The Effects of Religious Switching at Marriage on Marital Stability and Happiness
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"That Synergy of People" The Significance of Collective Identity and Framing in a Gay-Straight Coalition
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Research Note:
Technological Prospects for Social Transformation: Sociology and the Freedom of Information
Samuel J. Taylor

Book Reviews
Information for Contributors

Sociological Insight is a fully refereed research journal that publishes articles, research notes, and book reviews on sociology and other social sciences. The journal aims to attract and promote original undergraduate research of the highest quality without regard to substantive focus, theoretical orientation, and methodological approach.

Submission and Style Guidelines

Submit one electronic version of your manuscript to sociologicalinsight@austin.utexas.edu by the deadline specified on www.sociologicalinsight.org. Articles and research notes may be co-authored. The document must be in a Microsoft Word compatible format, double spaced, and in size-12 Times New Roman font.

Manuscripts must follow the American Sociological Association (ASA) Style Guide, 2nd Edition (1997). In-text citations must agree exactly with the list of references.

Articles should be between 4000 and 7000 words, including footnotes, endnotes, and references. Research Notes should not exceed 2,500 words. Book reviews should be around 1,000 words.

Include a separate title page listing the title of the article, name(s) of the author(s), institutional affiliation, total word count, and acknowledgements (if any).

Articles should include an abstract not exceeding 200 words. The abstract should be single-spaced and be on its own page (after the cover page).

Indicate the place of all tables/figures within the article (e.g. Table 1 HERE), but append all articles to the end of the article.

Margins must be 1-1/4 inches on all four sides.

We invite undergraduates to submit articles and research notes, and graduate students and faculty to submit book reviews, for Sociological Insight’s May 2010 issue.

The Editor reserves the right to return manuscripts to authors without sending them to external reviewers if they do not adhere to the submission guidelines set forth above or do not meet the quality requirements of Sociological Insight.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As we put the finishing touches on the first issue of *Sociological Insight*, we would like to express our deep gratitude to everyone who has contributed to making *Sociological Insight* a tremendous success in its founding year.

First and foremost, we offer our deepest thanks to Sharmila Rudrappa, *Sociological Insight*’s faculty sponsor, for her dedicated support and kind encouragement. Dr. Rudrappa’s wise counsel and guidance throughout the year on countless matters—from how to strengthen funding proposals and improve manuscript evaluation forms to her prompt answers to the myriad questions we had about various aspects of the publishing process—ensured a high level of organizational professionalism and the efficient management of the journal’s affairs. To Debbie Rothschild, our undergraduate advisor: we truly appreciate your enthusiastic devotion and the kind encouragement you showed us throughout the year. Your advice on innumerable matters—far too many to mention here—and administrative support and facilitation of events were essential to the journal’s smooth operation.

We are greatly indebted to Christopher Ellison for offering his expert advice on various aspects of the reviewing and editorial process. Dr. Ellison was generous enough to spend hours of his time reading through 36 abstracts to help us assign manuscripts to faculty and graduate student reviewers from around the U.S., based on their areas of expertise. We are extremely grateful to Robert Hummer, Chairperson of the UT Department of Sociology, for the tremendous personal support he has given *Sociological Insight*, as well as the financial and administrative resources he generously made available to the journal.

The UT Sociology Department, faculty, graduate students, and staff were essential in building the institutional strength that allowed *Sociological Insight* to achieve the broad set of goals and objectives we set for the journal since its birth in July 2008. Above all, we would like to thank Thomas Pullum for spending hours upon hours with the Editor-in-Chief and Managing Editors, offering valuable advice on management, communication, editing, and reviewing, based on his decades of experience as a journal editor. We also want to thank Jeremy Uecker for sharing with us valuable information on his experiences as a submitter to professional journals, particularly his suggestions on ways to enhance the revise and
resubmit process.

Furthermore, we thank Cynthia Buckley for identifying potential funding sources and for her helpful ideas on journal promotion and advertisement; Robert Woodberry, for his perspicacious suggestions on how to improve the manuscript evaluation forms; Daniel Powers, for his thoughtful remarks on the journal cover; Robert Freymeyer, for promoting *Sociological Insight* to researchers, particularly undergraduates, in a number of venues; Jackie Dana, for her deep commitment and administrative (and personal) support; and Evelyn Porter for her creative feedback on various designs of the journal’s cover.

The Office of Undergraduate Research was also instrumental to the journal’s success. We are especially grateful to Lynda Gonzales for organizing beneficial workshops aimed at training *Sociological Insight* staff, identifying funding sources for the journal, and arranging for Elissa Nelson to advise *Sociological Insight* on matters related to copy editing.

The high-quality articles published in this first issue of *Sociological Insight* would not have been possible without the critical feedback of 106 reviewers from all over the United States, South America, and Asia, each of which reviewed one manuscript, and in a few cases, two. Our gratitude goes out to each of you for your careful evaluations and insightful comments to submitters. We would like to express thanks to the panel of faculty judges for our undergraduate paper competition: Bob Freymeyer; Mark Warr; Michael Young; Shannon Cavanagh; and Thomas Pullum.

We want to especially thank the 52 authors, from 33 universities around the U.S., who submitted their manuscripts to *Sociological Insight*. Your passion for rigorous academic research and the advancement of the social sciences is the foundation upon which *Sociological Insight* is built. Among the 106 reviewers, 36 of them were undergraduates. In particular, we want to thank Abraham Pena, Dahlia Baldinger, Marcelo Bohrt-Seegers, Margaret Cordova-aulds, May Moayad, and Melissa Rodriguez.

Last, though certainly not least, we thank Nancy Guevara, the amazingly talented designer of the front and back cover of *Sociological Insight* and its various advertisements, who patiently endured countless editing sessions and spent tens of hours designing sample covers before we made a final selection; and Sam Taylor, *Sociological Insight’s* Layout Editor, who labored intensively for hours on end to finish the layout on time.

None of this would have been possible without the generous support of our funders: the UT Sociology Department; the College of Liberal Arts; the Population Research Center; the UT Coop; and the University Honors...
Center. We deeply appreciate your confidence in *Sociological Insight* during its founding year.

Gratefully,

Mazen Elfakhani, Deva Cats-Baril, Noble Kuriakose, Laura Hudson, Micheondra Williams, and Tabitha Spence
Every year, undergraduate students nationwide write tens of thousands of social science papers. A small, yet substantial, portion of this undergraduate research makes significant theoretical and empirical contributions to the social sciences. These findings rarely reach the attention of professional social scientists, however, because knowledge in the academic community is mostly disseminated in the form of journal articles, a venue unfamiliar to many undergraduates. As a consequence, not only is potentially important research ignored, but the social science community loses an opportunity to attract and engage the youngest generation of scholars in the enterprise of academic knowledge production.

*Sociological Insight* was founded in July 2008 with the goal of establishing the first fully refereed national undergraduate research journal aimed at publishing only the highest quality of social science research. While there are many undergraduate research journals dedicated to the social sciences, *Sociological Insight* sets itself apart by capitalizing on the lode of excellent research produced by undergraduates with the primary purpose of making a serious impact on the scholarly literature, and secondarily to encourage undergraduates to engage in the research process.

Our most significant challenges this year have been two-fold. First, we had to attract original, recent (2007-2009), theory-driven, methodologically sound, professionally written submissions which made important findings. Second, we needed to ensure that every published article would have been subjected to a rigorous review process that guaranteed their academic worthiness on a battery of professional benchmarks. Essentially, we needed to render any published article in *Sociological Insight* suitable for citation in the academic community.

To these ends, we undertook a massive advertising effort in which 125 Sociology Departments around the United States were contacted by phone and email. The great majority responded enthusiastically, posting *Sociological Insight* flyers around their departments and sending undergraduates multiple reminders of this opportunity. More selectively, we targeted the winners of awards at various conferences, prestigious research fellowships, and undergraduate paper competitions. These efforts proved fruitful, as *Sociological Insight* attracted 52 submissions from 33 U.S. universities:

*American University, Augusta State University, Beloit College, Bethune-Cook-
man College, Davidson College, Fisk University, Harvard University, Loyola University Chicago, Macalester College, New York University, Pennsylvania State University, Presbyterian College, Princeton University, Rice University, Sonoma University, Southwestern University, Spelman College, Syracuse University, Texas State University, Truman University, University of California Santa Cruz, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, University of Chicago, University of Alabama-Birmingham, University of Iowa, University of Maryland, University of Minnesota, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Texas at Austin, Vanderbilt University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Wake Forest University.

After a preliminary evaluation process, 36 of the initial 52 submissions which were considered for publication were selected to be sent to reviewers. Each manuscript was evaluated by three or four external reviewers, usually one sociology professor, one graduate student, and one undergraduate. All in all, 28 faculty, 42 graduate students, and 36 undergraduates around the United States participated in the review process. If an article was not reviewed by a faculty member, then it was sent to two graduate students and one undergraduate. All manuscripts were assigned to reviewers based on research interests through an anonymous review process.

Selecting undergraduates to serve as reviewers is central to Sociological Insight’s mission. As the Roman Stoic philosopher Lucius Seneca wrote, *docendo discimus*: we learn when we teach. By critically evaluating a research paper on a number of specified criteria, students learn to identify the objective strengths and weaknesses of a paper and grow to develop an intuitive sense of what constitutes good research. Thus, undergraduates can benefit greatly from evaluating the work of their peers. Undergraduate reviewers had to submit a writing sample, a letter of recommendation, or a curriculum vitae before they could qualify to serve as reviewers, and they received a slightly adjusted article evaluation form.

We emphasized in our correspondences with each reviewer—particularly faculty and graduate students—that their overall recommendation as to whether a manuscript should be accepted for publication, rejected, or sent for “revise and resubmit” should reflect the fact that Sociological Insight is a highly selective journal. It was well-understood by reviewers that we were seeking to publish only the very best of undergraduate research; articles which could potentially make an impact on the scholarly literature.

Ultimately, seven articles and one research note were accepted for publication in this issue, as well as seven book reviews written by gradu-
ate students and PhD candidates. We are extremely proud of the excellent quality of all of these articles, each of which adds important insights to its area of study.

In this issue, Collin Payne fills a crucial gap in the scholarly literature on religion, family, and health by studying the effects of religious switching on marital stability and happiness. He finds that marital stability and happiness tend to be lower in religiously heterogamous marriages than in same-faith marriages. However, he also identifies important differences within “religiously homogamous” marriages. Homogamous marriages in which one partner made a relatively large switch to his or her spouse's religion were characterized by lower levels of marital stability and happiness than homogamous marriages in which no switch occurred. Moreover, Payne found that religious service attendance does not increase the marital stability and happiness of homogamous couples in which one partner switched, while it does in the case of homogamous couples in which there was no switch. These differences challenge the common conceptualization of homogamous marriages and suggest that more nuanced distinctions among homogamous marriages, based on the presence and relative size of a religious switch, are needed.

Alex Park weighs in on heated debates in political sociology on the causes of civil violence. He uses journalistic accounts, human rights documentation, and government data to examine why the residents of two South African townships which had remarkably similar cultural and structural backgrounds, exhibited drastically different behaviors during a twenty-day period of xenophobic violence in May 2008. While one township acted violently against local immigrants, the residents of the other township mobilized to protect their immigrant population. Park shows how the choice of tactics that residents use in order to exert control over their particular political situation depends primarily on the political opportunities that result from local and national political dynamics. This supports theories in sociology and political science that emphasize the primacy of political context over socio-economic or cultural factors in determining social action.

Further highlighting the importance of contextual factors in explaining social behavior is Ashley Leyda's article on sex offender recidivism. While most statistical models that predict the risk of sex offender recidivism focus on offender-level variables, Leyda investigates the effect of media coverage on recidivism rates in Minnesota. She finds that sex offenders who were released from jail in years in which there was relatively higher coverage of sex crimes in a major Minnesotan newspaper were more likely to recidivate. This finding could possibly pose a challenge to
rational choice models of criminal behavior which may predict that increased coverage of sex crimes would raise the perceived risk of reconviction for committing a sex crime (a disincentive). Alternatively, Leyda suggests that news coverage of sex crimes could reinforce sexual criminal activity through social learning mechanisms or vicarious reinforcement.

Low-income African American women often feel that effective communication with their doctors is strained by the impersonal, didactic tone of physicians. Dayna Fondell uses a structural violence model to understand the complex nature of HIV-risk among low-income African American women in Houston. This model moves beyond risky individual behaviors to encompass a broader range of social factors, daily experiences, and power systems, which together influence the high HIV-risk among African American women. She investigates a nonprofit health organization whose staff is comprised of members of the communities that the organization serves. Based on interviews with staff members and their clients, Fondell finds that staff members implicitly draw on a “structural violence” framework in using their personal histories to relate to the experiences of their African American clients. The organization’s approach is largely successful but is limited by funding stipulations that focus on the medical aspects of AIDS, as opposed to contextual factors.

We are also excited to publish Jennifer Barnes’ fascinating research on the intersection of consumer habits and ethnic identity among East African Muslim immigrant women. Through nine in-depth interviews, Barnes shows how these particular women reconcile assimilative pressures from mainstream American culture with pressures toward “cultural maintenance” emanating from their ethnic communities. They frame their dress in collectivist, Islamic terms, reinforcing their ethno-religious identity. On the other hand, they interpret shopping behaviors and experiences in American stores as an expression of agency and individuality. Many respondents took pride in their knowledge of American fashion and use it to assert their inclusion in American society and to create a sense of belonging as a minority group. Thus, Barnes’ research provides valuable insight into how an understudied immigrant population uses consumption to form an individualist identity based on agency and social power, while also using dress to construct a collectivist identity based on ethno-religious membership.

Alissa Tombaugh makes innovative use of wedding advice articles online to analyze how the language surrounding wedding functions reinforces category-bound behaviors pertaining to brides, women, grooms, and men, in the context of wedding planning. Tombaugh focuses on how brides are expected to fulfill a multitude of category-bound behaviors
pertaining to an unrealistic notion of idealized femininity. Interestingly, Tombaugh shows how the persistence of traditional inequality in wedding work is evidenced in new social mediums, in which social constructions of gender and structures of heteronormativity take new forms but are nonetheless part of the same systems of inequality.

Tristine Baccam’s research on the ways in which gay rights organizations form coalitions with “straight allies” is especially important in light of the current national debate on the rights of same-sex couples to marry. Baccam shows how the LGBT movement has expanded its membership base by constructing a collectivist identity focused on a set of grievances to which disparate groups, gay and straight alike, can relate. The LGBT organizations that Baccam studied used an “injustice frame” and a “family frame” to express its grievances, the latter of which was essential to the movement’s ability to attract straight families and individuals. Baccam draws similarities between the roles of straight allies in the LGBT movement and the involvement of whites in the civil rights movement and men in women’s rights movements. While these framing tactics aimed at inclusiveness can create internal weaknesses, they can also greatly expand a group’s social influence.

Finally, Samuel Taylor comments on the need for sociologists to investigate the potential effects of rapid technological advancement on reconfiguring social relations to reduce social inequities. The accelerating technological progression that has characterized the past few decades has rendered information the key component of modern economic, political, and cultural activity. Taylor propounds that as information becomes an increasingly valuable resource, a neo-Marxist class conflict centered on the freedom/control of information will constitute the dominant force shaping social relations. He emphasizes that this social struggle is already taking place in debates around network neutrality, file sharing, censorship, surveillance, copyright legislation, and in numerous other venues. As those who aim to restrict the freedom of information continue to define information as a scarce resource subject to the same legal/economic regulations as property rights, this struggle will become increasingly salient in social life.

We hope you will enjoy the diverse intellectual perspectives, innovative methods, and exciting findings presented in this first issue of Sociological Insight. Also included are seven book reviews that cover a wide range of important issues, trends, and social problems, from globalization and human rights to neighborhood social change and middle-school sex education.

Sociological Insight looks forward to bringing its readers many more
excellent publications in future years. Next year, we will reach an even greater number of undergraduates by expanding our faculty network, contacting more universities in and outside the United States, selling subscriptions to university libraries nationwide, and advertising at major sociological conferences. We will continue to devise plans to grow *Sociological Insight* with the goal of making it the leading fully refereed undergraduate research journal in the social sciences.

Enjoy reading!

Mazen Elfakhani
Austin, Texas
April 2009
The Effects of Religious Switching at Marriage on Marital Stability and Happiness*

Collin F. Payne
University of Wisconsin-Madison

One of the leading causes of religious switching is interfaith marriage, when one partner of a marriage changes religions to be of the same faith as his or her spouse. This paper investigates the consequences of religious switching on marital happiness and perceived marital stability. I use NSFH wave 1 data to examine whether the patterns of reported stability and attitudes towards marriage differ among couples where one partner changes religion at marriage, couples where partners are of the same faith before marriage, and couples where partners remain of separate religions through marriage. My analysis suggests that marital happiness and stability are lower among individuals in religiously heterogamous marriages and marriages where there is a large switch—a switch between major religious groupings—for religious harmony when compared to same-faith marriages. My findings show that future research on religion and marriage may need to reconsider how homogamy and heterogamy are defined, as couples who undergo a religious switch to be of the same faith at marriage have significantly different outcomes than couples who were previously of the same religion.

Movement between religions is related to a variety of factors, both social and personal. It is estimated that one in three Americans switch religions at some point in their lives (Loveland 2003; Roof 1989), and almost one in ten will switch two or more times (Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens 1995), a far higher figure than of any other western country. One of the leading causes of this switching is interfaith marriage (Hadaway and Marler 1993; Musick and Wilson 1995; Newport 1979; Sherkat 1991), when one partner switches religions to be of the same faith as his or her spouse. As switching occurs frequently in the United States, further in-

*I would like to thank the generous support of the National Science Foundation during this research, as well as Hyeyoung Woo, Robert Hummer, Jim Raymo and two anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions on earlier drafts. A preliminary draft of this paper was presented at the 2007 Southern Demographic Association Conference. The author can be reached via email at collin.payne@mdrc.org.
vestigation is warranted into the consequences of this brand of religious mobility. My study will look at whether the patterns of reported marital stability and attitudes towards marriage differ between couples where one partner changes religion at marriage to obtain religious homogamy, couples where partners share the same religion before marriage, and couples where partners remain heterogamous through marriage.

In many ways this paper seeks to further the work of several papers on marital stability and marital happiness (Call and Heaton 1997; Glenn 1982; Heaton and Pratt 1990), by both bringing heterogamous couples into the analysis and looking more specifically at couples where one partner switched religion at marriage. However, my analysis will focus primarily on the differences between these various types of marriage, and somewhat less on how religious beliefs and specific church affiliation affect satisfaction and stability outcomes. Though there have been a great deal of previous studies of homogamy and heterogamy, and a sizable amount of work on religious switching for marital reasons, no previous research has specifically examined how switching religions at marriage affects the reported stability and happiness of the union. Thus, the goal of this paper is to obtain a more nuanced view of how the religious history and religious conditions of a marriage affect its happiness and stability.

**Literature Review**

The literature on religion and marriage has identified many of the impacts and trends that are associated with different kinds of inter- and intra-faith marriage. Overall, homogamous couples are more likely to be happy with their marriages, and are more likely to view their partnership as stable (Glenn 1982; Heaton and Pratt 1990). Some of this phenomenon may be due to the tendency for religiously homogamous couples to be more similar across other characteristics (race/ethnicity, education, socioeconomic status, etc.). However, even when these differences are controlled for, higher levels of religious attendance are still associated with a higher likelihood of reported happiness and stability (Heaton 1984; Heaton and Pratt 1990), and homogamous couples have far higher rates of attendance than do heterogamous couples.

Religious switching is fairly common in the United States, though the motivations behind it are derived from a great many factors on the individual level. Aside from interfaith marriage, a number of other life events have an impact on an individual’s propensity to switch, such as the dissolving of close family ties (Sherkat and Wilson 1995) or residen-
tial relocation. The age breakdown of “switchers” shows that movement between religions is disproportionately made up of young people (Newport 1979), the group that is also at higher risk of entering into a marriage and having children. It is known that in religious switching for marital reasons, the religions of origin and destination are not chosen randomly, and there are differing likelihoods of switching depending on the differing religious backgrounds of the partners. Switching for marriage is very dependent on how “attractive” and “retentive” the individual’s religious choices are (Musick and Wilson 1995). Additionally, married couples’ church attendance and strength of belief are associated with greater marital happiness, and an overall lower risk of conflict and dissolution (Sherkat and Ellison 1999). Thus, it might be expected that an increase in attendance would have similar effects across all categories of marriage, as increasing attendance should be a good measure of religious devotion and higher religious capital.

Religious attendance is also heavily impacted by the presence of children in the home. Married couples with children are far more likely to participate regularly in religious services than childless and unmarried couples (Mueller and Cooper 1986; Roozen, McKinney, and Thomson 1990). This relationship is not necessarily unidirectional as religious participation is correlated with higher rates of marriage fertility (Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite 1995).

The likelihood of switching religions at marriage is also impacted by the racial makeup of the couple. Overall, “Non-whites are less likely to switch for reasons of marriage than whites” (Musick and Wilson 1995), which may be due to the tendency of individuals to marry within their racial and/or ethnic groups, where religious homogeneity is generally higher. Non-whites overall report more religious attendance and higher levels of religiosity than do whites, which likely contributes to the lower rates of switching among these groups. Education has been shown to raise the likelihood of switching overall (Loveland 2003), though it is also correlated with greater religious participation (Iannaconne 1997; Sherkat 1998). It is as of yet unknown if education affects the chances of switching at marriage.

In summary, homogamous marriages have overall higher rates of stability and happiness than heterogamous marriages, and this is significantly driven by the tendency for homogamous partners to be more similar across a range of social characteristics than heterogamous couples. Church attendance is associated with greater happiness and stability, and the presence of children spurs on this attendance. Additionally, race, ethnicity, and education also impact the propensity of an individual
to switch religions at marriage.

Although we have a good grasp of the causes of religious switching at marriage and the differences between homogamous and heterogamous couples through previous research, it is unknown if religious switching at marriage has an effect on the happiness and stability of the union. I hypothesize that couples where a partner switches religion for marital homogamy will exhibit higher rates of self-reported marital instability and unhappiness than couples who were homogamous prior to marriage. This prediction follows from contemplating the respective levels of religious capital—the skills, knowledge, satisfaction, and relationships gained from religious participation (Iannaccone 1990)—present in different types of marriages. In a homogamous marriage, shared religious activity is complimentary, with higher levels of religious capital resulting in greater returns on religious behavior (Iannaccone 1990). Though “switcher” couples would usually be lumped in with the larger homogamous group, I theorize the lack of a shared religious history will limit the returns on their religious behavior. I also predict that rates of happiness and stability will be higher in couples where a small switch occurs than in couples where a major switch occurs, as minor switches impact religious capital less than major switches (Iannaccone 1990). Drawing on these hypotheses, this article investigates if there are differences in the happiness and stability outcomes between couples who were homogamous before marriage and couples who are homogamous due to a switch in faith at the time of marriage.

**Methodology**

In order to study the relationship between type of marriage and marital happiness and stability, I used data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), a nationally representative longitudinal sample of individuals with waves of data collection in 1987-8, 1993-4, and 2001-2. The NSFH contains a main personal interview and a self-administered section for the given respondent, as well as a self-administered questionnaire given to the respondent’s spouse. The 1987-8 questionnaire asked a more exhaustive set of questions on religion than other intervals, and thus I will only use data from the first wave in my analysis. These data contain an oversample of some minority groups as well as recently married couples, increasing cases of marriage and allowing for a more precise estimation of coefficients. In addition to the main interview, I use data from the self-administered questionnaire of the respondent, as well as data from a self-administered questionnaire of the main
respondent’s marital partner. The interviewers were present for the self-administered part of the main respondent’s questionnaire, and thus there was nearly full completion of that data. For the marital partner form, the response rate was 83.7 percent. The total sample of the NSFH wave 1 is 13,007 individuals, but limiting my study to first marriages, currently married couples, cases where I have records from both partners, and those of white, black, or Hispanic race/ethnicity leads to a total sample size of 4,089 respondents.

As stated above, my measures were collected using a combination of personal interviews and self-administered questionnaires. My measures of marital stability and happiness come from two questions. To measure happiness, the question, “Taking all things together, how would you describe your marriage?” was asked, with responses coded from 1 (very unhappy) to 7 (very happy). Due to the number of responses and the general patterns of response, I changed this into a binary variable with 0 for responses of 6 and 7 and 1 for responses of 1 to 5. Perceived marital stability was measured using the question, “During the past year, have you ever thought that your marriage might be in trouble?” with responses coded 0 for no and 1 for yes.

I used a variety of measures for the background information on my respondents. Responses for religious affiliation originally fell into over 60 categories, which I collapsed down into the categories of No Religion, Catholic, Liberal Protestant, Conservative Protestant, Jewish, and Other, in order to lessen the number of positives of religious heterogamy due to slightly differing responses between spouses. My coding scheme for the religion variable was informed by the categories used by Steensland et al. (2000), modified for the NSFH religion categories. This will allow me to see how large the switch at marriage was—either within or between major groups. Other religion measures, all coded similarly, include the religion of the main respondent during childhood, pre-marriage, and post-marriage, and the religion of the spouse post-marriage. Both spouse and respondent were asked if they had switched religion at marriage, with 0 coded as no and 1 as yes, and I combined these two responses to get the portion of my sample where a religious switch at marriage occurred. I categorized four different types of marriage in my analysis—homogamous, heterogamous, marriages where there was a small religious switch (i.e. within each of the 6 categories of religion), and marriages where there was a large switch—a change in faith from one major religious grouping to another.

My study also controlled for other variables, including age, sex, race, regular religious attendance, duration of marriage, presence of a
child, educational attainment, and region. Age is coded as 0 for less than 55 years and 1 for 55 or over, and sex is coded as 1 for males and 0 for females. My measure of religious attendance is also coded as binary, with 0 as attending less than once a month and 1 as attending once a month or more. I coded the duration of marriage into four categories: 0-3 years, 4-9 years, 10-19 years, and 20 years or more. The child measure simply tells if there was a biological child produced from the marriage. For education, the measure is divided into variables for those without a high school diploma, for those with only a high school diploma, for those with some college or an associate’s degree, and for those with a bachelor’s degree or more. As there are differences in religious behavior between regions of the country (Sherkat and Ellison 1999), I included a measure of this, with categories coded for the regions of the Northeast, North-Central, South, and West. Throughout my coding, responses labeled as “No answer,” “Refused,” or “Inapplicable” were set as missing values.

To obtain my results, I used logistic regression to estimate several models. I initially ran separate regressions for marital happiness and marital stability, including binary measures for the type of religious situation at marriage, to ascertain if there were fundamental differences between my four different types of marriages. I next divided the overall sample, running separate logistic regressions for each category of marriage for marital stability and happiness, in order to see how the correlates of these characteristics varied between the different types of marriage. This approach allowed me to see both the total differences among the four types of marriages as well as how the various factors that impact stability and satisfaction change between the types of marriage.

Results

The descriptive statistics from my data (Table 1) show that overall 24.5 percent of people in my sample report marital unhappiness, and 21 percent report marital instability. The sample has slightly more females than males, and about one-quarter of the sample is over the age of 55. Around 58 percent of couples have had biological children, and slightly over 60 percent attend church at least once a month. Homogamous couples made up 2140 (56.4 percent) of my cases, heterogamous couples 909 (24.2 percent) cases, couples where a small switch occurred 511 (13.3 percent) cases, and couples where a large switch occurred 222 (6.1 percent) of my cases, though these numbers vary somewhat in my models due to differences in missing data on the happiness and stability questions.
Table 1
Summary Statistics of Marital Happiness, Stability, Marriage Type, and Other Predictors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital Instability</td>
<td>3731</td>
<td>0.210</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Unhappiness</td>
<td>3920</td>
<td>0.245</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4089</td>
<td>0.482</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 55</td>
<td>4089</td>
<td>0.231</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of a Child</td>
<td>4088</td>
<td>0.579</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Attendance</td>
<td>4018</td>
<td>0.597</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Type of Marriage:
- Homogamous: 4089 | 0.564 | 0 | 1
- Heterogamous: 4089 | 0.242 | 0 | 1
- Small Switch: 4089 | 0.133 | 0 | 1
- Big Switch: 4089 | 0.061 | 0 | 1

Duration of Marriage:
- 0-3 years: 4082 | 0.124 | 0 | 1
- 4-9 years: 4082 | 0.231 | 0 | 1
- 10-20 years: 4082 | 0.236 | 0 | 1
- 20 years or more: 4082 | 0.409 | 0 | 1

Education:
- Less than HS grad: 4084 | 0.208 | 0 | 1
- HS grad: 4084 | 0.510 | 0 | 1
- Some College: 4084 | 0.055 | 0 | 1
- Bachelors or more: 4084 | 0.227 | 0 | 1

Race/Ethnicity:
- White: 4035 | 0.819 | 0 | 1
- Black: 4035 | 0.106 | 0 | 1
- Hispanic: 4035 | 0.075 | 0 | 1

Region:
- Northeast: 4089 | 0.186 | 0 | 1
- North Central: 4089 | 0.290 | 0 | 1
- South: 4089 | 0.353 | 0 | 1
- West: 4089 | 0.172 | 0 | 1

Source: National Survey of Families and Households Wave 1
The basic logistic regression models (Table 2) show interesting differences in reported stability between the types of marriage, though the results for marital happiness were somewhat weaker overall. People in heterogamous marriages, as expected, reported significantly greater rates of marital instability. Interestingly, however, persons in couples that experienced a large religious switch at marriage had the highest coefficient for marital instability, and a moderate, though not significant, coefficient for happiness. In previous research on religion and marriage, these couples would have been simply coded as homogamous; thus this finding is quite important and surprising. Religious attendance provides a strong positive effect on happiness and stability, and the presence of a child heightens both marital unhappiness and marital instability. Older individuals reported lower feelings of marital instability, and level of education seemed to have no effect on either happiness or stability in these models. Duration of marriage had opposite effects for marital stability and happiness, with increasing duration associated with increasing stability, but very significantly decreasing levels of marital happiness. Hispanic individuals reported higher rates of stability, and black individuals had significantly lower reported marital happiness. Males also reported higher rates of happiness and stability than females.

The next portion of the analysis splits the above model and estimates separate regressions for the types of marriage. Here, the goal is to ascertain how the correlates of marital happiness and marital stability differ between these groups. These analyses are exploratory, but will hopefully aid in understanding the underlying reasons behind the overall lower rates of stability and happiness among heterogamous couples and couples where one partner made a major religious switch for homogamy. I will begin my analysis by discussing the differences between marital types with respect to marital stability, and then will discuss marital happiness.

Some interesting and unexpected results arise in the comparison between the correlates of stability for the four types of marriages in my study (Table 3). I conducted t-tests of the net effects of each sub-sample to the whole group, and found significant differences ($p > .05$ level) in the homogamous and heterogamous groups. Overall, the coefficients of many variables are of similar size and magnitude as they were in the overall logistic regression results. Although the difference is not universally significant, males are generally less likely to report experiencing marital instability. The presence of a child also seems to raise feelings of instability overall, and individuals in longer duration marriages show less likelihood of experiencing marital trouble.
Table 2
Logistic Regression Models of Type of Marriage and Other Covariates on Marital Instability and Unhappiness:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Marital Instability</th>
<th>Marital Unhappiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-.221*</td>
<td>-0.128†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.086)</td>
<td>(0.078)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 55</td>
<td>-0.446*</td>
<td>-0.155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.178)</td>
<td>(0.133)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>0.543***</td>
<td>0.422***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.108)</td>
<td>(0.098)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Attendance</td>
<td>-0.440***</td>
<td>-0.418***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.092)</td>
<td>(0.084)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TYPE OF MARRIAGE (Homogamous is Omitted)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Marital Instability</th>
<th>Marital Unhappiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heterogamous</td>
<td>0.218*</td>
<td>0.281*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.103)</td>
<td>(0.096)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Switch</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.135)</td>
<td>(0.119)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Switch</td>
<td>0.301†</td>
<td>0.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.174)</td>
<td>(0.162)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DURATION (0-3 years is Omitted)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Marital Instability</th>
<th>Marital Unhappiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-9 years</td>
<td>-0.051</td>
<td>0.353*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.141)</td>
<td>(0.152)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19 years</td>
<td>-0.236</td>
<td>0.590***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.150)</td>
<td>(0.155)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20 years</td>
<td>-0.800***</td>
<td>0.518**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.162)</td>
<td>(0.157)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EDUCATION (Less than HS is Omitted)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Marital Instability</th>
<th>Marital Unhappiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Grad</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.125)</td>
<td>(0.107)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.207)</td>
<td>(0.191)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA or more</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.144)</td>
<td>(0.128)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RACE (White is Omitted)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Marital Instability</th>
<th>Marital Unhappiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.371**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.143)</td>
<td>(0.125)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>-0.331†</td>
<td>0.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.182)</td>
<td>(0.157)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**REGION (Northeast is Omitted)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Marital Instability</th>
<th>Marital Unhappiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>0.139</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.129)</td>
<td>(0.115)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 3
Logistic Regression Models of the Covariates of Marital Instability by Type of Marriage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Homogamous</th>
<th>Heterogamous</th>
<th>Small Switch</th>
<th>Big Switch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>0.227†</td>
<td>-0.013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.126)</td>
<td>(0.112)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>0.211</td>
<td>-0.013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.143)</td>
<td>(0.130)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.166***</td>
<td>-1.636***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.199)</td>
<td>(0.192)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>3614</td>
<td>3795</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
<td>243.40</td>
<td>115.37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prob &gt; chi2</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R2</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SE reported in parenthesis under coefficient*

†p<.10 *p<.05 **p<.005 ***p<.001

*Source: National Survey of Families and Households Wave 1*

### Male

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Homogamous</th>
<th>Heterogamous</th>
<th>Small Switch</th>
<th>Big Switch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over 55</td>
<td>-0.359</td>
<td>-0.683</td>
<td>-0.644</td>
<td>0.265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.239)</td>
<td>(0.410)</td>
<td>(0.481)</td>
<td>(0.663)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of a Child</td>
<td>0.613***</td>
<td>0.428*</td>
<td>0.669*</td>
<td>0.402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.157)</td>
<td>(0.188)</td>
<td>(0.328)</td>
<td>(0.462)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Attendance</td>
<td>-0.388**</td>
<td>-0.795***</td>
<td>-0.413</td>
<td>0.161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.125)</td>
<td>(0.186)</td>
<td>(0.273)</td>
<td>(0.394)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DURATION (0-3 years is Omitted)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Homogamous</th>
<th>Heterogamous</th>
<th>Small Switch</th>
<th>Big Switch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-9 years</td>
<td>-0.080</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>-0.204</td>
<td>-0.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.210)</td>
<td>(0.231)</td>
<td>0.474)</td>
<td>(0.656)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20 years</td>
<td>-0.166</td>
<td>-0.072</td>
<td>-0.694</td>
<td>-0.724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.218)</td>
<td>(0.257)</td>
<td>(0.472)</td>
<td>(0.678)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 20 years</td>
<td>-0.760**</td>
<td>-0.678*</td>
<td>-0.898†</td>
<td>-1.750*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.232)</td>
<td>(0.308)</td>
<td>(0.463)</td>
<td>(0.731)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### EDUCATION (Less than HS is Omitted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Coefficient 1</th>
<th>Coefficient 2</th>
<th>Coefficient 3</th>
<th>Coefficient 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS grad</td>
<td>0.242</td>
<td>-0.302</td>
<td>0.299</td>
<td>-0.324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.173)</td>
<td>(0.230)</td>
<td>(0.441)</td>
<td>(0.535)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>0.143</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.321</td>
<td>-1.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.303)</td>
<td>(0.361)</td>
<td>(0.628)</td>
<td>(0.988)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA or more</td>
<td>0.410*</td>
<td>-0.483†</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>-1.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.199)</td>
<td>(0.264)</td>
<td>(0.482)</td>
<td>(0.634)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### RACE (White is Omitted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Coefficient 1</th>
<th>Coefficient 2</th>
<th>Coefficient 3</th>
<th>Coefficient 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>-0.161</td>
<td>0.316</td>
<td>0.435</td>
<td>0.668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.196)</td>
<td>(0.269)</td>
<td>(0.457)</td>
<td>(0.708)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>-0.487*</td>
<td>0.213</td>
<td>0.133</td>
<td>-1.366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.230)</td>
<td>(0.385)</td>
<td>(0.651)</td>
<td>(1.151)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### REGION (Northeast is Omitted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Coefficient 1</th>
<th>Coefficient 2</th>
<th>Coefficient 3</th>
<th>Coefficient 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>0.202</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>-0.206</td>
<td>0.673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.178)</td>
<td>(0.241)</td>
<td>(0.389)</td>
<td>(0.546)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>0.167</td>
<td>0.434†</td>
<td>-0.031</td>
<td>0.495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.171)</td>
<td>(0.237)</td>
<td>(0.400)</td>
<td>(0.563)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>0.302</td>
<td>-0.040</td>
<td>0.182</td>
<td>0.660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.196)</td>
<td>(0.262)</td>
<td>(0.466)</td>
<td>(0.645)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Coefficient 1</th>
<th>Coefficient 2</th>
<th>Coefficient 3</th>
<th>Coefficient 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.452***</td>
<td>-0.491</td>
<td>-1.026</td>
<td>-0.763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.273)</td>
<td>(0.335)</td>
<td>(0.640)</td>
<td>(0.931)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2029</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square (df=15)</td>
<td>127.19</td>
<td>75.07</td>
<td>33.20</td>
<td>24.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prob &gt; chi2</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R2</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>0.098</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SE reported in parenthesis under coefficient
†p<.10 *p<.05 **p<.005 ***p<.001

Source: National Survey of Families and Households Wave 1
Separating the regression by type of marriage sheds light on some important differences within these groups. Though the limited sample sizes of the small switch and big switch groups make interpretation of these results difficult, one can see interesting patterns in the size and magnitude of their various coefficients. Importantly, increasing education shows opposite effects for homogamous and small-switch marriages as it does for heterogamous and big-switch marriages. While education is shown to decrease the likelihood of experiencing marital instability for small-switch and homogamous marriages, it shows strong negative coefficients for heterogamous and big-switch partnerships, indicating that individuals in these groups with at least a bachelor’s degree have a higher chance of being in a troubled marriage.

The differences in the impacts of religious attendance provide the most interesting finding here. Regular religious attendance is shown to be a strong protective influence in terms of stability for both homogamous and heterogamous marriages. For “small-switch” marriages, the statistically insignificant coefficient was of similar magnitude and direction. However, in marriages where a big religious switch occurred at marriage, religious attendance shows no protective effect whatsoever (the coefficient is non-significant and is of opposite sign in comparison to the other categories). This is fascinating, as individuals in big-switch marriages have attendance rates comparable to homogamous and small-switch individuals, rates far higher than those of heterogamous couples (Table 4). Though their attendance is quite high, it seems to have no effect on their marital stability.

The results for the separate regression models of marital happiness (Table 5) follow closely with the marital stability regressions, though the model fit is overall somewhat weaker. A t-test of net sub-sample effects was significant only for the heterogamous group. Again, these analyses are exploratory, and as small sample sizes limit significance in the small switch and big switch groups, my discussions here are somewhat speculative. Marital duration still has an overall strong negative effect on marital happiness, meaning longer-term marriages may be more stable, but they also lead to lower reported levels of happiness. The coefficients of the child measure also show that the presence of a child is associated with lower levels of happiness, though the coefficients are not significant for all types of marriage. African Americans also report overall lower levels of happiness with marriage, though again the difference is not universally significant.
Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less Than Once/Month</th>
<th>Once/Month or More</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homogamous</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(33.83)</td>
<td>(66.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterogamous</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(64.88)</td>
<td>(35.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Switch</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(27.19)</td>
<td>(72.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Switch</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(31.30)</td>
<td>(68.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,618</td>
<td>2,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40.27</td>
<td>59.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages in parenthesis under counts.
Source: National Survey of Families and Households Wave 1

Table 5

Logistic Regression Models of the Coefficients of Marital Unhappiness by Type of Marriage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Homogamous</th>
<th>Heterogamous</th>
<th>Small Switch</th>
<th>Big Switch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-0.201†</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
<td>-0.254</td>
<td>0.165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.107)</td>
<td>(0.151)</td>
<td>(0.220)</td>
<td>(0.330)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 55</td>
<td>-0.079</td>
<td>-0.378</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>-0.323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.179)</td>
<td>(0.297)</td>
<td>(0.346)</td>
<td>(0.539)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of a Child</td>
<td>0.578***</td>
<td>0.175</td>
<td>0.398</td>
<td>0.615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.140)</td>
<td>(0.175)</td>
<td>(0.279)</td>
<td>(0.436)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Attendance</td>
<td>-0.412***</td>
<td>-0.493**</td>
<td>-0.593*</td>
<td>0.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.113)</td>
<td>(0.169)</td>
<td>(0.239)</td>
<td>(0.368)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DURATION (0-3 years is Omitted)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-9 years</td>
<td>0.395†</td>
<td>0.486*</td>
<td>-0.124</td>
<td>0.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.230)</td>
<td>(0.240)</td>
<td>(0.483)</td>
<td>(0.795)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20 years</td>
<td>0.638*</td>
<td>0.700*</td>
<td>-0.084</td>
<td>0.442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.230)</td>
<td>(0.258)</td>
<td>(0.473)</td>
<td>(0.775)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 20 years</td>
<td>0.519*</td>
<td>0.705*</td>
<td>-0.032</td>
<td>0.424</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**EDUCATION (Less than HS is Omitted)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS grad</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>(0.140)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.674†</td>
<td>(0.372)</td>
<td>†p&lt;.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>-0.040</td>
<td>(0.265)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.544</td>
<td>(0.572)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA or more</td>
<td>0.132</td>
<td>(0.171)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.998</td>
<td>(0.954)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RACE (White is Omitted)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0.344*</td>
<td>(0.162)</td>
<td>*p&lt;.05</td>
<td>0.204</td>
<td>(0.414)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>(0.190)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.464</td>
<td>(0.591)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**REGION (Northeast is Omitted)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>(0.156)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.511</td>
<td>(0.333)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>-0.063</td>
<td>(0.149)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.145</td>
<td>(0.336)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>-0.086</td>
<td>(0.178)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.269</td>
<td>(0.408)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Constant**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-1.722***</td>
<td>(0.265)</td>
<td>***p&lt;.001</td>
<td>-1.329***</td>
<td>(0.329)</td>
<td>***p&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chi-Square (df=15)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Prob &gt; chi2</th>
<th>Pseudo R2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>69.42</td>
<td>2140</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.030</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SE reported in parenthesis under coefficient
†p<.10  *p<.05  **p<.005  ***p<.001
Source: National Survey of Families and Households Wave 1
The results of religious attendance on marital happiness are strikingly different across the four types of marriage. For homogamous, heterogamous, and small-switch couples, the coefficients are strong, significant, and negative, demonstrating that regular attendance is associated with a lower likelihood of an individual reporting marital unhappiness in these groups. In couples where there was a major religious switch at marriage, however, religious attendance again shows no significant effect, and indeed the coefficient trends towards showing the opposite—that attendance is associated with decreased happiness.

**Conclusion**

My investigation provided some interesting and surprising information on the relationship between the type of religious makeup of a marriage and the corresponding levels of stability and happiness in the marriage. Big switch marriages and heterogamous marriages showed much lower coefficients for marital stability and marital happiness than did homogamous and small switch couples. The results also show that marital happiness and marital stability are not the same, and seem to be influenced by strikingly different factors. For example, duration of marriage was directly related to marital stability but inversely related to marital happiness, and differences between happiness and stability were also observed across different racial, education, and regional groups. The models also seem to fit marital stability better than marital happiness.

Perhaps the most striking of my findings is that religious attendance has no positive effect on either marital stability or marital happiness for couples where there was a major religious switch for marital homogamy. Though these couples attend religious services at comparable levels to homogamous and small-switch couples, they do not seem to receive any of the protective effects that attendance provides these groups. This is an interesting and unexpected result, and one which is not easily explained. This difference may be due to differing levels of personal religious belief and involvement among individuals who underwent a major switch at marriage. Individuals willing to undertake a large switch of faith at marriage are not likely to be heavily invested in their prior tradition, and thus may not be as likely to invest extensively in their new religion. That scenario would result in a lower amount of religious capital for the couple, and this would contribute to the group’s higher rates of marital instability and lack of benefit from attendance when compared to other types of homogamous marriages. Furthering this observation, there may also be cases where a partner later regrets
their change in faith, generating even more tension in the marriage. Regardless of the level of individual devotion, people who are brought up in a religion have likely internalized certain attitudes and beliefs inherent to their faith. Though they were willing to change faiths for reasons of marital homogamy, these subtle differences in viewpoints may arise as a source of disharmony in the context of the marriage. My findings suggest that future research on religion and marriage may need to consult the marital religious switching of homogamous couples, in order to more successfully understand this group. This study also emphasizes the necessity of further research into the differences in religiosity and strength of beliefs among couples where a partner switched religion for homogamy.

References


A Tale of Two Townships: Political Opportunity and Violent and Non-Violent Local Control in South Africa

ALEX PARK
Macalester College

A number of recent gains in social science have found that periods of violent civil disorder marked by chaos may actually exhibit an underlying order, defined by the specific political conditions of the time. Violent control can emerge as a grassroots effort to establish authority in areas experiencing a vacuum of central authority. However, can these same theories of violence be applied to incidents of widespread non-violent control as well, where and when the political conditions are similar? Using a variety of accounts from research conducted by human rights groups, media outlets, and government data, this paper considers the actions of residents in two townships in South Africa during a twenty-day period of xenophobic violence in May 2008. While one township acted violently against its immigrant population, the other mobilized to protect its own population of local immigrants. The actions are considered within a similar theoretical framework to demonstrate how both involved an assertion of local control done in the interests of residents during a time of political instability at the national level.

For twenty days in May 2008, impoverished black townships in cities throughout South Africa experienced an unprecedented wave of xenophobic violence which left 62 people dead and over 30,000 internally displaced (HRW 2008). The events added insult to an injured and, by many readings, inept president, all but ensuring the ascendancy of his longtime rival only months later (Kagwanja 2008). The period garnered significant attention in both local and international news media and in the South African government. The attacks began in the Alexandra Township in Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, but within days, the attacks were replicated in similar episodes of violence in townships and city centers throughout the nation. A few commentators spoke of a nationwide uprising of the urban poor against a common, if illusionary, immigrant enemy (Mngxitama 2008).

Analysts at observing media outlets and human rights groups
took a more conventional approach, pointing to a presumed connection between high poverty and high violence, and the increasing prevalence of poor immigrants, especially from Zimbabwe. Historically, the black townships of South Africa were the location of some of its most desperate poverty, and township residents were prone to act violently, either against state agents (during the Apartheid era) or against each other, in the form of crime. Additionally, since the end of Apartheid in 1994, a majority of native South Africans—but especially township residents—had been known to harbor increasingly strong anti-immigrant sentiments (HSRC 2008:16). Though never on the scale exhibited in May 2008, conflict between immigrants and natives had turned violent in the past. For these reasons, many observers of the May period assumed that whatever tensions that had existed between immigrants and natives in the townships before simply reached their breaking point that year. The supposed culprit was the confluence of poverty, a tendency towards violence, and the close proximity of immigrants and poor natives.

However, it is essential to emphasize that not every impoverished township in South Africa violently evicted its immigrant population in May. One in particular, the township of Khutsong, less than thirty miles southwest of Alexandra, did not report a single incident for the entire period (Carletonville Herald 2008). Local leaders there arranged for the protection of immigrants en masse, and residents staged massive shows of solidarity in the township streets (Mngxitama 2008). What is remarkable is that Khutsong had its own large population of foreign immigrants, proportionally comparable to Alexandra’s and, by some measures, was as poor as, and even more prone to violence than, Alexandra.

Here, a problem arises: the residents of one township worked very hard to either expel or murder foreign immigrants in their community. During the same period, residents from another culturally and conditionally similar township mobilized to protect foreign immigrants. These facts alone challenge any generalized notion which would attribute the difference in outcome to poverty or cultural conditions. Alternatively, I propose an analysis that connects the violence to the broader political interests at work in the two townships. The campaign of protection in Khutsong began as a reaction to the campaign of violence in Alexandra, but the political processes at work were fundamentally the same in both. In each township, native residents used the treatment of their immigrant populations to gain leverage on the common source of their grievances—the national government—at a time when its leaders were weakened by division and trapped in a stagnated transitional period.

Three years into his second term but failing to deliver on a num-
ber of key promises, President Thabo Mbeki’s title was being challenged from within his own party, the African National Congress (ANC), by longtime rival and party president, Jacob Zuma, effectively making Mbeki a lame duck in office. By 2008, it was obvious that Mbeki was on the way out and Zuma was on the way in, but this did not happen. The resulting political climate was defined by two centers of gravity and wrought with instability, creating a leadership void which would be filled at the local level during May 2008.

Using data on housing, crime, and immigrant distribution patterns, I developed a structural framework for assessing the socio-economic makeup of Khutsong and Alexandra and the effects of immigrant settlement on those conditions. On that foundation, I am proposing a micro-political narrative for each township as they relate to the macro-political narrative of South African president Mbeki’s shrinking, and ANC president Zuma’s expanding, influence in national politics—two interconnected narratives which had profound reverberations in both Khutsong and Alexandra.

Theoretical Framework: Political Opportunities Worth Exploiting

In past decades, analyses of violent inter-ethnic conflict have focused heavily on the supposed cultural “roots” of the case to show how the parties involved were conditioned to hate each other prior to the transition into violence. Writing on South Africa before 2008, one analyst proposed that perpetrators of anti-immigrant violence were culturally predisposed towards violence (see Valji 2003:1). Recently, however, social scientists have criticized these “culturalist” perspectives for being too narrow in scope.

Brubaker and Laitin (1998) argue that the transition from non-violence to violence is a “phase-shift” deserving of independent theoretical consideration and cannot be considered the mere culmination of an otherwise non-violent conflict. However, they argue that in culturalist analyses the concept of “phase shift” is effectively ignored (Brubaker and Laitin 1998:426). Culturalist perspectives also have significantly limited understandings of the instrumentality of violence in a particular conflict. The choice to employ violence should not be seen as an arbitrary decision (Brubaker and Laitin 1998). Understanding why violence was employed as a tactic within a particular conflict and at a particular time is as important as knowing why non-violent alternative tactics were not used, and whether these were even viable options.

The issue of instrumentality leads to two questions: the question
of viability (why the option to use violence was available from a practical standpoint in the first place) and the question of timeliness (why the choice to exercise that option was made when it was). Part of the question of viability may be addressed through an assessment of governmental capacity. Tilly (2003:41-52) argues that the ability of a democratic regime to prevent violence within its area of jurisdiction depends on its ability to address claims made against it or between its citizens effectively. High-capacity democratic regimes routinize most of that process by allowing a small number of strictly enforced inroads through which citizens can make claims against the regime or each other (Tilly 2003:50). In such cases, routine claim-making may result in conflict, but such conflicts rarely turn violent. Accordingly, we can expect government agents to only use violence selectively (thus rarely) when resolving conflict (Tilly 2003:52). In contrast, states with low-capacity democratic regimes tend to exhibit more violence because initially non-violent conflicts frequently turn violent (Tilly 2003:52). Moreover, a less effectual government would likely be less involved at every level of conflict, either as a third-party arbiter or manager of conflict after the violence had ensued (Tilly 2003:52).

However, the overall capacity of a regime is not always constant within its area of jurisdiction. How effective a regime is at managing or preventing conflict in a given area is determined in large part by its physical presence in that area. This consideration is important when examining states where the regime itself is strong, but its presence in certain locales is extremely weak. If we are to assume that a theory of governmental capacity can be applied to the internal power dynamics of a weak sub-region within a strong democratic state, then we would expect residents to exercise violence liberally as they resolved local claims against each other. However, uncertainties arise when we consider which channels those residents would access to advance claims against the national government. Being tied to a strong democratic regime, residents’ expectations for the state would likely be high, but the apparatus of the state—including the police, the court system, and other government agencies—would be distant or ineffectual.

As the government expanded its capacity within the sub-region, local stakeholders may be unwilling to cooperate, and possibly be resistant, if their own control overlapped with the proposed gains for the state. By the same token, local stakeholders may willingly cooperate with an expansion of government into their area if it guaranteed access to resources not otherwise available. In this latter scenario, expansion of government power would function in the form of a partnership between state agents and residents. If the circumstances which allowed for
the creation of that partnership changed, an initially welcome expansion of government power could lead to conflict. Thus, any such expansion, wanted or not, would expose state agents to a potential conflict with locals and, accordingly, to local methods of conflict resolution, including violence. If widespread violence was committed by locals in spite, or in defiance, of powers which had been willfully ceded to state agents previously (i.e., widespread vigilantism), that shift could be considered a termination of the partnership and a reassertion of local control by residents.

Following this assessment of governmental capacity, we might answer the question of timeliness with an application of social movement theory and the role of political opportunity. Recent research in sociology has demonstrated that social movements “develop and succeed not because they emerge to address new grievances, but rather because something in the larger political context allows existing grievances to be heard” (della Porta 2008:223). Opportunities can include a variety of events and circumstances, such as “regime shifts, periods of political instability, or changes in the composition of elites”—all of which may provide “openings” for social movements to take hold and gain traction (della Porta 2008:223). Applying this theory of political opportunity to periods of collective violence, we can adjust the question, asking not why violence occurs, but what circumstances allow it to gain traction, endure, and take hold as a social movement in its own right, thus becoming a period of violence, instead of just an incident of it. This adjustment makes room for the possibility that, in a given case, group violence had always been a viable option, but its exercisers only became politically motivated and numerous because of changes in the broader political landscape.

A final area worth considering is the relationship between participants of group violence and their targets. Studies conducted on the Rwandan Genocide, the collapse of the Balkans, and other intra-national conflicts in the last two decades demonstrate that what appear to be ethnic or national targets can actually be politically constructed. Accordingly, certain social groups may be targeted not because of their ethnicity or nationality per se, but because of the political interests they represent, are associated with, or otherwise stand to benefit from through their continued presence (Calhoun 1993; Mamdani 2002). Thus, the real question may not be about how victims were selected, but what political factors allowed for violence to catch on at a particular time and spread rapidly in a given area.
Methodology

Applying this framework to an analysis of the May 2008 period of xenophobic violence (known hereafter as “the period”) is foremost a task of connecting the political circumstances affecting the participants to the events themselves. Having made those connections theoretically sound, we might understand why the exercise of group violence against—or for the protection of—local immigrant populations was considered an option for advancing those interests at the time.

It should be noted that in the course of this paper the term “xenophobic violence” does not mean xenophobia which resulted in violence, but rather, violence which was manifested in and justified by those attitudes on the part of the attackers. As the evidence will make clear, whether a group of people acted violently against, or offered protection to, immigrant populations, their actions had little to do with their own feelings towards them.

The two townships of Alexandra and Khutsong were selected because of the combination of their structural and cultural similarities and the different outcomes that they experienced during the period. The theory upon which my analysis hinges is fundamentally about opportunity yielded by conditions of political instability. Alexandra was the first township to erupt in violence. In that respect, focusing my analysis on it is valuable because it restricts an assessment of the instability to conditions other than those resulting from the period itself. While the rationale for natives to attack immigrants may have been the same in participating townships across South Africa, including Alexandra, the initiative exhibited by Alexandra residents may have provided the impetus to act elsewhere. Similarly, Khutsong provides an ideal case for comparison since it was evidently the only township in or near Gauteng to initiate a large-scale effort to protect its immigrant population.

In evaluating a political opportunity and the different ways in which it was exploited in the townships, both the localized political interests at work and the corresponding actions must be analyzed within the context of the national political circumstances. Moreover, since the questions at hand concern collective interests and collective action, I will view actions as the united effort of a single entity within each township. For these reasons, I do not base this research on interview data. Instead, I construct a political narrative for each of the two townships using journalistic accounts from domestic news outlets such as the Mail & Guardian (M&G) and the South African Press Association (SAPA), international news agencies such as the British Guardian and Telegraph newspapers; government data, including census data and documents provided by the Al-
Background to the Violence and Its Political Context

In order to understand the period of xenophobic violence we must consider the political climate which beset the country prior to the first attacks. In December 2007, Jacob Zuma was elected president of the ANC, virtually guaranteeing his future as head of state, while Thabo Mbeki had more than a year left in his second term as president of South Africa. Popular and political support was therefore divided between two leaders, with Mbeki serving as the de jure leader of the national government, and Zuma serving as the de facto leader of the South African people. Mbeki was rendered a lame duck in office, leaving the ANC and its supporters throughout the country both confused and anxious (The Economist 2007:78). Accordingly, the events which transpired in May should be viewed as an effort to make sense of that divided political situation.

Khutsong and Alexandra Townships Before the Period

Alexandra is one of the poorest townships in South Africa with an unemployment rate of around 60 percent, nearly triple the provincial average (Census SA in PPTPPSA 2004:8). With an estimated 15 percent of its population of around 850,000 people having been born outside South Africa, Alexandra also has one of the largest immigrant populations in the country (ARP 2008:1).

In 2001, Mbeki launched the Alexandra Renewal Project (ARP) to improve the township by replacing informal settlements with formal government housing (ARP 2001). A goal was set for 22,250 total households, 44 percent of which would be free units issued to homeless residents (ARP 2008). By May 2008, 1,400 free houses had been built in the Extension 7 area of Alexandra (ARP 2008). In accordance with law, the ARP did not discriminate against immigrants when allocating services so long as the applicant had legal residency in the country (NDH 2004; ARP 2008). From its outset, this policy of allocating houses to immigrants was unpopular among residents. However, while relations between Alexandra natives and the government were often strained, they at least existed; the same cannot be said of the natives and the government an
At the time of the period of violence, residents in Khutsong had been engaged in a violent anti-government revolt for more than a year, since the municipality to which it belonged was demarcated from Gauteng and made part of North West Province in December 2006. The reasons behind the South African Parliament’s decision to demarcate Merafong are still unclear, and events leading up to the final decision strongly indicated that it was unpopular among the people.

Merafong was a cross-provincial municipality, as it straddled the border of Gauteng and North West Province, and this complicated service delivery. Since the government had already declared a desire to eliminate all cross-provincial municipalities before the March 2006 election, demarcation had been anticipated by the public. A committee in Parliament was formed to make a recommendation as to which of the two provinces to consolidate Merafong into. This committee concluded publicly that Merafong should be fully incorporated into the wealthier of the two provinces, Gauteng, as expected and desired by Merafong residents. However, a week before a decision was to be made and legislated, the committee reversed its position without announcement (Mabuza 2008). Merafong residents expressed concern that incorporation into the poor North West would overstress the province and hinder critical service delivery, but the ANC-dominated Parliament voted to follow the committee’s recommendation and incorporate Merafong into North West despite the objections. Merafong residents considered this move an outright betrayal by the ANC (Carrol 2006).

In Parliament, the decision instantly pit ANC leadership against its own members representing Merafong, who in an unusual move defied the party to support the will of their constituents by repeatedly trying to block the legislation (Mde and Brown 2006). Their efforts failed, and in Khutsong, violent resistance began almost immediately, once more pitting the ANC against its allies (Blair 2006). The local branch of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)—a committed ally of the ANC—rallied against the party and organized what became a mass resistance against the national government. By the time of the boycotted March 2006 elections, 13 of the 17 local councilors had been driven from their homes by arson, the library had been burned down, and polling stations across the township had been firebombed (Blair 2006). When the election occurred, only 300 of 30,000 registered voters in Khutsong had cast a ballot (IRIN 2007).
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A Time of Violence: Alexandra and Khutsong during the Period

The period of xenophobic violence began on May 11, 2008 in the Beirut neighborhood, an informal settlement area with a large immigrant population in the Alexandra Township in Gauteng province. It lasted twenty days and spread across South Africa, gaining attention in news media and raising serious concerns within the national government. On May 14, the South African Broadcasting Corporation reported that Alexandra residents had been pelting police with stones and resisting verbal demands to cease their attacks. On the same day, the main opposition party in Parliament called on the ANC to send the army to Alexandra for the first time since Apartheid, emphasizing that South African Police Services (SAPS) had effectively lost control of the situation (SAPA 2008c). After five days, the attacks spread across the country. In every township in which violence occurred, there were reports of police being either ignored or overwhelmed, cars and shacks being torched, roads being blocked off, and immigrant-owned businesses being looted, creating a national breakdown of civil order (SAPA 2008a; SAPA 2008b).

On May 19, Zuma announced that he had heard numerous reports of a phenomenon that would bring grave trouble to the ANC: mobs of attackers were seen chanting his campaign song “Umshini Wami,” in Alexandra and elsewhere (Mbanjwa 2008). The statement confirmed existing journalistic accounts, some of which even traced the chanting of “Umshini” to the first hour of xenophobic violence in Alexandra (Rubin 2008). Zuma denounced the attacks and expressed personal disgust with the song’s new usage (Mbanjwa 2008). On May 21, Mbeki ordered the army into Alexandra to assist police (Mail & Guardian & SAPA 2008).

On May 31, SAPS reported “a quiet weekend” with “few known incidents” of anti-immigrant violence, signifying an end to the period (SAPA & AFP 2008). A final tally counted 62 dead and 560 injured (SAPA & AFP 2008). In Gauteng alone, more than 16,000 people, including around 1,000 from Alexandra—mostly foreign immigrants—were internally displaced (HSRC 2008:14; ARP 2008). In Alexandra, the violence had lasted for the entire period but had not spread outside Beirut and a nearby area of government-built houses called Extension 7 (ARP 2008). In that time, Khutsong continued its anti-government campaign, but the township did not experience a single incident of xenophobic violence for the entire period.
Taking Back the Township in Alexandra and Khutsong

Urban black South Africans have historically been considered one of the more xenophobic social groups in a nation characterized by strong xenophobic sentiments. However, this should not be considered a cause for the period of violence. The prevalence of xenophobia had been rising for more than a decade at the time of the period (Crush and Pendleton 2004:15-17; Phlip 2008). In 2007, 47 percent of urban residents living in informal settlements said they “welcomed no foreigners.” However, while poor urban blacks considered foreigners a problem, evidence suggests that this group considered the presence of foreign immigrants a symptom of deeper government inadequacies which needed to be addressed.

An HSRC study (2008) conducted immediately after the period found that in focus groups, natives in Alexandra and other participant townships were outraged by government failures to reduce crime and create jobs. In both these areas, immigrants were viewed as either the cause of increased crime which the government had failed to control, or competitors in a tight economic market for which the government had failed to create enough jobs.

This study supports existing research which suggests that native township residents considered the immigrant presence to be synonymous with crime.¹ Further, natives were more upset with police for their purported corruption, which allowed foreign criminals to escape deportation with bribery, and for their failure to substantially reduce immigrant crime (HSRC 2008:28). Respondents also blamed government for the high number of immigrants, particularly stressing its failures to enforce national borders and curb legal and illegal immigration (HSRC 2008:29). Moreover, respondents were outraged by Mbeki’s failure to resolve the lasting political and economic crises in Zimbabwe earlier that year, which had spurred much of the immigration from that country in the previous eight years (HSRC 2008:8).

In Alexandra and other townships, the immigrant presence in government housing incited some of the most intense outrage among natives (HSRC 2008: 48). As was the case with jobs, the presence of immigrants exacerbated the competition for housing. More significantly, the fact that there was competition at all highlighted the government’s failure to build enough houses in the first place. For natives, fixing the

¹ In 2006, 66 percent of respondents to one survey said that a major incentive for immigrants to come to the country was “to commit crimes.” One in five said that crime was the only reason. Only 11 percent said the main reason immigrants came was “to seek a better life” (Phlip 2008).
problem would involve reasserting local control in those areas where the government had failed. In order to understand why violence was selected as a means of taking control, a critical evaluation of the relationship between natives in Alexandra and the national government is necessary.

**Governmental Capacity and the Case of Alexandra**

With an explicit legal system, an organized court system, and a competent police force, the South African government differs from its counterparts in most of Africa in that it has many of the hallmarks of a high-capacity democratic regime. However, Alexandra’s government is limited in many respects. The first police station in Alexandra did not open until 2003, and at the time it only stationed 290 personnel at any given time to police the township’s estimated 850,000 civilians. This created a police to civilian ratio of about 1:3000, which was slightly more than ten times the national average in 2008 (Bagnoni 2003; SAPS 2008a). SAPS (2008b) statistics show no significant decline in crime after the station’s opening. Therefore, Alexandra could be considered a low-capacity sub-region within the jurisdiction of the high-capacity regime of the South African national government. If the theories articulated in the previous section are correct, we can assume that government power in the township was expanded through a partnership between state agents and residents, wherein responsibilities typical of a democratic regime were only ceded to state agents at the will of local stakeholders.

As in a high-capacity democratic state, citizens had many options available to them for making their political will known to the national government, such as voting and political organizing, and in 2008, these options utilized by Alexandra natives. The township has historically been one of the most politicized in South Africa, with more than 70 percent of its residents belonging to a political party or organization (PPTPPSA 2004). Most are members of the ANC, and in the last two elections, Alexandra overwhelmingly voted for that party (du Preez 2008). It was evident that during the period in May 2008, many attackers saw their work as an endorsement of Zuma’s presidential bid. The singing of “Umshini Wami”—plainly an expression of support for Zuma—by attackers as they moved through townships should be taken as a deliberate attempt to connect an anti-government message with a pro-Zuma message.

Reports of these violent endorsements should not be taken as evidence that all natives in Alexandra or even all the attackers supported Zuma. A prominent population of South Africans did express caution over Zuma’s political rise, and it is reasonable that those sentiments were
salient among some of Alexandra’s population. Among that group, some may have been disillusioned with the ANC altogether and unwilling to express support for any of its candidates. Even opponents of the ANC would have recognized that Zuma’s ascendency to the South African presidency was as inevitable as Mbeki’s fall from it. With government leadership experiencing change, ensuring that incoming leaders understood the demands of Alexandra’s residents, as the then-current regime had failed to do, was in the interest of all, regardless of political affiliation. Accordingly, evicting immigrants from Alexandra in defiance of the government was a way to make those interests vociferously known.

Certainly, evicting over a thousand immigrants from the township would have immediately gratified local xenophobes. But apart from that direct gain, the campaign sent a message to the national government: Alexandra’s partnership with it had effectively ended. In reclaiming those means of control which had been earlier ceded to the government by their own will, residents became the local housing authority, immigration authority, and the police, as the government had failed to adequately fill those roles. Reasserting power demonstrated not only the government’s ineptitude, but also the underlying autonomy of the township itself. The ultimate control of Alexandra was found not in the state, but in the hands of the residents themselves.

The uprising against the national government in Alexandra should not be viewed as an attempt at secession, but as a deliberate effort to redefine the township’s relationship with the state. Incoming government leaders had the opportunity to restore a partnership between the state and the township, and the cost of failing to meet the standards of residents was clear. By reasserting local control, residents exploited the opportunity provided by a stagnated leadership transition to make their own political interests known to both South Africa’s existing and future leadership.

Back when Alexandra Loved the Government

A remarkable comparison to 2008 can be found in Alexandra less than a year after the ANC took power. For weeks between December 1994 and January 1995, armed gangs, working with an assortment of local civic organizations, collected and evicted immigrants who they claimed were living in the country illegally in a campaign similar to the one observed in May 2008. However, in total contrast to the events of 2008, the gangs marched the captive immigrants to a police station in nearby Wynburg and demanded their immediate deportation (HRW 1998:135). A spokes-
person for one supporting organization said, “We are simply doing the job of the police by handing them [undocumented immigrants] over and asking them to be deported back to their own countries” (Debutshena in HRW 1998:135). No such appeal to police help was reported in May 2008.

What explains this difference? The months following the 1994 election which ended Apartheid and got the ANC elected were marked by jubilance in South Africa. Believing they had a government accountable to them for the first time, urban blacks welcomed the presence of state agents in their area. Accordingly, the 1994-95 campaign could be interpreted as the beginning of a mutual, and perhaps a citizen-directed, partnership between state agents and civic groups, with locals functioning as part of a joint mission with police. By May 2008, after that goodwill toward government had ended, the partnership ended as well, and the immigrant problem was dealt with by citizens in spite of state agents, thus constituting a reassertion of local control.

The Khutsong Comparison

In searching for a link between poverty and xenophobic violence in May 2008, some elaborate theories have been proposed. The Christian Science Monitor reported that a surge in food prices not long before May 11 had pushed some residents in Alexandra over the edge, turning their existing xenophobic attitudes into acts of violence (Baldauf 2008; Yusuf 2008). Yet the rise in food prices was global, and any effect it had on levels of stress or quality of life would have affected the poor in Khutsong as well. The unemployment rate for Khutsong, estimated by trade unions, was around 40 percent in 2006 (Carroll 2006)—not quite as high as the estimated rate in Alexandra, but still very high.

Moreover, the state of housing in Khutsong was abysmal. Since the demarcation, prospects for housing improvements (which the government had promised earlier) had become significantly worse, since the switch meant that the required funds would come from the cash-strapped North West provincial government (Blair 2006). Alexandra had a “Renewal Project” to amass dedicated resources for new housing projects as well as the guarantee of presidential oversight. Even if the process of constructing and allocating houses was slow and largely ineffectual, houses were being built. In being demarcated, Khutsong effectively got the “anti-Renewal Project”: a hold on promises to build more housing, and outright neglect from the national government.

Currently, crime rates are also very high in Khutsong and exceed Alexandra in key areas, according to the most recent SAPS statis-
tics. Khutsong has a smaller population than Alexandra (150,000 versus 850,000), but the per capita murder rate in 2003/2004 was virtually the same in both (~1/7000). It should be noted that the attempted murder rate in 2003/2004 was higher in Alexandra (~1/4800 vs. ~1/7,900), however the rate of “assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm” (a more accurate description of the majority of attacks during the period than “attempted murder”) was significantly higher in Khutsong that year (1/340 vs. 1/624). Statistics are similar for the preceding decade (SAPS 2008a; SAPS 2008b). Khutsong was also rich with immigrants. Though exact figures are unavailable, estimates have put the immigrant presence between 5 and 10 percent of its total— less than in Alexandra, but still constituting a major part of the community and far above the national average.

Khutsong does exhibit a number of structural factors which make its non-violent stance during the period less unsurprising. The township has always served as a labor pool for the South African gold mining industry, which has historically been upheld by foreign labor (Crush, Jeeves, and Yudelman 1991). In contrast to the informal economy of Alexandra, the relative equality of opportunity provided by a gold mine suggests that immigrants would not have posed a serious economic threat to the majority of Khutsong’s population. South Africa’s gold mines are among the most technically challenging in the world, making mining skills highly valuable. This means that pay scales in South African mines are dependent on a miner’s skills, with the more experienced miners earning more money than less experienced and less skilled newcomers. A flood of immigrants into Khutsong would not have threatened the earnings of miners, and thus native residents would have had little economic incentive to deter immigration.

Like any mining town in South Africa, unions also featured strongly in the life of men in Khutsong, particularly the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), which was part of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Due to the NUM’s open membership policy and fervently anti-racist and anti-xenophobic rhetoric, it was likely that the organization would be instrumental in forming bonds between immigrants and non-immigrants—bonds which when threatened, non-immigrants were willing to protect.

However, the presence of unions and a lack of economic incentives to drive out immigrants cannot alone explain why Khutsong residents protected immigrants or rallied in the street to demonstrate their support during the period. On May 23, 2008, Reuters reported that a platinum mine east of Alexandra where a number of unionized immi-
grants were employed had been targeted by anti-immigrant mobs in search of nearby worker settlements (Macharia 2008). Two of the mine’s workers had been killed and rumors of attacks reached another platinum mine nearby where many immigrant workers had elected to leave until things settled down (Macharia 2008). Affiliation with mines and unions had clearly not protected these individuals.

Therefore, a purely structural explanation of the protections in Khutsong is a façade with many cracks. A culturalist analysis also proves untenable. If a cultural disposition towards violence was a causal factor of the period, we would expect that the township which acted violently towards its immigrant population in May 2008 (in this case, Alexandra) to have had more thoroughly exhibited that cultural behavior than Khutsong in preceding years. Crime statistics alone strongly suggest that levels of violence were comparable in both townships. The fact that these statistics were taken before Khutsong experienced a period of civil unrest which overlapped with the period of xenophobic violence is especially telling. A deeper analysis is necessary to grasp what happened and why.

Theorizing Peace and the Politics of Protection in Khutsong

The demarcation of Merafong was the single greatest political calamity in Khutsong since the Apartheid era. Its effect on the political consciousness of the township’s natives was the foremost consideration in every aspect of their political workings, including their mobilization against xenophobic violence in May 2008. By protecting immigrants, Khutsong residents, like their counterparts in Alexandra, exploited an opportunity provided by the stagnated leadership transition in the national government. The demarcation divided the ANC against itself, its supporters, and its historic allies, most notably COSATU. One statement issued by the local branch of COSATU accused the government of not caring “about the views of [its] people, including our children,” and calls the ANC “dictatorial” (COSATU 2007). Such strong language from a historic ally is illustrative of the severity of the conflict between the two groups over Khutsong.

However, like many South Africans, COSATU’s outrage with the government and the ANC did not translate into a total break with either.

2 In fact, prior to 2008, Khutsong residents did engage in attacks on local immigrants themselves. In 2007, anti-government protests turned violent and resulted in attacks on several Somali-owned shops in events which some analysts say precipitated the period in 2008 (IRIN 2008).
The fiasco in Khutsong was not the first major dispute between COSATU and top ANC leaders. In 1999, COSATU had a dispute with Mbeki, after which Mbeki refused to meet with trade unionists for over a year (Gu-mede 2007:395). During that time, Zuma emerged as a conduit between COSATU leaders and Mbeki, making it somewhat unsurprising that COSATU all but endorsed Zuma during his political rise. Similarly, leaders in the anti-demarcation movement in Khutsong voiced their own cautious gratitude for Zuma’s bid for the South African presidency before meeting with ANC delegates in March 2008 (Tabane 2008). As one analyst stated, the people of Khutsong told government leaders, “We are not against the ANC, but for the people” (Brown 2008). A similar conjecture could be made regarding the people of Alexandra in May 2008.

As immigrants started to be attacked in townships in Gauteng and government control in Alexandra began to weaken significantly, Mbeki’s regime looked increasingly vulnerable. COSATU and leaders of an affiliated group, who founded the Merafong Demarcation Forum (MDF) to defend the interests of the municipality since the demarcation, had an opportunity to take a stand against the regime in its hour of desperation. Like the campaign in Alexandra, protection was a way for these groups to establish local control in spite of the national government in Khutsong. By protecting a group of people at the exact time when the national government had shown its inability to do so, the Khutsong campaign made the government look powerless even more effectively than by directly creating instability. After two and a half years of violence, protection may have been an effective new approach for Khutsong’s residents: highlighting government ineffectiveness while showcasing the organizational capacity of local groups for positive action through non-violent coordination.

There is additional evidence of an explicit will on the part of the MDF to not only protect immigrants, but to connect that project to its original political mission. In May 2008, The MDF joined the Coalition Against Xenophobia (CAX), an association of groups that criticized the government during the period. Of 46 groups who had joined or supported the Coalition, almost all others had broad-based national membership or operated only in Gauteng (CAX 2008a:2-3). On May 24, the Coalition sent an open memorandum to the Premier of Gauteng broadly addressing “the South African government” and listing four demands, at the top of which was a call for authorities to “provide immediate emergency support for individuals and families displaced by the current violence” (CAX 2008a:2). The MDF signed that statement. On May 25, the MDF also signed a “Pledge of Solidarity Against Xenophobia,” again drafted by the
Coalition, committing it to do everything possible to “stop [the] violence” (CAX 2008b). On June 6, long after the violence had subsided, around 5,000 Khutsong residents marched with MDF leaders to ANC headquarters to present a list of complaints. Most of these were related to the demarcation, yet one of the grievances was a demand for Mbeki and the Minister of Intelligence to resign for having failed to “predict” the attacks in May (Butjwana 2008).

Why did Khutsong residents, untouched by the period of violence, approach the ANC making such an explicit connection between their stances on the demarcation and xenophobia? A probable reason is that residents wished to make a case against the government, on the basis that for all the ANC’s anti-xenophobic rhetoric, its leaders could not back its words with action. That message would have fit with the results of the campaign of protection, which demonstrated that Khutsong residents, COSATU and, most notably, the MDF, were essentially more capable of protecting people than the government. Similar to the evictions in Alexandra, protections in Khutsong were about demonstrating government ineptitude and, more fundamentally, reasserting local control in spite of government failures.

**Discussion: Two Ways to Defy a Weakened State**

By using violent means to take control of the township, the natives of Alexandra both asserted their township’s autonomy and demonstrated that their willing partnership with the government had ended. The government was weak and the township revolted, twisting the arm of the state and daring the state to stop it. In Khutsong, a different scene ensued in deliberate contrast to the violence in Alexandra and other townships as renegade political and community leaders worked with native residents to resist the state by protecting immigrants in ways that the state had failed.

Looming above both townships at the time was a crisis of leadership in the national government which had fostered a climate of political instability. Native residents in both townships were outraged with the national government and intent on sending a message to it, and viewed the crisis as nothing less than a political opportunity. To exploit that opportunity, residents took advantage of the inherent vulnerability and political centrality of their respective immigrant populations—not merely to settle an old score or protect old friends, but to make use of the immigrants themselves because their presence embodied the dysfunctionality of the national government of the time. In doing so, native actors
reasserted power in the areas of their domain where the government had failed to live up to the responsibilities assigned to it.

Only in Alexandra did residents act violently, but in both townships, the underlying rationale and the processes at work were the same. The difference in outcome cannot be explained by either culture or economic incentives. How the residents of each township acted or reacted during the period in May, and why they chose to mobilize at the time that they did can only be explained by the political conditions of their township.

This research has depended heavily on journalistic accounts of the period of xenophobic violence—observations which were made by professional spectators, but not the participants themselves. Especially with regard to the campaign of protection in Khutsong, the above analysis is based on assumptions made from evidence surrounding the event, not testimony from the community leaders and ordinary citizens who were involved. A further study of the period would benefit from interviews with participants, both in Alexandra and Khutsong. Doing so could pave the way for alternative theoretical analyses from political psychology perspectives.

Additionally, there are broader theoretical questions raised by this research which could inspire future research in Africa and elsewhere. Uncertainties remain about the power dynamics of states that exhibit governmental capacity which is unequally distributed between localities. South Africa is one example, but there are others. More research is needed to understand how residents and governments in those states interact, not just during times of civil breakdown but at all times, including—perhaps especially—during the process of routine claim-making.

References


Sex Offender Recidivism in Minnesota and the Importance of Law and News Coverage

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Over the past two decades, recidivism among sex offenders has ignited both curiosity and concern in the United States. This study replicates a study published by the Minnesota Department of Corrections entitled “Sex Offender Recidivism in Minnesota.” The study found that recidivism among 3,166 previously convicted sexual offenders in Minnesota dramatically declined between 1990 and 2002. Moreover, the Minnesota study found that the decline could not be fully explained using offender-level variables. This research attempts to further explain the dramatic decline in recidivism by considering contextual variables that measure newspaper coverage of sex crimes and changes to the legal environment in Minnesota during the same time period. These contextual variables have been added to Minnesota’s model. The findings suggest that newspaper coverage of sex crimes aggravates reconviction for later sex crimes.

The 1990s saw major changes in the treatment and handling of sex offenders by the United States criminal justice system. These changes were largely the result of high-profile and well-publicized incidents involving rape and murder that occurred throughout the United States (Farkas and Stichman 2002; Garfinkle 2003; Janus 2006:14; Minnesota Department of Corrections (MDC) 2007). At least ten women were victims of such incidents in Minnesota alone (Janus 2006:2). The perpetrators in many of these cases had criminal records characterized by violence and sexual assault and had commonly served at least one prison sentence for such acts (Janus 2006:2).

These high-profile incidents produced increased public awareness about, and public outcry against, sex offenders (Meyer and Cole 1997 in Farkas and Stichman 2002). The public was particularly concerned with “sexual predators”—those sex offenders who recidivate and are considered a very dangerous threat to society (Janus 2006:2).

As a result of the public’s response, legislatures around the country, including Congress, enacted new sex offender laws aimed at reducing sexual recidivism (Harris 2006; Janus 2006: 16). These laws sought
to aggressively control recidivism by “disabling” sexual predators before they commit any sex offenses (Janus 2006:3). In Minnesota, for example, the state legislature “increased the lengths of prison sentences for sex offenses, created a sex offender registry, enforced civil commitment statutes for high-risk offenders, increased the intensity and length of supervision for sex offenders, and implemented community notification for offenders who pose a greater risk to recidivate sexually” (MDC 2007:5). These new sex offender laws reflected the public’s moral concern regarding sex offenders and served to not only increase the punishments, but also the perceived costs of sexual offending (Janus 2006:15).

The media also focused and attracted persistent attention to sex offenders (Garfinkle 2003; Janus 2006:2). The stories of many sex crimes were repeated in local and national media outlets for weeks (Janus 2006:15). As a result of the attention given to sex offenders by the media, legislatures, and the public, sexual offending became a major public policy issue (Simon 1997 in Farkas and Stichman 2002).

While previous research acknowledges that the media and legislative attention given to sex offenders during the past two decades were important factors contributing to sexual recidivism, there are no studies that have simultaneously examined these factors (see Farkas and Stichman 2002). This paper focuses on the possible impacts of media coverage and legal changes regarding sexual offending on the risk of recidivism among previously convicted sex offenders in Minnesota. To this end, I replicated a study published by the Minnesota Department of Corrections (henceforth MDC) in 2007. This study examined reconvictions among 3,166 previously convicted sex offenders in Minnesota using offender-level variables and found that reconvictions within three years of an offender’s release declined dramatically between 1990 and 2002, a decline from 17 percent for offenders released in 1990 to 3 percent for those released in 2002 (MDC 2007). The study also found that the decline in recidivism could not be fully explained through the offender-level variables that were considered. In an attempt to further explain the dramatic change, I added contextual variables to Minnesota’s model that measure newspaper coverage of sex crimes and changes to the legal environment in Minnesota during the same time period.

**Literature Review**

Most of the existing research on recidivism among sex offenders has focused on characteristics specific to the offender. These offender-level variables are used to explain or predict future sexual offending. For ex-
ample, characteristics such as deviant sexual interests, age, prior commissions of sexual offenses, single marital status, psychopathy, and antisocial orientation, have all been found to be associated with sexual recidivism (Barbaree 2005; Hanson and Bussiere 1998; Hanson and Morton-Bourgon 2004; Hill et al. 2008). While previous studies have contributed to a better understanding of the offender characteristics associated with sexual recidivism, they have ignored contextual factors, such as media coverage and legal changes, which may also be associated with recidivism.

In order to understand the contextual forces associated with sexual recidivism, examining the work of Grasmick, Bursik, and Arneklev (1993) on drunk driving is particularly insightful. Their study analyzed levels of self-reported and actual drunk-driving as associated with threats of shame, embarrassment, and legal sanctions in 1982 and 1990 in Oklahoma City (Grasmick et al. 1993). In accordance with official data from the same time periods, Grasmick et al. (1993) found a 22 percent reduction in reported drunk driving. There was also a 27 percent reduction in persons who reported an intention to drive while under the influence of alcohol in the future (Grasmick et al. 1993). According to the Oklahoma City Police Department, alcohol-related incidents in Oklahoma City decreased significantly during the interim period (Grasmick et al. 1993:50).

During the 1980s, there was much activity in the United States surrounding drunk driving, particularly revolving around attempts to reduce drunk driving through legislation (Grasmick et al. 1993). Legislation that was passed at the state and federal level attempted to influence social values and community standards and was characterized by a broader trend of tough public policy (Grasmick et al. 1993). This legislation on drunk driving was similar in goal to the later legislation on sexual offending. It was also similar in that it sought to increase the perceived cost of drinking and driving through more severe legal sanctions (Grasmick et al. 1993). Public groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD) were also formed in an effort to change laws and public attitudes regarding drunk-driving (Grasmick et al. 1993). The attention given to drunk driving by legislatures and public groups helped to bring the issue to the forefront of issues on the public social agenda (Grasmick et al. 1993).

Oklahoma also experienced an increased rate of legal changes concerning drunk driving during the 1980s (Grasmick et al. 1993). In 1983, the Oklahoma State Legislature passed a law which allowed arresting officers to seize the driver’s license of any person who had a blood-alcohol concentration of .10 or above (Grasmick et al. 1993). During that same year, a “moral-appeal campaign” was launched by the Oklahoma
Department of Transportation’s Highway Safety Office that used the slogan “Good ol’ boys don’t drink and drive” (Grasmick et al. 1993:49-50).

Grasmick et al. (1993) argued that harsher penalties for drunk driving and the attempts to change public attitudes influence two central mechanisms of social control: the expected utility of certain behaviors and normative/moralistic control. Rational choice theory assumes that humans are capable of calculating the costs and benefits (utility) of their actions and that their actions are based on those calculations. The theory asserts that the rational actor will choose the action that will maximize utility. Previous research supports the notion that the certainty of punishment produces deterrence (Nagin 1998). In their research, Grasmick et al. (1993) extended rational choice theory by arguing that anticipated emotional punishments, such as guilt, may affect the expected utility of behavior as much as legal punishments. Their study also attempts to link the first mechanism of social control with the second: “shame [can be viewed] as a source of compliance and conformity to norms…from such a perspective, values and norms become key costs in rational choice models of crime based on subjective utility” (Grasmick et al. 1993:43).

In developing their theory on drunk driving, Grasmick et al. (1993) assumed that the moral crusades and campaigns of the 1980s would cause rational actors, who were exposed to such campaigns, to experience shame, guilt, and embarrassment if they drove while intoxicated. They purported that actors feel negative emotions, such as shame and embarrassment when violating norms that they or significant others deem important (Grasmick et al. 1993). These factors would increase the potential costs of driving while intoxicated, thus deterring rational actors from doing so.

Anticipated guilt was a stronger deterrent to drinking and driving than were anticipated legal punishments (Grasmick et al. 1993). Grasmick et al. (1993:61) concluded that “the increased threat of shame and its relatively strong deterrent effect appear to be the primary source of reduction in drunk driving” in Oklahoma City. Thus, their theory was supported by the evidence produced in their study and it appears as though strong emotions, such as shame and embarrassment, might act as deterrents to committing law violations in much the same way as legal sanctions (Grasmick et al. 1993).

My research attempts to apply the rational choice theory perspective put forward by Grasmick et al. (1993) to sex offender recidivism. Legal changes pertaining to sex offenses may produce a deterrent effect as potential offenders calculate the costs and benefits of future offending. Moreover, media coverage of sex crimes may have effects of anticipated
guilt, shame, and embarrassment similar to those produced by the advertising campaigns that targeted drinking and driving.

**Hypothesis**

My hypotheses were tested using a dataset on incarcerated sex offenders released from Minnesota prisons between 1990 and 2002 that tracked recidivism from 1990 to 2005. This dataset was augmented with multiple measures of media coverage of sex crimes and changes to the legal environment, measured for each individual’s release year.

In accordance with the research and theory generated by Grasmick et al. (1993), I hypothesized:
1. Media coverage will decrease recidivism.
2. Legal changes that increase the penalties for sex crimes will decrease recidivism.
3. Controlling for media and legal variables should weaken the negative effect of release year because media coverage of sex crimes and legal changes likely increased during the period studied.

**Data and Methods**

Between 1990 and 2005, the Minnesota Department of Corrections (MDC) studied 3,166 sex offenders released from correctional facilities in Minnesota between 1990 and 2002 (MDC 2007). Their sample included only those “offenders whose governing offense at the time of [their] release was a sex crime,” which was defined as 1st-5th degree offenses of criminal sexual conduct as laid out in Minnesota statutes (MDC 2007:11). Moreover, offenders were only included in the sample if they had a state identification (SID) number, which was necessary for obtaining access to their conviction data from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (MDC 2007:11).

The dependent variable in my study was recidivism, as it was in the MDC study. The MDC operationalized recidivism as a re-arrest, re-conviction, or re-incarceration in a correctional facility in Minnesota for a new sex crime following an offender’s original release from prison. This data was collected on offenders included in the study through December 31, 2005. It is important to note that this data was collected for only those re-arrests, reconvictions, and re-incarcerations that occurred in Minnesota. For this reason, the findings based on this data sample likely underestimate true recidivism levels, because subjects could have been arrested in other states. It is also important to note that a re-arrest, re-
conviction, and/or re-incarceration were only considered an incident of recidivism if it occurred after the subject’s release date. Thus, offenders that were re-imprisoned for a sex offense that had been committed prior to their original prison term were not considered in the MDC study (MDC 2007).

The Minnesota Department of Corrections used Cox Regression techniques to model whether or not the offender had recidivated with another sex crime (MDC 2007). They estimated these models controlling for time at-risk to reoffend and offender–level variables. Appropriate time was deducted from the total at-risk time, measured in months, for offenders who were re-sent to prison for supervised release violations, for non-sex crime incarcerations, and for those who were civilly committed immediately prior to serving their original sentence (MDC 2007). A negative effect in these models would imply a reduced risk of recidivism in the next month from the point of view of a given month in the study period as a specified independent variable increases; whereas a positive effect would imply an increased risk of recidivism in the near future as a specified independent variable increases.

The offender-level independent variables included in Minnesota’s study, and controlled for in my study, were factors that are known, or have been hypothesized to, impact recidivism. They include: the offender’s sex, race, age at the time of the original release from prison, the number of previous felony convictions, the number of prior sex crime convictions, “the number of disciplinary convictions that [the] offender received in the final 12 months prior to the initial release from prison,” “the number of months between [the] offender’s first release date and the end of post-release supervision,” the number of returns to prison caused by a supervised release violation, and the year that the offender was originally released from prison (MDC 2007:16-17). The MDC also took into account the relationship between the sex offender and the victim by measuring whether the offender’s victim in the governing offense was a male child or an adult female; whether the offender’s county of commitment was in Minnesota’s metro-area or elsewhere in the state; whether the offender received prison-based sex offender treatment during imprisonment; and the offender’s “level of post-release supervision” (MDC 2007:17-18).

The MDC found that the offender’s year of initial release from prison had a particularly significant and negative impact on recidivism, which suggested “that other unidentified factors were also responsible for the reduction” that they discovered in sexual recidivism during the 1990-2002 time period (MDC 2007:25).

The central purpose of this study is to explain the negative effect
of release year using contextual variables that measured newspaper coverage of sex crimes and changes to the legal environment in Minnesota during the period studied by the MDC. In doing this, I replicated Minnesota’s study by using Cox Regression techniques to model recidivism through reconviction, controlling for time at-risk to reoffend and the offender-level variables analyzed by the MDC.

**Media Variables**

In order to measure media coverage of sex crimes, I analyzed the content of 300 Sunday editions of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. The *Star Tribune* was selected based on its readership, as it is the most widely circulated newspaper in the State of Minnesota (Bowker 2007). Using the *Bowker’s News Media Directory: Newspaper Edition* (2007), I found that the Sunday edition of the *Minnesota Star Tribune* had 674,345 subscribers, more than any of the other weekly editions. I also chose to exclusively analyze editions published on Sundays as they would likely garner the widest readership throughout the state per week. I randomly selected 25 Sunday editions of the *Star Tribune* for each year between 1990 and 2002 using a sampling frame of 52 Sundays. A similar sampling method was used by Liska and Baccaglini (1990) in their analysis of twenty-five editions of leading newspapers for one year to identify the effect of newspaper coverage on the fear of crime.

I used LexisNexis to search newspaper editions published after the latter part of 1991. I searched only those articles from the “News” and “Variety” sections of the *Star Tribune* using a keyword search for consistency. My keyword search included 14 terms related to sexual offending. These terms included: pedophile, molester, molestation, sex, sexual assault, sex crime, peeping, flashing, rape, sexual violence, sexual contact, sexual conduct, sex offender, and sexual abuse.

I was not able to use LexisNexis to search for newspaper editions prior to the latter part of 1991 because the LexisNexis archives did not include editions of the *Star Tribune* published in 1990 or the beginning of 1991. For those editions published between 1990 and the beginning of 1991, I searched the *Minneapolis Star Tribune’s* online archives. Since these archives did not have the same keyword capabilities as LexisNexis, I carefully scanned the headline and introductory paragraph of each “News” and “Variety” article contained within the randomly-selected editions, for the terms included in my keyword search.

For an article to be considered in my analysis, it had to describe a sexually-related offense, a sex offender, or a relevant legal issue relat-
ing to sex crimes. To be retained, the description(s) had to be a central theme or component of the article. Thus, I excluded some articles from my study because sex offending was not the main focus of the article, even though some keywords may have been present. I did not include articles relating to prostitution or sexual harassment in my sample.

Using the above methods, a total of 129 articles were selected for my sample and served as the units of analysis for measuring the contextual media variables. I coded these articles for the presence of 28 variables and aggregated them by year through simple sums. These included variables relating to characteristics of the article, the victim(s), the criminal offenses(s), the offender(s), and characteristics of legal changes. Two dummy variables that tracked important legal changes were coded independently of their media coverage (described in a subsequent section). The independent variables that were created for my study that related to media coverage are listed below. At the level of each article, I scored the variables described below as one or zero, depending on the presence or absence of the relevant content. I then aggregated the dummy variables by year and attached them to the offender-level data based on each offender’s year of release:

**Article Characteristics**: The first variables in my study measuring article characteristics include number of stories, the total number of words per article, and the page number on which the article began within a section. Each article was coded as being one story, which allowed me to easily calculate the total number of articles that described any sex-related offense, a sex offender, or a relevant legal issue relating to sex crimes, per year. I also analyzed whether or not an article that described a sex offense(s) portrayed the sex offense graphically. In determining whether an article portrayed the offense graphically, I looked for the presence of details pertaining to the offense, such as incident details describing how the sexual assault happened or details regarding the use of a weapon during the offense.

**Victim Characteristics**: The second group of variables involves victim characteristics and includes whether there was more than one victim described in the article and whether the victim(s) portrayed in the article was described as sympathetic or unsympathetic. For example, prostitutes are usually viewed by the public as being less sympathetic for their situation than other victims because of the nature and dangers associated with their work; therefore, victimizations of prostitutes were coded as unsympathetic, while victimizations of others were coded as sympathetic.
**Offense Characteristics:** The third group of variables relates to offense characteristics and include whether or not the sex crime(s) described in the article occurred in Minnesota.

**Offender Characteristics:** The fourth group of variables in my study involves offender characteristics. Variables were created to measure whether more than one offender was portrayed in the article; whether the offender(s) portrayed in the article had committed a sex crime prior to the crime identified in the article (learned from the information included in the article); and for articles that portrayed more than one offender, whether more than one of those offenders had committed sex crimes prior to those identified in the article. I also created a variable to analyze whether the offender(s) who was portrayed in the article was sympathetic. Only those offenders who were suffering from a mental condition that would impair their judgment were coded as being sympathetic. Individuals who had been falsely accused were not coded as sympathetic offenders, as they were not really offenders. I also created variables to measure whether the offender(s) portrayed in the article was living in Minnesota or outside of Minnesota at the time of the crime; whether at least one offender portrayed in the article had been charged for the offense they allegedly committed; and whether at least one offender portrayed in the article had received formal punishment as a result of their crime. This included only government-induced criminal punishments. Civil punishments, such as fines, and work-related punishments were not included. Another variable analyzed whether or not at least one offender portrayed in the article had been sued as a result of their actions.

**Legal Changes/Laws:** The fifth and final group of variables in my study related to legal changes. For those articles that described at least one legal change or law related to sexual offending, I created variables to measure whether the described legal change(s) or law(s) could be perceived as increasing the cost or the benefit of committing a sex crime. The increased cost, for example, could be the result of longer sentences or harsher punishments for those who were convicted for committing a sex crime. Some articles portrayed judges and other criminal justice officials who were lax on the enforcement of penalties, which might be viewed as increasing the benefit of committing a sex crime. A variable was also created for those articles that described at least one legal change or law relating to sexual offending, to measure whether the legal change(s) or law(s) dealt with types of formal punishment. In these instances, formal
punishment would be any type of punishment that was court-ordered. Lastly, for articles that described at least one legal change or law relating to sexual offending, I created variables to indicate whether the legal change(s) or law(s) described in the article pertained to sex offender registries, housing restrictions, civil commitment, or community notification, and whether or not the described legal change or law was applicable to sex offenders in Minnesota.

Legal Variables

I investigated high-profile legal changes pertaining to sex offenders that occurred between 1990 and 2002, analyzing laws passed during the time period by the Minnesota State Legislature and Congress that would pertain to, and possibly affect, those previously-convicted sex offenders included in the study. Moreover, I collected information on sex offender laws in Minnesota including when they were passed, largely from an information brief published by the Minnesota House of Representatives’ House Research Department, entitled, “Sex Offenders and Predatory Offenders: Minnesota Criminal and Civil Regulatory Laws” (see Zollar 2003). I also collected information using the Minnesota Legislature’s website (see Minnesota Office of the Revisor of Statutes 2008). I collected information on sex offender laws passed by Congress from law reviews (see Farkas and Stichman 2002; Garfinkle 2003). The independent variables that I created for my study that relate to legal changes are listed below:

1994-2002: In 1994, the U.S. Congress passed the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offenders Registration Act as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (Farkas and Stichman 2002; Garfinkle 2003). In that same year, the Minnesota State Legislature passed Minnesota statute 253B.185, which allowed for the civil commitment of sexually dangerous persons who have been found to have a strong likelihood of reoffending (Minnesota Office of the Revisor of Statutes 2007). I scored this variable as one for individuals released between 1994 and 2002 and zero for those released earlier.

1996-2002: In 1996, Congress passed Megan’s Law, which amended the Jacob Wetterling Crimes against Children and Sexually Violent Offenders Registration Act (Farkas and Stichman 2002; Garfinkle 2003). During that same year, the Minnesota State Legislature passed Minnesota statute 244.052, which allowed law enforcement officers to notify the public
of the residential addresses of previously convicted sex offenders living in Minnesota (Zollar 2003). The statute also placed restrictions on where certain sex offenders can live in accordance to school locations and other offenders (Zollar 2003). I scored this variable as one for individuals released between 1996 and 2002 and zero for those released earlier.

Results

Media Variables

Table 1 presents the results from my replication of the Minnesota Department of Correction’s study, as well as the contextual variables that I analyzed which were found to be significantly related to the risk of reoffending. Since my hypotheses had predicted the direction of the variables, a conventional one-tailed test was used to determine significance; however, because the variables that were found to be significant using a one-tailed test were not in the direction I had predicted, I used a two-tailed test to determine their significance. The four significant effects of my media variables shown in Table 1 held in a logit model that adjusted for the nesting of observations within release year, indicating that these effects are robust.

In accordance with the findings published by the MDC, offenders who had been convicted of at least one sex crime prior to their governing offense were found to have a significantly increased risk of reconviction for a later sex crime. Moreover, offenders who had victimized strangers and male children in their governing offense were at a significantly increased risk of reconviction, as were offenders who had dropped out of “prison-based sex offender treatment” (MDC 2007:17). I found that offenders who had received supervision upon being released from prison had a significantly reduced risk of reconviction for a later sex crime. Furthermore, the year in which an offender was released from prison for their governing offense was associated with a significantly reduced risk of later reconviction.

Contrary to my hypothesis, I found that the media variables had positive effects on reconviction. Thus, newspaper coverage of sex crimes aggravated rather than deterred reconviction. While all of the contextual variables I created to measure media attention to sex crimes were found to aggravate reconviction, only four were statistically significant at the .05 level.

Offenders who were released during years in which there were a large number of articles that graphically portrayed sex offenses were at a significantly increased risk of reconviction for a later sex crime. I also
# Table 1

Cox Regression Models of Recidivism:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offender-Level Independent Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Offender</td>
<td>0.812</td>
<td>0.809</td>
<td>0.782</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority Offender</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at Release</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Sex Crime</td>
<td>1.147*</td>
<td>1.164*</td>
<td>1.148*</td>
<td>1.137*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger Victim</td>
<td>0.525*</td>
<td>.528*</td>
<td>.523*</td>
<td>.527*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquaintance Victim</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.172</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Child Victim</td>
<td>.410*</td>
<td>.408*</td>
<td>.410*</td>
<td>.417*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Adult Victim</td>
<td>-0.074</td>
<td>-0.079</td>
<td>-0.075</td>
<td>-0.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro-Area</td>
<td>0.181</td>
<td>0.175</td>
<td>0.187</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Stay</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent Discipline</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment Completer</td>
<td>-0.197</td>
<td>-0.195</td>
<td>-0.192</td>
<td>-0.227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment Dropout</td>
<td>.401*</td>
<td>.407*</td>
<td>.410*</td>
<td>.379*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Supervision</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive Supervised Release</td>
<td>-0.554</td>
<td>-.569*</td>
<td>-0.522</td>
<td>-.580*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervised Release</td>
<td>-.650*</td>
<td>-.648*</td>
<td>-.648*</td>
<td>-.651*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervised Release Revocations</td>
<td>-0.071</td>
<td>-0.066</td>
<td>-0.068</td>
<td>-0.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Release Year</td>
<td>-.196*</td>
<td>-.197*</td>
<td>-.206*</td>
<td>-.203*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Media Variable**

| Graphic Portrayal                    | 0.039*  | NI      | NI      | NI      |

**Offender Characteristics**

| More than One Offender Portrayed     | NI      | .042*   | NI      | NI      |
| Unsympathetic Offender              | NI      | NI      | .026*   | NI      |
| Offender did not Receive Punishment | NI      | NI      | NI      | .052*   |

*p<.05

*Source: Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2007, “Sex Offender Recidivism in Minnesota”*
found an aggravating effect for articles that described more than one offender or unsympathetic offender, measured separately. Lastly, I found an aggravating effect for articles that depicted offenders who had not received formal punishment as a result of their crimes.

Legal Variables

In results not shown, and in accordance with my hypothesis, I found that the contextual variables that were created to measure legal changes pertaining to sex offenders produced negative effects on reconviction. Thus, the legislation passed by the Minnesota State Legislature and Congress between 1990 and 2002 reduced recidivism; however, these effects were not statistically significant at the .05 level (one-tailed test). As the effects of the legislative changes made between 1990 and 2002 are not strong, they cannot be used to explain the decrease in sexual recidivism among the 3,166 previously convicted sex offenders in Minnesota during the same time.

Discussion

My findings suggest that newspaper coverage of sex crimes aggravates reconviction for later sex crimes. Sex offenders who were released during years that received more news coverage of sex crimes were more likely to be reconvicted of later sex crimes than those offenders who were released during years in which sex crimes received less news coverage. This conclusion is contrary to my hypothesis and it appears that the research and theory generated by Grasmick et al. (1993) to explain the reduction in self-reported drunk driving in Oklahoma City during the 1980s does not apply to a similar reduction in sexual recidivism among the 3,166 previously convicted sex offenders in Minnesota between 1990 and 2002.

While I cannot definitively explain the aggravating effect of newspaper coverage on sexual recidivism, one possible explanation is that the recidivist behavior exhibited by the sex offenders is a consequence of “social learning mechanisms, such as imitation and vicarious reinforcement” (Warr and Stafford 1991:851). Such behavior could be learned or reinforced from reading about the actions of other offenders in the Minneapolis Star Tribune. Offenders may adopt the criminal behavior of other sex offenders by imitating such behavior or by observing the benefits of such behavior (vicarious reinforcement) (Warr and Stafford 1991). Offenders may interpret the media attention to sex crimes and sex offend-
ers as bringing notoriety to those who commit sexual offenses. Thus, sex offenders may commit sex crimes in hopes of achieving similar notoriety.

Another possible explanation lies with the efforts of the Minnesota Criminal Justice System rather than the offenders. It may be that criminal justice officials, including police officers, prosecutors, judges, and corrections officials have stepped up their efforts and been more proactive in prosecuting and convicting sex offenders, as a result of public and legislative reaction to sexual offending (see Farkas and Stichman 2002). According to a 1997 report by the Bureau of Justice, “since 1980… the number of prisoners sentenced for violent sexual assaults has increased by an annual average of 15 percent—faster than any other category of violent crime, and faster than all other crime categories except drug trafficking” (Farkas and Stichman 2002:256). In other words, the effects observed here may not reflect a real increase in recidivism in response to publicity, but increased efforts at monitoring former offenders by the Minnesota Criminal Justice System.

These are certainly not complete explanations for the aggravating effect of newspaper coverage on recidivism among sex offenders in Minnesota, and thus more research is needed to better understand this surprising relationship. A future study of this kind might examine the contravening effects of media attention and ad campaigns on criminal behavior. It is possible that anti-sexual abuse ad campaigns, which were not tracked here, could also be used to deter sexual recidivism.

References


“Been There, Done That”: A Case Study of Structural Violence and Bureaucratic Barriers in an HIV Outreach Organization*

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This paper explores the heuristic and practical value of adopting the structural violence model to better understand the complexities of HIV risk in the lives of low-income African American women in Houston, TX. The non-profit organization Positive Efforts was used as a case study to explore HIV prevention services through participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Many of the staff members at Positive Efforts have had life experiences similar to those of the clients they serve. The organization uses an approach referred to as “been there, done that” to express their ability to relate to low-income African American women. Through this lens and their work in HIV street outreach, the staff of Positive Efforts is able to recognize and articulate the factors affecting HIV risk within the communities they serve. The structural violence model can be applied to understand the complexities of day-to-day risk and violence in the lives of low-income African American women. In addition to understanding the everyday struggles for shelter, food, safety, and health experienced by their clients, Positive Efforts identifies institutional barriers to effective service delivery.

According to the Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS) 52 percent of new cases of HIV in Houston, Texas are within the African American population (HDHHS 2008). This is consistent with a national trend of high incidence rates among African Americans, specifically females. In 2005, 66 percent of all women living with HIV in the United States were African American (Center for Disease Control 2008). In light of this elevated risk, HDHHS has designated African Americans, and specifically African American women, as a priority group for efforts of HIV prevention (Ryan White Planning Council 2005). The organization featured in this study, Positive Efforts (PE), is funded by HDHHS to specifically target this population in its prevention efforts. The vast majority of

* Special thanks to Positive Efforts and the Houston Department of Health and Human Services.
PE’s clients have low income and few have health insurance. A number of clients are drug users and/or sex workers, groups traditionally labeled as “high-risk” and “hard to reach” because of their illegal activities (Auerbach and Coates 2000). These groups are also considered to be high-risk because of the number of sexual partners to which sex workers are exposed, the risk for infection created by intravenous drug users, and the greater likelihood of unprotected sex among active drug users (Auerbach and Coates 2000). However, all African American females within the area the organization serves are considered to be high-risk because of the increasing incidence rates within their neighborhoods (HDHHS 2008).

One explanation for the high incidence rates among African American females is that they engage in “riskier” behavior than other groups. This is not, however, supported by data. Wyatt et al. (2002) found that race/ethnicity was not responsible for HIV risk behavior when comparing African American, white, and Latina women, but HIV risk was higher for women who are of lower socioeconomic status and have greater exposure to violence. Much of the research on HIV risk has centered on individual-level behavior, at the expense of overlooking contextual factors (Lane et al. 2004).

Farmer (2004) defines structural violence as the suffering and risk caused by historical disenfranchisement, which results in a lack of agency on the part of the individual. This concept is useful for understanding which factors beyond individual behaviors create increased HIV risk among certain communities, namely African American females, and can inform new methods of prevention that address these factors. Staff members at PE recognize that situational factors increase their clients’ level of HIV risk, but as a result of its funding structure, the organization faces barriers in addressing these issues.

**Literature Review**

Diseases are treated as specific pathologies, and generally the publically funded prevention methods for diseases reflect this conceptualization (Farmer 2004; Singer 1995; Singer and Clair 2003). This mentality is demonstrated within HIV prevention through the constant focus on the individual risk behavior, rather than encompassing the circumstances surrounding risk (Farmer 2004; Shannon et al. 2008). Singer and Clair (2003:424), however, define disease as “a unit for grouping and understanding why people get sick and specifying what condition they are suffering from,” as opposed to blaming one specific behavior. Rather than being an isolated pathology, diseases are situated in a social context
that influences their transmission and impact (Singer and Clair 2003). The environment and place, both physically and socially, that individuals occupy in society greatly affects their health (Lane, et al 2004; Singer 1995)

Structural Violence and HIV Risk

According to Epele (2002), when minority women become identified as a risk group it becomes difficult to ignore the need to address inequalities of gender and socioeconomic status as crucial issues influencing HIV risk. Individuals who are subject to inequality along the lines of gender, race, and stigma are more likely than the general population to face disease (Collins, Unger, and Armbister 2008). The fact that HIV disproportionately affects certain populations makes it crucial to contextualize the disease within the social conditions of those being infected (Collins et al. 2008; Farmer 2004; Shannon et al. 2008). The concept of structural violence does not prioritize one explanatory cause, but rather draws attention to the numerous axes that increase health risks among specific populations (Shannon et al. 2008). This model expands upon the bio-medical construct of HIV as a pathological disease caused by individual risk behavior, to one that encompasses the situations that put certain individuals at greater risk than others (Singer 1995).

The structural violence model enriches the conceptualization of HIV risk by encompassing the risk that is experienced in the every day lives of certain groups, as well as the power systems that create this vulnerability. These power systems can include racism, poverty, gender hierarchies, geographical location, community norms, and laws defining access to welfare and assisted living (Collins et al. 2008; Shannon et al. 2008; Sumartojo et al. 2000). Together these systems construct an environment that limits an individual’s ability to prevent HIV infection (Sumartojo et al. 2000). This framework allows for an understanding of the prevalence of HIV among African American women, despite the fact that they are not necessarily engaging in “riskier” behavior than people of other races, when social factors are controlled for.

Specific Factors

Funding for interventions within the African American community began later than interventions within white communities. Gay white males were identified as the first main HIV risk group through the 1980s, and so the bulk of funding was targeted at this population. It was not until there were more AIDS cases within the African American population
than the white population, despite the fact that African Americans make up only 13 percent of the population (U.S. Census 2000), that funding began to specifically target African Americans (Airhihenbuwa et al. 2002).

The most common means of HIV transmission among African American women is from heterosexual contact with high-risk partners, followed by injection drug use (CDC 2008). The context surrounding these behaviors, therefore, becomes a natural point for research and intervention. Research has identified that one factor common to African Americans is a low male-to-female ratio, due to the large number of incarcerated males (Lane et al. 2004). This results in a higher ratio of males having more than one partner, with or without their female partners’ knowledge (Airhihenbuwa et al. 2002; Lane et al 2004). Having more partners greatly increases an individuals’ risk of contracting HIV (Lane et al. 2004). Incarceration itself puts individuals at high risk for HIV (Airhihenbuwa et al. 2002) and the ratio of HIV-positive results between whites and African Americans is 1:2 (CDC 2008). The high incarceration rate of males also results in more female-headed households. As single parents, many women put their children’s needs before their own, which may also result in risky sexual behavior (O’Daniel 2008).

Another risk to women found predominantly in minority subcultures is the “down low” attitude. Bisexuality and homosexuality are not considered acceptable in many African American communities; therefore men hide their activity from their female partners (keeping it on the “down low”) (Airhihenbuwa et al. 2002). Because these men do not identify as homosexual, they often do not consider themselves as being at risk for HIV (Airhihenbuwa et al. 2002).

Given their socioeconomic status, many African American women at-risk for HIV are also at risk for homelessness and/or unsafe living environments. Women may live in areas of high drug use, or be drug users themselves. Drug use is a risk factor associated with HIV and health in general (Epele 2002). The communication of this relationship is often a central component in HIV prevention and treatment (Epele 2002), but how it is presented varies. In healthcare settings it is often brought up by a doctor/clinician. Many of these interactions assume that because people speak the same language and confidentiality is insured, doctors and patients can understand each other (Singer 1995). However, the failures of both prevention and treatment of low-income African American females indicate that doctors and patients often have disparate perspectives due to status differences, which often makes effective communication difficult (O’Daniel 2008; Singer 1995). Female drug users have reported that many times they were aware of the risk to their health, especially in the
use of street drugs, but were frustrated with the “lectures” they received from doctors who simply told them to quit (Epele 2002; O’Daniel 2008). This may occur because doctors focus on the broad health implications, rather than understanding the personal tradeoffs in the women’s everyday lives. In the everyday reality of poor women, particularly those engaging in drug use and sex work, the conceptualization of HIV risk is mitigated by the more immediate daily risks they experience, such as threats of hunger, housing, and addiction (Baker, Case, Policicchio 2003; Epele 2002). This same trend is found within sex workers. Many women enter into, and continue, sex work because of poverty or drug addiction (Baker et al. 2003). They are aware of the risk of HIV, but it does not outweigh everyday risks of poverty and violence. In addition to issues of communication and understanding between doctors and patients, the illegality of this behavior further marginalizes this group from both society and a number of social resources, including, but not limited to healthcare (Epele 2004).

Present throughout these situations are the forces of poverty and lack of access to healthcare. Poverty has been found to be the dominant socioeconomic force within the HIV epidemic (Parker, Easton, and Klein 2000). African American women are more likely than white or Latino women to have HIV risk given their economic situations (Wyatt, Forgen, and Guthrie 1998). In her investigation of the experience of African American HIV positive women in Denver, Colorado, O’Daniel (2008) found that the health system failed to realize the complex interplay between poverty and access to HIV health care. While many services are offered for free, the barriers of lack of childcare, single-parent economics, drug use, survival sex, unstable housing situations, as well as the complex overlap of these issues, makes accessing services and practicing less ‘risky’ behavior complicated tasks (O’Daniel 2008).

These realities must be taken into consideration in the conceptualization of HIV risk among social groups. When diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, are found within communities suffering from other social factors, the situation must be understand in more sophisticated and complex terms (Auerbach and Coates 2000). Organizations which have employees who have had similar backgrounds as their clients have been found to be more sensitive to the complexities of the risk “trade-offs” faced by their clients, and more aware of the importance of helping clients meet their day to day needs as a part of caring for their HIV (O’Daniel 2008; Streat 2000). There is, however, a lack of academic research focusing on specific care providers who meet these qualifications, and their analysis of barriers to HIV prevention.
Organizational Structure of HIV Services

Most public funding for HIV prevention in Houston, Texas is managed by the Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS), specifically the Department of HIV/STD and Viral Hepatitis. This division manages some programs directly and contracts with local non-profits to target specific populations. The contract organizations are required by the CDC to provide services that qualify as evidence-based interventions. Evidence-based interventions are strategies that have been researched by an outside group and found to be effective at preventing the spread of HIV. The use of evidence-based strategies is one method of trying to insure that funds are not being wasted on ineffective forms of prevention (Auerbach and Coates 2000). While prevention efforts are recognized as important, relative to primary care services they are more susceptible to budget cuts and reallocation of funds (Auerbach and Coates 2000).

Currently preventative interventions most commonly focus on one-to-one conversations or small group workshops that distribute information on risk reduction and self-management of risk with the goal of eliciting behavioral change on the individual level (HDHHS 2008). Unfortunately, the empirical studies that determine what constitutes an effective preventive intervention are not always accessible to individual agencies. In addition, there is little research evaluating the efficacy of evidence-based interventions as practiced in the field by service providers (Kelly et al. 2000). An alternative to the current situation would be what Kelly et al. (2000:1087) refer to as a “bidirectional process of technology,” where service providers are given intervention models, but the research of models is influenced by the specific needs and constraints of service providers and opinions from the HIV positive community (Auebach and Coates 2000). Many researchers call for HIV prevention workers to be more innovative in their tactics, to break away from the traditional sphere of public health, and partner with community members and organizations that provide services not directly related to healthcare (O’Daniels 2008; Parker et al. 2000).

Methodology

This article draws upon data collected through participant observation of the organization featured. The organization, Positive Efforts (PE), was chosen by the researcher because HDHHS identified them as an organization that uses “out of the box” methods and which is particularly
effective at serving “hard to reach” populations.

Data Collection

PE was founded and is run by a longtime HIV/AIDS advocate, Barbara Joseph. The entire staff is African American, and all but one staff member is female. Everyone in the outreach staff has at least ten years of experience in the field, as well as experience in other fields such as nursing, home health care, and police work. The focus of PE is to promote HIV and syphilis prevention\(^1\) by bringing services directly to the clients. This not only facilitates the organization’s access to clients who are considered “hard to reach,” but it also allows the staff greater insight into the everyday lives of the individuals they are trying to serve. The outreach workers conduct testing in drug rehabilitation centers and parole programs, but primarily focus on street testing in Northwest Houston. This form of testing requires outreach workers to park their cars at areas of high pedestrian traffic, such as convenience stores and fast-food establishments, and to conduct testing out of the backs of their cars. A crowd often gathers, composed of individuals waiting for tests and members of the community who are hanging out in the area. Typically one worker helps clients complete the necessary paperwork while another worker administers the test and speaks with clients about risk behavior on an individual basis. While people are waiting for their results, the worker not conducting tests also hands out condoms and pamphlets and answers questions from the crowd. In addition to testing, some outreach workers also organize small group interventions entitled Sisters Informing Sisters on Topics of AIDS (SISTA) with clients who were tested in drug rehabilitation and parole centers.

I conducted participant observation with PE for ten weeks, for four days each week. This participation included helping recruit clients for testing, helping them fill out their paperwork, preparing instruments for tests, as well as sitting in on the conversations between testers and clients about health risk and their sexual histories. It also included observations of the small group discussions conducted by some outreach workers, as well as observations of how the outreach workers process the paperwork for clients. After six weeks of observations I conducted semi-structured interviews exploring themes that had frequently emerged from informal

\(^{1}\) This entails prevention of initial HIV infection, but also the prevention of co-infection, where an individual who is already HIV positive may become infected with another strain of HIV.
conversation and observations. Interviews were conducted with five outreach workers and with the head of the department within HDHHS that funds PE. To supplement these interviews and verify the accuracy of the staff’s analyses, sixteen clients were interviewed. The staff interviews were conducted in the PE office, and clients were interviewed at the site where they received a service from PE. The staff members that were interviewed were all female, as were fifteen of the sixteen client interviews, as well as the head of the department at HDHHS. The interviews were all audio-recorded with permission of the subjects. Throughout the research, there was frequent communication to ensure that the needs of both the organization and the researcher were being met.

Analysis Framework

The researcher used interpretive phenomenological analysis to ensure that the words and priorities of those being studied were being articulated (Morrison and Whitehead 2005). After collecting data the researcher analyzed the observations and interviews to identify and understand the common themes. This strategy closely resembles anthropologists’ analysis of “emic” categories produced by the group studied. It also aligns well with “grounded theory” in sociology, which elicits categories and cultural frames used by informants rather than imposing them (Charmaz 2002; O’Connor, Netting, and Thomas 2008). The themes that emerged were strongly aligned with the structural violence framework, though the actual term was never used by the interviewees. The analysis and conclusions drawn were discussed with members of the PE staff to verify the accuracy of my interpretation of their words and actions.

Results

Staff members at PE make a concerted effort to keep the services they offer accessible and relevant to their clients. They speak in a similar vernacular to their clients and consider this essential to their provision of services. All members of the staff articulate the need to talk neither above, nor below a client. One outreach worker said “just because people are in the projects doesn’t mean they are dumb.” In one-on-one conversations, the focus is on figuring out how the client wants to talk about the issue, be it through humor, scientifically, etc. and to let the client set the tone of the interaction. The staff members show that they are comfortable in their clients’ environments. One staff member said:
I guess with the team that we have that don’t mind getting out there are just sitting on the corner with the people that are at risk, you know we don’t have anyone that is uppity or snooty here, and a lot of the people that work here have come from some of the same backgrounds so it doesn’t bother us to get out there and mingle with the folks.

Many of the staff members at PE have had life experiences similar to those of the clients they serve. Several members of the staff have spent time in jail, are recovering drug users, or have engaged in the exchange of sex for goods or services. Others are single mothers or have had family members incarcerated. Additionally, some members of the staff currently lack health insurance or have been uninsured at various times in their lives. Moreover, several members of the staff are HIV positive. Finally, the staff is entirely African American, and all but one member is female.

In talking about work in the community, four themes emerged that demonstrates the staff’s recognition of the structural violence occurring in the targeted populations: (1) lack of access to healthcare, (2) the role of drugs, (3) the vulnerability of women having unsafe partners, and (4) the pervasive effects of poverty.

**Lack of Access: Both currently and historically**

Staff members at PE recognize the historical failures of the health system and social services within the neighborhoods they work:

A lot of resources hadn’t been put into those [African American] communities so its almost like um... the message is just now reaching them 24 years later, and it’s very hard because we’re out there we find that the lack of education and knowledge, the modes of transmission, the actions, just the sheer nature of the disease itself is very lacking within that community.

They hear clients asking about whether there are clinics in the area and complaining about the lack of transportation. Many clients said they did not know where they could get a free HIV test besides jail. There is mistrust of social services and the police, and also mistrust of health workers coming into their community. This makes access to health care difficult since, according to the staff, many people are uninsured and yet do not feel safe coming to the free clinic:

There are a lot a people that won’t come, they don’t go nowhere but from their front door to the store to the weed house, and they ain’t co-min’ to the clinic. They don’t have transportation.
Role of Drug Use

The neighborhoods that PE works in are areas with frequent drug sales, especially of crack cocaine. Whether or not individuals are users themselves, they are in environments where exposure to the paraphernalia of drug use and to drug-related violence is rampant. An additional long-term impact of drug use that the staff has identified is a care-giving generation gap caused by crack cocaine. A number of teenagers live with their grandparents because their parents are crack addicts and/or are in jail, and thus are not able to function as parents. The grandparents are perceived as not being able to control the kids, resulting in the kids spending lots of time on the street and engaging in high-risk behavior.

Women with Unsafe Partners

Another factor that determines risk is gender politics within the community. Women whose partners were not present would talk about being ready to “kill their man” if he came up with a positive HIV result since the women report they were not “messing around” with anyone else. The staff also recognizes the implications of having a large percentage of the male population in jail, and how that factors into community risk:

We as minorities have more black African American men incarcerated, and when they come out we fool around with them not even knowing what’s been going on it there, and I think that’s where a lot of our confessions are coming from, and that’s besides the men that prefer having sex with other men, or with men and women, you know, on the down low.

Sex work is an activity that exposes many women to potentially high-risk partners. Such work is overwhelmingly tied to low socioeconomic status, disproportionately affecting women of color. Though not exclusively connected, the staff reported on the connection between drug use and sex work. One client explained that she engaged in sex work when she relapsed to drugs: “I’ll go get me a little bit, then they come back and relapse on drugs and then bam… I’m back out there.” When trying to practice safe sex, drugs can be a hindrance to the women. One sex worker reported that to keep girls safe, “you need to put a condom in their hands when they ain’t had that first hit of the day or whatever.” The use of drugs during sex work can lead women to not use condoms, and the sores caused by burns from crack pipes can put women more at risk to infections from oral sex.
While they recognize the connection, the staff does not want to make assumptions about women engaged in sex work:

It could be circumstances I might not even know about: she may be doin’ it for food, to pay her bills… she might just like it.

This woman is probably out there, probably providing and trying to provide for needs that she has, maybe drugs, maybe she has a kid at home, maybe she is tryin’ to put her kid through college, maybe she is tryin to put herself through college, who the hell knows.

The PE staff does recognize the risks involved in sex work beyond HIV, including stigma, violence from their pimps and clients, and the refusal of clients to wear condoms. This puts many sex workers in a difficult predicament because they have to decide between making money and protecting themselves. Another factor the PE staff realizes is that condoms can be an expensive form of risk reduction for some of their clients. They focus on distributing condoms and letting clients, especially sex workers, know where they can get more. The PE staff is concerned that clients should not have to choose between buying condoms and something else they need:

Condoms are expensive, people will tell you, do I buy milk or condoms? I need milk for my baby’

These perspectives of clients and staff reveal that the day-to-day realities of sex work involves a complex network of risks and trade-offs.

Role of Poverty

All of these factors are tied to the economic disparities that staff members of PE see in the communities they serve. Staff members emphasize that their clients have to deal with so many problems on a daily basis:

Some people come in, not worried about HIV, worried about bills, kids, etc…if you just push HIV they aren’t gonna listen. You have to be sympathetic to their situation and really listen to them and their needs. It’s hard because there is so much you want to do, but you have to realize you can’t solve everything.

I can’t go and have disenfranchised, low income, special needs women sit down and talk to me for two hours about something. Cause number one, I’m not gonna be able to give them a decent something to get them to sit for 2 hours, if you’re gonna be telling me the minimum wage
is $7 an hour, and I can only give them a $10 gift card for 2 hours or you know, it doesn’t make sense.

Another economic factor is that even though there are free clinics, it often takes more time to visit one of these clinics than clients can get off from work, especially if they are HIV positive and have to make regular clinic visits. Thus, most clients served by PE do not seek any form of preventative care, or health care in general besides what is provided for them on the street, due to time constraints.

Staff Responses to these factors

In light of the circumstances of its clients, PE tries to make services as accessible as possible. The staff combats the issue of stigma and fear of social services by sharing personal experiences with their clients. One staff member sums up this attitude as a willingness to say “been there done that” to her clients. She explains that when a client starts talking about drug use, or if she meets a client while testing in a rehabilitation center, she will say that she went through rehab before; or when she is asking a woman about whether she has engaged in an exchange of sex for goods or services and the client seems hesitant, she is comfortable saying “girl, you know you had him pay your light bill or something for you, I done did that too.”

PE staff work hard to meet clients “where they are at.” For drug users the staff has various suggestions:

If we approach them and tell them they just need to quit then we won’t get anywhere. If their joy is getting high, then they are gonna keep doing it until they want to stop. Yes it would be better if they quit, but they already know all that, and they don’t want a lecture. Instead we can work with them to reduce their risk bit by bit.

The outreach workers suggest ways to clean needles with bleach and water, and encourage clients to “shoot up” in smaller groups. If clients are having sex while high and remove a condom because they cannot feel anything, the staff members encourage them to at least pull out before ejaculation and to keep trying different types of condoms for future encounters. They also teach women how to keep condoms in their cheeks and put them on with their mouths, and how to use female condoms. An outreach worker explains that:

Overall the motto is, “What can I do to help you be safer?” Not abstinence, not using condoms all the time, not quitting sex work, or drugs,
but at least be safer while you address these other issues.

By helping clients make small steps that they are actually more likely to accomplish, PE staff members believe they can move clients towards safer behaviors while keeping lines of communication open. This belief was confirmed by client reports that they did indeed feel that they could relate to the staff. Clients stated that working with the staff gave them opportunities to articulate issues they were going through and helped them communicate better with their peers. They recognized the fact that the staff had similar life experiences and this made them more comfortable dealing with them. In addition to this client feedback, the organizations that invite PE to test at their locations, as well as the head of the department that funds them, reported that PE is one of the HIV prevention organizations that has had significant impact on communities at risk.

_Frustrations with the Bureaucratic System_

While PE still uses an approach that views HIV on the individual behavioral level, the organization’s actions and accommodations to clients take into consideration the broader social context surrounding HIV risk. The organization is restricted from moving further away from an individual behavior model by its funders. While clients and organizations working with PE view it as a successful organization, the staff of PE feels that they are not nearly as effective as they could be. Most members of the staff felt that while they were successfully helping some individuals, they could be having a significantly larger impact within the community, and be in a position to more effectively address factors relating to structural violence, if they were given more flexibility by their funders.

PE believes it could better serve its clients if it were less restricted by the bureaucratic structure of public funding institutions. One consistent critique from both staff and clients of Positive Efforts is the amount of paperwork they have to deal with. While clients being tested in rehabilitation centers did not complain about the paperwork, clients tested in the street often did, and asked why they had to fill out so much information and answer so many questions. Staff members articulate the concern that it often is not possible to have a twenty-minute one-on-one conversation on the street with a client, much less the hour-long protocol based on counseling quotas it must meet. Another concern is that clients in any setting may get uncomfortable when they feel everything they say is being written down. One staff member believes that you need to put
aside the paperwork to really understand what is going on:

Let them tell you the real truth cause when you’re writing down stuff with pens and pencils, people are only doing what they think you want them to do.

While some of the paperwork is filled out on-site with the client, the tester fills out the remainder of the paperwork after the fact, a task that can take significant time. This leaves less time for locating new sites and spending time in the community, preventing the staff from testing as many clients as possible:

I think there are too many stipulations on what we do. I think we are so inundated with paperwork nowadays that we are not getting to the root of the problem cause we don’t have time. If we sit up and fill out 15 copies of the paper work to go with every folder, how we having enough time to go out there and provide the services we need to for those folks?

This frustration is also expressed by other organizations. In focus groups on barriers to care, a number of Houston service providers reported that the paperwork was excessive and prevented them from providing services as efficiently as possible (RWPC 2005).

A lack of flexibility in the services the organization can provide is an even larger concern than the paperwork requirements. PE can only provide services in specific areas, and must follow a protocol set by the CDC. The problem, from the staff’s perspective, is that the majority of the people they have to report to at HDHHS have not had any experience in outreach, especially street outreach. This makes it frustrating for PE staff members because they feel they are more informed about the needs of their clients than the people enforcing the restrictions.

The funding structure does, however, espouse some of the same values articulated by PE. Both the CDC and HDHHS recognize the role of poverty and race in HIV risk (CDC 2008; RWPC 2005). The Houston Area Comprehensive Plan for HIV Services shows that people infected, or at risk, list housing, basic health care, and food as the largest gaps in care (RWPC 2005). The current plan for prevention services encourages free testing, testing in public areas, transportation to testing, mental health services, and free HIV services for HIV positive individuals. In focus groups conducted by the Ryan White Council for HIV Services, it was found that service providers report financial assistance for consumers, transportation, and housing as the major barriers to care for HIV-positive individuals (RWPC 2005).
The focus of funding, however, is on testing and counseling. While the ties between race, poverty, and HIV infection are recognized in the literature, the understanding of these connections is only being used to identify which groups should be targeted for testing (RWPC 2005). In 2005, the City of Houston allocated 25.3 percent of their total funding to Home/Community Based Support Services, 32.9 percent to Ambulatory/Outpatient Medical Care, 31.2 percent to the AIDS Drug Assistance Program, 4.4 percent to Other Outpatient/Community Based Primary Medical Care Services, 5.3 percent to Inpatient Medical Care Services, and .08 percent to Prevention with Positives (RWPC 2005). This funding distribution represents a clear focus on the medical aspects of the disease, patient medical care and drugs, rather than a focus on the social context surrounding the disease.

PE would like to be permitted to work in a more holistic way. Currently PE is funded to perform tests and conduct SISTA group interventions. The money for this work comes from specific funds that are determined at the beginning of each fiscal year. If unexpected changes occur throughout the year and the organization wants to reorganize its services, or needs a new computer, or wants to go into a new area, it must get every change approved by the city, which takes significant time, and the changes are not always granted. While PE is funded to give tests, the staff may discover that the actual priority in their communities is condom use. In the same way that staff see the clients reassessing risk in different settings, the organization wants the flexibility to meet the more immediate needs within its organization and community. The CEO, Barbara Joseph, wants to try new methods because she believes the organization is not solving as many of the community’s problems as it could. One program the PE staff would like to implement is to involve clients in condom distribution, office work, and basic skills training, so that they can do work alongside members of the organization. The CEO feels that empowerment and the ability to pay, train, and involve former clients is crucial to combating HIV risk among women. She says she wants to get “out of the box” and try to solve problems such as poverty and female empowerment which are at the root of HIV risk and infection. She believes these issues must be combated via a holistic provision of services that addresses the complex disenfranchisement experienced by the women. As people who interact daily with clients on the street, the PE staff do not feel that the problems of the clients can be solved without a more comprehensive and flexible approach.
Conclusion

Positive Efforts is an example of an organization that recognizes the complexities surrounding HIV risk for African American females in its community. The staff members work to provide relevant services in light of their clients’ needs. In order for the organization to enhance its effectiveness, however, funding sources need to recognize the complicated nature of HIV risk. The distribution of funds must be in line with this understanding of the importance of social factors in influencing health outcomes. This change in perspective is unlikely to occur until the disease is viewed in the social context of inequality and structural violence. Mandating HIV prevention outreach to be combined with other services, rather than funding testing alone, would allow for more comprehensive and effective health care.

There is also a need for more direct communication between researchers, policy makers, and service providers in the creation and tailoring of intervention programs. The “been there, done that” mentality among service providers is important and much appreciated by clients. A more effective and well-coordinated approach to risk reduction among African American women may be possible if policy makers also recognize the value of this mentality.

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Style and Consumption Among East African Muslim Immigrant Women: The Intersection of Religion, Ethnicity, and Minority Status

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This research examines the dress choices and shopping behaviors of East African Muslim immigrant women to explore how they understand dress and consumer choices in the context of ethnicity, Islam, and their relationships with non-Muslim Americans. Specifically, I analyze how women use dress and consumption as a tool for self-expression and what the use of this tool reveals about these women’s responses to social pressures: (a) assimilative pressures emanating from mainstream American society and (b) pressures toward cultural maintenance found within the local East African Muslim community. I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with nine East African Muslim women in their twenties living in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. I found that women use a personal Islamic framework to explain their style choices, though they also conceptualize dress as a collective attribute when positioning themselves relative to non-Muslims in the United States. These women frame their experiences in American stores as experiences of agency, feeling that knowledge of American fashion and consumerism demonstrates their belonging in non-Muslim American society. The meanings these women assign to dress and consumption and the flexibility with which they can deploy these meanings depend on social relationships as well as personal religious views about style and consumption.

Sociology has long recognized that people use dress and consumption to construct an individual identity and to signal that identity to others (Davis 1992; Finkelstein 1991). However, it is unclear how accurately observers decode the signals that wearers send to them (Finkelstein 1991; McCracken 1988), especially when the meanings dress embodies are culturally-specific (Shirazi-Mahajan 1993). Using dress as a symbol of personal identity becomes difficult when wearers and observers use different cultural schemas to interpret dress, or have access to multiple cultural understandings of dress and consumption. As a visible marker of difference, dress often becomes symbolic of social division, whether achieved or ascribed, as evidenced by recent developments such as the
debate in France over students wearing headscarves in schools.

Clothing is also a consumer product. Accordingly, this study builds off research that analyzes consumption as a form of self-expression, and it adds to studies exploring the interaction of consumer habits and ethnic identity. More specifically, it explores the extent to which immigrants in America adopt, reject, or modify American style and consumer models when other Islamic cultural influences are present. It also evaluates the intersection and interaction of these two frameworks and demonstrates the ability of social relations to impact style and consumption decisions among immigrant populations.

This paper examines the style and consumer choices of East African Muslim immigrant women, focusing specifically on the overlapping effects of Islam and American consumer culture on dress choice. I also explored how these women interpret their choices regarding style and consumption in the context of culture, religion, and the relationships they perceive between themselves and Muslim and non-Muslim Americans, as well as the social and individual processes by which norms of dress within this community are constituted, accepted, modified, and rejected.

The study of dress and consumption among East African Muslim immigrant women is particularly compelling because these women have access to Islam as an alternate framework in which to make style and consumer choices, and to ethnic shopping centers, which aid the consumption of cultural and religious products. Moreover, most of these women wear a headscarf and many also wear hijab or other types of cultural and religious clothing, thereby signaling their religion and ethnicity visually and binding consumer and style choices to religious identity. This research explores questions about how East African Muslim women negotiate the different systems of meaning regarding dress and consumption that they encounter, and how social relationships and other circumstances influence their engagement with these different systems.

I found that the women I interviewed navigate two frameworks—Islam and mainstream American consumerism—that assign different meanings to clothing choices and involve different ideas about what style and consumption decisions reveal about these women. The meanings these women derive from each framework impacts how they relate to others within and outside the East African Muslim community. Often, women’s divergent understandings of appropriate Islamic dress produce uncertainties that lead to internal deliberations about the definition of modest dress. The relationships these women feel they have with others in American society affect the way they use the two frameworks. Per-
ceived discrimination can motivate women to demand cultural inclusion by demonstrating a knowledge of American consumerism at the same time that it strengthens the importance of Islamic dress as a communal undertaking.

**Literature Review**

As multicultural actors, East African Muslim immigrant women confront assimilative pressures from mainstream society, and pressures toward cultural maintenance from their ethnic community. My research helps evaluate competing hypotheses regarding how multi-cultural actors respond to divergent social pressures. They may be completely constrained by either of these pressures, or they may be able to use culture as a “tool-kit” (Swidler 1986), agentially responding to different sets of pressures depending on the circumstances. This study deals specifically with pressures regarding norms of dress and consumption.

A long tradition of sociology has established the relationship between consumption and identity. In a consumer society, our selection of goods can reveal who we are and what we believe (Dávila 2001). Bourdieu (1984) theorized that consumption is a means of categorizing oneself through one’s classification of consumer goods as desirable or undesirable. In a similar vein, Douglas (1997) argues that shopping is inherently “cultural” in that it reflects preferences for lifestyles or attitudes that purchased goods embody. Commodities—particularly branded commodities—can help locate the consumer within a larger community (Finkelstein 1997).

Consumption is an increasingly effective identity marker in light of the increasing importance of the consumer as a social role. As Dávila (2001:11) notes, “whether exiles, citizens, permanent residents, or immigrants—individuals are consumers first and foremost.” Moreover, according to Canclini, consumption is democratic, as it is, in theory, equally accessible to everyone (Zukin and Maguire 2004). Consumption, by virtue of its democratic nature, can be an especially important method of self-expression for marginalized groups who have traditionally been denied access to other forums in which to establish or debate collective identities (Dávila 2001).

The links between consumption and ethnic identity are complicated. Hamlett et al. (2008) remind researchers that “ethnic” shopping behavior can be as much a product of external or infrastructural constraints on consumption—such as geographic mobility or economic necessity—as ethnic identity. However, two trends in recent literature suggest that
immigrants may adopt consumption as an avenue for self-presentation. First, the experience of immigration and the subsequent concentration of immigrants into certain neighborhoods encourage the development of strong ethnic identities (Morawska 1990), which combined with a marginal position within the host society make consumption a likely mode of identity expression. Second, theories of acculturation in which immigrants are viewed as selectively retaining ethnic markers and adopting features of the host society, have replaced older models of one-way assimilation (Hamlett et al. 2008; Morawska 1990). These new theories suggest that immigrants may retain ethnic identities and corresponding consumer habits as they gain familiarity with the host culture’s institutions, acquiring a broader venue in which to exercise consumer power. Even if neither assimilation nor ethnic maintenance determines how immigrant women make consumer decisions, access to multiple orientations toward consumption offers immigrants several ways to blend these orientations. Immigrants may draw on different cultural understandings in different settings, or combine elements of different orientations to create an original perspective. Some may maintain traditional orientations; others may gravitate toward orientations from mainstream culture.

Ethnicity or marginality alone cannot completely account for “ethnic shopping behavior,” and practical constraints on shopping behaviors limit minority populations’ access to consumption as a mode of cultural expression (Hamlett et al. 2008). However, in certain instances consuming can be a powerful tool for ethnic or minority self-expression, or a symbol of acculturation or belonging. Finkelstein (1997) argues that knowledge of the value of goods according to a certain cultural paradigm can establish one as fluent or fashionable within that paradigm, and may offer marginalized populations a tool with which to demand inclusion or display collective identity. Lamont and Molnar (2001) found that black Americans use consumption to both assert their membership in mainstream society and to define and display a black American identity. In this case, consumption was used democratically to demand social inclusion on the basis of shared consumer habits; and as a method of classification to exhibit membership in a distinct minority culture. Hamlett et al. (2008) and Rouse (2004) also found evidence of consumption as a unifying force, the former among South Asians in Britain and the latter among African American Sunni Muslims in California.

There is an intimate link between dress and consumption. Dressing allows people to display to others what they have purchased. While physical characteristics have always had significance for social interactions (Finkelstein 1991), sociologists contest how well people can manip-
ulate dress to communicate internal traits (genuine or contrived) to others. Several theorists critique the notion that dress offers a clear means of communication, despite social actors’ attempts to use it to convey specific messages (Davis 1992; Finkelstein 1991). As Shirazi-Mahajan’s (1993) study of women in post-Revolution Iran indicates, dress serves as a form of symbolic interaction only if both wearer and observer agree on the meanings clothing embodies. If they do not, people cannot effectively manage others’ perceptions of them, the language of clothing loses its power, and miscommunication results. The potential for miscommunication makes dress in multicultural settings, and the dress choices of multicultural actors, a compelling topic.

These choices are especially salient for East African Muslim women, whose ethnic and religious identity cannot be divorced from religion-based stereotypes prevalent in mainstream American culture. If European and North American societies consider Muslim women oppressed, the headscarf is the symbol of that oppression, and women who cover their hair cannot escape the consequences of this symbolism (Bullock 2002). Despite, or perhaps because of, this emphasis, the headscarf is often especially important for identity construction among Muslim women living in the West (Göle 2003). The fact that dress for East African Muslim immigrant women has religious and social implications within the host society makes their decisions regarding dress, and their use of dress to signify identity, even more interesting.

These studies on the meaning of the headscarf in Western/secular societies suggest self-presentation as a relevant area of analysis for the study of East African Muslim immigrant women. Given their exposure to multiple cultural understandings of the headscarf and other forms of cultural or Islamic dress, these women might blend different cultural frameworks of dress and self-presentation as they do different frameworks of consumption. The importance of religious identity and the role of dress in establishing and communicating that identity, makes consumption alone inadequate as an analytic tool. By studying the intersection of consumption and self-presentation as forms of self-expression, this project can adequately address the intersecting dimensions of identity that Eastern African Muslim immigrant women confront.

Methodology

I gathered information through in-depth semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observation. Observation periods in a Somali
mall in a Minneapolis neighborhood with a large East African population and brief, on-site conversations with women shopping there formed the ethnographic portion of my study. In light of the differences between American and Somali malls, ethnographic observation gave me a better sense of the shopping environment in Somali malls and yielded information that helped shape my interview questions. It often gave me a point of comparison from which to launch interview questions (e.g., “I know at the Somali mall, it’s common for customers and storeowners to barter. Do you think the customer-salesperson relationship differs between Somali and American malls?”). Specifically, ethnographic observation helped me understand the power of conservative social norms and the prevalence of more conservative understandings of Islamic dress within the Somali malls, which answered questions about what kind of social pressures women in my study encounter from their co-ethnic community. I also recruited three of the women I formally interviewed at the Somali mall. Though I used ethnography to supplement interview data, I draw most of my analysis from interviews, which best allowed me to uncover how people understand and negotiate overlapping sets of cultural prescriptions. In total, I interviewed nine women.

Interviews were uniquely suited to my research question because questions of dress and consumption are questions of consciousness. As Ewick and Silbey (1998) define it, consciousness is a form of individual participation in social structures; it provides a framework for understanding how individuals interact with socially generated patterns of meaning. The meanings women assign to dress and fashion choices, and the processes through which they develop these meanings and translate them into behavior are as, or more, important than consumptive practices themselves. These meanings and processes can be assessed most effectively through interviews, which allow respondents to frame their experiences according to their own subjective understandings, and to steer the interview to subjects they believe are relevant. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to use questions regarding basic consumptive behavior to understand whether and how these women understand consumption and self-presentation in a religious or ethnic context, use consumption as a mode of self-expression, and view the relationship between minority status and style choices. I was able to frame questions in the language of shopping, avoiding suggestive wording. This was espe-

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1 Somali malls are small shopping centers with exclusively East African-owned stores that sell a variety of imported East African goods, especially religious and cultural clothing that are not sold in American stores. The vast majority of customers at the Somali mall were East African Muslim men and women.
cially important because I expected that some of the women might have had experiences of harassment or discrimination related to dress, style, or consumption. In interviews, I could let such stories arise naturally from the conversation; in contrast, a survey questionnaire would have likely cued certain responses. From a practical standpoint, interviews facilitated communication across language barriers. Since I had no translator, I had to conduct the interviews in English, and often had to rephrase a question or ask a participant to explain her response. Any other research method would have made these processes of clarification difficult or impossible.

I always began interviews with basic questions regarding recent shopping behavior, for example: “Can you tell me about the last time you went shopping? Where did you go? Who were you with? What were you shopping for?” Although there was no set structure for the interviews, I generally asked participants to describe the different kinds of shopping they did, which kind they enjoy the most, and how their shopping habits have changed. Beyond these preliminary questions, the course of an interview was largely determined by the information the participants provided. I transcribed each interview myself. (All full-length interviews were recorded. The short on-site conversations in Somali malls were generally unrecorded; I transcribed these on-site by hand.) After all the interviews had been conducted, I coded them thematically, searching for overarching patterns in the data. I drew out themes that emerged most strongly from the data, and organized my analysis around these key ideas.

The population for this study was East African Muslim immigrant women in their twenties who live in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area and wear headscarves. I chose to study this population partly for practical reasons; East Africans are a large and visible minority group in the Twin Cities, and I believed I would have greater access to these women than to women in other minority groups. I wanted to work with first-generation immigrants who have lived in the United States long enough to be familiar with American institutions and patterns of consumption. Women in their twenties are likely to have attended school in the United States and to speak English—a necessity, since I could not work with an interpreter. As a result of their experiences, these women have likely experienced both American and East African cultures. Moreover, they have achieved a level of social and financial independence that lets them make personal decisions regarding shopping and consumption. I chose to work with women who wear headscarves partly to homogenize my sample, given the diversity of Islamic dress. I also suspected that these
women were more likely to perceive their religion as something that set them apart from mainstream American society, and thus more likely to make consumer choices in the context of that separation.

This population is in several ways unusual among immigrant groups, making the study of their style and consumption choices theoretically compelling as well. Among East African Muslim immigrant women, ethnic identity intersects with race, religion, racial and religious stereotyping, gender, and immigration or refugee status (Guenther, Pendaz, and Songora Forthcoming; Waters 1999). Race is especially important for black immigrants in the United States, who often find themselves categorized as “African American” within an American racial schema they neither endorse nor are familiar with. The potential for this categorization, which many black immigrants believe to be disadvantageous, can strengthen immigrants’ commitment to preserving ethnic markers and ethnic identities (Guenther et al. Forthcoming; Waters 1999). East African communities in the Twin Cities are composed largely of refugees, whose relationship to the state and the host society differ from those of most immigrants (Guenther et al. Forthcoming). These differences may impact refugees’ desire or ability to acculturate to the host society.² In addition, these immigrants have settled into a new gateway area, where according to Hernández-León and Zúñiga, immigrants have greater freedom to define their identity due to the absence of an immigration history (Waters and Jiménez 2005). East African immigrants may develop new, unanticipated patterns of consumption. Their consumer habits may reflect the intersection of native and host culture influences, rather than a tradition of previous immigrants’ economic activity, especially since newly-built Somali malls offer an alternative to American stores. Religion is another influence. Most Muslim immigrant women recognize stereotypes about Muslims in host societies (Dietz 2004; Guenther et al. Forthcoming). Whether religion or religious stereotyping affects women’s style and consumption decisions is an important question because certain Islamic mandates touch on dress and consumption directly (e.g., modest dress for women.)

I drew participants from several sources. I found some through academic contacts and a contact in an “English as a Second Language” (ESL) program. I also recruited directly from American and Somali malls, and used limited snowball sampling. Recruiting from different sources increased the diversity of my sample. However, this method limited my

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² Though my sample included both immigrants and refugees, I will use the term “immigrant” for the sake of clarity.
control over the sample. Particularly in the Somali mall, where direct recruitment was most successful, I was obliged to accept any participant who allowed me to interview her. I also conducted some research under less-than-ideal conditions: some women offered only limited time and several were unwilling to let me record their voice, due to religious and cultural conventions, making my final sample more diverse than I expected. Though all of the women fit my basic criteria, some were refugees, others were immigrants, and others were in the United States only to complete their education, after which they planned to return to Africa. While this diversity yielded several interesting themes, future research might focus on a more specific population.

Findings

For the women I interviewed, dress has both individual and collective significance. While women use individual criteria to create their own style, they sometimes experience dress as a collective phenomenon. Shopping for these women can be an opportunity to express individuality, to affirm social norms, or claim agency in consumer settings.

“If you’re feeling scared, it means you don’t see around you people wearing like you’re wearing”: Dress as Community

Except at Somali, and other ethnic, malls, American norms of dress and consumption prevail in commercial settings. For some women, the discrepancy between East African Muslim dress codes and American dress codes infuses dress and clothing with communitarian significance. Fatima and Saida, both Ethiopian refugees in their early twenties, downplay the importance of personal style, and frame clothing as a collective practice. Clothing emerges from their narratives as a collective, rather than individual, attribute. It is a symbol of community, as well as the medium through which acceptance, rejection, understanding, and ignorance are mediated.

Both Saida and Fatima have experienced harassment based on culture or religion. They see these conflicts as rooted in others’ attitudes toward Islam. These women believe others see their clothing as the primary marker of their Muslim identity, and they consistently attribute confrontations to the ideas their clothing inspires in non-Muslim Americans. Explaining some of her shopping experiences, Saida said:

I don’t know how [salespeople] judge. Some people, most likely, they don’t like the way you dress. And that’s how I believe.....If you are wear
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ing pants or jeans or open your hair [don’t wear a head covering] and you look or you act like that, they may not say that.3

These women feel dress separates them from non-Muslim Americans, and they believe their dress may inspire hostility or anger. Fear of confrontation, not personal considerations of style, interacts with religion to influence clothing decisions. Explaining why she and Fatima no longer wear full hijabs,4 Saida cited an incident of abuse she had heard about: “They beat the girl at the bus station, and [were] chasing her and stuff. I say, ‘I’m not going to do that if they’re going to do that to me.’” Although both women dress according to a fairly conservative interpretation of Islam, fear of harm constrains their clothing options.

However, Saida and Fatima both told me they would be comfortable wearing full hijab at the mosque or at the technical colleges they attend, because many other women there wear it. In these conversations, they adopted a view of themselves not as individuals seeking the right of personal expression, but as members of a community seeking to express what they consider an internally consistent dress style. In the case of full hijab, they found at the mosque and their schools not a venue to express their individuality, but a safe space in which to declare a shared ethnic and religious identity.

For these women, clothing becomes a powerful symbol of community, and can also be a strategy against harassment and discrimination. While Saida and Fatima believe their clothing signals their Muslim identity to others, they also see a community-wide dress code as an avenue toward greater societal acceptance for Islam and Islamic dress. Khadija, a young Somali ESL student, said:

When we go to [American] stores, like the outlet mall [in an extra-urban area], maybe they don’t know Somalis, and they don’t know our culture, or the things we wear, I feel scared sometimes….When we go to the Mall of America, there’s a lot of Somali people [and people are familiar with] Somali culture. They know us. But when we go [to other stores], they don’t know us.

Khadija feels more comfortable in settings where people are familiar with her culture and religion. Similarly to Saida and Fatima, she believes dress can establish familiarity and help Muslims gain acceptance.

3 Significantly, Saida first explained the connection between clothing and poor treatment at the beginning of the interview, in response to a general question, not following a specific probe regarding clothing styles or stereotypes.

4 A full hijab is a head covering that is tight around the face then drapes over the upper body.
among non-Muslim Americans.

Saida, Fatima, Khadija, and Maua, a Somali woman in her mid-twenties, all moved to the Twin Cities from cities with small or non-existent East African Muslim populations, where they were less comfortable wearing Islamic dress. Fatima recalled:

But once I...visit[ed] Minneapolis, I [saw] people covering and I [said], "Oh my god, why am I not covering my hair?" And the [Muslim] people, they explain it [to non-Muslims] the more we stay there....But before, we didn’t explain. We didn’t know how to explain it to them. So we ended up being just like them; just to be safe.

The presence of a large Muslim community gave Fatima the courage to dress according to the understanding of Islam she shares with the women in her community. She believes the visible presence of Muslims in the Twin Cities helps dismantle the stigma against Islam and creates greater freedom for Islamic dress. For many women, shared dress codes signify a strong community, and thus represent safety and comfort. As Saida explained: “If you’re feeling scared, it means you don’t see around you people wearing like you’re wearing.” Dress was the primary means through which Saida established a sense of belonging.

When women feel uncertain about their relationship to non-Muslim Americans, they often draw on a collective understanding of dress, and rely on the commonalities within the Muslim community to carve out a space for Muslim women in society and to mediate the uncertainties they perceive in their relationships with non-Muslim Americans. This framing of dress and consumption suggests that women do understand their clothing choices as symbolic of religious identity, but the identity that clothing symbolizes is collective, rather than individual. When women discuss the messages their clothing sends to non-Muslim observers, they frame the discussion in terms of collective goals; the idea is to gain greater acceptance for Islam and Islamic dress, not to signal individual tastes or attributes. Personal style does have a role in women’s dress decisions. However, even within the East African Muslim community, style is an unreliable method of communication.

“Me, I pretty much go by the religion”: Islam as a Paradigm Shift

Despite its collective elements, dress is not a solely collective phenomenon; the participants also see style decisions as personal choices. In this context, religion is an important element of style choices, and distinctions between Muslim women who dress differently can be as important as those between Muslims and non-Muslims. For some, the religious
aspect of these choices is largely unconscious: the question is what color headscarf to wear, not whether to cover one’s hair. Others consciously blend their own interpretation of Islam with their individual sense of style, creating a personal context in which to evaluate style choices. For all the women, religion offers an alternative to American consumerism as a paradigm that assigns and interprets the meaning of clothing. While Islam does not subsume American consumer categories, it does present women with a different lens through which they can accept, reject, or modify these categories. However, using Islam as a style paradigm creates its own ambiguity, as women encounter and must rationalize divergent interpretations of Islamic dress.

For some women, Islam provides unambiguous instruction regarding dress. These women generally profess a strong link between dress and religious devotion, and thus do not seek to alter what they see as Islam’s dress code. Amina is a young Somali woman who was raised since infancy in Kenya and came to the United States to attend college. She explained:

I’m a practicing [Muslim]. I’m trying to practice my religion....[Our religion] teaches us that God said women [are] supposed to wear non-fitting clothes, something which can cover you. That’s what God said.

Sabra, also in college, is ethnically Somali but grew up in Kenya. Like Amina, Sabra sees a relation between style decisions and faith. While she believes that taste influences clothing decisions, she also imbues certain clothing decisions, such as whether to wear pants or whether to cover one’s hair, with religious significance:

[What you wear] depends how conservative you are. If you’re more conservative, you will care about tight stuff, or revealing stuff. If you’re not, you wear pants, and revealing stuff. It categorizes you into more liberal and more conservative. And that’s what makes you different from [the other Muslim women].

The understanding of dress code as an element of religion does not preclude the use of style as a mode of self-expression. Amina goes to great lengths to preserve her personal style of dress:

My mom sends me scarves from back home. If she sees nice scarves, she sends me them. Most of the skirts that are here are so tight, so fancy. I’m so simple, I don’t like too much stuff, something which sparkles too much....So mostly my skirts I get from back home.”

Amina does not reject style as a reflection of personality or individuality; she simply relegates style decisions to arenas Islam leaves avail-
Sabra uses her sense of style in a similar way, drawing on it to fill in the gaps she believes her religion has left open. Her personal taste attracts her to certain items in American stores, though she noted that: “[for] most of the clothes that I wear, the number one thing that I consider is my religion: Is it something that you can wear as a Muslim woman?”

To these women, using clothing to signify Muslim identity may be more important than the smaller distinctions wrought by minor fashion decisions. In other words, these women may adopt “Muslim” as their master status. As Sabra explained it: “Dress code. Very, very important. It’s part of our culture, and it’s our religion, and it’s what makes you different from the other [non-Muslim] person.”

In contrast, Mapenzi, an Ethiopian woman and a recent college graduate, relies on her own interpretation of Islam to define appropriate clothing. She selects clothing that reflects personal, not collective, standards:

I incorporate the Islamic belief of how a modest woman should look with the world we live in today....[Y]ou have to incorporate everything and make up your own style. A lot of Muslims that I’d be talking to might be telling me that wearing pants is wrong, but the way I interpret it, I can tell them that what it says in the religious principles is that women should be modest and shouldn’t reveal themselves, so the jeans aren’t revealing me, and I’m not exposing any skin, so that’s how I look at it.

Unlike Amina and Sabra, Mapenzi carves a space within Islam for agency and religious interpretation, though she still limits the clothes she wears in accordance with her understanding of Islam. These two orientations represent two types of consciousness. While Amina and Sabra favor ethnic and religious orientations, Mapenzi blends the two perspectives to create her own. Regardless of the specific understanding she has of the Islamic dress code, each woman frames style and clothing decisions in an Islamic mantle.

Not surprisingly, given the diversity of interpretations of the Islamic dress code, women sometimes encounter perspectives other than their own. Diverging feelings about appropriate attire can create conflict or nurture internal contradictions as women struggle to reconcile their understanding of Islam with others’ and with their belief in the sincerity of their fellow Muslims.

Though some of the women believe dress is an accurate signifier of religious devotion, others reject clothing as a predictor of a woman’s faith. Significantly, it is not only the women who dress less conservatively who eschew the idea that good Muslims must dress a certain way. Lela is
a college freshman and her parents are Somali, but she has lived most of her life in the United States. Describing her style choices, Lela explained:

Me, I pretty much go by the religion. But I don’t think that you can dress a certain way to be [of a] certain religion. God is not going to judge you by the way you dress….[O]f course you have to cover up….[But] how you look on the outside and what is in your heart can be different things.

Similarly, some of the women argued that conservative dress can conceal weak faith. These attempts to divorce dress from religion yield tenuous stability. Maua, who dresses fairly conservatively, drew on the Qur’an to explain other Muslim women’s style choices:

God himself said, ‘I create all this different-ness, all these different humans.’ God tells us, ‘You can either choose to look like this, because that’s what I want you to look like, and be thankful for your religion, and be at peace with everybody else. [Or choose to look different.]’ I have friends that pray…[but] they don’t dress that way. That doesn’t mean that they’re bad, and I’m better.

At the same time that Maua denied the connection between faith and dress, she espoused the notion that Islam favors one style of dress. The belief that the Islamic dress code is self-evident frustrates women’s attempts to separate dress from faith, as the following conversation shows:

Maua: Muslim-wise, they [Muslim women] all know what to wear and what not to wear, because it’s in the Qur’an. So everybody knows.
Khadija: They know, but they ignore it. They don’t want to do it.

Maua can rationalize women’s differing standards of “modesty,” but she has trouble accepting her rationalization. Explaining Islam’s prescriptions regarding dress, she said: “Islam, once you understand [it], you are all done, and you basically have to practice it.” For Maua, Islam defines appropriate dress clearly. The question was whether people would accept Islam’s standard, or substitute their own. (While Lelo also believes there is a disjunction between dress and faith, she spoke of “go[ing] by the religion.”)

Many of these women find themselves guarding an uneasy equilibrium, caught between their desire to unlink dress and devotion and their intuitive belief that their interpretation of the Islamic dress code is correct and obvious. Ambiguity regarding Islamic dress, and the connection between dress and faith, obfuscates the messages these women
might send with their clothing, as well as their ability to interpret others’ clothing choices.

The Islamic style paradigm adopted by most women helps them define themselves in relation to other Muslims. It also creates internal tension for women who grapple with the discrepancies between their own and others’ interpretation of Islam. American consumerism, as an alternative framework, further complicates women’s use of the Islamic style paradigm. American consumerism can challenge the Islamic framework at the same time it offers women a chance to participate in American society.

“I don’t wear it, but I still know about it”: Acculturation and American consumer models

Though the women I spoke with recognize the impact of Islam on their personal style and cite religion as the most important factor influencing their clothing choices, they are neither unaware of nor unaffected by American consumer models. The extent to which they accept these models varies, but their interactions with American consumer structures are informed and deliberate.

Some of the women have adopted the use of brands as symbols of a certain style. Often, when I asked women what stores they liked, a typical first response was: “Stores with brands I like.” For these women, brands are closely tied to personal style. Khadija broke her dress style down to its branded elements: “I like Guess for the purse. And the shoes, I like Nike. And the coats, I really like Baby Phat.” Likewise, when Lela was asked what she likes about the mainstream American stores she frequents, she explained: “The designs. And the brands, it’s different….I see myself wearing those kinds of clothes over any other kind of clothes in the world.” Lela and Khadija understand dress as a way to reflect their individuality, and see brands as a convenient shortcut to personal style.

The women who do not use brands this way are not unaware of the role brands play in American society. Rather, they reject the conspicuous consumption they see embedded in brand-name culture. Sabra said: “I don’t follow brand names…A lot of the stuff, you’re paying for the brand, and they’re not even cute, and they’re not even comfortable…. Why would I buy something very expensive just for the name?” Amina criticized the use of brand names as a tool for projecting false wealth or status:

[L]et’s say you have a Gucci watch, you have Versace shoes, you have a Coach bag. [People] say, ‘Oh, she’s wealthy. She’s rich.’ It gives you a title
that you are not….So for me, I don’t like to be [seen] as something that I’m not.

Brand names play a limited role in both women’s fashion choices, but not because they are ignorant about brands. Rather, Sabra and Amina reject brands precisely because of their understanding of them as symbols of style and status.

Whether they accept or critique the mainstream use of brand names, knowledge of American consumerism can have functions that transcend practical considerations of shopping and style. Sabra considers fluency in American fashion as a point of pride. Though these fashions have a limited influence on her personal style decisions, Sabra believes others value her knowledge about them. She draws on this knowledge as a sales associate at Macy’s:

People come to the counter, [and ask], “What do you think goes with this? What color?” And I’ll try to explain the color….Sometimes there’s someone who comes with a dress and asks, “What kind of shoes?” …[M]aybe I’m used to coats and shoes, and magazines, and how every time we have a new style at Macy’s they put it on the mannequins, so it kind of makes it easier [for me] to [learn]….Some customers will come and I tell them the style. I don’t wear it, but I still know about it.

For Sabra, knowledge translates into social capital. Knowing about American fashions gives her confidence to advise customers at work and her friends when they go shopping together. Mainstream American stores offer her a venue in which to demonstrate the extent of her knowledge and claim the associated social rewards.

For other women, proficiency in the American consumer system is a natural outcome of acculturation. As Maua explained: “Brand names are something that you look into. It doesn’t matter where you’re from. It’s just something in our society. [Living] here, you look into it more.” Maua sees her knowledge of brand names as a symbol of her integration into mainstream American society. Like Maua, Saida frames her knowledge of brand names in the language of acculturation. She thinks about brand names almost as a rite of passage. Her growing familiarity with them reflects a more general process of integration. American malls offer her an opportunity to claim membership in one area of American society.

While many women understand brands and shopping as a form of acculturation and a means to demonstrate belonging, some also engage consumption aggressively and make more dramatic claims for social power. Saida’s experiences are somewhat unusual among my sample: she was one of a few women who told me she had experienced overt


harassment in American stores. Nonetheless, her response to this harassment, and the way she frames her shopping experiences often simply extend the practice of using American consumption to demonstrate acculturation or cultural fluency.

Saida understands consumption, particularly in American stores, partly as a forum in which she can convert money into acceptance. She sees her purchasing power as a way to challenge stereotypes and assert her power as a consumer over salespeople who act inappropriately. Discussing the language barrier she sometimes experiences in American stores, she explained:

I don't like when [American salespeople say], “I don’t know what you’re saying.” They get the idea, but they just pretend they don’t get what you’re saying….You say it two, three, four times, I get mad. I’m not gonna say it. I say forget it.

Saida frames her response not as an act of retreat but as an act of defiance. By disengaging from the sale and denying the offending sales associate the commission, she positions herself as the more powerful player in the salesperson-customer interaction.

An example of Saida’s experience at the Coach store draws together several elements common to other stories. Together with her husband, Amaad, she relayed the following events:

Saida: She [a saleswoman] think we don’t afford [the purse]. When we buy it, she say, “Oh, oh you bought it? Oh my god.” See? She think we don’t afford it. [laughs]

Amaad: [The sales lady], the way she’s standing over there and she keep looking at us like some people [who might be] stealing…. And when we get [a purse], and go [to the] other lady, I’m looking at [the first lady’s] facial expression. And then we bought it and we left. And the next day, she [Saida] didn’t like it and we turn it back to her.

Saida: We go [to the Coach store], [we return it.] This is the lady [who looked at us strangely.] Sorry for her! [laughs] Next day again, we are now going to buy [another] purse. We are walking along. “Hey, see that purse? [a different purse that was not at the store before] It’s coming back again.” And then I buy that one. The smaller one.

This narrative illustrates some of the strategies Saida uses to claim power and reject stereotypes in American consumer settings. First, with the purchase of a high-cost status symbol—a Coach bag—Saida asserted her knowledge of American fashion and her financial ability to pay
for high-end items. The second assertion is important because Saida often perceives that American salespeople suspect she is unable to afford the merchandise she is browsing. By choosing which salesperson to purchase the purse from, and by returning it and buying a different one, Saida demonstrates her familiarity with American shopping rules and her ability and willingness to manipulate them. She is not ignorant of the system or desperate to make a certain purchase; instead she sees herself as a flexible player in a bid for power.

Fluency in American consumer culture has social implications, and women who can manipulate this knowledge feel they gain control over certain social relations. Moreover, consumption allows East African Muslim women to interact with American culture in a way that dress precludes. While dress positions women as part of a community—Muslims, with respect to non-Muslims—shopping allows them to engage American consumerism as individuals, and to demonstrate acculturation and social power.

Conclusion

For the women I studied, dress and consumptive behaviors can be a reflection of personal style, a marker of Muslim identity, or both simultaneously. Viewing dress as a symbol of Muslim identity allows women to visualize a space for themselves in American society at the same time that an Islamic style framework emphasizes the differences among Muslim women.

While the East African Muslim women I spoke with rely primarily on the “Islamic style paradigm” to guide their decisions about dress and interpret others’ style choices, the ability to shift between Islamic and American reference frames gives these women agency in American consumer settings. In contrast, Islamic style paradigms rarely leave room for agency, as they give people little control over the meanings others extract from their style choices. Women interpret other’s clothing according to their own understanding, which may not match the understanding of the wearer.

Consistent with previous research, this study found dress to be an unreliable communicator of status and identity. Dress acquires the most stable meanings when it serves as a symbol of community or ethnic/religious identity with respect to relationships with non-Muslim Americans. However, the wide variety of interpretations of Islamic dress makes personal style a problematic signifier of religious identity or individuality within the community. While women may attempt to project a certain
dress-based or religious identity with their choice of clothing, the discrepancies between their own and others’ style ciphers limits their success.

While they sometimes framed dress in collective religious terms, the women I studied were less likely to view their shopping behaviors as an artifact of ethnicity. Knowledge of American fashion and consumer patterns gave these women a sense of control over their relationship to mainstream American study. Findings echo those of Dávila (2001) and Lamont and Molnar (2001), who found that consumption was an important tool for minorities asserting their inclusion in American society. Like the participants in those studies, some of the women I interviewed used their power as consumers to demonstrate acculturation, communicate status, or claim power.

This research began the important work of exploring style and consumption choices among a unique immigrant group. It provides a foundation for further studies of style and consumption choices among immigrants and minorities and the interaction of alternate paradigms for evaluating dress style and consumption.

Future researchers should consider broadening the scope and focus of this study. As discussed earlier, my sample was quite diverse. While the diversity of my sample generated insights about the ways Islamic and American paradigms intersect, and allowed a fairly comprehensive analysis of women’s consciousness with regards to dress and shopping, the characteristics of the sample limited my ability to generalize patterns based on the attributes of the individuals. New research could expand the size of the sample, or focus on specific sub-groups within the population. My study is also limited by a self-selection bias. I could only interview women who spoke English, and had very limited access to women who did not want their voices to be recorded. Future research designs could include an interpreter or stenographer to accommodate these women.

More generally, my research focused on a particular immigrant group with unique religious influences on style and consumption and specific venues in which they could carry out their beliefs: an ideal group for a study on the intersection of dress and consumption paradigms. Future studies should examine the impact of retail infrastructure and community solidarity on conceptualization of dress and consumption, as well as dress and consumer practices.


Pretty Dresses and Privilege: Gender and Heteronormativity in Weddings*

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In this article, I examine wedding advice columns using textual analysis to critically engage with aspects of inequality that persist in contemporary weddings. I propose that the language surrounding weddings functions to reflexively construct a reality in which women’s subjugation goes unquestioned and heterosexuality remains entrenched as the normative system. Through an ethnomethodological analysis of tacit knowledge, the presence of heteronormativity is revealed. Examination of category-bound behaviors associated with the bride illuminates the way in which her potential accountability as a bride becomes linked to her accomplishment of idealized femininity. The results confirm and extend existing literature on inequality in weddings, point to the omnirelevance of gender as a membership category, and further explore the complex intersection of gender and heterosexuality at the interactional level.

From family celebrations to popular films, from bridal registries to children’s toys, wedding discourse pervades contemporary American society. According to the Bridal Association of America (2006), nearly 2.3 million weddings occurred in each of the last 3 years in the United States. The cost of a wedding continues to rise, with the average having increased to over $28,000 in 2007. This includes wedding attire, jewelry, photography, food, flowers, travel costs, and many other expenses associated with the primary wedding market (Bridal Association of America 2006). Not included in these statistics is the secondary wedding market that capitalizes on the wedding to sell products only indirectly related

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to weddings. For instance, in the 1990s alone, over 30 movies were produced with the word “wedding” in their title and many others presented a wedding as a central aspect of the plot (Ingraham 1999). Further contributing to the pervasiveness of wedding discourse is its increased presence on the internet, which is now being utilized in the planning of 77 percent of weddings that occur (Bridal Association of America 2006).

Not only do weddings pervade society, but they also serve as a site of much social interaction. A great deal of work is dedicated to the planning and executing of weddings. Research has shown that the growing wedding industry continues to be marked by an unequal division of labor. This division of labor is broken down along the lines of traditional gender roles with the greater amount of work falling on women. Studies have examined this division of labor through the corresponding ideologies espoused by newly married heterosexual couples (Humble, Zvonkovic, and Walker 2008; Sniezek 2005). This article explores some of the other processes through which patriarchal privilege is maintained in wedding discourse. In this qualitative textual analysis of articles from TheKnot.com, a major wedding planning website, I draw upon ethnomethodology to analyze the routine nature of women’s subordination through the construction of weddings. While this gender inequality might seem obvious to anyone who has been involved in creating a wedding, my article demonstrates how women become complicit in their own subordination as the bridal role becomes linked to idealized femininity or society’s norms regarding what women should be like.

Another seemingly obvious inequality that requires a deeper examination relates to who is allowed to have a wedding. Ingraham (1999) argues that weddings play an important role in reinforcing heterosexuality within society. This research seeks to examine the ways in which contemporary weddings contribute to the social construction of a heteronormative society. It seeks to illuminate the way a heteronormative society—a society in which heterosexuality is normalized and privileged while other sexualities are marginalized—is reflected in and reinforced through the language of wedding discourse.

While my research will focus on the ways in which wedding discourse is involved in the perpetuation of patriarchal privilege and a heteronormative society, it must be emphasized that wedding discourse is shaped by the society in which it exists. Weddings influence social norms and institutions, but cultural, economic, and political factors also shape the structures of contemporary weddings. Throughout this article, analysis will focus on the text of wedding advice articles and its implications regarding gender and sexuality in weddings. Although it is clear that
other factors are at work in shaping weddings, a thorough analysis of such factors is outside the scope of this article.

It is often taken for granted that weddings are a normal facet of social life. This research continues in the vein of scholarship that seeks to move beyond the unquestioned status of the wedding and engage in a critical exploration of the ways that language affects, and is affected by, the social reality in which the wedding exists. Through such an exploration, the workings of privilege reinforced by contemporary U.S. weddings can be uncovered.

**Literature Review**

Ideological critiques have been the cornerstone of scholarship on weddings and related rituals. Ingraham’s (1999) comprehensive study of the consumption associated with the wedding industry remains a landmark in the field. Through the concept of heterosexual imaginary, Ingraham (1999) developed an analysis of the way in which weddings are used to maintain the inequality of institutionalized heterosexuality. Other scholars have furthered this critical examination of the intersection of romance and heterosexuality by examining how portrayals in popular U.S. culture produce and secure institutionalized heterosexuality (Best 2005; Cokely 2005). Oswald and Suter (2004) offer evidence of this inequality in their comparative research on inclusion and exclusion in wedding rituals. Other critiques of weddings have examined the perpetuation of inequality through the marriage mystique (Geller 2001) and the connections between love, consumption, and “magic” in lavish weddings (Otnes and Pleck 2003). Each of these researchers makes substantial contributions to our understandings of the production of inequality through consumption, romance, and heteronormativity in relation to wedding rituals.

Inequality related to gender and identity formation in weddings and related rituals has also been a focus of feminist critique. Boden’s (2003) deconstruction of the “superbride” reveals the role of magazines in bridal identity formation as weddings produce the bridal role as a consumer identity. Research on the interactional level has examined the perpetuation of inequality through the division of labor in wedding work (Humble et al. 2008; Sniezek 2005). Blakely (2008) draws on textual analysis in parts of her study of advertisements for wedding planners to illuminate the ways in which wedding planning remains a gendered activity for which the bride is responsible. Eglin (2002) and Stokoe (2006), while not focusing on weddings, exemplify the utilization of membership categories in analyzing gender inequality.
Other scholarship has analyzed the connections between the inequality associated with gender and sexuality. Within this broad field, some scholars, while acknowledging the complexities of theorizing on these intersections, insist that gender should be viewed as principal and sexuality as resulting from it (Jackson 2005). Others question this notion through concepts such as “heterogender” which emphasizes the way gender is shaped by sexuality (Ingraham 1994). For example, Garlick contends that within a heteronormative system, “men and women are constructed as sexual opposites in ways that assume the ubiquity of heterosexuality, such that one can only achieve true ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ by becoming and remaining heterosexual” (Garlick, cited in Brickell 2006:99). Apart from these views of gender and sexuality, there are understandings that seek either to keep gender and sexuality analytically distinct or claim they are too interconnected to be distinguished from one another (see Richardson 2007). While presenting divergent viewpoints, these authors all point to the necessity of engaging with the complex intersections between gender and sexuality.

This article draws from and broadens each of these areas of literature by exploring the production of inequality through the embodiment of cultural ideologies presented in wedding advice articles. Specifically, this research is based upon analysis of online articles, reflecting the growing trend toward utilizing internet-based sources in planning weddings (Bridal Association of America 2006). As a contemporary and commonly used source for wedding planning, online articles provide the opportunity for insightful examinations of current sociological trends. This article does this by combining the use of textual analysis and membership categorization to examine the production of gender inequality through the construction of bridal identity. While bridal identity has been examined in a number of the aforementioned studies, doing so through the use of textual analysis of online sources is the unique contribution of this paper. By limiting the focus of my own research of weddings to gender and sexuality, I seek to ensure that not only will these issues be fully examined but that their complex intersections will also be analyzed.

Methodology

This analysis of weddings is grounded in analytic induction and informed by the interpretive tradition of ethnomethodology. The methodology is based on an understanding of the social world as a reality constantly being reflexively constructed by its members through talk and interaction (Mehan and Wood 1975). Textual analysis offers a productive
means of exploring the implicit knowledge in reflexively produced accounts of weddings. In this article, I examine 10 accounts from TheKnot.com to understand the tacit knowledge through which they organize and constitute the social world which they describe.

Tacit knowledge is the background knowledge that must be known and understood to comprehend the context of the accounts. By examining tacit knowledge, we are able to see that which is often hidden or taken for granted in society but which nonetheless functions to construct reality. An examination of tacit knowledge also relies upon a consideration of the indexicality present in the data. Indexicality refers to the way that “symbolic forms...carry a fringe of incompleteness that must be filled in, and filled in differently every time they occur” (Mehan and Wood 1975:90). As a symbolic form, language is always context-dependent. To account for this indexicality, words and phrases are analyzed as part of the larger accounts rather than in isolation so that the analysis does not lose sight of the context on which the language depends.

To further this analysis, I examine the principal membership categories represented in the data, specifically bride and groom. Membership categories exist within membership categorization devices which serve as a way of organizing society. For example, within the membership categorization devices of weddings one could find such membership categories as bride, groom, mother-of-the-bride, attendant, and many others. Other membership categorization devices hold other membership categories, such as a university where one could find students, professors, administrators, and guest lecturers. Because each person in society exists within multiple membership categorization devices, they are incumbent in many categories. For example, a person could be simultaneously a student and a wedding attendant with each different membership category being highlighted in different situations depending on the membership categorization device in which they are acting.

Each membership category is associated with a variety of category-bound behaviors. A person identified to be in a certain membership category is potentially accountable for their behavior as a member of that category (Coulon 1995). Following the previous example, within the membership categorization device of the wedding, the attendant may be potentially accountable for hosting showers and supporting the bride. Her potential accountability for the behaviors of a student would not be as relevant in this situation because it is within a different setting. As an attendant, her potential accountability signifies that if she does not exhibit those behaviors associated with her membership category, she may face admonishments that serve to correct her perceived fault of be-
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havior (Coulon 1995). Although people within a membership category may not always be held accountable for all of their category-bound behaviors, potential accountability still functions to inform their behavior as they seek to accomplish those behaviors and avoid being held accountable.

In analyzing the category-bound behaviors presented in the wedding planning accounts, my research reveals the ways in which people reflexively construct reality in everyday life. Some categories are potentially accountable for many behaviors while others are potentially accountable for fewer. By examining this distinction, my research points to the way some categories are privileged and thus experience less pressure to succeed in accomplishing their membership categories.

With the internet being reported as the second-most utilized resource in wedding planning, surpassed only by family and friends, online content is an exciting and useful resource for a textual analysis of accounts relating to the contemporary U.S. wedding (Bridal Association of America 2006). TheKnot.com was chosen for its preeminence in the field, with 3.2 million unique visitors to the site each month and a number of prestigious distinctions for its wedding-related content (The Knot 2008c). Data was collected from the site at one specific time rather than over a period of time, reflecting the decision to focus on the current state of affairs of weddings rather than trying to study the similarities, differences, and developments in weddings over the years. This focus allows for the analysis of a number of current trends present in the language that are related to the wedding planning process.

In order to avoid anecdotally choosing specific examples that fit with prior conceptions of this topic, I employed data collection measures designed to increase credibility (Silverman 2001). This was accomplished through first narrowing the content area to the “Planning” section of the website. Within this section, there are 18 subsections. Each of these was reviewed during data collection on January 27, 2008. The feature article in each subsection was collected as part of the data set, with the exclusion of only those features that were photo mosaics or interactive activities such as surveys. In addition, the “Going to a Wedding” subsection was excluded so the data set would remain specifically focused on the planning of the wedding rather than also including advice on how to be a guest at a wedding. Ten articles fit the above criteria and were used as the data set for analysis. Each article was about two pages long on average.

In order to critically engage with the ways in which language affects, and is affected by, the reality in which the wedding exists, I analyze
two distinct but related patterns. The first pattern focuses on specific, heteronormative tacit knowledge that is present in the accounts of the data set and that serves to define the membership categories that are allowed within the wedding. Language is used here to set the boundaries of inclusion. Following that, I analyze the most prevalent membership category found in the data—the bride—in terms of category-bound behaviors, to gain a more complete understanding of the construction of this category. Through the language used in the text, the role of the bride is constructed to include certain category-bound behaviors and become linked to the membership category of woman.

Results

Heteronormativity in Membership Categories

An analysis of weddings must begin by examining the membership categories presented in the accounts—the bride and groom. Within the accounts themselves, the relationship between these membership categories is sometimes explicitly stated; however, often times the persons getting married are referred to simply as a couple. While this neutral language is fairly common, there is an equal occurrence of references that are heteronormative, referring specifically to the bride and groom or “he and she.” When the membership categories of the people getting married are explicitly mentioned, it is always in a heterosexual pairing. They are sometimes referred to as “brides and grooms” (Vagnozzi 2008) or are told that “he gets to choose electronics, while she gets to choose the bedding” (The Knot Girls 2008). However, there are no references to “the two brides” or “he and his groom.” This heteronormative language can be seen in the following passages:

According to Reggie, there are five must-take shots for any formal snap session: the bride and groom alone, followed by the couple with their attendants, the couple with their parents, the couple with the bride’s immediate family, and the couple with the groom’s immediate family. Reggie says he’s more likely to get solo shots of the bride and groom while they get ready, and grab most of the other key combos on the fly. (Wood 2008)

Unfortunately, it’s not appropriate for the bride or groom to ask for wedding gifts, so you have to be careful with how you let people know where you’re registered. (The Knot Girls 2008)

I am curious about the etiquette involving toasts at the rehearsal dinner
and the reception. I am the groom and would prefer not to address the group if I am not obliged (I have enough to worry about already!). Does the bride generally make a toast nowadays? Also, even if the bride and groom are not obliged to speak, does the obligation arise once others start making toasts? (The Knot 2008e)

By explicitly pairing the bride and groom in each of these passages, the language that is used draws upon the heteronormative tacit knowledge that is present throughout the accounts. The language does not provide room for any configuration of a couple other than one that is made up of a bride and a groom. In the first passage, the phrase “bride and groom” is used interchangeably with the phrase “the couple.” This illustrates the way that it is tacitly understood within the accounts that the only acceptable configuration of membership categories in a wedding is a bride and a groom. Throughout the accounts, reality is reflexively constructed so that a bride must have a groom, that “he” goes with “she.” This tacit knowledge shows the heteronormativity that is a part of the reality of weddings that is being constructed. Besides its presence in heterosexual pairings in the accounts, heteronormativity also intersects with gender to covertly shape the category-bound behaviors of brides and grooms.

While heteronormative language is only used in about half of the references to the people getting married, it is clearly pervasive. Within the ten articles that constitute the data set, only one does not include any heteronormative references. However, it does not include any neutral references either; it is an article that only addresses the bride and does not refer to the person she is marrying at all (The Knot 2008a). In every other article, there is language that reinforces the heterosexual pairing of the bride and groom. Thus, every time neutral language such as couple is used, it is in an article that also contains non-neutral language. When this is considered alongside the lack of any explicitly non-heteronormative language, it is clear that the neutral language does not contradict the language of heteronormativity. They work together to convey the tacitly understood fact that the two people getting married should be in a heterosexual pairing.

By so often depicting the couple as a bride and groom, other configurations of couples are being marginalized. For instance, two men or two women who wish to plan a wedding for themselves would find that they do not fit within the acceptable membership categories allowed within the membership categorization device of the wedding. The power of language is seen in this instance as certain couples are excluded from the wedding due to the way reality is constructed through hetero-
Tacit knowledge is also an important tool for analyzing the most common membership category presented in the data—the bride. Throughout the accounts, a subject is often addressed without an explicit reference to that subject’s membership category—what I will refer to as an ambiguous “you.” It must be understood that this ambiguous “you” is, in fact, tacitly referring to the bride. For this to be believed, the wedding must be understood as primarily the responsibility of the bride and much less so of the groom. For instance, many of the accounts that include the ambiguous “you” deal with such category-bound behaviors as buying dresses for bridesmaids or deciding on china patterns—behaviors that are clearly associated with the bride. Through an understanding of the tacit knowledge of gender norms presented in these behaviors, the accounts makes clear that the ambiguous “you” being referred to is in fact the bride. For instance, the statement “Of course the wedding is your day to shine, but you want your bridesmaids to look beautiful, too!” (The Knot 2008a), while not directly invoking the membership category of bride, is obviously referring to the bride when saying “you,” because the groom would not be presumably accountable for determining how bridesmaids look. This piece of tacit knowledge illustrates the fact that to be a bride is to be potentially accountable for being fully involved in all aspects of the wedding, since the accounts are overwhelmingly addressed to the bride or the ambiguous “you”, understood to be the bride.

In coding the accounts by category-bound behaviors for which the bride is potentially accountable, a clear trend emerged. Almost half the accounts depict the bride as exhibiting the behavior of being considerate. Whether it is being considerate of friends, family, guests, or co-workers, the bride is constantly being linked to this category-bound behavior. For instance:

Be sure to register for items in a range of prices so that people can choose gifts within their means. Provide a mix of goods: Think traditional for older relatives, affordable and fun for college pals. It may sound a bit manipulative, but you’ve got to make your registry choices appealing -- and easy for your guests to buy. (The Knot Girls 2008)

This account of what wedding gifts a bride should register for is a typical instance of the category-bound behavior of considerateness. While the language of the final sentence seems to point to this as an account of the bride behaving out of self-interest, a deeper analysis shows...
otherwise. There is tacit knowledge that when guests come to a wedding, or in some cases are invited but unable to attend, they will give gifts to the couple. With this understanding, it is clear that self-interest is not the category-bound behavior central to this passage because the guests are expected to give gifts. Thus, a bride behaving out of self-interest could register for whatever she desired, knowing that guests would feel pressured to buy the items because of the tacit category-bound behavior of gift-giving for which they are potentially accountable. However, this account illustrates the bride behaving out of considerateness in trying to cater to the gift-givers by making choices “appealing” to and “easy” for them. The category-bound behavior the bride is potentially accountable for here has nothing to do with the bride herself or what she desires to receive; instead it focuses on others and the need for the bride to be considerate of them—to make the fulfillment of their tacit category-bound behavior easier to accomplish. Thus, the construction of the membership category of bride includes being potentially accountable for putting oneself aside in an attempt to consider others. Another account illustrates this trend even more clearly:

Q: My fiance’s family either has no idea they are supposed to host a rehearsal dinner, or they just don’t care! My parents can’t afford it but suggested I invite everyone to a catered party at my house (my fiance and I will pay for it). Aside from their ignorance of wedding stuff, my fiance’s divorced parents hate each other. Would it be really awful if I did not invite them to the rehearsal dinner? I’m stressing about whether or not they’ll ruin it.

A: It would be awful not to invite them. Remember, no matter who they are or what they’re like, your fiance’s parents will soon be your in-laws. No matter how horrible you think they’ll act, you should start off on the right foot by inviting them to this party. Trust me, there will be more trouble if you don’t invite them than if you do. Grit your teeth, grin, and bear it. (The Knot 2008e)

The bride is explicitly depicted in this passage as putting herself aside, told to “grit your teeth, grin, and bear it” with regard to her future in-laws so as to be considerate of them. Again, being a bride means focusing on being considerate of others in all aspects of the wedding planning, preparation, and events rather than focusing on oneself.

These accounts of the bride fulfilling the category-bound behavior of considerateness bring into focus the place held by the membership category of bride with relation to the category of woman. Gender categories are membership categories for which one can be held potentially accountable in almost any situation; they are virtually omnirelevant
(West and Zimmerman 1987). While the category of bride differs in that it has a much more limited scope of potential accountability, it relates back to gender—in this case to being a woman. Women, as a gender, are more likely to be held potentially accountable for being considerate of others. When considerateness is the principal category-bound behavior associated with brides in these accounts of wedding planning, it illustrates a connection between the membership categories of bride and woman. Given the commonality of category-bound behavior, an important part of being a bride is being held potentially accountable for exhibiting the category-bound behavior of a woman—idealized femininity. Even in planning the wedding, which is depicted throughout the text with phrases like “your big day” (The Knot 2008a), the one whose day it is must display feminine considerateness and grace instead of focusing solely on herself. If someone does not display the category-bound behaviors for which the bride is potentially accountable then she is in fact not fulfilling those that pertain to gender adequately either. This connection illuminates the pressures brides face in fulfilling their category-bound behaviors, because they are not only potentially accountable as brides but also as women.

While the pattern of considerateness as a category-bound behavior of brides is strong, there are exceptions to it. These also depict the way brides are expected to exhibit idealized femininity throughout all things associated with the wedding. One exception to the considerateness pattern is found in the category-bound behavior of indulgence. In this exception, brides are potentially accountable for indulgent behavior. For instance, they are expected to indulge themselves in certain, specific areas:

Can’t decide between a princess ball gown and a sexy mini? Wear both! In 2008, brides will make their guests do a double take by switching up their looks between the ceremony and reception with their gowns and hairstyles—like an elegant updo for when you recite your vows and switching to natural cascading curls to party. (Vagnozzi 2008)

While this behavior might seem directly opposed to the considerateness that puts self-interest aside to care about others, it still fits within the larger construction of the wedding, in which brides are potentially accountable for idealized femininity. The indulgence for which the bride is potentially accountable is in the realm of personal appearance, a very specific kind of indulgence. To indulge through providing one’s favorite food at the reception is not a behavior expected of the bride but indulgence in personal appearance is. Choosing to buy and wear multiple
fashionable gowns for the wedding is an example of the way in which the bride is fulfilling the category-bound behavior of indulgence while simultaneously exhibiting idealized femininity by fulfilling the behavior of valuing her appearance and fashion. As with the pattern of considerateness, this exception to the pattern shows that if a bride does not fulfill the behavior associated with her role as bride, she is likewise falling short of idealized femininity and will potentially be held accountable not only as a bride but as a woman. This behavior points to the tacit knowledge that women are allowed and expected to indulge when it comes to their appearance because indulging in care for one’s appearance is associated with femininity. However, the indulgence must remain focused on appropriately feminine behaviors, because indulgent behavior in other areas of life may in fact be considered inappropriate for someone in the membership category of woman.

Another exception to the pattern of considerateness is found in the category-bound behavior of planning the wedding and immersing oneself in that planning. Within the many instances of a bride being potentially accountable for planning all aspects of the wedding, it is clear that she is not only supposed to plan but to immerse herself in the plans. This is illustrated in the following passage:

When you come back from your honeymoon, putting together your wedding album may seem like a daunting task. There will be so many beautiful and funny photos to choose from, and after months of daily wedding-related decisions, you may decide to take a break and do the album later. (Perron 2008)

In this passage, the phrase “months of daily wedding-related decisions” denotes that to be a bride is to be potentially accountable for devoting oneself fully to the wedding. Because wedding planning can go on for months or years, this pattern shows a reflexive construction of reality in which the bride is potentially accountable for making a significant time commitment. Likewise, this passage shows that the potential accountability for category-bound behaviors of being a bride is not over at the end of the wedding—the bride is still potentially accountable for such tasks as wedding albums and writing thank you notes after the event is over. Thus, this category-bound behavior demonstrates clearly the time commitment associated with being a bride. While these accounts construct such a time commitment as part of the reality of a wedding, it is in fact a behavior that is unrealistic for many women in contemporary society who are already pursuing busy lifestyles and may not have the time or desire to immerse themselves in wedding planning. When be-
ing a bride is linked to idealized femininity, a woman’s unavailability or her choice not to immerse herself in all aspects of the wedding results in potential accountability for not fulfilling the behaviors of a bride, but also of a woman.

The final exception to the pattern in this data is the category-bound behavior of anxiousness. In this exception, the bride is potentially accountable for being anxious during the wedding planning or the event itself. For example:

Brides who calm their nerves through a trip to the spa may instinctively be partaking in a Moroccan custom. To prepare for the wedding day, Moroccan brides luxuriate in a milk bath to purify themselves before the ceremony. (Wright 2008)

Although this passage talks about calming nerves, it also takes for granted the fact that brides will be anxious or have nerves that need to be calmed. It exemplifies the category-bound behavior of anxiousness. This category-bound behavior is linked to other behaviors for which the bride is potentially accountable. As the data has shown, the category-bound behaviors of bride include responsibility for the majority of the wedding planning and work. Potential accountability for anxiousness is generally unique to the bride because of the responsibility she has for the wedding. It also defines the membership category of brides as being potentially accountable for exhibiting a proper balance of anxiousness: they should be neither anxiety-free nor over-anxious to the point of being labeled “bridezilla.” This category-bound behavior can be linked to the idealized femininity in which the woman is seen as the weaker sex and therefore must not exhibit complete emotional control during this stressful event. Thus, even though the bride is often potentially accountable for a great deal of the work associated with the wedding, the category-bound behavior of anxiousness illuminates the way she must temper the competency she shows in doing the work with a certain degree of anxiousness so as to maintain an appropriate level of femininity. Within the heteronormative reality, explored in the previous section of analysis, this category-bound behavior reinforces not only idealized femininity, but also its complement: hegemonic masculinity. In this way, it becomes clear that the idealized femininity women are expected to exemplify while being a bride is not only detrimental because it pressures them in many ways but also has effects on men who are pressured into accepting and fitting themselves into hegemonic masculinity.

From this ethnomethodological perspective, potential accountability for many different category-bound behaviors is understood as part
of the way a woman accomplishes the role of bride. She could be held accountable for fulfilling the behaviors of considerateness, indulgence, immersion, and anxiousness. Each of these category-bound behaviors is linked in some way to an exemplification of idealized femininity. If the bride does not correctly perform the specified category-bound behaviors of a bride, she is likewise potentially accountable for not appropriately performing the behaviors of a woman. This strengthens the potential accountability because it is tied not only to the membership category of bride, but also to the more omnirelevant category of woman. Within this analysis, it is clear that it is at times difficult for a bride to adhere to the category-bound behaviors expected of her, such as the need to please others and to devote so much time to wedding planning.

As previously noted, the membership category of groom is much less prevalent throughout the accounts and the groom is not often explicitly linked to category-bound behaviors in the text. Many of the behaviors for which the bride is potentially accountable may seem to be universal behaviors that anyone, male or female, would be held potentially accountable for in the wedding planning process. To understand this analysis in light of that fact, the emphasis must lie in the potential accountability actually presented in the text. The text predominantly presents category-bound behaviors of brides while leaving grooms privileged through lack of accountability. The potential accountability does impact grooms, though, insofar as the idealized femininity that is expected of a bride will put the expectation of hegemonic masculinity upon the groom. Thus, the groom will be potentially accountable for hegemonic masculine behaviors that are seen as complementing the category-bound behaviors of the bride.

From this ethnomethodological analysis of wedding planning accounts, it becomes clear that these accounts reflexively create the social world in which gender inequality persists. Grooms are rarely mentioned in these accounts, and as a result, men are constructed as less visibly accountable for the work of weddings. By not being potentially accountable for as many behaviors as brides, grooms enjoy a privileged position. The behaviors and stratification of brides and grooms also intersects with the heteronormativity in the accounts.

Discussion

This analysis of the accounts presented in wedding planning articles from TheKnot.com has a number of important sociological implications. At perhaps the most evident level, wedding discourse at TheKnot.
com reinforces heteronormativity through the membership categories of bride and groom, which work to marginalize, if not exclude, the possibilities of same-sex wedding planning. The membership categorization device of the wedding does not include non-normative membership categories. This is an example of ten articles that present themselves merely as sources of wedding planning advice while subtly aiding in the reflexive creation of a heteronormative society. It demonstrates the critical importance of membership categories, not only in relationship to normative practices, but also as a fundamental aspect of social change. We do not yet have membership categories for talking about same-sex marriage.

Further, the analysis of category-bound behaviors associated with the category of bride demonstrates some of the ways that gender inequality is constructed through potential accountability in the wedding. Brides are potentially accountable for many more behaviors than are grooms, and these behaviors are also linked to their accomplishment of gender. This research helps to uncover the ways that the roles of bride and of woman are reflexively constructed in relation to one another. If a person does not perform the category-bound behaviors of being a bride, she may be potentially accountable not only as a bride but also as a woman who is not exhibiting the idealized femininity that is expected of her. This analysis sheds light on the persistence of inequality in wedding work: women become complicit in their own subordination as they attempt to fulfill the multitude of category-bound behaviors for which they are potentially accountable not only as brides but also as women.

Heteronormativity intersects with gender throughout the data. One example is in the heteronormative gender roles that shape the tasks of the bride and groom. As the analysis showed, accomplishment of the bride’s category-bound behaviors is linked to her accomplishment of gender. Thus, the bride’s accomplishment of gender is linked to her accomplishment of heteronormative behaviors that serve to reinforce normative gender roles. The prevalence of category-bound behaviors for the bride also highlights, through the heteronormative accounts, the privilege experienced by the groom. While the bride is potentially accountable for a number of behaviors throughout the data, the groom is rarely mentioned and thus enjoys a privileged status in which he is not potentially accountable for as many behaviors. The idealized femininity for which the bride is potentially accountable also points to the possibility of the groom being potentially accountable for exhibiting hegemonic masculinity. In these ways, the data exhibits the ways in which heterosexuality and gender intersect at the interactional level in constructing the wedding.
Further research that builds upon this textual analysis would be very useful in developing a more complete picture of the way that reality is reflexively constructed with regards to weddings. This could be done with further ethnomethodological research using other methods such as conversation analysis. By analyzing conversations with actual brides, the connection between the membership categories of bride and woman could be examined. Also, further research would be useful in developing a thorough analysis of the membership category of groom since it was very rarely present in this data set.

Another direction for research could use textual analysis to study the development of weddings through recent history to understand historical trends surrounding the presence of gender inequality and heteronormativity. Studying wedding planning articles over the last decade or from select years throughout the last few decades could potentially discover other patterns of sociological import in addition to those that have been examined here.

While there are many opportunities for further research, the implications of this study should not be down-played. This study’s results have clearly depicted the way language works to reflexively construct inequality within society, specifically in the context of weddings. Furthermore, the methodology of this research draws from and extends existing literature in an interesting way. Internet resources have become increasingly popular for wedding planning. My analysis of the text of online advice columns points in much the same direction as previous studies of weddings that have used different sources. This exemplifies the way in which aspects of the status quo have been adopted through new mediums. Nonetheless, these sources retain the potential of serving as mechanisms of social change as they continue to be utilized more frequently. The presence of the inequality examined in this analysis, the full extent of which may not be noticeable at first glance, provides great opportunity for change, as gender inequality and heteronormativity can be engaged with critically in the wedding planning process to reduce their presence therein.

References

“That Synergy of People”: The Significance of Collective Identity and Framing in a Gay-Straight Coalition*

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Building an inclusive coalition is imperative for the organizational strength of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) movement. New organizations fighting for LGBT rights are able to advance to the national forefront by building coalitions with other well-established LGBT organizations. Using participant observation and interviews, I examined a gay-straight coalition in Austin, Texas, and two of its partner gay organizations. The inclusion of straight allies in the LGBT movement became possible through the creation of a collective identity which incorporated an injustice frame and a family frame. In addition, collective identity and framing worked in tandem to reproduce one another to be inclusive of both LGBT and straight families in the LGBT movement in Austin, Texas.

The social movement scholarship has examined collective action taken by minority groups in pursuit of their own rights, such as women in the feminist movements, African Americans in the civil rights movement, and lesbian and gay people in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) movement (Biggs 2006; Dufour and Giraud 2007; Fernandez and McAdam 1988; Gamson 1996; Morris 1981). In addition, history has shown that majority group members often participate in these movements. These majority group members are not simple “grunt” workers in the movement. Rather, they often play key roles in mobilization (Platt and Fraser 1998). As key players, they join the movement as part of various organizations, building relationships and coalitions with minor-

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ity movements. As such, majority group members have aided minority group movements attain their goals in several instances (Platt and Fraser 1998). In this paper, I ask how these majority group members become involved in a movement that does not directly impact their personal lives. I examine the participation of a straight allies group, Atticus Circle, in a coalition with gay-identified groups. More specifically, I am interested in how this coalition constructs a collective identity that is inclusive of the members of the majority participating in the minority movement.

**Literature Review**

Social movements are venues in which collective identities may be produced, redefined, and contested. Collective identity is the “shared definition of a group that derives from members’ common interests, experiences and solidarity” (Bayard de Volo 2006; Dufour and Giraud 2007; Melucci 1989; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Schneider 1997; Taylor and Whittier 1992: 105). Originally, collective identity was conceived as being based solely on an ascribed identity, such as race, class, or gender, rather than on an appealing ideology or common experiences (Cerulo 1997; Jasper 1998). Further research revealed that collective identity also stems from the shared emotions of individuals, the high likelihood and approximation to protest, and the grievances and dissatisfaction with race relations and government (Bayard de Volo 2006; Bernstein 1997; Gamson 1991; Heaney and Rojas 2006; Jasper 1998).

Collective identity in social movements allows organizers and participants alike to formulate an identity that is shared amongst the group, thus creating a sense of solidarity. Through this solidarity, individuals in the group are more apt to continue participation and to express efficacy in the group as well as to effectively recruit new participants into the movement (Barkan, Cohn, and Whitaker 1993; Benford 1993; Hirsch 1990; Oliver 1984; Passy and Guigni 2001; Polletta and Jasper 2001). Collective identity is vital for a successful social movement because it provides the necessary motivation to attract, recruit, and maintain participants.

Social movement literature often understands collective identity by examining the participation and the activities of the main focus group of the movements, such as black individuals in the civil rights movement and women in the feminist movement (Fernandez and McAdam 1988; Gamson 1996; Platt and Fraser 1998). Scholars have briefly examined the presence of majority group members in minority movements, finding that inclusion of majority group members lends resources, power and/or legitimacy amongst the “mainstream” (Platt and Fraser 1998; Sweat 2004).
However, few have examined the strategies social movement organizations use to address the recruitment and commitment of majority group members, such as straight allies in a LGBT movement. One exception is Sweat (2004), who examined high school gay-straight alliances (GSAs) as spaces for students of all sexual orientations to fight institutionalized heterosexism. Sweat (2004) conceptualized the role of straight allies as involving building bridges between gay and straight communities, explaining and exploiting the discrimination of LGBT individuals, and giving legitimacy to LGBT concerns. Sweat (2004) discussed the necessary inclusion of straight allies in high school GSAs. However, Sweat did not detail the strategies the group used to create a collective identity, which encompassed both lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth and straight allies. His analysis of the increase of high school GSAs in California functioning as a social movement did not specify how or why straight allies participated in GSAs.

Social movements often construct a collective identity for the minority group by using frames (Benford and Snow 1992, 2000; Carroll and Ratner 1996; Heaney and Rojas 2006; Klandermans 1993; Valocchi 1999). The injustice frame has been at the center of social movement literature exploring mobilization and collective identity (Cerulo 1997; Gamson 1992; Jasper 1998; Jasper and Poulsen 1995). The injustice frame is the way in which a situation or condition is expressed to be unjust, and in most cases, is perceived this way as a result of human agency (Gamson 1992; Jasper 1998). Movements such as the environmental movement, the nuclear disarmament movement, feminist movements, and the civil rights movement use the injustice frame in order to mobilize actors and create collective identity (Benford 1993; Fernandez and McAdam 1988; Capek 1993; Dufour and Giraud 2007; Platt and Fraser 1998). The injustice frame creates emotions that promote solidarity and collective identity (Jasper 1998). The word “injustice” can exude feelings of indignation (Gamson 1992), inducing individuals and groups to react in such a way that creates and strengthens social bonds and solidarity.

In the LGBT movement, the experience of being denied civil rights—or the same rights as straight individuals, prompts anger, sadness, and confusion—motivates individuals to take action (Jasper 1998). The LGBT movement defines the right to marriage, the right to have children, and the right to domestic partner benefits as basic civil rights that should be granted to all people. Since the LGBT community is being denied these rights, their situation reveals a perceived injustice. This notion of injustice also resonates with many straight individuals. In this paper, I will elucidate how the LGBT movement uses the injustice frame to in-
clude straight allies in its collective identity.

**Organization History**

Atticus Circle is a national straight allies organization located in Austin, TX that works both at the national and state level to facilitate events and fundraisers that educate straight individuals in each state about local gay issues, particularly those revolving around the family. Atticus Circle has built strong relations with two active gay non-profit organizations in the LGBT movement, Equality Texas and SoulForce. Equality Texas is a non-profit organization, affiliated with the larger Equality Federation that works toward the elimination of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression through research initiatives, education and lobbying. SoulForce is an international organization, which promotes “relentless non-violence” by recruiting, training, and equipping volunteers (SoulForce 2008). They seek to identify a connection between anti-gay religious dogma and the attacks on the lives and civil liberties of LGBT Americans.

**Methodology**

The coalition between Atticus Circle (a straight allies group), Equality Texas (legal and gay rights advocacy group for gay individuals) and SoulForce (gay rights religious group for gay individuals) was examined using participant observation and supplemented with interviews and content analysis of documents. These data were used to analyze the development of strategies, collective identity, and framing.

I conducted participant observation from August 2008 to November 2008 in Austin, Texas. Approximately 65 hours of field research was completed. I attended events and observed at the offices at least once per week for at least three hours per week. I entered the field as a volunteer for Atticus Circle, attending events and also completing data entry for the organization when I was in the office. The events included candlelight vigils, religious leader panels and action leader training sessions held by Atticus Circle, as well as various events that were co-sponsored by SoulForce or Equality Texas. I observed interactions, paying particular attention to those of leaders and administrators. I listened to conversations and telephone conferences. I was also able to access email information and contacts between administrative staff of Atticus Circle as they corresponded with administrative staff at Equality Texas and SoulForce. I attended the majority of the events held by Atticus Circle and their part-
ners during this time period in order to fully immerse myself in the organizations. As I observed I took copious notes in the field, and upon returning to my residence, I took full-length field notes on the day’s events.

Interviews were also conducted to supplement information gathered from field observations. Formal and informal interviews were conducted with eight respondents: four were associated with Atticus Circle, two with Equality Texas, and two with SoulForce. Each respondent completed a questionnaire. Respondents were all asked questions regarding their participation and role within each of their respective organizations as well as their thoughts on the partnership and collaborative work within the coalition. In addition, I asked each respondent about their demographic characteristics including race, gender, where they were originally from, age, social class, occupation, and religious affiliation. All except one respondent stated that they were white. Ages of respondents ranged from twenty to fifty-five years old. The demographic characteristics of the respondents were representative of their organizations. All were from different places in the United States, ranging from Seattle, Washington to Akron, Ohio. The respondents from Atticus Circle were two administrators, the executive director and the founder, as well as one action leader for the Austin area and one member. From Equality Texas, I interviewed the political director and the operations director. In addition, two staff members of SoulForce, the executive director and director of media and public relations, were interviewed to uncover the relationship between SoulForce and Atticus Circle.

Each respondent was asked to complete a consent form at the beginning of the interview, but none of the eight respondents requested confidentiality. Given my direct communication with the executive director, Jodie Eldridge, I first interviewed her and used a snowball sample to contact other potential interviewees. Each of the interviews ranged from 20 to 99 minutes. Two of the eight were phone interviews, the other six interviews were face–to–face at coffeehouses, restaurants, or in the respondent’s office. Interviews were taped and transcribed within a week after the interview. Real names were used with the permission of the respondents.

Website and press releases from each of the organizations and mainstream media sources (i.e. Dallas Morning News, New York Times, National Public Radio transcripts and podcasts) were examined in order to get a better understanding of the way each organization framed itself to the public. Many of the documents were used to clarify the structure of each of the organizations, their mission statements, and how the organizations related to one another.
Results

Collective identity is constructed in social movements to promote a sense of community and identification with other participants. In the LGBT movement, two distinct forms of collective identity were being developed, that of the straight ally and that of the LGBT movement as a whole. The members of Atticus Circle developed their collective identity as straight allies through their participation at events, rallying for social equality with gay organizations, specifically SoulForce and Equality Texas. By including straight allies in LGBT movement events, the LGBT movement is making a clear statement of their desire for inclusiveness and equality.

Straight Allies Creating Collective Identity

Activities and national campaigns such as the “Gay? Fine by Me” t-shirt campaign and Seven Straight Nights are events in which people can express their support for LGBT rights as straight allies along with their gay friends, family, and fellow students. “Gay? Fine by Me” is a national t-shirt campaign that encourages collective identity construction. The t-shirt campaign promotes straight allies to “come out” and to wear their t-shirts in support of LGBT rights. Another campaign by SoulForce and Atticus Circle was called Solidarity of Sunday (SOS). In an effort to make straight allies visible in the religious sphere, allies wore their “Gay? Fine by Me” t-shirts to religious services on Sunday in order to confront homophobia that was perceived to stem from religious practices and traditions. Using these t-shirts as symbols, straight allies were able to construct an experience of solidarity, and thus collective identity.

Collective identity can also be constructed through shared meanings. Seven Straight Nights asks straight individuals to stand up for LGBT rights in a week of vigils, marches, concerts and other events nationwide. The focus of this event is to remind participants, particularly straight allies, of the meaning of being “equal humans.” This collective identity fostered by the notion of “equal humans” is central to the inclusiveness of the LGBT movement. During the Austin Seven Straight Nights event, the crowd gathered and simultaneously lit their candles for the vigil and sat or stood in one section of the tower as a group, listening to a Reverend Rigby speak. Reverend Rigby, a straight ally who is a minister at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian church in Austin, spoke to a crowd of young college students, saying: “we share that role as a culture to fight for justice and get in the face of the perpetrators and defend our fellow human [sic],
whether straight or gay, because their life is worth just as much as our own” (Field notes from 9/17/09). Gay individuals solemnly told their stories which seemed to deeply impact their straight allies who were reading excerpts from Crisis by Mitchell Gold. The reader’s tones were mirrored in the faces of the audience (Field notes from 09/17/08). In this moment, the straight allies shared in the gay individuals’ sense of the violation of humanity and this helped create a powerful sense of collective identity by establishing an emotional, symbolic solidarity (see Gamson 1992).

Similarly, the collective identity of LGBT and straight allies was expressed in silent vigils and in collective oaths. At the Join the IMPACT Rally in response to the California Proposition 8, which changed the state constitution to limit the definition of marriage to opposite-sex couples, everyone in the crowd was asked by Reverend Rigby to take a pledge, dedicating their lives to continue fighting for justice and equality “until death does us part” (Field notes from 11/15/08). By reciting the oath publicly after the reverend, they exhibited a symbolic collective identity in such a way that affirmed their identity as equal humans (see Keogan 2002). Keogan (2002) examined the citizenship process of immigrants in New York and California. Within the process, he found that taking an oath publicly symbolically characterized their identities as American citizens. This symbolically shared experience of the immigrants examined by Keogan (2002) resembles the shared experiences of LGBT individuals and their allies in witnessing the events of the 2008 election where Proposition 8 took away the right to same-sex marriage in California. The collective identity of “equal inclusive humans” was expressed in the group’s dedication to a notion of social justice and derived from “members’ common interests, experiences and solidarity” (Taylor and Whittier 1992:105).

Straight allies also helped construct the collective identity of the LGBT movement as an “identity for education.” Bernstein’s (1997) “identity for education” is the deployment of collective identity to be used to suppress the differences of a marginalized group in an effort to educate the mainstream. Highlighting similarities provides a justification for equal rights and privileges. As they promote “identity for education,” straight allies and LGBT individuals share with the whole of society how LGBT individuals are not different from the “mainstream.” By pointing out how LGBT individuals share the same concerns as straight individuals, the LGBT movement further deployed the identity for education. At the University of Texas Domestic Partner Benefits Rally, Texas state representative Elliott Naishtat stated that it was in the interest of every parent, spouse, and partner to provide healthcare to their family. He continued to say that because The University of Texas did not provide these ben-
efits, it was unjust and harmful to all families (Field notes from 11/12/08). By making the concern of healthcare and family salient in the minds of straight individuals, Naishat aided in deploying an identity for education and revealed the injustice served to people who shared the same concerns as the mainstream. At the same rally, the president of the Pride and Equity Faculty Staff Association (PEFSA) stated that she wanted to be able to provide health insurance to her partner as would any straight husband or wife would for their spouse. This reiteration of the importance of domestic partner benefits made the identity for education more salient to both straight and gay groups present at the rally.

Collective identity in this LGBT coalition expanded beyond the identity of LGBT individuals. The LGBT movement was also inclusive of straight allies. The presence of straight allies (via Atticus Circle as a collective identity) at these events legitimized the movement’s call for social equality and justice. By constructing a collective identity as citizens fighting for civil rights as “equal humans,” the coalition was able to include both gay and straight individuals.

**Role of Straight Allies in the LGBT Movement**

Straight allies are important to the LGBT movement because they are used as “bridges” between the straight majority and the gay minority. Sweat (2004) discussed this concept of straight allies as bridges when he noted that straight allies were established “others” willing to defend their LGBT friends and classmates. Straight allies explained the discrimination of LGBT individuals and gave LGBT concerns legitimacy to non-members of the GSA. These straight allies promoted the notion that it is important to express concern for every student’s well-being by talking with administrators and holding open forums on sexuality. Atticus Circle, in much the same way Sweat (2004) described, provided a venue in which straight allies legitimized LGBT concerns through the rationale that if straight individuals cared about LGBT rights, then the issue’s overall importance must be beyond the exclusive concerns of LGBT individuals. In my interview with Randall Terrell, he discussed his position as a straight individual lobbying for LGBT rights:

> If I am sitting here talking to a straight person saying that you should vote for gay rights, you know it’s important to me, I’m straight…whether you have to rethink…it’s not a gay person asking for a favor…you have to rethink why it is important or not important to you. (Interview, 10/24/08)
Randall acknowledged his position as a straight individual giving legitimacy to gay concerns. Randall addressed the need to begin to challenge the “mainstream” ideas of rights and privileges and asks individuals, straight and gay, to “rethink.” To “rethink,” in Randall’s terms, is to realize that a straight person must confront the privileges and rights the straight population has and then compare those with the rights of the LGBT community. Straight individuals must re-conceptualize what is meant by civil rights for all humans. As a straight ally, Randall serves as the bridge which brings straight individuals to terms with their position of power in society.

The role of straight allies takes on various other forms. Straight allies played a crucial role mobilizing for policy change and working to change attitudes and beliefs about LGBT individuals. Jeff Lutes of Soul-Force best explained the movement to create activists and change minds when he stated:

We’re really about changing hearts and minds about the issues of sexual orientation and gender identity because in my way of thinking anyway, until hearts and minds are changed it’s going to be really hard for us to get full civil equality. It might be able to piece things together here and there, but the thing about bills and legislation and politics is that politicians come and go, bills can be passed, killed or rescinded and so any gains that we make legislatively I think are sort of short-lived unless we are changing the public’s perception of who we are as a whole and I think we see that in other civil rights movements too. (Interview, 10/27/08)

Jeff explained that the goal of the LGBT movement was to gain legal equality bolstered by a change in attitudes and beliefs in the hearts of people. Jeff, even before the November 4th vote in California to pass Proposition 8, foresaw that bills and legislation were “short-lived” victories and that the real work was in “transforming hearts and changing minds.” Jeff saw groups like Atticus Circle, as members of the LGBT movement who were also working to “change hearts and minds.”

The role of straight allies was characterized and constructed in the LGBT movement through events and campaigns that strongly identified LGBT and straight individuals to be one and the same: equal humans. This concept of collective identity clarifies how the role of straight allies as bridges and agents of change is constructed. In turn, the ways in which these roles are situated in the movement elucidates the use of framing in the LGBT movement. In the next section, I will further demonstrate how this inclusion of straight allies becomes embedded in the collective identity of the LGBT movement through the use of the injustice frame and the
In order to create solidarity amongst both straight and gay individuals, collective identity and framing are used. Framing and collective identity work in tandem, neither preceding the other in the effort to create solidarity (Heaney and Rojas 2006; Polletta and Jasper 2001). In order to connect these groups, gay and straight, the alignment of frames must occur. Frame alignment is where the ideological frames of individuals, organizations and coalitions must all coincide for a coalition to mobilize and pursue its goals (Croteau and Hicks 2003). Individuals who participate in groups such as SoulForce, Equality Texas, or Atticus Circle often join these organizations because their personal ideals align with that of the organization. However, the alignment of organizational frames to a coalition frame is a complex process. Previous scholarship has found that this shift in frames within the coalition can result in the downfall of collaborative work (Croteau and Hicks 2003; Rose 2000; Staggenborg 1986). Coalitions, in order to be successful, must find or create a master frame which each group or organization is willing to support. The creation of a master frame, or what Benford and Snow (1992) call an elaborative frame, may use multiple frames in order to appeal to individuals, groups, or even coalitions. In most cases master frames are created to become more inclusive of groups. According to Benford and Snow (1992):

Elaborative master frames are organized in terms of a wide range of ideas. They are more flexible modes of interpretation, and as a consequence, they are more inclusive of systems that allow for extensive ideational amplification and extension. Being more syntactically flexible and lexically universalistic than the restricted frame, the elaborated master frame allows for numerous aggravated groups to tap it and elaborate their grievances in terms of its basic problem-solving schema (p. 140).

These elaborated master frames provide a common set of grievances for disparate groups. As organizations attempt to become more inclusive, these common grievances are critical for the negotiation and reproduction of collective identities and frames. The straight-gay coalition I studied shifted from a restrictive frame (the injustice frame) to an elaborative frame (injustice and family frame).

For example, in the Equality Texas-Atticus Circle-SoulForce coalition, it is almost indistinguishable to know which came first: the collective identity of being equal humans or the use of the master frame of
injustice. As I described earlier in the events surrounding The University of Texas Domestic Partnership Benefit rally, the use of the injustice frame was apparent when Texas state representative Naishtat stated that it was unjust for The University of Texas to provide healthcare to their straight, but not gay, faculty and staff. All three organizations in my research shared the injustice frame, which is inclusive of all people straight and gay alike. This coalition further expanded the frame to include both LGBT individuals and straight allies by combining the injustice frame with a second frame: that of the family frame.

The family frame was central to how these organizations in the LGBT movement connected with the ideologies of the “mainstream.” When Atticus Circle and SoulForce trained their action leaders prior to their Seven Straight Nights event, they emphasized the importance of communicating LGBT concerns to the general public through the use of family frames. Rachel Stones, the 2008 Austin action leader, recalled:

One of the points they made was about trying to reach the moveable middle … …not going to all the radicals who already feel strong about this, but reaching out to people who don’t necessarily have a say. They try to relate to people on all sorts of levels and Atticus Circle does this in particular … [with] the family…they focus on the family and on kids and equal rights for families. They think a lot of people can relate with that because a lot people have families and can understand why people would want equal rights within their family. (10/3/08)

Rachel provided evidence that the coalition’s use of equality for the families of all individuals, gay and straight, was pre-meditated and used to identify with people on a universal level. This is the master frame of the coalition, which can be identified on organizational levels and possibly across movements (Carroll and Ratner 1996). “Both groups have families and both groups value families,” said Paige Schilt of SoulForce, when she explained how SoulForce seeks to identify with religious groups as well as allied groups like Atticus Circle. By making this comparison, Paige conveyed a basic understanding that the two groups have one central commonality: the family. This commonality and connection to the “mainstream” marks the emergence of a new elaborative master frame used by the LGBT movement.

The framing of events is of utmost importance in the LGBT coalition. Atticus Circle provided and introduced many of the speakers at the Join the IMPACT rally, which included Jeff Lutes of SoulForce, Jim Rigby of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Paul Scott of Equality Texas, and Mason Marriott-Voss, a young son of two women who were good friends of Jeff
Lutes. At the Join the IMPACT rally in opposition to California’s Proposition 8, which eliminated the right to same-sex marriage, approximately 3,000 people gathered at Austin City Hall. Children of LGBT individuals carried signs as they sat upon their parents’ shoulders. The children’s signs made it quite clear that this was not only affecting the rights of LGBT individuals, but also their children. Mason stepped up to the microphone and announced it was sad to know that there were rights denied to him, his family, and the other 6 to 10 million children of LGBT individuals. Mason said that the majority of families, the real “American” families, are “weird” because they do not all consist of a married mom and dad with children. Mason said that only “23% of American families are actually composed of the traditional family unit: a married man and woman with kids” and that, “according to his math teacher, that was the minority.” He concluded, “It is not about people, gay or straight. It is about families.” By addressing the frames of family and injustice, actors and participants in the LGBT movement made a definite attempt to be inclusive of all people, straight and gay. This statement to save the real “American” families by Mason reflected the master frame’s focus on protecting the rights of all families, not just LGBT families.

The LGBT movement, as seen in the coalition between Atticus Circle, SoulForce and Equality Texas, employs the frames of injustice and family in order to be inclusive of straight individuals. In my interview with Leah Bojo of Equality Texas, she discussed a film project by Equality Texas in which:

“They talked to families and they got families on tape talking about their family, talking about their kids, showing the kids and it was really moving. It was really a great way to make everyone realize a law here is actually really impacting people and families and you know foster kids without a family and say[ing] that… [you] can’t go live with two people because they’re lesbians really is an impact. So I feel that once you start talking about that…. [it makes the issue visible]. And you can relate. Everyone can relate to know what it is like to not have a family. I mean I would think that most people would want everyone to have a family…I mean you really can’t argue with that (Interview, 10/16/08).

Leah argued that the video project made the injustice surrounding family visible to viewers. In addition, she also acknowledged the reason for using families was that “hav[ing] a family” or “want[ing] everyone to have a family” was something to which “everyone” could relate. Leah made no distinction between straight and gay families, but stated that “everyone” could understand the meaning of “family.” The family frame in cooperation with the injustice frame provides an even more thought-
provoking social justice issue for straight allies because it promotes an awareness of the straight majority’s right to the family. It is the elaborative master frame of family which seems to reveal injustice and the privilege of straight individuals.

As seen in Valocchi’s (1999) examination of frames used in the gay liberation movement of the 1970s, frames are in constant negotiation with the people and identities they are trying to include. He examined how the desire to be more inclusive prompted a change in both the master frames and the collective identity of the movement. In this straight-gay coalition, the “aggravated groups” were not only LGBT individuals, but also the straight individuals who sought to fix the problem (see Benford and Snow 1992). As Paul, a minister at the Seven Straight Nights Panel, said:

This is our time and our opportunity to change the world in an effort to provide, in a sense, mutual healing. This is to engage in the collective work of liberation to counter the rest of the world that is running in fear and freaked out. We need to recognize the fundamentals of freedom and social justice, as well as the strange mix between body and spirit that allows us to be open (Field notes, 09/18/08).

Paul uses the inclusive “we” to make his point clear that it is those of us sharing a passion for freedom who will lead the way. This “we” is important to underscore because it demonstrates the use of the injustice frame and family frames as the overall elaborative master frame of the movement. Again, this elaborative master frame is used to be inclusive of all individuals, gay and straight, in the LGBT movement.

Discussion

Collective identity and framing were central to the mobilization of gay and straight participants in the Atticus Circle-SoulForce-Equality Texas coalition. Collective identity was constructed through events and activities that resonated with straight individuals as well as their gay friends and family members to create shared feelings of solidarity. In creating collective identity, the role of the straight allies, as agents of change and bridges, became more defined. More specifically, collective identity was developed through the movement’s use of the injustice and family frames. The use of the injustice frame alone, according to the organizations, may have not been sufficient enough to be inclusive of straight allies. The addition of families created a master frame which expanded the participation of the movement to be inclusive of all individuals.
Collective action frames are built at the individual level, the organizational level, and movement level and are in constant interaction with collective identities. In this particular coalition between Atticus Circle, SoulForce and Equality Texas, the ability to identify as LGBT individuals and allies under the injustice and family frames enabled the movement to advance LGBT rights. My findings support those found in previous research that collective identity is not only based on demographic characteristics, ideology or social categories, but rather a combination of all of these. My research acknowledges that collective identity and framing work in tandem to create an inclusive, collective identity. Moreover, I found that these specific frames and the collective identity construction allowed for the inclusion of members of the majority group into the minority movement. Although they were not the focus of this LGBT movement, straight individuals played an important role.

Admittedly, political events which occurred during my research may have amplified the use of the injustice and family frames. The occurrence of the November 2008 elections, including the amendments banning same-sex marriage in Florida, Arizona, and California and the banning of gay foster parents in Arkansas, highlighted issues of social justice and LGBT families. Future research conducted in a non-election year could determine whether and how the master frames are negotiated in response to other salient events. Moreover, future research could identify and study larger, more established groups in the LGBT movement to see if other coalitions within the movement use similar frames. Finally, my research primarily focused on gay and lesbian issues. Further research could examine the roles of collective identity and framing as they apply to bisexual or transgender issues.

Similar to the findings of previous scholarship on the role of whites in the southern civil rights movement and the involvement of men in the feminist movement, my research finds that while these arrangements are certainly prone to tactical weaknesses, they can also increase group strength. When gays and straight allies work and collaborate together, new perspectives can be brought to the table and new resources can be mobilized. As Ebaugh and Pipes (2002) argued, collaborative efforts by grassroots coalitions can sometimes fill in gaps when the government cannot or will not provide resources or rights for minority groups. Non-profit organizations like Atticus Circle, SoulForce, and Equality Texas utilize the strength of ordinary citizens in a collaborative effort to fight for the rights of their fellow humans.
References


RESEARCH NOTE

Technological Prospects for Social Transformation: Sociology and the Freedom of Information

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In 1965, Gordon E. Moore (1965), co-founder of Intel, observed that since the invention of integrated circuits in 1958, approximately every two years the electronics industry is able to fit twice as many transistors on a chip for the same price. This exponential and deflationary trend, referred to as Moore’s Law, has since been revised to reflect a doubling every eighteen months, and similar trends are evident for a variety of essential computer and networking components (Bell 2008; Nielsen 1998; Walter 2005). Moore (1965) marveled at the prospect of fitting 65,000 components on a single chip by 1975. Intel’s recently released Core i7 boasts 781 million components, and that is with plenty of room to spare (Toepelt 2008). In a practical illustration, a one thousand dollar computer purchased today—ignoring the limitations of software—has roughly half the hardware performance capabilities of a thousand dollar machine purchased eighteen months from now, and this trend will likely continue in the foreseeable future (Kanellos 2005). The implication is that today’s massive supercomputer will be tomorrow’s affordable desktop; today’s laptops will fit in tomorrow’s pockets; and today’s passive RFID tags will be tomorrow’s active embedded systems (Greenfield 2006; Morville 2005; Sterling 2005). Nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, and cognitive science are poised to converge. Their development, fueled by these exponential trends, present challenges to the present social order as reviewed in studies commissioned by the National Science Foundation (Bainbridge and Roco 2003, 2006).

Ray Kurzweil (2001) refers to the coming accelerating technological change as a rupture in human history. Kurzweil’s (2005a, 2005b) statistical models reflect that in the coming century our society will experience

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20,000 years of technological progress at the current rate rather than 100 due to these exponential trends. He (2007) describes the current period as the transition into an “all information economy” through which we will achieve the goals of communism. Kurzweil (2005c) predicts we will soon be able to cure aging, harness nanotechnology to print products from information requirements with desktop manufacturing facilities, and radically enhance our biological and cognitive abilities through transhuman technologies as individuals merge with machines to varying degrees, integrating computers into their very being. He foresees that the appearance of “superintelligence”—the technological singularity—will occur sometime around 2045. Moravec (1992) muses on a merger of mind and machine, likening the difference between our affairs and the affairs of the coming “superminds” to the difference between our current affairs and the affairs of bacteria. Hughes (2002, 2004) discusses the politics surrounding human enhancement technologies and issues of governance in an age of enhanced citizenries. Bostrom (2002) highlights the existential risks posed by the coming technological developments. Similarly, Hawking (1998) expects rapid, disruptive growth in technological progression in the coming decades. These technologies sound like science fiction, but as these and other thinkers have pointed out, the technological prospects for near future social transformation are great, far greater than many currently assume. The potential to solve many of the inequities highlighted within sociology will emerge, as well as the potential to bring them to whole new levels of disparity. Likewise, there exist challenges unlike any humanity has faced.

Sociology, from its origins, has been a stalwart advocate for social change. In this century, a new generation of sociologists must continue this tradition, harnessing information technology to illuminate social problems; advocating for the freedom of information, an essential right in an age of accelerating change; and insisting on the application of knowledge to transform society. Simmel (1908) spoke of the difficulties sociologists face in reconstructing psychological processes to analyze social milieus: a problem of access and ability to extrapolate information. Durkheim (1898) cited respect for free inquiry and rationality as fundamental to the individualism of intellectuals, stating that a cult of individualism is necessary for organic solidarity while the division of labor pushes our minds apart. Castells (2004), in discussing the network society, observes that in digital culture, the symbolic environment is increasingly a diversified hypertext which he dubs “real virtuality.” Castells (2004) also points out that information technology has thus far shown to increase social inequality as large swaths of the population lack access to
new inventions while a small elite dwell the bleeding edge.

Castells is not alone in highlighting the conflicts brought about by these new societal conditions. Deleuze (1992) predicted the rise of the control society, a society marked by numerical languages of control consisting of codes that grant access to information. In this social environment, individuals are rendered as datasets, samples, markets, and banks, and humans become interchangeable “individuals” in the eyes of the ruling class. Marx’s (1845) communism is marked by a revolution within us, gradual and individual recognitions of the contradictions of property. He portrays this conflict as a clash between the proletariat and bourgeoisie classes, workers and capitalists, as this is where he saw the most profound lines drawn in his industrial age. Wark (2004) brings this argument to a post-industrial context, portraying the conflict as centered on the freedom of information. He accentuates a proposed inherent contradiction of applying ownership to information within a computer, a machine designed to be capable of freely manipulating and copying information by expressing it as binary representations. The conflict in Wark’s (2004) manifesto is between the “hacker” and “vectoral” classes. His hacker class (which includes researchers, authors, artists, biologists, chemists, musicians, philosophers, and programmers) creates new information—abstractions—but does not have the means to propagate their creations freely. The vectoral class opposes them, so named because they have seized ownership of: vectors, the vehicles by which information travels; archives, central repositories of information with lasting value; and flows, the ability to spread information quickly and widely. By owning these, the vectoral class aims to harness the abstractions of the hacker class to enhance their own control, as well as to control the free spread of information by declaring it their property. Wark (2004) predicts that through their expressive politics (i.e. their hacking), the hacker class will gradually realize their class interests, find solidarity, and act to subvert vectoral control. However, everywhere the hackers will find information in chains, and only through securing the absolute freedom of information will they be able to fully realize their interests as a class.

There exists no better example of a hacker acting to subvert “vectoral control” through expressive politics than Richard Stallman. Richard Stallman (2002), author of the GNU General Public License (GPL) for software and founder of the Free Software Foundation, widely regarded as the preeminent free software license and social movement organization respectively, describes free software licenses as “copyleft.” Stallman (2002) defines free software licenses as those which ensure the freedom of users to modify, copy, and re-distribute the software unencumbered
by price or controls. Stallman (2002) also points to the contrasts between free and proprietary software licenses. He claims that the purpose of proprietary software licenses is to dominate and subjugate users by preventing access to the source code of the software, thus prohibiting them from modifying or improving the application to suit their needs. Since users of proprietary software are barred from access to the source code, there is no way of knowing for sure exactly what the software is doing. Further, the publishers of proprietary software usually require users to sign away virtually all rights and avenues of possible recourse prior to use of an application by way of requiring them to first agree to “draconian” unilaterally negotiated end user terms. The scheme results in the tying up of user data in nontransferable file formats, locking them into expensive upgrade schedules, and enabling software developers to dictate functionality, by extension controlling user activities. Stallman (2002) also criticizes Digital Rights Management (DRM), which consists of proprietary technologies used by the publishing industries and by hardware and software manufacturers to control the use of digital media and restrict the use of digital devices. Stallman illustrates the dystopian implications of DRM in a work of speculative fiction in which a near future university student is faced with a moral question of whether to loan their laptop to a friend for fear they may access the books purchased on it, a criminal violation that the university has been charged with curtailing, the local Internet Service Provider polices for, and the operating system of the laptop itself may be able to detect. He argues that while today DRM and proprietary licenses are seemingly benign inconveniences to the consumer, they fundamentally restrict digital freedoms for the enhancement of profit and control, and this will come increasingly in conflict with basic social morality and our desire as humans to access, manipulate, and share information freely.

Stallman and other free software activists and developers operate by a hacker ethic, desiring and valuing the freedom to share and manipulate information far above any pursuit of profit or notoriety (Himanen 2001). When this ethic is allowed to thrive, as is the case in the vast ecology of cyberspace, entirely new systems of social production, cultural participation, and civic engagement are enabled and have already been widely adopted the world over (Benkler 2006). The conflicts over file sharing and remix culture offer examples of early conflicts between hackers, empowered by and seeking the freedom of information, and the established vectoral class, seeking its control. These conflicts can be portrayed as pitting the interests of transnational media conglomerates, assisted by government officials they aggressively lobby, against global internet users empowered by their interconnected computers to freely
share, “mash up,” and create their culture. The courts and legislators have frequently sided with and affirmed the views of industry, and critics point to the impracticalities of enforcing these laws, as well as the negative social implications of closing the source on our human culture through continuing to strengthen copyright (Lessig 2004; Vaidhyanathan 2004). The growing audacity of service providers to openly violate principles of network neutrality, as well as to propose complex systems of information surveillance, censoring, and filtering, illustrates the Orwellian dangers of allowing closed systems to rise to prominence in cyberspace by mandate or by market manipulation (Zittrain 2009). Wark’s (2004) vectoral class possesses influence rivaling that of any would-be ruling class, but their position is unique in our network society, as that which they have seized, information and its means of propagation, are increasingly becoming the sole commodity and source of power respectively. The disparity arising from this condition can only be expected to escalate as technological change accelerates absent victories by the hacker class.

Despite inroads, the hacker class faces an uphill battle against an entrenched establishment, their ethic coming in conflict with a social order focused on competition for profit and market share, dominated by closed systems of scarce property and seeking to extend them without end. It is quite possible that the coming century will offer a promise of radical social transformation, for better or worse. Marx (1845) envisioned the extremes of alienation and exploitation as the signs of impending revolution, the rhetoric of the ruling class ratcheting up to reinforce false consciousness and the tenuous superstructure showing signs of weakness. These signs can be witnessed today in the drive for automation in manufacturing, the spread of DRM and proprietary controls over media and devices, the persecution of those who usurp those controls, and the efforts to stifle the free and open ecosystem of cyberspace. Marx’s revolution remains relevant, the vanguard of Wark’s hackers marching forth through real virtuality under their banner of free information. At what point will the contradictions be too much to bear? What level of disparity is acceptable when life extension therapies, desktop manufacturing facilities, and cognitive enhancements hit the market? Sociology has a tradition of addressing these issues, drawing attention to contradictions and illuminating inequities. Assuming the static amid this dynamic new environment is only to the detriment of the current debate, and the current debate needs to be re-framed. Sociologists should be especially attentive to issues of digital rights, emerging technologies, and their combined implications.


TECHNOLOGICAL PROSPECTS FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

art0134.html).


BOOK REVIEWS


In their recent book, Environmental Change and Globalization: Double Exposures, Leichenko and O’Brien discuss how globalization and changes in the global environment intersect to produce various outcomes that threaten human populations. They rightly criticize existing analytical approaches for failing to consider the inherent association between the two processes, and propose a “double exposures” framework for analyzing the complex ways that global processes are related. The aim of the book is, on one hand, to introduce new scholars to the nuances of global environmental change, and on the other, to advance an analytical tool to simplify researchers’ task of studying global changes.

For the undergraduate audience, the text contains an early chapter that reviews discourses of both global environmental change and globalization. In this regard, the book can serve as a useful teaching source for any course covering the themes of globalization, development, environmental policy, global climate change, and/or any ancillary topic. Also, the text nicely employs recent research and uses real case studies to illustrate the interconnectedness of globalization, environmental change, and their effects on human populations. The authors’ “double exposures” framework specifically considers how multiple facets of globalization and changes to the local and global environments interact with regards to exposure units (e.g., individuals, communities, states), contextual environments (e.g., economic, political, cultural, and technological capacities that dictate how units are both exposed to and respond to changes), responses, and outcomes. The text is rich with real life examples that demonstrate how varying contexts, exposure units, and responses produce different outcomes relevant to human security.

Despite its positive contributions to the field, the book suffers from three flaws. In no particular order, they are as follows: equating neo-liberal economics with globalization, minimizing the role of population structure, and proposing an analytical tool that is simultaneously too simple and too complex.

First, the authors’ double exposure framework commits a pedantic error by elevating neo-liberal economic policies to be the central tenet of globalization. To be sure, Leichenko and O’Brien briefly highlight some general facets of globalization, such as the “space-time” compression, which alludes to the
shrinking stage on which populations, governments, and markets interact via increased communication channels, trade, and transport. Yet, when it comes to advancing their double exposures framework, as well as highlighting case-studies, the authors overly rely on the destructive nature of global capitalism to most convincingly link globalization with environmental change. Karl Marx’s simple description of globalization as the “universal interdependence of nations” (1848) remains as astute today as it was a century and a half ago. That the face of globalization in today’s world is masked by the “Washington Consensus”—privatization, deregulation, and weak government—should not betray the underlying interdependence that has long existed in the world. Nor should this mask be singled out and implicated in efforts to educate undergraduate audiences about global-level interconnectedness in the twenty-first century.

Second, the book minimizes how population structure affects economic and environmental priorities in a region, and in turn, the essential role population structure plays in shaping how a region is affected by globalization and environmental changes. To be sure, vulnerable human settlements are often discussed to illustrate insecurities stemming from increasingly unpredictable weather (p. 49), coastal degradation (86), and uneven urban settlement patterns (76), amongst other cases. Omitted from these discussions, however, are the direct effects that population growth, human mobility, and population structure have on these growing insecurities. Population does not simply set the context wherein the interplay between globalization and global environmental change takes place. Rather, more than globalization, the structure and characteristics of a region’s population determines its exposure to insecurities and shapes a civilization’s economic priorities. José Ortega y Gasset once boldly proclaimed that “the increase of population is the most revolutionary phenomenon of our times.” Whether or not one agrees with the statement, one must certainly grapple with the claim when discussing global changes. Indeed, the United Nations projects that nearly all future population growth will take place in urban regions of the developing world (UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division 2009). Population change far and away influences how local municipalities and provincial/state governments prioritize their need to grow their economies, deliver services, and integrate sustainable technologies. While it is helpful to discuss how globalization is related to how this prioritization takes place, we must begin with population.

Finally, the double exposures
framework advanced by the authors is paradoxically too simple while at the same time being too complex. Regarding the latter, one need only to glance at the schematic diagram of the double exposures framework (39) to realize that the “dynamic linkages” in the diagram refers to the permission for anything in question to affect any and everything else. In essence, it is a framework without a theory, and, thus, as a methodological tool it permits interactions and feedback loops for any and all phenomena. While this may be true to an extent, the researcher’s job is to synthesize complex interconnectedness into meaningful relationships that further promotes knowledge and/or policy. A framework with such complexity needs to be couched in theory, a requisite minimally touched upon in Environmental Change and Globalization: Double Exposures.

Leichenko and O’Brien’s efforts to move beyond myopic analyses of environmental change and to stress the dynamic links that it shares with other global processes are to be celebrated. There are no doubts that Environmental Change and Globalization: Double Exposures advances our understanding of the inherent links between global process and environmental changes, as well as demonstrates the need for multi-disciplinary analyses of global changes. Their use of rich examples makes the reading enjoyable and accessible for readers of all levels. Unfortunately, the overall impact of the text is hampered by its omission of population processes in the double exposures framework, its reductionist treatment of globalization, and its lack of theory.

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DAMAGED GOODS? WOMEN LIVING WITH INCURABLE SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES.

In Damaged Goods? Women Living with Incurable Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Adina Nack uses a symbolic interactionist perspective to trace how the contraction of HPV and herpes transforms women’s sexual selves. Nack, an Associate Professor of Sociology and Sexuality Studies, is also an accomplished outreach worker, health educator, and researcher in the area of sexual health. In this auto-ethnography, Nack shares the same “master status” as her interviewees. Through this multidimensional perspective, she is truly a new voice in sexual health. Her work is both informative and educational but also provides a sociological analysis of the lives of the women she interviewed who live with incurable STDs. It holds wide appeal for many audiences including those interested
in the social-psychological impacts of having HPV, medical practitioners, and other women who live with HPV and herpes. By privileging the voices of the women she interviewed, Nack is able to provide a critical analysis of women’s experiences with incurable STDs. In addition, she attempts to de-stigmatize the illnesses of HPV and herpes through this seminal work.

In her in-depth interviews with 43 women about their experiences living with incurable STDs, Nack utilizes a symbolic interactionist perspective and describes how the contraction of an incurable STD actually changes one’s identity and how she views herself as a sexual being. She contends that once a woman learns of her chronic STD, her sexual self is transformed. She begins to change the way she perceives her body and views herself as “damaged goods.” In a sense, her sexual self has become “spoiled” such that she can no longer view her body as desirable. Indeed, this experience is not limited to shifts in the way a woman who contracts and incurable STD views her body, “genital herpes and HPV infections similarly challenge women’s perceptions of themselves with regard to health, morality, and social status” (13).

Nack further describes how women with chronic STDs experience the Six Stages of Sexual-Self Transformation that she developed. All the women she interviewed experienced a transformation of their sexual selves and how they viewed themselves as sexual beings. Using this six stage framework, the author describes the physical, moral, and social consequences of living with an incurable STD. She traces the lives of women as they experience the first stage of sexual-self transformation: Sexual Invincibility.

In this stage, women describe their lack of concern over the possible contraction of STDs. The women Nack interviewed discuss their fears of pregnancy, their lack of sex education, and their general denial that they could ever contract an STD as reasons for feeling “sexually invincible.” Women who become alerted to the fact that they might have contracted a STD experience STD Anxiety, the second stage of sexual-self transformation Nack describes. In this pre-diagnostic stage, some women discover their possible STD status through symptoms while others learn from previous and/or current sexual partners that they might have a STD. The myth of sexual invincibility is shattered when women receive their HPV diagnosis and discover that they are not immune to sexual health risks in the third stage of sexual-self transformation, the Immoral Patient stage. Describing their experiences in medical offices where they first received their HPV diagnoses and discover that they are not immune to sexual health risks in the third stage of sexual-self transformation, the Immoral Patient stage. Describing their experiences in medical offices where they first received their HPV diagnoses, women begin to redefine their now “official” status as sexually-diseased women (66). Some even experience criti-
cism from their medical practitioners for engaging in unprotected sex. Such criticisms leave women feeling immoral, chastised, and even deserving of this incurable disease. Beyond the doctor’s office, women who have been recently diagnosed with HPV begin to view themselves as Damaged Goods, Nack’s fourth stage of sexual-self transformation. Women who negotiate their new “diseased status” discuss shifts in the ways they now view their bodies. Some describe their bodies as diseased, infected, and even spoiled. Many women experience anxiety about their ability to build (or maintain) romantic relationships and their fears of becoming sterile as a result of their HPV infection. Women in this stage view their bodies and even their identities as “damaged.” Recovering from this experience, women enter the stage of Sexual Healing, the fifth stage of sexual-self transformation. Women begin to learn how their physical and emotional symptoms of living with a chronic STD can be managed. Finally, women who have experienced the elements of the previous stages now enter the final stage of sexual-self transformation: Reintegration. In this stage, women learn to incorporate their new sexual selves into their interpersonal interactions. Women describe the challenge of developing, maintaining, and even reinventing their romantic relationships while negotiating a new sexual self. Most women in this study experienced a shift in gender norms such that they became more assertive in their romantic relationships taking charge of protection during sexual activity. Such changes allow women living with incurable STDs to feel more confident in their lives. Indeed, the majority of the women in this study took pride in their new sense of self and even described how this entire experience with HPV changed their lives for the better.

While this study certainly provides us with an excellent framework for understanding the lives of women living with HPV, it does not allow for a critical discussion of the lives of the intimate partners of these women. Due to the strong impact a STD diagnosis has on intimate relationships, it would be helpful to understand how the partners of women living with HPV-infected women are affected by HPV diagnosis. Furthermore, a critical focus on race/ethnicity is lacking in this study. While the author does provide some analysis of differences between African American, Chicana, and white women, such efforts are inadequate. It is simply problematic to discuss the lives of women without strongly addressing how race/ethnicity affects their experiences with STDs.

This critical analysis of the lives of women living with HPV is an excellent contribution to the sexual health literature. This is the first study of its kind to analyze the psy-
cho-social impacts of living with HPV. Nack certainly contributes to her goal of de-stigmatizing HPV and herpes by privileging the voices of women living with incurable STDs.

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**PUBLIC PULPITS: METHODISTS AND MAINLINE CHURCHES IN THE MORAL ARGUMENT OF PUBLIC LIFE.** By Steven M. Tipton. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008, 496 pp.; $35.00 USD (cloth)

The United States is not a theocracy, yet few would disagree with the assertion that religion is a key component of American life. But what precisely is the public church’s role in society, particularly in the political sphere? How do diverse religious bodies whose viewpoints often conflict with one another organize together in order to impart their vision of a moral society to the rest of the world? Should the public church be concerned more with politics or doctrine, personal change or prophetic witnessing? These questions are impossible for us to ignore today when issues such as the war in Iraq, welfare reform, and same-sex marriage are constantly debated and framed as moral problems in Washington, churches, and our homes.

In *Public Pulpits: Methodists and Mainline Churches in the Moral Argument of Public Life*, Steven Tipton, professor of sociology of religion at Emory University and the Candler School of Theology, seeks to answer these important questions by looking at the specific case of moral advocacy by the mainline Protestant church in the latter part of the twentieth century. Through case studies, Tipton describes the church’s various attempts at fulfilling the roles of “prophetic witness, voice of conscience, social activist and reformer, moral advocate, and interlocutor” (3). Ultimately, this book posits that the ongoing culture war is a result, in part, of the debate between various public theologies on the purpose and meaning of civil religion in society. Tipton goes on to argue that this stems from a fundamental clash between the notions of the United States as a democracy versus the United States as a republic. In this denominationally diverse society, is it possible for the various churches to become “the Church” and function as a united group calling for moral dialogue and conduct?

In his research for this book, Tipton analyzed in-depth interviews, social-teaching documents, and comparative organizational histories in order to uncover the role of religion, particularly the mainline Protestant church, in the moral arguments of public life. Part I, “Contesting Church and Society,” focuses on internal conflicts and
divisions within the church, specifically on bodies within the United Methodist Church and how they are able to relate to one another as well as to the government, political parties, and non-religious advocacy groups, while maintaining their unique church identity. Case studies are presented of the General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church, as this is the largest mainline denomination with a diverse membership; the Good News Movement, a group within the UMC which emphasizes the inerrancy of scripture and importance of evangelism; and the Institute on Religion and Democracy, which was born out of the Good News Movement and served as a critical voice to the political and financial contributions of the UMC.

In Part II, “Witnessing versus Winning in Washington,” the book shifts focus from the internal workings and conflicts of one particular denomination to how the mainline denominations as a whole function together and engage in national advocacy. The organizations spotlighted in this section are largely para-church bodies and interchurch groups which purport to be a political voice for the entire spectrum of mainline churches. Specifically mentioned are the Interfaith Impact for Justice and Peace, a strong example of interdenominational cooperation for the public good until 1995, when it lost influence; the Interfaith Alliance, which was formed to counter the influence of the evangelical right; and the National Council of Churches, which was successful once it concentrated its efforts on only a few issues, particularly health care reform. The successes and failures of these organizations are instructive, as their examples provide the mainline church with the steps it needs to take, or avoid, in order to function as a cohesive unit for real moral change. This section takes particular care in outlining the dangers of a church organization becoming too political and focused on too many issues. Tipton argues that Mainline churches, especially in light of their weakening financial situation and dwindling membership, need to unite around a common set of core issues and then seek to engage the public and the government in moral dialogue, not specific policy suggestions.

These recommendations calling for a more focused agenda and a less political identity are further elaborated on in the conclusion, which is the most useful section of the book, particularly for anyone in the church who is involved in social teaching and moral advocacy. Tipton warns about the dangers of church groups relying on partisan constituencies and lobbying tactics which are no different than those used by non-religious groups. The public church should be constantly promoting public dialogue and be an active part of the moral argu-
ments of public life. The diverse membership of the church, with participants from every social class and racial/ethnic group, gives it the unique ability to embody the whole of society and give otherwise disadvantaged people a platform.

This is a powerful book which makes important contributions to the sociology of religion. Ultimately, Tipton was successful in laying out the history of the mainline churches and related organizations as they experimented with different identities as the public church. Organizing the book into separate case studies strengthened the argument as a whole and helps the reader follow the broader argument, as well as to understand its relevance to the broader society. Anyone interested in social issues, be it inequalities in health care, disparities in education, or any other societal ill, would be well-served by reading this book, as Tipton demonstrates that the mainline church has been a key voice in many of these issues. Tipton's bias is clear throughout the book, as he seems far more in agreement with the progressive mainline church leaders than their outspoken critics or the religious right. However, an impressive feature of the book is that Tipton takes care to quote people from both sides of every issue, so the reader can think through issues independently. Most of the book is organized data which presents the many faces of the public church and its critics, with a cleverly woven underlying argument. This book does not just serve to instruct academics about the history of moral advocacy by the mainline churches; rather, it should be read by all scholars, politicians, and religious leaders and participants who wish to understand how the church can best affect moral change and serve society.

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In Opting Out? Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home, Pamela Stone sets out to clear the fog surrounding the issue of choice, as high achieving professional women “choose” to leave their high-flying careers to head back home. Stone, however, has reservations about whether these women were in fact choosing full-time motherhood over the careers they had invested so many years of training in. The questions that motivated her research are simple yet important. Who were these women? Why were they putting years of training and accomplishment aside to go back home to a set of reward-
ing, yet devalued and unpaid tasks? What happens to them and to their jobs after they leave? Up to this point, these questions had gone unanswered. To fill this gap, Stone interviewed fifty-four white married women, between 33 and 56 years of age, who had left their successful careers to become full-time mothers. From a persistent rhetoric of choice, Stone skillfully teases out important insights about the real constraints these successful women face at home and at work which effectively, and sometimes permanently, push them out of their jobs.

In a thorough analysis of the opt-out decision, Stone finds that inflexible employers is only one of the reasons behind women’s decisions to quit. Stone shows how the culture of intensive mothering, their husbands’ hands-off approach, and the structure of work pull women toward home and push them out of their jobs. In a provocative move, Stone contends that even family-leave policies might just encourage women to leave the workplace permanently.

Women in relatively privileged social locations have a tendency to perceive their problems in highly individualistic terms and to see the solutions to their problems as being matters of personal choice. When asked about the role of children in their decision to quit, these women cited how they chose to stay home because they doubted the intellectual and moral capacity of their paid caregivers to suit the complexity of their children’s needs. The women believed that only they could pass on to their children the human and social capital they will need to preserve their position of privilege. The professional women Stone interviewed actively participated in what Stone called the professionalization of domesticity. After they left their jobs, the home became the space where they could apply their professional skills with the same intensity and commitment as they were used to in their former jobs. At home they had the opportunity to coordinate their children’s extracurricular activities and manage their children’s schedules. The early socialization of these women into the structure of the professions allowed them to easily transform mothering into a hyper-organized, goal-oriented activity, a transformation that in turn operated to pull these women closer to home.

Factors related to the home also directly influenced the women’s decisions to leave their careers. Sixty percent of the women Stone interviewed said that their husbands’ lack of involvement in family life was a major factor in their decision to quit. Many of the women said that while they were working in demanding careers, they were able to forge an agreement of mutual help with their husbands. However, the moment the women left their jobs, the agreement was off and their
husbands regressed to the more traditional role of the unavailable partner. Interestingly, Stone fails to discuss how women’s complacency to their husbands’ unwillingness to shoulder their share of caregiving and family responsibility undermines the possibility of creating egalitarian relationships. The fact that most husbands gave their wives permission to quit, served as a perfect complement to their failure to get involved in household and caregiving tasks. As these accounts revealed, most husbands stood at the sidelines while women deliberated their decisions to quit.

The most significant factor pushing these professional women out of their jobs is a workplace culture that is still modeled after the ideal male worker, an individual unencumbered by caregiving and other family obligations. The structure of high-powered corporate jobs still follows the old linear male model of career success, characterized by a steady climb from an entry level position to the highest echelon one can reach before retirement. It is this model that also informs the extended leave policies of even family-friendly companies. Stone argues that these leave policies do nothing to accommodate the on-going and ever changing needs of working mothers, but provide a view of an elusive world of deeper connections with their families and communities. What professional women need are flexible policies that would ensure their retention in the workplace. More importantly, they need a restructuring of the all-or-nothing, linear, male-model path to career success that is unachievable not only for women, but for men as well.

While this book provides significant insights about the world of elite professional women, Stone’s reluctance to theorize at the expense of her subjects is an important limitation of the book. For instance, there is no discussion about the role of relative privilege in thwarting social change. Given relatively low economic risk surrounding these women’s career choices, the women did not feel the urgency to challenge the norm of the ideal male worker that is so pervasive in corporate America. Also, as most of the women participants were able to afford to hire the labor of other women at home, few felt the need to challenge the asymmetry of their marriages. Not one of the research participants thought about how their own participating in intensive mothering contributed to the creation of the double-bind and devaluation of their own work at home.

Notwithstanding, this book should appeal to a wide audience including corporate managers, men and women who work and take care of families, and anybody interested in issues of gender, family, and work.

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In our fragmented world, few concepts ever reach universal acceptance, and Western catchwords such as “democracy” and “freedom,” often considered absolute goods in this part of the world, remain contested in many parts of the planet. The crux of the issue seems to be that many seemingly universal concepts are far from being unambiguous, thus leaving “un-democratic” leaders plenty of room to criticize Western hypocrisy and to question what, for example, democracy really means. After all, is American reliance on an electoral college all that different from Cuban or Iranian screening of political candidates, or is it simply an alternative interpretation of democracy? Human rights, the topic of Lynn Hunt’s timely book, is in that sense different from virtually all other Western ideals since it is based on potentially universal ideals surrounding the inherent value of each individual. In an attempt to identify the origins and track the development of human rights, Hunt takes the reader on an impressive historical journey that begins with British, French, and American enlightenment thought, and eventually takes us to the present.

Besides providing the reader with a plausible explanation of the emergence of human rights, Hunt’s book makes for an interesting and stimulating read for other reasons. First, her approach is, if not counterintuitive, at least surprising. Instead of searching for the origins of human rights solely in political philosophies and the shrewd calculations of self-interested elites, Hunt convincingly argues that human rights could only become a possibility after the individual’s psyche had been transformed, a process that primarily occurred in the 18th century. The route through which such alterations occurred, Hunt suggests, operated through the filter of culture. Specifically, she argues that the popularization of the novel in the 18th century allowed readers to identify with people outside of their social environs, thus constituting a crucial bridge to the individuals’ ability to empathize with those of different social class backgrounds. In addition to the novel, another new trend in the arts fueled the progression towards human rights, namely the painting of portraits. Portraits were of course not new to the 17th and 18th centuries, but buyers now began to commission paintings of themselves and their families, instead of ones celebrating royalties and saints. Furthermore, rather than all portraits looking more or less the same, consumers began to request that painters emphasize the individual’s specific traits, thus reinforc-
ing the notion of the individual's autonomy and distinctiveness.

Thanks to the popularization of the novel and the portrait, notions emphasizing the autonomy and uniqueness of each individual gained prominence and propelled enlightened Europeans toward conceptualizations of human rights. The first step in this progression was the growing disgust among French intellectuals with the rather widespread practice of the “preliminary question”–a method of judicial torture designed to get those already convicted of crimes to name their accomplices. Thanks to their “novel” ability to empathize, the intellectuals’ aversion soon became shared by the general population, and torture was eventually banned in France. Although Hunt herself does not draw the parallel, “the question” displays some striking similarities with U.S. treatment of suspected terrorists at Guantanamo Bay and elsewhere around the world.

The most compelling theoretical argument of the book surrounds the notion of declarations, central to all three major documents dealt with in the book (the 1776 American Declaration of Independence, the 1789 French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights). The universality of the claims espoused by these documents trapped their authors in a rhetorical cage from which they could not easily escape. While undoubtedly some of the founding fathers, as well as several French proponents of the Rights of Man, intended for the rights they proclaimed to be truly universal, many of them saw these universal rights as belonging naturally only to white, propertied men. However, and this is the brilliance of Hunt’s argument, the decision to publicly declare the universality of the ideas embraced in these historic documents eventually made them universal, even though this may not have been the authors’ original intention. Consequently, rights were in time granted to people of color and women. Nonetheless, in a fascinating turn of events, Hunt proposes that this notion of universality in the 19th century helped fuel racist notions and the eugenics movements, as opponents of equal rights turned to the natural sciences in attempts to exclude certain groups from universal rights. The disasters resulting from such ideologies in the first half of the 20th century finally cemented the centrality and importance of human rights, thus bringing its circular progression to completion.

Hunt’s book is a fine example of scholarly work made accessible to a more general audience. While theoretical problems can always be identified with projects as ambitious as Hunt’s, I will be content to raise what might be the most obvious concern regarding her work, namely its strictly Eurocentric
perspective. While France and the United States certainly played an important role in inventing white perceptions of human rights, Hunt remains silent about similar developments in other parts of the world. Nonetheless, it is generally unfair to require authors to cover all aspects of a given topic in some pages. Thus, in its objective to explain the invention of the largely Western notion of universal human rights that the global community finds itself governed by, Hunt’s monograph constitutes a powerful, readable, and important contribution to our understanding of the topic; a highly recommended reading for anyone wanting to understand one of the master narratives of our era.

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CRACKS IN THE PAVEMENT: SOCIAL CHANGE AND RESILIENCE IN POOR NEIGHBORHOODS.
By Martín Sánchez-Jankowsk.
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Poor urban neighborhoods in the United States are generally portrayed as depressive, anomic, and dangerous environments. In his book Cracks in the Pavement: Social Change and Resilience in Poor Neighborhoods, Martin Sanchez-Jankowski reframes the question of urban poverty. Rather than asking why people are poor, he tries to understand how people in poverty achieve a sustainable and enjoyable lifestyle. He criticizes the research of Oscar Lewis on Mexican and Puerto Rican poor families for "blaming the poor," but recognizes the ways in which poverty produces a culture of its own. He undermines the understanding of poor neighborhoods as socially disorganized and invites the reader to understand how the social fabric of the neighborhood is produced, transformed, and reproduced.

Sanchez-Jankowski uses an approach of social change that is developed from the perspective of everyday life. "Social change" is not conceptualized as changes in levels of individual attainment or the socioeconomic improvement of a specific social group. Rather, the alterations of people’s lives occur within the evolution of social cliques which have a territorial as well as a social configuration. Sanchez-Jankowski argues that cliques are found in the public or semi-public spaces of specific neighborhood in which people group together. Based on an exploration of neighborhoods in Los Angeles and New York, he selects five community mainstays: the housing projects, the mom-pop stores, the barbershops and hair salons, the gangs, and the local high schools, and follows their evolution through a decade. Social change occurs within
the evolution of the mainstays. When attaining the status of neighborhood institutions, these community mainstays act as cliques to create social fragmentation or foster integration between different ethnic groups. Thus, changes are studied within the evolutions of these local institutions, using a non-evolutionary approach which moves from economic enterprises to neighborhood institutions. Shifts in community institutions involve the reorganization of social cliques that are triggered either by increasing violence and/or demographic change. Sanchez-Jankowski explores each mainstay, uncovering how they provide a sense of continuity, stability, and an overall functionality in the lives of neighborhood residents.

Methodologically and conceptually, the study proposes a return to using classical ethnographic methods to understand urban poverty. He revives the ecological approach of the Chicago School by highlighting the importance of the neighborhood as a territorial unit that provides social meaning to its residents. Methodologically, the author draws from George Suttles’ *The Social Order of the Slum*, introducing value orientation and ethnic segmentation categories as the defining features of the everyday lives of residents. However, he finds that ethnic factors also depend on reconfigurations in the social fabrics of neighborhoods in response to demographic changes. He differentiates between contested and fragmented neighborhoods; the former representing a more persistent ethnic segregation and the latter an ethnic segmentation. Additionally, he uses Elijah Anderson’s *(Streetwise: Race, class and changes in the Urban Community)* distinction between “street” and “decent” families and re-defines them into two orientations applicable to individuals rather than the family.

Sanchez-Jankowski then describes how the proportion of individuals within ethnic groups varies and generally orients the paths of social actions, specifically an orientation of excitement and an orientation of security. Both orientations are rational to the environment of scarcity and fear. Since few resources are available, social risk characterizes life in poor neighborhoods. Therefore, while an individual within the maximizing-excitement orientation behaves in a way aimed at ensuring opportunities, security-maximizing individuals act in ways to minimize risk. This categorization of individuals organizes the thread of theorization throughout the book. However, little evidence and theorization is offered on the question of whether or not people develop or may change those value orientations. For instance, in his chapter on the gang, he demonstrates that teenagers within a maximizing-security orientation are also susceptible to become in-
involved in gang activity. Sanchez-Jankowski fails to show whether these teenagers are able to switch or reinforce their initial orientation through their participation in gang activity.

The analysis provides a synthetic approach to traditional research that is useful, but fails to recognize the importance of certain neighborhood institutions, such as the church, which is glaringly absent from Sanchez-Jankowski’s theoretical framework. He puts high emphasis on individual-oriented rationalities. The chapters on economic-oriented activities such as the barber shops and beauty salons are, in my opinion, the most interesting ones. Caretakers within those stores are the heart, in most of his narrative stories, of the social cliques and the capacity to integrate newcomers. They are directly influenced by demographic change as their businesses are highly dependent on the social groups to which they belong. For instance, when typified as neighborhood institutions, store owners seem to have a more integrative role than just barbers or hairdressers. Generally, stores can integrate a diverse group by providing a space for social interaction and guaranteeing safety to their clients.

The transition stages of demographic change are crucial to redefining the characters of such neighborhood institutions which challenge the role of caretakers. The most interesting findings relate to the conflicting role within state perceptions of school goals and the neighborhood norms that sustain both the order of everyday life and the ways in which specific individual goals are constructed. Finally, the chapter on gangs provides a convincing case against the perception that gangs are to be treated as a crime-related social problem. Gangs are presented as neighborhood institutions, functional in the socialization of teenagers to neighborhood norms, and playing an important role in the protection of the individual, the ethnic group, and sometimes other neighborhood institutions.

Sanchez-Jankowski’s thought-provoking book provides a synthetic and renewed theoretical approach to urban poverty. Undergraduates, graduate students, and professors in the social sciences will find the book compelling.

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In Risky Lessons: Sex Education and Social Inequality, sociologist, Jessica Fields takes us into the
sometimes exhilarating and often bewildering world of middle-school sex education. Fields takes us beyond the policy debates of sex education and into actual middle school sex education classrooms, where things do not always happen as smoothly and neatly as policymakers would imagine. Rather, Fields shows us that while sex education policies do shape what happens in classrooms, they do not wholly determine what students do and do not learn. Rather, any classroom curriculum contains formal, hidden, and evaded curriculums that sometimes resist—but more often reinforce—social inequalities of age, gender, race, class, and sexualities. This book will appeal to a wide range of students, parents, educators, academics, and policy makers interested in lessening social inequalities.

Fields conducts an ethnographic study of three North Carolina middle school sex education classrooms and traces the political and community debates over sex education in North Carolina. While the U.S. government has mandated that any public school receiving federal funding for sex education must teach abstinence-only sex education, North Carolina's house bill 834 stipulates that local school boards may decide to teach students about contraception after a formal community review. That is exactly what the district where what Fields calls “Southern Middle School” is located voted to do. In contrast, Fields also conducts participant observation at the public “Dogwood Middle School” where abstinence-only sex education is mandated and at a private Quaker middle school, “Fox Academy” where students do not learn about abstinence at all, but rather receive comprehensive knowledge about sexuality, including the ways in which sexuality can be pleasurable. These three middle-schools serve very different populations. Southern Middle School is composed of predominately African American low-income students, while Dogwood Middle serves mostly white low-income students, and Fox Academy is composed of mostly white middle-class students. Unfortunately, the sex education curriculums (formal and hidden) reinforce the already existing inequalities of race and class among these three schools. Already economically privileged white students at Fox receive longer sex education instruction, participate much more actively in their education, learn about the ways sexuality can be pleasurable for both men and women, and ultimately gain a greater sense of sexual subjectivity and agency than do students at the two public schools. In contrast, low-income students at the public schools receive much shorter sex education instruction and are taught only about the dangers and risks of sexuality, which stunts stu-
dents’ ability to develop a sense of sexual subjectivity or to “recognize and develop their capacity to claim and assert their right to bodily safety, needs, and joy” (135). In addition to reproducing and reinforcing class inequalities, sex education at the two public middle schools reinforces inequalities of sexuality, age, gender, and race. Any mention of non-conforming sexual identities (an already rare occurrence) is subject to ridicule and derision. Students participate much less in their sexual education at the two public middle schools, reinforcing hierarchies of age. Discussions of female bodies elicit derision, the clitoris is not mentioned (eclipsing girls and women’s right to sexual pleasure), and girls are constructed as the sexual gatekeepers of boys’ uncontrollable sexual urges, all of which reinforces gender inequality. Sex education materials—videos, anatomical images, and flipcharts—consistently portray normal bodies as white. Boys and girls of color do not see others like them making sexual choices, presenting them with a limited vision of their potential for sexual agency and ultimately contributing to a re-entrenchment of racial/ethnic inequality.

In order to move beyond what Fields calls “sex education’s stunted vision of both sexuality and education” (170) researchers, educators, and policymakers must attend to both policy and classroom practices. In particular, Fields advocates that researchers and policymakers consult young people when designing formal sex education curriculums. Furthermore, she calls on teachers to make their lessons more expansive to include students’ critiques and lived experiences. In her words, “Risky Lessons calls on researchers to explore youth as participants and contributors—as sexual subjects who help to determine the course of sex education in schools” (171). Additionally, sex education must move beyond viewing sexuality as only a danger or risk to students. Rather, policymakers and educators must begin to view sexuality as both a site of danger and pleasure. Only when sex education helps all students—but especially girls, sexual minorities, students of color, and low-income students—develop a capacity of self-determination, sexual subjectivity, and an ability to pursue sexual pleasure with an awareness of sexual danger, can social inequalities be challenged.

However, currently national and community debates on sex education seldom address these issues but rather focus their attention on what Fields views as the limiting debate of abstinence-only versus comprehensive sex education. In fact, she finds few differences between what students learn in the abstinence-only and comprehensive sex education classrooms. Rather, Fields finds only one difference between these two war-
ring positions: how knowledge or lack of knowledge contributes to sexual danger. While abstinence-only advocates hold that sexual knowledge in itself manufactures sexual risk, comprehensive sex education advocates charge that sexual knowledge is imperative to reducing the risks of STDs, teenage pregnancy, and sexual coercion. The challenge thus remains to move these debates forward to address more important issues such as the question of how sex education might contribute to reducing social inequalities of age, gender, race, class, and sexualities, rather than reinforcing them. Debates must move beyond viewing sexuality as only about risk and instead explore the ways in which sexuality and learning can be pleasurable and foster in all students a sense of sexual subjectivity and agency. This book is an important start to tackling this crucial challenge.

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