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# Illuminating How Identities, Stereotypes and Inequalities Matter through Gender Studies

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# Foreword: Illuminating How Identities Stereotypes and Inequalities Matter through Gender Studies

Gender studies as an academic pursuit has made tremendous strides since the 1970s when women's studies first shoved its way into college curricula, transforming itself and the university as it did so. Gender Studies programs are now common on college campuses, even as they are on the front lines of attacks seeking to cut programs perceived as unmarketable and hence disposable by budget cutting administrators. These political battles inside the university mirror battles happening outside the institution where women, gender and sexual minorities, and people of color are forced to bear the brunt of the shrinking social safety net that puts all of us at risk. Gender studies is fertile terrain for cultivating new ways of framing problems and solutions both inside and outside institutions. This volume highlights current work at the intersection of gender studies and sociology that both demonstrates the current reach of this work and opens new avenues for young scholars in gender studies, sociology, and related disciplines such as history, anthropology and psychology.

The volume's editors have drawn together work from a wide range of methodologies that offers a global coverage of issues in gender studies today. This aspect makes this a particularly useful volume for professors and students looking for an introduction to contemporary issues in the field and the breadth of approaches scholars are taking in their work in this new millennium. The volume's authors use quantitative as well as qualitative methods to ask questions in such disparate subfields as literature, media and cultural studies, demography, political science, and more. Readers are taken from New Orleans' 9th Ward to Taiwan, from 19$^{th}$ Century Kansas to contemporary online worlds. Writings are grouped loosely under three main sections: Identities and Perceptions; Culture, Stereotypes, and Stigma; and Social Problems and Applications. Readers are encouraged to move freely in a nonlinear fashion through the book, exploring the varied routes through gender studies according to interest, classroom need, or simply for examples of how to apply different methodologies to different questions. The volume is meant to be flexibly read and used, just as gender studies must be in the increasingly austere world of the academy.

The first section of the book, "Identities and Perceptions," foregrounds questions about the content and making of identities in various "worlds," both on and off line. Jenny Davis and Nathalie Delise both examine how identities form in online

communities. Using an autobiographical approach, Davis explores the effects of blogging on the production of academic identities in gender and women's studies while Delise telescopes out to examine the role of Facebook in making gender both on and offline. Brandi Woodell's work takes readers to church to ask how people negotiate the intersection of LGBT and Christian identities in a world that often assumes one must choose one or the other. Departing from these more conventionally sociological inquiries, Emily Knox brings sociological insights to bear on her reading of tomboy identities in the work of Carson McCullers. The divergent issues brought up in this section are indicative of the range of the volume more generally.

The second section, "Culture, Stereotypes, and Stigma," is similarly broad, using quantitative and qualitative methods to bear on a variety of historical and contemporary problems. Lisa Bunkowski and Amanda Hedstrom take readers to nineteenth century Kansas to explore the experiences of women on the frontier. Ashly Patterson and Nicole Farris both use content analysis to explore, respectively, gender stereotypes and social construction of gendered identities in the feminine hygiene industry and advertising more generally. Echoing the literary approach of Knox's earlier essay, Manuel Medrano explores the groundbreaking writing of Carmen Tafolla and the ways in which she challenged stereotypes of Chicana/o identity to offer a more complex picture of those identities as well as American identity more generally.

The third section of the book, "Social Problems and Applications," is most explicitly concerned with the question of "now what?" Diane Mitrano's essay closely reads the Ms. Magazine blog to see how feminists are theorizing issues in child custody in order to explore what solutions are imaginable in this time and place. Using the limited data set provided by the National Survey of Family Growth, Mary Ann Davis looks at the use of foster families to expand the possibilities of LGBT family more generally. Davis also helpfully addresses the methodological problem of doing research with limited data, a persistent problem for gender studies scholars asking new kinds of questions. Yu Ting Chang's essay takes up a similar data set, but this time from Taiwan in addition to the United States, to ask how gender differences affect life chances in both places. This is a useful comparative study that addresses the methodological problem of working across global difference. Jenny Savely's piece shifts to the qualitative to explore how gendered expectations shape behaviors and attachments to place in New Orleans' 9th Ward. Savely's piece, like the others in this section, not only frames a problematic, but demonstrates how a gender studies lens can illuminate new possible answers and interventions. Taken in sum, the articles in this volume provide readers insights into current problems and questions in gender studies as an interdiscipline while encouraging readers to blaze their own trails that we can travel into the future.

Kate Drabinski

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# Part I
# Identities and Perceptions

# “Blogging my Academic Self”

**Jenny L. Davis**

My Master’s thesis was an ethnography of MySpace, focusing on identity processes within social media. My dissertation was a formal theoretical experiment that examined the relationship between power and identity verification. In between and in conjunction, I have studied online deviant subcultures, families with children who have disabilities, women with medically defined excess body weight, and attitudes of feedlot farmers towards antibiotics and disease response. In short, my research interests and scholarly pursuits are highly eclectic. Although I certainly have threads weaving these lines of research together (e.g. culturally embedded identity), these threads are loosely twined.

This broad approach to the study of social life may *seem* desirable. As a young scholar, it certainly appeals to me. The structure and culture of the Academy, however, beg to disagree. This chapter is about the negotiated journey of my Academic Self, a highly developed work, yet one very much still in progress. In particular, I focus on the role of blogging within this journey, and the ways in which public writing, with and for a loosely defined community, has shaped who I am today, and continues to shape the places I will go.

*What do you want to study? What are your areas? With whom do you work?* These are the prime questions that academics ask one another at varying stages of their careers. The expectation is that one will have answers to these questions readily available, and that the answers will be concise, consistent, and clearly carved out. Such answers are the crux of who one is professionally, where one’s passions lie, and how one goes about examining social life.

In my early years as a graduate student, these questions from colleagues and faculty members were a source of anxiety. *What do you mean who did I come here to work with? I came to study Sociology.* To answer these questions was to define myself as a scholar, situating myself within a network. To be honest, I was rather unsure about who I was and who I wanted to be. My answers to these questions changed frequently, usually with the ebbs and flows of my coursework, as exciting professors revealed an array of rich writings to which I had never previously been

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exposed. One week I was a food scholar, the next a social psychologist, and the following an aspiring queer theorist. As a woman scholar, this was problematic. On the one hand, I feared that others would see me as the wavering and indecisive lady, the floundering girl in need of paternal guidance. On the other hand, I feared the confining boxes of explicit scholarly self-definition. Certainly, I did not want to find myself trapped by my own designations.

Finding that nebulous space between over-specialization and pin-ball-style academic identity hopping required an array of resources. These included close mentorship and guidance by a few highly accepting and knowledgeable women scholars with mutual respect for work with which they were not always familiar; student-led collaborations in which my colleagues invited me into their academic worlds and helped me integrate my interests; and, above all, blogging. It is this last component—blogging—that I will discuss for the remainder of this piece.

Today, as I prepare to enter my first tenure-track faculty position, I am able to answer these questions of academic identity with a greater degree of confidence. *I study identity and community from a variety of perspectives, often with a focus on human-technology augmentation. I am also a strong proponent of public sociology.* I have found a self-definition broad enough to encompass disparate lines of empirical and theoretical research, and yet cohesive enough to satisfactorily convey an academic agenda. My work as a blogger has been instrumental in getting here.

In late October 2010, through happenstance e-mail exchanges with blog editor Nathan Jurgenson, I was invited to write a guest post for the then fledgling blog Cyborgology, a site dedicated to social theory and technology. After a few more guest posts, Jurgenson and co-editor PJ Rey invited me to become a regular contributor. I excitedly accepted. Since then, I have been part of a small team contributing weekly posts and collectively constructing theoretical perspectives on the role of technology in society.

Some warn that blogging without tenure (or in my case, without a degree) is highly risky. Hurt and Yin (2006) go so far as to refer to untenured blogging as an "extreme sport" (1253). Indeed, the act of regular blogging is highly time-consuming. I spend hours each week researching for and constructing my posts, and none of this labor goes directly into the all-coveted peer-reviewed articles on which job applications and tenure decisions mostly rest. As a woman scholar, this is not an issue to take lightly. Women have a long history of over-laboring, often at the cost of personal success. And yet, women also have a history of relegation to the margins, snuffed voices struggling from the sidelines. As such, women in academia must take opportunities to enter the public arena, to be heard and present within scholarly discourses. I was the first woman to contribute regularly to Cyborology (there are four of us now) and the inclusion of my own and other diverse voices continues to be instrumental in constructing robust and complex theories.

On a personal level, blogging is one of the most rewarding academic activities in which I engage. It is through blogging that I have found community, explored my own voice, and prosumed an academic identity into being. This last point is of particular significance—through the production and consumption of content and comments on Cyborgology, I have simultaneously produced and consumed a par-

ticular way of seeing myself, related lines of action, and networks that support my academic identification.

Prosumption refers to the blurring of production and consumption. The term was introduced by Alvin Toffler (1980) to describe the enmeshment between production and consumption within the marketplace. In the last few years, the term has resurged as a useful way to understand the prevalence of user generated content in an increasingly connected era (Jurgenson and Ritzer 2011; Ritzer et al. 2012; Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010). The notion of prosumption troubles the false dichotomy between producers and consumers, as participants in a connected era prosume entertainment through YouTube, social networks through Facebook, restaurant reviews through Yelp!, and DIY expertise through Pinterest.

Prosumed content, of course, does not exist in a vacuum. Rather, this content holds identity meanings for those who prosume it (Davis 2012a). If prosumption troubles the false dichotomy between production and consumption, identity prosumption troubles the false dichotomy between objects and subjects of prosumption. Just as early consumption theorists argued that goods and entertainment hold identity meanings for their consumers (Bauman 2005; Horkheimer and Adorno 1972), so too does prosumed content hold identity meanings for its prosumers.

This notion of identity prosumption is rooted in the social psychology of self and identity. Identity refers to the internalized set of meanings attached to personal characteristics, occupancy of a role and/or membership in a group (Burke and Stets 2009; Smith-Lovin 2007). Who one is and how one sees the self guides how the actor engages in and with the world. Social actors come to know and define themselves in two related ways: by seeing what they do, and taking in others' reactions to them (Burke 2004; Cooley 1902; Klein et al. 2007; Stryker and Burke 2000; Wilson and Dunn 2004). Prosumed goods and content, under some conditions, act as a mirror, reflecting the self back to the self. In particular, prosumed goods and content hold identity meanings when they can be connected back to the prosumer in a defining way, and when they encompass some form of interaction, be it with actual other(s), imagined other(s) or a reflexive self (Davis 2012a).

Because the self is multilayered, so too is identity prosumption. One can prosume individual identity meanings, prosume group membership, and/or prosume new identity categories into being (Davis 2012a). For a quick discussion of the layers of identity prosumption—and an explicit focus on new identity categories—see this short post on Cyborgology by Nathan Jurgenson and myself (Davis and Jurgenson 2011, http://thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/2011/09/12/prosuming-identity-online/).

Blogging is indeed a prosumptive activity, and one which holds identity meanings for its prosumers. As a blog author, the content that I prosume reflects back on me in a defining way. Moreover, the act of blogging—especially for Cyborgology—is highly interactive. Each post receives comments from other bloggers, academics, technology enthusiasts, and, sometimes, trolls. The posts are shared via Facebook and Twitter, through which conversation surrounding the content continues. Each post is linked up with other posts within the blog and outside, connecting me, as a blogger and a scholar, to a particular community, carving out scholarly boundaries

and locating myself within them, and at times, reworking those boundaries as the content, conversation, and networks shift.

Each week when I hit "publish" I feel a mix of relief (Thank goodness I got my piece written this week), excitement (I can't wait to see what people think!!) and anxiety (Will this be the week that 'They' finally call me out as an imposter?). With each emotionally fraught punch of the "publish" button, I write my Academic Self a little more into being. I began posting with a narrow focus on identity. This was (and still is) my comfort zone. Soon, however, I realized that identity theories alone were not enough to take me through weekly prosumption of content. I needed more. As such, I got braver. I began to tread in less familiar territory, adding to the posts of my fellow bloggers, arguing with journalists, exploring issues of gender, race, art, power, sexuality, and the body.

In broadening my intellectual horizons, writing at the fringes of discomfort, I blogged myself into a more robust social media theorist. I saw myself writing on these topics, and saw that my work was (mostly) well-received, or if not, argued against in ways that at least took my ideas seriously. In prosuming blogged content, I prosumed personal identity meanings, and this propelled me into further exploration of new empirical arenas—from robots, to sex toys, to medicine—as well as into new theoretical perspectives—from queer theory, to critical analysis, to technology as materialized action (Schraube 2009).

These evolutions in personal academic identity meanings, of course, have been embedded within a supportive community: namely, the other Cyborgology bloggers and regular readers of the blog. These others act as a network or group within which I have come to define myself, and who grant me the shared "Cyborgologist" label. This mutual process of identification takes place through seemingly mundane but quite powerful mechanisms, such as a picture and bio on the "authors and editors" page of the blog, (hyper)links between my own work and other bloggers/affiliates, inclusion in Twitter threads (through @connects) that engage relevant news stories, debates, and lines of research, and collaborative projects—both within and outside of the blog—in which we communicate not only ideas, but also our networked connections.

Not only then, am I a person who theorizes technology, but I am a *Cyborgologist*, adhering to a particular perspective on human-technology interaction, and engaged in a particular intellectual community. Specifically, those of us who write for Cyborgology have taken on the joint project of writing from an augmented perspective—the view that physical and digital, though maintaining separate properties, cannot be understood outside of one another (e.g. (Banks 2013; Boesel 2012; Davis 2012b; Jurgenson 2012; Rey 2012; Wanenchak 2013). We explicitly integrate this perspective into our posts, scrutinize and adjust the augmented perspective, and critique popular and/or academic accounts that adhere instead to a "dualist" perspective—the idea that digital and physical are separate and/or zero-sum.

Our shared theorizing encompasses us as bloggers within a particular theoretical camp. Although each of us maintain quite distinct lines of research and a diversity of perspectives, we share in the group Cyborgologist identity, and think, act, and write in accordance. Not only then have I blogged *myself* into a Cyborgologist iden-

tity, but collectively, through interactions with other blogs, media outlets, and social media, we bloggers have prosumed "Cyborgologist" into a consumable academic identity category. Indeed, "Cyborgologist" is a strong part of my academic identity, and an identity category that increasingly holds meaning within the broader academic community as both a theoretical standpoint and an activity of public sociology.

Through blogging, I have had the opportunity to share ideas and engage with a broad audience in an accessible way. This is quite different from the closed off venues of academic peer-reviewed journals (although I certainly still contribute to those, both because of their intellectual value and for practical purposes of obtaining professional advancement). Cyborgology facilitates interactions with graduate students, undergraduate students, distinguished professors, independent scholars, journalists, mothers, fathers, technology enthusiasts, and interested publics. I have listened to and engaged with a broad array of voices, adding my own voice to the mix and writing myself out of the ivory tower. In so doing, I blogged myself into a Public Sociologist, an identity which I deem quite valuable.

And so here I am today. A blogger. A Cyborgologist. A public Sociologist. A theorist of technology with an augmented approach. A woman scholar with a voice inside and outside the academy. A member of a scholarly community. I have taken these identities and translated them into journal articles, conference presentations, and personal statements on job applications—the kinds of productions traditionally valued within the academic realm. I have, in short, blogged my Academic Self. Perhaps blogging without tenure is a risky endeavor, but it is certainly a rich one, the fruits of which I will continue to tend as I move onto the next professional stage.

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# How Do You Facebook? The Gendered Characteristics of Online Interaction

**Nathalie N. Delise**

## Introduction

Many social networking sites lost and gained popularity over the past decade, although Facebook continues to thrive. Facebook is a part of everyday discourse and highly salient to many people's social interactions and presentations of self. Due to its popularity, Facebook is an important place to study interaction especially since to date it is fairly under-explored within the social sciences. The purpose of this study is to examine how presentation and interaction on Facebook differs from face-to-face interaction and presentation. Specifically, the chapter will address gender similarities and differences.

Facebook has strong implications for our lives and livelihood. For example, admissions offices, hiring personnel, and lawyers use information that they find on individuals' Facebook profiles to either benefit or discredit them (Hamilton and Akbar 2010). Facebook is also a practical way for individuals to network and share job related information. Facebook is a common medium for socialization in general. People are able to keep in touch with one another (and the rest of their friends) through Facebook. This simple feature has major outcomes that are addressed in the background and findings. All of these highlight the importance of the presentation of self and the perception of one's identity on Facebook.

Facebook's popularity began when it swept across college campuses after creator Mark Zuckerberg first introduced the site in 2004. The distinctiveness that Facebook originally held was that users had to have a '.edu' email address; this college only appeal was what set Facebook apart from other major social networking sites at the time such as Myspace and Friendster. Facebook grew rapidly after repealing

This chapter is an adaptation from a larger work, "Me, Myself, & Identity Online: Identity Salience on Facebook vs. Non-Virtual Identity" (2012).

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the condition of requiring a '.edu' email address. The site first opened to high school students in September 2005, and then to the general public in September of 2006.

Today there are over 800 million active Facebook accounts worldwide; and over 50 % of these users log in each day (Facebook 2011). Every single one of these accounts may not represent an "actual" person, but this is still an important feature in regards to this research (i.e. difference in interaction, and control over presentation). For example, pets, Santa Claus, and deceased Presidents have Facebook profiles; some individuals maintain multiple personal profiles as well. There are more than 350 million active users currently accessing Facebook through their mobile devices; more than 475 mobile operators globally working to deploy and promote Facebook mobile products; and more than 7 million apps and websites are integrated with Facebook. More than 2 billion posts are liked and commented on per day, and on average, more than 250 million photos are uploaded per day (Facebook 2011). These numbers show how prevalent presenting ourselves on Facebook is in society today.

At this stage in the research social networking sites are defined as "web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (Papacharissi 2009, p. 201). The definition of Facebook according to Facebook (2011) is:

> Facebook, the product, is made up of core site functions and applications. Fundamental features to the experience on Facebook are a person's Home page and Profile. The Home page includes News Feed, a personalized feed of his or her friends updates. The Profile displays information about the individual he or she has chosen to share, including interests, education and work background and contact information. Facebook also includes core applications—Photos, Events, Videos, Groups, and Pages—that let people connect and share in rich and engaging ways. Additionally, people can communicate with one another through Chat, personal messages, Wall posts, Pokes, or Status Updates. (http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics)

Facebook is designed to connect people through a virtual network of "friends". In doing so, each member participates in the presentation of self virtually—through profile creation, maintenance, and exchanges of content.

## Background

This study takes a Symbolic Interactionist approach and primarily draws on Self and Identity theories, including Dramaturgical theory, Identity theory, and Social Identity theory. Context and reflexivity are fundamental features of these theories. Context refers to the time, location, and audience (i.e. who, what, when, where). Reflexivity is simply a back and forth process that occurs during social interactions—an actor projects an impression for an audience, the audience interprets that projection and responds accordingly, the actor interprets the feedback and then internalizes it. Hence, the actor is both the subject and object of his or her interactions.

The virtual setting of presentation and identity projection on Facebook is similar yet distinct from face-to-face interactions. According to Paik and Zerilli (2003), face-to-face interaction is the medium through which people physically enact their social roles, therefore the authority offered by a person's role only exists when it is applied in the presence of others. For example, male/female are not only identities, but sex role categories that must be enacted through physical interaction to become real and legitimate (Paik and Zerilli 2003). The lack of face-to-face interaction through social networking sites, however, challenges this view point. Therefore, such media initiates a new playing field for analyzing behavior and the presentation of self.

## *Facebook as Location*

Goffman (1959) noted that sometimes the presentation of self, or performance, is directed at the location rather than the audience alone. For instance, when one goes to court there are certain guidelines that one follows because s/he is in a courtroom; the main factor guiding behavior is the location or setting. Similarly, Facebook is a location for presentation which guides behavior; users may be acting in certain ways for Facebook 'appropriateness', not necessarily for specific audience members.

According to Papacharissi (2009, p. 215), Facebook is "the architectural equivalent of a glass house, with a publicly open structure which may be manipulated (relatively, at this point) from within to create more or less private spaces". The merging of private and public boundaries on Facebook brings about behavioral consequences for those who must adjust their behavior to make it appropriate for a variety of different situations and audiences (Papacharissi 2009). Thus, people must adjust their behavior for Facebook specifically.

The setting of online interaction is a distanced front stage performance in comparison to interacting in person or face-to-face. Currently there are two primary trends in the research: Facebook enables the creation of an ideal or enhanced self (Bargh et al. 2002; Christofides et al. 2009; Farrell 2006; Gonzales and Hancock 2011; Marshall 2010; Mehdizadeh 2010; Papacharissi 2002, 2009; Subrahmanyam and Greenfield 2008; Wise et al. 2010) and people enact greater levels of disclosure on Facebook (Papacharissi 2009; Christofides et al. 2009; Subrahmanyam and Greenfield 2008; Mazer et al. 2007). In addition, Hinduja and Patchin (2007) found that it is easier to share information online compared to face-to-face interactions.

## *Usage*

Prior research shows that there are differences in the way men and women use social networking sites such as Facebook. First, Armentor-Cota (2011) claims that men and women communicate using different language styles online. Pascoe (2011)

noted that young men like using social networking sites to interact with prospective dates because it is easier to talk to them there. Some researchers claim that the majority of people use Facebook to keep in touch with those whom they already know (Kujath 2011; Papacharissi 2009); although Tufekci (2008) found that men are more likely to branch out and meet new people through Facebook, while women are more inclined to interact with those whom they already know. Despite these differences, there are control facets that similarly affect men and women.

## *Control*

On Facebook, individuals show rather than tell others about themselves, indirectly defining themselves through content (Christofides et al. 2009; Desmarais et al. 2009; Mehdizadeh 2010). Facebook users may manipulate identities depending on information that they decide to post or put forward. This includes: profile pictures, album pictures, status updates, wall posts, comments, and personal information such as name, birthday, school, relationship status, email address, favorite movies, favorite bands, favorite quotes, interests and the like. Users also have the ability to "tag" or "untag" themselves in others' content; tagging refers to attaching a link from the information to one's personal page. Thus, identities emerge via front stage projections as a result of selective self presentation (Gonzales and Hancock 2011).

While both men and women selectively self present information online, they do it in different ways. Women are more likely than men to use a nickname, pseudonym, or false name online (Armentor-Cota 2011). Men are associated with self promoting descriptions in the "about me" section and women self promote through pictures (Mehdizadeh 2010). This is not surprising considering gender stereotypes; women's looks are associated with being their most salient identity characteristic, and status through education, career, humor, and the like are salient identity characteristics of men. Remember that roles influence one's identity and behavior (i.e. gender roles).

According to Armentor-Cota (2011) gender identity is neutralized in some co-ed online settings, yet traditional gender norms are also reproduced online. This is blatant through pictures, posts, and comments where males enter a masculine discourse framing women as sexual objects on profiles (Pascoe 2011). The males display certain items to project a masculine image that they know will be viewed by others.

Although the individual is central on Facebook, people still expect to interact with others. Exchanges create content as well as individuals (Dalsgaard 2008; Marshall 2010; Papacharissi 2009; Wise et al. 2010; Mazer et al. 2007). According to Papacharissi (2009), inferences about one's tastes, social habits and character can be made based on the company one keeps. Thus, what your friends post on your page reflects back on you. Who one's friends are, as well how many friends one has, is tied to identity projection on Facebook. The display of friends on Facebook can also be seen as a public display of connection (Tufekci 2008).

### *Display of Identity*

Social identities are displayed through taste in clothing, music, literature, sports and the like; each are associated with certain forms of cultural capital that distinguish identities (Bettie 2003; Pierre Bourdieu 1978; Dalsgaard 2008). Educational attainment, occupation, class and prestige compile one's socioeconomic status, which is also displayed through impression management. One cultural difference in class is signified by the use of nonstandard grammar or speech (Bettie 2003; Bourdieu 1978). Gender and class identity intersect through style, fashion, and make-up; these features are perceived to be central to a girl's identity, but all girls do not have the same access to trendy/expensive products (Bettie 2003). This speaks to both what it means to be feminine and of a particular class.

Femininity is marked by wearing make-up, dresses, tight clothing, and being non-athletic with the exception of cheerleading; where as masculinity is marked by athleticism, rowdiness, leadership, and heterosexuality (Pascoe 2007). Masculinity was also projected through attire: athletic shorts, ties, and men's button down shirts (Pascoe 2007). Pascoe's (2007) work also points to the intersection of performing gender and sexuality when she discusses teenaged girls that "act like boys"; these girls are athletic, outspoken, and predominantly lesbian.

Bettie (2003) discusses how race, class and masculinity intersect. She mentions a magazine chapter about white boys performing "black" identities because they were wearing hip-hop styled clothing, as well as a group of young black boys that were performing a "white" identity because they appeared as though they "walked out of Eddie Bauer" (Bettie 2003, p. 47). In this scenario one's racial identity is being interpreted through clothing, just one aspect of performance. However, this is actually a sign of class, not only race; Eddie Bauer signifies middle-class whiteness, not working-class. The students who/were identified as the rockers and smokers were white, working class kids who wore mainly dark clothing (Bettie 2003). This reference to displaying a certain image through clothing speaks to the relationship between projection and perception.

## Methods

As part of a larger study that sought to explore the congruencies and incongruences in presentational behavior, in person compared to on Facebook, this chapter focuses on gendered aspects of interaction in relation to identity maintenance and perception. The particular questions of interest reflect how the research is primarily exploratory. One, how does interaction differ on Facebook compared to face-to-face? Is there a difference between identity projection in person and identity projection on Facebook? Which identities are most salient on Facebook compared to saliency during a face-to-face interaction? Finally, what features are similar or different among the genders?

The data was gained through content analyses of personal Facebook profiles, followed by semi-structured face-to-face interviews, observations, and a Twenty Statements Test (ASANET.org 2008). Content on Facebook profiles reflect front stage behavior (e.g. comments, posts, and the like), and the emergent identities can be viewed as the outcome of presentational behavior. Face-to-face interviews were conducted to gain backstage access to participant's Facebook self. The non-virtual self is backstage of Facebook but is still a front stage presentation, or a face-to-face front. Theoretically, the Twenty Statements Test responses are the best reflection of backstage information.

Participants were twenty (20) individuals, in the New Orleans area, who have a personal Facebook page. Participants were not chosen if they belonged to my personal "friends" list. There are fifteen (15) females and five (5) males from various racial backgrounds. Their ages range from 18 to 42 years with the average being 25.2 years of age. The average number of years spent on Facebook is 4.1 years; the average is slightly higher for females compared to males, 4.3 years versus 3.6 years. The following themes discussed reflect how the emergent data overlaps and connects.

## Findings and Discussion

### *Comparison of Salient Identities: Twenty Statements Test Cross-Comparisons*

In general, less than a third of the TST identities aligned with the participant's front stage and backstage projections combined across gender. This displays how people reserve a portion of themselves and only share/project certain information. Women and men project some congruent qualities across the board, but also project different identities according to context (i.e. only on Facebook, only in person, neither). Some participants displayed more of their TST identities on Facebook, where as others project more of their TST identities (or salient identities) in person. This mixed finding is consistent across gender.

### *Identity Projection*

Participants are more eclectic and project a more diverse collection of identities on Facebook compared to their non-virtual selves. Many women and men display their employment and religious affiliations on Facebook but did not mention either backstage. Individual talents were also represented on Facebook over and again, while these same identities were not made apparent in person; for example, singer, drummer, cook, seamstress, actor, writer and the like. This assortment of identities reflects the postmodern self, where you can pick and choose a variety of identities

to project in different contexts. This finding aligns with current research in that the postmodern identity is fluid, especially during online interactions (Armentor-Cota 2011).

Overall, participants' racial identities were congruent while their gender identities were slightly different. All males identified themselves as men during the interview, which aligned with their appearance on Facebook. One participant identified as queer during the interview, but appeared more womanly than androgynous on Facebook. The remaining females identified themselves as women, and their Facebook data was synonymous. Gender was also measured by recording masculine, feminine, or gender neutral identities. Collectively, males were more gender neutral on Facebook when compared to their backstage, face-to-face selves/identities. It is notable that female participants appeared more feminine on Facebook compared to their non-virtual self. Armentor-Cota (2011) also found that one's gender identity online doesn't necessarily reflect one's offline identity/self.

Additionally, multiple women projected a difference in their name via front stage. Married women tended to use only their married last name in person, while including their maiden name on Facebook. It is possibly easier to retain the connection with one's maiden name via Facebook, or easier to state only one name in person. Identifying and displaying both the maiden name and married name may be necessary for Facebook in particular. For instance, people that do not know one's married last name can still search for her through the maiden name (if listed of course). Other women displayed different first and/or last names. This could represent a different identity online or it could signify private and extra cautious characteristics. Either way, women are more likely than men to present a difference in their name online.

More than half of participants did not list their birth year on Facebook; although only one male contributed to this category. In turn, one's identity attached to their age is not displayed. It is not surprising that this is mainly a feature among women where age can be stigmatic. Due to retaining this information backstage, many women seemed younger and more youthful on Facebook. This is not only reflected through physical appearances in pictures but through other content as well, such as the "Lion King" listed as a favorite movie signifies a youthful identity for example. Past research also shows that men and women frequently lie about age and body image online (Agger 2012).

When it comes to physical appearance, there were numerous incongruences in display. Some participants appeared taller, some shorter, some heavier, or slimmer on Facebook compared to their backstage appearance (in person). Despite gender, multiple participants displayed "prettier" or "better looking" versions of themselves on Facebook versus in person. Some were more "put together" on Facebook compared to a messy, sloppy, or frumpy appearance face-to-face; with the exception of one individual who seemed more sophisticated in person. One way to look at this would be a consistently 'good' version of the self is on Facebook, and inconsistencies reside backstage.

Moreover, women do not want unflattering photos of themselves on Facebook. Only women outright admitted to controlling their body image on Facebook through

pictures. Meaning the front stage impression is maintained by keeping (existing) unflattering pictures backstage. For example, only posting pictures "from the chest up" or "no uglies"; these females expressed not posting ugly pictures of themselves, and concerns over others' posting this sort of image of them as well.

me "ok. um, what are your concerns with Facebook, if any?"
P8 "um, [pause] I think the only one is that people occasionally post really ugly pictures of me, [light chuckle] I think that's just about it."

If others do post "ugly" or unflattering pictures, the solution is simple according to P3, "I would delete it or untag it" and P12, "I would delete it or untag it, unless it's *really* funny". Ugly pictures are seen and discussed in a negative light because society both admires and rewards physical beauty. Ugly pictures threaten this avenue for a positive, approval worthy front stage image on Facebook for women. In the case of the funny picture, no matter how ugly, it still reflects a happy, likable, approachable and socially positive identity.

Furthermore, it is not such a surprise that this is a female response/behavior. Physical appearance is held at a higher standard for women, thus both the maintenance and perception of beauty is usually more important to women. Due to this, the disturbance of a positive beauty image is more destructive to women's impressions and social value compared to men. On the most basic level women did not want ugly pictures of themselves on Facebook because they want to put forward their best face possible. On a more abstract level, ugly pictures threaten perceived femininity and may interfere with a possible source of power or status, or an identity standard at the least.

The projection of class status was also slightly incongruent, in that men and women displayed more elevated status symbols via front stage (on Facebook) compared to backstage (face-to-face). Many participants expressed a difference in their educational status in person compared to on Facebook. The majority of this group tended to be men with no educational information listed on Facebook, and they admitted to having little or no college education during the face-to-face interview. This means that their educational status is not important to them, or that it does not function to bolster one's image on Facebook. One woman increased her level of educational attainment on Facebook (e.g. college senior in person and graduate student on Facebook), and another woman de-emphasized her level of prestige in person (e.g. did not project Ivy League affiliation in person, but was listed on Facebook). This is putting forward the "best" face front stage by displaying socially valuable qualities that may not be easily expressed in person.

Another theme that emerged from the data is maintaining an interesting impression front stage (i.e. not boring). Similarly, men and women stated that they try to post their own interests or "things" that others might find interesting such as humor, music, art and the like.

me "What do you try to post about?"
P14 "… or um if there's a quote or a lyric something sometimes that I like an I wanna share or like a video ya know just stuff that I wanna share, pretty much."

P17 "um mostly I, I try an keep it as non-cliché as possible because the cliché posts kinda make me nauseated…"

P6 "Um, [slight pause] I think it's just stuff that kinda goes on through the day that I think other people might find interestin' or might find humorous."

Being funny or humorous was the most exaggerated front stage identity characteristic. The majority of men and women displayed humorous, funny, comical, silly, or witty content on their Facebook profiles. While backstage, most participants spoke about being witty or displaying humorous material as well, but they were not funny or witty. The funniest participant in person happened to appear more bland on Facebook in comparison. This shows how humor and wit are easier to portray on Facebook for most men and women. This is also evidence that wit and humor are valued identities on Facebook among the genders. Being funny is entertaining, i.e. not boring.

Many participants, despite gender, seemed happy on Facebook while this was incongruent with their face-to-face (backstage) projections/presentation. In addition, those who were happy in person still provided signs of emphasizing happiness on Facebook. For instance, P5 directly states "do[ing] happy things" while avoiding "negative things"; and P2 stated not posting about his/her personal life "cuz um I don't need anyone to {ta} see how depressing that is." Descriptions of what participants do not post, i.e. descriptions of backstage behavior, contribute to the identities that are projected on Facebook.

The majority of men and women were identified as sociable, outgoing, fun loving, supportive, helpful, thankful, giving, family oriented and friendly based on their front stage impression. This finding aligns with past research on "likable" personality traits. Wortman and Wood (2011) found that people who identify with communal, or other oriented, traits are highly liked by their peers. This is not surprising that these characteristics are emphasized on Facebook, being that Facebook is a *social* networking site. What is interesting is that most men and women expressed these identities on Facebook but were not identified as so in person (backstage). Those who are friendly face-to-face are even friendlier on Facebook, and the same goes for family recognition (discussed below). This means that these identities are characteristic of the expected norm on Facebook.

## *Facebook as Location (for Front Stage Projections)*

For most people, Facebook is a location where various groups of acquaintances, friends, family, and/or strangers come together to view an individual's presentation of selfat all times. Due to this users tailor their behavior to accommodate any possible audience member; this behavior is specific to Facebook because this is the only place where all of these people will be "together" at once (viewing and interpreting one's identity projection).

The average number of Facebook friends is 388 within a range of 86 to 1098. Women have a slightly higher number of friends on average compared to men;

404 for women and 339 for men. The number of Facebook friends signifies public displays of connection and a mass audience.

## *Connectivity and Belonging*

Multiple women expressed that they are active members of one or more Facebook groups. This is not very shocking because Facebook is supposed to facilitate networking and information exchange for groups of people. However, it is interesting that this was solely a female feature; possibly because women are socialized to maintain interdependence through groups. Belonging to a Facebook group, or page, directly signifies a sense connectivity and belonging; and this in-group association is an important identity for said individuals.

Friends and family were featured in a mass amount of content on Facebook profiles, as well as mentioned throughout the interviews in different contexts. Overall, there are more direct references to family on Facebook than in person across gender. This not only highlights how family ties are important, but also how the display of relations is linked to connectivity and belonging via Facebook. Both men and women had posts about friends and family on their profiles, yet mainly women discussed posting about their family during interviews. Women referred to posting about their children/grandchildren in particular. Depending on context, this can reflect an adult, parent/grandparent, proud, responsible, caring, loving, family oriented, and/or youthful identity (among others). In this respect posting about family is not seen as too personal or private, it is framed as approvable information to share.

me "and um, What do you post about the most?"
P10 "ooh haha about how my kids doin, generally things like that, oh Randy did this and Randy did that ya know."

Posting about one's friends displays that one is a friend, friendly, social, sociable, likable, and/or popular which are all socially positive characteristics. Although men and women compose posts for and about their friends, only women discussed the necessity to wish others happy birthdays regularly. Men and women are equally likely to claim that they comment on others' pages rather than their own, although this was a minority among the rest. More evidence of connections the better, especially because Facebook is a social networking site.

In general, participants mostly interact with their close friends, best friends, or family on Facebook. P10 explained the logic behind it best "…it's langiappe…it's like an extension of who I see anyway…" Langiappe is a local New Orleans term that means just a little extra, like a bonus. Once again this aligns with previous findings that people use Facebook to keep in touch with those whom they already know (Kujath 2011; Papacharissi 2009). Of the exception, men are more likely than women to mainly interact with acquaintances; for example, "acquaintances… because I can always call my best friends…" and "whoever's on my newsfeed".

## *Difference in Interaction*

The following results provide further evidence that there *is* a difference in interaction on Facebook compared to face-to-face interactions. First, there is also a difference in the medium of interaction for men and women on Facebook. Men are more likely to access Facebook via computers and women are more likely to access Facebook via smart phones. This may account for the difference in frequency of Facebook use; one's phone may always be with her/him while a laptop or desktop may have limitations to usage. On average, participants log in to Facebook at least once per day and up to five times per day. Although, women use Facebook more often than men. Some women reported checking their Facebook pages constantly, while no men reported checking their Facebook page more than a few times per day. This is not surprising because of the community aspect of Facebook; girls are socialized to be more communal while boys are geared toward independence and individuality. The more often one checks Facebook reflects a need for social connection.

Multiple men and women stated that the frequency their Facebook use depends on notifications (that others have reached out to them in one way or another) and/or is to keep in touch with others. Using Facebook as a way to keep in touch was a running theme throughout, but mostly mentioned in conjunction with frequency of interaction. It is a way to contact or inform friends (and family) that are near for social events; and it enables people to keep in touch with friends and family that are far away. P9—"…I do use it to stay in touch with people that I would never see." P20—"Guess it's good because you can interact on a daily basis."

People keep in touch through Facebook, but not necessarily face-to-face. When asked if they interact face-to-face with those whom they interact with the most on Facebook, overall responses were split between yes, no, and sometimes. However, women are more likely than men to answer "yes". Kujath (2011) also had split findings when it comes to communicating face-to-face with Facebook friends. This is important because if someone never sees their "friends" there are no repercussions for presenting oneself differently on Facebook compared to face-to-face (because there is no way to compare). Even more so, subtle differences (exaggerating/minimizing) are easier to attain and maintain with less frequent interactions.

## *Control*

Due to its features, Facebook fosters a different mode of interaction which enables people to project different identities at will. For instance, one-fourth of participants report maintaining more than one account that they personally created. Men are more likely to have multiple accounts on Facebook comparatively (only their most current personal profile was analyzed). In addition, one woman expressed creating new profiles every now and then to start fresh, and currently does not use her (real) first name on Facebook.

me "so, why do you have multiple accounts?"
P17 "um kinda got bored with one account so you feel like takin on a new personality [chuckle]."

Facebook fosters expressive control over identity projection and control over one's audience to an extent. Privacy controls allow people to restrict who can and cannot view one's page and/or specific information on their page. Men's settings were equally dispersed across a range from completely open to completely private. It is notable that most women claim to be private or completely private. When asked why those privacy settings are set, more women stated that they do not want strangers to see their information. For example, P1 stated: "just don't like the idea of strangers being able to see my page…" While men are more likely to respond with 'no reason', 'not worried', or concern for hackers.

What is interesting is that men and women expressed that they must know someone before that person is allowed to view their information, but then they later mention not "really" knowing one's Facebook friends or simply not knowing who is looking at their profile. For instance:

P5 "I don't really like to post extra things just 'cuz it's really unnessecary 'cuz alota friends that you have on Facebook you really don't talk to 'em, they're just Facebook friends air quote,…"
me "Do you have personal rules for your Facebook use?"
P15 "um, I don't post too personal, and I only put certain pictures up like, select pictures mostly from like the chest up, an I watch what I post of my {mah} niece and nephews uh you don't know who's looking even though it's private, still [chuckle]."

The idea that you do not know who is looking is a reason for caution and reserved identity projection for men and women. This is a simple defense mechanism to protect one's image. This also shows that even though people post vast amounts of content on Facebook, they are skeptical, suspicious, aware, and/or precautious as well.

In general, women and men have concerns over various privacy issues relating to everyday Facebook use. There are direct statements of dissatisfaction toward changes and updates to privacy controls taken on Facebook (Facebook does not inform users when updates are made, therefore this leaves one at risk or under protected compared to privacy levels set before the update). In turn this puts the individual's identity at risk.

Similarly, women and men reported concerns over the information that Facebook stores, and the accessibility of that information. Current and future employers, hackers, and Facebook employees are a few given reasons for concern. Some men and women mentioned that other people post too much information; some noted that other people may regret certain things on Facebook in the future. Facebook is the epitome of the surveillant society; the possibility that one is being monitored, at any or all times, leads to acts of self surveillance (i.e. controlled behavior).

P6 "um, for me, I guess is don't put anything on there that I would later regret or feel different about or have someone think differently of me because I

actually even though Facebook I think should be like a personal like ya know like little box that you have, people like professional people especially look at that so it may skew like their perception of you even though it is really just for that ya know personal space I think that is like one of the {tha} factors."

P4 "…um, but that's kind of the {tha} things that bother me that they can they can have access to that sort of information and that Facebook stores that information [-slight country twang here] and that's why they're in trouble now they're always tryin to negotiate with that, um, like google will like gmail n things will store for a certain amount of years and that's their legal limit and then it'll all wash away but Facebook doesn't have that yet so theoretically they could have that stuff forever, anything an everything that you have on there [country twang] [pause]"

me "and I thought it was just a couple years"

P4 "it's supposed to be, but I think that they keep statistics that, most people do keep statistics, but the the way they're doing it is more detailed than than other agencies so, yea yea the rules are supposed to be two years but, I don't think they're wiping it as as cleanly as alot of other people are."

## *Personal Rules and Guidelines*

One definitive example of self-surveillance is following personal rules of guidelines while using Facebook. The majority of participants, men and women, have rules which guide behavior specific to Facebook; although some said that they do not have rules, they still described particular guidelines for use. Take P2 for example, "I wouldn't say rules, I just I, really the only rule I have is that I'm not gonna post too much about my personal life. That's really it." Men were more likely than women to respond "no" or "not really".

Controlling pictures is important for men and women, albeit different reasons. As noted earlier only women proposed guidelines for photos to control their body image on Facebook (e.g. "no uglies"). Most notably, men and women discuss not wanting pictures portraying deviant acts or anything "inappropriate" on Facebook. People hold themselves accountable for their own image by not posting particular pictures of themselves. For some participants their friends even know not to post/tag them in inappropriate pictures. In general, most described not wanting to have pictures of partying, drinking alcohol, doing drugs, and/or nudity on Facebook. Women and men make a conscious effort to keep these images off of Facebook. Controlling such pictures is one way of avoiding a deviant identity, while putting forward a socially acceptable front.

P1 "…like my friends and {an} stuff know not to post like certain pictures if they take pictures out, like if we're out drinkin n stuff like that they know certain pictures they can't post."

P20 um, [pause] not really, I guess like, [slight pause] pictures of {uh} me smokin weed I wouldn't want that on Facebook.

P8 "I think it's just only friends can see pictures n stuff but [pause]"
me "and why is that?"
P8 "um cuz there's pictures of me smoking and being gay, [lowers voice-] like literally being gay not like gay as in stupid like hanging out at queer clubs {pubs?} n stuff."

One major similarity among men and women, is the awareness and disapproval of negative posts on Facebook. Backstage, participants explicitly stated that Facebook is not a place for negativity, and expressed discontent for those who do post negative information. They claimed to avoid posting anything that could be considered offensive, controversial, mean or regrettable. Complaining, sadness, negative feelings, personal problems, and posting about being sick were also redundantly mentioned as "no-no's". Furthermore, men and women specifically described avoiding "drama" on Facebook, while expressing opinions/feelings towards those who do post about others in a negative fashion.

P7 "I try not to post negative stuff on there like I don't think I don't think people should put their negative business out like oh I'm fighting with a friend um I might post how I'm feeling I might say I'm aggrivated but not necessarily say why I'm aggrivated cuz I don't think that's everybody's business why I'm aggrivated."
P12 "…it's like not a place for {fer}, just being like uuuuuuhh I don't know how you're gonna transcribe uuuuh but, mmeh just being like mopey n like people aren't attracted to mopey I guess is where I'm goin with that like nobody wants to fuckin hear you uuuuuuh {sad sounds} oh my God my life sucks [in a sad voice] like after a while my life sucks, it's like pssh I don't wanna hear that anymore,…"
P1 "I guess I don't really complain, like, and I don't curse on there cuz my {mah} lil sisters are all like all of em are on there. Nothin about drinkin."
me "What do you post about the least?"
P11 "uh drama [slight pause] really."
P12 "it's like talking behind someone's back in front of everyone…it's awful… it's trashy".
P19 "I hate when people post mean things on there, I never do that!"

Of course there is always an exception to the rule. One woman did admit to talking about others in a negative fashion through status updates and posting about feeling down or sad at times. However, this woman also mentioned not having local friends. It is possible that this seemingly negative behavior is because Facebook is the only outlet/avenue for this individual to vent to friends. In addition to expressing how they avoid negativity, participants indirectly display how a positive image is a goal to maintain on Facebook via front stage presentation/impressions.

Another backstage feature that emerged is being cautious and somewhat suspicious of possible audience members (viewers). Besides having activated privacy controls, many men and women take extra steps not to inform others about their

location. Throughout the interview responses, across participants and questions, the topic of location was repeated over and again. This included general everyday information such as one's address, where one is presently located, and where one is going or plans to go. Men and women alike expressed a concern for people being able to track them via Facebook posts that include their location. Multiple participants mentioned "Big Brother" and the possibility of "Big Brother" knowing the respondent's location. Not surprisingly, only women discussed not posting their location due to stranger danger, traveling, and being socially aware/mindful. [ex.] Suspicion and precaution guides action and projection on Facebook, which protects identity as a result.

Not posting about one's private or personal life was an important regulation to highlight for the majority of men and women. However, what is considered private and personal to some may not be to another. Participants generally defined this in terms of importance, closeness, or things that only a few people would know about. Some participants categorized "feelings", personal thoughts, and opinions in this manner as well. These men and women noted that this type of information does not need to be shared with the entire Facebook community, which was also a recurring theme on its own.

Relationships in particular are a private/personal matter that people do not post about, or try not to post about because it is too close/important to them. There was no projected evidence of partner monitoring. However, both men and women projected their partner affiliation directly through their relationship status and various posts. Even though relationships are too personal to discuss on Facebook, affiliations are projected in minor (general) ways.

Me "Do you have personal rules for your Facebook use?"
P2 -slight pause—"I wouldn't say rules, I just I, really the only rule I have is that I'm not gonna post too much about my personal life. That's really it."
P18 "my personal stuff [laughs] [slight pause] definitely not relationship stuff or anything personal."
P14 "…I don't like to {ta} ya know like oh I love you so much like I don't post all that stuff."
P20 "I try not to post about relationship stuff" "cuz I just {jus} don't feel the need to {ta} share that kinda stuff people, don't care well I guess some people care but people need-ta ya know read that it's not important, to share with the {tha} Facebook world."

Moreover, participants also stated avoiding posting general, day-to-day information. Participants expressed that they do not like it when other people post about general everyday tasks. The majority of participants displayed this sort of discontent, while only a small minority claimed to actually post general, day-to-day information. Men and women also expressed that they do not post "too much information" which can relate to personal or private information. Too much information is invasive while general information is boring. There must be a balance between "too personal" and

"too general". Ben Agger (2012) claims that content on Facebook is bland and not "deep" because it's entertainment. "Facebook entertains us because it *is* us—our minute descriptions of our days, our sensibility, our opinions" (Agger 2012, p. 21).

Furthermore, tailoring one's behavior to the expectations of Facebook friends, signifies how women and men find connection and belonging on Facebook. P4 explicitly stated, "I kind of tailor it to an audience I think that that's there in my friend group." When asked, "do you post certain things for specific people?" nineteen (19) of twenty (20) participants responded yes. This means that their actions are generated toward a particular audience. More than half of these participants described "tagging" others in their status updates or personal comments; in affect the post connects the individuals and manifests belonging among friends. These actions also reflect attention seeking and social approval through Facebook. For instance:

me "ok. Do you post certain things for specific people?"
P2 "if it is intended for a specific person, there's a thing you can do on there like type their name down and it'll tag them in your comments."
me Do you post certain things for specific people?
P9 um I mean I'll occasionally tag people but usually I post usually I'll do that um as like a comment or a message on their wall I don't usually use my status update to call out other people

## *Importance to Users and Social Approval*

Participants were asked how important Facebook is to their social lives on a one to ten scale (ten being the most important). The average was 5.0 for men and 5.06 for women; but participants followed this by claiming that they would not want Facebook to "go away". It is surprising that Facebook is equally important to men and women, yet women use Facebook more often.

Actually, Facebook may not be that important to one's social life but it may be important for effects associated with identity maintenance via social approval (e.g. self esteem). The perception of our identity is important to the overall presentation of self in that we need to know how our presentation is being perceived by others and whether or not this supports our identities. Feedback mechanisms, such as comments and the 'like' button on Facebook, mark a need for social approval (Papacharissi 2002). At the same time, the 'like' button works to verify one's identity. The 'like' button on Facebook is not necessarily about the item/content posted, it is more about the person needing to be approved of, publicly, on Facebook. Being interpersonally liked is important to one's well being even through adulthood for men and women (Wortman and Wood 2011). Sheldon et al. (2011) found that Facebook use is driven by rewards from and for connectivity. This displays a backstage need for social approval through checking one's Facebook page for front stage feedback from "friends".

## Conclusion

Overall, women and men use Facebook in both similar and different ways. The output content reflects various identities, even oppositional identities concurrently. Projecting masculine and feminine characteristics for instance: appears to be wearing make-up in the profile picture (feminine), yet a computer science major (masculine). There is more fluidity, yet identities still have meaning and matter to both men and women. Feminist theorists highlight how we hold various identities (i.e. race, gender, class, sexuality) at once and these identities cannot be separated. This also means that one affects the other and vice versa (e.g. intersectionality). The current results are no exception.

Facebook is a constant billboard for the qualities, characteristics, and identities that people want to be associated with. The majority of women and men have personal rules or guidelines that they follow while using Facebook. Following rules and guidelines reflect increased levels of backstage control while using Facebook. This shows that despite the collection of fears or concerns, people continue to use Facebook consistently. To counter this worry (to an extent) these individuals control their Facebook use and will not post certain information. Thus, guidelines contribute to individual identity maintenance (via control), and highlight how people tailor their front stage behavior specifically to Facebook. Both genders expressed that they do not post inappropriate material on their Facebook page and women expressed that they do not allow others to tag them in this sort of content. Avoiding inappropriate posts coincides with avoiding negativity. Inappropriate or deviant actions are associated with negative identities (i.e. stigma).

Collectively the findings imply that women and men create norms for behavior for any social setting and Facebook is not exempt. It is interesting that even though drinking and partying is widely acceptable in New Orleans, it was still avoided on Facebook. This means that Facebook norms override local norms when participants engage in presentational behavior on Facebook.

The results show discontent with certain behavior on Facebook (e.g. negativity, drama, general information or personal opinions). Breaking the norm by posting information that "should not" be shared with the Facebook world, has real effects. Ostracism occurs through "hiding" or "unfriending" friends. Past studies found that ostracism occurs through mediated communication despite the lack of physical proximity (Smith and Williams 2004). The individual does not have to be physically ostracized to experience the effect. The backstage evidence that participants cater to their friends list reiterates this aspect of reflexivity and the need for social approval. Presentation through Facebook is founded on reflexivity, no matter how distant the reaction.

If the norm is being funnier, happier, consistently good-looking and the like on Facebook, the underlying implication is that participants expect this of others and assume that there is some "missing" information. Therefore, the Facebook face is expected to be the "best" face. Men and women claiming to not post anything that they will later regret shows that they are not perfect (backstage) and that they do

make mistakes. However, these participants rarely publish their mistakes publically—in the front stage. In doing so, they preserve their ideal presentation of their self. Their profile—a face without blemishes.

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# Negotiating Gay Male Christian Identities

**Brandi Woodell**

## Introduction

There is a common assumption within our society that it is not possible for an individual to be a happy and healthy, socially integrated lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) Christian (Wilcox 2003). In other words, there is a direct conflict between Christianity and homosexuality, and one cannot fully be one and the other. This ideology states that "good" Christians cannot be gay and that self-respecting gay men and lesbians would never choose to stay with any group that denigrates their identity so fundamentally. The stereotypical and default assumption is that gay individuals are not Christian and that Christians are not accepting of gay individuals. However, gay Christians exist. In fact, there are entire churches dedicated to being open and affirming toward gay Christians—at least one or two in every major city in the US. Many are able to reinterpret their Christian beliefs into ways that are not just tolerant of homosexuality, but that accept and promote it in a way that intertwines the two (Wilcox 2003); where the two rely on each other so organically that any idea of them being mutually exclusive or divergent in any way is unfathomable. This is not the notion portrayed by the dominant culture, which states that stereotypically, every person is essentially one identity. They are gay OR they are Christian, but they are never both.

The same can be said about notions of gay individuals in rural spaces. Most typically, gay individuals are associated with metropolitan areas and lifestyles (Weston 1995). City life is where gay men and lesbians can find others like themselves whereas in the country, they cannot. It is this idea of the "gay imaginary" that helps create a hierarchy, placing urban life as superior to rural life (Weston 1995). The stereotype that rural gay men and lesbians must leave the country lifestyle behind to be happy, places one identity above another and creates a notion that you can only be one thing at a time; that identities never intersect or intertwine. Despite these stereotypes, there are gay individuals who identify with rural life and spaces. There are

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gay men and lesbians who live in these rural places that see little or no confliction between their sexual orientation and their chosen place of residence.

The question I pose is how do rural gay Christians experience the intersection of their socially conflicting identities? What factors affirm and contribute to maintaining these socially conflicting identities? Lastly, how integrated are these identities and when does one of them become more or less salient.

I studied the lived experiences of rural identified gay Christian men in both rural and urban places. This study sheds light on the "myths of isolation and invisibility" often associated with gay men in certain spaces (Chauncey 1994). It also challenges stereotypes about what it means to be a gay man in the country.

## Identity Theories

Symbolic Interactionism lays out a theoretical framework in which behaviors can be explained in the context of any given situation. Within this framework, individuals are social beings that create social and cultural meanings through their interactions and the interpretations of these interactions (Burke 2006). Individuals act towards each other based on their perception of the meanings attributed to those interactions and their situations. These meanings can be understood on many different levels ranging from general societal agreed upon meanings to particularistic meanings where each group or subculture assigns a unique meaning to the situation. A major component of Symbolic Interactionism is the idea of self. This self is defined through the many identities contained within it. A self is created through cultural narratives and understandings. Individuals create and maintain their identities by interacting with others to learn the appropriate patterns of speech and behavior that are associated with the identity the individual is trying to invoke. It is through our understandings of others that we understand and explain ourselves. Since our identities are products of social interaction, we create, change, and maintain identities within every situation. The self we present depends on our understandings of the meanings assigned within the social situations. It is because of these meanings that identities have real social consequences (Howard 2000).

An identity is a set of meanings that are used to define who a person is within a situation (Burke and Stets 2009). Furthermore, we can have as many selves as we have groups that we interact with or desire to interact with. This means that you can have multiple identities that you use to interact every day. For example, someone may identify as a parent, a student, and a dog person all at the same time. But what happens when identities conflict–-when the standards of one identity are socially incompatible with the expectations held within another identity? This study focuses on the rural gay Christian population as an example of negotiating socially conflicting identities.

In particular, this study focuses on gay Christians in rural environments. The purpose is to extend theory and to examine and understand the experiences of gay Christians in rural environments. This study seeks to understand how rural gay

Christians experience these socially conflicting identities. This is an exploratory study designed to find this population and to document their experiences as they relate to identity development, negotiating identities and creating queer spaces in areas not typically thought of as accepting of queer experiences. I use symbolic interactionism to provide an analysis of the patterns of behavior and interpretation used by individuals who must negotiate conflicting identities, in this case, forming a sub-culture within the larger society.

## *Being Rural, Being Gay*

Many studies have claimed that "rural" and "gay" are incompatible (Halberstam 2005; Rubin 1984; Terry 1999). Others discuss the need for understanding the identities in a hierarchy with "rural" ranking as more important to the individual than "gay" in the sense that they are willing to live in rural areas where they cannot be visibly gay or "out" in public. Research of this nature emphasizes an idea of rural life where gay individuals cannot construct their sexual identity, at least not to the extent that urban sexual identities are believed to be constructed (Fellows 2001; Howard 1999).

Characterizing rural in this way, as constricting to the development of sexual identity, is common, but a few scholars have started relatively recently to explore new ways of understanding rural life. John Howard (1999) discussed the importance of understanding what he calls "queer agency" (meaning the ability for people to create queer lives for themselves) when relating to ideas of rural space. He discussed how looking at rural spaces from a limiting perspective, i.e. as lonely and isolated, impedes the ability of these people to construct their own style of queer rural life. Focusing only on the constricting nature of rural spaces ignores the people who live there willingly, who want to be there and who have made a happy life there. In only looking at the constricting nature of rural space, whether actual or perceived, one is ignoring the experiences of people who choose to live there.

In line with the perceived ideas of rural environments being confining, there is also this notion that rural spaces in the United States operate as "America's closet" resulting in a binary notion of queer spaces that entails hidden hierarchies.

> Examining the assumptions that tether LGBT identities to cities and closets to rural communities opens the door to critique the privileging of some queer identities over others that the politics of gay visibility can produce (Gray 2009, p. 4).

A hierarchy is automatically assumed when urban/rural spaces are understood as binary. One space is believed to be superior to the other. In this case, urban environments are considered the place of sexual tolerance and enlightenment where queer identities flourish while rural spaces are devalued and viewed as inhibiting the fulfillment of a happy and healthy life (Halberstam 2005).

Emily Kazyak (2011) discusses the importance of cultural narratives in researching rural identities. She found that in rural spaces, gay and lesbian individuals construct for themselves what it means to be gay in such spaces instead of relying

on the constructed narrative of urban sexual identities. This interpretation of queer rurality focuses on the integration of other identities into their sexual identity, and usually involves a total rejection of the *extreme urban gay lifestyle*, which is considered to be those who go to pride parades and are not "just old married people" (Kazyak 2011). It is through this modified cultural understanding that I will seek to understand rural gay Christians. In understanding how people construct their identities, we can learn what that identity means to them, how they can hold multiple identities and how those identities may not be conflicting to them even though they are perceived as conflicting by others.

## *Gay Christians*

The subject of gay Christians is one that has been extensively explored in previous literature (Mahaffy 1996; Rodriques and Ouellette 2000; Thumma 1991; Wilcox 2003; Wolkomir 2006). Most studies involved years spent researching, observing and interviewing gay Christians. The theories behind these studies have been almost exclusively theories related to identity and identity dilemmas.

An ideological identity dilemma, such as that presented in current gay Christian studies, is found to occur when two or more identities are fundamentally incompatible (Wolkomir 2006). This would occur when holding one identity is a direct violation of a sanction held within another identity. This dilemma usually demands a change of behavior or perception on the part of the individual or it leads to prolonged stress and anxiety.

Research within the last 20 years has consistently shown that gay Christians do experience varying levels of cognitive dissonance related to holding these two identities (Mahaffy 1996). This can either be internal cognitive dissonance, meaning a contradiction within one's own held beliefs or external cognitive dissonance, meaning contradictions between one's own held beliefs and the beliefs of others, or both. Three avenues have been proposed to resolve this cognitive dissonance. An individual can reject the church and its beliefs and embrace their gay identity. An individual may feel they cannot leave their church and attempt to reject their gay identity in an effort to stay in the church. Or the individual must find a way to integrate these two socially conflicting identities.

For some individuals, leaving their church may be the best option for them. This can either mean they reject religion all together or they start attending open and affirming churches. The most widely known open and affirming (also termed gay friendly) church in the United States is the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC). Most current research on gay Christians comes from information gathered at MCCs. MCC is a Christian denomination founded to give members of the gay community a place to worship without fear of judgment based on their sexual orientation (Wilcox 2003). These churches, while having the best intentions, are not able to reach everyone who is both gay and Christian. Moreover, these churches are exclusively found in urban areas. They not only separate urban gay Christians from rural gay Christians, but also gay Christians from other Christians.

Because of deeply held religious beliefs, some individuals may feel that they simply cannot be both gay and Christian and therefore seek to reject their gay identity. The now former organization, Exodus International, along with many other current Christian groups, caters to this population. These ex-gay ministries tell gay Christians that they can overcome their homosexual tendencies through God. This "reparative therapy" as it is termed, seeks to help gay individuals repress their homosexual behaviors (Wolkomir 2006). These groups focus on learning the correct gender roles for a person's biological sex under the assumption that through God all things are possible. When applying the idea of this all-powerful God to ex-gay ministries, individuals are learning that with enough prayer and trust in Him, God can change their sexual orientation. Ex-gay ministries, specifically those associated with Exodus International, re-socialize their participants to understand that homosexuality is just a sin like any other sin. The idea is that once you start to think of homosexuality on the same level as say cheating, stealing or lying, you can ask God for forgiveness, be cured and go about leading the morally pure life that paves the way to heaven (Wolkomir 2006).

Still, other individuals either do not experience any conflict in holding these two identities or have resolved the discrepancies through the process of identity integration. Some scholars have suggested a three-step process of integrating identities. First, gay individuals must understand that their religious beliefs can be changed. Second, they must then change their beliefs into a gay positive theology. This step is usually done through the reinterpretation of scripture. The last step requires that they apply this new theology to their lives (Wolkomir 2006). The result would involve truly believing that God loves you no matter what, that God created you the way you are, and that you can be both gay and Christian in the eyes of God.

For those Christians that revised their theology, they identify the idea of faith to be the first and most important factor in their lives. This idea of rebuilding your faith into one that does not conflict with your gay identity is one of the most important steps in integrating identities (Thumma 1991; Yip 1997). Changing how you read scripture and how it is affecting your life, as well as understanding the importance of a personal relationship with God are all key elements to rebuilding a gay positive faith and theology (Thumma 1991). Having a community is extremely important to both a Christian and to a gay identity (Wilcox 2003). Having a group that you can talk to and share important life moments with is central to identity development.

It is important to remember that not all gay Christians experience much, if any, cognitive dissonance related to holding these two identities (Mahaffy 1996). While these individuals are important to remember, I believe my research can be most useful in studying how those who do experience cognitive dissonance resolve this through integration. Nevertheless, I look both at those who do not experience any conflict and those that are actively trying to negotiate their perceived conflicting identities to understand the process and to understand how the backgrounds people can come from may play a role in this process.

Some studies have suggested that a new religious belief is needed to integrate gay and Christian identities (Thumma 1991). Within the current literature, two fac-

tors lead to the self-verification of gay and Christian identities. The first is the reinterpretation of scripture within a group. It is important to revise religious beliefs as discussed earlier, but it is also important for others to understand the sacred texts of your religion in similar ways. A reinterpretation of scripture is usually done by taking the seven verses of the Bible that are traditionally understood as being anti-gay within some workshop or group study and looking at the historical context and their earlier translations in an attempt to understand what the Bible *meant* in the original Hebrew. This usually involves trying to figure out what the Bible story was supposed to warn against instead of forbidding homosexuality. The second factor that is important in leading to self-verification is having a personal relationship with God. A personal relationship with God is seen as the only way to resolve any internal cognitive dissonance that comes as a result of trying to hold both gay and Christian identities. It is through these means that gay Christians reconcile their identities even in the face of unaccepting churches and communities (Thumma 1991; Yip 1997).

## Studying Rural Gay Christian Men

Drawing on in-depth interviews, this paper specifically examines the experiences of self-identified, rural, gay, Christian men[1]. Fourteen interviews have been taken from a larger study on rural gay Christian experiences to highlight the unique perspectives held by gay men in rural environments. Interviews lasted 1 h on average, I also conducted two follow up interviews to gather more information about the men's involvement in their local church and gay communities.

Respondents were recruited via snowball sampling, beginning with insiders from three rural areas, and followed by calls for participation on social media sites including Facebook, Facebook groups, and Twitter. Due to the difficulties of finding this subset of an already hidden minority population, snowball sampling and recruitment calls on social media sites were the most effective ways of gaining access to my population of interest. It was through insiders and call respondents that I have largely been granted my access. Via interviews and resulting respondent narratives, I examine the ways in which individuals may or may not resolve socially conflicting identities.

My primary research interest is how individuals resolve socially conflicting identities. Specifically, how do rural gay Christians experience the intersections of these three ostensibly socially conflicting identities? Moreover, what factors affirm and contribute to maintaining these conflicting identities? And, how do stereotypes and cultural assumptions about these identities affect the identities of rural gay Christians?

[1] The Institutional Review Board at the University of New Orleans has approved this study.

## Sensationalized Conflicting Stereotypes vs. Real Life

For this paper, my sample consists of 14 males who each identify as gay from Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Texas. Of the total interviews, only one person is currently living in an urban environment. However, he is rural identified. Interviewees range in age from 19 to 32. I recognize the limitations of this sample. The subjects are all young and I expected this to be the case due to the social networks of my initial snowball sampling and a methodology that involves online responses. The majority of my sample is white. However, one person identifies as Native American and one identifies as Black and Latino. All of my participants are Christian, but they range in their levels of religiosity, with some participants attending churches identified as mainline protestant and others attending evangelical churches.

While the homogeneity of my sample may initially seem like a weakness, I believe it can also be seen as a strength. That is, homogeneity should contribute to generating a more focused narrative regarding the intersections of a rural, gay, male, Christian experience and potential identity creation.

During these interviews, several themes emerged in regard to how one experiences being a rural identified gay Christian. More specifically, there are five themes that deal with church types, community and an urban/rural hierarchy. Some of the gay men I interviewed wanted to attend an open and affirming church. These are churches like the Metropolitan Community Church that were founded specifically for the LGBT Christian population. Others described a church where they would fit in; not one that is necessarily thought of or known as being open to gay individuals, but is one where these men felt God was calling them to worship for various reasons. Still, others did not see the church institution as central to their faith and Christianity and thus only sought a personal relationship with God for their spiritual needs. Another area these men discussed in depth was community. Each man had, or at the very least wanted, some sort of community involvement; whether it is through their churches, LGBT centers or peer groups. Many cited having a community that supported them in their lives as one of the most important aspects of living a happy and emotionally healthy life. The last major theme that spanned several interviews was how these men constructed a hierarchy of urban lifestyles and rural lifestyles. I interviewed men on both sides of the spectrum: those that placed urban life as the best choice, as well as those that thought rural life was the only morally acceptable choice for a Christian. However, no matter what they believed about either lifestyle, they all maintained strong stereotypes of what it meant to be gay in the city.

## Gay Friendly Churches

The majority of my participants live in rural areas of Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Texas, which are stereotypically unaccepting of gay individuals and potentially even unsafe for the lives of these men. All those interviewed discussed strongly, and in much detail, their religious lives. Each one identified himself as a Christian and

then explained what that meant to him. For Simon it meant "the foundation for my moral and ethical beliefs." For Paul it meant "feel[ing] like you're part of something greater." Two men talked about wanting to find a specifically gay friendly church, one that they knew would be accepting without having to hide their sexual orientation and mentioned MCC by name. When discussing joining a MCC, Elijah said, "I have thought about joining. I like it, I really do. I think it is really cool because it shows the way the Christian community is moving to show that you don't have to shut me out and that I can be accepted." For Elijah it was important for him to have somewhere he could be openly gay and Christian. He needed a church where he knew he would be accepted. For him, driving to a larger city near his small town was worth it to have both an accepting Christian and gay community. For Jonah, it was important for him to attend an MCC to link his sexual orientation and his Christianity. Jonah saw this church as a way to enhance his community involvement. For him MCC is "not just a gay church, but is a group for all people and that's what I like about it."

For the four men discussed in this section, rural does not necessarily mean isolated. These men live in rural areas of the United States. One drives 2 h one-way to attend his church. Others live a little closer to "town" (bigger city with an MCC or similar church) but still go out of their way to attend an open and affirming church. These men enjoy their rural life communities and their gay communities, just in different locales. They choose to live in rural areas that do not always, if ever, have gay friendly churches and they choose to drive to a nearby city to meet other gay men and women in a more formal setting. These men are not isolated or stuck in their small towns. Just because they choose to live in certain areas does not mean they have to give up expressing their sexual identity.

## The Fit of the Church

The other 10 men that I interviewed did not mention anything about looking for a specifically gay friendly church; instead they discussed finding a church where they would fit in. To them, this meant people who shared most of the same beliefs they did, for example that drugs are bad and abortion should be illegal. These men also wanted a church that would not openly preach against gay issues. For example, Joshua discussed the need to attend a church that was accepting, although he did not specifically look for a MCC. Rather, he was able to find acceptance in his local Methodist congregation. "[Pastor] has never preached on homosexuality and my Sunday school hasn't either… it is all inclusive. There is no separate thing for LGBT which I'm okay with." He looked for a church that held the same beliefs he did on building "community and having loving relationships" (interview with Joshua) and he found that with this church. Simon wanted "fellowship with other believers" and cared more about having people that shared his views "on the importance of what Christianity means." Another man, Matthew, discussed the people within his church saying that although "the whole doctrine… of the Christian church con-

demns homosexuality… the positive thing about it (his church) is that the people are kind and accepting." Matthew said "you can find this at different places"; you just have to look for a church that fits you. One interviewee, David, described how he would automatically know how well he would fit in with a church. He said, "You will always know where God wants you to be because you will walk in the door and you will feel at home." For David, he knew he would feel at home, like he belonged, as soon as he walked into the door of the church where God wanted him to be, so having one that is specifically for the LGBT population was not important to him. It is not he who picks his church, God leads him to the right church.

The interviews suggest that these gay men in small towns negotiate being both gay and Christian. For some, it is all about where God wants you to be, where you feel at home and comfortable. For others, it is about the people at the church making you feel welcome. A lot of the experiences these men relayed to me were about how they were out (openly gay) to the town as well as out to the church community, and they still felt safe and welcomed in these churches that officially condemn or ignore homosexuality at the denominational level. This shows the important role these individual congregations played in the atmosphere of acceptance of these gay men and the sense of community and comfort these men felt in those churches.

## Personal Relationship with God

Many of these men cited having a personal relationship with God that was accepting of their sexual orientation as the reason they did not necessarily need a specifically gay friendly church or a church family at all. It was these men's faith in a Christian God that loved them no matter what, that would be there for them, and that would accept them given that He had created them. This interpretation made it possible for them to be Christian and gay. David explained it to me like this:

> Could I stand before God and say yes I know this is wrong but it is who I am. Could I justify it to the face of God? Could I say yes sir I take my punishment, I know what I did was wrong, it is who I am, it is who you made me to be, I know you love me anyway, and I know I have to take this punishment? And I found that yea, I could do that.

David felt that God created him just the way he is and it was through his personal relationship with God that he is able to be gay, to live in the rural areas that he prefers and still be the Christian that he feels God is calling him to be. Jude said that no matter what, "God loved me anyway." For him, he was able to combine what it means for him to be gay into his own religion that he calls his "God that is with me always." Jude added, "God is bigger than our understanding." This phrase is what Jude said he often repeats to himself and others. He believes this idea is important to having a personal and intimate relationship with God. One must remember always, "… that God is bigger than our understanding." He describes this phrase as the foundation for his beliefs. Issac described his personal relationship with God that "gives me the freedom to explore churches other than specifically gay friendly

churches… because I know God loves me." All of those interviewed talked extensively about how God should be the first and most important aspect of a Christian's life, including gay Christians. To them, God created them gay just like he created some people straight and it is up to all of God's people to live a life worthy of Him. These men did not see being gay as a hindrance in this mission. They were able to be both gay and Christian through their understanding of a loving and accepting God.

This theme shows how these men will identify has gay and as Christian with or without having a church home or church family. The most important aspect of Christianity, for these men, is still being met. These men have a personal relationship with their Creator, with the only entity whose judgment matters, and with whom they will have to answer to when they die. This is how these men thought about God in relation to themselves. At least for the three men discussed above their faith is not dependent on their social interactions, having a community, or the institutional structure of the church. These interviews show that community and structure do not necessarily contribute to holding certain identities. These men saw themselves as Christian, as devoted Christians, and claimed personal relationships with God as the source of their faith and devotion.

## Community

In contrast, for the other men, the theme that emerged out of my interviews is the importance of having a community. It is universally known that a community can be a great support system. Communities offer benefits to the individual that then reflect back to benefit the group. It is this sense of cohesiveness that both Christian communities and gay communities strive to create and maintain. An important aspect of Christianity is the opportunity to fellowship with other Christians. All of the men interviewed mentioned the need to have a group that understood them, where they would fit in, and that would be there for them. Many cited their church communities (Samuel referred to them as "Church family") as being as important to them. For some men, it was even more important than their gay community. Through the course of the interviews, it was clear how they developed and maintained their Christian community; going to church together and/or meeting with one another outside of church to discuss their faith. David told me about his community in his rural town that he recently left.

> There was a group of us, a group of gays that were all Christian. We all went to different churches but we were all Christian… We talked to each other, we visited with each other, we would sit and have lunch every now and then and share our faith, share our lives. We would call each other out of things that we shouldn't be doing. It was a nice kind of accountability group.

What remained a question for me was how do they maintain a gay community within rural communities that are unlikely to have specifically gay places? When asked to elaborate on their gay community, many cited just going out together, saying that everyone in town already knew pretty much that they were gay so they would just

meet up at someone's house or at a bar or share a meal. Adam stated that someone "can find a gay community anywhere" and cited that as another reason why he chooses to remain in a rural environment given his sexual orientation. When I asked Noah about what he looks for in a community, he said, "I am looking for accepting people." For Noah, it did not matter whether you lived in a city or in the country, you can find accepting people in both types of environments and cited his move from his non-accepting small hometown to a different small town that is a lot more accepting. Matthew cited having a loving and supportive environment that enabled him to create his gay community. Daniel cited driving to the next big town to go to the one gay bar in that town. Jacob mentioned the Internet and social media playing a huge part in how he met his partner while both were living in rural locations at opposite ends of the state of Louisiana. This suggests an important evolution in the creation of gay communities.

Language plays an important role in the creation of a community. Understanding certain words in specific ways helps to establish a dialogue between individuals in interactions. Throughout my interviews, specifically interviews with a few gay men that have lived exclusively in rural areas, a pattern of language use has become apparent. These men use words like "homosexual lifestyle" and "admitted homosexuality" to talk about their sexual orientation. These phrases are generally thought to be offensive and derogatory towards the gay community in urban environments. This could be an important distinction between rural and urban gay people that should be further studied to understand the stereotypes each group has toward the other and their differences.

## How Stereotypes Create Issues: The Urban/Rural Binary

The last major theme revealed in my interviews was a very hierarchal notion of rural and urban gay men, but not in the way most of us think. One of these men criticized urban gay men and thought better of rural gay men like himself. Several of those interviews expressed interest in living in a small town where they could know everyone, as well as going to a small church for the rest of their lives. David lives in an urban environment currently. He went to this big city for his work. He attends church at a local gay friendly church similar to MCC, but not affiliated. He has very strong opinions of gay men that live in urban environments. To him, an urban gay man is one that does drugs and goes out drinking every night. These men, in his mind, do not attend church and are not "quality people" (quoted directly from interview with David). But when asked about the gay men he encountered back home he had very different things to say. David recalls a more tight-knit community in his small town; one that was always there for each other, one that always showed support for that person, would "call each other out on things we shouldn't be doing," and a group that you could share your faith with as well as your sexual orientation. For David, living in a rural place meant close friends that accepted you and that had the same values that you did. Finding such close friends has not been David's

experience after moving to a large city. Several of the other men I interviewed, who still live in a rural area, had similar things to say. Many thought that in their small town (whether or not it was the one they grew up in) there was a community that was accepting of them. They felt comfort in knowing everyone in town and being able to talk to them about church, school and family life. Some felt they had to move out of their hometown to find acceptance, but still stayed in a rural area instead of moving to a larger city.

It is worth considering if the interviewee, David, who disapproved of urban gay males that lived what he viewed as a more decadent lifestyle, may reflect not only stereotypes, but real divisions in the gay community captured by Lisa Duggan's term "homonormativity". Both Duggan (2004) and Judith/Jack Halberstam (2005) use the concept of "homonormativity" to refer to assimilationist gay and lesbian politics organized around the pursuit of rights granted to white, middle-class heterosexuals, such as the right to privacy, the right to marry, the right to join the military, and the right to have and to keep their children. Both of these authors define "queer" as a "way of life" that resists both heteronormativity and homonormativity. Indeed, Halberstam argues that "queer" is not defined by homosexual sex, but by the experience of living on the margins of domestic safety and sexual respectability in what he calls "queer time" and "queer spaces" (Halberstam 2005, p. 10).

Given the findings of this study, it might be interesting to explore whether such assimilationist gay politics or ideologies are more likely to be found in rural settings and small towns, rather than in large metropolitan areas. In turn, it is even more likely that Christian beliefs foster such normative views of how people should live their lives. Thus, perhaps, some of the reasons why the gay male Christians in this study feel more at home in rural areas and why they feel out of place among urban gay males is because of their more deeply ingrained homonormative values.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The research has shown that a major contributing factor to the health and happiness of these rural gay Christian men is how active they are in both gay and Christian communities. Most interviewees discussed how important it was for them to find others like themselves within both of these communities. They also spoke about the importance of finding a gay community that was accepting of their Christianity, and a Christian community that was accepting of their sexuality. In most cases, this was the same group highlighting the integration of gay Christian identities, much like the experiences of urban gay Christians who attended open and affirming churches. The finding of community appears to be largely attributed to the small size of the rural community and a homonormative gay population that rejects decadence. Because the general community is so small with fewer resources, gay individuals can find other gay individuals in their rural Christian communities. In this way, rural gay Christians make-up their own homonormative gay (as opposed to queer) space within their greater community.

Above all, interviewees wanted a social support system and people with whom to socialize. Having community, whether or not through formal structures like LGBT centers or church institutions, enhanced how these men felt about themselves and their choice to live in a rural environment. One surprising finding that came out of this work is the stereotypes both rural and urban gay men have about each other, even if they have lived in both communities. Not many of those interviewed could cite a specific source as to where these stereotypes came from. Many had ideas of urban life that portrayed urban gay men as involved in risky, sexual, decadent behaviors and drugs. As such, they were not the type of people that would go to church or truly be living the way God wanted them to live. While this viewpoint is coming predominantly from a man who was raised in a rural environment and who is currently living in a large metropolitan area, it may be interesting to follow up on this finding in future research.

Conversely, it is no secret that individuals in urban environments, generally speaking, attribute certain qualities to rural life that are hegemonic today in our society's view of what it is like for gay men in rural spaces. This viewpoint paints small towns in America as unsafe and harmful for the gay population, and as somewhere that must be escaped in order to live a happy and healthy life (Halberstam 2005; Rubin 1984; Terry 1999; Weston 1995). From the research I have conducted this is not the case. Gay men in the country can live a life that is just as productive and fulfilling as anyone living in an urban environment. According to those interviewed here, being rural was a way of life they did not want to give up just because they were gay. They were able to find accepting groups in which they built a community of people they could rely on for support. Also, this highlights the social tolerance of the rural community toward specific gay individuals—although this may not be the case when directed toward an abstract or more general gay community. I hope to further highlight this paradox in my future work.

Unquestionably, these interviews illustrate that rural, gay, and Christian identities are not always as conflicting as they are stereotypically thought to be. What is most important is that they find a community that accepts and supports them. This support system, its tolerance and strength, is the most important factor contributing to the health and happiness of gay Christian men in rural environments.

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# Tomboys in the Work of Carson McCullers

**Emily Knox**

The last time that I went out to lunch with my father, step-mother, and 6-year-old brother they asked me about my work. I explained that I was doing a study on tomboys, and examining the different definitions of what a tomboy entails. My dad asked me if I meant tomboys "as in girls that wear t-shirts and play sports and stuff."

Before I could answer, my stepmother interrupted "No, Michael! I think we both know what she's talking about", she said. "So 'tomboys', you're calling them nowadays?" she said as she winked at me, thinking that she had discovered the hip, new slang term for lesbian. I tried to regain my part of the conversation, and tell my dad that he was actually right. I, for all intents and purposes, was talking about the unkempt, sporty girls that he was thinking of. When I mentioned athletics, my step-mother (a high school teacher) asserted that she heard the girls in her class talking about how they quit playing sports because (she glanced at my younger brother who was obviously not paying attention, then looked back at me and whispered) "they say that all of the girls that play sports are D-I-K-E-S."

My dad looked to my brother, and in a thinly-veiled metaphor for homosexuality, he looked down at his plate and said "It's like broccoli, you know. Some people are born liking broccoli and some people aren't. And the ones that don't never will, no matter what you do. People just have different tastes, I guess." And with that, the conversation ended. Though I never got to actually explain what I was doing, this interaction did provide me with an interesting insight into the many conceptualizations just two individuals could have regarding what is meant by tomboy. Here in just a brief moment they had, rightly or wrongly, addressed issues of female masculinity, sexual orientation, stigma and social tolerance, nature vs nurture, youth culture, and queer discourse.

There are many notions of what it is to be a tomboy, and what a tomboy is culturally, socially, and individually. Different sources yield many varying definitions, showing the multiplicity of the term and demonstrating how the idea of what it means to be a tomboy varies according to context. Near the turn of the twentieth century, Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote that, "[t]he most normal girl is the

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tomboy- whose numbers increase among us in these wiser days,—a healthy young creature, who is human through and through" (Abate ix). As with most cultural archetypes, the tomboy figure became an increasingly popular character in literature during the twentieth century (Abate x). In her novels *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding*, Carson McCullers constructs two very complex tomboy characters, both of which epitomize the tomboy archetype. Through both novels I've identified several recurring themes that pervade the narratives of the tomboy figures.

The first of these is the notion of tomboyism being a phase. This idea of temporality points to the significant recurring theme of norm enforcement, which intensifies with age, throughout the novel. The most prominent theme of the criticism that is received by tomboys centers around their physical appearance. This includes their attire as well as their body comportment. The fourth theme, and an insight that is unique in the narratives, is the tomboy psychology. McCullers allows the reader into the characters' minds, fully allowing them to understand the thought processes of the tomboy figures. This encompasses their attitudes, desires, fears, as well as dreams and plans for the future.

I first came to these themes through a critical analysis of academic work on the subject of tomboys (Knox 2012). This analysis began with examining the work of cultural studies scholar Judith Halberstam who, in her book *Female Masculinity*, observes that the rambunctious and active behavior and masculine identification of tomboys is generally accepted throughout girlhood, but punished when they threaten to extend into adolescence (Halberstam 1998). There is a handful of other work that both critiques and expands upon Halberstam's studies on female masculinity (Adams et al. 2005; Halberstam 2005). It is through this work and this literature that I have gathered these four themes and will be applying them to the novels *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding* by Carson McCullers.

The etymology of the word tomboy is actually very inconsistent. The earliest date in which a definition has been documented is the 1553 listing in *Oxford English Dictionary*, which defines a tomboy as "a rude, boisterous or forward boy." In contrast to this, according to *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* the term "tomboy" did not appear until 1566. According to some scholars, it was during the 1570's that the term changed from describing boisterous young men to representing women with the same characteristics. When this happened, it began to be associated with sexuality, and developed into something that could potentially be a social problem (Abate 2008). In the 1570's *Oxford English Dictionary* describes a tomboy as a "bold and immodest woman".

It was during the 1590's and early 1600's that tomboy evolved into its current usage. It was defined as "a girl who behaves like spirited or boisterous boy; a wild romping girl" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). However, it wasn't until the mid-1800's that *Merriam- Webster Dictionary* changed its definition to characterize a female. It's also said that during this time, prompted by the poor state of women's health, the concept of tomboyism was designated as an alternative to the dominant female lifestyle (Abate 2008). The late 1800's to the early 1900's are known as the "heyday of

literary tomboy narratives" (Abate 2008). It's during this time that tomboys became common characters in popular culture, and for a short time this lifestyle became widely accepted. (See Appendix for timeline of definitions)

However, there is another line in the development of the term "tomboy", which stems from the prefix "tom". Since its inception this prefix has been used to assign masculinity to something. Originally, the term "tom" referred to "a masculine woman of the town, or prostitute" (Halberstam 1998). When tomboy began to describe boisterous women, this same meaning was conferred upon them. Because women were classified according to their marriageability, prostitutes were put into the same category as lesbians. Both were unmarried, and both were women of independent means. It's from this that the term tomboy gains its association with sexuality.

All of these historical definitions yield several common themes. The earliest definitions define the tomboy according to behavior. When it becomes gendered, it gains an association with sexuality as well as sexual orientation. Being connected to female sexuality, we begin to see tomboyism as a potential social problem. Since the concept of tomboy originated, it has gone through phases of being both unfavorable and greatly valued, according to the needs of society at that time.

There are many inconsistencies between sources when attempting to define tomboy historically. However, we can see how these definitions or particular attributes have evolved into current day lay definitions, which are largely consistent with one another. The current edition of the *Oxford Dictionary* defines tomboy as "a girl who enjoys rough, noisy activities traditionally associated with boys." These definitions continue to define tomboy according to behavior, but additionally add age restraints as well as physical characteristics to the figure. Because popular definitions confine tomboyism to prepubescent girls, it has lost its explicit association with sexuality. (See Appendix for lay definitions.)

As with the etymology of the word, it's been difficult to determine individuals' clear definitions of tomboy. In academic literature, tomboys are more specifically described, but all of the definitions are context oriented. This literature is largely from the field of cultural studies, in which Judith Halberstam is one of the leading voices. Halberstam is primarily associated with *Female Masculinity* and cultural references related to this area of literature. Halberstam describes tomboyism as "an extended childhood period of female masculinity." She also speaks to the current day conceptualization saying that:

> Even a cursory survey of popular cinema and literature confirms, the image of the tomboy is only tolerated within a narrative of blossoming womanhood; within such a narrative, tomboyism represents a resistance to adulthood itself rather than to adult femininity. Tomboy identities are conveyed as benign forms of childhood identification as long as they evince acceptable degrees of femininity, appropriate female aspiration, and as long as they promise to result in marriage and motherhood. (Halberstam 2005)

This definition is especially important, as it brings up issues of age as well as the idea of tomboyism as a phase. In the latter definition, we're lead to believe that tomboyism is only tolerated so long as they grow up to be heterosexual and heteronormative.

Other cultural studies scholars define tomboy:

> "As aberrant" girls or pseudo boys, tomboys are ambiguous entities, begetting ambiguous reactions in both the mainstream and academe. While tomboys are granted more social and parental acceptance than their "sissy" counterparts, due to tomboy display of socially rewarded "masculine" traits or behaviors, and/or beliefs that tomboyism is temporary, tomboy is a pejorative label, implying gender deviance. (Carr 1998)

This definition speaks to the norm enforcement that is taking place with the label, and again presents the concept of tomboyism as a potential social problem. It also echoes Halberstam's definition with the belief that tomboyism is a temporary state.

In another study that was done on high school female athletes, their respondents used the tomboy label to navigate between lesbian and girly girl. The ambiguity of the term allowed for them to still embrace certain aspects of female masculinity. "Tomboys can play sports, have a boyfriend or not, resist girly markers like makeup and ribbons, skirt questions about sexual identity, and still find acceptance with their peers (Adams et al. 2005)". Here this theme is still evolving. It's a question of maturity, question of a phase, and there's now some autonomy that's now being extended to the tomboy. We also now begin to see the concern with the overlap of sexuality.

The common themes brought up by the lay definitions and the academic literature are also found in McCullers' narratives. In many ways the tomboy characters from the novels serve as an autobiographical rendering of their author, Carson McCullers. In the book *Tomboys: A Literary and Cultural History*, Michelle Abate says that "McCullers' tomboyish behavior was matched by her equally tomboyish appearance. Always longing to stand out from the crowd, she refused to conform to feminine conventions of dress."(152). In addition to this description, Abate also cites the accounts of other individuals. One described her first impression of McCullers saying "I saw a girl so tall and lanky that I first thought it was a boy. Her hair was short, she wore a cyclist cap, tennis shoes, and pants" (153). In reading these descriptions of McCullers it's easy to see the parallel between her and the fictional characters Mick Kelly and Frankie Addams. McCullers was familiar with both the joys and the difficulties of tomboyhood. So the reoccurrence of these figures is not surprising, as McCullers was able to draw upon her own life experiences while creating their narratives.

For Example, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* is Carson McCullers' first novel. It was published in 1940, and written at the onset of World War II. It is set in a town in the American south. Each chapter of the novel shifts between the narratives of four main characters, one of which is that of a tomboy- Mick Kelly. Although her family doesn't have the resources to indulge her desires to play, Mick is very passionate about music and many of her actions and dreams center around it. Much of her narrative has to do with her feelings of isolation, and her desire to belong to a group. McCullers says that Mick "wasn't a member of any bunch" (McCullers 2001, p. 104). The story takes place over a period of several months during which, Mick faces many challenges to her tomboyism and the pressure to abide by to the confines of traditional femininity.

*The Member of the Wedding* was Carson McCullers' third novel, published in 1946, and the central character is the young tomboy Frankie Addams. The story plays out in an unnamed town in the American south during World War II, and the bulk of the novel occurs within a period of several days. The novel centers around Frankie's older brother's wedding, and (like *The Heart is a Lonely* Hunter) much of the narrative is commentary on Frankie's feelings of isolation and loneliness. McCullers begins the novel describing her tomboy character saying that:

> It happened that green and crazy summer when Frankie was twelve years old. This was the summer when for a long time she had not been a member. She belonged to no club and was a member of nothing in the world. Frankie had become an unjoined person who hung around in doorways and she was afraid. (McCullers 2001, p. 461)

The entirety of the novel centers around Frankie's feelings of ostracization, and her quest for belonging. Although most of Frankie's time is spent with the family's African American housekeeper Berenice and her younger cousin John Henry, she has no real peer group. Frankie dreams of leaving her town, and her immediate solution to both these desires and her loneliness is to leave with her brother and his new wife after their wedding. She says that "[t]hey are the we of me" (McCullers 2001, p. 497). The novel shows Frankie's attempts to abandon her childhood self and to adopt and portray a new feminine, adult image. The book illustrates the rapid evolution of her identity, and demonstrates the belief in the temporal nature of tomboyism.

## Tomboyism as a Phase

McCullers' own tomboyism is exceptional, because it extended into adulthood. Because of society's disapproval of gender deviance, Halberstam speaks to this anomaly saying "that any girls do emerge at the end of adolescence as masculine women is quite amazing" (6). She, explains that "[t]omboyism generally describes an extended childhood period of female masculinity" (5). While this definition did not hold true for McCullers, in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* the reader gets the impression that Mick might not share that same fate. Through the novel the reader observes the struggle that Mick experiences. In regards to Mick's narrative, this book is a coming-of-age story. At the beginning of the novel, she is on the cusp of adolescence. The initial descriptions of her and her behavior are that of a stereotypical tomboy. She is active, daring, and ambitious. She first appears in the novel buying cigarettes (McCullers 2001, p. 18), then climbing to the top of the roof of a house, "the place where everybody wanted to stand," but where few would go for fear of falling (McCullers 2001, p. 34). This again serves to demonstrate the audacious quality of a tomboy.

However, as her story progresses, the effects of the pressure to conform that she receives from all around her become more and more evident. Judith Halberstam speaks to the truth of this explaining that "[t]omboyism is tolerated as long as the

child remains prepubescent; as soon as puberty begins, however, the full force of gender conformity descends on the girl" (6). Mick's story is an illustration of just that. Whereas at the beginning she was described as a girl who had a "habit of hitching up her khaki shorts and swaggering around like a cowboy" (22), at the end of the novel Biff Brannon describes her saying that "[s]he had grown older. Her rough and childish ways were almost gone. And instead there was something ladylike and delicate about her that was hard to point out" (357). It's likely that this is largely the result of the "punishment" for her tomboyism.

In *The Member of the Wedding*, Frankie develops throughout her entire narrative. This is manifested most obviously in the way that her name changes with each part of the book. In part one she goes by Frankie. In part two, she refers to herself and introduces herself as F. Jasmine. In the third and final section of the book, she goes by her full name, Frances. Notably, whenever she reflects on her past self, throughout the novel, she does think of herself as Frankie. In the second section of the book, she does this thinking that "[i]t was the old Frankie of yesterday who had been puzzled, but F. Jasmine did not wonder any more" (McCullers 2001, p. 503). She also describes her former self as "the ghost of the old Frankie, dirty and hungry-eyed, [who] trudged silently along not far from her" (McCullers 2001, p. 513). The names that she assigns herself are an obvious representation of her coming-of-age and trying to embrace a new adult, and traditionally female identity.

## Norm Enforcement

The backlash that tomboys experience because of their gender deviance takes many forms all of which are methods of norm enforcement. The first that Mick experiences is her ostracization from both family members and social groups. McCullers says "She wasn't a member of any bunch. In Grammar School she would have just gone up to any crowd she wanted to belong with and that would have been the end of the matter. Here it was different" (104). This feeling of not belonging coupled with her lack of social status lead to Mick's idea to have a prom party, and indirectly to her realization that the power she thinks she can obtain through complying with the rules of conventional femininity is really a facade for oppression. When preparing herself for her party, Mick literally and symbolically abandons her tomboy image in favor of an exaggerated version of femininity. In her silk evening gown, high-heels, and tiara Mick's display of femininity is so excessive that it's much more like a performance of femme drag rather than the natural and effortless version of femininity that is the cultural ideal. The book does go on to say that "[s]he didn't feel like herself at all. She was somebody different from Mick Kelly entirely" (107).

Her party provides an excellent example of (literally) choreographed heterosexuality as well as showing the artificiality of inter-gender mingling. At the party "[t]he girls bunched together and did a lot of laughing to pretend like they were having a good time. The boys thought about the girls and the girls thought about the boys.

But all that came of it was a queer feeling in the room" (108). However, during her party the neighborhood kids begin to intermingle with the vocational school kids and wild, active play erupts "and she felt like the very wildest of all" (115). The party that she had meticulously planned out and the outfit that she had chosen were both ruined by the end of the night. The interactions between the neighborhood kids and the vocational school kids epitomizes, what the texts suggest is, a natural desire for freedom. During this scene Mick, in her unrestrained state, takes someone's suggestion of trying to jump over a ditch at the end of the street (115). She ran towards the ditch, and attempted to jump over it, but only landed on a pipe and lost her breath. She realized the problem was with the shoes she was wearing. She would have been able to do it without trouble if she were wearing sneakers, but she recognized too late that high-heels aren't designed for rigorous activity and that's what caused her to falter (116). In this moment, her high-heeled shoes are a tangible symbol of the oppressive brand of femininity that is being forced upon her, that she has tried and failed to embrace.

In *The Member of the Wedding*, much of the norm enforcement that occurs comes from Frankie herself. Throughout the novel she repeatedly tries to embrace traditional femininity, and in her attempt to do so she performs an exaggerated and flamboyant version of it. McCullers repeatedly mentions Frankie's unhappiness with herself. She says that "[t]his was the summer when Frankie was sick and tired of being Frankie. She hated herself…" (McCullers 2001, p. 478). It is Frankie's own self-loathing and desire for change that made her want to shed her childhood persona and take on a new adult one. The way that this manifests itself is primarily through the attire that she chooses. At the beginning of the novel, McCullers describes Frankie's summer attire saying that throughout the summer she went around "wearing her Mexican hat and the high-laced boots and a cowboy rope tied round her waist" (McCullers 2001, p. 513). In the novel, Frankie eschews these clothes in favor of dresses and high-heels. Because Frankie interacts with so few people within the novel, most of the norm enforcement that is visible comes from within the character herself

## Physical Appearance

There are many parallels and similarities between the characters Mick and Frankie. The initial descriptions of both say that they are 12 years old, unusually tall for their age, and have short hair and a boyish appearance. In *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* Mick is described as "[a] gangling towheaded youngster, a girl of about 12… dressed in khaki shorts, a blue shirt, and tennis shoes- so that at first glance she was very like a young boy" (McCullers 2001, p. 18). In *The Member of the Wedding,* McCullers describes the tomboy character, Frankie, saying that "she was grown so tall that she was almost a big freak, and her shoulders were narrow, her legs too long. She wore a pair of blue track shorts, a B.V.D. undervest, and she was

barefooted. Her hair had been cut like a boy's, but it had not been cut for a long time and was now not even parted." (McCullers 2001, p. 462).

Attire is an important theme throughout the novel, and a significant feature of the tomboy identity. Shoes and hair are two objects that are brought up frequently throughout the novel. On several occasions in the novel, Mick's preference for men's attire is mentioned. The first interaction that is shown between her and her two older sisters is an example of most of the common themes that have already been seen. McCullers writes "Are you just going to just tramp around the room all day? It makes me sick to see you in those silly boy's clothes. Somebody ought to clamp down on you, Mick Kelly, and make you behave. Etta said. 'Shut up,' said Mick. 'I wear shorts because I don't want to wear your old hand-me-downs. I don't want to be like either of you. And I won't. That's why I wear shorts. I'd rather be a boy any day'" (42). Later in the book, when Mick's dreams of one day being the famous composer and conductor of a symphony are disclosed it's said that when she was conducting "she would either wear a real man's suit or else a dress spangled with red rhinestones" (241). These two choices once again illustrate the dichotomy between "real" masculinity and the overstated femininity that Mick has already tried to perform.

Both Mick and Frankie's performances of femme drag are contrasted by many of their dreams for the future. In both novels, the tomboy characters make plans to pass as men and join the military. Mick's plans are to "fight the Facists" to do this she says "I could dress up like a boy and nobody could ever tell. Cut my hair off and all" (McCullers 2001, p. 245). Similarly, when making her plans to run away, Frankie thinks that "[i]f the train goes to New York, she would dress like a boy and give a false name and a false age and join the Marines" (McCullers 2001, p. 593). In addition to these, the tomboy characters have many other plans for the future that involve passing as a male.

There is a display of this exaggerated femininity by Frankie in *The Member of the Wedding* as well. It happens on the day when she is supposed to meet her brother's fiancé for the first time. Afterwards, another character describes Frankie's performance back to her saying that: "You came down with your organdie dress on and lipstick a inch thick from one ear to the next" (McCullers 2001, p. 485). Throughout the novel, Frankie periodically acts out her brand of femininity, even at the cost of her own comfort. When Frankie was trying on dresses to wear to her brother's wedding McCullers said that "[s]he walked in the wedding dress, with her hand on her hip. The silver slippers had squeezed her feet so that the toes felt swollen and mashed like ten big sore cauliflowers." (McCullers 2001, p. 544). Frankie's performance of excessive femininity is also demonstrated by the name that she refers to herself by. It's in this section of the novel that she requests that her friends and family begin to call her F. Jasmine- a notable change from the gender ambiguous name of Frankie.

## Psychology

In many examples of tomboy literature, the desire to be a boy is expressed in different ways, both directly and indirectly. However, most people interpret this desire as their longing for the independence and privileges that they associate with boyhood rather than the character wanting to be biologically male (Halberstam 1998). Mick's desire for independence is shown throughout the novel is displayed through her ever-changing dreams for her future. At the beginning of the novel, she intends to be famous by the time she's 17 and plans to achieve this by becoming an inventor (McCullers 2001, p. 35). Later on, she had decided that she would become a famous composer by the time she was 20 (McCullers 2001, p. 241). Later her dream grows to include traveling to Europe to kill Fascists with Harry (McCullers 2001, p. 245). At the end of the novel, after Mr. Singer's death and after she has taken the job at Woolworth's her dream is reduced to one day saving enough money to buy a secondhand piano for herself (353). The development of her plans for her future mark Mick's perception of her own potential, which wanes with her loss of freedom and loss of her tomboy identity.

Another notable facet of both tomboy characters is their identification with other marginalized groups. Mick with her African American housekeeper Portia, and Frankie with her housekeeper, Berenice. To an extent, one can assume that they identify this way because they also feel somewhat oppressed and feel that they are somehow able to sympathize with these character that they, too, are in a minority group of sorts. An example of this comes in *The Member of the Wedding* on a bus, when Frankie opts to sit next to Berenice "back with the colored people" (McCullers 2001, p. 588).

Almost as important as their feelings of loneliness, the tomboy characters both have an intense desire to be known. In *The Member of the Wedding,* Frankie voices these desires as she dreams about her with her brother and his new wife saying that:

> And we will meet them. Everybody. We will just walk up to people and know them right away. We will be walking down a dark road and see a lighted house and knock on the door and strangers will rush to meet us and say: Come in! Come in! We will know decorated aviators and New York people and movie stars. We will have thousands of friends, belong to so many clubs that we can't even keep track of all of them. We will be members of the whole world. Boyoman! Manoboy! (McCullers 2001, p. 565)

Similarly, all of Mick's dreams for her future in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* involve being known for her accomplishments- musical or otherwise. Mick plans to "be seventeen and very famous" (McCullers 2001, p. 35).

In The Member of the Wedding, it is proposed that Frankie has a party, and in The Heart is a Lonely Hunter, Mick actually does have a party. In the former, it's suggested that Frankie hosts two parties simultaneously. A bridge party in the front, and a costume party in the backyard. Similarly, when Mick hosts her prom the neighborhood kids have a party of their own sort in the street in front of the house. Eventually these parties converge. Both of these events represent the duality of the

tomboy character, as she develops into womanhood. This same duality- the one between childhood and adulthood- is also displayed by one of Mick's final moments in The Heart is a Lonely Hunter. In Biff's final account of her, she is in the New York Cafe after work, where she orders an ice cream sundae and a draft beer. Both of these items epitomize the order of a child and adult. This scene alone represents the struggle, and the change that is taking place in Mick's life as she searches for an identity.

Michelle Abate says that "[f]rom their inception, tomboy characters and their accompanying behaviors have been linked with such elements as social surprise, gender duplicity, and unlimited possibility" (xiii). This is true of Carson McCullers, Mick Kelly and Frankie Addams. Both characters are ideal models of the tomboy archetype, as most elements of their stories are shared with other tomboys both real and fictional. These novels were heavily influenced by the political and social context of the time in which they were written. *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* was published at the beginning of World War II. Mick's female masculinity in the book is prophetic in that it directly precedes the rise in and increased value of masculine behavior as millions of women enter the workforce. Although *The Member of the Wedding* was published in 1946, but written during World War II, and the novel is set in the year 1944. McCullers' final portrayals of both Mick and Frankie demonstrate how the tomboy figure is complex and ever-changing as it continuously adapts to its time, place, and role in society.

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# Part II
# Culture, Stereotypes, and Stigma

# Violent Environment: Women and Frontier Coffey County, Kansas: 1855–1880

**Lisa Bunkowski and Amanda Hedstrom**

"Horrible Murders in Southern Kansas," read the article headline in the New York *Daily Tribune.* On June 10, 1861, residents of Neosho Township, Coffey County, Kansas made a grisly discovery. During the night, according to the *Daily Tribune*, Mary Wiley and her 6-year-old son William were brutally slain in their beds; "the bodies were literally butchered" ("Horrible Murders in Southern Kansas" 1861, p. 3). It was more than ordinary murder, it was cruel act of violence; all told, the stab wounds numbered nearly 40, the boy's spinal column was severed, his leg nearly bisected. Despite the heinous nature of the crime, no one was ever convicted.

To make sense of the case, to find meaning in these brutal murders, this chapter focuses on the concepts of patriarchy and violence, and an analysis of the body as the locus of violent discourse. We have adopted an approach of transdisciplinarity to enable us to more fully integrate gender and feminist theories into our historical analysis. This approach serves as a bridge between the more conventional "gender & history" approach of the past 25 years and the literary and feminist theory foundations from which historians have drawn theoretical inspiration. By reading the various narratives associated with this violent event through the theoretical lenses reinvigorated from "border" disciplines, we gain a deeper understanding of gender and violence on the Kansas frontier as manifested in this case study.

Johnson suggests that scholars use the term "transdisciplinarity" to express the impact on cultural studies by cross-disciplinary exchanges between literary studies, cultural studies, and history. What distinguishes transdisciplinarity from the "borrowing and integration" of interdisciplinarity, and from the "less productive coexistence within definite borders" of multidisciplinarity, Johnson explains, is the impact the sharing between disciplines has on cultural studies (Johnson 2001, pp. 270–271). The transformative nature of the exchange is at the heart of the matter. More recent discussion of transdisciplinarity is situated in the context of gender violence research. In their examination of the approach, Messing, Adelman, and Durfee emphasize the crossing of "epistemological, methodological, and traditional

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practice-research boundaries," or "border-work" that is part of the practice of transdisciplinary research (Messing et al. 2012, p. 641). Messing and her colleagues take the agenda of transdisciplinary research beyond the goals we envision here; part of their purpose is to foster collaboration between academics and community stakeholders to work toward social change (Messing et al. 2012). What we propose is to apply the transdisciplinarity approach to the discipline of History, to go beyond simply borrowing concepts from related disciplines and integrating them in a limited fashion. Our goal is to let these revised ways of reading the historical evidence transform our understanding of the history, just as the reinterpretation of the past helps to shape the theoretical concepts we utilize. To a degree this case study can contribute to the goals of Messing and her colleagues; the examination of gender and violence in the past can help inform our understanding of society's historical context.

In her 1986 classic essay, historian Scott commented on the way that many historians have utilized gender in their analyses: either describing yet failing to interpret the phenomena, or seeking a causal understanding, often limiting the process by conceptualizing 'gender' as 'women' (Scott 1986). She acknowledged that feminist historians employed more varied approaches, yet they too were limited by their early theoretical fixation on binary opposition, the antagonism between male and female. Despite emphasizing the limitations of early feminist historians' analyses of gender, Scott conceded that they were (in the late 1980s) "in a position to theorize their practice and to develop gender as an analytic category" (Scott 1986, p. 1066).

In addition, Scott emphasized the need for a "refusal of the fixed and permanent quality of the binary opposition, a genuine historicization and deconstruction of the terms of sexual difference…[and] to continually subject our categories to criticism, our analyses to self-criticism" (Scott 1986, p. 1065). In other words, as historians we need to be more self-aware, and to critically scrutinize our terminology and analytical concepts, as well as the historical materials. Demonstrating a transdisciplinary impact on the social sciences, Scott drew on anthropologist Clifford Geertz in noting the "epistemological turmoil" among social scientists that shifted analysis from "scientific to literary paradigms…from an emphasis on cause to one of meaning, blurring genres of meaning" (Geertz 1980; Scott 1986, p. 1066). This paradigm shift, or genre-mixing, was an early example of transdisciplinarity. Historians did not discard the emphasis on cause; rather many transformed their approaches to include a search for meaning utilizing theory and methods grounded in literary/critical analysis. The transformative aim of transdisciplinarity, to borrow ourselves from Geertz' explanation, demonstrates that there was "[s]omething happening about the way we think" about historical methods (Geertz 1980, p. 166).

In 2010, Scott returned to her classic essay for a reexamination, offering a fresh, albeit familiar critique of the state of the field. She finds that despite the promise of the impact of Post-structuralism and the blurring of genres, the tendency persists for historians to get mired in fixed meanings of 'men' and 'women,' describing gender roles rather than critically analyzing them, conflating the physical traits of females with a shared notion of 'women.' There is still much work to be done. The discipline of history has not been fully transformed by the impact of new or different inter-

pretive approaches. For gender to remain a useful and critical category of analysis, Scott recommends a conceptualization of gender that focuses on how "meanings are established, what they signify, and in what contexts" (Scott 2010, p. 10, 13). To apply this approach to gender, and to embrace the goal of finding cause *and* meaning, we propose re-crossing this transdisciplinary bridge to the foundational feminist, gender, and literary theories to find the ideas that will enable us to 'think about the way we are thinking,' or scrutinize our analytical concepts and terminology to re-read and better understand the various narratives associated with this violent event in mid-nineteenth century Kansas.

For this task, we first return to some of the feminist literary critics. What we have in mind for this case analysis is aligned with and framed quite well by Kolodny in her 1976 discussion of feminist literary criticism. "All the feminist is asserting, then, is her own equivalent right to liberate new (and perhaps different) significances from these same texts;" Kolodny explains, "and, at the same time, her right to choose which features of a text she takes as relevant because she is, after all, asking new and different questions of it" (Kolodny 1994, p. 250). Kolodny advocates a "playful pluralism, responsive to the possibilities of multiple critical schools and methods, but captive of none" (Kolodny 1994, p. 251). This flexible plurality of interpretive methods is a path to achieve the transformative goal of transdisciplinarity.

To ask the new and different questions of our case study, we turn to some foundational works on conceptualizing gender, patriarchy, and the body. Having given ourselves the liberty to change the way we think about the analysis and interpretation of historical evidence (indeed, what constitutes evidence), we need to agree on a conceptualization of gender, hierarchy/patriarchy particularly with regard to violence where women are both victims and perpetrators, and the body as a means of violent discourse.

It is best to look to the work of early feminist theorists for assistance with understanding gender and conceptualizing 'women.' If we take Post-structuralism to its extreme, the result can be a sense of paralysis; it seems impossible to define 'women' or 'gender;' that the idea of 'woman' is a fiction (Alcoff 1988). Returning to the work of Alcoff and her notion of "positionality" helps us to work through this. In this concept, a woman's identity is not based on biology (it is non-essentialized), and it emerges from specific historical experience. Woman, according to Alcoff, is "a relational term identifiable only within a (constantly moving) context; [and] that the position that women find themselves in can be actively utilized… as a location for the construction of meaning" (Alcoff 1988, p. 434–435). Of critical importance are the changing historical context and women's ability to affect their situation. Hütchtker (2001) provides an excellent overview of the radical deconstruction of the concept of gender and the implications for historical research, including an insightful overview the ideas of Judith Butler, Denise Riley, Linda Alcoff and Joan Scott. Scott's conceptualization of gender builds on Alcoff's understanding of 'women.' Scott provides a useful definition. Here again we focus on historical context, with "gender [as] a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes." Further, Scott explains, "gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (Scott 1986, p. 1067). In the case of the Wiley

murders, it is the notion of relationships of power, in part signified through gender that caused us to return to patriarchy as another category of analysis. The challenge in this case is that it includes a woman as a victim and as a perpetrator. The conventional application of theories of patriarchy to explain violence of men against women is not a perfect fit. However, the social environment of this community in mid-nineteenth century Kansas fits the basic definition of patriarchy, that men, as a group, were privileged over women.

In her recent examination of violence against women, Hunnicutt proposes "resurrecting 'patriarchy' as a theoretical tool" (Hunnicutt 2009, p. 554). In response to criticisms of the concept of patriarchy, Hunnicutt proposes the foundation for a more useful theory of violence against women. Of her five-part argument, the final two components offer the most promise for our case:

> The concept of patriarchy must be developed together with *other forms of hierarchy* and domination in which it is inextricably embedded.
> There are labyrinths of *power* dynamics in patriarchal systems. Violence against women cannot be understood as a simple formula of 'oppressor and oppressed.' Patriarchal systems must be envisioned as 'terrains of power' in which both men and women wield varying types and amounts of power. (Hunnicutt 2009, pp. 554–555).

This is clearly the situation in mid-nineteenth century Kansas. The Wileys and the Johnsons, men and women, were navigating terrains of power. Although there is not yet any widely accepted theory of patriarchy, Hunnicutt's suggestions toward developing a "theory of varieties of patriarchy and victimization of women" are useful for analyzing our case.

Because the Wileys were murdered in such a brutal fashion, we also need to briefly consider concepts of the body as a center of discourse, a text of culture, a locus of social control (Bordo 1992). In her analysis of hysteria, agoraphobia, and anorexia nervosa, Bordo proposes a reconceptualization of body-discourse. Like Hunnicutt, she does not go so far as to proclaim she has developed a new theory, yet her suggestions prove analytically useful nonetheless. Much like the discussion of patriarchy, Bordo proposes discourse that will "allow us to confront the mechanisms by which the subject becomes enmeshed, at times, into collusion with forces that sustain her own oppression" (Bordo 1992, p. 15). With the Wiley case we have a situation where the physical bodies played a role in the power relationships between the various actors, and violent retribution was literally written on the bodies of Mary and William. In Foucault's discussion of the body, "the condemned man published his crime and the justice that had been meted out to him by bearing them physically on his body" (Foucault 1979, pp. 43–45). The spectacle of torture and execution, and certainly murder in the Wiley case, demonstrate concepts quite similar to those examined by Foucault. Their bodies displayed Mary Wiley's alleged crimes and the "justice" meted out to her, and by extension to her son. We need to consider their bodies as part of the larger narrative constructing the meaning of the events.

Reaching across that transdisciplinary bridge to postmodern anthropologists Turner and Myerhoff, we capture another concept to help us interpret this violent episode: the anthropology of performance. The notion of performance is woven through our understanding of gender, patriarchy, and the role of the body. Butler

demonstrates this when she conceptualizes gender as an individual performance that is constructed in a specific social, cultural, and historical context, often conveyed through the body (Butler 1990, 1993). Turner's concept of social drama is center to our interpretation of the events in Kansas. The period surrounding the events was a social drama, and followed the successive phases lined out by Turner: (1) breach—the public rupture of social relations; (2) crisis—where people take sides; (3) remedial procedures—often ritualized action taken to redress grievances; (4) reintegration—rebuilding of the community, often through the construction of narrative to shape the meaning of the events (Turner 1992). It is the reflexivity of social drama that constructs the meaning for the participants. Myerhoff explained, "[c]ultural performances are reflective in the sense of showing ourselves to ourselves… arousing consciousness of ourselves as we see ourselves… we are made self-aware, conscious of our consciousness" (Myerhoff 1992, p. 7). Yet, Turner utilized Myerhoff's notion of reflexivity to explain how "social dramas may draw their rhetoric from cultural performances… they exaggerate, invert, re-form, magnify, minimize, dis-color, re-color, even deliberately falsify, chronicled events" (Turner 1992, p. 42). A significant point, as Turner notes, is that the social drama is "processually 'structured' [by its phases] before any story about it has been told" (Turner 1992, p. 33).

The social drama of the events in Coffey County centers on power relationships of gender and patriarchy. A critical component to analyzing gender, patriarchy, or the meaning conveyed by and through the body, according to many of the theorists we reviewed, from Scott to Alcoff to Butler, is the specific historical context.

This chapter concentrates on events in Coffey County, Kansas from the territorial period (1854–1860) through the first year of statehood in 1861. White settlers were attracted to the region by new land opportunities that offered potential, where they could claim homesteads or pre-empt land. Settling farms in Kansas in the mid-nineteenth century was made possible by a series of land laws. The Pre-Emption Act of 1841, the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, and later the Homestead Act of 1862, and the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, each opened vast tracts of land to settlement. Additional treaties with Native Americans, federal land grants to railroads, and federal land sales also increased the amount of available land. The railroads, land agencies, emigrant aid societies, and individual communities advertised the availability of unoccupied lands and expressed a clear desire that emigrants should settle in these locales. Veterans' benefits and military-bounty land warrants helped make land ownership accessible to many. The combination of these factors resulted in a tremendous influx of settlers onto the western frontier during the nineteenth century.

Kansas proved to be very successful in drawing large numbers of these migrants. Attracted by advertisements and opportunity, they settled near railroads and on free or affordable land. Coffey County received many of these new settlers. The first white settlers came to Coffey County in 1854, as traders at the Sac and Fox Indian agency. Shortly thereafter, their relatives arrived and other small colonies were established. The state legislature organized the county in July 1855 (Cutler 1883). From a population of fewer than 100 white settlers in 1855, the number had jumped to 2,842 by 1860 (Fig. 1).

**Fig. 1** Population Growth [Census data drawn from records of Kansas Territorial Census, 1855 and U.S. Federal Census, 1860]

Population Growth

| Kansas Population | |
|---|---|
| **1855** (Territorial Census) | **1860** (Federal Census) |
| 8,521 | 107,206* |
| Coffey County Population [non-Native American] | |
| **1855** | **1860** |
| <100 | 2,842 |
| [*includes portions of modern-day Colorado] | |

As the population growth indicates, new land laws and policies made land accessible. However, unmarried and widowed women continued to face discrimination in both acquiring land and making a living independent of a husband. The *Kanzas News* of Emporia, Kansas (in neighboring Lyon county), published an editorial entitled "The Rights of Women" in 1857 which, though recognizing the need for the excess population of the east to resettle on farms in the west, denied that this was an option for single women, concluding, "there are multitudes of females in all parts of the United States who eke out a miserable existence by ceaseless and scarce-rewarded toil, and who cannot flee from want by any means in their power is too true. There is no resource for these. They cannot till the land be it ever so productive."

Here the editorialist simply accepted the notion that women were incapable of successfully farming on their own. "The sphere in which society tolerates them [women] is so limited," the article proclaimed, "that while all want, some must starve" ("The Rights of Women", 1857). The solution, apparently, lay in shipping the eastern males out west to farm, while allowing women to assume their vacated, eastern jobs. This view reflected a prejudice that single women had to surmount.

Although distant from eastern urban society, mid-nineteenth century Kansas promoted the concept of "separate spheres," and upheld the notion of "true womanhood." The ideology of separate spheres, according to historian Kerber, was a socially defined distinction between men's and women's activities. This complex of ideas included the concept of separate and often opposite duties, functions, and personal attributes for men and women. It perpetuated the notion that men and women were naturally, essentially suited for different activities (Kerber 1988). The shift of economic production from the private or domestic sphere during the Industrial Revolution led to a separation of female and male domains. Women, still the primary caretakers of children, were assigned to the domestic sphere, while men followed their jobs into the public sphere. Historian B. Welter examined mid-nineteenth century prescriptive literature, revealing the notion of the "true" woman, the middle-class white ideal. The virtuous woman was to be pious, pure, submissive, and a paragon of domesticity, embodying the characteristics that every woman should strive to emulate (Welter 1966).

Prescriptive literature, a vehicle intended for the dissemination of society's ideals, helped inculcate the ideologies of separate spheres and true womanhood into nineteenth century American women (and men). This prescriptive literature encompassed many different types of writing. Novels with object lessons were quite

popular, and advice books detailed how a woman could best fulfill her duties as prescribed by the ideology of true womanhood. These popular texts gave advice on proper behavior, tips on hair and clothing styles, along with recipes for preparing delicious and economical meals. Of course, ideology represented by prescriptive literature does not necessarily describe actual behavior. Historian E. A. Rotundo has argued that the authors of such literature frequently "indicated the prevailing trend by advising against it" (Rotundo 1993, p. 149). Whether they were describing behavior, or merely advising against it, mid-nineteenth century prescriptive literature exposed large numbers of Americans to these ideas.

A common source of prescriptive commentary was magazines and journals. Edited by Sarah Josepha Hale between 1837 and 1877, *Godey's Lady's Book* was the leading women's magazine during this period. This monthly periodical provided color plates of fashionable clothing, moralizing short stories and poetry, as well as patterns for clothing and accessories so a woman could better display/perform her appropriate gender.

On the frontier, a subscription was often shared by many women, each contributing a small amount of money to jointly purchase a single subscription. When the magazine arrived, they passed it around to each member, then on to family and friends (Riley 1988). The Coffey County *Kansas Patriot* (1865) printed this statement regarding the popularity of *Godey's* and the existence of subscription clubs,

> Gody's [sic] Lady's Book, for December, is on our table. Now is the time to get up clubs for this superb publication. No lady should be without it. It is not only invaluable to ladies for the choice patterns and receipts it contains, but the reading matter is pure, elevating and refined, and nobody can read Godey without feeling better and having a more exalted opinion of the world.

Essays and poems in *Godey's* reminded women to strive to uphold the virtues of "true womanhood." A few examples will suffice. In 1860, *Godey's* informed women that, "in domestic happiness the wife's influence is much greater than the husband's" (*Godey's* 1860, p. 236). The home she made for her husband was to be,

- a little haven, all joy peace, and tranquility; suspicion dwells not there;
- jealousy did not reign there, nor falsehood, with its double tongue;
- no venomous slander had a place there; peace spread her wings over it;
- man never entered it but he forgot the cares of a busy world;
- there he dwelt in happy confidence unmingled with remorse.
- Such a place was the quiet home of woman (*Godey's*, 1862, p. 473).

Perhaps more influential than *Godey's* were the local newspapers in Coffey County. These papers were even more accessible to the average woman in Kansas, and they published numerous commentaries regarding the accepted behaviors and responsibilities of women. These local papers provide insights into the attitudes of their subscribers in the selection of newsworthy events and the content of editorials.

The alleged moral superiority of women is a common theme. In "What is Due to a Woman," appearing in the *Emporia News* in 1860, mothers are credited with civilizing society and ensuring its continued success by virtue of giving birth to (and raising) great men. Because of this vital contribution, men are advised,

> To be grateful to woman for this unbounded achievement of her sex, that she, far more than he, and too often in despite of him, has kept Christendom from lapsing back into barbarism; kept mercy and truth from being utterly overborne by those two greedy monsters—money and war. Let him be grateful for this, that almost every soul that has led forward or lifted up the race, has been furnished for each noble deed, and inspired with each patriotic and holy aspiration, by the retiring fortitude of some Spartan, or more than Spartan—some Christian mother…. So
> everywhere; man executes the performance, but woman trains the man.

Thus, women are informed that as True Women, they are not to be the makers of history, rather they are the ones behind the scenes, encouraging their sons and husbands on to greatness.

The influence of women—as long as she lives up to the domestic ideal—is also recognized by the *Neosho Valley Register* of Coffey County (1861),

> A Wife's Influence—A married man falling into misfortune is more apt to retrieve his situation in the world than a single one, chiefly because spirits are soothed by domestic endearment, and his self-respect kept alive by finding that although all abroad be darkness and humiliation, yet there is a little world of love at home, over which he is a monarch.

These excerpts from *Godey's Lady's Book* and the local newspapers of Lyon and Coffey counties were readily available to the pioneer Kansas women. They describe the attributes of the idealized, "true woman," yet do not come close to depicting the reality of the women's lives.

Historian E. Jameson explains that for farmwomen working in the West, the ideals of true womanhood and a separate domestic sphere for women were unattainable. The very nature of the homestead family blurred the barriers between the separate spheres, as gender-assigned tasks were shared by both sexes (Jameson 1987).

The local papers reflected the disparity between rhetoric and reality with a plethora of negative comments about women. The *Kanzas News* included this cutting comment in 1857, "A strong minded woman is now defined as she who spoils a very respectable woman in vain endeavors to become a very ordinary man." These sexist jokes, essays, and advice commentaries were evidently considered important, as most appeared on the first and second pages of the papers. The *News* (1857) further warned that, "[a] strong minded woman is now defined as she who spoils a very respectable woman in vain endeavors to become a very ordinary man." Better that a woman should behave more appropriately—leave hard work to the men, and set about winning a husband. The *Neosho Valley Register* published this advice in 1859, "You may cap him, or you may trap him or catch him, but how much better to make it an object for him to catch you. Render yourself worth catching, and you will need no shrewd mother or brother to help you find a market." It is interesting to note that during the Civil War years, comments of this nature were practically nonexistent in the *Emporia News*. Although, they reappeared after the war ended. Media prescriptions for gender comportment and definitions of gender were not restricted to feminine ideals. Men were targets, as well. The *Kanza News* (1858) reported, "A dandy is a thing that would, be a young lady if he could; but since he can't, does all he can, to let you know, he's not a man." Rhetoric about "dandies" and other commentary about appropriate behavior and physical appearance made it

abundantly clear how the idealized man of the period should comport himself. Any blurring of lines left one open to ridicule.

The reality in Coffey County was, of course, not that simple. In an earlier study, we found that a number of women in the county during this transitional period were heads of their farming households, for a variety of reasons (Bunkowski 1993, 2011). Their gender performance did not model the media prescriptions, and although their appearance and behavior might have seemed out of place in established eastern communities, it does not appear to have raised any significant flags among their community peers, beyond these published reprimands of "unladylike" behavior. It is significant to note that although many were listed as "farmer" on the 1860 census, while Kansas was still a territory, but in 1861, when Kansas became an official state, these women were listed as "keeping house" and the oldest male (even if not an adult) was listed as farmer in the 1870 census. In the larger picture, despite their various accommodations to provide for their families, they maintained (although modified) the white, largely middle-class concepts of appropriate gender behavior of the mid-nineteenth century. This was particularly evident when the white women were compared to the Sac and Fox women of the area.

Newspaper accounts of the period often described Indian women in a genderless or sexless fashion, if not describing Indians in general in a manner that removed their humanity. This account from the White Cloud C*hief* in northeast Kansas used a play on words and a choice of terms to convey a lack of respect. "An exchange says, 'it would be a libel on the feminine sex, to call one of our Western Indian squaws a woman.' Then what should she be called? Dingus says he would call her a *he then*, (heathen.) Bad boy!" (*Chief* 1861, p. 2). For the most part, discussion of Native Americans focused on efforts to obtain land held by them, on violence threatened by them, or violent acts allegedly perpetrated by them. Little effort was made to examine relationships in specifics, or understand cultural differences. The activities of Native Americans concerned Anglo settlers in Coffey County. Until 1854, Coffey County had been inhabited exclusively by Native Americans, particularly the Sac and Fox. In 1859, early settlers initially encountered more Indians than Anglos (Aldrich 1931). Although Anglo settlers were fearful, Indians in Coffey County rarely posed a physical danger. Settlers most commonly complained about Indians intruding in their homes and demanding food, a misinterpreted Native American custom that seemed alien to white settlers. More accounts described beneficial trade relationships than violent ones.

Environmental problems posed a greater threat to the survival of those first settlers. Kansas during this period was not the lush, verdant paradise that those who came in the 1850s had hoped it would be—the way the emigrant guidebooks had depicted it. The destructive Texas or Spanish cattle fever killed an estimated 300 cows in neighboring Lyon County during a 3-week period in 1859 (French 1929). Storms and tornadoes occurred frequently during the summer months. Unfortunately, the storms did not bring rain. This was the infamous "Drought of Sixty." The great drought was the more serious of the problems. Between the fall of 1859 and the fall of 1860, only one inch of rain fell (McDaniel 1976). The effect of the drought on crops was compounded by a frost every month during that year and

by high winds (White 1931; *Neosho Valley Register* 1860). Some measure of the calamity is seen in the response of relief agencies in eastern states, which shipped supplies into Kansas to aid the desperate settlers (McDaniel 1976). Unfortunately, these shipments did not always arrive where they were needed most. In 1860, the *Neosho Valley Register* lamented that, "supplies for the suffering people of Kansas are being constantly received at the river towns, and yet none reach these parts. " These conditions worked against the success of the first wave of settlers.

The early years were also disrupted by the outbreak of the Civil War, the same year that Kansas was admitted to the Union. Crops, which had suffered from the severe drought, were further ravaged and neglected during the war. Although the resulting famine drove many would-be settlers out of the territory, Kansas nevertheless responded to the Union's call for troops. Enlistment was so high that the county was left with only about 100 military-aged men to protect the population from border conflicts (Blackmar 1912). As a result of the high volunteer rate, Coffey County experienced a number of "temporary widows."

These pioneer women, many struggling on their own, faced numerous challenges in a society that privileged men—in particular, white, urban, wealthy men. However, it is important to note that in the social and cultural environment of Coffey County, Kansas during the mid-1800s, white women—even these independent pioneer women would have had some advantage through their alliance with the patriarchal elite. Native American and African American women would have been much more vulnerable than white women would, and the situation would have been more extreme for those with fewer resources and more marginalized status. Many of the single women pioneers we examined in our earlier study manipulated this patriarchal environment to their benefit. Others, like Mary Wiley, attempted to do so, but in the end, this put her and her son at greater risk.

According to the account of a contemporary, Wiley was a "California widow." While residing in Illinois, Wiley's husband had been enticed by the 1849–1850 gold rush, and left home. After several years, communication between the two ceased and Mary was faced with quickly diminishing resources. Her strategy for survival at that point was to attach herself to a male neighbor, John Johnson, and gain his financial protection. During the 1860 drought, Johnson's brother-in-law returned from Kansas to Illinois, and traded his land there to Johnson. Shortly thereafter, Johnson, 45, moved his wife, Hester, 44, two daughters, Matilda, 18, and Amanda, 14, along with Wiley and her son, William, to their new homes in Coffey County (Hamilton 1959). The arrangement ultimately ended in tragedy, and no one was ever held accountable for the crime.

To understand how this small social drama developed, we must peel back the narrative layers for the events, starting first with the 1861 newspaper accounts, then the 1883 version recorded in the official state history, followed by an 1880s memoir by J.P. Hamilton, one of Wiley's contemporaries, which was reprinted in 1931, and distributed again in 1959. The reflexive aspects of shaping and reshaping the narrative changed the meaning of the events for the community, restructuring that part of the community identity that was affected by the murders.

The newspapers accounts were published less than 3 weeks after the events. The Emporia *News* (located within 55 miles), the Oskaloosa *Independent* (within 105 miles), and the very detailed account in the New York *Daily Tribune* explicate the phases of the social drama. The first phase, *breach*, according to this first layer of narrative construction, occurred when it became clear that there was an inappropriate level of intimacy between Johnson and Wiley. It had begun in Illinois and intensified in Kansas. The two had transgressed social standards. According to the *Independent* (1861), Johnson had been "boldly keeping her as his mistress, much to the mortification of his wife and children, and which has for some time created family feuds and difficulties."

The second phase, *crisis,* erupted when Johnson's adult sons, Wesley and Harrison, returned to the side of their mother. The *Daily Tribune* explains that the Johnson boys had been at Pike's Peak, but returned not long after the family settled in Coffey County. The elder Johnson had constructed a cabin for Wiley and her son on his property, within sight of his own family home. "From that time on," according to the article, Johnson "seemed to have openly, and with no attempt at concealment, kept her as his mistress, showering upon her innumerable proofs of his favors" (*Daily Tribune*, 1861, p. 3). This escalation, to "notorious adultery," after 11 years of an illicit relationship, resulted in an intensification of resentment in his family. When his adult sons arrived and observed the situation, they "urged" that Wiley be removed from the family farm. Without her husband or other adult male to help her navigate in this patriarchal society, Wiley had been in a vulnerable situation. As an abandoned woman with a young child, her options were limited. Attaching herself to the physical and financial protection of Johnson was shrewd. As Wiley gained stability and security, Hester Johnson and her daughters were at increasing risk of losing it. When Johnson's two adult sons came on the scene, the balance of power tipped back to her. With two grown men in her corner, Hester Johnson and her 18-year-old daughter, Matilda, were more firmly aligned with vital patriarchal power in this situation than Wiley.

The third phase, *remedial procedures,* consists of the murder, allegedly to redress the grievances of Hester and her children, and took on ritualized, symbolic overtones. The *Independent* (1861) briefly describes Wiley and her son as being "almost literally butchered." A more detailed description is found in the *Daily Tribune*,

> Upon the woman were found twenty wounds, either one of seven of which would have produced immediate death. Upon the boy was found seventeen wounds, either one of five of which would have produced immediate death. The wounds were inflicted with a large bowie-knife or butcher-knife. There were evident marks of struggle on the part of the woman, she having reversed her position in the bed… Both the victims were evidently asleep when the fatal attack was made… The scene of the murder presented a most horrible spectacle. The bodies were literally butchered. The beds upon which the bodies lay were literally drenched with gore, and the walls, and the clothing on the wall, were besprinkled with clots of blood. On the stand was a half-burned candle, paper, ink, pins, an open Bible, and various small articles of female ornament (*Daily Tribune*, 1861, p. 3).

The bodies of both victims were brutally attacked. It is conceivable that the overkill demonstrated in these murders was the effect of the anger the original family felt toward the usurpers. They used the bodies of their challengers to express their rage.

There were 37 total stab wounds. A later account explains that William's spinal column was severed and his thigh disjointed by the blows. It is significant to note that in the various records of these murders, William's age is never recorded the same in any two accounts; it ranges from 6 to 14 years. It is possible that if he was at the younger end of the range, that he could have been Johnson's son. The body Wiley shared with Johnson, the bed they shared, and the cabin where they met were all bathed in blood. The woman and her son were removed as a threat, their bodies destroyed. The blood, perhaps, cleansed the original family. The path was open for Hester and her children to regain their rightful place in the family structure, and the community could move past the breach.

The final phase, *reintegration*, occurred when the trial resulted in acquittal and the Johnson family left the area. The *News* reported that, "Mrs. Johnson and several of her children had been arrested, but nothing had been proven at last accounts" (*News*, 1861, p. 3). The *Daily Tribune* provided more details. According the report, Wesley and Matilda Johnson were arraigned. Although the evidence was circumstantial, "the bad reputation of the family, of Johnson, and the provoking circumstances with which he surrounded them," were considered at the time to be "very conclusive evidence that the foul deed had been committed by someone in the family" (*Daily Tribune*, 1861, p. 3). In the end, Matilda was acquitted due to lack of evidence, and Wesley, who had disappeared along with his brother Harrison, never appeared in court (Cutler 1883).

The newspaper accounts constructed the story in such a way that Wiley, to a degree, bears some responsibility for her own murder and that of William, because of her "notorious adultery." That behavior was not acceptable, and it was almost understandable that Johnson's family rebelled. Although the community did not condone the Johnson's methods, there is a sense that they empathized. Not much effort was made to track down the Johnson sons, or hold anyone accountable for the crime.

When the "Record of Crimes" was published in Cutler's 1883 classic *History of the State of Kansas*, it concluded the affair by reporting, "[s]hortly after the trial of Matilda, the whole family disappeared" (Cutler 1883, p. 652). A clean end to a messy episode—the breach of peace, the brutal remedy, and in the end, all the participants, the "outsiders" were gone. The community was left to tell and retell the story of the incident in a way that fit their sense of communal identity.

In the final version of the episode, first recorded by a contemporary of the participants, J.P. Hamilton, in the mid-1880s, the tone of the events is modified. The challenges of the frontier period are a memory, and the Wileys are afforded more compassion. Hamilton describes Wiley's youth, noting, "that she was far the superior of Mrs. Johnson, both in looks and intelligence." As the crisis escalated, Wiley often met with "a tirade of abuse from Mrs. Johnson and her daughters" (Hamilton 1959, pp. 142–144). Hamilton reports that Wiley's life was "a burden to her," that Harrison taunted her, and that she had a "presentiment of her tragic ending," that was "a constant terror to her mind" (Hamilton 1959, p. 143). Yet the Johnson sons are not completely vilified. Wesley is described as resembling "a perfect gentleman both in demeanor and conversation." He is credited with coming up with the murderous plan. Although it is not questioned that this "gentleman" could come up with a plan to commit murder, Hamilton insists that is the brother Harrison who engages

in the bad behavior. Hamilton is not as generous in his description of the brother, Harrison. "Strongly animalized, brutishness, sensuality and avarice beamed from every feature," Harrison had the brawn to carry out Wesley's plan. The patriarch, the elder Johnson, is described as first having spoken against his sons, but when brought before the courts, he stands by his original family, refusing to incriminate them (Hamilton 1959). This is described in a manner that almost demands respect.

Hamilton concludes the account with an epilogue about the Johnson family based on his visits to Leavenworth, Kansas, where the Johnsons had apparently relocated after the events. He reports that the father was "strongly addicted to horse-racing," and had left his home to pursue interests related to that business. Wesley was involved with counterfeit money, and Harrison was involved with aggravated robbery. He reinforced the notion that it was in the best interests of the Coffey County community that this family had left (Hamilton 1959). The result is ambivalence. The murders were, as Hamilton notes, "a deed that will forever blacken the annals of Coffey county history," yet the final narrative depicts sympathetic victims, and perpetrators who were to a degree, driven to these acts. Although they were not held accountable by the law, and they continued in their devious ways, they were far removed from Coffey County.

In the larger historical context of violence in Kansas during this territorial and early-statehood period, particularly when viewed through the lens of gender, it is clear that the Wiley case did not garner much attention. For the period, the murder of a woman and her child, no matter how brutal, was quickly subordinated. Frequent reports of cattle- and horse-theft (property with more financial and moral value than an "adulteress" and her child), Indian attacks in the Western regions of the state, environmental threats, political turmoil, not to mention Civil War violence at the state's border, ensured that relatively little attention was given to matters such as this where the victims and the perpetrators were "undesirable."

To dig through the layers of narrative associated with the case, to find meaning in these brutal murders, we have revisited the concepts of patriarchy and violence, and the body as the locus of violent discourse. We have adopted an approach of transdisciplinarity to allow us to incorporate gender and feminist theories into our historical analysis. This transdisciplinary approach functioned as a bridge between the more conventional "gender & history" approach and the literary and feminist theory foundations from which historians have drawn theoretical inspiration. By reading the various narratives associated with this violent event through the theoretical lenses reinvigorated from "border" disciplines, such as Post-modern cultural anthropology, we gain a deeper understanding of gender and violence on the Kansas frontier as manifested in this case study.

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# The Proof is in the Pudding: Gender Specific Stereotypes in Television Advertisements

**Nicole Farris**

## Introduction

According to the A.C. Nielsen Co., the average American watches approximately 4 h of television per day. Additionally, 99% of US households own at least one television set, and by age 65 most people will have watched about 2 million commercials on television. Commercial television advertising is of particular interest in this study, which examines the content and make up of television commercials by type. This chapter seeks to examine the number of television commercials that are related to food, and of those that are related to food, what the specific commercial is advertising, who is portrayed in the commercial, and if the commercial has no actors, who is narrating the commercial.

Looking at commercial television advertising is interesting because it has been proven that this and other forms of advertising lead people to make specific decisions about what they choose to buy, as well as give people (mainly women) other messages about body type and social norms related to external appearance. Mass media messages may in fact be "one of the strongest transmitters" of information (Hesse-Biber et al. 2006). These messages become internalized and have certain negative ramifications on self-esteem and can be potentially psychologically damaging to the viewers who are receiving these messages. For example, Hesse-Biber et al. argue that eating disorders and disorderly eating are not only psychiatric in nature, but are also "culturally induced" diseases that are a result of the "cult of thinness" promoted by the mass media (2006). This "cult of thinness" promotes the idea that success is equal to being thin and beautiful, and the media sends mixed messages when it simultaneously glamorizes both thinness and highly processed foods.

When it comes to food advertising, there is an abundance of research that has been done on commercial advertising aimed at children and how this advertising may lead children to make poor choices when it comes to nutritional health outcomes. However, it seems as though there is a dearth of research on the targets of

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other television food commercial advertising, and how those in the commercials are portrayed. This is what my study seeks to look at and examine in more depth.

## Literature Review

Much of the literature regarding advertising and food focuses on children's viewing of television advertising. Associations have been found between commercials aired during children's popular television viewing times and the types of foods children request to eat (Morgan et al. 2008). Studies show that children are particularly vulnerable to food advertising, and the food industry feels that children are an important market because they have the ability to influence their parents spending and income. This can be particularly dangerous in the case of advertisements for food high in sugar and other sweets and confections, due largely in part to the fact that food promotion has an effect on children's preferences as they are more likely to ask for advertised products (Morgan et al. 2008). These advertised products are usually high in fat, sugar and salt, as over the past decades, "televised food promotions targeting children have been found to be increasingly dominated by a 'big five' of items: (sugared) breakfast cereals, confectionary, savory snacks, soft drinks, and fast food restaurants" (Buijzen et al. 2008, p. 232).

A similar study employed time diary data to analyze associations between children's television advertising exposure and their consumption of advertised food brands, advertised energy dense food products and food products overall (Buijzen et al. 2007). The authors found that after controlling for various child and family variables, the relation between advertising exposure and overall food consumption only held in lower income families. The authors also found evidence of a spillover effect of advertising, in which the impact of television food advertising exceeded the advertised brand and generalized into more generic unhealthy consumption patterns.

Other studies have looked at food related advertising geared toward certain racial or ethnic groups, such as Mexican children. Studies show that food advertising has been shown to be a contributor to childhood obesity, which is prevalent among young Mexican children. Aside from problematic food advertising featured on television commercials, obesity is closely linked to time spent watching television, using the computer, or playing video games as television viewing is related to physical inactivity and poor food habits. (Ramirez-Ley 2009). Coon and Tucker (2002) found that children who had longer amounts of television viewing often chose foods with higher caloric and fat content, sweet and salty snacks, and carbonated beverages. Additionally, some authors suggest that the excessive promotion of high-calorie foods is a significant contributor to childhood obesity.

Consistent with prior research, Jenkin et al. argue that there is good evidence that food advertising influences food preference and purchase behavior by children (2008). One rigorous review commissioned by the Institute of Medicine concluded that: "television advertising influences the food preferences, purchase requests, and

diets, at least of children under 12 years of age, and is associated with the increased rates of obesity among children and youth" (Jenkin et al. 2008, p. 614). Other reviews have concluded that studies of food preferences utilizing experimental designs have shown that children exposed to advertising will choose advertised food products at a significantly higher rate than children who were not exposed. A recent Australian survey examining children's exposure to television advertising of unhealthy food were likely to have more positive attitudes toward unhealthy food as well as a more frequent consumption of such unhealthy food. Lastly, data from a New Zealand longitudinal cohort study has revealed an association between childhood television viewing and adult body mass index (Jenkin et al. 2008).

Because of the fact that much of the food and advertising literature is devoted exclusively to the discussion of children, I will also describe a broader range of literature on advertising, including different aspects of gender, race, and general advertising principles. In general, advertising is about creating a relationship between subjects and objects (Barthel 1988). Seminal works by Karl Marx and Georg Simmel describe the processes through which objects gain identities and the expression of our own identity through goods. Likewise, Goffman (1979) argues that public pictures, or advertisements, are designed to catch a wider audience and notes that this wider audience may not necessarily know each other through social interaction but are likely linked in some way, through attitudes or political affiliations. Jhally (1987) argues that advertising is the most influential institution of socialization in modern society, in that it "structures the mass media content, plays a role in the construction of gender identity, impacts the relationship between children and parents, dominates political campaigns, is a voice in the arena of public policy, and has become a favorite topic of everyday conversation" (1987, p. 1). It should be quite interesting to sociologists that all of these complex processes occur via advertising, as advertising is more or less a discourse through and about objects (Jhally 1987). However, as we have seen, this discourse on the relationship between people and objects is salient and should not be seen as superficial and previous research shows that advertising deeply impacts human's lives both in terms of their views on themselves and others.

## Methodology

For this study, I employed a content analysis of television commercial advertising. While not necessarily methodologically innovative, content analysis does provide researchers a relatively easy and inexpensive way to conduct research, which is of particular importance for undergraduates who wish to embark on research in the social sciences. Esterberg (2002) notes that this accessibility is especially useful for beginning researchers, such as undergraduates, and she also argued that social researchers have long used media accounts to investigate social life. From a historical standpoint, Babbie (2011) demonstrated that Ida B. Wells used content analysis in 1891 to test the widely held assumption that black men were being persecuted in the

south primarily for raping white women. Wells analyzed newspaper articles on the 728 lynchings reported during the previous 10 years. As previously mentioned, one major strength of choosing to employ a content analysis of media accounts is that media accounts are easily accessible and free. Content analysis generally involves a systematic analysis of texts, but this can include any kind of written material as well as other materials such as commercials, movies, and television shows. Additionally, media accounts are "useful for understanding how groups of people are represented in public discourse or what norms and ideals for behavior exist in a particular time and place" (Esterberg 2002, p. 124).

For this chapter, I focused on both the manifest and latent content of the commercials. The manifest content refers to the picture or objects that can be directly counted, and the latent content refers to the underlying meanings of the commercials (Esterberg 2002). Since much research has been done on print advertising, I thought that commercial television advertising would be an interesting way to look at media portrayals and the relationship of gender and race to food. This analysis seeks to examine the nature and content of television advertising on a variety of channels during all viewing times and identify the proportion of advertising aimed at the marketing of food products. Unfortunately, as is the nature of content analysis, I was unable to observe directly everything that I would have liked to explore. As such, for this project, I looked at television commercials during the time frame of January 24 to March 22, 2012. I watched a total of fifteen (15) hours of television at various times during the day. I watched channels such as TNT, Spike, USA, MTV, ABC Family, CNBC, A&E, Bravo, and WE and coded the commercials as follows. I divided the commercials by content; either food related or non-food related. I counted how many commercials per hour were from each category, and of those commercials that were food related I then made note of what product the commercial was advertising, what the gender and race of the actors in the commercial were, and if the commercial featured only the food product, then I made note of the gender of the narrator. Out of all the commercials I viewed over this 15 h period ($n = 391$), about 22 % of the commercials were food related, whereas about 78 % of the commercials were non-food related.

## Results

When it comes to television commercial advertising that relates to food, there are consistent themes that frequently appear. When the commercial is advertising food that can be cooked at home, a woman is portrayed in the commercial. Additionally, women are portrayed in commercials that advertise food that is served to the family at meals such as breakfast and dinner. Commercials for diet products also appear to target women, as these commercials either have women acting in the commercial or narrating the commercial in the case of a commercial that portrays only the product. Commercials advertising fast food favor the portrayal of men and minorities. I will discuss many of these commercials in depth, and then move to the implications and ramifications that these commercials and portrayals may have on society at large.

One example, a commercial for Bertolli frozen dinners (a bag of Italian style food that you can heat and serve with relative ease) portrays a woman cooking for her husband. She puts the product in the microwave, and then a magical transformation happens. The microwave is actually some sort of an opening to an authentic Italian kitchen, where chefs then prepare the food and put it back in the microwave in time for the woman to take out and then serve to her husband with a smile. As one might imagine, many of the commercials that portray women as the main characters take place in the kitchen. Another commercial, for Smart Balance butter show a group of women standing in the kitchen enjoying this butter product, and then the commercial shows a series of screen shots of mothers putting butter on different food items for children and other family members. Another butter commercial for I Can't Believe It's Not Butter shows a famous actress singing at the grocery store while dancing with the tub of butter. This commercial also shows an attractive man dancing with the woman, but he is merely a prop while she is the main performer of the commercial.

Other commercials follow this same formula. One commercial for Hamburger Helper shows a mother in the car with her children at a drive through, and the Hamburger Helper oven mitt appears and tells the mother that it would be better if she served her children Hamburger Helper instead of drive through fast food. Another commercial for the same product shows a family at a school play or recital, and the oven mitt appears again as the mother is wondering what to serve the family for dinner. A commercial for a specific type of yogurt (Dannonino) features a mother serving the yogurt to her children and her children's friends, and she is the host of a play date that the children are having. The mother is particularly concerned with this type of yogurt because it has extra calcium and other vitamins added so the children can then grow to be big and strong. It tastes "yummy!!!!" according to the children. Other commercials include an Ore Ida French fry commercial in which the mother cooks and serves dinner to the family, while discussing the trials and tribulations of the economic recession. In this commercial, the mother discusses how the family has had to cut back on expenses, like traveling and buying vegetables, but the one thing she can count on is Ore Ida French fries. The commercial then cuts to a scene of the traditional family (Mother, Father, Son, Daughter) sitting at the dining room table while smiling and eating their French fries.

These commercials that prominently feature women doing the home-cooking for the family sit in sharp contrast to the commercials advertising fast food products. A large majority of fast food commercials featured either minorities or men enjoying the products. A Burger King commercial features men playing football, and then deciding that they want to go try the new hamburger at Burger King. However, one of the men has "really tiny hands," and because of this he is worried that they will look even smaller when he is enjoying this massive hamburger. This commercial depicts many interesting constructions and notions of masculinity; playing football with the guys, which is essentially one of the most masculine activities one could think of, juxtaposed with the non-masculine tiny hands that one of the men has. Additionally, these men want to eat the flame broiled hamburger, and one friend wants to eat it so much that he offers to hold the burger for "tiny hands" just so they can eat this masculine piece of meat (an action that may be construed as decidedly un-masculine).

Another commercial featured a new product from Kentucky Fried Chicken, the "double down." This product is essentially a sandwich, but instead of bread, bacon and cheese is sandwiched between two pieces of chicken. This commercial depicts a series of about five men, who at first are talking in a high and computerized sounding pitch. They are complaining that other "puny" chicken sandwiches do not fill them up, and then they discover the "double down" sandwich, and their voices return to a normal octave. They note that this sandwich is big enough to fill them up, and at the end one of the men exclaims, "Colonel Sanders, you the man!" In this commercial, we get the message that other chicken sandwiches are basically not "manly" enough to satiate a real man, but this new bun-less sandwich with two pieces of chicken, two pieces of bacon and two pieces of cheese is manly enough to fill up a real man, and even "made" by a real man, Colonel Sanders. Interestingly, another Kentucky Fried Chicken commercial depicts the fact that there is a chef that cooks all the chicken at the restaurant, and this chef happens to be African American and a woman. Another commercial for Kentucky Fried Chicken that was subsequently pulled off the air depicted a white man surrounded by Africans, and in order to get their attention he pulled out a bucket of fried chicken and proceeded to pass it around. There are many ramifications of messages like these, which will be discussed in depth later in this chapter.

A commercial for McDonald's breakfast depicts a van full of people, both male and female, but they are all minorities. The people appear to be happy, as they all just scored items off the McDonald's dollar menu for breakfast. Another commercial depicts an African American woman who is also happy that she "knows the value of a dollar" and can buy items off the dollar menu. It seems that with these commercials McDonalds is implying that minorities do not have enough money to eat something off of McDonald's regular menu, which is quite inexpensive compared to other fast food restaurants, and we are shown that all they can afford to buy are items off of the dollar menu, where each item is only 1 $.

Another commercial for Sonic Drive In features two men sitting in the car talking with each other. The series of commercials with these men are actually quite famous, in part because it is a continuing commercial that has been featured for many years running. In this commercial, the men are sitting in the car enjoying ice cream while talking about dating. One of the men mentions that he took a date to Sonic and she ordered off of the value menu, thus he thought she was a "cheap date." Other commercials in this series include the men talking with each other while eating Sonic in the car, and these commercials have become quite popular and studies have shown that these commercials are one of the most effective advertising campaigns in the fast food industry. A Papa John's commercial was specifically aired for the NCAA March Madness tournament that featured a special deal for pizza and other side dishes. The commercial showed men watching basketball and then Papa John showed up with a pizza delivery for the men to eat while watching the basketball games. No women were present in this commercial, which implies to viewers that women either do not like to watch basketball, or they were unwelcome at the gathering of men watching the basketball games. Likewise, a commercial for Subway is hosted by Michael Phelps, and he specifically notes that the foot-long sandwich is big enough to quell his appetite.

Other television commercials depict social constructions of gender in various ways. A commercial for the candy bar Snickers shows a group of men riding in a car, apparently on a road trip. However, in the backseat is Aretha Franklin, asking the driver to turn up the air. One of the other men tells her to "have a Snickers bar, because you act like a diva when you are hungry." "Aretha" takes a bite of the Snickers bar and then promptly turns into a man. A similar commercial features a group of men playing football, and one of the players is Betty White. The men form a huddle and the captain says "You've been playing like Betty White all day." Shortly after the huddle, a girlfriend of one of the players runs over with a Snickers bar, and when "Betty White" takes a bite of the candy bar she turns back in to a man. These particular commercials very clearly depict specific gender stereotypes. When men are hungry, they are nagging and act annoying, akin to the way women behave. Additionally, in the previously mentioned commercial featuring the football game, the girlfriend was watching from the sidelines, prepared to give her boyfriend a snack so he could keep playing football. This reinforces the traditional gender ideologies that men are the sports enthusiasts and players while the women are the cheerleaders who stand passively by on the sidelines.

Lastly, there are some commercials that do not fit exactly into the categories I have described above, but still reinforce traditional gender ideologies. As I have previously mentioned, many commercials advertise "good" and "right" foods to eat in order to be thin and beautiful. Many commercials portrayed women in need or want of these products. The most prevalently advertised product was Special K, which has a line of cereals, diet shakes, granola bars, and crackers to help women lose weight avoid eating "bad" foods. One of the commercials depicts two women in an office in cubicles next to each other and each is opening a diet shake drink. One woman has a delicious looking Special K drink while the other woman is forced to drink a disgusting "canned" diet shake drink. However, the woman drinking Special K brought an extra Special K shake, which she shares with her co-worker. After she gives her co-worker the extra shake, they "cheers" each other with the shakes and then proceed to drink the shakes instead of eating breakfast. Another Special K commercial depicts a woman staring into the freezer late at night and dialoguing with a carton of chocolate ice cream. She is worried that if she eats the ice cream, she will "undo her whole day," which presumably means that she will negate the dieting and good eating habits she had throughout the rest of the day. Like the other commercials, she happens to have a box of Special K chocolate cereal, and she chooses to eat this and satisfy her chocolate craving instead of eating the ice cream. These messages not only depict the idea of diet eating in order to be happy and successful, they also push the idea that eating regular foods like ice cream is bad and will ruin your whole day and make you feel guilty. Almost exclusively, these commercials depicting women operate using shame and guilt tactics for eating certain foods.

Commercials for Quaker rice cakes and granola bars also depict women's attempts to eat healthy. The commercials strive to show that Quaker products are not only delicious, but they also made with whole grains which function to keep diets on track. Other diet products include the fruit juice drink Fruit 2 Day and V8 fruit and vegetable juice. These commercials portray women drinking these drinks, and

the V8 commercial shows a woman happily stepping on a scale because the V8 juice helped her to lose weight. In an interesting contrast, V8 fruit juice also has a commercial depicting a man drinking the juice because evidently he does not like to eat vegetables and with this juice, he is able to get a full serving of fruits and vegetables while drinking a great tasting beverage. In these commercials, we not only see more evidence of women trying to eat and drink the "right" foods to maintain or obtain a certain body figure, but we also see the stereotype that men do not like to eat healthy and essentially have to be tricked into eating or drinking healthy items.

## Discussion/Conclusion

The commercials that I have described are not exhaustive of all the food related commercials that I viewed, and are most certainly not exhaustive of all the food commercials that are currently being aired on television. I chose these specific commercials to describe in this piece because I feel that they are important and allow us to analyze the context of race, class, and gender and the intersectionality with food and the messages we receive regarding food. The ramifications of these messages are important to look at as well. For example, commercials depicting an African American chef (or cook) at Kentucky Fried Chicken in addition to the now banned Kentucky Fried Chicken commercial are riddled with historical issues and other potentially racist connotations.

Clearly, there is a dramatic history of a black woman as cook in American advertising and this theme has persisted since the times of slavery. In Deck's (2001) analysis of the black woman cook as fetish in American advertising, the black woman has been depicted as the "quintessential cook and housekeeper" (69). This woman's main job is to prepare and serve food, and she does so without a recipe of any kind. Williams-Forson (2006) also discusses the history of the perceived relationship between slaves and chicken. Williams-Forson describes the history of chicken and fowl and observes that it is likely that chicken in the US came to be here by way of Africa. In the US, it is also probable that slaves had responsibility for caring for the animals on a plantation, including the chickens. Some slaves were allowed to sell eggs at the market, and there became a common conception that black slave men were good at controlling roosters and were often in charge of them for cock fighting purposes. Other stereotypes include those of black men having a certain sexual capacity comparable to roosters as well as stereotypes that assumed that black men were chicken thieves, black men liked to have sexual relations with white women ("white meat") or that black men liked to have sex with the chickens themselves.

These stereotypes were further complicated by the fact that many black men and women were very good cooks, especially regarding cooking chicken. While cooking chicken was traditionally seen as women's work, during World War II there was a push for more men to cook chicken and this activity was masculinized because it related to the war and helping the troops. As I have previously stated, Williams-Forson (2006) notes that black men and women were skilled at cooking chicken dishes.

Much of this skill was obtained during slavery and after the emancipation of slaves, many black women were hired as housekeepers and cooks for white families. Black men were also hired as cooks, but more often in chicken restaurants such as "Coon Chicken Inn." Some scholars argue that there appeared to be tension between different classes of blacks regarding food choices; those who were middle class wished to create more positive images by promoting "proper food." Despite this, the lower class blacks wanted to maintain food and meal traditions with which they were accustomed, and continue eating foods like chicken and pork chops.

Taking the stereotype of the black woman cooks, and combining it with the stereotypes regarding African Americans and chicken, Kentucky Fried Chicken seems to really have outdone itself as far as stereotyping is concerned. Not only do they cover the stereotype that women are good cooks, but they also incorporate the fact that African American women are supposedly good at cooking chicken and are in fact the best at doing so.

The television commercials depicting the women cooking for families also serve to reinforce stereotypes. These advertisements depict women and are likely targeted toward women, because as Parkin (2006) notes, many women are primarily in charge of food acquisition and food preparation and as such, most advertisers focus their products on women. Parkin describes major themes that are portrayed in the commercials I analyzed as well. For example, she notes the theme that women demonstrate love for their family through food. We can see this by the advertisements that tell the mothers what to cook to make the family happy, much like the Hamburger Helper advertisement. With the exception of one of the Hamburger Helper advertisements, we see that most of the prepared food advertisements are directed at white women. This is consistent with Parkin's finding that historically, advertisers focused not only on middle class women, but white women.

The continued reality that women are more likely than men to be the ones doing the shopping for food and the preparation of the food for the family has important implications in terms of the perpetuation of the unequal division of labor in the household. Coltrane (2000) notes that the five most "time consuming major household tasks (in the US) include (a) meal preparation or cooking, (b) housecleaning, (c) shopping for groceries and household goods, (d) washing dishes or cleaning up after meals, and (e) laundry, including washing, ironing, and mending clothes" (1,210). Coltrane's findings are illuminating in the context of a discussion regarding gender and food, because three of the five most time consuming household tasks relate to food, and are performed primarily by women. The continuation of this division of labor seems to naturalize and essentialize the idea that women should be in charge of feeding the family. For example, DeVault's book depicts many situations in which the essentialism of women as caregivers is present. In many of the interviews, the women (and likely the men and children) seem to take for granted the complexities associated with the process of preparing and feeding the family. For example, one respondent in DeVault's study remarked that meal planning "is just routine to me. It's just all up there, you know. Just what comes natural. It's just a part of- just like, my work." (DeVault 1991, p. 57). Another respondent reported that her skills "come automatically, it's sort of like instinct" (1991, p. 48). Of course, these

respondents can be contrasted with others who were interviewed who reported that they disliked doing the grocery shopping and preparing and cleaning up of meals. DeVault notes that to many people, including women themselves, meal preparation is largely invisible work. She notes that "doing a meal requires more than just cooking; it takes thoughtful foresight, simultaneous attention to several aspects of the project, and a continuing openness to ongoing events and interaction." (1991, p. 55). Despite these efforts, many women fail to identify these actions as work. She also notes that this invisible work can take place at any time throughout the day, in the form of in the mental work of meal planning. However, whether the work simply comes "naturally" or is somewhat tedious, women overwhelmingly feel that it is their job to feed the family.

From the television commercials that I analyzed for this analysis, while limited in scope, clearly depict advertising via television commercials that perpetuate both racial/ethnic and gender stereotypes. This is problematic, due in large part to the fact that Americans spend such a large portion of their time watching television and by proxy, these commercials. These stereotypes are also problematic because people may very well be internalizing these messages and subsequently perpetuating these gender ideologies and stereotypes themselves. Commercials that show women being the primary caretakers of the home and family as far as meal preparation is concerned give the message that women should in fact be in charge of these areas of home life. Commercials that depict men as only being able to buy fast food and only doing so if it is manly and filling enough to satisfy their large appetites reinforces other traditional gender notions that men are unable to prepare meals for a family or even for themselves, and because of this are forced to buy pre-packaged and unhealthy food to satiate them. Additionally, these commercials imply that certain ways of eating and acting are "manly," and the opposite of that, anything unmanly or feminine, is bad or wrong. Other commercials that focus on minorities eating and buying fast food have a variety of implications as well. It is widely known that many fast food restaurants are established in lower income neighborhoods and those who live in these neighborhoods lack access to healthy and fresh food; those in lower socioeconomic areas live in veritable "food deserts." Many times, fast food is the only option for these residents, and commercials that exclusively depict minorities eating and enjoying this food makes it seem as though it is not only good that they are eating the food, but actually normalizes the behavior. Parkin (2006) showed that many advertisers appeal to the poor and working classes through convenience foods, which is certainly what we see reinforced in the commercials I analyzed. The commercial with the African American woman cook at Kentucky Fried Chicken is almost as problematic as the Kentucky Fried Chicken commercial that was pulled off the air. In fact, I am actually quite surprised that the aforementioned commercial has not received any negative attention or recourse.

It seems that on the whole, many commercials that are being aired on television are fairly problematic at the very least, and are certainly sending some potentially negative messages to the viewers. This is especially important because advertisers do know what they are doing with their advertisements, and we as the public should not take these advertisements or the messages they send lightly. Using our socio-

logical imagination, we can easily spot and critique commercials that have negative images or ideologies. Unfortunately, many people are unaware of the hidden messages and agendas of commercials, hopefully with time, more people will become aware of what commercials are really saying and become cognizant of how these messages negatively impact many aspects of our lives.

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# Carmen Tafolla: Chicana Writer, from the Whispers of Her People

**Manuel Medrano and Aaron Rodrigues**

Historian Gerda Lerner suggests that the contemporary writing of women's history beckons us to understand gender itself as a social construction. Documenting American presidents or wars, by tradition, emphasize men's achievements.[7] The resulting history creates inequities which make it difficult for women to challenge the status quo. For minority women the difficulty increases, and for Latina women, even more so. Their history, culture and literature are almost nonexistent in traditional sources.

Thus, to include in this book a biographical sketch of a Latina writer whose works rival any of her contemporaries, regardless of gender, is appropriate and logical, because she contributes to the collective identity of the work.

Tafolla is a writer, performance artist, professor and screenwriter. In 2012 she was recognized as the first poet laureate in the history of San Antonio. All told, Tafolla is a renaissance woman whose story is compelling and is best told in her own words from interviews about her life and life's work.

The lifespan of Chicana literature has been extensive; unfortunately the life of its publication has not. We do not know who the first Chicana writer was, but we do know that she began to document her experiences in North America shortly after the Conquest. Regrettably most of her stories or poems were never published.

After the U.S. Mexico War, Chicanas continued to write *décimas*, fiction and non-fiction and poetry as the America Southwest became a confluence of Anglo and Mexican, of interethnic accommodation, of cooperation and violence and of past and present. Rarely, however, were there words published and many died with those who had penned them.

Over a century later, the Chicano Renaissance of the 1960's and 1970's provided a long overdue public venue that Chicanos and Chicanas had seldom known. The literary models born then crossed boundaries with bilingual, bicultural themes, challenged the status quo and revealed the Chicana's complex and heterogeneous

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identity. In many ways the duality of the people of pre-Columbian America had come full circle.

Today, the Chicana poet from Texas, the Cuban-American essayist from Florida, the Puerto Rican novelist from New York, the New Mexican screenplay writer and the Guatemalan short story writer from San Francisco are only a few of the women who add their individuality to the collective genre called Chicana literature. Whether this literature echoes a resistance to social, economic or cultural oppression or whether it captures a single fragment of all of our lives through a solitary literary image, it has gained the attention of both the American and the international academic communities. Writers such as Evangelina Vigil, Gloria Anzaldua, and Sandra Cisneros have moved into mainstream literature while maintaining their cultural essence. Such is the case with Carmen Tafolla who epitomizes the best of the movimiento and the promise of Chicana literature.

In *Sonnets for Human Beings and Other Selected Works*, Dr. Durmont, the distinguished college professor refuses a student's request to write a critique on a Chicana author because "Chicano literature simply isn't quality." The student responds with, "but this stuff's good! I mean it's the first stuff I've ever seen that talks about real things (2)." Carmen Tafolla is indeed "the real thing."

Tafolla was born on July 29, 1951 in San Antonio, Texas and grew up in a west side *barrio*. Unlike the negative images of what a *barrio* was supposed to be, Carmen did not feel deprived. She remembers, "I didn't feel it was a slum; I didn't feel it was a ghetto. I felt it was a *fiesta*, full of all kinds of *primos* and *abuelos* and *tíos* and *tías* … a life full of *cuentos*. We had a tremendous history (1)." Both her mother, María Duarte Tafolla, and grandmother, Josefina Moreno de Duarte, inspired her to write. Her mother had a great ability to remember people's stories and her grandmother was a great storyteller. From them, she learned to love storytelling and to respect the oral power of a story. Carmen felt surrounded by a multitude of experiences while growing up between two cultures, two worlds and two languages. Although Tafolla admits that not all of her experiences were positive, they blended into a "total picture of life (1)."This total picture would become the foundation for her life's work as a writer and performer.

Although books were not plentiful in her household, she remembers a Spanish-language bible, a hymnal and the first volume of the dollar-a-month Childcraft Series entitled "Childhood Versus, Rhymes and Fables."These were enough to provide literary excitement for the 5-year old Carmen. When she was ten, the city of San Antonio funded a new public library on the West side of town. Carmen remembers walking there every week with her mother to check out five books, the maximum allowed.

Her school experiences from elementary to high school were characterized primarily by challenge and survival. She remembers that on the first day of her first year in school, there were 42 children in the classroom and most did not speak English. Most of the teachers there did not understand Spanish and their expectations of Mexican American children were quite negative. Carmen had six or seven different first grade teachers and could not understand why they kept leaving after only a few weeks. She recalls, "… and then it wasn't Miss Johnson; it was Miss Waverly; and then it wasn't Miss Waverly, it was Miss Evans. And then it wasn't Miss Evans (1)." It was not until third or fourth grade when she overheard some teachers whispering

among themselves that the best teaching jobs were elsewhere, not in the west side of town.

By the time, she was in junior high, most teachers did not even bother to whisper. They would tell the students directly that their *barrio* school was not very good and that a grade of A here was worth only a C in a school in the better part of town. These and other negative statements impacted their identity. Carmen reminisces,

I'll never forget María Guadalupe Soriano, who sat in front of me, and our eighth-grade science teacher would say "Don't speak Spanish. It's a dirty language." And María Guadalupe would sit at her desk, and she would mumble, and she would grumble, and she would say, 'My mother's not speak a dirty language, and my grandmother does not speak a dirty language.' And she would just mumble and grumble it because she couldn't say it too loud in front of the teacher. So we have these experiences, and I'm surprised today that so many of us survived those experiences and turned it very creatively to the positive (1).

Tafolla attended a tough junior high on the rough side of town. She remembers that although it was not a practice at other junior highs outside the west side, both boys and girls were frisked going in and leaving the cafeteria. Because the bouffant hair style was popular in the 1960's, many girls wanted to use these big, puffy, teased hair styles. The school discouraged it because as one teacher commented, "…if you get into a fight, you're going to reach into your hair and gonna pull out the knife, and you're going to stab somebody with it (1)."

Girls were also prohibited from having mirrors in their purses because teachers believed that if they got into a fight, they would take the mirror, break it and then slash somebody with it.

Tafolla remembers that what they learned in junior high wasn't necessarily what they were expected to learn. For one principal, Carmen was the exception. He told her that she had the potential to make it all the way to high school. She recalls,

It was about the stereotypes, and it was about their expectations of us, and young children are always influenced by the expectations, so certainly some of us did go and do what were trained to do. The boys were frisked and frisked, and they went on to be learned to be frisked…and yet even through all that, we survived because there was a lot of goodness in the values. There was a lot of emphasis on *siendo decente, portandose como la gente*, and being *respetuoso.* There were very, very positive values within our culture that survived even all the negative stereotypes that we encountered in the schools (1).

Some of those same people became writers, artists, film makers and statesmen who contributed to their society. She completed her first 8 years in almost exclusively Mexican American public schools. Then, Tafolla was awarded an academic scholarship to a private high school, more oriented for college preparation. By this time, Carmen was already writing poetry about generations of her family and the "collective identity" they represented.

Her early college course work was in Spanish, French, and secondary education at Texas Lutheran College in Seguin, Texas from 1969 to 1971. In 1972 she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish and French from Austin College in Sherman, Texas. One year later, she received a Master of Arts degree in

multicultural education from the same college. In 1975, she began graduate work in Mexican American studies at the University of Texas at Austin and 8 years later, she received her Ph. D. in foreign language education and bilingual education. Since the early 1970s, she has taught both high school and university classes. In addition to serving as Director of the Mexican American Studies Center at Texas Lutheran College, Tafolla has taught at Our Lady of the Lake University, Trinity University, and the University of Texas at San Antonio, Northern Arizona University and at California State University in Fresno.

She readily admits, however, that her writing was not a product of her formal education but a calling from the heart. Many of the protagonists in her work are *barrio* people. She comments, "If I can do what I really want to do in my writing, I want to capture the beauty of *nuestra gente*.I want people to be able to see how funny and how ironic and how dramatic and how strong and how weak we are because in that is our humanness (1)."Tafolla's father remembers his own mother teaching him *dichos,* or proverbs. Among these were, 'No hay Sábado sin sol, ni Domingo sin misa' (there is no Saturday without sunshine, and no Sunday without mass) and 'dime con quién andas, y te dire quien eres' (tell me who you're with, and I'll tell you who you are). Although her grandmother died when Tafolla was only 1 year old, she grew up reciting her proverbs and felt that she knew her through her father's stories. Carmen comments, "those are the valuable things about our culture—the stories that we tell, the values that carry on in our personal way, and that I hope to transmit in my characters (1)."

There is, however, diversity in her characters, "Some of my characters are, uh, like *poquito aqui, poquito alla,...*based on family members (Medrano 1999)." Tafolla writes about her *gente* (people), but her stories and poems touch people's hearts all over the world. She honors the old stories and fables that have been handed down to her by her family in their stories and says that she writes "to document las voces de nuestra gente, the voices of the people all around us…I don't want to make personages…fictional characters that are perfect, that only say smart things, that only do the right thing all the time, that are heroes and heroines who never make a mistake, that are without blame. I don't think that's real. I don't think that's human (1). "For example, the voice of "Tia Sofia", in *A Student's Treasury of Texas Poetry*, TCU Press, 2007, has lightened the hearts of Tafolla's audience many times with her witty nature, her Tex-Mex slang, and her lovely weirdness….

*...que me lleban a la calle Southmost, porque siesta esperando el doctor,* jou gonna have to wait a long time. *Sí, yo sé porque yo fui con doctor una vez,* and jou know what day do? Dey put me in dis rroom. Dey call it de waiting rroom. And jou know whach jou do der? Jou wait, jou wait, jou wait. No, no, y by the time they call me, I was almost well already. *No, y después sale la nurse, la enfermera, eh, y me dice, me lleva a otro cuartito, y me dice, sabes lo que me dice esa mujer, me dice,* "take off your clothes." *Asi me lo dice, fíjate no mas que,* "take of your clothes. And put on dees gown." It was not a gown! It was a piece of pepper, and it was cold in that piece of pepper. *Y ya pa cuando vino el doctor,* I was sick all over again (2).

A second Tafolla character is Teresa or Tere, named after her aunt, grandmother and great-grandmother. About her first grade experience Tere says,

…I went to first grade, and it was fun. Yeah, and there were lots of things. Yeah, like, like, there were books, big books…and there were desks…and a chalk board too, yeah… and there were lots of kids, and there was a teasher. She was perty, la teasher. And I say, Hi! My name is Tere. And she say, 'Oh, Terry.' And I said, No, Tere. And she said, 'No, Terry.'…Ter-ree! 'OK'. It's Terree*, pero, no importa, no importa*. It doesn't matter because then, then, uh, uh, the teasher, she say she gonna teash us stuff, and, and, and I said, teasher, teasher, I know how to write my name. She said, 'That's nice. Now sit down' (2).

Tere vividly remembers coloring a picture of Cinderella,

…and she gives picture to color and they give the colors. Then, they take them away, or first they give them to you. And so, and so I got to color my picture of la Cinderella. And she have long black hair down to there. She have little blue stuffs on top of the eye like that*, no más que mi* sister se pone glitter *también, pero no tenían un color de* glitter, so *no más le puse el* blue stuff, *pero* she looked just like my big sister. She was so perty, la Cinderella, and the teasher, she come up to me. she say, "Oh, no! Cinderella has blond hair." No, mine has black. And she, "Oh, no, Cinderella has blond hair." And she take away my picture, and she give me another, and she say, "OK, now do it over. Do it right!" (2).

Another Tafolla character, La Dot, represents a middle school student who is assertive, spunky, and confident but is often labeled a troublemaker. As she is applying her makeup, La Dot says,

I don't like this ear rings; they're not long enough. *Yo queria unos de esos grandotes*, you know, like this, you know, the great big ones? Like that, *pero ta bueno. Oye, tú no mas, no, la Sylvia no vale nada…Hijo, corriendo tras el Larry, y el Larry* don't like her. I know because he likes me. He told my brother. And then he asked me if I'd meet him a la tiendita after school. *Ta bien chulo ese. Es el más* good looking de toda la class. Hijo, and the other day he had on his blue chirt con el colar *pa riba asi,* and could see his medallion on the chest *y como siempre* los tennis Reebok el white hanky, Ta bien pacito. Y la Sylvia, she thinks she's gonna get him. *Pero nomas con* chains girl because he's after me, and I'm not going to chase him away. I mean it's not my fault he likes me, is it? *No hombre, tú no te apures*. They say she's gonna jump me*, pero tu no te apures, manita. Yo me defiendo, yo me defiendo* because "nobody, nobody insults La Dot!" (2).

Although her characters are fictional, "they're not too far from human beings walking down the streets. I might roll two or three characters together into one to make them a more real character (1)."Tafolla does not apologize for her Mexican American characters who are bilingual and bicultural. They may be very specific to their culture, but they're human and people in Europe and North America can relate to them because they are real.

Alex Haley, author of *Roots*, once called Carmen Tafolla a "world class writer"(5). He read her *Curandera* book of poetry and was very impressed because her poems were auditory, a projection of human voice, song and story (5). As young girl Carmen believed that becoming a writer would be almost impossible and remembers,

A very long time ago (I must have been 10 or 12 years old) someone told me that to get a PhD, you had to write a book called a dissertation, and it had to be on a topic NO ONE had ever written on before…For a long time, I thought that was true, lamented the fact that by the time I grew up, all the good storylines would be taken, all the topics explored, all the interesting invented already. "Boy, was I naïve!" (4).

Since then Tafolla has become acutely aware of the challenges and rewards that accompany the writing process. She reminisces,

They say that writing is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration, and that's true, but I also tell people…listen. Listen to the voice inside of you, and be willing to write about the things that occur to you, but keep writing…. Read other writers. Read what's out there. You get ideas, and you become more sophisticated…don't let anybody tell you (that) you can never be a writer because you're not sophisticated enough; you're not world-traveled enough; you don't have the right experiences; you're not wealthy enough, you're not smart enough. Don't believe any of that. You have to have your own voice. Each one of us has a voice…You know, you stare at a blank piece of paper until drops of blood form on your forehead. It's a hard life. It is lonely. It is a struggle because nobody can tell you that you said what you wanted to say. You're the only one who knows if you really said what you were trying to say, and, yet, it's so rewarding (1).

For Carmen Tafolla, obstacles have been transformed into successes. Today, she is an internationally acclaimed a poet, author, performer, and educational consultant. Among her numerous publications are *Get your Tortillas Together (1976)*, a volume which includes many of her earlier poems. In *Curandera (1983)*, another collection of poems, Tafolla articulates her message through a wise folk healer. In 1985 she contributed "La Isabela de Guadalupe y otras Chucas" to *Five Poets of Aztlán*. *Sonnets to Human Beings and other Selected Works,* published in 1992, combines both short stories and poetry. Among her most recent children's picture books is the award winning *That's Not Fair!: Emma Tenayuca's Struggle for Justice (2008),* the first published book about the Latina labor organizer and civil rights leader from San Antonio. In her 2009 children's book, *What Can You Do with a Paleta*?, Tafolla vividly describes a Mexican American barrio through the words of a young girl finding uses for the natural frozen fruit treat.

As a performer Tafolla exhibits a boundless cultural energy. Dr. Gene Chávez, Executive Director for the Center for Intercultural Communications, Inc. describes Tafolla's one-woman theatrical performance, *My Heart Speaks a Different Language* in the following way, "(Tafolla is)…a mirror of understanding, providing rich insights, not only to Hispanics in the reflection of the intricate tapestry that they are as a people, but to all people—about the nature of diversity, the face of prejudice, and the strength human promise (6)." Although Carmen was never formally trained as an actress, she comments, "I'm not acting these parts; I'm living them. When I get on stage, I'm living that character (5)." She admits that she enjoys her "voice" writings (monologues and dialogues) the most because the characters in them like Tere and Tía Sofía are understood and recognized by her audiences throughout the United States, Mexico, Canada, New Zealand and numerous countries in Europe.

She is also an accomplished screen writer. In 2005 Tafolla completed a comedy titled "Real Men…and other miracles," co-written with filmmaker Sylvia Morales.

Today Carmen Tafolla remains a most celebrated writer and performer. Her stories have appeared in many literature textbooks, kindergarten books, journals and more than 200 anthologies. Among her numerous awards are the 1987 National Chicano Literature prize from the University of California at Irvine for *Sonnets to Human Beings and Other Selected Works,* the Americas award for best children's writing book, two International Latino Books Awards and two Tomas Rivera book awards. In 1999 she received the Art of Peace Award from St. Mary's University for promoting human understanding, peace and justice. Her 2008 book, *That's Not Fair!: Emma Tenayuca's Struggle for Justice*, was listed as a Best Children's Book in *Críticas Magazine*.

Tafolla is philosophical about what may lie ahead for Chicana/Chicano literature and for her. She believes that the new millennium will be

…a time of rebirth…a time of reassessment…It's like a morning, a new dawn. It's very symbolic. Chicano literature has a lot that has come before now, but people need to remember that a culture is ever changing, that we don't have to do what we did 50 years ago or a 100 years ago or a thousand years ago or, or 5 years ago… that culture is always dynamic… that our culture is being invented every day in our own lives. Our culture is what we make it. And all the promise, all the potential is there to make it what we want it to be…and to make the most of our mestizaje (1).

Carmen Tafolla has made the most of her biological and cultural mestizaje and still listens to the whispers of her people. She has written about herself, about her people, and about her culture and will continue to do so with both passion and integrity, and the world, including the Mexican American community, is better because of it.

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# The Social Construction and Resistance of Menstruation as a Public Spectacle

**Ashly Patterson**

## Bleeding Bodies are Stigmatized Bodies: An Introduction

Over the last decade, American artist Vanessa Tiegs (menstrala.blogspot) and German artist Petra Paul (mum.org) have created quite a stir in the art world with their preferred painting medium, collections of their own menstrual blood. Their canvas art, displayed on white backdrops, range from intricate patterns of red swirls complete with feathered brush strokes; to sprinkles, spatters, and splotches reminiscent of a pair of freshly stained white panties. While a few admirers of their craft have praised the ingenuity and boldness of these female painters, a great majority of laymen and art critics have expressed indignation and disgust toward this visual display of bodily art. Thus, the expressive works of Tiegs and Paul have been denounced as tasteless excuses for artwork and have been labeled as medical biohazards (Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler 2011). Such negative responses to these female art forms raise important sociological questions as to why menstrual blood evokes such passionate social judgments rooted in aversion, disgust, and fear.

Through my research on this topic, I have found feminist literature on menstruation prior to the 1990s third wave feminist movement to be sparse. Though a plethora of feminist scholarship on women's body work exists pertaining to women's reproduction systems, the overwhelming majority of such research has focused on pregnancy, childbirth, abortion, contraception, and sexuality. It has been suggested that the reason for this menstrual oversight is due in large part to the core issues being fought for in the second wave of feminism. There is little doubt that second wave feminists had substantial social issues to contend with as they battled for reproductive rights and the establishment of rape crisis centers and battered women's shelters, while also fighting against workforce discrimination and harassment. At the core of these issues lay the foundation of women's desire for liberation and equality with men. However, as "Everywoman became Superwoman" menstruation became purposefully obscured (Stein and Kim 2009, p. 98). This was particularly

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evident during the 1980s as more women entered into professional careers which were previously reserved for men. This evolving gendered landscape led many women to reject the idea that fulfillment could only be found in the creation of a perfectly moist cake, well-mannered children, and a happy husband. In this vein many women were eager to prove that they could indeed balance a home and family life with a demanding full-time career. Yet many women found that competing amongst men in the workforce meant that they had to hide female attributes, like menstruation, which reminded male co-workers and superiors that women were not men, and hence were incapable of competing on the same level with men. This notion is captured by second wave feminist Judith Lorber, who stated that her early goal in life was to simultaneously have a full-time career and family, and as such, "menstruation was something to be minimized, managed, and made invisible" (Lorber, as cited in Bobel 2010, p. xi). However, sweeping menstruation under the rug has had its drawbacks as pubescent girls and women have paid a price for this menstrual disregard. Ignoring the menstrual body in feminist literature has been detrimental to healthy menstrual socialization in puberty and has led to menstrual stigma that has affected the health, well-being, and agency of women.

The underlying theme of this chapter is to illuminate the need for more menstrual research, theory and activism in twenty-first century feminism. In an effort to begin bridging this gap, this work synthesizes literature collected from diverse academic fields including sociological theory, feminist anthropology, feminist psychology, social psychology, and third wave menstrual activism. Information gathered from the literature reflects social attitudes toward menstrual bodies and seeks to expose the gendered discourses that accompany menstruation as an evolving, sociocultural and historically specific phenomenon. While I laud the small group of third wave feminists who have been conducting menstrual research since the early 1990s, I think that such work has inadequately addressed the theoretical and sociohistorical underpinnings needed for a more comprehensive menstrual analysis. Current research on menstruation has been framed using Erving Goffman's stigma theory and Simone de Beauvoir's feminist existentialist work on women's *Otherness*. However, to date there is little mention of Michel Foucault's or Karl Marx's concepts and theories in menstrual analysis.

The main objective of this study is to develop a feminist theoretical understanding of menstruation. I use the perspectives of three leading male theorists—Erving Goffman, Karl Marx, and Michel Foucault—to understand this phenomenon, while keeping a feminist focus on how their works illuminate this profoundly female predicament. I first use Goffman's concept of stigma in order to establish the micro-level, social psychological aspects of negative portrayals of menstruation and their internalization by women. I next use Foucault's theory on discourses to understand how stigmas are social constructions that change over historical time, and I compare premodern and modern discourses on menstruation. Here I contend that menstrual discourses shift from premodern superstitious and religious understandings, to the medicalization of menstruation and a focus on hygiene, with the rise of modern sciences in the late nineteenth century. Third, I use Marx's understanding of capitalism to discuss how the emergence of the personal care industry utilized new medical

discourses for their own commercial interests by tracing the industrialization and commoditization of feminine hygiene products. Finally, I explore how feminists today are mobilizing to resist all three of these sociohistorical developments—the stigmatization of menstruation, the medicalization of menstrual discourses surrounding this stigma, and the commercialization of menstruation.

## Menstrual Stigma

The term stigma comes from the ancient Greeks who used it as a physical sign, typically through branding, to mark the devalued status of criminals and slaves (Goffman 1963; Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler 2011). The stigmatic mark, or stain, rendered a person's character defective, thus spoiling their identity by ascribing them a discredited status (Goffman 1963; Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler 2011; Kowalski and Chapple 2000). Others in society reacted to those possessing "stigma symbols" with scorn and disgust, thus leading to social distancing and the avoidance of the stigmatized individual (Goffman 1963, p. 43). Goffman's (1963, p. 4) stigma-theory suggests there are three categories of stigmatization; "abominations of the body" resulting from physical scarring and deformities, "blemishes of individual character", such as mental illness or prostitution, and "tribal stigmas" which are stigmas related to identity and are attributed to marginalized groups based on characteristics, that include but are not limited to, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

A stigmatic condition can either be visibly observable resulting in the individual being immediately "discredited" or the stigma, if deeply concealed, has the potential to remain invisible (Goffman 1963, p. 41; Kowalski and Chapple 2000). An invisible stigma creates a social environment in which the mark is not immediately discernible but has the potential to discredit the individual (Goffman 1963; Kowalski and Chapple 2000). There exists an important distinction between the terms discredited and discreditable. A person whose identity is discredited means that others are aware of the existence of that individual's stigma; while the term discreditable implies the need for secrecy, as the stigma has the potential to become publically revealed (Kowalski and Chapple 2000).

This distinction is important as the behaviors elicited by each situation are different. According to feminist psychologists, Robin Kowalski and Tracy Chapple (2000, p. 75), when others are aware of a discredited person's spoiled identity, the stigmatized may attempt to compensate in some other area or try and "save face" by becoming hyper-motivated to repair the damage to her image. In contrast, a person who is discreditable is more likely to go to extremes to carefully keep her condition hidden and concealed in an attempt to thwart the social stigma (Goffman 1963, p. 41; Kowalski and Chapple 2000). A discreditable person, who is concealing a stigmatized condition, is often highly self-conscious of how others perceive her. Due to the fear of having her stigmatized condition revealed, she may adopt "disidentifiers" as an attempt to "pass" as "normal" in order to avoid a humiliating

social incident (Goffman 1963, pp. 42–44; Kowalski and Chapple 2000, p. 75). However in both cases a stigmatized condition is one to be avoided.

In contemporary society the biological act of menstruating fits all three of Goffman's (1963) stigma categories. First, through the cultural belief that menstrual blood is a repugnant bodily fluid, menstruation discredits the female body by marking women as stigmatized (Goffman 1963; Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler 2011). Therefore, menstruation is seen as a "bodily abomination" which stigmatizes women as filthy and malodorous (Goffman 1963; Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler 2011). Many women perform ritualistic hygiene procedures in order to cleanse and deodorize their bodies in an attempt to keep their menstrual status hidden. Furthermore, it is suggested that menstrual blood causes more social revulsion than other bodily fluids like nasal mucus, breast milk, or semen; a view which supports menstrual blood as an abhorrent bodily abomination (Houppert 1999; Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler 2011).

The stigma of menstruation further mirrors Goffman's (1963) definition of individual character blemishes. There are two ways for menstruation to blemish the female image; first through menstrual leakage onto clothing which conveys a very visible stain on a woman's character; and second through mental and physical illness that results from premenstrual and menstrual phases of a women's cycle (Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler 2011). It is suggested that any visibility of menstruation, even reminders such as tampons or sanitary napkins, or mental and physical symptoms, like irritability and cramping, are emblems that stigmatize women as being unclean in body and irrational in mind, thus lacking bodily control (Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler 2011; Lee 1994; Merskin 1999). Furthermore, public displays of menstruation, whether intentional or unintentional and physical or psychological, result in social distancing and avoidance (Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler 2011). This character blemish directly and unquestionably links bodies and minds of women, stigmatizing them as both physically and mentally disordered.

Lastly, Goffman's (1963) concept of tribal identity further helps to explain menstruation as a social stigma, as women's menses are culturally viewed as revolving around the identity trait of "femaleness" (Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler 2011, p. 2; Merskin 1999). Socialization into this female tribal identity is thought to occur during menarche, the first menstrual cycle, which is viewed as a cultural marker indicating a girl's entrance into womanhood (Lee 1994; Merskin 1999). Therefore, menarche is a developmental time in which girls' bodies become further differentiated from the bodies of boys due to sociocultural inscriptions of femininity, sexuality and appearance control (Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler 2011; Lee 1994). Indeed, many girls report that menarche marks a time of social restriction as parental control becomes more stringent, due to fear of sexual activity that could lead to pregnancy (Lee 1994). In this way, menarche marks a rite of passage into the socialization and stigmatization of womanhood as a tribal identity, a stigma that the privileged, unstained male body escapes. Therefore, the menstrual body is socially constructed as a stigmatized condition, a problem in need of a fix.

## Foucault and the Menstrual Body

Though Goffman's theory aids in providing a basis for understanding menstruation as a social stigma, his ahistorical approach does little to explain how these stigmas change over historical time. Therefore, in order to gain insight into the sociohistorical construction of menstruation as stigma, I turn to Foucault's theory of the integral relationship between power and discourse. Foucault argues that the scientific and medical discourses which emerged in modernity entailed subtle forms of social control and surveillance (Bobel 2010; Mann 2012). While many modern theorists praised these modern scientific discourses as achievements which improved and liberated social life from traditional religious and superstitious constraints, Foucault argued that such innovations held the potential to restrict and inhibit human behavior through new forms of power, regulation and control (Mann 2012). Expert scientific medical discourses came to be privileged forms of knowledge that superseded the socially lived knowledge of everyday life experiences (Bobel 2010; Mann 2012). These discourses also categorized and legitimized notions of social normality and abnormality, labels which people came to internalize as social facts and were used as yardsticks to measure and police their own practices (Ramazanoglu 1993). Therefore, Foucault saw expert knowledges and medical discourses as exercises in new forms of social control, by which the subjugated learned to police themselves.

Foucault's work centers on the ways in which these less invasive forms of power and discipline came to be inscribed on social bodies in modernity. These new discourses of control were manifest in modern institutions such as factories and schools, where regulation and control was aimed at the body and its movements (Bartky 1997; Foucault 1975). Consequently, humans came to be constructed through terms relating to industry, as efficiency in all activities was stringently monitored and surveilled under the watchful gaze of superiors (Bartky 1997; Foucault 1975). Hence, members of modern Western society came to be viewed as embodying industry, an "apparatus of production" within time and space; which required individuals to be socially malleable, easily coerced, and ultimately docile in homogeneity (Foucault 1975, p. 153). Foucault termed this supervised policing of body movements by superiors, "mechanics of power," "micro-physics of power," "biopower," which he believed came to be internalized by subjects, through ritualistic practice, and resulted in self-regulated discipline (Foucault 1975, p. 138, 160).

This notion of "biopower" underlay his theory of the panopticon, which was based on Jeremy Bentham's architectural building design which is used in many modern social institutions-especially the modern prison (Foucault 1975). Foucault argued that the design of the panopticon allowed for optimal and ceaseless surveillance of inmates in spatial relation to other prisoners, as well as to guards. For Foucault, this conceptual design captures the essence of a surveillance society. He stated that the effect of the panopticon is "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures automatic functioning of power" (Foucault 1975, p. 201). Thusly, the jailed becomes the jailer as the regulatory control of the body becomes internalized in the mind (Bartky 1997; Foucault 1975). Foucault sees the

whole of Western society as operating under this disciplinary gaze; as members of society act in accordance to prescribed, normative standards of behavior. Deviating from these standards of normalcy holds the potential for creating the self as a public spectacle that often results in social sanctions.

## Performing Menstruation: An Internalized Menstrual Panopticon

Foucault's theory of discourse as power can be applied to menstrual bodies and the internalized socialization process pubescent girl's encounter when they enter menarche. For many, this is a pivotal time, as pubescent girls are beginning to identify with their emerging sexuality, and as such begin to perceive their self-value as reflected through the appraisals of others, particularly the gaze of males (Bartky 1997; Lee 1994; Merskin 1999; Roberts and Waters 2004; Stubbs and Costos 2004). As menarche is thought to be the gateway to womanhood, this transition further entails the process of sexual socialization into heterosexual scripts (Lee 1994). Consequently, menarche and sexuality are deeply entwined due largely to the fact that developing female body parts, like hips and breasts, take on sexual meanings and girls learn to associate these body parts with male desire (Lee 1994). However, this process of menstrual socialization is marked by ambivalence and contradiction, as menarche is emblematic of the processes by which girls begin to negotiate their burgeoning adult femininity (Stubbs and Costos 2004). As previously stated, parental control tends to tighten after menarche and girls also learn that they must now *act* like a lady by dressing modestly, with legs crossed, so not to draw attention to their emerging sexuality. Yet society and pop culture both send a different and perhaps more powerful message, as pubescent girls learn about their changing bodies through a lens of devaluation and stigma. Girls learn, particularly through forms of media, that their bodies are riddled with imperfections, and as such require rigorous discipline and management in order to be sexually desirable to the male gaze (Bartky 1997; Lee 1994). Thus, girls come to treat themselves, on some level, as objects to be evaluated; many believe that their physical appearance reflects how they are viewed and subsequently treated by male members in society (Erchull 2011; Roberts 2004; Roberts and Waters 2004; Roberts et al. 2002). In this light, menarcheal girls come to adopt a third person, looking—glass perspective, known as "self-objectification," a concept which allows for anticipating and controlling the way others, specifically males, view and treat them (Roberts 2004; Roberts and Waters 2004, p. 7).

Using a poststructuralist approach, Sandra Lee Bartky (1997, p. 34) describes the internalization process of young women's socialization as a form of self-objectification as follows: "In contemporary patriarchal culture, a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women: they stand perpetually before his gaze and under his judgment." Girls are socialized into proper menstrual etiquette-an etiquette which bolsters the importance of secrecy and concealment, of hiding their stigma from the surveillance of the male gaze. Such self-objectification has

been shown to create negative attitudes toward menstruation, as some menarcheal girls' come to associate their emerging menstrual and sexual identities with feelings of anxiety, shame, and disgust- hallmark traits of a stigmatic condition (Goffman 1963; Kowalski and Chapple 2000; Roberts 2004; Roberts and Waters 2004). It is through the internalization of the panoptical male gaze that young women self-objectify and self-police their bodies, resulting in disciplined attempts to avoid the public spectacle of bleeding femininity (Bartky 1997; Roberts and Waters 2004).

Consequently, menstrual concealment comes to be viewed as imperative. Bloody leaks are viewed as a sign of inferiority in a world that privileges non-menstruating, male bodies (MacDonald 2007). Menstrual leakage comes to be associated with essentialized biological processes that render female bodies uncontrollable and undisciplined. Bloody stains "announce to the world that women are not men, cannot be men, and as so cannot exist in the world as men do" (MacDonald 2007, p. 5, 6). As such, ideal femininity entails a process of socialization in which the main objective is that female bodies should never "leak" (Merskin 1999, p. 948). Menstruation is constructed as a feminine secret which should be kept from public view. Fear of discovery leads to excessive self-surveillance and personal hygiene checks in order to ensure that menstrual status remains hidden. Some scholars even argue that women participate in this concealment of menstrual periods in order to prevent their male partners' embarrassment, as well as their own (Forbes et al. 2003; Lee 1994; Merskin 1999). Menstrual discourse, therefore, entails secrecy and concealment; as women's attempts to avoid the spectacle of tainted femininity comes to be a carefully practiced performance in stigma management.

## Traditional Society and the Menstrual Taboo

Most scholars agree that nearly every society and religion has traditionally stigmatized women through the taboo of menstruation (Delaney et al.1988; Lee 1994; Merskin 1999). However, the discourses and meanings surrounding this taboo have varied. In traditional agrarian societies the taboo surrounding women's menses was constructed in paradoxical and contradictory ways; menstrual blood was perceived as both a magical and poisonous bodily fluid, having the inherent power to create and to destroy life (Delaney et al.1988; Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler 2011; Lee 1994; Merskin 1999). These pre-modern notions were enveloped in male-centered religious beliefs, which constructed the female body in dualistic terms; women were viewed as embodying the sacred and profane, as conceptualized by sociologist Emile Durkheim (Delaney et al.1988; Fields 1995). Hence, prior to scientific medical understandings of how the female body could bleed for days without weakening or succumbing to death; elementary explanations tended to involve spiritual superstitions rooted in earthly fertility beliefs which viewed menstrual bodies as being bewitched.

Menstruating women were viewed as emitting *mana*, a life threatening supernatural power (Delaney et al.1988; Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler 2011). Because

men do not experience menstrual cycles, preindustrial patriarchal societies came to fear the power of a woman's blood, believing that any contact with the bodily fluid would pollute their spirits leading to both bodily and spiritual demise (Delaney et al.1988; Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler 2011). These archaic explanations stemmed from fear of the unexplainable and led to forced exile where rituals of purification were performed on the female body (Delaney et al.1988, p. 7; Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler 2011). By isolating women to menstrual huts, men were kept safe from the menstruating woman's *mana*, which was believed to have the power to take away a man's virility (Delaney et al.1988). Therefore by secluding menstruating women from daily tribal life, men were able to protect their masculinity and ultimately their power and control (Delaney et al.1988, p. 7; Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler 2011).

Anthropologists argue that taboos have historically and cross-culturally been created to protect humans from perceived dangers. Often viewed as a culturally constructed form of protection, a taboo can be thought of as a socially collective fear that assists in giving social order and control to a society (Delaney et al.1988; Merskin 1999). Therefore, a taboo can be defined as anything existing within a society that is collectively perceived as being a threat and results in prohibitions and restrictions that may include certain thoughts, words, actions, and things that appear to threaten the health and prosperity of the group (Merskin 1999). Preindustrial patriarchal societies used the menstrual taboo as a tool of power and control. Women were restricted from full participation in tribal life through a veil of patriarchal discourses that have deemed menstrual bodies as dangerous, socially unruly, and spiritually impure.

The Judeo-Christian tradition, arising as it did in ancient, patriarchal agrarian societies, illustrates these menstrual taboos, as both Judaism and Christianity marked women as unclean and sinful in both body and spirit (Delaney et al.1988; Merskin 1999). This is evidenced by the Old Testament book of Leviticus, verses 15: 19–33, which speaks of menstrual blood as the root of all evil and goes as far as to give instructions to women on how to properly remove their monthly stain (Delaney et al.1988; Merskin 1999). Old Testament patriarchal menstrual discourses were powerful, and show up today in popular culture, specifically through the use of the Westernized menstrual euphemism, *the curse* (Delaney et al.1988; Merskin 1999, p. 944). This term is derived from the biblical story of Eve's fall from grace and her ultimate deliverance into sin, resulting in a cultural belief that menstrual blood was toxic, as female bodies were impure (Merskin 1999). In ancient societies, these religious discourses exerted power over menstruating bodies, their regulations restricting women's access to full partnership in religion and traditional agrarian life, thus fostering the prestige of men.

Today, patriarchal rules set in place by the book of Leviticus are still widely practiced by Orthodox Jewish women who, during menstruation, are regarded as being in *tame'ah*, a term meaning spiritually unclean (Kowalski and Chapple 2000, p. 75). During this phase of bodily and spiritual uncleanliness, these women are required to refrain from sexual intercourse for 7 days during and after their menstrual cycles. Furthermore they are forbidden from undressing in front of, having physical

contact, or sharing a bed with their husbands. At the end of the 14 day period these women are required to take a ritual bath, *Mikvah*, in order to purify their bodies, and only then are they allowed contact with men (Delaney et al.1988, p. 39; Kowalski and Chapple 2000, p. 75). Similar notions of women's spiritual and bodily uncleanliness can also be found in the Qur'an and Hindu Vedic Mythologies (Delaney et al.1988). Thus, cross-cultural historical analysis suggests that the menstrual taboo was institutionalized by major patriarchal religions that arose in ancient, agrarian societies where menstrual blood became a symbolic tool used to subordinate and exclude women from full participation in social life.

## The Feminine Handicap: Menstruation as a Medical Condition

Though some of these religious menstrual taboos still exist today, the Industrial Revolution brought much change in the way Western discourses spoke of, organized around, and controlled the bleeding bodies of women (Brumberg 1998; Mann 2012). In short, menstrual scripts fluctuated with shifts occurring in the sociocultural environment (Brumberg 1998). Historical research suggests that one of these major cultural shifts occurred in the1870s as medical science was beginning to establish its authority in society with new scientific knowledge, innovations, and technologies (Brumberg 1998; Lander 1989). These medical discourses of power began to govern views on menstruation, which, in turn affected the cultural meanings inscribed on female bodies.

In the mid- to late nineteenth century, industrialization greatly altered the lives of women in many ways as manufacturing jobs replaced women's home production of many household staples, such as bread, soap, and clothing (Mann 2012). The movement of home economy jobs to factories particularly increased the leisure time of white, middle-class women (Brumberg 1998; Mann 2012). Furthermore, the industrial era marked a time of new discourses on womanhood, referred to as "the cult of domesticity" or "cult of true womanhood" which idealized women's roles as housewife and mother (Welter 1973). This era was also characterized by the "doctrine of separate spheres," which informally located women's place within the home and men's place outside the home in the public domain (Baca Zinn and Eitzen1993, p. 56; Welter 1973). These immense sociocultural shifts, along with the women's rights movement that accompanied them, had won, Victorian women the opportunity to attend college as a means of improving their motherly duties. Initially, this spurred health professionals of the day to question if young women could perform intellectual work while maintaining a healthy reproductive system (Brumberg 1998; Mann 2012).

In the eighteenth century, it was common for Western women, like mothers, sisters and neighbors to educate pubescent girls on menstruation. However, by the end of the nineteenth century expert, authoritative advice from male physician's eclipsed women- centered menstrual knowledge and education. In 1873, Dr. Edward Clarke,

professor at Harvard Medical School argued in his book, *Fair Chance for the Girls*, that young women of the day paid too little attention to what he termed, their "periodicity" (Brumberg 1998, p. 9). Clarke believed that girls' inattention to their menstrual cycles led to poor health and low fertility rates. Therefore, he argued that a girl's first period was a crucial developmental time in which educational pursuits should be put on hold in order to provide an opportunity for young girls to ease into their maturing bodies (Brumberg 1998).

He backed his argument by stating that a challenging educational environment would force blood away from the ovaries, nourishing the brain instead, resulting in both physical and emotional damage that would cause dire consequences on a girl's later chances at motherhood (Brumberg 1998; Lander 1989). Clarke advised and encouraged mothers of pubescent girls to home school their daughters between the years of menarche and marriage, further encouraging socialization into domesticity through activities like sewing, which was believed to lead to "rhythmic periodicity" of the menstrual cycle (Brumberg 1998, p. 9). The power of such patriarchally constructed medical discourses, instilled fear in girls and women from pursuing a higher education or professional training that would likely inhibit them from attaining idealized standards of womanhood (Brumberg 1998).

By the 1880s Dr. Joseph Lister's work on antisepsis led to a medical revolution which spurred the development of Germ Theory, an idea that certain diseases were linked to particular germs (Brumberg 1998; Lander 1989). This innovation spawned a public health movement as medical experts worked to educate the masses on both home and bodily cleanliness (Brumberg 1998). The medical legitimacy given to germ theory changed the standards by which menstrual blood and personal hygiene were regulated, leading to new and more stringent forms of feminine bodily control and discipline. Until this time in history, women constructed reusable menstrual products from cotton, chambray, or linen. These cloth scraps found in nearly every woman's "rag bag" are the source of the popular misogynistic term "on the rag" (Brumberg 1998, p. 41; Delaney et al.1988). After use, the bloodied material would be soaked, washed, and reused. However, as germ theory gained hegemony over menstrual consciousness, women opted for new sanitary options, such as disposable napkins made of gauze or surgical cotton (Brumberg 1998; Stein and Kim 2009). Such materials could be purchased in bulk from the Sears and Roebuck catalog, which advertised their products antiseptic qualities and were expertly endorsed by the medical profession (Brumberg 1998; Stein and Kim 2009).

With the medicalization of discourses surrounding the natural bodily process of menstruation, women's bodies came to be viewed as a medical malady or a feminine handicap, which required constant medical supervision and surveillance in order to ensure proper menstrual socialization (Stein and Kim 2009). This menstrual discourse that focused on hygiene was powerful. These notions came to be shared by many well-respected male physicians of the day and doctors took on the responsibility of steering their female patients on the right path to womanhood (Brumberg 1998). Medical science in the Victorian Era also established the idea that women's ovaries were the most important organ in the female body and regular "monthlies" came to be regarded as key to women's health and well- being (Brumberg 1998,

p. 8). Therefore, by the dawn of the twentieth century a well-defined menstrual script arose from the expert, authoritative advice of medical professionals that undermined past religious and superstitious beliefs in favor of a new discourse on menstruation that centered on bodily regulation through rituals of sanitation and feminine hygiene.

## The Commodification of Menstruation

As previously noted, the late nineteenth century witnessed major advances in scientific technology and industry that fostered the mass production of goods previously made in the home (Brumberg 1998; Mann 2012). Marx's analysis of capitalist development makes us aware that under a capitalist system, the endless drive for profit leaves no stone unturned. Anything, including physical, emotional, or mental labor, as well as material products, has the potential to become commodified for profit in the marketplace to meet both necessary and constructed public demand. In this vein, commodities like textiles were the first goods to be produced in capitalist factories in order to meet the immediate needs of large sectors of the population. In the case of menstrual products, when half of the population has the potential to become consumers of a specific commodity brand for thirty plus years, such market areas are likely to be lucrative places for investment. The increasing legitimacy of the germ theory of disease, coupled with the medicalization of menstrual discourses focusing on personal hygiene, created a potentially viable market in the late nineteenth century for the commodification of menstruation.

The term *feminine hygiene* originated in 1873 as a result of the Comstock Act which made it illegal to advertise or sell any form of pornography, which included menstrual products and early forms of contraception (www.lunette.com). Nevertheless, entrepreneurs found ways around this legality by packaging and selling such commodities under the label, feminine hygiene. The very notion of feminine hygiene thus came to be associated with menstrual products where women's bleeding bodies were socially constructed as unsanitary. In 1896 the Johnson & Johnson Company made the first attempt at patenting a disposable napkin called "Lister's Towels," which drew on the popularity of Dr. Joseph Lister's germ theory (Delaney et al.1988, p. 137). "Lister's Towels" were considered an item of luxury and were intended to be marketed to middle-class women with disposable incomes. However, sales for this item were poor due to Victorian era values of morality and modesty that stringently regulated discourses on menstrual product advertising. Due to this regulation, few women understood the actual use value of the commodity or were too embarrassed to approach the druggist to purchase the product. As a result "Lister's Towels" soon disappeared from drugstore shelves (Brumberg 1998; Delaney et al. 1988; Kissling 2006). It would be 25 years before the next attempt would be made to commercially market a disposable sanitary napkin.

During World War I French nurses discovered that bandages of cotton gauze, made of cellulose fiber, were much more absorbent than older cloth materials such

as bird's eye or outing flannel and the use of such material as a disposable menstrual product proliferated during war time (Delaney et al. 1988). This set the stage for the Kimberly-Clark Corporation to try their hand at marketing an advantageous new product called Kotex. Developed in 1921, Kotex emerged as the first disposable pad that could be held in place by a sanitary belt with metal clips (Delaney et al. 1998). Though ads promoting Kotex did not appear until the 1930s, strict social mores surrounding women's bodies had attenuated to a degree with the aid of the first wave women's movement and its success in winning the vote with the passage of the19th amendment in 1920. Women's new found freedom in the poll booth, coupled with the sexual revolution of the roaring twenties, created a prime market for women's disposable sanitary napkins. Furthermore, issues of embarrassment surrounding the purchase of such personal products were curbed due to the invention of the coin dispenser in 1920 by executive advertiser, Albert Lasker (Kissling 2006). The dispenser promoted notions of secrecy and discretion as it allowed women to drop in a coin and discreetly retrieve a disposable pad. The idea was to save women from the humiliation of having to purchase menstrual pads from a male drugstore clerk. Ultimately the coin dispenser is thought to have been a major player in the commercial success of Kotex sanitary napkins, as vending machines filled with disposable pads popped up in drugstores across the country (Kissling 2006).

The first magazine ad to depict a feminine hygiene product was Amolin, a personal deodorant powder which appeared in the *Ladies Home Journal* in 1920 (Delaney et al. 1988). Not long after this, *Good Housekeeping* ran an ad for Lysol, which during the 1920s was marketed not as a household cleaner but rather as a vaginal cleanser, and for Zonite, another popular douche of the era (Delaney et al. 1998; Stein and Kim 2009). These products were marketed to "married women" and were aggressively promoted to cure all "marital ills" (Stein and Kim 2009, p. 151). For example, one Lysol ad offered women "morning-after freshness" with the warning, "Beware of the one intimate neglect that can engulf you in marital grief"- code words for avoiding vaginal odor during sex. These ads also hinted of the possibility that the disinfectant strength of Lysol could be used not only as a germ killer, but also as a sperm killing form of contraception (Stein and Kim 2009, p. 151).

The first Kotex advertisement appeared in the early 1930s in *Good Housekeeping* and made no mention of menstruation. The product emphasized secrecy and concealment such as in the statement, "New Phantom Kotex…eliminate those telltale outlines" (Delaney et al. 1988, p. 130). The late 1930s witnessed the invention of the first mass produced tampon- Tampax. Tampons were promoted as an internal form of protection, an idea that became synonymous with menstruating in a "civilized" manner (Kissling 2006, p. 14). However by the 1940s the focus of menstrual ads began to shift in direct relation with national changes brought on by US participation in World War II. These ads utilized progressive themes encouraging women to join the labor force in order to aid the war effort. They targeted women, instead of girls, stressing women's utility, bravery, responsibility, and competency in the workplace (Delaney et al. 1988). For instance, San-Nap-Kin advertised saving money and time through the purchase of their product which "allowed for hours of extra service…without the extra bulk" (Delaney et al. 1988, p. 130). Kotex on

the other hand targeted teens of working war time mothers as one ad depicted a girl sitting next to a boom and mop having stopped her chores due to her period, the ad reads:

> Who would have thought you'd turn out to be a deserter from a dust mop and a few dishes… when Mom's counting on you? When your country's counting on you? As Mom explained-it's girls like you taking on 'homework' who release a whole army of mothers for rolling bandages and selling war bonds and driving drill presses! (Delaney et al. 1988, p. 131).

Women had worked hard for their country. However, after World War II and throughout the 1950s, the postwar ideology of the "feminine mystique" forced many women to reclaim their domestic roles as housewives and mothers (Delaney et al. 1988). The author of The Feminine Mystique, Betty Freidan, was not far from the mark when she wrote that the history of U.S. women could be viewed in the evolution of women's magazine advertisements (Delaney et al. 1988).

Indeed, menstrual ads shifted again after World War II, often depicting bodiless faces of women, which has been interpreted as showing that women were no longer important to the political economy (Delaney et al. 1988). Ads took a less serious tone, used shorter and less complex sentences, and referred to adult women as "girls" insinuating that women's intelligence dropped as they left factories and returned to the home (Delaney et al. 1988). Furthermore, ads positioned women as ornamental beings, stressing that the only burden for women in the 1950s was to be beautiful. Such cultural discourses were powerful for directing ideal femininity standards towards the individual- a far cry from the outward collectiveness exhibited by menstrual ads during 1940s war time (Delaney et al. 1988). Menstrual product advertisements of the 1960s continued to capitalize on notions of idealized womanhood. However, with the 1963 release of Friedan's The Feminine Mystique such ideals became exposed as an illusion. Friedan's work ushered in the second wave of feminism and many women began to shed the façade that they were self-actualized through being the perfect wife, mother, and homemaker. Manufacturers and advertisers capitalized on women's fight for liberation and by the early 1970s Johnson & Johnson introduced the first "beltless" sanitary napkins, "Stayfree". Kimberly-Clark soon followed with "New Freedom," menstrual pads with an adhesive strip that affixed to women's underwear (Kissling 2006). Both of these products were thought to be as revolutionary as women's lives could be if liberated through product innovations that could be purchased in the marketplace. By riding the feminist wave, the femcare industry capitalized on menstruation by linking women's liberation with menstrual emancipation through consumption.

In the twenty-first century, women's relationship with her menstrual body continues to be mediated by the femcare industry and consumer culture (Kissling 2006). Menstruation is still viewed as a process which negates embodying perfect womanhood as women are sold images of their bodies as dirty and malodorous. Their perfection can be saved only through the purchase of certain brands which keep "that special time of the month" a concealed secret (Delaney et al. 1988, p. 132). Feminine product ads are embedded with ideas of freshness and concealment, notions which exploit the status of women as Other for corporate profit (De Beauvior

1952). Further, menstrual consumption has come to pass as a normalized practice with women viewing their menses in an ahistorical context. Historian Joan Brumberg (1998, p. 30) states, "When contemporary American girls begin to menstruate, they think of hygiene, not fertility. That is the American way, and it is taken for granted- as if it were part of the natural order".

While there exists little debate over how femcare products have freed and liberated women by allowing more comfort and convenience, liberation has come at a cost since women become complicit in the creation of their Otherness. Today, clever marketing strategies have sold women an image of their bodies as dirty, odorous, and unmanageable, resulting in a heavy focus on concealment and self-policing, which translates into disciplined economic rituals. Women have simply compromised their new independence for shame and secrecy, neatly packaged along with pads and tampons. Menstrual ads are imbued with contradiction; thus, it is imperative to deconstruct these ideas in order to expose the history of commercial exploitation of women's menses. Though menstrual products are sold under the guise of comfort and freedom, as gender scholar Elizabeth Kissing (2006, p. 124) notes, "… freedom is never really free, at least under consumer capitalism."

However, not all product advertisements are negative. Feminine hygiene ads also serve as one of the few public discourses on menstrual education and have helped to break the silence surrounding menstrual bodies (Simes and Berg 2001). In the late nineteenth century, girls learned about menstruation only in terms of how it was tied to morality and reproduction. The establishment of the femcare industry in the 1920s shifted the focus from marriage and fertility to a new discourse on hygiene management (Brumberg 1998). By the 1930s new marketing strategies arose through the creation of menstrual education divisions within the femcare industry. Advertisers discovered that they could better promote their products and potentially gain customer loyalty by distributing free product samples and educational materials to parent-teacher associations and organizations such as the Girl Scouts (Kissling 2006). Thus, twentieth century advertisers targeted women, not only as "workers and producers, but as consumers," which shaped the cultural idea that knowledgeable consumerism was empowering and allowed women at least some control in the marketplace (Kissling 2006, p. 12).

Many scholars agree, however, that femcare advertisers give false impressions to women which in effect propagates menstrual stigma for profit (Docherty 2010). Family studies scholars D.H Simes and M.R. Berg (2001) found through their analysis of 200 contemporary menstrual product advertisements dispersed throughout popular women's magazines, that menstruation was most often conceptualized as a burden, in need of close attention and surveillance to ensure the proper security in feminine protection. These researchers found that advertisements capitalized on fear mongering through threat of stigmatization, which they called "heightening insecurities," such as ads focused on shame and embarrassment stemming from odor and menstrual leaks due to purchasing the "wrong" brand (Simes and Berg 2001, p. 467). This leads one to question what feminine hygiene protection actually means given how so many companies boast that their brand is the best form of protection on the market. What exactly is the femcare industry protecting women from, their own bodies?

## Radical Menarchists: A Menstrual Revolution

Alongside the patriarchal religious, medical, and economic institutions that have appropriated women's menstrual bodies for self-interest, stand a small but growing number of fierce women who are challenging these hegemonic power systems. These radical menstruators of the third wave feminist movement are resisting by breaking free from their closeted silences and making menstruation a visible public act (Bobel 2010; Docherty 2010). American artist Vanessa Tiegs (Tiegs 2008) and German artist Petra Paul (Paul 2003), as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, are making waves and causing a scene by laying bare their "bloody speech" for the world to see (Rich 1995, p. 284). As this new wave of menstrual activism grows, Tiegs and Paul have been joined by many women who are actively confronting and giving voice to the cultural silence which surrounds the social and biological process of menstruation (Bobel 2010) Feminist scholar Chris Bobel (2010) claims that this new breed of primarily young activists, known as radical menstruators or menarchists, are bursting onto the scene with a mission to rid the sociopolitical culture of all negative menstrual attitudes. This branch of third wave menstrual activists have learned well from their feminist mothers and have built their activism on the legacy of the second wave's women's health, environmentalist, and consumer reports movements (Bobel 2010)

The goal of these third wave menarchists is to confront and resist a medical and consumer culture which has seized control of and exploited the female menstrual experience for profit (Bobel 2010; Docherty 2010). While some menstrual advocates are rooted in ecofeminism and body spiritualist movements, menarchists are steeped in punk, anarchist, and anti-corporate ideals, and use caustic wit, shocking street performances, and Do It Yourself lifestyles to promote their messages (Docherty 2010). Menarchists have created zines, art, and music that raise menstrual consciousness and educate women on their bodies and the hazards of using mass produced feminine hygiene products (Bobel 2010; Docherty 2010). They make tee shirts that say things such as, "It all started with a period," and create fashion patches called "Stains," which a woman can affix to her pants as she sees fit (Docherty 2010, p. 11). These activists further educate women on safe, alternative menstrual products such as menstrual cups like the Diva Cup and The Keeper, which do not absorb but rather collect menstrual blood, and Luna pads and Glad Rags which are rewashable and are created in various colors and patterns, both a nod to bodily and environmentally safe menstrual products (Bobel 2010; Docherty 2010).

Menarchists aim to empower women and men, all menstruators and non-menstruators, by exposing the ways in which heteronormative patriarchal institutions have justified their power and control over menstruating bodies (Bobel 2010). They incite in women the self-agency needed to take a stand and resist dominant medical and corporate patriarchal institutions that have propagated images of menstrual bodies as devalued and inferior in order to boast male privilege and self-interest (Bobel 2010; Docherty 2010). Menarchists argue that women need to take back the power of their bodies by publically undermining patriarchal attempts at control that

lead to women's bodily self-loathing. They call on all women to reclaim their bleeding bodies, and the entitlement to bleed without secrecy and shame. Yet while these radical menstruators are becoming a public force to be reckoned with, their activism is not without its flaws. It has been argued that the menstrual justice movement may be problematic as it represents a "solution in search of a problem" in that most women are not interested in "reclaiming" their menstrual cycles, but instead would be elated if their periods would simply just disappear (Bobel 2010, p. 7).

With this in mind, it is important to stress that being a menstrual activist does not have to entail going to extremes, like ecstatically looking forward to the next month's cycle, or creating art with menstrual blood. While there is nothing wrong with these forms of menstrual activism, menstrual advocacy can also take a more subtle form, such as in becoming "period positive" (Green 2013). Being "period positive" reflects an understanding that when we, as a society, indoctrinate pubescent girls into the culture of menstrual stigma, medicalized discourse, and menstrual consumerism; we are socializing girls to be accepting of messages that their bodies are somehow naturally inferior to that of male bodies, unclean, impure, dis-eased, and thus in need of bodily management that can only be procured through consumerism. In other words, being a menstrual activist with a "period positive" outlook can be as simple as recognizing that it is time to bring this negative menstrual narrative to an end and embrace an open and honest, realistic menstrual dialogue. It is recognizing that developing a menstrual consciousness is a method through which women and men come to acknowledge and accept that menstruation is a part of a normal biological process that some bodies experience. Thus, being "period positive" is an avenue through which we learn to socially de-stigmatize menstruation by accepting that this body process is not a curse, it is not offensive, and it is in no way indicative of a physical or psychological illness.

## The Menstrual Body: Conclusion

In concluding this chapter I want to emphasize that I do not intend for this work on menstruation to be taken as an indicator of femininity or womanhood, nor is it meant to idealize or glamourize the menses. However, as a feminist researcher I find it imperative to break the silence on menstruation in an effort to begin bridging the gap in current feminist literature and activism. While this chapter has made strides toward bringing menstruation "out of the closet" (Young, as quoted in Docherty 2010) and into the public domain in order to facilitate a feminist theoretical and sociohistorical understanding of menstruation, I recognize that this work leaves many stones unturned. Hence, future work should entail analyses of the diverse intersections of menstruating bodies; including dimensions of race, class, sexual orientation, and women with disabilities. Taking into consideration the complexities of women's lives would be most useful for developing a comprehensive analysis on menstruation.

In this chapter I have focused primarily on Goffman's stigma-theory, Foucault's theory on discourse and power, and Marx's theoretical understanding of capitalism- while remaining conscientious of the importance of keeping a feminist eye on how these male-centered perspectives illuminate this menstrual research. The main objective has been to highlight three cultural and sociohistorical developments surrounding- the stigma of menstruation; the role that religious and medical discourses have played in perpetuating this stigma; and the role that capitalism has played in the rise of the femcare industry which commoditized women's menstrual cycles for profit. I have argued that all three of these developments have, in combination, served to historically silence a positive, honest and open menstrual dialogue. The implications for this reticence have had dire effects on the lives of girls and women, as menstrual stigma, powerful religious and medical discourses, and commoditization of female bodies through the menstrual cycle have resulted in a weakening of women's bodily agency, health and well-being.

I further addressed how as a small but growing number of radical women are rising to challenge these hegemonic, patriarchal power systems. Known as radical menstruators, these women of the third wave feminist movement are confronting and giving voice to the cultural silence which surrounds the social and biological process of menstruation (Bobel 2010). The main goal of these activists is to eradicate all negative sociopolitical and cultural menstrual discourses. Menarchists further support educating both women and men through various methods of menstrual consciousness raising and by adopting a "period positive" outlook (Green 2013). While this menstrual movement is still in a nascent stage, the message is strong. A positive "menstrual consciousness" is a reflection of social agency and when this agency is practiced in numbers there exists a powerful potential to create a social environment which strengthens the lives of girls and women through the promotion of bodily respect, health and well-being.

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# Getting Off Online: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Cyberspace

**Jesus Smith**

## Chapter Introduction

The intersections of race, gender and sexuality illuminate the particulars of gender performance for gay men and can aid younger and new researchers in understanding the complexities of gender for non heteronormative people. While there is extensive literature examining the influences of race/ethnicity on gender performance in the heterosexual population, there has been less attention given to how these factors operate in the gay community. A goal of this chapter is to analyze how race/ethnicity influences gender performance among men who have sex with men (MSM) on and offline. Being that the online worlds of facebook, tumblr, pintress, and instagram have become central to the lives of many people in the US and the popularity of online dating cites like OK Cupid, eHarmony, and Match.com continuing to rise, it is shocking that many social researchers are not rigorously investigating the online phenomenon. Considering this, one of the unique aspects of this study is the examination of race, gender, and sexuality online and how it affects the lives of gay men of color, a group studied comparatively less then gay white men. By doing this, young and new researchers will be able to see how the technological world is important to the study of different populations and can aid in discovering new social theories and ideas about marginalized groups. To do this I will examine the history of racialization and sexualization of gay men of color. I will then discuss the methods used to explore this subject. I will conclude with a discussion of the results of the study and implications for future work.

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## Elements in the History of Sexual-Racialism

Racial dynamics within the homosexual community have not been fully explored, leaving a gap in research rife for analysis of the intersections of race and sexuality. Despite this, we can draw from historical analyses that reveal a complex relationship regarding race and sexuality within the heterosexual community. Patterns of sexual- racialization or racial sexual stereotypes are rooted in American history, as evident in the sexual exploitation of slaves during the 1700s and 1800s. Nagel (2003) revealed how hyper-sexualized depictions of slaves are embedded in society. The sexual excessiveness of savage African slaves painted them as nymphomaniac animals, as "claims and concerns about the physical sexual endowments of Black men and the sexual appetites of Black women circulated back and forth across the Atlantic in the minds and publications of Europeans who settled the America's" (2003, p. 11). Patricia Hill Collins (2005) also argued that, "men of African descent were also seen as hypersexualized beings (2004, p. 4)." She maintains that "African men's sexuality was seen as dangerous and in need of control (2004, p. 4)." This was the case particularly in regards to slavery. Since White men historically were the protectors of White women from Black sexuality, especially during Jim Crow, this legitimized their social role over Blacks' lawless behavior and uncontrolled actions. African men were perceived as violent, with an overwhelming sex drive (Collins 2005). Nagel further investigated how hyper-sexualized depictions of Blacks embedded in society fueled sexual fantasies, desires and fears of Whites participating in sexual liaisons with Blacks (Nagel 2003).

Race and ethnicity became sexual boundaries or limitations for Whites, forming a "solid barrier to assimilation" (Nagel 2003, p. 12). Legislation was established to enforce the boundaries amongst the races. Statutory proclamations in the South particularly illuminated the so-called "sinfulness" inherent to interracial liaisons. Whites argued that Blacks lusted after White women as an excuse to subjugate them to lynching (D'Emilio and Freedman 1988). Despite laws and the stigma assigned to those who had sex outside their race, interracial sex still took place. Many times this was through recreational sex or sex with no strings attached because it limited the risk of being penalized for interracial sex (Nagel 2003). There was constantly an "emphasis on African sexuality and savagery" that seems linked to colonialism during the era of the slave trade (2003, p. 11).

Gay sexuality produced a particularly different result. While heterosexuals feared Black sexuality, comparatively, White gay men today desire Black men's perceived sexual dominance and unrestraint (Baldwin 1985; Logan 2010). The American ideal of sexuality, as Baldwin (1985) noted, is rooted in the ideal of American masculinity. Racial stereotypes interact with notions of masculinity to produce a desire for hyper-masculinized Black men amongst White, gay men. Black men who conformed were sought after and those that did not were penalized (Logan 2010). As Darieck Scott (1994) denotes, "'Blackness' especially male Blackness, is almost definitionally masculine and constitutively heterosexual" with the vast majority of images of gay men corresponding to those of White men (1994, p. 301).

As exclusivity has allotted for the creation of White only gay spaces, the men excluded, although gay, did not fit the stereotypical White norm of "gayness" (Scott 1994). The lack of visibility of gay men of color has even been noted by Black film maker Marlon Riggs, as stated in his film *Tongues Untied,* "I pretended not to notice the absence of Black images in this new gay life, in bookstores, poster shops, film festivals, even my own fantasies….I was an invisible man" (Riggs 1989) . Riggs directs our attention to the invisibility of Black men from the gay world and how this affected even him at an individual level. This absence of Black images in gay oriented media contributes to the marginalization of Blacks and other men of color. This arguably contributed to the development of *sexual racism* (Plummer 2005) or sexual discrimination based on race.

An example of sexual racism can be seen in the mass media, such as film, television, DVDs and most importantly, the internet which have enabled Black images to enter the homes, social spaces, and bedrooms of a large number of people Sexual racism utilizes mass media to "reproduce and disseminate" its ideology Pornographic films and images of the Black thug hustling the innocent White male help "manufacture the consent" of racial hierarchies as "natural, normal, and inevitable (Collins 2005, p. 6; McBride 2005). The media has become saturated with Black images in music videos, billboards, and the internet, putting Black sexuality everywhere this has even affected online dating. For instance, commenting on the gay market place of desire seen on and offline, McBride (2005 pp. 92–93) contends that:

> …there is no better place to come to understand and to appreciate the ways in which the legacy of the U.S. society's profound primal experiences with race have permeated all aspects of life in this country right down to and including our sexual desires, than to examine our behaviors in our most unscripted or personal moments such as pornography and personal ads to see how people express and characterize their desires under cover of privacy and anonymity…

Through his work, McBride uncovered several Craigslist personal ads that expressed racial desires as well as pornographic films that did the same in racist ways. For example, McBride noted that in pornography, Black and White Men had limited interactions with a vast majority of Black performers being on top thus portrayed as hyper-masculine (2005). Some examples of this can be found by simply perusing the men for men section of craigslist.org or the gay porn section of an adult video store where many ads by users and films by studios demonstrate how race, gender performance and sexuality play out online. Many times, the gender role expected of gay men of color is clearly in the titles of the gay pornographic films. Titles like the Bacchus films *Give a Thug a Bone* and *A Thugs Cock Party* demonstrate how Black gay, male gender performance is associated with the hyper-masculinity of "thugs" and animalized into a dog in search of a "bone." Both of the film covers show Black men with above average penises and six pack abs, reinforcing ideas of masculinity through penis size and athletic body image.

## Racial Construction and Sexual and Gender Performance

Ehlers (2006) suggested that race be considered in Judith Butler's (1999) work on gender performance. Butler demonstrated how Drag Queens performed gender by being men who portrayed women in hyper-feminine style, dress, mannerism, and speech. Ehler's application of performativity to race is relevant to the way we use our bodies to present ourselves in different ways. To be considered a certain race has more to do with performance than with anything biological. In other words, if one acts or behaves as "Black," their Whiteness would be considered illegitimate. Hence, the desire to assimilate and take on a White racial performance is in order to disassociate with Blackness.

Perhaps, nothing is more symbolic of the status of Blackness than the black body. Charles Johnson (1993) further explored the relationship between the construction of race and its connection with the body in his work, *Phenomenology of the Black Body*. Here, Johnson makes it clear that what is ascribed to the Black body contributed to the marginalization of Blacks. The appearance of a Black body through the eyes of a White spectator means the soul was stained. White fears were projected onto Black bodies, fears to "contain or confront: bestial sexuality, uncleanliness, criminality, [and] all the purported 'dark things'" (1993, p. 127). This "stain" was even attributed to black blood which accordingly carried within itself the ability to transform Whites into Blacks, giving them the characteristics stereotypically associated with Blacks like crime and low order animalism. United States mulattos or people born of one White parent and one Black parent, similarly, even though possessing White Blood, were still depicted as dangerous because their exterior bodies did not accurately reflect their stained interior Blackness (Johnson 1993). Johnson's examination of the Black body and its "stain" help us to understand why Black men may be socially less desirable than other races.

One of the best forums in which to see gender and racial performance is online within MSM dating sites. The invention of the internet and the occurrence of online dating as suggested above have greatly altered the social organization of desire through mass communication and the erosion of traditional institutional controls of sexuality (Green 2008). The uniqueness of this study lies in the examination of how cyber space has allowed gay men to create identities with their profiles online against the backdrop of sexual racism, stereotypical gender performance and sexual liaisons.

## Data and Methods

The data for this study come from men who have sex with men (MSM) in El Paso, Texas, a city along the U.S.-Mexico border. While the majority of studies have focused on areas like Seattle, Washington, and California (e.g., Plummer 2005; Han 2008), we know very little about gay communities along the U.S.-Mexico border

or in regions with a majority Latina/o population. As such, the geographic context of this study is of value. I also recruited participants from a popular men for men online site that is distinguishable from other sites because it is free to users and pays for its self through online pornography ads that appear on the sides of the website when users peruse it, and a majority of the ads portray racialized pornography. The website also allows its users to create profiles in which they could describe themselves in terms of weight, height, penis size, whether they are out or not, can host at their residence or not, and allows them to post images of themselves and make the images private or public.

In-depth interviews were collected with 16 MSMs. The men interviewed reflect the largest racial groups represented in El Paso, specifically, Latinos ($N=4$), Blacks ($N=4$), Whites ($N=4$), and biracial (Black and Latino, White and Latino, and Black and White) ($N=4$) (Table 1). One Black participant opted to describe himself as American rather than Black. The participants were between the ages of 20 and 58. I recruited two research assistants to help collect the data and conduct the interviews to minimize interviewer effects of race. I was primarily concerned about "race of the interviewer effects" with my Afro-Latino racial identity. Hence, I matched the interviewees and the respondents by race. Therefore, one of the research assistants was a Mexican male who was a member of a gay, bisexual, and progressive men's fraternity. His participation in the organization, as well as his work in an El Paso queer organization, gave me access to several more potential respondents who were subsequently interviewed and included in my study. He conducted interviews with Latino men in public spaces in English. One of the participants he interviewed identified as Latino but when asked to describe himself racially, he stated he had a Mexican mother and White father. This was unbeknownst to the Latino interviewer and because of this we categorized this respondent as mixed-race. The second assistant was a straight White male educator. In order to recruit White respondents, he created a profile on the men for men website with a disclaimer that he is heterosexual but looking for White men who have sex with men to interview for a study on race and sexuality. His profile was initially picture-less with only the disclaimer visible. This resulted in very few men taking interest in the study despite our efforts to assure users online that someone would be interviewing them in person. After this, we adjusted the profile by adding his picture and keeping the disclaimer to assure the users that this was a legit study and that the person interviewing them was in fact the person on the profile. Both interviewers were given notebooks to carry during the interviews so that they were able to write down what they noticed during the interviews, including the responses participants had to certain questions. I conducted interviews with Black men and mixed race men (specifically Black and Latino MSMs). I began data collection for the interviews using a purposive sampling technique. I posted advertisements online with the disclaimer to recruit participants. I posted on craigslist.com within the men seeking men section. Postings were announced in the city's gay magazine, Bloke, through my profile on facebook.com, and through e-newsletters for Metropolitan Community Church (El Paso's sexually inclusive church). Both assistants were trained on how to interview the participants, how to probe for clarity, and how to maintain control of the interview. After each interview, I would hold a

**Table 1** Frequencies on Sample Characteristics

| | F |
|---|---|
| *Age* | |
| 20–29 | 5 |
| 30–39 | 4 |
| 40–49 | 4 |
| 50–59 | 3 |
| 60–69 | 0 |
| *Occupation* | |
| Professional | 8 |
| Service | 4 |
| Retail | 1 |
| Manual Labor | 1 |
| Student | 2 |
| *Racial/Ethnic Identity* | |
| Black | 3 |
| White | 4 |
| Latino | 4 |
| Black and White | 2 |
| Latino and White | 1 |
| Black and Latino | 1 |
| no answer | 1 |
| *Sexual Identity* | |
| Gay | 14 |
| Straight | 0 |
| Bisexual | 1 |
| no answer | 1 |
| *Gender Identity* | |
| Masculine (masc) | 8 |
| Feminine (fem) | 0 |
| In between (masc & fem) | 5 |
| both (more fem) | 1 |
| both (more masc) | 1 |
| no answer | 1 |
| *Socio-economic Status* | |
| High Class | 1 |
| High middle | 5 |
| Middle | 6 |
| Lower Middle | 1 |
| Working Class | 3 |

debriefing with the interviewers to make sure each interview question was asked and probed, if any questions made participants uncomfortable, and if the interviewers noticed whether certain questions elicited specific responses, such as asking a question about racism and the respondent taking some time to think about the question before answering or something of that sort. Additionally, I examined the interviewers notebooks to determine what, if anything, was picked up on during the interview process that may be important to the study. I include this information in this chapter.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. This was done purposefully so that any long pauses in between questions and responses could be

understood in the context of the question. For example, a question regarding condom usage might garner a slight hesitation from respondents, suggesting unease with the question. By transcribing everything–every pause, stutter, switch back and forth in a story and repeat of questions– I was able to get a better grasp of how participants felt and responded to questions. This was particularly important because I was not present during the Latino, White, and mixed Latino and White participant interviews. The transcribed interviews were assigned pseudonyms and coded and analyzed through NVivo qualitative analysis software. At the onset of the transcribing process, I began developing preliminary themes about experiences in the gay community in terms of race and sexuality. Through a more in depth use of NVivo I was able to generate more thorough themes that I could systematically organize relating to the intersections of race, sexuality, and sexual health practices. Interviews lasted approximately 1 h. I received IRB approval for this study and all of the respondents provided written informed consent to participate in this study.

After interviews were completed, participants were given an opportunity to ask any questions related to the subject matter addressed in the interview. They were also given the chance to ask the interviewer any questions. Some participants did ask questions in regards to what the study aimed to capture and what other people had to say. The answer was that the aim was to capture how race operated within the gay community and that other people's responses varied and respected a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. Some people also took the ending moment as the perfect opportunity to reflect on past answers they may have provided and felt they needed to add to and adjust or revise to represent more accurately what they thought about race and sexuality in the gay community.

## Results

Results from the in-depth interviews revealed the prevalence of sexual racism online and the ways in which it affected how the participants identified online in terms of gender performance and racial and sexual stereotypes. Specifically, many of the participants found ways in which to navigate the sexual marketplace of desire online via the creation of their profiles and allowing the profiles to either play on sexual racialized performance pertinent to their race or manipulate their profiles so that they increased potential mates. When asked how they identify online, Josue, a Latino MSM stated:

> When you set up your profile it asks you questions like what's your race and what's your body type and of course you could always omit those but I feel like if you fill those out it helps the person to kind of measure you up as far as like maybe putting your age or height, your weight. It helps with saying like oh well this is how this person is, you know, like this is their body type or whatever, so I do put those but I don't emphasize one over another. Like I just simply fill them out from the drop box and that's it…Sometimes people lie about their age, especially in the gay community, but I'm not ashamed of my age. I put body type to be average, black hair, brown eyes, um I don't think it asks if you're masc or fem, cus I don't remember putting anything for that…so I just put that as bottom…And what I'm looking for I put "dates," I put "sex, relationship," well actually I put "one on one sex" because some put group and I don't put that…

Josue helps us understand the mechanics of the online realm that allow users to use drop slots with answers to questions pertaining to weight, height, penis size and race. While the physical world allows for only so much expression of racial and sexual desire, the online realm fosters environments of racial and sexual stratification through the mechanisms of the profiles. Quantifying one's body, as Josue explains, "Helps the person to kind of measure you up," of course, at a distance where one can maintain ideals associated with race without having to be confronted with them in person.

> **Latino Interviewer: Do you show pictures of your face or your body?**
> *Ricardo: just my face.*
> **Latino interviewer: Why do you choose to present yourself in this way?**
> *Ricardo: Because I would expect the same from someone else. I want to know who I'm talking to. I don't want to be talking to a nipple, to a chest, or to an ass crack, you know. So that's my face and that's how I would talk to someone if I would talk to them.*

Ricardo, a 30 year-old Latino, posted a picture of himself on his profile in hopes of attracting men with pictures on their profiles as well. Still, while some may place their 'pics' and 'stats' on their profile in hopes of getting the same, the race of the user may affect who talks to them and may in fact shut them out of the equal trade. Deshawn explains how he is expected to present himself in a certain type of way:

> …Because I think, I think um, that the people, I think online have a definite idea of what they want. But if you're not what they want, they let you know. Or if you don't fit a certain mold, they let you know and they move on. Um, you know, so I think online, it's easier because you're not in front of that person so they can be more of their own selves, you know, like… all they see is the picture and they're like, uh, no. To where I think if they were in front of you, they'd try to be politically correct and maybe, you know, polite.…

Deshawn, a 40 year-old Black-Mexican man, felt like the online realm led to more upfront racism and gender disapproval. When asked if the people they were attracted to in the past changed in the present, the majority of the participants said yes. Despite this admission, what we desire may change from one moment to the next, as Deshawn explains; people still go online with "a definite idea of what they want." The responses about the online realm seem to suggest that seeking a partner for sex or relationships online creates an environment where desire is fixed. Thus, people may express what they want more blatantly without remorse. When ask if racial dynamics are the same online, Xavier, a half Latino and half Black MSM, responded:

> Xavier: No. I feel like online you create like a pseudo person that represents you but isn't really you. And so you get to, if you so choose, to be harsher and be stricter on what you're looking for.

McBride (2005) discussed a veil of anonymity online as the means for people to be as open and honest about their feelings and desires as they want because no one will know. Xavier, in the above quote, seems to have touched upon this very same veil in his discussion of racial dynamics online. Clearly, the veil is used to subjugate members of the Collective Black to blatant forms of racism. Similarly, Josue discusses the blatant forms of racism online shielded with the veil of anonymity:

> I think they are probably even worse. Like people are crude online and they tend to say a lot of nasty things. Like the online world acts like a little mask for you and people feel more empowered to say what they want to say and so people would say things online that they would never say in person so yeah I think the racial dynamics is probably even worse. If you go online you see on there like I don't like Blacks I don't like Whites, don't be Asian, like don't talk to me, just very negative. I see that a lot.

Both Xavier and Josue mention how one's online profile may represent a different self that is not "really you" and so expressing racial desire despite the possibility that that could change is allowed if you "so choose."

## Gender and Race Online

The contemporary reality of the intersection of technology and romance dictates that many men will meet online and the mechanism of the online world fosters racial environments where sexual racism exists along with rigid gender performances. Participants manage their identities online in order to present themselves in such a way that promotes an equal social exchange. Yet sexual racism locks men into racial and sexual stereotypes about gender roles and gender performance in the gay community. Sam, a 30 year old white male, describes how gender and race intersect online:

> **Are there any sexual stereotypes you notice online about the different races?**
> *Sam: Yeah, they all put masculine. All of them. Yeah, it's weird, they'll put masculine and they'll have eyebrows that look like they've been done with a sharpie. Or they'll say top and they got a picture of their [butt]. Totally opposite. And some that say masculine, apparently that means fat and hairy. Doesn't make them manly, just makes them fat and hairy.*

Here Sam helps illuminate what it means to be "masculine" online. According to Sam, different races consistently present themselves as masculine on their online profiles despite having an appearance that maybe more likely associated with effeminate behavior (such as sharpie drawn eye brows and pictures of their "[butt]" despite saying they are tops). Similarly, he touches on how masculine bodies seem to be associated with "fat and hairy" online. Xavier also elaborated on how the online realm provided a platform for race and gender to collide.

> *Um I tend to notice the, the sexual stereotype about big black men, big black [penises], that one. Also um smooth bottoms, smooth feminine, if you're feminine you tend to be a bottom, those are two of the main that I've noticed.*
> **Interviewer: Okay how are these stereotypes portrayed?**
> *Um by pictures, by numbers, by if you see on their profile a black guy and it has their cock size it's like ten plus or it'll be like 8 plus or some outrageous number or you see a picture of like a twink young smooth guy, usually his sexual role is bottom or vers bottom.*

As Xavier explains, being black online means having a large penis, whether or not this is the case in reality. He also juxtaposes "big black men" with large penis against "smooth bottoms" that are "feminine" and "tend to be a bottom." The contrast between the two clarifies that being black means being masculine and a top or insertive partner during anal intercourse versus feminine and a bottom or receptive partner during anal intercourse.

Despite the hostility that may be found online, a vast majority of the participants felt online dating was one of the main methods for meeting other men, leaving other options off the table for MSM and thus forcing them to be exposed to the racialized realm of cyber space. Miguel, a 31-year-old working class Latino claimed:

> Unfortunately, here in El Paso, we don't have so many options so it's either online or at the bars for most of the part. I mean I'm pretty sure you could find someone at school sometimes or at work, or at the store, it depends, but it's also high percentages of just bars and online.

Miguel clearly felt other options of meeting men were out of the picture and that it came down mostly to online. In this environment race and sexuality interlock shaping the hierarchy of desire.

Another display of the tri-racial stratification system in the gay community is evident in the manner in which participants prioritized their sexual and racial identities. Many of the Black participants felt like they had no choice in the matter and were at the mercy of the perceptions of others. When asked if he would prioritize your racial identity over your sexual identity, Jaden, a 47 year old Black male responded: "Yes, because it's obvious (laughs) um you know people always ask about racial identity as opposed to sexuality, and well as an African American you don't have a choice. You're Black when you're seen, so that's first. That's always first priority. It's how you're perceived." Jaden stresses how the ability to choose racial identity over sexuality is not available to Blacks. Will, a 57 year old Black man, echo's the sentiment by Jaden:

> One of the challenges that a lot of dark skinned people have, I think in America, is they don't have a choice. You go for a job interview they see your skin and automatically they make assumptions, they hear you speak, they make assumptions; they see how you're dressed and make assumptions. You can hide your sexuality but your race you can't hide. So what I learned through the period of time is to accept myself for who I am and be happy and not really care about what others think.

The ability to choose how to identify is not within reach for those who are Black, reaffirming the literature (Plummer 2005) that asserts this. Will also helps illuminate the way in which race extends beyond skin color. Being Black, according to Will, says something about the "way you speak" and "the clothes you wear" that may lead to "assumptions," giving weight to the argument that race is a performance. When asked how his race/ethnicity impacts his sexuality, Damarcus, a 31 year-old bar tender explained:

> *Damarcus: Well I think people consider me to be…they expect me to be more ghetto, rough, and thuggish, based on the way that I look. These are the things that I have gotten since I've been here. But it's…I hear it a lot when they get to know me they tell me I'm nothing about what I look like.*
> **Black interviewer: hmm I wonder what that means.**
> *Damarcus: it's just like well look how big I am, then you hear me talk and it's like a softer voice and things like that.*
> **Black interviewer: Ok um what other ways do you think it has impacted your sexuality?**
> *Damarcus: Well a lot of people automatically assume me to be this straight up "top".*
> **Black interviewer: Yea**

*Damarcus: You know what I mean but it's like I'll bottom every once and awhile. I consider myself more verse. But when it comes to that that is what I have encountered too…*

Damarcus too explains how being Black means more than just your skin color and goes into the realm of performance. Specifically, being Black is a personification of things "ghetto, rough, and thuggish." Although Damarcus identifies as "verse" or willing to be the dominant and passive partner during sex, he is almost always assumed to be the "top" or aggressor. Together, these examples point to the unique intersection of race and gender performance online in the gay community.

## Conclusion

The objective of this study was to analyze how race/ethnicity influences gender performance among men who have sex with men (MSM) on and offline. As such, the main data come from 16 in-depth interviews with White, Black, Latino, and Mixed-race MSMs. I began the analysis with an examination of MSM social networking sites. Here I found than an overwhelming majority of the participants expressed that the most common way to meet other MSMs was online. Participants manage their identities online in order to present themselves in such a way that increases their desirability by noting physical attributes such as their weight and height and body type in hopes of getting the same in return from potential partners. Yet sexual racism on and offline renders sexual, racial, and gendered performances without much fluidity. Moreover, the online realm enables users the veil of anonymity as a "mask" that hides who they really are in an effort to freely express what they desire, which more often than not is masculine tops and feminine bottoms. Of immense importance is the way gay black men are stereotyped to represent hyper masculine "thugs" and aggressive tops, either to the desire or the chagrin of White gay males. This study offers a unique examination of gay men's sexual lives online and how they illustrate the intersections of race, gender performance, and sexuality.

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# Part III
# Social Problems and Applications

# Punishing Abused Women: A Retrospective on a Ms. Magazine Blog

**R. Dianne Bartlow**

## Introduction

This chapter explores the social problem of child protection in disputed custody cases. It examines the plight of women facing biased courts favoring males in child custody decisions disputed by fathers who in some cases have histories of family violence and child abuse. The methodology used is unique both in terms of data and analyses. The data used are 59 reader commentaries on the Ms. Magazine Blog article focusing on the penalty often paid by abused women in family courts and child custody loss. The methodological lens employed is that of a participant-observer. I also analyze the discourses of responding bloggers using the Cultural Studies approach to reading and interpreting the "text." The blog responses depict mothers who have sought family courts in the hope of obtaining a fair resolution for themselves and the children they have put forth great effort to protect, and have found instead a family court system that often ignores evidence of domestic violence when making child custody decisions. The responses to the Ms. Magazine Blog article relating to the punitive treatment of abused women by facilitating their loss of child custody examined in this chapter suggests that even amidst the gains made to combat violence against women over the last 30 years, and important changes in institutional practices (namely in health care and criminal courts to better insure the protection of abused women and their children), "…the family courts remain a dark and terrifying gauntlet through which battered mothers must pass in their attempts to protect themselves and their children from the violence of their ex-husbands" (Silverman 2010, p. xxv). In short, family courts often exacerbate the trauma of women already victimized by positing their facilitating Parental Alienation Syndrome and its derivatives, in addition to using gag orders, inept experts, and an embrace of androcentric thinking, all while the mainstream media remains silent in regards to what has been called the "dirtiest little secret in America" (Hannah and Goldstein 2010, p. xxix). By utilizing the Cultural Studies approach to reading and interpreting

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the "text" of the Ms. Magazine blog responses on the abuse of mothers and children by family courts, we get a window into how Ms. Magazine readers view the issue of child custody as well as explore their own involvement in the custody battles.

## Background

I wrote a book review on *Domestic Violence, Abuse, and Child Custody* by Hannah and Goldstein for a Ms. Magazine blog article in May 2010. Within a week after the review posted, there were approximately 30 blog responses which came mostly from mothers who had experienced mistreatment by family courts and others familiar with the alarming abuse of women and children by the court system. There were also blogs posted by those who were angered and astonished that even in child custody battles where domestic violence has occurred, the battering parent, often the father, is given custody of the children in about 50% of the contested cases. In that article, a chilling example was given pertaining to a Daily Beast report by Cara Tabachnick (2010) whereby infant Wyatt Garcia was murdered by his father who subsequently turned the gun on himself. Tragically, this occurred after the infant's mother filed three separate motions in family court to get an order of protection against the father, Stephen Garcia, related to a bitter custody battle and was denied the request because she was viewed as "complaining woman," and someone who was lying. (p. 1). To date, 59 posts have been made with the vast majority echoing the nightmares protective mothers experience in family courts throughout the nation. It quickly became apparent the article had hit a nerve. These mothers had approached family courts in the hope of obtaining justice for themselves and the children they desperately tried to protect, and found instead a court that often ignored evidence of domestic violence when making child custody decisions.

The blog responses point to what appears to be a severe form of punishment that is being meted out to mothers who are navigating family courts for violating the patriarchal order of judges. Family courts victimize by the use of both labels such as Parental Alienation Syndrome as well as gag orders, inept experts, and an embrace of androcentric thinking. The blogs point to mothers who have sought family courts in the hope of obtaining justice for themselves and the children they have desperately tried to protect, and have found instead a system that operates as an instrument of oppression and one that often ignores evidence of domestic violence when making child custody decisions.

## Methodology

This chapter presents my entry into the Ms. blogosphere and an analysis of the discourse of responding bloggers. The data used are 59 reader commentaries, written from May 2010 to August 2012, on the Ms. Magazine Blog article I wrote in May 2010, a book review on *Domestic Violence, Abuse, and Child Custody* by

Mo Therese Hannah and Barry Goldstein. These respondents focused on the punitive approach toward abused women in family courts and attendant child custody loss. I analyze the discourses of responding bloggers using the Cultural Studies approach to reading and interpreting the "text." Through this analysis common themes emerged: experiences in court; questions of who is to blame; the structure of the family court; the biases of family courts and judges; the role of "experts"; media coverage; Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS); and the impact of early law on child custody loss.

## Background to Cultural Studies Approach and Use of Feminist Theories

Kellner (2003) indicates that media culture; including radio, television, film and other linked products which we can herein include blogs, not only "dramatize and legitimate the power of the forces that be," but "show the powerless that they must stay in their places or be oppressed" (p. 9). He adds, "[t]he media are a profound and often misperceived source of cultural pedagogy" in that "[t]hey contribute to educating us" on "how to behave and what to think, feel, believe, fear, and desire—and what not to" (p. 9). What is key to this chapter's exploration is that Cultural studies "is valuable because it provides some tools that enable one to read and interpret one's culture critically" (Kellner 2003, p. 10).

According to Zeisler, cultural studies "is the all-purpose umbrella term for interdisciplinary examinations of a phenomenon or phenomena related to novels, films, social values, influence and ideology" (2008, p. 5). Kellner (2003) suggests a text is any cultural artifact that can be read, analyzed, interpreted, and criticized for the way in which it illuminates a particular ideology or representation in order to study the interplay between representations and ideologies of class, gender, race, ethnicities, and nationality and, the way they are presented in popular culture.

Central to such an analysis are three components; "the production and political economy of culture, cultural texts, and the audience reception of those texts and their effects" (Kellner 2003, p. 12). According to Kimmel and Messner (2004), the pioneering work of feminist scholars in traditional disciplines, women's studies and in other arenas has helped to further awareness about how gender operates, throughout many of our societal institutions that inform our ideological frames of reference.

Mann (2012) suggests that *theory* is designed to help us make sense of the worlds in which we live. In this process, we develop concepts, discourses, and theories that aid in organizing our reflections on reality, and ways we can make this knowledge intelligible[1] Mann asserts that theories can help "place individual items within a

[1] To this end, Mann states that "**concepts**" are abstractions that help us to categorize or group similar individual features of social reality, and that "**discourses**" are historical ways of specifying knowledge that links concepts into ideas that enable writing, speaking, thinking and acting. She adds, "**Theories** are developed discourses that offer a general account of how a range of phenomena are systematically interconnected" (pp. 8–9).

larger context to understand both the whole and the parts constituting the whole" (2012, p. 9). In drawing upon Jagger and Rothenberg, Mann argues that feminism[2] is "incipiently theoretical" in that "it understands the plights of individual women as connected with each other, as instances of *systemic subordination* rather than as results of individual, accidental, or coincidental misfortune" (2012, p. 9).

In drawing upon Beasley (1999), Mann (2012) notes that some authors would rather categorize their work as "critical practices," "critical stances," or "critical inquiries" (p. 10). The key here, addressed by Kesselman et al. (2008) is that "[w]omen studies scholars working both within and across disciplines have generated new concepts and approaches to understanding the world." The authors add…. "we cannot understand the world without factoring in women's experiences and perspectives" (p. 8). To this end, "[F]eminism has never rejected motherhood but instead has attempted to improve the conditions under which women mother" (Shaw and Lee 2004, p. 16).

This analysis builds upon the groundbreaking literature focusing on the intersection of domestic violence and child custody (see Chesler 1986, 2011; Neustein and Lesher 2005; Winner 1996; Hannah and Goldstein 2010). This work focuses on the oppression of women and mothers by family courts with an eye to how blogs add a unique and valuable avenue for deciphering how the public at large, and mothers in particular, respond to the operations of societal institutions including the legal institution via the family court system that involve loss of custody of their children.

The analysis also helps to offer an account of how a range of phenomena are systematically interconnected while drawing upon women's studies and the interdisciplinary fields of cultural and feminist legal studies. Moller-Okins (1989) suggests, "[T]he potential significance of feminist discoveries and conclusions about gender for issues of social justice cannot be overemphasized" (p. 7). These discoveries she adds, undermine centuries of argument that began with the idea of a differentiation of women and men with the domination of women by men, "being natural," and "therefore inevitable," and not included in considerations about justice. Moller-Okins suggests that while "such notions cannot stand up to rational scrutiny, they not only still survive but flourish in influential places," (1989, p. 7).

Moller-Okins adds that while for decades "…feminists have been intensely thinking, researching, analyzing, disagreeing about, and rethinking the subject of gender; our political and legal institutions have been increasingly faced with issues concerning the injustices of gender and their effects." She indicates, "[t]hese issues are being decided within a fundamentally patriarchal system," (1989, p. 7) where males are presumed to be the head of households. According to Moller Okin, "[t]here is clearly a major 'justice crisis' in contemporary society arising from issues of gender" (1989, p. 7).

[2] Amy Kesselman et al. (2008), suggest feminism "refers to the belief that women have been historically subordinate to men as well as to the commitment to working for freedom for women in all aspects of social life" (p. 11).

## Use of Ms. Blogasphere in Research

Ms. Magazine represents a rich diversity of feminist thought with a commitment to the exploration of a myriad of stories that examine the contours of women's experiences and lives. By extension, the Ms. Magazine blogs represent the readers who respond to articles on a diverse range of topics and issues, many of which have impacted and mirror their own lives. As such, the Ms. Magazine blog responses provide a glimpse into how an article focusing on the abuse of mothers and children by family courts is a window into how Ms. Magazine readers view the issue of child custody. The blog posters also illuminate their own involvement in the custody battles.

## Experiences in Court

Blogger *Nancy Lee Grahn* (2010) suggested the Ms. Magazine article was appreciated and "true" based on her own experience in family court. Grahn explained, "It was the worst experience of my life and my child is still suffering the trauma of it" (p. 12).

In contrast, the blog entries also highlight why one person was adverse to a focus on the experiences of mothers and children in family courts, and by implication to the book review of *Domestic Violence, Abuse, and Child Custody*, which spurred the discussion.

## Are Women Blameless?

*Venice* (2010) is one of two bloggers who suggested readers should not assume that women are "blameless" because in this view, women may be "culpable" for the violence against them (p. 6). Not surprisingly there were blog responses to *Venice* expressing outrage and which served to educate the blogger on the severity of violence against women, but the idea is that Ms. Magazine blogs provide a space for readers to share their thoughts and experiences. A key point is that blogs provide a site where analysis can occur. In this case, the blogs illuminate the tenor and sentiment of mothers who are otherwise "fit" parents and the challenges they face in their engaging in child custody battles with an oppressive court system and the myth that mothers always win custody.

In "Batterer Manipulation and Retaliation Compounded by Denial and Complicity in Family Courts," Lawyer Joan Zorza (2010) suggests:

> [w]hile there is a belief that mothers almost always win custody cases…it is simply not a given and that men who abuse their female intimate partners, largely though false accusations, harassment, manipulation, intimidation, have been surprisingly successful in winning custody and often driving their victims into poverty. (pp. 14–2)

## The Family Court

Zorza argues "Abusive men not only harass their victims, many harass their partners' lawyers and manipulate those in and connected with the court system who are supposed to insure that children are placed with their better parent in a safe, nurturing environment" (2010, pp. 14–2). She explains, this makes it "all the stranger that about half of the time batterers win custody in family courts and are actually more likely to win custody than men who do not abuse their partners" (2010, pp. 14–2).

Blogger *Abusers never lie, yeah right* (2010), expressed her astonishment that family courts mistreat mothers, and that the system operates under a veil to oppress women seeking justice:

> This is a national crisis and people put in place to protect children from abuse are enabling abusers at alarming rates. There is a new kind of abuse A Stalking through family courts. Women once thought that IF they could get out and IF they could get divorced they would be safe and free from abuse. Not anymore. Dare to ask for help in family court and you just bought yourself a front row ticket to hell. (p. 15)

## The Role of "Experts"

In drawing upon Zorza's (2010) work, the blog article points out that among those who are contributing to the exacerbation of mothers' oppressive treatment when they attempt to protect their children from sexual or physical abuse and themselves from domestic violence, are mental health experts who serve as mediators, and evaluators when custody is contested, in addition to supervisors of visitation or counselors that are utilized by family courts (Bartlow 2010). Unfortunately according to Zorza, these experts that family courts routinely rely upon are not knowledgeable about domestic violence as courts assume. She argues "…the vast majority of the experts upon whom the courts rely have never received adequate training in intimate violence or child sexual abuse…" and that "…their professional schools seldom teach the subjects, and 40% of those working in mental health fields in the United States admit they have never received *any* training about child sexual abuse" (pp. 14–9). Worse, Zorza suggests "The content of what little training exists in schools and in continuing education programs is often questionable or outright misleading…" She argues a mere "one-hour" is common and deemed sufficient for such training over the mental health expert's career (pp. 14–9). Compounding the problem, Zorza explains that even when these experts get on-the-job training unaffected knowledge is unlikely to manifest. This is because even though some mental health experts may get good training in these areas of family court most are "… already so indoctrinated in crediting what men say, or blaming women, or disbelieving women's allegations about DV and incest, that few are able to absorb what they are being taught" (pp. 14–9). Zorza adds, "One of the country's best experts in child sexual abuse maintains that only 10% of custody evaluators know enough about incest to not be dangerous to women and children in cases in which such allegations are raised" (pp. 14–9).

Blogger *Lorraine* (2010) echoed this sentiment suggesting she was jailed for contempt after her child refused to be further abused by her abusive father. In her blog, *Lorraine* pointed to what she described as a "cottage industry of mental health professionals and attorneys with cozy relationships with family court judges" who "routinely bankrupt families with enormous court-ordered fees and often recommend that children be placed with their sexually or physically abusive fathers" (p. 10). *Lorraine* added "Family court judges frequently ignore evidence of abuse, refuse to hear direct testimony from the children, and rubber stamp their cronies' recommendations." Moreover, *Lorraine* explains that "Nurturing mothers are forced to pay costly fees to attend supervised visits with the children they raised, watching helplessly as their children continue to report abuse by their abusers to uncaring visitation monitors" (p. 10). *Lorraine* argues "Mothers who speak out about the system failure often face judicial retaliation and lose what little time they have with their children" (p. 10). Moreover, she suggests "The unregulated cottage industry churns away, generating hundreds of thousands of dollars in fees to experts, while some of the worst cases settle only when the children turn 18." She aptly surmised that "This is a national epidemic that is destroying families across America" (p. 10).

Chesler (2011) suggests imagining a mother having to endure the minutiae of legal wrangling when their child's life is at stake, and when the rent or mortgage cannot be paid, or when a "good-enough lawyer" cannot be afforded, and "when you are afraid that you will lose your mind as well as your children":

> Then multiply whatever you're feeling with the experience of having to endure the actual litigation, which may last anywhere from four to twenty very intense years and which take over your waking and sleeping life. Mothers and their supportive families have routinely been impoverished by such lawsuits. Some mothers have also lost their jobs, friends, family, and their physical and mental health. (p. 225)

## A Broken System

Neustein and Lesher (2005) also point out that their study pertaining to the reasons protective mothers and their children are fleeing family court included an assessment by the National Organization of Women (NOW) chapter in New York State that highlighted one out of every two calls to the NOW organization on a daily basis is from a mother who lost custody because she tried to get the family court to protect her and her child from sexual abuse committed by the father.

Hannah and Goldstein (2010) wonder what is the remedy in the handling of cases involving domestic violence and child abuse, and question whether family courts as currently structured are "reparable" or, "irretrievably broken" particularly when domestic violence and battles over child custody are involved (p. xxix).

Blogger *Believe children, please!* (2010) wrote that she believed the family courts in the lone star state (Texas) were indeed broken. She suggested that there were 25 women she was aware of in Dallas family courts who lost access to their children for calling attention to the abuse they and their children had experienced. She added, "All they did was ask the court to protect them and the abuser got

custody." Her blog points to what she termed "corruption" in family courts and the helplessness many mothers feel. "…there is nothing else a loving mother can do other than go public and articles like this really help? Thank you!!!" (p. 15).

Blogger *Victoria Blessing* (2010) highlighted public efforts occurring whereby mothers from across the country who had experienced judicial retaliation for protecting their children from abuse would be banner carriers for reforming what she called a "broken court system" as part of a national effort to protest the malfunctioning of the family courts in a Washington D.C. march. Blessing suggested "Courts are giving children to known abusive parents and severing all contact with loving, non-abusive parents who have been the primary caretakers of the involved children" (p. 4). Drawing upon the Ms. Magazine blog article, she pointed out that 75 children had been murdered by their father, after allegations, threats and proof of abuse that was ignored by the courts. Blessing argued that with the blood of dead children on their hands, judges insist they are right while ignoring laws that regulate their conduct. She added these judges disregard evidence that to reasonable people would point to providing protection by those being harmed. Blessing's blog statement pointed to the lack of accountability in family courts suggesting laws designed to regulate the conduct of judges were granted through an initiative process whereby voters agreed judges should regulate themselves in preserving judicial independence. She added her belief that even though the judicial branch is supposed to be independent of the checks and balances inherent in our system of government, judges have a mandate to be independent but that independence is obstructed when they "act and rule as a group" (p. 4).

## The Role of Judges

The role of judges in the family court system is illuminated in Brigner's work. (2010). Having worked for three decades as a family law litigator, domestic relations court judge and judicial educator, Judge Brigner argues some judges think like abusers. In drawing upon Sociology professor James Ptacek's work on the similarity in thinking between judges and abusers, Brigner suggests "The abuser can berate the victim as unstable, stupid, and not credible; the judge can confirm her inconsequence by paternalistic demeanor, denial of protection, and by treating her claims as lies" (2010, pp. 13–5). Moreover, Brigner argues judges erroneously believe violence ends upon separation, and that violent husbands can be good fathers. He suggests judges also fail to recognize litigation abuse.

Blogger *Jen* (2010) suggested in the current structure of family courts, she had little faith justice would ever be served in her behalf. She wrote, "any custody fight would destroy me." She added that she thought she had a better chance of mothering her daughter even if it meant remaining in an abusive situation. "There's a fight on and it's against women who have been battered, it's so bad now that they take battered women to jail…" (p. 6). Blogger *Jennifer* (2010) suggested that it was only through a "technicality" that she has managed to keep her child safe for roughly 70 % of the time. She asked, "Am I selfish to want 100 % for her and I?" (p. 8).

Co-editor of *Domestic Violence, Abuse, and Child Custody* Barry Goldstein (2010) wrote a response to the Ms. Magazine blog article suggesting that what compounds the malfunctioning of family courts is that overall there has been a failure in the national media to expose the crisis in the custody court system:

> We wondered if the definitive research in the book and the discussion of the media's role would encourage coverage of this critical issue. How many children could have been saved from unspeakable torture if the media's role had covered the Catholic Church sex scandal sooner. Of course who would believe respected clergy could commit such heinous acts and other clergy would cover it up. For years it has been hard for the media to believe respected judges could routinely force children to live with abusers, but now the research is overwhelming. The problem is that 30+ years ago at a time when there was no research available, the custody court system developed practices to respond to domestic violence. We now have a specialized body of research that establishes these standard practices are outdated and discredited. The problem is that judges and other professionals in the courts have heard the same misinformation their entire careers so that it is deeply ingrained. *Barry Goldstein* (p. 7).

What specific practices are outdated and discredited in family courts?What misinformation have judges and professionals connected to the system been using that works against any modicum of justice and fairness for mothers trying to keep their children and themselves safe? And what has been the role of the media in exposing what has been called "the dirtiest little secret in America" (Hannah and Goldstein 2010, p. xxix).

## Inept Media Coverage of Child Custody Scandals and PAS

A few bloggers posted website links to newspaper articles and organizations dedicated to exposing family court scandals in addition to further academic research and resources. Blogger *Rochelle* (2010) posted a link to one 2009 story that did receive some media attention and one rare story that was broadcast on ABC-10 in San Diego. It highlighted the testimony of Joyce Murphy before a state assembly committee hearing on "Domestic Violence: The Interest of the Child." Murphy kidnapped her own daughter to protect her from her estranged husband who had been convicted of child molestation. In the news story, Murphy detailed how both the San Diego Family Court and district attorney refused to listen to her and instead repeatedly brought up Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS) as the reason Murphy did not want her daughter to visit with her father (Clement and Atkinson 2009).

Hannah and Goldstein (2010) expose the harmful court practices that have evolved over the last two decades including the Parental Alienation Syndrome (PAS), and "friendly parent" statutes that they say have "coalesced to form the toxic landscape facing litigating mothers" (p. xxxiii). According to Zorza (2010) PAS "assumes abuse allegations are largely trumped up, and not only silences mothers for seeking to protect themselves or their children from their abusive partners," it also "punishes" them. With such an approach, Zorza suggests family violence is discounted, and abusers are empowered while battered women are disempowered. Zorza argues that ultimately children are harmed (pp. 1–8). She adds when PAS is

raised, and accompanying allegations that it is mothers who alienate children from their fathers, the result is that mothers deserve to be punished by depriving them of custody and, in some cases, even visitation with their children. "The American Psychological Association characterized PAS as having no scientific basis," according to Zorza. She asserts this fact renders PAS junk science and therefore as a concept, it has "no audience except in the family court system" (pp. 1–10).

Blogger *kat* (2010) argued "…the question is whether courts hold a double standard that allows abusive men access to their children, because child abuse is somehow more acceptable or normal than that from women" (pp. 13–14). The bulk of her post focused on this standard:

> Note that PAS applies specifically to the father—there is no corresponding statute saying that a child hostile to his mother has been "poisoned" by the father—…you see the issue…I suspect the ongoing myth that women are more manipulative than men plays a part here as well. Domestic abusers and sexual predators of both sexes tend to be very adept manipulators, but if the courts automatically assume men do not have the same ability (and a lot of people do think this) then they will be tricked, manipulated, and rendered impotent by those men over and over again. (p. 14)

Blogger *Believe children, please!* (2010) echoed this sentiment suggesting, "Who has more of reason to lie? An innocent child or a man who it trying to elude jail for molesting his child" (p. 15).

In the Murphy case, the court ordered overnight visitation in face of the evidence presented. Though Murphy now has permanent custody of her daughter, it wasn't before she was jailed for felony kidnapping, lost custody of her daughter to her ex-husband for 6 years, and was granted only limited visitation. Her ex-husband Henry Parsen, now behind bars was accused of hurting three girls, two of them younger than 14 years old, according to ABC I-10 Reporter Lauren Reynolds (2009). The charges against Parsen also included oral sex with a child, molestation, possessing child porn and using a child to make porn.

Blogger *dads get special treatment* (2010) suggested, "If I were violated, sexually or physically, no one would ever force me to be in the same room with the monster who hurt me let alone force me to live with him…so why does the child welfare system throw these cases into family court and force these young victims to have contact with the person they say hurt them?" (p. 16).

Waller (2010) argued "At present, PAS and its derivatives have become so entrenched in the mentality of the courts that the same drivel is routinely passed along to reporters, who often buy into it" (p. 15–10). She suggests reporters take experts' opinions without questioning the assessments made, and seek out the pro-PAS lobby first when covering PAS stories whether the story is pro or con. Waller adds the pro-PAS group is comprised of Fathers Rights (FRs) advocates and their enablers, few of whom are battered and bankrupt, like the noncustodial mothers who have little energy to organize.

> If reporters are not strongly committed to getting the whole story, they might be duped by the pro-PAS regiment. So it does not take much for reporters to miss half the story, or get it wrong entirely, all the while thinking they have done their due diligence by getting quotes from "experts". (pp. 15–11)

In drawing upon the family law experience of attorney Richard Ducote, Waller (2010) suggests, what getting the other side of story amounts to for the mainstream media (MSM), is depictions of mothers routinely espousing false allegations with no context for any abuse that has occurred. She explains the story might get nixed altogether if the pro-PAS group decides not to comment on the story. "I believe that the refusal of alleged abusers to talk to the press is a strategy used by FRs groups to keep the media from covering these stories…if one side will not talk, that guarantees the media's silence" (pp. 15–20). Waller adds, "The MSM may use 'fair and balanced' as an excuse for a number of their failings, but I maintain that it is fear that is preventing the media from exposing the family court problems" (pp. 15–20).

In short, Waller (2010) argues that while the family courts have failed miserably in protecting and dispensing justice for abused children and their mothers, (MSM) has also played its own role in this failure. She maintains the news coverage of the family court arena is rare and, focuses only on acrimonious custody battles, is typically sensationalized, and usually blames the victim. Moreover, it is often only when someone dies that MSM covers a story. "So the media accepts, death, injury, or jail as ways to wrap up a story," according to Waller (pp. 15–14).

On the macro side when thinking of the larger structural forces at play, she suggests that after the Reagan era's deregulation of media corporations, there is now a "near-deafness, dumbness, and blindness of the media regarding the hopelessly flawed condition of the nation's family court system" which has "risen to the level of complicity" (pp. 15–2). Waller questions how the atrocity of what goes on in family courts goes largely unnoticed, and unaddressed by the media in a nation that prides itself on respect for family values, human rights, and justice for all. While there are a host of contributing factors for ineptness of MSM to cover child custody cases, Waller argues that key amongst them is that the media lacks "guts" in its quest for "eyeballs" and "advertising" (pp. 15–4).

When the media do report on contested custody cases, mothers are often depicted as villains. In her article, Elizabeth (2010) argues that the construction of custody abduction cases in particular are presented as tugs-of-love-and-war. Elizabeth suggests "…the media draws on and plays into a social dispute, waged most obviously between fathers' rights activists and domestic violence advocates, over children's living arrangements following parental separation" (p. 51). She adds, custody disputes operating at the individual and social level have a highly gendered overtone:

> Over the last twenty years the importance attached to fathers for children's well-being has grown considerably, a situation that can be attributed to the actions of a number of disparate actors that include fathers rights groups, members of the therapeutic and legal professions, and neo-conservative and neo-liberal politicians. (p. 52)

According to Elizabeth, the fathers' rights movement (FRM) emerged in response to feminist challenges to male social dominance, and within the heterosexual nuclear family. She explains that "…the FRM has become a global phenomenon that has, despite differences in tactics, forcefully mounted two interrelated arguments as part of what some call a backlash against the gains made for women by the women's movement" (p. 52) The two arguments include the notion that fathers are

discriminated against by family courts in that there is a belief, so the FRM's argue, that presumes mothers are the better caretakers, and that "mothers have become overly powerful figures who are not immune from misusing their power to selfishly and vindictively deprive fathers (and children) of an important relationship" (p. 52).

Thus, she adds, particular attention has been given to making central the claims of fathers within family law. In this scenario, there is a "…propensity of the law to construct mothers who oppose 'continued fathering,' for any reason except proven physical or sexual violence, as 'implacably hostile' rather than caring and protection" (p. 52). Moreover argues Elizabeth, at the extreme, children are removed from otherwise good mothers with legal restrictions placed on her relationship to her children, and contact with her children limited to supervised access visits.

In this regard, Elizabeth maintains that "[m]edia representations of high profile custody disputes…have clear ramifications for commonplace custody disputes, affecting how parents in ordinary disputes manage and interpret the dispute, as well as affecting those who seek to influence the disputing parties" (pp. 52–53). Counselors, psychologists, lawyers and judges are among the court players wielding influence in contested custody deliberations in addition to politicians, according to Elizabeth.

Blogger *Susan* (2010) suggested that she was abused by her husband for two decades, and nearly killed by him on three occasions. She indicated that she was devastated financially, sexually abused by two lawyers involved in her case, and has had to endure a life filled with fear as a result. Although *Susan* stated she has been proactive in trying to get laws passed to help protective mothers, she asserted that the actions of abusive courts and their agents contributes to the reasons why women stay with abusers particularly when these courts deny justice to women thereby furthering their victimization.

## Impact of Early Law on Child Custody Loss

Blogger *CRoss* (2010) pointed to the impact of early law on the functioning of family courts today. She suggested that for insight into why dads get special treatment, bloggers could look to some of the archaic laws regulating marriage and divorce. The blogger alluded to California's Family and Conciliation Courts and the laws used that provide the basis for custody switching programs across the country. *CRoss* suggested that the Family Conciliation Court Law in California specifically gives the family court jurisdiction over abuse cases, and indicates a child has a primary right to both parents. CRoss added, it also authorizes government funding, especially for Responsible Fatherhood and Access to Visitation programs. She pointed out that mediation is used in cases that result in abuse victims being forced to "share" the child with the perpetrator.

Levit and Verchick (2006) explain that "Until the late nineteenth century, fathers held rights to custody over children upon divorce, on the theory that offspring, like property, were within the husband's control" (p. 174). The authors point out that

though custody laws have changed over time, "…in those contested cases, fathers obtain custody 70 % of the time" (p. 175). In his chapter "Historical Legal Context in Domestic Violence Custody Cases," Lawyer Marvin Gray (2010), expands on the early history of child custody suggesting that "…in the written law of ancient civilizations women and children were generally treated as property in most if not all ways"(pp. 3–10). He explains that the ruler used judges and laws to govern human activities and behaviors including custody of children, and divorce among other things including marriage. These laws and customs Gray argues, are still influencing family courts today even though they are invisible to many participants in the court system. He adds, these early laws and customs were created to place fathers in clear positions of power over their wives, slaves, and children in the household, and considered the fathers the general manager of the property and wealth of the family.

## The Role of Secrecy

Journalist Karen Winner (1996) suggests that "So much of what goes on in local divorce court is hidden from public scrutiny. So little can be taken at face value" (p. xv). She argues three factors must be taken into account in any assessment: "the acrimony between divorcing spouses: the lawyers' and judges' strongly entrenched custom of not reporting their colleagues' misconduct and; the secret workings of the lawyer disciplinary committees and judicial conduct commissions" (p. xv). According to Winner:

> Divorce court lawyers and judges often insist on secrecy and routinely forbid clients from attending discussions about their cases. They do this by holding conferences in the judge's chambers. The litigant is prohibited from attending the secret proceeding even as a spectator. These chambers conferences are held "off the record" without witnesses and without court stenographers, so the client must rely on her lawyer for any information about what went on. (p. 147)

This invisible court power is what so many of the Ms. Magazine bloggers referred to illuminating the mechanisms that contribute to the extreme punishment dealt by family courts.

## Conclusion

This chapter examined the discourses of 59 bloggers responding to a blog on the punitive response (i.e. punishment) to abused women in family courts and child custody loss. I used the Cultural Studies approach to reading and interpreting the "text." This analysis found common themes emerged: experiences in court; questions of who is to blame; the structure of the family court; the biases of family courts and judges; the role of "experts"; media coverage; parental alienation syndrome; and the impact of early law on child custody loss. Some may argue the Ms. Magazine

blogs represent nothing more than mere opinion espoused by biased women, yet the overwhelming evidence points to the assessment that their comments do indeed mirror a family court system operating to punish mothers engaged in child custody court battles, to disbelieve abused women, and ultimately harming protective mothers and the children involved in such disputes. The experience of one blogger highlights a system out of control. *Sassy* (2010) suggested her son survived being shot by her abuser, but he will have a bullet hole in him the rest of his life to remind him. Astonishingly, *Sassy* (2010) explained the Williamsburg, Virginia police allowed her abuser to go back to the scene of the crime and clean it up before they sent a patrolman to talk to him over 20 minutes later. Equally surprising, *Sassy* suggested the investigators never came to the scene until the next day, after the abuser spent the night in the house. *Sassy* explained that after she filed for divorce on grounds of violence, the judge overseeing her case allowed the sealing of her abuser's record of abuse. This later move is one used in family courts to silence women who dare to speak out against domestic violence.

"Gag orders are the ultimate means used by family courts to silence and control an aggrieved party," according to Zorza (2010). She explains "Courts sometimes go as far as forbidding a party to raise abuse allegations in court, preventing the court from ever deciding whether the complaints were valid" (pp. 1–28). Zora contends further that gag orders are a ploy that prevents an abused party from validating her experience, getting support, or achieving healing. She explains that "While gag orders are officially justified as vindicating the court's orders and protecting the privacy of the family, and especially that of children, in actuality they protect the court and abuser from being publicly shamed while reinforcing the victim's feelings of desperation, isolation, self-blame, and shame" (pp. 1–29).

Blogger *Victoria Blessing* (2010) offered her solution for the malfunctioning family court system:

> Together we must tell judges they have responsibility, not power… These courageous women, and their helpless children, need our protection and attention. We must demand, wherever these abuses are identified, effective, careful and immediate review of all cases where protection under the law has been withheld, and coordinated emergency protective, medical, legal, and psychological services delivered to affected children and family members –along with a thorough public outreach campaign encouraging victims to come forward to receive relief and assistance. (pp. 4–5)

Recently, a cameraperson and I attended a family court proceeding in the Los Angeles Superior Court pertaining to a contested custody case in the hopes of shooting the proceedings as part of a documentary the author of this article is producing. We were unable to film the proceedings even though we had asked for such access. The presiding judge in the case never responded to our request to film the proceeding, and the court media representative indicated such requests were usually not granted. Still, the cameraperson and I were astonished but not entirely surprised, that the case represented yet another instance of a protective mother being threatened with the loss of custody. In this case, the protective mother's lawyer argued during the hearing that very probably her client was a no show in court due to fear of the abusive father. The lawyer also argued that the father who was a rabbi had previously

sexually molested one of the children in question and that because of that alleged occurrence, the mother might have been afraid to appear in court with the abuser. The attorney for the protective mother indicated that even she had not been able to reach the protective mother and was concerned for her safety. Still, the judge in the case, ordered this protective mother to appear in court on the next day and, indicated that if this protective mother did not appear, she could very well lose custody of her children and be held in contempt of court. The loss of a child under any circumstances is devastating. But more egregious is when the state sanctions such loss with undue cause as the Ms. Magazine blog responses suggest and the research corroborates, in addition to a media that fails to report or, at best underreports such instances of injustice, often framed with protective mothers as villains. This must stop.

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# Constructing Families: Gay Male and Lesbian Foster Families

**Mary Ann Davis**

## Introduction

This chapter uses demographic data to examine the family structure of gay males and lesbians and their biological and non biological children. The heterosexual bias in marriage and family laws in the U.S. is under current question. As of June 2013, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled on two of these laws, Proposition 8 and the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). To summarize after voters in California passed Proposition 8, banning same sex marriages, proponents challenged and Proposition 8 was found to be unconstitutional "under the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment" (United States Supreme Court 2013a, p. 1) In Hollingsworth Et Al v. Perry et al the United States Supreme Court (2013a) ruled that the parties who challenged the Ninth Circuit Court, which found that Proposition 8 was unconstitutional, did not have standing. Thus, the Supreme Court decision allowed same sex marriage in California. Next, in United States V. Windsor, Executor Of The Estate Of Spyer, Et Al found that DOMA was unconstitutional, thus, supporting same sex marriages. Current civil rights discourse supporting the legal rights to marriage and adoption by gay males and lesbians brings to light the dearth of data about the actual family structures today.

The reality of the American family is very different from the ideal American family as neither individuals nor families follow a rigid heterosexual orientation Sexual orientation is composed of multiple aspects of behaviors, orientation, and identification and is influenced by factors such as age, location, and situation. Family composition is also highly variable. Children enter gay and lesbian households in many ways. The children raised by gays and lesbians may be from a former or current heterosexual relationship, be biologically related to one or both partners, be conceived through assisted reproduction utilizing insemination or surrogacy or be either foster or adoptive children (Baumle et al. 2009).

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This chapter addresses what can be learned about current sexual orientation from a current national survey. First, I explore the background of research on sexual orientation and the data limitations. Next, I use National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) ASCI 2006–2010 data, merged with NSFG open access files, to explore the following research questions. First: how are individuals identified as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, and bisexual across behavior, attraction, and orientation? Second: what are the demographic characteristics of these individuals? Third: are there children, including foster children, in the households of gay and lesbian individuals? Fourth: do gay males and lesbians report a different presence of children and foster children than heterosexuals?

## Background

### *Assumption of Sexual Dualism*

Assumptions within the U.S that either all are heterosexual or there is a dualistic heterosexual or homosexual orientation have been long challenged by sex researchers who have argued that this is a simplistic and inaccurate approach. In the 1950s Margaret Mead challenged this western conception that gender identity roles are universal through her comparison of the Arapesh, Mundugumor, and Tchambuli tribes. Observations of these multiple and differing gender roles disproved the hypothesis that Western gender roles are universal. Arapesh men and women were both nurturing, following the feminine role; Mundugumor men and women were both aggressive following the masculine role; Tchambuli gender roles were the reverse of what was expected in the West.

Kinsey, Pomery, and Martin (1948/1998) stated the dualist argument was multifaceted. First, that sexual orientation is innate beginning at birth and does not change over the lifetime. Second, that there are physical, mental, and personality characteristics that distinguish homosexuals from heterosexuals. Third, that these characteristics are obvious and so recognizable by all (Kinsey et al. 1953/1998).

Kinsey's research debunked all of these arguments. Instead, he found there to be a continuum of gender identity that may be fluid, changing across a lifetime. Thus he posited the Kinsey Scale: 0- exclusively heterosexual with no homosexual, 1- predominantly heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual, 2- predominantly heterosexual but more than incidentally homosexual, 3- equally heterosexual and homosexual, 4- predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual, 5- predominantly homosexual, only incidentally heterosexual, and 6- exclusively homosexual (Kinsey et al. 1948, pp. 636–659).

Other researchers agreed with both the continuum and fluidity of sexual orientation. Klein et al. (1985) argued that the Kinsey scale was limited as it did not take into consideration important multivariable aspects… "attraction, behavior, fantasy, lifestyle, emotional preference, social preference, self-identification" (1985, p. 38) as well as changes in life situations across stages of development. Klein's Sexual

Grid allowed for this variability by including sexual attraction, sexual behavior, sexual fantasies, emotional preference, social preference, self-identification, and hetero/gay lifestyle across three dimensions; past, present and ideal (1985, p. 39).

Although the dualistic construction of sexual identity disallowed bisexuality and created the belief that it did not exist, early sexual researchers noted that there were greater portions of bisexuals than either lesbians or gay males. (Kinsey, Pomery, and Martin 1948/1998) groundbreaking sexual research found that bisexuality was common; possibly 50 % of the population had bisexual experiences. In spite of the long-standing research, bias continues against bisexuals which limits their identification and thus inclusion in research (Powell et al. 2010). Rust (2000a, b) identifies a masculine research bias in sexual identity research which, along with prejudice against bisexuals, perpetuates gaps in examining situational homosexuality and bisexuality.

## *Data Limitations*

As a demographer, I am concerned that there are limited available data that describe the current sexual orientation of the U.S. population. The gold standard for population based data in the United States is census data. This consists of population information collected every 10 years supplemented by the American Community Survey which is collected annually to every 3 years, depending on the size of the community population. Next, are population based national surveys and vital statistics data (birth, marriage, divorce, death records) through the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). However, there has been a deficiency of United States data coverage of same sex relationships as all of these national data listed above have the ongoing issue of a lack of data on gay and lesbians. This limits the demographic analysis as demographers examine population characteristics through using these existing data.

The dearth of data is slowly changing. In 2000 U.S. Census allowed researchers to obtain vital data on same sex partnered couples through examining household relationships to the household head. This began a spate of articles examining data on same sex couples but gave no information on single or un-partnered gays and lesbians (Gates 2005; Walther et al. 2011). Household member composition was based solely on the relationship to the person who completed the form, so the relationship to the person listed as spouse is not known. Relationship to other household members faced a similar bias in that while the relationship of the children to the individual is known, the relationship of the children to the partner was unknown. So census data on foster and adoptive children in a household is also questionable.

Gates and Newport (2012, 2013) argue that U.S. Census research has an urban bias. Other researchers have reported that a combination of concern over confidentiality and/or the increased stigma of reporting self as other than heterosexual may lead to a census undercount (Badgett and Rogers 2003). This need for confidentiality may be stronger in geographies with legal or social restrictions to gay and lesbian foster parenting and adoption.

Gates and Newport (2012, 2013) addressed these census limitations through Gallup poll data. This telephone poll of 206,186 interviews were held from June 1

through December 30, 2012, asking the question "Do you, personally, identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender?" to determine how many GLBT persons are in the U. S. [1] This is the "first time a study has had large enough sample sizes to provide estimates of the LGBT population by state (Gates and Newport 2013, p. 3)". Although there was some variation between conservative and liberal states, all states were within two percentages of the 3.5% population that identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.[2]

The National Coalition for LGBT Health (2013) reported that until recently the national surveys had no data on sexual orientation. This is also slowly changing. Recent changes in national surveys allow, for the first time, an examination of persons who self identify by responding to questions of sexual behavior, attraction, and orientation. Federal surveys that obtain behavior, attraction, and orientation data include the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions, the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, and the National Co-morbidity Study-R (LGBT Health 2013).

Even those surveys that may not survey sexual orientation nationally are beginning to obtain some data on a state by state basis. Currently, at least eight Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System questionnaires (BRFSS) and at least 13 Youth Risk Factor Surveillance System questionnaires (YRBSS) include questions on sexual orientation, behavior, and attraction; and several BRFSS and YRBSS questionnaires have included or currently include a question about gender identity. (LGBT Health 2013, p. 7). Arguably, the self-reporting of sexual orientation is questionable. There are concerns that the reporting may be inaccurate due to stigma related to gay and lesbian status.

Next, is the issue of whether or not those who respond to the survey actually understand the language and intent of the questions and response categories. This second concern required content testing regarding asking about sexual orientation (MAP 2011a). Miller and Ryan (2011) described research to develop and evaluate sexual identity questions for the National Health Interview Survey specifically designed to improve sexual orientation questions used in the 2006 National Survey of Family Growth[3]. The following questions were designed, tested, and recommended for use in surveys:

[1] Gates and Newport (2012, 2013) posed that the Gallup poll of 206,186, surveyed more than either the General Social Survey, that surveyed about 2,000 adults annually a sexual orientation question 2008 and; or the NSFG that surveyed young adults aged 18 to 44, about 20,000 from 2006–2010.

[2] "…all of the states that have LGBT populations of at least 4% have laws that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and allow same-sex couples to marry, enter into a civil union, or register as domestic partners. Of the 10 states with the lowest percentage of LGBT adults, only Iowa has such laws (Gates and Newport 2013, p. 3)".

[3] Miller and Ryan report "In designing a new question, the 2006 NSFG version was used as a point of departure because it was regarded as the best performing question to date on a survey. In order to improve upon the 2006 NSFG version, it was determined that the goals for the new question would be to (1) reduce misclassification of non-minority respondents, (2) reduce rates of 'don't know' and 'something else' and (3), particularly for those respondents who do fall into 'something else,' be able to sort non-minority from minority sexual identity cases (2011, p. 6)."

Do you think of yourself as:

[For men:] Gay [For women:] Lesbian or gay

[For men:] Straight, that is, not gay [For women:] Straight, that is, not lesbian or gay

Bisexual

Something Else (Go to A)

Don't Know (Go to B)7

A. [If 'something else' is selected] By something else, do you mean that…

You are not straight, but identify with another label such as queer, trisexual, omnisexual or pan-sexual

You are transgender, transsexual or gender variant

You have not figured out your sexuality or are in the process of figuring it out

You do not think of yourself as having sexuality

You do not use labels to identify yourself

You made a mistake and did not mean to pick this answer

You mean something else (Go to C)

B. [If 'don't know' is selected] You did not enter an answer for the question. That is because you:

You don't understand the words

You understand the words, but you have not figured out your sexuality or are in the process of figuring it out

You mean something else

C. [If 'you mean something else' is selected]

What do you mean by something else? Please type in your answer

Source: Miller and Ryan (2011, p. 6).

## *Civil Rights for Equal Family Status*

As an indicator of the increasing overall support for gay and lesbian rights the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) passed in 1996, which by definition limited marriage to heterosexuals, was ruled unconstitutional in June 2013 by the U.S. Supreme Court. The effect of DOMA[4] and Proposition 8 on gay marriages has had widespread research support. From 1998 to 2006 thirty states had elections to ban same-sex marriages; the ban won in 29 of these states (McVeigh and Diaz 2009, p. 891). However, the National Conference of State Legislatures (2013) reports as of June 2013 thirteen states and Washington DC allow same sex marriages (California, Connecticut, Delaware, District Of Columbia, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington). Three of these states (Rhode Island, Delaware and Minnesota) enacted these laws in 2013. The civil rights aspect of gay and lesbian family structure is whether gay and lesbian individuals and couples, already successfully parenting biological and step-children, have legal ability to become foster and adoptive parents. Gates (2010, pp. 25–26) reports that while no state bans single parent adoptions by GLBT individuals, only seven states have non-discrimination adoption policies (California, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island). With slight variation, six states have non-discrimination foster care policies (California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island and Wisconsin).

There is a lag between the reality of the family structure of GLBTs and the legality of these families. The Williams Institute used three sources of data to examine gay and lesbian adoption and foster care; the U.S. Census 2000, the National Survey of Family, and Growth (2002), and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) (2004). The Williams Institute estimated from these multiple sources that approximately 9 million American adults are GLBT with estimates of from 2.0 to 2.8 million children raised by GLBT parents (MAP 2011a, p. 1). The need to recognize GLBT foster and adoptive homes is precipitated by the overall demand for foster and adopt homes. AFCARS data reveal there were about one quarter million children in foster care with 100,000 of these children awaiting adoption. Of these about half are placed annually in adoptive homes. The North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) and most professional organizations recommend gay and lesbians as foster and adoptive parents.[5]

[4] Refer to the Amicus Curiae American Sociological Association in Support of Respondent Kristin M. V. Perry and Respondent Edith Schlain Windsor for sociological research supporting same sex marriage.

[5] NACAC (2005) Policy statement on Gay and Lesbian Adoptions and Foster Care: "Philosophy-Children should not be denied a permanent family because of the sexual orientation of potential parents. Practice and Policy Recommendations- All prospective foster and adoptive parents, regardless of sexual orientation, should be given fair and equal consideration.

NACAC opposes rules and legislation that restrict the consideration of current or prospective foster and adoptive parents based on their sexual orientation.

The AFCARS data reporting children available for adoption (by age, ethnicity, and special needs) has financial implications for states. States have dual fiscal responsibility for providing quality, affordable care for children removed from families due to abandonment, abuse or neglect, while at the same time meeting the judicial requirement of providing care in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child. For children who require long term care, the most desirable long term placement is in a stable family setting. This is translated into care in either a long term foster home or adoptive home. Barth et al. (2006) estimated adoption generated a savings of about $ 68,326 per child. "If the projected cost estimates from North Carolina are used for the approximately 50,000 children who are adopted each year in the United States, the governmental savings could range from $ 3,271,100,000 to 6,341,250,000 (2006, p.149).

Davis (2011) notes that there is a gradient of both preferred adoptive/foster parents and preferred children. The preferred adoptive/foster parent is white, in a heterosexual marriage, young, middle class, educated, and employed with a stay at home spouse. The preferred child is young (under age 4), a single child instead of being part of a sibling group, ethnically white, and with no physical, educational, or mental challenges. AFCARS (2012) reports that 117,513 children were available for adoption annually from 2007–2011. Of these less than half, an average of 53,829, were adopted annually. AFCARS (2012) data indicate that of the 104,236 children waiting for adoption in 2011; 29,164 were Black, 22,929 were Hispanic, and 41,655 were white. The mean age was 8 years, they entered care at a mean age of five, and the mean time waiting for placement, after termination of parental rights was 23.6 months (eliminating those aged 16 and over). Thus the majority of children available for adoption through child welfare are not children preferred for adoption. At the same time researchers posit that due to this gradient, LGBT parents may be more willing to adopt children with special needs who are among the most difficult to place.

Foster care is an important pathway to adoption as it is in the best interest of the child to minimize moves and provides a stable nurturing environment for emotional attachment during the process of long term efforts at either family reunification or termination of parental rights. Advocates for equal rights to become foster and adoptive parents argue that the reality is GLBT families are already parenting foster and adoptive children. MAP (2012, p. 22) estimates 14,000 or three percent of foster children currently live with GLBT families. "Of the 54,407 children successfully adopted from foster care in 2009, one-third was adopted by non-traditional families including single women, single men and unmarried couples (MAP 2011a, p. 22)." AFCARS (2012) data supports this trend of adoptions by non-traditional families.

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Professional organization that support gay and lesbian adoptions: The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (1999); The American Academy of Pediatrics (2002); The American Bar Association (1999, 2003); The American Psychoanalytic Association (2002); The American Psychological Association (2004); The Child Welfare League of America (2004); The National Adoption Center (1998); The National Association of Social Workers (2002) (Davis 2011).

In 2011, 54% of adoptions were to foster parents, 68% were married couples, 27% were single females, and 2% were single males (AFCARS 2012).

What is unknown is the sexual orientation or relationship status of the single adoptive parents. Baumle and Compton (2007) found that those who cannot function within existing family statutes function outside the law in order to maintain functional, albeit not legally sanctioned families. Findings by Gates and Cooke (2011) support this in that same sex couple 2010 census data found the highest numbers of same-sex couples raising children are located in Mississippi, followed by Wyoming, Alaska, Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Kansas, Alabama, Montana, South Dakota and South Carolina, states that do not have non-discriminatory policies. Further support is from the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute's National Survey of Adoptive Agencies. They found that 60% of agencies surveyed accepted applications from self-identified lesbians and gays in 1999–2000; 39% had placed children in self identified lesbian and gay homes; and those agencies that were either public agencies or who placed children with special needs were most likely to place in lesbian and gay homes (Brodzinsky et al. 2006; Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute 2006).

If one considers the aforementioned gradient, of who is the most and least desirable child, the children available for adoption through the Child welfare system are least desirable (they are likely to be older, racial minorities, and have physical or mental challenges) requiring broadening the range of who are acceptable parents in order to find and recruit parents. Gates (2012) recommend that the legal ability to foster and adopt in order to provide homes for children in the child welfare system be extended for the reason stated above.

Mary Keane of Yonkers is a perfect example. At age 50, Mary, a lesbian, decided she wanted to be a mom, so she volunteered to be a foster parent. Now 63, Mary is the proud parent of 12 foster kids, five of whom she has since adopted. Thanks to New York's open foster care laws, Mary was able to give these kids the happy, stable home they'd never known (Huffington Post 2011).

MAP (2011a, p. 21) data support this need as19% of children in the foster care system are not in the preferred family setting. "Adding to the problem, children may face years of instability before an adoption becomes final. Of the 115,000 children waiting to be adopted in 2009, the average child had been waiting for over 3 years (MAP 2011a, p. 21)".

## Methodology

This background leads to the current study. Data used are the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) 2006. This involves continuous data merged with ACASI 2006–2010, the most current release of such data available and surveyed 10,353 males and 12,235 females, a total of 22,588. I use both the public data and the ACASI protected data. ACASI data are protected due to the sensitive nature of the questions. For this research I use the ACASI questions concerning sexual orientation, sexual behaviors, and sexual attraction merged with the NSFG public data

about household structure and composition including the presence of foster children in household.

I use the NSFG ACSI files, merged with NSFG open access files to explore four research questions. First, how individuals are identified as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual identified across the three above mentioned criteria. These include sexual behavior (same sex contact or no same sex contact), sexual attraction (attraction to only the opposite sex, mostly attracted to the opposite sex, equally attracted to the opposite and same sex, mostly attracted to the same sex, only attracted to the same sex), and sexual orientation (Heterosexual/straight, Homosexual/Gay/Lesbian, Bisexual, and other). Second, what are the demographic differences? Demographic variables obtained from the NSFG are Race and Ethnicity (White, Black, Hispanic, and other race), marital status (married, cohabiting, Never Married, Divorced, Widowed, Other), education (less than High School, High School, Some college, and 16 Plus Years College) income ($ 0 to 24,999, $ 25,000 to 49,999, $ 50,000 and above), metropolitan residence, and religion (Catholic, Protestant, Other Religion, and No Religion). Third, are there children, including foster children, in the households of gay and lesbian individuals? The NSFG variables for this question differ for males and females. The item selected for males is "Number of Biological Children Fathered". This is converted to a 0/1 dummy variable indicating that the male has fathered at least one child. The female item used is "Has children in household < 13". This is also coded as a dummy variable indicating at least one child in the household. Fourth, is the presence of children and foster children different from heterosexuals?

Data are examined using STATA 11.1 (svy) weighted analyses so that the results can be generalized to the population. Analyses used are weighted descriptive analyses and logistic regressions reported as odds ratios.

## Results

The first question looks at how individuals are identified as heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual across the three above mentioned criteria: sexual behavior, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation). Table 1 reveals that the three criteria; behavior, attraction, and orientation result in different frequencies and weights. Note that while 9.37% of both sexes report same sex contact, 1,854 of 12,235 (15%) of females report same sex contact while only 599 of 10,353 (5.8%) of males report same sex contact. Converse to an assumption of a dualistic heterosexual/homosexual sexual preference, frequencies of bisexual attraction and orientation present similar trends of greater frequencies in both males and females than homosexual attraction and orientation. Significantly more females (1,985 or 16.2%) report bisexual attraction than same sex only attraction (106 or 0.8%). Female orientation is similar (591 or 4.8% report bisexual orientation and 197 or 1.6% report lesbian orientation).

Table 2 addresses the second question concerning demographic characteristics. This table presents the result of examining, using logistic regressions reporting the odds ratios, whether those with homosexual or bisexual orientation differ significantly.

**Table 1** Frequencies and weights-sexual behavior, attraction, and orientation by sex. (Source: NSFG 2006–2010 ACASI files)

| | | Females | | Males | | Both | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Freq. | Weights | Freq. | Weights | Freq. | Weights |
| Behavior | Sexual contact with same sex | 1,854 | 6.8 | 599 | 2.56 | 2,453 | 9.37 |
| | No same sex sexual contact | 10,324 | 42.77 | 9,713 | 47.35 | 20,037 | 90.12 |
| | Not ascertained | 57 | 0.32 | 41 | 0.2 | 98 | 0.51 |
| | Total | 12,235 | 49.89 | 10,353 | 50.11 | 22,588 | 100 |
| Attraction | Only attracted opposite sex | 9,960 | 82.21 | 9,485 | 92.37 | 19,445 | 87.3 |
| | Mostly attracted opposite sex | 1,467 | 11.71 | 424 | 3.5 | 1,891 | 7.59 |
| | Equally attracted to both | 412 | 2.99 | 83 | 0.73 | 495 | 1.86 |
| | Mostly attracted to same sex | 106 | 0.71 | 79 | 0.69 | 185 | 0.7 |
| | Only attracted to same sex | 124 | 0.76 | 169 | 1.28 | 293 | 1.02 |
| | Other[a] | 210 | 1.618 | 163 | 1.44 | 373 | 1.521 |
| | Total | 12,279 | 100 | 10,403 | 100 | 22,682 | 100 |
| Orientation | Heterosexual/straight | 11,275 | 92.79 | 9,851 | 95.2 | 21,126 | 94 |
| | Homosexual/Gay/Lesbian | 197 | 1.21 | 224 | 1.7 | 421 | 1.45 |
| | Bisexual | 591 | 4.16 | 160 | 1.24 | 751 | 2.69 |
| | Other[b] | 216 | 1.85 | 168 | 1.86 | 384 | 1.86 |
| | Total | 12,279 | 100 | 10,403 | 100 | 22,682 | 100 |

[a] Not sure, Not ascertained, Refused, or Don't know

[b] Something else, Not ascertained, Refused/Don't know

**Table 2** Odds ratio demographic factors-homosexual/bisexual orientation. (Source: NSFG 2006–2010 ACASI files)

| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | | Model 5 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Odds ratio | *P*>t | Odds ratio | *P*>t | Odds ratio | *P*>t | Odds ratio | *P*>t | Odds ratio | *P*>t |
| White | 1.22 | | 1.27 | | 1.27 | | 1.3 | | 1.36 | |
| Black | 1.16 | | 0.99 | | 1 | | 0.92 | | 1.07 | |
| Hispanic | 0.87 | | 0.9 | | 0.92 | | 0.83 | | 1.06 | |
| *(Other race reference)* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Married | | | 0.38 | *** | 0.38 | *** | 0.41 | *** | 0.42 | *** |
| Cohabiting | | | 0.79 | | 0.79 | | 0.81 | | 0.77 | |
| Never married | | | 1.63 | *** | 1.64 | *** | 1.63 | *** | 1.6 | *** |
| *(Divorced, widowed, other reference)* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Less than high school | | | | | 0.96 | | 0.93 | | 0.99 | |
| High school | | | | | 0.95 | | 0.95 | | 1 | |
| Some college | | | | | 1.05 | | 1.05 | | 1.09 | |
| *(16 plus years college reference)* | | | | | | | | | | |
| $ 25,000–49,999 | | | | | | | 0.78 | | 0.78 | |
| $ 50,000 and above | | | | | | | 0.69 | *** | 0.72 | ** |
| *($ 0–24,999 reference)* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Metro | | | | | | | 1.52 | ** | 1.43 | |
| Catholic | | | | | | | | | 0.4 | *** |
| Protestant | | | | | | | | | 0.49 | *** |
| Other religion | | | | | | | | | 0.9 | |
| *(No religion reference)* | | | | | | | | | | |

**$P<0.01$; ***$P<0.001$

Note that the only significant differences are marital status; those with homosexual/bisexual orientation are significantly less likely to marry across Models 2–4. For a more intuitive interpretation of the odds ratio I convert to a percent change in odds by subtracting the odds ratio from 1. Across Models 2–4, those with homosexual/bisexual orientation are 0.62–0.58 % less likely to be married. Across Models 2–4, those with homosexual/bisexual orientation are 26 % more likely to have an income above $ 50,000. They are 52 % more likely to live in a metropolitan area. Religion is also significant. They are 0.6 % less likely to be Catholic and 0.51 % less likely to be Protestant.

Next, in Table 3 are the demographic factors using lesbian as a dummy variable. In this analysis race becomes significant so that Whites in all 5 models are significantly more likely to be lesbian, ranging from 1.32 to 1.25 %. Lesbians are significantly more likely to be single, ranging 0.43 % in Model 2. Income is also higher; in Model 5 lesbians have a 0.36 % increased likelihood of a $ 50,000 plus income.

The remaining two questions are examined in Table 4. Table 4 shows that whether one examines the male question "the number of biological children fathered" or the female question "has children in household < 13", gay males and lesbians have children, though much as in the Tables 3 and 4 examination of marital status, to a lesser frequency than heterosexuals. Forty-five percent of all males have fathered biological children, compared to 28 % of gay males. Lesbians are more likely to have children in the household. Forty-six percent of all females have children in the household below age 13, compared to 41 % of lesbians.

Foster children were reported in drastically lower frequencies but there are indications that both gay males and lesbians are foster parents.

## Discussion/Conclusion

Conflicting pro and con gay rights movements and societal antigay discrimination are driving forces in current legal battles over the status of GLBT adoption and marriage (Chauncey 2005). Driving the need for research is the need for data to narrow the gap between past anti-gay discrimination and the rapidly changing acceptance of alternative lifestyles and families. The National Conference of State Legislatures (2013) reports as of June 2013 thirteen states and Washington DC allow same sex marriages. As individual states consider this issue the debates about both the legal standing of the marital status and laws concerning gay and lesbians comprising families are heated. Thus there is need for ongoing research to support or disprove the many allegations that providing legal marital status to gay male and lesbian relationships will have negative consequences on the children of these unions (American Sociological Association 2013).

This chapter used the NSFG data to explore four research questions. First, what is the identification of individuals as heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual across the three criteria: sexual behavior, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation? Table 1 supports earlier research in that about 10 % of the population reports same sex behavior

**Table 3** Odds ratio of demographic factors of lesbians*. (Source: NSFG 2006–2010 ACASI files: Behavior Question "samesexany")

| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | | Model 5 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Odds ratio | *P*>t | Odds ratio | *P*>t | Odds ratio | *P*>t | Odds ratio | *P*>t | Odds ratio | *P*>t |
| White | 2.32 | *** | 2.25 | *** | 2.23 | *** | 2.3 | *** | 2.31 | *** |
| Black | 2.19 | *** | 1.97 | ** | 1.95 | ** | 1.8 | ** | 1.85 | *** |
| Hispanic | 0.85 | | 0.79 | | 0.8 | | 0.73 | | 0.89 | |
| *(Other Race Reference)* | | | (Omitted) | | (Omitted) | | (Omitted) | | (Omitted) | |
| Married | | | 0.36 | *** | 0.37 | *** | 0.42 | *** | 0.43 | *** |
| Cohabiting | | | 0.85 | | 0.86 | | 0.89 | | 0.87 | |
| Never Married | | | 0.57 | *** | 0.58 | *** | 0.59 | *** | 0.58 | *** |
| *(Divorced, Widowed, Other Reference)* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Less than High School | | | | | 0.97 | | 0.89 | | 0.93 | |
| High School | | | | | 1.05 | | 1.01 | | 1.04 | |
| Some college | | | | | 1.26 | * | 1.24 | * | 1.26 | * |
| *(16 Plus Years College Reference)* | | | | | | | | | | |
| $ 25,000 to 49,999 | | | | | | | 0.63 | *** | 0.79 | |
| $ 50,000 and above | | | | | | | 1.44 | *** | 0.64 | *** |
| *($ 0 to 24,999 Reference)* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Metro | | | | | | | | | 1.42 | *** |
| Catholic | | | | | | | | | 0.41 | *** |
| Protestant | | | | | | | | | 0.62 | *** |
| Other Religion | | | | | | | | | 0.78 | |
| *(No Religion Reference)* | | | | | | | | | | |

*$P<0.05$; **$P<0.01$; ***$P<0.001$

**Table 4** Presence of children and foster parents by orientation. (Source: NSFG 2006–2010 ACSI)

| | Number of biological children fathered | | | | Has children in household < 13 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Males | Weight | Gay Males | Weight | Females | Weight | Lesbians | Weight |
| No | 6,434 | 0.55 | 454 | 0.72 | 6,572 | 0.54 | 1,111 | 0.59 |
| Yes | 3,969 | 0.45 | 145 | 0.28 | 5,707 | 0.46 | 743 | 0.41 |
| T | 10,403 | 1 | 599 | 1 | 12,279 | 1 | 1,854 | 1 |
| Number of foster parents | | | | | | | | |
| No | 10,358 | 1.00 | 595 | 0.99 | 12,214 | 1.00 | 1,847 | 1.00 |
| Yes | 45 | 0.01 | 4 | 0.01 | 65 | 0.01 | 7 | 0.00 |
| T | 10,403 | 1 | 599 | 1 | 12,279 | 1 | 1,854 | 1 |

and discounts sexual dualism through confirming greater frequencies of bisexual than either gay or lesbian orientation. Second, what are the demographic differences? Tables 2 and 3 report few significant demographic differences between heterosexuals and gays and lesbians. Marital status is a significant difference; however this is embedded in the social and political movements leading to states recognition of gays and lesbians the right to marry. To reiterate, as of June 2013 thirteen states recognize the right of gays and lesbians to marry and this right is under consideration in other states. Other significant differences are income and religion. Third, are there children, including foster children, in the households of gay and lesbian individuals? Fourth, is the presence of children and foster children different from heterosexuals? Both of these questions are explored in Table 4 which indicates that gays and lesbians parent both children and foster children, although the frequencies are lower.

Although there clearly are data limitations, notably limited responses, analyses of the ACASI- NSFG does begin to make available data to answer these allegations and questions through analyses of questions of sexual orientation, sexual behaviors, and sexual attraction and children, including foster children in household. However, data is insufficient for statistical analyses of gay and lesbian foster parents.

Earlier research using census sample can only be used to examine gay and lesbian unmarried partners who "self-identify" with two caveats. First, this only identifies unmarried couples; second, the census data provide no information about sexual orientation, behavior, or attractions, variables used to distinguish gays and lesbians in other surveys. (Gates et al. 2007; Walther et al. 2011). Use of NSFG survey data can begin to address these limitations as this ongoing longitudinal survey includes the aforementioned variables; sexual behavior, attraction and orientation.

There is even less information to direct state policies or legislation regarding foster and adoptive children. AFCARS results are limited to administrative data which does not contain the sexual orientation or marital status of foster parents. Census and survey data likely undercounts foster and adoptive children. Census data only questions the relationship to the householder, missing those who have a foster or adoptive relationship with others in the household. Next, many adoptions are informal and likely to be missed. Informal adoptions or foster children may also be kin, and identified as kin so that they are not counted as foster or adopted children (Gates et al. 2007, p. 26). Finally just as there are no standard questions about sexual behavior, attraction and orientation, the questions about the status of children in households are also not standardized.

Badgett and Rogers (2003) further argue that confidential issues or the stigma at being "out" may lead to a census undercount. Carpenter (2005) argues that single gay males and lesbians may find it easier to foster and adopt, so that spousal relationships are likely either unstated or unreported. This need for confidentiality may be stronger in geographies with legal or social restrictions to gay and lesbian foster parenting and adoption so that an undercount may be greater in nonmetropolitan areas of less liberal parts of the country. This is the case even though researchers (Biblarz and Evren 2010; Brooks and Goldberg 2001; Lobaugh et al. 2006; Goldberg and Gianino 2011, Meezan and Rauch 2005; Patterson 1992; Stacey and Biblarz 2001) concur that parental sexual orientation does not have adverse effects on child outcomes including gender preferences, sexual behavior, and psychological well-being.

In spite of stigma, the "best interests of the child" element is the only part of the law or agency standards that favors gays and lesbians. This refers to it being in the best interest of the child to have a stable placement with minimal moves. Also, there are a large number of children available for placement in foster care or adoption who are deemed less desirable because they are older, have health or emotional problems, are siblings, or are minorities. Professionals[6] agree that family placement, including gay and lesbian family placement, is preferred (Evan B Donaldson Adoption Institute 2006). This need for stable placement and often less desired children in foster care means that gay and lesbian foster and adoptive placements are currently practiced. Gates et al. (2007) report that 6 % (14,100) of foster children live with gay and lesbian parents. About 80 % are single parent households; 20 % are same-sex unmarried partner households; about three-fourths are female. There is a great need for including gay and lesbians as foster and adoptive parents. About 115,000 children in foster care are awaiting long term placements.

In conclusion, this chapter highlights the need for the study of both the characteristics and relationships of same sex individuals and their families. The NSFG survey data is a start but sexual orientation data needs to be consistently included in surveys. The need for data supports including common questions and consistent variables so that sexual behavior, attraction, and orientation are included in all federally funded family research. Only then can policies affecting marriage and family law be informed by research versus assumptions which are often prejudicial.

[6] There is ongoing support for Gay and Lesbian Adoptions by multiple professional organizations:
The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (1999)
The American Academy of Pediatrics (2002)
The American Bar Association (1999, 2003)
The American Psychoanalytic Association (2002)
The American Psychological Association (2004)
The Child Welfare League of America (2004)
The National Adoption Center (1998)
The National Association of Social Workers (2002)
The North American Council on Adoptable Children (2005).

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# Sex Differences in Adult Mortality: Some Evidence from Taiwan

**Yu-Ting Chang**

Women, on average, live longer than men, while differences in longevity between the sexes vary from country to country and over time. Usually we use life expectancy at birth ($LE_0$) in the conventional life table to be representative of the average years one could survive. $LE_0$ means that the average years a newborn, who is subjected to the age-specific probabilities of dying during his/her lifetime, could expect to live in a specific society at a given time (Poston and Bouvier 2010, p. 121). Thus, when we say that females in Taiwan in 2008 have a life expectancy of 81.9 years, we mean that a female newborn in Taiwan in 2008 could live, on average, 81.9 years.

In this research, we will use $LE_0$ to present the differences in longevity between the sexes. For example, in 2002 gender differences in $LE_0$ among the developed countries of the world ranged from 4.4 years in Sweden to 13.2 in the Russian Federation (Gjonca et al. 2005). Also a global 5 year difference existed between 2005 and 2010 with the estimated life expectancy in the world for males of 65.0 years and for females of 69.5 years (United Nations 2007). In 2010, the average gender differences in $LE_0$ ranged from 2 years in the least developed countries to 7 years in the more developed regions (Population Reference Bureau 2010).

Available data inform us that there has always been a gender difference in $LE_0$ which, on average, has increased over time. From 1900 to the late 1970s, the worldwide sex difference in $LE_0$ grew from 2.0 to 7.8 years. In the United States in 1900, the advantage in $LE_0$ for women over men was 2.0 years, that is to say with white females at birth being expected to live 2.9 years more than comparable males (Madigan 1957; Johnson 1977). In 1950, "this female advantage had doubled to 5.8 years" (Madigan 1957, p. 203). By 1974, United States gender differences in $LE_0$ had risen to 7.7 years (Johnson 1977) due mainly to the higher pace of improvement in $LE_0$ for females compared to males. However, in recent decades the sex difference in $LE_0$ has decreased in some countries (e.g. the UK), possibly because of improved medical assistance to males and increasing female mortality from conditions

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typically regarded as "men's diseases," such as heart disease and strokes (Gjonça et al. 2005; Lowen 2009).

Why do females have a higher $LE_0$ than males? We must consider a genetic factor and environmental and behavioral influences to help understand this dissimilarity.

A genetic factor many researchers have pointed to is the chromosome difference that may explain the gender difference in longevity and mortality (Jarvic 1963; Gartler 1990; Kalben 2003; Madigan 1957; Manton 1990; Neel 1990; Waldron 1983). Some evidence suggests females may live longer than males due to genetic factors and also the possibility of some female hormones protecting women from some kinds of diseases, whereas some male hormones leading to increased mortality due to some causes of death for men. The most famous and interesting study of this disparity was conducted by Madigan in 1957. "The subjects chosen for study were teachers and personnel of administrative staffs of Roman Catholic religious Brother-hoods and Sisterhoods engaged in educational work" (Madigan 1957, p. 204). Madigan's subjects were similar in most behavioral characteristics, such as time for sleep, work, study, and recreation, and with respect to diet, housing, and medical care. None were married. That is to say, the major difference was their gender. This study concluded that "biological factors are more important than sociocultural pressures and strains in relation to the differential sex death rates" (Madigan 1957, p. 209).

Despite Waldron (1983) and Hazzard (1986) agreeing that a genetic factor can explain the difference in infant mortality, they held that the interaction between genetic and environmental factors has more than a negligible effect. "The biological make-up of women gives them a mortality advantage, but it is not sufficient to explain today's variation in developed countries" (Gjonca et al. 2005, p. 26). Some demographers have hypothesized that during the twentieth century sociological roles, socioeconomic development, cultural and historical factors and/or life style (e.g. smoking) could also play an important role with regard to gender disparity in $LE_0$ and mortality. Mortality declines and longevity increases are the major characteristics in the twentieth century; therefore, "the observation of consistent sex mortality differentials has raised the possibility that expectations and behaviors associated with gender roles may be important to health maintenance or may result in differential exposure to health risks" (Nathanson 1984, p. 192).

In spite of studies exploring biological, genetic, and/or behavioral factors there is no single or combined explanation that fully accounts for gender differences in mortality and $LE_0$ and some contend that most of the sex differentials in mortality may be accounted for by health behavior, cultural and biological factors (Oksuzyan et al. 2010; Rogers et al. 2000, 2010). Not everyone agrees on the overall importance of one or more of these factors. But, generally, female biology provides certain survival advantages over men at infancy, lower accidental deaths as teenagers and at young adult ages, and lower death rates due to cancer and cardiovascular diseases (Gjonça et al. 2005; Rosenberg 2010).

Although there are always gender differences in longevity, from the current estimations and projections, we can expect human longevity to keep increasing in the future, while it might not continue to increase endlessly. As we know, the rise of the

overall life span has been mainly due to large developments in public health, sanitation, nutrition, medicine, and medical technology. Human beings, however, seem to have no endless longevity. More advanced medicine and medical technology can be employed to extend human beings' longevity as much as possible, but the methods are not always effective and desirable. The fact is that people age considerably prior to death. No one can overcome the power of aging. Aging is the only one cause of death everyone would face during his or her lifetime. Therefore, we would like to investigate how aging effect differentiate longevity between the sexes. Given that many of the aforementioned factors that impact $LE_0$ and mortality may be unique to different nations and cultures, it would seem of import to explore aging influences with Taiwan.

## Data and Method

The following data and methods were used to examine and compare the role of aging in the sex differences of $LE_0$ for Taiwan in both the twentieth and the early twenty-first century.

### *Life Table*

Data for this study were drawn from annually abridged life tables for Taiwan during the years 1906–1943 and 1950–2008; from the Human Mortality Database (http://www.mortality.org/). The death counts from 1944 to 1949 in Taiwan were not registered because of disruptions caused by World War II (Canudas-Romo et al. 2012).

### *Method*

To examine the effect of aging on $LE_0$ over time, I used logistic models of mortality to decompose $LE_0$ into three parts, which will quantify the roles of juvenile mortality, background mortality, and senescent mortality, as proposed by Bongaarts (2006). Following Bongaarts' arguments (2006), a chart has been developed to present the three components of life expectancy (see Fig. 1). $LE_0$ could be affected by juvenile and adult mortality. Juvenile mortality covers all deaths under 25 years. Adult mortality is defined as deaths occurring over age 25 and includes background mortality and senescent mortality. Background mortality covers some causes of death that have not shown a strong age pattern, such as deaths from accidents, violence and any infectious diseases, whereas senescent mortality increases with age and includes deaths due to cardiovascular diseases, cancer and other chronic diseases showing significant age patterns. That is to say, senescent mortality would increase with age. The assumption of this method is to calculate senescent life expectancy

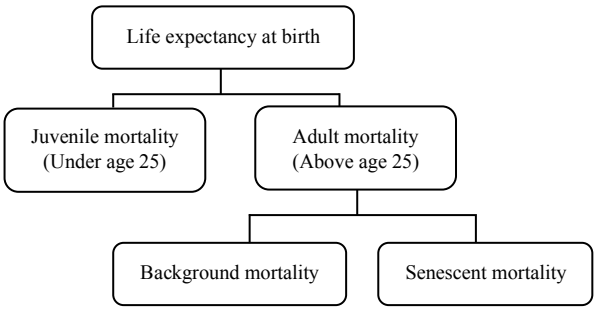


**Fig. 1** Three components of life expectancy. (Source: plotted according to Bongarts (2006))

by removing juvenile and background mortality. This means that how long one can live if aging is the only one cause of death. In summary, we used this logistic model to estimate senescent mortality and compare the differences between the sexes in Taiwan.

The logistical model (see Eq. 1) helps us to estimate background and senescent mortality. The senescent mortality ($\mu_s$) can be computed from the background mortality ($\gamma$) subtracted from the observed mortality rate ($\mu_x$) for ages above 25 (see Eq. 2).

$$\mu(x,t) = \frac{\exp\{\beta(x(t)-\phi)\}}{1+\exp\{\beta(x(t)-\phi)\}} + \gamma(t), x \geq 25 \tag{1}$$

$$\mu_s(x,t) = \mu(x,t) - \gamma(t) = \frac{\exp\{\beta(x(t)-\phi)\}}{1+\exp\{\beta(x(t)-\phi)\}}, x \geq 25 \tag{2}$$

Each denotation is defined as the following:

t: Period
x: Age in years
$\mu(x, t)$: Force of mortality at age x in period t
$\gamma(t)$: Background mortality in period t
$\mu_s(x, t)$: Senescent force mortality at age x in period t

Then we used the senescent mortality to calculate senescent life expectancy (denoted $LE_S$) in a life table (see Eq. 3), which is the mean age at death for a newborn, on the assumption that all newborns are not subject to juvenile mortality and background mortality (Bongaarts 2006, p. 610). That is, aging would be served as the only one hypothetical cause of death.

$$LE_s(t) = 25 + \int_{25}^{\infty} e^{-\int_{25}^{x} \mu_s(x,t)\,dx}\,dx \tag{3}$$

Following are the results of life expectancy at birth and senescent life expectancy revealing sex differences in longevity for Taiwan from 1906 to 2008.

**Table 1** Levels and trends of life expectancy at birth and senescent life expectancy in Taiwan, 1906–2008

| | Female | | Male | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Year* | $LE_0$ | $LE_S$ | $LE_0$ | $LE_S$ |
| 1906 | 30.5 | 65.6 | 28.9 | 54.6 |
| 1910 | 36.8 | 68.1 | 33.2 | 54.5 |
| 1920 | 31.3 | 70.9 | 29.1 | 59.9 |
| 1930 | 47.0 | 71.7 | 42.5 | 63.4 |
| 1940 | 46.6 | 69.6 | 41.6 | 62.4 |
| 1950 | 55.7 | 69.5 | 53.1 | 65.5 |
| 1960 | 66.4 | 74.3 | 62.3 | 69.9 |
| 1970 | 71.6 | 75.5 | 66.7 | 71.8 |
| 1980 | 74.6 | 76.9 | 69.6 | 73.4 |
| 1990 | 76.8 | 78.8 | 71.3 | 74.9 |
| 2000 | 78.5 | 80.1 | 72.6 | 75.3 |
| 2008 | 81.9 | 83.2 | 75.6 | 77.2 |
| *Trend* | | | | |
| 1906–1950 | 25.2 | 3.9 | 24.1 | 10.9 |
| 1950–2000 | 22.8 | 10.6 | 19.6 | 9.8 |
| 2000–2008 | 3.5 | 3.1 | 2.9 | 1.9 |
| 1906–2008 | 51.4 | 17.6 | 46.7 | 22.6 |

## *Sex Differences in the Levels and Trends of Longevity in Taiwan from 1906 to 2008*

The twentieth century was distinguished by the greatest increase in human longevity. Table 1 presents the results of life expectancy at birth and senescent life expectancy for selected years, and Fig. 2 and 3 show two types of life expectancy between the sexes. First, over the past century, life expectancy at birth in Taiwan has increased substantially; in 1906 it was about 30.5 years for females and 28.9 years for males; by 2008 life spans rose to 81.9 years for females and 75.6 years for males. The average life expectancy at birth in 2008 was about 2.7 times higher than in 1906 for females and 2.6 times higher for males (See Table 1 and Fig. 2). The differences in $LE_0$ between the sexes increased from 2 years in 1906 to 6 years by 2008. This fact shows that females have always lived longer than males in Taiwan, and the gap has kept increasing over time.

Next, let's compare estimated senescent life expectancy ($LE_S$) to see the effects of juvenile, background and senescent mortality between the sexes in Taiwan.

Figure 3 illustrates the trends and levels of senescent life expectancy ($LE_S$) for females and males in Taiwan from 1906 to 2008. $LE_S$ indicates how long people could live if there were no juvenile and background mortality in Taiwan society. That is, the differences between $LE_0$ and $LE_S$ are the sum of the effects of juvenile and background mortality. $LE_S$ shows senescent mortality is the only cause of death in the determination of human longevity. Senescent mortality for males had decreased more than that for females (22.6 vs. 17.6) from 1906 to 2008, whereas

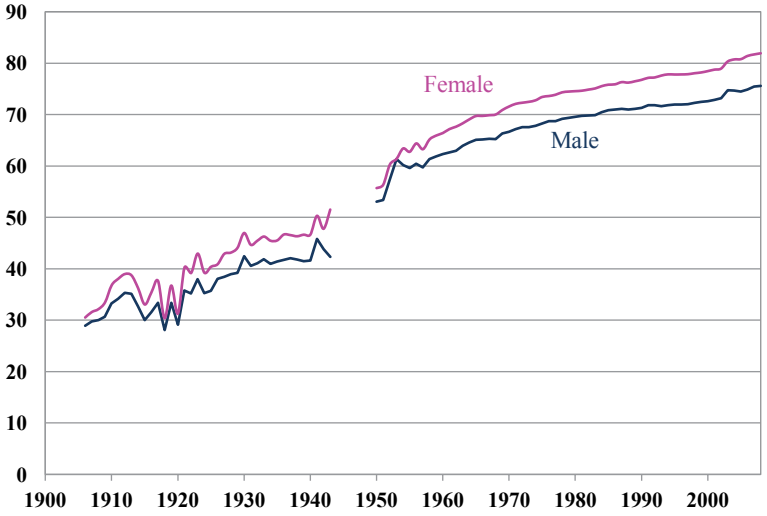


**Fig. 2** Life expectancy at birth in Taiwan from 1906 to 2008. (Source: Human Mortality Database http://www.mortality.org/)

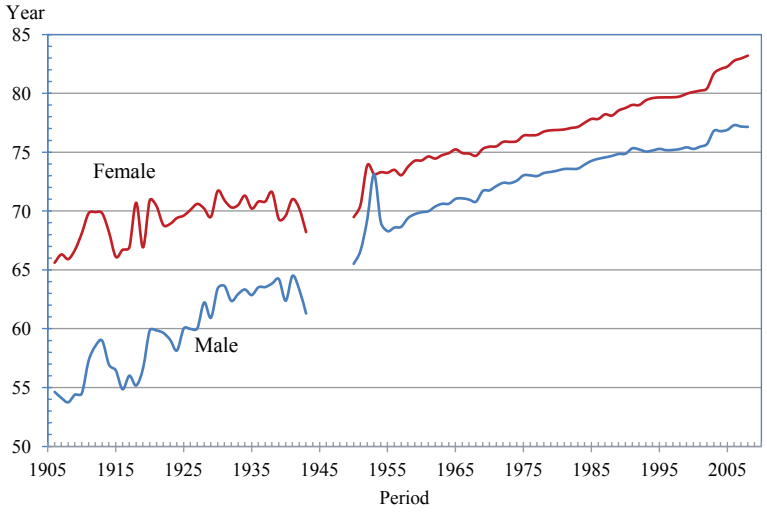


**Fig. 3** Differences in senescent life expectancy between sexes in Taiwan, 1906–2008

senescent life expectancy for females was still 6 years higher than that for males in 2008 (83.2 vs. 77.2). The figure demonstrates that senescent mortality has been decreasing for both genders over time; while there have been differences in senescent life expectancy between males and females since 1906. The gap in $LE_S$ between the sexes had been decreasing from around 11 years during the 1910s to 4 years during

the 1990s and then has widened to 6 years in the early twenty-first century. This difference in $LE_S$ is close to the difference in $LE_0$ we mentioned previously. Therefore, the comparison between $LE_0$ and $LE_S$ will be shown as following.

Table 1 also shows that, for females in 1906, $LE_S$ exceeded $LE_0$ by 35.1 years (65.6 vs. 30.5), but by 2008 the difference between the two life expectancies had narrowed to just 1.3 years (83.2 vs. 81.9). It means that the sum of effects of juvenile and background mortality for females have decreased from 35.1 years in 1906 to 1.3 years in 2008. For males in 1906, at the same time, $LE_S$ exceeded $LE_0$ by 25.7 years (54.6 vs. 28.9), but by 2008 the difference had narrowed to 1.6 years (77.2 vs. 75.6). The difference between the two life expectancies for males is higher than that for females (1.6 vs. 1.3). This fact shows that the effects of juvenile and background mortality for the both sexes have decreased to a very low level in Taiwan, while that for males are still higher than females today.

## Conclusion

Life expectancy for Taiwan has increased considerably to a high level in the last century and in this century, while two separate periods have been affected by different mortality effects. In the first half of the twentieth century, decreases in juvenile and background mortality led to increases in life expectancy. These advances in juvenile mortality before 1950 benefited from improvements in living standards, nutrition, sanitary conditions, and control of infectious diseases (Bongaarts 2006; Omran [1971] 2005; Poston and Bouvier 2010). Additionally, since 1950, the substantial improvements in senescent mortality have resulted in the increases in life expectancy. More effective medical inventions, the use of antibiotics, and the increased prevention and control of chronic diseases are possible explanations for the acceleration in the improvements in senescent mortality since mid-century (Bongaarts 2006; Haines 2008; Poston and Bouvier 2010).

The Taiwanese society seems to provide a safe environment to human beings today due to the low effect of background mortality. The effects of juvenile mortality for both males and females in Taiwan have also dropped to the lower levels today. Even though male senescent mortality has decreased considerably over 100 years, female senescent life expectancy was still much higher than that for males (83.2 years vs. 77.2 years). Therefore, the disparity in senescent life expectancy between sexes provides the leading explanation as to why the gap in $LE_0$ between sexes in Taiwan has continued to widen over time.

Additionally, senescent mortality for both sexes has a considerable decline in Taiwan. Senescent mortality is related to chronically degenerative diseases, which means the risks of some causes of death (e.g., cardiovascular disease and cancer) increase strongly with age. A strong and effective medical system could improve the efficiency of medical quality for those afflicted with chronically degenerative causes of death. Accordingly, the considerable decline in Taiwan's senescent mortality can be attributed partially to the health care system in Taiwan, known as

National Health Insurance, instituted on 1 March 1995. This national system has provided equal rights for health care for all Taiwanese citizens. The population coverage reached 99 % by the end of 2004 (Fanchiang 2004) and to 99.6 % today (Chan 2012). Therefore, Taiwan's National Health Insurance system may be playing an important role in the high levels of life expectancy in Taiwan.

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# Gendered Helping Behaviors and Place Attachment in New Orleans' Upper 9th Ward

**J. M. Savely**

## Introduction

'Community development' has become a buzzword in the changing atmosphere of New Orleans' post-Karina Upper 9th Ward. The growing influx of non-profits, activists, young urban professionals, and socially aware 'hipsters' has created a wave of modern influences in the traditional landscape of the Marigny, Bywater, and St. Claude neighborhoods. Informal and formal gatherings of people concerned about any range of issues, including the environment, education, historic land use, economic development, the gay community, and social justice are increasingly prevalent. Most of these efforts are geared toward relating personal issues residents experience into the neighborhoods they live in by advocating in their locale. As with many social problems, minority communities experience vulnerability in distinctive ways. Women, people of color, and members of the LGBT community in particular view their community through the lens of issues most related to their unique experiences as members of these groups and generally engage in volunteerism related to the salience of their identity as such.

Neighborhoods are clearly important to residents. For residents of this unique area in particular, locality represents an expression of self and the characteristics that make them feel "at home." The diversity of interests, experiences, and values represented are increasingly varied and highly transitional as the community changes and adapts to post-disaster forms of development in modern urban society. Residents negotiate the complex perspectives they bring to the area amongst how they spend their time and experience the space they live in (Beck et al. 2003). The result is a cornucopia of experiences and activities that work together to construct the changing landscape of the Upper 9th Ward where the neighborhoods are still recovering post-Katrina and available resources are still very limited to residents.

In spite of traditional assumptions about attachment to place and community life in New Orleans, something quite different is emerging from the neighborhoods of

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the Upper 9th Ward. As individuals make sense of themselves among the varied narratives and opportunities in the area, they engage in what is influential to their own experiences with themselves and their environment (Beck et al. 2003; Lawler and Thye 1999). This limits investment in collectively accessible resources, or social capital, that in turn limits the quality of life available in an area (Uphoff 1999). As newcomers and long-term residents who have returned to the city engage with the changing communities of the Upper 9th Ward, efforts to renew the area represent diverse perceptions of what is valuable and how resources should be allocated. It is this investment in a community's assets by those with access to resources within and outside of the community that guides the development of an area. With varying forms of attachment to the community at work, residents' participation then becomes more complex as new influences from young, transitional, higher income newcomers represent a shift in priorities and the allocation of resources. Efforts to rebuild New Orleans post Katrina have invited new demographics of people to a city made famous for its culture and traditions. With a population of newcomers attached to their community in diverse ways, the result is variation in how the community is being developed through their participation in it. Gentrification of communities of color and influx of affluent white families has reoriented the focus of community development efforts toward the interests of higher income individuals and away from the interests of individuals that have, in the most recent history, made up the community. A growing LGBT population in the area has also diversified access to resources as well as direct resources to particular outlets that are relevant to newcomers who are part of this community. Thus, changes in the demographic makeup of the area have similarly led to new and diverse forms of community growth. This study seeks to examine the attachment of post-Katrina residents of New Orleans' Upper 9th Ward to place and the relationship between this attachment and how they participate in their community through forms of helping behavior.

Residents of the Marigny, Bywater, and St. Claude neighborhoods were interviewed and a brief economic and cultural analysis of the area was conducted. The identities of respondents are contextualized within their specific neighborhood so as to locate how their self-concept as active in their particular community. Sense of attachment and belonging to place are related to how individuals understand themselves in relation to the distinct area in which they live.

The Marigny, Bywater, and St. Claude are understood as 'neighborhoods' located in the larger 'community' context of the Upper 9th Ward. The Marigny is locally known for its upper income residents in relation to the surrounding residential areas of the Upper 9th Ward. Of the three neighborhoods examined in this study, the Marigny is occupied by the greatest proportion of homeowners. It is also a large hub for LGBT residents, is particularly progressive in its growth of the arts, and the most affluent of the three communities. With the transition of the neighborhood in recent years, Bywater has demographically begun to look much more like the Marigny. White flight, Hurricane Betsy, and outgoing factory jobs left the community largely abandoned and in severe blight well into the 1990s. Development from the Marigny overflowed into the Bywater as it had no room to move further West into the already largely occupied and developed French Quarter. Middle-income individuals bought

Bywater homes at very low prices and restored them. Though the Bywater remains lower in income than the Marigny, gentrification of this community has placed pressure on the Upper 9th Ward as a whole as higher income families have spread from the Bywater to St. Claude. The traditional New Orleans' culture of St. Claude residents frames need in much different ways than frames placed by outside observers. The difficult economic situation of many residents has led to participation in the underground economy, contributing to one of the most prevalent issues in the community, crime. However, residents have recently given voice to their concerns, marching through the streets, holding prayer vigils at sights where individuals have been killed by gang violence, and giving youth outlets such as jobs, after school activities and the like through the "Silence is Violence" and "Stop Killing People" movements. Women of color have served as particularly powerful in these movements. Decreasing crime and the hopeful development of St. Claude Avenue, the boundary between the St. Claude neighborhood to the North and the Marigny and Bywater neighborhoods to the South, has attracted more white and middle-income residents to St. Claude.

Drawing on social capital and identity theories, I argue that understanding how an individual conceptualizes self in relation to the area where they reside better improves understanding of place attachment and explanation of whether and how they participate in helping behavior within their community. Social psychology perspectives offer that identity informs behavior while behavior also informs identity (McCall and Simmons 1966). Identity related to a specific place results in rewards and behavior related to that place; likewise, behavior in a specific place results in identities related to that place (Cuba and Hummon 1993). Identity theories suggest that appealing to salient characteristics of an individual's identity within a neighborhood should promote participation in helping behavior within that community. Participation in voluntary helping behavior is behavior by which an individual distributes available resources to him to help meet the perceived needs of another individual (Lin 2008, p. 59). However, few studies have explored the relationship of the individual to the community and its affect on participation outside of the experimental lab setting. Studies of place attachment have also been largely limited to studies of natural amenity rich areas and do not examine post-disaster areas (Matarrita-Cascante 2010). Using participation as a measure of attachment to place and including theories of identity, this study reveals that fragmented social ties result in attachment to place related to abstract values and lifestyles that are increasingly divided from place based relationships or specific amenities.

I offer that current theories relating the social behavior of civic participation to identity constructs require additional development in their focus on attachment to place as an indicator of participation. In the changing environment of New Orleans' 9th Ward, and perhaps in the continued influences of modernity elsewhere, this study suggests that helping behavior in the form of voluntary participation may be motivated less by attachment to specific place or particular others but rather to values and ideals that are more abstract and thus transcend particular place.

Focusing on the post-Katrina neighborhoods of New Orleans' Upper 9th Ward, I explore how respondents' self-concept affects participation in helping behavior

within their community. I examine the engagement of particular individuals' with their locality and the attachment that provokes participation. How individuals perceive their identity and form their self-concept within the context of place, in particular, is valuable to the study of participation. The individual's understanding of themselves in relation to their community also illuminates their attachment and commitment to the community and their participation within it. The flux between individual gratification and attachment to the 'community' is central to this study. This study will also pay specific attention to displaced connections between individual and group life in the context of modern conceptions of individuality and social action guides this project.

## Review of Current Literature

### *The Problem*

#### The Micro-Macro Problem

Edward Lawler et al. (1993) discuss the severed connection of individuals from the macrostructure as the "micro-macro problem". Individuals interact with one another and carry their identities into micro-social interactions and into the positions they hold in networks that make up the macro-structure. Individual power is enacted in participation with both the local and the global community as identity is affirmed and enacted. The interdependence of the individual and the larger community cannot be understood simply as a stream of productivity but as an intricate intermingling of all the characteristics individuals bring to the collective.

In an increasingly global society, individual identification with others and conception of 'home' is not always contained within the locality of their place of residence. Decreased attachment to local community has contributed to the degree to which individuals choose to invest in their communities. For the local community to act as the hub for both the individual and the enactment of social capital in a modern global society, the individual must experience attachment to it. To promote participation it is necessary for the individual to experience a positive association between themselves and the community.

How individuals choose the activities they participate in is a result of the individualism required to function in modernity (Beck et al. 2003). Pressures of modernity and globalized interactions require focus on self in order to survive in highly competitive economic and social situations. "Self-verification" is the process of representing the meanings of a group associated with an individual's identity in order to embody the characteristics of the role (Stets and Burke 2000, p. 232). Social exchange theory assumes that individuals engage in interactions with those who are valuable to them, either by receipt of valued resources or affirmation of self (Lawler and Thye 1999).

Political scientist Robert Putnam (2000) offers that volunteerism may have begun to spread "beyond the boundaries of traditional community organizations" and/or that "commitments to volunteering are more fragile and more sporadic" (2000, p. 129). Putnam traces the causal factors of delocalization and decreased commitment to volunteering to a weak connection of individual values and subjective macro-level obligations to the values tied to organizations (Putnam 2000, p. 129). This scenario sets up a problematic situation that the literature does not currently speak to. The disintegration of local community ties and the fragility of commitment to locality are expanded on in the perspectives that inform this study. By understanding the variety of individual identities and self-concepts found within the complex urban environment we can bridge the concepts of identity with participation in the local community and examine attachments that are at play. This study focuses on how participation exists as a venue for individuals to make personal resources available to the collective and thereby contributing to their own experience and quality of life, bridging the micro-macro disconnect.

### The Effect of Individualization upon Community Involvement

In recent years the activities and investments of Americans have moved farther away from community life. The many options for self-fulfillment and unique social positioning deplete the resources associated with common experiences and shared risks. Many individuals participate in a "themed environment" when consistent and predictable collective spaces and relationships are absent that encourage group interaction around shared lifestyles (Gottdiener 1997). In constructing an environment, "people self-actualize within the commercial milieu, seeking ways to satisfy their desires and pursuing personal fulfillment through the market that expresses deeply held images of themselves" (Gottdiener 1997, p. 305) Nonetheless, collective action is required to support resources that support the general quality of life in a community. As global opportunities draw resources away from the local, the very environment that sustains communities and livelihood is put in jeopardy. The "ideal" environment constructed by global opportunities veils underlying structural issues that makeup the quality of life residents' experience.

## *Social Capital*

### The Importance of Collective Helping in the Local Community

Social capital is the "social networks and norms of reciprocity [that] facilitate mutual obligation and responsibility for action" (Putnam 2000, p. 21). This concept is important because even though collective movements struggle to gain support, communities function in an interdependent manner—whether or not residents realize it. For example, public funds that come from the tax base of a community

provide for public services designated by elected and appointed officials, such as police departments, fire departments, schools, infrastructure (streets, sewage, water, electricity, etc.), parks and recreation centers, community centers and other services. Social capital allows us to empower, promote community ownership, develop relational ties, and incorporate mutual control of a geographic area.

Social capital contributions by individual residents allows the development of ties that incorporate mutual control and address the conflict between the globalized community and the geography of the local (Collins 2004). The ability to identify 'self' in the context of participation promotes affirmation of self, attachment, and commitment to the group (Lawler et al. 2009). Identification as a resident of a community is central to this paradigm because it creates attachment and commitment to the community. This then leads to greater involvement and investment in the community by its residents, which greatly affects the standard of living in a community. Limited ties or attachment to the local has contributed to lack of individual participation in helping in the individual's own neighborhood.

The breakdown of community coupled with emphasis on the individual perpetuates the narcissism that devalues the importance of community and creates an environment in which residents can remain ignorant of the impact neighbors have upon the quality of life in an area. Particularly in post-disaster cities such as New Orleans many residents' impression of those who seek to 'help' is influenced by their experience with recovery and relief organizations that often prioritize the economic value of people and community over the lives of residents themselves (Smith 2007). In addition to the division of individuals from the global, highly intersectional vulnerabilities such as racism, classism, and gender inequalities function to further limit the time and energy individuals are willing to sacrifice for others (Hill Collins 1998). The enormity of efforts required for marginalized populations to compete in the current economy stifles the ability, time, and resources available to even similar others, limiting participation in efforts that are not directly beneficial (Wilson 2009).

## *Identity and Attachment*

### The Social Psychology of the Self within the Group

Drawing from identity theories, individuals experience and construct their self-concept and form their role identity in a given interaction through their perception of signs and symbols (McCall and Simmons 1966). Within this framework, the "self-concept" is understood as the situated understanding an individual has of himself as he exists in the world (Gecas 1982, p. 3). "Role performances" align with given identities as determined by the social resources an individual gains by supporting particular identity characteristics (Stets and Burke 2003, p. 196). Rewards to identity determine the salience of the identity individuals invest and commit to in a given interaction. The cost or benefit of particular behaviors and participation

within a group are the means by which individuals determine behavior (Stets and Burke 2000). Sheldon Stryker's et al. (2000) framework for identity theory offers that identity salience is a result of commitments the individual makes to reinforce salient identity within a group rather than individual behaviors that are "independent of supportive relationships" (Stryker et al. 2000, p. 26). Other similar research has supported this and found that the greater the commitment to identity, the more salient the identity is for the individual (Stets and Burke 2003).

Theories concerning relational cohesion assert that one's commitment and attachment to a group conveys one's willingness to self-sacrifice for the benefit of the group by revealing a link between affective and emotional processes and the power structure of the exchange and commitment process (Lawler 2001). Attachment develops as the actor attributes emotional response to the social unit and task outcomes. Similarity includes contribution to the task, success of performance, and sense of shared responsibility (Lawler 2001, p. 253).

## Place as the Landscape for Identity

The commonality and consistency of geographic place provides a space where identity is both formed and enacted. "Articulation of self" within a particular environment enhances the development of personal and social identity as "physical, social, and cultural" influences and the diverse experiences actors bring to place function to operationalize the self in reference to that locale (Cuba and Hummon 1993). For this study, self-concept is the foundational theory I draw upon to qualitatively analyze behavior in relation to neighborhood participation.

Place attachment is related to integration to a local area, long-term residence, stage in life-cycle, and self-concept as derived from a broader social context (Cuba and Hummon 1993, p. 115). Place identity is determined by how an individual situates themselves in a place in accordance with characteristics of that place and relational ties with others. Cuba and Hummon (1993) posit that response to these factors is determined by the extent to which an individual expresses feeling at "home". Belonging is related to an individual response to their relationships with others, social units in a place, where they reside relative to social ties, and "locus", or the association of self-concept with place (Cuba and Hummon 1993). Characterizations such as familiarity, belongingness, identity, dependence, and rootedness have been used to empirically measure place attachment (Williams and Vaske 2003). Much of the current research examining place attachment has been quantitative and remains primarily within literature related to tourism and temporary or seasonal residents of an area as well as in amenity migration literature (Kyle et al. 2004). Amenity migration research specifically relates ecological factors rather than social processes to place attachment (Matarrita-Cascante 2010). As such, a gap exists within the literature connecting self-presentation and individual identity to group identity processes within the context of place.

## Methodology

This study addresses the following major research question: How does identity affect how individuals experience attachment and therefore participate in helping behavior related to their neighborhood? The neighborhoods of the Upper 9th Ward are the landscape for examining attachment and participation. Insight into the motivations and perceived rewards of community participation are informed by data related to the reflected appraisal of salient identities interviewees. Qualitative interviews of post Katrina residents of the neighborhood of New Orleans' Upper 9th Ward examine interviewees' personal perspectives of community, participation, and their own identity, allowing more thorough examination of the relationship of identity and participation by relating characteristics of individual identity and motivation to methods of participation. Interviews were conducted within the community where the individual maintains residence.

### *Research Procedure*

#### The Upper 9th Ward

The particular neighborhoods studied were chosen based upon diversity of socioeconomic status, race, and cultural values held within a concentrated area, as well as for the recent influx of community development projects in the area. According to the New Orleans City Planning Commission, the Upper 9th Ward lies within Planning District 7. The geographical boundaries of District 7 serve as a guide for the neighborhood boundaries of the study. However, the cultural boundaries of the neighborhood an individual identifies as their residence are used for analysis.[1]

#### Qualitative Interviewing

An ethnographically informed approach is used. Such procedures are appropriate to guide this study, as historical composition and development of the area as well as personal experiences of its residents are indicative of current events, individual perspectives, and individual self-concepts. Face-to-face interviews are conducted

[1] These cultural boundaries, generally, identify the St. Claude neighborhood as extending from North Claiborne Avenue in the North, Montegut to the West, the Industrial Canal to the East, and St. Claude Avenue to the South. The Bywater neighborhood is understood as the area from St. Claude Avenue to the North, The Mississippi River to the South, Montegut Street to the West and the Industrial Canal to the East. The Marigny neighborhood is understood as the area from St. Claude to the North, The Mississippi River to the South. Montegut Street to the East and Elysian Fields Avenue to the West, this does not include the area considered the Faubourg Marigny which extends West of Elysian Fields Avenue (City of New Orleans). (SEE APPENDIX C).

with ten residents from the area to both personally interact with participants and gain thorough understanding of respondents' perspective of their narrative.

This method is used to determine salient characteristics of individuals identity within a neighborhood and the resulting behaviors related to participation. Interviews gathered personal information about the individual such as personal values, employment, rewards, use of resources, experience with need, sense of belonging, and actual participation. The intent of these questions is to develop a conception of commitment to the neighborhood and identity salience, informed by Stryker's theory that these invoke participation (Stryker et al. 2000, p. 33). Interviews additionally include questions about perceptions of the neighborhood, themselves within the area, and voluntary participation within the community. Identity salience within the community may not have been a concern of participants prior to interviews, however, the condition for this study is that aspects of identity most salient in the neighborhood can be drawn upon and analyzed, regardless of the depth of this salience.

## Respondents

Participants involved in this study are all part of a unique post-Katrina New Orleans community whose recent influx of development and community activists has been instrumental in framing the perspectives of respondents toward the community and themselves within it. Six of ten are pre-Katrina residents of New Orleans. Four of these six lived in the Upper 9th Ward prior to the storm. The employment of respondents includes social and environmental activism, education, clergy, childcare, and retirement. Respondent's race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and age also vary. Of ten respondents, four are white, two are black, three identify as ethnic "other", and one is Hispanic. Two respondents identify as lower income, seven as middle income, and one as upper income. Five respondents are male and five female. Three respondents are single, six are in married heterosexual relationships, and one is in a same-sex relationship. Three interviewees are in their 20s, three in their 30s, and four are 50+.

Initial interviews come from two residents of each of the three geographic neighborhoods. Respondents include individuals who are both actively participating in a community-based organization, those who volunteer informally, and those do not participate in helping behavior in their community. Access to this population is offered by the researcher's personal familiarity and connection to the neighborhoods studied. From each initial interviewee, I conduct snowball sampling by requesting contact information about an additional resident of the same community.

## Analysis of Interview Data

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and interpreted. Coding of transcribed interviews and observation notes allows for consistent and reliable interpretation. Coding and interpretation developed during the research process in order to appropriately

assign meanings that align most accurately with responses of each participant. This coding allows a more effective way to determine patterns or themes of behavior or perspectives that arise within participant responses. However, particular variables of interest, as derived from the literature, were used to structure analysis.

Corresponding to the primary research questions, the main concepts of interest are self-concept, rewards, participation in helping behavior, attachment to the community, sense of belonging and trust, and commitment. Each of these concepts is analyzed through the lens of identity theory. Variables used to analyze self-concept include personal values and paradigms as well as influential individuals that motivate behavior. Emotions are related to behaving in particular ways and the motivations that determine how the individual perceives the value of rewards. Rewards understood as experienced through the realization and enactment of values in participation through positive feedback or benefits. Rewards are also related to personal fulfillment in primary activities the individual engages with in the community that are not affiliated with paid employment.

Resources that respondents use take the form of capital and non-capital resources such as skills or time, for example. Individual perceptions of participation in helping behavior indicates "participation". Method and type of participation are inferred from modes of perceived helping behavior, response to perceived needs in the community, participation in voting, and in filling out the Census. Helpfulness is understood as it relates to the individual's perspective of need and his participation in actively responding to need in a way he understands to benefit others or reduce need. Likewise, participation is understood as influenced by whether the individual perceives rewards from participation. Perceived helping is behavior in which the actor views the behavior as helpful.

Attachment through relationships to others, with particular attention to place, is understood through the variables of proximity of intimate social ties as well as commonality found in place (Cuba and Hummon 1993). Belonging and trust are also associated with attachment and evaluated by sense of belonging as well the respondent's trust of their neighbors. Rewards tied to residing in the respondent's particular neighborhood as well as likes and dislikes about the community are used as indicators of attachment. For measurement purposes, place attachment specifically is operationalized according to the work of Williams and Vaske (2003) who measure familiarity, belongingness, identity, dependence and rootedness as indicators of place attachment.

## Sampling Limitations

This study is limited in the number of respondents who participated. Without a more varied and thorough sample, this research is only generalizable to respondents who were part of the study. However, the intent of this research is to be reflexive of theory and represent the individual self-concepts of respondents in the Upper 9th. The experience of these individuals is also not generalizable to residents of the Upper 9th Ward or all New Orleans communities. The Upper 9th Ward is, however,

unique as a community experiencing dramatic social and economic transformations post Hurricane Katrina. Though findings may not be generalizable, they are indicative of a particular experience within post-Katrina neighborhoods undergoing similar changes. This study hopes to be representative of the theoretical relationship of identity and motivation as they contribute to participation. Previous emphasis upon generalizable samples has served to limit analysis of identity and self-concept as they relate to volunteerism (Watson 2004, p. 201). Findings are representative of larger theoretical implication in the study of place attachment and offer evidence of changing conceptions of participation, particularly in post disaster areas.

## Findings

Respondents' identity and their understanding of themselves within their neighborhood play a major role in how they perceive and engage with their neighborhood. The diversity of self-concepts present in this study is indicative of how individuals participate and therefore, how they distribute their resources to their neighborhood and community in general. The lived experiences of respondents vary and create a unique understanding of what is necessary and beneficial to themselves and, likewise, how they are influential to their community. Findings relate that this influence is key in how individuals decipher their behavior as well as their understanding of self in relation to place. Respondents' identities within the context of their communities are diverse and segmented along the lines of individual interest which then serves to motivate how individuals participate within the community. Expressions of place attachment defined in concepts of familiarity, belongingness, identity, dependence, and rootedness are major themes in the findings and expose a fragmentation of community ties that result in participation associated with individual values and perception of self within the community. Attachment to particular concepts or lifestyles important to respondents served to limit attachment to specific others and, rather, to amenities or opportunities they felt were present in the area.

### *Attachment*

#### Familiarity

Respondents describe various motivations for moving to the 9th Ward. Many expressed attachment to the community because particular aspects of life there that makes them feel comfortable or embodied a lifestyle they find aligns with their interests or past experiences. One respondent describes his being inclined to move to the area after having done previous projects there similar to those he wished to continue throughout his life. The area represents an opportunity to continue the type of work he had previously done and an atmosphere consistent with his goals.

> I wanted to find an inner city to work in… There was a calling from God that I started to feel when we first moved to [my hometown]….moreso as I went as a young person on mission trips. I went with our men to the inner city of Philidephia. Then our youth group came to New Orleans to the Irish channel and we did Bible clubs, backyard Bible clubs with the kids in their facility and in the St. Thomas project. (Bywater resident, middle income white male, late 30s)

The idea of being 'called' to the neighborhood appears frequently. This response is related to their faith and a perception that they have unique skills or abilities God has given them that are particularly relative to their neighborhood.

> I felt a call to the community, that that is where I was supposed to be, even as a single woman, a single white woman. It made a lot of people uncomfortable for me to do it, but I felt an overwhelming call to be in this community… I wanted to live in the community as a positive presence, you know, informal, but a positive presence…it wasn't like I was going to go in and flip it all around… and that is what keeps me there now. I love it there. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. (St. Claude resident, middle income Acadian female, late 20s)

Such conceptions of respondents' roles related to their community were centrally defined not by particular familiarity with the specific place, geographically or relationally, of the 9th Ward but rather opportunities present there.

## Belongingness

Despite the lack of close relationships respondents indicate that they have in the area, many relate a deep sense of belonging and feeling of home. This is often described in feeling a strong sense of self as characteristics they associate with their self-concept are affirmed in the community. The communities of the Upper 9th Ward have vastly different reputations, each affording respondents a different ideal that catalyzes their attachment to the area rather than to particular people. For example, two of four respondents from the Bywater state connections to the diversity, tolerance, and 'bohemian' lifestyle in the neighborhood.

> I love the Bywater because it is funky. There are no rules…Like your house is an expression of your character…When you look at the house, you don't know who lives there. You drive in the Bywater and you think, they've got to be artists just because of how the house looks. It is a hodgepodge. No rules it is just whoever you are and an expression of yourself and that is what I like. (Bywater resident, middle income Hispanic female, 50+)

The 'no rules' lifestyle of the Bywater encompasses not only artistic self-expression, but is stereotypically associated with a separation from modern social expectations.

> I was just following the pattern and the way things were supposed to be, and then we came here and I thought, you know, no, that is not what life is about, following the pattern. And I thought, oh, what have I done, I wasn't me, I wasn't free spirited and I fell to the conformity or formality of society and have I lost myself in the process? And now it is like I'm here and I can find myself all over again…I was such a hippie, I was so free spirited… then I came to the Bywater and I found myself again. (Bywater resident, middle income Hispanic female, 50+)

"Finding oneself" sexually, politically, environmentally, spiritually and in many other ways is a generally accepted theme that dominates the daily activities of many Bywater residents.

One Bywater resident of 33 years, who lives north of St. Claude Avenue, traditionally included in the St. Claude neighborhood but politically designated as the Bywater, feels strongly about the opportunities he has in the diversity of his neighborhood. In spite of his not being demographically representative of the community he lives in, his sense of belongingness is amplified as he has the opportunity to engage with community members in a way that bolsters his sense of self.

> On my side, and this might sound hoaky, but what I am conscious of every day is "oh my god how good I have it." It is a wonderful reason to live there. You see how truly difficult life is for many of them. Every day I watch the kids come by the house. We are on a corner, so all our rooms look out onto the street. [We see when it is] cold and a kid [is] going off to school oblivious to it with no jacket. There is this one mom with 4 or 5 kids and those kids walk by every day and they are immaculate. They are perfect and you can tell that she lives for these children. Oh, I get off on it. (Bywater resident, middle income white male, 50+)

Respondents who express attachment to their community indicate a desire to be involved. Actual involvement in the neighborhood and relationship to others in the area is indicative of respondents' identity and their experience with feedback from their involvement. This involvement does not necessarily relate to participating in efforts that benefit other individuals, but rather acts to build or improve aspects of the community respondents are attached to. Respondents feel their involvement with other residents demonstrates that they have developed relationships with others. The intimacy of these relationships vary, are generally the product of momentary or semi-frequent meetings, and are rarely what respondents could define as "close".

All respondents maintain that their close personal relationships are with individuals who do not live in their community, the majority actually live outside of the city. Nonetheless, respondents are adamant that they "know [their] neighbors" and express a general awareness of the activities and lives of fellow residents. These relationships, however, cannot be verified with examples of the needs or current life situations of specific neighbors. In fact, in requesting contact with neighbors who respondents might recommend to participate in the study, respondents are hard-pressed to think of neighbors they can suggest.

Lack of relationships respondents can draw upon is unexpected due to participants' adamant responses to questions about ties to individuals in their community.

> We know our neighbors, that is very important. Just relationally there are so many different people that live even just on our street. And of course, working close to home, two blocks for me and four blocks for [my husband]. That was very purposeful too, having a true investment in every way to this community to this neighborhood. I think we recognized that we lived enough years in suburbia where you pulled into your garage and you close the door and you sat on your back deck in your privacy fenced back yard and you only knew your neighbors if there was an emergency, or at best, if their kids were the same age as yours and they might come over. And that sense of living in a neighborhood and still feeling isolated when you recognize that most of your friends were elsewhere, I think that was a catalyst for us and we said, "We're not going to live that way anymore". (Marigny resident, middle income white female, late 30s)

However, when this respondent and her husband were asked to describe relationships with neighbors there was inconsistency with the depth of relationship they perceived and what they could relate. They related examples of relationships in the following way:

> varying degrees of closeness (Marigny resident, middle income multi-ethnic male, late 30s)

> And we have met another couple a block from us… we have met their girls. There is a lady on burgundy who has a day care and I see here in morning with the kids going in and I say hi. And tonight when I was going back to PTO they were leaving so varying degrees, just say hello. You realize who lives on your block and who doesn't… and even in the community garden has been a great place. We met the guys who live across the street and our neighbor lives on St. Ferdinand and we met her. And her daughter likes rabbits and our daughter likes rabbits. (Marigny resident, middle income white female, late 30s)

Again, despite the lack of close ties through familiarity with others or contact with place, respondents indicate that they feel a deep sense of belonging due to their ability to live in a particular way or participate in specific aspects of the community.

Similarly, other residents describe the environment of the neighborhood as providing them with an avenue for self-expression. These respondents all have deep attachment to the progressive thinking, art culture, and activism that has a hub in the community.

> The attraction to the neighborhood was a lot of neighborhood pedestrians from the neighborhood. Before the storm, there were all the services you could use, so you didn't have to drive 3.1 miles to a grocery store, which is what we have to do now—at least to my grocery store. But yeah, I wanted that…and I'm not teaching accounting anymore and so I don't have to be Uptown and this is where it's happening. It's a fun, vibrant neighborhood. You'll never know who's going to pass by in a parade. We're indoor/outdoor people, my husband and I. I lived in Carrolton right on Palmer Park and it was lovely but no one ever went out at night. Here you can jump on a bike and go and walk. (Marigny resident, upper income white female, 50+)

Responses indicate that belonging is grounded in finding a connection with one's self and the activities or overall atmosphere of the community, particularly if an opportunity for participation in events that reflect specific interests or meet specific individual needs.

## Identity

Respondents' identity shapes the motivations that create their response to needs they perceive. Because of the diversity of motivations and types of participation, resources are distributed according to what is personally beneficial or meaningful. All behaviors respondents associate with participation in helping behavior are motivated by the rewards they experience in enacting behaviors associated with salient characteristics of their identity. Faith, family, employment and particular interests or values, for example, are benefitted by respondents' participation. Self-expression

through participation in these issues or causes are vital to respondents experience with their neighborhood.

Respondents' identity shapes the motivations that create their response to needs they perceive. Because of the diversity of motivations and types of participation, resources are distributed according to what is personally beneficial or meaningful. All behaviors respondents associate with participation in helping behavior are motivated by the rewards they experience in enacting behaviors associated with salient characteristics of their identity.

Salient aspects of individuals' identity, such as relationship with family, are central to participation as respondents are fulfilled when, for example, addressing needs that would better the experience of their children or spouses within the community. One respondent with two pre-teen daughters who works to grow the youth program in his church wants his children to have what he had growing up.

> When I grew up, I was involved in youth group. Any young person who wanted to be a part of youth group at the church could be. And there were tons of kids who were a part of our youth group whose parents go to church and they had friends and it worked. And not all of them were really really spiritual people, but they really benefited from the safe place. And they benefited. Well, these kids, lot of these kids don't have that available. Church youth group doesn't exist. As many churches as there are around, there's really not a group that you can become a part of and you and really feel, oh I'm a part of this group. (Bywater resident, middle income male, late 30s)

A Marigny resident who teaches at a local private school discussed her involvement in the development of Colton School in the Marigny, a proposed KIPP school that residents want to be designated as an arts centered elementary school:

> I think maybe because we are both working for schools we are at the forefront for children. But when we are talking about the future of New Orleans, I see [education] as a huge need to provide opportunity for our children. To have a quality education regardless of what neighborhood they are in. And here we are in a neighborhood that is desirable and has recovered since the hurricane and you look at what has happened in the 9th Ward…and the schools there that haven't returned and haven't recovered. When will those children be given and opportunity as well to have an education? That for me, especially where we are at, is the biggest need or issue on the table. (Marigny resident, middle income white female, early 40s)

Though this area does not currently have a public school that would serve this age group, this resident and her husband are interested in expanding art influences in the neighborhood. The couples' interests and skills are related to the arts, as her husband is a graphic designer, children are heavily involved in the arts, and she herself feels liberated by the arts community.

Respondents rarely framed their engagement with the neighborhood as obligatory or a kind of 'giving back' to a community that provides them venues for self-expression. Rather, participation is in direct response to developing a particular cause the respondent is personally invested in.

> I always kind of felt that I didn't fit into that dominant class. I felt like I had to be different. I felt I would never quite fit in and be, you know, the poster boy image of America, so I had to find my place in the undergrowth…I always identified with people and saw that the

> way institutions were dealing with people, that people did not understand that viewpoint and misunderstood urban youth, for example, or other cultural minorities. And just some of the viewpoints that didn't represent that mainstream viewpoint. (Marigny resident, lower income Jewish male, early 20s)

This respondent's personal understanding of himself links him to a larger community of "outsiders". The vulnerabilities he experiences through a lack of representation and understanding motivates his current actions to address social injustices related to marginalized peoples. In this way he believes that he commands recognition and 'a voice' for himself that perpetuates the benefit of his work.

Expressing participation as a form of contributing to social improvements through the use of lessons respondents learned through past life experiences appears in many respondents' discussion of why they choose to participate in particular ways.

> I was pulled out of the hood, coming from a poor environment that says, "You can't be this because you're from here, this social community, you're black." And that's the same situation with these kids. They live in the 9th Ward, some of them live on the Bywater side but still. And a lot of people say "You can't do this because you're dumb, you go to this school, you're black." And the emotion support also, because a lot of these kids never had a real male head. I didn't have that when I grew up. I had my uncle, he was my guardian, but he was never really there. I didn't know my father so to be that for these kids is like "Hey, alright. This is how a black man takes care of things". (Bywater resident, lower income black male, early 20s)

The important life experience this respondent had as a low-income black child growing up in New Orleans without a father and without opportunities that would help him 'succeed' acted as a major factor in his decision to relocate to the city and choose his current field of employment. A huge portion of his job and free time is spent "mentoring" and serving as an adult role model to young boys in the Bywater and St. Claude neighborhoods. The ways in which he now serves "at risk black youth" who are similar to himself compensate for the lack of positive experiences and direction he had.

One couple discussed their reasons for moving to and participating in the community as an opportunity to expose their children to lifestyles and experiences they were not exposed to as children.

> We've been there done that, and we realized we needed a real strong sense of community around for our family's sake, for our kids exposure that the world is not monochromatic. There are different people and different flavors and varieties and we wanted them to see that and live with that and understand it so when they are off on their own, the world isn't such a stark contrast from what they grew up with. And that was a bold thing. That was our experience growing up, particularly here, its' very very diverse… (Marigny resident, middle income multi-ethnic male, early 40s)

This desire is motivated by experiences this couple had living elsewhere and childhood of the wife in particular that lead them to seek out a community that would offer diversity and tolerance rather than "guilt…rigid[ity] and structure". Their methods of participation seek to expose their children and others to understand what it means to "love everyone", a concept they felt was lacking in other places they have lived.

**Dependence**

For some respondents the community acts as a safe space to participate in various lifestyles. The same couple who describe few close relationships in the area relate a strong connection to the community due to the experience of their eldest son in an artistic and "quirky" environment.

> He can be himself, he doesn't have to be criticized for being different or creative and eccentric and dramatic. And it is so refreshing as parent to know that who he is being celebrated. So yeah, we definitely know that this is home. (Marigny resident, middle income white female, early 40s)

This son attends the local school for the arts (NOCCA) where he has excelled largely due to increased support from peers, a resource he did not have in Michigan where his family lived during most of his formative years. This demonstrates a kind of dependence not on the specific community of the Marigny where the family lives but rather the lifestyles that are accepted there that allow them to feel less restricted by social norms that might otherwise limit, for example, their son's expressiveness.

One respondent who after this study moved from the area discussed his disappointment with a lack of interdependence residents experience with one another. He draws these conclusions from his experience with his church community, which is primarily made up of residents of the 9th Ward.

> It is a different culture even in the churches [in Alabama]. There, when we had a baby, we had a Sunday school class that was bringing us food for that that and that. Now when we had a baby here, that didn't happen…But back home, if anybody in you Sunday school class has a death in the family, or has a baby, or they're in the hospital, you are overwhelmed with love. And that is just life.
> There has to be someone to be the gatekeeper for the love [in Alabama]…That was hard for me to understand when I got here, when I got to this church… Someone died and the rest of the church was 'that's too bad' but there was nothing done to show love. (Bywater resident, middle income white male, late 30s)

His disappointment with the lack of altruism in the Bywater, which he had experienced while growing up in Alabama, detracts from his sense of belongingness and ability to depend on fellow residents. Without affirmation through the support of others, this respondent expressed a need to address this lack by organizing support systems to care for people in situations such as the loss of a loved one or in time of illness. In this way he attempts to correct for the loss of values he depended on in the past.

Respondents often expressed similar ideas of dependence upon values related to lifestyles not present in the community and therefore framing participation in the community in ways that will encourage a change in behavior. One respondent discusses the possible interconnectivity of the 9th Ward and his attempt to help residents understand and participate in unified ways. He uses music, for example, as a way to help youth understand diverse ideas that they may also be able to relate to and use in their daily lives as a way of teaching them how to exist more harmoniously with those they may not otherwise recognize their similarity with.

> Largely I consider myself to be part of a greater, larger circle that includes the Bywater, the Upper 9th ward where I work, just that whole area of St. Claude… I see those communities as being interdependent and working together and in order to access…like we come here [corner store in St. Claude]…there are different things that we share in this area, that are all within our reach….So I sought to bring more understanding, more communication, and more dialogue…I kind of understood the different symbolisms that those lyrics had for people and what they meant, and how something that somebody is saying might not mean what somebody else interpreted it as (Marigny resident, lower income Jewish male, early 20s)

For those who rely on their community to produce an environment in which they can feel they can "be themselves", when the community does provide this, it also perpetuates dependence as individuals may feel they may not be able to find another environment that supports them in such ways.

> I've learned so much about priorities and what is really important and just about slowing down and what does it mean to really be successful in life, from the people in the community…I've learned how it seems like the people who are poor or not in a successful job or successful position in life, they seem to be a lot happier than a lot of these white collar people who are considered to be successful and have all these things. It has helped me think about what is important and what kind of life I want to live and make choices…Even if I am in a hurry to rush out somewhere and somebody stops me, I'll be intentional if I think, you know, this is more important, I need to talk to this person… I think about the neighborhood as an extension of myself. I don't look at it as "Oh, I can't stay here when it is time for me to settle down because it's not the right place to raise a family or be married in". I don't even see it that way. I know I'm supposed to be there. I love the community, the good and the bad of it. It is my full intention to be in the Upper 9th ward community forever (St. Claude resident, middle income Acadian female, late 20s)

In this way, respondents express their desire to remain in the community when it serves to create an environment in which they find the amenities they most heavily prioritize. However, when characteristics individuals may depend do not exist and they do not feel they can promote growth toward them, attachment to the community begins to dissipate. When individual residents that respondents seek to help do not accept their views or if respondents are continually diverted from 'success' by cultural or societal norms, they become frustrated. One New Orleans native currently working with urban youth in the Bywater expresses his sentiment toward the city in this way:

> Growing up here, just seeing how the city doesn't progress at all, like the leaders are so corrupt and want to isolate New Orleans from everything… I'd rather be somewhere else. This city just gets so dark. From a young age, I never really felt attached to anything, so kind of just say "oh, bye." Probably if I leave, I'll be "oh, I miss it". (Bywater resident, lower income black male, early 20s)

Lack of progress and frustration with aspects of the community lead this individual to relocate to another community in New Orleans.

## Rootedness

Faith, family, employment and particular interests or values, for example, are benefitted by respondents' participation and experience in their community. Self-

expression through participation in these issues or causes are vital to respondents experience with their neighborhood.

> There is no place like home and your spiritual roots. It is so vitally important in the time that we are living in. I've lived in different places…but it wasn't for me. I kept coming back here. The people, the food, I guess the lifestyle. You know, when you go other places and you see other culture and how other people live, and their food and how they communicate and how they do things, and mainly the friendliness. (St. Claude resident, middle income black female, 50+)

Among respondents this expression always takes the form of bringing others into a similar approach to issues that respondents take by invoking their personal paradigm, skills, or other resources. However, inability sway others into sharing these perspectives changes the experience with rootedness of those who have lived in the community for even extended periods of time.

> So that's where I am now, walking by faith praising God as I go and blessing His name, praying for people. When they come to me for prayer I don't mind praying….A lot of people done moved out the neighborhood and some people have moved back. But slowly [I am] knowing what is going on. I used to know a lot of people on the block, but a lot of people are scared. I can understand that too, but you have to bypass that because the Word says that God didn't give us a spirit of fear but of peace and love and of a sound mind. So I try not to entangle myself too much with fear. Before my family came back I would is in this home by myself…Everybody has to take things how they see it, but my faith is in the Word. I believe God is able to keep me and take care of me so I just do my thing. So I'm not worried about all this in the middle. I believe the promises are there and I believe the promises of God. And that is what my life is based on, that is my foundation and motivation, my spiritual roots. (St. Claude resident, middle class black female, 50+)

Frustration and disappointment at lack of 'success' emphasizes their attachment to the paradigm or cause they hope to support rather than to the particular people who experience the needs they address. Respondents who experience incongruities between their cause and the efforts residents or organizations in the community are willing to support changes are more apt to leave the community or to realign their perception of helping and focus on personal goals.

> Sometimes you don't feel like dealing with people, even though you know you should. I think you have to be balanced with that. I think it is good to be intentional and disciplined, but then you might look at people as projects, and things can get twisted that way, where it's not genuine…It is important for me to have balance in my own life to be effective, not trying to give out of something that is empty, an empty self, but learning I'm not the end all be all to rescuing these people, and not seeing things that way. (St. Claude resident, middle income Acadian female, late 20s)

This respondent experiences a great deal of frustration with organizations coming into the city and her own neighborhood seeking to 'help'. The privilege implied by notions of "rescuing" is evident in some respondents' approach to how they participate in their community. Again, motivations return to affirmation of self-concept, or reemphasizing the need for affirmation.

## *Perception of Community*

Forms of attachment founded in self-concept rather than specific place, or individuals who live there, results in perspectives of community that relate to the self rather than holistically to the community at large. In identifying community needs, for example, all respondents' lack knowledge of happenings beyond their own social sphere in some way. This affects their perception of and interaction with the community specifically when it comes to their participation.

### Perception of Need

Attempts to impact changes that effect the daily experience of respondents often creates a veil over the extreme needs fellow residents of their neighborhood experience. One respondent expressed that she saw ignorance as a problem both for her neighbors, however she also indicated that she did not pay attention to problems either.

> [We have] isolated people in a poor area. Not knowing what else they can do. Ignorance [is a problem]. They just don't know about things…they don't know what it is to be told something positive. Adults don't know if they get their GED they can do so much more, as if the cultural norm is against them…I don't think about the problems in my community. People don't talk about the issues because it is the norm. It is just how it is and we deal with it. It is just kind of expected which is actually probably part of the problem. (St. Claude resident, middle income Acadian female, late 20s)

Issues such as poverty, housing shortages, or increases in rental costs for example, are never mentioned.

Respondents do recognize the variation in need between the neighborhoods, especially between the area south of St. Claude Avenue (the Marigny and Bywater) and the area north (St. Claude).

> I think the Bywater on this side of St. Claude is fine. I don't think people need any help here…To me, this side has already been established. I think the people who have moved here have already established this neighborhood… [People need help] on the other side of the Bywater. A friend of mine is a social worker… and I went to her house, she is doing a prayer walk, and she lives right on France but on the other side of St. Claude and I'm driving down her street and there are potholes and the houses are run down and then I get to her house and she took her money from Katrina and fixed her house absolutely precious. So I thought, this is the side that needs the help. And I think more churches should be involved in that side. I think that is the side that needs it. (Bywater resident, middle income Hispanic female, 50+)

Clear understanding of what needs others might experience is difficult for some respondents to articulate, as they do not experience the needs they recognize others might have or do not frequently interact with residents of varied social status. In spite of this recognition, this respondent does not participate in any efforts to address the needs she recognizes in the neighboring community.

Respondents generally have difficulty identifying needs they do not personally relate to. The experiences they do relate to are often the product of opportunities they have, or do not have, because of their income. One respondent, attempting to respond to the lack of green space and the "barren" look of his community, decided to take on the project of breaking holes into the sidewalk and planting trees. He felt that this would make the neighborhood more pleasant and aesthetically pleasing.

> I was going to be a hero. I went to my neighbors and they said "we don't want trees" and I thought, what are you talking about, everybody wants trees. I was so white, so middle class, so focused in my own perspective. I didn't really bother to think about, "Do they want trees?", "Why aren't there trees over there? (Bywater resident, middle income white male, 50+)

What the respondent was oblivious to as a middle-income person in a lower income neighborhood is that those who cannot evacuate during floods drive their vehicles up onto sidewalks to prevent them from taking on water. Trees would prevent this, leading to the loss of property in the low-lying area.

## Responding to Need

The relationship of identity and participation is evident in that participants' respond to their neighborhood in ways they feel are beneficial to addressing needs that they acknowledge with methods they are familiar with or attached to. Some perceptions of useful response may differ by, for example, being a pre-Katrina resident.

Nine of ten respondents discussed ways they participated in their neighborhoods that they feel are beneficial to their neighbors. One respondent who indicated that she did not participate in behaviors that she feels are helpful explained her lack of participation as due to limited time.

> The only thing I volunteer through is through church…I really don't do anything with the community…I was telling myself, in 3 years I'm going to retire that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to volunteer to drive the elderly women whenever they need to do something. I want to do some church, like missionary work around here, in the neighborhood, like walking around, going to the other side of the 9th Ward and seeing what I can do over there. Can I teach at the school, volunteer, things like that. And do it through the church. Missionary work doesn't have to be out of state, it can be in your community. And those are the things I would like to do… I don't know, because I become so busy, I don't just stop and think, "Well, I could do this". (Bywater resident, middle income Hispanic female, 50+)

Her desire to help, like other respondents for this study, is in ways related to her perception of needs and her own interests.

This participant does not help because aspects of her life such as her job, family, church and "rediscovering herself" are time consuming and fulfilling. She often mentions fulfillment and pleasure as key aspects of her decision-making. When asked why she feels a desire to help in ways she currently is not, this participant explained,

> Because I see so many people doing it and they get such great pleasure out of it. I want to experience that pleasure and I haven't had the chance to. When I see other people doing

> something I think, why would you want to do that. What is the purpose of doing that? I really have to think about it and analyze it…you know because it is gratifying. Why don't I do something like that? It is almost like sometimes I deny myself gratification. (Bywater resident, middle income Hispanic female, 50+)

Respondents whose family engages the majority of their time and attention are most fulfilled when addressing needs that would better the experience of their children or spouses within the community. One respondent with two pre-teen daughters who works to grow the youth program in his church wants his children to have what he had growing up.

> When I grew up, I was involved in youth group. Any young person who wanted to be a part of youth group at the church could be. And there were tons of kids who were a part of our youth group whose parents go to church and they had friends and it worked. And not all of them were really really spiritual people, but they really benefited from the safe place. And they benefited. Well, these kids, lot of these kids don't have that available. Church youth group doesn't exist. As many churches as there are around, there's really not a group that you can become a part of and you and really feel, oh I'm a part of this group. (Bywater resident, middle income male, late 30s)

A Marigny resident who teaches at a local private school discussed her involvement in the development of Colton School in the Marigny, a proposed KIPP school that residents want to be designated as an arts centered elementary school:

> I think maybe because we are both working for schools we are at the forefront for children. But when we are talking about the future of New Orleans, I see [education] as a huge need to provide opportunity for our children. To have a quality education regardless of what neighborhood they are in. And here we are in a neighborhood that is desirable and has recovered since the hurricane and you look at what has happened in the 9th Ward…and the schools there that haven't returned and haven't recovered. When will those children be given and opportunity as well to have an education? That for me, especially where we are at, is the biggest need or issue on the table. (Marigny resident, middle income white female, early 40s)

Though this area does not currently have a public school that would serve this age group, this resident and her husband are interested in expanding art influences in the neighborhood. The couples' interests and skills are related to the arts, as her husband is a graphic designer, children are heavily involved in the arts, and she herself feels liberated by the arts community.

Likewise, individuals whose identity is attached to particular value sets are engaged in activities in which they can promote or act on these values, such as engaging youth in intellectual or character advancement or providing opportunities for progressively minded others to work toward shared goals.

> My husband and I created a committee… because I thought that young people would be interested in creating a sustainable life. Initially we got a lot of people and it then it peters out as everything. But we had different programs. We had planting trees, recycling batteries, CFLs, energy efficient lights. We were interested in bicycle safety. I've always been involved in that, even way back when we just used to, many many many moons ago, we used to bring our recycling to Tulane. They had a dump and I used to always do it. It's always been a passion. I did it in my classroom; we used to recycle paper. It's just my way of life. I do it all. It wasn't a second nature to me. It's very comfortable. (Marigny resident, upper income white female, 50+)

Because this respondent feels concern for environmental dilemmas such as energy use, her perceived form of addressing "need" is through outlets with a similar focus. Not finding an organization that worked toward the issues she felt compelled to address, she assisted in the formation of a group that she felt could respond more appropriately.

While each participant responds in ways he or she perceives as generally helpful, behaviors are not necessarily framed as beneficial to the specific needs they see as most prevalent in the community.

> Now I kind of bumped it up so these people can be useful to me. In between my family and the people who are useful are the people who I enjoy who help me in all those activities and share the same interests, [association] members, people I met in Bywater because of my activism. Otherwise I am not much of a social person. We don't throw dinner parties, it is either my family or my activism, there's not much else. (Bywater resident, middle income white male, 50+)

In this way, attachment to concepts related to self alter the ways in which respondents engage with their community.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study illustrates the individual identities of respondents and their participation in helping behavior within neighborhoods of the Upper 9th Ward. Findings indicate changing conceptions of place attachment through how respondents enact community participation in the area. Each respondent's helping behavior acts as a response to issues that relate to needs they personally experience or had in the past, believe are important to who they are, or addresses issues in the community that make their daily experiences less enjoyable.

Research illustrates that the spaces in which individuals express themselves are diverse within the construct of modernity (Bauman 2000). Within the urban environment of the Upper 9th Ward modern economic expansion in the form of business and cultural spaces allows access to a variety of opportunities in which respondents can meet their need for affirmation to characteristics of their identity that are salient within in the area, consistent with social identity theories (Lawler et al. 2009). Particular segments of cultural and economic opportunities thrive in various locations within the neighborhood. Streets, blocks, corner stores, restaurants and cafes, as well as the many non-profits serve as venues for self-expression and gratification.

However, the Upper 9th Ward's recovering post-Katrina and mostly residential four square miles are limited in the resources available to residents. Access to opportunities for work, play, and to general resources such as grocery stores, schools, and shopping, are largely available outside of the tiny tract of land that is home to approximately 25,000 residents (City-data.com 2011a, 2011b, 2011c). The connectedness residents experience to their community, from my conversations with them, is also critical. Yet, respondents engage more in issues that are relevant to themselves and encounters that alter their daily personal experiences than by responding

to community wide issues that promote shared experiences and quality of life. This is especially the case for residents with the ability to obtain vital resources outside of the community.

I conclude that as individuals are continually divided from the necessity of close personal relationships with others in their locale, they substitute limited affirmation by creating an environment that provides verification to dimensions of their identity they value most. In doing so, individuals participate in ways reflecting attachment to concepts and lifestyles. In spite of the attachment respondents express, many were not aware of the personal needs of other specific residents, or their names in some cases. This indicates that how individuals experience place attachment may be changing to accommodate fragmented social ties by depending on abstract forms of fulfillment not related to ties with others.

*Diverse Identities' Affect on Place Attachment and Participation* Current literature lacks an inclusion of the influences of modernity in conceptualizations of place attachment. As expected, diversity among respondents' identity results in varied means of participation (Stryker et al. 2000). However, the influence of respondents' salient self-concepts in relation to their community act to construct their perception of their area, the needs experienced in it, elements within it that they appreciate and identify, and therefore, their attachment to place (Burawoy 2000). Respondents' sense of belonging and feeling "at home" is often the result of their being able to express themselves and feeling their interests and/or skills align with some aspect of the area (Cuba and Hummon 1993). Current literature relies on affirmation of identity and emotional cohesion in relation to place based interactions to motivate attachment to place. In examining attachment to place as an indicator how if and how residents participate, findings indicate that respondents' attachment to concepts and lifestyles, specifically those related to self-concept, served as motivation for participation rather than attachment to specific others or place attachment as understood through traditional measures.

Though respondents felt they their participation involved them in important issues, their assessment of the area's needs did not motivate the type of participation they engaged in. Instead, their specific interests motivate participation. Motivating interests reflected characteristics of the respondents' identity that related to how they see their role within their neighborhood (Lawler et al. 2009). For example, educators may enact their interest in education by attending public meetings related to neighborhood schools. Individuals who strongly identify with their religious faith may participate more frequently in faith-based activities that they associate with their particular beliefs. Environmentalists may enact their values by promoting "green" activities in their neighborhood.

Lack of an intersectional perspective by respondents limits the manner in which they understand and respond to social problems in their community. The limitation of the focus on individually experienced social issues constrains development that addresses larger or more vulnerable portions of the population. Though respondents who are women, people of color, or members of the LGBT community, who experience social vulnerabilities at a disproportionate level in the broader context of the United States, have a broader analysis of need, their perspective is nonetheless

limited to those who share similar experiences as members of the same social category. This is indicative of the shared standpoint of individuals occupying the same social group who can better understand the experience of similar others (Hill Collins 1998). In pursuing participatory means that allow for improved individual experiences, members of socially vulnerable groups work to improve the lived experience of similar others, if only unconsciously so.

However, need across socially vulnerable groups is varied. Need for resources differs greatly and the pursuit of resources that improve individual experience as opposed to community experiences limits the extent to which those who experience vulnerability on many levels are included. For example, the resources most needed by the primarily affluent LGBT community of the Marigny do not serve the lower income community of color of St. Claude to the same degree.

Women's concern, as is frequently represented in past literature, is the most widespread. Women are closely tied to faith-based communities as the source of personal and social fulfillment. Their participation in varied roles such as being mothers, grandmothers, members of women's groups, and childcare providers, for example, work to diffuse their influence beyond their particular families to the education system, churches, and other local organizations. Nonetheless, women's perspective of need is likewise limited to those issues that directly impact those in their immediate networks.

Participation related to respondents' everyday happiness, comforts, personal safety, and use of their skills through involvement in organizations or in interactions that contribute to bettering their experience in the community. Issues that respondents participate in relate to expressions of their identity and attachment to their religious faith, family, employment or specific skills, or particular causes such as the environment or social justice. Respondents sometimes create their own organizations, address needs within specific social groups, or address needs that represent their interests outside of their own neighborhoods as a means of participating in particular issues (Gottdiener 1997). The diverse interests of respondents result in varying selectivity with which respondents determine how they participate, limiting the range of issues being addressed in the community (Smith 2007).

Attachment to abstract concepts in neighborhoods limits both respondents' understanding of others' experience with need and divides necessary resources from issues not addressed by individual life experiences, interests, or needs, for example. Attachment to place as related to particular concepts also detracts from commitment to specific others. The specialized issues respondents are involved pulls involvement away from large-scale issues in the community, leaving certain problems without that attention that catalyzes collective action. For those affected by poverty, hunger, gentrification, or poor educational opportunities in the Upper 9th Ward, lack of recognition means that neighbors with the social power and resources to assist may be unaware of their plight (Reed 2008). Those with limited resources or power to affect change for themselves are then left without support or strong advocates as more resourced residents are unaware or do not consider the effect of individual residents' experience on the community in general.

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