

***Proceedings of the 2014 IWIC,
Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology***

February 2014
University of Central Florida
Orlando, USA

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Conference General Information

Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology

2014 First Ever International Women's Issues Conference (IWIC)

Event Info

February 21 & 22, 2014, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida. Morgridge International Reading Center.

The conference invites dialogues surrounding Women's Issues about the areas of information and knowledge: power and leadership; education and policy; technology and infrastructure that affect women in the intersections of race, social class, gender and sexuality on intellectual and institutional perspectives, local and global forums, public and intimate spaces. All disciplines and levels of professional and graduate scholarship are welcome. This conference will foster the discussion of global issues affecting women directly or indirectly through education, the use of technology and the transformation of leadership skills.

Conference Themes

Art, Communication, Culture, Development and Policy, Diversity, Governance and Policy, Governance and Leadership, Gender, Health, Higher Education, Immigration, Information and Communication Technology, International Relations, Motherhood, NGOs, Professional Development, Leadership Trends, Race, Religion, Sexuality, Social Class, Social Justice, Spirituality, Transnational Feminism, War, Women in Crisis, Women in STEM, Workforce Issues, Youth.

Location

UCF Main Campus

University of Central Florida, Main Campus- with over 1,400-acres campus provides modern buildings, most of which have wireless abilities, with 600 acres set aside for lakes, woodlands, and an arboretum. "We believe that a university campus should not only be a place to learn, but a pleasant place to live." Students and parents are impressed with the modern facilities and beautiful green areas in campus. Enjoy your visit to UCF and sunny Florida!

UCF/MIRC Location

All conference sessions took place at the Morgridge International Reading Center (MIRC), map location [ID 122](#)

Call for Papers

Guidelines for Research Papers

Research papers should not exceed 7,000 words, or about 15.5-double-spaced pages, plus endnotes. Endnotes and bibliographic citations should follow either *Modern Language Association Style (MLA)*, or *the American Psychological Association (APA)*. Papers are considered ineligible if previously published, presented, accepted or under a journal review. Only one paper per author will be accepted for presentation and at least one author should be present at the conference.

Submission:

1. All complete papers are to be submitted online only, no hard copies or faxes allowed.
2. Include one separate title page containing title, authors/s, affiliations/s, and the address, phone and email of lead author.
3. Include abstract of the paper on a separate page.
4. Your name and/or affiliation should not appear anywhere in the paper (only on the title page).

Deadline for complete papers: January 31, 2014

Evaluation criteria, deadlines and contact information

All research paper submissions will be evaluated on originality and importance of topic; literature review; clarity of research purpose; focus; use of original and primary sources and how they support the paper's purpose and conclusions; writing quality and organization; and the degree to which the paper contributes to women's issues. All submissions will be blind-juried, and submissions from graduate students as well as faculty are encouraged.

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Samantha DeBee

Martha García

Nya Ittai

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Arpita Sharma and Puja Kumari

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Citation:

Author of paper: Samantha DeBee

Title of paper: Women's Progressive Climb into the Political Sector: A Review since the Industrial Revolution

Conference Name: First Ever International Women's Issues Conference (IWIC)

Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.

Conference Date and Location: February 2014, University of Central Florida

Title of Proceedings: *Proceedings of the 2014 IWIC, Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.*

Year: 2014

Citation:

Author of paper: Martha García

Title of paper: Cultural Landscape: Female Portrait in the Narration of the *Book of True Love*

Conference Name: First Ever International Women's Issues Conference (IWIC)

Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.

Conference Date and Location:

Title of Proceedings: *Proceedings of the 2014 IWIC, Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.*

Year: 2014

Citation:

Author of paper: Natalie Dimitra Montgomery and Jenepher Lennox Terrion

Title of paper: The Empowerment of Immigrant Mothers Through Mental Health Literacy

Conference Name: First Ever International Women's Issues Conference (IWIC)

Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.

Conference Date and Location:

Title of Proceedings: *Proceedings of the 2014 IWIC, Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.*

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Citation:

Author of paper: Nya Ittai

Title of paper: When The Time is Right: Does the Length of Maternity Leave Affect Mother-Infant

Conference Name: First Ever International Women's Issues Conference (IWIC)

Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.

Conference Date and Location:

Title of Proceedings: *Proceedings of the 2014 IWIC, Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.*

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Author of paper: Cameron Montgomery

Title of paper: Diverse Causes and Effects of Stress in Adolescents: A Meta-analysis

Conference Name: First Ever International Women's Issues Conference (IWIC)

Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.

Conference Date and Location:

Title of Proceedings: *Proceedings of the 2014 IWIC, Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.*

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Citation:

Author of paper: Lynne Gayle

Title of paper: Female Genital Mutilation: Global Perspectives and Local Practices

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Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.

Conference Date and Location:

Title of Proceedings: *Proceedings of the 2014 IWIC, Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.*

Year: 2014

Citation:

Author of paper: S. N. Geetha, Barani Sivakumar and T. Dheepa

Title of paper: Political Empowerment of Women Through Self-Help Movement- A Study in Tamil Nadu, India

Conference Name: First Ever International Women's Issues Conference (IWIC)

Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.

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Title of Proceedings: *Proceedings of the 2014 IWIC, Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.*

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Author of paper: Donita Grissom

Title of paper: H.O.P.E. "Helping Other People Excel"

Conference Name: First Ever International Women's Issues Conference (IWIC)

Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.

Conference Date and Location:

Title of Proceedings: *Proceedings of the 2014 IWIC, Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.*

URL:

Year: 2014

Citation:

Author of paper: Samantha Heuwagen

Title of paper: Reproductive Rights in Argentina: A Multicultural Look at the Evolution and Practice of Reproductive Choice

Conference Name: First Ever International Women's Issues Conference (IWIC)
Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.

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Title of Proceedings: *Proceedings of the 2014 IWIC, Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.*

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Citation:

Author of paper: Akshaya Kannan, M. Amirthaveni and S. Thilakavathy

Title of paper: Study of the Rituals, Nutritional Practices, and Hygiene during the Turmeric Bathing Ceremony in Southern India

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Citation:

Author of paper: Jobia Keys

Title of paper: Illustrations of Intersectionality in Disney Junior's Doc McStuffins

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Author of paper: Hanady Nabut

Title of paper: Women Economic Empowerment in MENA

Conference Name: First Ever International Women's Issues Conference (IWIC)
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Title of Proceedings: *Proceedings of the 2014 IWIC, Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.*

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Citation:

Author of paper: Arpita Sharma and Puja Kumari

Title of paper: Say No to Male Chauvinism: A Utopian Dream of India

Conference Name: First Ever International Women's Issues Conference (IWIC)
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Title of Proceedings: *Proceedings of the 2014 IWIC, Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.*

Year: 2014

Citation:

Author of paper: Claudine Turner and Lauren Murray

Title of paper: Sometimes I Fell Like a Motherless Child

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Conference Date and Location:

Title of Proceedings: *Proceedings of the 2014 IWIC, Women at Crossroads: Literacy, Leadership, Power and Technology.*

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Citation:

Author of paper: Alexandra Wilson

Title of paper: Why Haven't Gender Quota Laws Been Successful in Increasing the Amount of Female Representation in the National Congress Brazil?

Conference Name: First Ever International Women's Issues Conference (IWIC)
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Women's Progressive Climb into the Political Sector:

A Review Since the Industrial Revolution

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Abstract

The Women's Suffrage Movement in the United States led women into uncharted territory. They were actively using their voice in the public sphere and demanding to be heard. The permeation of women in the political sector was seen a slow rise, but their increasingly steady involvement in political matters has created a culture the modern 18th century woman would certainly not recognize. The Progressive Movement, Industrial Revolution, and technological innovations during this period moved women from the purely social sphere into the political. Throughout history, as war after war had taken young men away to fight, women would maintain the home and take on the role of both partners. It was not until the "Great War," and more notably World War II that women were pulled out of the domestic sphere and into the workforce in the name of their country. This paper will research the political and social involvement of women in the United States from the Industrial Revolution to the present in order to assess the influence of education and technology on their progressive movement into a male dominated sector.

Keywords: *suffrage movement, Industrial Revolution, women in politics, progressive movement, Great War, WWII*

Women's Progressive Climb into the Political Sector: A Review Since the Industrial Revolution

The Role of Women

A woman's role in any society can be linked to the foundation of that society: be it patriarchal or matriarchal. As history progressed and civilizations became organized and evolved beyond the traditional "hunter gatherer," lines became further delineated between the separate roles of men and women.

"As agriculture evolved in the Americas, women typically held important positions, because of the pivotal role of their work. Hunter-gatherer bands were small, with men hunting, and women at a camp, responsible for their children, gathering foodstuffs, and processing meat...Over time, the role of women as gatherers was transformed to women as cultivators." (Buhle, Murphy, Gerhard, 2009)

Not all of the early American communities were patriarchal, for example, the "Pueblo communities of the southwestern United States, like the Iroquois, were both matrilineal and matrilocal, although men were often involved in agriculture. Women built their homes, although men provided the timber. Again, women ran the households, but men controlled the *kivas*. (Buhle, et al., 2009).

Marriage, Family, and Gender Identities

The organization of the family was quite different from what we know today. "Where land was held communally, one was more usually identified with a clan than a family. Marriages were personal, and divorce freely available for both partners. Polygamy was widespread, and often took the form of *soral polygamy*, in which a man

married sisters. The Miami and Illinois groups, however, were patrilineal, and sharply and even brutally enforced a husband's monopoly on sex with his wife." (Buhle, et al., 2009).

Men traditionally went out of the home, hunted, provided the meat for the community as well as protection and defense, while women remained nearer the home, rearing the children and tending to gardens and matters of the household. Because of childbirth and rearing, it did and does make more sense that women's role was more essential in the home, but as our society evolved, this fact and the ideology that accompanied it, began to limit women's access to opportunities and what we will later call: "equal rights."

Very early on in the history of the Americas, we find that the women's status has a great deal of influence on the public exercise of power,

"in stratified societies, but in more egalitarian, more or less mobile societies, women often shared power with men. Mayan women could rule as monarchs, often inherited from their husbands. Women rulers were also known in the Aztec and Mississippian societies. Less formally, women often played decision-making roles, and shared power with men, in spite of gender divisions of labor. A pattern is discernable: that in those societies in which women controlled their bodies or household resources, they also exercised power, related to the survival of their people." (Buhle, et al., 2009).

In teaching my World History class, full of bright-eyed ninth graders, we survey many of the world's civilization and study the progression from the hunter-gatherer societies to the traditional patriarchal society, which, to them, seems "normal," but when

we come across a matriarchal society, not only are they taken aback, but they are also rather surprised. To these students a society, in which the female is seen as the leading focus of society, is unusual, but in fact women have always been at the center. Though, much of their place and importance at the “center” has not been in the public eye, but rather in the privacy of the home.

The progression for women, “the fairer sex,” toward equality will be a slow, tumultuous, interesting, and arguably incomplete, journey. So, where should we begin? After all, the evolution of an organized society has a long history. For the sake of time and paper, this research will begin by examining the changes that will surround women's involvement in the public sector during the Industrial Revolution. From the Industrial Revolution, WWI, the Suffrage Movement, WWII, the Feminist Movement, and the so-called “War on Women” of today's political climate, I will examine the facts and perhaps debunk a few myths along the way. Most importantly, I will investigate the key role that women have played in our American culture and politics and foreshadow what their future might look like.

Looking Back: 18th Century Moving Forward

Women have always worked in some capacity, but the perceived value of their work has not always been seen by society to be equal to that of men's work. Prior to the Industrial Revolution,

“women and men who worked side-by-side on the farm in an agrarian culture became separated in a manufacturing-oriented society. Women stayed home and tended to child rearing and domestic responsibilities while men went to the city or factory to seek wage labor. The gender separation of the private sphere, or home

life, from the public sphere, or working world, was not an equal division of labor. Male wage labor and public work was accorded greater value and direct compensation” (Wilson, 2009).

Because of this separation between the genders, there was a perception that because men returned with money in hand, there was more value to their work. Thus, “in economic terms, men’s work had exchange value because the money earned could be used to purchase goods. The Cult of True Womanhood, a social belief that dominated the nineteenth century, regarded women as too moral and pure to participate in the harsh, competitive realities of the business world,” an ideology that would plague their entrance into the work force for the next century (Wilson, 2009). Though, advances in industry and the necessities of wartime labor would assist women in defeating these ideologies and break down the barriers of separate spheres.

As immigration into the United States grew, so too did the changing outlook of women as economic contributors. Women began to take more “part in running business in urban areas. They often ran taverns, and in South Carolina married women had the right to make contracts. In Boston and Philadelphia, women ran nearly as many shops as men, while others were artisans” (Buhle, et al., 2009). Women, predominately in rural areas, took part in the cottage industry (where textile products would be made in the workers home, mainly on a part-time basis), which would soon be drastically changed by new technology that would revolutionize the textile industry.

Women, especially young, unmarried women, began to gain independence outside of the home through economic opportunities in the textile industry. One example comes from a young factory worker, Anne Swett, who, in a letter to her sister, describes her joy

at her newly found independence. In February of 1847, she describes her living situation and how being a “boarder with free time was ‘grand.’” She had pocketed four dollars for her first two weeks of work and was figuring out her potential as a wage earner. Her letter expressed newly discovered feelings of economic independence, and she assured her sister that she would never again bind shoes as an outworker in her Massachusetts home (Blewett, 1988). This outwork left little free time as it was work done on top of the necessary housework and other chores. Anne Swett’s letter illustrates perfectly, not only women’s desire for independence, but also the access to that independence that technology afforded.

Industrial Transformations

As women began to enter the work force as the economy expanded during the Industrial Revolution, many young men began to experience difficulty finding job opportunities, in some cases women were hired in place of men because they could be paid a lower wage. “Small spinning establishments in New England were the first textile factories. Labor came mostly from poor families, who contracted with the mill owners for their children’s labor” (Buhle, et al., 2009). The transition for both men and women would be an uphill battle. These small textile factories helped to maintain the integrity of the family, but as families were dependent on the company for housing and the wages were generally paid in credit at the company store, the family began to lose control over their lives, independence, and economic freedom, they become a sort of indentured servant (Buhle, et al., 2009).

Not all Americans felt the benefits from the Industrial Revolution, the young and single members of society enjoyed most of the benefits of the technological industrial

advancements. The shift in industrial work specifically benefitted young women, such as those in Manchester and Lowell who benefitted from a new business plan: paying individuals as opposed to an entire family for labor.

The young single women that came to be their labor force often worked for part of the year and returned to their families seasonally. Their wages gave them new independence, which might include education, but could also mean giving those wages to their families. Lowell also offered cultural activities, which might mean an informal education to young women who could not afford anything more formal. Maintaining the respectability of young workers was considered an issue. To that end, matrons were often installed in dormitories, and peers might exert pressure as well (Buhle, et al., 2009).

As steady income for farmers became unreliable as the mechanization of farming equipment altered the opportunities for small farms, some began to move to textile villages for new opportunities, but by 1900, almost one-third of the textile mill workforce was comprised of women and children under fourteen. (Buhle, et al., 2009).

Many young women found themselves in domestic work, which had the benefit of offering room and board and occasional leisure time for culture or religion. Included room and board allowed some of the women the ability to send wages back home to their families. Though domestic work was a large employer to young single women, many women worked in manufacturing companies or in retail. For some wives and mothers, it was beneficial to take in laundry or sewing to gain supplemental income (Buhle, et al., 2009).

Though, there was a large movement and attraction to the growing urban cities, the majority of women and their families continued to live rural lives until 1860. “Dairy work, its products to be sold in local markets, was an important source of income. Farm kitchens were important work areas, linking dairy work and food production. Farm women, unlike their urban counterparts, both bought and sold at market, making their role unique and valued” (Buhle, et al., 2009). As the 19th century progressed toward the 20th, agricultural overproduction and protective tariffs were detrimental to the agricultural market and forced “failed farmers moved to the textile villages, but by 1900, almost one-third of the textile mill workforce comprised of women and children under fourteen” (Goldfield, Abbott, Anderson, Argersinger, J.E., Argersinger, P.H., 2012). Much of the workforce consisted of women and children in part because they were paid significantly less than men, making it more profitable for factory owners. Eventually, wage and labor laws would shift this dynamic.

The Industrial Revolution brought many changes to American society: where and how men and women worked, the social and economic status of men and women, and the family structure. Though the Industrial Revolution offered many new opportunities for men and women, it also helped to draw social lines among the classes. With the growing emergence of the middle-class, so too grew the separate spheres and with it the social ideologies of the values and the roles that men and women played in society. As seen many times throughout history, different rules apply for different social classes. Women of the lower classes were expected to work because it was necessary, whereas women of middle and upper classes were meant to be more domestic, refined, and well-versed in the

art of entertainment. As time progressed, these ideologies will change as we enter the dawn of a new era and movement: women's suffrage.

Movement for Independence

This paper poses to examine women's rise into the political sector, and as it has already discussed, the onset of the Industrial Revolution brought women a new sense of economic independence, but our democracy was still largely patriarchal and set in its ways. If we take a brief moment to look at our democracy, we must look to ancient Greece and the Athenian democracy for its roots. Most every Civics or Introduction to Politics book begins with a study of the ancient Greek democracy as the springboard to our American democracy. As we investigate those roots to our government, we find that the Athenians are quite patriarchal and it was only the men who were allowed to vote and therefore make key decisions for the society.

Though our roots can be traced to the ancient Greeks, our founding fathers did make some changes to the Greek model.

In the city-states of ancient Greece, the citizens decided public policy by voting directly on policy issues. The framers of the U.S. Constitution were distrustful of direct democracy, fearing that majority rule combined with direct democracy might result in policies that were hasty, emotional, and abusive of minority rights. In essence, they feared that such a combination would produce majority tyranny (Tannahill, 2012).

“At the beginning of the twentieth century, women were outsiders to the formal structures of political life—voting, serving on juries, holding elective office—and they were subject to wide-ranging discrimination that marked them as secondary citizens”

(Evans, n.d). Slowly, movements for women's suffrage began all across the world and American women began their campaign during the latter half of the 19th century. "Over the course of the century, however, women in America moved dramatically (though still not equally) into all aspects of public life—politics, labor-force participation, professions, mass media, and popular culture" (Evans, n.d).

Many root the beginning of the American women's suffrage movement at Seneca Falls, New York where a public protest meeting was held in July 1848. "At that historic meeting, the right of women to join with men in the privileges and obligations of active, voting citizenship was the one demand that raised eyebrows among the hundred or so women and men attending" (DuBois, 2006) Elizabeth Cady Stanton and many in the audience, including radical Lucretia Mott, "worried that the demand for political equality was either too advanced or too morally questionable to include on the launching platform of the new movement" (DuBois, 2006).

Despite their fears, this moment became a pivotal one, as it put forth the Declaration of Sentiments, which, "began with an assertion that men and women were created equal, and then listed grievances, before laying out the natural rights of women... Frederick Douglass spoke in favor of the franchise, and the resolution was carried." (Buhle, et al., 2009). The years that followed would bring several more national conventions aimed at fighting for women's rights, though it would be another 70 years until the "1920 ratification of the nineteenth constitutional amendment, which prohibited the states from "disfranchisement on the basis of sex," would be passed (DuBois, 2006).

Women not only made their public sector/political debut with woman suffrage, but also with the abolitionist movement, in fact, many of the women became involved

first in activism for the rights of black Americans. “There were many areas of overlap between the abolition and women’s rights movements... The American abolition movement had been split on the issue of women’s rights. Conversely, the issue of fighting slavery was divisive within the women’s rights movement” (Buhle, et al., 2009).

Many women, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony, and Alice Paul, to name a few, stepped out into the public eye to promote their cause and thus marked the rise of women’s involvement in the political sector. Participation that continues to grow in ways Stanton, Paul, and Alice could have only dreamed, in that we have now seen a female candidate for president, Hillary Clinton, and will likely see her run again in the 2016 presidential election.

The Second Industrial Revolution

The second industrial revolution brought a great deal of innovation: “including electricity and mass production. It also placed the United States at the front of industrial nations... By 1910, one-quarter of American women worked for wages, increasingly in non-domestic positions. [As before] the majority of these women were young and single” (Buhle, et al., 2009). Women mostly worked in different jobs than men and they were working for lower wages. Women working in the garment industry, “outnumbered men, but generally held the less-skilled, lower-paid jobs. This sector also employed many new immigrants, notably Jewish and Italian women” (Buhle, et al., 2009). Retail sales did offer better pay and working conditions, but most of these positions were reserved for white, working-class women.

By 1890, 58,000 women worked in these jobs. Clerical work also became more common for women. Women also represented one-third of all federal jobs in

Washington D.C., though at much lower rates than men. Office work was more segmented, with women increasingly identified with the new typewriters (Buhle, et al., 2009).

Revolution in Education and Opportunity

During the second industrial revolution, women began to take on new professions and became more educated. According to Buhle, et al. (2009), by 1910, 40 percent of college students were women. With the changes in the public school system, it demanded more educated teachers and “women came to hold 75 percent of the nation’s teaching jobs. African American women also found jobs as teachers, predominantly in black school systems.” This demand was met by the creation of four new universities and by 1910, there were more than 22,500 black women teaching throughout the nation. (Buhle, et al., 2009).

Women also made progress in the field of medicine, while mainstream colleges were still closed to women in the late 19th century, women such as “Elizabeth and Emily Blackwell founded schools to provide medical education to women. By 1900, five percent of all American doctors were women. Chicago and Boston in particular were welcoming women into the profession.” (Buhle, et al., 2009). Access to education would become a key factor in women’s upward progression in public life.

The emerging consumer society also changed life for women as new household appliances made food preparation easier and afforded them more time. An emphasis on saving time permeated advertising of the time. This consumerism also brought about the popularity of the department store, “a middle-class retail establishment that became a center of urban downtowns after 1890” (Goldfield, et al., 2009). Fashion also met with

innovation as women's hemlines rose and the era of the flapper signaled a change in the attitudes and behaviors of women in the 1920s.

A push for education on birth control and the reproductive rights of women also drastically changed the social climate. New ideas about marriage and motherhood opened new lines of thinking. Activists like Margaret Sanger "challenged conventional ideas on the social role of women and promoted birth control" (Goldfield, et al., 2009). Sanger "championed birth control, especially for working people. She felt the latter could improve their conditions with smaller families. This push to free women from the idea that they were bound by their domesticity would be an uphill battle. (Goldfield, et al., 2009).

For many in the medical profession, a woman was controlled by her reproductive organs, and suited by them for domesticity. Some, such as Dr. Edward H. Clarke went so far as to argue that women could not menstruate and think. Though many could and did refute such claims, the argument persisted and continued to effect the ideology that women did not belong in the public sector (Buhle, et al., 2009).

The Technology of War and the advancement of Women

The U.S. held on to its isolationist policies prior to entering into the "Great War," and in contrast, the women immediately jumped in to fulfill the vacancies left by the men. As we approached the war that would supposedly end all wars, technology was continuing to advance with weaponry such as the machine gun and the mass production of military supplies. "World War I popularized the use of the machine gun—capable of bringing down row after row of soldiers from a distance on the battlefield"

(memory.loc.gov). As men left for war, the women entered the workforce in the factories where almost one million became

wage-earners for the first time... and took on unaccustomed work as well. The so-called *Great Migration* brought about five million black southerners to the North in search of jobs. While many of [these] women in this relocation took the domestic and cleaning jobs left by white women who now had more opportunities in factories, for the first time African American women themselves took up factory work...The large numbers of women in industry induced the Department of Labor to form a new Women's Bureau" (Buhle, et al., 2009).

The Women's Bureau "was created by law in 1920 to formulate standards and policies to promote the welfare of wage-earning women, improve their working conditions, increase their efficiency, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment"

(www.dol.org). Although women had the opportunity to work, the wages were lower than those of their male counterparts and poor working conditions continued to plague them.

World War I was also instrumental in bringing women into the fight in a different capacity, women joined the armed services working as "nurses, telephone operators... both at home and overseas" (Buhle, et al., 2009). As the war introduced more and more women into the workforce, it would become increasingly difficult to push them back into participating only in the domestic sphere.

The onset of World War II would again bring about a mobilization for jobs for women. Winkler (n.d.) remarks that "for groups [who were]discriminated against in the past, the war was a vehicle for lasting social and economic gains. For women and blacks in particular, the war was a stimulus—and a model—for future change." In 1940,

factories were operating below desired capacity which may have been acceptable had we not entered into the war, but the attack on Pearl Harbor put a halt to President Theodore Roosevelt's staunch isolationist policies and American factories were "forced to rapid[ly] increase production. Women moved into jobs left vacant by men, for a variety of reasons. In spite of the need for their labor, they were offered less money than the men they were replacing" (Buhle, et al., 2009).

The need for labor was so great that propaganda campaigns developed by the *War Manpower Commission* were designed to actively recruit women. From this propaganda came this iconic, Rosie the Riveter, who as depicted exudes strength while still maintaining her femininity. By 1944, nineteen million women, many of whom had already been wage earners, would be employed. "The significant change came in the kinds of work available to women, [they] worked as welders, riveters, assembled tanks and worked for the government in much higher numbers. Many women changed work, from domestic or retail work to factory work" (Buhle, et al., 2009). While employment opportunities during the war brought economic independence to many women, they were also constantly reminded that their positions were temporary.

At the peak of the industrial effort, women constituted 36 percent of the civilian work force... Traditionally, working women had been single and young. Between 1940 and 1944, married women made up over 72 percent of the total number of female employees. By the end of the war, half of all female workers were over thirty-five (Winkler, n.d.).

Women also replaced men in other areas of the public sector, including baseball and dance bands. Philip Wrigley's *All American Girls Baseball League*, created in 1943

would grow to include ten teams by the wars end. The women who played were expected to retain all of their femininity, which is perhaps best displayed by their skirted uniform, a “tunic fashioned after the figure skating, field hockey, and tennis costumes of the period. Satin shorts, knee-high baseball socks and baseball hat completed the uniform” (AAGPBL.org)

During the period 1941-1945, more than 200,000 women served in the United States military. “Furthermore, countless women—single and married—supported the Allied war effort through activities like civic campaigning and rationing” (Irwin, n.d). The war was a liberating time for women and it certainly changed the traditional values of which Americans were accustomed.

The movies [of the time] reflected this duality. War films like *Since You Went Away* and *Mrs. Miniver* showed faithful women doing volunteer work to support the war effort, keeping home fires burning, waiting for their men to return. But shortly after peace time, films like *Double Indemnity* and *Gilda* implied that the war had allowed women to "get out of hand," and that the "liberated woman" might be undermining traditional marriage and family (Strom and Wood, 1995).

As the war came to an end, women were encouraged to leave their jobs. “Some were able to continue working, but most left their positions. Still, their experience helped lay the groundwork for a women’s movement in later years and the war was an important step on the road to equal rights” (Winkler, n.d.). World War II had altered long held ideas about women working. “The role reversal altered women’s consciousness about paid labor. Although most working women were laid off after the war, opinion polls indicated that

the majority of women enjoyed the experience of working and wanted to continue” (Wilson, 2009).

Women in Politics and the Image Portrayed by the Media

It is certain that the efforts of women fighting for equal rights and the labor shortages caused by innovation and wartime needs, created the foundation of the platform women stand on today. Though the image of women and their perceived “place” in society; both domestic and public, has changed considerably, there is still progress to be made when it comes to women’s involvement and experience in political office and campaigning.

Until recently, women have been seen as having supportive roles, faithfully standing by their husbands who are running for presidential office. Larson (2001) describes case studies, which have investigated the media coverage received by prospective first ladies during and after the presidential campaign. These studies find while reviewing coverage of Nancy Reagan, Barbara Bush, and Hillary Clinton, that they received positive media coverage until they became politically active. From this, we can suggest that politically, our nation still had women boxed into a supportive or more domestic role. As time progresses and presidencies transition, those barriers are being breached, most notably during the 2008 presidential campaign when Hillary Clinton became a frontrunner for the Democratic Party. While, Senator Clinton (at the time) maintained a steady lead, the media did not hesitate to negatively attack her. In a U.S. News article, Paul Bedard (2011) discuss Clinton’s 2008 campaign and suggests that Clinton was right:

She was doomed by media sexists. Two new scholarly studies that blow the whistle on the industry's lopsided reliance on male reporters find that the media first belittled her effort against Barack Obama, then jumped the gun to push her out of the race earlier than any other recent strong primary challenger ... Among the key findings is that sexism, more than ideology, drove the media's anti-Clinton theme. (Bedard, 2011).

Bedard (2011) quotes the study, which suggests that some of the media bias showed itself in name-calling or even more subtly by referring to her only as "Hillary." "Some 8 percent of the time, the leading 127 newspeople studied by the scholars called her "Hillary." It was "Barack" just 2 percent of the time. And it wasn't because she marketed her campaign as "Hillary," they add" (Bedard, 2011). One could refute this study by suggesting that because of history and potential confusion, "Hillary" was used as opposed to Clinton in order to avoid confusion with her husband and previous president.

Political Involvement

Though recent decades have brought women into the public sector in growing numbers, the UNDP guidebook and case study on *Empowering Women for Stronger Political Parties*, investigates the rationale for increasing women's participation in politics. The study suggests that American women have experienced gains within the Democratic Party, in part due to the fact the party tends to support the causes important to many women. The Democratic Party made moves to remove their Women's Division in 1952 in order to integrate the female member into all of the committees and leadership positions.

Although met with disdain by women in the party, this gender-neutral approach took hold for several decades and women generally abandoned collective strategies to influence policy as an electorate group... As women began to mobilize across sectors, the Democratic Party was more responsive to women's call for greater representation, recognizing the impact that women could have on the electoral success of the party. In addition, the party leadership came to acknowledge women as one of its key constituencies, with women voting at higher rates than men since 1980 and constituting higher numbers of undecided and swing voters (Ballington, 2012).

As women were gaining influence within the Democratic Party, they were also gaining influence externally through women's organizations, including the National Organization for Women (NOW), the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), the Women's Campaign fund and EMILY's List, to name a few.

In the 1960s and 1970s, several women's CSOs and political action committees emerged with the specific mission to foster women's full political participation, arguing that American politics represented an "Old Boys' Network." These organizations sought to increase women's access to political power through the recruitment and training of, and provision of financial donations to, women candidates at the state and national levels (Ballington, 2012).

The Democratic Party, Since the 1980s, has worked to grow and maintain a gender balance at their national conventions. This has proven beneficial to women in the party, as those who attend the conventions have many opportunities to fundraise and network, both of which have been critical to their political careers. "Many first-time women office

seekers have previously served as party delegates, which allowed them to leverage the relationships they built through participation in the party's conventions" (Ballington, 2012). According to Ballington (2012), the Republican Party has also increased their efforts to increase and "formalize women's role in the conventions through Charter revisions.... [and they have] worked to promote greater proportions of women in their conventions, with 48 percent women [attending] in 1980."

Legislation was also introduced and passed to advance women's cause: the Equal Rights Amendment (1972) which states that: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex" (USHistory.org, n.d).. This amendment was first proposed to Congress by the National Women's Party, lead by Alice Paul in 1923. "Feminists of the late 1960s and early 1970s saw ratification of the amendment as the only clear-cut way to eliminate all legal gender-based discrimination in the United States" (USHistory.org. n.d).

Between 1972 and 1977, the ERA amendment was considered by each of the state legislatures, and in some states it was considered numerous times. "Hawaii was the first state to ratify what would have been the 27th Amendment, followed by some 30 other states within a year. However, during the mid-1970s a conservative backlash against feminism eroded support for the Equal Rights Amendment, which ultimately failed to achieve ratification by the a requisite 38, or three-fourths, of the states." (History.com, n.d). Ratification of this amendment continues to be pursued.

Political Office

"Women in the United States continue to confront a hurdle in getting above 17 percent representation in Congress and, as of 2010, constitute only 22.9 percent of state

executive positions, 24 percent of state legislators, and 17.6 percent of mayors” (Ballington, 2012).

While American women may have lower than desired representation in government, they attain more professional success in medicine, business, and higher education than do most of their counterparts around the world. An enduring puzzle is, therefore, why the U.S. lags so far behind other countries when it comes to women's political representation. In 2008, women held only 16.8 percent of seats in the House of Representative, a proportion that ranks America lower than 83 countries (McDonagh, 2010).

According to McDonagh (2010) though women's ranking in political participation is lower than many countries, “their involvement in managerial and administrative positions outside government, is at the top of the list – ahead of all fifteen countries in the European Union and just about all of the nations of the world.”

McDonagh (2010) also discusses that in order to be a democracy, policies must be adopted that “affirm women's individual sameness with men.” For example, the 19th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees women's right to vote. Interestingly, she goes on to suggest that democratic policies that promote women's individual sameness with men also have an effect on the attitudes of the public “by teaching voters that women are as suitable as men to be political leaders in the public sphere of the state.”

Though, there is a problem in that promoting *sameness* is not enough because women are still being viewed as “maternalists who are different from men [and that] all societies categorize their members based on sex.” That categorization also leads to the roles (engendered or not) that sex might fit into. Research has

found that “women more than men, for example, are associated with such policies as education, health, welfare, and peace and are more likely to be assumed to have relational personality traits.” (McDonagh, 2010).

Thus, female candidates will generally run for types of political office that fit within their public stereotype.

Perception of the female candidate

“Until the beginning of the 1990s, many female candidates felt compelled to steer clear of “women's issues.” Female candidates needed to be careful how much they emphasized their support for issues that might make them appear to be weaker candidates” (Grounds, 2008). According to Grounds, (2008) women were wary of voters perceiving them as less than capable or soft and inexperienced on issues such as foreign affairs, defense, and the economy. They did not want to be seen focusing on an agenda

“stereotypically female or “soft,” [by focusing on] issues such as education. This fear is substantiated by evidence that, even today, voters perceive male and female candidates with a gendered lens. Although this is less often the case than in the past, studies show that voters still associate certain issues and abilities with each sex.... Voters see a candidate with high credibility as powerful, authoritative, and capable of making critical decisions. Women candidates have a particularly difficult time with this because some voters still perceive women as less politically powerful than men.” (Grounds, 2008).

The media plays a significant role in perpetuating the stereotype. Grounds (2008) cites the studies which research media coverage on female candidates and suggest that much more so than men, they focus on their physical appearance and personal lives.

Gender Wage Gap and the “War on Women”

We continually hear and discuss the matter of unequal wages for women and the perceived “war on women.” There have been many different statistical models created and quoted over the years, but one interesting review refutes many of those claims.

Rosin (2013) questions the gender wage gap and asks: “you know that “women make 77 cents to every man’s dollar” line you’ve heard a hundred times? It’s not true.” Rosin (2013) studied the Bureau of Labor Department statistics which show that the “median earnings of full-time female workers is 77 percent of the median earnings of full-time male workers.” Which she states, is quite different from “77 cents on the dollar for doing the same work as men.” She suggests that the

latter gives the impression that a man and a woman standing next to each other doing the same job for the same number of hours get paid different salaries.

That’s not at all the case. “Full time” officially means 35 hours, but men work more hours than women. That’s the first problem: We could be comparing men working 40 hours to women working 35 (Rosin, 2013).

That number also does not take into account the different working patterns of many men and women. Many women work less hours than men and many take time off with maternity leave or take years at a time off from work. So, how should we get an accurate measurement of women’s comparative wage? Initially, a comparison of average weekly wages should be taken, which is considered to be a slightly more accurate measurement as it eliminates time taken off during the year and bonuses. The studies find that this measurement actually finds that “women earn 81 percent of what men earn” (Rosin,

2013). When further restrictions are made in only comparing men and women who work 40 hours a week, the wage gap again changes to 87 percent. (Rosin, 2013)

Economists Francine Blau and Lawrence Kahn look at the salaries of men and women doing the same work their paper, "The Gender Gap." They examined education and experience, which did not shift the gap much, considering women usually have at least the same, if not more education than men.

The fact that men are more likely to be in unions and have their salaries protected accounts for about 4 percent of the gap. The big differences are in occupation and industry. Women congregate in different professions than men do, and the largely male professions tend to be higher-paying. If you account for those differences, and then compare a woman and a man doing the same job, the pay gap narrows to 91 percent (Rosin, 2013, August).

While this data does point out a difference, we cannot exactly suggest that there is a wage inequality such as the one that is often expressed. Rosin opines that

Focusing our outrage into a tidy, misleading statistic we've missed the actual challenges. It would in fact be much simpler if the problem were rank sexism and all you had to do was enlighten the nation's bosses or throw the Equal Pay Act at them. But the 91 percent statistic suggests a much more complicated set of problems. Is it that women are choosing lower-paying professions or that our country values women's professions less?

In a Goldin and Lawrence Katz study, they studies men and women graduating from the University of Chicago with MBAs from 1990 to 2006 and they found that initially, right of school, there was very little difference between the salary of men and

women, “which might be because of a little bit of lingering discrimination or because women are worse at negotiating starting salaries” (Rosin, 2013). But as time progressed, they found that the gap does widen to 40 percent between 10 and 15 years later. Most of the gap is a result of career interruptions and fewer hours worked. (Rosin, 2013, August). This research suggests that the pay difference is a result of the different choices men and women make and that while women leave the workforce to have families, their opportunity for returning to work with a higher wage, diminishes. Perhaps the U.S. needs better maternity leave policies or perhaps our priorities are in order and not every family needs to consist of dual-career couples.

Where to go from Here?

If you haven't already surmised from this research, women have always been activists in their own right. Regardless of where they might be working: the home, factory, cubicle, corner office, Congress, or the military, the opportunities have never been so great. Women are receiving more college degrees every year, in fact the number of female college graduates is surpassing that of males, in 2011, 56 percent of the graduates were males and 61 percent were females. (nces.ed.gov)

We may see a female president in the next three years and will likely see an increased number of female representation in Congress. Most importantly, women need to continue to push to have their voices heard in the public sector and in doing so, not fall victim to negativity of opposing parties or the media. One such example, the “war on women,” needs to be overcome and erased from the conversation in the mainstream media. While there may be a foundation to the argument that politicians do not have the best interests of the female population at heart, the more that this phrase and what it

stands for is acknowledged, the longer women will be restrained and not let free to achieve all of which they are capable. Most importantly, Americans needs to end the line of thinking that women haven't arrived, because they have and the road from here looks promising.

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Literature & Culture [5305 words]

Cultural Landscape: Female Portrait in the Narration of the *Book of True Love*

“Love is the force that leaves you colorless”
Ovid, *Metamorfosis*

1. Introduction and preliminary considerations

The *Book of True Love* written by Juan Ruiz, Archpriest of Hita, in fourteenth century Spain represents for many scholars the antithesis of what society consider *good love* displaying—precisely—the opposite attributes that makes the text an *exemplum* of *lack of love*. It is significant to note that the author builds this antithesis—in many of the cases—through a rich linguistic inventory of terms, connotations, and metaphors associated to the misconstruction of the female characters. The main intent of this study consists in demonstrating that the *object* becomes—in some specific instances—the *subject* of the conversation that leads the characters in the text to perform their actions. Juan Ruiz used female misrepresentations within the dialogue to justify—as a matter of background—the discord between words and female images predominant in the medieval culture of Spain. In contraposition, the Carnival and the Lent, which have been very popular aspects of the European folklore, the possession of earthly

goods, and the religious context foment the interdependence effect that the representation of female characters registers in the main thesis of the book. The following question arises: What is the *role* of specific words as the main essence of the narration and its implications in the construction of the cultural landscape? The analysis of the cultural and linguistic inventory present within the text in conjunction with its *exempla* will facilitate the understanding of the textual register as a *literary parabola* of the collective social organization of medieval Spain.

Juan Ruiz was a clergyman who was born in Alcalá de Henares—according to the *copla* 1510 of the text—and based on the *coplas* 1485-89 the readers may obtain a description of the author written in first person singular. *Libro de Buen Amor* (*Book of True Love*) is constructed into three sections and registered under the tradition of *mester de clerecía* (*mester*, which means profession and *clerecía*, which means ministerial). It has been suggested that the main intention of the book is to display a fictional autobiography to send a religious message or moral lesson that represents the conflict between what is considered painstaking love and what is displayed as lack of love. The main plot states the romantic adventures of the narrator-protagonist interlaced with collections of *exempla* based on Aesop's tradition and a recreation of the Latin comedy *Pamphilus de Amore* in

the episode that describes the undertakings of Lord Melón and Lady Endrina (Lord Melon and Lady Plum) assisted by the mediator character called Trotaconventos. In order to understand the insightful meaning of this text, it would be instrumental then to take into consideration the linguistic assortment of terms and connotations to determine the cultural context of medieval Spain.

2. Text and Portrait

The correlation between narrative and image has been approached from different angles in recent times. Kai Mikkonen in "Presenting Minds in Graphic Narratives" refers to previous studies regarding the **"mediating mind" and** in particular:

For instance, Monika Fludernik demonstrates that narrativity, a set of properties that characterizes narrative, fundamentally involves the presentation of a consciousness, reflecting on and reacting to events and evaluating them. In developing her influential notion of narrative experientiality, Fludernik suggests that any extended piece of narrative relies on the experiential portrayal of event sequences and human consciousness (1996: 28–30). (301)

In this direction, the previous works of Alan Palmer deserve being taken into this conversation because they offer a grounded point of **view based on the premise of verbalization and consciousness: "[b]y** the verbal norm Palmer means specifically the preoccupation with the

highly verbalized flow of self-conscious inner speech and thought (14, 63–67), as well as with free indirect perception where the narrator **uses a character’s consciousness as the perceptual angle on narration (48)”** (Mikkonen 301). This approach may be applied, as well, to the reading—and rereading—of classical and modern narrative as **Mikkonen suggests specifying that “the verbal norm of the theoretical discourse on fictional consciousness has contributed to a highly limited notion of “thought” and “mind” in classical narratology”** (302).

The *Book of True Love* through the narration in poetry and the *still life* paintings by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Pieter Aertsen, and Diego Velázquez are closely related to the perceptions of the portraits and the cultural values registered in Europe during the Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque era which denotes the complex relation between the observers and the observed, the portrayer and the portrayed, the painter and the painted, the viewer and the reader. Elizabeth Alice Honig in *Painting & the Market in Early Modern Antwerp* explains that “[t]he process of commodity exchange thus endows objects with social meaning as their market value reflects back on each partner in trade. And these partners judge one another, and themselves, on the basis of the values contained in marketable **objects”** (11). In relation to objects and subjects interacting at the

same level, Anne Lowenthal in the introduction to *The Object as*

Subject expounds:

As with any genre, the interpretive issues concerning *still life* itself has only recently been rescued from the margins of Western art, the last of the so-called lesser genres to enjoy the critical attention once reserved for history painting. As with any genre, the interpretive issues concerning still life are shaped not only by form and content but by the interaction between image and viewer as well. (3)

In Spain, the presence of the *still life* motives is part of what is considered antiquity. It was part of the Golden Age culture and it was used to connect two worlds, the object with the subject, and to make connections between the medieval times and Early Modern Spain. It was used to project a contrast or distance between the classical art and the early modern pictorial production. It is related to the *mimesis*, the imitation of the natural world. Juan Ruiz was an educated viewer of art and was familiar with the description and definition of the *still life* from classical Greek, Roman antiquity and ancient texts. Painters were considered photographers during the Golden Age in Spain who followed this artistic heritage and portrayed objects and subjects with verisimilitude and precision.

In this sense, Veronika E. Grimm analyzes the attitudes towards *still life* concentrating her attention on the relation of food in late antiquity and how the extremes between feasting and fasting may contribute to the enforcement of what is considered culturally accepted

or rejected in relation to basic human necessities, equally present in men and women (4-5). As tactile outcome of these cultural interrelations between what is portrayed and what remains observable, objects have been used as a language or code to share motives, interfaces, and attitudes. The terms and linguistic range found in the *Book of True Love* and its rhetorical implications provides the centerpiece to decipher the interactions between words and society. The readers encounter a vast description of terminology concerning, for example, poultry, vegetables, grains, cereals, and fruits. It is necessary to note that these elements are applied in this text to initiate and maintain individual and collective liaisons. Taking into consideration that Juan Ruiz was the Archpriest of Hita, I will use then the Hebrew meanings of two key words, *abad* (serve or cultivate) and *shamar* (maintain and conserve/take care of) and its dynamics of stewardship in direct resonance with the image of female characters within the text that serves as an indicator of the cultural ambient of medieval Spain.

3. Portrait of the female character of Trotaconventos

The narration in poetry of the author sketches within the text of the *Book of True Love* a female character called Trotaconventos who uses

a sensual language to convince a young widow named Lady Endrina (Lady Plum) to begin a relationship with Lord Melón de la Huerta, which in onomastic sense this name would be translated into *melon from the market garden* (862-65). In this illustration, the readers may notice a complete register of words related to fruits and grains known as staple food or less dainty objects because they did not require culinary intervention. Nevertheless, fruits are highly symbolic because of its female erotic and sensual connotations. The female character in these examples in the *Book of True Love* is painted by the author as a woman who does not take care of the another female character; on the contrary, it seems to denote some kind of personal interest in the character of Trotaconventos in obtaining some tangible outcomes of this specific relationship. The narrator presents in the text a pictographic female character that may mislead the readers to formulate a faulty deduction based on a non-reliable construction of a single character. To Mikkonen this partiality would be the result of **“[t]he verbal bias that Palmer perceives in the speech-category** approach has also privileged, in narratological research, fictions that **employ techniques of inner speech and thought”** (301) and at the same time, as Mikkonen discerns **“[t]he analysis of mind-presentation** in graphic storytelling might suggest ways to loosen the grip of the **“verbal norm”** in narratology, while also helping us evaluate what in

the speech-**category approach might work across narrative media**" (302).

The parabola centers the character of Trotaconventos as a cultural portrait of the woman who realizes her function in the cultural landscape where she has been situated by society because when she is describing her store she mentions ¡qué cidras y qué manzanas! (Oh, what apples by the wall!) (862-65). The female character supplies the apples to manufacture *sidra* (cider), but she does not form part of the manufacturing labor of this liquor neither does she cultivates the fruits and grains. We observe here an intercultural effect presented in a photographic bilateral dimension: in the same way that the character of Trotaconventos functions as the paid mediator between Lady Plum and Lord Melon, she is the mediator between the agricultural laborer and the consumer who buys the fruits and grains in her store. In direct relation to cultural interactions, the female character staples two relationships in the *name of love*. The text does not offer any **indication that these goods come from Trotaconventos' own harvest or land**; in other words, it does not represent her active role or *abad* (cultivate). According to the study of Mikkonen "[a]mong the most obvious constraints of verbal mind construction in graphic narratives is **contextual character portrayal: the rendering of a character's thoughts and sensations with the help of the physical context**" (303). In an

allegoric picture, Lord Melon cultivates the fruits and grains in his market garden (the garden of sensual and erotic pleasures, but also he owns land and an estate within the text) and Trotaconventos sells his harvest to Lady Plum. The textual painting of the *still life* here demonstrates the nature and extent of the relationship that is taking place in the text among individuals interrelating in the same cultural context. In the same way that Trotaconventos functions as an intermediary between both characters, the narration of the poetry **goes between the textual and graphic image portrayed with “[t]he possibility of integrating inner speech and thought within the graphic image, while indicating the emphasis or other qualities of the thoughts, makes this speech category convenient for the medium” and as a matter of fact “[a]ny extended use of this mode, however, naturally alters the balance between the visual and the verbal component in favor of the latter” (Mikkonen 307).**

Fruits and grains are always available in Trotaconventos’ *tienda* (store) in a more basic stage, which does not require further actions from her part. In this specific *exemplum*, the stewardship of **Trotaconventos’ possessions signifies her social status. The ladder may be applied as well to the presence of *still life* and its symbolic implications. Trotaconventos’ style of life is based only on her social economy without the intervention of the contemplative aspects of the**

subject. This textual portrait shows the cultural topography of the medieval Spain.

In a similar way Pieter Aertsen in his painting titled *The Market Woman* (1567)—among other possible titles for the same painting—reconciles the expectations of a changing economy and its cultural aesthetic. Diego Velázquez’s **paintings**—which are characterized by the presence of subjects—includes fruits as *still life* objects in his painting *Three Men at Table*, 1617, on which we observe two pomegranates and wine, which allegorizes grapes. The wine denotes the production industry while the pomegranates allegorize the agriculture. In these three examples, the object and subjects share the same artistic platform and the viewer is invited to observe both, *subject* and *object*, as part of the same open access place.

As John Dagenais indicates in his exegesis of *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing the Libro de Buen Amor*, the “Proverbs, which make up such an important part of Juan Ruiz’s book, were also portrayed as having “another sense” in some prologues to the proverbial books of the Bible” (82). The latter may be applicable to the presence of objects and its symbolic implications in the text, which shows that it is in reading techniques and strategies that the reader must decode the medieval significance of the textual works (Dagenais 82-83). Juan Ruiz draws the female character **Trotaconventos’ style of**

life based only in the active life proper of the perceptible cultural scene without the intervention that the presence of some kind of contemplative life would have added to obtain the necessary balance between both sides of the same social geography.

As Martin Ederer in "The Vita Contemplativa and Vita Activa in the Thought of Domenico de' Domenichi (1416-1478)" points out the "[d]ebate over the superiority of the contemplative life (the *vita contemplativa*) or the active life (the *vita activa*) was already ancient by the Italian Renaissance" and it was well-defined by Aristotle "with related issues in his *Nicomachean Ethics* in the fourth century B.C., and the degree to which one was to involve one's self in society and civic matters was a central debate among the foremost Hellenistic schools of philosophy" (19). At that time "[t]he active life only carried fewer opportunities – and therefore fewer responsibilities – for exercising virtue, which ultimately meant less lay accountability before **divine judgment**" (Ederer 27). Likewise in this dialogue, Paul A. Lombardo in "Vita Activa versus Vita Contemplativa in Petrarch and Salutati" states the change from religious to secular canons explaining that this tension is "especially apparent in Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries between the value which had been attributed traditionally to life within the cloister, secluded and contemplative, and the life of an active citizen, in commerce with the affairs of **the world**"

(83). Even though the discussion about these topics are not completely finished, as we may infer as modern readers in the 21st century, both *corpus of values* (activity and contemplation) are important components within any aspect of a culture and its economy.

In relation to stewardship, one of the principles based on the Hebrew tradition states that the steward of the land and its harvest should be responsible for the service, cultivation, protection, and the quality and the care of the products that they provide to the community. In doing so the flesh and the mind would be equally satisfied and this equilibrium leads to a healthy body and a healthy mind. The dialogue of Trotaconventos in the *Book of True Love* is mainly based on the symbolic aspects of fruits and grains (891-94). The reader, however, may notice that Lady Plum must first process **this information at the mental level in order to accept Trotaconventos'** proposals. Lady Plum had rejected any intervention by Trotaconventos previously in this story until she mentions her fruit-store. The construction of the allegory between objects and instant gratification has been part of the text of the *Book of True Love* since its beginning until its epilogue. The *literary parabola* is presented to the readers through the portrait of the female characters and their kinships and not necessarily through a reliable view of human interactions and social complexities.

As Mikkonen has explained “[v]isual focalization constitutes an interface between the scope of the image and the verbal component in **constructing the sense of a mind**” and as a logical result “[a]ll verbal narrative commentary necessarily suggests a relation with the pictorial information and the visual angle of the images that it accompanies, but what is seen does not have to be in harmony with verbal **information**” (312). The female character of Trotaconventos is finally obtaining her objectives only through the interrelation of mind and flesh. Her agency functions as a subsidiary working in direct connection to the producer to satisfy both the flesh and the intellectual necessities. As a lucrative result in the *Book of True Love*, Lady Plum and Lord Melon get married at the end of this story (891-94). In Pieter Aertsen paintings we find a parallel to this textual image in his *Market Scene with Vegetables and Fruits*, 1567, oil on panel in which we notice the concert between the agriculture and the vendors in a public space called *the market*. Reindert Falkenburg in “Matters of Taste: Pieter Aertsen’s Market Scenes, Eating Habits, and Pictorial Rhetoric in the Sixteenth Century” utters that the Aertsen’s market scenes are associated with a rustic quality and sense of disorder because “[t]he formal presentation of the offerings in Aertsen’s market scenes also has a rustic quality. This is primarily due to the rough, sometimes scarred surface of individual vegetables, especially the pumpkins and

melons" (20). Portraying irregularities in shape and forms shows the way in which the painter chooses to present nature to the viewer. These paintings by Aertsen project a sense of disequilibrium and **discord because "[t]he composition of the produce within the market scenes—that is, the way in which the food has been arranged by the vendors—is not only assertive but also rather disorderly and poorly balanced"** (Falkenburg 20). In Velázquez, on the other hand, we notice the marriage between the plum and melon in his painting *Old Woman Frying Eggs*, 1618. Here a boy with a melon in one hand and a flask of wine in the other symbolizes this union among cultivator, producer, and consumer. The painting invites the viewer to obtain some level of concord and harmony through the aesthetic image of a mature woman and a boy sharing the same geographical space as the recipients of the benefits of the produce obtained by agriculture and the market place—a constant reminder of the interaction between object and subject.

4. Portrait of the female character of Lady Lent

Another noteworthy *exemplum* of this *literary parabola* is clearly established in two highly symbolic parodies: the confrontation between Lord Carnal and Lady Cuaresma (Carnality and Lust against Purity and Abstinence). In this instance of the *Book of True Love*, food proclaims

the separation of a group and symbolizes belonging to a cultural or religious community. In the battle between Lord Carnal (Lord Flesh) and Lady Cuaresma (Lady Lent), the food is not an object; it is the subject (1075-78).

Juan Ruiz shows to the readers a very graphic image of the Lent which is associated with seafood and fasting while the Carnival/Carnality is associated with meat and feasting. Both of these cultural representations are well-painted in the *Book of True Love* (1087-89). In this part of the story not only the quality of food is important, but also the tools to cook it and the high quality of the utensils as well. The narrator makes a clear contrast between the well-equipped army of Lord Flesh versus the potential army of Lady Lent formed by sea creatures. The food is used to designate relationships and activities of a specific group. It marks a differentiation among styles and skills. It represents security and comfort. However, Lord Flesh is defeated by Lady Lent and sent to prison due to overeating and overdrinking during his feast. It is not the fact that Carnality is associated with feasting which provokes the loss of his army, it is the lack of stewardship what leads the army of Lord Flesh to the excess contributing to the victory of his contender. Lady Lent who symbolizes fasting, mind, and moderation wins the battle against Lord Flesh, who symbolizes feasting, body, and surfeit. Lord Flesh has lost his mind

and soul due to overindulgence. As Veronika Grimm explains, “[f]ood habits are a language through which a society expresses itself” and adds that “[e]ating is a social experience and the rituals concerning food have always played an important part in the life of human groups” (3). In this particular *exemplum* of the *literary parabola* in the text, the mind overcomes the flesh. It might also imply that the female character of Lady Lent is able to defeat the masculine character of Lord Flesh, not because she is stronger or more gifted, but because the female character in this specific instance has been able to analyze each situation individually and has exercised self-control, self-moderation, and the self-stability among all the elements that constituted the collective cultural expectations for male and female characters. Still, the story does not end at this point and during the stewardship of Lady Lent the initial structure is reestablished through a new kind of order (1175-78).

The story in the text says that Lady Lent and Lord Ayuno (Lord Fast) went to mass during Palm Sunday taking with them Lord Flesh who then takes advantage of this outing and escapes from custody. Lady Lent went off very hastily into mountains, hills, and finally back to the sea and Lord Flesh defeated Lady Lent. Lord Amor (Lord Love) and Lord Flesh reconvened and both established their supremacy. Lord Flesh is then especially welcomed by male cooks and butchers (1210-

1227), which may signify the frictions between the male character, Lord Flesh, and the female character Lady Lent. In an intent of “tell and show” **instead of “show and tell”**, the author through the narration in **poetry reveals that “graphic narration subjects to doubt the** theoretical presuppositions, prevalent in much narrative theory that is based on literary narrative fiction, concerning the distinction between **telling and showing” (Mikkonen 315)**. It would seem at least that this specific male narrator controls the victory and the non-victory at the textual level through the selection of words, and not necessary through the level of action, which represents some kind of denominator of the predominant cultural context in medieval Spain. It is very interesting to observe that the battle between the flesh and the mind/spirit is well-portrayed by Pieter Bruegel the Elder in his painting *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent*, 1569, where the viewer can observe the constant *mêlée* between the needs and the wants represented through the image of the sellers and the buyers in the marketplace.

Equally important to mention would be that the so-called Lord Love may be seen as a mismatch between the characterization of Lord Love and its level of performance within the text. Love in essence should cover each of the characters under its jurisdiction. Allowing this type of ending for Lady Lent in the *name of love* without the possibility

of redemption and grace demonstrates the cultural context in which the book is written and the female characters are portrayed through the narration and selection of words. Another intercultural effect takes place presented in a photographic bilateral dimension: the presence of the “good and true love” functions as the sangfroid to achieve the control between both extremes. From this point on the representation of objects—and subjects—in the following parts of the text remains in concert with the lack of equilibrium between mind and flesh. The possibility of an active and a contemplative life symbolized by the Palm Sunday is lost and concludes with the exit of Lady Lent as the ultimate sacrifice allegorized by the sea to save the objects—who are the subjects within the text. At the literary level, the character of Lady Lent is never treated in the same way that the rest of the characters. Since a biblical perspective—based on the New Testament—Lady Lent never receives the meaning of Easter, which brings the text to function only under the law of the Old Testament without taking into account the grace of love of the epistles in the New Testament. However, at the textual and allegorical level, Lady Lent returns to a topographical space that represents the freedom found in the mountains, hills and sea which in some degree may be interpreted as some kind of the *divine reward* and *poetic justice* granted to this female character within this specific cultural landscape.

5. Conclusions and post considerations

In the same way that Kai Mikkonen concludes that “[t]he examples that I [Mikkonen] have discussed all portray characters in action **within social environments**” (317), this reading has selected specific *exempla* of the *literary parabola* inserted in the *Book of True Love* that contribute to the cultural landscape defined by the textual production in the medieval Spain and yet present later during the 16th and 17th century in the European art. In both cases, the modern comic and the **classical caricature “[t]he impersonal perspective of a visual narrative can create a sense of a storyworld simply by showing a world in a sequence of images” (Mikkonen 317).**

Based on this study, we may answer the question that originated it: what is the *role* of specific words as the main essence of the narration and its implications in the construction of the cultural landscape? Words related to objects and subjects play a more significant role than only the means to obtain nutrition, acceptance and comfort. Its symbolic value in the construction of a cultural topography is calculated through its function to initiate and maintain personal and interpersonal relationships. It demonstrates the nature and quality of those relationships; it determinates the degree of

knowledge required for professions and occupations; it may function as reward or punishment; words identifies social status, and proclaims union or lack of unity. The portrait of the female characters in the *Book of True Love* displays the disparity between words and action; between narration and image; between action and contemplation because very often “[i]n reading visual narratives we often see the mind in action from a focalized perspective, or through a figure in action” (Mikkonen 316). The stewardship of flesh and mind begins and ends with words. Words and their meaning by cultural context reveal the agencies, capitals, and resources to obtain and preserve the vital equilibrium between the active and contemplative *modus operandi*; words identify the relationships between the individual and the collective shared space; words bring to light the interrelation between the inner and the outer poise of the mind, soul, and heart.

In the *Book of True Love*, words show examples or models of what may be considered lack of love and what is considered *good love*. The domestic style of life is brought to the artistic level through pictorial representations and photographic textual production which represent the dialogue among the art and the text and “[o]n the whole, an important aspect in graphic narratives is the versatility of the forms of relation between verbal narration and visual focalization.

Graphic narratives in general manipulate this relation and cause it to **undergo changes in the course of the narrative**" (Mikkonen 318).

The difference, resistance and strain between genders are compiled in the *literary parabola* of the *Book of True Love* through the linguistic inventory of words that illustrates, not only the tension between genders, but also the unrest of relations between cultures and beliefs within each gender. The constant fluctuation between the narration in poetry and the implied authorship adds a new degree of difficulty to interpret the text and the image portrayed of the female **characters because "[i]n first-person narratives, the thought balloons can be further accompanied by a continuing narratorial voice, which is differently marked off in the space of the image"** (Mikkonen 319). It is necessary to indicate, as well, that the complexity of the textual image of the female characters in the *Book of Truth Love* are in some cases misconstrued by the narration of an autographical text that in principle intends being read as an *exemplum* of moral lesson. In this regard, Kai Mikkonen warns us **that the "[i]ndirect speech, by contrast, as in reported thought of a third-person consciousness, remains doubly indirect, difficult to place within the image, and always in danger of repeating the information given in the image"** (319). Even though this study does not pretend to be exhaustive or absolute, it would be advisable to continue this exploration among the interception of text

and image through words and objects, and its direct resonance in the subjects interacting within the same—or not—cultural scenery.

The readers of the *Book of True Love* must decide by themselves what represents the thesis and what plays the role of the antithesis through the analysis of the selection of the language present in the cultural register of medieval Spain. The text presents to us the consequences of choosing fecund words and the results of the absence of productive words; the difference between a well-prepared feast and a less elaborated-meal; the quality of objects and the absence of them; the necessary skills to create a feast and the absence of skills and culinary formation, thus, the readers must decide between thesis and antithesis. As Anne Lowenthal has informed us, the *object* has the potential capacity to become the *subject* in the pictorial representation, and as this study has demonstrated, the *object* may become the *subject* through the cultural topography of the narrative. At the end of the text, the readers are able to appreciate the victory of the *good love* through the *literary parabola* painted in the *Book of True Love*. From my standpoint, the process of reading and decoding the messages hidden in this medieval fourteenth century *exemplum* is what I may consider the *good and true work*, which was necessary to enter into the rebirth of the Renaissance culture, and later on the flourishing of the Baroque social era. Both of these periods, the

Renaissance and the Baroque conform today what is named for good and true reasons the *Early Modern Spain*.

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When the Time is Right: Does the Length of Maternity Leave Affect Mother-Infant
Attachment and Infant Outcomes?

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Abstract

John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth conducted seminal work during the 1960s to outline the importance of mother-infant interactions during the first year of life. Attachment Theory was developed based on their studies. Since then, extensive research on the theory as well as its effects in infancy and throughout the lifespan have been well documented. A significant event that interrupts attachment during infancy occurs during the year after a mother gives birth. This event is a mother's return to paid employment. Maternal employment during the first year of life has been studied for its effect on both mother and infant. Studies have consistently shown that maternal employment interrupts attachment between mother and infant and can lead to depression and anxiety in both. This study will use data from the Fragile Families data set to examine if there are differences in infant health and mother-infant interactions for mothers who return to work before or after the standard twelve week postpartum period that is allowed through the Family and Medical Leave Act. Findings indicate that length of maternity leave is predictive of the frequency of reading interactions between mother and infant at one-year postpartum.

Timing of Maternal Employment

Introduction

The expectancy and birth of an infant is one of the most celebrated and anxiety-provoking events in life. After delivering a human infant, it is widely accepted that recovery time is essential. The physical recovery from childbirth, demanding needs of an infant, the search for adequate childcare, coupled with the related sleep disturbance often experienced by new mothers and fathers, make for a stressful first year for infant and family. For working women, two primary questions that have lingered in both research and popular circles has been how much recovery time is needed and when can a mother return to paid employment following childbirth. These questions have been addressed from the physical aspects of recovery for the parent as well as the psychological aspect of developing a secure attachment between mother and infant (Klein, Hyde, Essex, & Clark, 1998).

The length of time that a mother takes off from work following childbirth has traditionally been called maternity leave. A current gender-neutral term that has been used is parental leave. For this paper, the term maternity leave will be used due to the focus on mother-infant outcomes. In the United States the legislation that addresses the issue of maternity leave is the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA). The act permits 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to natural and adoptive parents following the birth or adoption of a child. When the act was initially implemented, it appeared to be a victory for working mothers. However, if looked at closely, the law does not provide paid leave and only applies to companies with 50 or more employees. Perhaps partially based on the standards set by the FMLA, Hock and DeMeis (1990)

found that the average time taken for maternity leave was 3 months. Six weeks of maternity leave had also become a popular length of leave in the U.S. Hyde (1995) however postulated that six weeks of leave was an inadequate amount of time to promote maternal well-being or strong mother-child bond.

In most U.S. work environments, the announcement of a pregnancy is often coupled with uncertainty on both the employee and employer's part. Mothers do not know how their labour and delivery will go, and so often want to take a wait-and-see approach about their return to work. Employers, on the other hand, are looking at losing an employee for an unspecified amount of time and the need to maintain productivity regardless of the employee's absence. Although it's been almost twenty years since the FMLA was passed, maternity or parental leave remains a hot topic in the U.S and abroad (Baxter, 2009).

The United States seems to stand out based on its maternal leave policies. In most countries around the world, parents are provided with job-protected, often paid leaves following the birth of a child (Gornick, Meyers, & Ross, 1998). Sweden is well known among working mothers as the country with the most desirable maternal leave policy. Both mothers and fathers can receive 90% of one parent's wages for up to nine months following childbirth (Scarr, Phillips, & McCartney, 1989). Unpaid job-protected leave is also provided until the child reaches eighteen months of age. In addition, parents can work only six hours per day until their child reaches age eight.

Canada, the United States' neighbor, has also provided generous maternal leaves to both mothers and fathers. Until late 2001, Canadians were allowed up to 10 months of job-protected leave for both mothers and fathers. However, in the fall of

2001, the Canadian government changed its policy to twelve months of job-protected leave for parents at 80% of the pre-birth salary (Evans, 2007). Many other countries (Gornic et al., 1998) have similar policies to Canada and Sweden and advocates for better maternal leave policies in the United States have been steadily conducting research to offer scientific evidence of the importance for parent and child to be together during the first year after birth (Hyde, 1995; Hock & DeMeis, 1990). This study is a continuation in the line of research that examines the optimal length of maternity leave. The now standard twelve weeks of maternity leave that is provided via the FMLA will be a focus of this paper. A guiding question in this study is whether the standard twelve weeks of leave fosters an appropriate level of attachment between mother and infant.

Literature Review

Attachment theory

John Bowlby (1969) in one of his earliest works on attachment, believed that the process of attachment was an instinctual response that served to protect the young infant from harm and predators. This attachment is formed early in life and is particularly geared towards the infant's primary caretaker. Bowlby's Attachment Theory stemmed from his observations of homeless children and children who were separated from their parents for brief and extended periods of times. After extensive observations and data recording, Bowlby concluded that "What is believed to be essential for mental health is that the infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his mother (or permanent mother-substitute) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment." (Bowlby, 1982, p. xi). A central tenet of Attachment

Theory is that feelings of alarm and anxiety accompany separation from attachment figures (Bowlby, 1973).

In his studies of children who were in institutional settings such as hospital wards, residential nurseries, and foster homes, Bowlby (1973) observed that brief separations from the parents lead to intense emotional responses in young children. The children often displayed intense behaviours of protest (screaming, crying, and clinging to familiar objects), followed by despair and detachment. These observations led Bowlby to conclude that “separation from mother figure is in itself a key variable in determining a child’s emotional state and behavior” (p. 22).

Mary Ainsworth and her colleagues conducted one of the first famous experimental studies of attachment and separation. These studies involved the creation of the Strange Situation laboratory procedure that was comprised of 8 3-minute episodes in a playroom, with a mother, her child, and a stranger present and absent in the rooms during different episodes (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970). The reactions of all the children in the study (N = 56) were so similar in intensity and type that this experiment received a great deal of attention.

Mary Ainsworth’s studies of mother-infant dyads during the strange situation test revealed that when infants were separated from their mothers and a stranger was introduced, there were four distinct types of responses from the infants upon their mother’s return. Some infants were securely attached to their mothers and although they cried and tried to search for their mother, they greeted her happily when they were reunited. Other infants were anxiously-ambivalently attached and when reunited with their mothers they alternated between going near their mothers and going away from

their mothers. These infants also had trouble resuming play activities when their mothers returned. The next group of infants that were identified were the avoidant attached infants. As the name implies, when these babies were reunited with their mothers, they wanted little to do with her. The fourth response set was the disorganized-disoriented type of infant. This child would approach the mother and at the same time avoid her as she came near.

The Strange Situation experiment is part of the foundation from which attachment theory was developed by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (Bowlby, 1973, 1988; Broderick & Blewitt, 2010; Rosen & Rothbaum, 1993). Bowlby's theory of attachment essentially stated that infants and their mothers have certain behaviours such as clinging and smiling that are designed to keep mother and infant close, thereby creating in the infant a feeling of security and enhancing chances for survival (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). After attachment theory was introduced, studies have been conducted to determine the effects that secure and insecure attachments may have on children .

One of these studies was conducted by Schneider-Rosen and Rothbaum (1993). In a study of 62 children with an average age of 21 months, Schneider-Rosen and Rothbaum (1993), found that mothers of securely attached infants were more responsive to the needs of their children compared to mothers with insecurely attached infants. Another study showed that mothers can also develop an attachment style towards their infant. Crowell and Feldman (1991) observed mother-infant dyads during a separation and reunion process. The results confirmed the effect of attachment style on infant development and revealed three types of mothers in terms of attachment style: secure, dismissing, and preoccupied. For all three groups, their infants played quietly

after separation and made few outbursts about the separation. It is the mothers' behaviours at separation that distinguished the three groups. Securely attached mothers prepared their infants for the separation, were affectionate, and showed little anxiety about leaving. Upon reuniting they approached their infants and their infants were accepting. For the dismissing mothers, separation was marked by little preparation and reunion was marked by avoidance between mother and child. For the preoccupied group, anxiety was high and preparation was low upon separation; while avoidance was intensified in both child and mother at reunion.

The reason that attachment is an important topic of discussion is that it can have far-reaching effects into adulthood. The interactions between the child and the caregiver(s) that are formed during infancy are the model from which the child will develop all other close relationships (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). For example, if an infant had distant and neglectful caregiver during infancy, this relationship may lead to the development of a schema of emotionally distant interpersonal relationships. Attachment during infancy has been shown to have an effect on cognitive and personality development (Bowlby, 1973); childhood behaviours (Erickson, Sroufe, and Egeland, 1985, as cited in Broderick and Blewitt ,2010); and adult relationships (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan and Shaver, 1987).

Attachment is an important part of human development that begins during the prenatal stage, and can have far reaching implications into adulthood life. Examining attachment during the early stages of life can provide clues on how to strengthen the process and minimize potentially negative outcomes later in life.

The Strange Situation experiments showed how distressing separation between infant and mother can be. It was noted that during the course of life a natural form of the strange situation experiment occurs on a daily basis and leads to the separation of mother and infant. This occurrence is the separation that takes place when a working mother returns to work following the birth of a child. In fact, one line of research that has specifically addressed anxieties that occur when mother return to work was pioneered by Ellen Hock and associates at Ohio State University in the early 1990s.

Maternal Separation Anxiety

Hock and colleagues (DeMeis, Hock, & McBride, 1986; Hock & DeMeis, 1990) found that mothers who worked outside of the home and wanted to work outside of the home were less anxious than mothers who wanted to stay at home but who had to work. The type of anxiety was coined maternal separation anxiety. It was noted by DeMeis et al. (1986) that working mothers often have to perform a balancing act between career and family life. As they described “ A crucial balance of separation and closeness provides an optimal context for meeting the needs and promoting the healthy development of both mother and child (DeMeis et al., p. 801).

Subsequent studies on maternal separation anxiety kept the theme of mother's preference about working or staying at home (Buffardi & Erdwins, 1997; Hock, McBride, & Gnezda, 1989). Most working mothers are not able to exercise a preference to stay at home due to economic constraints that lead to the need for them to be employed. A mother's return to paid employment following the birth of her child is often dictated by her need to support a family which is subsequently dictated by her employer's policy on

maternity leave. Currently in the United States most employers base their maternity leave decisions on FMLA legislature.

Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993

The FMLA is the only federal law that addresses the amount of time that a working mother is allowed to take following the birth or adoption of a child. The FMLA was signed into law by President Bill Clinton after eight years of congressional hearings and two amendments to the original bill that was proposed in 1985 (Prohaska & Zipp, 2011). It provides for twelve weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to natural or adoptive parents following the birth or adoption of a child to people who work for companies with fifty or more employees. The employees must also have worked at least 1,250 hours in the prior year in order to be eligible for leave. Compared to other industrial nations, the FMLA has three unique features; 1) it is unpaid; 2) it includes multiple generations, and 3) it is dependent on the size of the company. This federal parental leave bill has been criticized by many due to the fact that it is unpaid and provides a small amount of maternity leave for working mothers, compared to the provisions given in other countries (Hyde, 1995; Earle, Mokomane, & Heymann, 2013). As mentioned earlier, many countries provide for a standard six months or more paid maternity leave to new mothers.

One of the pioneers in research on maternal leave is Dr. Janet Hyde. In 1983 Dr. Hyde initiated the Wisconsin Maternity Leave and Health Project (WMLH) in order to address “the scandalous lack of maternity leave policy in the United States” (Hyde, 1995, p. 303). The WMLH was a collaborative, first-of-its-kind project that aimed to investigate maternity leave, mental and physical health, and relationship outcomes in a

large-scale, longitudinal manner. A sample of 570 women and 550 of their husband/partners were recruited for the study with an overwhelming number of the sample being Caucasian (93%) and married (95%), with a mean age of 29 (Hyde, 1995; Hyde et al, 1996). Interviews were conducted during the second trimester, and at one, four, and twelve months postpartum. Mothers were also videotaped at four months postpartum during interactions with their infants. Fathers were interviewed by phone at the same times as mothers. Measures of depression, anger, anxiety, self-esteem, role quality, employment status, role congruence, infant temperament, satisfaction with division of labour, occupational status, and employment preference were taken. Length of leave was computed by counting the number of weeks between childbirth and a mother's return to work.

Significant results included findings that a maternal leave of six weeks or less was associated with increased depression for mothers in failing marriages. This was when compared to women who took leaves of twelve weeks or more or those with leave of six weeks or less but with no marital difficulties. The authors concluded that length of leave was a risk factor for negative mental health outcomes when combined with marital discord.

Another investigator used the WMLH Project data and found that at twelve weeks postpartum there were significant differences on mental health measures (depression, anxiety, and anger) when viewed in terms of employment preference and status variables (Klein et al., 1998). Mothers who preferred a different work status than the one they had were more anxious, depressed, and angry than mothers who liked their current work status.

Since Hyde's seminal work in the area of maternal leave, many others have investigated this issue from multiple perspectives including whether the availability of leave affects the return to work (Baxter, 2009); how the length of leave affects mother-child interactions (Clark, Hyde, Essex, and Klein, 1997); the effect on women in the workforce (Joesch, 1994); and from a lifespan perspective, specifically how much regret a mother feels about returning to work (Wiese & Ritter, 2012). One study that has specifically looked at how interactions between child and mother are affected by when a mother returns to work was conducted by Clark et al. (1997). This study was guided by prior knowledge that infants have many emotional, physiological, and attachment needs during the first year of life, and that these needs are best met through a reciprocal, affectively-laden relationship with the mother. The authors proposed that a mother's return to work before she is ready to return may hinder the developmental needs of the infant (Clark et al., 1997).

For their study, Clark et al. (1997) interviewed a total of 541 women and videotaped interactions between 379 participants and their infants at 4 months of age. Mothers and infants were videotaped during feeding time, a structured task, and during free play. Behaviours were coded using a relational assessment scale that included items for tone of voice, affect, mood, responsivity, visual contact, verbalizations, alertness, and many other factors. Other measures included length of maternity leave, mother's depressive symptoms, maternal and physical health, financial stress, parental stress, infant temperament, number of hours worked per week, and marital communication and support. The results showed mothers who reported more depressive symptoms and had shorter maternity leave (six weeks or less) were

observed to have less positive affect, sensitivity, and responsiveness to their infants. Mothers who reported less depressive symptoms had positive interactions with their child regardless of the length of leave.

The authors (Clark et al., 1997) concluded that the effect of the amount of time that a mother takes following childbirth is moderated by characteristics of infant and mother as well as family and work factors. Limitations of the investigation included the use of a primarily middle to upper-middle class sample of Caucasian (92.4%) women who were highly educated (36.4% with college degree); and a cross-sectional analysis of interactions between mother and infant. They suggest a replication of the investigation with a longitudinal approach and with additional moderating and mediating variables such as availability of flex work schedules and quality of nonmaternal care is warranted.

Purpose of the study

The current investigation is designed to continue this line of research by examining the relationship between the length of maternity leave, infant health, mother's mental health status, and attachment between mother and infant. Given that attachment between a mother and her newborn has shown to be critical for human development, it is wondered if an early separation between mother and child that is forced due to economic necessities will have an effect on mother-child attachment. Although there have been studies on attachment, maternal separation anxiety, the FMLA, and maternity leave, there has been few studies to investigate any combination of these areas. The Clark et al. (1997) study has been one of the most comprehensive studies to date. However, they looked at six weeks of maternity leave. This study will

examine the twelve week maternity leave that is provided by the FMLA. Clark et al. (1997) suggested a replication of their study with longitudinal data and additional moderating variables such as flexible work schedules and quality of nonmaternal infant care. In their study, the majority of the respondents (over 90%) were middle to upper-middle class Caucasian women. This study will address some of the suggestions made by Clark et al. (1997) to expand on this area of research. This study is part of a longitudinal study and is comprised of primarily African-American and Hispanic lower income single mothers. Another unique aspect of this study is that it will examine the effect of the twelve week leave that is provided by the FMLA.

Based on prior findings, the following hypotheses will be examined:

- a. Mothers who return to work after taking twelve weeks or more of maternity leave will report more positive parent-child interactions at one year follow-up, compared to mothers who take less than twelve weeks of leave.
- b. Mothers who return to work after taking less than twelve weeks of maternity leave will report more illness in infants during the first year, compared to mothers who return to work after twelve weeks or more maternity leave.

Data and Methods

The data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study will be used for this research. The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study is a multi-city (20 cities), longitudinal (5 waves of data collection) research project that was designed to address three major concerns of family policymakers— how does non-marital childbearing work, what is the father's role following a birth, and what welfare reforms are needed (Reichman, Teitler, Garfinkel, & McLanahan, 2001). Policymakers were interested in

knowing how fragile families function in terms of the relationship between mothers and fathers, the conditions that keep them together or lead to separations, and the effect of public policies such as welfare reform on parents' behaviours and living arrangements (Reichmann et al, 2001).

The initial sample consisted of 3,600 unmarried couples and 1,110 married couples who were first interviewed immediately following the hospital birth of their child, and then at one year, three years, and five years post-partum. In-home assessments were also conducted at 30 and 48 months postpartum. Questionnaires addressed major areas such as prenatal care; parent relationships; expectations about father's rights and responsibilities; social support; attitude towards marriage; parents' health; education; employment, income; and knowledge of local policies. For additional detail about the Fragile Families study sample and design, see Reichman et al. (2001).

The full sample of mothers at one-year follow-up was $N = 4,898$. Since this study was focused on working mothers, mothers who did not provide a positive response to the return to work variable were excluded from all analyses. By selecting for mothers who responded to this variable, the sample size was reduced to $N=2,760$.

Independent Variables

The independent variables include mother's age, marital status, work status, income, and length of maternity leave. Mother's age and marital status were constructed variables. Marital status was measured by the question that asked about the mother's relationship with the child's father at one-year follow-up. Response choices for this question included "married," "romantically involved cohabiting," "romantically involved some visitation," "separated/divorced/widowed," and "not in

relationship.” This variable was dummy coded (marital = 1). Work status was measured by the question “Were you working full/part-time when returned to work after child born?” Response choices included 1=part-time and 2=full-time. Income was measured at the total household income before taxes and had eight categories ranging from less than \$5,000 to more than \$60,000. Length of maternity leave was measured by the question “How old was child when you went back to work after child was born?” This was measured in months. To capture the twelve week maternity leave provided by the FMLA, this variable was also dummy coded (twelve weeks or more = 1).

Dependent variables

To assess child’s health at one year follow-up, the question “How many times since birth has child been to health care professional for illness” was used. The responses to this question ranged from 1 to 90. To measure attachment between mother and child, several measures were used. One was the question “was child ever breastfed” (1=Yes and 2=No). This was recoded to 0=No and 1 = Yes. Then a series of questions that indicated parent-child attachment interactions were used. These questions asked the number of days each week that mom “played peek-a-boo or gotcha”; “sing songs or nursery rhymes”; “read stories”; “tell stories”; “play with toys such as blocks or Legos”; “hug or show physical affection”; and “put child to bed.” Response ranged from 1 to 7 days per week and also had aggregate responses such as several times per week, several times per month, and never. Three of these variables were selected as target measures to be used in this study. They were recoded to remove values such as those represented several days per month or week.

The chosen variables were the ones that measured reading, hugging, and playing interactions between mother and child.

For this study, multiple linear regression analyses were utilized to see if a child's health one year after birth and mother-infant interactions could be predicted by the mother's age, marital status, household income, work status, or length of maternity leave.

Results

A summary of the descriptive statistics for all variables are included in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 reports means, standard deviations, and ranges for continuous variables, while Table 2 reports frequencies and percentages for dichotomous variables.

Insert Table 1 about here

Insert Table 2 about here

The results of the multiple regression models for child's health and the four attachment variables (breastfeeding, reading, hugging, and playing) can be seen in Tables 3 through 7, respectively. The coefficients for mother's age, marital status, household income, work status, and length of maternity leave are listed in these tables.

Insert Table 3 about here

Insert Table 4 about here

Insert Table 5 about here

Insert Table 6 about here

Insert Table 7 about here

Results indicate that in terms of mother-infant interactions reading behavior could be predicted by the length of maternity leave ($t=2.643, p<.01$). That is, the longer the leave then the more frequently a mother reads to her child. Other significant findings are that a mother's age ($t=2.701, p<.01$) and marital status ($t=11.078, p<.01$) had a positive influence on breastfeeding. Marital status also had a positive influence on the frequency with a mother gave her child hugs or showed affection ($t=2.969, p<.01$). A mother's age also negatively influenced the frequency with which she played with her child. As mother's age increased she was less likely to play with her child with toys or Legos. The mother-infant interaction that showed the most significant correlation with the independent variables is reading. Positive correlations were found for mother's age ($t=.187, p<.05$), marital status ($t=2.885, p<.01$), work status ($t=-2.114, p<.05$), and length

of maternity leave ($t=2.643$, $p<.01$). Mothers who were older, married, worked part-time, and took maternity leaves that were longer than twelve weeks reported reading more often to their children.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study began as an exploration of the connection between mother-infant attachment and the role that length of maternity leave had on maternal and infant outcomes. The result indicated that for attachment behaviours such as reading, hugging, and playing with the child, length of maternity leave could predict only reading behaviours. Infant health was not able to be predicted by any of the independent variables chosen for this study. Therefore, mothers who took more time off work following childbirth were likely to read more often to their child, one year postpartum.

The implications of this finding is that longer maternity leaves may lead to more attachment between mother and infant. Since attachment has been linked to positive outcomes in children, anything that fosters attachment between mother and child should be encouraged by society. These results indicate that one reason to promote longer maternity leave for mothers could be to increase attachment during infancy, which may lead to improved outcome throughout the lifespan. Though the findings for the three attachment variables were mixed, there is potential for future research in this area.

Replications of this study could include a reliable, standardized, and valid measure of attachment. The variables used to measure attachment in this study were single variables that may not capture the full complexity of attachment behaviours. Another suggestion for future research would be to include all of the variables that measured mother-infant interactions in this study. Only three of the eight mother-infant

interactions were included in this study. Since the finding was that maternity leaves greater than twelve weeks promoted reading between mother and child, additional analyses could look at leave times that are greater than twelve weeks to determine if there is an optimal time that mothers can take maternity leave without jeopardizing the connections that they have formed with their newborns.

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Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Sample Size for Mother's age and Child's Age when Return to Work, and Child Visits to the Doctor for Illness Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Mother's age	26.19	5.862	16-46
Child's Age Return to Work (in months)	4.63	3.00	1-18
Child visits for illness	3.62	5.778	0-90

Table 2. Frequencies, Percentages, and Sample Size for Marital Status, Work Status, Household Income, Length of Maternity Leave, and Breastfeedind

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Sample Size
Marital Status			N = 2,755
Married	2006	27.1	
Non-married	749	72.7	
Work Status			
Full-time	1676	60.7	
Part-time	1082	39.2	
Total Household Income			N = 819
0 – 10,000	377	13.7	
10,001 – 20,000	154	5.6	
20,001 – 30,000	107	3.9	
30,001 – 40,000	47	1.7	
40,001 – 60,000	76	2.8	
More than 60, 000	58	2.1	
Length of Maternity Leave			N=2,760
Less than 12 weeks	897	32.5	
12 weeks or more	1,863	67.5	
Breastfeed			N=2,760
Yes	1,498	54.3	
No	1,249	45.3	

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analyses: The Effects of Mother's Age, Marital Status, Work Status, Household Income, and Length of Maternity Leave on the Frequency of Visits to the Doctor for Infant Illness

Independent Variables	Model
Mother's Age	.024/.025 (.020)
Marital Status	.255/.020 (.265)
Work Status	.395/.034 (.223)
Household Income	-.010/-.008 (.024)
Length of Maternity Leave	.021/.00 (.236)
Intercept	2.243
N	2,754
R ²	.003
Adjusted R ²	.001

Note: Cell entries are given as unstandardized regression coefficient/standardized (beta) coefficient with the standard error given in parentheses. * p < .05 ** p < .01

Table 4. Multiple Regression Analyses: The Effects of Mother's Age, Marital Status, Work Status, Household Income, and Length of Maternity Leave on Breastfeeding

Independent Variables	Model
Mother's Age	.005/.054** (.002)
Marital Status	.246/.220** (.022)
Work Status	-.012/-.012 (.019)
Household Income	-.001/-.006 (.002)
Length of Maternity Leave	.028/.026 (.020)
Intercept	.357
N	2,741
R ²	.061
Adjusted R ²	.059

Note: Cell entries are given as unstandardized regression coefficient/standardized (beta) coefficient with the standard error given in parentheses. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 5. Multiple Regression Analyses: The Effects of Mother's Age, Marital Status, Work Status, Household Income, and Length of Maternity Leave on Frequency of Times Mother and Child Hug

Independent Variables	Model
Mother's Age	-.001/-.009 (.002)
Marital Status	.075/.058** (.028)
Work Status	-.022/-.019 (.023)
Household Income	.001/.010 (.002)
Length of Maternity Leave	.016/.013 (.024)
Intercept	6.9268
N	2,754
R ²	.004
Adjusted R ²	.002

Note: Cell entries are given as unstandardized regression coefficient/standardized (beta) coefficient with the standard error given in parentheses. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 6. Multiple Regression Analyses: The Effects of Mother's Age, Marital Status, Work Status, Household Income, and Length of Maternity Leave on Frequency of Times Mother and Child Play

Independent Variables	Model
Mother's Age	-.016/.045* (.007)
Marital Status	.134/.061 (.089)
Work Status	-.008/-.008 (.074)
Household Income	.012/.032 (.008)
Length of Maternity Leave	.064/.038 (.078)
Intercept	6.248
N	2,754
R ²	.004
Adjusted R ²	.002

Note: Cell entries are given as unstandardized regression coefficient/standardized (beta) coefficient with the standard error given in parentheses. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 7. Multiple Regression Analyses: The Effects of Mother's Age, Marital Status, Work Status, Household Income, and Length of Maternity Leave on Frequency of Times Mother and Child Read Stories

Independent Variables	Model
Mother's Age	.002/.004* (.008)
Marital Status	.321/.062** (.111)
Work Status	-.195/-.042* (.092)
Household Income	.002/-.004 (.010)
Length of Maternity Leave	.258/.053** (.097)
Intercept	4.210
N	2,754
R ²	.009
Adjusted R ²	.007

Note: Cell entries are given as unstandardized regression coefficient/standardized (beta) coefficient with the standard error given in parentheses. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Running head: Empowerment of Immigrant Mothers

The Empowerment of Immigrant Mothers Through Mental Health Literacy

**Article Submission: Women at Crossroads Conference: Literacy, Leadership,
Power and Technology.**

Orlando, February 2014

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February 8, 2014

Abstract

New immigrants to Canada are identified as a vulnerable population in terms of mental health and, as a result, organizations are signaling the need to enhance their mental health supports. The article highlights a research study that used focus groups and questions based on the messaging of a Canadian school mental health program to understand how new immigrant mothers interpret and develop key aspects of their mental health literacy and how they attain parent empowerment. A thematic assessment of the knowledge, interpretation, proposed actions and decision-making of the study participants (n=7), all recent immigrants to Canada and mothers of high school students, shows the potential of new immigrant mothers to strive towards self-efficacy at the same time that it points to barriers that need to be overcome along this path. These findings are supported by four main themes: the maternal role in mental health maintenance of protector, mother as communicator, informed views and support of mental illness, and myths and illusions of mental illness. This study demonstrates that new immigrant mothers appreciate the importance of fostering mental health understanding and discussion with their children at the same time that they encounter obstacles to the advancement of their mental health literacy.

Keywords: mental health literacy, parent empowerment, new immigrants, mental health awareness programming

Introduction and Literature Review

New immigrants to Canada are identified as a vulnerable population in mental health and, as a result, organizations are signaling the need to enhance their mental health supports. The purpose of this article is to share how the empowerment of new immigrant mothers through mental health literacy was fostered, and to consider the findings in terms of the development of self-efficacy amongst this group.

According to census data there are just over six million newcomers in Canada, one in five (19.8%) of the total population (Canada, 2007). This fact is a catalyst behind the signal to increase mental health supports for immigrants, refugees, ethno-cultural and racialized groups (MHCC, 2012, p. 82) amongst whom “an increased rate of illnesses, poorer access to care and care outcomes and poorer satisfaction with services in these groups in Canada and internationally” has been documented due to incidence of one or more negative conditions of social determinants of health (MHCC, 2009, p. 6). There are many mental health risk factors for new immigrants, including religious/cultural differences affecting mental health attitudes in their households, the stigma associated with mental illness, the upheaval of resettlement facing new immigrants, cultural barriers and economic constraints, and lack of information and health literacy (Reitmanova & Gustafson, 2009, p. 615).

Considering religious and cultural differences, in a study that assessed the settlement and program needs of immigrant youth, Van Ngo (2009) exposed the increased vulnerability that young newcomers to Canada face on this level. Factors identified by Van Ngo and other researchers as catalysts for challenging life experiences were linguistic, acculturative, psychological, economic, or linked to the stress of

migration (Pereirra & Ornelas, 2011, p. 196; Van Ngo, 2009, p. 82). Van Ngo points to a spectrum of physical and mental health challenges as a result of socioeconomic status, malnutrition, religious and cultural “taboos and practice preventing access to health education,” and country of origin particularly for individuals who come from countries haunted by atrocities such as war, genocide, oppression, racism and discrimination (p. 84). The impression is left that immigrant youth often find themselves torn between cultural ties in their families of origin and the new ties they aspire to build as they attempt to assimilate in school and community settings (Van Ngo, 2009).

Research also suggests that immigrants have unique mental health experiences as a result of mental health stigma. Abdullah and Brown (2011) define mental illness stigma as the devaluing, disgracing, and disfavoring by the general public of individuals with mental illnesses. They suggest that mental illness stigma is a serious problem because of its many harmful effects on stigmatized individuals including a reluctance by others to interact with a person suffering from mental illness and limited access to employment opportunities (p. 935). Abdullah and Brown (2011) argue that mental illness stigma has higher prevalence amongst cultural populations. Rao, Feinglass, and Corrigan (2007) recommend that stigma be considered separately amongst cultural populations (not merely as a pattern amongst a general population) since diagnoses of mental illness are given based on deviations from sociocultural or behavioral norms. In other words, Rao et al. (2007) argue that mental illness is deeply tied to culture and other determinants, and as such mental illness stigma is likely to vary across cultures (p. 935).

Stodolska (2008), who cites Portes and Rumbaut (2001), adds that experience of resettlement itself, which may include loss, change, conflict and demands, can take its

toll on an immigrant's emotional state (p. 36). In fact, the experience of resettlement is intense, and often recent, remaining fresh in the minds of new immigrants. This suggests that countries welcoming new immigrants need to pay attention to their psychosocial needs, particularly at the start of their settlement process.

From a standpoint related to mental health literacy, cultural barriers and economic challenges facing new immigrants make it more difficult to access and make sense of relevant health information and this can exacerbate health literacy difficulties (Kreps et al., 2008). Aday (1994) identifies a challenge in "estimating the prevalence and health status of vulnerable people" on the basis of limited, incomplete, and poor quality data stemming from medical diagnosis, health and other government records and individual patient self-reporting (p. 495). This pattern is often intensified by the fact that new immigrants often have a difficult time accessing and navigating health services and information: whether it is finding a family physician or understanding critical information due to language or lack of familiarity with the system (Reitmanova & Gustafson, 2011). These are examples of challenges that immigrants face stemming from a lack of health literacy. This is significant given the many demands that settling in a new country creates, compounded with cultural differences and possibly language barriers. MHCC (2009) also states that at various life stages, in particular migration, the danger is tied to personal stress "at a time when the social safety-net may be weaker" (p. 15). This suggests that immigrants are at highest risk for negative mental health patterns upon their arrival and thus warrants studying the most recent newcomers and their empowerment needs in mental health literacy.

Community and School Based Mental Health Programs

It has been suggested that mental health promotion can play a key role in improving the public's understanding and response to mental disorders (Kelly et al., 2007). These authors demonstrated that "first aid skills" in mental health were deficient, meaning that both adults and adolescents did not understand how to adequately respond to mental health urgencies (Kelly et al., 2007, p. 83). Kelly et al. (2007) credited mental health interventions including school-based programmes, for their capacity to change public beliefs and response to mental health concerns through the enhancement of mental health literacy.

An example of a school-based intervention is an awareness program titled "Talking About Mental Illness" (TAMI). The goal of the program is to help youth understand mental health issues and reduce mental health stigma. This program is being delivered to high school students nationally in Canada. The program recognizes the need for youth to be able to communicate about mental illness with their family (CAMH, 2001, p. 10).

Parents and School-based Mental Health Programming

A scan of relevant literature on the specific role of parents in successful school-based mental health programming outcomes the findings was very limited. While there is an abundance of material available on the role of parents in the delivery of mental health services, the literature predicated their involvement on the basis of their child being in treatment or in need of help, not for the broader mental health of children as a whole. A limitation of this overall finding is that the research to date has assumed a reactive approach more common with mental illness diagnosis instead of a preventative, proactive

overall mental health and well-being stance. Nonetheless, the concept of parent involvement in the effective delivery of programs emanated from the results of youth program studies (Johansson et al., 2007; Phillipson et al., 2009; Pinto-Foltz et al., 2011).

Phillipson et al. (2009) emphasized how “high school students clearly communicated the important role of their parents in decisions concerning health service usage,” (p. 58). This finding supports a role for parents in help-seeking behaviour.

Other studies confirm that a common tendency amongst teenagers is to speak to their mothers about mental health related issues and other sensitive health issues such as sex (Jaccard, Dittus & Gordon, 2000; Lindsey et al., 2010; Wisdom & Agnor, 2007). In addition, studies associate mothers with main caregiving responsibilities (Farinelli & Guerrero, 2011; Grewal et al., 2005).

Similarly, a study that explored how Latina mothers perceive mental health and mental health promotion found mothers to be “monitors of their children’s emotional needs” (Vera & Conner, 2007, p. 235). This study also found that ethnic mothers understood how stability and happiness contribute to a person’s mentally healthy outlook, and that mental health is interpersonal in nature (Vera & Conner, 2007, p. 235).

In summary, mothers have consistently been viewed as gatekeepers to their children’s mental health, which could be attributed to gender roles and higher emotional sensitivity and acuity for females. It also appears that ethnic minority women understand the importance of strong emotional support of their children. These findings support this study’s direction of examining how new immigrant mothers perceive their role in maintaining their children’s mental health.

Parent Empowerment in building mental health literacy

Helfinger and Bickman (1996) made a significant contribution to the concept of family empowerment which became widely used in the late 1980's in mental health and social services (p. 105). While Heflinger and Bickman (1996) found that family empowerment had no single definition, they cite Vanderslice's definition of the term as a "process through which people become more able to influence those people and organizations that affect their lives and the lives of those they care about," (p. 105). They suggested that "programs that teach skills to promote access to needed information and resources" (p.106) could be helpful in enhancing the capacity of parents (p. 106). Further, they postulated that the "facet of self-efficacy," defined as "parents' belief that their involvement in their children's mental health treatment will make a difference" (p. 106) to be a more motivating and necessary component to empowerment (p. 106). To that effect, Bickman et al. (1998) see empowerment as thorough knowledge combined with high levels of self-efficacy promoting an active role in an experience. He also defines self-efficacy as the personal "beliefs and expectations that a parent has about being able to acquire and participate in the mental health treatment services for his or her child" (p. 271).

A limitation of the entire empowerment concept is its reactive, narrow focus on mental health services and not on mental health awareness. Similar to a differentiation made earlier, the former term is connected to mental illness and is based on an individual patient experience and the latter term is significant for the well-being of the general population. As such, a parent's path of empowerment should not only be confined to whether or not their child is in treatment. However the premise of empowerment as a state of confidence and self-efficacy is still valid.

In this article the empowerment of new immigrant mothers is defined on a similar basis using the same tenets proposed by Heflinger and Bickman (1996) and Bickman et al. (1998) but in the context of mental health literacy (and not mental health services). According to Pinto-Foltz et al. (2011) and consistent with the definition of Kelly et al. (1997) *mental health literacy* is defined as the knowledge and beliefs about mental illness and mental states that assist people in the recognition, management, and prevention of related diseases.

In sum, the purpose of this article is to explore the empowerment of new immigrant mother and their experience of a mental health promotion aimed at their children. The assumptions guiding this research are the following: (1) mothers' knowledge of mental health can positively impact their child's learning outcomes on the issue, (2) mothers have the ability to participate in the learning (mental health promotion) process, and (3) mothers' understanding of mental health can help attain a favourable difference leading to a healthier existence for their child.

Research Questions

The following questions are advanced in conjunction with the theoretical perspectives and arguments outlined in the literature review:

1. *How do new immigrant mothers of South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Eastern European descent perceive their roles with regard to the maintenance of their children's mental health?*
2. *What is the nature of the mental health perceptions and attitudes that TAMI program messaging triggers for new immigrant mothers of South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Eastern European descent?*

3. *How do TAMI mental health messages contribute to and build upon new South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Eastern European immigrant mothers' perceptions of and attitudes toward mental health?*

Methodology

Approach

This study embraces a phenomenological approach and aims to understand empowerment and mental health literacy through the eyes of immigrant mothers from South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Eastern European countries. The approach to inquiry applied to this study was phenomenological given that the research sought to understand “the essence of human experiences as lived by people,” (Creswell, 2009, p.13), in this case, immigrant mothers.

Focus groups have proven to be a reliable and effective research tool in the area of health and mental health, particularly in the following areas of interest linked to this study: understanding attitudes toward depression (Wisdom & Agnor, 2007), help-seeking behaviour (Phillipson et al., 2009) and family occurrences of mental health disorders (Piedra & Byoun, 2012), the efficacy of health interventions and programs (Cashman et al., 2011), the health behaviours of vulnerable populations including immigrants and Aboriginal groups (Dawson et al., 2013), and perspectives on taboo topics (Kitsinger, 1995).

Sample and Procedures

Sample population. The study design included two focus groups to accommodate up to six people per session. Research participants were recruited purposefully. New immigrant mothers of Eastern European, South Asian, and Middle Eastern descent were

selected in order to offer a comparison of mental health perspectives and experiences between the cultures and to understand distinct cultural patterns from common source countries of immigrants to Canada.

The Career Edge Organization committed to this study by supporting the sampling procedure with the goal of selecting new immigrant mothers of Eastern European, South Asian, and Middle Eastern descent. The Career Edge Organization, located in Toronto, Ontario, was approached because of its extensive multi-cultural reach; it runs the Career Bridge Program, a job matching program with a pool of thousands of foreign-trained professional new immigrants from around the world. Furthermore the Career Edge sample population offers several other benefits relevant to this study. Firstly, program participants are recent newcomers to Canada within the last three years. This is consistent with literature review findings that noted that within the three year time frame, the psychological impact of settlement and the settlement needs of immigrants tend to be highest. Secondly, registrants are pre-screened for post-secondary education, fluency in English and workplace communication skills. This meant that participants were able to interact fluently with the researcher in English. All of the pre-screening criteria also provides for homogeneity within the sample.

Selection Criteria. To facilitate participation, the study was conducted in the same city from which the sample was drawn, the Toronto area, where the majority of the Career Bridge program registrants live. Since the study's focus is understanding the immigrant experience of parent empowerment in mental health literacy and since mothers have a role to play in their children's mental well-being and receptivity to behavioural

change that promotes it, the study participant pool was narrowed to women only, and to mothers of children (under the age of 18) who attend school in Ontario.

Immigrants of South Asian, Middle Eastern and Eastern European descent were selected on the basis of Canadian immigration statistics and the most common source countries. UN (2013) lists Iran as a South Asian region country as well its neighbours Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan on the basis of geographic region. However it is widely known that although the country of Iran and others are located on the continent of Asia, they are in an area commonly called “the Middle East” and whose cultures are viewed as Middle Eastern. Therefore the category “Middle Eastern” has specific mention in this study.

The top five source countries of immigrants were identified under the category of each region. This was accomplished by cross-referencing the UN (2013) list of countries within each region with the last entry column of 2010 with an annual world-wide list published by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, “Permanent Residents by Source Country,” (Canada, 2010). This yielded the following South Asian countries of origin for prospective participants: India, Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka and the following Eastern European countries: Ukraine, Russia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, and Poland. The total eligible sample population representing South Asia was comprised of 219 women. The total eligible sample population representing Eastern Europe was comprised of 34 women.

In total 253 invitation emails were sent, to which 14 women responded yielding a response rate of six per cent. Of these 14 women, the majority, 12 of them (86 per cent) were confirmed as eligible and available on the selected dates and accepted the invitation

to participate. A limitation of this process was the Career Edge Organization's requirement that participants to take an extra step and the initiative to contact the Researcher on their own for privacy and proprietary reasons. Despite follow-up efforts, only seven women ended up attending, yielding a participation rate of 58 per cent. A breakdown of the participants' profiles is illustrated in the following table.

Figure 3.1 Focus Group Participants

Alias	Country of Origin	Culture	Number of Years in Canada
Geeta	India	South Asian	1
Dipa	Bangladesh	South Asian	3
Farnaz	Iran	Middle Eastern	1
Ana	Romania	Eastern European	2
Bahar	Iran	Middle Eastern	2
Mona	Iran	Middle Eastern	less than 1
Samireh	Iran	Middle Eastern	1

Since only one member of the Eastern European participated, patterns could not be discerned nor could conclusions be drawn about her cultural group. Therefore, the researcher decided to exclude Ana's data from the analysis and only identify patterns specific to the mental health literacy experiences of South Asian and Middle Eastern mothers.

Focus Group Procedures

Logistics and Mechanics. Two 120-minute semi-structured focus group sessions were conducted. The open-ended questions were centered on themes such as family communication, cultural perceptions, maternal roles in health maintenance, parent empowerment, mental illness stigma, understandings of mental health and family dynamics and were designed to facilitate an open-ended dialogue on the mental health attitudes, perceptions, and hypothetical actions of the participants. Some questions incorporated messages from the TAMI program in order to evoke reaction and address mental health literacy. The dialogue that emanated from the sessions was captured on an audio-recorder.

Data Analysis. The audio data files were transcribed by the first author and validated by the second author. In order to capture the true essence of the dialogue, words were not changed. Upon completion of the transcription, emerging themes were confirmed by identifying “significant phrases or sentences that pertained directly to the experience” and “meanings were formulated and clustered into themes common to all of the participants” following the data analysis steps recommended by Creswell (2013) for phenomenological study (p. 115). The participant responses were then organized into groups according to theme by moving around the electronic data on a data worksheet and placing the information under appropriate subheadings.

Results

A total of six themes emanated from the data. Each theme was linked to the theory and concepts presented in the literature review and represented by the research questions. However, only four themes of primary relevance to this article will be

discussed. These themes encompass aspects of parent empowerment theory, mental health literacy, mental illness stigma, and mental health promotion and are encapsulated as follows: “mother as communicator”, “mother as protector”, “informed views and support of mental health and mental illness” and “myths and illusions of mental illness”. The following paragraphs will explain each theme, will provide the coding indicators that stemmed from the focus group discussion, and that were “coded as reflective of each theme” and, finally will highlight quotes representing those themes.

Theme One: Mother as Protector

This theme represents how mothers perceived their responsibility in ensuring that their child would be protected from harm or any negative influence that could impact their child’s life. Many of the codes associated with “protector” were related to healthy living (references to the importance of maintaining proper habits) in areas such as eating, exercise, studies, etiquette, play, computer and television. They were also related to protective actions taken by mothers (to ensure the overall health maintenance of their children) such as understanding new social norms, and responsibilities such as administering medication, maintaining regular doctor’s visits, monitoring healing progress, providing encouragement, acting out of concern, and establishing a calm, safe, and comfortable atmosphere. Out of the two roles in this category, most often, mothers viewed themselves and characterized their actions as guardians.

Considering habits, more than one participant expressed worry about their child’s social and cultural norms as well as diet.

I like to say something about our culture, like how to behave around people, how we will greet them and talk with them –manners. I also like to talk about food habits. (Dipa)

I also talk to him about the food habits, same thing. They like their pizza and bread items and we were not used to eat these items everyday back home. (Geeta)

These examples are just a couple of several references to how mothers would encourage their child's nutrition particularly in the context of being a newcomer to Canada. Respondents showed that health starts at home.

In addition, other areas of common maternal concern that focused on habits included study practices and finding a balance with recreational computer time, as well as their children's friends:

I am talking about school, homework, friends, if she is ok with her friends... And also about TV programs.... I am concerned about physical activity, most of the time she spend time at home. (Farnaz)

My daughter explains about her teachers, especially her French and music teacher. We always communicate about her friends -- boys and girls. I ask her about how was school. (Mona)

These responses described how mothers protect their children's academic and developmental progress fostering a safe environment at home that responds to those needs.

In addition, respondents typically took responsibility for protective health actions, such as taking the child to the doctor, following medical advice, staying alert for health symptoms and setting a standard for healthy living.

Finally the idea that mothers were best able to establishing a peaceful home environment and fostering a calm approach had significant mention as something participants considered to be in their children's interest.

If we talk about mental health I stay calm and relaxed when we talk and ask her to be relaxed. I can better contact with them and transfer my relaxation to her.

(Mona)

If my daughter said she was feeling anxious, in a calm condition I would listen and let her explain everything to me. (Samireh)

This variety of references reinforces that newcomer mothers feel that the ability to maintain a calm, friendly environment for their children particularly in approaching communication on mental health is important. It is evident this demeanour was considered pivotal in arriving at an effective outcome.

Theme Two: Mother as Communicator

This theme represents mothers' communicative actions and how they perceived themselves as able to make a difference in the lives of their children by talking to them about issues of mental concern and about life in general. Mentions of encouraging family discussion, conversation, open dialogue on sensitive issues, problem solving, asking questions, talking, listening and sharing, and positive effects of communication were labeled under "communicator." The concept of family discussions of mental health was viewed as an important principle to the majority of the participants.

I agree about talking. If husbands and wives, mothers and children talk and listen the problem is solved. Inside the family we can solve the problem. (Bahar)

It is very helpful to talk about mental health in the family. If a child talks about a mental issue with his or her friend, friends can mislead. (Mona)

These examples illustrate the perceived benefits of family discussion, implicating all members. The respondents viewed themselves as well positioned to encourage communication within the family unit.

There was a slight emphasis on the relevance of the nature of the dialogue, often described as open, two-way communication, where the individuals would share and listen in references that depicted mothers as communicators.

If my son came home and said he was feeling anxious, I would listen what he would want to tell us. I hope to be open to him and discussing all the problems with him in the future. Discussing with him regularly. Discussion is more important in a family. Everyone is free to say views. (Dipa)

These references depict the style of newcomer mothers' communication and their appreciation of in-depth, fulsome discussion with their children, which was significant according to their views.

Theme Three: Informed Views and Support of Mental Health and Mental Illness

This theme encompasses the ideas and supportive actions that participant mothers shared on mental illness and on mental health in general. As noted in the literature review, there is a relationship between perspectives of mental illness and one's attitudes toward mental health. Associations that connoted mental health and mental illness in the eyes of the participants showed that these new immigrant mothers had informed views. This was evident since responses reflected various mental health and mental illness influences that were highlighted in the literature review. References that included

mentions of family attachment, depressive feelings of a family member or child, sheltering one's self from others, feelings of happiness, levels of social acceptance, social activity, addiction and stress, effects of puberty, prevention of a mental disorder and personal satisfaction were coded as "informed views of mental health and mental illness." In addition mentions that were favourable of mental health prevention, and that encouraged mental health maintenance action, were coded as "support of mental health and mental illness."

I understand that mental health is a feeling that leads people to activity. If children feel bad or depressed he will not open up to others. He will keep himself away from others. (Dipa)

In my view it is feelings about happiness, satisfaction that make me feel that I have good mental health. (Farnaz)

These examples represent participants' insights and awareness of mental health.

Throughout the discussion participants showed a certain degree of support of mental health and mental illness by suggesting preventative actions.

I have more responsibility, definitely more concern, and the decision would depend on me to take my children to a psychologist. (Farnaz)

It is ok because they want to teach the students about preventing suicide, and teaching them about how they can ask for help and teach them skills. (Mona)

Each participant's comment illustrates a belief in proactive responses that have an ability to protect the mental health of loved ones.

Theme Four: Myths and Illusions of Mental Illness

This theme represents misconceptions about mental illness and stigmatized responses towards an individual suffering from mental illness. This was determined by presenting a purposefully stigmatized message of mental illness taken from the TAMI program to the participants. All of the participants agreed with the message that “I think that people with mental illness are making up excuses,” revealing their belief in such a statement by sharing negative and stigmatized responses (supportive of the statement) and misunderstanding. Responses that espoused the following beliefs were coded as “myths and illusions of mental illness”: religion has a role in preventing mental problems, mental health requires medication, people with mental illness cannot accept their behaviour, people with mental illness make excuses, mental illness is not normal, and body adornments are a sign of poor mental health.

Mentally ill don't agree they have mental illness. They try to act as normal people maybe for a few hours but after that they can not continue like normal people.

(Dipa)

People with mental illness take pills or go to the rehab system. So why should they have excuses? If they know they have mental illness they have to take medication.

(Bahar)

Some opportunistic people try to take advantage of the situation. They refuse to be treated because they can have some advantage of being in this condition. (Samireh)

All of these responses show a clear and consistent emphasis on the idea that mental illness requires rehabilitation, should be medicated, and is inexcusable.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the empowerment of new immigrant mothers by discussing their insights associated with mental health literacy. The following section will discuss the important mental health literacy perspectives of new immigrant mothers that were uncovered and respond to the research questions in two ways. First, it will touch upon how the participants perceive their roles with regards to the maintenance of their children's mental health. Second, it will discuss the nature of immigrant mothers' existing mental health perceptions and attitudes as triggered by the TAMI program messaging.

The exploration and combination of the themes suggests that participants were motivated and confident about their capacity to realize empowerment should obstacles such as mental illness stigma be overcome. In the next two sections, the roles with which participants identified, "protector" and "communicator," and associated tasks with empowerment and the ability to make a difference will be discussed.

Theme One: Mother as Protector

Participants described a variety of ways through which they safeguarded their child's health and well-being. Their responses focused on two "protective" aspects: the nature of the suggestions and lifestyle choices they would prescribe for their child, and protective actions they would and have been known to take as a mother.

In terms of *lifestyle choices* they advocated for, there was a strong emphasis placed on nutrition and meal options, study habits, and exercise. It was evident from their responses that participants felt confident about the types of behaviour they supported, and the conversation took a tone that, as mothers, they "knew best". This is consistent with

research that has positioned mothers as the most knowledgeable when it comes their child's health (Jaccard, Dittus & Gordon, 2000; Lindsey et al., 2010; Wisdom & Agnor, 2007) and therefore illustrates the confidence in their sound judgment and natural instincts that immigrant mothers have when it comes to the lifestyle choices that will impact their child's development.

These responses were complimented by *protective actions* participants assumed as part of maternal responsibility for their children's health which consistently included maintaining a high level of awareness, taking the child to the doctor, administering medication, and monitoring health progress and deterioration. These responses echo the results of others studies that associate the main caregiving responsibilities of children with mothers (Farinelli & Guerrero, 2011; Grewal et al., 2005) and show that immigrant mothers take their roles in this regard seriously. A response that represented all participants was how the establishment of a calm environment by mothers could nurture an open approach and dialogue in response to their children's mental health needs.

This is related to research that has shown that teenagers have a tendency to approach their mothers (rather than other caregivers) when it comes to discussing their emotional state and feelings (Jaccard, Dittus & Gordon, 2000; Wisdom & Agnor, 2007) and offers a possible justification as to why mothers are perceived by their children as most receptive to their mental health needs. Most significantly, previous research has shown that a positive home environment that encourages family discussion was related to more optimal mental health of teenagers (Johansson et al., 2007). The concurrence between the participants' responses and the results of other studies shows that the

immigrant mothers' convictions with regard to how to protect their children's mental health are grounded.

Theme Two: Mother As Communicator

Participants firmly supported the premise that communication with their children about life in general and issues of mental health concern specifically were integral in fostering a nurturing relationship with their children. Their responses were best encapsulated by the clear presence of two response categories that emerged: the importance of family discussion of mental health, and the relevance of establishing comfortable grounds for free mental health discussion.

Responses that advocated for family discussion on mental health showed that mothers perceived that the inclusion of both parents in the dialogue would lead to the most optimal outcomes such as better problem solving, the sharing of more accurate information and personal experiences, and the fulsome brainstorming of ideal solutions. These beliefs are congruent with previous research findings. One study concluded that teen-parent discussions of mental health issues are important, given that these conversations could lead to positive reinforcement and influence of mental health messaging (Pinto-Foltz et al., 2011). The fact that in the current research similar answers came from mothers suggests that immigrant mothers also support this important idea of parental involvement. Other relevant studies have concluded that parents were seen to have a central role in discussion and decisions regarding mental health service usage (Johansson et al., 2007; Phillipson et al., 2009) that is reflective of remarks such as "parents can give ideas about solutions." The participants showed that they had a

promising approach in mind when it came to communicating as a family unit about mental health.

The second response category that was evident related to “mothers as communicators” and focused on an open nature of mental discussion stemming from the establishment of a supportive atmosphere that fostered such dialogue. Some of the ideas that pointed to the importance of a safe setting for discussion were depicted by words such as “listening, open, free, improve, solutions, and closeness”. Participants felt that by encouraging open discussion they would be best positioned to answer to their child’s mental health needs. Johansson et al.’s (2007) study on teen perceptions of mental health also underscored parallel characteristics of family discussion on mental health such as the approachability of parents and openness. The fact that participants supported the type of dialogue that teenagers view as so important could position new immigrant mothers to make a positive impact in their children’s mental health experiences.

The concept of parent empowerment was previously defined in part as a process through which parents can use their knowledge to attain a high level of self-efficacy and have an active role in the experience of their child, to the extent that they can make a meaningful difference. The roles with which immigrant mothers identified -- “protector” and “communicator” -- promote involvement in their children’s mental health and positioned them to be able to use their own experiences and previous knowledge in order to better assist them. Moreover, participants felt confident about these roles, as shown by excerpts of answers that, for example, included “would make me feel really good”, “my child would come to me for all of their issues mental physical or whatever” and “inside the family we can solve the problem.” The nature of their responses showed a degree of

self-efficacy in that the participants felt positive about their roles and abilities in response to their child's mental health needs.

The third theme, "informed views and support of mental health and mental illness," represents a capacity for mental health literacy based on the knowledge that immigrant mothers shared. While the accuracy of this knowledge was not measured, it did show that the group was somewhat informed in their perspectives of mental health and prepared to take the necessary steps to ensure the mental health of their children (and families).

Theme Three: Informed Views and Support of Mental Health and Mental Illness

The mental health and mental illness perspectives of new immigrant mothers included a series of appropriate words and symptoms in the various responses. This indicated that participants had a foundation of existing knowledge on mental health and mental illness.

In terms of informed views, it was notable that the immigrant mothers were able to define mental health using relevant wording and in their own terms such as "activity, depression, happiness, satisfaction, social acceptance, and preventing mental disorders". The possession of mental health knowledge and founded beliefs is confirmed by research to be a key part of mental health literacy (Kelly et al., 1997; Pinto-Foltz et al., 2011). The TAMI program messaging triggered responses that revealed a foundation for enhanced mental health literacy.

In terms of support of mental health and mental illness, the participants most often expressed a willingness to encourage remedial action and recognized the importance of doing so. This theme of support is pronounced in the second part of these mental health

literacy definitions that include management, prevention and acting on health information (Kelly et al., 1997; Pinto-Foltz et al., 2011; Schiavo, 2007). Action that immigrant mothers identified as the types of actions they would take to respond to a mental health threat facing their child included consulting professionals, taking the child to a psychologist, and supporting school mental health programming by helping their child learn about the issue. This finding aligns with the overarching principles of the TAMI program, which underscores the importance of additional home supports in effective program delivery (CAMH, 2001). Somewhat consistent with this finding, other research has found that such mental health “first aid skills” are lacking for parents (Kelly et al., 2007). While it can be argued that the participants showed the opposite, with an adequate response to mental health crisis, it is unclear what motivated that response, and how the circumstance of group discussion on the topic may have prejudiced their answers. The research conducted by Kelly et al. (2007) views mental health interventions such as the TAMI program as integral in positively changing public mental health beliefs. While the mentions of TAMI program messages were brief and in the form of questions, the program position could have had some influence over the responses of the participants during the session. This implies that the messaging contributed to immigrant mothers’ perception and attitudes toward mental health as they agreed that taking action was an appropriate next step.

The mental health maintenance actions that participants said they would take for their child’s wellbeing as outlined above are also relevant to parent empowerment, as an outcome of increased mental health literacy. Mothers stood behind actions that would allow them to realize a “meaningful difference for their child” whether this meant taking

their child to a mental health professional or assisting them with mental health program concepts learned at school. These results are reflective to those of a study that found that mental health training techniques for Latina women mitigated mental health literacy barriers at the same time that the culturally sensitive tools fostered a sense of empowerment amongst them (Ginossar & Nelson, 2011).

The nature of the informed views and the existing mental health perceptions and attitudes that emanated from the discussion showed a series of founded ideas. These perspectives illustrate that there is a base from which to build and expand up on that knowledge. By using TAMI program messaging to stimulate discussion, participants' responses and positions were steered in progressive directions. This pattern indicates that there is an opportunity to continue this path, by reinforcing accurate mental health information and discussion amongst peers.

The fourth and final theme for this article, myths and illusions of mental illness, speaks to the stigma of mental illness that had evidently distorted the views of immigrant mothers and suggests that more work needs to be done to dispel these polarizing ideas with hard facts.

Theme Four: Myths and Illusions of Mental Illness

Towards the end of the focus group discussions participants were presented with the following stigmatized message about people with mental illness: "I think people with mental illness are making up excuses." Despite the fact that participants had already shown during the focus group discussion how they could take proactive action towards mental health maintenance for their children, there was uniform agreement with the stigmatized statement. All of the responses supported the message by reiterating why and

how it could be true. It is relevant to note that many of the immigrant mothers also shared their perception that mentally ill people required hospitalization and prescription drugs to be treated. In their opinions, mental illness required serious intervention. While this could be rationalized through previous studies that showed that ethnic minorities view the mentally ill as “significantly more dangerous” than Caucasians (Abdullah & Brown, 2011) the ideas advocating for prescription drugs were contrary to previous findings that echoed concern about over-medicalization of mental illness (Martin, 2009). A common opinion also surfaced that viewed making up excuses and the perceived fact that the mentally ill are able to get away with “not working” and “doing the wrong things” as unfair.

This position is also consistent with the definition of mental illness stigma used by Abdullah and Brown (2011) in that the participants disapproved and discredited those who suffer from it. It is particularly interesting to see that these participants felt it was not fair that individuals suffering from mental illness could get away with making up excuses and not working, given that the sample population in this study faces barriers to finding employment in their field on top of other hardships as a result of the immigration process.

Moreover, the absolute concurrence with the statement suggests a dichotomy within the mental health views of immigrant mothers. Despite their previously shown willingness to support the concept of mental health maintenance such as taking their child to a professional and talking about mental illness with their teenagers, participants voiced a polarizing response when presented with the statement. This suggests that although participants exhibited overtures towards mental health literacy (and acting upon it) they still had degrees of mental illness stigma that cannot be overlooked.

Conclusion

In closing, by exploring attitudes relevant to the empowerment of new immigrant mothers and the development of enhanced mental health literacy, this article revealed the mental health perspectives of new immigrant mothers. This was accomplished through focus groups that featured a protocol of general mental health questions as well as TAMI program messages to incite the discussion. Results disclosed important aspects of the development of new immigrant mothers' mental health literacy levels and attainment of self-efficacy in order to experience parent empowerment such as their knowledge, interpretation and attitudes, and their communication needs.

Significance of the Study

This study's findings support the principles of parent empowerment as defined by Heflinger and Bickman (1996) and Bickman et al. (1998) as shown through the beliefs that the participants shared: that their knowledge of mental health can positively impact their child's learning outcomes on the issue, that they have the ability to participate in the learning (mental health promotion) process, and that their understanding of mental health can help attain a favourable difference leading to a healthier existence for their child. It was evident that the participants felt naturally inclined to take on the roles of protector and communicator in key aspects of their children's lives that are complimentary to parent empowerment. These roles embraced actions that would allow immigrant mothers to participate in their child's learning process on mental health issues and gave them confidence that they could make a positive impact.

On a similar note, the study revealed that this cohort of new immigrant mothers, who are highly qualified in their professions and have superior English language

competencies, have a foundation of general mental health knowledge upon which more extensive mental health literacy can be built. From a constructive standpoint, however, the study indicates that there is still progress to be made in order for these new immigrant mothers to have a complete understanding of mental health and feel fully empowered in their roles. This finding is significant and is grounded in the results that confirmed the presence of mental illness stigma.

This study confirms that new immigrants are a vulnerable population that requires further study in the area of mental health literacy and experiences of parent empowerment. This is particularly important as mental health programs and promotion tools become increasingly common in school and community settings. Immigrant parents are a key secondary audience that warrants more in-depth consideration for the future success of mental health promotion. This was shown through new immigrant mothers' interest in enhancing the mental health knowledge and care of their children at home and the impact of various barriers on these processes.

In closing, the future possibilities for research in the areas of mental health literacy and new immigrant parents are vast. Researchers interested in exploring this audience and mental health might consider the following: conduct comparative analyses that account for perspectives and actual experiences of parents and children, conceive of more ideal recruitment strategies with in person, face-to-face interaction, find access to broader immigrant sample population groups with varying language abilities and educational backgrounds, and evaluate the efficacy of such programs and messages through participatory research, whereby the audience actually experiences whole initiatives from start to finish.

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Diverse Causes and Effects of Stress in Adolescents: A Meta-analysis

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Abstract

In this article, we reviewed, analyzed and categorized 76 quantitative articles in the scientific literature on adolescent stress and coping between 1991 and 2013. An over-arching, comprehensive ecological framework of adolescent stress and coping was developed. This framework was tested through meta-analytic procedures. Results indicated that stressors play a primary role within the stress and coping relationship. Other concepts such as family, friends and school are the main concepts related to adolescent stress and coping and this suggests that socialization is a primordial aspect of adolescent stress and coping.

Coping with stress during adolescence has become a thoroughly documented phenomenon and there is a growing understanding of its relationship with adolescent mental health and illnesses. The scientific literature on adolescent stress and coping has evolved, demonstrating that the two concepts are inextricably linked. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) framework on stress appraisal and coping is prominent in the scientific literature on adolescent stress and coping. According to this frame of reference, a stressor is appraised by an individual as threatening or harmful, resources are then appraised within the immediate environment to cope with the stressor, and finally, one copes with the perceived threat or harm.

Stress can be conceptualized as daily hassles and events, or as major life events. According to Cheng and Li (2010), both daily hassles and major life events are related to adolescent pathology. Stress is typically measured in terms of acuteness (e.g. acute life stress) by generating a total sum of the number of new life events experienced by an adolescent (O'Conner, Rasmussen & Hawton, 2010).

Coping is typically referred to as a strategy rather than a mechanism. Semantically, the terms strategy and mechanism can be differentiated in that a strategy is more purposeful, planned and conscious, whereas a mechanism is an unconscious "mental and emotional pattern that shapes behaviour in a given situation or environment" (The Free Online Dictionary, n.d.). Coping can take on several forms, such as problem-focused and emotion-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Coping strategies can be either functional or dysfunctional, or similarly conceptualized as adaptive versus maladaptive (O'Conner et al, 2010). Examples of applicable functional coping strategies include social support, parental support, and the above-mentioned problem-focused coping. Dysfunctional coping strategies typically encompass avoidance, wishful thinking, and blame (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989).

Among adolescents, stress and coping have been linked to personality traits and pathologies such as perfectionism, anxiety, self-harm, and depression. Overall, social support through friends and/or parents has proven to have a palliative or mediating effect on adolescent stress and mental disorder. Gender differences in stress and coping have also been examined across numerous studies, typically showing that females display more internalized forms of pathology than males (e.g. anxiety and depression), who tend to show more signs of externalized forms of pathology (e.g. violence and aggression). Given these trends and considering the vast scientific literature on adolescent stress and coping, it was deemed worthwhile to create a comprehensive framework of adolescent stress and coping.

Literature review

The following section will outline relevant findings on adolescent stress and coping drawn from a selected pool of the 76 articles that were also used for subsequent meta-analytic procedures in this paper. A unique focus on gender in presenting this literature highlights the context of the present publication (conference proceeding for Women at a Crossroads).

Gender differences related to coping strategies

There is a clear difference in coping strategies between adolescent girls and adolescent boys. Boys are more apt to use problem solving strategies as opposed to girls who, as Nolen-Hoeksema and Girgus (1994) argue, use more dysfunctional ruminative coping strategies and have a decreased perception of instrumentality, thereby making them more prone to depression. This problem is compounded by the added stress of the biological and social challenges that girls endure during early adolescence. Griffith, Dubow and Ippolito (2000) found that maladaptive coping styles among adolescent girls are also in part influenced by low levels of perceived self-efficacy, which may be a result- or a cause of- poor self-esteem. Moreover, low self-esteem is much more prevalent in adolescent girls compared to boys given that girls' physical appearances generally become of utmost concern during these formative years.

Groer, Thomas and Shoffner (1992) found that adolescent girls have innate needs for love, belonging and self-esteem. According to one study, the best way to help satisfy these needs is through a supportive family environment (Goodkind, Ruffolo, Bybee & Sarri 2009). More specifically, results of the study showed that familial support decreased levels of depressive symptoms. Furthermore, Konishi and Hymel (2009), purport that a supportive family can improve self-esteem and may also even reduce bullying, which can be a negative coping strategy that is used to cope with stress.

Gender differences related to stress

Since rates of suicide are on the rise among adolescents, especially among girls (Kirmayer, 2012). Earlier scientific has consistently demonstrated that the most impactful stresses on adolescents are school, parents, friends and boyfriend/girlfriend problems (Brosz

Hardin, Carbaugh, Weinrich, Pesut & Carbaugh, 1992). Adolescents with suicidal tendencies in this earlier study affirmed that most of their problems involved their parents. For females, the problems tended to arise in their maternal relationships more specifically.

There may also be gender differences in how boys and girls interpret different situations (Griffith et al, 2000). Girls have a tendency to place a much greater importance on their appearance and interpersonal relationships than boys. Finally, studies by Hampel and Peterman (2006) have shown that preventative programs for stress have been very beneficial to both male and female adolescents. Some preventative measures suggested by Hall & Torres (2002) consist of but are not limited to addressing ideas that have been misconstrued and confused or inaccurate perceptions of stressful events.

The research objectives were to:

1. Review, analyze and categorize the many concepts related to adolescent stress and coping that can be found in quantitative articles in the scientific literature in order to develop an over-arching, comprehensive framework of adolescent stress, stressors, and coping strategies;
2. Test the over-arching, comprehensive framework on adolescent stress, stressors, and coping strategies through meta-analytic procedures.

Method

Research objective #1

This section describes our methodological steps for searching for articles, shortlisting them based on inclusion/exclusion criteria, and coding variables (e.g. concepts). The next section will describe how average effect size measures were computed via meta-analytic procedures for research question number two. The databases searched were ERIC, Sociological Abstracts, PsycINFO, SCOPUS, PUBMED, and Erudit. We employed the keywords,

“adolescent”, “stress” and “coping” across databases in order to maintain consistency when tracking articles. As well, we restricted our searches in all databases to peer reviewed articles published between 1991 and 2013. The time frame is representative of the original aim to capture a 20-year literature span until 2011, in addition to a two-year extension that was allotted to this project. In the PsycINFO and PUBMED databases, which include animal trials and veterinary medicine, we refined our search to human studies.

Article selection criteria

The criteria used to select articles were:

- 1) the age range for the adolescent participants fell between 12 and 19 years,
- 2) the articles provided quantitative measures of the relationship between stress and stressor or between stress and coping strategy.

We excluded articles that focused on clinical disorders such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia and other specific medical conditions.

Articles consisting of quantitative data were included, while conceptual overview and synthesis articles as well as qualitative research were excluded given that they would not provide a computable effect size. In addition, articles that reported only multivariate relationships between stress and combinations of stressors and/or coping strategies were eliminated because the effect sizes in those cases did not singularly refer to the direct effect of a given stressor or coping strategy on stress; a single relationship between pairs of variables could not be established in these instances.

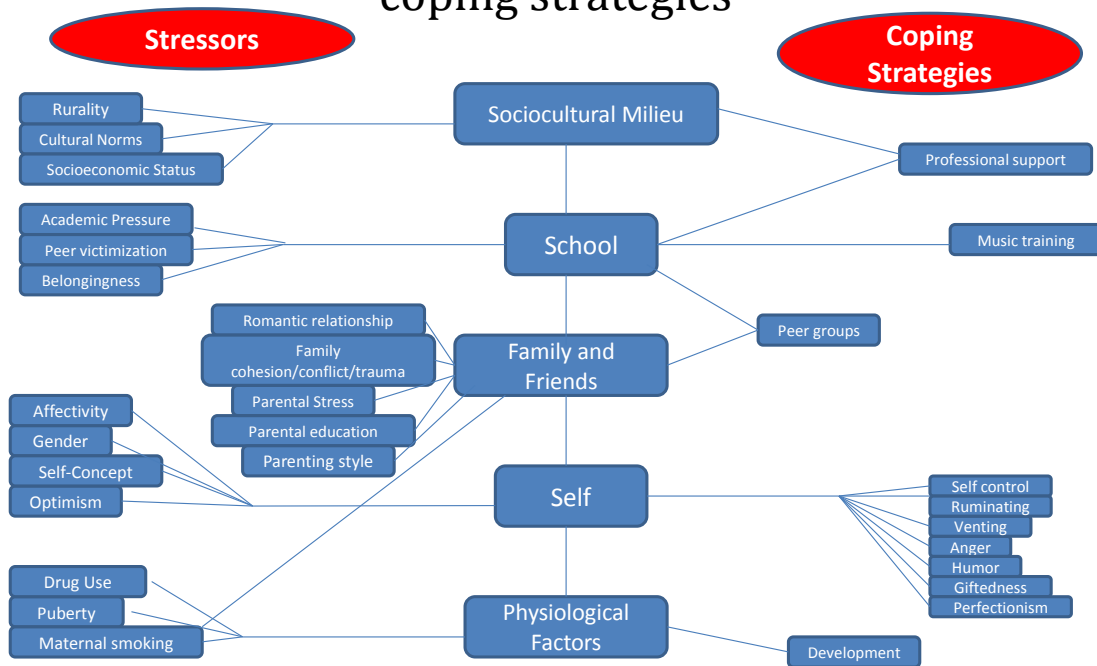
Based on these criteria, 76 articles were selected from a much larger set of 197 papers (Appendix Table 1: 76 Articles used for the Meta-Analysis, including sample sizes and effects sizes). Only three of the studies used a physiological measure of stress; all others used a

measure of *perceived* stress. As well, only two of the studies that were included were published in a language other than English (one French and one Spanish). Both of these articles were translated by the principal investigator.

Coding procedure

The 76 articles were divided between four researchers, who read and examined their assigned articles. Next, we drew a concept map on a large blackboard with constant negotiation and discussion between the four researchers regarding the categorization of main concepts and sub-concepts that were operationalized into categories and sub-categories with supporting examples and definitions.

The ecology of adolescent stress, stressors and coping strategies



Based on this process, independent variables in the selected articles were classified into two main categories that reflect the ecology of adolescent stress: 1) stressors and 2) coping

strategies. These two main recurring categories were often used concurrently in the scientific literature on adolescent stress and coping. The first main category, *stressors*, is comprised of stress factors and/or variables that are used interchangeably in the scientific literature on adolescent stress. The second category, *coping strategies*, refers to functional and/or dysfunctional coping strategies.

Next, five main sub-categories relevant to both stressors and coping strategies were derived from the literature review: 1) socio-cultural milieu, 2) school, 3) family and friends, 4) self, and 5) physiological factors.

These five sub-categories are not hierarchical, and are simultaneously related to both main categories (stressors/coping strategies). Examples of the first sub-category, *socio-cultural milieu*, and under the main classification of stressors, are: rurality (e.g. living in an urban or rural environment), cultural norms (e.g. performing well at school, good grades etc.), socio-economic status (e.g. lower, middle or upper class based on parental income). An example of a coping strategy in this sub-category is professional support (e.g. access to help from a psychologist or a mentor within the community).

The second sub-category, *school*, is comprised of stressors such as academic pressure (e.g. graduating with a high Grade point average), peer victimization (e.g. bullying) and belongingness (e.g. fitting in to a particular school and classroom). Under coping strategies, *school* consisted of professional support (e.g. support from a teacher, principal or counsellor), music training (e.g. being part of a choir) and peer groups (e.g. getting help from friends). Professional support and peer groups were separated into two sub-categories because of their dissimilar nature.

Third, the sub-category *family and friends* contains the following examples under stressors: romantic relationships (e.g. sexual relationships), family cohesion/conflict/trauma (e.g. supportive parents), parental stress (e.g. unemployment), parental education (e.g. high school, college or university degree), parental style (e.g. permissive or avoidant) and maternal smoking (e.g. mothers that smoked prior to birth, and/or during pregnancy, or who currently smoke). One example under coping strategies is peer groups (e.g. friends that are supportive in times of duress or hardship such as exam periods).

Fourth, the sub-category *self* is reflected by the following examples of stressors: affectivity (e.g. worry, anxiety, depression), gender (e.g. female or male), self-concept (e.g. seeing oneself as strong and resilient), optimism (e.g. confidence that the obstacles will be overcome). Still under the *self* sub-category, but in relation to coping strategies, the following seven examples were identified: self-control (e.g. the ability to control oneself faced by a threat), ruminating (e.g. repeating or replaying the same fear over and over in one's mind), venting (e.g. screaming or letting it out), anger (e.g. kicking, punching, fighting, feelings of rage), humour (e.g. making a joke of the situation), giftedness (e.g. having a specialty such as sport that one excels in to overcome a threat or obstacle), perfectionism (e.g. the drive to achieve and excel).

Finally, the fifth sub-category, *physiological factors*, refers to the following under stressors: drug use (e.g. using alcohol and / or marijuana), puberty (e.g. transitioning into early, mid and late adolescence with its related signs such as getting one's period), and maternal smoking (mothers and or fathers that have smoked prior to during or after the birth of their child). Development (e.g. the ability to both thrive and continue to grow cognitively and

physiologically while under duress) is an example of a coping strategies under the same sub-category of physiological factors.

It should be noted that the above examples have been expressed in a positive fashion under the main category of coping strategies. As one example, peer groups could easily be categorized as ostracizing rather than supportive. Another salient example is family cohesion/conflict/trauma whereby an adolescent may be living in an abusive family environment.

Understanding the ecological framework

In many fields of research, researchers face complex or convoluted problems that have many interrelated causes. Examples include health problems such as cancer and diabetes, environmental issues such as climate change, and educational challenges like student diversity. To deeply understand and effectively intervene in these contexts, researchers will often adopt multi-level, multi-factorial frameworks that are described as “ecological”, “biosocial” or “psychosocial”; examples include Rapport et al. (2002) in the context of medical education, Raphael (2009) in relation to health determinants, Melchert (2013) from a psychological perspective, Phelps and Davis (2005) in educational matters, and Stokals et al. (2008) in the context of team science. When it comes to analyzing and conceptualizing *stress*, alternative approaches do exist and we do not intend to reduce their importance. Examples include biological and environmental influences, causes and coping mechanisms, and functional and dysfunctional coping strategies. We believe, however, that the ecological perspective developed in this paper offers a broad view of the issue that is both novel and useful for those engaged in researching and treating the complex problem of adolescent stress.

Results

Research objective #2

Each of the 76 articles selected for the meta-analysis contributed at least one effect size in the form of a correlation coefficient. Some articles reported correlations between stress and more than one stressor or coping strategy; these articles, therefore, each contributed more than one effect size. Each correlation coefficient was converted into a standard metric using Fisher's r to z transformation. In all, 309 correlation coefficients were converted. These transformed values were used to compute the average effect sizes and for all subsequent analyses.

The average effect size of stressors on stress was found to be $\bar{r} = .343$, $p < .05$ (95% CI = [.339, .347]), whereas the average effect size of coping strategies on stress was found to $\bar{r} = .061$, $p < .05$ (95% CI = [.054, .069]). The difference in these average effect sizes was compared. The average effect size for stressors on stress was found to be significantly stronger than the average effect size for coping strategies on stress, $Q(1) = 4680.98$, $p < .05$.

A comparison of the average effect size of stressors and coping strategies on stress within the five sub-categories in which stress factors occur (i.e., socio-cultural milieu, school, family and friends, self, and physiological) was also conducted. The results showed that there was a significant difference in the average effect size across sub-categories, $Q(4) = 5943.11$, $p < .05$. Stressors and coping strategies corresponding to the sub-category of family and friends had the strongest average effect size, $\bar{r} = .373$, $p < .05$ (95% CI = [.369, .377]), followed by the school sub-category, $\bar{r} = .134$, $p < .05$ (95% CI = [.108, .160]), self, $\bar{r} = .080$, $p < .05$ (95% CI = [.073, .087]), and sociocultural milieu, $\bar{r} = .079$, $p < .05$ (95% CI = [.065, .092]). Stressors

and coping strategies in the physiological sub-category showed the weakest average effect, which was not significantly different from 0, $\bar{r} = .031$, $p > .05$ (95% CI = [-.044, .106]).

Discussion

Male and female adolescents have differing coping strategies. For girls, there is a greater likelihood of using dysfunctional strategies (rumination and internalizing) which can contribute to feelings of depression tied with low self-esteem. Thus, strong family support may be paramount during these formative years to guide and support adolescent girls. Specific attention towards the maternal relationship is recommended as it has been suggested as being a source of certain suicidal tendencies. Furthermore, exercise, which can also lower stress levels and heighten self-esteem, is another resource that is less commonly used by females. Finally, preventative measures that address the underlying issues leading to dysfunctional coping strategies such as ruminative coping have proven to be beneficial for adolescents.

The overall results of this quantitative synthesis are consistent with our over-arching, comprehensive ecological framework on adolescent stress and coping strategies regarding the inextricable relationship between stressors and stress and between coping strategies and stress. Moreover, the fact that the effects were unequal provides reasoning for the different sub-categories in our framework. Stressors played a principal role in the quantitative articles that were examined in this study compared to coping strategies, which seemed to play a more secondary role or function and this aligns with Lazarus and Folkman's frame of reference. The results regarding the five different levels show the importance of family and friends in regards to adolescent stress and coping. Next, school plays an important role in both stress and coping followed by self and then sociocultural milieu. Physiological factors may have an intermittent and varying role in stress and coping strategies.

Future research should continue to consider the bidirectional relationship between adolescent stress and coping strategies and stressors. Moreover, interventions must heed the role of family and friends as both stressors and potential functional and/or dysfunctional coping strategies. Considering the amount of time students spend in school, this factor has an obvious impact on both adolescent stress and coping strategies. However, it is important to note that, in the literature, school seems to have impact on adolescents' stress and coping than family and friends. It would thus seem that socialization, as an umbrella concept comprised of family, friends, and school, is prevalent in adolescent stress and coping and future research should continue to examine this key, uniting component to better understand adolescents' emotional and cognitive needs.

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Appendix

Table 1: Articles used for the Meta-Analysis with sample and effects sizes

Study	Sample Size	Effect size
Aldridge and Roesch 2008 a	67	0.4118
Ang et. al (2009)	289	0.4356
Ang et. al (2009)	310	0.3428
Auerbach (2012)	179	0.3428
Ayerst 1999	27	0.2661
Ayerst 1999 control	27	0.7089
Bal et al 2003	820	0.3316
Berg	252	0.1923
Burwell and Shirk 2007	168	0.6328
Campos et al 2012	90	0.4722
Carlson and Grant 2008	1265	0.3205
Chango et al. 2012	173	0.4986
Cheng	365	0.1307
Connor	737	0.0902
Constantine et al 2002	106	0.3316
Conway 2012	381	0.5627
Cook	175	0.1717
Coyle and Vera 2013	147	0.01
Dalton and Pakenham 2002	78	-0.0802
Davila et al	71	0.2661
Doungtran 2011	70	0.4477

Dumont 2000	153	0.6042
Dumont and Provost 1999	297	0.3654
Early et al. 2006	108	0.0601
Ellen Li et al 2006	246	0.3316
Eriksson et al. 1997	81	0.0902
Finkelstein & al. (2007)	1167	0.2986
Foret et al. 2012	114	0.001
Gaylord-Harden et al 2009	2172	-0.1196
Gaylord-Harden et al 2011	278	0.2877
Gore and Aseltine 1995	1208	0.0601
Gould et al 2008	399	0.2027
Hampel and Petermann 2006	286	-0.0802
Howard and Medway 2004	75	-0.2554
Huan 2012	1,791	0.1307
Jaser et al 2005	78	0.03
Jaser et al 2007	73	0.05
Jose and Huntsinger 2005	113	0.3316
Jose et al 1998	540	0.2986
Kraaij et al 2003	1310	-0.01
kuja-Halkola & al. (2010)	187106	-0.5493
Landis (2007)	796	0.0902
Lee and Larson 1996	358	0.1511
Liu et al 2011	189	-0.0802
Lohman and Jarvis 2000	42	-0.1003
Low et al 2013	245	0.0902

Magaya et al 2005	101	0.4973
Mclaughline and Nolen-Hoeksema 2012	1065	0.1614
Moksnes	1508	0.03
MURBERG and BRU 2005	327	0.523
Murray	417	-0.2237
Ng and Hurry 2011	1199	-0.04
Plunkett and Henry 1999	155	0.02
Plunkett et al 1999	77	0.2237
ROMERO and ROBERTS 2003	873	0.9962
Rowley et al 2005	172	0.3769
Santiago and Wadsworth 2009	82	0.04
Scott Jr. 2004	71	0.1206
Scott, Jr. and House 2005	71	0.0601
Seiffge-Krenke 2006	112	-0.001
Shulman 1993	121	-0.1379
Shulman and Cauffman 2011	373	0.3316
Sontag et al. 2008	111	-0.1614
Stein and Gonzalez 2012	171	-0.3316
SULDO et al 2008	0	0.0586
SULDO et al 2008 - control	0	0.0601
Teva et al 2010	4456	0.0601
Unger et al. 1998	432	0.01
Vera 2012	144	0.01
Vera et al. 2011	157	0.00
Verhoeven et al. 2012	127	0.00

Wadsworth and Berger 2006	79	0.0902
Wadsworth and Compas 2002	364	0.02
Wadsworth et al 2005	57	0.1307
White and Shih 2012	279	0.2661
WRZESNIEWSKI and CHYLINSKA 2007	696	0.1104
Zhang et al 2012	671	0.1923
Zuković et al 2012b	412	0.182

Data

Sum - Sample Size	219902
Sum - Effect size	12.8412
Total Sum - Sample Size	219902
Total Sum - Effect size	12.8412

**Female Genital Mutilation:
Global Perspectives and Local Practices**

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Abstract

This paper examines why international and domestic activism has produced little change in the practice and discourse of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). It relies on multiple academic approaches and theories, with the goal of synthesizing information that has been generated by scholars and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) towards the elimination of FGM. The paper begins with background on FGM and the communication theories and models that are instructive for my analysis. The literature review shifts to foreground material with a synthesis of the current interagency report on progress and barriers to ending FGM. I then examine the debate about the framing of campaigns and conflicting views on how FGM activism could be most effective. I conclude with a discussion of how the theories and models of communication and activism addressed in this paper can help us understand why FGM has remained a common practice with little change despite decades of awareness.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is prevalent in 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East and is an institutionalized cultural norm in the areas where it is practiced. Also referred to as “female circumcision” or “cutting,” the World Health Organization (Shah, McLeod, Gotlieb, & Lee, 2009) describes FGM¹ as “partial or total removal of the female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons”(p. 1). Approximately 140 million women worldwide have undergone the procedure and as many as three million more may be subjected to it each year (WHO, 2013). FGM has no health benefits and in contrast, is known to cause severe pain and long-term negative health consequences. In contrast to the widespread acceptance of FGM at the local level, it has been the target of international efforts to eradicate it for decades (Boyle, 2002). It is currently recognized as a global human rights issue against girls and women, and the United Nations (UN) approved a resolution to eliminate FGM in December 2012 (UN News Center, 2013; United Nations, 2012).

Numerous organizations and activist groups, in addition to the UN, are striving to bring an end to FGM and they are using different approaches and strategies. Grassroots activists advocate a community-based, bottom-up approach, while others argue for a legislative, top-down intervention. The result is a misconstrued controversy between anti-FGM proponents who share the same objective (Bonino, 2012). This debate raises the question of how the various organizations are attempting to eradicate the practice of FGM and whether the current strategies are effective given the still common practices of FGM worldwide, which suggests that global activism and policies have largely failed. In this paper, I aim to investigate the central question: Why has international and domestic activism produced little change in the practice and discourse of FGM?

¹Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the term that was recommended for UN adoption in 1991 and is used by WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA (World Health Organization, 2008) and as such I use FGM throughout this paper.

This paper examines the practice of FGM, the efforts to stop it and its implications in the context of transnational activism. FGM is a local problem as well as a global human rights issue, creating a complex intersection of power, influence and activists. To understand how activists from the top or the bottom can contest FGM in the local setting where it takes place, two secondary questions guide my analysis: (1) Who has the power to dictate the FGM practice? (2) Whose voices are heard and whose are silenced? Theories used to inform my analysis include modernity, development communication, new social movements and transnational activism. Materials that provide a factual, historical and current account of anti-FGM efforts include reports issued by WHO, the UN, studies published in academic journals and a variety of news media reports. My focus is on the most recent developments and understanding and as such I rely on information published from 2010 to 2013.

This paper relies on multiple academic approaches and theories with the goal of synthesizing information that has been generated by scholars and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) towards the elimination of FGM. It begins with a summary of early efforts to eradicate the practice of FGM. Following the historical framework, I provide background on the communication theories and models that are instructive for my analysis. The literature review shifts to foreground material that synthesizes the current interagency report on progress and barriers to ending FGM. I then examine the current debate about the framing of campaigns and the conflicting views on how FGM activism could be most effective. I conclude with a discussion of how the theories and models of communication and activism addressed in this paper can help us understand why FGM has remained a common practice with little change despite decades of awareness.

Literature Review

Historical Background

The earliest report of a campaign to end the practice of FGM comes from Kenya in the 1920s-1930s. At that time “female circumcision” was widely used throughout the country although efforts to end it took place only in the Kikuyu culture where male leaders of the Church of Scotland Missionary Society (CSM) opposed the practice on their sense of moral and religious authority (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 67). Circumcision was used similarly (in respect to the symbolic practice, not the physical operation) for both boys and girls to mark their transition into adulthood and the practice was embedded in their “teaching of tribal law, religion and morality” (Kouba & Muasher, 1985, p. 103). The missionaries’ attempt to impose their norms failed as it had very limited support and exacerbated disagreements within the Kikuyu community regarding colonial practices.

The campaign against female circumcision became a symbol for colonial attempts to impose outside values and rules upon the population. The Kikuyu nationalist elite defended the practice as necessary to the preservation of traditional culture, and attacked foreign efforts to eradicate it” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 70).

Ultimately, the controversy was reframed by the locals and it came to represent the emergence of Kikuyu nationalism and independence; it also placed women in the symbolic center of preserving national culture (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

As Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998) argue, framing is a critical strategy in transnational activism networks and it accounts for the current use of the term “female genital mutilation” as opposed to “circumcision”. In 1974, a coalition of global women’s rights activists changed the terminology to reflect that it is a human rights violation and not a “neutral” act that parallels that of male circumcision (Keck & Sikkink, 1998); however, scholarly reports from

subsequent decades were still using the term “circumcision” (e.g. Boyle & Carbone-López, 2006; Williams & Sobieszczyk, 1997).

FGM is typically performed on girls from newborn to age 15, and many describe the excruciating pain and demoralization they go through in the process (Di Giovanni, 2012). WHO delineates four types of FGM and for the purposes of elucidating what the practice entails and how it constitutes a violent act against women, following is an abbreviated summary of the WHO (2008) classifications:

- (1) Partial or total removal of the clitoris.
- (2) Partial or total removal of the clitoris and labia minor, with or without excision of the labia majora.
- (3) Narrowing of the vaginal orifice and creation of a seal covering.
- (4) All other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes (p. 4).

The first three types are documented in 28 countries in Africa, some countries in Asia and the Middle East as well as among ethnic groups living outside their countries of origin (World Health Organization, 2008). Countries with the highest prevalence of FGM in girls and women include Somalia (97.9%), Egypt (95.8%), Guinea (95.6%), Sierra Leone (94.0%), and Djibouti (93.1%) (World Health Organization, 2008).

Development Communication

Global social change is a process that engages individuals, communities, organizations and governing agencies on multiple levels in a variety of contexts. As such, it necessitates an interdisciplinary approach as well as a scholarly framework that bridges cultural, political and communication theories. As scholar Leslie Steeves noted, “no one theory is sufficient for understanding gender and media problems globally” (2007, p. 192). The field of development communication, which “refers to a process of strategic intervention toward social change initiated by institutions and communities,” (Wilkins & Mody, 2001, p. 385) provides a model and mode of inquiry that is a fruitful starting point.

Stemming from a desire to foster peace and provide support to Third World countries following World War II, international organizations were charged with developing aid programs and policies that would promote a variety of humanitarian goals. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) outlined the common objectives of development communication in the 1960s, which encompassed a broad range of activity:

Communications were not confined to information or broadcasting organizations and ministries, but extended to all sectors; and their success in influencing and sustaining development depended to a large extent on the adequacy of mechanisms for integrated and coordinated multi-sectoral project planning (Mayo & Servaes, 1994, p. 4).

There are numerous conceptions of development although scholars such as Srinivas Melkote and Leslie Steeves (2001) agree that it is commonly understood “as improving the living conditions of society”(2009, p. 105). The practice of this objective is similarly unconstrained by a prescribed path or preferred theory.

Multiple theories have been used in development communication, dependent upon the context as well as the perspective of the scholar. Historically, the dominant paradigm in the field is modernization, which supports the advancement of a capitalist economy and Western notions of modernization. Stemming from sociological perspectives related to modernization, development in the Third World was viewed as a process of “changing the character of individuals living there to resemble more closely the attitudinal and value characteristics of people in Western Europe and North America” (Melkote, 2009, p. 106).

Scholars in the field were criticized for biased, ethnocentric and patriarchal views that were on par with the common belief that “cultural traditions had to be destroyed if the Third World nations and peoples wanted to modernize” (Melkote, 2009, p. 108). The emergence of new theories, such as diffusion of innovations (Rogers, 2003), and the convergence model of strategic communications (Kincaid, 1988) served as the basis for communication strategies using

mass media to disseminate ideas and facilitate change in local communities, yet this top-down approach received criticism in keeping with that of the modernization paradigm.

Inherent Western biases, such as patriarchy, resulted in “individual receivers treated as objects or targets for persuasion and change” (Melkote, 2009, p. 115). Scholars (e.g., Rodriguez, 2001; Wilkins & Mody, 2001) maintain that these biases and underlying assumptions shaped mediated interventions even when they’re enacted on the local level as part of a bottom-up approach. Furthermore, grass roots campaigns often marginalized women and privileged men:

As development projects are designed and implemented by Third World men and women, local symbolic constructions of gender, class, and race permeate development discourse. The result is a multilayered discourse of development that negotiates Western discourse of modernity with local discourses of race, class, and gender. (Rodriguez, 2001, p. 473)

Melkote (2009) contends that initial efforts in this direction were only superficially engaged in participation. “Although the people were induced to participate in self-help activities,” (Melkote, 2009, p. 113) external change agents had effectively pre-determined both the problem and solution.

Melkote’s prescription for the future trajectories of development communication is to foster meaningful change through participatory action research (PAR) and empowerment. PAR draws on Foucault’s (1980) concern with the “ways in which power, knowledge and subjectivity are interrelated” (Vintges, 2012, p. 285) and furthermore, how they serve individual agency or oppression. Because the hierarchy of power within society serves to perpetuate inequalities, PAR engages the marginalized in personal discourse with a goal of subverting the status quo and making room for resistance (Melkote, 2009). Empowerment, a term used in a variety of fields and in development communication strategy, involves working with people in their local

environments – a genuine grassroots approach – to develop support networks, skills and competencies that will promote social change.

Melkote’s vision for improving development communication underscores the need for new theories and models for social change in the Global South. While many lessons have been learned, and many assumptions brought to light in the past decades, the field has not reached a consensus as to how development communication can be effectively applied to social movements in a global context.

Robert Huesca (2001) contends that the field of development communication suffers “conceptual disarray” (p. 415) due to changes in global structures as well as the introduction of new communication technologies. He argues that the nebulous focus of the field would be improved with a shift in the direction of new social movements. Noting that the two fields have evolved in parallel trajectories, he posits “Because of its focus on action, the new social movements literature has described and analyzed social contexts and action processes in a way that enriches further inquiry into development communication” (Huesca, 2001, p. 416). The way and context in which new social movements conceptualize power is at the center of its utility in the advancement of development communication.

Transnational Activism

The theory of “new social movements” (NSM) stems from the contributions of Melucci (1989) and Touraine (1971), who recognized that activists in the U.S. counterculture in the 1960s were utilizing networked information technologies. This new generation of activists was adapting to the trend of global interconnectedness, using technology to cross borders of space and time. In Melucci’s view, existing theories couldn’t account for this group of social organizers and their campaigns of resistance or change. His criticism was two-fold: collective

action theory explained the *why* and resource mobilization theory explained the *how*, but both neglected to account for the participants of social movements (Melucci et al., 1989). NSM emerged in response, allowing theorists (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991; Jenkins & Klandermans, 1995), to explore the *actors* and *actions* that were part of the modern movement for change.

The theory that developed in response to Melucci's criticism addresses the missing elements of previous theories: the *who* and *what* of social movements. The actors of NSM are conceptualized as educated, creative knowledge workers who have similar world views; they are composed of "anti-hierarchical networks of interpersonal relations, small, diverse groups in ad hoc linkages and diffuse, decentralized, autonomous organizational forms" (Lievrouw, 2011). NSM actions include constructing and exchanging information based on "group interests, expertise, norms, values" and employing "extensive, sophisticated use of media ICT (information and communication technology), communication and representation as a principal field and form of action in itself" (Lievrouw, 2011). Aside from the use of ICTs, these social movement actors differentiate themselves from traditional activists through their strong alliances based on self-identification with the group.

One of the most instructive perspectives on the capacity for social movements to enact change in the era of globalization is put forth by Keck and Sikkink in *Activists Beyond Borders*. They argue that transnational advocacy networks have the capacity to break cycles of oppression, overcome abuses of power and reframe the debates, terms, sites and configuration of participants. To understand how they work, in particular the role they have played in FGM, one must understand what a transnational network is, who the actors are and what they do. To begin, the authors define networks as "forms of organization characterized by voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange... We call them advocacy networks because

they plead the causes of other or defend a cause of proposition” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 8). Their actions include promoting causes and advocating for changes “particularly in value-laden debates over human rights” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 9). Multiple actors that may be part of a transnational advocacy network: NGOs, local social movements, media, religious or secular groups, intellectuals and governmental organizations on a variety of levels (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). The web of actors forms a network and this in turn establishes an operational structure.

Because the primary actions of the network include persuasion and socialization, NGOs are seen as key players. NGOs may act as lobbyists or pressure those in power and they may forge connections with powerful allies; furthermore, they often bring new ideas and facilitate the flow of communication that is needed for a network to circulate information and form relationships (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Organizations such as the UN and WHO have credibility and legitimacy in the global arena of policy makers, mass media and volunteer groups. They also have sophisticated channels of communication that can spread the message of local people and grassroots organizers, influence public perceptions and monitor changes.

The message itself is the central issue, focus and strategy of a transnational advocacy network. Narratives of personal experience help identify the problem and those stories are given meaning and resonance through “cognitive frames” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 17) which are essential to define the struggle and position it in a context such as human rights or women’s health. Frames create identity for the network, establish comprehension among publics and provide direction in the strategic activities (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986). The importance of NGOs in the process of determining frames is significant. NGOs have access and resources to cull statistics and factual information which are legitimizing elements of a frame. The facts are then paired with personal testimonies of the oppressed. A human interest story that

is factually based and simultaneously dramatic meets “newsworthiness” criteria (Gitlin, 1980; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Ryalls, 2012) and it is accordingly more likely to generate media coverage of the issue. The implications of journalists’ awareness of a problem, and their ability to garner widespread attention, are significant: “For new social movements, the media are seen to play an important role in shaping public consciousness and policy” (Mendes, 2011, p. 83). Presenting the problem in a compelling light – choosing the frame(s) and disseminating the story – is thus a primary undertaking in activist campaigns.

In their research, Keck and Sikkink determined that there are three main ingredients for success of an advocacy network. The first two characterize the type of issue and the third is the nature of the story: (1) it involves physical harm to a vulnerable individual, (2) it concerns inequality of opportunity and (3) it tells a clear and convincing causal story (1998, p. 27). The importance of the personal narrative is an element that Keck and Sikkink repeatedly stress, yet they note that the early campaign to end FGM among the Kikuyu people backfired as a result of imposing Western beliefs and personal narratives on an unreceptive population (1998, p. 27). This campaign and other anti-FGM efforts attempted over the last decades demonstrate a variety of obstacles in the path toward change, particularly when it comes to the ability of individuals to make a personal choice in opposition to the local, cultural and familial norms. This raises the problem of human agency.

Current Evaluations: Frames vs. Practice Perpetuation

According to the WHO (2011) report *Female genital mutilation programmes to date: what works and what doesn't* the practice of FGM is deeply rooted in cultural beliefs and a variety of anti-FGM interventions, ranging from the local to the international level, have been slow to produce results. In this and other reports (“WHO | Female genital mutilation,” 2013;

World Health Organization, 2008) ethnicity and social conventions—with associated benefits and punishments—are most often cited among the reasons for FGM’s prevalence.

Culture

Studies published in academic journals show that researchers arrive at similar conclusions from various methodologies. A statistical analysis that was performed in 10 countries where FGM is practiced in varying degrees of prevalence states that “Reasons for this practice include beliefs that it enhances fertility, promotes purity, increases marriage opportunities and prevents stillbirths. These beliefs are strongly rooted in tradition, culture and religion, but none carries a scientific basis” (Sipsma et al., 2012, p. 120). Another analysis (Berg & Fretheim, 2010) coalesced the findings from 25 FGM studies presented in 29 publications, including 16 qualitative investigations, eight quantitative studies, and one mixed-methods study. The authors determined that “an intricate web of cultural, social, religious, and medical pretexts for FGM/C exists” (p. 2). They also identified key factors in the continuation of FGM: cultural tradition, sexual morals /marriageability, religion, health benefits, and male sexual enjoyment. Cultural tradition was the perceived as the most influential factor (Berg & Fretheim, 2010).

Intervention

The deeply-held beliefs and traditions that support FGM raise questions about the perspective and goals of NGOs attempting to eradicate it: is it appropriate for outsiders to challenge these traditions? If so, how can they be challenged effectively? The quest for effective strategy is complicated by the fact that “Interventions have been poorly evaluated thus far to allow both international and national NGOs and governments to know where best to place their limited resources and prevent as many girls from undergoing the practice” (WHO, 2011, p. 5). Due to the lack of systematic evaluations of previous efforts, WHO and other agencies report

general conclusions and provide limited examples of specific interventions that have been attempted. The lack of historical information and reports of action taken by WHO, UNICEF and other NGOs, suggests that the efforts themselves were scattershot rather than systematic.

To illustrate the generality of most conclusions, following is the paragraph headed “Development and Interventions” in the WHO (2011) report on *Female Genital Mutilation programmes to date: what works and what doesn't*:

Anti-FGM programmes fail to include intended beneficiaries in the development of interventions who are crucial to ensuring an effective outcome. Intended beneficiaries allow agencies to assess where their target audiences are on the behaviour change continuum and hence which messages and approaches are best to prevent girls from being subjected to the practice. Instead, they are involved only after the programme has been designed and implemented. The results and assessments argue that this may contribute to the fact that the programmes, although vast, are designed in a haphazard fashion with no strategic format. (p. 4)

This conclusion echoes Melkote’s criticism (2009) of development communication, in particular the superficiality of many efforts in the participatory approach. Insight into some of the specific instances where communication generated by NGOs failed to resonate with locals comes from the lessons learned in Ethiopia regarding information and education campaigns (IEC):

IEC materials need to be targeted to specific audiences and communities instead of being mass produced. In Ethiopia for example, posters depicting excision of a girl with blood on the knife and girl may have been shocking for westerners but was a normal event for Ethiopians. In addition, some agencies focused on the message of sexuality, namely “FGM reduces women’s sexual enjoyment”. However this is not likely to change people’s opinions of the practice as contrary to the intended effect of the message this is what supporters of the practice would like, with the belief that unexcised women will be “unfaithful to their husbands” as a result. (WHO, 2011, p. 4)

This case illustrates the report’s conclusion that development communications from a variety of approaches have been ineffective and in some cases were perceived as judgmental or threatening.

Resonance

Following this conclusion and in keeping with optimism for social activism approaches (Huesca, 2001; Melkote, 2009), examples of framing (pursuant to Keck and Sikkink's analysis) are another avenue for insight. International activists position violence against women in a human rights framework that can be understood globally but is simultaneously supposed to resonate with the individuals whose behavior is the target of the desired change. "Thus, in the case of female genital cutting, frame theorists might expect most African women opposed to the practice to articulate a medical or women's rights explanation – those frames most often used by the international activists – for their opposition" (Boyle & Carbone-López, 2006, p. 437). In a study conducted in five countries where FGM is prevalent – Central African Republic, Egypt, Kenya, Mali, and the Sudan – 13,195 women (7,969 were "circumcised") who reported opposition to FGM were surveyed to determine the reasons for their belief that the practice should be discontinued (Boyle & Carbone-López, 2006).

The survey showed a low coincidence between activists' frames and women's opinions; however, the medical frame resonated with more individuals (40% of circumcised women; 19% of uncircumcised) in the survey than the human rights frame. This finding suggests that media are more effective in shaping the opinions than activists. It is also consistent with arguments that the most persuasive frames link to principles of modernity, specifically "those rooted in scientific expertise or economic progress, or individual human rights" (Boyle & Carbone-López, 2006, p. 456). The authors' finding that none of the frames were selected by many women indicates that activist messages did not reflect those individuals' beliefs. This suggests that the voices of the women who experience FGM are not being heard by the activists and NGOs who are interpreting their experience and spreading their stories to the international community. Alternatively,

activists are opting to frame the stories for international attention and support but are neglecting to account for the disconnection between anti-FGM frames and the women's beliefs. This lack of connection may jeopardize trust and be viewed as "ethnocentric and insensitive" by the African women it aims to help (Kouba & Muasher, 1985).

In addition to high-profile organizations such as the UN and WHO, organizations dedicated to ending FGM and helping those who suffer as a result of the practice include the Desert Flower Foundation, Orchid Project, Daughters of Eve, End FGM, FGM-HILFE, 28 Too Many, No Peace Without Justice, Global Alliance Against FGM, Tostan, Stop-FGM-Now and many more that are primarily based in European countries. The mission of 28 Too Many, which represents the 28 countries in Africa where FGM is practiced, includes mapping best practices in the anti-FGM efforts. The goal of the map is to "Provide and share information and trainings on FGM and network with academics, educationalists, NGOs, governments and UN change agents" (Wilson, 2010). The founder and president of 28 Too Many, Ann-Marie Wilson, stresses that to prevent FGM from harming girls of future generations there is a "need for better information about FGM, sharing and learning about different approaches to ending FGM and looking to set clear international goals about how governments, NGOs and communities can work together better" (Wilson, 2013). Her desire to cull information reflects the reports from WHO that suggest previous actions and programs lack documentation that can be used for comparison or formal conclusions.

Societal Norms

Answers to the question of who has the power to dictate FGM, come to light in a similar synthesis of WHO reports and scholarly studies of the practice. According to the report *Eliminating female genitalia* (World Health Organization, 2008), which was signed by 10

different international organizations (among them are the UN, UNICEF and UNESCO), the practice continues because it is “deeply entrenched in social, economic and political structures” (p. 5). It is based on inequalities between men and women as well as societal norms that limit women’s control over their own lives. The social advantages (including being marriageable) typically outweigh any disadvantages.

Where female genital mutilation is widely practiced, it is supported by both men and women, usually without question, and anyone departing from the norm may face condemnation, harassment, and ostracism. As such, female genital mutilation is a social convention governed by rewards and punishments which are a powerful force for continuing the practice. (World Health Organization, 2008, p. 5)

The decision for a girl to undergo FGM is usually made by members of her extended family although the females arrange for the ceremony (World Health Organization, 2008).

Pressure on the family to conform to their cultural norms and traditions is immense. Furthermore, the fact that “men will marry only women who have undergone the practice” (World Health Organization, 2008, p. 6) makes it nearly compulsory in order for a woman to attain economic security and feminine identity. In addition to the patriarchal hierarchy of families, FGM is also entrenched in “local structures of power and authority such as traditional leaders, religious leaders, circumcisers, elders, and even some medical personnel” (World Health Organization, 2008, p. 6). The financial aspects account for the fact that FGM may be falsely justified by medical personnel known as “excisers” for whom the practice is “lucrative” (WHO, 2011, p. 3).

Family

The information gathered and reported by NGOs and scholars in the field suggests that a woman has no autonomy regarding FGM. Instead, it is a decision made by her family when she is too young (between the ages of 0 and 15) to make a rational assessment or give informed

consent. Informed consent is a concept that has been used by activists to craft anti-FGM legislation and establish a legal platform for protecting women and their families who may oppose the practice; however, “where countries have had anti-FGM legislation, enforcement of these has been poor. Furthermore, some of these laws consist of loop holes allowing the medicalisation of the act, as is the case in Egypt” (WHO, 2011, p. 2).

The problem is complicated by evidence that many women support the practice and mothers in particular “maintain a substantial role in the decision to circumcise” their daughters (Williams & Sobieszczyk, 1997, p. 974). A study of parental attitudes towards FGM in Sudan revealed that 90% of women approved of the practice, based on their own opinions; they cited “custom and tradition” as the most common reason they had chosen (or plan to choose) for their daughters to undergo FGM (Williams & Sobieszczyk, 1997, p. 974). Approximately half of the women surveyed did not have an answer for why the practice persists and of those who did, “ignorance” and “fear of social criticism” were cited by 17% each (Williams & Sobieszczyk, 1997, p. 974).

Voices of FGM

Substantial evidence points to the fact that the majority of women, who live in regions and cultures where FGM is common, do not object to the practice because they do not perceive it as harmful or demeaning.

Instead, they view it as a ritual that benefits their daughters and ensures their honour. Furthermore, they argue that this practice is inherent to their culture and to their very essence or identity and therefore, any analysis of this practice must be situated within their local contexts in order for it to be properly understood and made meaningful. (Imoh, 2013, p. 40)

This suggests that there is a large gap between the conception of FGM among human rights activists and the people who experience it first-hand. For effective development communication programs to be created in the future, and for successful activist campaigns to resonate at the local

level, careful attention must be focused on those who are directly affected and responsible. The role of women should not be underestimated and the societal structures dominated by men must be simultaneously figured into the equation. Furthermore, the experiences and opinions most often solicited for studies on FGM are women's. The perspective offered by Seifu Adem, a man who comes from an area in Ethiopia where FGM is commonly practiced, provides an interesting layer to the complex web of beliefs and traditions.

Adem is married to an Ethiopian woman and currently lives with his wife and child in the U.S. while he attends graduate school. He says (Adem, 2013) that most of the women in his circle of friends and family in Ethiopia have been "cut" for a variety of reasons associated with sexuality and marriage. Sex before marriage is strictly forbidden in his culture and FGM is believed (in this culture) to curb a woman's sexual desire. A woman who undergoes FGM is deemed to be protected from temptation, thus ensuring her husband will be happy with the union. "Having a virgin bride is a big source of pride for a man; after the marriage he will announce that she was a virgin and there will be a big celebration," says Adem (2013). He adds that the women want to have the ceremony because it is a celebrated tradition and rite of passage, similar to a Bat Mitzvah in the U.S., where the young woman is honored and given gifts.

In response to a question about the Western belief that FGM is a human rights violation, Adem says that he concurs. His opinion demonstrates another surprising contradiction between the acceptance of the practice and simultaneous support for its end. Adem recalls that in the cities where people have formal education many families are opting to forego FGM; however, he believes that in most villages where there is little education there is also very little chance to change the tradition. It is important to note that Adem was speaking to a Western woman and the interview provides anecdotal, not scientific, information.

The desire to control female sexuality, as it relates to FGM from a male's perspective, elicits Foucault's (1980, 1995) concept of power over sexually constructed subjects. As Castells explains in *The Power of Identity* "The regulation of desire underlies social institutions, thus channeling transgression and organizing domination" (2009, p. 262). In the cultures where FGM is practiced, both the mothers and the fathers typically insist that their daughters undergo FGM in order to curb their sexual desire and ensure that they remain virgins until married. The belief that removing the external signs of the female genitalia will curb sexual urges is constructed over thousands of years of practice and as Foucault argues, the common knowledge of the topic has become "truth" to the people living in these cultures and communities.

Waris Dirie, a Somalia-born supermodel who experienced FGM when she was approximately 5 years old, has become a spokesperson against FGM and the harmful "truths" that are passed on from one generation of women to the next. In Dirie's case, as recounted in her autobiography *Desert Flower* (1999) and the movie of the same name, the FGM procedure was brutally painful and led to health problems, though not as severe as those of her sister and cousin who died as a result of the process. Dirie is an impassioned advocate for ending FGM states: "I consider FGM the worst type of torture that can be done to a woman. It's impossible to describe the pain" (Di Giovanni, 2010).

Another perspective, this one from a woman who had a different experience with FGM, comes from Fuambai Ahmadu. An anthropologist and associate professor in the University of Chicago's Department of Comparative Human Development, Ahmadu takes a controversial stand on FGM. She is a native of Sierra Leone who grew up in America, and decided as an adult to undergo the procedure in her homeland. As reported in *The New York Times* (Tierney, 2008),

Ahmadu criticizes the term “mutilation” and states her argument for a better understanding of the issue as well as empowerment for women and their right to choose:

What western audiences rarely see and anti-FGM activists would prefer them not to see is the fact that many circumcised women who support their tradition are healthy (conditions of dire economic poverty, notwithstanding), lead sexually fulfilling lives and they as well their partners quite like their circumcised bodies. Then, there are some who (like some circumcised men) feel emotionally, psychologically and physically traumatized by their experiences... experiences of shame, disfigurement and inferiority that these young women are made to endure as a result of the dehumanizing media representations and western social criticisms of their bodies and cultural practices. (Tierney, 2008)

Ahmadu’s “anti-feminist” perspective has received its fair share of criticism. In response, she “lamented that her Westernized “feminist sisters insist on denying us this critical aspect of becoming a woman in accordance with our unique and powerful cultural heritage.”” (Dickerson, 2007).

This example highlights the question posed previously as to whether human rights activists should challenge cultural traditions. It is a troubling dilemma as it pits respect for cultural heritage against the belief that people, in this case women, are harmed as a result. Recognizing that there are many sides to the debate, and many opinions that may or may not be heard in media reports or scholarly studies, it is tempting to accept or reject Ahmandu’s side of the story based on one’s own set of beliefs and cultural norms.

In the United Kingdom where there are large populations of immigrants from FGM-practicing nations, the debate is heated. Across the Internet, where boundaries of space and time are eliminated, stories abound of girls travelling back to their country to undergo the ritual of FGM (Onwordi, 2011), or having it performed illegally in the country where they are living (S. L. Roberts, 2012). These stories are in stark contrast to those of women who were traumatized by the experience of FGM and are speaking out to put a stop to the practice (Taylor, 2013). In the midst of these conflicting opinions, Daughters of Eve, Forward, the Orchid Project and other

non-profit activist groups provide support for women who suffered from FGM; scholars continue to conduct research on the best way to educate and communicate with FGM-practicing communities and NGOs such as WHO test strategies, compile data and issue opinion that is more accurate or valid than any other, but additional voices add valuable perspectives for the questions posed in this paper.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali is a Somalia-born, ex-Mulsim, former Dutch MP who has won numerous awards for promoting freedom of speech. She has a “formidable reputation” based on her past experiences and her present-day accomplishments: her parents had her undergo FGM at the age of five, she has received death threats as a result of writing the globally controversial Dutch film *Submission*, and she currently lives in the United States where she is a fellow at the Belfer Center’s Future of Diplomacy Project at the Harvard Kennedy School (A. Roberts, 2013). Ali supports campaigns to eradicate FGM but cautions that awareness-raising is not a sufficient strategy for change:

“Education campaigns do not work. Just talking to the mothers and grandmothers about why the practice is harmful is not convincing. They just tell their daughters to grit their teeth ... The core of the problem for them is, who is going to marry my daughter if I cannot verify she is a virgin?” (A. Roberts, 2013)

This suggests that marriage has become a disciplinary regime and further underscores the conflicting voices and competing approaches from another perspective. WHO reports state that NGOs have been unsuccessful in creating an educational program that works because there are numerous regions, ethnicities and cultural traditions that comprise a complex web of practices and beliefs, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution that works (WHO, 2011; World Health Organization, 2008). According to Ali, educational programs are wasted money and effort.

A recommendation for the future could be a combination of Ali’s perspective and WHO’s recommendation for the creation of new programs and mechanisms for change that are

multisectoral and involve sustained, community-led programs that are participatory, non-judgmental and non-coercive (World Health Organization, 2008). On the other hand, if one takes Ahmadu's view, this recommendation amounts to nothing more than an age-old imposition of western values.

Over time, activists and NGOs have built a convincing argument for why the practice should be considered a human rights violation and efforts should be continually made, and strategies improved, until it has been eliminated. However, there is conflicting and insubstantial evidence that certain people, particularly those who are practicing and/or undergoing FGM in areas with limited access to education, think that it is bad and should be eliminated. Thus, the efforts to persuade them to the contrary are based on Western beliefs and values. Educating people and imposing Western values is often deemed necessary in cases such as HIV and other health problems. A lack of knowledge or people speaking out on the local level about HIV does not mean that they shouldn't be educated and ultimately persuaded to change their behaviors. It is a medical imperative and the grounds for intervention are clear. The case and grounds are not that clear with FGM. The lack of clarity—boundaries of right versus wrong, global versus local, cultural traditions versus human rights—is at the heart of why FGM persists.

Conclusion

This paper is written from an inherently Western viewpoint, so given all of the obstacles to ending FGM, a predictably Western conclusion might be that it continues because it is not strongly opposed by the people who practice it. Furthermore, efforts to eradicate FGM are impeded by the complex cultures that support it as well as the fact that interventions are ineffective because they are imposing Western views. This reasoning could lead to the argument that it would be preferable to let the locals decide their future in regards to FGM. In response to

this thinking, Hirsi Ali offers a sharp critique of “intellectuals who she says have utterly failed in their responsibility towards non-white women... for arguing that female genital mutilation needs to be considered "in context", as part of a "cultural identity" that western women don't understand” (Brockes, 2010). The line of argumentation that Hirsi Ali rejects is that of the postmodernists. Postmodern theories posit that there is no single truth and culture is relative (Dirlik, 1996). A postmodern approach to FGM can lead to relativism.

Relativism romanticizes differences and thus leaves no room to critique FGM. From this perspective, there is no possibility for the marginalized to gain power and have a voice. Furthermore, it disables the potential for modernity to assist in social progress. Adopting the relativist approach “would imprison the present in the past and disguise oppression in a neo-ethnic sheen” (Dirlik, 1996, p. 8). This position is contrary to the argument posed in the introduction to this paper and adopted by the United Nations: women’s rights are a fundamental responsibility and must be pursued in a concerted, global effort. Therefore, the different voices that are heard and not heard in this debate, must be continually sought and represented. Many voices have been silenced by global and local norms. As Keck and Sikkink write, “norms constrain because they are embedded into social structures that partially demarcate valued communities” (1998, p. 34). Norms discriminate against the marginalized and must be identified on a variety of levels for activists to engage in strategic grassroots or transnational campaigns.

Due to the vast differences in local cultures and spaces where FGM is practiced, there is no single social intervention that has proven, or is likely to be, effective in ending FGM. There are various kinds of power struggles at work—hegemonic nationalism, patriarchalism, and injustice against women—and global activists must adapt their strategies to the local contexts in which they are working to eradicate FGM. Similarly, the creation of development

communication programs requires that the voices of both women and men be heard and understood within the societal structures, economies and politics of their respective cultures.

The development of a transnational advocacy network that shares information and generates additional discourse is of critical importance for actors at all levels to participate in a solution. A study of individual organization's efforts, such as those underway at 28 Too Many, would yield a deeper understanding of the activists involved: What are their backgrounds and beliefs? Whose voices do they represent? Are they opinion leaders who might shape opinion in the community, regional, national or transnational arena? Answers to these questions would provide a different perspective from which to explore the complex issues of FGM.

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**Political Empowerment of Women through Self Help movement
- A study in Tamil Nadu, India
By**

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Abstract:

Women empowerment essentially means that the women have the power or capacity to regulate their day- to- day lives in the social, political and economic terms -a power which enables them to move from the periphery to the centre stage. Empowerment is one of the key factors in determining their success. Entry of women into political institutions is an issue of equality. Increasing numbers of women have gained entry to formal political spaces. Women participation in political system could be well measured and explored using a set of factors that affect and enable women's political effectiveness in different democratic arena. There are various indicators that define women political empowerment. This paper examines these indicators namely: participation in various forms of associations, politics and civic struggles, mobility, autonomy, decision making relating to voting, excising power wherever necessary and exposure to media in propaganda of women issues and the resultant impact on women empowerment vide SHG's in Tamil Nadu.

Introduction

A country's development and the status of a society are measured in terms of women's well-being of that nation. Of the 1.3 billion people who live in absolute poverty around the globe, 70% are women (CARE 2005). Therefore, women empowerment and their participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society are fundamental to the advancement of human rights, social justice and sustainable development. In every society, women struggle against gender norms that limit their resources and opportunities for improvement. This has highlighted the need for women's empowerment.

Women empowerment essentially means that, women have the power or capacity to regulate their day- to- day lives in the social, political and economic terms -a power which enables them to move from the periphery to the centre stage. Empowerment is one of the key factors in determining their success. Their development, status and position would elevate women in the society. Empowering women must be a united approach, a genuine cause that requires continued attention and recognition by all, particularly in India where men are the predominant decision makers. Presence of women, particularly in politics is a new development . But still, the state and society seem to be lagging behind in offering them political reservations that were long overdue.

Entry of women into political institutions is an issue of equality. For a healthy political system and welfare of the people it is important that women must come forward and perform a vital role in political activities because more opportunities to participate in the political process will enhance their economic and organizational capacities so that they can gain more self-confidence and make attempts for a better share in the political system. Thus their participation in the political process

is crucial for strengthening the democratic traditions. Since women are globally under - represented at all levels of governance in relation to their share of the population (IDEA 2006), there is an enormous demand for more representation of women in political bodies and their political participation is now a major objective throughout the global women's movement.

Increasing numbers of women have gained entry to formal political spaces. Women participation in political system could be well measured and explored using a set of factors that affect and enable women's political effectiveness in different democratic arenas. The indicators that could be used are Participation in community programmes, politics and civic struggles, Involvement in various elections and political parties, Increased number of women leaders at village, district, state and national levels, Existence of women's networks, Participation of women in various associations, Awareness of her social and political rights, Exercising her legal rights, when necessary, Involvement of women in non-traditional tasks, Increased training programmes for women and the degree to which the media take on women's issues (Cornwall, 2005).

SHG as a Strategic Tool for Political Empowerment

Political empowerment would encompass the "ability to organize and mobilize for change". Consequently, an empowerment process must involve not only individual awareness but collective awareness and collective action. The notion of collective action is fundamental to the aim of attaining social transformation (Stromquist, 1988). In the past, women's role in politics was very minor. But now, the scenario is gradually changing. Indian women always have shown extraordinary dynamism in organizing themselves for income generation and exposing their leadership qualities. SHG serves as a strategic tool in bringing up women in political scenario. Membership with a group gives women the "visibility" and provides them a legitimate forum to articulate their needs and bring out the leadership qualities that are innate within them.

A revolutionary change in women's political participation within a group would be emphasized through a) Encouraging them to participate in community programmes b) Integrating them in the general national development plan c) Allotting them good portfolios and motivating them to do good practices and d) Full support from all family members, society and environment. It is clear that women can be empowered individually. But the feminist vision is one where women are able to articulate a collective voice and demonstrate collective strength. SHG serves a platform and permits a gradual building of their capacity through sharing that enhances participatory development. It was also stressed that, incorporating the feminist perspective in the concept of empowerment through group building implies a long-term re-designing of societies that will be based on democratic relationships. In total, empowerment deals with strategic rather than practical gender needs.

Review Of Literature

Nidheesh (2009) in his study proved that women's participation in public life had increased dramatically, making them "visible" in the public sphere, while men's participation continued as before. Women participated in a wide range of public activities like standing for society elections and participating in auctions. They also attended trainings and meetings, involved in social campaigns like banning arrack shop and social events of collecting relief funds during disaster. Women regularly attend Gram Panchayat meetings and learnt how to get their entitlements through government schemes.

Reddy (2008) concluded that SHGs link with formal credit institutions resulted in improvement of repayment rate, savings, financial status of household and family income. There is an increase in awareness levels about the society that has led to laying roads, planting trees, conserving environment, construction of water harvesting structures, donations to the victims of natural calamities, campaign against social evils like dowry, child marriages, crime against girls and women, untouchables, AIDS and support to widows and destitute.

Hust (2005) concluded that SHG membership can contribute to women's election to *panchayati raj*, but does not appear to influence what they can achieve if elected. It also states that more than SHG support the members (or their families) often have political leanings and activities even before they were members of SHGs. Most active PR women representatives were those from families with political connections, and/or with a background of employment in government programmes. Caste, wealth and literacy did not emerge as key factors.

Senthil Vadivoo and Sekar (2004) stated that the self help group is a movement for women empowerment. It covered women collectively struggling against direct and indirect barriers to their self development and their social, political and economic participation. Women's empowerment can be viewed as a continuous process of several inter-related and mutually reinforcing components. Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building, leading to greater participation, greater decision – making power and control the transformative action to overcome the constraints in this process.

Banerjee (2004) demonstrated the fact that, in a given situation, individual empowerment of women is better achieved through a collective process, where the individual draws her strength and power of self-assertion from a strong collective and sense of solidarity. Social heterogeneity, ethnicity, political ideological differences and cultural diversity tend to get subsumed under the pace and pressure of a collective empowerment process.

Statement Of The Problem

Women in India have been oppressed culturally, socially, economically and politically for many a centuries. Exposure to political scenario is the rarest opportunity given to women in any form of society. Women in general are not given a status at home, in the families, in the society and in the country. In the multi ethnic and multi cultural society like that exists in India, women are least exposed to participate in community activities. Even given a chance to participate in community-oriented activities and that are carried with the intervention of either family member or social leaders. The core of the problem is that they shoulder a number of responsibilities, but they are not given adequate participatory or decision making power in the family or elsewhere.

Women can gain such power, if at the grass root level when women are given recognition and power to make decisions relating to their economic status, cultural and social status. Such type of overall improvement of the power is a way for political empowerment. The political empowerment of women is one of the central issues in the process of development of countries all over the world. Tamil Nadu has a glorious tradition of recognizing the importance of empowering women over several decades.

Involvement in Self Help Groups(SHG's) has enabled women to gain greater control over resources like material possession, intellectual resources like knowledge, information, ideas and decision making in home, community, society and nation. Thus, empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one of the power. There are various indicators that define political women empowerment. These indicators are participation in various form of associations, politics and civic struggles, mobility, autonomy, decision making relating to voting, excising power wherever necessary and exposure to media in propaganda women issues.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the impact of SHG in comparison with non-members of SHG on women empowerment in political spheres.
2. To calculate the index of political Empowerment using various factors in Erode District.
3. To study whether the respondents demographic profile factors significantly predict the respondent's level of political empowerment.

Testing Of Hypotheses

For the purpose of the study, the following null hypotheses were framed and tested to find whether there is any significant difference between the sample respondents who are members of SHG in comparison with women who are not members of SHG (Non-SHG women). In addition to this also hypothesis to test whether the respondents profile factors age, educational qualification and nature of membership significantly predict the respondent's level of political empowerment was also framed.

1. H_0 : There is no significant difference between the political empowerment of SHG and Non-SHG women.
2. H_0 : Age has significant influence on the political empowerment of the respondents.
3. H_0 : Educational Qualification has significant influence on the political empowerment of the respondents.
4. H_0 : Nature of Membership has significant influence on the political empowerment of the respondents.

Methodology of the Study

The purpose of the study is to find how SHGs are playing a significant role in the empowering women on political space. To find an answer to this question, a sample of rural based SHG women and Non-SHG women are selected and studied. With the choice of Erode district as the study area, all the rural women in the fourteen blocks of the district constitute the universe for the study. Two categories of women are identified and selected for the study viz., those in SHGs and those outside. The Tamil Nadu Women Development Corporation has the list of all the registered SHGs in fourteen blocks of the Erode District. In the year 2009-10, the register had a list of 10301 rural based groups in the district.

Since special attention of the study is on studying the impact of SHG on women empowerment, the list of SHG women and Non-SHG women belonging to the same block were identified and studied. From the list of 10301 rural based SHGs of the Tamil Nadu Women Development Corporation, 200 groups were selected based on the stratified random sampling. From these randomly identified 200 groups, 600 SHG members were selected in a ratio of 3 members per group based on convenience sampling. 600 Non-SHG members were selected for the study based on the proximity and locality of the SHG members. Of the 14 blocks, finally 1200 sample (comprising of 600 SHG and 600 Non-SHG members) were selected for the study.

The data were collected by personal interview method using questionnaire as a tool. The data relating to demographic profile of the respondents and the political aspects of women empowerment were collected. The data pertaining to the possession of various cards such as Kalaingar Kaappettu Card, MGREGS Card, etc. involvement in various associations and elections, voting decision and participation in civic struggles were studied. Most of the information is qualitative in nature and the variables were constructs. Therefore, a structured enquiry schedule was the instrument used for collection of the information.

For easier understanding and analysis a type of index was constructed. The researcher decides on the specific scores to be allocated, ensuring that the ordinal scale for each variable is such that high value always represents either “good” or “bad”. The weight for each item is determined by the researcher based on their relative importance as perceived by the researcher.

Index of political empowerment was constructed and it is a consolidated measure of the political empowerment of the individual. This index is calculated for each respondent based on the following variables: Possession of cards like Kalaingar Kappettu Card, MGREGS card etc, Involvement in various associations like PTA, WDC etc, Participation in various elections, Voting decision, Participation in civic struggles and approaching various officials and Participation in Collector’s Greivance Redressal Meeting. The weights and scores for each variable are assigned based on their relative importance. The maximum possible value for the index is 100. The data collected were analysed using percentage analysis, z-test and logistic regression methods.

Analysis and Interpretation

Political participation constitutes the pavement for the empowerment of women in political sphere. The question of political empowerment of women in rural India has assumed considerable significance because of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. The amendment provides reservation of seats and posts of chairperson for women in all grassroots level democratic institutions in the countryside known as Panchayats. This is a historic step of far reaching implications and significant repercussions on the political process in rural India. The study of the nature and level of political participation and its resultant empowerment can be evaluated only on the basis of the availability of democratic values. The presence of the umbrella of democracy is a pre-requisite for the attainment of maximum extent of participation and empowerment. It signifies such proceedings like voting, seeking information, discussing and proselytising, attending meetings, contributing financially and communicating with representatives.

Possession Of Cards

Life is much easier if one have any card like Voter ID, Ration card or passport as a proof of their citizenship. It helps the people in several ways by playing as an important tool of identification now-a-days. Hence, a study has been conducted in surveying the possession of cards among the respondents. The table below shows that, majority of 33.28 percent and 30.04 percent of the respondents possess the Voter ID and Ration card. 23.92 percent of the respondents have Chief Minister’s Medical Insurance scheme card which provides a free medical treatment for the families who has the annual income below Rs.72, 000. The respondents of 12.50 percent also possess MGREGS card and only few 0.26 percent respondent has ATM card. No one of the respondents hold passport and PAN card.

Table 1: Possession Of Cards

Sl. No.	Type of cards	No. of Respondents	%
1	Voter ID	1017	33.28
2	Chief Minister's Medical Insurance Scheme card	731	23.92
3	Ration card	918	30.04
4	Passport	0	0.00
5	PAN card	0	0.00
6	MGREGS card	382	12.50
7	ATM card	8	0.26
	Total	3056	100.00

(Note: Total is based on the response to various statements in this section for 1200 respondents)

Involvement In Various Associations

A table has been drawn to show the respondent's level of involvement in various associations like Parent Teacher Association (PTA), consumer forum, Women Development Corporation (WDC), Grama Sabah and political parties.

Table 2: Involvement In Various Associations

Sl. No.	Associations	HI	IN	NS	RI	VR
1	Parent Teacher Association (PTA)	14 (1.2)	76 (6.3)	246 (20.5)	377 (31.4)	487 (40.6)
2	Consumer Forum	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	56 (4.7)	154 (12.8)	990 (82.5)
3	Women Development Corporation	150 (12.5)	231 (19.3)	131 (10.9)	294 (24.5)	391 (32.6)
4	Grama Sabha	113 (9.4)	299 (24.9)	158 (13.2)	231 (19.3)	399 (33.3)
5	Political Parties	133 (11.1)	208 (17.3)	154 (12.8)	359 (29.9)	346 (28.8)

(HI – Highly Involved, IN – Involved, NS – Not Sure, RI – Rarely Involved, VR – Very Rarely Involved)

Hence, it is noticed that around 30 to 40 percent of the respondents are rarely involved in association of Parent Teacher, Women Development Corporation and Grama sabha. Still higher 82.5 percent respondents do not involve in consumer forum. This may be because of their lack of awareness towards it. Only 29.9 percent of the respondents are involving in political parties that to a rare one.

Participation In Different Elections

With the 73rd and 74th amendments of the constitution, Panchayati Raj institutions were established as a tool of decentralization of power at the grass root level. Another major feature is the reservation of 33 percent for women encourages them for active participation.

Table 3: Participation In Different Elections

Sl. No.	Type of Participation	No. of Respondents	%
1	Voted	846	84.60
2	Campaigned	96	9.60
3	Contested	36	3.60
4	Won	22	2.20
	Total	1000	100.00

(Note: Total is based on the response to various statements in this section for 1200 respondents)

This study attempts to find out the role played by the respondents in different elections. Nearly 84.60 percent of the respondents take part in voting in the election. 9.60 percent of them campaigned and 3 percent of the respondents contested in the election. Among the 3.60 percent those who have actively taken part in contesting elections, 2.20 percent respondents won and taken up their prestigious seat.

Participation In Various Civic Struggles

Women in India are not free to express their ideas since, they live in a male dominated society. Expression or participation in political activities becomes a difficult task for a woman in rural India. In spite of these hindrances, women still come out to participate in various civic struggles. Women represent themselves in outraging the problems relating to drinking water, transport facilities, price rise, alcoholism, road construction etc.

Most of the people today are very zealously participate in the civic struggles in order to assert their basic rights. Hence, the above table shows that, apart from half of the respondents the rest make their active participation. Nearly 27.3 percent of the respondents involve in the issue of road construction. 10.6 percent for the issue on price rise and 5.3 percent regarding the basic rights of women. And few like 0.8, 1.0 and 4.8 percent respondents involve in the issues of transport service, alcoholism and drinking water respectively.

Table 4: Participation In Various Civic Struggles

Sl. No.	Issues	No. of Respondents	%
1	Drinking water	57	4.75
2	Transport services	10	0.83
3	Price Rise	127	10.58
4	Alcoholism	12	1.00
5	Basic women's right	63	5.25
6	Road construction	328	27.33
7	Not Participated in any struggle	603	50.25
	Total	1200	100.00

District Collector's grievance redress meeting is an objective put forth by the government. On every Monday of the week, it has been fixed a grievance redress day. On this particular day, all the people use to give petitions and confess their grievance and claims directly to their district collector, and the necessary steps will be taken immediately through the representatives of various department.

Table 5: REPRESENTATION IN COLLECTOR'S GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL MEETING

Sl. No.	Opinion	No. of Respondents	%
1	Given petition	619	51.58
2	Not given any petition	581	48.42
	Total	1200	100.00

Hence, a study has been conducted to know whether the respondents take part in that and give petitions regarding their problem. The table depicts clearly that, 51.6 percent of the respondents has given petition, and the rest did not.

Political Empowerment Index

An index of political empowerment of women is calculated using a Weighted Average method by using some proxy variable. These variables are given a differential weightage (based on their relative importance). The proxy variables used to measure political empowerment of women are: a) Possession of cards like voter card, MGREGS card etc., b) Involvement in various forums c) Participation in various election d) Voting decision e) Participation in various civic struggles and approaching various officials and f) Participation in Collector's Grievance Redressal meeting.

Table 6: Index Of Political Empowerment Among Shg And Non-Shg

Index of political empowerment	SHG	%	Non-SHG	%	Total	%
10-20	3	0.50	301	50.17	304	25.33
20-30	47	7.83	231	38.50	278	23.17
30-40	248	41.33	58	9.67	306	25.50
40-50	283	47.17	10	1.67	293	24.42
Above 50	19	3.17	0	0.00	19	1.58
Total	600	100.00	600	100.00	1200	100.00

The study examined the political empowerment of SHG and Non-SHG from 1200 respondents with equal weight age. There are some important progresses seen at the social awareness of SHG respondents. Regarding this, the SHG respondents are remarkably far better than Non-SHG respondents. From the lower level (10-20) to (20-30) it has been predominantly occupied by Non-SHG respondents. But, as the level increases the number of SHG respondents also gradually increases. This shows that, the political empowerment of the respondents of SHG is highly commendable than of Non-SHG. This has been made possible through the training given to the respondents regarding their public speaking skills and other skills developmental programmes conducted by the SHG in order to enlighten the minds of their members.

Table 7: Test Of Significance For Difference In Political Empowerment

Group	Mean	SD	z value	Result
SHG	39.6	6.5	45.202	Significant at 1% level
Non-SHG	21.7	7.2		

A test of significance has been conducted in knowing the difference in political empowerment among the SHG and Non-SHG respondents. It can be understood from the above table that, the scores of the respondents of SHG differs with that of Non-SHG in knowing the significance for difference in political empowerment among the SHG and Non-SHG members. With z value of 45.202, the test result shows that the slight variation in the mean scores of difference in their political empowerment is significant at 1 percent level. The respective mean value of SHG and Non-SHG is found to be 39.6 and 21.7 and their SD as 6.5 and 7.2.

Logistic Regression –Political Empowerment

Logistic regression analysis was applied to test whether the respondents profile factors age, educational qualification and nature of membership significantly predict the respondent's level of political empowerment.

**Table 8: Demographic Profile Vs Political Empowerment
- Omnibus Tests Of Model Coefficients**

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	442.882	3	.000
	Block	442.882	3	.000
	Model	442.882	3	.000

The omnibus tests of model coefficients table 4.97 indicate that, the four predictors together, the model or equation is significant (Chi-square test value – 442.882, df – 3, N – 1200, p<0.001).

**Table 9: Demographic Profile Vs Political Empowerment
- Classification Table**

	Observed		Predicted		
			Political Empowerment		Percent Correct
			Low	High	
Step 1	Political Empowerment	Low	722	166	81.3
		High	123	189	60.6
	Overall Percent				75.9

a. The cut value is .500

The above table 4.98 predicts the number of respondent's level of political empowerment. Out of a sample of 1200 respondents, the majority, 888 respondents have low political empowerment and 312 are having high level of political empowerment.

Logistic regression model also predicts that the majority, 722 (out of 888 observed) respondents have low level of political empowerment but 166 respondents are having high level of political empowerment and the correctness of the prediction is 81.3%. The model also predicts that 123 respondents (out of 312 observed) have low level of political empowerment but 189 are having high level of political empowerment and the correctness of the prediction is 60.6%.

It is concluded from the logistic regression analysis that majority of the respondents are having low level of political empowerment and the overall predicted correct percentage is 75.9%.

**Table 10: Demographic Profile Vs Political Empowerment
Variables In The Equation**

	Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
								Lower	Upper
Step 1a	Age	-.072	.072	1.010	1	NS	.930	.721	.900
	Educational Qualification	-.043	.092	.217	1	NS	.958	.773	1.029
	Nature of Membership	-4.07	.330	152.142	1	1%	.017	.820	1.251
	Constant	4.475	.564	63.046					
a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Age, Educational Qualification, Nature of Membership									

The table 4.99 shows that the respondent's profile factors nature of membership is significant with the political empowerment status of the respondents. The factors age and educational qualification are not significant. The Exp (B) gives the odds ratio for each factor. The odds ratio and confidence interval for nature of nature of membership is 0.017 (C.I. value ranges between 0.820 to 1.251). The table also indicates that the nature of nature of membership influence on the political empowerment status is significant at 1 percent level.

The following equation predicts the political empowerment of the selected sample respondents.

$$\text{Log (p/1-p)} = 4.475 - 0.072*\text{Age} - 0.043*\text{Educational Qualification} - 4.068*\text{Nature of Membership}$$

Results and Discussion

Political empowerment profile includes involvement in various associations, and elections. Nearly 7.4 percent participate in Parents Teachers Association, 32 percent in Women Development Corporation, 34.3 percent in Grama Sabha and 28.4 percent in Political Parties. Almost all the respondents participate in the election in one way or other like voting (84.6 percent), campaigning (9.6 percent), contesting (3.6 percent) and 2.2 percent have won the elections. Invariably of being or not being a group member, the level of political participation by women seems to be much lower. The NGOs and the other supporting organizations can motivate groups by giving exposure to successful women being in a political scenario. This is necessary because, many women are reluctant to take up new path due to their apprehensions regarding their abilities and the risks involved.

There is a significant difference in the political empowerment of SHG and Non-SHG members. It could be inferred that SHGs are more politically empowered than Non-SHG. It is inferred from the above table that nature of membership is the important variables, which predict the level of political empowerment of the respondents. The observation made from the SHG respondents show that, the possibility to work in groups gives women, a sense of security and confidence in proceeding with their business.

Hence, a similar effort can be taken to bring together women in Non-SHG's and promote group women enterprises. Since, the success of an enterprise is determined by factors like the size of the enterprise, net worth of the enterprise and the employment generated, promotion of group enterprises will meet the objectives of larger scale operations. This in turn will result in increased mobilization of capital, large scale of production, better organization and management and resultant increase in turnover and networth. Efforts should be taken to screen the number of members during the project formulation stage itself. Moreover, the training programmes suggested for the members of the SHG will also hold good for the Non-SHG form of enterprises.

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H.O.P.E.
“Helping Other People Excel”

by

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Abstract

Hope is a positive psychological construct. The definition of hope utilized in this paper is derived from the work of the late Dr. C. R. Snyder. His definition and theory of hope is that hope consists of goals and/or problems to solve, pathway thinking and agency thinking. Hope can be measured. There are advantages that high hope people enjoy that their low hope peers do not. Hope can be increased and taught. Hope is the force that moves a person from one point in life to another point in life. Without hope, a person is paralyzed and left with unmet goals and unrealized dreams. A person can help someone else increase their hope levels. This paper will explain hope, the hope theory, and some ways a person can help other people excel by helping them to increase their hope.

H.O.P.E.

Helping Other People Excel

Life is full of tasks, problems, goals, and choices. Every day people make decisions that either keep them moving toward a good and hopefully a better life. Alternatively, some people make decisions that keep them from moving forward at all. In other words, the choices people make result in hope or stagnation (Lopez, 2013). So what is hope? The definition and theory of hope that is relied upon in this article is detailed below. Further, there are ways in which a person can help another person increase their hope. These are detailed below.

Snyder's Hope Theory

The hope theory which underpins this current paper was developed by C. R. Snyder (1991). To date, it has been the most researched and validated theory pertaining to the measurement of hope (Creamer, 2009). Snyder established that the very core of hope was a cognitive component which is the perception that goals can be met (Snyder, 1994). Therefore, Snyder's Hope Theory rests on the definition of hope which is that hope is a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals) (Snyder, 1991).

There are two types of hope described by Snyder. First, trait hope, which is established in children by age 3 and is stable thereafter (McDermott & Snyder [2000], Snyder [1994; 2000], and Snyder, McDermott, Cook, & Rapoff [2002]). Second, there is state hope, which can be influenced by situational factors that are reflected at an ongoing or "state" level. The fostering of hopeful thinking begins with a child needing a secure attachment with one or more caregivers, who in turn are taught and modeled effective goal-related activities (Snyder, 1994). If parents reinforce cognitive processes consistent with goal achievement, children become increasingly

hopeful. Likewise, if children are discouraged from goal setting or distrust major attachment figures, due to abuse or neglect, they will display limited ability to formulate and pursue goals (Snyder, 2000). Of utmost importance is that these cognitive constructs are founded in an individual's ability to develop and achieve desired goals utilizing multiple strategies to reach desired goals (Snyder, 1994).

Goals

Goals, the essential ingredient of Snyder's Hope theory, are discussed herein in detail. Snyder's major assumption when developing the hope theory was that human actions are goal directed (Snyder, 2002). Goals are the anchoring point for the development and measurement of hope (Snyder et al., 1991). Snyder reported that in order for goals to be motivating, they should be deemed as having a high personal value (Snyder, 2000). Goals do not require hope if they are easily achieved or seemingly impossible to achieve, or are not motivating or valued (Snyder, 2000). To reach goals, people must perceive that they are capable of imagining one or more routes, or pathways, to their goals.

Pathway Thinking

Hope also consists of pathway thinking. Pathway thinking is a person's perceived ability to develop reasonable routes to achieving desired goals (Snyder, 1991). In other words, pathways symbolize a person's belief that he/she can produce feasible routes and possible alternative routes for completing planned goals (Snyder, 2000). Pathways are related to problem solving and strategy based performance by an individual (Chang, 1998). Every goal can have several plausible pathways, although some pathways may be more effective or reasonable than others. If a perceived pathway is not effective in accomplishing a goal, then the individual will attempt an alternate pathway. A person who is considered high on trait-like pathways thinking will perceive

him- or herself as being successful at generating routes to goals or, regenerating routes if a strategy is blocked (Snyder, 2000). This individual confidence in the ability to produce strategies to meet goals is at the heart of pathways thinking.

Agency Thinking

The motivational component of hope is agency thinking. Agency thought is the perceived capability to use one's pathways to reach desired goals (Rand, 2009). Agency is essential for movement toward a goal (Lopez, Snyder, & Teramoto Pedrotti, 2003). If a goal is blocked, agency thinking and motivational self-talk assists with the required inspiration to discover the best alternate pathway to reach the goal (Snyder, 1994). The capacity to maintain a mindfulness of agency thinking escalates the likelihood that chosen pathways will result in success. When success is achieved, the goal pursuit process is validated by positive emotions and the cycle of setting and attaining goals continues (Snyder, 2002).

Measuring Hope

To measure hope, Snyder and colleagues developed the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (ADHS) (Snyder et al., 1991) designed to assess the two sub-factors of hope: pathways thinking and agency thinking. The Hope Scale has consistently demonstrated acceptable internal consistency estimates (overall alphas from .74 to .88, agency alphas of .70 to .84, and pathways alphas of .63 to .86); test-retest reliabilities (ranging from .85 for 3 weeks to .82, $p < 0.001$, for 10 weeks); and, concurrent and discriminant validities (Snyder et al., 1991).

Levels of Hope

People can experience high hope or low hope, contingent on their level of hopeful thinking. A discussion of the characteristics of high and low hopeful thinkers follows.

A characteristic of a high-hope person is they will experience cyclical pathway and agency thought that is effortless throughout the goal cycle; on the other hand, low-hope people will have recurring pathway and agency thought that is cautious and slow (if at all functioning) in the goal sequence (Snyder, 1991). People with high hope seem to have no fear as well as tenacity in the face of adversity (Snyder, 1991). Snyder (1995) wrote, "high hope people see roadblocks to their goals as being a normal part of life" (p.357). People with high hope are more decisive than people with low hope (Snyder, 1995). High hope individuals set clear goals and establish multiple strategies for achieving their goals while individuals identified as having low hope are more likely to set ambiguous and unclear goals (or no goals at all) (Snyder, 1994). Low hope people lack effective plans and strategies for achieving their desired results (Snyder, 1994). High hope individuals are also more likely to stay focused on their goals, developing processes to evaluate their progress, and continuing in spite of anticipated and unanticipated obstacles (Snyder, Feldman et al., 2002).

In a study conducted employing listening preferences, memory and self-report tests regarding typical self-talk, it was found that high-hope people incorporate self-talk agency phrases as, "I can do this," and "I am not going to be stopped" (Snyder, Lapointe, Crowson, & Early, 1998). High-hope people quickly tailor their routes effectively so as to reach their goals. The low-hope person, on the other hand, might be unlikely to produce alternate routes (Snyder, 1994). A summary of the characteristics of high-hope and low-hope people is found below:

Table 1

Characteristics of High-Hope and Low-Hope Individuals (Snyder, 2006)

High Hope	Low Hope
Many goals	Few goals
Specific goals	Vague goals
Realistic goals	Unrealistic goals
Goals that require effort	Goals that are easy to attain
Focus on relevant information	Ponder on negative information
Approach goals	Avoid goals
Prefer positive self-referential input	Prefer negative self-referential input
Create multiple pathways to goals	Create few pathways to goals
High motivation	Low motivation
Skilled at creating alternative pathways	Unskilled at or lack energy in creating alternate pathways
Belief in successful goal pursuit	Lack of belief in successful goal pursuit
View obstacles as a challenge	Are discouraged by obstacles
Use strategies to strengthen agency thinking	Use interfering and ineffective strategies
Learn from previous successful and unsuccessful goal pursuits	Ponder on previous failures
Steadily focus on goal pursuit	Are easily distracted
Confidence in own skill	Lack of confidence

Hope is not significantly related to native intelligence (Snyder, McDermott, Cook, and Rapoff 2002). Hope is not significantly related to income (Lopez, 2009). Dr. Shane Lopez (2013) asserted that hope can be learned and shared with others (pp. 222-220). He characterized hope as being like oxygen and that we cannot live without it (Lopez, p. 181-185). Additionally, he distinguished hope as something that can lift our spirits, buoy our energy, and make life seem worth living (Lopez, 2013). Being a hopeful adult has many benefits. High-hope people perform better at work (Peterson & Byron 2008), have higher well-being (Gallagher & Lopez 2009), and live longer (Stern, Dhanda, & Hazuda 2001).

At this point in the discussion of hope, in order to ascertain a complete picture of hope, it is important to look at what hope is not. Therefore, a glimpse of hopelessness will shed more light on what hope is.

What Hope Is Not

Hopelessness

Hopelessness has been associated as the belief of impossibility (Miceli and Castlefranchi, 2010). Hope as seen by Snyder contains pathways to meeting goals and is encouraged to try to work through a goal or problem. Hopelessness is a person's inability to see a positive future (Hollis et al., 2005). Hope, on the other hand, looks for a positive future and a way to obtain a positive future. Hopelessness leads to increased risk of depression and suicidal thoughts (Magelleta & Oliver, 1999). A hopeless person is “deficient in a basic spiritual power which results in the risk of lapsing into lethargy and indifference” (Warnock, 1986). They stop moving. They are paralyzed.

False Hope

A criticism of the hope theory is the possibility of setting unrealistic goals that result in failure or are unreachable (Snyder, 2002). False hope can be found when a person has a desired goal and the motivation (i.e., agency) to reach that goal, but, they do not have the strategies to attain the goal (Kwon, 2000). Critics of hope might claim that hope is more like wishful thinking or daydreaming. Snyder (2002) offers a rebuttal to the issue of false hope stating that individuals with high hope often approach obstacles that are perceived as unrealistic with strong pathway and agency thinking. Likewise, when a particular goal is perceived as blocked, high-hope individuals are flexible in changing their goals to ones that are more obtainable (Irving & Snyder, 1998).

The following section will view the hope theory as compared to other related theories/constructs. Hope theory has exhibited some similarities to these other constructs thereby supporting its convergent validity; however, it also has displayed sufficient differences as to support its discriminant validity.

Hope and Related Constructs

Snyder's Hope Theory (1991) resembles constructs of self-efficacy, optimism, problem solving, goal theory and motivation; however, they are not the identical. The current study is founded on the basis of hope consisting of goals, pathway thinking and agency thinking. Because this study will examine elements of first language literacy that are similar to the components of hope, it is imperative to highlight other constructs that relate to hope. This clarification will assist in narrowing down the possible places of convergence of hope and first language literacy.

Problem Solving

Turning attention to potential similarities and/or differences in hope and problem solving, they differ in at least two fundamental ways. First, the identification of an anticipated goal, or a solution to a problem, is observed as being at the core of problem-solving (Heppner & Hillerbrand, 1991). Similar to hope theory, discovering the most effective pathway is the foundation for problem-solving (D'Zurilla, 1986). Agency thinking within the hope theory provides the motivation to activate pathway thinking (problem solving) (Snyder, 1991). Hope and problem solving have correlated positively (rs of .40–.50; Snyder, Harris, et al., 1991).

Optimism

Optimism is often interchanged with hope. It is important to understand that hope is not just the idea of being optimistic. It is similar to hope in that it is a goal-based cognitive process that operates whenever an outcome is perceived as having substantial value (Snyder, 2002). Optimism differs from hope in that it encompasses a single cognitive state expecting positive outcomes across life domains (Carver & Scheier, 2002). Optimism has been thought of as when a person has as a general expectancy that good things will happen (Schier & Carver, 1985). The optimist often has the belief that circumstances will work out as he or she desires, but, does not possess the pathways necessary to go after and achieve the desired goals (Snyder, 1995). Frankly speaking, the optimist has the agency thinking, or motivation, but lacks the pathway thinking, or established plan, that is present in the hope theory.

Self-Efficacy

Hope (Snyder, 1991) has also been associated with the construct of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). Both constructs share two components; the willpower (agency) element of the hope theory is similar to the efficacy expectancies of the self-efficacy theory. Also the waypower

component (pathways) of the hope theory is similar to the outcome expectancies of the self-efficacy theory. One major difference between the two theories is that Bandura contends that the efficacy expectancies are most important, whereas Snyder argues that willpower (agency) and waypower (pathways) are equally important (Peterson & Luthans, 2003). Self-efficacy is the belief that a goal *can* be achieved whereas hope is the belief that a goal *will* be achieved (Peterson & Luthans, 2003). Self-efficacy does not include pathways thinking (Peterson & Byron, 2008).

Motivation

When examining the relationship between hope and motivation, it is critical to clarify that hope is not the same as motivation. Wlodkowski (1990) defines motivation as a "hypothetical construct that cannot be directly measured or validated through the physical or natural sciences" (p. 97). The agency sub-factor of hope contains the motivational factor because it is the part of hope that provides the encouragement to move from Point A to Point B (Snyder, 1991). However, motivation does not contain the pathways factor of hope. Hope is not motivation, but it can motivate.

Emotions

Hope is mistaken for positive or negative emotions by some people. Some often dismiss hope as a non-viable construct thinking it is a whimsical emotional reaction. Perceptions regarding goal attainment can produce positive or negative emotions. For instance, positive emotions might result with a positive attainment of a goal and negative emotions from an unsuccessful attempt at reaching a goal (Snyder, 2002). High-hope people typically possess positive emotions and low hope people tend to personify negative emotions, with a sense of lethargy about the pursuit of goals (Snyder, 2002). Therefore, it is the goal-directed thinking,

rather than emotions that determine successive goal-related performances (Snyder, Cheavens, & Michael, 1999). It is important to note that when situations are at their most difficult, when goals seem the most unattainable, hope is not automatically diminished (Snyder, 2002).

Helping Other People Excel

Sometimes in life a person is blinded from their ability to progress from one point to another in their life's goals. Often, people need help making a plan for their life. Also, they need the help of hopeful people to help them determine how to reach their goals. They also need assistance in making alternate plans in case their initial plans do not work. Hope literature suggests that hope can be taught (Lopez, 2013). The following will explain how a person can increase hope for others.

Choose Feasible Goals

Whether you are a friend, teacher, co-worker, or family member, you can help other people choose feasible goals. Making clear goals provides a firm foundation for hopeful development (Snyder, Lehman, Kluck & Monsson, 2006). Goals should be chosen that are valuable to the person needing more hope (Lopez, 2013). The goals should be clarified so they can be clearly assessed.

Generate Several Paths

People who are high in hope entertain several pathways to their goals (Snyder, 1991). Having multiple pathways increases the chance that the person will find one or more effective routes to their goal (Lopez, 2013). Multiple pathways also enhance the motivation for reaching goals by minimizing the possibility of absolute goal blockages (Lopez, 2013).

Specify Sub-Goals

Some goals are too cumbersome to achieve in one step. Therefore, if you are helping a person increase their hope, it is wise to assist the goal setter to break a larger goal into smaller, attainable goals (Snyder et al., 2006). This exercise minimizes the possibility of the low hope person from becoming overwhelmed and falling into failure mode. A series of small successes will increase hope as the person moves along towards fulfillment of the large goal (Lopez, 2013).

Visualize the Path

Another technique for assisting a person with increasing hope is to help them visualize their desired outcome. If a person mentally experiences a complex goal, it possibly will provoke thoughts regarding means to obtain desired goals (Snyder, 2006). Educating the person about such visualization and encouraging its use will enhance the ability to generate pathways (Snyder, 2006).

Connections with Hopeful People

A person in need of hope is more successful in increasing hope if they connect with a hopeful person. If a person is overwhelmed and having trouble mustering up hope, they should connect with someone that makes them feel like they matter in this world; someone who makes them feel understood and encouraged (Lopez, 2013). Whenever a person makes a connection with someone who reminds them that they matter, they have the chance of reconnecting with their sense of identity and purpose, which can spark them back into hopeful action (Lopez, 2013).

Increase Positive Self-Talk

A person's messages to themselves can make or break their goal mastering actions. In other words, it is most helpful to correct any messages being spoken by a person that will

sabotage their hopeful thoughts and actions. If you are mentoring someone in need of increased hope, it might help to rehearse positive self-talk with that person (Snyder, 2006). Positive messages increase the motivation factor of the hope process, helping a person continue moving toward the achievement of a goal (Lopez, 2013).

Create and Sustain Excitement about the Future

A person needing more hope to fuel their movement toward a goal need a cheerleader to keep them encouraged in their quest. Followers look to hopeful leaders to dream big, and to motivate them toward a meaningful future (Lopez, 2013). With the support of a hopeful leader, one of the fastest hope building strategies is to overturn obstacles, giving followers their best shot at doing what they do best (Lopez, 2013). Further, a hope filled leader should help people create more options for attaining their goals (Lopez, 2013).

Conclusion

In conclusion, hope begets hope. The more hope you can help a person build in their life, the more advancement they can make in their lives. The more hope you share with someone else, the more dreams you can help make happen for the hopeless person. When a person helps another person obtain more hope in their life, they can in turn give some of their hope away to help someone else. Hope can be given away anywhere and everywhere. It's the gift that keeps on giving.

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Reproductive Rights in Argentina: A Multicultural Look at The Evolution and Practice of
Reproductive Choice

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Reproductive Rights in Argentina

Women have been fighting for equality for many years. One of the largest issues when it comes to equality for women in the world is reproductive rights. This rings true for Argentina as well. Argentine women ranked 24th among 134 countries in terms of their access to resources and opportunities relative to men. However, even with a limited sense of equality, women in Argentina are still struggling to achieve reproductive freedom.

Women's empowerment is linked to their decision making capacity at all levels and spheres of life; the personal is the political.¹ In order for the entire population of Argentinean citizens to gain and maintain their rights to reproductive freedoms, the focus of empowering half its population, women, must be strong and it must be made an important issue in and outside of the government² "...The defense of 'cultural practices' is likely to have much greater impact on the lives of women and girls than on those of men and boys, since far more of women's time and energy goes into preserving and maintaining the personal, familial and reproductive side of life."³

Since the topic of multicultural feminism has been debated by feminist scholars, this researcher defines multicultural feminism as the realization that not all social challenges

¹ Petchesky, "From Population Control to Reproductive Rights: Feminist Fault Lines." *Reproductive Health Matters*, Vol. 3, No. 6, (Nov., 1995), 153.

² Petchesky, "From Population Control to Reproductive Rights: Feminist Fault Lines." *Reproductive Health Matters*, Vol. 3, No. 6, (Nov., 1995), 154.

³ Okin, Susan Moller. *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Ed. Joshua Cohen, Mathew Howard, and Martha C. Nussbaum. 13.

women face are universal. In today's world there is a multitude of cultural and social conditions which create struggles, that are unique to location and region based on different situations found within that specific culture.⁴ The transnational feminist lens used within this piece focuses on the intersectionality of nation states, not privileging one culture over the other as well not focusing on specific feminist theories, location, region or class.⁵

This transnational feminist research is intended to help educate and begin a move toward reproductive rights for women and men in Argentina. It is also will try to paint a better transnational feminist view on what is happening within the country. Bridging what is being done in other countries in regards to reproductive rights and then seeing how Argentinians are interpreting such feminism. This piece will focus on the education of the population in regards to sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and overall sexual health⁶. In addition, I will offer methods for using feminist pedagogical strategies since Argentina does not have a sexual education curriculum in place.

On top of the educational aspect of reproduction, the research examines the activism⁷ and movements trying to help educate and aid the ability for women to be informed about

⁴ Okin, Susan Moller. *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Ed. Joshua Cohen, Mathew Howard, and Martha C. Nussbaum.

⁵ Rubin, David. "Transnational Feminism: Transnational Feminism in the United States." Discussion, Tampa, November 18, 2013.

⁶ Bell, et al. "Supplement: Ensuring Sexual and Reproductive Health for People Living with HIV: Policies, Programmes and Health Services." 2007, 113.

⁷ Women's activism in Argentina.

their choices and bodies.⁸ The piece will look into a small fraction of activism that has begun in the country; however, there is still a large gap in the literature needed to understand how certain organizations are using education to empower women (and men) when it comes to reproductive rights for both sexes.

This piece will focus on the themes of sexual education, choices regarding diseases/unplanned pregnancies and women's rights as way to view activism in Argentina. As well as an in depth look at how multicultural feminism plays a role in the country and its involvement in producing change within social frame works and is government. This research paper will also look at how evolutionary theory and life history theory work together and against each other to gain certain reproductive rights. The intention is to bridge the gap of the research of women's rights in Argentina and what can be done to further aid in their fight towards reproductive rights and freedoms.

Life-History Theory, Evolutionary Theory and Feminist Thought

Even though most feminist scholars reject biology as a reason why women are oppressed, it can be a useful tool to examine how the current culture has manifested itself.⁹ Human reproductive ecology examines the investigation of human fertility from an evolutionary perspective across a variety of human contexts.¹⁰ Evolution causes changes over

⁸ Borland, et al. "Quotidian Disruption and Women's Activism in Times of Crisis, Argentina 2002-2003." 2007, 700.

⁹ Smuts, Barbara. "The Evolutionary Origins of Patriarchy." 1.

¹⁰ Miller, Elizabeth. "What is Reproductive Ecology?" Lecture, Tampa, August 2013.

time and can help explain the human body's reproductive capabilities as it generally examines changes in allele frequency in populations over time.¹¹

Some anthropologists explain the choices of women and their decisions to reproduce and when, by looking at life-history theory. Human females have a limited amount of resources (i.e energy, time) to donate to survival and fertility. "According to life-history theory, any organism that maximizes fitness will face a trade-off between female fertility and offspring survivorship".¹² This theory also focuses on birth order or the scheduling of children with an emphasis the parental investment of each child.¹³ Life-history theory is a good starting point to explain why young women are getting pregnant at younger ages and how some others postpone reproduction. How do individuals navigate life history theory trade-offs over their lifespan given their ecology?¹⁴ Even though it seems humans are reproducing for love, biology would infer otherwise. The Darwin affect is still in full swing and that we are attracted to people who can offer the best offspring. ¹⁵

There are costs associated with reproductive effort and selection, that is why we can not endlessly reproduce. Instead is optimizes the offspring and how well they are created and live to adulthood.¹⁶ Decisions need to be made and considered when having a child or

¹¹ Miller, Elizabeth. "Review of Evolutionary Ecology." Lecture, Tampa, September 3, 2013.

¹² Strassmann et al. "Life-History Theory, Fertility and Reproductive Success in Humans." 553.

¹³ Mace, Ruth, "The Coevolution of Yuma Fertility and Wealth Inheritance Strategies." 389.

¹⁴ Miller, Elizabeth. "Review of Evolutionary Ecology." Lecture, Tampa, September, 2013.

¹⁵ Voland, "Evolutionary Ecology of Human Reproduction." 348.

¹⁶ Voland, "Evolutionary Ecology of Human Reproduction." 349.

planning when to have another offspring because this pattern will continue throughout out the lifespan of the individual. Optimal decisions are those that maximize the number of potential grandchildren.¹⁷

Early sexual maturity will produce more offspring – thus ensuring a larger number of healthier offspring.¹⁸ Social norms and socioeconomic factors play large roles in when women reproduce which can explain why many people take the time to invest within themselves by way of education and wealth before reproducing.¹⁹

An evolutionary approach to understanding how the system of patriarchy has been established and used amongst many human societies is a useful example of how to combat the fact that Argentina is lacking reproductive choice for women.

“Many human societies appear to involve greater male control over female sexuality than is typical of most nonhuman primates, and in contrast to males in most nonhuman primate societies, human males tend to control both resources and political power.”²⁰

Using feminist evolutionary theory not only examines power relations amongst the sexes but it tries to explain the origin of male power over females. For example, from an evolutionary viewpoint, males who did not secure enough resources or the types of

¹⁷ Mace, Ruth, “The Coevolution of Yuma Fertility and Wealth Inheritance Strategies.” 389.

¹⁸ Voland, “Evolutionary Ecology of Human Reproduction.” 351.

¹⁹ Voland, “Evolutionary Ecology of Human Reproduction.” 352.

²⁰ Smuts, Barbara. “The Evolutionary Origins of Patriarchy.” 10.

resources females found acceptable in a mate found themselves without mates. It can also explain male aggression towards females. "Male aggression is constrained in female-bonded species not just because of the threat of female coalitions, but also because females in these groups hold considerable "king-making" power."²¹ Feminist theory asks why men seek power; evolutionary theory asks why this social structure came to dominate human existence.²²

"Female and male mammals have different reproductive interests, and these interests often conflict. Males sometimes employ coercion to resolve conflicts in their favor."²³ Females look to find the best partner that will give them the most chance of producing (and ultimately, raising) a healthy offspring. They invest a lot of time and energy to reproduce. Males, in turn, only focus at fertilizing the female and can walk away from their mate to find others to fertilize.²⁴ Since both sexes are looking for different things in a mate (i.e. females look for quality, males look for quantity), the conflict arises when courting begins. Courting provides the female with different benefits, such as protection or food. This is very costly to the male since he is using his time and energy to acquire such benefits but through these actions, the male can overpower the female and use sexual coercion to reproduce.²⁵

²¹ Smuts, Barbara. "The Evolutionary Origins of Patriarchy." 9.

²² Smuts, Barbara. "The Evolutionary Origins of Patriarchy." 2.

²³ Smuts, Barbara. "The Evolutionary Origins of Patriarchy." 5.

²⁴ Smuts, Barbara. "The Evolutionary Origins of Patriarchy." 5.

²⁵ Smuts, Barbara. "The Evolutionary Origins of Patriarchy." 6.

Understanding the driving force behind human reproduction and what individuals are looking for in terms of finding a mate helps feminist scholars understand male domination of female sexuality and therefore the reproductive choices of women - not only in Argentina but throughout the world.

Sex Education: How the Feminist Perspective Can Help Argentina

Sex education is a vital part of a well-rounded education and a way for young people to be educated on various sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy, as well as many other negative and positive experiences that go along with the act of sex. The importance of a well-rounded sex education is apparent. Empowering the students of Argentina to know how they can protect themselves from diseases or unplanned pregnancies is critical not only for the individuals involved, but for the country as a whole.

The use of a comprehensive sexual education in Argentina can also combat the evolutionary need for men to control female sexuality, by giving equal education to women and men to understand their sexual desires.²⁶ “Sexual Strategies Theory, for example, [can predict] that women and men differ, on average, in many components of short-term mating—the nature of sexual fantasies, the relaxation of standards, the desire for sexual variety, time elapsed before seeking sexual intercourse, and many others.”²⁷ Using a curriculum that involves not only feminist teaching strategies, but is mindful of evolutionary theories, such

²⁶ Smuts, Barbara. “The Evolutionary Origins of Patriarchy.” 2.

²⁷ Buss et al. “Evolutionary Psychology and Feminism.” 783.

as sexual strategies theory, can give students a well-rounded sex education that can last them for their entire lifetime.

Currently, there is no formal sex education curriculum in Argentina's public education system. It is left to educators to give *some* information in classes like biology. In the rare and special cases, the only knowledge provided are brief descriptions of reproductive systems of animals, not humans. Even rarer is discussion or mention of specific names of genitalia.²⁸

In order to prepare the K-12 student body of the positive and negative outcomes of being sexually active, one must consider how these students are being taught in other countries around the world and how to implement these progressive teaching strategies in order to better Argentina as a whole. Feminist pedagogy offers a unique and more solid foundation to better prepare the young adults to deal with sex, sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases and other sex related activities to keep them healthy and in control of their bodies.

At the heart of most sex education curriculums are the discussions about contraceptives, pregnancy, and how to avoid STDs. Many sex educators worry about adolescent's unplanned pregnancies and the overwhelming statistics of young people not being responsible when they have sex. Many teachers of high school age students argue that information about contraceptives and pregnancy should be at the center of sex education and its curriculum.²⁹ There are not enough educational programs to teach women and men about

28 www.HRW.com, 2011.

29 Kehily, 2002, 222; Munoz, 2001, 150; Trimble, 2009, 54.

the complexities of a healthy sex life and yet, good³⁰ girls who do not get pregnant throughout their adolescent years find the importance of discussing contraception and its relevance in a well-rounded sex education curriculum. The curriculum must empower the youth by giving them a solid and helpful tools to navigate sex and all its complexities.³¹ It is not an extreme conceptual leap to understand how some young women could perceive pregnancy as an invitation to adulthood. Special care is given to pregnant women- it appears that the woman is special and gets plenty of attention compared to others. It is also the understanding that becoming a parent breaks the individual from adolescence, which is something many young people wish to distance themselves from.³²

Once the educator understands what is important to the student and how the curriculum must be established (valuing the conversation about contraceptives and pregnancies), the different methods of teaching about sex can begin to be explored. The curriculum is of utmost importance. The educator must be aware that sex education has many political and ideological implications.³³ The top three views of the ideologies behind the methods are liberal, conservative and feminist pedagogical practices.³⁴ Liberal practices consist of open minded ideas about the reproductive system giving the students full knowledge of their bodies, whereas the conservative viewpoint only teaches abstinence

30 The definition of *good girl* in this essay, are the ones that are socialized to do the right thing by not getting pregnant or getting a sexually transmitted disease and following society's rules of being sexually responsible for and of their bodies.

31 Munoz, "Self-Aware Sex Education: A Theoretical and Practical Approach in Venezuela." 2001, 150.

32 Trimble, "Transformative Conversations about Sexualities Pedagogy and the Experience of Knowing." 2009, 54.

33 Munoz, "Self-Aware Sex Education: A Theoretical and Practical Approach in Venezuela." 2001, 140.

34 Whitehead 55; Janssen, 2009, 12; Kehily, 2002 216; Trimble, 2009, 54.

One of the most effective and evolving methods to teach students about sex is comprehensive sex education. Comprehensive sex education includes more active learning strategies on the human reproductive system. It starts very young (generally age 5) and continues until graduation. It crosses disciplines, classes, and ages to simplify health education for young adults. It also helps with self-esteem, prevent sexual abuses and promote respect for families of all kinds. It even tries to make boys more nurturing and girls more assertive.”³⁵ This comprehensive education takes a building block approach that involves not only facts but sophisticated concepts. “Just as it would be unthinkable to withhold math education until the sixth grade, so, too, is it unwise to delay the introduction of sex education until the eighth grade.”³⁶ This type of education closely resembles feminist pedagogical practices.

Sex curriculums taught in classes today do not reflect the real natures of the act of sex. Real life experiences often differentiate from what is taught and explained in classes.³⁷ This can be combated by using feminist pedagogy in the classroom and throughout the sex education curriculum.³⁸ Miseducation is a large and troubling problem.³⁹ Teaching youth about sex and family planning prepares them for the future and what can and most likely will happen to them.⁴⁰

35 Whitehead, "The Failure of Sex Education." 1994, 55.

36 Whitehead, 1994, 55; Janssen, 2009, 12.

37 Trimble, "Transformative Conversations about Sexualities Pedagogy and the Experience of Knowing." 2009, 58.

38 MacDermid et al, "Feminist Teaching: Effective Teaching." 1992 31.

39 Whitehead, 1994, 55; Janssen, 2009, 4; Zaitsev et al, 2006, 12.

40 Zaitsev et al, "Promoting Sex Education for a Healthy Life." 2006, 12.

Youth express the need and desire to have real life discussions about sex.⁴¹ When the curriculum and certain activities align with what students are interested in or their personal goals, the student will opt to not participate with the material. This is a type of self-preservation method when forced to deal with negative emotions which can come about in such sex-related classes.”⁴² Educators do try to teach sex using real life examples which makes it easier for the teacher and the students to understand the concepts in the curriculum. Educators today are now mentoring, guiding, informing, and teaching different sexual orientations, sexual performances, “behavior problems,” first times, bad touch, and abusive intimacies.⁴³

One of the downfalls of sex education is the large focus on the female reproductive system instead of equal examination of male and female systems. Girls know more about sex than boys - more studies are about the female reproductive system than the male system. Young women have more literature to read and understand their bodies.⁴⁴ “[It] boils down to a rough 5:1 over representation in coverage of female puberty as compare to male puberty, a finding in part suggestive of the significance of feminist input over the last quarter of the twentieth century.”⁴⁵ Gillian Hilton argues that boys have a hard time relating to the subject of pregnancy or babies, therefore there needs to be a more boy-oriented approach to covering

41 Trimble, “Transformative Conversations about Sexualities Pedagogy and the Experience of Knowing.” 2009, 54.

42 Trimble, “Transformative Conversations about Sexualities Pedagogy and the Experience of Knowing.” 2009, 55.

43 Janssen, “Sex as Development: Curriculum, Pedagogy and Critical Inquiry.” 2009, 5.

44 Janssen, 2009, 17; Zaitsev et al, 2006, 14; Hilton, 2001, 33.

45 Janssen, “Sex as Development: Curriculum, Pedagogy and Critical Inquiry.” 2009, 17.

areas such as “penis size, how to approach prospective partners and male health matters.”⁴⁶

The feminist perspective gives educators the ability to teach and interact with students differently than the traditional methods of sex education.⁴⁷ The feminist stance is regarded as the most progressive as it seeks to question “... social norms and common-sense assumptions, particularly in matters of sex–gender inequality. Within the feminist framework it is possible to address issues of gender relations, personal perspectives and sexual diversity.”⁴⁸

Feminist pedagogy offers sex education unique, sometimes controversial, strategies for teaching in the classroom.⁴⁹ The feminist perspective adds insight to the way one understands and defines family planning. It also evolves and creates new ways to do research and create knowledge; these perspectives “inform and focus selections of what educators will teach from the available information.”⁵⁰ Feminist pedagogy is able to examine and help bring to an end racism, sexism, classism, etc. by shedding light on the issues and letting the students use their critical thinking skills.⁵¹ The attempts of feminist pedagogy at redefining classrooms has been small and slow moving.⁵² However, this type of pedagogy does offer a new way to look at the material and open up the doors to a new form of teaching.⁵³

46 Hilton, "Sex Education- the Issues When Working with Boys." 2001, 37.

47 Whitehead, 1994, 55; Kehily, 2002 2; MacDermid et al. 1992, 31; Crabtree, 2003, 132; Sandell, 1991, 179.

48 Kehily, "Sexing the Subject: Teachers, Pedagogy and Sex Education." 2002, 2.

49 MacDermid et al, 1992, 31.

50 MacDermid et al, "Feminist Teaching: Effective Teaching." 1992, 32.

51 Crabtree et al, "Theoretical, Political, and Pedagogical Challenges in the Feminist Classroom: Our Struggles to Walk the Walk." 2003, 132.

52 Sandell, 1991, 179; MacDermid et al, 1992, 36.

53 Crabtree et al, "Theoretical, Political, and Pedagogical Challenges in the Feminist Classroom: Our Struggles to Walk the Walk." 2003, 132.

Due to this form of teaching, students participating the process of sex education retain information more and will continue to use the information throughout their lives.⁵⁴ Sex education is both a philosophy and a new type of pedagogy; it is rooted in the technocratic understanding of young adulthood and their sexuality. It also assumes that once young people understand and can use a certain set of skills dealing with sex and sexuality with proper education about contraceptives, they will be able to control their sexual behavior. Comprehensive sex education, therefore, creates a type of sexual rule.⁵⁵

Young students are eager to learn about their sexuality and discover sex for themselves. Many students are at different stages of jumping into the sexual pool. Some discover love and once comfortable in that stage, move on to get ready for a mature sex life with a healthy background to support them.⁵⁶

One of the silent goals of a well-rounded sex education curriculum is to create good⁵⁷ sexual citizens, individuals that do not get sick (i.e. a sexually transmitted disease) or get pregnant or get someone else sick or pregnant. Giving citizens a solid sex education not only helps the individual on a personal level, but will impact the country on an economic, social and political level by having well educated citizens when it comes to their bodies and sexual activities.⁵⁸

54 Whitehead, 1994, 55, Zaitsev et al, 2006, 18.

55 Whitehead, "The Failure of Sex Education." 1994, 55.

56 Zaitsev et al, "Promoting Sex Education for a Healthy Life." 2006, 18.

57 *Good* is defined as doing what is socially appropriate and expected; not doing damage to one's body or someone else's body.

58 Munoz, "Self-Aware Sex Education: A Theoretical and Practical Approach in Venezuela." 2001, 151.

A look to the future of the role of feminist pedagogy in regards to sex education is a positive one. The language is changing and vocabulary has been changing to incorporate new knowledge and understandings. For example, the use of the terms sexual violence and sexual predators.⁵⁹ The role of social media has grown in its importance by expanding and increasing the ability to get the correct information to the young masses. Ideas, concepts, theories and methods to better sex education in the world is easily accessed by many individuals to help educate the young.⁶⁰

Many leading public health and medical professional organizations around the world support comprehensive education as well as feminist pedagogy to educate and create a new sex education curriculum. A curriculum focusing on a well-rounded education that encompasses all aspects of sexuality and a curriculum with feminist practices will better educate the next generation by instilling in them the importance of preventing sexually transmitted diseases, unplanned pregnancies and having them have healthy ideals about their bodies. In the end, with a solid education behind them, the students can engage in healthy lifestyles and become good sexual citizens.⁶¹ If Argentina is able to implement a strong sex education curriculum into its school systems, it would be just one small step to getting reproductive rights.

59 Janssen, "Sex as Development: Curriculum, Pedagogy and Critical Inquiry." 2009, 19.

60 Bashford et al, "Public Pedagogy: Sex Education and Mass Communication in the Mid-Twentieth Century." 2004, 74.

61 See previous definition of *good*.

Progressive with a Twist

Argentina has a very complicated view on sex and sexuality which makes obtaining reproductive rights difficult. Since discussing such topics like sex and other sex related issues is extremely taboo in Argentina, many citizens lack general knowledge about their bodies and sexual reproductive systems.⁶² If one cannot speak about such topics, then they simply do not exist. Using the United States and Europe as examples of positive steps forward towards reproductive freedom, helps not only Argentina but Latin America as a whole gain these rights for everyone.⁶³

The idea of family planning was unthinkable before the 1980s. The government regulated how many children a couple could have and how many months/years they could wait before having another child. The notion of any type of contraceptive or family aid in Argentina was not considered until 1988; "...the first Responsible Parenthood Programme (Programa de Procreación Responsable) to provide contraception and counseling services by the public hospitals was implemented in the city of Buenos Aires."⁶⁴

In 2002 (14 years after la Programa de Procreación Responsable started), Argentina passed a law that established the creation of a national program for sexual health and responsible procreation. It emphasized prevention and early detection of STDs and HIV infections, free and universal provision of contraceptives, access to information about sex

62 Bianco, 'Adolescence in Argentina: sexuality and poverty'. Buenos Aires, Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer (FEIM) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 2003, 1.

63 Lopreite, "Travelling Ideas and Domestic Policy Change: The Transnational Politics of Reproductive Rights/Health in Argentina." 2012, 122.

64 Lopreite, "Travelling Ideas and Domestic Policy Change: The Transnational Politics of Reproductive Rights/Health in Argentina." 2012, 114.

and sexually transmitted diseases and counseling services, as well as the promotion of female participation in family planning discussions, and improvement in the quality and extent of sexual and reproductive health services.⁶⁵

In order to maintain these types of programs and services, the country needs to support feminist organizations and other organizations fighting to educate women and men about reproductive rights. Feminist leaders participating in Argentina's women's movement argue and advise that women's sexual and reproductive rights must include the freedom to decide if one wants children, how many to have and the condition of which she will have children, as well as to demand access to all social, political, cultural and economic rights (and resources) in order to make well informed decisions about her body.⁶⁶ Women are demanding such actions to be taken by the Argentine government, but it has been a slow process. Women are still having a hard time obtaining contraception even ten years after the law has passed.

Another issue women face is access to abortion, a vital part of reproductive freedom. Abortion is still prohibited and criminalized in the majority of Latin America.⁶⁷ In 2005, 28% of women died having an abortion; most not supervised by a physician. Compared to other countries in the area, this high mortality rate does reflect the prevalence of unsafe, illegal and unregulated abortions. It also demonstrates general access to contraceptives and

65 Bonder et al, *Advancing Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Argentina: Challenges to Implementing International Law*. 2007, 122.

66 Bonder et al, *Advancing Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Argentina: Challenges to Implementing International Law*. 2007, 122-123.

67 Lopreite, "Travelling Ideas and Domestic Policy Change: The Transnational Politics of Reproductive Rights/Health in Argentina." 2012, 122.

lack of control over their sexuality.⁶⁸

The Argentinian Constitution does not establish specific provisions for abortion, but a 1994 reform added constitutional status for a number of international pacts, such as the Pact of San Jose.⁶⁹ As late as 2010, abortions were still outlawed in Argentina. In March 2012, the government passed a law allowing women to access abortion in all cases of rape. The Argentinian Supreme Court has ruled that abortion in case of rape or threat to women's life is legal and that an affidavit of being raped is enough to allow a legal abortion. It also ruled that provincial governments should write protocols for the request and treatment of legal abortions in case of rape or life threat.⁷⁰ However, not a single woman has been able to obtain a legal abortion through this new law because the issues are still being discussed in court.

The Next Step for Argentine Women

The citizens of Argentina have been working hard to make change when it comes to accessing contraceptives and a well-rounded sexual education. Using transnational discussions to access information from around the country itself and using established feminist organizations around the world to gain reproductive rights allows Argentina to institute its own set of feminist values. Argentina's human rights and women's movement advocates are

68 Bonder, *Advancing Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Argentina: Challenges to Implementing International Law*. 2007, 122.

69 This pact declares the right to life "in general", from the moment of conception. The interpretation of the expression "in general" in certain cases of abortion is still subject to debate.

70 Reproductiverights.org

young compared to other nations, as well as recently concerned about women's rights as a human rights issue.⁷¹ Argentina has a robust network of women's organizations whose demands include public access to abortion and contraception, such as the Women's Informative Network of Argentina (RIMA) and Catholic Women for the Right to Choose (*Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir*). The National Women's Meeting, held annually in different cities, gathers these and other feminist and pro-choice groups to fight for reproductive rights of various women in Argentina. Until there is the shift in political will, however, the small steps made by organizations are even more important. In a country where a woman's legal rights are often ignored and become secondary to arbitrary legal processes, these organizations are taking the initiative to ensure alternatives to the failing governmental policies are known.⁷² It only takes one person or grass roots organization to put into motion reproductive change.

In 1985, Argentina ratified the Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In 1994, the National Constituent Convention incorporated the ratification of the CEDAW into the text of the new constitution. During the 1990s, some laws began to tackle domestic violence, by empowering police agencies and provincial judicial authorities to establish preventive measures. Although the Government of Argentina ratified the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women in 1996 (enacted in the 1994 Convention of Belem

71 Bonder et al, *Advancing Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Argentina: Challenges to Implementing International Law*. 2007, 121.

72 Bonder et al, *Advancing Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Argentina: Challenges to Implementing International Law*. 2007, 124.

de Pará), not all Argentine provinces have publicized regulations for its application and despite the creation of the Women's Department (in 1985) under the protection of the President, and provincial delegations, Women's Sections still have not been established throughout the entire country.⁷³

The National Council of Women carries out programs to promote equal social, political, and economic opportunities for women. The council worked with the special representative for international women's issues, the Ministry of Labor, and union and business organizations to form the Tripartite Committee on Equal Opportunity for Men and Women in the Workplace, which seeks to foster equal treatment and opportunities for men and women in the job market.⁷⁴

Argentina must now focus on not only gaining human rights for its citizens but also start focusing on women's rights and its role in promoting and obtaining equality for everyone: in the home, in the job market and in the government. Argentina has neglected reproductive rights for the last several decades; it is time the country examined and accepted new liberal views on gender roles and reproduction.⁷⁵ For countries that support United Nations doctrines and policies, acknowledging and viewing women's rights as a vital part of obtaining human rights is a step forward for women and their reproductive freedoms.

Recently⁷⁶, the United Nations declared that access to contraceptives is a human right. “The

73 Report on Human Rights Practices: Argentina, 2008.

74 Report on Human Rights Practices: Argentina, 2008.

75 Lopreite, "Travelling Ideas and Domestic Policy Change: The Transnational Politics of Reproductive Rights/Health in Argentina." 2012, 110.

76 November 14th, 2012

United Nations says access to contraception is a universal human right that could dramatically improve the lives of women and children in poor countries. It effectively declares that legal, cultural and financial barriers to accessing contraception and other family planning measures are an infringement of women's rights."⁷⁷

Conclusion: The Future

With the guidance of other countries, Argentina has the opportunity to become the most progressive country in Latin America when it comes to reproductive rights. Using the idea of multicultural feminism to respect the preexistent culture, yet bridging the gap of feminism and transnationalism, Argentina can work on building a strong country founded on equality. The work of various organizations that focus on sexual and reproductive rights, human rights and women's citizenship intersects with women's lives on the ground, and will only be made relevant when the work reflects in the lives of women today.⁷⁸ For example, "... a human rights approach to people infected with HIV emphasizes principles such as the participation of affected communities and non-discrimination in shaping and delivering policies and programs" can and will help not only women, but men too.⁷⁹

Understanding life-history theory and how evolution has brought Argentina and the world to a reproductive impasse is one of the many ways we can use these ideas as a tool to

⁷⁷ news.yahoo.com, 2012.

⁷⁸ Bonder et al, *Advancing Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Argentina: Challenges to Implementing International Law*.2007, 126.

⁷⁹ Gruskin, "Ensuring Sexual and Reproductive Health for People Living with HIV: An Overview of Key Human Rights, Policy and Health Systems Issues." 2007, 5.

help gain reproductive rights and choice for all. The ability to decide when to have a child is an important aspect of reproductive health, not only for the mother, but for the offspring. This maximization of fitness will provide healthy children can then, in turn, produce the next generation of good sexual citizens.⁸⁰

With a stable sex education system in place, many of the stigmas of discussing and dealing with sex will diminish. Once an open and honest dialogue can begin, more people will be aware of their bodies and acknowledge the need to gain reproductive freedom for women. Gaining the right to have a legal abortion is the small next step. Various human right organizations are working hard to gain reproductive rights for all citizens.

It is only a matter of time until Argentina gains full equality. Yet this cannot be done with only a Western gaze and a Westernize thought processes. Using transnational feminism and Multicultural feminist ideals will open the door to a broader discussion of what can be done to aid the women and men of Argentina. Allowing more of an open dialogue about feminist values, and also respecting the preexisting culture, can open new doors for the citizens to gain reproductive rights. The ability to make educated decisions about one's reproductive life, body and health, will be one step towards empowerment.

⁸⁰ *Good* is defined as doing what is socially appropriate and expected; not doing damage to one's body or someone else's body.

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Bonder, Gloria, Marjan Radjavi, and Carlota Ramirez. *Advancing Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Argentina: Challenges to Implementing International Law*. Canadian Women's Studies, 2008-2009.

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Since this paper focuses on how to help women and uses various feminist approaches, this piece is helpful to understanding how to gain human rights through a feminist approach.

Espinonza, C. "Mujeres Siguien Siengo Discriminadas." *La Nacion*, October 2009.

An article that looks at how woman are still being oppressed and what can be done to solve problems they face today. Even though this piece is in Spanish, using my translation skills, I can use this piece to examine what women are still doing today to work towards getting the rights they deserve.

Galey, Margaret E. "International Enforcement of Women's Rights." *Human Rights Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (November 1984). Accessed October 17, 2012.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/762184>.

An article that looks at how woman are still being oppressed and what can be done to solve the problem. Looks at these problems on a global scale and it's influence on Argentina. A helpful article on how to gain women's rights in not only Argentina but Latin America has a whole.

"Gender Equity Issues in Argentina." FSD Foundation for Sustainable Development.

Accessed October 17, 2012.

<http://www.fsdinternational.org/country/argentina/weissues>.

This website looks at what is happening today in Argentina and how gender equality is still a prevalent problem. Since apart of this research looks at gender and how it plays into human rights, this piece is influential.

Gruskin, Ferguson, and O'Malley. Ensuring Sexual and Reproductive Health for People

Living with HIV: An Overview of Key Human Rights, Policy and Health Systems Issues. Reproductive Health Matters 2007.

A piece focusing on an overview of human rights, policy and the health systems for individuals who have HIV; examination of reproductive rights. Policy is what creates the change

Herrera, Ana Amuchástegui, and Marta Rivas Zivy. "Los procesos de apropiación subjetiva de los derechos sexuales: notas para la discusión." *Estudios Demográficos y Urbanos* 19, no. 3 (2004). Accessed October 17, 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40315408>.

A spanish discussion of sexual rights and what can be done to gain freedoms.

Even though in Spanish, using translation, the message of how to maintain sexual rights is very important to this piece and how to gain rights that are not yet in place.

Hilton, Gillian L.S. "Sex Education- the Issues When Working with Boys." *Sex Education* 1.1 (2001) Print.

An article that showcases the hardships when trying to teach boys about sex education and their bodies. Because some sex educators believe boys do not pay attention in sex ed because they do not feel it is about them, this piece examines strategies on how to get boys to participate and understand the material. A good piece for this research you have to educate the whole population about their bodies and the bodies of the opposite sex.

Human Rights Watch. "Argentina" Accessed October 17, 2012.

<http://www.hrw.org/americas/argentina>.

The groundbreaking announcement about the UN stating obtaining contraceptives is a human right. An important piece for this work.

Janssen, Diederik Floris. "Sex as Development: Curriculum, Pedagogy and Critical Inquiry." *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 31.2 (2009) Print.

An in depth look at how sex education is taught. Give strategies that I touch on throughout the piece.

Kehily, Mary Jane. "Sexing the Subject: Teachers, Pedagogy and Sex Education." *Sex Education* 2.3 (2002): Print.

Looks at the relationship of the teacher and how they execute a sex education curriculum. Knowing my positionality within this piece is helpful to showcase the work and make it relatable and offer critiques as a scholar.

Lopreite, Debora. "Traveling Ideas and Domestic Policy Change: The Transnational Politics of Reproductive Rights/Health in Argentina." *Global Social Policy*, 2012. 109-28.

A look at policy changes within Argentina. A focus on health and rights. A large focus of my work on this research.

MacDermid, Shelley M., et al. "Feminist Teaching: Effective Teaching." *Family Relations* 41.1 (1992): 31-38. Print.

Examine how to reach students using feminist methods. Uses comprehensive sex education to educate students. This method is one I focus on throughout the piece.

Mace, Ruth, "The Coevolution of Yuma Fertility and Wealth Inheritance Strategies." *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. Lond. B. The Royal Society*. (1998), 389-397.

This article looks at how parental decisions play into Life-History Theory and how it all relates to reproduction. It is a good piece to help explain when people decide to have children, how it affects other offspring and the fitness of the parents.

Measor, Lynda. *Young People's Views on Sex Education: Education, Attitudes and Behaviors*. Comp. Coralie Tiffen and Katrina Miller. London: Routledge, 2000. Print.

This piece looks at sex education and its effect on young people. A good piece to examine how to communicate with the younger generations.

Mercer, Marilyn. Feminism in Argentina. Accessed October 17, 2012.

<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/feminism/arg.html>.

Web article looking at feminism and Argentinian organizations fighting to end oppression towards women. Again, this piece is important to aid in my discussion about organizations and what they are doing in Argentina.

Miller, Elizabeth. "Review of Evolutionary Ecology." Lecture, University of South Florida, Tampa, September 3rd, 2013.

A brief overview of what evolutionary ecology is and how it relates to reproduction. This lecture helps explain its importance to reproductive theories and helps shape its relation to reproductive rights.

Miller, Elizabeth. "What is Reproductive Ecology?" Lecture, University of South Florida Tampa, August 2013.

Class lecture focusing on reproductive ecology, its meaning and importance. Helpful because of the examination of this piece and its relevance to gaining reproductive rights.

Munoz, Mercedes. "Self-Aware Sex Education: A Theoretical and Practical Approach in Venezuela." *Reproductive Health Matters* 9.17 (2001): 146-52. Print.

Looks at sex education in a new way but using comprehensive sex ed techniques. This idea of comprehensive sex ed is the backbone of this piece and this article is very important to the work.

Nielsen, Christine S., and Juan Gabriel Mariotto. "The Tango Metaphor: The Essence of

Argentina's National Identity." *International Studies of Management & Organization* 35, no. 4 (2005-2006). Accessed October 17, 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40397643>.

A piece focusing on Argentina and its culture. Useful to this work to propose how the country can implement sex ed, discussions about gender and policy for government rights.

Okin, Susan Moller. *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Ed. Joshua Cohen, Mathew Howard, and Martha C. Nussbaum. Princeton: Princeton University Pr., 1999. Print.

This book poses the question, “Is multiculturalism bad for women” and attempts to answer it but having several respondents discuss this issue. The idea itself helps situate this work and how its lens is used to discuss the topic of reproductive rights.

Petracci, Mónica, Ramos, Silvina and Dalia Szulik. "Implementing ICPD: What's Happening in Countries: Maternal Health and Family Planning." *Reproductive Health Matters* Vol 13, no. 25 (May 2005). Accessed October 17, 2012.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3776229>.

Looks at the relationship between family planning and maternal health. Looks at various countries. Helpful to understand what is happening around the world in terms of reproduction and family planning.

Petchesky, “From Population Control to Reproductive Rights: Feminist Fault Lines.” *Reproductive Health Matters*, Vol. 3, No. 6, (Nov., 1995), pp. 152-161. Print.

An article looking at how the personal plays into the political and how issues ranging from population control to the very important reproductive rights

cause problems for feminist scholars. This is an important piece to shape the discussion of transnational feminism and how it relates to Argentina.

Raguz, Maria. "Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Latin America." *Health and Human Rights* Vol 5, no. 2 (2001). Accessed October 17, 2012.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4065364>.

An examination of how Latin America deals with reproductive rights. Another article that helps shape my thesis and argument.

Report on Human Rights Practices 2008: Argentina. United States Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. March 6, 2007.

Looks at the stance of human rights in Argentina. Somewhat out of date, but has good material to view and examine.

Reproductiverights.org. Last modified March 2012. Accessed November 2012.

<http://reproductiverights.org/en/press-room/argentina-decriminalizes-abortion-in-all-cases-of-rape>.

A website looking at reproductive rights from all angles of the discussion.

Gives the research new and fresh ways on how to add to reproductive rights.

Rubin, David. "Transnational Feminism: Transnational Feminism in the United States" Discussion, Tampa, November 18, 2013.

Class lecture focusing on transnationalism within the United States and its impact on the global community. This discussion with the professor and the

students became extremely important and helpful to this piece because of the examination of the definition of transnational feminism.

Safe World for Women. Accessed October 17, 2012.

<http://www.asafeworldforwomen.org/womens-rights/wr-americas/argentina.html>.

Website looking at various organizations to help women in Argentina. A great website with up to date information on women's rights, which help shape the ideas of this piece.

Sandell, Renee. "The Liberating Relevance of Feminist Pedagogy." *Studies in Art Education* 32.3 (1991): 178-87. Print.

How feminist pedagogy liberates the classroom. This piece gives strategies on how to use feminist pedagogy to teach students how to use critical thinking. A good way to look at how to teach sex education in Argentina.

Sheppard, Bonnie. "Reproductive and Sexual Rights." *Health and Human Rights* Vol 7, no 2. Accessed October 17, 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4065198>.

A brief look at reproductive and sexual rights. This quick over view of reproductive and sexual rights add to this research by plainly discussing these topics.

Strassmann et al. "Life-History Theory, Fertility and Reproductive Success in Humans." *The Royal Society*, 2002. 553-562. Print.

This article examines life-history theory in terms of fertility and reproductive success in human. The authors examines polygamous relationships and their

ability to reproduce or the issues that arise in these types of grouping. This piece will be very helpful in defining life-history theory and its importance to reproduction.

Smuts, Barbara. "The Evolutionary Origins of Patriarchy." *Human Nature*. Vol. 6, No. 1. 1995. Print.

The author writes from the Feminist Antropologist view points and explains for using evolutionary theory, combined with feminist thought can create a better understanding of why males seek to control and over power females. This piece has helped this research bridge together her understanding of feminist theory with new concepts to the research as evolutionary theory and life-history theory.

Trimble, Lisa. "Transformative Conversations about Sexualities Pedagogy and the Experience of Knowing." *Sex Education* 9.1 (2009): 51-64. Print.

How pedagogy can be used to educate about sex and sexualities. This is an excellent piece and backbone to how I have posed my thesis on sex education.

Voland, Eckart. "Evolutionary Ecology of Human Reproduction." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 27 (1998), pp. 347-374. Print.

Article explains what evolutionary ecology, in regards to human reproduction, contains and why it is important. Using this framework, in my paper will bridge the discussion of reproductive rights and ecology.

Whitehead, Barbara Dafoe. "The Failure of Sex Education." *Atlantic Monthly Magazine*

274.4 (1994): 55. Print.

An article that challenges sex education and what can be done to improve it. A good article that has included a brief history of sex ed and how to can be used in today's classrooms.

Yahoo.com. Last modified November 2012. Accessed November 2012.

<http://news.yahoo.com/un-says-access-contraception-human-122456723.html>.

Access to contraception is a human right. A brief read on the United Nations stance on contraceptives.

Zaitsev, G.K., and A.G. Zaitsev. "Promoting Sex Education for a Healthy Life." *Russian*

Social Science Review 47.2 (2006): 12-28. Print.

How a good sex education curriculum can promote a healthy life and lifestyle for everyone. This article is wonderful for adding to the discussion about how comprehensive sex education can help promote a healthy life within Argentina.

Table 6: Evaluation of Reproductive Health Education Given to Urban and Rural Subjects (Responses in Percentages)

Variables	Urban			Rural			All Subjects N=256
	Salem N=60	Tiruchi N=55	Urban Subjects N=115	Salem N=59	Tiruchi N=62	Rural Subjects N=121	
When first taught about Menstruation							
Prior to menarche	41.7	43.6	42.6	49.2	43.5	46.3	44.5
After menarche	56.7	56.4	56.5	50.8	50.0	50.4	53.4
Sex Education Given in School	100.0	96.4	98.3	94.9	14.5	53.7	75.4
Grade that students were given Sex Education:							
V	1.7	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4
VI	0.0	1.8	0.9	6.8	1.6	4.1	2.5
VII	73.3	0.0	38.3	11.9	3.2	7.4	22.5
VIII	25.0	92.7	57.4	57.6	3.2	29.8	43.2
IX	0.0	1.8	0.9	22.0	4.8	13.2	7.2
Audiovisual aids used in Sexual Education Curriculum	95.0	16.4	57.4	27.1	0.0	13.2	34.7
Reason given for menstrual Bleeding in Curriculum	33.3	47.3	40.0	18.6	16.1	17.4	28.4
Source of menstrual bleeding taught in Curriculum	46.7	36.4	41.7	33.9	0.0	16.5	28.8
Source of bleeding identified as:							
Genital organs	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.1	0.0	2.5	1.3
Reproductive Organs	0.0	3.6	1.7	18.6	0.0	9.1	5.5
Vagina	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.6	0.0	6.6	3.4
Uterus	13.3	18.2	15.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.6
Ovary	8.3	5.5	7.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.4
Navel/Stomach	3.3	0.0	1.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8
Kidney	3.3	0.0	1.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8

Introduction

Animated cartoons operate as a lens through which children view the world at a very early age. Animated cartoons provide children with a fantasy world full of lasting images, stories, and lessons about life. Children all over the world are exposed to animated cartoons, and the images and messages promoted through this medium present perspectives that can influence their perceptions of gender, race and class. For marginalized groups, representation in animated cartoons and other media channels can play a significant role in their perceived social status. One particular marginalized group, African American girls, are largely absent from child-targeted animated cartoons. The politics of visibility in the media play a significant role in acknowledging the presence of marginalized groups. The virtual invisibility of black girls from animated children's cartoons paints a bleak picture of their place in popular visual culture. While the representations of females and minority children in animated cartoons have improved over the years (Klein & Shiffman, 2009; Klein & Shiffman, 2006), stereotypical and racially biased portrayals of females, minority groups (Klein & Shiffman, 2006) and working class groups continue to make their way into these shows. Using an intersectionality theoretical lens, the implications of gender, race and class are explored in Disney Junior's animated series, *Doc McStuffins*, in an effort to add to the current scholarship in this area.

The way children comprehend social interaction on television changes as they progress through different stages of cognitive development (Bearison et al., 1982). Piaget (1965) notes that preschool aged children are in the "preoperational" stage, and their social understanding is limited to explicit descriptive characteristics without any knowledge of underlying perceptions or intentions outside of their own. Preschool aged

children focus on noticeable features they see on television and tend to describe people and events in terms of physical characteristics (Bearison et al., 1982). Therefore, it is important to examine the “noticeable features” of children’s television content in order to arrive at a reading of the text that corresponds to that of a preschool aged child. This study takes an animated cartoon as its major focus because children are exposed to animated cartoons at an early age, and the gender and race-related messages are likely to be influential in the development of children’s beliefs and attitudes on gender roles and racial groups (Klein & Shiffman, 2006). Moreover, cartoon viewing typically takes place over several years, which means that exposure to this type of content is repeated and frequent. As noted by Greenberg (1982), early exposure to media messages affects the formation of attitudes of children; unlike adults, they do not have the rationalization skills and cognitive ability to decipher messages and evaluate the validity of stereotypical portrayals of minorities in television (Katz, 1976).

Few studies have focused on the representations of minority characters in children’s animated cartoons (Klein & Shiffman, 2006; Klein & Shiffman, 2009) or on representations of female characters in animated cartoons (Baker & Raney, 2007; Thompson & Zerbinos, 1995). However, no studies have focused specifically on African American, female characters and the messages about race, gender and class that are perpetuated in animated cartoons, leaving a gap in research addressing portrayals of African American female characters and the messages those representations may convey to children.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws upon intersectionality, a Black feminist paradigm that ties gender, race and class together “as simultaneous forces” (Brewer, 1993, p. 16), or indicators of marginalization with regard to representation. Furthermore, race, gender and class are viewed as inseparable elements in analyzing how oppression operates in an ideological sphere (Hill Collins, 1990). It is imperative to recognize the importance of the intersectionality of race, gender and class in media representations. For the minority female character, this intersectionality aids to identify her and define who she is to her audience. This study will focus specifically on Doc McStuffins. I specifically explore the character portrayals, stereotypes and the impact of race, gender and class on the representation of this character. The following research questions guiding this study are listed below.

RQ1: How is Doc McStuffins portrayed in the show? How does she relate to other characters on the show?

RQ2: How does the portrayal of Doc McStuffins reflect or challenge traditional gendered, racial and class stereotypes?

Review of Literature

Animated children's cartoons have contributed to shaping American culture for nearly eighty years. They have impacted “national discourses of race, language, identity and general social commentary” between children and parents because cartoons help parents initiate challenging conversations about social issues with children after co-viewing¹(Pimentel & Velazquez, 2009, p.5). They are the genre that many children rely on for entertainment and education (Engstrom, 1995), and are particularly significant given

¹ Co-viewing- parents watching cartoons with their children

that an abundance of research demonstrates that children learn from the images they see on television (Bandura, 2001; Greenberg, 1982; Swan et al., 1998; Roberts, 2004).

Learning from Media Messages

Early exposure to media messages has been found to affect the formation of young viewers' attitudes (Greenberg, 1982; Swan et al., 1998). Because children are more likely to be exposed to animated cartoons at an early age than other television genres, these cartoons provide opportunities for children to learn about a variety of subjects, attitudes and behaviors. Cartoons act as a tool for children to learn about the world around them. According to social cognitive theory, children learn by observing others and mimic the behaviors they see (Bandura, 2001; Entman & Rojecki, 1998). Indeed, cartoons provide young people with some of "their earliest notions regarding race-related standards and expectations" (Klein & Shiffman, 2006, p.167) and are likely to "be influential in the initial stages of developing beliefs and attitudes about different racial groups" (Klein & Shiffman, 2006, p.167).

Children also learn about gender roles through animated cartoons (Thompson & Zerbinos, 1995). Studies have consistently reported that females are vastly underrepresented in children's animated programs (Baker & Raney, 2007; Klein & Shiffman, 2009; Thompson & Zerbinos, 1995). Researchers across cultures have documented similar findings (Gotz et al., 2008) in places like China (Chu & McIntyre, 1995) and Kuwait (Al-Sheab, 2008). The shortage of female characters in children's animated cartoons may suggest to young viewers that females are not important, or that it is better or more socially preferable to be a male than a female (Klein & Shiffman, 2009).

Race and Gender in Animated Cartoons

There is a paucity of research involving gender and racial representations of minority children in animated cartoons. In a recent animated children's cartoon analysis that examined more than 1,200 American cartoons and over 4,200 major characters from 1930 to the mid-1990's, Klein and Shiffman (2006) found that white characters appeared more frequently than minority characters. Nearly 70% of the cartoons featured characters that were Caucasian and 16% of the cartoons featured characters that were racial minorities. They also found that the amount of representation from greatest to least in animated children's cartoons was as follows: White, African-American, Latino, Asian American, and Native American (Klein & Shiffman, 2006). The limited representation of minority characters may suggest to children that whites are more important than minorities (Klein & Shiffman, 2006).

As the U.S. population has shifted, "the number of Latino-themed children's programs in English that target not just U.S. born Latinos but all ethnic groups has increased" (Moran, 2007, p. 294). This increase in Latino non-animated programming reflects the fact that Latinos are the fastest growing racial group in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009), yet they were nearly absent in animated cartoons (Klein & Shiffman, 2006). With the exception of *Dora the Explorer* and *Go, Diego, Go!*, Latino characters in animated children's cartoons are extremely underrepresented.

Asian American characters have also been underrepresented in animated children's cartoons and Native Americans are seemingly absent (Klein & Shiffman, 2006). Given the lack of Native American characters featured in cartoons, it is possible that children may not

be aware of their existence in society, or children may think that this minority group simply does not count (Klein & Shiffman, 2006).

Indicators of gender are also important to examine, as gender in television reflects cultural values while representing trusted information and images (Wood, 1994). According to Wood (1994), by age 5 children will seek out role models and play an active role in their own gender identity development. Gender role stereotypes, according to Graves (1999), are imperative to children because they help define what it means to be a girl or boy. Baker and Raney (2007) emphasize that when "stereotypical gender portrayals are viewed consistently over a long period of time, children become increasingly more likely to perceive those stereotypes to be indicative of reality, and are thus more likely to demonstrate attitudes and behaviors consistent with those perceptions" (p.27).

Female characters have typically been portrayed as passive and dependent on the male characters, and less likely to be the lead character (Burguera, 2011). Studies have consistently reported that females are vastly underrepresented in children's animated programs (Baker & Raney, 2007; Klein & Shiffman, 2009; Thompson & Zerbinos, 1995). The shortage of female characters in children's animated cartoons may suggest to young viewers that females are not important (Klein & Shiffman, 2009). In addition, female characters are more likely to emphasize relationships, appear more vulnerable and are more likely to seek advice or protection than their male counterparts (Baker & Raney, 2007).

Character Roles

Bang and Reece (2003) point out that more focus has been given in recent years to the status of the roles played by minorities on television rather than the total frequencies of

their appearance. The rationale is that “it is not just quantitative representation... but more importantly qualitative representation... [that] influences the perceptions of certain ethnic groups” (p.52). Racial minorities often appear in one-dimensional character roles and are not given as many speaking or leadership roles as their white counterparts (Klein & Shiffman, 2006). It is important to analyze this character status, which can be understood as the “designation of speaking authority” (Li-Vollmer, 2002; p. 220). The characters with the most speaking parts have the highest status. Evidence from previous research found that White males were featured in major higher status roles more frequently than any other group (Bang & Reece, 2003; Bramlett-Solomon & Roder, 2008; Klein & Shiffman, 2006; Larson, 2002; Li-Vollmer, 2002).

Overall, it can be inferred from the representations of minority groups in animated cartoons, that minority characters “need the presence of white [characters] in order to validate their presence” (Larson, 2002, p. 231). Although researchers have found that representations have improved over time (Bang & Reece, 2003; Klein & Shiffman, 2006; Roberts, 2004), racial minority characters continued to appear less than white characters in children's programming. The vast majority of children's programming is white and male-dominated (Baker & Raney, 2007), seemingly excluding female, minority characters. Female characters are also seen as being more helpless (Baker & Raney, 2007) and weaker than their male counterparts, thus placing the female animated character in an ideological glass ceiling situation where they are never quite equal to male characters.

Racial minorities and female characters are portrayed stereotypically in children's cartoons (Klein & Shiffman, 2006). However, no studies to date have specifically analyzed

representations of female, African American cartoon characters and the messages those representations may communicate to children. Therefore, it is imperative to analyze representations of this group because of the influence these images have on children. This study uses qualitative analysis to gain insight into the portrayals of the only current leading female, Black character in animated children's cartoons- Doc McStuffins.

Methodology

This study uses critical textual analysis to examine portrayal of the character, Doc McStuffins. I position my analysis within the field of cultural studies and used intersectionality (race, gender and class) in order to discover what ideologies are being perpetuated within *Doc McStuffins*. As a qualitative method of analysis, textual analysis "focuses on the underlying ideological and cultural assumptions of the text" (Fursich, 2009, p. 240), and invites the recognition of underlying meanings, embedded patterns and assumptions and exclusions of a particular text. In addition, textual analysis, from a cultural studies perspective, allows researchers to determine "which gender, class and ethnic identities [within] the current cultural sensibilities...[are]encouraged, and which ones they exclude" (Fursich, 2009, p.241). I followed the steps outlined by (Fursich, 2009) and began this textual analysis with a detailed reading, followed by contextualized interpretations of the text.

Through my close textual analysis of the show, I watched the entire first season of *Doc McStuffins* and viewed each episode twice. During the first viewing I noted general representation cues, such as appearance, role and status. For the second viewing, I noted more detailed information such as relationship to the other characters, messages conveyed

through the characters and whether racial, gender or class indicators were evident. I viewed certain scenes additional times when necessary to better compare the representation of Doc McStuffins across episodes.

The show that was chosen for this study was based on the following criteria: (1) the show must be animated cartoon that currently airs on a television station aimed at entertaining preschool aged children (not to be aired only as reruns) and (2) the show must feature a recognizable female, racially unambiguous African American as the lead character. The black, female character was chosen for analysis based on her skin color and other racial and ethnic cues. Lead character was defined as a character that appeared in every episode of the show, was designated with significant speaking roles, and was directly involved in the situations and events highlighted in each episode. Based on the aforementioned criteria, the show chosen for this study was *Doc McStuffins* (airing on Disney Jr.). After previewing all of the animated cartoons, *Doc McStuffins* was the only current animated cartoon that featured a leading, black female character. There were other shows that featured black female characters, however, those shows featured characters who did not have significant speaking roles or involvement in the events highlighted in each episode (ex: *Bubble Guppies*² and *Lalaloopsy*³), or featured racially ambiguous characters (ex: *Jake and the Neverland Pirates*⁴).

² Bubble Guppies currently airs on Nick Jr. and features 6 characters (one of which is an African American female) who are mermaid-like and live in an underwater city where they interact with the residents while teaching the audience basic counting skills, color and shape recognition and more. Molly, the Black female character, is not directly involved in the situations on each episode, nor does she have significant speaking roles in every episode.

³ Lalaloopsy currently airs on Nick Jr. and features 8 main characters (one of which is an African American female). The characters are rag dolls that embark on adventures in a fairytale world while teaching the audience the

I chose to analyze cartoons from these channels because these channels cater to children ages 2-5, and this is the time period when many children are first exposed to television, establishing their first televised view of the world around them.

Analysis

Doc McStuffins

Doc McStuffins is currently Disney Junior's new "golden egg" in the ratings world, topping the charts as the number one series for children ages 2-5 and beating out Nickelodeon's popular show *Dora The Explorer*, which targets the same preschool aged audience (Palmeri, 2012). The main character, Doc McStuffins, is a 6-year-old African American girl who wears a white lab coat, pink-sequined sneakers and a magic stethoscope and calls herself "the best toy doctor around." She is portrayed as a kind, fun, and savvy girl who enjoys fixing sick toys and stuffed animals. In nearly each episode she is called upon by her friends, family members, neighbors and stuffed animal buddies to utilize her quick wit, intelligence and imagination to determine how to rid stuffed animals and toys of their ailments and illness.

Roles

There are a few consistent roles that Doc McStuffins embodies throughout the first season. Those roles are: The Expert, the Leader and the Nurturer.

Expert Power

importance of teamwork, friendship and sharing. Dot, the Black female character, is not directly involved in the situations on each episode, nor does she have significant speaking roles in each episode.

⁴ Jake and the Neverland Pirates currently airs on Disney Jr. The show features three friends who explore new destinations while finding hidden treasures and escaping the wrath of Captain Hook. The show features a female lead character, Izzy, who is racially ambiguous. She has long, straight brown hair and tanned skin- the only cues to her race. She could possibly be a tan Caucasian or a Latina girl. The show never addresses her ethnicity.

"Doc," as she is affectionately called by her stuffed animal friends, is "The Expert" in most of the episodes. According to Stevenson (2006) expert power is the type of power that is obtained by having more information or skill than most other people in a given area. In Doc's case, her expert power is recognized by the supporting characters because of her extensive medical knowledge and common sense problem-solving skills. In the "Shark Style Tooth Ache," episode, Doc's younger brother Donny is taking a bath while Doc is brushing her teeth in the bathroom. Donny takes his shark bath toy, named "Mr. Chomp" and briskly maneuvers him through the bath water. Doc looks back at her brother to remind him to be careful so that he doesn't harm the toy in the process of his rough playing. Shortly after Doc issues this warning, Donny accidentally slams Mr. Chomp into the side of the bath tub, cracking his front shark tooth. Without hesitation, Donny immediately calls on his sister, Doc, to fix Mr. Chomp. Doc presumably knows exactly how to fix the problem as the expert. She takes Mr. Chomp into her clinic, examines his tooth with a magnifying glass, spots the cracked tooth and applies super glue to mend the crack. Mr. Chomp's tooth is good as new and Doc is praised as the expert.

In the episode "Break Dancer," Doc's toy ballerina, Bella, performs a dance and while leaping across the floor, she hurts her leg. Doc immediately rushes over to Bella and tells her not to move because if her leg is broken, moving it could make it worse. This is information that a medical expert would know. Once Doc determines that Bella did indeed break her leg, she applies paste and creates a cast for Bella. Furthermore, she tells Bella to stay off her leg overnight so that her leg can heal properly. Doc's assistant, a stuffed hippo named Hallie, confirms Doc's expert advice by saying "if you follow Doc's orders and stay off that leg overnight, you'll be ready to dance when the sun comes up!" Doc's toy friends

often validate her expertise to other toys that are in need of a “checkup” so that they know they are in the best hands. In many of the episodes, Doc’s real friends also validate her knowledge. In the “Bubble Monkey” episode, Doc’s best friend and neighbor, Emmie, tells Doc “I don’t know how you do it, but you always get broken toys to work again,” right before Doc offers to fix Emmie’s broken bubble monkey toy. Doc’s role as the expert is generally a role assigned to white male characters. However, anytime a white male character appears on the show, they know less than Doc, and are in need of her expertise and assistance concerning their malfunctioning toys. The depictions of power dynamics between Doc and the supporting white male characters challenge traditional portrayals of female and black animated characters.

The Leader

Doc is portrayed as the “Leader” in nearly all of the episodes. As the leader, she takes charge of the situations and the supporting characters rely on her to diagnose her patients and give them marching orders. In each episode, Doc diagnoses a character’s ailment and lists it in the “Big Book of Boo-Boos.” Doc’s assistant, Hallie, plays the role of the nurse. Some of the ailing cuddly characters see Hallie briefly before she refers them to see Doc. Although Hallie is knowledgeable, she too relies on Doc to give the final diagnosis, and assists Doc with anything she needs. Doc consistently calls upon Hallie to “bring the medical bag” and “write this down in the Big Book of Boo-Boos.” Doc is the only character who gives prescriptions to the ailing stuffed animals and toys, which further demonstrates her role as the leader.

In the “Bubble Monkey” episode, Doc’s friend, Emmie, yields to Doc and lets Doc take the lead to figure out what is wrong with her bubble monkey toy after it stops properly

dispensing bubbles. In the same episode, Doc carries the bubble monkey toy into the clinic and all of her stuffed animal and toy friends follow Doc into the clinic. Throughout the entire first season, the stuffed animals and toys follow Doc wherever she goes and she is the first to enter any space. In addition, as the leader, Doc has the power to bring the animals to life. Doc decides when to touch her magic stethoscope to open the imaginary world where the stuffed animals and toys can come to life. Without Doc touching her stethoscope, the animals stay "stuffed." In most of the episodes when a human character comes toward Doc while she is with the toys, she quickly tells the toys to "go stuffed," and they immediately stop talking and moving. Doc is the only one who can hear the toys and stuffed animals talk, and at any given movement she has the authority, as the leader, to bring them to life, or make them "go stuffed." African American cartoon characters are not generally assigned leadership roles, as they are often secondary characters (Klein & Shiffman, 2006) who have to rely on others to lead them. Doc's leadership power is a direct contradiction of traditional characteristics attributed to female minority animated characters.

The Nurturer

The role of the "Nurturer" is to provide "general support to others and help to keep up the general spirit" and when people are "ill or depressed, the nurturer will be there to help them" (Straker, 2013). Doc McStuffins consistently provides support to the other characters, shows affection to her friends and patients, lifts everyone's spirits and helps the other characters all while displaying a happy smile, somewhat reminiscent of the

stereotypical black mammy⁵. Through her nurturing role, she reflects a cheerful, doting mammy-like character who is very concerned about everyone around her. She always lends the other characters her shoulder to lean on when they are afraid or sad. Her role as the nurturer is evident in several episodes when she consoles her stuffed snowman toy, "Chilly," each time he believes he is ill. Chilly seems to always think he is sick, and Doc gives him a checkup and oftentimes afterwards a pat on the back or a hug to reassure him that everything will be fine. Doc always speaks to her patients in a kind, reassuring voice that sets them at ease when she is giving them a checkup.

Relationships with Other Characters

Doc McStuffins has a great relationship with all of the recurring characters on the show. Doc has a very loving relationship with her parents who appear on several episodes. She is often seen embracing her parents, asking them for advice, or just having simple daily communication with them. In the "My Huggy Valentine" episode, Doc runs into the kitchen after school where her parents are waiting for her. She shows them her valentine's cards from school and then shows them a card she made especially for them. Her mother responds "Aww, thanks Doc. We love it!" and her father goes over to her, picks her up and gives her a big hug, and as he puts her down he says "Happy Valentine's Day, Love bug!" - a sweet nickname he calls her a couple times throughout the season.

Doc's parents are shown as having an affectionate relationship. They embrace each other in a couple episodes, dance with each other and speak highly of each other. They are

⁵The mammy is seen as an overweight, desexualized, domestic, motherly woman who is usually nonthreatening to White people (Jewell, 1993). The "concept of the mammy was constructed in the 1830s as a stout, dark-skinned, smiling, hardworking, doting woman" who happily served those around her- more specifically, her White employers (Chen et al., 2012, p.116).

also seen together in the kitchen, outside and around the house. Doc also has a positive relationship with her younger brother, Donny. She plays with him in many episodes and consistently offers him advice such as “make sure you are careful when playing outside” and “be sure to wash your hands.” Her brother looks up to her and trusts her advice. Donny also calls on Doc to help fix his broken toys and is always very grateful when she fixes them. Doc has a few friends that appear throughout the first season and viewers get to see her interaction with other children. In this domain, she is fun, friendly and helpful. Her friends also entrust her to fix their broken toys, and Doc happily accepts their toys as patients each time.

Doc is unquestionably featured as the lead character in every episode of the show with supporting characters that appear on each episode as well. Once Doc puts on her magical stethoscope, her stuffed animal friends come to life and she takes charge of the day. Although Doc is clearly the leader, her friends feel comfortable to express their opinions and Doc listens to her comrades' advice.

It is important to note that when Doc successfully diagnoses and treats one of her patients, regardless of whether or not she received some help from another character, she takes full credit for her success. This demonstrates Doc's individualistic American culture trait, which focuses more on individual achievements than collective achievements (Hofstede, 1980). Doc oftentimes verbalizes this quality and rejoices with “Yes, I did it!” or “I am good!” The other characters do not challenge her after she makes these exclamations, they just happily agree with a “Yes, you did!” or “You *are* the best!”

Intersectionality

Interestingly, gender is not discussed on the show through the characters, but gender cues are evident. Doc's room is embellished with pink and purple décor. Her walls are painted pink, she has a large pink circular rug that she plays on in her room and most of her clothing and toys include variations of pink. Variations of pink clothes, toys and rooms reflect female gender (Pomerleau et al. 1990, Shakin et al. 1985). Gender cues are also evident with Doc's clothing. She is usually wearing white lab coat, a purple and white striped shirt, a pink skirt, purple and pink polka dot tights and pink sequined sneakers. Doc's gendered specific clothing is balanced by her mother's clothing. Doc's mother is usually seen in a green shirt and blue jeans. Green and blue are colors attributed to the male gender (Pomerleau et al. 1990, Shakin et al. 1985).

Traditional gender roles are challenged with the depiction of Doc's parents. Her mother is a working pediatrician while her father stays at home and takes care of the children, the house and the garden. Doc's mother is often at work, heading to work, on the phone with a parent of a sick child, or working from her home office. Her father is typically, cooking, cleaning, taking the children to the park or gardening. The construct of the husband as the breadwinner of the family perpetuates the expectation that men should be the primary earners (Thebaud, 2010) and women should supplement by working at home and taking care of household duties. Doc's parents represent the opposite of this generally accepted concept of gender responsibilities.

Gender and race work together to define Doc McStuffins, however, race is not discussed on the show. While it is clear that Doc and her family are African American, the concept of race is absent from discussion. There are no African American cultural

traditions or artifacts depicted on the show. This may be a decision on the part of the show's creative team to make an effort to present the character in a normative fashion. However, in the process, the show does not address the social "otherness" of her race or gender, which could possibly spark important discussions between parents and their children.

Doc's family is a positive representation of an African American family- perhaps the most positive representation of a Black family in child-targeted, animated television history. Doc's family appears to be upper-middle class. This is assumed based on the fact that Doc's mother is a doctor, and her father is a stay-at-home dad. If the family can afford for Doc's father to stay at home with the two children, one would assume that the family is in a very comfortable financial situation. Other indicators of an upper-middle class status include the family's spacious home and manicured lawn, the children's abundant toys, games and electronics, and Doc's large playhouse in the backyard, which serves as her makeshift clinic. The intersectionality of Doc's gender, race and class is key to understanding the character and the show.

Racial and Gender Stereotypes

Klein and Shiffman (2006) noted that African American cartoon characters were historically portrayed in stereotypical roles such as the "singer," "dancer," or the "musician." Although Doc and her friends sing in every episode, she is not the "singer", she is the doctor. While she does not appear to fit any of the traditional "entertainer" racial stereotypes attributed to African Americans, she does embody characteristics reminiscent of the stereotypical Black "mammy"- being nurturing and taking care of everyone around her. Being nurturing (or sensitive and emotional) is also typical characteristic attributed to

most female animated characters (Thompson & Zerbinos, 1995). Doc is undeniably the main character of the show, and among other qualities, she is independent, influential, funny and intelligent. These characteristics alone defy traditional gender and racial stereotypes.

Doc McStuffins is an African American girl who wears braided pigtails in her presumably natural hair. Traditionally, black hair in its natural state is negatively attributed to subpar beauty ideals (Thompson, 2009). White European standards of beauty can be found in all aspects of mediated messages- even in cartoons. However, *Doc McStuffins* challenges those beauty standards with her seemingly natural hair, and her dark brown skin tone. Doc's mother also has natural hair, worn in an afro style, and is dark skinned. African Americans with lighter skin tone and Eurocentric facial features (such as smooth hair, thin lips and a narrow nose) are more likely to be accepted in mainstream society (Russell, Wilson & Hall, 1993) and represented in mainstream media (Bond & Cash, 1992). Cartoons are no exception. Doc challenges the standard ideal of both black beauty and mainstream beauty. She is not the archetypal, white female character, nor is she the light-skinned, straight haired black female character. Her character reaches a certain level of normativity, and she is just portrayed as a little girl who wants to be a doctor.

Challenges and Reflections

Doc, in some way, challenges and reflects traditional gender, class and racial stereotypes. Doc embodies characteristics that are typically attributed to white, male

characters- leader, heroic, inquisitive, clever and adventurous. The fact that Doc's distinguishing qualities are celebrated demonstrates that gender stereotypes are being challenged in children's animated cartoons. Doc challenges gender stereotypes through her roles as "the Expert" and "the Leader/Chief"; however she reflects gender and racial stereotypes through her role as "the Nurturer."

With regard to class, Doc's apparently comfortable lifestyle symbolizes a middle or upper-middle class status that challenges traditional televised depictions of African American lifestyles (Greenberg & Brand, 1994). Doc represents a social group that has been neglected in children's animated programming- the black girl character. While some of the representations of race, gender and class reflect traditional tropes, the intersectionality of Doc McStuffins largely challenges stereotypes, help to define her and usher her into normativity.

Conclusions and Implications

Doc McStuffins represents *possibility* for many young girls, especially young black girls, who may see the character and believe that she can also be a doctor one day. The success of this show may encourage the creation of other shows that challenge traditional depictions of African American female animated characters and feature them in progressive, leading roles. This show centers on an intelligent, curious and kind young girl who enjoys helping her friends and looks up to her mother. The show teaches children that they have the power to fix things around them by using simple problem solving and critical thinking skills. *Doc McStuffins* inspires children (and adults) to tap into their imagination and help other people. The combination of these identities and experiences mold Doc into

the loveable girl that captured American children's hearts as the show climbed to the top of the ratings charts.

Doc McStuffins appears to empower young children, especially preschool aged girls, in various ways. She defies notions of white male patriarchy and progressive representations of female minorities, which can teach children acceptance and respect for female minorities. Since this show is currently rated in the top three animated shows for preschool aged children (Palmeri, 2012), with millions of young viewers tuning in each week, it has the power to teach children lessons. With consistent viewing of this show over time, children will learn, as social cognitive theory suggests, that female, minorities can be smart, adventurous, kind, important and, perhaps most transgressive- leaders.

Instead of the intersectionality of gender, race and class representing layers of oppression (Hill Collins, 1991) for Doc, her intersectionality represents layers of progress and hope for more diversity in children's animation, and directly challenges hegemonic messages communicated to young viewers. Children are especially susceptible to messages in animated cartoons; therefore careful analysis of this genre of television is essential. The ways that animated characters are portrayed should be important to the producers of this content, because when they understand the ramifications of their animated creations, they can consciously make an effort to minimize clichéd portrayals and create characters who challenge gender and racial stereotypes.

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Women's Economic Empowerment in MENA

Abstract

The idea of women's economic empowerment in the developing world has been growing in momentum throughout the past couple of years. Today, it is a force that is dramatically redefining the concept of economic development and transforming the economic and political landscape of the Middle East. Women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region are finding innovative ways to participate in the labor market. As a result, they are becoming agents of change in their political, economic, and social environments. Despite the tremendous amount of growth that has realized over the past decade, women in MENA still face significant hurdles to realize their potential. This study will highlight the developments that have taken place within the last decade, and describe how they have improved, or worsened economic conditions for women in the region. It will also explain the issues associated with previous developments, and their missing dimensions. The concept of women's economic empowerment will be analyzed through a multidisciplinary approach in which factors such as religion, ideology, culture, politics, and economics will be merged to understand the foundation of the problems facing women in MENA. These factors will also be analyzed from various levels of analysis: individual, state, and global.

Introduction

This paper sheds light on many of the issues regarding women's access to the economic sector in MENA, and provides recommendations for advancing the participation of women in the labor market. It begins by exploring the socio-cultural roots of the issue, and then the practical and technical obstacles that women face such as limited access to financial instruments. In addition, the paper will provide suggestions as to how governments, firms, and societies can collaborate to increase gender equality in the economic sector. The concept of women's economic empowerment must be analyzed from a culturally relevant lens, as traditional solutions to gender inequality many times overlook cultural complexities. A case study of Jordan will demonstrate some of the various factors involved in increasing women's empowerment, and will describe why certain measures targeted towards women in the past have failed to achieve their objectives.

The paper is divided into six sections: (1) the developmental importance of women's economic empowerment; (2) religious and sociocultural obstacles; (3) technical and financial obstacles; (4) case study of women's economic empowerment in Jordan; (5) recommendations, and (6) conclusion.

The Developmental Importance of Women's Economic Empowerment

The issue of women's economic empowerment has been greatly overlooked by economists, politicians, and policy-makers that seek to restructure the political and economic landscape of the Middle East. It is an idea that is all too often disregarded and placed at the bottom of political agendas. There is also a lack of knowledge about the economic barriers that women face in the Middle East. However, increasing interconnectedness, the advancement of globalization, and changing dynamics in the

region have made it all the more important that these issues be addressed and that women in MENA become more active in the global economy.

Women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are among the least represented on a global scale. The World Bank's Enterprise Survey points that levels of female entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa are far behind those of other regions (World Bank, 2010). Women in MENA make up 1/3 of the total labor force in the region, compared to 76% of the total participation of males. The region, along with South Asia, is ranked as the lowest in gender equality according to the World Bank Gender Equality Index (Kharamah, 2012). The 2002 U.N. Arab Human Development Report pointed out that the lack of women's empowerment in MENA is one of the three main obstacles to growth in the region (Salime, 738). The U.S. Department of State stressed that the participation of Arab women in parliaments, cabinets, and the work force has been miniscule (Salime, 738). Women's participation in the economy is strongly connected to their participation in public affairs. States that have high amounts of gender equality in the economic sector are more likely to have women involved in political affairs, and are also more likely to possess strong characteristics of stability (Rizzo, et al., 1154). State governments that possess an overwhelming majority of men in positions of power are more likely to develop policies detrimental to the welfare of women and children. This is the case in many of the countries in the MENA region. It is therefore vital to understand the problems that women face when attempting to integrate into civil society and the economy, and how such issues can be overcome.

Societal Benefits

Although the rhetoric of "women's economic empowerment" emerged in the 1980's, the effects of increasing economic opportunities for women have gained greater recognition throughout the past decade. The importance of developing policies targeted towards women in MENA in particular, has also gained attention, as the region has become more important in discussions regarding national security. Governments, in particular, are learning how advancing women's rights is a strategic objective to increase global security, prosperity, and development. Providing women with greater access to finance in particular, can be a means of politically and socially empowering them. Indeed, economic development and women's empowerment are mutually supportive. A recent survey conducted by the United Nations concluded that economic development is strongly correlated with the economic empowerment of women. In countries where women have gained greater access to the workforce, economic growth has also been achieved. Conversely, in countries where women are least represented in the economy, economic growth has declined (Abu Kharmeh, 2012). Studies show that if more women in the Middle East were employed in the national labor force, GDP would increase by 0.7% each year. This would lead to a growth rate of 2.6%, as opposed to 1.9% (World Bank, 2004).

The economic empowerment of females has an apparent short-term, and long-term benefit to societies. Studies show that women who are provided with economic opportunities in MENA have more decision-making capabilities in their households. When women are economically empowered, they are also better able to escape poverty, domestic violence, and other socio-economic problems (Coleman, 2013). A regional study carried out by UNIDO came to the conclusion that women with stable incomes

have improved living standards, higher educational levels, higher life expectancies, and lower fertility rates. Other studies have highlighted that when women gain access to resources such as education, finance, property, technology, and employment, they have a greater impact on the wellbeing of their children, in comparison to men's access and use of such resources (Jordan Human Development Report, 2011). The economic empowerment of a female has many positive externalities on society as a whole, and it creates a chain reaction in which women are driven by the successes of others in their communities.

Gender Inequality and Conflict

Also, of vital importance is the strategic value of the MENA region. Recent demographic trends, along with recent surges of political instability demonstrate how MENA should be a national security concern to the United States. There are alarming statistics in relation to unemployment rates in the region. Youth unemployment in MENA is the highest in the world, and female youth unemployment is more than twice the percentage of men's, even in more egalitarian Middle Eastern states such as Jordan, the UAE, and Egypt (United Nations, 2009). Female youth in MENA are the least involved in the economic sector at a global level, making up only 24% of those employed in the labor force. For young men, the participation rate in the economy makes up 50%, which is also the lowest in the world. Women and children make up the majority of people in poverty, and targeting them can thus yield tremendous benefits. The creation of small and medium enterprises has been considered fundamental in reducing unemployment rates amongst women and youth (Abu Kharmeh, 2012).

Women and Radical Groups

Providing women with opportunities in MENA can have a direct effect on the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism. Women tend to be the most negatively affected by ideological radicalism, and their interests often conflict with those of highly conservative, and patriarchal groups. Since Islamist groups tend to put women and children in extremely vulnerable situations, physically, emotionally, and financially, women are more likely to support alternative solutions to their economic and security concerns. Empowering them in ways that make them self-sufficient, involved, and independent can thus decrease levels of female involvement in radical organizations, and bring greater security to disadvantaged areas in MENA (Salime, 741). Also worth noting is the fact that the majority of these organizations gain influence by providing financial assistance to families. They also primarily target young men. As mothers, empowered women are better able to counteract such events. Women in MENA can serve as modernizing agents in societies resisting conservative and patriarchal forces.

Religious and Sociocultural Obstacles

Despite strong evidence pointing to the micro, and macro-level benefits of empowering women, the issue of gender inequality in MENA's economy is highly complex and requires a historical and socio-cultural analysis. The most reasonable explanations for the lack of women's participation in the workforce are those of social, and religious restrictions. Women in MENA are discouraged from being active in the economic sector because of traditional Islamic norms regarding the roles of Muslim

women. Highly conservative interpretations of Islamic teachings have slowed progress in women's economic integration, and women in the region are divided between traditional expectations, or pursuing a lifestyle that is conducive to modernization.

The Role of Interpretation

This resurgence in Islamic fundamentalism in MENA, however, has had different impacts on different segments of the female population. Interestingly, although younger generations in the region are abiding by more conservative interpretations of Islamic teachings, they are also more integrated into the labor force than older generations. This is the case in Tunisia, where women are more represented in the workforce than most countries in the Middle East and North Africa (Abu Kharmeh, 2012). Tunisia is one of the most progressive parts of MENA in the area of women's empowerment. Tunisia contains the greatest number of women-owned businesses in the region. On average, women in the country make up 19.3 employees per company (Abu Kharmeh, 2012). The level of women's participation in the workforce in Tunisia is reflective of its social construct of females. In a study conducted by the Pew Research Center, respondents were asked to choose the ideal Muslim woman's attire. Tunisia, along with Turkey and Lebanon made up the greatest percentages of people who accepted a more liberal form of dress. Respondents in those countries also scored highest when asked if women should have the freedom to decide what they should wear. Such statistics symbolize the levels of freedom of expression that women in the region enjoy.

Government and Religion

Some attribute women's empowerment in Tunisia to the government's role in secularizing society through reformist programs, bans on hijab, and modern social constructs of Islam among other factors. However, similar patterns have been observed in other MENA countries where government imposed secularization is not a factor, indicating that Islamic norms and values are being redefined. Indeed, Tunisia's success in the empowerment of its female population is due to a number of factors. The country's labor code permits women to be fully involved in the economy, and education is equally available among males and females. A number of initiatives have also taken place to alter social constructs about male and female roles. Today, Tunisia experiences an economic growth rate that is five times the growth rate of its people (Wilson Center, 2010).

Female Roles in Islam

Islamic norms have evolved significantly throughout the years. In the beginning of the Islamic era, women were actually more integrated into the local, and international economy. Women were merchants, and traders. They owned property, and other assets, and they managed resources. In other words, they were empowered in ways that allowed them to be self-efficient, and independent. Islamic history contains several stories of the entrepreneurial spirit of the Prophet Muhammad's wife, Khadija, and other influential women at the time. Scholars of the early Islamic era viewed women's participation in the economy as a common and legitimate act. It was not unusual to society that women at the time be economically active, and engage with men when performing business transactions. As state structures developed, however, they neglected working women in

many countries (El-Azhary Sonbol, 2004). This for example, was the case in Jordan after the separation of the informal and formal sectors of the economy. Females, which were actively engaged in occupations such as agriculture, and farming, were excluded from the formal sector, and were thus, no longer acknowledged (Abu Kharmeh, 2012).

Scholarly Views

Scholars differ in the rational regarding women's lack of involvement in the economic sphere. Sociology professor, Valentine M. Moghadam, stresses that economic factors provide for a greater understanding in regards to the factors inhibiting gender equality in the economy. She argues that patterns of gender employment in MENA are reflective of the political and economic conditions of each nation, as well as global economic circumstances. Instead of socio-cultural factors such as norms and beliefs, Moghadam argues that class, state-policy, development approaches, and patterns in the international system characterize employment trends. Scholar on women and Islamic law in the Middle East, Amira El-Azhari Sonbol, prefers an alternative approach to explain gender employment. She argues that deeper and more historical forces characterize gender inequality and unemployment in MENA. El-Azhary views cultural and political barriers as the primary reasons for which females make up such a low percentage of the labor force in the Middle East (Abu Kharmeh, 2012). This is the case in Jordan, she argues, where the political structure and the advancement of the economy, would equate to greater gender equality in the labor force. However, conservative beliefs and norms have discouraged many Jordanian women from actively engaging in the social, political, and economic spheres (Abu Kharmeh, 2012).

Diverse Islamic Environment

Cultural and religious restraints provide for a more comprehensive explanation in regards to the low numbers of women in the economy. Through an evolutionary process, religious positions on women's roles have translated to different norms for women throughout MENA. Of course, such norms vary from country to country. Countries with Islamic governments such as Saudi Arabia possess more limited environments for women entrepreneurs. However, the growth in the amount of women running tech businesses in Saudi Arabia demonstrates how women are attempting to find alternative ways to participate in the economy. Countries with more liberal laws targeting women such as the UAE, and Tunisia have been more successful in accommodating the labor force.

In some of the more conservative parts of MENA, local religious institutions are the only places that Muslim women visit. These institutions provide them with knowledge as to how to go about daily affairs. Such establishments, however, do not provide women with sufficient practical and strategic information. Women are many times discouraged from participating in the public, and economic sectors. In addition, state governments do not collaborate sufficiently with local religious institutions to educate and guide women towards participating in civil society.

Technical and Financial Obstacles

It is paramount to address the issue of women's access to financial resources in MENA. Women-led start-ups and small businesses are evolving to require more capital, and microfinance institutions have been the main providers of capital to female entrepreneurs throughout the years. Although the amount of women receiving small loans is large as a percentage, it is relatively small in numbers. A primary reason for this is the lack of perceived demand by microfinance institutions. A study conducted by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) indicates that women in MENA are more likely than men to fund business projects from personal sources (Niethammer, 5). This is partly due to a lack of education, or information about formal finance. As a result, finance institutions do not perceive demand by women and do not focus their resources in areas where they are much needed (Niethammer et al., 5).

Local Impediments

On a local level, women lack the information and encouragement necessary to thrive in economic environments. The reason for which many microfinance institutions have been successful is due to the fact that they operate in small villages, and communicate with their borrowers in personal ways. The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, for example, is one such institution that fosters an environment in which women can openly participate in the economic sector. The Grameen Bank also provides each loan to a group of women to increase accountability (Bornstein, 2013). This social component of lending can be applied in MENA to encourage women to seek out loans, and participate in the economy. Women in the region do not have sufficient role models, whether they are relatives, friends, community members, or colleagues. Strong support systems, and mentors are necessary for women to thrive in environments that are characterized by conservative social norms. Women in MENA also lack the confidence to approach mostly male lenders, and they do not have sufficient female counterparts to lean on.

Lack of Resources

Female entrepreneurs in the region also lack significant ownership of collateral, or land and capital. Although many women in MENA are entitled to property, they lack knowledge as to how much they are entitled to. Male relatives many times control their lands through legal rulings, or by consent. Women in disadvantaged regions are many times unaware of how to manage their land ownership, and as a result, fail to use it in an efficient manner. Therefore, they do not meet the minimum requirements to borrow from available financing sources (Niethammer, et al., 5). This causes their businesses to remain underdeveloped and less efficient. Such restraints prevent women from reaching their full potential, and outgrowing the small business sector.

Women entrepreneurs in the Middle East and North Africa tend to fund their small enterprises through personal sources such as personal savings, family, and friends. However, personal savings do not provide the sufficient amount of capital to successfully run, or expand a business. Therefore, women entrepreneurs who fund their businesses from such sources must have a significant amount of family support. This support comes in the form of material, and emotional support. Aspiring woman entrepreneurs who lack savings and support are left behind. Beyond the start-up phase of a venture, women tend to use their personal belongings, savings, and homes as collateral (Niethammer, et al., 6).

Supply-Side Issues

In terms of supply, many financial institutions do not offer loans tailored to women entrepreneurs. Women are also not viewed as competitive participants of the economy because their startups require higher risks. Bankers view such investments with skepticism even though women generally have a positive reputation paying back micro-loans. Women entrepreneurs, who want to move past the microfinance phase, are many times unable to do so due to their lack of capital. Microfinance has aided many women and families in escaping poverty. However, it has not been as successful in providing women with the means to expand past the micro stage of development.

Case Study

Female Economic Empowerment in Jordan

Jordan has seen various trends in its levels of women's integration into the economy throughout the past decades. Changing norms, and beliefs, as well as economic and political changes in Jordanian society has influenced some of these patterns.

Jordan is a very strategic part of the Middle East for many reasons. One of the primary reasons for which women's empowerment in Jordan should be prioritized is due to the high amounts of refugees that have immigrated to the country. High refugee influxes from Palestine, Iraq, and Syria, have made Jordan a truly intercultural society. Women, which make up most of the refugee population, have an enormous impact on the Jordanian economy. Their input however, is not formally acknowledged since they are mostly active in the informal sectors. Even informal activity has decreased due to macro-economic policies that have disregarded the needs of women. Women's involvement in the workforce has also decreased throughout the years. There are several reasons attributed to this decrease in activity. Economic restraints, as well as political, and socio-cultural obstacles are all factors that have shaped women's participation in the Jordanian economy.

Jordan, which is considered one of the "tech powerhouses" for women in MENA, has an average rate of about 6 female staff members per company (Abu Kharmeh, 2012). This is relatively low in comparison to Tunisia and the UAE. As previously mentioned, Tunisia employs about 19.3 female employees, and the UAE employs on average, 13.9 employees. The ratio of women to men employed in Jordan's private sector is approximately 1 to 6. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Jordan make up more than 90% of all enterprises in the country. Women entrepreneurs however, constitute just 3.9% of all entrepreneurs in Jordan. This gap is even more apparent in comparison to global standards, in which women entrepreneurs constitute 25% to 33% of the labor force (MOPIC, 2010).

Jordan is generally seen as a more progressive part of the Middle East in terms of the political and economic opportunities that it provides for women. Despite Jordan's progress in establishing laws, and regulations in favor of women's employment, the country still falls behind compared to more egalitarian countries such as Tunisia, the UAE, and Bahrain. If gender equality were based on the country's political and economic structure, as many scholars claim, Jordan would be experiencing different trends.

The lack of women's economic activity in the private sector causes stagnation due to the allocation of occupations. In Jordan, female employment in the public sector made up 46.6% in 2007. However, women in the public sector face the reality of a glass

ceiling, and few are able to advance to higher positions. This is particularly true for occupations in government, where men make up the majority of higher-ranking officials. As a result of this distribution of occupations in the government sector, men are primarily responsible for the formulation of policies targeting women. This of course, is many times against the female interests (World Bank, 2005). This form of horizontal segregation is common amongst women in Jordan. In 2009, approximately 53% of Jordanian women were employed in the health and education sectors. According to the Department of Statistics, Jordan was able to generate about 64,000 jobs in 2008. The public sector made up only 41.4% of these jobs, with men filling 82.5% of them. It is worth noting that in 2009, females made up 74% of applicants to the Civil Service Bureau, in comparison to 26% of males (Abu Kharmeh, 2012).

Such trends point to some of the obvious issues that women face when attempting to participate in the labor force. Females in Jordan are increasingly attempting to join an already saturated sector, and within the public sector they are left behind in comparison to men. It is therefore, vital that this employment gap be filled by jobs in the private sector, and small and medium enterprises. However, women are also poorly represented in SMEs with only 18% of management positions held by women.

The reasons for such gaps in gender equality in Jordan and other MENA countries are disputed. Some scholars argue that trade liberalization, and macroeconomic policies are most effective in bringing women into the workforce. If this were the case, however, women in Jordan would have a higher representation in the labor force. They argue that the structural adjustment programs that were imposed on Jordan in the 1980s actually reduced women's participation in the economy (Abu Kharmeh, 2012). Instead, some experts, argue, that social norms, and constructs are the primary determinants of gender inequality in the country. Indeed, these very factors have been considered to be the most accurate in explaining such trends.

Recommendations

Community Outreach and Educational Initiatives

To address the lack of women's participation in the economy, root issues must be brought into perspective. A grassroots approach to empower women is of significant importance. Microfinance has proven to be highly successful among motivated women (Niethammer et al., 4). However, there is a previous step to the process of women's empowerment that has not been established. It is that of educating women about the opportunities that are available to them. They must be educated about the freedom that they have within their religion, and within their societies. This begins with redefining Islamic teachings that relate to gender roles. Moderate and progressive interpretations of Islamic text portray women in a more egalitarian nature. One in which they are able to actively pursue education and career lives within the bounds of Islam. Isobel Coleman, a senior fellow for U.S. foreign policy at the Council on Foreign Relations, describes this idea as "Islamic feminism". In a growing movement, women want to practice their economic, political, and social rights and at the same time look to Islam as the source of those rights (Coleman, 2013). Religious constraints are amongst the primary reasons for gender gaps in the economic sphere, and thus, must be the first barrier to be addressed.

On a local level, mosques and other religious establishments must take the vital role of educating women about their basic rights. Mosques are seen as centers in which the community comes together and supports one another. It is that sense of community and support that women seek when attempting to participate in the social, economic, and political sectors.

On a state level, national governments must collaborate with local institutions to push forward policies that target women. A national collaborative to increase educational opportunities for women has not been sufficient, as female employment has remained stagnant despite the rising levels of educated women in the region.

Another issue to address is the lack of confidence among women in the MENA region. This is in part due to the fact that local financial institutions view them from a cultural lens, which discriminates against women. Because women tend to open smaller, more riskier business, and lack the collateral necessary to gain legitimacy, they are often viewed as unreliable borrowers (Niethammer et al., 6).

Overall, many of the obstacles that women face attributed to religion, are actually purely cultural obstacles. Social constructs in regards to women's roles in societies are shaped mostly by cultural stereotypes that lack Islamic reasoning. Many regressive cultural practices that inhibit women's involvement in the economy are not limited to the MENA region, and can be found in societies that practice different religions.

Financial and Institutional Reform

Women throughout MENA lack the access to capital necessary to fund start-ups, or expand their businesses. One of the primary adjustments that finance institutions must implement is that of adjusting loan products to meet the needs of women. Women are the primary customers of microfinance institutions, but make up the minority of people that borrow from non-governmental lending services. Many monetary institutions and lenders are currently tailored to appeal to men. The types of loans being offered are those that require a significant amount of collateral. This is why micro-finance institutions have gained popularity in many parts of the developing world. Such institutions, however, are not as profitable as those that provide macro-loans, and therefore are not as attractive to lenders. Studies also show that the movement from "not for profit" to "for profit" in the microfinance sector has caused the businesses to suffer. Micro-finance institutions should remain not for profit organizations as high interest rates can cause the borrowers to be worse off than they originally were before taking the loan. Also worth noting are Islamic positions regarding interest in the Middle East and North Africa. Interest, or the Arabic equivalent, "riba" is looked down upon according to Islamic teachings. Consequently, women in the region are more hesitant to seek out loans that operate on interest. Non-profit financing institutions are thus, more effective in attracting female clientele. Such financial establishments must be sensitive to cultural and religious beliefs.

Loan Structuring

Women in MENA still struggle with stereotypes regarding gender roles, and as a result, they have greater responsibilities when joining the labor force. Aside from being entrepreneurs, they must also manage the roles of homemakers, and mothers. Many do so without male support. Therefore, loan services should be tailored to meet their lifestyle needs. Women entrepreneurs would benefit from loan services that use provide low interest rates, have flexible payment schedules,

and require less collateral (Niethammer, et al., 7). As an alternative to collateral, financial institutions could verify credibility through other sources such as letters of recommendation. Lending institutions would also attract more women by increasing the amount of women representatives working for them. This is another area where traditional expectations regarding gender interactions have slowed women's involvement in the economic sector. Market studies regarding the demographics of particular areas could aid financing institutions in developing services suited to the needs of their customers.

Vitality of SME Sector

The small to medium enterprise (SME) sector is particularly important for MENA countries in which women are least represented in the labor force. SMEs make up a significant portion of the economy in the Middle East, and they hire a great amount of youth and women. This sector is vital because it operates on low risk, and women are more able to meet the loan requirements necessary for such businesses. However, this sector is demanding greater education and skills, which women are not equipped with.

Global Level Involvement

One of the main obstacles that aspiring women entrepreneurs face is a lack of knowledge about the financial tools available to them. Partnerships between NGOs and financial institutions would be more suited to communicate with female customers. The 10,000 women initiative for example, was a result of a partnership between Goldman Sachs and several non-profit, and academic organizations. Among the partners involved in the project were The World Bank, the Clinton Global Initiative, Vital Voices, and the Center for Global Development. The project aimed at training 10,000 women throughout the developing world and providing them with business and management education, mentors, and connections to capital (Goldman Sachs, 2014). The 10,000 women initiative is a model that financial institutions can implement in MENA to effectively foster economic growth and development.

State Level Reforms

On a state level, national governments must push forward policies targeted towards women. State governments in MENA must strive towards targeting the glass ceiling that exists throughout the region. In countries such as Jordan, various female-focused policies could improve the amounts of women in senior positions in the public and private sector. The establishment of greater quotas in positions that disproportionately represent women would be an effective way to address the gender gap. Successful economic development requires women-focused policies (Niethammer et al., 2).

Conclusion

The return on investment (ROI) of investing in women is unmatched in comparison to other economic policies. The ROI of economically empowering women is

visible in both the short run, and the long run. When women in disadvantaged parts of the world bring home an income, they alter the structure at a local level. In the long run, they produce a more educated, healthier, and efficient generation who contribute to the world economy. Small, and incremental changes yield great results on a global level. If economists and policymakers make a cost-benefit analysis of dedicating time and resources to increase women's economic equality in MENA, they may come to the conclusion that redistributing foreign aid funds in ways that benefit women is in fact the most rational path to take. A redistribution of aid funds targeted towards providing training, and resources in the private sector, for example, could have a significant impact on the employment gaps in MENA. The United States in particular, has sent billions of dollars of aid to the region. Such funds, however, have failed to yield growth and advancement. A more strategic approach to the development issue in MENA would involve greater inclusion of women into the economy. Reallocating funds towards programs that advance women's empowerment would be a much more effective method of tackling the poverty issue.

To improve the economic outlook of women, and society as a whole in the region, a collective and collaborative approach must take place. It would need to include the involvement of various parties at the local, state, and global levels. At local levels, women need to receive the education necessary to combat cultural, and financial restrictions. At a state level, national governments must be able to establish more even-handed laws that allow women to realize their potential and have incentives to do so. On a global level, transnational actors and NGOs need to work closely with local communities and state governments to tackle the issues that lead to female unemployment.

A Muslim female leader once said, "Society is like a bird. It has two wings. And a bird cannot fly if one wing is broken." A nation in which half of the human resources are untapped is a nation that is inefficient to the maximum extent. Women in MENA are disproportionately represented in all sectors of the economy, and civil society. Women's empowerment and democracy building are positively correlated, and as previous studies have suggested, stability and gender equality go hand in hand. A Middle East with more women leaders could be a Middle East characterized by greater cooperation, less poverty, less violence, and better living standards for all.

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Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child

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Abstract

Sixty percent (1,113 of 1,852) of young adults who aged out of the State of Florida foster-care system 2013 were female (Cby25 Initiative, Inc., 2013). The Florida Department of Children & Families reported that in 2012 approximately 57% of young adults formerly in foster care in the State of Florida aspired to attend college, but only 7% finished post-secondary education (Independent Living Services Advisory Council, 2012), the majority of which completed Associate's degrees (5%) and vocational licenses (1%) (Cby25 Initiative, Inc., 2013). By applying those percentages to the women aging out of the foster care system in 2013 alone, we find that 645 women are projected to attend college, but only 78 will attain a post-secondary degree, with 56 of those completing an Associate's degree and 11 earning a vocational license. Reports suggest that the other women who age out of the foster care system will become homeless, jobless, and mothers soon after exiting the system. The failure to encourage and guide foster care students to college preparatory classes in high school and to (and through) college could conceivably reproduce cycles of poverty, homelessness, and abuse, particularly for women. This research paper provides insight into the challenges faced by foster care students, and particularly women, who have aged out of the foster care system. It will also discuss best practices in transitioning foster care youth into higher education as a means by which to counter some of the challenges foster care youth and alumni face.

Twenty-eight thousand youth across the nation aged out of foster care in fiscal year 2010 (Casey Family Programs, 2011). In other words, just over 4% of the 662,000 children in foster care from October 2009 to September 2010 “were too old to remain in care ... [and entered into the high risk strata] for homelessness, joblessness, incarceration, welfare dependency, early childbearing, and sexual and physical victimization” (Children’s Rights, 2013). While 70% of the youth in foster care indicate that they aspire to complete high school and earn a bachelor’s degree, less than 60% complete high school. Of those completing high school with a diploma or a GED, between 25% and 73% enroll in some postsecondary education, but only 1.8% to 7.7% actually complete their post-secondary education (Pecora et al., 2009; Festinger, 1983; Havalchak, White, & O’Brien, 2008).

Obtaining a bachelor’s degree has been correlated with greater earning potentials, improved self-worth, confidence, and greater social mobility (Casey Family Programs, 2008). For foster care alumni, especially those between the ages of 18-21, access to postsecondary education and/or vocational training can serve as a vital step on the way to adulthood. The failure to encourage foster care youth to enroll college preparatory classes in high school and to pursue higher education has resulted in: 12-30% homelessness rates; 25-55% unemployment rates; 18-26% incarceration rates; and 40-60% early childbearing rates (Children’s Rights, 2013; Daining & DePanfilis, 2007). For the few that are able to enroll in higher education, the struggle is not over; many youth will have already aged out of the foster care system, limiting the resources available for them during their collegiate career (Hernandez & Naccarato, 2009). Educators, particularly post-secondary educators, can make the difference in the lives of this underrepresented population. Indeed, several institutions have already begun the process of expanding opportunities for educational access and success for this culturally diverse population.

Foster youths' barriers to higher education

Lower levels of academic achievement have been observed in youth who have received state care, especially when compared to their peers from the general population (Pecora et al., 2006). While scholarship on the influence on placement is limited, factors including length of time in care, number and type of placements have been found to influence educational outcomes (Harris, Jackson, O'Brien & Pecora, 2009). Children with multiple placements often experience problems associated with academic record transfer and poor collaboration between caseworkers, schools and foster parents (Smithgall, Gladden, Howard, George and Courtney, 2006). The number of placement changes that a youth experiences is also linked to lower scores math and reading standardized test scores (Rumberger, Larson, Ream & Palardy, 1999). Foster care youth are more likely to attend low-achieving schools, have lower levels of reading and math achievement and experience grade failure and repetition (Smithgall, et al., 2006). The Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth revealed that by age 19, 37% of youth in foster care had not completed high school; by age 25, 20% had not yet earned a high school diploma or GED (Courtney et al., 2011).

Foster youth also encounter non-academic obstacles upon aging out of foster care and entering young adulthood. They often struggle more than other young adults across a number of lifespan-developmental milestones including finances and employment, housing, physical and mental health, social relationships and community connections, personal and cultural identity development and other life skills (Casey Family Programs, 2006). Other barriers exist that make access to higher education difficult for foster care alumni. Approximately one-third left the system without basic resources including a driver's license, cash, or basic household necessities such as dishes (Pecora et al., 2006). Many do not have anyone willing to co-sign a loan or lease

which makes it difficult to secure housing. While Medicaid and other support is available in some states until age 21, this requires foster care alumni to navigate bureaucratic processes to receive benefits; often for the first time. Other barriers include lack of transportation, the need for full-time employment, and parenting responsibilities (Courtney et al., 2009).

Increasing college awareness

Seventy percent of foster care alumni in one Midwestern county expressed a desire to attend college but only 2% successfully enrolled (McMillen, Aluslander, Elze, White, & Thompson, 2003). The child welfare system emphasizes safety and permanence while making education an afterthought rather than a targeted outcome for foster care alumni (Hernandez & Naccarato, 2010). A New York City social worker stated, “Agencies do not encourage college but instead encourage kids to get their high school diploma or GED, get a job and get the hell out of care” (Freundlich & Avery, 2006, p. 16). As such, foster care youth are less likely than their peers to enroll in college preparatory coursework (Harris et al., 2009).

Early college access programs such as the Federal Trio programs, including Talent Search, Upward Bound and Student Support Services, can introduce foster care youth in middle and high school to the benefits of higher education and the importance of earning a high school diploma (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008a). However, these programs are underfunded and are not offered incentives to offer support programs for foster care youth. The Educational Opportunity Program provides access, academic support and financial aid to full-time academically and economically eligible students who show promise for college success but may not otherwise be admitted. The program offers campus-based support during for first-year students (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008b). The Higher Education Opportunities Act of 2008 ensures that foster care youth are given first priority for these

programs as a means of providing greater access to higher education for the population (Hernandez & Naccarato, 2010; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008b).

Foster youth attending college

A recent study that controlled for race and gender found that foster care alumni enrolled in four-year institutions are more likely to drop out than other low-income first-generation students (Day et al., 2011). In a study of foster care alumni between the ages of 23 and 33 found that enrolled in higher education, Pecora and colleagues (2005) found that 21% had received a degree or certificate beyond college. Only 2.7%, however, earned a bachelor's degree; this rate is much lower than for the general population (24%).

Many academic and nonacademic factors influence foster care alumni's success in higher education. Davis (2006) cites academic and personal under-preparedness, financial concerns, and concerns about living independently for the first time as causes for attrition. Academic preparation is a serious concern for many alumni of care, causing many to rely on remedial coursework before enrolling in college coursework (Harris et al., 2009). Many alumni of care cannot rely on parents or others for financial or emotional support and lack independent living skills (Wolanin, 2005). Alumni are more likely to exhibit mental and behavioral health problems (Shin, 2006). Foster care alumni often find themselves without support systems on campus as many administrators lack the understanding of the unique needs of this student population. Even programs designed for first-generation and/or low-income students may not adequately support foster care alumni (Emerson, 2006; Dworsky & Perez, 2010).

Access to financial aid is a serious concern for many alumni of care. Under federal law, all wards or dependents of the court are considered "financially independent" which means that their parental income is not used to evaluate their financial aid eligibility. However, foster care

alumni are often unaware that they must indicate their status on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to receive the aid available to them (Davis, 2006). Congress established the Educational and Vocational Training Voucher (ETV) Program in 2001 as an amendment to Chafee Foster Care Independence Act. The ETV entitles current and foster care alumni up to \$5,000 annually to assist with tuition, housing, and other education-related expenses. These benefits are available until age 23 if they first took advantage of the benefit before age 21. However many recipients of these funds to be insufficient to cover the costs associated with college enrollment (Wells & Zunz, 2009). Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah and West Virginia offer tuition waivers for alumni of care to attend state universities at no charge or at greatly discounted rates. Foster care alumni in Alabama, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin are eligible for scholarships and grants. Eligibility requirements and funding amounts vary by program and state (Dworsky, et al., 2009).

Specific Challenges for Female Foster Care Alumni

Female alumni of foster care face many obstacles on their path into young adulthood. For example, one-third of homeless women reported being raised away from their biological parents. Among homeless women with children under age 18, over 60% had children who had lived in foster care or other out-of-home placements (Zlotnick, Robertson, & Wright, 1999). Carpenter, Clymann, Davidson, and Steiner (2001) report that experience in foster care was associated with being younger in a woman's first pregnancy, being younger at the time of first intercourse, and having more sexual partners than women in the general population.

Incarceration and delinquency rates are much more prevalent in alumni of care; by age 23-24, 30% of female foster care alumni had previously been convicted of a crime (Dworsky & Perez, 2010). Finally, Smith, Stormshank, Chamberlain, and Whaley (2001) found that older females are more likely to experience multiple placements while in foster care. They hypothesize that the large number of placements that a girl may experience may cause her to experience behavioral issues than other children in care. While statistics such as these are the scary reality of many foster care youth, women in particular need to be introduced to, and encouraged to complete college in order to develop the skills necessary to obtain the benefits associated with degree completion: increased empowerment, greater earning potential, improved health, and lower rates of reliance on public welfare systems for them and their families (Salazar, 2013).

Barriers to Foster Care Alumni Success in College

Foster care alumni legally have no parents and, as wards of the courts, can be considered first generation students. The challenges they face, then, can be understood from the perspective of a first generation student.

First generation student success is challenged by students' understanding of the college experience and what is required of them and their family support structure to be successful, including curricular and co-curricular integration; extracurricular campus-based engagement; and personal and financial support. First generation students are often academically underprepared for the reading, math, and critical thinking requirements of college, have basic academic plans and expectations regarding the college degree and its resultant benefits, and are less experienced in developing and maintaining academic and personal peer- and adult- mentoring relationships. The confluence of these factors results in students at risk of stopping or dropping out of postsecondary education (Terenzini et al., 1996). Colleges and universities have implemented

programs to provide “systematic and comprehensive academic support services (such as assessment and remediation, learning laboratories, tutorial services, intrusive advising, and monitoring of student progress) until [students are] firmly established in a major [and such support can be transitioned to the major advisor]” (Richardson and Skinner, 1992, p.39) and to assist students in developing relationships with faculty and staff invested in encouraging students as competent, valuable members of the academic community who can and will be successful.

Foster care alumni hail from similar backgrounds as first generation students. Their support systems are often case workers who may not be able to emphasize the importance of: work-study and internship opportunities that integrate on-the-job practical skills with classroom knowledge (curricular and co-curricular integration); student involvement in campus activities that cultivate leadership skills and attitudes (campus engagement); and developing academic, social, and professional connections that form a safety net on which to bounce and move forward when they fall (personal and financial support). In addition to the challenges faced by first generation students, foster care alumni in postsecondary education reported that they need assistance with personal and social skills; physical and psychological health care; internal and external housing considerations; employment and career planning; transportation; and academic preparedness (Ball State University/Ivy Tech Community College Guardian Scholars Program, 2007).

Specialized programs like the Guardian Scholars program have emerged to recruit foster care alumni to post-secondary education and retain them through academic, social, and vocational support initiatives. These campus and community collaborations provide financial aid, programmatic support, year-round housing, and mentoring opportunities that communicate to Scholars that they are valued members of the campus community. Scholars can be selected based

on application (California State University – Fullerton campus) or based on their experience as wards of the courts after age 14 (Ball State University/Ivy Tech Community College). These programs acclimate Scholars to the campus through a dedicated safe-zone where they can relax, develop a close cadre of mentors and allies, obtain tutoring and homework assistance, receive academic and career encouragement and guidance, and learn life skills (e.g. etiquette, financial and household management, etc. (Ball State University/Ivy Tech Community College Guardian Scholars Program, 2007). In short, “they create the structures and practices that help students bring meaning to their college experiences” (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005, p. 109) thereby directly challenging one of the causes of the academic difficulty and social isolation endangers student persistence.

KnightAlliance Network (KAN)

The University of Central Florida, under the vision of Dr. Marybeth Ehasz of the Division of Student Development and Enrollment Services, leads the North and Central Florida charge against foster care alumni attrition. The Multicultural Academic and Support Services (MASS) office has developed the KnightAlliance Network (KAN) program as a supportive space through which students experience community, acclimate to KnightLife, share tips for success, and assist in designing significant and impactful programming.

KnightAlliance Network is composed of five elements: academic, social, and professional development; workshops and roundtables; life skills coaching; mentoring; and leadership. KAN members receive holistic guidance and support in helping them develop and achieve their academic, social, and professional goals (including transition plans) from a veteran academic advisor who employs appreciative advising techniques to empower students. MASS students (including KAN members) are encouraged to attend workshops and roundtables

introducing them to University programs and life opportunities (e.g., study abroad; undergraduate research; entrepreneurship). At the end of the semester and the academic year, students are eligible for scholarships and recognition based on their workshop and roundtable attendance. KAN members receive life skills coaching in household management, time management and financial literacy; basic first aid and medical care; personal image, hygiene, and presentation. The mentoring component of the program is two-dimensional in that 1) KAN members are paired with University faculty and staff members invested in their success as students and as people, and 2) KAN members must mentor a high school student or a state college student who is preparing to attend college. KAN members are encouraged to establish and maintain a recognized student organization that will allow them a voice in student government, fund local and national opportunities to attend conferences, and assist in educating the broader community (campus, local, and national) about the challenges to student success that foster care alumni face.

The program Coordinator serves as the primary campus liaison for students, community partners, and the Florida REACH consortium of state colleges and universities committed to improving the college experience and graduation rates of foster care alumni. As the primary point of contact for students, the Coordinator is responsible for outreach and recruitment. Students who indicate that they were in foster care after the age of 13 or who have received the state tuition exemption during the academic year are identified by the campus financial aid and bursar's offices and confirmed by the State of Florida Department of Children and Families. MASS staff email and call identified students to introduce them to the KnightAlliance support network. The Coordinator works closely with the Community Based Care of Central Florida, Valencia College, and Seminole State College to identify and design individualized support for

local and state-wide foster care alumni who are preparing to transition to UCF. Finally, the Coordinator participates in the monthly meetings of the Department of Children and Families, state college and university campus liaisons, and matriculated foster care alumni through the State of Florida to establish best practices.

UCF's KnightAlliance Network program follows the model of the Guardian Scholars program in providing a stable support system that facilitates the building of students' comfort level and sense of belonging, which produces increased confidence, self-esteem, and independence. While this program promises to positively impact the persistence and graduation rates of all foster care alumni, it is imperative that female foster care alumni participate in the program. Sixty percent (1,113 of 1,852) of young adults emancipated from the State of Florida foster care system in 2013 were female (Cby25 Initiative, Inc., 2013). Of that number, only 78 are projected to attain a postsecondary degree: 11 earning vocational licenses; 56 earning associate's degrees; and 11 earning a bachelor's degree. The remaining 1,035 women are at great risk for incarceration, early motherhood, and perpetuating the cycles of poverty and foster care placement. Programs like UCF's KnightAlliance Network and Guardian Scholars are vitally important in empowering female foster care alumni, increasing their earning potential, and establishing and maintaining their independence.

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**WHY HAVEN'T GENDER QUOTA LAWS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN INCREASING
THE AMOUNT OF FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN THE NATIONAL CONGRESS
BRAZIL?**

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Democracy and Exclusion in Brazil

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Introduction

Throughout the course of Brazilian history, women have had a hard time finding their niche within Brazilian politics. They have suffered from marginalization in a society with high patriarchal attitudes and a lack of free speech during the totalitarian regimes; not to mention the role that the feminization of poverty plays in Brazil. Throughout Brazilian history, politics has been considered a male endeavor (Blay, 1979). However, there have been feminist groups and political organizations aimed at increasing women's standard of living, though they were not well accepted by the established political parties. Friedman's (2009) research argues that left wing parties prior to WWII did not receive feminists into their ranks because they thought they were in alliance with the Catholic Church. Although, left wing parties mobilized women for their cause after WWII, they segregated them by creating their own parties within the male dominated left-wing parties. Therefore, even though women had gained access to politics they continued to be marginalized (Friedman, 2009). Feminist groups gained power in leftist parties after democratization in 1985; however, left wing groups lost power. The new Brazilian constitution of 1988 reinforces the principal of isonomy and affirms formal equality of rights between men and women. However, this is not enforced, as women continue to receive unequal pay for equal work and the husband is still viewed as leader of the household (Verucci, 1991). Additionally, Friedman argues that due to the opening up of the market and Brazil's adoption of neoliberal economic policies, the state is no longer responsible for the social and economic welfare of its people. This places more burdens on women, further limiting their ability to participate in national politics and increasing the affects of the feminization of poverty (Friedman 2009). Although, women first gained the right to vote nationally in 1932 they remain under represented in Brazilian politics; especially in the National Assembly of Brazil (Blay, 1979). In 1995 feminist groups made headway with the call for more women in government when the Brazil's

National Congress passed gender quota laws for elections. Gender quota laws are defined as, an Affirmative Action law implemented in some countries to promote female political participation. In some nations gender quotas are voluntarily used by certain political parties to appeal to female voters, including the Partido dos Trabalhadores of Brazil. In Brazil these legislative quotas first appeared in the early '90s and they require parties to nominate a certain number of female candidates, however, women do not actually have to be elected (Frazier, 2008). Sacchet (2008) argues that the passage of gender quota laws for elections was a response to the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women held in 1995. At first they only applied to the position of City Councilor and were used for the first time in the elections of 1996. By the elections of 1998 they were required at both the state and national level (Sacchet, 2008). Gender quotas are intended to make government more representative of the actual population as well as promote policy that is beneficial to women and encourage women to become involved in government (Sacchet, 2008).

However, these quota laws have not significantly increased female political participation at the national level and in some elections; female participation has actually decreased after the implantation of quota laws in Brazil (Frazier, 2008). Other Latin American countries, such as Argentina, implemented gender quota laws in 1995 as well. However, Argentina has seen a significant increase in female participation in their parliament (Gray, 2003). Many theories have been offered to explain the low female representation in Brazil, from women's inability to travel due to their familial obligations (Adelman and Corrêa de Azevedo, 2012) to the deterioration of bonds between voters and representatives (Miguel, 2008). However, Sacchet's (2008) theory of institutional design offers an opportunity for a quantitative study between female representation in Brazil and female representation in Argentina. Her theory allows for a comparison of these

nations' electoral structures, in order to evaluate if these structures have had an effect of discouraging or preventing female political participation and representation in Brazil's National Assembly.

This study will compare percentages of female representatives in the National Assembly of Brazil, including the Chamber of Deputies and Federal Assembly with that of Argentina's parliament. I will look specifically at the elections after the implementation of gender quota laws; therefore, I will look at the national elections of 1998, 2002, 2006, and 2010. I will compare these elections, to prove or falsify my hypothesis that the proportional representation open party list electoral system in Brazil, has the effect of reducing female representation due to the market-based elections that the candidates must run in order to win a seat from their party in the National Assembly.

Literature Review

Paxton and Kunovich (2003) offer three theories for low female political participation cross nationally. They argue that women around the globe continue to remain under-represented in government due to social-structural reasons, political reasons, and ideological reasons. Social-structural reasons refers to the availability of political intuitions to women, in order for women to participate politically. If women have duties at home, sometimes due to a patriarchal social structure, they cannot travel, restricting their ability to run for public office. Additionally, women have a greater chance, globally, of lacking the resources needed to run for and hold public office, such as education and wealth. Political reasons would include a lack of openness to women in their nation's political system and ideological reasons are the way in which people perceive female candidates, usually less favorably than male candidates (Paxton and Kunovich, 2003).

There is a variety of theories that attempt to explain the unsuccessfulness of Brazil's gender quota laws in increasing the amount of female representation in the National Assembly. However, the theories involving the institutional design of Brazil, as compared to other nations that have had success with their gender quota laws, provide an opportunity to evaluate Brazil's institutional design. One of these theories points out that Brazil's proportional representation system with open lists allows voters to elect their candidates in market-based elections (Sacchet, 2008). A proportional representation system with open-party lists refers to an electoral system in which voters cast their vote for parties, after which, seats in parliament are distributed to each party proportionally based on the amount of votes they received. After which, voters cast their vote for candidates within the party to fill these seats in parliament. This system gives voters more choices over candidate selection, however also making the election more "market-based" (Sacchet, 2008). This is unlike in Argentina, which operates under a proportional representation system with closed party lists, allowing the placement orders of females at the top of lists. In a closed party list electoral system, voters cast their vote for parties, after which, seats in parliament are distributed to each party proportionally based on the amount of votes they received. Parties then chose internally who will fill those seats based a list of candidates created prior to the election (Sacchet, 2008). In addition, market based elections require candidates to have financial and political resources. Therefore, 78 percent of those elected to the National Assembly of Brazil are incumbents; according to Sacchet (2008) this is higher than other Latin American countries. Not only must candidates campaign for themselves, but also they must run against other candidates, often times this means running against candidates within their own party. This can lead to what Sacchet refers to as a "weak party system". A weak party system such as Sacchet (2008) refers to would have the characteristics of low institutionalization, lack of

policy agenda and lack of rank-and-file members. Politicians have little loyalty to one party and engage in constant party switching for personal gains. This system can lead to or propagate corruption and political patronage.

Miguel (2008) offers another theory as to why gender quota laws have not been as successful in Brazil as in other countries. He argues that the laws call for parties to run a set percentage of female candidates for open seats; however, the laws do not require those seats to be filled by women. Miguel also argues that since legislation passed to increase the total amount of candidates from each party and coalition, this allows for more choice among male candidates and reduces the affect of the gender quota (Miguel, 2008). Additionally, Miguel (2008) argues that there has been a “deterioration of loyalty to representative bodies”. According to Miguel, Brazil has seen a drop in voter turnout, increase in distrust of the democratic institutions, and a decrease in membership of political parties in recent elections. All of which, lead to a decrease in female political participation.

Perlman (2011) offers a more recent evaluation of low female representation and political participation in Brazil. She adds that the Brazilian political system continues to operate under cronyism, corruption, and patronage, which have reemerged with the multi-party system after democratization in 1985. Not only does this contribute to low political participation because people remain cynical about the effectiveness and validity of their democratic system, but it also restricts women from running and winning elections due to the political connections required to partake in cronyism and clientelism. Connections most females have not had the opportunity to establish.

There have been six criteria set out by Guldvik (2011) to determine a strong gender quota regime. These include: (1) concrete and achievable goals, (2) rank-and file order for candidates, (3) adjustments to the gender quota regime as time progresses, (4) guidance and information from authority figures, (5) Party's involved must implement the laws satisfactorily , and (6) there must be control of the process and sanctions for lack of compliance (Guldvik, 2011). These criteria can be applied to Brazil's gender quota laws and this study will particularly look at the lack of rank-and file order for candidates. Therefore, preventing Brazil from meeting the full criteria for a strong gender quota regime.

Substantive Focus

As of April 1, 2013 women make up about 16 percent of the Federal Assembly in Brazil and about 8.6 percent of the Chamber of Deputies (Inter-Parliamentary Union Data, 2013). Although, gender quotas were first implemented in the 1996 election, they became applied to national elections in 1998. However, the results below show that there has not been a significant increase in female political participation in either house of the National Assembly of Brazil.

Methods

This research will determine if the institutional design of the Brazilian electoral process, proportional representative open party list system, hinders the effectiveness of the gender quota laws and in effect, perpetuates under representation of females in the national assembly, by comparing the percentages of females elected to the Brazilian National Congress with that of the Argentinean parliament. By using the data available in the election archives from the Inter-Parliamentary Union for both Brazil and Argentina, a linear regression model has been constructed from the years of 1998 to 2010. This model is most suitable to determine if the

amount of female representation in the Argentinean parliament has been greater than in the Brazilian National Assembly in the elections since the implementation of gender quotas in 1998.

If female representation in the Argentinean parliament has been greater than in the Brazilian National Congress in national elections since 1998, it supports the hypothesis that Brazil's open party list component of their proportional representation electoral system hinders female participation and representation. Given that both countries have elements of cronyism and corruption within their government (Perlman, 2011). Both nations also have gender quota laws for candidates that do not actually have to fill the seats (Miguel, 2008). Additionally, both Argentina and Brazil suffer from Paxton and Kunovich's (2003) social-structural, political, and ideological reasons for low female participations. The only difference regarding these two nations is criteria two of Guldvik's (2011) six criteria for strong gender quota regimes, that is ranked party candidates. Therefore, a discrepancy between the amount of female representation in Argentina and Brazil can be attributed to the open party list system of Brazil's proportional representation system which violates Guldvik's (2011) second criteria and requires resources for market-based campaigns (Sacchet, 2008).

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of gender quota laws in Brazil the results of female political participation have been compared for the National Assembly of Brazil to that of Argentina's parliament, another Latin America nation that has implemented similar gender quota laws in 1995. This research has compared Brazil's rate of female political participation with that of Argentina, in order, to determine if Brazil's closed list proportional representation electoral system contributes to the unsuccessfulness of the nations gender quota laws. Argentina operates under a proportional representation system with closed party lists, which minimize the effects of market-based elections.

This research uses the data provided in the election archives of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to compare percentages of female representatives in the parliaments of Argentina with that of the National Congress of Brazil. Since, gender quota laws were enacted in 1995 in Argentina and they were first effective in the 1998 national elections in Brazil, the percentages of female representation in the elections from 1998 – 2010 have been used as data.

Hypothesis

I hypothesize that the unsuccessfulness of the gender quota laws in increasing the amount of female representatives in the National Congress of Brazil is due, in part, to the institutional design of the Brazilian electoral system with its proportional representation system and open party lists.

Findings

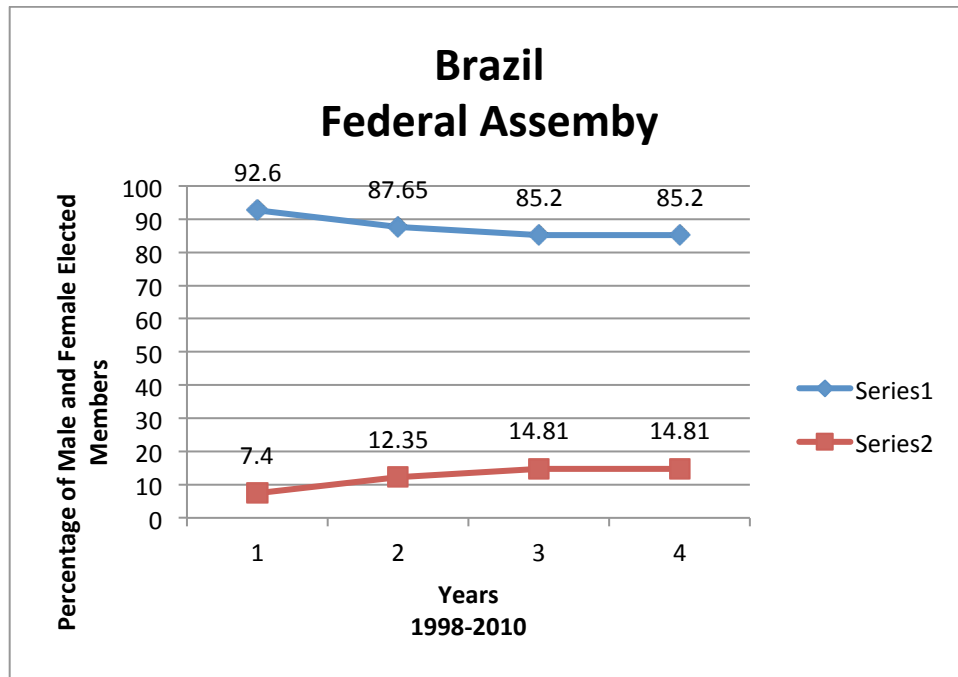
The linear regression models created for the elections to the Brazilian National Assembly for the years, 1998, 2002, 2006, and 2010 show significantly less women being elected to parliament than in Argentina for the years, 1999, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2011. In Graphs 1, 2, and 3, males are depicted in Series 1 and females in Series 2.

Graph 1.a shows the percentage of males and females elected to the Brazilian Federal Assembly for the years 1998, 2002, 2006, and 2010. This model shows that four elections after the implementation of the gender quota laws the percentage of females elected increased by 7.41%, from 7.4% in 1998 to 14.81% in 2010. Additionally, males were elected to 85.2% of the open seats in 2010.

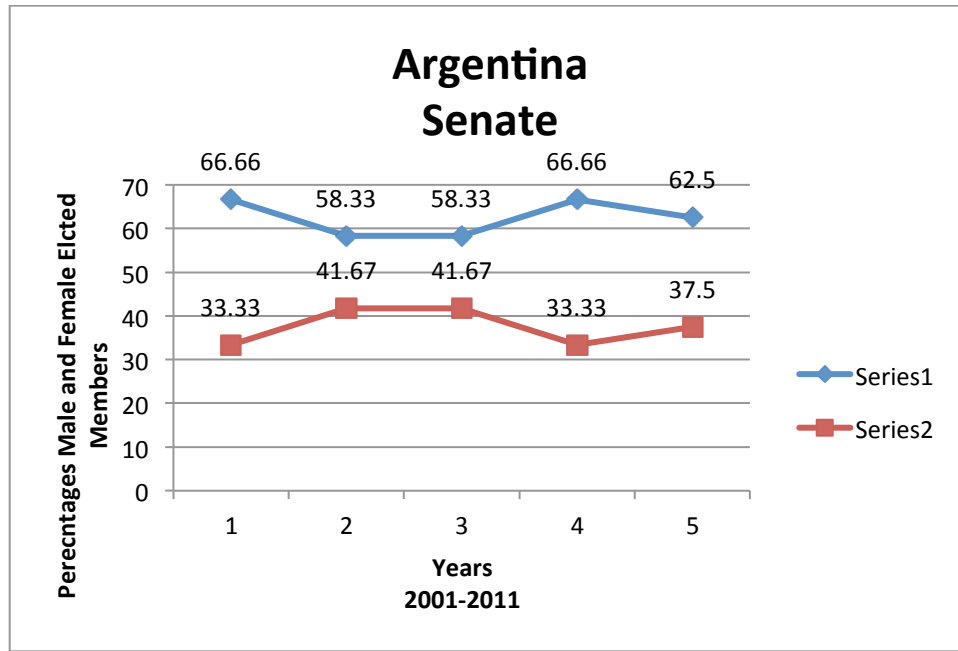
Compared to Graph 1.B, in the Argentinean Senate, males were only elected to 62.5% of the seats in 2011. However, the percentage of females elected to the Senate only increased by

4.17% from the years 1999 to 2011, with a peak in the 2005 and 2007 elections when women were elected to 41.67% of open seats.

Graph 1.a

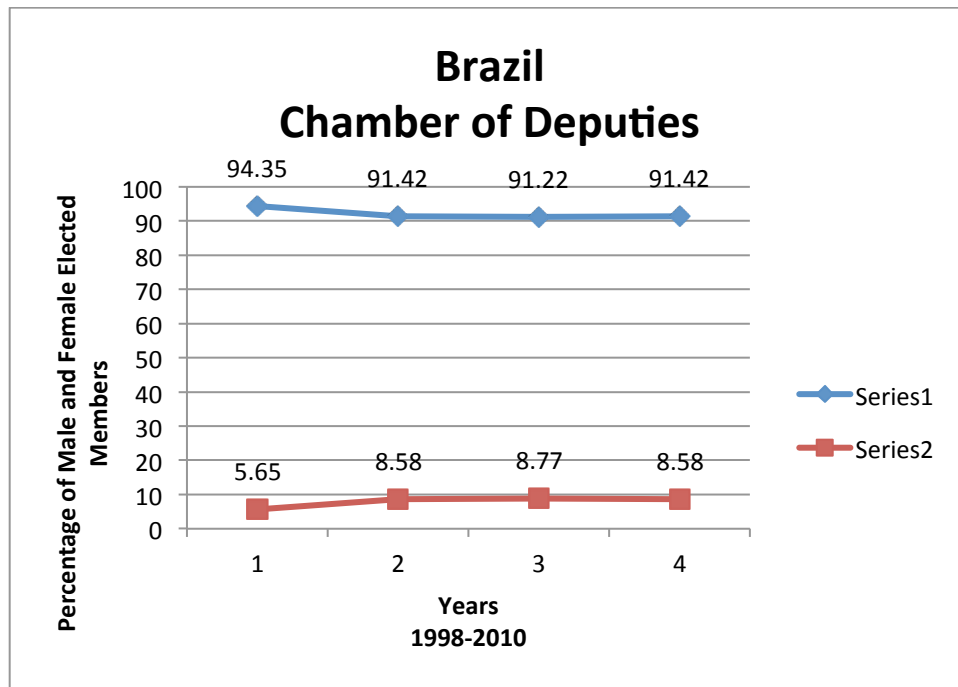


Graph 1.b

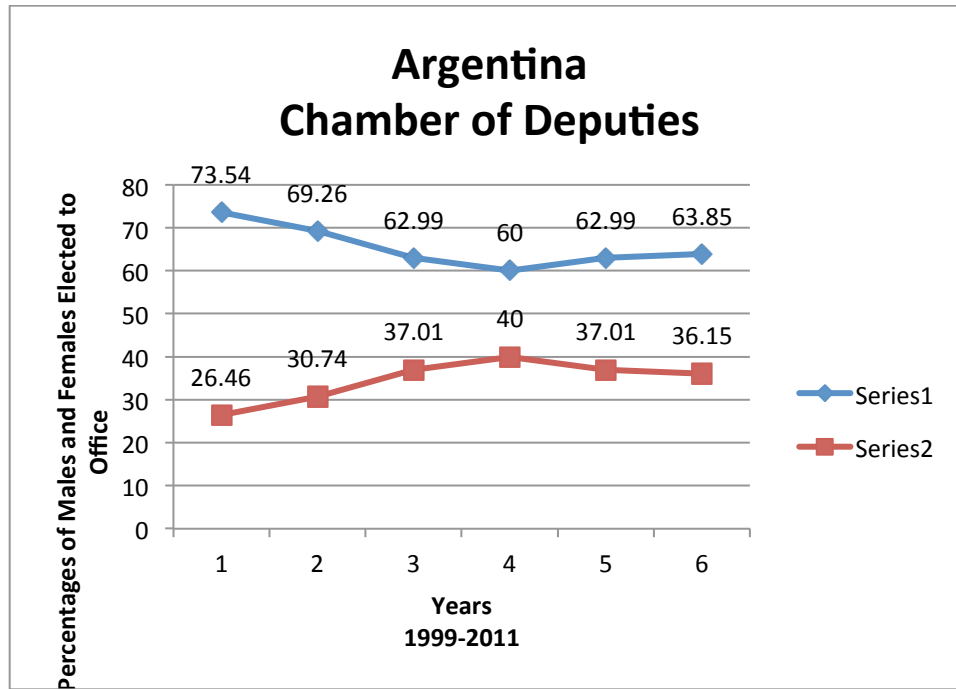


In the lower house of Brazil's Chamber of Deputies, the percentage of women elected to office increased by 2.93% from 1998 to 2010, as shown in Graph 2.a. In 1998 when the gender quota laws were first implemented women won 5.65% of the open seats and four elections later in 2010 they won 8.58%, with males continuing to win an overwhelming majority of seats at 91.42%. Graph 2.b shows that in Argentina in 1999, women won 29.46% of the seats available in the Chamber of Deputies. In 2011 women won 36.51%. Therefore, there was an increase of 9.69% of women elected to the chamber of Deputies from the first election after the implementation of gender quota laws to the most recent election.

Graph 2.a



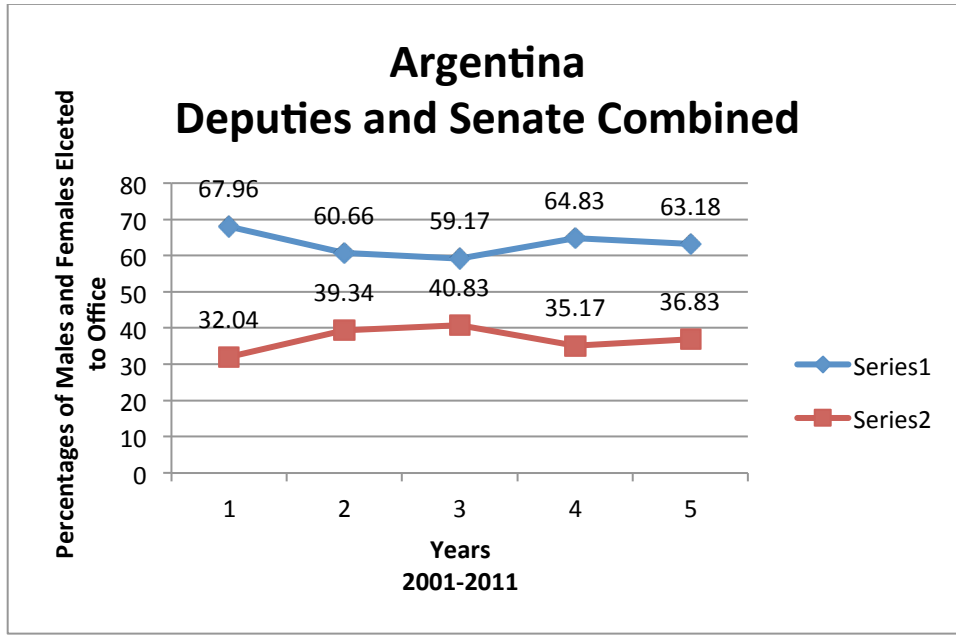
Graph 2.b



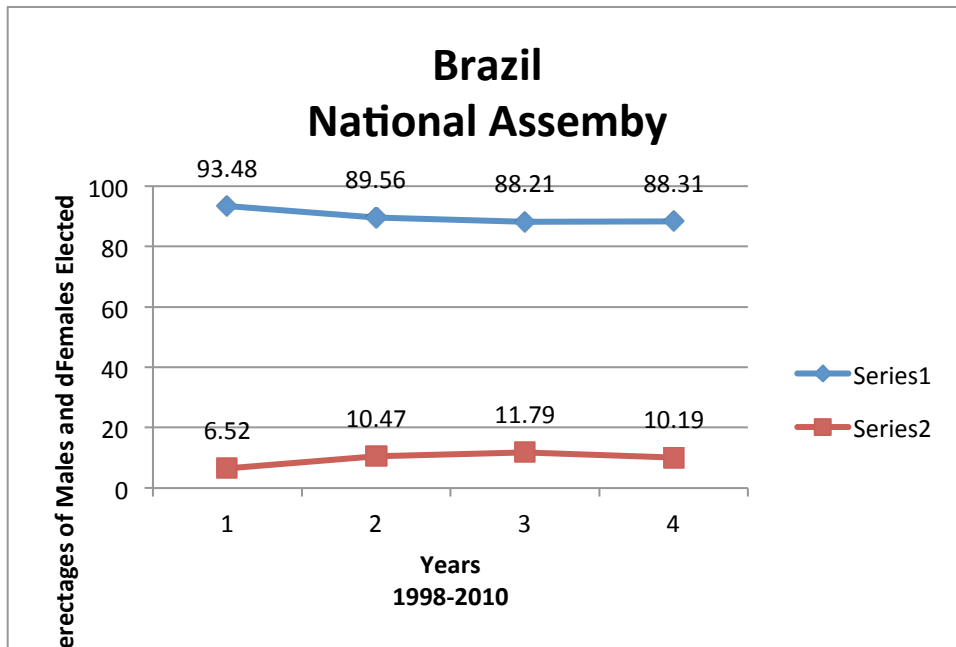
Graph 3.a shows the total percentage of males and females elected to the Argentinean parliament from 2001 to 2011 for both the Senate and Chamber of Deputies. Females elected to the Argentinean parliament increased by 4.79% from the years 2001 to 2011. The gap between females and males elected to open seats was closed in the 2007 elections when women won 40.83% of the seats and males 59.17%.

Compared to the whole of the Brazilian National Assembly shown in Graph 3.b, including both the Federal Assembly and Chamber of Deputies, females being elected increased by 3.67%. Women won the most seats in the election of 2006, when they won 11.79% percentage of the seats in the Brazilian National Assembly compared to males who won 88.21% of the open seats.

Graph 3.a

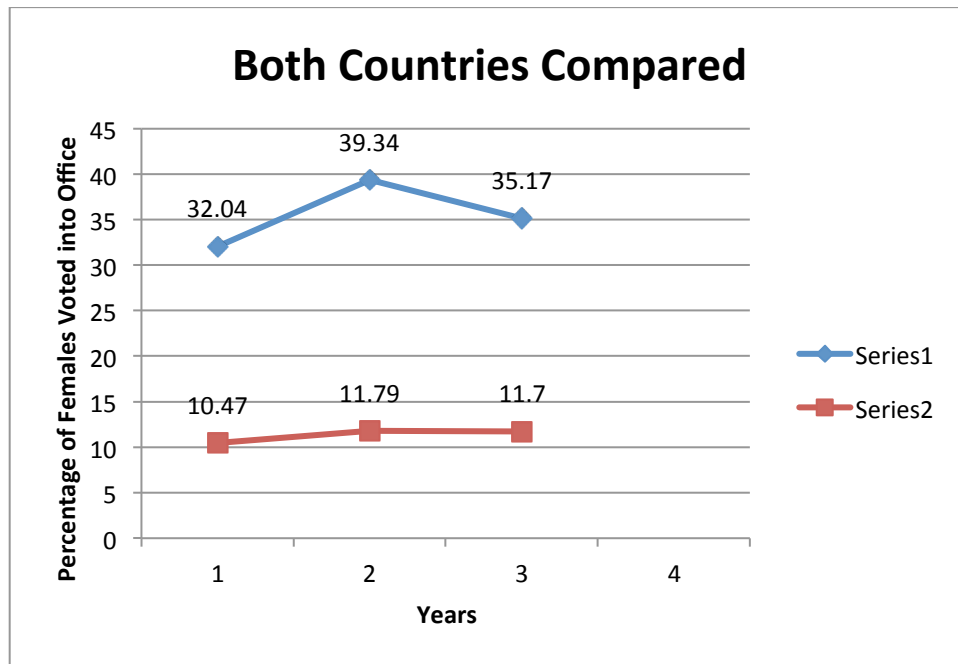


Graph 3.b



The parliaments of Argentina and Brazil can be compared for corresponding years. Graph 4 shows the Brazilian National Assembly in series 2 and the Argentinean parliament in series 3. The percentages in the years labeled 1, refers to the Brazilian election of 2002 and the Argentinean election of 2001. Year 2 refers to the Brazilian election of 2006 and the Argentinean election of 2005. Year 3 is the Brazilian election of 2010 and the Argentinean election of 2011. These six elections fell after the implementation of gender quota laws in each nation and within one of year of each other in both countries and therefore can be analyzed together. Graph 4 shows that that there has been an overall increase of 3.13% in females elected to parliament in Argentina compared to 1.23% increase in the Brazilian parliament. Additionally, both nations saw a peak in females elected to parliamentary office in the Brazilian election of 2006 and the Argentinean election of 2007, depicted in Graph 4 as Year 3.

Graph 4



Conclusion

The results support the hypothesis that open-party lists proportional electoral system in Brazil hinders female candidates from being elected to the Brazilian National Assembly. The results show that female candidates are elected to the Argentinean parliament significantly more so than the Brazilian National Assembly. Given that both countries have social-structural, political, and ideological reasons for low female participation and election to office (Paxton and Kunovich, 2003), the discrepancy between the amount of females elected in Argentina and those elected in Brazil can be attributed a lack of rank-and-file party members as in an open proportional system. The open-list electoral system requires a higher investment from female candidates, as they must run two elections. The second election within their party may require that they run against male candidates within their party and also be able to amass resources to fund a campaign. This is unlike in a closed list system where they would be selected based on their placement on the party's list.

This research is limited in that there are only four elections with which to draw data from to analyze the effectiveness of gender quotas in Brazil. Additionally, Argentina first implemented gender quota laws in 1995 compared to Brazil which first implemented them in 1998, therefore it could be argued that Argentina has had more time for their laws to become institutionalized, therefore, leading to higher female representation. However, when looking at corresponding years between Argentina and Brazil, such as the 2006 election Brazil's female representation is not close to Argentina's in 1999.

Female underrepresentation is an issue for any country attempting to grow democratically. When 88% of those elected to the National Assembly are male, half the population is not represented in the nation's government. This not only hinders women's issue legislation from

being debated and even enacted into law, it also prevents women from attempting to participate politically. Under-representation of females can overall, reinforce and perpetuate patriarchal gender values.

Additional research on this topic should focus on other causes of low female representation in Brazil. Argentina's high rate of female representation at the bringing of the implementation of gender quota laws shows that other factors may be involved in hindering female representation in Brazil and look to countries like Argentina on how it improve. Also, other forms of political participation should be evaluated. Research shows that women tend to be more involved politically in grassroots activism rather than formal political institutions. Therefore, a broad study on women's political participation should include those forms of activism as well.

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