

# 'Master Manipulator' reveals how fraudulent research hid truth about Autism

Book Review: 'Master Manipulator: The Explosive True Story of Fraud, Embezzlement and Government Betrayal at the CDC'

By Louis Conte

Dirty deeds often require dirty people.

For the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Poul Thorsen, the subject of James Grundvig's just-released book, *Master Manipulator: The Explosive True Story of Fraud, Embezzlement, and Government Betrayal at the CDC* (Introduction by Robert F. Kennedy Jr), was the right man at the right time.

In the late 1990s, the CDC's Vaccine Safety Division, led by Dr Colleen Boyle, was facing a growing public realisation that autism was reaching epidemic levels. Many parents and some scientists suspected vaccines were the culprit in triggering the catastrophe. They pointed the finger at the increasing levels of Thimerosal, a mercury-based preservative used in many vaccines. In a stunning failure of oversight, no government regulatory agency caught the fact that mercury exposure in childhood vaccines vastly exceeded safety limits.

The secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) was facing billions of dollars in compensation claims in the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (NVICP) in what would later become the Omnibus Autism Proceedings.

Grundvig reveals internal emails – acquired through Freedom of Information Law filings – suggesting that the CDC, an agency administered by the secretary of HHS, needed data to exonerate vaccines. The pace of events Grundvig lays out along with internal CDC emails implies that the government officials needed it fast.

Enter Poul Thorsen, a visiting Danish scientist with lavish lifestyle ambitions, little talent, a poor work ethic and an eye for the ladies. With an overabundance of grandiosity, Dr Thorsen created a research group called the North Atlantic Neuro-Epidemiology Alliance (NANEA) in 1999.

## The 'Danish Studies'

Thorsen had access to Denmark's national disease registry, a health care database of all Danish citizens that would be used to "backtest" data for studies that would gin up statistics to show that autism rates in Denmark went up after the removal of Thimerosal, thereby proving

that increases in autism incidence rates could not be blamed on the preservative.

As Grundvig demonstrates in *Master Manipulator*, Thorsen and his NANEA cohorts excluded the data that showed the rates dropped by 30 per cent when the mercury was removed in Denmark. Noticing the data manipulation, leading scientific journals (*JAMA*, *New England Journal of Medicine*) refused to publish the paper.

The *Journal of Pediatrics* ultimately published Thorsen's paper, but only after a CDC executive, Dr José Cordero, twisted the arm of the journal's chief editor in a letter, which was also acquired through Freedom of Information requests.

Grundvig notes that the CDC officials who are alleged in the controversial documentary "Vaxxed" (pulled by the Tribeca Film Festival after pressure from unknown members of the scientific community) to have committed research fraud were the same scientists who brought in Thorsen.

Grundvig highlights the CDC's role as sponsors of hiring the rogue Danish scientist in Chapter 8, *2001: A Data Odyssey*, by capturing the May 30, 2001, email exchange between CDC's Dr Marshalyne Yeargin-Allsopp to José Cordero. She wrote:

"As we discussed on Friday, we have become aware through Poul Thorsen of an exciting opportunity to study the role of MMR vaccine and autism using several registries/existing studies and the repository of biologic specimens and laboratory capabilities in Denmark."

There were two principal legal theories being tested before Special Masters presiding over the Omnibus Autism Proceedings in the NVICP: whether the MMR vaccine caused autism and whether Thimerosal (the mercury-based vaccine preservative) caused autism as well.

Thanks to Thorsen, the CDC had what it needed to help the secretary of HHS avoid responsibility for both the MMR vaccine and, later, Thimerosal's role in the autism epidemic. The "Danish Studies" – six of them in total – would be used to kick out thousands of vaccine-injured claims from Vaccine Court in 2011. One of the cases dismissed was for Grundvig's son.

## Indictment

Then Thorsen's recklessness caught up with him.

Grundvig travelled to Den-

mark and interviewed Thorsen's associates while Thorsen himself avoided the journalist, declining repeated requests to tell his side of the story. In addition to reaching out to Thorsen through his colleagues, Grundvig contacted the fugitive scientist's lawyer and his ex-CDC epidemiologist girlfriend Dr Diana Schendel.

Grundvig learned from sources on the ground in Denmark that Thorsen began siphoning money out of NANEA, stopped paying his employees, and then left them with a hefty tax bill. Many of these complaints against him were levied by his underpaid staff, but were not recorded in the US Department of Justice's 22-count indictment. They were exposed in a separate 2012 Danish trial on Thorsen's own tax-evasion issues, all of which were investigated and reported by several Danish journalists.



NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The 2011 Department of Justice indictment against Thorsen showed his desire to be "upwardly mobile", buying a \$500,000, 4-bedroom house in a tony Atlanta suburb, a classic Harley Davidson motorcycle, plus two vehicles, including a Honda SUV. The reader will learn that all of this was allegedly done with falsified invoices on CDC letterhead, stealing more than \$1 million in US taxpayer-funded grant money meant for autism research.

Remarkably, no one at the CDC seemed to have noticed the exorbitant purchases until the Office of the Inspector General of HHS did so after picking up on a 2009 Aarhus University internal investigation of Thorsen and the forged CDC invoices.

Somehow, the CDC and the rest of the federal government public health community continues to claim that Thorsen's science was sound and proved that vaccines don't cause autism. In other words – "bad guy, good science."



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▲ The cover of James Otter Grundvig's book, 'Master Manipulator: The Explosive True Story of Fraud, Embezzlement, and Government Betrayal at the CDC'.

◆ Demonstrators carry signs decrying the use of mercury in vaccines during a protest at the US Capitol in Washington, DC, on July 20, 2005.

ever caught?

We may never know. While Thorsen is a fugitive from American justice, he is living openly in Denmark, seemingly without a care in the world. He works at a hospital that still receives CDC money, while his name appears on several studies published as recently as 2015. The scientific community continues to embrace Poul Thorsen.

In *Master Manipulator*, Grundvig paints a picture of a CDC where science is manipulated by people with a shocking lack of conscience. For example, Dr Colleen Boyle issued a memo asking employees to include children too young to have an autism diagnosis in autism data. Such inclusion would have the effect of reducing the recorded rate of autism. From her April 25, 2000, email to longtime CDC colleague Dr Frank DeStefano, she wrote:

"Since most of the dx's [diagnoses] are generally not picked up until the 2nd or 3rd year of life, had you considered eligibility criteria of at least 18 months or 2 years? What happens if you do this?"

This damning email strongly supports Grundvig's assertion that Boyle was willing to manipulate data to get the outcome desired.

And Grundvig goes further

– he reveals that before assuming her role at the CDC Vaccine Safety Division, Colleen Boyle helped cloud the truth about what Agent Orange did to Vietnam veterans exposed to dioxin, in the compelling chapter *Agent Orange is the New Black*.

As his book supports its main thesis – poisoned soldiers, poisoned children – it's clear that Thorsen wasn't the only master manipulator in this sad tale of abuse of power and misuse of government health care funds.

The CDC and Poul Thorsen deserved each other. James Grundvig's *Master Manipulator* shows that America deserved much, much better.

Louis Conte is the father of triplet boys, two with autism. He has written widely on the vaccine/autism controversy including a novel, "The Autism War," co-authored a nonfiction book with Tony Lyons, "Vaccine Injuries: Actual Documented Adverse Reactions to Vaccines," and co-authored a seminal article on the controversy, "Unanswered Questions From the Vaccine Injury Compensation Program: A Review of Compensated Cases of Vaccine-Induced Brain Injury," which was published in the peer-reviewed *Pace Environmental Law Review*.

# For Girls in Liberia, going to school is a delicate venture

Michelle Obama's visit puts spotlight on girls' education

By Chika Dunu  
Epoch Times Staff

Jomalin Kamara represents the tiny number of girls in Liberia who completed primary school. And the road wasn't easy to navigate – there were cultural quagmires she had to step through along the way.

Kamara said the established culture is to educate boys but not girls. Although, only 7 per cent of boys and girls together complete primary school in the nation.

Only 37 per cent of young women in Liberia are literate, according to UNICEF. The literacy rate for young men is 68 per cent, nearly twice as much.

"Culture plays a key role," Kamara said. "For example, my mommy, she didn't finish school when she was with her parents because their culture supports only boys going to school. And for most parents they strongly believe

in their culture. They will do everything to never go against it."

Kamara's advice to other girls who seek to convince their families that education won't destroy their culture, comes from experience.

"I will tell her to convince them by secretly going to school, make good grades, still be intelligent and humble, and show her parents that you can be educated and still be a good housewife – 'cause that's what they are afraid of," said 21-year-old Kamara.

More than a third of young women are married by the time they are 18, a UNICEF report said.

Kamara is grateful for the sacrifices her parents made for her to pursue an academic career.

"I'm not the only child, so they had to take care of every one of us [sic] school fees," said Kamara. "My dad repaired watches to send us to school. For that I'm grateful."

Ironically, in a family of four

siblings – two girls and two boys – Kamara and her sister are the only ones to pursue higher education. She is currently studying statistics at National School of Statistics and Applied Economics in the Ivory Coast on a full scholarship.

## Let girls learn

Perhaps the most obvious cultural anomaly in Liberia right now is its president – Harvard-educated woman Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Sirleaf is the first female elected as a head of state in Africa.

Michelle Obama, her mother, and her two daughters met with Sirleaf last week when they travelled to Liberia to promote girls' education. Obama is also a Harvard alumna and her daughter Malia intends to start there in the fall of 2017.

"It's always a privilege to travel with my mum and my daughters, because I want them to see

the world," said Obama at the Peace Corps Training Centre in Kakata, Liberia. "I want them to get to know your stories and understand what you go through and just how hard you're working to get your education."

Students at the R.S. Caulfield school in Unification Town listened to Obama share about the opportunities that are possible with education. Obama also heard stories like Kamara's from the young girls at the school – there were 334 girls among the 1034 student population.

"When I was your age, if anyone had told me that I would be the first lady of the United States of America, I would have laughed at them," Obama told the girls. "Because growing up, in that space, there had never been an African-American president, let alone an African-American first lady. So to be where I am today is basically doing what many people

thought was impossible."

Obama was promoting the Let Girls Learn initiative, which was launched in March 2015 by the US government to help adolescent girls "attain a quality education that empowers them to reach their full potential", according to the website.

More than 62 million girls around the world are not at school and half of them are adolescents.

## Liberia initiatives

While in Liberia, Obama established several new initiatives to support education reform for girls in Liberia.

The United States Agency for International Development will dedicate up to US\$27 million to Let Girls Learn and will go towards expanding the initiative with focus on education and the country's educational programs.

The Education Quality and Access In Liberia (EQUAL) initiative looks to promote

safe school environments for approximately 3864 adolescent girls in Grand Bassa by preparing school administrators with the tools to improve gender equality in education and respond to and prevent school-related, gender-based violence in 10 communities across Liberia.

Ten Liberian counties will get \$20 million to be allocated as a monthly take-home ration to families of young girls who maintain an 80 per cent or higher attendance rate at school. The funding is available for girls in grades 4 through 6 and is part of the US Department of Agriculture's McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program.

Let Girls Learn is a collaborative effort with the US Department of State, US Agency for International Development (USAID), Peace Corps, Millennium Challenge Corporation, and other agencies.