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EMILY DICKINSON'S ENCOUNTER WITH VICTORIAN-AMERICAN BUDDHISM

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Emily Dickinson's encounter with mid-to-late nineteenth-century American Buddhism. Unlike her friend and "teacher," T. W. Higginson, she did not openly partake in the cultural conversation about Buddhism. In the 1870s, however, many articles and extracts were published about Buddhism in the periodicals subscribed to by the Dickinson household. I propose that any resemblances her writing could be said to have with the teachings of the Buddha and Buddhism in these periodicals is not coincidental. The phenomenon Dickinson calls "the law of Flood," has many similarities with James F. Clarke's descriptions of Nirvana and Buddhist impermanence. In addition, four of Dickinson's 1873 poems can be read in concurrence with the narrative, "A Buddhist Legend." However, it is the possession of Alfred Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism*, in 1885, that cements my argument on Dickinson's interests in Buddhism.
Keywords: Dickinson, Buddhism, Transcendentalism

Introduction: First Encounters

Emily Dickinson's encounter with Buddhism in the mid-to-late Victorian period is a subject yet untouched by scholars. Much has been written about Dickinson's response to the Puritan faith and its doctrines of predestination and Original Sin. Even in defiance of, or in indifference to, its doctrines,

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Dickinson, it is thought,was deeply steeped in the ethics of her New England religious upbringing.[1] She could not escape it. As one of Dickinson's well known biographers argues, she absorbed the Puritan axioms (hard work, austerity, and simplicity) into her writing, without thinking (Sewall 22). However, by the time Puritanism reached Dickinson, it no longer resembled New England Calvinism (Eberwein). It had already split into the Congregational and Unitarian traditions, and after the Great Awakening of 1740, the doctrine of Original Sin weakened as a source of "total depravity" (Eberwein 81). Born into an era of religious revivals, Dickinson refused to profess her faith in God, and although her own religious formation came in a "conservatively evangelical" environment, Jane Eberwein admits that the version she experienced was "attenuated" (81). It follows that her disenchantment with such an experience may have opened her up to alternative traditions of worship. As Patsy J. Daniels has argued recently, Dickinson was in search of "something more real, urgent, and meaningful than Christianity" (4, 6). That "something," according to Daniels, came to resemble Buddhist thought.[2]

While Daniels proposes a connection between Dickinson's seclusion and modern-day practices of Buddhist meditation, I propose that any resemblances the poet's writing has to Buddhist thought is culturally and historically specific. She encountered Buddhism at a relatively late date (1870s), but no less important stage in her writing and most likely, though not exclusively, as a consequence of her friendship with

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[1] See for example, Sewall, *The Life of Emily Dickinson* (19-27); Keller, *The Only Kangaroo Among the Beauty* (67); Eberwein, *Dickinson: Strategies of Limitation* (81-82); Lundin, *Emily Dickinson and the Art of Belief* (11-13); and McIntosh, *Nimble Believing* (26).

[2] Others who have explored the topic of Dickinson and Buddhism (and/or Zen), even in passing, include Amy Horiuchi (*Possible Zen Traits in Emily Dickinson's Perception*), Steven Hagen (*Buddhism Is Not What You Think: Finding Freedom Beyond Beliefs*), Christina Feldman (*Woman Awake: Women Practicing Buddhism*), R. C. Allen (*Emily Dickinson: Accidental Buddhist)*, Helen Koukoutsis ("'The Missing Seed': Keesah Gotami's and Emily Dickinson's Way of Understanding Death") and Joan Kirkby ("Emily Dickinson's Varieties of Religious Experience").

Thomas Wentworth Higginson. In 1870 and 1873 he visited Dickinson at the Homestead, and in between those visits he composed a small series of articles and lectures in which he expressed, for the first time, his sympathy for Buddhism.[3] We know she read whatever she could by him.[4] We also know she turned to him in 1862 for instruction and advice as a poet. Later, she even appreciated him as a friend for saving her life; and for the first time in 1877 she approached him for religious instruction. "Would you explain it [immortality] to me?" she asked, "I was told you were once a Clergyman" (L503).[5]

Although the calling as a poet was a "sacred" one to Dickinson, particularly in the early stages of her writing (1860s), I agree with Benjamin Lease that she understood it to be temporary (because the "occupant must die" [Fr1507][6]) and therefore "of little importance alongside the prospect of 'some other realm of existence'" (96). For this reason Higginson's faith "was far more important to Dickinson than any praise he could offer (or withhold) in critical response to the poems she sent him" (Lease 96). That "faith," however, was marked by his impatience with the orthodox Christian doctrine and his 1849 resignation from the Ministerial pulpit, which begs the question: did Emily Dickinson find a kindred spirit in his impatience? Barton Levi St. Armand believes she may have read his 1859 lecture on Spiritualism, which is an attack on the Christian doctrine of salvation. Belief in this doctrine, as Higginson implies, leads to a fear of death and a desire to

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[3] Higginson's articles on this subject include "The Sympathy of Religions," "The Buddhist Path of Virtue," "The Character of Buddha," and "Buddha and Jesus." He also reviewed vol. 1 of Samuel Johnson's three-volume book on Oriental religions, and in 1893 a revised and shorter version of his earlier paper, "The Sympathy of Religions," appeared in *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism: Voices from the World's Parliament of Religions*. See Thomas Tweed, *American Encounter*, 20-25; see also 174-75, n. 33, 34, and 35.

[4] See letters 260, 280, 323, 337, 352, 353, 368, 405, 413, 418, 449, 450, 458, 488, 503, 593, 622, 692, 728, and 1042. Reference to Dickinson's letters will hereafter be noted with an "L" beside the letter number.

[5] See also L330, L621, and L1045.

[6] Reference to Dickinson's poems will be noted with an "Fr" beside the poem number, to reflect the Franklin edition used.

escape death. Spiritualism, he adds with optimism, is the end of that gloom and the beginnings of a new "gospel of gladness" (cited in Lease 102, n. 5). In the same year, Dickinson was making her own disrespect for doctrines known to Mrs. Joseph Haven, and, if indeed, as Lease argues, she gained spiritual strength by admiring others' (like Wadsworth and Higginson) who had found the "certainty [of immortality] that kept eluding her" (96), then it is perhaps correct to say that in Higginson she sought not only literary instruction but also religious affirmation.

My own *"Joy's Insuring Quality": Mystical Apophasis and Zen Satori in Emily Dickinson's Phases of Writing* (thesis) considers the possibility that, after the late 1860s, her own writing was in active dialogue not only with Higginson's essay "Buddha and Jesus" (the only one of his on this subject to appear in the *Springfield Republican*), but also with other essays on the subject of Buddhism and the Buddha. Included is James Freeman Clarke's essay, "Buddhism; or, the Protestantism of the East"; Lydia Maria Childs' essays, "The Intermingling of Religions" and "Resemblances between the Buddhist and the Roman Catholic Religions"; the short pieces in the "Sunday Readings" section of the *Republican*: "Origin of Buddhism," "Buddhism," and "Buddhism" (Griffls); and the narrative, "A Buddhist Legend," which was extracted from Anna H. Leonowens' 1873 book, *Romance of the Harem*, and reproduced that same year in the *Republican*. This list is nowhere near exhaustive, but the mere mention of these articles and extracts raises an important question: what would Dickinson have encountered, and perhaps responded to, even if she had read only one of them?

In her 1996 article, "Dickinson Reading," Joan Kirkby regards newspapers and magazines, like the *Republican*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's* and *Scribner's*, which the family regularly received, as a basis for studying Dickinson's engagement with her contemporary milieu. She argues that "most private self-utterances" are, in the Bakhtinian sense, socially constructed and "completely *dialogic*," which means that "[t]he literary text is valuable precisely because of its dynamic relationship with its context" (248). We need only to

look at America in the nineteenth century to understand the significance of this argument. The growing interest in Buddhism and the East and Eastern philosophies, generally, was so prevalent that it infused the consciousness of the culture. Hinduism, for instance, affected the writings of Transcendentalists like Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau even kept a copy of the *Bhagavad-Gita* during his two-year stay at Walden Pond. Although Dickinson thought Whitman a "disgrace," Emerson and Thoreau served, in part, as her literary companions. Their works could be found in the family library.

Dickinson's "dialogue" with, or "reading" of Buddhism, in the books, periodicals, and newspapers of the family home, illuminates her "intellectual context and project" (Kirkby 248). What we find is that she is as much preoccupied with human suffering and its cessation, with the cycle of life and death, and with impermanence and illumination, as the Buddha is depicted to be in the nineteenth-century articles. Although she was preoccupied with these philosophical concerns well before she might have encountered them in the context of Buddhism, what this paper considers is the general compatibility of her thought with Buddhism, despite any question of knowledge or interest on her part. However, I also examine her reading of Alfred Sinnet's *Esoteric Buddhism*, a book in her possession that demonstrates she did have explicit knowledge of, and interest in, Buddhism, even if only a year before her death. My aim is to show that a general compatibility of ideas and a shared vocabulary might well have provided Dickinson's writing a foundation for a specific interest once a book like this came into her possession. Making use of Thomas Tweed's *The American Encounter with Buddhism 1844-1912*, the first section of this paper is an examination of the cultural significance of Buddhism in Victorian America. Emphasis is given to T. W. Higginson's role in that cultural conversation about Buddhism. The second section is a literary reading of key Dickinson poems and letters in the light of this cultural conversation. In the third and final section of this paper, I present a reading of Sinnet's *Esoteric Buddhism* against the pencil markings of Dickinson's volume.

1. Victorian-American Buddhism, Cultural Assent, and Higginson's "Sympathy"

The American encounter with Buddhism begins unofficially in 1844 with the first French-to-English translation of the Lotus Sutra by Elizabeth Peabody and the first Buddhist lecture by Edward Salisbury (Tweed xxxi). The conversation gathers more participants in the next few years, but, as Tweed argues, most accounts between 1844 and 1857 tended to present Buddhism in a negative light; it was not unusual for the everyday American to open the pages of *Harper's*, the *Living Age*, or the *New Englander* and, on occasion, read about the incompetence, barbarism, and peculiarity of Buddhists. One anonymous writer in *Harper's*, for example, draws on terms like "worthless," "dregs," and "animal" to paint a blatantly condescending portrait of the Buddhist priesthood: "Wherever the Buddhist religion extends–that is in the regions which have come under my observation–the priests seem to be, with some few exceptions, a worthless race, picked up from the dregs of the people, and leading a life of animal ease on the offerings of worshipers" ("Sketches" 327). A description such as this could be found in the records of travelers and in the letters, journal entries, and articles of Christian missionaries who believed that Buddhists were misguided in their religious worship and therefore in need of Christian salvation (Tweed 6). Reverend Edward Hungerford stands out among the mainstream Protestants and conservative Unitarians who upheld this missionary-style view in the mid-1800s (1858-1877). In 1874 he argued that Buddhism is an example of heathenism and nihilism, that it lacks morality and focuses only on "the dark side of existence," and that without a Savior–without God, love, heaven, and sin–Buddhists have no virtue to aspire to beyond the grave (279).

Despite Buddhism's atheistic and nihilistic character, disillusioned Christians (those that generally grew to sympathize with Buddhism in the mid-to-late 1800s) did not agree with the aforementioned disparagements. The moral code of Buddhism–the law of cause and effect (Karma)–they observed, better suited the natural and behavioral sciences of

the time. They also upheld the belief that Buddhism adapted well to (social and cultural) change and was pragmatic in its view of life and death. According to Tweed, the "disenchanted" found it easier through Buddhism to envision a world saved "by individual choice and impersonal law" (104). They saw in Buddhism a philosophy (or more precisely a kind of "religion") that encouraged tolerance among its fellow members. In his 1874 article "Buddhism and Christianity," Hungerford conceded that Buddhism's moral code had won the admiration of the "Christian world"; but he also said that what this "Christian world" embraced was insignificant alongside Christ's moral precepts. He complained that Buddhist sympathizers, writers and speakers alike, exposed themselves to moral corruption and, by making "Horticultural Hall in Boston their temple, to hold up in one hand Christianity to a rap and in the other hand Buddhism to praise," invited apostasy (268). In all probability, this last comment, and perhaps the complaint as a whole, was directed at Higginson (Tweed 24).

On Sunday, March 3, 1872, Higginson gave a speech at Horticultural Hall in defense of the Buddha's character. He argued that Buddhism is not without "the Deity, Bhâvânâtrya" and that the Buddha is a model of spiritual perfection and virtue who preaches about "renunciation and love" ("Character" 83). He added: "any trait of sublime virtue" the Buddha embodies does not fall short from these human teachings, "and the proof of this is in the exceptional homage his character wins from those who went to the East to make converts from his religion" ("Character" 83). Higginson had a great deal to say on the subject of Buddhism in the years between 1870 and 1872, and most of what he did say, to the ire of others, was in praise of its scriptures and its teacher. In his 1871 tribute to Max Müller's translation of the *Dhammapada*, for instance, he writes:

> I have never seen any book which had a
> firmer or clearer hold upon the eternal
> laws, or kept more clear of trivial
> evasions, or contrivances to evade the
> consequences of sin by the substitution
> of another…. I do not envy that man who

does not find the depth of his soul stirred
by a book like this. ("Buddhist Path"
360-62)

And again, in his well known essay "The Sympathy of Religions," he praises Buddhism's display of tolerance: "Wherever it has spread, it has broken down the barrier of caste. It teaches that all men are brethren, and makes them prove it by their acts; it diffuses gentleness and self-sacrificing benevolence" (14).[7] Here we have a former Unitarian minister and Civil War Colonel (among other things) who not only immersed himself in a conversation that would change America's perception of Buddhism forever, but also, as one author argues, "launch[ed] the idea of the sympathy of religions into prominence" (Schmidt 115).

What is not exactly clear, however, is why he did not warm to Buddhism in the 1850s and 1860s. His attitude, Tweed explains, simply changed by the 1870s; but perhaps it is likely that what impelled him to the conversation was America's growing sympathy for Buddhism, and because this sympathy did not emerge from obscurity until the mid-nineteenth century, it is easy to see why it was not enough on his mind earlier. When he publicly joined the conversation in 1870, he admitted that he was unwilling to "belong" to a particular religion; he wished rather to embrace all religions or "*the* religion," as he stressed, which included no less "than the piety of the world" ("Sympathy" 22). Of course, he was not alone in that desire. Child boldly envisioned a "Future Church" that contained only the most exemplary qualities of every religion. "We shall not live to see it," she said, "but we may be certain that, according to the laws of spiritual growth, it will retain a likeness to all the

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[7] "The Sympathy of Religions" was so popular among religious liberals and radicals that a year later it gained a place among the pages of the *Radical* (a journal featuring important liberal communications, clubs, and associations). Six years later it was published in book form, and in 1898 it gained international esteem when it was translated into French. See Schmidt, *Restless Souls* Chapter 3, "The Piety of the World," 101-41.

present, as the present does to all the past" ("Intermingling" 395).

The period between 1858 and 1877 in America saw many religious liberals and radicals of Unitarian, Transcendentalist, and Free Religionist origin harmonize the teachings of Buddhism with accepted, mostly Protestant views of "ultimate reality, historical development, and human nature" (Tweed 13). Many did so, not necessarily because they desired religious unity, but because they were not prepared to dismiss the general belief in a Judeo-Christian God and the immortality of the self. Some sympathizers, for instance, embraced the "science" (Karma) and tolerance of Buddhism and affirmed theism and individualism. Esoterics (whose opinion of Buddhism was shaped by other movements, like mysticism or theosophy), overlooked or minimized "doctrinal discontinuities" in their discussions about Buddhism and Christianity (Tweed 49, 52). And, in an attempt to counter the impression that Buddhism is a direct contradiction of all that Protestants value, the Unitarian Minister James Freeman Clarke played on anti-Catholic sentiments of the time to promote the idea that Buddhism is closer to the Protestant spirit than to Brahmanism and Catholicism. In his "Buddhism; or, the Protestantism of the East," an article that appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1869, Clarke explores this idea at length. He writes:

> The human mind went through, in Asia, the same course of experience afterward repeated in Europe. It protested, in the interest of humanity, against the oppression of a priestly caste. Brahmanism, like the Church of Rome, established a system of sacramental salvation in the hands of a sacred order. Buddhism, like Protestantism, revolted and established a doctrine of individual salvation based on personal character…. The daily sacrifice of the mass is the central feature of the Romish Church. So

> Brahmanism is a system of sacrifices.
> But Protestantism and Buddhism save
> the soul by teaching. (715)

Among the Buddhist articles that appeared in the *Atlantic*, this one informs the nineteenth-century reader most about the doctrines of Nirvana and Karma, the four noble truths and the eightfold path of Buddhism, the role of God in Buddhism and the nature of Buddhist immortality, and the Buddha's enlightenment. Clarke explains that this enlightenment grew out of the knowledge that life and death can never be escaped; that humans, insects, and animals are surrounded by the inflexible laws of nature. These laws are here to remind us that we are nothing and that we return to a world of "absolute being" which is "*nothing*" (that is Nirvana). This last point is explained in the following passage:

> The Buddhist, when he says that Nirvana is *nothing*, means simply that it is *no thing*; that it is nothing to our present conceptions; that it is the opposite of all we know, the contradiction of what we call life now, a state so sublime, so wholly different from anything we know or can know now, that it is the same thing as nothing to us. All present life is change; *that* is permanence: all present life is going up and down; *that* is stability: all present life is the life of sense; *that* is spirit. (726)

Clarke's discussion on Nirvana and on "the perpetual round of growth and decay, life and death, joy and woe," (720-21) which the Buddha is said to have experienced, is especially noteworthy. Dickinson's own philosophy of life and death, joy and grief, and immortality bears some resemblance to the Buddha's in this essay. Economical with her use of language and metaphors, Dickinson chose, it seems, to sum up that philosophy in three words: "law of Flood" (L415).

2. The Buddha, Buddhism, and Dickinson's "law of Flood"

In late June 1874, Emily Dickinson wrote a letter to her friend Samuel Bowles and, by extension, his wife, to express her appreciation for comforting the family at the time of her father's funeral. Mr. Dickinson had passed away earlier that month. To emphasize the gravity of the family's loss, Emily Dickinson would later refer to this passing as the "first Mystery of the House" (L432, 1875). In the letter to Bowles (and in the preceding letter to her Norcross cousins), Dickinson's grief appears resolute. Yet it is here that the phenomenon she referred to as the "law of Flood" is explained. She says to Bowles, "You compel us each to remember that when Water ceases to rise–it has commenced falling. That is the law of Flood" (L415). Let us, for a moment, take what she says here, literally. In a flood, water is the key element of natural and human devastation. Some floods may develop slowly, others rapidly. The rule, or "law," is usually the same every time: water rises, engulfs the surrounds, and eventually falls. Dickinson, however, adds another slant to this literalness: the rising and falling are taking place at the same time, all at once. Water will only cease to rise when it "has commenced falling." The past participle, "commenced," assumes that the falling takes place, at some point, at the same time as the rising. In the second stanza of poem Fr583, she extends on this logic using again the concept of a flood:

> You cannot fold a Flood –
> And put it in a Drawer –
> Because the Winds would find it out –
> And tell your Cedar Floor –

The ups and downs of human life can never be put away. In the same respect, grief cannot come and then go; it is always present, even when it is not; or rather grief, the speaker implies in L415, is experienced only in its passing. In an epigrammatic poem she sums up this paradox as follows: "All things swept solely away/ This is – immensity –" (Fr1548). In the emptiness of things, abundance is already seen.

Dickinson turns the literalness of a flood into a philosophy about the mind, in much the same way that Emerson turns the idea of living in succession and in "parts" into a philosophy about the "eternal ONE." In his essay, "The Over-Soul," for example, he says:

> We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist, and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one. (262)

Emerson's abandonment of a personal deity in "The Over-Soul" has some kinship with the Hindu notion of *Brahman*, or the divine being of the cosmos that dwells in the individual self (otherwise known as *Atman*); but, while Dickinson acknowledges that we live in "succession" and in "parts" (to use Emerson's terms) she does not relate that life to an eternal or divine oneness. She does not abandon what is a personal deity in order to replace it with something else. Her "Flood" philosophy alludes to the concrete everyday laws of nature as they are seen or experienced now; the "act of seeing and the thing seen," for Dickinson, unlike Emerson, is not a "superhuman site" (L391). "Eden always eligible," she says to her friend Mrs. Holland, "is peculiarly so this noon. It would please you to see how intimate the Meadows are with the Sun" (L391). To see the everyday things of this world at play, in this moment, is enough. It is this intimacy that Dickinson's "law of Flood" embodies.

The term "enlightenment" is often used in contemporary discussions of Buddhism to describe the moment of seeing. This seeing, Hagen argues, "is the sudden realization

that there's a depth and dimension to our lives, and to the world, that we had been oblivious to" (232). In Dickinson's cultural milieu, this *seeing* was defined as Nirvana (Clarke), or as the shedding of "delusions" (Griffls 7). The eligibility of Dickinson's "Eden"–attained only in the now–resembles Clarke's descriptions of Nirvana and Hagen's description of Buddhist enlightenment. When she adds poem Fr1285 in L391 to Mrs. Holland, Dickinson cements her position as a kind of nineteenth-century Buddhist thinker:

> The most triumphant Bird I ever knew or met
> Embarked upon a twig today
> And till Dominion set
> I famish to behold so eminent a sight
> And sang for nothing scrutable
> But intimate Delight.
> Retired, and resumed his transitive Estate --
> To what delicious Accident
> Does finest Glory fit!
>
> (Fr1285C, L391)

Arriving and departing is marked here by a "delicious Accident." The "triumphant Bird" arrives and departs spontaneously, settles nowhere, and resists nothing. More importantly, in the bird's arrival, its flight can already be seen– this is "Glory." We're reminded here of Clarke's argument about the Buddha: "He saw an infinite multitude of souls–in insects, animals, men,–and saw that they were surrounded by inflexible laws–the laws of nature. To know these and to obey them–this was emancipation" (721). Dickinson reproduces this same argument on the inflexibility of nature's laws in many of her poems. For example, the stone "That rambles in the Road alone," fulfils "some express Decree/ In casual simplicity–" (Fr1570); the "Butterfly upon the sky" that soars away, never sighs (Fr1559); and the drunkard who rests in his "disheveled Sanctity"–the ditch–is unmoved by heaven, hell, or honor (Fr1679). All this coming and going, rising and falling happens now, in this moment, in accordance with the laws of nature.

That the moment does not last is no surprise or disappointment to the speaker. In fact, it is welcomed. In poem Fr1761, she explains why (spelling errors are the poet's own):

> That it will never come again
> Is what makes life so sweet.
> Believing what we dont believe
> Does not exhilirate.
>
> That if it be, it be at best
> An ablative estate –
> This instigates an appetite
> Precisely opposite.

This poem deals with two realities. The first reality rests on the notion that this life will end and never come again. The second reality is the desire, or appetite, for precisely the opposite. Both realities are possible, as long as they are lived in a kind of "flood" existence: life is sweet because it is fleeting. In another poem (Fr1749), Dickinson regards this fleeting moment with a kind of reverence:

> By a departing light
> We see acuter, quite,
> Than by a wick that stays
>
> There's something in the flight
> That clarifies the sight
> And decks the rays.

Here, the poet's reasoning gains significance alongside the Buddhism of her time: "All is fleeting. Nothing is real. This life is all delusion" (Griffls 7). Coming and going, rising and falling are not merely a part of life; they *are* life–this life, "which is inseparable from *this moment* [author's italics]" (Hagen 210). For Dickinson too, not only does this moment not last, but it is also inseparable from eternity (or Nirvana):

Forever – is composed of Nows –
'Tis not a different time –
Except for Infiniteness –
And Latitude of Home –

From this – experienced Here –
Remove the Dates – to These –
Let Months dissolve in further Months –
And Years – exhale in Years –

Without Debate – or Pause –
Or Celebrated Days –
No different Our Years would be
From Anno Dominies –
(Fr690)

How much more compatible can we say then is her reasoning to the Buddhist tracts of her time, than to Emerson's Transcendentalism? Consider for example those cited by Clarke: "The rising of the world is a natural case"; "Its rising and perishing are by nature itself"; and "It is natural that the world should rise and perish" (715). Let us have a look at one of Dickinson's well known poems with these tracts in mind:

To pile like Thunder to its close
Then crumble grand away
While everything created hid
This – would be Poetry –

Or Love – the two coeval come –
We both and neither prove –
Experience either and consume –
For none see God and live –
(Fr1353)

Clarke says that the Buddhist "denies God" because "He is the unknowable. He is the impossible to be conceived of" (726). The speaker's argument is similar: "To pile like Thunder to its close/ Then crumble grand away/ While everything created

hid" *would be* "Poetry" or "Love" if it were not for the mind that had to live in conjecture. Any discussion about God, or the unknown, is therefore redundant: "For none see God and live." What can be talked about, with some certainty here and now, is the separation that exists between humans and the unknown, thus the nature of things that "pile" and "crumble."

When most preoccupied with the impermanence of the natural world, Dickinson's writing tends towards a kind of atheism that resembles the Buddhism of her time. Yet, we have to be careful how we think about this term "atheism" in Dickinson's writing, as well as in the context of nineteenth-century Buddhism. As Clarke explains, "Buddhists are not atheists, anymore than a child who has never heard of God is an atheist. A child is neither deist nor atheist: he has *no* theology" (728). Any discussion about the nature of God for the Buddhist was, and is, therefore meaningless. On the subject of the Divine, Dickinson had much to say; but what she said quite clearly had nothing to do with the worship of doctrinal laws. She knew God to be a "distant–stately Lover–" (Fr615), a jealous God, and even a "Father." She often sent short non-aphoristic sermons about Jesus to her friends to highlight his human virtues. "To be human is more than to be divine," she says, "for when Christ was divine, he was uncontented till he had been human" (L519). His human suffering therefore appealed to her most.

When an extract from Higginson's article "The Character of Buddha" appeared in a column of the *Springfield Republican* in 1872, Dickinson, in all likelihood, would have read it. The extract focuses on the Buddha's and Jesus' emphasis on human pain and ascetic virtue. Both men, according to Higginson, saw love in light of renunciation. They ignored family life "and taught an ascetic rather than a human virtue" ("Buddha and Jesus" 7). My feeling is that Dickinson would have read this critique both as a reflection of her own reclusion and of the renunciation she defined as "a piercing Virtue –" (Fr782). She would have agreed with Higginson. As shown above, Jesus' teachings on ascetic virtue were less important even to her than his teachings of human virtue. The request for her correspondents to "'consider' me" on behalf of

the lilies (L683) or to simply "Consider the lilies" (L904) illustrates this point further. Nothing that Higginson says in this *Republican* extract would have surprised her. Dickinson knew about Jesus' life and teachings already; what this piece may have done is stir further curiosity in her about the Buddha's character and teachings.

Her curiosity may have taken her, for instance, to the short narrative piece, "A Buddhist Legend." It is a recounting of the legend of Keesah, a woman who lived in the village of Sârvâthi during the time of the Buddha. It is said that her son died suddenly. Unaware of what had happened, she searched for a cure and, at length, was directed to the Buddha for consolation. As medicine, the Buddha requested from her a few grains of mustard seed "from a house where no child, parent, husband, wife, relative, or slave has ever died" (7). In time, Keesah realized the futility of her search and laid her son under a tree in the forest, covering him with leaves. When she had relayed this to the Buddha, he told her:

> You have found the grains of mustard-
> seed; you thought that you alone had lost
> a son, but now you have learned that the
> law of death and of suffering is among
> all living creatures, and that here there is
> no permanence. (7)

In his article "The Character of Buddha," Higginson described this Buddhist legend as a "beautiful parable" (82). Dickinson, perhaps, would have agreed.

Published in the *Republican*, the narrative was situated on the news page against two other articles by Higginson.[8] We cannot be certain she read the narrative. What we are certain of, at least, is that she treated the *Republican* like "a letter–we [the family] break the seal and read it eagerly" (L133). The 1873 poem "Lain in Nature–so suffice us" (Fr1309) can be read in

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[8] Higginson's "Health" and "The Physical before the Mental" appear two columns to the left of "A Buddhist Legend."

concurrence with "A Buddhist Legend." The year 1873 is also noteworthy in Dickinson's writing as there are three other poems (Fr1284; Fr1296; Fr1298) that can be read in concurrence with this narrative. For reasons concerning space, however, I have chosen to focus on what I believe to be the most pertinent example.

> Lain in Nature – so suffice us
> The enchantless Pod
> When we advertise existence
> For the missing Seed –
>
> Maddest Heart that God created
> Cannot move a sod
> Pasted by the simple summer
> On the Longed for Dead –
>   (Fr1309)

The term "mustard seed" has some significance in Christian biblical vernacular. Jesus uses it as a metaphor for birth and growth. He says to his disciples, "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field" (Matthew 13:31). He also likens the "kingdom of heaven" to a "man who sowed good seed in his field" (Matthew 13:24). The Buddha uses the "mustard seed" as a metaphor for death, and I propose that Dickinson's reference to the "seed" in poem Fr1309 be read with the Buddhist meaning in mind. No doubt she would have been aware of Jesus' use of the term, being a keen bible reader herself, but the poem confronts loss and suffering, and addresses the law of death, with a likeness to the Buddha's understanding in this *Republican* narrative.[9]

    The first stanza can be read as a direct recounting of Keesah's suffering: the dead body, referred to as the "enchantless Pod," is laid in nature at that moment when the hope of finding the "Seed," or cure for death, is let go. Here,

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[9] For a Zen Buddhist reading of this poem, see my essay, "'The Missing Seed': Keesah Gotami's and Emily Dickinson's Way of Understanding Death," in *Mind Moon Circle*.

like Keesah, Dickinson acknowledges that the search for the "missing Seed"–or the soul of the "Pod"–is the search for a way to assuage the longing felt for the dead. The "Seed," however, represents suffering. Indeed, "advertise existence" recalls Keesah's desperate attempts to remedy death and suffering. In the same instructive manner as the Buddha, the poet implies: to be laid in nature, to grieve, to know that dying occurs each moment is enough. "So suffice us" suggests that every life, no matter how long or short, is complete in itself. Nothing is unfinished, and as the Buddha's reassurance to Keesah suggests, because "here there is no permanence," nothing is therefore missing. Dickinson, it appears, responds in the second stanza with the same voice of impermanence: "Maddest Heart that God created/ Cannot move a sod." No one can raise the dead. The "Heart" fails to realize this because it is attached to the very thing it was born without: a cure (or God's curability). What is the cause of this attachment? In a Buddhist article appearing in the *Republican* five months prior to "A Buddhist Legend," the answer given is "desire" ("Buddhism" 7). Perhaps in the Buddha's final words to Keesah, Dickinson saw something of her own philosophy about life and death, and one's attachment to cures:

> Is Heaven a Physician?
> They say that He can heal –
> But Medicine Posthumous
> Is unavailable
> > (Fr1260, stanza 1)

3. Dickinson's Reading of Alfred Sinnet's *Esoteric Buddhism*

Emily Dickinson responded most to moments of self-realization through natural epiphanies, and for this reason, as I have argued above, the phenomenon she called the "law of Flood" can be said to resemble the teachings of Buddhism, even before she consulted Alfred Sinnett's book in 1885. As early as 1863, she stated that "the 'Supernatural,' [is] only the Natural, disclosed–" (L280). This summed up for her the

"science" of living, that is, the empirical nature of the transient moment; but it also reminded her, especially in her later life, of "the uncertain certainty": "Paradise existence" (Fr1421). Letter 882 to Elizabeth Holland speaks of this remembrance. The letter also hints that the poet may have consulted Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism* because she wanted to make sense of the afterlife, and she wanted to achieve this, in part, through Eastern wisdom:

> I have made a permanent Rainbow by filling a Window with Hyacinths, which Science will be glad to know, and have a Cargo of Carnations, worthy of Ceylon, but Science and Ceylon are Strangers to me, and I would give them both for one look of the gone Eyes, glowing in Paradise–There are too many to count, now, and I measure by Fathoms, Numbers past away– (L882, 1884)

At the time, Ceylon was regarded as the spiritual capital of Buddhist practice; its Buddhism (Theravadan in nature) was attractive to esoterics because it was the most authoritative (Tweed 54). What characterized the esoterics was their belief in metaphysical experiences. Theravada Buddhism was attractive precisely for this reason, even though, as Tweed argues, the Theravada tradition of Ceylon was not esoteric. In Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism*, if nowhere else, Dickinson was reminded that Ceylon is the place for dealing with the social and moral codes of Buddhism (158). However, she could not have used the terms "Science" and "Ceylon," in L882, with Sinnett's meaning in mind, as the letter was written before she had read his book. We can only speculate that she used these terms with the late-Victorian conversation about Buddhism in mind. Arguably, Dickinson may have expected her reader to equate Ceylon with Buddhism, in the same way that she may have expected her reader to understand her allusions to Christ's lilies of the field.

If the latter inference is accurate, then perhaps what characterizes L882 is the poet's need to possess a world that was out of her reach; not being able to *see* the dead here and now fueled this desire. In the end, even she believed in what "we dont believe" (Fr1761) – though she understood its illogicality. "All we possess we would give to know" (L873) she argued vehemently to Elizabeth Holland just after the death of her nephew Gilbert Dickinson (in 1883). What she wanted to know was the nature of eternal life; and yet, there's a sense of satisfaction when Dickinson says, "but Science and Ceylon are Strangers to me"–as though discovery entails the loss of conjecture, and "The Riddle that we guess/ We speedily despise–" (Fr1180). What she would find in Sinnett's book are answers about the supernatural world, with the same illogical awareness as her own.

Sinnett gives his reader the impression that the problems of the universe (the cycle of birth, death, and Karma) can be solved, but only through the possession of what he terms "Oriental knowledge." This knowledge is founded on the principles of esoteric Buddhism and concealed from the uninitiated. "Oriental knowledge," in particular the esoteric or "secret" doctrine of Buddhism, Sinnett argues, is a "very real and important possession" (2). Through it, as marked in Dickinson's volume of *Esoteric Buddhism*, "*salvation is*" obtained "*by devout practices irrespective of knowledge of eternal truth*" (Sinnett 168). Through it also the student can freely search for and verify the teachings of "Nature" "in those regions which Western philosophy can only invade by speculation and argument" (Sinnett 19). That verification comes through science.

The science most esoteric Buddhists directed their readers or listeners towards was "occult" in nature. Séances, clairvoyance, telepathy and astrology constituted such occult practices, and signified a science that confirmed the existence of a spiritual realm beyond the human intellect. Spiritual causes and their effects, such as ghosts and "out of body" experiences, could therefore be explained through occult science. The occult doctrine of science, according to Sinnett, followed the understanding that human evolution is "determined by

spirituality," that is, by the non-material realm, and that the non-material realm cannot be attained through "devout aspiration," but rather through

> …the highest kind of intellection, that which takes cognizance of the workings of Nature by direct assimilation of the mind with her higher principles. The objection which physical intelligence will bring against this view is that the mind can cognize nothing except by observation of phenomena and reasoning thereon. *That is the mistake–it can; and the existence of occult science is the highest proof thereof.* (129)

Hence, spirituality, Sinnett contends, is not composed of faith and piety. Rather, spirituality, as it is understood in the esoteric doctrine of Buddhism, is the mind deeply absorbed in, but still conscious of the workings of, the non-material realm (termed "Nature"). We're reminded of Dickinson's earlier poem: "Not 'Revelation'–'tis–that waits,/ But our unfurnished eyes–" (Fr500); only in the emptiness of the mind can revelation be seen. In her later life, with Sinnett she received a different argument. It is a mistake, he says, to think that by entering the "higher principles" of the mind we are limited by our physical intellect. Occult science proves that we each have the capacity to be in contact with the dead here and now. This is a bold statement, not unusual for occultists at the time to profess, but in direct contradiction with Dickinson's maxim (Fr500). Yet we have to remember that she was reading Sinnett's book in 1885, and by that time she had experienced, in a short period (eleven years), an overwhelming number of deaths among her family and close circle of friends.[10] Sinnett's argument would

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[10] Eight deaths occurred between 1874 and 1885, beginning with Emily's father, Edward Dickinson (1874); Samuel Bowles (1878); Charles Wadsworth (1882); Emily's mother, Emily Dickinson (1882); James Clark

have given her the impression that the supernatural can be experienced apart from the natural world, and so, given the science of occultism, anyone can glimpse "the gone Eyes, glowing in Paradise." Joan Kirkby, in her article "Emily Dickinson's Varieties of Religious Experience," indicates that the last sentence of the passage cited above in Dickinson's volume of *Esoteric Buddhism* is double scored in the margin–an idiosyncratic marking commonly attributable to the poet's handwriting.[11] The marking of this sentence suggests that Dickinson may have been skeptical but, at the same time, intrigued by the idea that the afterlife can be experienced here and now, even if through an understanding of esoteric Buddhism.

According to Kirkby, the markings in Dickinson's volume of *Esoteric Buddhism* suggest that she was interested in the link Sinnett made "between the material and immaterial worlds," especially, it seems, between the nature of human consciousness and the absolute consciousness of esoteric metaphysics (6). Esoteric metaphysics, as implied by Sinnett, treats absolute consciousness as "non-consciousness"–a condition of being, empty of all sensations, ideas, and content, and a representation of the sum total of all consciousness, which ironically cannot be experienced. "*These paradoxical expressions,*" Sinnett reassures his reader, "*are simply counters representing ideas that the human mind is not qualified to apprehend, and it is a waste of time to haggle over them*" (182). Dickinson would have read this contradictory passage–which is marked in her copy of the book–with little skepticism. For she also understood that even "the Possible has it's insoluble

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(1883); her nephew, Gilbert Dickinson (1883); Otis P. Lord (1884) and Helen Hunt Jackson (1885).

[11] Kirkby's certainty that these markings are characteristically Dickinson's is hopeful. In working with the Dickinson archives, Kirkby affirms that Dickinson's 1885 edition of *Esoteric Buddhism* contained the poet's name inside the front cover. Dickinson often shared the same books with other members of the family, like Susan, but this book, according to Kirkby, clearly seems to be the possession of the poet.

particle" (L352), and that it is comforting to know "we are permanent temporarily…though we know no more" (L962).

She was wise to hail herself a "pagan" on three occasions in this late period of her writing.[12] She was aware that the spiritual philosophy she expounded no longer, if it had ever, adequately abided by the Puritan faith. She encountered, and perhaps found solace in, *Esoteric Buddhism* and its argument that Buddhism does not subject beings "to any priestly system or dogma by terrifying their fancy with the doctrine of a personal judge waiting to try them for more than their lives at their death" (183). In the esoteric doctrine of Buddhism, nature is "self-sufficing," or rather every life is subject to the process of incarnation, so the idea that there is a fixed, non-corporeal world or reality "beyond the grave" that is "exempt from the law of change, progress and improvement" is, as Sinnett claims, counter to the natural law of the universe: "*For there is a manifest irrationality in the common-place notion that man's existence is divided into a material beginning, lasting sixty or seventy years, and a spiritual remainder lasting forever*" (30). There is no reason why Dickinson would have agreed with the latter argument, since she believed that "Existence has a stated width/ Departed, or at Home–" (Fr1302). Yet, according to Kirkby, the passage is marked. What this suggests is that even though she may not have agreed with Sinnett, she most likely would have found the idea that we are *eternally* permanent equally irrational.

This irrationality may also explain Dickinson's ambivalent position regarding her allusions to the Christian resurrection and immortality in passages such as "that divine 'again' for which we are all breathless" (L536), "Easter in November" and "Father rose in June" (L952). She accepted that those who passed away "to thy Rendezvous of Light" (Fr1624) achieved *their* "Mystery" of immortality, which she herself felt forbidden to experience. "Boundlessness," she explained in 1884, "forbids me" (L952). This same argument she encountered in *Esoteric Buddhism*: "*The universe is boundless,*

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[12] L566, about 1878; L860, 1883 ("infidel"); and L976, 1885.

and it is a stultification of thought to talk of any hypothesis setting in beyond the boundless–on the other side of the limits of the limitless" (183). This sentence, which is doubly marked in Dickinson's volume of *Esoteric Buddhism*, according to Kirkby, would have affirmed the poet's view that even though there is no fixed "Course" beyond this present moment, beyond even this life, "there is Boundlessness–" (L871).

Although Dickinson never abandoned her Puritan heritage, by the 1880s she felt that when it came to matters concerning life "in any other world/ My faith cannot reply" (Fr1587). The same year Dickinson made this assertion, she received a letter from Reverend Washington Gladden, who responded to a question she posed: "Is immortality true?" His reply:

> I believe that it is true–the only reality– almost; a thousand times truer than mortality, which is but a semblance after all. I believe that virtue is deathless; that God who is the source of virtue, gave to her 'the glory of going on, and not to die'; that the human soul, with which virtue is incorporate, cannot perish. (L752a)

What she received from Gladden was too abstract, arbitrary. Deeply grief-stricken, especially after Gilbert's death, she sought in Buddhism–Sinnett's Buddhism more accurately– a possible way to know if there *was* more, "More than Love and Death" (L873). On this subject, in his chapter "The Constitution of Man," Sinnett, unlike Gladden, gives her a concrete answer:

> When a man's body dies, by desertion of the higher principles which have rendered it a living reality, the second, or life principle, no longer a unity itself, is nevertheless inherent still in the particles of the body as this decomposes,

> attaching itself to other organisms to which that very process of decomposition gives rise.… The third principle, the Astral Body…is an ethereal duplicate of the physical body, its original design.… At death it is disembodied for a brief period, and…may even be temporarily visible to the external sight of still living persons. Under such conditions it is taken of course for the ghost of the departed person. (22-23)

Sinnett continues, detailing the nature of the human soul and the perfection of this soul, which is in constant flux, beyond the third principle of existence. The soul is reborn–if in human form–occupying "man's higher nature," and perfecting itself with each reincarnation. Once the soul reaches the seventh principle of life, "man ceases to be man," Sinnett argues, "and attains a wholly superior condition of existence" (27). The process takes hundreds of years. Each rebirth, according to the esoteric doctrine of Buddhism, is naturally evolutionary, unconcerned with fulfilling some pre-arranged agreement with a higher being.

In this detailed and "exhaustive system of human evolution," as Sinnett called it, Dickinson's question would have been answered. Would she have been satisfied with the answer? Quite possibly she would have queried Sinnett's explanation of Buddhist reincarnation just as she queried Charles H. Clark after the death of his brother, James: "Are you certain there is another life? When overwhelmed to know, I fear that few are sure" (L827). In this she was a loyal skeptic and a loyal pagan. Essentially, the esoteric doctrine of Buddhism, as Dickinson encountered it through Sinnett's book, would have strengthened and, at the same time, alleviated her uncertainty about the afterlife, and, to borrow McIntosh's argument, it would have given her "a chance to use" her "Calvinist heritage, perhaps partly unconsciously, while at the same time…reject Calvinism as a body of dogma" (26).

What we can be certain about is that Emily Dickinson's reading of Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism* does not stem from mere curiosity. The November 1883 edition of the *Atlantic Monthly* contained a review of this book in its "Books of the Month" section. Maybe Dickinson read this review. Two years later, nonetheless, the book was in her possession. In all probability, it would not have been her first encounter with Buddhism, nor her first response. What would have brought her to this book is a lifelong preoccupation with the cycle of life and death, and with suffering and impermanence–concerns that find a place alongside those of the Buddha in her time.

Conclusion

Dickinson's encounter with Buddhism was possible for two reasons: her friendship with Higginson and the family's periodical subscriptions, which featured articles on the teachings of the Buddha and Buddhism. While there is no direct evidence in her letters and poems to suggest that she read and responded to any of the articles on Buddhism and the Buddha, what we can infer from her writing is that she was preoccupied with a way of thinking that was not entirely suited to her Christian heritage. Through such an inference, I have argued that Dickinson practiced a way of thinking that came to resemble the Buddhist thinking of her time. This is not to say that she identified with Buddhism like Higginson, who openly praised the tradition's diffusion of tolerance and spoke about its "human" teachings. She made no attempt it seems to respond to the cultural conversation about Buddhism. She encountered it, rather. Her encounter is characterized by a response that reflected her interests in the here and now, and later, in the afterlife.

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HOCQUENGHEM, MIELI, AND SEAHORSES: NATURE AND BIOLOGY AT THE ROOTS OF QUEER THEORY

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper considers the work of two leftist European activists from the 1970s, Mario Mieli and Guy Hocquenghem. It considers their different ideas about nature and biology, focusing on the reasons *why* their views about the origins of sexuality came to be different. This essay argues that Hocquenghem conflated biology with the oppressive systems that have used it, whereas Mieli is shown to have advocated intellectual engagement with biological discourse, such as animal models. This is important because both authors are considered founders within queer theory, yet Hocquenghem's ideas are widely known and accepted while Mieli's are not. The translation history of Mieli's text suggests that positive views of biology have since been suppressed in mainstream queer theory.

The variety of attitudes to biological metaphor in classical queer theory is underappreciated, and uncovering it is significant. New considerations of "queer nature," based on field observations, do not trace their conceptual roots to earlier writings of the sexual revolution. This paper proposes Mieli as a theoretical forebear for those seeking a more positive view towards biology within modern cultural discourse.

Keywords: Guy Hocquenghem, Mario Mieli, queer theory, biology, nature, biopower, leftism, sexuality, social construction, essentialism

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Foreword: Biology and Queer Theory: a Cultural Studies Approach

Cultural studies investigates culture: the manifestations of people's responses to their world. Oftentimes it is taken to mean the study of typical cultural output, without prejudice as to form or genre. Typical questions for this broad area of study include the origins and transformations of cultural features, the production of meaning, and the relation of power to practice. Cultural studies aims to analyze society ethically, break down divisions between types and fields of knowledge, and ideally bring about a political change through disseminating its findings.

[1] Cultural scholars typically focus on specific aspects of culture with reference to a given context, such as an identified group in time and space, or a specific topic, such as gender or ethnicity. The discipline is necessarily broad in nature and encompasses a range of methodologies and traditional disciplines.

While this breadth leaves cultural studies open to charges of dilution, even directionlessness, it does bring advantages. Chief of these is a framework for explaining how cultural output in one area can influence both theory and practice in another. A given item, such as a text, can be analyzed in terms of how it blends and hybridizes allegedly separate fields of knowledge. The sensitivity to power that informs cultural studies is particularly helpful here, as it alerts the reader to the consequences of perpetuating certain types of thinking as ideas are carried from one realm into another.

This paper employs a cultural studies perspective to approach a topic that straddles several different disciplines: the roots of hostility to biology within queer theory. The question is not so much whether there is a biological component to sexuality. Instead, the focus is on *how* and *why* two classical queer theorists came to hold different opinions on this question. I would like to draw a comparison between the influential ideas

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[1] I am paraphrasing these characteristics from Sardar (9). Barker lists the key concepts of cultural studies as being culture and signifying practices, representation, materialism and non-reductionism, articulation, power, popular culture, texts and readers, and subjectivity and identity (7-11).

of one thinker, Guy Hocquenghem (French, 1946-1988), and the less influential ideas of another, Mario Mieli (Italian, 1952-1983). Both were political activists as well as theorists; both wrote for a wider audience; both were committed to liberating those who were oppressed by the sex-gender system, but also by the capitalist system. As Marxist intellectuals, these two were typical of their era and worked within a well established strain of European radical thinking and practice.

These similarities might make one expect their differences to be minor, and yet there are differences between them that reflect an emergent split in queer theory today. Hocquenghem rejected any biological theory of sexuality. Biology for him was an instrument of oppression and its explanations made no sense in terms of his ideology. Mieli, however, drew a distinction between science as it was currently interpreted and applied (unjustly), in medicine, and science as a method of understanding the world. A more honest science, in his view, could be used to justify human diversity, especially sexual diversity.

This difference of opinion is directly relevant to present-day concerns. Most queer theory today is highly suspicious of biology and claims of a biological "origin" for various sexualities. At the same time, some very new work within the field, drawing on ecology, seeks to reclaim biology from its history of misuse. Queer ecologists, as they might be termed, see biology as a cultural tool which has only been used to oppress, rather than being designed to oppress. This approach reflects the critical spirit of cultural studies in general. It seeks to show that the past abuses of biology, which characterize sexual minorities as "unnatural," are not in fact inherently rooted in the nature of biology itself. On the contrary: they are the product of a cultural ideology, for which there exist more ethical alternatives.

My aim in casting Hocquenghem and Mieli in a cultural studies light is primarily historical, albeit with a political agenda. One of my main points is that the expected binary "match," whereby liberal capitalist views would be in favor of biological theories of sexuality, while leftist ones would be unfavorable, does not always hold true. A second point is that

liberationist pro-biology views have a pedigree within classical queer theory of the 1970s, and not just among the ecologists of today. A third point is that these views could be found in the work of a thinker outside the realm of science, who was seeking to integrate scientific ideas into his broader political program, rather than the other way around.

The argument following these points is that queer theory needs to learn from its own history. Radical social constructionist accounts of sexuality, according to which sexuality is constituted entirely socially, tend to claim that biological models of sexuality betoken an "oppressive," "sexist," or "hegemonic" frame of mind, incompatible with an agenda for social justice. One likely reason that this view prevails may be that the main thinker from the era of sexual revolution who disagreed with it wrote in Italian. He therefore was culturally disadvantaged in terms of his future potential to influence a field whose main contributors have been in Anglo-Saxon countries, drawing on mostly French ground theory. In reading Mieli through the eyes of his French contemporaries, we have inadvertently lent credence to a point of view which deprives us of a cultural tool and overlooked another perspective which offers a different and, I would argue, more resourceful response.

The primary contribution of queer theory to cultural studies lies in its focus on analyzing opposition within a specifically cultural sphere (Sardar 147). If queer theory is to live up to its potential for destabilizing the social categories which are used to dominate people, it needs to remain vigilant as to how its own use of categorizations can lead to misunderstanding. False associations and essential binaries are hallmarks of oppressive systems. In exploring the different attitudes of Hocquenghem and Mieli towards biology, I am seeking in part to make queer theory more knowledgeable, but also less intellectually oppressive.

Abuses of and Uses for Biology

The role of biology within queer theory is troubled. Biology, meaning both the study of living things and the body

of knowledge it produces, has authority and intellectual prestige, derived in part from its perceived status as a "hard" science. This social fact has influenced the role biology has played in discourses of sexuality. The ideas of *nature*, *biology*, and *medicine* concern the living body in different ways. Some classic theorists see little difference between these three in terms of the way they are used against sexual minorities, and tend to view them as aspects of a hostile heteronormative system. Others draw distinctions by referring to the discourse of "nature," which is seen as misunderstood, in contrast with the practice of medicine, which is seen as hostile.

The history of how the term "biology" has been used suggests that the social effects of biological discourses might depend more on who uses them, and to what end, than on their inherent nature. Biological conceptions of sexuality, rooted in classical nineteenth-century sexology, have been used as means of oppression (Foucault 185-86). The ideas of "biologically-founded" race and sexuality have comparable histories in terms of defining the rights of the citizen (Byne et al. 209). Sexual minorities have been branded "biologically" degenerate or inferior, as have people of lower socio-economic class, various ethnicities, and women. The history of abuse of biology has led many theorists of gender and sexuality to reject this body of knowledge, "situating queer desire within an entirely social, and very human, habitat" (Alaimo 51).

Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson detail how Foucauldian critiques have enabled the deconstruction of oppressive "nature-talk" in medicalized sexual discourses. They also make very clear that this "nature-talk" itself had only a distant relation with the principles of scientific observation. They make a similar point with regard to Darwinian evolution compared to its distant cousin, social Darwinism (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 6-11). The theory and the application of the theory are not to be confused. As a means of describing and understanding the natural world, biology is a cultural practice in its own right. It can be separated from its practical applications, and might lend its potential power to whoever uses it. Heteronormative expectations have, until recently, damaged and limited biology by refusing to recognize sexually

diverse behaviors in nature. The expectation, not the practice, is the problem (Alaimo 54).[2]

From the point of view of cultural studies, the main interest is not in tracing hostility towards biology, or towards scientific culture, in recent queer theory. Examples of this are common.[3] My interest is instead to demonstrate how this hostility reflects the influence of a certain kind of post-Marxist thought, of which Guy Hocquenghem is representative, at the expense of another. This second variety, that of Mario Mieli, views biology as a resource rather than a threat, and anticipates its being used properly as a means of valorizing diversity—specifically, sexual diversity.

In order to justify this focus fully, I shall need to add a bit more context concerning leftist forebears of queer theory "then," and mainstream queer theory "now."[4] Closely involved in post-Marxist theoretical responses to biology is the idea of "biopower." Biopower is the term the philosopher Michel Foucault (French, 1928-84) used to indicate a new awareness in the industrial era that power might be exerted through controlling the biological processes of a population, especially reproduction (35-36, 180-83).[5] Biopower is therefore a strategic, political *response to* biological knowledge, rather than a *branch of* it. However, this idea influences attitudes towards biology itself. Foucault's account of how capitalism

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[2] Joan Roughgarden (2004) and Bruce Bagemihl (1999), among others, detail natural sexual diversity and remedy its historic misrecognition (Alaimo 52).

[3] "Through genomics, science makes grandiose claims that it will unlock the secret of genetics and, as a result, human nature. Although it fails in every way to link genetics to patterns of social behavior, its institutional power enables a discourse of authority that threatens the freedom of sexual subjects, rendering them objects of curiosity at best and degenerate genetic anomalies, 'abnormal natures' at worst" (Carley 91). Note Carley's blanket use of the term "science." See also Lovaas, Elia, and Yep 6-7, 9-12; Lostroh and Udis-Kessler 226.

[4] Not all queer theorists identify with the political left, although most do.

[5] Foucault actually coins the term "biopower" on p. 183.

perceives value within reproduction, and therefore seeks to manipulate it, motivates leftist hostility to biology.[6]

It might be tempting to see reactions to biological categorizations of sexuality, and by extension to biology overall, in the context of biopower. I would argue that to view all biologies as being inherently, or necessarily, strategies for harnessing biopower would risk confusing the core problem. What is at issue really is the relation of biology, in its own right, to culture in general. This becomes clear through a comparison of attitudes towards "biology," as a general theoretical practice, and "nature," its object, as opposed to those regarding "medicine," meaning its practical application to human beings. The comparison is to be made between the respective attitudes of Guy Hocquenghem and Mario Mieli. These two have several advantages over Foucault in terms of pursuing this topic. They were both open agitators for queer liberation at the time. Neither thinker, at least in the pieces discussed here, was writing for an elite audience, whereas Foucault's work is specialist.[7]

Hocquenghem has been described many times as a "bridge figure" between homosexual activists and the mainstream left. He acted in this capacity both during the general uprisings in France of 1968, which have since been viewed as a cultural watershed,[8] and in the following movements which spawned the homosexual rights group FHAR (originally formed by lesbians in 1971) and its allies.[9]

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[6] Foucault was not himself a Marxist, but his ideas are seen to be developed from, and complementary to, those of Marx. His position is generally agreed to be loosely leftist. Jeffrey Weeks, a well-known leftist queer theorist, implies that in his view Foucault is a supplement to Marx (Weeks "Uses" 162).

[7] Gutting characterizes Foucault's prose as "archly intense" (101).

[8] In May 1968 France saw a well-observed general strike that lasted two weeks, a march of well over 400,000 workers in Paris, violent suppression of student marches, and a series of other protests. A small industry has since devoted itself to analyzing the heritage of "*soixante-huit.*"

[9] See Gunther 45-50, and also Marshall 1, 5. The acronym FHAR, *Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire*, is a complex pun; its two

This role was not an easy one: for existing leftist organizations of the time, homosexuality was a bourgeois vice. Hocquenghem therefore operated at the interface of competing ideologies of power and oppression, being both an insider (as a revolutionary and activist, and a man) and an outsider (as a homosexual, a man, and as a member of the educated elite) to his various constituencies.[10]

Mieli, active in student uprisings in Italy during the 1960s, was a co-founder of the pressure group-cum-street theatre company *Fuori!*, which existed in various forms from 1972-76. He also came from a relatively privileged and well-educated background. He maintained an exaggerated, "camp" mannerism that immediately marked him as a sex-gender outsider, yet was conscious of his privilege in wider society from being a man. Having spent some time with the Gay Liberation Front in London, Mieli met Hocquenghem in Paris in the spring of 1973, although the encounter was not a success.[11]

Both of these authors were politically and socially active, moved within varied circles, and experienced shifting combinations of privilege and exclusion, a phenomenon described in cultural studies as intersectionality. This is a typical experience for people of sexual minorities. It demands a careful approach to shifting relationships of social power

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homophones are *fard* (makeup), and *phare* (searchlight / lighthouse / torchbearer).

[10] Hocquenghem was not one of the *gazolines*, a group of radical and working-class identified drag queens, although he had excellent relations with them. Alessandro Avellis's feature documentary *La Révolution du désir* (2007) contains several relevant interviews, including one with the veteran lesbian activist Françoise d'Eaubonne.

[11] Mieli's account, as reported by Mario Rossi in 1973: "Guy Hocquenghem, renowned theorist and gleaming star of the FHAR, treated us like dirt, me and another comrade from *Fuori!* who had visited him to discuss method and research perspectives…. He snobbishly blew us off, strong with an intensely blind chauvinism and a theoretical arrogance very close to the chaotic confusionism of his friends Deleuze and Guattari, "anti-psychoanalytic analysts," as they dare define themselves (from on high in their macho-ist tenured chairs, so fashionable these days)…." In Prearo 13-14.

(Cohen 449-52). Similarly, their writing reflects its own systems of power and struggle, according to their respective views about how *ideas* worked in favor of given power interests. They are therefore relevant both for seeing which ideas intellectuals chose to spread among a wider audience, and also as subjects whose writing reflects its own power struggles. A comparison can inform cultural problems we reckon with today, in our own context.

Marxist Backgrounds

Proto-queer theory of the 1970s characterizes the hoped-for sexual revolution in terms strongly reminiscent of a Marxist revolution from the masses. Hocquenghem and Mieli both anticipate class and economic liberation explicitly as a combined goal. They both follow classic Marxist principles,[12] applying them by means of analogy to their readings of sexual problems in society. Patriarchy, for them, is an element of the liberal capitalist establishment; biology and its counterparts, medicine and psychiatry, are similarly so. They can therefore be compared with other revolutionary leftist thinkers of this period who sought liberation for ethnic minorities, women, and other oppressed groups. In overthrowing The System, activists aimed to liberate society in general at the same time as they liberated themselves. This is because the means of oppression of a given group, for instance a sexual category, would in their view have been motivated by the same economic interests that oppressed another group, such as an ethnicity.[13] The combat strategies could be adapted from one situation to another by analogy.

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[12] Hocquenghem comes close to questioning transcendental subjectivity in ways that might ultimately distance his ideas from classical Marxism, but he does not depart from it to the same degree as Foucault. For a fuller discussion on Foucault vs. Marxism, see Poster (especially 4, 18, 87). See also Gutting 24-25.

[13] Cohen (*ibid*.) warns against one possible implication of this, that all struggle is universal. Awareness of, and even combat against, oppression in one area does not necessarily entail similar activity in another. The nature and context of each instance of oppression are always specific.

Hocquenghem's *Le Désir homosexuel* (1972) and Mieli's *Elementi di critica omosessuale* (1977)[14] are essays that treat four main topics: the history of concepts of minority sexuality, the writers' own ideas of what minority sexuality is about, the need for general social change, and the connections between these concepts in contemporary societies. Both interweave their own polemic with a blend of classical psychoanalytic and Marxist theory, personal anecdote, and citations from the medical and popular presses. Hocquenghem is widely quoted and cited in European sexuality studies, while Mieli's work is "…probably the first and the most important piece of queer theory in Italian" (Malagreca 101). Already it is worthwhile noting the implied familiarity gap, as it were, between these two pieces for even a specialist English-speaking audience. Hocquenghem's style is more general, more formal, and less personalized than Mieli's. Mieli's work, originally a thesis, is considerably longer and more repetitive.[15] Still, in content they share a great deal, and so I shall first outline the points they agree on.

Both authors were avowed Marxists. Their ideas concerning social problems, social change, and the global relevance of the sexuality question are all anchored in one underlying concept: that Œdipal, patriarchal sexual systems are a tool of capitalism (Hocquenghem 91; Mieli 64). Hocquenghem writes, "Capitalism makes its homosexuals into failed normal people, [just] as it makes its workers into fake bourgeois" (93). The rhetorical parallelism invites us to build an equation: homosexuals = proletariat. Mieli, in particular, insists repeatedly on the economic underpinnings of homophobia. He explains the systems of patriarchal economic

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[14] All quotations appearing in English but taken from materials published in French or Italian are my own translations, unless otherwise noted.

[15] Mieli himself in his preface says that the work's origin brought about certain limitations, including "a certain misshaping of style, due to the clash between the rebarbative tones of academia and uninhibited means of a gay mode of expression" (ix). He also admits an imbalance of development between topics, some discussions of which remaining "more or less at first draft stage" (*ibid.*).

oppression at length, with many examples from urban proletarian mass culture. He is particularly farsighted in his comments on low-wage, dead-end jobs in what we now know as the "gay economy" (Mieli 88-89; compare Seidman 34-35).

Hocquenghem, whose work was published four years before Foucault's *Histoire de la sexualité*, incorporates an idea that looks very similar to biopower into his critiques, although he does not give a name to it. Mieli, whose thesis also predates Foucault's work,[16] does the same. All three believe that the ability to understand and manipulate human life processes in a systematic way provides a potent tool for the capitalist system.

Fernbach's account of Hocquenghem's work as "tacitly assuming a certain Marxist analysis of society" (Fernbach 11) is too understated. The term "tacit," with its connotations of silence, risks mischaracterizing Hocquenghem's basic political attitude. Perhaps he might have been more interested in abstract discursive exchange, but I believe he was also the first person to promote the "deprivatization of the anus" (Hocquenghem 118; cf. Mieli 162). One could hardly find a more provocative phrase for expressing hostility to the market. Indeed, if the very *anus* has been privatized, it is hard to imagine any other part of the body that has not already been infiltrated by the capitalist system.

Marxism and Psychoanalysis

In their treatment of how concepts of homosexuality develop, both authors rely heavily, albeit critically, on psychoanalysis. Both point out the general prejudice that distorts "scientific" approaches to sexuality. This in turn hides the way in which scientific prestige reinforces cultural prejudice, to the benefit of the patriarchal sex-gender system

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[16] Although Mieli's *Elementi* was actually published in 1977, Mieli had both defended the thesis on which it was based, and had this work accepted for publication by Einaudi in 1976 before Foucault's work first appeared, in French, later that year (Prearo 15).

(Hocquenghem 27; Mieli 26-27 and *passim*).[17] They apply their argument particularly to psychoanalysis and psychiatry.[18] Mieli calls psychiatrists "the bully boys of capitalist power" (29). Hocquenghem in particular builds on Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Œdipus* (1972) in promoting a view of sexual and social regimes as inherently linked, by exploring analogies between Freudian and capitalistic models of discovery and exploitation (Hocquenghem 62). Mieli coins the term "educastration" (7 and *passim*) to describe the effect this has on "straight" men.

Mieli and Hocquenghem agree that the homosexual type is a social role-construct.[19] Each argues that denial of internal homosexual impulses is the foundation of homophobia in men, and that the phallocentric, "macho" model of male sexuality is a tool of patriarchal economic and political oppression. This position is aimed against cultural expectations that seek to control by conflating the internal, namely sexual motivation, with the external, namely gendered behavior. Hocquenghem goes further. As René Schérer says (xii), he consistently argues against any characterization of one's sexuality on the basis of object choice, an "internal" criterion in these terms. I would say that this has an added effect of bringing Hocquenghem closer to a position from which it is difficult to accept an embodied basis for sexuality. In other words, through targeting clumsy expectations based on the confusion of biological sex with social gender, Hocquenghem eventually moves towards rejecting the idea of biological sex, and with it, the discipline of biology itself.

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[17] I refer here to the distinction between biological *sex* and socially constructed *gender*, and to the ways in which relations between them can be exploited. See Lerner 238.

[18] Neither Hocquenghem nor Mieli suggests that these two disciplines are identical (which they are not, although they can overlap), but they both react to them (respectively) in the same way.

[19] This idea seems first to have emerged explicitly with Mary McIntosh (42-43), who draws a parallel between being identified as a homosexual and as a Jehovah's Witness—implying that the two are comparable states of being.

Nature and Desire

Both Hocquenghem and Mieli discuss an entity called "desire" within the human being. Neither really defines this term in a material or biological way. Hocquenghem comes close, offering "A *branching out* of the organs without law or rule" (94).[20] The two thinkers agree that desire is pre-Œdipal and undifferentiated by sex and preference. Hocquenghem writes, "Desire emerges in multiple form, of which the components are separable only *a posteriori*… Just like heterosexual desire, homosexual desire is an arbitrary slice within an uninterrupted and polyvocal flux" (24). This explanation of Hocquenghem's draws on the German Marxist, Herbert Marcuse, whose concept of undifferentiated desire is also an influence on Mieli (Malagreca 105). In its explicit targeting of object-choice categories, Hocquenghem's language is also close to Seidman's definition of "hard" social constructionism, according to which the only element that all humans are born with in terms of sexuality is a capacity for sensation (Seidman xiv).[21]

Both authors' critical approach to psychoanalysis mirrors a shared hostility to the biomedical establishment. However, the two thinkers differ in their views on what the living, embodied organism contributes to sexuality, and its epistemology. In the very first paragraph of his work, Hocquenghem says that "homosexual desire is eliminated socially by a series of familial and educational mechanisms" (23). This again suggests a perspective very close to Seidman's "hard" social constructionism. Mieli says, "homosexuality is

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[20] The original French gerund is *branchement*. The colloquialism "*branché*" means "plugged in," "well-informed." Marshall suggests, insightfully, that Hocquenghem owes much to the Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of the anarchic, carnivalesque body (Marshall 34).

[21] Seidman proposes weak versus strong varieties of social constructionism. In the weak variety, we would be born with a given sexual nature, but might not express it in the face of social pressures. Later on, however, he promotes the adoption of a social view of sexuality without specifying which variety (138). The difference and presumably the eventual choice between the two both seem more important than this ambiguity would suggest.

congenital and hence an expression of the polymorphism proper to our deepest transsexual, hermaphrodite being" (11-12). The same, he says, is true of desire for the "opposite" [*sic*] sex: "homosexual desire, and likewise that for the other sex are in rapport with the transsexual nature of deepest being."[22]

Mieli's wording refers to an *a priori* being without clarifying why, or how, this entity can be both transsexual and hermaphrodite.[23] The language draws on Marcuse, and so the application is not necessarily to be interpreted in bodily terms. At the same time, Mieli seems to be engaging, if ever in an imprecise way, with the bodily. Simply using the terms "transsexual" and "hermaphrodite" implies a challenge to the familiar binary model of physical sex. Hocquenghem's paradigm of anarchic organs might at first glance seem more revolutionary, but it is also less inclined to try to account for organic development. What we are already seeing is a developing split between paths. One seeks engagement with and possibly rehabilitation of biology, while the other pursues a departure from it.

Difficulty with Determination: Hocquenghem's Polyvocity

Shortly after his discussion of what homosexuality is, Mieli says that "definitively, there has still been no success in explaining why some people become gay and others straight" (42). Another European Marxist, Jeffrey Weeks, would make exactly the same remark, in almost the same terms, only to

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[22] Although not a directly related topic, it is worth noting Mieli's hostile and dismissive treatment of bisexuality (21-24).

[23] *'L'omosessualità è congenita e quindi espressione del polimorfismo proprio del nostro essere transessuale profondo, ermafrodito. Allo stesso modo, anche le tendenze erotiche verso il sesso «opposto» fanno parte del nostro polimorfismo erotico, e sono quindi espressione dell'ermafroditismo profondo. Sia il desiderio omosessuale che quello per l'altro sesso sono in rapporto con la natura transessuale del profondo'* (Mieli 11-12). Both Fernbach's English and Prearo's (more recent) French translations depart from this in significant ways (see Fernbach trans. 29; Prearo trans. 40). Madelon Hartford has suggested to me that if Mieli's term "transsexual" is replaced with "pansexual," these statements make more sense.

leave it hanging (Weeks "Discourse" 31). Hocquenghem briefly acknowledges such a thing as exclusive same-sex object choice, but then says that "same," "self" and "object" are anthropomorphizations of desire that presuppose the construction of a subject. This operation is itself dependent, says Hocquenghem, on a social ideology that gives a shape to sexuality (125, 127).

These difficulties with theorizing determination, as Epstein puts it (259-60; see also Marshall 35), point to an inability on the part of some leftist social constructionists to account for a perceived involuntary aspect of sexuality.[24] Hocquenghem locates this involuntary aspect within what he characterizes as the "polyvocity of desire" (26). His refusal to "let homosexuality speak for itself" is ironic, especially given his intellectual milieu. In only a few years, his friend Foucault would explain that the Western bourgeois patriarchy controls sexuality through a discourse of *interdiction, inexistence, mutisme*[25] (Foucault 11).[26] Bearing in mind the focus within cultural studies on uncovering systems of power and oppression, one could ask whether "drowning out" an entire realm of enquiry might, in its own way, be an oppressive intellectual strategy on Hocquenghem's part.

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[24] Bailey reviews the field and available findings, noting particularly its shortcomings with regard to queer issues and people (see especially 51, 66-67).

[25] Foucault's diction here is ambiguous. The suffix *–isme* in French can function both as the English *–ness*, and as *–ism*. *Mutisme* could therefore mean simply the state of being mute; or equally, muteness as an ideology to be enforced: "hushism."

[26] My choice of saying that, according to Foucault, "bourgeois patriarchy controls sexuality through a discourse" is based on the need to respect the terms of Foucault's argument. In his theory, the formula *interdiction, inexistence, mutisme* applies to disempowered agents who cannot speak: the uneducated, children, homosexuals (sometimes), etc. Those who can and do speak use this ability to *promote* sexuality as a "forbidden" topic, in a system of disingenuous "repression." They can also inveigle speech from the weak in structured situations, as for example in legal or medical examinations. Thus in Foucault's eyes does sexuality become less *bodily* and more *discursive*, and also more open to social control (13, 15, 18, 38).

Hocquenghem's difficulties with the relations between description, definition and classification (which he views as being both tight and swiftly bridged) seem reflected in his hostility towards the use of science. "Dividing the better to rule, the pseudo-scientific thought of psychiatry has turned barbarous intolerance into civilized intolerance" (27). This wording allows us to deduce that there at least *could* exist a non-pseudo science; but Hocquenghem has no time for animal models, views "natural" as only a socially normative term, and calls "nature" a "theological notion" (41).[27] Hocquenghem dismisses the Kinsey reports, saying Kinsey was naive (Hocquenghem 26-28). The only possible rapprochement for Hocquenghem with biology lies in a cryptic end statement. He appears to suggest that through political action, we could come closer to an experienced biological reality which is neither made hierarchal nor anthropomorphized:

> Homosexual movements denounce the idealising sublimation of the social mentality just as they do the pitiless assault of "individuals."[28] They break down the border that separates biology from psychology, making Nature no longer the incriminating referent but a term of equivalence with the immediacy of desire. (Hocquenghem 182)

There is evidence within Hocquenghem's own work that reaching even this mysterious, transcendental

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[27] Similar concerns persist today, regarding both "natural" and "normal." The idea of "normal" has a surprisingly complex genealogy, demanding historical caution (Cryle and Downing 191, 196). The same is true of "nature" / "natural" (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 5, 9-12).

[28] Hocquenghem promotes Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the individual as an imposed collective phantasm, which they explain as being allied with the Oedipal model of personality development (itself ideologically driven). Hocquenghem spends some time explaining the consequences for homosexuality of being structured by an Oedipal *society*, instead of a non-patriarchal *group* (118-21).

reconciliation with the Natural body might be unthinkable. In a reference to *Madness and Civilization*, an earlier work by Foucault,[29] Hocquenghem draws a clear parallel between homosexuality and madness as "unclassifiable," evidently in reaction to the oppression classification makes possible (Hocquenghem 26).[30] Yet what is being silenced as a by-product of this refusal seems to be any kind of description of sexuality which is clearly traceable to anything other than the social and the economic. At least one feminist Marxist writing after Foucault has seen this as a theoretical impasse:

> Once [Foucault] has demonstrated that the body has been, and remains, an effect of a process of sexualization, once it has been shown that pleasure is not an ahistorical quantity, we cannot return to the body or to pleasure as the elements of liberation. (Hauser 204)

While we might hesitate to trace this impasse to Foucault himself (as does Hauser), it does seem that social constructionist theory is lacking a means of engaging with embodiment. In other words, we need a means of recognizing and understanding the non-discursive aspects of the body, in order for it to provide a secure solution to oppressive discourse.

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[29] Foucault, Michel. 1972. *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*. Paris: Gallimard.

[30] Prearo says (14) that the intangible nature of Hocquenghem's topics derives from two factors. One was the current intellectual fashion, 1973 being "the hour of the abjured, desacralized, deconstructed, refused subject" (see also Marshall 25). The other would be that writing such as Hocquenghem's "did not come from the base of the movement," in implied contrast with Mieli's. Given Hocquenghem's long activist history, this second factor is questionable. It does seem worth considering another suggestion by Mieli himself (as reported by Mario Rossi, in Prearo, *ibid.*): that such works were intended mainly to be confiscated, as a publicity stunt, rather than to be read critically by a wider audience (Mieli implies).

Views on Nature: Mieli's Seahorses

Mieli is every bit as scathing as Hocquenghem about the oppressive project of bourgeois science as it has actually been practiced, especially in the realm of psychiatry. On the other hand, he is willing to entertain using the term "nature," as opposed to "norm" / "normal" (Mieli 28; cf. 21-22). He has warm words for the Kinsey reports, if not for the way in which society has attempted to incorporate them (Mieli 147-50 *passim*). He also speculates that future research into the origins of different sexual desires might take place in non-oppressive ways (166-67). He is comfortable with animal models for human sexuality (28, 211), a topic to return to in a moment. At one point Mieli quotes André Gide's treatise *Corydon*, written in 1924, to help argue that reproduction is only one possibility among the many offered by desire (Mieli 40; cf. Gide 47-48). This idea is itself a cornerstone of sexual liberation.

Corydon has turned into a kind of theoretical litmus test as, rightly or wrongly, a historic text in queer biology. It is the earliest modern homosexual apologia to have both used animal parallels and achieved global fame. However, its pervasive sexism poses major ethical and political problems. Its bias has given it a troubled legacy, many would say justifiably so. This lingers at the expense of its attempt to engage with nature in a non-heteronormative way. Mieli's reference to this text is notable for his *lack* of hostility to the animal metaphors it uses, and beyond them to biological and ecological research into human sexuality. At the same time Mieli does not once endorse *Corydon*'s misogyny. On the contrary: he is a vocal feminist throughout his work.

Given Mieli's comments about medical practice, this different attitude towards "biology" and "nature," even when framed in the unfortunate context of *Corydon*, is noteworthy. Compare this with Hocquenghem's view, noting his own use of these terms: "…when Gide in *Corydon* tries to construct a homosexuality founded biologically on comparison with other species, he does nothing but blindly fall in the trap set for him by the need to found within nature the forms of desire" (Hocquenghem 42).

Mieli occasionally uses animals as models for radical change in human sexuality. His most colorful example elaborates on the cross-gender childrearing habits of seahorses, which might inspire our own species as we contemplate a transsexual future:

> It is not impossible that the coming transsexual freedom might contribute to producing, in a *relatively* distant future, alterations of the biologico-anatomical structure of the human being, such as to transform it, for example, into a gynander, fit for parthenogenesis or for new types of procreation for two (or three, or ten…?). There already exist in nature animals such as the seahorse, for example, which reproduces as ever in "inverted" fashion (the female lays the eggs in the male's body, and the male fertilizes them, carrying them in himself until giving birth). (Mieli 211)

The second sentence makes a visual pun on sex-gender confusion. Biologically speaking, the seahorses are not transsexual, they only behave "that way." As an example, it does seem a bit far-fetched. Seahorses probably do not distinguish biological sex from social gender. Their behavior is still separated according to lines of sex, albeit in an unusual-looking way. They would not make a watertight example for Mieli's "hermaphrodite" concept. Nonetheless, it is clear that Mieli does not perceive the world of biological knowledge to be somehow tainted or threatening. He encourages us to view it as a corroborator and support for our own diverse reality.

The passage on seahorses is missing from Fernbach's English translation (Fernbach trans. 212; compare Prearo trans.

317).[31] Why was such a noticeable passage left out? One clue emerges in a brief but generally positive commentary on Mieli by a British scholar of Hocquenghem's work, Bill Marshall. Marshall was working with Fernbach's translation:

> Whereas Hocquenghem sees anti-homosexual paranoia and Oedipalisation as facts of desire organised and channelled in a certain way, Mieli believes there is something else outside which represses Eros, and that is ideology, a concept Deleuze and Guattari, for example, explicitly reject.[32] Mieli's concept of Eros is therefore grounded not only in Freudian theory but in Jung's trans-historical archetypes, and, like Gide in *Corydon*, from "nature." He endearingly informs the reader that there are gay ducks.[33] More importantly, science, notably genetics and embryo research, is invoked to emphasise the fundamental hermaphrodism of every human being. (Marshall 36)

Marshall's decision to place the term "nature" in scare quotes suggests that this term is problematic for him, unlike "desire" in Hocquenghem's text. For this reason, I detect a pejorative note to his characterization of Mieli's duck example as "endearing." This is reinforced by his contrasting it unfavorably with other examples of activities that are more "scientific." The contrast suggests a conceptual split and a credibility gap between the world of everyday "macro" nature and laboratory-based, technical "micro" biology.

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[31] Overall, Prearo's French version is slightly more accurate in content, but its prose style is transformed, apparently to suit French academic convention (hence, very formal and Latinate). Mieli's simpler manner comes across more clearly in Fernbach.

[32] We recall that Deleuze and Guattari are major influences for Hocquenghem.

[33] Fernbach trans. 65; see also Mieli 28. In Prearo's version (63), the statement that many birds are often homosexual is kept, but the species are left out, for no apparent reason.

Marshall does not necessarily endorse this greater credibility of "science"–he is describing Mieli's ideas and strategy here–but without gainsaying *why* science is more important in Marshall's eyes, it is clear that it *is*. It is equally clear that parallels drawing on that world, yet applying it to the world of everyday experience, are not welcome, or at least not to be taken seriously. We are seeing another, subtler version of the refusal to allow a clear relationship between culture and biology. Did Fernbach leave out the other passage about seahorses because he believed it would be seen as preposterous, "unscientific," objectionable even, and thus reflect badly on Mieli? Judging from Marshall's reaction to the duck example, which is less eye-catching, Fernbach may have had good reason to worry about the seahorses.

Mieli views biological nature and biological science as pertaining to a single continuum of physical reality in which we belong, as we are living, physical beings. This continuum for Mieli exists both in tandem with, and distinct from, human systems that attempt to make sense of it. The discourse of nature — material, inherent (if not necessarily fixed) nature — is available for the general observer, regardless of who they are. In itself it is neither an ideological determinant, nor a biopolitical trap. By the same token, formally trained and recognized scientists are not, in Mieli's eyes, the only authority worthy to make judgments about how the world works. This is liberating and anti-hierarchical. The continuum endorses full participation in the world in which we are all embodied.

Malagreca, using vocabulary derived from Lacan, says that Mieli is unique in differentiating the paternal-symbolic law from the rules and norms that govern society (Malagreca 104). One might add that Mieli similarly separates natural law from the rules and norms that influence scientific practice. For a leftist thinker concerned specifically with minority sexuality, in the 1970s, this is noteworthy.

The Political, the Natural, and Theorizing Sexuality

One of the aims of this article has been to indicate that within the roots of queer theory, a deep-seated mistrust of

biology has developed without there being serious questioning of the metonymy which blurs the object of this mistrust. The reason for this runs deeper than a simple confusion of objects — discourses of nature and biology, versus the social structures that have manipulated them. Queer leftism has resolved the need for using subjects without relying on a transcendental one. In this respect, it has successfully negotiated a certain distance from classical Marxism (Poster 4, 41). However, with few exceptions, queer theory has not managed to do without a transcendental social explanation for sexuality, for fear of confronting seriously the problem of determination that comes with it (see Lostroh and Udis-Kessler 226).

The irony of all this is that Mieli, who was obviously a Marxist, did not share this problem. Indeed it has been possible, for much longer than has been imagined, for leftist thinkers to occupy what are called "essentialist" points of view without compromising their political program.[34] For a number of historical reasons, including the way in which Foucault's ideas have been understood in the English-speaking world, recognition of this fact is rare; and theoretical interaction between sexuality studies and biology is only beginning to enjoy wider credit among queer activists.

The willingness to consider human and animal on an equal footing has a long association with efforts to demystify the nature of humanity.[35] To refer again to Hocquenghem, as his own treatise argues, homophobic "biology" is unworthy of

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[34] Tolerance of biological discourse in sexuality—or at least a positive attitude towards a biological "origin" for sexual orientation—correlates most strongly with a deterministic world view, with political liberalism and with libertarianism, among Anglophone Americans at any rate (Tygart 259-60, 274-75). It would be helpful to ask how biology can be put to more queer-friendly uses without being attached to anyone's economic agenda.

[35] Linnaeus [1707-78] had little time for Descartes's theory that humans, uniquely, had souls, whereas animals were simply *automata*. Surely, he thought, Descartes had never seen an ape: "…I ask you and the entire world to show me a generic difference between ape and man which is consistent with the principles of natural history. I most certainly do not know of any" (letter to Johann Gmelin, quoted in Agamben 26). See also Hird 238, Alaimo 55-56.

the name precisely because it is unable to use the knowledge it pretends to develop (Hocquenghem 26-27, 66; see also Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 11). The knowledge that radical constructionism was not, in fact, the only approach considered valid within classic activist writing should encourage more recent researchers concerned with an ethical ecological approach to sexuality, who might otherwise feel as though their position had little modern support (see Alaimo 52).

Acknowledgements

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ASSESSING PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF INTIMATE BEHAVIORS IN CLINICAL SUPERVISION AMONG LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS, LICENSED SOCIAL WORKERS, AND LICENSED PSYCHOLOGISTS

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify perceptions of Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Social Workers, and Licensed Psychologists regarding intimate behaviors in clinical supervision. A second purpose of the study was to identify perceptions of Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Social Workers, and Licensed Psychologists regarding intimate behaviors based on the participants' sex.

Participants included 102 Licensed Professional Counselors, 53 Licensed Social Workers, and 83 Licensed Psychologists from the five United States regions. Results of the study indicated no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Social Workers, and Licensed Psychologists regarding intimate behaviors in clinical supervision based on sex. The study revealed that none of the respondents reported engaging

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sexually with a supervisee or supervisor during the supervisory relationship.

Though it was noted that no statistically significant difference was found among the three groups investigated, the endorsement by some respondents of high-risk behaviors indicated alarm for the professions. The high-risk behaviors endorsed by respondents were behaviors suggested by past researchers which lead to sexual relationships among supervisee and supervisor in clinical supervision. It is believed that information obtained by this study may facilitate and enhance mental health training programs regarding supervisory ethics, dual relationships, and the circumstances that may lead to sexual inappropriateness in clinical supervision.

Introduction

The issue of dual roles and relationships is perhaps the most examined ethical issue in clinical supervision (Barnett-Queen 2000; Congress 2001; Herlihy & Corey 1997). Researchers have attempted to address the maintenance and development of appropriate boundaries and continue to address the effects and outcomes of engaging in dual relationships during clinical supervision. However, limited research in the fields of counseling, psychology, and social work has been conducted that examined ethical dilemmas that occur from overlapping roles and relationships that supervisors have with supervisees (Bernard 1994; Congress 2001).

Sexual relationships involving supervisor and supervisee are clearly in contradiction to codes of ethics and standards of conduct within all three fields: counseling, social work, and psychology (American Counseling Association [ACA] 2005; American Psychological Association [APA] 2003; National Association of Social Workers [NASW] 1996). Additionally, sexual relationships are prohibited by most university faculty codes of conduct as well as agencies due to the inherent "power differential" between supervisors and supervisees (Murator 2001). However, social relationships or

behaviors that might lead to sexual relationships or the exploitation of the supervisee are not as clear cut in the counseling, social work, or psychology disciplines. The problem all of these disciplines tend to face is how additional social roles or relationships might develop and lead to sexual inappropriateness with the primary relationship being that of supervisor and supervisee. Research indicates that even nonsexual social relationships affect supervisor objectivity and perceptions of fairness when professional boundaries are not clearly defined and maintained (Burian & Slimp 2000). It is relatively common and an acceptable form of a multiple relationship to serve as a clinical supervisor and also as the supervisee's teacher or employer. However, this behavior may lead to problems if the roles are not clearly defined and the supervisor and supervisee are not aware of "cross-over" effects (Ford 2001).

The supervisory relationship as well as the training setting provides an unforeseen opportunity for blurring professional roles and personal boundaries. Transference, countertransference, sexualized interactions, distorted feedback, and a distorted sense of intimacy have all been implicated as reasons for the development of sexual relationships or inappropriate social relationships. Researchers have indicated that supervisees are not equipped to handle these situations due to their lack of experience and vulnerability (Herlihy & Corey 1997). This inexperience makes it difficult to distinguish inappropriate supervisory behaviors. Moreover, authors have questioned whether or not clear boundaries exist in clinical supervision (Congress 2001; Ford, 2001; Itzhaky 2000). Ford (2001) suggested that because of this "gray" area, clinical supervisors are beginning to "shy away" from providing supervision. Other authors suggested that an examination of social relationships and ways they may develop into sexually inappropriate relationships would be beneficial and practical to the counseling, social work, and mental health fields (Gabbard 1996; Gutheil & Gabbard 1993).

A substantial amount of research has been conducted on dual relationships involving sexual intimacy in supervision (Barnett-Queen 2000; Glaser & Thorpe 1986; Miller &

Larrabee 1995; Pope, Keith-Spiegel, & Tabachnick 1986; Pope, Levenson, & Schover 1979; Robinson & Reid 1985; Strom-Gottfried 2000). Most of this research has focused on psychologists and graduate students. According to Robinson and Reid (1985), 48 percent of the female graduate students surveyed in psychology reported sexual seduction during their internship. Approximately 86 percent of the respondents indicated that their teachers initiated the sexual experience. In addition, 14 percent of the women reported sexual contact with educators while in training. Clinical psychology students reported more sexual seduction during their training programs than did students in other areas of psychology. Glaser and Thorpe (1986) investigated the incidence and impact of sexually intimate relationships with supervisors during the training of psychologists. The authors found that 17 percent of the female clinical psychologists surveyed reported some form of sexual contact with psychology educators. Of these sexual relationships, 60 percent were with professors and 35 percent were with clinical supervisors. Pope, Levenson, and Schover (1979) stated that 17 percent of the clinical psychologists surveyed reported sexual contact (genital stimulation or intercourse) with at least one educator during their training programs.

Thoreson, Shaughnessy, and Frazier (1995) in a study involving 377 female members of the American Counseling Association (ACA) investigated sexually intimate experiences with clinical supervisors during their counselor training. Of the 377 respondents, 7 percent reported engaging in sexual contact while in the role of a client, a student, or a supervisee. The researchers defined the training relationship as a teacher-student, advisor-advisee, or supervisor-supervisee relationship. Thoreson et al. (1995) also found that 3.6 percent of the respondents reported sexual contact with a clinical supervisor after the training relationship had ended. According to the results, the exact number of the sexual contacts with a supervisor, teacher, or advisor was not reported, and overall results were given for contacts with teachers, advisors, and supervisors.

Social Relationships

Counselors, social workers, and psychologists often engage in social interactions with professors or even supervisors in their training programs (Burian & Slimp 2000; Ford 2001; Itzhaky 2000; Keith-Speigel & Koocher 1985; Slimp & Burian 1994). Supervisees are often expected to be congenial, friendly, social, and they may even feel obligated to engage in social activities with their clinical supervisors. Social and day-to-day interactions between clinical supervisors and supervisees in some settings may be an important factor in maintaining a positive working relationship.

Often, supervisees seek out supervisors with whom they share research interests. Research collaboration often demands a substantial amount of time with the supervisor and increases opportunities for the development of personal relationships. Additionally, supervisees in agencies and hospitals often have interactions with clinical supervisors at workshops and in-services and through mutual friends and departmental activities. Keith-Spiegel and Koocher (1985) and Slimp and Burian (1994) agreed that engaging in social relationships during the supervisory relationship is much less harmful than engaging in sexual relationships. However, as supervisees become personally involved with their supervisors, the potential for intimacy increases.

Another critical issue is that clinical supervisors provide evaluations of persons in training (Bartell & Rubin 1990; Bernard 1994). Supervisors often provide professional endorsements for supervisees seeking licensure and certification. The level of social involvement, whether negative or positive, has a direct impact on the supervisors' evaluation of their supervisees. The supervisor may ignore known deficiencies of the supervisee because of the supervisor's personal involvement with the supervisee. Consequently, if the supervisor and the supervisee experience difficulty within their social relationship, the supervisor may provide an inaccurate or negative evaluation of the supervisee's skills (Bernard 1994). In addition, clinical supervisors provide recommendation letters

for continued employment or education. Although the supervisor should not allow personal feelings to impact on his or her professional attitudes and behaviors, personal involvement with the supervisee may make objectivity more difficult. Kitchener and Harding (1990) suggested that seemingly harmless relationships may have a negative impact on the supervisory relationship because the behavior impairs the supervisors' judgment.

Social relationships may develop for a number of reasons. Clinical supervisors may choose to supervise persons who have similar research interests, personal interests, or similar backgrounds. Supervisees may enjoy the supervisory relationship and become motivated to interact more personally with their clinical supervisors because of a positive and supportive working relationship. Bartell and Rubin (1990) noted that social relationships develop especially during the end of doctoral training programs. The mentoring relationship encouraged in most doctoral programs tends to promote social interaction from an emerging collegiality and peer interaction.

Even though social relationships pose less potential harm than sexual relationships, engaging in personal relationships creates possible negative consequences. A clinical supervisor's objectivity may be impaired when evaluating the supervisee. Supervisees may not discuss personal, sensitive issues related to therapy for fear of damaging the personal relationship with the supervisor. Although research on boundary violations in clinical supervision is limited, Gutheil & Gabbard (1993) found that sexual relationships with clients begin with crossing boundaries involving time, place, and self-disclosure. Gutheil and Gabbard (1993) also reported that social relationships that occur outside of the university or agency involve time and place issues. Fults and Dooley (1999) found high comfort levels (*strongly agree* to *agree* range) among supervisees regarding social interactions, such as lunches (95%), dinners (85%), and congenial outings (75%) with their clinical supervisor, creating the possibility of the development of intimate personal relationships. According to Gutheil and

Gabbard (1993), these behaviors lead to social relationships and may often cross the line into inappropriate sexual activity.

In addition to sexual relationships and sexual intimacy, limited research has focused on the circumstances that led to sexual relationships in supervision (Gabbard 1996; Kitchener 1988; Navin, Beamish, & Johanson, 1995). In an analysis of several case studies, Gabbard (1996) found that most sexual relationships began with "nonsexual hugs." Fults-McMurtery, Dooley, Young, and Webb (2007) reported high levels of comfort among supervisees regarding being hugged by their clinical supervisors.

Although studies have established that sexual intimacies do occur between supervisors and supervisees, the research focused on the circumstances that lead to sexual relationships in supervision is limited (Gabbard 1996; Kitchener 1988). Explicit boundary violations such as engaging in a sexual relationship with a supervisor have been addressed thoroughly in the literature (Barnett-Queen 1999; Barnett-Queen 2000; Cobia & Boes 2000; Glaser & Thorpe 1986; Koocher & Keith-Spiegal 1998; Miller & Larrabee 1995; Thoreson, Shaughnessy, & Frazier 1995).

However, the literature does not clearly address those boundaries that are less directly sexual such as types of physical touches that might occur in the supervisory relationship (Thoreson et al. 1995). Based on a review of the literature, socially and sexually inappropriate supervisory relationships are more prevalent among licensed clinical psychologists than licensed counselors or licensed social workers, although limited research has been conducted involving the latter two groups (Barnett-Queen, 2000; Miller & Larrabee 1995; Navin et al. 1995). Barnett-Queen (2000) also suggested that inappropriate social and sexual relationships are more prevalent when supervisors are men and supervisees are women.

The purpose of this study was to identify perceptions and attitudes of licensed professional counselors, licensed social workers, and licensed psychologists regarding intimate behaviors in clinical supervision. A secondary purpose of the study was to identify perceptions and attitudes of licensed

professional counselors, licensed social workers, and licensed psychologists regarding intimate behaviors based on the participants' sex. The third purpose of the study was to examine the differences among licensed professional counselors, licensed social workers, and licensed psychologists based on the number of reports of sexual incidents in the supervisory relationship.

The following hypotheses were posed to address the problem under investigation:

> 1. There is no statistically significant difference among the perceptions of Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Social Workers, and Licensed Psychologists regarding intimate behaviors in clinical supervision.
>
> 2. There is no statistically significant difference among the perceptions of Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Social Workers, and Licensed Psychologists regarding intimate behaviors in clinical supervision based on sex.
>
> 3. There is no statistically significant difference among the number of reports of sexual relationships in clinical supervision among Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Social Workers, and Licensed Psychologists.
>
> 4. There is no statistically significant difference among Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Social Workers, and Licensed Psychologists regarding the number of reports of sexual relationships in clinical supervision based on the participants' sex.

Method

Participants

Participants were Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs), Licensed Social Workers, (LSWs), and Licensed Psychologists (LPs) in five United States Regions: Midwest, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and West. Of the 420 instruments mailed, 246 were returned, for a return rate of 57 percent. After excluding eight surveys due to incomplete data or having area of specializations or licenses in areas other than counseling, social work, and psychology, the study included a

total of 238 participants. There were 107 men (45%) and 131 women (55%). Three (1.2%) were African American and 235 (98.7%) were Caucasian American. Of the 238 participants, 93 (39.1%) were single, 129 (54.2%) married, 14 (5.9%) divorced, and 2 (.8%) widowed. Of the 238 participants, 102 (42.8%) were Licensed Professional Counselors, 53 (22.2%) were Licensed Social Workers, and 83 (34.9%) were Licensed Psychologists. (See Table 1.)

Table 1: Group Demographic Frequencies (N = 238)

Variable	Frequency	%
Sex		
Men	107	45.0
Women	131	55.0
Race		
African American	3	1.3
Caucasian	235	98.7
Age Range		
20-29	13	5.5
30-39	52	21.8
40-49	74	31.1
50-59	78	32.8
60 and over	21	6.7
Degree		
Master's	143	60.1
Specialist	13	5.5
Doctorate	82	34.5
Area		
Counseling	102	42.8
Social Work	53	22.2
Psychology	83	34.9

Instrumentation

The Comfort Level Supervisory Inventory (CLSI) was developed by Fults and Dooley (1999) to assess comfort levels of supervisees regarding behaviors initiated by their clinical supervisor. The CLSI that was used in this study was an outgrowth of a smaller, more limited measure developed in two previous studies. The basis for the CLSI was derived from the literature based on standards of conduct and professional ethics of counseling, psychology, and social work disciplines (ACA 2005; APA 2003; NASW 1996).

The CLSI was developed because of the lack of available instruments designed to address this area of interest. The CLSI uses a five-point Likert-type scale to assess and report the extent to which respondents are comfortable with a variety of sexual and social behaviors. The scale ranges from 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neither, 2 = disagree, to 1 = strongly disagree. (See Table 2.) The CLSI contains 14 two-part statements consisting of a total of 28 Likert-type statements. On the first 14 statements, participants were asked to report their comfort levels in the role of a supervisee. In the next set of 14 statements, participants were asked to report their comfort level regarding statements in the role of a supervisor. The researcher also developed a demographic form that was completed and returned with the instrument.

Table 2: ANOVA Summary Table for Groups in Role of a Supervisee

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Groups	12.380	2	6.190	.201	.818
Within Groups	7234.259	235	30.784		
Total	7246.639	237			

* Note: Significant at $p < .05$ level.

The CLSI was first reviewed by soliciting feedback from five professionals with expertise in the area of supervision and ethics to confirm face validity and assess content and construct validity of the instrument. The professionals reviewed and edited the questionnaire prior to its first administration as a pilot study. The questionnaire was also administered to five participants who were not a part of the original sample. These participants were asked to give inferences about the variables being measured. Follow-up interviews were conducted to determine whether all questions were understood and if the purpose of the study was clear. After consultation, minor changes and edits were made based on the experts' suggestions.

Two pilot studies were performed using the original fourteen two-part-item instrument to assess validity and

reliability. Participants in the first pilot study were from graduate and undergraduate programs, and in the second pilot study participants were Licensed Professional Counselors in one southeastern state. A total of 73 respondents participated in the initial pilot study with a total of 43 in the second pilot study. The pilot studies were used to determine internal consistency reliability for the instrument and to examine the levels of acceptable behaviors or components of the instrument.

To date, there are no known statistical measures in the literature to establish content validity. However, Mueller (1986) suggested that to establish content validity of an instrument, a researcher must first identify the content to be measured. Then the researcher must formulate statements that reflect the content domain to be measured. Finally, the procedure must be documented. Thus the CLSI used in this study was developed by identifying the content (relevant sections of the ACA, ACES, APA, NASW) regarding engaging in dual relationships in clinical supervision in the above areas. Next, items were created that addressed this identified content area (sexual and social dual relationships). Then the constructed items were reviewed by professionals with expertise in clinical supervision.

Internal consistency reliability was established in the first and second pilot studies. Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Cronbach 1951), a numerical estimate of internal-consistency reliability was used. The first pilot study yielded a .69 reliability coefficient. The second pilot study yielded a .73 reliability coefficient on the statements analyzed in the role of a supervisee and a .75 reliability coefficient analyzed in the role of a supervisor. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was conducted to determine internal consistency of the present study and yielded a .74 reliability coefficient on the statements analyzed in the role of a supervisee and a .82 reliability coefficient on the statements analyzed in the role of a supervisor.

Procedures

A list of Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Social Workers, and Licensed Psychologists was obtained from

state licensure boards. Based on Cohen's (1988) tables for the F-test, given a medium effect size at an alpha of .05, a sample of approximately 80 participants per group from the overall states was needed to obtain a power of .89. After a complete list of counselors, social workers, and psychologists was compiled, the recommended participants per group in each state were selected. A randomized sampling technique was used to acquire the recommended sample size of 80 per group based on Cohen's (1988) effect sizes. The per-group number was increased to 140 to enhance the possibility of having a return rate within the recommended sample size. The table of random numbers was used to acquire the 140 per-group sample. After the list of per-group participants was compiled, a cover letter explaining specific instructions and the nature of the research was drafted and mailed to the participants. Participants were asked to complete the demographic information and survey and return in the self-addressed stamped envelope. No follow-up was conducted.

Data Analysis

The hypotheses were addressed through an examination of statistical analyses done on the responses of the groups. Demographic characteristics of the groups were examined and reported using descriptive statistics including means and percentages. Non-parametric statistical tests were used to analyze the survey responses since the responses were ordinal-level data. Data used to examine responses based on gender were analyzed using the Mann Whitney U test. The Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance was used to compare the perceptions of acceptable and unacceptable intimate behaviors among the three groups, Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs), Licensed Social Workers (LSWs), and Licensed Psychologists (LPs) in the supervisory relationship. Demographic statistics were used to report the differences based on the number of reports of sexual incidents among the three groups. All tests were conducted at the .05 level of significance. Statistical analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

Results

The first hypothesis addressed the differences in the perceptions and attitudes of intimate behaviors among Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Social Workers, and Licensed Psychologists. A Kruskal-Wallis test was used to explore whether differences in the perceptions of intimate behaviors existed in the supervisory relationship among the three groups. The Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance revealed no statistically significant differences, $F(2, 235) = .648$, $p > .05$ among the three groups and their perceptions and attitudes of intimate behaviors in clinical supervision in the role of a supervisor. (See Table 3.)

Table 3: ANOVA Summary Table for Groups in Role of a Supervisor

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Groups					
	44.097	2	22.048	.435	.648
Within Groups					
	11902.193	235	50.648		
Total	11946.290	237			

* Note: Significant at $p < .05$ level.

Additionally, the Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance revealed no statistically significant differences, $F(2, 235) = .201$, $p > .05$, among the three groups and their perceptions of intimate behaviors in clinical supervision in the role of a supervisee. (See Table 4.)

The second hypothesis of the study addressed the differences in men's and women's perceptions of intimate behaviors. The Mann Whitney U test was used to examine the differences in perceptions based on sex. Results of the Mann Whitney U analysis indicated that there were no statistically significant differences, H(2) = .328, $p > .05$, in the perceptions and attitudes of men and women Licensed Professional

Counselors, Licensed Social Workers, and Licensed Psychologists regarding intimate behaviors. The third and fourth hypotheses both addressed the number of reports of sexual relationships in the three groups and the differences in the number of reports of sexual relationships based on sex. No participants in the study reported engaging in a sexual relationship with a supervisor or with a supervisee. Therefore, no statistical analysis was needed to address the last two hypotheses since no participant indicated having engaged in a sexual relationship during clinical supervision.

Table 4: Sample Items on the Comfort Level Supervisory Inventory

If I were a supervisee (a person in training), I would feel comfortable
> if my supervisor asked me to his or her home for dinner.
> if my supervisor gave me a gift and it was not a special occasion.
> if my supervisor pats my hand.
> if my supervisor rubs on my shoulders.
> if my supervisor asked me out on a date.
> accepting a ride home from my supervisor.

If I were a supervisor, I would feel comfortable
> asking a supervisee to my home for dinner.
> giving a supervisee a gift and it was not a special occasion.
> patting a supervisee's hand.
> rubbing a supervisee's shoulders.
> asking a supervisee out on a date.
> offering my supervisee a ride home.

An examination of individual items revealed that on items 1f and 2f, regarding "being asked out on a date by a supervisor or asking a supervisee out on a date," three of the 238 responses (1.2%) were in the *agree* or *strongly agree* categories in the role of a supervisee. In the role of a supervisor, nine of the 238 responses (3.8%) were in the *agree* or *strongly agree* categories. On items 1i and 2i regarding "having a sexual relationship with a supervisor or supervisee" respectively, three (1.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement in the role of a supervisee. On the item regarding "having a sexual relationship with a supervisee" in the role of a supervisor, six of the 238 respondents (2.6%) were

in the *agree* to *strongly agree* range. Seventeen (7.2%) of the respondents were in the *agree* to *strongly agree* range with 29 (12.2%) undecided in the role of a supervisee regarding "complimenting or being complimented on physical bodies." On the same item, in the role of supervisor, 23 (9.7%) respondents were in the *agree* to *strongly agree* range with 19 (80%) undecided. The item, "being kissed by a supervisor or kissing a supervisee" was endorsed as *agree* to *strongly agree* by eight (3.4%) of the respondents in the role of a supervisee. Moreover, 23 (9.7%) of the respondents indicated "yes" to the following question: "Have social behaviors ever caused problems in the supervisory relationship where you were either the supervisee or the supervisor?" In addition, seven (2.9%) of the respondents answered "yes" to the question, "Have social relationships with a supervisee ever led you to "cross the line"?

Discussion

The current research was conducted to expand findings regarding sexual and social relationships among Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Social Workers, and Licensed Psychologists. Additionally, the current research was undertaken to examine differences in perceptions based on the participant's sex. The findings indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in perceptions regarding intimate behaviors in supervision among Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Social Workers, and Licensed Psychologists. These findings differ from earlier work by Fults and Dooley (1999) that found differences in the responses of students training in different mental health disciplines.

The findings also revealed no statistically significant difference in men's and women's perceptions of intimate behaviors among Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Social Workers, and Licensed Psychologists in clinical supervision. These findings differ from Miller and Larrabee's (1995) suggestion that sexual intimacy and sexually inappropriate behaviors are significantly more often noted in men supervisors with women supervisees. The instrument used in the present study did not differentiate same-sex and

opposite-sex relationships in supervision, which may have influenced the results.

Although none of the participants in the present study indicated they had engaged in sexually inappropriate relationships with a supervisor or supervisee, this does not suggest the absence of sexual relationships in supervisory relationships. This finding may merely support Miller and Larrabee's (1995) conclusion that research involving sexual intimacy in clinical supervision is under reported or not reported at all. Further research needs to be conducted involving sexual and social relationships in clinical supervision, particularly in light of Strom-Gottfried's (1999) finding that persons who had sexual liaisons with supervisors were more likely to have sexual relationships with clients.

An examination of individual survey items found that the participants as "supervisee" tended to rely on the supervisors' judgment, but when relying upon their own judgment in the participant as "supervisor" role, they appeared more "strict" in interpreting the statements. Those behaviors that appeared "gray" such as "patting hands" and "giving hugs" were endorsed at a higher level of agreement when the participant was in the role of a supervisee than in the role of the supervisor. Supervisees are vulnerable during their training programs and therefore tend not to question or challenge their supervisor due to their inexperience with the supervisory process. Supervisees may tend to allow behaviors such as "hugging" and "hand-patting" due to the power differential in the supervisory process and a perceived lack of power by the supervisee.

Further recommendations include focused training on power as it relates to the supervisory process, ethical dilemmas, and the problems of dual relationships in training programs. Further research that compares training in ethics in counseling, social work, and psychology might also assist in clarifying differences across mental health disciplines.

Limitations

The results of the current study should be examined within the context of the current study's limitations. One specific limitation of this study is that the instrument did not suggest the sex of the person being supervised or providing the supervision. Since research by Barnett-Queen (1999) and Glaser and Thorpe (1986) stated that most of the cases of sexual relationships in training were when a woman was supervised by a man, the CLSI did not address this issue. Although male supervisor and female supervisee is the most common pattern for ethical and boundary violations during clinical supervision, it must also be acknowledged that the possibility of the reverse exists. Further, same-sex homosexual or lesbian patterns are also possible and were not examined in this study.

The self-report nature of the instrument also limits its generalizability. Some responses of the participants may have been influenced by social desirability due to the sensitive nature of the topic. The finding that there were no reported sexual occurrences during clinical supervision with a supervisee or with a supervisor supports the idea that these behaviors are under reported or not reported at all. Several reasons may have contributed to this finding. First, traditionally there have been significantly more women social workers and counselors at the master's level, and largely men with doctorates in psychology. Additionally, the question of whether participants had sex with supervisees and supervisors would be causing them to admit that they had participated in an ethical breach.

Two variables, age and race, may have also influenced the results of this study. Participants were almost entirely Caucasian American. Earlier research by Fults and Dooley (1999) was more racially balanced, perhaps indicating a change in the racial make-up of these fields. In addition, the majority of the participants in the present study ranged in age from 40 to 59. Research that is more balanced in race and age should be undertaken. Although this research included a broad sample of regional areas across the three groups (LPCs, LSWs, and LPs), further research should be conducted with a larger sample size.

The recommended sample size per group was obtained in two of the areas, but not one group, and this may have influenced the results.

Conclusion

The current research was conducted to expand findings regarding sexual and social relationships among Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Social Workers, and Licensed Psychologists. Additionally, the current research was undertaken to examine differences in perceptions based on the participant's sex. The findings indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in perceptions regarding intimate behaviors in supervision among Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Social Workers, and Licensed Psychologists. There were also no reports of sexual incidents among the participants. However, results revealed that behaviors such as "hugging," "dating," "kissing," and "hand-patting" during the supervisory relationship were moderately tolerated.

Though it was noted that no statistically significant difference was found among the three groups investigated, the endorsement by some respondents of these high-risk behaviors indicates alarm for the professions. The high-risk behaviors endorsed by respondents were behaviors suggested by past researchers which led to sexual relationships among supervisee and supervisor in clinical supervision. It is believed that information obtained by this study may facilitate and enhance mental health training programs regarding supervisory ethics, dual relationships, and the circumstances that may lead to sexual inappropriateness in clinical supervision.

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GENDER DIFFERENCES IN OUTPATIENT HEALTH SERVICES UTILIZATION AMONG OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM AND OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM VETERANS ENROLLED AT A CENTRAL MISSISSIPPI VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER BETWEEN OCTOBER 1, 2002 AND SEPTEMBER 31, 2008

by
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ABSTRACT

The specific aims of this study are to describe gender differences in health services utilization and in physical and mental health diagnoses among veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars enrolled at a central Mississippi Veterans Administration Medical Center. Data for this retrospective design study were gathered from the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 16 Data Warehouse computerized medical records of veterans who served in or in support of either Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) or Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or both and were enrolled at the G. V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center in Jackson, Mississippi, or one of its Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) between October 1, 2002, and September 31, 2008. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the study population. A total of 4080 (523 women and 3557 men) veterans met the inclusion criteria. The study found that the majority of OEF and OIF veterans that enrolled in the VA did not use health services. But gender does appear to affect outpatient utilization of health services at the Jackson VA. Women veterans were more likely to utilize health services than men and were significantly more likely to be younger, black, and never married compared to their male counterparts. Veterans with a service-connected disability were more likely to be users of VA health services,

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regardless of gender. This study provided the first detailed look at the burden of illness and utilization trends of this unique population of veterans at a central Mississippi Veterans Affairs Medical Center and provides a baseline for further comprehensive, longitudinal studies.

Introduction

The face of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is changing. While the VA has historically been regarded as an agency primarily devoted to the care of male veterans, women represent the second fastest growing segment of the United States (U. S.) veteran population following aging veterans (Richardson & Waldrop 2003). Although the largest proportion of women veterans treated by the VA served during the Vietnam War era, there is a recent surge of women newly discharged from service related to Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Compared with veterans of prior conflicts, OEF and OIF veterans comprise the largest groups of women veterans today and are seeking VA medical services in greater numbers (Academy Health 2008), creating an increased demand for services beyond the levels usually associated with the VA.

OEF and OIF women veterans and their use of VA health services is a relatively new area of research. Very few studies have been undertaken to examine the association between gender and health services utilization rates among this special population. The studies that were completed to examine data on women veterans' healthcare utilization relative to men have yielded conflicting results (Hoff & Rosenbeck 1998; Wolinsky et al.1995; Duggal et al. 2010; Haskell et al. 2010). What is acknowledged by the VHA Office of Policy and Planning (2008) is that incredibly little is known about the differences and similarities in health in men and women veterans and how this might impact health services utilization within the VA or outcomes measures across gender.

One of the goals of providing services to the users of the VHA system is to improve the health and the quality of life for veterans. Like other healthcare systems that are seeking to adapt to a changing healthcare environment, the VA needs information about the health of current and prospective patients to anticipate demand, identify and remedy gaps in services, design effective services, and evaluate the outcomes of care. To provide high quality care to its women veterans, the VA must recognize the impact of combat exposure and the unique and complex physical and mental health needs of female veterans returning from war. While few in number, studies of the OEF and OIF population have primarily focused on male veterans and mental health outcomes (Seal et al. 2007; Hoge et al. 2006).

Women veterans coming into the VA system are younger with 85 percent of the women veterans from under age 39 through child-bearing age. They have health needs dissimilar from male veterans because of many factors including types of military experiences, the increased prevalence of certain conditions in women, manifestations of disease in women compared with men, and gender-specific issues that solely affect women (Kjerulff et al. 2007). In past conflicts, female veterans have used fewer VA health care services than male veterans (Office of Policy and Planning 2007). This pattern and trend may not hold for OEF and OIF veterans due to changes in the combat experiences and demographics of women serving in the military. Combat exposure has been associated with high levels of physical (Kang et al. 2000) and mental health conditions (Seal et al. 2007; Hoge et al. 2006) and healthcare utilization (Kelly et al. 2008).

There are several reasons to expect that health services utilization may differ in women veterans compared to men. A range of health conditions, from cancer and coronary artery disease to depression, may occur differently in women than in men (Haseltine & Jacobson 1997), leading to gender-related differences in management. In the general population, women use outpatient health services more heavily than do men (Schappert & Burt 2002) and the same could be true in the

VHA (Carney et al. 2003). Because women veterans are on average younger than men (Skinner et al. 2006), it is reasonable to expect these women to have a reduced need-based demand, as health services utilization tends to be lower in younger patients (Schappert & Burt 2002).

The overall effects of OEF and OIF deployment on women's physical and mental health are unknown. Several early studies reported high rates of musculoskeletal injuries in female service members (Kowel 1980; Reinker & Ozburn 1979; Ross & Woodward 1994); however, the Gulf War Registry reported fewer muscle and joint pains in female veterans compared to male veterans (Murphy et al. 1999). Studies examining gender differences in mental health conditions among OEF and OIF veterans have shown mixed results (Seal et al. 2009; Street et al. 2009). Women are far more likely than men to experience sexual trauma while in the military (Turner & Frayne 2004; Murdoch et al. 2007), which can have long-term effects on health and healthcare use (Frayne et al. 2006). Findings suggest that women who experience military sexual trauma report higher levels of depression, substance abuse, and medical conditions (Frayne et al. 1999) than those without military trauma.

Female veterans face several challenges that may influence use of health services. A General Accounting Office (GAO) study (1982) of VA women's health care found widespread deficiencies in the availability and quality of care. Nearly a decade later, a follow-up GAO study (1992) found that despite progress as a result of legislative mandates, inadequate attention to gender-specific health problems and barriers to addressing privacy deficiencies persisted. Vogt's study (1997) found that limitations in service availability and logistics of receiving care were barriers to VA use for women veterans who were current and former VA users.

This study seeks to describe gender differences in health services utilization and physical and mental health diagnoses among veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars at a central Mississippi Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC). The knowledge gained from this study will allow administrators and policy leaders locally, regionally, and nationally to anticipate

health concerns and align resources to serve those needs. Understanding the magnitude of gender and other socio-demographic determinants on the use of VA health services is not only important but essential in promoting and providing equal access to healthcare and improving overall health and quality of life. The objectives for this study are:

- To describe the OEF and OIF study population
- To describe gender differences in the utilization of VA health services among OEF and OIF veterans
- To describe gender differences in physical and mental health diagnoses among OEF and OIF veterans utilizing VA services

This study addressed multiple health services research priorities by examining and describing use of health services by women veterans in regard to the era of services associated with both the Iraq (OIF) and the Afghanistan (OEF) wars and examining and describing physical and mental health conditions (chronic illnesses) and their effect on utilization. Typically most studies investigating women veterans have occurred in settings in the West and Midwest regions of the U.S. Mississippi and Louisiana, both states that are located within the Southern region and that consistently rank last in the state by state rankings for overall health, provide the primary service areas for veterans evaluated in this study. This study examined patient characteristics within a health delivery system possibly influenced by geographic region which may also affect utilization. No studies have been reported that examine the current specific objectives in the current setting.

Theoretical Framework

The research framework for this study is the Behavioral Model of Health Services Use developed by Ronald Andersen in the 1960s. One of the most frequently used frameworks for analyzing the factors that are associated with patient utilization of health services, this model has been used extensively nationally and internationally as a framework for utilization and

cost studies of general populations as well as special studies of minorities, low income, children, women, the elderly, oral health, the homeless, and the HIV-positive population. The conceptual framework uses a systems perspective to integrate a range of individual, environmental, and provider-related variables associated with decisions to seek care (Phillips et al. 1998).

The demographic variables or individual determinants of utilization are important indicators for distributing health services under a system with a goal of equitable distribution such as the VA. There is a well established relationship of age, sex (gender), race, and marital status to physical needs, disease patterns, health maintenance, and subsequent use of health services (Andersen & Newman 2005). The propensity to use services more than other individuals can be predicted by individual characteristics that exist prior to the onset of a specific episode of illness. The current study looked at the predisposing characteristics of age, sex, race, and marital status, as well as the enabling characteristic of service-connected disability.

Age and sex (gender) are closely related to health and illness. People in different age groups or of different genders have different types and amounts of illness and different patterns of utilization. None of the findings from previously reviewed studies addresses the possibility that gender is most likely to be an important determinant of utilization when women seek health services in a predominantly male environment. Race and Hispanic origin are important demographic characteristics that are associated with socioeconomic characteristics of education, employment, and income. Both men and women have taken advantage of military service as an opportunity to learn job skills, to gain educational benefits, and to enhance life skills.

Marital status is an important characteristic in assessing an individual's economic and social well being inasmuch as it relates to other characteristics such as income, living arrangements and family structure, and health status. Marital status reflects what the lifestyle of the individual may be, the social environment of the individual and associated behavior

patterns, which may be related to the use of health services (Bradley et al. 2002).

The enabling characteristics are the means that are available to individuals to allow use of health services. Service-connected disability is an injury or illness that either was incurred or aggravated by military service and affects employability or functioning. It is a known predictor of use of health services within the VA system (Rosenheck & Massari 1993) and is based on the proportion of the disability assigned by Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). Persons with more than 30 percent service-connected disability are entitled to maximum benefits, including veteran's retirement pay, disability severance pay, separation incentive payments, and increased amounts of VA compensation (Maciejewski et al. 2007).

The utilization of health services may be characterized in terms of the type, site, purpose, and time interval involved. The type of utilization refers to the kind of service received and who provided it: hospital, physician, dentist, pharmacist, and others (Andersen 1995). The site of the medical care encounter refers to the place where the care was received: physician's office, hospital outpatient department, emergency room, or other. The purpose of a visit distinguishes whether it was preventive–checkups and immunizations; illness-related–treatment of acute illnesses; or custodial care–nursing homes and homes for the aged.

Four measures of utilization for the current study were focused on outpatient services (type) provided in different sites such as primary care clinics, mental health clinics, specialty care clinics, and emergency departments. The health services utilization rates are measured by the frequency of visits within the study time frame and are the unit of analysis for use of health services. The final measure of utilization for this study was the outcome measure of evaluated health status reflected in physical and mental health diagnoses that veterans receive during their use of the health services.

Understanding the factors that influence utilization is helpful in identifying reasons for differences in utilization, consumer satisfaction, and outcomes, and for formulating

policies and programs that encourage appropriate utilization, discourage inappropriate utilization, and promote cost-effective care (Aday 1993). The knowledge gained from this study provided information that exerted influence in the structuring of services to be provided to women veterans within the Jackson VAMC as it moves forward in designing gender-specific comprehensive health services and clinic models.

Methods

The Institutional Review Board (IRB), the Research and Development Committee (R&DC), and the Associate Chief of Staff of Research for the G. V. (Sonny) Montgomery VAMC approved this study by expedited review. The study used a retrospective design involving the secondary analysis of data abstracted from computerized medical records of veterans who served in or in support of either OEF or OIF or both and were enrolled at the G. V. (Sonny) Montgomery Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) in Jackson, Mississippi, or one of its Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) located in Hattiesburg, Meridian, Greenville, Kosciusko, Natchez-Meadville, and Columbus between October 1, 2002, and September 31, 2008.

The Jackson VAMC and its CBOCs have a primary service area comprising the middle third of Mississippi (50 counties) and six parishes in Louisiana. Veterans who served in or in support of either OEF or OIF or both and that have also served in prior conflicts and may have accessed VA services prior to 2002 were excluded from the study population. Also excluded from the study were veterans who had accessed VA services but were subsequently killed in action or deceased for any other reason. Exclusion criteria were incorporated to allow analysis of data from veterans entering the system during a certain time and receiving services during the same period.

Data Collection

Data for this study were gathered from the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 16 Data Warehouse using

computerized records from four sources: the OEF and OIF Roster, the VHA Decision Support Services database (DSS), the Patient Care database, and the VHA Support Service Center database (VSSC). Data were abstracted from the VISN 16 Data warehouse by the computer analyst after approval of a data warehouse data user agreement. Data were abstracted for services received, and initially coded using the Social Security numbers of participants to allow for matching data from the different sources. Once data from sources were linked and combined, participants were assigned a 32-digit random identification number that prevented the identification of individuals directly or through identifiers.

Outpatient services data were obtained from clinical encounter data. DSS identifiers, also commonly known as stop codes, are nationally-directed standards that are used to identify workload by type or site of utilization for all outpatient encounters, inpatient appointments in outpatient clinics, and inpatient billable professional services. The identifiers are organized by the following categories listed in Table 1:

Table 1: DSS Identifier Categories

100-299	Ancillary and General Support Services
300-399	Medicine and Primary Care Services
400-449	Surgical Services
500-599	Mental Health Services
600-699	Various Special Programs
450-499 and 700-999	Other

Emergency room visits were identified by DSS identifier stop code 130. Primary care clinic visits were identified by stop codes 322 and 323. Mental health outpatient clinic visits were identified by codes 125 and 500-599. Specialty care clinic visits were identified by stop codes 200-299 for ancillary clinic visits such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, and pain clinic; 300-399 (with the exception of 322 and 323 referenced above) for specialty medicine clinics visits such as neurology clinic, cardiology clinic, and dermatology clinic; and 400-449 surgery clinic

visits. Telephone triage, stop code 103, and lab division, stop code 108, were not included in the analysis of outpatient encounters.

The VA computerized record includes the date of the visit, clinic type, and the associated diagnoses designated using the International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision Clinical Modification (ICD-9-CM) codes. ICD-9-CM codes associated with specific VHA outpatient encounters were used to categorize diagnoses from the date of the first encounter visit through the end of the study period, September 31, 2008. Study participants were classified as users if they had a minimum of one outpatient encounter visit since enrollment and nonusers if they had no outpatient encounter visits since enrollment. Total numbers of visits were calculated based on DSS identifier clinic stop codes (medicine and primary care clinic outpatient encounters, specialty care clinic outpatient encounters, emergency department encounters, surgery clinic outpatient encounters, ancillary clinic outpatient encounters, and mental health clinic outpatient encounters).

Variables

The variables analyzed for this study were:

Independent Variables

Gender—(male or female) is the primary predictor variable obtained from the medical record. Additional covariates include socio-demographic and military service related characteristics including:

- Age (as of the date of data extraction; calculated from the data of birth)
- Race (White, Hispanic, Black, Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaskan Native, unknown)
- Marital status (never married, married, divorced, separated, widowed, unknown)
- Service branch (Army, Marine Corps, Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard)
- Percent service-connected disability (Non-service connected, service connected less than 50%, service connected 50-100%).

Dependent Variables

The outcome variables consist of four measures of utilization in the various healthcare settings and the most prevalent diagnoses codes:

- Visits to primary care outpatient clinics
- Visits to mental health outpatient clinics
- Visits to specialty care outpatient clinics
- Visits to emergency departments (EDs)
- Physical and mental health diagnoses

Statistical Analysis

All data were coded and entered into a database using Microsoft Excel for Windows XP (Microsoft, Redmond, Wash.). Data were analyzed using SPSS 19 Statistical Standard Grad Pack Software (IBM Corporation, Armonk, New York). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the OEF and OIF study population in terms of sociodemographic variables and military characteristic variables such age, race, gender, percent service-connected disability, marital status, and branch of service. Data were reported as means with standard deviations, and frequencies, and percentages. Sociodemographic and military characteristic variables were compared with the four measures of health services utilization and gender using chi-square analysis test for categorical variables and T-test analysis for continuous measures to determine the association between independent and dependent variables. Significance level was set at $P<0.05$. Total overall frequencies for broad diagnostic groupings were calculated. The ten most common diagnoses were determined in females and in male veterans separately and their prevalence calculated. The top five combined broad diagnostic groupings were determined for the study sample.

Results

Of the total 7,390 OEF and OIF veterans enrolled at the G. V. (Sonny) Montgomery VAMC, 4,102 met the initial

screening criteria for study inclusion. Thirteen veterans (twelve males and one female) were excluded as a result of prior access to services before October 1, 2002. Nine veterans (all males) were excluded as a result of death with varying circumstances. A total of 4,080 veterans serve as the sample population, including 523 women veterans and 3,557 male veterans.

Objective 1: Demographics of the Sample Population

A complete summary of the analysis of demographic characteristics is presented in Table 2. The mean age of the

Table 2: Sociodemographic Variables for the Sample Population
(N=4080)

Sociodemographic Variables	Women (N=523)		Men (N=3557)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Age	36.26	9.1	39.58	10.6
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Race				
White	130	24.8%	1762	49.5%
Black	374	71.5%	1611	45.3%
Hispanic	11	2.1%	107	3.0%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	5	1.0%	46	1.3%
Asian or Pacific Islander	3	.6%	31	0.9%
Marital Status				
Married	140	26.8%	1911	53.7%
Divorced	93	17.8%	424	11.9%
Never Married	247	47.2%	950	26.7%
Widowed	5	1.0%	17	0.5%
Separated	36	6.8%	151	4.3%
Unknown	2	0.4%	104	2.9%
Service Branch				
Air Force	53	10.1%	238	6.7%
Army	421	80.5%	2742	77.1%
Coast Guard	0	0.0%	19	0.5%
Marines	6	1.2%	289	8.1%
Navy	43	8.2%	269	7.6%
Service Connected Disability				
Non-Service Connected	300	57.4%	1886	53.0%
Service Connected <50%	153	29.2%	1127	31.7%
Service Connected 50-100%	70	13.4%	544	15.3%

sample population was 39 + 10.84. The females comprise 12.8 percent of the sample population and had a mean age of 36.26 + 9.103, compared to a mean age of 39.58 + 10.61 for the male veterans. There were significant differences in the racial

distribution of veterans. The majority of female veterans was black (n=374) compared to a majority of white (n=1762) male veterans. The majority of the women veterans were never married (47.2%) compared with a majority of male veterans who are married (53.7%). There were similarities across genders in the distribution of the military characteristic of service-connected disability. The majority of male and female veterans were classified as non-service-connected (53% of the males and 57.4% of the females), and a lesser percentage of veterans were classified as less than 50 percent (31.7% males and 29.2% females) or 50-100 percent (15.3% males and 13.4% females). Branch of service analysis shows the majority of veterans enrolled had an Army affiliation (77.1% of males and 80.5% of females). No statistical differences were noted for service branch affiliation by gender.

Objective 2: Gender Differences in Health Services Use

Table 3 summarizes the analysis of health service utilization status by gender. Bivariate analysis showed a significant difference in utilization by gender, in that women were significantly more likely than men to have utilized services (p<0.01).

Table 3: Enrollment & Health Services Utilization Status by Gender

	Women	Men	P value
Users	46.4%	45.9%	P<0.01
Nonuser	53.6%	54.1%	P<0.001

During the study period, 45.9 percent or 1875 veterans in the study had at least one outpatient encounter visit at the VAMC or CBOCs. Despite enrollment, the majority or 54 percent (N=2205) of participants did not utilize any outpatient health services. Analysis also demonstrated that users of VA health services did not differ significantly by age (p=0.13) or service branch (p=0.25) from the nonusers of health services. Significant differences were observed between the two groups (users and nonuser) for marital status (p<0.01), race (p<0.000), and service-connected disability (p<0.001). Among the

enrolled veterans who utilized VA health services, more women utilized services than men (46.4% vs. 45.9%, p<0.01). Women users were more likely than men users to be younger (mean age 36.7 + 8.9 vs. 41.6 +11.2, p<0.001) and never married (50.3% vs. 20.3%, p<0.01). Men and women did not differ in their classifications for having service-connected disability (p=0.8). Table 4 summarizes the analysis of veterans utilizing services by gender.

Table 4: Sample Population Characteristics of Veterans Utilizing Care by Gender

Characteristics	Women N=242	Men N=1533	P value
Mean Age (S.D)	36.7 (8.9)	41.6 (11.2)	P<0.001
Race (%)			
White	22.7%	43.4%	P<0.01
Black	77.1%	52.6%	
Hispanic	0.04%	2.3%	
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	0.02%	1.1%	
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.6%	
Marital Status			P<0.01
Married	21.2%	58.8%	
Divorced	20.7%	14.8%	
Never Married	50.3%	20.3%	
Widowed	0.0%	0.1%	
Separated	7.7%	5.7%	
Unknown	0.1%	0.3%	
Service Connected Disability			P<0.8
Non-Service Connected	38.0%	36.2%	
Service Connected <50%	34.9%	36.1%	
Service Connected 50-100%	27.1%	27.6%	
Total Outpatient visits N=37227	4913	32314	
Mean (S.D)	10.8 (9.5)	9.5 (10.7)	P<0.001

Examination of encounter data reveals a total of 37,227 encounter visits among varying clinics over the six-year study period. The greatest numbers of visits by OEF and OIF veterans were to medicine and primary care clinics. Visits totaling 19,614 or 52.6 percent of all visits occurred in primary care settings. Women veterans had a significantly (p<0.001) higher usage of primary care clinic visits with 59 percent compared to 51.7 percent for male veterans. Emergency room visits were similar across the board, constituting 4.1 percent of

visits for women and 4.2 percent for men. Visits to mental health clinics (18.7%) and specialty care clinics (6.7%) were significantly higher for men than women (13% and 3.7% respectively). Women veterans had significantly higher usage of ancillary clinics and significantly lower use of surgery clinics. Table 5 provides a summary of encounter visits counts by clinic type based on gender.

Table 5: Encounter Clinic Visit Counts by Gender

Type of Service	Women	Men	Total	P- Value
Emergency Room	202	1355	1557	0.06
Primary Care & Medicine Clinics	2900	16714	19614	0.001
Mental Health Clinic	656	6038	6694	0.13
Specialty Care Clinics	180	2175	2355	0.21
Ancillary Clinics	502	2452	2954	0.01
Surgery Clinics	473	3580	4053	0.19
Total	4913	32314	37227	

Objective 3: Gender Differences in Physical and Mental Health Diagnoses

To describe gender differences in prevalence of medical conditions, cumulative frequency counts of all broad ICD-9 diagnoses categories were determined for veterans utilizing outpatient services. The top five combined broad diagnostic groupings were mental disorders, diseases of the circulatory system, diseases of the endocrine/ nutritional/ metabolic system, diseases of the musculoskeletal system/ connective tissue and diseases of the digestive system. The most common conditions diagnosed in the sample population fall in the top broad diagnostic grouping of mental disorders. Table 6 summarizes the frequency counts of conditions in the top five combined broad diagnostic groupings by gender, and Table 7 summarizes the finding of all diagnostic categories by gender.

**Table 6: Top Five Broad Diagnostic Categories**

	Women	Men
Mental Disorders	1360	5875
Diseases of the Circulatory System	482	2274
Diseases of the Endocrine/ Nutrition/ Metabolic System	576	1961
Diseases of the Musculoskeletal System/ Connective Tissue	273	2118
Diseases of the Digestive System	196	1409

Table 7: Broad Diagnostic Category by Gender

Diagnostic Category		Frequency	Women %	Men %
Infectious and Parasitic Diseases	001-193	440	14.5	85.5
Malignant Neoplasm	140-208	117	29.9	70.1
Benign Neoplasm	210-239	117	17.1	82.9
Diseases of Endocrine/Nutritional/Metabolic System	240-279	2537	22.7	77.3
Diseases of Blood/Blood Forming Organs	280-289	172	19.8	80.2
Mental Disorders	290-319	7235	18.8	81.2
Diseases of the Nervous System	320-359	578	22.0	78.0
Diseases of the Eye and Adnexa	360-379	371	12.1	87.9
Diseases of Ear and Mastoid Process	380-389	562	7.3	92.7
Diseases of Circulatory System	390-459	2756	17.5	82.5
Diseases of Respiratory System	460-519	586	17.3	82.7
Diseases of Digestive System	520-579	1605	12.2	87.8
Diseases of Genitourinary System	580-629	619	20.5	79.5
Pregnancy/Childbirth/The Puerperium/Conditions originating in the perinatal period	630-679	52	100	0.0
Diseases of the Skin	680-709	1091	11.5	88.5
Diseases of the Musculoskeletal System/ Connective Tissue	710-739	2391	11.4	88.6
Symptoms, Signs & Ill Defined Conditions	780-799	881	8.9	91.1
Injury/Poisonings	800-999	147	13.4	86.6

Identification of the ten most common conditions in female and male veterans was determined and their prevalence calculated. The most common conditions in order of frequency for women veterans were obesity (278.0), depression (311.0), headaches (784.0), hypertension (401.9), anxiety (300.0), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (309.81), lumbago (724.2), hyperlipidemia (272.2), type II diabetes (250.0), and gastroesophageal reflux (GERD) (530.81). The most common conditions in order of frequency for male veterans were hypertension (401.9), obesity (278.0), hyperlipidemia (272.2), PTSD (309.81), depression (311.0), lumbago (724.2), anxiety (300.0), leg pain (719.46), adjustment disorder (309.28), and GERD (530.81). With the exception of adjustment disorder, leg pain, headaches, and Type II diabetes, the same eight conditions (depression, anxiety, hypertension, obesity, esophageal reflux, PTSD, lumbago and hyperlipidemia) earn a

ranking on the top ten lists by gender. Figure 1 shows a graph of the most common conditions by gender.
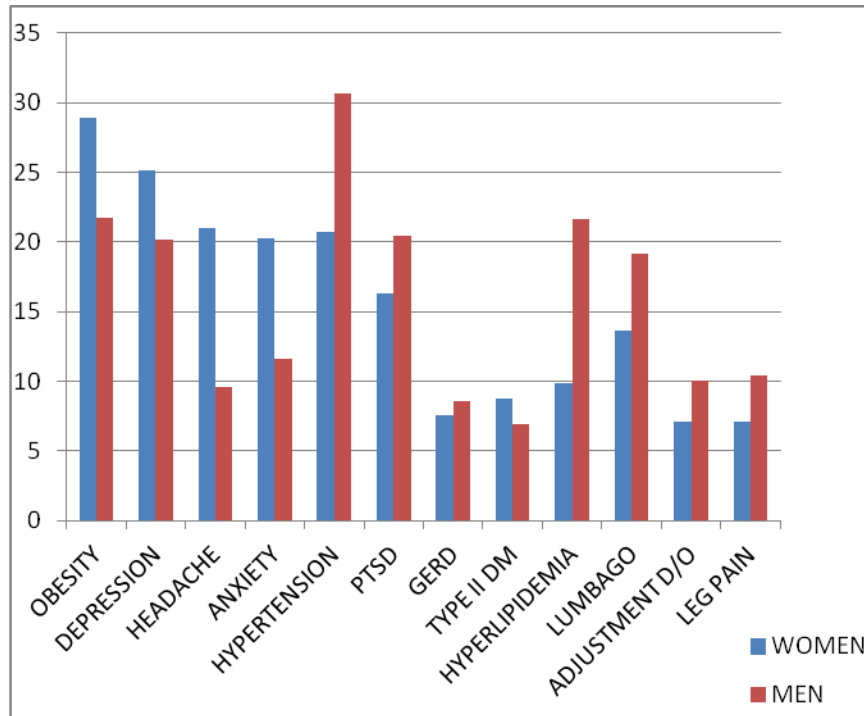
Figure 1: Clinical Diagnoses Prevalence by Gender

Discussion

Findings indicate that female OEF and OIF veterans were younger than their male counterparts and were more likely to belong to a minority group, were never married, and served in the Army. The older, white, male segment of the study sample was most likely married, having served in the Army or Marines. Distribution of service-connected disability showed categorical similarities across gender.

Utilization data indicates that the majority of OEF and OIF veterans (54%) that enrolled in the Jackson VA did not utilize any health services. The users of health services were significantly more likely to be younger, black women that were never married, and older, black, married males. The findings also confirmed that veterans with service-connected disability

(regardless of gender) were more likely to be users than non-users of health services.

To increase utilization of services, extensive outreach efforts have been developed by the VA and the Department of Defense to inform OEF and OIF veterans of their benefits. The efforts include mandatory Yellow Ribbon programs for National Guardsmen and Reservists and the mailing of personal letters from the VA Secretary to Veterans for active duty soldiers when they separate from active duty and become eligible for VA benefits.

Recent studies in Connecticut by researchers Duggal et al. (2010) and Haskell et al. (2010) revealed consistent findings of younger, single, African American OEF and OIF women veterans utilizing services at the VA. Current study findings reveal high utilization by OEF and OIF women veterans (46%), which is a substantial increase to the 15 percent average utilization by earlier eras of women (U. S. General Accounting Office 1992). Some studies of the utilization of VA health services by women have suggested that, although health services utilization has been increasing, women's rates are still lower than men's (Romeis et al. 1998; Weiss & Ashton 1994). Findings from a study by Washington (2006) report that among VA users, 51 percent of women veterans split healthcare across VA and non-VA healthcare systems, in contrast to 43 percent of male veterans VA users.

Among veteran users of health services, women had a significant difference ($p<0.001$) in number of visits with a mean of 10.8 visits compared to 9.5 among males. National data reports state that among VA users, 45.6 percent of OEF and OIF women veterans made 2-10 visits and 38.5 percent made 11 visits or more since 2002 (VA Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards 2010). Women veterans had significant higher rates of outpatient utilization than men, specifically medicine and primary care clinic visits ($p<0.001$) and ancillary clinic services ($p<0.01$). Contrary to previous reports, men had higher utilization rates of mental health clinic visits. They also had higher utilization of specialty care clinic visits. Emergency room use rates were comparable among both groups.

The lower rates of utilization of specialty care and surgery clinic services by women are largely impacted by the absence of electronic encounter information including diagnosis codes and number of visits for women veterans who are referred into the community for gender-specific care and other fee services. The limited tracking of fee services is of particular importance for the female segment of the population, as comprehensive women health services are not available through the Jackson VAMC. Additional analysis on the types of services utilized over time and the factors influencing utilization and satisfaction are required to better achieve new and comprehensive information to guide and direct policy decision and recommendations.

Among nationally sampled OEF and OIF veterans, mental health is the second largest broad diagnostic category of illnesses treated at the VA, preceded only by orthopedic conditions and injuries (Zoroya 2007). Among OEF and OIF veterans sampled from enrollees at a central Mississippi VAMC, mental health is the top diagnostic category for diagnoses, with orthopedic or musculo-skeletal conditions ranking fourth. Formal epidemiological studies are required to answer specific questions about overall heath and conditions of OEF and OIF veterans.

Consistent with findings from previous studies, higher rates of musculoskeletal and connective tissue conditions such as lumbago and leg pain were noted. Other researchers have described higher rates of back and joint problems and other musculoskeletal conditions such as limb pain, myalgia, and muscle spasm (Stuart et al. 2002; Hoff & Rosenheck 1998; Duggal et al. 2010; Haskell et al. 2011) and have suggested the new impact of combat exposure (Haskell et al. 2011) and use of heavy body armor initially designed for men (Harper et al. 2007) may predispose women to musculoskeletal injury. Further research is needed to specifically examine and describe the prevalence of musculoskeletal conditions in females and define the etiologies.

Higher rates of mental conditions such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, and adjustment disorder were noted for the current study; however, women had lower utilization of mental

health clinics compared to men. Depression, one of several health conditions that may occur differently in women than in men and lead to gender-related differences in management, has been shown in most studies on mental health problems in OEF and OIF veterans to have higher rates among women (Seal et al. 2009).

PTSD, one of the more common conditions among the OEF and OIF sample population at the Jackson VAMC, has been examined in a number of studies and found to have small or non-significant differences by gender (Medical Surveillance Monthly Report 2007; Kang 2008; LaPierre et al. 2007). Greater recognition of the increasing rates of sexual harassment and assault among women veterans has led to the expansion of screening and management programs for depression, PTSD, and military sexual trauma. Further research is needed to fully understand the role of gender in the development of deployment-related mental conditions.

Current study findings of higher rates of mental conditions with lower utilization of mental health clinics might suggest management of the conditions within the confines of primary care clinics where utilization of services was higher for women veterans than men, or signify barriers to utilization as a result of inconvenient access with mental health care separate from primary care. Researchers Leaf et al. (1998) found that women are more likely to seek care from their general medical practitioner or primary provider for mental or emotional needs and that they are no more likely to seek care from a mental health specialist. Integration of mental health services into primary care clinic areas may help to facilitate management of mental conditions while preventing underutilization of important services, reducing stigmas associated with use, and decreasing barriers to care.

Several factors associated with stigma and barriers to care have been analyzed in the current study and several other studies and found to be of significance. They include demographic factors such as young age, male gender, and white race (Bonin et al. 2007; McCarthy et al. 2007; Kuehn 2006) and psychiatric conditions, such as PTSD, depression, anxiety, and alcohol use problems (Gillock et al. 2004; Hoge et al.

2004). Service branch and service type may also be associated with barriers to care (Vogt et al. 2008). Protective factors such as marriage (McCarthy et al. 2007) and social support (Bonin et al. 2007) may help to counteract these influences, decrease barriers to care, and promote utilization of mental health services.

New findings not reported in previous studies of OEF and OIF veterans were the higher rates of endocrine, nutritional, and metabolic conditions such as obesity, hyperlipidemia, and type II diabetes; circulatory conditions such as hypertension; and digestive conditions such as GERD. The findings highlight a triad of conditions (obesity, diabetes, and hypertension) with comorbidity (GERD) that are most prevalent in the South (U. S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention 2009), particularly states like Mississippi and Louisiana, two of the eight states located in the South Central VA Healthcare Network, which has the largest geographic distribution of veterans among the 23 VISNs in the U. S. (VA Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards 2010).

Within the general veteran population, diabetes and obesity are more prevalent in older age groups from earlier eras of service and are not consistent with the young age of the sample population and their recent military discharge (Hedley et al. 2004). To address the growing problem of obesity, in 2004 the VA introduced the Managing Overweight and Obesity for Veterans Everywhere (MOVE) program. Though the program has been successful in the VA, the VA must continue to adapt this program to meet the needs of younger veterans. Given that previous studies have found an association between PTSD and obesity (Vieweg et al. 2007), the VA must continue to adapt its programs for PTSD and other risk factors for obesity among OEF and OIF veterans.

Mississippi, considered one of the Deep South states, is one of the more rural states in the country with 69 of 82 counties classified as rural (Mississippi State Department of Health 2010). Several studies have documented the relationship between place of residence, health conditions, and health services utilization. Studies (Ghelfi & Parker 1997; Zuckerman et al. 1999) indicate that living in the South and in rural areas

predisposes individuals to less than optimal health. In Mississippi, people in rural areas were significantly more likely than urban residents to be in fair or poor health and uninsured and significantly less likely than urban residents to visit a health care provider or be confident they could get needed care (Ormond et al. 2000).

Although this study offers only a brief snapshot of the health profile of veterans in the South, in-depth studies should be undertaken to examine prevalence, risk factors, and outcomes of conditions that could have the influence of region.

Limitations and Strengths

This study has several limitations, and most notable is the use of secondary data analysis. First, the findings cannot be generalized to all veterans or all of those who have served in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. Only access to data from veterans who had enrolled in VA care is available. It is possible that the veterans who enroll and use VA services differ in many ways from those who enroll and do not use services, as well as those who never enroll. Currently, there is no systematic or accessible system that tracks the health needs of veterans not utilizing VA services; therefore, analysis of VA data remains the best and, at present, only method to estimate the health needs of veterans.

Another limitation of the study is the small number of women included in the study. Utilization data at the Jackson VAMC were combined with those at the CBOCs to increase the sample size of females. This site effect may have altered the findings, as enrollment and utilization rates may differ between the VAMC located in what is considered to be an urban area and the CBOCs that are located in areas to serve rural communities. Recent studies have shown differences in the overall characteristics of veterans utilizing CBOCs and VAMCs (Maciejewski et al. 2007). A larger representative sample of OEF and OIF veterans utilizing other VA facilities within VISN 16 with a comparison by urban versus rural location is therefore indicated to better explore gender differences in healthcare utilization while accounting for the

influence of region. Furthermore, estimates of the prevalence of physical and mental health problems among these veterans overall may be biased, because certain health conditions may cause barriers to care (Hoge 2004), and others may increase or decrease the likelihood of a veteran seeking care (Vogt et al. 2005). Another related influence on this limitation is that reliance on ICD-9-CM codes from VA administrative databases may be subject to misclassification or clerical error, and subject to physician and patient reporting bias. The clinical diagnoses were not independently verified and were subject to the inaccuracy intrinsic in clinical diagnoses and lack of distinction between pre- and post-deployment condition. Nonetheless, the data are most appropriate for healthcare planning purposes because ICD-9 administrative data accurately reflect the need for healthcare resources (Frayne et al. 2007) and because the clinical diagnoses partially dictate the treatment plan, inaccurate diagnoses would not be expected to bias the analysis of utilization rates (Pietrzak et al. 2009).

The final limitation of the study is that the electronic encounter information for women veterans who are referred into the community for gender-specific care and other fee services is not available. Most gynecological and all obstetric and mammography services, including surgical services, are fee services, and documentation from the private providers was not included in VA databases. Absence of electronic encounter information for gender-specific data highlights a major pitfall for describing and understanding the general, gynecological, and reproductive health needs of women veterans.

The Jackson VAMC's current model of primary care delivery results in women veterans' being scheduled to see two or more providers, possibly at two or more sites, in order to receive routine care, but no system exists that tracks the continuity or degree of linkage and coordination of medical services associated with a particular illness experience or episode. Comprehensive clinics to serve the needs of young, working women that offer access, flexibility of hours, and use of technology while also offering services that address sexual health and family planning are essential if the VA intends to meet the needs of women veteran health services users.

While women have high disease burden and high utilization of VA services, they receive the most fragmented care, according to the Report of the Under Secretary for Health Workgroup (2008). With no tracking system in place to monitor referred or fee-basis visits which are a large portion of women veterans' health services, a precise description of utilization trends and consumption of services cannot be completed. Comprehensive care offered in one clinic will allow equal access to all encounter data and permit comprehensive descriptions of health services utilization among women veterans. Current fragmentation not only raises challenges to the continuity of care, but it also reflects inefficiency and proves costly for the VA system. This in turn creates new access barriers for women veterans and impacts overall utilization and quality of care delivered.

The main strengths of this study are the use of a complete data set of information on selected independent predictors (age, gender, race, marital status, and service-connected disability) of health services utilization for VHA enrollees, as well as a sufficient number of women and men to allow for meaningful analyses and comparisons.

Conclusions and Implications

Rates of VA health care utilization by OEF and OIF veterans may be influenced by combat veteran enhanced access to VA enrollment, a national policy that extended services from two years to five years post discharge, and exemption from co-pay charges for any health problem possibly related to their military service. Traditionally, women veterans have underutilized VA health care; however, this study's results offer a contrast from previous trends and highlight the complexity of women veterans' health care and support the establishment of comprehensive women's health clinic and services within the Jackson VAMC.

Utilization data indicate that current models of care delivery present barriers to women veterans with chronic illness care needs using VA. Knowledge gaps need to be addressed through the dissemination of accurate information about VA

eligibility and availability of women's health services. Future research should be directed toward identifying determinants of fragmentation of care and unmet healthcare needs for women with different levels of physical and mental health disease burden and their combined impact on utilization.

In-house comprehensive health services offering primary care, gynecological care, mental health care, and social support services, all under one roof, will decrease fragmented care by ensuring that VA providers offer gender-specific care and coordinating care that is currently provided outside the VA. The new clinic models should create and provide both efficiency and cost savings. With the increase in the number of OEF and OIF veterans using VA health care, understanding gender differences in their utilization of health services should help policy leaders and decision-makers provide better health care to both men and women.

Gender does appear to affect outpatient utilization of health services at the VA among women. This study provides the first detailed look at the burden of illness and utilization trends of this unique population of veterans at a central Mississippi Veterans Affairs Medical Center and provides a baseline for further comprehensive, longitudinal studies. Knowledge of the prevalence of physical and mental health problems in female veterans is essential for the VHA as it plans for the predicted increase in the female veteran population in the next few years.

The implications of the greater understanding of gender differences is important because men and women veterans differ substantially in terms of the socio-demographic characteristics that influence health and health services utilization (Frayne et al. 2006; Skinner et al. 1999) and because care models based on men translate poorly to women (U. S. General Accounting Office 1992). In order to understand and treat the health effects of military service and of combat exposure, the VA must first have a comprehensive description of differences in health services utilization among its fastest growing segment of current and future consumers. Further research is needed to understand why certain women may be utilizing services while others may be underutilizing VA

(outpatient mental health) services. Once women veterans are enrolled and utilizing health services in the VA system, the services, environment, and process of care must be receptive to their needs and preferences if women veterans are to choose, continue, and endorse VA care.

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RESEARCH LITERACY AND SCIENCE IN THE LIBERAL ARTS

by

Joseph Martin Stevenson[*]
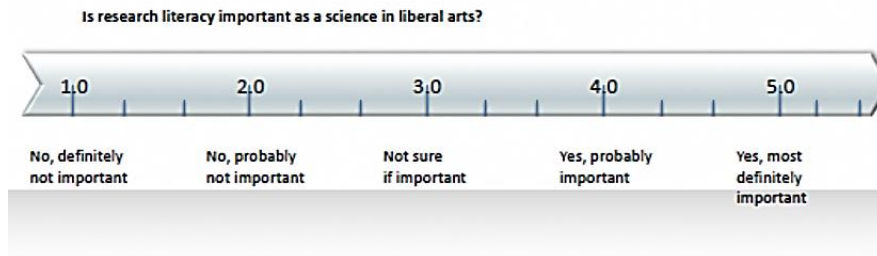
First: Evidence and Epistemological Exercise

In today's society where and when revelations of life have become increasingly "evidence"-based, students must graduate from college with the academic acumen, an epistemological orientation, and the intellectual prowess to employ data-driven analysis and research-centered assessment of everyday living sparked by human intrigue and ignited through the windows of cognitive wonderment. This essay briefly highlights six elements and interrelated components to consider for stimulating intellectual growth toward "research literacy." This literacy can emerge from either the pre-decision or post-decision process of anticipated—as well as unanticipated—problems, concerns, challenges, or other areas

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of human inquiry. Today's students should be well versed in primary and fundamental research methodology. They need not be masters of the language at the doctoral level but gradually acquainted with the lexicon in preparation for potential advanced graduate work and for the global workplace where there are accelerating demands for international relevance and intensifying needs for local responses through action-oriented research within the community.

Every student is the sum of his or her own personal, academic, and professional experiences. One of those educational experiences in college life is the acquisition of research literacy. The research literacy levels should begin with understanding some of the basic *scientific* principles of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This literacy level should increase over time and begin with a grasp of a lexicon that is used to describe the search. As students' awareness is increased, so too are their vocabulary and their grasp of learning, but research literacy must be real to their lives, relevant to their interactions in life, with both the complementary and interdependent theory in practice or application.

Undergraduate students should be at least conversationally proficient as they grow throughout the college development years. The genesis for data-driven decision-making is rooted in ideas, inquiries, and intrigue from questions that surface in college life–in and out of the classroom, inside the mind and outside the body, locally and globally. A decision from the mind then becomes a laboratory for learning. Understanding data and their meaning is critical: recognizing that in qualitative research, data are presented through words, while numbers often describe quantitative research. How students use these methodologies is a creative exercise for the mind. Indeed, this is a creative journey for college students as they also develop much-needed skills in leadership. A recent IBM survey of 1500 CEOs identified creativity as the number one leadership competence, at a time when some research has suggested that American creativity has declined (Bronson & Merryman 2010). The result of knowledge management and information discernment is infinite research literacy as an art,

science, and technical competence for lifelong journeys that transcend all domains in personal, academic, and professional development and the intellectual dimensions of the human experience.

Second: Literacy, Logic, and Liberal Arts

The individual and institutional process for engaging, developing, and empowering young scholars as researchers is embryonic and should develop throughout the undergraduate experience in the liberal arts as well as the sciences. Although some examples are given in this essay, students and faculty are encouraged to craft their own conceptual frameworks for developing a campus-wide agenda for research literacy. Graduate education should provide the capstone opportunities for students to build on their past in a manner that should be cyclical to support lifelong learning of research literacy. This process should be implemented through a developmental cyclical, a continuum for competent skill ability, a taxonomy for the developmental stages, and a cyclical framework or logic model with academic learning loops across and around the sciences and the liberal arts. The process must be led by faculty with inherent and sustained components for intellectual fluidity and programmatic flexibility. As recognized by George F. Will, liberal arts "connotes a certain elevation above utilitarian concerns, yet liberal education is intensely useful" (qtd. in "Liberal Arts"). As new research suggestions surface, paradigms for structural and scientific revolutions must change and oscillate for research literacy in the undergraduate curriculum constructs (Kuhn 1970).

For purposes of this essay, research literacy is defined as the trained ability to apply scientific research methodologies that can range from qualitative applications to quantitative treatments of investigation and inquiry. Gillian Beer at Cambridge University, several years ago, suggested that

> scientific work always generates more ideas
> and raises more questions than can be answered
> solely within the terms of scientific inquiry. It
> suggests questions about chance, about the

future, about splicing and mixing, about our bodies and minds, about scale in relation to the human: the very large and the very small, the near and the far, the visible and the invisible. (Beer 2005, p. 37)

Undergraduate learning and literacy education is the sum of all experiences from entering higher learning to exiting with learned abilities, attitudes, disposition, skills, and competencies for life– personally, academically, and professionally. The first two years of the undergraduate experience should provide the foundation of a continuum for literacy competence. The second two years of the undergraduate experience should build from the progress and persistence of the first two years, as well as propel undergraduates to graduate study. According to *Brittanica*, the application of liberal arts is rooted in practices from the middle ages (*trivium* and *quadrivium*) and is conceptualized within the context of writing, rhetoric, logic, philosophy, areas of mathematics, and music with a modality mix of genre ("Liberal Arts"). During the Roman and medieval times, this type of education was described as *enkuklios paideia* ("Liberal Arts History").

Figure 1.0: 2 + 2 + 2 + Developmental Cycle
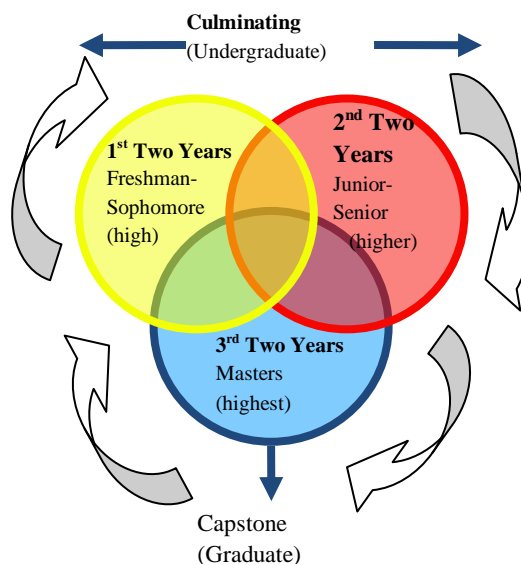
Figure 1.0 denotes a two-plus-two-plus-two graphic of the embryonic cyclical for developing young scholars as researchers. It suggests that these matriculating years move from lower levels to higher levels of research literacy.

Third: Constants, Critical Thinking, and Curriculum

Most current liberal arts programs of study embody a diversity of varying disciplines and international perspectives in addition to an examination of different cultures to enhance the students' capacity for critical thinking in regard to research literacy. Subjects of inquiry and investigation conventionally include topics in literature, language, history, philosophy, and science. This type of curriculum usually spreads across a general education framework on the modern university campus; however, critical thinking *without* the knowledge and acquisition to conduct research competence is incomplete. Research literacy should be threaded throughout the college curriculum in the sciences, the arts, and the professions. Research should be the constant and common denominator in today's undergraduate curriculum, and the undergirding disciplinary theme should be critical thinking with research methodology as a foundation for loop learning. This epistemological elevation can be nurtured and navigated from the arts to anthropology, economics or environmental studies to English, music to mathematics, theater to technology, and sociology to other social and behavioral sciences like politics, psychology, geography, history, and areas in humanities. Students and faculty should also employ the concepts of "generative learning," in this regard defined as value-driven learning that seeks what is alive, compelling, and energizing and that facilitates the thought processes to see radical possibilities beyond the boundaries of current thinking (Allee 2003).

Research, of course, begins with a question or hypothesis to address the perplexities and complexities in our biological and physical world. A balanced liberal arts experience has a depth of cultural understanding and a breadth of ethical dimensions that engage students in making choices
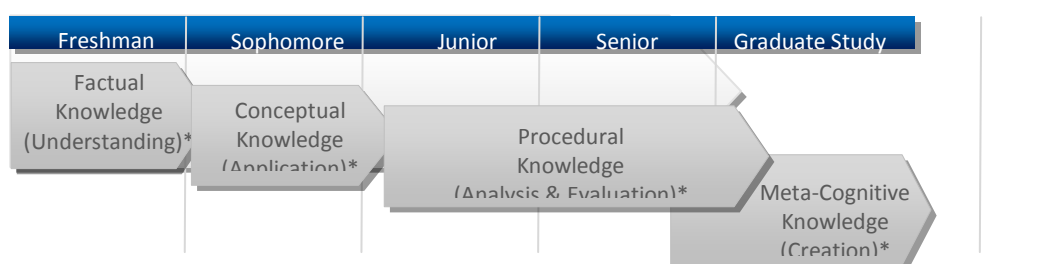
and choosing alternatives from data, information, and knowledge. Michael Grady, with St. Louis University, suggests that carefully designed research projects should follow the following pattern of questions. These questions can be posed to freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior, and graduate-level students if strategically infused with horizontal and vertical symmetries and synergies within the curriculum. The questions include:

- What is the research question?
- In what manner will data be collected?
- From whom will data be collected?
- What is the project timeline?
- What quality criteria are applicable? (Grady, p. 13)

The Association of American Colleges and Council for Graduate Schools stated more than three decades ago that "competence in the trade of research is the essential foundation for any superior achievement" (*Graduate Preparation of Scientists* 14). This compelling argument remains today and will continue in the future. A recommended continuum for developing research literacy from the freshman to the graduate levels is displayed in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Literary Continuum of Competence

Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Graduate Study
Factual Knowledge (Understanding)*	Conceptual Knowledge (Application)*	Procedural Knowledge (Analysis & Evaluation)*		Meta-Cognitive Knowledge (Creation)*

*Source: *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching and Assessing* (2001) by Anderson, Kratuwohl, Airasian, Cruikshenk, Mayer, Pintrich, Ratus, and Wittrock.

Fourth: Critical Examination, Process, and Evaluation

Each year should be parallel with an element of taxonomy that grows from fundamental factual and conceptual knowledge about research in the freshman and sophomore years and procedural knowledge about research in the junior and senior years. The manifestation of understanding, applying, analyzing, and evaluating research should result in meta-cognitive competency for new knowledge creation at the graduate level or wherever students find themselves after graduation from baccalaureate degrees. Faculty should, in the spirit of shared governance, meet continually as a *community of practice* to determine where the tenets of critical thinking should be integrated in this continuum. Among the evoked tenets that might be considered are the following:

- Examine cause-effect relationships
- Differentiate among fact, opinion, conjecture, and fiction
- Determine originality or author-artistic bias
- Contrast, contradict, blend, and compare divergent points of view
- Recognize logical fallacies and faulty reasoning
- Synthesize and integrate varying knowledge bases
- Apply qualitative decision-making for diagnosis or prognosis
- Apply quantitative decision-making for diagnosis or prognosis
- Define measurable strategies, objectives, and beacons for positive progress
- Create alternative frameworks for new "stretch" thinking (Stevenson et al. 2008).

These tenets should be conceptualized based on faculty prerogative, vision, and uniqueness to the discipline, but research literacy should remain central to both the continuity and continuum of modern curriculum planning.

Students should pose research questions that empower them to understand cause-and-effect relationships, to differentiate between facts and fiction, and to either verify or

validate data. Many students think in the present and use language that is absent of solid critical thinking and logical decision-making. Some students read material from written, on-line and other visual sources without determining bias and the basis for original thought. Richard Paul and Linda Elder with the Foundation for Critical Thinking provide an excellent template for raising intellectual standards and fostering critical thinking. They conceptualize this process in the areas of clarity, accuracy, precision, fairness, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, and significance. We must facilitate the development of critical thinking by helping students to compare different points of view and recognize faulty reasoning and illogical manifestations from the world that they experience.

Figure 2.0: P+A+P Developmental Taxonomy
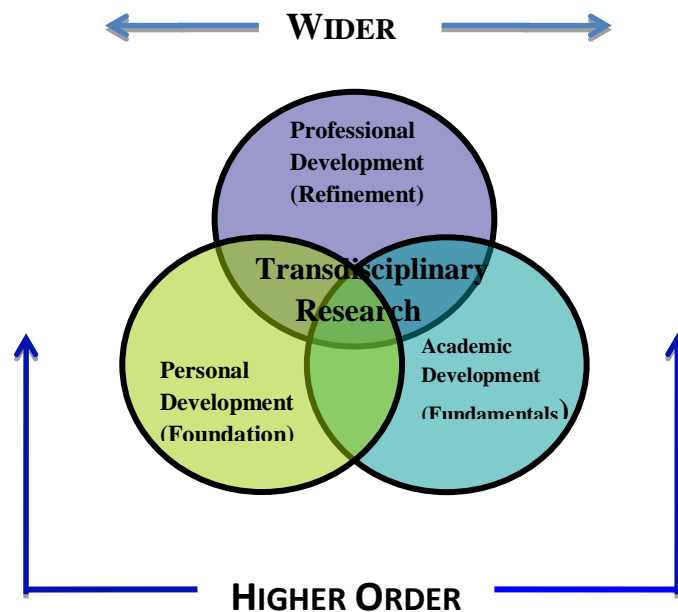
Research literacy can not only help students with discerning, synthesizing, and integrating knowledge but also equip them with a diagnostic decision-making process from the application of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The

results of these new skills are to compel students to think before they talk, research before they respond, and assemble information and data before they assess the world around them. As suggested in an earlier essay, "From Founding Purpose to Future Positioning,"

> we must engage our faculty, students and others [who are] in our learning community of practice in all dimensions of scholarly research: analysis, inquiry, investigation, fact-finding, probing, theorizing, examination, innovation, experimentation, and exploration. We need new pioneers in a new frontier . . . . Moreover, scholarly and scientific research in these complex *modern* and contemporary times will empower us to understand the ironies, the mysteries, the contradictions, and the hypocrisies of life as we experience them, and empower us with the skill sets, behaviors, attitudes, dispositions, knowledge, and modern appurtenances to embrace the marvel, the mystery, and the magnificence of modern higher learning. (Stevenson 2008)

The process for conceptualizing the three basic fundamental and developmental stages of student life is exhibited in Figure 2.0.

Fifth: Design, Development, and Learning Loops

Students in the first two years should conduct research about their own personal development as the first foundation. This should include self-reflection and analysis of one's own strengths and weaknesses against potential and propensity for change. Students in this stage should examine their preferences, the possibilities that surround them, and the probabilities of their success or failure if changed behavior does not occur. In the absence of research literacy infrastructure in high school, higher education must take on this remedial role. The second developmental stage should

encompass the fundamental analysis of student academic performance and productivity in the discipline, while the third and final stage should involve the refinement of one's professional development. Professional development of research literacy should occur in the upper division and graduate periods of academic life, while personal and academic development should occur in the first two years and second two years, respectively, in the undergraduate experience. This, too, is a cyclical process with higher order skill development experience in the first four years and wider order experience manifested in the fifth and sixth years as students matriculate to the graduate level.

In organizing a college curriculum and crafting a research literacy agenda on a college campus, the transdisciplinary thematic and threaded tenets for research should be embodied in the curriculum that spans across the arts, the sciences, and the professions. Again, determining the conceptual framework for creating academic loops in this regard will require extensive discussion and elaborate discourse by the faculty in collaboration with their students. As suggested in Figure 3.0, research is conventionally constant and common as a teaching mechanism among faculty in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. When research is approached and addressed in the arts, based on this author's thirty years of observation, it is usually episodic and relational to a particular or specific artistic or literary question. However, when research is engaged in the professions, it is typically frequent and specific to a professional, career, or technical domain.

Figure 3.0

A+S+P Academic Loops
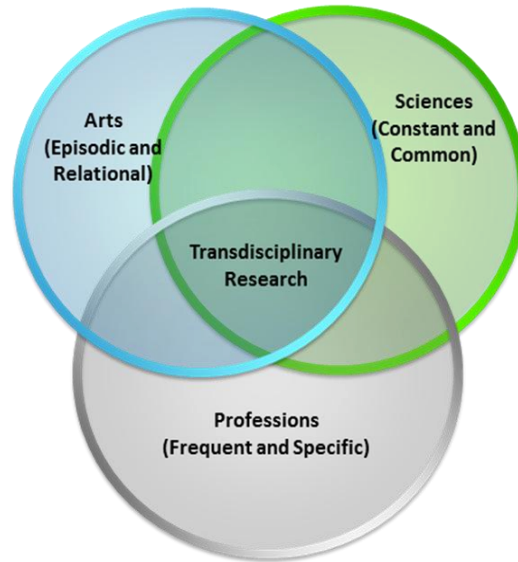
To reiterate, research within a transdisciplinary curriculum, that stretches between left brain and right brain cognition, should be constant and common across the entire curriculum—the arts, the sciences and the professions—such that all students may enter the institution with little knowledge about how to conduct research, but will exit the institution with a competency level of research literacy that will serve as a lifelong learning technique and decision-making tool. As suggested by T. S. Eliot, to be educated is to "understand what it is to be awake, to be living on several planes at once" (Eliot vii). This tool can be applied at home, in the work place, in graduate school, in community service, and with family and friends when questions concerning life need to be addressed or resolved with data-driven resolution. At the center of these deliberations, should be the use of the umbrella term "complexity theory," which refers to the "interdisciplinary exploration of a set of theories from different fields, all of which share focus on complex adaptive systems and evolutions" (Allee 2002). It should be noted that "spirited discussion, discourse, deliberation, and decisiveness versus unyielding disagreement and divisiveness is the fundamental interactive process for building an

entrepreneurially spirited and creatively charged campus" (Stevenson 2004). The process of "exchange analysis" should be implemented in this endeavor, as defined as "an assessment of overall patterns and system dynamics of value exchange, to determine whether the value-creating system is healthy, sustainable, and expanding" (Stevenson 2004). The basis for this essay and the premises of its suggestion encourage *research literacy* in the liberal arts as a *science*. What follows are some examples that can be considered on the college campus. All of these suggested prototypes should begin with a research question and an initial review of literature in the subject matter posed by the research in question.

Sixth: Collaboration, Pedagogies, and Synergies

Collaborative research–historical, experimental, or comparative–should be encouraged in the undergraduate experience by faculty who lead discussions about the creative journey of research literacy. Service learning can be a major component for collaboration between faculty and students. Particularly as both the world within the academy and the society that surrounds the academy become intensely more blended among the disciplines, collaborative research can be revealing, rewarding, and reflective. Some examples:

- Art students might collaborate with anthropology students on collecting Native American images to determine the varying cultural interpretations. Students could assemble these images and ask members of a Native American community to assess the different meanings as related to their lives and their community.

- Students could conduct focus groups in this community and later administer a survey to validate the gathered data about the different interpretations.

- Communication students could collaborate with others who are studying sociology to analyze different case studies about the portrayal of different cultural groups

in the media. Students could study these case studies from the internet or print journalism. Each case study should be examined for common and contrasting points of view. Students might also select particular televised broadcasts to examine images, perceptions, and portrayals of different people. These students could develop their own case studies for future students to study in the disciplines.

- Criminal Justice students might analyze case studies about high-risk youth and then survey local high-risk youth to determine if the determinants of behavior are dissimilar or the same.

- Nursing students could conduct interviews with teenaged mothers to determine if their lifestyle and eating habits either contrast or are in concert with revelations from literature reviews. A follow-up survey to verify the data from the interviews could be formulated to continue the investigation. Students who study public health and social work should be involved, too.

- Economics students might conduct focus groups with or surveys of targeted populations to determine patterns of consumer behavior, perhaps comparing global markets to local markets. Other economics students might collaborate with history majors to trace the history of economic thought from medieval civilization to modern times. The result of this historical examination might be used to compare the application of economics in urban settings with marginalized populations.

- Literature, linguistics, and language students might study areas of Greek mythology and conduct focus groups with people from the Mississippi Delta or Appalachian culture to determine contemporary relevance.

- Other students in English could assemble different case studies of poetry and survey non-English majors to

determine the extent to which they embrace the art and interpretation of poetry. Philosophy students and others who study in the humanities could create case studies based on the comparison of readings from the "Black books" and the "classics." Their findings might be examined and captured for developing hip-hop genre with music majors. Students who are studying humanities might compare Russian literature to Japanese literature and translate different cultural meanings. These meanings could be incorporated in a survey (Likert) for other students to complete to determine their appreciation of the comparisons.

- Geography majors might study the human elements behind the devastation of Hurricane Katrina by conducting on-site surveys and making follow-up observations concerning human experiences. Geographic information systems (GIS) could also provide data from a helicopter point of view to examine different patterns within the regions of devastation. The examination of climatic variations could be completed to enhance data revelations.

- Students who study mathematics could collaborate with political science majors to conduct surveys or focus groups about mathematical relevance as perceived by middle school students in rural settings.

- Psychology students might join in this collaborative to determine the extent to which self-concept is linked to academic performance in mathematics.

- Theater students might develop productions based on an analysis of case studies from families who experienced agricultural life at the turn of the century. Aging farmers could provide short stories about their experiences, and these experiences could be crafted into the design and development of theatrical productions.

These are just a few examples for the utilization of focus groups, surveys, interviews, observations, and other

instruments that can be used to collect data for further analysis and in-depth examination. Certainly students are not expected to master all of the domains and dimensions of qualitative and quantitative research, but they should apply these methodologies and compare their treatments during research inquiry. An excellent resource for collaborative research is offered by Richard Sagor for the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (Sagor 1993).

Conclusion

Faculty must lead all of these research endeavors with their students to secure and sustain the appropriate guidelines for human subject research. Here, too, students should be involved in this process to learn about the ethical and legal dimensions of conducting research. As mentioned by Michael P. Grady, the dimension of quantitative research is embedded in a purpose for prediction and control or cause and effect, while the purpose of qualitative research is to understand, describe, or interpret behavior. Quantitative research typically uses tests and instruments; data collection is primary to quantitative methodology. The condition of qualitative research is conventionally conducted under natural dimensions, while quantitative research is conducted under more controlled conditions (Grady 1998). In either case, students should embrace research literacy as a cognitive tool and decision-making technique. Their vocabularies and levels of literacy should grow over time from understanding the fundamentals of research hypothesis to the selection of research approaches that lead to correlational, experimental, and causal-comparative research. Students should be increasingly aware of the techniques of random sampling, pilot studies, and measurements from certain instruments used to apply research methodologies.

Understanding the basics behind verifying and validating data is critical to empirical research and evidence-based learning. All students should examine the perplexities and complexities of life that are hidden behind the numbers of quantitative research or the words of qualitative research. As

mentioned earlier, the development of young scholars as researchers is an embryonic and cyclical process from students enhancing their judgment and reasoning in the first several years of college to making vocational connections later in college. The developmental stages of students expands across personal, academic, and professional stages, moving from understanding the foundations of research, to the fundamentals of research, to the refinement of research toward higher and wider orders of literacy.

Research literacy should filter throughout the undergraduate experience in the arts as well as the sciences and the professions. Exit interviews of students to determine their levels of literacy might serve the institution well in determining academic effectiveness and instructional efficiency. Becoming research literate will empower our students to make sound decisions, assess situations based on assembled data, resolve conflicting points of view, and make choices or choose alternatives substantiated by evidence and supported with data derived from quantitative and qualitative treatments of research. Finally, given the much-anticipated and predicted retirement, attrition, and exodus of the American professoriate and the severe shortages of scientific researchers from underrepresented minorities, college and university leaders should leverage the undergraduate curriculum to nurture students as first responders to this national crisis at a time of growing national security concerns and escalating global competitiveness.

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BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

by

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Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa. *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*: Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2011.

Richard Arum, Josipa Roksa, and Esther Cho. "Companion Report to 'Academically Adrift' Educational Assessment." *Educational Assessment* January 19, 2011. Accessed June 12, 2011. http://assessment.voices.wooster.edu/companion-report-to academically-adrift/.

American higher education is in flux. Huge enrollments, constrained budgets, fleets of part-time and adjunct faculty and students harnessed to new information technologies characterize the modern college and university landscape. In some schools the adaptive changes are controlled, occurring only at the margins. In others, new pedagogies have taken over, leading to massive instructional redesign that involves constant faculty resocialization and new buildings replete with the latest "smart" technologies. But despite the development of creative initiatives, large and small, to educate students, stakeholders are alarmed. Their concerns are with the well established institutions together with the less prestigious. Colleges and universities across the board are not educating students able "to write well enough to satisfy their employers…reason clearly or perform competently in analysing complex, non-technical problems" (Box 8). This is a concern for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that the numerical majority population, the highly educated and skilled

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baby boomers, are fast moving into retirement at a time when replacement workers are much fewer in number; as well, their skills are not nearly as well developed. Another troubling reason is that in this era of global capital, competition is zero-sum, meaning that your gain is my loss. Looking at this from a macro perspective, American workers have to be the best in the world if our economy is to remain competitive as we move into the twenty-first century.

To corral the various concerns about the failure of higher education to graduate students who can write well enough to satisfy employers while thinking critically and analytically, the Social Science Research Council partnered with the Pathways to College Education[**] to organize this study funded by the Lumina, Ford, Fulbright, and Teagle Foundations as well as the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The study was conducted by sociologists Richard Arum of the Steinhardt School of Education at New York University and Josipa Roksa of the University of Virginia and is called *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*. In addition, Arum, Roksa, and Esther Cho of the Social Science Research Council published an online companion report that can be accessed at http://assessment.voices.wooster.edu/companion-report-to-aca-demically-adrift/.

Their research found that 45 percent of college students in their first two years are not learning enough to demonstrate a statistically significant improvement and 36 percent of the 2,300 students studied did not show significant improvement in learning after four years of college. Among those who did demonstrate gains, the amount of learning was modest. It is no surprise then that they found that students expressed a general "lack of purpose" and reported that they spend as little as five hours a week on their studies.

What are they doing with their time? Today's social and technological developments propel students into lives where time is the ultimate scarce resource. The study found

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[**] The Pathways to College Education is an alliance of national organizations seeking to advance college opportunities for underserved students.

that students spent 51 percent of their day socializing and recreating and 24 percent sleeping. Working, volunteering, fraternities and sororities, and other student clubs took nine percent. Classes and lab work occupy students another nine percent, which leaves seven percent of their crowded twenty-four-hour day to study. Time spent in one pursuit is time denied another.

Multitasking saves precious minutes. Think of all the students you see walking to class while performing functions on their cell phones. The authors cite a 2009 study by Camille Charles, Mary Fischer, Margarita Mooney, and Douglas Massey, aptly titled *Taming the River: Negotiating the Academic, Financial, and Social Currents in Selective Colleges and Universities*, which shows that the student school work week of 120 hours is stretched into 131 hours by African American students and 125 hours by white students by the time all of the activities are added up. The 48-hour weekend is stretched into 57 hours by African-American students and 52 hours by white students (Charles et al. 266).

In response to globalization and other changes sweeping every institution on the planet, some universities have adopted a pedagogy called transformative learning, which seeks to induce deep, structural shifts in the student's basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions as measured through the National Survey of Student Engagement. The authors of *Academically Adrift* are critical of the transformative learning movement sweeping the nation. Those college and university administrators that rely solely on the student satisfaction components of the National Survey of Student Engagement often ignore the issues raised by the non-academic satisfaction aspects, and are more concerned with retaining students than with educating them.

Those skills that employers need are not immutable but can be acquired through learning. Long-term occupational success in the current economy, in fact, depends upon acquiring academic credentials and the attendant academic skills. How is this done? Arum and Rokas argue that college-level learning needs to be rigorously developed by faculty who hold high expectations and are available for student-initiated conferences.

As well, they assign forty-plus pages of reading per week, and they require more than twenty pages of writing each semester. For faculty this means that class size needs to be reduced. These are the most accessible solutions to the problem.

Academically Adrift is not without its critics. There are multiple blogs discussing the text. Some say that the authors overstate the case or that the sample is not representative or that the interpretation of the data is skewed. The strongest criticism comes from Alexander W. Astin of the University of California at Los Angeles. He claims that the interpretation of the data is really the province of those trained in education and not the domain of sociology. Further, the study is lopsided and does not report what percentage of students did improve. The criticism doesn't detract as much as it broadens the consideration of the substance of the text about the state of higher education.

An affiliate organization of the American Society of Public Administration, the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, is urging members in academia to read and discuss the text with their peers. The role of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and its counterpart in the humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, was originally established to develop consensus among elite academics about program trajectories that would further the nation's interests. Today the SSRC, like all of us, is attempting to examine issues impacting this country from a global perspective. I would encourage anyone interested in the fate of our students and our nation as well as the role of higher education to read this book and to participate in the debate about the nature of undergraduate college education.

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