

Brooke's story inspired me in many ways. It really made me think when she talked about how healthcare is a broken system in America. Sadly, I was not surprised by that fact as I have aunts, cousins, and grandparents who have been working in the medical field for many years and I have heard some horror stories and rants about changes that need to be made. In fact, Brooke's anecdote about the mattress pads reminded me of the time I had an opportunity to shadow an autopsy here at the UW.

My overall autopsy shadowing experience was a good one. It was extremely interesting and I did not at all get nauseous even though I was expecting to. However, there was one negative incident that I will never forget. This may be a little graphic, but as we were working on sawing open the skull in order to see the brain, an older couple walked down to the morgue and knocked on the door. They could not get a good look at what we were doing, as there is a double set of doors to pass through before you get to the actual autopsy room, but parts of those doors are glass, and the woman who went out to talk to them had a slight splatter of blood on her scrubs, so they certainly got a glimpse of what was going on. This is obviously unacceptable and likely traumatic for the poor couple.

The reason the couple came down in the first place was because a relative of theirs had just died a few hours ago and they wanted to see the body to say their goodbyes. However, bodies are only brought to the morgue for autopsy if the cause of death is unknown or if they died under suspicious circumstances, and if your friend or relative is brought down there you certainly do NOT want to see them. It was a truly horrible miracle that this couple was even able to find the morgue, as it is a maze down there and there is not very good signage to point you in the right direction. Understandably, the head medical examiner was furious that this had happened. Once he found out that the couple had found the morgue because someone at the front

desk gave them directions, he kept muttering to himself about “those damn higher ups”. Similar to Brooke’s situation, the people at the front desk and the “higher ups” in charge were not aware of exactly how we did things down at the morgue. They made an incorrect assumption, and it had very negative consequences. In my opinion, the UW hospital system needs to improve their communication to avoid further mishaps like this, and to improve their overall function. As we have learned, communication and transparency are two very important parts of any system.

While that story I just told is certainly relevant (if a little disturbing (sorry!)), I did go off on a tangent from what I originally wanted to write about. When Brooke said that the healthcare system was broken, it made me think about other systems that may be broken in America, specifically the education system, as I hope to become a teacher after graduation. From my experience thus far, I have seen and heard that a lot of schools focus on teaching to a test. Whether that be so the school can get high ratings or meet quotas, or so the students can ace their ACTs or get all 5s on their AP tests, I do not think that is the way a school should be run. It is stressful, dehumanizing, and bad for morale. It also promotes the mentality that after you have taken the test, what you have learned is no longer relevant; and if something doesn’t matter you can just forget about it, right? I believe teachers should teach what they are passionate and knowledgeable about and students should learn because they want to learn. People would enjoy school more and be more motivated if schools cultivated a true desire for knowledge, which I believe can be found deep down within each person. There are simply so many amazing things to learn about in this world, far too many to explore in one lifetime.

I am in a Curriculum and Instruction class at the moment which focuses on diversity and inclusion in schools, another important aspect that I believe needs to be improved. In this class, we have talked a lot about gender and race issues, including the gender binary and the double

bind that occurs for many students of color who experience conflicts between being black or brown and being American. I brought up some of these issues in class, but did not realize that I could've talked about them two weeks ago in the journal about boundaries. As much as I liked writing about the pit orchestra because that is something I love to do, I feel that the gender binary system is a little more important in our society. (I am so glad that you told us that the journal prompts are loose/flexible. It is very freeing). Speaking of freeing, breaking or redrawing the boundary of the gender binary or what it means to be American can be wonderfully freeing for many people in America. It can allow them to escape their painful double-binds and to feel comfortable in their own skin. The same concept applies for the role of a woman in society, or what the term "marriage" can mean. Being more open, especially in schools, allows people to truly be themselves, and can help students open up to the endless possibilities of learning. If a student can feel comfortable and at home in a school, they can actually focus on the material and try their best, instead of worrying about how society will view them, or paint them in a negative light. If we can open up our boundaries, and ignore harmful societal norms that tell us who we can and cannot be, we can take a giant step forward in improving the education system in America. I am so glad that systems thinking allows us to reevaluate some of these broken systems and work on bettering them for the future. I am also glad Brooke came and gave us some real life examples about how she has already started doing some of this amazing work!