*An Officer and a Gentleman* Key Points for 20-Minute Discussion
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The purpose of this discussion is to identify some of our cultural challenges preventing people from being willing and/or able to make consciously aware and responsible choices in their sexual relationships, with the potential for pregnancy and the consequences of pregnancy as a primary consideration. The question is: what will it take to address these challenges adequately to advance conscious conception in our culture?

*An Officer and a Gentleman* is strong material for a conversation about Conscious Conception because every main character, except Sgt Foley, represents a different perspective and position among some of the causes and conditions that underlie the prevalence of unconscious conception. Analyzing each character in detail reveals a panorama of pre- and perinatal considerations that evolve out of the dynamics that drive people to have sex without regard for the consequences of unplanned pregnancy. In fact, in this particular cultural example, the potential for pregnancy is used as a psychological, moral and materialistic power play to manipulate and force commitments in relationship. In every character example, from every angle conceptions took place or are at risk for occurring steeped in the Trauma of Omission for the babies or possible babies. William Emerson identifies trauma of omission as occurring when primary needs are completely missed, denied or left out of the slightest consideration by parents or responsible parties.

Ideally, teaching people that babies are sentient, conscious and aware beings from the moment of conception should naturally cause people to be vigilant about how and when they invite possible pregnancy. However, the hard reality is that this stand inherently requires people to put the interests of *future possibility* above their own immediate self-interests that run at deeply primal levels. How do we reach people with the realization that delaying the immediate drives that result in unconscious and unplanned pregnancies is truly in their own self-interests, as well?

We tell ourselves that celebrating a new being is about the beautiful baby. However, right now, our cultural norm tends to be that the quality and degree of welcome a baby receives is directly dependent on whether the parents are ready or not. To the greatest extent it is self-interest of parents and would be parents that drives the trauma of omission in unwanted and unplanned pregnancies.

In the film, we learn that two of the main characters, Zack and Paula were both pregnancies that were either unplanned or the result of failed power plays in the relationships between each pair of their biological parents. The relationship between Zack and Paula, in turn, starts out in effects as a recapitulation of both their parents’ choices and experiences. The unfolding of the story makes it clear that this has been a way of life for generations, and generational trauma is just one of the many pre- and perinatal traumas reflected through the characters. Paula is truly looking for the sincerity of a shared love, and not just a ticket out of small-town America into a life overseas. Still, twice we see her avert eye contact with Zack, as she lies about the fact that she is decidedly looking for her way out of the factory life that is, “exactly what I don’t want.” Zack, having been on the receiving end of the devastating consequences that lying spurs, swings the opposite direction toward brutal honesty. Throughout the story he walks a fine line between reaching and stretching for growth to get his needs met, yet constantly guarding against feeling intimately touched.

The second couple in the film, Sid and Lynette, shed light on entirely different considerations, fueled by the same root causes and drives to get primal desires met.

Lynette has been skillfully playing the field of officer candidates for two years. On the one hand, she is determined to “make a guy fall in love with her,” while at the same time she is tired of “these hotshot ass holes, who use us until they’ve had enough and then ditch us like we’s trash.” During her relationship with Sid, she determines to feign pregnancy to railroad him into marrying her. It is through Sid’s plight of self-sacrificing moral responsibility to everyone in his life but himself that we truly see the harsh, stark depths to which pregnancy and the potential for pregnancy is, in some cases like these, so desperately far off the radar of consideration. When Lynette does play the possible pregnancy card, Sid’s sense of moral responsibility instantly comes forward. In his caring and concerned tone, he thinks he is comforting and supporting Lynette, saying, “That’s not the only issue here . . . There is my *responsibility as its father for one thing* (as if he’s thinking like a Father) *. . . When you go for the abortion, I’d be right there with you, comforting you. We’d be going through the whole thing together.”*

Both heroines in the story opt for sex and the risk of pregnancy just as fast as the men do because they know sexual gratification is their surest ticket to hold the interest of the men long enough for a glimmer of hope at living their dream.

In the ultimate set of confrontations over “the baby” between Sid and Lynette and then Zack and Lynette, that culminate in the revealing that Lynette’s pregnancy was a lie, power play, Lynette defiantly declares, “You’re no different than I am, Paula!” In that moment, having not actually gone down the path of feigning pregnancy, Paul replies, “Oh yes I am!” However, here is where we see what is perhaps one of the most important distinctions made in the story, pertinent to increasing conscious conception culturally—the positive influence of the support of Paula’s mother. The story reveals that Paula is still living at home, while Lynette clearly lives on her own. Living and working together, Paula’s mother is close enough to Paula to see the writing on the wall, when Paula storms out of work to go after Zack because she loves him and “can’t just let him run off!” If it were not for Paula’s mother seeing her own mistake playing out right before her eyes and thus stopping Paula--naming the truth that, “You’ll say anything, baby; you will! And, God help you after that!!!,” Paula would have acted out, in effect, almost exactly the same as Lynette.

Women need to get back to sharing deeply the benefits of women’s wisdom. The good news here is that we can do this today. There is nothing stopping the formation of women’s circles that invite younger women in to ask their questions, share their frustrations, hopes and dreams. Women need to learn from older women that each woman is charged with understanding attractiveness and how to carry it wisely. This is not about men not having total responsibility for their actions. But, it is about women being taught that by nature, men have a visual cortex geared to fire up at the sight of the curves that women inherently carry. And, it is within a woman’s grasp to realize what she does with her attractiveness is her choice.

In the same way, men need to return to sharing the wisdom they have gained with other men. In the movie, what Sgt. Foley ultimate gave Zack was the benefit of his *invested attention to Zack’s story* (by looking into his file and discovering his mother committed suicide when Zack was still a child, etc.)and sharing his life experience as a wiser man, in ways that Zack did not get from his father. In one light this may sound far too simple. It is not the solution to the problems we face changing our paradigm to conscious conception. But, this is one of the key places that it starts, to make that change in ways and at levels that will last and stand the test of time.

At critical points of relationship, where patterns were at risk for repeating, Paula had her mother’s positive influence for healing and change. Zack had Sgt Foley’s marvelous instincts about when to push Zack, *and when and* *how to catch him in his pain before he quit the officer candidate program*. Thus, the result in Paula and Zack’s relationship and their opportunities to fulfill their individual potentials were realized. Whereas, for Lynette and Sid, who did not have available, receive or pay heed to support and wisdom, the relationship ended in tragic misunderstanding and suicide.

In summation: Here is just one conclusion I have come to. Increasing education and awareness about babies as sentient and aware beings is one critical side of the pendulum on which Conscious Conception as a norm in our society swings. Discovering the keys that bring people to understanding why sexual responsibility at the level of Conscious Conception is *personally important to them* is the other side of what is necessary to change our cultural paradigm. It is when individuals have their own skin in the game that they become ready and willing to make necessary changes.

Advocating for our culture to return to the importance of strengthening the mammalian brain, I believe is a key. It is the mammalian brain that naturally has the mechanism is place not to destroy our own young. Grassroots efforts to reach people, one person, one group at a time to change our cultural sexuality.