in Rodriguez’s (2014) study said, “It’s always going to be fragmented...we’ll only see parts of each other’s lives” (p. 1141). While technology can assist in communication it can never replace face-to-face interactions. There is also the chance that the other parent will not allow communication during their visitation times. Sadly, for these situations, there is nothing that the other parent can do until the child is old enough to make their own decisions. If possible, parents should try to work together to allow for both parents to attend special events for children and to communicate regularly with the children when not physically present for extended times.

Divorced Co-Parenting Relationships and Communication

Co-parents can also use technology to communicate efficiently and effectively with one another. “One of the most important challenges in post-divorce families is maintain positive coparental relationships...requiring communication between ex-partners who may have contentious relationships” (Ganong,

Coleman, Feistman, Jamison, & Markham, 2012, p. 397). One way to do this is by using technology. When a quick question is being asked, and will not have a detailed answer a phone call may be sufficient. However, if the response is going to be detailed a text may be more beneficial.

One thing for co-parents to keep in mind when using technology, especially the phone or text, is that constant contact may come across as harassment or crossing a line. Technology can be very beneficial, but it can also be used to control and manipulate the other parents, which can further deteriorate a fragile relationship. When the parents do not have a good relationship, the phone can “disintegrate into arguments about on-going disagreements and rehashing of past issues” (Ganong et al., 2012, p. 399). However, if used to focus on the children’s needs the phone can be very effective for fast communication.

In relationships that are less amicable, email may be a better use of technology. According to Ganong, Coleman, Feistman, Jamison, and Markham, (2012), “emails can be sent without fear of engaging the other parents in unwanted conversation” (p. 399) and allow a record of any details shared and agreed upon, and can be less emotionally charged. Using phone conversations, once something is said it is out there, and texts are often sent in the heat of the moment and can be too emotionally charge. Using emails, the sender is more likely to edit the content and use the medium to try to defuse the situation or reduce the likelihood of conflict. Email is also a useful tool for those who need to convey detailed information regardless of the state of the relationship, and at times a shared family calendar can relay a lot of this information for families with multiple children with schedule commitments.

When communication breaks down to a point that it is affecting the children, it is time for the parents to consider enlisting the help of a professional. One such type of professional help is mediation. Mediation can take place during or after divorce. According to Gentry (1997), “children must feel secure and

empowered to share their observations, thoughts, wants, and feelings relative to their parent’ divorce” (p. 316). In Gentry’s study two games were used, Life Stories and Future Stories, both of which are similar in nature and helped keep the children from being bored while disclosing similar information to each parent separately.

For the family discussed the major areas of contentment were, “time spent with the children, supervision of the children when a caregiving parent had to be absent, and behaviors when communicating with each other about the children’s welfare” (Gentry, 1997, p. 318). Before the games were used in mediation, the parents agreed to not make the children feel caught between them and that they would not be making the final discussion regarding any of the concerns. During the games the parents realized that the children loved both and wanted to spend time with each, that they were not in denial about the divorce, and had many good memories as a family, but were optimistic that their parents would navigate their relationship better in the future (Gentry, 1997, p. 320). Since there were no red flags that the helper felt would result in the children being at risk, the games were used and effective in navigating the families conflict areas, even after divorce.

Conclusion

Despite the increase in families that are partaking in more even joint custody, there are still challenges faced by these families. Communication between the co-parents and individual parent units and children are important. Divorce will be an adjustment for the entire family, and may be especially hard on children, but having a healthy relationship with the parents can make all the difference. Even having a healthy relationship with one parents can have a profound impact on the child’s coping abilities and ability to adjust in a healthy manner.

A major component in a healthy relationship for the children is open and honest communication. However, parents should not use the children as an outlet for their stress and

frustrations, which could result in over sharing and the child feeling caught between sides. One influential area for child adjustment is the dynamics of the co-parental relationship. If the co-parents can maintain a healthy relationship amongst themselves and communicate effectively between each other, this can be perceived as a good relationship model for children and reduce the stress that children experience.

In addition to working out a good relationship between ex-partners, a good relationship between the child and both the custodial and non-custodial parent should be attempted. For the custodial parent this is easier to do through daily maintenance communication than for the non-custodial parent. The non-custodial parent may need to use technology to strengthen their relationship maintenance with children, something that can only be attained with the cooperation of the custodial parent's cooperation. In addition, learning to be a high conversational oriented family, if not already one, may be profoundly beneficial.

Practicing open dialogue between the co-parents and the parent and children will allow for more topics to be discussed in more depth. Further, surface conversation may be able to maintain a relationship with the non-custodial parent, but this limited conversation with the custodial parent may be detrimental to the child's social and coping skills, which can increase the chances of prolonged low self-esteem. Additionally, families that are consensual seem to have the easiest time in having open communication without sending too many mixed signals on what rules and values are important. If the current family type is *liaise-faire*, learning to adjust to pluralistic will increase the chances of a child adjusting in a healthy manner.

When one parent cannot be present often, regardless of reason, the use of technology can be a very effective way to maintain communication with children. In addition to maintaining a relationship with a child with extended periods of absence,

technology can also be used for co-parenting in any situation. Technology can make it easier to coordinate a child's schedule, to share important information, and to converse in a manner that is easier to control. Using technology to communicate between co-parents can also have its drawbacks and parents need to be careful not to fall into those patterns.

It may be easy to react to a text in an emotional manner, without taking the time to calm down after an initial interpretation of the message. If one remembers to take a step back and calm down, they may find that they misunderstood the message or inflected their current emotional state onto the message without realizing it. In addition, phone calls and text messages can be used to harass the other co-parent and it's important to ensure that you are not doing this, intentionally or not. When records are needed, either for court or due to a forgetful parent, email may be the best solution. Email is also a good solution for co-parents who are having a harder time communication in a non-hostile manner.

In addition to these options, having a family calendar, such as Google calendar or Cozi, may prove beneficial and help keep everyone more in tune to upcoming events and activities for the children. Divorce can have both negative and positive effects on the family, and even if negative effects are present at first, they may ease with time. It is never the child's job to help the parent cope or be their emotional punching bag. While open dialogue is important, it should be limited to what the child can process, without intentionally withholding or being ambiguous, and should never be used to belittle or degrade the other parent.

It is the parent's responsibility to foster an environment to make the transition as easy as possible for the children. It is the parent's responsibility to maintain a healthy relationship with the children and to provide a chance for the other parent to do the same. It is the responsibility of the co-parents to work together as a team for the benefit of the

children. Children can learn to be independent, to cope with stress, to be proficient with interpersonal communication, to see that two people can who are different can work together in a peaceful manner, and so much more.

Children can be severely affected by divorce, but they don't need to. Tools are available today to help facilitate a healthy environment and relationships for divorced families. At the end of the day, the co-parents have a chance to teach children the skills that will help them function better as adults. It is the responsibility of the parents to protect their children, while helping them grow. To allow children to express themselves and learn to grieve and cope with stress in a healthy manner. At the end of the day, the co-parents control so much of this in how they communicate with one another and the child. It's about high conversational orientation, without over-sharing or ambiguity. It's about learning to love a new way.

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