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To Cover Our Daughters: A Modern Chastity Ritual in Evangelical America

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TO COVER OUR DAUGHTERS:
A MODERN CHASTITY RITUAL IN EVANGELICAL AMERICA

by

HOLLY ADAMS PHILLIPS

Under the Direction of Kathryn McClymond

ABSTRACT

Over the last ten years, a newly created ritual called a Purity Ball has become increasingly popular in American evangelical communities. In much of the present literature, Purity Balls are assumed solely to address a daughter's emerging sexuality in a ritual designed to counteract evolving American norms on sexuality; however, the ritual may carry additional latent sociological functions. While experienced explicitly by the individual participants as a celebration of father/daughter relationships and a means to address evolutionary sexual mating strategies, Purity Balls may implicitly regenerate existing social hierarchy. This ritual facilitates a sociological purpose by means of re-establishing the role of the male through halting the psychological development of sexual identity in the daughter, and these rituals are enacted in the ownership of the daughter by the father, who is responsible for maintaining the daughter's purity, for "covering her with his protection."

INDEX WORDS: Purity, Evangelical, Chastity, Sexuality, Adolescent identity, Submission

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HOLLY ADAMS PHILLIPS

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Introduction

At first glance, the Christian evangelical Purity Ball appears to be a typical debutante ball or high school prom with dinner and dancing in a beautiful ballroom. Music, ballet, cake, satin gowns, and tiaras fill the decorated Broadmoor Hotel as young girls dance with their fathers, sharing a special moment in time. When describing the experience, Sarah Tullis, 14, exclaims, “Dancing with my dad was the most wonderful part of the evening. As we waltzed around the ballroom, he would speak blessing in my life.” However, this father/daughter dance also carries a specific meaning: the participants claim the dance is a celebration of purity. Tullis continues, “I realized what a privilege it was to be able to spend a night with my dad as he imparted glory and purity into my life” (Wilson, 140).

The first Purity Ball was created and performed in 1998 in the Grand Ballroom of the Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and subsequently has been performed thousands of times, with approximately 4,700 Purity Balls taking place in 48 states during 2008 (TLC Video, Abstinence Clearinghouse website). The event has gained popularity worldwide with various media outlets including Dr. Phil Show, Tyra Show, The Today Show, and Good Morning America; contacts from Scotland, France, Germany, New Zealand, Australia, and Great Britain; and even the Al Jazeera network having requested information and interviews with representatives of the Purity Ball movement (Adams, 20). While little scholarly literature has been produced to date on this ritual, the media at large has published information, chronicling the participants’ and their critics’ views, and significant debate has begun regarding Purity Balls, most of which centers on the effectiveness of abstinence pledges and issues regarding sex education. These debates, generally, are grounded in the common understanding that the Purity Ball is only addressing the adolescent girls’ sexuality. I, however, would like to argue that it is a

religious ritual in which sexuality, purity, identity, authority and ownership are all intertwined. While the participating fathers are perhaps addressing evolutionary gender proclivities regarding sexual behavior, they may, with hopes of protecting their daughters from potential harm, inadvertently render them powerless by conflating protection with authority and ownership. In doing so, what these fathers consider to be an act of empowerment for their daughters is simultaneously, through a ritual attractive to adolescent girls, communicating to their daughters that their identities are bound with their relationship to their fathers and the authority of men -- a potentially disempowering act.

Consequently, this newly formed ritual carries implication for the field of religious studies. The Purity Ball offers insight into ritual theory regarding gender and age, for ritual meaning constructed by the Purity Ball community might differ from ritual meaning constructed by the individual participants. More specifically, the individual construction of meaning might differ according to gender and age with a sociological function being an ironic by-product of the ritual, some of which might be unknown or unacknowledged by participants. Significant to ritual theory, then, is the misunderstanding of ritual meaning-making in Purity Balls by the participants. Furthermore, the meanings of this religious ritual as understood by the participants shed insight into the interaction between psychology of the individual, social functions, and evolutionary predispositions. What may be a ritual overtly focused on the protection of an adolescent girl could in fact be functioning on a deeper level to establish the role of the male by means of affecting the daughter's development of identity.

After offering a description and historical context for the Purity Ball, I will focus my attention on the possible sociological function of this ritual, a function that may not be consciously communicated to the younger participants or even acknowledged by the

participating fathers. Manifest and latent functions, social scientific concepts clarified by Robert K. Merton, are necessary language for the study of the sociological function and individual constructed meaning of Purity Balls. Significantly, Merton, through his employment of these functional tools, offers the ability to discuss those functions (and perhaps dysfunctions) of Purity Ball ritual that are conscious and deliberate (manifest) and those that are unrecognized and/or unintended (latent).

I will then apply J. Z. Smith's theory of ritual, specifically communal placement of attention as a means of societal rectification, to gain an understanding of a potential latent sociological function of the Purity Ball ritual. This analysis of the Purity Ball will be supported by Elaine Combs-Shilling and Catherine Bell's work regarding embodied ritualization.

Next, I will develop an analysis of ritual meaning for the adolescent daughter, using Erik Erikson and Carol Gilligan's theories and critiques of psychosocial development, particularly as it pertains to her development of identity. Further research, particularly interviews, are needed to make any scholarly claim regarding the fathers' perspectives. I will offer, however, a brief suggestion that David Buss's sexual strategies theory is applicable to the father's explicit understandings and motivations for the Purity Ball ritual.

My analysis of Purity Balls in regards to ritual meaning will suggest that this ritual carries unique insight into coming of age rituals. In particular, the social role or identity of the daughters (who are the initiates) does not change or progress into adulthood; however, the roles of the fathers are, perhaps, reinforced through both manifest and latent functions of the ritual.

Description of Colorado Springs Purity Ball

When describing the event, the founders of the ritual, Randy and Lisa Wilson, write, “A Father-Daughter Purity Ball is a memorable ceremony for daughters to pledge commitments to purity and their fathers to pledge commitments to protect their girls. Because we cherish our daughters as regal princesses – for I Peter 3:4 (NASB) says they are ‘precious in the sight of God’ – we want to treat them as royalty” (Wilson, 142).

The Purity Ball, like many rituals, has been affected by interreligious diversity, but for the purposes of this paper, I will focus on the original Purity Ball in Colorado Springs. Many of the details offered in this description are characteristic of most Purity Balls but may not be present in all Purity Ball events. While the original Purity Ball was once considered a one-time event for adolescent girls and their fathers, the event is now attended yearly, with girls as young as four experiencing the ritual for the first time and expecting to attend yearly until their wedding. These changes have been suggested by the founders; this newly formed ritual continues to evolve.

Fathers and daughters attend the Purity Ball dressed in formal attire with daughters in elaborate modern evening gowns and tiaras on their heads, and many girls prepare for weeks, even months, in advance with shopping for the perfect gown and appointments for beauty treatments like professional hair and make-up. When the participants arrive in the ballroom, the atmosphere is prom-like, and the tables are each decorated with a calligraphy banner describing a different characteristic this community attributes to the feminine spirit: gentleness, purity, graciousness, kindness, beautiful, precious, a treasure, helper/completer, and life-giver. The evening’s festivities are initiated with a prayer of thankfulness and dedication in which Randy

Wilson reports, “We admonish the fathers to war for their daughters,” and then a meal is served (142). At the end of the lavish dinner, a wedding cake is presented as the dessert.

After the meal, the *Father’s Call to Covenant* is read in which the leader (at the Colorado Springs event, Randy Wilson) states that the time has come for men to battle for the purity, souls, physical well-being, and hearts of their daughters. The girls are instructed to “Stand as centerpieces in our culture and to seriously regard their purity and holiness” (Wilson, 142). In response to the leader’s call, the men simultaneously read the following covenant:

I, _____’s father, choose before God to cover my daughter as her authority and protection in the area of purity. I will be pure in my own life as a man, husband, and father. I will be a man of integrity and accountability as I lead, guide, and pray over my daughter and my family as the high priest in my home. This covering will be used by God to influence generations to come.

While the fathers read this vow, many place one hand upon their daughter’s bowed head. A written form of this vow is then signed by both the father and the daughter.

After the signing of the covenant, adolescent female ballet dancers dressed in white tulle perform a dance choreographed in a specific sequence of songs. This sequence, entitled *Celebrate the Divine Order* in the program, is composed of three songs -- *Agnes Dei, I’ll Always Be Your Baby*, and *May I Have This Dance* -- which are reported to reflect the celebration of divine order by respectively celebrating God, fathers, and the daughters. The ballet dancers then carry a large wooden cross to be erected at one end of the dance floor and perform dances around the cross.

Once the cross is in place, two fathers stand in front of the cross, facing each other with swords thrust over their heads, touching, creating an inverted “V.” The swords are said to symbolize the fathers protecting the hearts of their daughters. Simultaneously, father/daughter couples come to the cross, stand under the swords, and the daughter kneels down to place a white

rose at the foot of the cross, symbolizing her purity and commitment to stay pure, emotionally, spiritually, and physically while the fathers “offer a quiet blessing” (Time Magazine, Gibbs, Jul. 7, 2008).

Many fathers then give the daughters purity rings, placing them on the daughter’s left ring finger, and some daughters are given necklaces or bracelets with lockets that are locked into place. The key kept by the father, to be given to the daughter’s husband at the time of their marriage (Gibbs, 2008). Kylie Miraldi, age 18, recalls the moment she received her charm locket with a key that her father holds, “We discussed what it means to be a teenager in today’s world. On my wedding day, he’ll give it to my husband. It’s a symbol of my father giving up the covering of my heart, protecting me, since it means my husband is now the protector. He becomes like the shield to my heart, to love me as I’m supposed to be loved” (Gibbs). One father, Jerry Forte, read a letter to his daughter as he placed the ring, which was her mother’s confirmation ring as a young girl, on her finger.

Dear Elise, This is the day of the Purity Ball . . . We are so excited This ring is made of gold . . . , a precious metal, and shaped into a heart, and it signifies how precious your heart is to God, to us, and to your future husband, who God is preparing you for . . . The diamond chip is a sign of purity, a reminder that you are committing to purity in heart, soul, mind, and body until marriage . . . You will be able to give your husband the gift of purity, rare and precious.
(Mermelstein, 252)

At either *A Father’s Call to Covenant* or after the placement of the roses, the fathers form a large circle, enveloping the daughters in the center of dance floor. While placing their hands on the daughters, they pray the following:

Lord, in the name of Jesus, we commit this evening to You. We thank You that we have the privilege of planning a ceremony that extravagantly protects purity. We thank You that in Your Scriptures the protection of purity was extravagant and beautiful, and we pray that these girls will never forget this evening with their fathers. Our daughters are princesses, and they are covered by the authority and

headship of their fathers. We pray a wall of protection around our girls that they would not give in to a moment that will destroy their lives. Father, guard the feminine, vulnerable, dependent spirits that You created in them. May fathers stand tall and war for the souls of their daughters and remain faithful to protect these girls for generations to come. (Wilson, 145)

One participant described this moment in the ritual as political: “Such an impregnable wall of fathers is what is necessary to see a movement grow that changes the course of our nation’s history. I stand with Randy Wilson and the men of my church, city, and nation to see such a movement occur” (Wilson, 143). The evening is then concluded with dancing and intermittent periods of fathers and daughters coming to the microphone to thank and bless each other. One daughter stated during this time, “I adore being your daughter. When you spend time with me, I feel like a beautiful princess” (TLC Video). Another participant cried, “Dad, you’re so great. You’re so awesome and wonderful. I’m gonna cry. I love you.”

The founders of this ritual, an evangelical minister named Randy Wilson and his wife Lisa, parents of seven children, five of whom are girls, state that their intention for creating this ritual was to address the relationship between fathers and daughters and by doing so to help daughters remain sexually pure until marriage, thus empowering them not to succumb to a culture that “lures them into the murky waters of sexual exploitation” (Banerjee, 2008). “I wanted to set a standard of how they (his daughters) should expect to be treated by the future men in their lives,” Randy Wilson told *Citizen*, a magazine distributed by the evangelical Christian organization Focus on the Family (Adams, 20). In a documentary produced by The Learning Channel on Purity Balls, Lisa Wilson said that she wanted to create an event that carried, “elegance, romance, and extravagance – all the things that girls find attractive” in a way that would “touch the intrinsic soul of a daughter.” She continues, “Every girl has a core question to answer which is ‘Am I beautiful; am I worthy of being pursued?’ – this should be

enforced by their father.” The Wilsons explain that if these questions are not fulfilled by the father, adolescent girls will seek to have this question answered through sexual interaction with men, and this interaction, according to Randy Wilson, will leave the adolescent girl heartbroken and possibly physically harmed. Lisa Wilson explains, “I believe if girls feel beautiful and cherished by their fathers, they don’t go looking for love from random guys” (Baumgardner, 2007). Hannah Lane, 11, has attended Purity Balls for six years. When asked what how important a girl’s relationship with her father is, she replies, “It mirrors how our Heavenly Father cares about us. If a girl doesn’t have a relationship with her dad, then she will find boyfriends, and that can lead to heartache and anguish” (TLC video). Christy Parcha, 18, participant of the Colorado Springs Purity Ball, suggests that sex outside of marriage allows girls to be “getting used, betrayed, having guys deceive you, all that kind of thing” (Baumgardner, 2008).

When asked why he and his eleven-year-old daughter have attended the Purity Ball for the last six years, Ken Lane explains, “It seems unrealistic in this day and age, and it wasn’t the path I took, but if it can work, how cool would it be to say ‘I’ve kissed but one man in my life?’ How cool, how special, how set apart. Why not shoot for the fairytale?” (TLC Video).

The descriptions provided by the participants of the Purity Ball present an event that seems to incorporate elements of traditional Christian weddings, modern proms, and debutante balls into a religious ritual for fathers and daughters. Furthermore, the reasoning given by the participants for attending the ball suggest the necessity of a father protecting his daughter from harm. While this necessity seems to reflect a universal human concern, this particular ritual arises from an evangelical Christian context. Consequently, one must understand evangelicalism to gain insight into the Purity Ball. The next section will address the history of evangelicalism and two particular movements influential to the development of the Purity Ball.

Historical Context of the Purity Ball Ritual

Purity Balls originated in Colorado Springs, which is recognized as the geographical headquarters of the evangelical community in the United States because of the presence of large churches such as New Life Church, previously pastored by Ted Haggard, and the headquarters for James Dobson's Focus on the Family organization. Randy and Lisa Wilson are self-identified members of the evangelical community, with Randy serving as a minister in a large evangelical church prior to establishing the *Generations of Light* ministry. To further understand the context in which Purity Balls developed, one must understand the history of the evangelical community, including two sub-movements within evangelicalism called The Patriarchy Movement and The Purity/Abstinence Movement, both of which have arisen in reaction to broader American societies changing views on gender roles and sexuality in the late twentieth century.

Evangelicalism is a Protestant Christian movement originating in Great Britain during the early 1700's. David Bebbington, British historian of the evangelical movement, identifies four distinct aspects present in the movement that "Together form a quadrilateral of priorities that are the basis of Evangelicalism" (Bebbington, 2008, 3). These aspects are conversionism, the concern for self and other's lives to be affected by the gospel; Biblicism, belief in the authority of the Bible; activism, the concern for application of gospel to social considerations; and crucicentrism, the priority of Jesus' sacrifice represented on the cross (Bebbington, 2008). While the term evangelical historically has broadly meant those who differentiate from Catholicism through Protestantism, contemporary American religious culture reflects an understanding of evangelicalism that is more specific.

Born out of a concern that individuals need to experience personal conversion (being “born again”) and the need to communicate the truth of God’s word through conversion to other lost souls, evangelicalism has traditionally emphasized a personal relationship with God and a return to the Bible as a means of addressing and offering remedy for social ills. In the 1700’s, John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church, George Whitefield, a popular evangelist, and Jonathan Edwards, a philosopher and theologian, spoke at revivals in America that emphasized personal conversion experience. From these revivals, the Baptist and Methodist denominations were formed. They thrived so much that “By the decades prior to the War Between the States, a largely evangelical ‘Benevolent Empire’ (in historian Martin Marty’s words) was actively attempting to reshape American society through such reforms as temperance, the early women’s movement, various benevolent and betterment societies and- most controversial of all- the abolition movement” (ISAE website, May 17, 2009).

During the early twentieth century, evangelicals differentiated themselves from the fundamentalist movement while simultaneously separating from modern liberal Protestant theology, thus placing the movement in position to be “in the world but not of it” and continuing the strategy to address social problems with conversion and spreading of the gospel (ISAE website, May 17, 2009) The latter part of the twentieth century saw a call from evangelical leaders, intending to continue evangelicalism’s mission to address social concerns with biblical answers, to organize and create a single, powerful voice in America. The consequence of this call was the creation of the Moral Majority by Jerry Falwell, Focus on the Family by James Dobson, and the National Association for Evangelicals, an umbrella organization for evangelical churches based in Washington, D.C. with the mission to “Serve to make denominations strong and effective, influence society for justice and righteousness, and gather the many voices of

evangelicals together to be more effective for Jesus Christ and his cause” (NAE website, May 17, 2009). The NAE estimates its constituency at approximately 30 million members while the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals based at Wheaton College cites recent sociological studies estimating 100 million evangelicals in modern America.

While the evangelical movement was organizing and establishing a voice in political America, changes were also taking place in gender roles and women’s issues. With significant changes during the twentieth century in American women’s lives -- including voting rights, accessible birth control, abortion rights, and the opportunity to work alongside men -- women were able to establish independence. By doing so, a historical hierarchy of power, reinforced by traditional biblical teachings on gender roles, was challenged. Evangelical Christianity responded to these challenges in various ways. For example, Southern Baptists responded by requiring churches, seminary professors, and affiliated organizations to sign a creed which prohibited females from taking homiletics courses, from being pastors in missionary endeavors, and from preaching from any pulpit.

In the later twentieth century, the evangelical community was also confronted with issues specific to sexuality. *Roe v. Wade*, contraceptives, and decreasing norms of abstinence among youth post 1960’s challenged evangelicals. Sexual norms established in biblical and traditional teachings were questioned by popular media, and a growing population in America that identified itself as non-Christian. These changes in culture also influenced the interpretation of women’s sexuality during the twentieth century. With the ability to control their fertility effectively, women were able to have sexual experiences without the concern for a possible pregnancy; thus, the sexual revolution of the twentieth century was born and a new era of open dialogue regarding women’s sexuality developed. Whether this sexual revolution or the creation

of modern media initiated what is now considered “the sexualization of girls” in American culture, the late twentieth century into the present day has seen an increase in sexual content directed toward younger girls in American society. For example, Target recently sold padded bras called “bralettes” with the cartoon character *Bratz* for girls ages 6-12, and Wal-mart sold panties in the juniors section with WHO NEEDS CREDIT CARDS written across the front. In addition, “Toy stores are selling plastic stripper poles, and ‘modeling’ websites are featuring prepubescent girls posing in lingerie (Valenti, 62). In early 2009, a new version of the cartoon character Dora The Explorer was released; the creators were swiftly criticized for the new “modern” version in which Dora is noticeably older and in some parents eyes “more sexualized.” This development in American culture has left many parents, evangelical or not, concerned and even disturbed.

In response to the changing climate in gender roles and women’s issues in America and as part of the trend established to “be in the world but not of it,” evangelical America developed at least two movements in the late twentieth century: the purity movement and the patriarchal movement. The patriarchal movement, also known as the “submissive lifestyle” by insiders of this movement, has gained popularity in the 1990’s and into the 2000’s in conservative evangelical communities. In describing this movement, Anthony P. Pinn writes the following:

In blending elements of the 19th – century cult of domesticity and theological concerns of twentieth-century evangelicalism, the Quiverfull Movement argues for divine control over the number of children in a given household: God knows how many children a particular couple can handle. In addition, these children are to be nurtured and raised within the context of clear gender roles: the husband as head of the home, and the wife as submissive to the husband and primarily concerned with the raising of godly children.” (*Religion Dispatches*, April 12, 2009)

Kathryn Joyce in *Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement* describes four scriptural bases for traditional biblical gender roles referenced by this movement. First, this

movement draws from Proverbs 31, which stresses the value of a godly wife and virtuous woman as more than rubies. The most quoted verse of the chapter states “Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised” (Proverbs 31:30). The second scriptural reference is Titus 2:3-5, “Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to too much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.” Third, I Peter 3:1 is referenced: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.” Finally, perhaps the most recognizable and frequently used biblical reference regarding Christian marriage, Ephesians 5:21, states, “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.” These four passages of scripture are used by the patriarchy movement to encourage a lifestyle that “chastises women not to struggle after careers but to accept as their realm the care and management of the household and . . . to warn women away from their natural, sinful inclinations to be unsubmitive, to rebel against God-given authority” (9).

In keeping with the evangelical community’s vision to address the degeneration of society with biblical answers, the patriarchal movement is political. A significant leader in the movement, Doug Phillips, states, “In the Bible it talks about a day when you had only pusillanimous, mollicoddled, effeminate men, and women who are taking over the men. Isaiah 3:12 says, ‘Children are your oppressors and women rule over you.’ This is God’s curse on a

sinful nation” (Joyce, 9). Phillips and the patriarchal movement’s answer to the curse of a sinful nation is through the Christian woman. The version of biblical womanhood that the patriarchal movement describes includes the following principles: submission to male authority, acceptance of the *Quiverfull* lifestyle which includes forbidding any form of birth control or prevention of pregnancy, the responsibility to present herself modestly to protect men from immorality, and the task of always keeping her husband sexually gratified in order to keep him from being tempted to commit adultery. The patriarchal movement believes that women who live this biblical womanhood lifestyle are fighting a battle. “The battle begins, and can only be won by Christian women. And the way women fight is not to ‘battle’ as most of us might recognize it, not as the world knows it, but as true believers do: by dying to themselves as Jesus died on the cross, by bowing down to the headship of their husbands” (Joyce, 7). This battle will be won, according to this movement, through the training of the coming generation of young women. This training is conducted through constant parental supervision and a homeschool education, ensuring protection of her purity. At a conference for members of the patriarchal movement, Scott Brown stated, “There’s a generation of daughters in this room today that we have not seen for one hundred years of American history . . . this new breed of daughters is a revival in the land that is the fruit of twenty-five years of work when parents turned their hearts to their children and began doing many culture-defying things such as homeschooling their children, fighting feminism, and leading their daughters in the opposite direction of women’s lib” (Joyce, 220). In addition, the movement answers the call for social change through increased evangelical population by means of the *Quiverfull* lifestyle. Mark Driscoll of Mars Hill Church has stated, “We are in a city with less children per capita than any city but San Francisco, and we consider it our personal mission to turn that around” (Joyce, 178).

Homeschooling has become an integral part of the patriarchy movement as young girls are trained to be homemakers, with young women in this community typically foregoing much of the educational subjects given in American schools. Furthermore, the popular Vision Forum homeschooling materials used by the patriarchal community stresses sharp gender roles with toys for girls from the *Beautiful Girlhood* catalog collection including tea sets, white gloves, modesty slips (an undergarment that ensures no transparency in a dress), dollhouses with accessories, and cooking and cleaning utensils. Vision Forum materials also suggest that children of the movement should have “little to no association with peers outside of family and relatives as an insulation from a corrupting society. Daughters shouldn’t forgo education but should consider to what ends their education is intended, focusing their efforts in ‘advanced homemaking’ skills” (Joyce, 218). In a conference in 2007 at Callaway Gardens, Georgia, Geoffrey Botkin, a noted leader in the patriarchy movement, and Doug Phillips, founder of Vision Forum, spoke to an auditorium of fathers and daughters, and suggested that girls should not “learn career skills as emergency ‘backups’ to support themselves, as ‘learning to survive can teach girls attitudes of independence, hardness’” (Joyce, 222).

In addition to training girls through homeschooling to be submissive housewives, the patriarchy movement also establishes the authority of the father repeatedly. At the same conference in Callaway Gardens, these fathers and daughters were told that “a virtuous daughter should’ turn her heart to her father’ in the spirit of Malachi 4:6.” In doing so, young women should make the choice to “redeem the years’ they have with their fathers and view their single lives as preparation for marriage: submitting themselves to their fathers and, to some extent, their brothers, as they will one day submit themselves to their husbands” (Joyce, 223). Furthermore, girls who do not behave in such a manner can be assumed to be “unsaved,” for “the

fruits of salvation would make a daughter eager to please and follow her father's guidance . . . girls whose hearts are turned to their fathers will behave as Doug Phillips' daughters: anticipating his needs, offering encouragement and physical affection ('rubbing their fingers through Daddy's hair'), and rejecting 'patricidal' friends who encourage them to keep secrets from their fathers" (Joyce, 224).

Protection of purity for these adolescent girls is the final means by which the patriarchal movement seeks to combat the social structure of America. However, their purity is in the hands of their fathers, and only submission to the authority of a father and then her husband will protect a young woman. Sarah Schlissel, daughter of Reformed Brooklyn pastor Steve Schlissel in an article entitled "Daddy's Girl: Courtship and a Father's Rights" writes the following:

Any man seeking to beg, borrow, or steal a daughter's hand without her father's endorsement is seeking to gain, in unlawful ways, "property" not his own. . . . I am owned by my father. If someone is interested in me, he should see him. . . . And no man can approach me as an independent agent because I am not my own, but belong, until my marriage to my father. At the time of my marriage, my father gives me away to my husband and there is a lawful change of ownership. . . . Notice there is no intermediate point between Daddy and Hubby. There is no "limbo land" where the girl is free to gallivant on her own, "discovering herself" as she walks in fields of gold, apart from any defining covenant head, doing whatever she sees fit. (Joyce, 226)

While the patriarchal movement might seem to be tied to a more fundamentalist form of Christianity than the mainstream evangelicalism in which Purity Balls have arisen, there are several links to be noted. First, Focus on the Family and the Southern Baptist Convention, each mainstream evangelical organizations, have accepted and promoted the notion of complementarianism, a model for Christian marriage based on gender roles of female submission and male headship, in addition to promoting the Vision Forum homeschooling curriculum written by Doug Phillips. Many of the published Christian materials and resources, such as the Vision Forum homeschooling curriculum, used by more fundamentalist than evangelical

associations of Christianity like the patriarchy movement are also integrated into mainstream evangelicalism. These materials communicate the submissive lifestyle.

These ideas about gender hierarchy and women's roles have a yet broader resonance throughout the evangelical church as a whole . . . but the notion of male headship and female submissiveness is a part of the basic theology of the church. Here, in mainstream evangelicalism – churches that fundamentalists consider worldly shells that have lost their Christian 'saltiness' – the same language of biblical marriage roles directs the sermons and the pastors' books for sale without acknowledging the fierce denunciations of feminism that fundamentalists know is the heart of their fight. (Joyce, xi)

Second, the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, which was formed originally by more fundamentalist evangelicals in 1987 with the mission to “set forth the teachings of the Bible about the complementary differences between men and women,” is presently directing mainstream evangelical organizations such as the Southern Baptist Convention, Presbyterian Church of America, and the Campus Crusade for Christ. Their published vision is to “See the vast majority of evangelical homes, churches, academic institutions, and other ministries adopt the principles of The Danvers Statement (Appendix A) as part of their personal convictions and doctrinal confessions and apply them in” (CCBW Website, May 18, 2009).

Finally, Randy Wilson, founder of the Purity Ball, was an employee of James Dobson's Focus on the Family in the late 1990's when he created the Purity Ball. This was also the time of Dobson's acceptance of the The Danvers Statement and the establishment of the Colorado Statement which offers a proclamation of correct interpretation of sexual relationship within biblical marriage (Appendix B). Furthermore, much of the language found in the Purity Ball like “covering of authority,” “high priest of the home,” and “protector of purity” are phrases first initiated in the context of biblical courtship and marriage by Bill Gothard in the late 1970's and into the 1980's. Bill Gothard's Institute is a \$63 million dollar a year business offering Christian teaching that “enumerates a series of ‘nonoptional’ spiritual laws calling for strict authoritarian

child training and an ethos of unswerving obedience to one's proper authorities in all jurisdictions of life." At the height of their popularity, his seminars would draw up to twenty thousand attendees. In these large seminars, Gothard established an argument for *Biblical Courtship* which was meant to educate adolescents and their parents in the biblical boundaries for finding suitable mates. These boundaries included seeking the blessing of God through "fruitful multiplying," each individual having a personal relationship with God, honoring parents through submitting to their wishes in selecting a mate, having moral purity through victory over lust (implying no physical contact prior to marriage), and the commitment to establishing a covenant marriage which includes wives submitting to husbands. While Bill Gothard was popular in the 1970's and 1980's in evangelical communities, recently his work has been focused on training programs called Basic Life Principles for more mainstream and even somewhat secular audiences, including educational seminars at women's prisons. In these seminars, Gothard teaches that women should be "under the umbrella of protection" by submitting to the "covering of authority" of either her husband or father (Joyce, 23).

The second movement within the evangelical community that is significant to the Purity Ball is the Purity/Abstinence Movement. Interestingly, the Purity Movement, beginning roughly in 1985, has evolved in the twenty years from an abstinence-based sex education program to a movement that now resembles Bill Gothard's original *Biblical Courtship* materials. While the purity movement involves a somewhat grassroots organization in which many avenues for information are available, one of the most widely popular forms has been LifeWay's (Southern Baptist Press) *True Love Waits* organization. Written by Jimmy Hester, *True Love Waits* evolved from the original Christian Sex Education project created in 1987 with an agenda of promoting abstinence until marriage. The movement gained momentum rapidly as churches

invited the sex education program into their youth groups and presented commitment cards for the youth to sign in honor of vowing to “save themselves until marriage.” By 1993, the largely popular and widely established evangelical Youth For Christ organization partnered with *True Love Waits* to plan a national rally in July 1994 while Genevox Music Group and interline released a *True Love Waits* music project. Within ten years, an estimated one million commitment cards had been signed and displayed at events and places including the National Mall, Georgia Dome, and the Golden Gate Bridge. The movement continued to gain momentum into the new millennium by offering events internationally, including Uganda, Australia, and the 2004 Summer Olympics in Greece. During this time, however, the movement received a facelift which included a more active role by the parents of youth, suggesting a more conservative move towards resembling Gothard’s *Biblical Courtship*. The commitment cards were rewritten to include a partnership by the student and parents, and a place on the card was added for parents to sign. By 2005, the movement became political as the organization launched “True Love Takes the Town” – “an initiative to encourage cities and towns to take a unified, community-wide approach to promoting sexual abstinence until marriage by involving schools, government, businesses, churches, health organizations, and other” (LifeWay website, May 19, 2009). In recent literature, this movement suggests that American society has established a pattern of confusion regarding sexuality and gender for adolescents, and through a lifestyle represented in “the promise,” American society can be restored by creating a generation that is “prepared for biblical, lifetime marriages” (LifeWay website, May 19, 2009).

The purity movement has gained further exposure as popular books have been published such as *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* by Joshua Harris, giving autobiographical accounts of biblical courtship. In *Leave Dating Behind: A Road Map to Marriage*, recently published in 2008, author

Christina Rogers maps the principles of biblical courtship with four rules: commitment to marriage, accountability, rejection of secular dating philosophy, and establishing physical boundaries. Within her account of these principles, Rogers weaves the tale of her personal courtship, and includes in her rules additional guidelines for courtship: responsibility of protection by fathers for their daughters, supervision of courtship (i.e. chaperones) to decrease temptations, importance of “real-life” courtship rather than fantasy dating, and a practicing of submission by the female to the male’s authority. These popular autobiographical accounts of biblical courtship are promoted on *True Love Waits*, LifeWay, Abstinence Clearinghouse, and Focus on the Family websites. While the purity movement’s origins were rooted in sex education programs with the agenda of promoting abstinence before marriage, more recent literature displays an increasing move towards biblical courtship with the emphasis on traditional gender roles.¹

The concern in evangelicalism to address societal trends that contradict specific traditional interpretations of biblical texts like sexual behavior and role of women seems to have created an atmosphere conducive for the creation of a ritual like the Purity Ball. From more fundamentalist movements like the Patriarchy Movement to the more mainstream group of Dobson’s Focus on the Family, evangelicalism continues to speak of a society degenerating because of loss of traditional values. What must be questioned, though, is to what aspect of societal ill does the Purity Ball speak to? For the participants, the explicit answer would be changes in societal sexual norms. However, the Purity Ball perhaps latently or implicitly

¹ A possible argument to be made at a later date is that the controversy surrounding traditional gender roles and the rise of feminism in the latter half of the twentieth century has become a topic by which more conservative and fundamentalist evangelicals are influencing mainstream evangelicals. Through additional research, an argument might be made that evangelicals will become increasingly polarized over gender roles and sexuality as mainstream evangelicals will either be influenced to take a more conservative stance or react by disassociating from the increasingly fundamentalist group.

addresses modern changes in gender roles in American society. This potential latent sociological function of the Purity Ball will be analyzed.

The Sociological Function of Purity Balls

Robert K. Merton's explanation of manifest and latent functions in social action offers helpful terminology for a sociological analysis of the Purity Ball. According to Merton, every social act fulfills functions that are explicitly stated and understood by the society. In other words, each action contains functions that are consciously acknowledged by the participants, and these functions are labeled manifest functions or dysfunctions. While each action results in a manifest function, a latent, or unintended/unacknowledged function or dysfunction is simultaneously fulfilled. Functions are defined as those actions which provide continuity to the existing social system, while dysfunctions are those actions that produce social change. Therefore, when approaching the Purity Ball from Merton's perspective, one must determine the manifest explanation for the ritual given by the participants as well as any unacknowledged functions that would reinforce the existing social structure and system within the evangelical community, perhaps unintended and unknown to the individual participants (Merton, 1957:73). While Randy and Lisa Wilson and many participants explicitly report the function of this ritual as empowering and protecting adolescent girls from harm and abuse, one must question what the latent function of the Purity Ball might be.

In *Imagining Religion*, Jonathan Z. Smith argues that ritual is constructed in response to society's need to direct attention, thus moving the ordinary into significant or sacred. He writes, "A sacred place is a place of clarification (a focusing lens) where men and gods are held to be transparent to one another. It is a place where as in all forms of communication, static and noise (i.e. the accidental) are decreased so that the exchange of information can be increased" (54). Smith argues that ritual is a means of paying attention to something, and the object of that attention is that which is defined as sacred by the community. The act by the community of

placing attention is what determines or defines what is sacred. “The ordinary (which remains, to the observer’s eye, wholly ordinary) becomes significant, becomes sacred, simply by being there. It becomes sacred by having our attention directed to it in a special way” (55). The question then pertaining to Purity Balls is to what is the attention being drawn or placed? In the ritual, is attention focused upon the adolescent girl? The father/daughter relationship? The virgin or sexual purity of the adolescent girl? Perhaps the submission of daughter/wife to male authority? Or is attention directed to a particular relationship of these elements of the ritual?

Smith continues by claiming that a community places attention upon the element of society that is incongruous with what ought to be. In other words, the community places attention upon that aspect of present reality that does not correctly reflect perfection on a cosmic level, the mythical ideal. The community, through placement of attention, focuses upon what action the community sees as incongruent with the correct action that reflects the values of that society. Ritual is constructed by society to communicate what *should* happen; it becomes the means by which reality is addressed in context with the ideal. He writes, “It [ritual] provides the means for demonstrating that we know what ought to have been done, what ought to have taken place . . . ritual is not best understood as congruent with something else. . . .Ritual gains force where incongruence is perceived and thought about” (63). According to Smith, then, ritual places attention upon that value or action of society that is perhaps not enacted in ordinary life; ritual is the action of society to reflect the incongruity between what is correct on a cosmic level and the reality of life. Consequently, through the use Smith’s approach to ritual, to understand the ritual of Purity Balls, a scholar must look to and understand what incongruency of value and social action Purity Balls reflects. Furthermore, this acknowledgement by community of what should be is offered as rectification for the incongruous reality (101). The attention placed upon

the incongruent nature between reality and the mythical ideal is done to rectify what *is* to what *should be*.

Merton's framework of manifest and latent functions in social action suggests additional means to understand the function of Purity Balls. The founders of the Purity Ball acknowledge the function of the ritual as the means to protect their daughters from the dangers of modern America's attitudes of sexuality, and while it could be easily assumed that Purity Balls are addressing changes in sexual activity among adolescents in the current generation, or perhaps the increasing sexualization of adolescent girls in popular culture, I would argue that Purity Balls cast light upon a different present day incongruity: modern American society's deconstruction of patriarchy and the traditional hierarchical gender/sexuality roles founded in certain interpretations of biblical text, and this incongruity might be a latent sociological function of the Purity Ball ritual. In other words, this function is unacknowledged and perhaps unintended by the participants. One may observe this societal incongruence addressed in Purity Balls through the order of songs for the Purity Ball ballet: "Celebrate god, celebrate fathers, celebrate daughters, celebrate life" (142). How does that order of songs speak to a daughter's virginity? How also would the characteristics of feminine spirit (gentleness, purity, graciousness, kindness, beautiful, precious, helper/completer, and life-giver) relate to sexuality? While Purity Balls may have an overt agenda of maintaining sexual purity of adolescent girls in attempts to protect them from abuse from young men, the ritual is also constructed to communicate the value of patriarchy, and this patriarchy is partly realized in ownership of the daughter's sexuality. The fathers are invested in maintaining the sexual purity of the adolescent daughters, but the deeper meaning of female purity in this community is submission of women to men more broadly. The adolescent female participants are under the authority of their fathers and later their husbands

because their sexuality is owned by these men; the girls cannot protect what ultimately does not belong to them.² The men state that it is their responsibility to protect the sexuality of the girls; and this protection is a marker of their ownership. “In patriarchy, a father owns a girl’s sexuality,” notes psychologist and feminist author Carol Gilligan, Ph.D. “And like any other property, he guards it, protects it, even loves it” (Baumgardner, 2007).³

It is important here to note that the fathers establish a specific form of patriarchy that must be defined precisely. The submission of women established in the Purity Ball is *Headship Patriarchy*, definable by The Danvers Statement. Most notable in *Headship Patriarchy* is that it is based on the complementarian lifestyle in which males and females are viewed as equal but different, and in their roles, wives are to submit to their husbands while husbands are to love their wives. In addition, gender roles are defined clearly with a woman’s responsibility to the care of her family and home while the man is responsible for financially providing for the family. Furthermore, in these specific roles, the male is established as the spiritual leader of his home, answerable to God for the actions of his family.

Thus, the communal meaning of the Purity Ball ritual is also not simply to recognize the value of the father-daughter relationship in and of itself, as indicated in several ways. First, although the event is typically attended by the fathers and the vow is usually read by the father,

² A further consideration regarding this topic is the potential conflation of protection with ownership in Purity Ball participants. Research at a later date should provide information regarding how the fathers define protection, the perceived necessity of protection for the daughters, and what role authority and ownership plays in the concept of protection.

³ An issue regarding the Purity Ball that goes beyond the scope of this paper is the insinuated element of incest between the father and daughter. The initial reaction of most scholars and non-participants of the ritual upon hearing of the event is one of strong criticism and concern, at times appearing as a visceral negative response. Interviews and analysis of these reactions is needed to understand if the adverse reactions are to the perception of incestual relationship. If so, I believe this ritual might give insight into why incest or the perception of incest might provoke discomfort, as well as informing the scholar as to what constitutes incest. Furthermore, a question regarding why insiders of this ritual do not identify the perceived incest must be addressed. In other words, is incest defined solely as physical relationship or can it be emotional, particularly in context of defining and developing daughters’ identity. Jeffrey Stout’s *Moral Abominations* and Mary Douglas’ *Purity and Dirt* are appropriate to this study.

there are exceptions: Celebration of Life, the Wilson's Purity Ball organization, includes in their "Purity Ball Preparation Packet" a vow for the male sibling as well. That vow reads as follows:

I, _____'s brother, choose before God to cover my sister as an authority and a protection in her life and in the area of purity. I will be pure in my own life as a man and your brother. I will be a man of integrity and accountability as I live my life and pray for my sister. This covering will be used by God to influence generations to come.

Furthermore, some participants have extended the reach of the Purity Ball by having future father-in-laws escort their son's girlfriends on occasion, especially if the female's father is not available. If the value of the Purity Ball were simply to establish or reflect upon the importance of the father-daughter relationship, there would be no need for a brother to sign a covenant to protect his sister's purity, nor would a future father-in-law need to take a son's girlfriend to the event. There would also be no need for a commitment or pledge. The Purity Ball may emphasize the father-daughter relationship, but the intended result of this emphasis on relationship at the Purity Ball is the daughter's purity. This acknowledgement of the father-daughter relationship is a means to a greater end. If the father is unavailable, another male must participate to establish the commitment of purity for the adolescent girl. At this event she cannot establish purity by herself, nor can her mother do so; the young woman needs a male to do so. It is also significant to note that if the Purity Ball ritual were solely about the girl's sexual purity, why would a future father-in-law not take his son/boyfriend of the girl to an event to make a commitment to protect his sexual purity, thus addressing the issue of potential sexual activity between the young couple? Rather, the ritual seems to place the burden of purity upon the young female in the relationship.

If the point of the ritual is not simply to recognize the value of a father/daughter relationship, could the Purity Ball then be placing attention solely upon the virginity or sexual

activity of the daughter? Is the community offering rectification between the present cultural norms of sexuality and their belief of God's mandates for sexual activity as displayed in The Colorado Statement? To answer these questions, we must look at the language used in the ritual. Purity is not described overtly in a context of sexuality during the Purity Ball. It is simply stated as that which is protected and covered. In fact, participants of the Purity Ball may not even know the community's meaning of purity. Jennifer Baumgardner, in documenting the 2008 Purity Ball in Colorado Springs writes, "When I ask Hannah Smith, 15, what purity means to her, she answers, 'I actually don't know.' Her older sister Emily jumps in: 'Purity, it means . . . I don't know how to explain it. It is important to us that we promise to ourselves and to our fathers and to God that we promise to stay pure until. . . . It's hard to explain'" (Baumgardner, 2008). The daughter may not know the sexual dimension of purity for this community, but she does know that she should promise to her father (not her mother) and God and herself to stay pure. If a daughter does not know the meaning of purity in terms of sexual behavior, but she does understand the importance of her father's position regarding her purity, one might suggest the community's attention is placed upon repairing hierarchy rather than immoral sexual behavior.

The language in the Purity Ball ritual does provide some answers. When the word "purity" is presented, the words "covering" and "protection" are used as well. What do those words mean for this community? In *Purely Woman*, written by the daughter of Randy Wilson, Jordyn Wilson writes about the "covering" given by fathers and what it means to her in a chapter entitled "Pure Covering." She first describes the Purity Ball ritual as the time when a girl receives her father's "covering" and then she writes,

I want to define the word 'covering' here. The covering of authority in our lives unleashes our strength, beauty and power as women. These virtues are only diminished when we refuse the gift of covering. The covering that I am talking about is a place of incredible safety emotionally, physically and spiritually. . . . I

am not talking about anything that is restraining, controlling or of selfish intent . . . we are under our father's authority when we are covered. What we as women are responsible to show to our authority is the beautiful gift of submission. That is our purpose, our design. We learn this with our dads, even our brothers, to exercise this with our husbands. Wherever we are, we have been called to rest in the authority that is over us and must learn the importance of obedience. (73-75)

Covering, then according to this daughter, becomes the establishment of authority of the father over the daughter and the establishment of obedience by the daughter to the male relatives in her life. It is related to her purity, as the covering is necessary for the protection of her purity. She is not capable to protect her sexuality or purity herself; it is the responsibility of her father, brother and her husband to do so. Therefore, I would argue that the social incongruency addressed by this community is gender roles and the hierarchy of authority. The Purity Ball community, using one aspect of a girl's identity, namely sexuality, is addressing a larger issue of societal concern: the place of women and men in social structure. The sexuality of the adolescent girl is one of the commodities controlled by the authority; first, it is withheld by the father, then it is handed to the husband, who maintains control. At Lauren Wilson's wedding, her father, the founder of the Purity Ball, officiated the ceremony; to pronounce the couple husband and wife, he stated, "Brett . . . I walked [you] through what Lauren's heart looked like. We talked of her incredible fragileness and the place that you must occupy for her to continue to grow into the fullness of all that God has created in her . . . You know, as soon as I do the next part [meaning the pronouncement of their marriage] I lose all control" (Marsalis, 145).

In her work on first marriage rituals in Morocco, M. Elaine Combs-Schilling presents the human body and ritualization of the body as means for continuing cultural norms and societal order. In particular for Morocco, patriarchal rule is re-established, according to Combs-Schilling through the ritualization of body in the context of sexual intercourse rituals. She writes of the body, "Our bodies are our means of access to ourselves and to the world . . . durable systems of

domination are often ones in which the structures of power are so embedded within the body of self that the self cannot be easily abstracted from them” (104). Through analysis of the Moroccan first marriage rituals, Combs-Schilling shows how ritual placed in the context of sexuality carries potent construction of meaning in regards to gender identity and dominant/submissive roles. This construction of meaning is so potent for the participant, Combs-Schilling argues, that the existing hierarchy of power becomes associated as natural with reality. “By obscuring cultural particulars in the most potent of human actions – actions whose power almost all of humanity in some form knows – the cultural particulars lose the feel of particularity and come to appear as something intrinsic to existence, a natural part of the world, take for granted” (105). This potency of embodied practice and meaning is the method for active regeneration of hierarchy of power as the ritual participant through experience of embodied ritual practice associates biological differences in gender as support for the cultural hierarchal structure. “The fusion of physical substratum with cultural elaboration is an enormously potent means of validating an invented structure of domination, for it encases cultural inventions within embodied truths, so that the biological truths themselves seem – naturally and implicitly – to support the structure of power.” The result for Combs-Schilling is that “Embedding a system of domination within the male-female division of the world, is, to borrow from Bourdieu, “the best founded of collective illusions” (114).

To understand the sociological function or community’s construction of meaning of the Purity Ball, then, one must observe and analyze the action of the ritual for the participants, in particular, three significant actions. First, at the time of the reading of commitment, fathers are invited to place their hands upon their daughter’s heads, in a display of “blessing” as the girls bow their heads to receive the covering. This bowing of the head towards the father can be

described as submissive in nature while the father, in acknowledging his role as her authority, commits to protecting his daughter's purity. In addition, the act of receiving a father's covering is a passive act by the daughter. While participants state that the daughter's purity is the focus of the ritual, the daughter herself never explicitly commits herself to purity, sexual or otherwise. She does not verbalize a commitment to purity. Khrystian Wilson, daughter of Randy Wilson and participant of the Purity Ball states, "People are saying the girls sign purity pledges, and that's setting them up for failure, but it's not, because we don't sign those purity pledges; our fathers do" (Adams, 21). Rather, the daughter passively receives her father's protection. This passivity expected on the daughter's part reflects what Combs-Schilling suggests as division of gender in ritualization and construction of meaning in such.

A second significant moment during the Purity Ball regarding embodied ritualization is the presentation of the rose. As the father/daughter couples walk under raised swords, which signifies, according to participants, the father's willingness to battle for his daughter's heart, the daughter bows to the cross to place the rose while the father stands above her. The daughter again is placed in a bodily position of submission, this time in context of the father's violent, if necessary, act to hold his daughter's heart. The question here is what does he battle for? Furthermore, this submissive stance taken by the daughter is placed in context of the cross as she lays down a rose to symbolize her purity. Does this mean she is handing over or sacrificing herself, her purity, as Christ sacrificed himself?

Finally, the fathers encompass the girls on the dance floor, enclosing them in a large circle as a symbolic barrier of protection from the outside world. This action, while attractive to the daughters for reasons discussed in the next section, is suggesting a state of passivity for the girls as they are symbolically separated from the outside world by their father. He is the

gatekeeper to her world and to the world that exists beyond her, as he establishes the “impregnable wall.” This separation, created both symbolically and physically again establishes authority of the father. All of the physical movements in the ritual of Purity Ball would support Combs-Schilling’s argument for embodied ritualization as a generative mechanism for social hierarchal structure, with, of course, the father’s role as authority figure at stake.

Catherine Bell also acknowledges the importance of body in constructing meaning in ritualization, and she offers a nuanced approach to the establishment of power in and through ritualization. For Bell, ritualization, a series of ritualized acts that are set apart from other ways of acting, creating schemas for interpreting/structuring the environment, invoking a series of privileged oppositions, becomes a “strategic arena for the embodiment of power relations” (170). Thus, according to Bell, ritual activities “constitute a specific embodiment and exercise of power” (170). Significant to the Purity Ball in her argument is the distinction between specialist and non-specialist in ritual activities. She argues that once an individual participant is differentiated as specialist, the lay person loses “direct control over a major medium of symbolic production and objectification. The result is that the lay person can only affect indirectly the constructions of ‘reality’ or ‘the ideal’ objectified through the activities” (214). One must question, then, what role the daughter plays as she is continually passive in the event while the father assumes the role of “High Priest of his home.” Perhaps, similarly to the non-specialist, the daughter is not directly participating in the construction of the “reality” or “the ideal” but indirectly assuming it or at least reinforcing the “ideal” by agreeing to play her passive role in it. Bell, in her concluding remarks on ritual action, states that ritual practices themselves can generate cultural schemas that differentiate self and society. If so, then meaning constructed by community, or the sociological function of a ritual may be experienced differently from the

meaning of ritual for individual participant, particularly the identity constructed by the ritual action. Consequently, while the sociological function of the Purity Ball may be the societal regeneration of patriarchy, the participants perhaps consciously construct a different meaning individually.

Additional research through individual interviews could address whether this sociological function to continue a hierarchy of social order is intrinsically or extrinsically available to the participants, particularly the fathers. In other words, are the fathers aware of this potential agenda for the ritual, even if they don't want to admit it because it might not be politically correct? An answer would help determine whether the function of the Purity Ball is manifest or latent. What *is* available for analysis regarding the meaning of this ritual is the construction of identity for the adolescent girls. We will turn to this issue in the next section.

The Daughter's Experience: Construction of Identity in Female Participants

Erik Erikson, a mid-twentieth century psychologist trained in psychoanalysis, created a theory of human development that suggested each person experiences stages of development throughout an entire life cycle. This theory, known as a psychosocial theory of development, describes how social and biological factors interact with psychological factors of an individual to produce lifetime development. In his theory of psychosocial development, Erikson argues that each person faces eight stages of development throughout lifespan, and each of these stages produce crises in which opposing tendencies, positive and negative, like trust versus mistrust, are navigated and negotiated by the individual. Significant to the Purity Ball female participants, Erikson introduces the stage of adolescence as one in which an individual negotiates the tension between identity or role confusion.

In his psychosocial theory of human development, Erik Erikson describes how a person reaches adolescence with a central need to construct identity (1950). This particular stage for the adolescent addresses the tension between identity and role confusion, with identity being the positive outcome. Erikson's model was based upon the process of *epigenesis*, a term that had been traditionally used only to describe fetal development in which organs and systems of biological processes develop in a necessary order. He argued that this process continues after birth in which the developing person negotiates age-specific needs as a combination of social, biological, and psychological factors. Erikson's theory began a wave of research into identity development, with a focus on how teenagers across the world use culturally variable identity resources to construct and narrate an identity.

This research in identity development has suggested that a toddler's first acknowledgment of self and other is the beginning of identity development. As the child's

cognition and social skills develop, identity progresses, culminating in the crisis of identity in adolescence. This identity of self, also known as ego identity, is a conclusion of childhood, in which an individual develops a successful identity that is cohesive, consistent, and persistent in nature and takes form in career roles, religious beliefs, physical attributes, cultural perspectives, and sexuality. Identity is also, according to Erikson, a consolidation of conscious, unconscious, social and individual drives, memories and acknowledgments. Erikson writes, “At one time, [identity] will appear to refer to a conscious sense of individual identity; at another to an unconscious striving for a continuity of personal character; at a third, as a criterion for the silent doings of ego synthesis; and, finally, as a maintenance of an inner solidarity with a group’s ideals and identity” (1956, 224). What emerges at the end of adolescence, then, is “an evolving configuration gradually integrating constitutional givens, idiosyncratic libidinal needs, favored capacities, significant identifications, effective defenses, successful sublimations, and consistent roles” (228). A child’s natural talents, unconscious drives and desires, favorite aspects of self and accomplishments, successful protective traits, and social roles and relationships all contribute to the emerging adolescent identity. If this cohesive identity is not constructed successfully, the result is role confusion, in which the individual does not find structure and consistency in self, leading to confusion in sexuality, careers, religious beliefs, etc.⁴ Furthermore, this role confusion, as it is part of the epigenetic process, further affects ongoing life cycle developments. Intimacy is difficult, as the next stage of “sexual intimacy fully reveals the latent weakness of identity” (232).

⁴ Each stage in Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development results in a balance for the individual of positive and negative outcome. This balance includes both the positive and negative aspects of the stage, which are incorporated into each successive stage. Consequently, for the successful development of identity, role confusion is not necessarily absent; rather, the positive outcome of identity coherence outweighs and incorporates that negative aspect of role confusion.

Identity is as much grounded in individual as it is in community, and is conscious and unconscious, leading to a conflict when “biological endowment and intellectual processes must eventually meet societal expectation for a suitable display of adult functioning” (19). Out of such conflict emerges the adolescent identity, which is not fixed but continues to evolve and change throughout later life. “Such a sense of identity is never gained nor maintained once and for all. Like a good conscience, it is constantly lost and regained, although more lasting and more economical methods of maintenance and restoration are evolved and fortified in late adolescence” (Erikson, 1956:74). This identity in optimal form “should show itself through commitment to those work roles, values and sexual orientations that best fit one’s own unique combination of needs and talents” (Kroger, 23). From Erikson’s perspective, the Purity Ball offers adolescent daughters salient identity content using identity roles as princess, daughter, and perhaps even virgin. The ritual serves to offer cultural, more specifically, community resources for identity, likely functioning to offer identities that compete with other identity resources like sexualized media or local peer groups; a Purity Ball offers another choice or potential identity resource in identity making beyond what popular culture might project.

Erikson’s theory of *epigenesis* as the method for development suggests three components that should be addressed when analyzing the development of the adolescent participants of Purity Balls: first, the theory of ritualization and role it plays in psychosocial development as the method of establishing recognition of self and other; second, the concept of inner space in the feminine as it pertains to adolescent identity formation; and third, development of sexual identity in adolescence by means of addressing sexual mating strategies.

Ritualization in Identity Formation

Erikson highlighted the important role of ‘ritual’ – a repetitious behavior that over time is ceremonialized – in the developmental process.⁵ For Erikson, ritual act is any act that is repeated over time which involves self and other. Ritualization, according to Erikson, is first introduced to the infant as the means of recognition between self and other and becomes a necessary aspect, throughout the individual’s life, of identity development. The caretaker signifies the most important “other” and this relationship is then throughout a lifetime amplified into greater social meaning. “Ritualization in man seems to be grounded in the pre-verbal experience of infants while reaching its full elaboration in grand public ceremonies” (Erikson, 1966:337). This elaboration of ritual activities continues throughout lifetime, differing in appearance, yet maintaining the purpose of recognition. “This need will reassert itself in every stage of life as a hunger for ever new, ever more formalized and more widely shared ritualizations and ritual which repeat such face-to-face ‘recognition’ of the hoped-for. Such ritualizations range from the regular exchange of greetings affirming a strong emotional bond, to singular encounters of mutual fusion in love or inspiration, or in a leader’s ‘charisma’ (338). As development occurs, Erikson argues, elements emerge in ritualization. In the play age, a dramatic element is introduced. Erikson writes, “This I believe, is grounded in the maturational advances of the play age which permits the child to create with available objects a coherent plot with dramatic turns and some form of climactic conclusion” (344).

Much like J. Z. Smith’s argument that ritual addresses incongruity in reality, Erikson suggests the dramatic element of ritualization in psychosocial development presents therapeutic or problem solving method for the child in the play age; it is the means for a child resolving

⁵ It is important to note that Erikson’s definition of ritual differs from Smith, Combs-Schilling, and Bell’s definition. For Erikson, ritual is nothing more than “any repeated act” which is not formalized in any way by an authority.

conflicting desires and previous experiences. Erikson argues that play is therapeutic, the child's way of solving problems by addressing what he wants with reality. He writes, "I propose the theory that the child's play is the infantile form of the human ability to deal with experience by creating model situations and to master reality by experiment and planning. It is in certain phases of his work that the adult projects past experience into dimensions which seem manageable . . . He anticipates the future from the point of view of a corrected and shared past. No thinker can do more and no playing child can do less" (Coles, 112). Thus, the dramatic element of ritualization introduced during the play age produces a reparative element in ritualization. The act of dramatic play with plot and conclusion becomes the means of fixing or repairing the outside world, the person whom the child is recognizing or relationship of otherwith self.

For the adolescent, this ritualization addresses her psychobiological need to construct an identity. She finds self in acknowledging and identifying with other, and ritualization through play offers a means to try new identities. The adolescent plays through construction and narration of new identities in career, religious beliefs, sexuality, and other means. In doing so, she experiments and creates model situations by identifying with others and negating identities with others, until she creates her cohesive identity.

One must ask, then, to what purpose, or more specifically, to what identity would a Purity Ball ritual be moving a young woman? If, as Erikson's theory suggests, ritualization is a means of acknowledging recognition of self and other, then it would seem plausible that Purity Balls are performed to acknowledge and position the self and other in a gender-driven hierarchal relationship in a way that establishes the parameters of self and other, as well as establishes parameters of sexual behavior. If the daughter is playing with identity roles through a ritual that portrays romance, extravagance, and all the things a girl finds attractive, and if she identifies a

role her community, particularly her father, endorses, she might accept that identity while not addressing the biological need to separate from family in order to construct an identity to mate. In doing so, she becomes sexually disengaged, as her identity is formed without addressing the most basic of biological needs in adolescence: the need to create an identity that attracts a potential mating partner. Furthermore, the identity that she constructs would be inextricably tied to the relationship with her father, particularly the hierarchy of that relationship. Thus, the construction of identity for the adolescent girl participating in a Purity Ball would be influenced in a way that might halt the biological process of differentiating from family, particularly *father*, and finding a sexual mate while re-establishing/reinforcing the previous childhood identity of *daughter*.

The label “pure” is used in the Purity Ball community to offer a specific narrative in the establishment of identity for these girls. If the attention of community in this ritual is focused upon the purity of the adolescent teen girl, does she construct her identity in this context? If so, her understanding of purity will influence her construction of identity. As stated earlier in the paper, it may seem as though some participants are not aware of the community’s understanding of purity. If a daughter participates in a ritual that includes her father vowing to cover her in protection and authority to keep her pure without the daughter knowing what purity is, then what is the meaning of this ritual for her? What identity does she adopt in this ritual?

One role suggested by the language used by both the fathers and the adolescent girl is that of “princess.” In a significant number of descriptions, the girls expressed feeling like a princess or experiencing a fairytale. “The moment I put my hand in my father’s, I felt like a princess. In those six precious hours, I believe I grew in relationship with my father more than I ever have. I knew it was my night, and I treasured every minute of it,” Anna Tullis, 11, states of her

experience at the Purity Ball (Wilson, 140). The adolescent girls as they are trying new identities in order to create their own, might find an attractive identity resource in the narrative of princess provided by the Purity Ball. Significantly, in most fairytales, princesses are sexually mature but not sexually active; princesses are sexually dormant. Feminist post-structuralist research has suggested that princess identity texts “engage with the production of girls’ conscious and unconscious desires, prepare for and proffer a “happy ever after” situation in which the finding of the prince comes to seem like a solution to a set of overwhelming desires and problems” (Walkerdine, 1984, p. 163). Typically, the princess is a virgin, waiting passively for her prince.⁶ Research in children’s princess play suggests that children reflect stereotyped gender roles associated with the fairytales about particular princesses. “Girls as well as boys positioned male characters as powerful and female characters as weak, even suicidal, victims” (MacGillivray and Martinez, 1998). Consequently, a story of the identity of princess given to the Purity Ball participants perhaps suggests an identity to the daughters that would support the latent sociological function of regeneration of social order.

Carol Gilligan, in responding to Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development, offers an approach to the development of identity that is applicable to the Purity Ball ritual (1982). At first a student of Erikson, Gilligan later critiques Erikson for failing to acknowledge how identity development might look differently for girls, particularly in establishing connection between self and other. Building upon the work of Nancy Chodorow and Robert Stoller, Gilligan argues that

⁶ The argument that identity is constructed as princess and the meaning of such for the adolescent girl can be substantially developed through qualitative coded interviews with the participants in which their experience is described, specifically what they associate, emotionally and imaginatively, with the term princess. In a future work, historical analysis of princess myth and fairytales, including the origin, traditional audience, meaning, and the introduction and modern popularity of princess stories for children into American culture will advance this argument significantly in potentially answering the questions, “Why is the identity of princess attractive to a young girl, and why to the father’s of a Purity Ball suggest it to the girls?” Feminist writer Andrea Dworkin’s book *Woman Hating* is a potential resource in this investigation with her suggestion that children’s fairytales are explicit means to communicate social sexual politics.

as females and males experience bonding and relationship with mothers differently, gender identity and early development establish separation of mother with boys and attachment of mother with girls. In doing so, male development becomes an exercise in individuation while female development establishes relationship (8). Gilligan writes, “Since masculinity is defined through separation while femininity is defined through attachment, male gender identity is threatened by intimacy while female gender identity is threatened by separation. Thus, while males tend to have difficulty with relationships, females tend to have problems with individuation” (8). As the prevailing theory in development, Erikson’s theory of identity and intimacy establishes individuation and separation as significant markers of maturity. However, what if for females individuation and separation are not markers of maturity? Gilligan responds that female development appears to be “divergent” from these markers during adolescence, and are assumed to be either “psychologically at risk” or “with a different agenda” (11). According to Gilligan, girls are determined to be less mature, less developed by standards established by Erikson; consequently, women begin to believe they are not developed. “As a result, women come to question the normality of their feelings and to alter their judgments in deference to the opinion of others” (16). This questioning of self and identity in women is called by Gilligan the “silencing of voice.”

Gilligan further argues that the stages for psychosocial development presented by Erikson, primarily identity followed by intimacy, are perhaps established differently in the female gender. Girls, Gilligan argues, structure a sense of self around the ability to “make and then maintain affiliations and relationships” (48). Erikson presented separation and individuation as markers for maturity and establishment of identity; however, Gilligan presents this view of maturity as problematic for women. “Thus there seems to be a line of development,

a failure to describe the progression of relationship toward a maturity of interdependence. . . . In this way, the emerging conception of adult development casts a familiar shadow on women's lives, pointing again toward the incompleteness of their separation, depicting them as mired in relationships" (155). How then, does Gilligan see the psychosocial development of identity in adolescent females? She writes, "For women, the developmental markers of separation and attachment, allocated sequentially to adolescence and adulthood, seem in some sense to be fused" (156). For women, identity is bonded with relationship; women's sense of self is inextricably tied to connection with other. The Purity Ball, then, potentially carries a powerful message for a daughter in offering an attractive identity of princess in the context of establishing a greater bond with her father. The Purity Ball reinforces the father/daughter relationship at the same time the daughter is constructing identity; thus, her identity is placed in context of that father/daughter relationship rather than relationship with social peer groups or a potential sexual mate. Furthermore, this relationship with her father is placed within a pledge to protect her and maintain her sexual innocence. Her sexuality, consequently, becomes potentially dangerous and damaging to the relationship between her and her father, the relationship around which her identity now centers.

Gendered Modes of Activity

While Lisa Wilson describes the Purity Ball as an event created to incorporate elements found attractive to adolescent girls, including "elegance, extravagance, and romance," Purity Balls are also attractive to the daughters for another reason (Baumgardner, 2007). The ritual addresses characteristics Erik Erikson associated with female "modes of activity," and by doing so, potentially speaks a powerful message to the daughters (Zock, 1997:188). Erikson names the feminine form *inner space*, which refers to "variable open-closed (inclusion-exclusion)" and is

also named relational play and calls the male form of play activity outer space, or externalized aggression (Zock, 190). In his work within play therapy, Erikson discovered this dynamic by identifying differences in play by genders.⁷ In constructing scenes, males tended to focus on outward movement and protrusion with active characters while females would create enclosed, inner space in which to develop the identity of characters in a story. Typically, the characters in the scene created by females would be passive in movement but discussed in relational terms in detail by the female. Thus, Erikson determined the female mode to be characterized as passive rather than active movement, inclusivity, and construction of identity inward in hidden space and enclosure. *Inner space* is used by Erikson to define the feminine form of approaching the divine and can also be expressed in the nature of feminine play of enclosure, establishing security (Erikson, 1950: 231-233). If feminine play of enclosure is therapeutic in effect, as Erikson argues play was therapeutic in nature, would rituals expressing enclosure be therapeutic and represent a powerful message to adolescent girls? For example, the “impregnable wall of fathers” enclosing their daughters in a circle of protection would be a strong symbol for daughters, speaking security of relationship, a powerful message for the adolescent female.

While Gilligan criticized Erikson heavily regarding his theory of modes of activity for the potential limiting of females to be aggressive, the Purity Ball, by establishing actions that reinforce Erikson’s theory, perhaps perpetuate a passivity expected in females that is socially constructed and communicated to children young enough to play (and thus exhibits Erikson’s modes of activity). Thus, the Purity Ball ritual conveys to the adolescent participant a message that is attractive and therapeutic while simultaneously carrying the sociological function of reinforcing social power structures. A miscommunication of meaning happens, and the effects for the disempowered participants (the daughters) are suggested by Gilligan.

⁷ As discussed previously, Erikson viewed play as repairing in nature for children.

As may be the case with the Purity Ball, when the security and relationship found so attractive to the female is bound with submission to the male, the ritual is simultaneously healing or comforting to the adolescent female while also enacting Gilligan's silencing of her voice through establishment of male authority and value of male maturity. The daughter's identity, as she constructs it, is bound with relationship, and in this ritual, the relationship with father is bound with the message of male authority and power. However, the daughter consciously experiences a bonding with her father that re-identifies her with her family. Furthermore, since her identity is bound with relationship to her father, if she re-creates her identity by becoming sexually active, does this potentially destroy the relationship with her father? This concern might be an underlying fear, thus a motivation, for the daughters to remain sexually inactive. In the documentary on Purity Balls made by The Learning Channel, one participant, now 24, describes how she struggled with having to tell her parents she had become pregnant with the young man who, with her father's approval, was courting her. She begins to cry not when describing how she told her mom, but instead when she told her father. She then states that her relationship with her father has deteriorated significantly since that time.

This establishment of authority by males in conjunction with reinforcement of relationship and security becomes problematic for the establishment of identity for adolescent girls. Hierarchy of authority collapses the female's creation of relationship network and brings about the question of her legitimacy in thought and self, creating Gilligan's silencing of her voice. In doing so, the relationship connections the daughter uses to simultaneously associate with intimacy and identity become stifling, forcing her to question her very self, her identity.

When the interconnections of the web are dissolved by the hierarchical ordering of relationships, when nets are portrayed as dangerous entrapments, impeding flight rather than protecting against fall, women come to question whether what they have seen exists and whether what they know

from their own experience is true. These questions are raised not as abstract philosophical speculations about the nature of reality and truth but as personal doubts that invade women's sense of themselves, compromising their ability to act on their own perceptions and thus their willingness to take responsibility for what they do. This issue becomes central in women's development during the adolescent years, when thought becomes reflective and the problem of interpretation thus enters the stream of development itself. (Gilligan, 49).

Consequently, what fathers may consider to be an act of empowering or at least protecting their daughters is communicating through an attractive message that successful relationship, and hence, their identities are bound with the authority of men.

Sexual Identity Formation and Evolutionary Sexual Strategies

Erikson's anthropological studies into puberty rituals described them as identity resources which normally functioned to attach a new 'adult' identity to the adolescent; however, the Purity Ball seems to function in order to stagnate or stall this anticipated identity of a sexualized female adult. The daughter's childhood identity orientation does not move from family to peer orientation which is the norm for adolescence but is, in essence, arrested until later notice.

Although Erikson's model explicitly links identity with puberty, more recent research has helped clarify why humans put so much energy into identity, especially in adolescence. Identity as it is formed in adolescence is specifically interested in and driven by mating strategy. In fact, mating strategy is in adolescence the most pressing aspect of identity construction; the adolescent is evolutionarily predisposed to present an identity that is attractive to a potential mate, thus suggesting why adolescents focus efforts on construction of identity (Bell, 2009). As an evolutionary phenomenon, humans have long been wired to establish successful mating patterns as soon as they reach puberty. With a strong social orientation, mating patterns are best expressed in identity attachments that are playfully exercised by adolescents through signs of

adornments, types of narratives, and culturally valued skills. Further, the teenager's puberty and accompanying desire to mate must be expressed outside the family gene pool. This drive spurs individuation from social group (family) in order to find a suitable mate. In this quest for a mate, the individual imitates others in forming socially acceptable behavior, integrating identity into personal practices (to provide consistency) and forming social groups outside familial relationships, displaying significant loyalty and concrete idealism (Bell, 2009). In other words, the adolescent imitates socially acceptable behavior, integrates that behavior into identity formation, and finds solidarity in formation of social groups.

One can argue that the Purity Ball can be used to address these biological needs in the daughters in a way that would create identity to delay the daughter becoming sexually active. By reestablishing a significant bond with the father in a potent and attractive ritual, the daughter is less likely to differentiate from family, delaying integration of social bonding and behavior with other adolescents, thus delaying formation of identity for mating strategy. Her sexual identity is arrested in this coming of age puberty ritual.

"We're losing our kids," Kevin Moore states when explaining why he escorts his daughters to the Purity Ball. "You have an enormous amount of females who are fatherless, and because of that void and emptiness in their lives, they look for love in all the wrong places and will often compromise in things they may intuitively know are not good. It's a lose/lose situation" (*Citizen*, 21). While the sociological function of the Purity Ball might be regeneration of hierarchical order, it is not clear if the fathers are motivated by this regeneration to participate in the ritual, nor is it apparent whether the fathers are consciously aware of this function. Further research through individual interviews of father participants is needed to substantiate any theory regarding regeneration of social order being the motivation, conscious or not, of the father.

What is apparent in the existing documentation on Purity Balls by the popular media is that the fathers do have an explicit motivation to protect their daughters from potential sexual mates.

After Jerry Forte placed a purity ring on the hand of his daughter, he handed her another box. In it was another ring for her to place on his hand, and while she did so, he explained the following:

It [ring] is in the form of a shield, symbolizing my commitment to protect and shield you from the enemy. Inside the shield is a heart, which is your heart, which I am covering. Across the heart are a key and a sword – the key is the key to your heart, which I will safeguard until your wedding day, and the sword is the protection I pledge to you. . . . On your wedding day, I will give this ring to your husband. I love you, my jewel, my princess. (Mermelstein, 252)

The fathers overtly state that their motivation is to protect their daughters from abuse, abandonment, and the sexualization of women present in modern America.⁸ Sex allows the opportunity, according to founder Randy Wilson, for adolescent girls to be used and abused, and this opportunity is the catalyst for keeping daughters from refraining in sexual activity. Interestingly, evolutionary psychology and the study of human mating strategies support these father's concerns.

An evolutionary psychologist, David Buss has led a paradigm shift in research around psychology and gender. Grounded in cross-cultural research, Buss demonstrates how males and females have genetically wired and substantially different proclivities for mating strategies. Using the categories of long term and short term mating strategies, Buss defines the 'strategy' as the "goal-directed and problem solving nature of human mating behavior" which is not necessarily "consciously planned or articulated" (205). These strategies carry the goal of sexual

⁸ A question to be answered at a later date addresses the issue of the sexualization of young girls in America. The Purity Ball's overt agenda, purity, is supposed to be addressing, according to the fathers, the increased sexualization of America's daughters in a way the defies popular culture. However, are not the labels of virgin or pure just as much sexual labels as slut or whore? I would like to argue at a later date that the characterizations of a young girl's status as sexually active or not are in both cases sexualizations of a girl; the labels, either way, are a means of labeling the girl through the lens of sexuality.

selection, as first developed by Darwin (1871), which argues that organisms develop reproductive advantages through evolutionary process in addition to survival advantage. This reproductive advantage is in competition and attraction, and leads to the successful perpetuation of one's genes in offspring. Robert Trivers later developed a theory of parental investment and sexual selection in which the parent who invests more heavily in offspring tends to be more discriminating about who they mate with (which is typically females in the human race, considering gestation is internal as well continuation of nursing after offspring is born), while the parent who is less invested typically competes more vigorously for access to the high-investing members of the opposite sex (the male in humans, as in minimal involvement, males only have to contribute sperm) (Buss, 2006). Variation in individuals exist regarding Trivers' theory of parental investment, making these claims representations of proclivities in gender, not determinants for any one person.

Buss takes these theories and demonstrates how males and females, equipped intrinsically with the knowledge of the theories above, developed strategies to acquire potential mating partners for both short term and long term experiences. How does this relate to Purity Balls? Typically, an adolescent male is biologically driven to find many suitable short term mating experiences in order to increase his chances (through quantity) of reproducing, for the more mates he can find, the better his chances to successfully reproduce. These males are interested in and looking for females who appear sexually accessible – those who are healthy (full lips, clear skin, lustrous hair), sexually knowledgeable, and interested in sexual activity. However, an adolescent female is biologically driven to find a suitable mate interested in long term mating who will provide resources for her offspring to increase the chances of survival, given she will/has invested heavily in the creation of the offspring. Obviously, these differences in

adolescent mating styles do not match for the different genders, thus creating what is widely regarded as sexual competition, both within each gender and between each gender. Furthermore, these gender differences in mating styles would reflect the earlier argument by Gilligan that male identity is threatened by intimacy while female identity is threatened by separation.

While there is significantly more involved in Buss' sexual strategies argument, these strategies can be applicable to the Purity Ball, as one may hear language of sexual strategies in the father's explanation for participating in Purity Balls. "Guys out there are about themselves. They are not about the girl. They're out only to get what they want from the girl, that pleasure. There's an incredible risk of abuse. A guy I know – his sister-in-law, at 18, in a bad relationship, unmarried, was pushed out of a car and killed," states Randy Wilson (Mermelstein, 255).

Fathers overtly try to protect their daughters from seeking a long term mate that turns out to be short term, potentially leaving his daughter with a newborn child and no resources to care for it, and the Purity Ball fathers are doing it in several ways. First, as discussed earlier, they delay the daughter's individuation from the family unit, thus inhibiting her development of identity for sexual mating. Second, the fathers keep their daughters from appearing sexually knowledgeable and interested in sexual activity, making them inaccessible to young males pursuing short term mating experience, by means of offering cultural identity resources such as princess, daughter, and virgin. Third, the fathers interact, through biblical courtship, with the young males to determine whether the male is interested in a short term or long term mating experience prior to allowing his daughter to associate with the young male. In doing so, the father guarantees the male is interested in long term mating strategy and is willing to commit to the daughter and potential offspring, providing resources to ensure the survival of the children.

Consequently, the fathers are explicitly trying to protect their daughters by addressing evolutionary sexual mating strategies that place adolescent girls at risk of not mating successfully, being used or abused sexually, or not having the resources to care for offspring. However, in their efforts to empower their daughters, the fathers, through a ritual that powerfully and attractively speaks to the girls, are ironically disabling their daughters by halting their identity development. The manifest function of the Purity Ball ritual is to address evolutionary sexual strategies, but the latent function of the ritual is the regeneration of social hierarchy of power.

Conclusion

With roots deeply embedded in the evangelical Christian tradition, the Purity Ball is a rite of passage ritual that overtly addresses America's evolving norms regarding sexuality and gender. However, this ritual holds multiple meanings, both latent and manifest, for the participants and community; the meaning of the Purity Ball ritual is significantly different based on a participant's gender. In the initial investigation of reports by popular media, the daughters interpret the event as a relational experience in which they deeply bond with their fathers, while the fathers discuss the event in terms of protecting their daughters from being abused sexually by males. The fathers' method for doing so is building relationship with the girls. The results of the ritual, however, seem to include a latent sociological function of the Purity Ball, addressing the perpetuation of a particular hierarchical order that is traditionally established in a sub-group of Christianity. Furthermore, the daughter's individual development of identity is stagnated as she replaces her biological need to individuate from family to adopt identity with an identity of daughter princess, dependent upon a protective father.

Evolutionary psychology explains the Purity Ball within the argument of David Buss' sexual strategies. Because of biological differences in sexuality and procreation, gender differences exist in the mating strategies of humans. In order to acknowledge and address these gender proclivities, fathers in past cultures have sought to control their daughters' sexuality prior to choosing her spouse in attempts to increase his chances of successful continuation of offspring. Whether these motivations on the part of the father were simply biological or emotional may be answered by a quote by Carol Gilligan cited earlier in the paper, "In patriarchy, a father owns a girl's sexuality. And like other property, he guards it, protects it, even loves it" (Baumgardner, 2007). Ironically, the father's control lies in tension with the

daughter's burgeoning sexuality, which necessitates her differentiating from her family and establishing an identity that largely incorporates features to attract potential mating partners. Historically, rituals and social institutions supported by patriarchal societies created methods for fathers to maintain control over their daughters' sexuality. However, during the twentieth century in America, the tradition of arranged marriages unraveled, gender and sexual restrictions on females eased, and women established greater independence. In response, the Purity Ball appears to be an effort to return the control and power of the daughter's sexuality back to the father. The Purity Ball may be a newly created ritual doing nothing new at all; it is a ritual returning society to the historical means of addressing evolutionary biology.

How does the Purity Ball do so? The Purity Ball offers ritualization of narratives that build specific identity in daughters. The cultural identity resources of "princess" and "purity" narratives are provided in a ritual that is attractive to the daughters by means of enclosure and relationship. These particular narratives traditionally suggest a sexual dormancy and submission while simultaneously acknowledging the need for protection to remain pure. Within the ritualization of these narratives, the daughters and fathers are recognized to each other in a context of hierarchal relationship, and this recognition of relationship within a ritualized process re-establishes the daughter's bond with family, particularly father. Consequently, the Purity Ball halts the daughter's individuation from family and her development of sexual identity while simultaneously suggesting a narrative of "princess" or "purity." The result is an identity formed in context of relationship with father, contingent upon a daughter's suppression of sexuality and the need for her father, as her authority, to protect her in the process. This particular identity once established in the daughter suggests a need for fatherly authority of her sexuality until the

time of marriage, thus re-establishing the patriarchal tradition of controlling a daughter's sexuality.

While the fathers in the Purity Ball discuss the manifest function of the ritual to be protection of the daughters from adolescent males and the sexual culture of modern America, the latent sociological function is the regeneration of patriarchal social structure established or reinforced in traditional Christianity. It is only by viewing the Purity Ball, as J. Z. Smith suggests, as a ritual performed to cast attention upon a perceived incongruence between reality and a mythological ideal that one may understand this latent sociological function of this ritual. This evangelical community understands God's mandate to be the submission of wives to their husbands as specified in The Danvers Statement, and also specific rules for sexual behavior as stated in The Colorado Statement. Both of these mandates believed by the community to be set forth by God are challenged by the present cultural norms in America, thus necessitating the rectification offered in the Purity Ball ritual. However, the rectification in the Purity Ball of each incongruence is joined with the other, consequently conflating hierarchy with sexuality. It is most obvious when observing the physical movement of the participants through the lens of Combs-Schilling's argument. The daughter's role in this ceremony is one of submission which binds her sexual identity to the authority of her father, to be transferred to the authority of her husband. The unfortunate effect, then, for the daughters in this ritual is the adoption of a limited secondary identity, constructed by the community in an effort to address what should be with what is. This limited identity establishes the daughter remaining under the control of men.

Therefore, the greater question regarding the Purity Ball is in acknowledging the tension between biological, evolutionary practice in humanity and the social construction used to address this *natural* event of mating strategy. Are the participants, particularly the fathers, aware that the

product of their intentions to protect and empower their daughters is a female marginalization?

This question can only be answered with additional research into the motivations, both implicit and explicit, of the participants.

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Appendix A

Core Beliefs: The Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

Rationale

We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:

1. The widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
2. the tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;
3. the increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
4. the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
5. the growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
6. the upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;
7. the emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness;
8. the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts;
9. the consequent threat to Biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;
10. and behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical Biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

Affirmations

Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).

3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9).
4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:1-7, 12, 16).
 - In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
 - In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
 - In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7).
 - In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission-domestic, religious, or civil-ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet 3:1-2).
8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor 12:7-21).
10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

Appendix B

The Colorado Statement

God intends sex to be a source of satisfaction, honor, and delight to those who enjoy it within the parameters of the moral standards He has established. Biblically speaking, human sexuality is both a *gift* and a *responsibility*. At creation, the gift of sex was among those things God declared to be "very good" (Gen. 1:31). What's more, the sexual relationship is invested with a profound significance in that it brings together a man and a woman within the context of the shared image of God (Gen. 1:27). Because sex is God's idea, and because it touches the image of God in human life, it is very important that the holiness of sexual behavior be diligently preserved. In fact, sexual behavior is moral only when it is holy (Eph. 1:4; 5:3; 1 Thess. 4:3-7; 1 Pet. 1:14-16).

Not only is sex good in itself; it is also given to serve good purposes. At creation God made it very clear that sex functions in two ways: it generates "fruit" (Gen. 1:28); and it enables relational "union" (Gen. 2:24). In other words, sexuality does not exist merely for its own sake. Rather, sex fosters human nurturing, both through the union of husband and wife and also through the enrichment of society through the building of families and communities. God also made sex to reflect the mysterious spiritual relationship He will one day enjoy with all redeemed humanity following the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7, 9).

According to God's plan, sexual intimacy is the exclusive prerogative of husband and wife within the context of marriage. Sexual morality, on the other hand, is everyone's concern. It matters to single individuals, to families, and to society. Most of all, it matters to God.

Sex that honors God's guidelines and standards is pleasurable. He designed sexual activity to be physically enjoyable, emotionally satisfying, psychologically fulfilling, and spiritually meaningful because He delights in the joys and pleasures of His creatures (Song of Sol. 4:1-16). Men and women who honor God's standards for sexual behavior please Him as well as themselves (1 Cor. 6:20; also note analogy in Isa. 62:5).

But while sex is designed to be pleasing, not all sexual pleasure is ethical. Feelings are extremely unreliable as guides to the morality of sex. As a matter of fact, it is possible for sinful men and women to experience a form of physical enjoyment and degrees of emotional, psychological, and spiritual fulfillment even in sexual conduct that God considers abhorrent. For this reason, the Bible gives many solemn warnings against appealing to human passion or lust as the basis for our definition of moral sex (Rom. 1:24, 26; 13:13-14; 1 Thess. 4:5; 2 Tim. 2:22; 2 Pet. 3:3; 1 John 2:15-17; Jude 18). Our sex lives are moral only when conducted according to God's standards. When engaged in according to these guidelines, sexual activity is enriching, fulfilling, and eminently blessed.

We want to warn against deceptions that hinder or forestall this blessing of God upon our enjoyment of the wonderful gift of sex. We also want to help men and women understand God's good plan for sexual conduct, and thereby to realize all the joy, satisfaction and honor God offers to sexual creatures made in His image.

Based on our understanding of biblical teaching, we make the following declarations. We do not claim that these declarations cover everything the Bible says on sexual morality. But we do believe they highlight standards that are critical for our time.

1. Desire and experience cannot be trusted as guidelines to the morality of sex (Rom. 8:5-8; 13:14; 1

Cor. 2:14; 1 Thess. 4:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:22; James 1:14; 1 John 2:15-16; Jude 19). **Instead, the morality of sex is defined by God's holiness** (Lev. 20:7-21, 26; 1 Cor. 6:18-19; Eph. 1:4; 5:3; 1 Thess. 4:3-7; Heb. 13:4; 1 Pet. 1:15-16).

Thus we affirm that men and women are free to enjoy sex in any way that honors God's holiness. We affirm that God made sex to be physically enjoyable, emotionally satisfying, psychologically fulfilling and spiritually meaningful, and that only sex that honors God's holiness can fully realize the complexity of His design at every level. We affirm that concepts of sexual morality founded upon anything other than God's holiness always pervert God's standards of sexual moral purity.

2. God's standard is moral purity in every thought about sex, as well as in every act of sex. Sexual purity can be violated even in thoughts that never proceed to outward acts (Job 31:1; Matt. 5:28; Phil. 4:8; James 1:14-15). Sex must never be used to oppress, wrong or take advantage of anyone (1 Thess. 4:6). Rape, incest, sexual abuse, pedophilia, voyeurism, prostitution and pornography always exploit and corrupt and must be condemned (Lev. 18:7-10; 19:29; 2 Sam. 13:1-22; Prov. 6:26; 23:27; Matt. 5:28; 1 Thess. 4:3-7; 1 Pet. 4:3; 2 Pet. 2:13-14).

Thus we affirm that God requires sexual moral purity in thought as well as in deed. We affirm that sexual desire must be disciplined to be moral. We affirm that thoughts of indulging sexual desire by outward acts of sexual sin are inward sins of lust. We deny that stimulating lust by images of sexual sin can be moral at any age or under any circumstances. We believe that no sexual act can be moral if driven by desires that run contrary to the best interests of another human being. We believe no sexual act can be moral that treats persons as impersonal objects of sexual lust. We reject the idea that thoughts about engaging in sexual sin are not immoral if not expressed in outward acts. We reject the idea that pedophilia, voyeurism, prostitution or pornography can ever be justified.

3. God's standards for sexual moral purity are meant to protect human happiness (Prov. 5:18-19; 6:32-33; John 15:10-11), but sex is not an entitlement, nor is it needed for personal wholeness or emotional maturity.

Thus we affirm that unmarried singles who abstain from sex can be whole, mature persons, as pleasing to God as persons who are faithful in marriage. We affirm that sexual celibacy is a worthy state for mature men and women (Matt. 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:1, 8; Rev. 14:4), and that lifelong celibacy can be a gift from God (1 Cor. 7:7). We affirm that freedom for service without obligations to spouse and children is a worthy advantage of the unmarried life (1 Cor. 7:32-35). We reject the idea that persons are not "whole" without sexual intercourse. We affirm that all persons, even unmarried teenagers, can rely on God for strength to resist sexual temptation (1 Cor. 10:13). We deny that unmarried teenagers must have sex and cannot abstain from sex before marriage.

4. God calls some to a life of marriage, others to lifelong celibacy, but His calling to either state is a divine gift worthy of honor and respect (1 Cor. 7:36-38). No one is morally compromised by following God's call to either state, and no one can justify opposing a divine call to either state by denying the moral goodness of that state.

Thus we affirm that God is pleased with those He calls to serve Him through the loving expression of sexual intimacy in marriage. We also affirm God is pleased with those He calls to special witness and service through a life of celibacy apart from marriage. We reject the idea that God's Word ever represents the loving expression of sexual intimacy in marriage as morally compromised.

5. Sexual behavior is moral only within the institution of heterosexual, monogamous marriage.

Marriage is secure only when established by an unconditional, covenantal commitment to lifelong fidelity (Gen. 2:24; Mal. 2:14-15; Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-8; 1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2; Eph. 5:31), and we should not separate what God has joined (Mal 2:14-15; Matt. 19:6; Mark 10:9). Christians continue to debate whether there are a limited number of situations in which divorce is justifiable (Deut. 24:1-4; Matt. 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:15), but all agree that divorce is never God's ideal; lifelong commitment should always be the

Christian's goal.

Thus we affirm that God established the moral definition of marriage, and that it should not be changed according to the dictates of culture, tradition, or personal preference. We deny that the morality of marriage is a matter of mere custom, or that it should be allowed to shift with the tide of cultural opinion or social practice. Furthermore, we affirm that God views marriage as an unconditional, covenantal relationship that joins sexual partners for life. We oppose the reduction of the moral obligations of marriage to a business contract. We do not believe that divorce for reasons of dissatisfaction, difficulty, or disappointment is morally justified.

6. Marriage protects the transcendent significance of personal sexual intimacy. Heterosexual union in marriage expresses the same sort of holy, exclusive, permanent, complex, selfless and complementary intimacy that will some day characterize the union of Christ with the redeemed and glorified Church (Eph. 5:28-33; 1 Cor. 6:12-20).

Thus we affirm that intimate sexual union in marriage is a reflection of the intimate moral and spiritual union Christ will some day enjoy with the redeemed and glorified Church. We do not agree that the meaning and purpose of human sexuality can be defined on the basis of personal preference or opinion. We oppose the idea that sexual morality is simply a matter of culture, tradition, or individual aspiration.

7. Sex in marriage should be an act of love and grace that transcends the petty sins of human selfishness, and should be set aside only when both partners agree to do so, and then only for a limited time of concentrated prayer (1 Cor. 7:3-5).

Thus we affirm that sex in marriage should be enjoyed without selfishness. We do not believe that sex should be withheld as a way of controlling, punishing, or manipulating the behavior of a spouse. We reject the morality of any sexual act, even in marriage, that does not express love seasoned by grace. We believe no sexual act can be moral if it is driven by selfishness or ambition for power.

8. Sex outside of marriage is never moral (Exod. 20:14; Lev. 18:7-17, 20; Deut. 5:18; Matt. 19:9,18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Rom. 13:9; 1 Cor. 6:13,18; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; 1 Thess. 4:3; Heb. 13:4). This includes all forms of intimate sexual stimulation (such as foreplay and oral sex) that stir up sexual passion between unmarried partners (Matt. 5:27-28; 2 Tim. 2:22). Such behavior offends God (Rom. 1:24; 1 Thess. 4:8) and often causes physical and emotional pain and loss in this life (Prov. 5:3-14). Refusal to repent of sexual sin may indicate that a person has never entered into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:32; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 5:3-5; Jude 13; Rev. 22:15).

Thus we affirm that God's blessing rests on sexual intimacy only when it occurs within the boundaries of marriage. We deny that sex outside of marriage is justified for any reason. We reject the idea that sexual intimacy outside of marriage can be moral if partners are honest, consenting, or sufficiently committed. We oppose the portrayal of sexual sin as a way of enhancing the popular appeal of entertainment. We reject the idea that sex between unmarried teenagers is acceptable if it is "safe." And we do not believe that churches should welcome into fellowship any person who willfully refuses to turn away from the sin of living in a sexual relationship outside of marriage.

9. The Old and New Testaments uniformly condemn sexual contact between persons of the same sex (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10); and God has decreed that no one can ever excuse homosexual behavior by blaming his or her Creator (Gen. 2:24; Rom. 1:24-25).

Thus we affirm that moral sex is always heterosexual in nature. We affirm that God gives strength to His people when they ask Him for help in resisting immoral sexual desires, including desires for homosexual sex. We affirm that God has perfect knowledge concerning human sexual biology and made no mistake in prohibiting homosexual sex without qualification or exception. We deny the claim that science can justify the morality of homosexual behavior. We reject the idea that homosexual attraction is a gift from God (James 1:13). We deny the idea that homosexual relationships are as valid as heterosexual relationships. We do not agree with those who claim that it is sinful to make moral judgments that favor heterosexual

behavior over homosexual behavior.

10. The moral corruption of sexual sin can be fully forgiven through repentance and faith in Christ's atoning work (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 John 1:9), but physical and psychological scars caused by sexual sin cannot always be erased in this life.

Thus we affirm that God fully forgives all who repent of sexual sin. We believe that relationships broken by sexual sin can be restored through genuine repentance and faith. We deny that there is any sort of sexual sin God cannot forgive. We oppose the idea that victims of sexual infidelity or abuse should never forgive those who have sinned against them.

11. Christians must grieve with and help those who suffer hard-ship caused by sexual immorality, even when it is caused by their own acts of sin (Rom. 12:15; Luke 19:10). But we must give aid in ways that do not deny moral responsibility for sexual behavior (John 8:11).

Thus we affirm that God calls Christians to love all who suffer social isolation, poverty, illness, or the burdens of unplanned pregnancy and single parenting, whether or not it was caused by their own sexual sin. We believe Christ set an example of loving ministry to those who suffer from the results of their own acts of sin. We reject the idea that our obligation to alleviate human suffering is valid only if such help is "deserved."