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In this issue, we bring you four different articles that focus on the interactions of race or ethnicity with gender, covering topics ranging from the images of Black women in the nineteenth century to the significance of race and gender for contemporary children and college students. Zine Magubane shows how Sarah Baartmann, the “Hottentot Venus,” represented only one image of African women for nineteenth-century Europeans and demonstrates that this image is unlikely to be the source of any contemporary negative representation of Black women’s sexuality. Magubane’s important case study illustrates how race and gender are not transhistorical characteristics but are instead rooted in social relations. In doing so, she provides an alternative to the predominant feminist understandings of Baartmann’s role in the construction of Black women as “other.” Rupe Simms also examines nineteenth-century images of African women, reporting on how enslaved women in the United States were represented in antebellum literature by pro-slavery intellectuals. He discovers that images of the “mammy,” the “mule,” and the “Jezebel” were found in differing frequencies across the six realms of religious, scientific, legal and political, philosophical, and social science writings, as well as in popular fiction. While arguing that this literature helped shape the social construction of Black women’s gender in the 1800s, he suggests that future research should examine any continuities and discontinuities in these same images over time.

Turning to contemporary children, Valerie Ann Moore compares how older and younger Black and white preadolescents establish and negotiate peer relations by engaging in racialized and gendered age processes at two differently structured summer day camps. She finds that campers shared some similarities in their peer relations but also discovers differences shaped by whether the camp was traditional or not and by the race and gender of the kids. Heidi Lasley Barajas and Jennifer L. Pierce’s article shifts our focus to another group of youth: successful Latina and Latino college students. Their data reveal that Latino/a students see themselves as part of a larger cultural group but also that the women tend to have a more positive racial and ethnic identity than the men. They suggest this difference occurs because women emphasize their group membership as Latinas, while the men are frequently supported by a mentor, often a white athletic coach, who encourages them to focus on the importance of individual success.

Rebecca E. Klatch’s article on the formation of feminist consciousness turns our attention to left- and right-wing activists in the 1960s but develops an analysis of the pathways to feminism that is relevant now. She finds that politics alone did not determine which women came to identify sexism. Instead, she finds three stages in the formation of a feminist identity: identification of inequality, locating a language
in which to frame these experiences, and the social construction of a collective identity.

Finally, we conclude this issue with two articles focused on health and sexuality. Susan M. Allen and Pamela S. Webster find that when wives develop physical limitations or get sick, husbands who have both egalitarian attitudes and are happy in their marriage will do more (but not an equal amount of) housework. The majority of the responsibility still falls on women. Similarly, Nicola Gavey, Kathryn McPhillips, and Marion Doherty find that safe-sex campaigns often target heterosexual women, assuming that women have control over condom usage and that women want men to use condoms. But this is a responsibility that is not easily taken on or necessarily desired. Read the article and find out why!

The editorial staff of *Gender & Society* hopes that this issue intrigues you and enhances your holiday reading. As always, we thank you for your continued support, which has recently been evidenced by our becoming the most cited journal in the field of women’s studies (according to the *Social Science Citation Index*).

CHRISTINE E. BOSE
University at Albany, State University of New York
THE FORMATION OF FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG LEFT- AND RIGHT-WING ACTIVISTS OF THE 1960S

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This article examines the formation of consciousness among women at the beginning stages of the women's movement. The author analyzes the complexity of pathways to feminism across the political spectrum, comparing women who were active on the Left in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) with women active in the leading conservative organization of the 1960s, Young Americans for Freedom (YAF). She finds an unexpected division among women in both groups between those who identify discrimination by their male peers and those who do not. The author argues there are three stages in the formation of feminist consciousness: identification of inequality or mistreatment, discovering a language or framing by which to interpret these experiences, and the social construction of a collective identity. Factors for each of these three stages that help or hinder the formation of feminist consciousness are discussed.

The emergence of the second wave of feminism during the late 1960s and early 1970s provoked a rich literature examining an array of factors that paved the way for the women's movement. Studies have provided critical analysis of historical and structural factors that laid the groundwork for feminism, such as the increased labor force participation of women, declining fertility patterns, and changing marital patterns (Klein 1984); the rising aspirations of middle-class white women and the importance of college (Freeman 1975); the influence of state policies (Briet, Klandermans, and Kroon 1987; Costain 1992); and the key role of protest movements in the 1960s creating a climate of civil rights (Dixon 1970; Fuchs Epstein 1975), building social networks, and in teaching women practical knowledge and skills that were transferred to the feminist movement (Buechler 1997; Evans 1979; Hole and Levine 1971; Kelly 1971; Strobel 1995).

These studies provide essential understanding of the historical, organizational, and ideological basis for the women's movement. Yet much less attention has been
paid to understanding how individual women who formed the women's movement became aware of gender inequality and began to identify as feminists in the first place. This gap in the literature is problematic and also raises important issues for studying social movements. Many social movement scholars have analyzed how people enter into collective action through recruitment by social movement organizations. The women who formed the women's liberation movement during the 1960s and 1970s are unusual in that many of these women were already politicized and mobilized, active in the civil rights movement, the antiwar movement, and the New Left. Thus, they did not need to be convinced of the importance of political involvement. Furthermore, no movement organized around the collective interests of women existed at the time nor were women's issues even seen as political. The formation of feminist consciousness for these women was not simply a process of recruitment by already established social movement organizations. In short, the development of consciousness and mobilization around women's issues took place among activists and within existing movements but pushed the boundaries of the ongoing definition of political. Francesca Polletta (1998) draws attention to the neglect within social movement literature of understanding the processes that precede the formation of movement organizations, pointing to the importance of studying the social-psychological and discursive processes involved before a movement is consolidated. Gerson and Peiss (1985) pointed out that we know very little about the form of nascent consciousness and about which factors help explain the means by which consciousness develops. By what process did the initiators of the women's movement develop feminist consciousness? What conditions encourage and which ones inhibit individuals from recognizing gender inequality and identifying their common concerns as women?

This article turns attention to the formation of feminist consciousness. I use the term feminist consciousness in the same way Ethel Klein defines group consciousness, as “the belief that personal problems result from unfair treatment because of one’s group membership rather than from a lack of personal effort or ability” (1987, 23). Feminist consciousness requires the recognition and rejection of unequal and unfair treatment of women and the transformation from seeing problems as personal to perceiving the social nature of problems that require political solutions. In short, people need to see themselves as objects of collective discrimination before they can mobilize politically. Part of the process of feminist consciousness, then, entails the formation of a collective identity as women. While Klein interchanges the terms feminist consciousness and group consciousness, I view feminist consciousness as a subset of gender consciousness. Within gender consciousness, I include not only feminists but also women who believe in gender equality but do not necessarily identify with the term feminist (Fainsod Katzenstein 1990), as well as women who recognize a common identity and interest as women but who mobilize in support of traditional conceptions of gender (similar to Kaplan’s [1982] notion of female consciousness).

In addition to theorizing the emergence of feminist consciousness, a second contribution this article aims to make is to illustrate the complexity of pathways to
feminism across political ideology. Many accounts of the rise of the second wave of feminism during the 1960s point to New Left women as the instigators of the women’s liberation movement, arguing leftist women were motivated to form a movement on their own behalf due to their secondary role and mistreatment by leftist men (Buechler 1997; Cassell 1977; Dixon 1970; Echols 1989; Evans 1979; Fuchs Epstein 1975; Hole and Levine 1971; Staggenborg 1998). Yet, my own study (Klatch 1999) comparing activists from Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the leading organization of the New Left, and Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), the most prominent right-wing youth organization during the 1960s, finds a much more complex picture. In comparing the experiences of women in SDS and YAF, I find an unexpected division among women in both groups over whether they perceived women in the organization as being treated as second-class citizens. While many leftist women did feel they were mistreated within the movement, other women in SDS deny discrimination by leftist men and say this was not a basis for their involvement with feminism. Equally surprising is the minority voice of women on the right who did perceive sexism within YAF during the 1960s, recognizing gender discrimination. Looking across the political spectrum, I find important factors that affect the development or the inhibition of feminist consciousness among women. These findings not only refute the frequent assumption that women of the New Left all became feminists due to their mistreatment within the Left but also challenge another common assumption: that only women on the Left recognize gender discrimination. Instead, I find a minority voice of right-wing women who also became aware of the dynamics of gender inequality through their political activism during the 1960s. This article examines the factors that affect the development or the inhibition of feminist consciousness among women across the political spectrum.

I begin with a brief discussion of method, followed by discussion of the three stages of the development of feminist consciousness. I then turn to my data on SDS and YAF to examine the variation in activists’ experiences as women in these two organizations. For each stage, I analyze factors that inhibit or promote feminist consciousness.

METHOD

This study is based on a comparison of activists in two leading organizations of the 1960s, SDS and YAF. Both SDS and YAF were formed in 1960; both were youth groups that grew out of older organizations of the Left and Right. SDS was dedicated to an array of issues including civil rights, welfare reform, opposition to the Vietnam War, and students’ rights. Thus, SDS was part of a social movement community (Buechler 1997) that included the civil rights movement, the student movement, the antiwar movement, and other movements on the Left. YAF, which was founded at the estate of conservative leader William F. Buckley, was also a multi-issue organization. YAF was devoted to fighting communism; opposing
Soviet expansionism and trade with Communist countries; protecting individual liberty and free enterprise; and, eventually, supporting the war in Vietnam and mobilizing against the Left on campuses. Although YAF was not truly a countermovement, as it was formed to affirm conservative principles and actions rather than to oppose existing leftist groups, later in the 1960s, YAF began an aggressive offensive against the Left. Thus, SDS and YAF were part of what Klandermans (1992) term a “multiorganizational field,” referring to a system of social movement organizations in alliance as well as those in conflict with each other. Although SDS was larger and more prominent by the mid- to late 1960s, YAF served an important role as a training ground for a whole generation of conservative leaders, many of whom hold positions of political prominence today (Andrew 1997; Klatch 1999) and whose impact was not felt until the 1980s and 1990s.

There are three sources of data for this study: life histories with SDS and YAF activists conducted from 1989 through 1991, participant observation at reunions of 1960s’ activists, and archival research of the organizational materials of these two groups. The interview sample of former activists was selected based on the following criterion: All people chosen were active for at least two years in SDS and/or YAF. The final sample of activists consists of 34 female activists, equally divided between SDS and YAF, and 40 male activists, 19 from SDS and 21 from YAF. Although a serious attempt was made to diversify the sample in terms of race, because both organizations primarily were composed of white activists, all activists interviewed are white, except for 3 Black activists in SDS and 1 Black activist in YAF. Activists were also chosen to get a mix of both leaders and rank-and-file activists. In SDS, the sample contains 24 rank-and-file members and 12 people who were part of national leadership and/or were at the (founding) Port Huron conference, 6 of whom were women (50 percent); the YAF sample consists of 23 rank-and-file members and 15 members who held national office and/or were at the founding Sharon conference of YAF, 2 of whom were women (13 percent). I also chose people who were active in a range of locations across the country.

In addition, the sample was chosen to reflect the ideological differences within each group. YAF activists include 25 traditionalists and 13 members who defined themselves as libertarian. The SDS sample includes 5 Progressive Labor members or sympathizers, 5 Weathermen members or sympathizers, and 2 Revolutionary Youth Movement II (RYMII) members or sympathizers; the majority of SDS activists were either unaffiliated with any factions during the 1969 splits (12 activists) or were uninvolved in SDS politics by 1969 (12 activists). The SDS sample also contains a mixture of activists who joined from 1960 through 1964 (17 people) and those who were drawn in from 1965 through 1968 (19 people).2

The interviews focused on four sets of issues:

1. **Background and upbringing**: This included questions on the demographic backgrounds of activists and their parents, parents’ political and religious beliefs, family dynamics, and early political and gender socialization.
2. Political involvement and organizational experiences: Questions focused on how and why individuals became involved, the experiences of men and women in YAF/SDS, and the development of ideology.

3. Interpretations of key events of the 1960s including the 1964 and 1968 elections; the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King; the civil rights movement; the Vietnam War; the counterculture; and so on.

4. Post-1960s lives: Questions focused on changes in lifestyle (such as occupation, religion, marriage, or children) as well as any shifts in political beliefs during the 1970s and 1980s.

Archival materials examined include papers, newsletters, pamphlets, correspondence, and other documents of SDS and YAF.

In comparing Left and Right, I was interested in the interorganizational similarities and differences, as well as the intraorganizational differences, within YAF and SDS. For example, within YAF, there were crucial differences between traditionalists, those who adhere to a religious and social conservatism, and libertarians, those who believe in the free market and individual liberty. Such differences proved critical to YAF’s history (Klatch 1994, 1999).

The views presented here are based on activists’ reconstruction of their feelings and experiences at the time, regardless of their present views of feminism or any differences in perspective in later years. For a full discussion of the use of retrospective memory, see Klatch (1999, 13-15).

THE STAGES OF FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS

What is the process of the development of feminist consciousness? There are three stages in the formation of feminist consciousness. The first stage is the recognition of mistreatment of women. This awakening can either happen suddenly, with “clicks” of recognition (Klein 1984), or can be a more gradual awareness that gender matters in one’s life and in determining one’s fate. Only when women begin to identify unequal treatment of themselves as women can they begin to formulate a conscious reaction to these individual incidents and feelings. As we will see, based on the experiences of women in SDS and YAF, organizational life is an important factor affecting whether women experience such “clicks of recognition.”

Second, to develop an oppositional consciousness, that is, an account that challenges the prevailing understanding (Morris 1992), these individual experiences and the recognition of mistreatment must be understood within a larger context. The formation of consciousness involves this articulation of injustice, the rejection of traditional rationales for unequal status, and the development of alternative beliefs (Gamson, Fireman, and Rytina 1982). The second stage involves the idea of framing. Snow et al. (1986) apply Goffman’s notion of frames to social movements, arguing that meaningful frames function to organize experience and guide action. In Goffman’s words, frames allow individuals “to locate perceive, identify, and
label” events within their life space or the world at large (1974, 21). Snow and Benford (1992) argue that frames are interpretive schemata that punctuate, accent, underscore, and embellish the seriousness and injustice of a social condition or redefine as unjust and immoral what was previously seen as unfortunate but perhaps tolerable. Frames incorporate a diagnosis of the social problem as well as a strategy and rationale for social change (Polletta 1998), thereby recognizing that problems are political rather than personal, situational rather than individual (Klandermans 1988; Polletta 1998). Successful frames connect information and experiences in new ways or in ways previously not articulated (Polletta 1998; Snow and Benford 1992), enabling activists to align a vast array of experiences so that they hang together in a unified and meaningful way, and so that subsequent experiences or events need not be interpreted anew (Snow and Benford 1992). These alternative definitions of reality are constructed within social networks and through social interaction (Klandermans 1988) and face an “uphill symbolic struggle” since they are contending with the predominant or hegemonic framing of reality, seen as the natural order (Gamson 1992). In terms of feminism, the establishment and acceptance of challenging or oppositional frames is particularly difficult because women’s roles historically have been assumed to be based on natural differences.

While framing is helpful in thinking about how clicks of recognition are formulated into a broader understanding, framing is typically used among social movement analysts to refer to the persuasive efforts of already established social movement organizations to mobilize potential recruits or bystander support (Gamson 1988; Polletta 1998; Snow and Benford 1988), rather than as fundamental to the actual formation of consciousness before the establishment of social movement organizations, by the initiators of a movement. In understanding the experiences of SDS and YAF activists, one of the critical factors affecting the inhibition or the development of this larger frame was whether there was an existing language to legitimize discontent. As we will see, whereas later activists in SDS (those who became active from 1965 though 1968) were surrounded in a language of oppression that helped them frame their own experiences of sexism in SDS, early activists (those who became active from 1960 through 1964) did not have a language to put into words their inchoate feelings. Similarly, while a minority of women in YAF were introduced to a language by which to name their experiences, the majority of women in YAF did not encounter such a language.

The third stage of the development of consciousness, and closely connected to the framing process, is the development of a collective identity. Melucci (1988, 339) views collective identity as group processes “by which individuals evaluate and recognize what they have in common and decide to act together.” Long before actual mobilization takes place, subcultural networks develop and generate collective identities that are the seedbeds for future collective action. Through interaction and social comparison, people produce a collective definition of the situation (Klandermans 1988). Thus, collective identity is “the shared definition of a group that derives from member’s common interests, experiences, and solidarity” (Rupp
and Taylor 1999). Included in this idea of collective identity is a shared understanding about the possibilities and limits of collective action (Klandermans 1992).

Essential to the process of challenging groups defining a sense of “who we are” is the delineation of boundaries, a drawing of circles that separate “us” from “them” (Rupp and Taylor 1999). These boundaries mark social territories by highlighting the differences between activists and those outside its borders. Boundary markers are central to the formation of collective identity because they promote a heightened awareness of a group’s commonalities (Taylor and Whittier 1992). Thus, collective identity is essential to building solidarity, a prerequisite for social movements. In the case of SDS and YAF, differences in organizational experience once again proved critical in explaining the facility with which a collective identity with other women formed.

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS IN SDS AND YAF MEMBERS**

Despite the fact that there is objective evidence of gender discrimination in both SDS and YAF (Klatch 1999), there was a division in each organization between women who perceived gender discrimination and recognized their own unequal position and women who denied discrimination within the organization. Why do some women in each organization recognize discrimination while others say they were treated equally? Let us now consider the factors that influenced this variation in subjective perceptions for each of the three stages of development.

**Stage 1: The Recognition of Inequality**

I was surprised to find a division among both left- and right-wing women as to whether they perceived discrimination within SDS and YAF as activists during the 1960s.

The majority of leftist women in this study did identify gender discrimination within SDS. Nearly all of the women who perceived sexism were later activists. A variety of issues were discussed as illustrative of women’s secondary status in SDS, echoing prior accounts of male dominance on the Left. For instance, women mentioned the lack of women in leadership roles, citing examples of men chairing meetings, dominating speakers’ lists, and generally acting as experts and theoreticians of the movement. Women also complained about being relegated to do the mundane tasks of the movement, the daily chores and office work: xeroxing, phone calls, and making coffee. Beth Oglesby states,

Women were doing too much of the office work. Women were doing the footwork of the organizing . . . taking the mothers to the welfare office. They were doing the phone stuff. They were doing the mailings. . . . And it’s the men who talk, and it’s the men who theorize, and it’s the men who make the decisions. Except for a few articulate women, most of the women were not listened to.
This, too, was a common complaint: that not only were meetings dominated by men but when women spoke, they were not taken seriously. In short, women felt silenced and made invisible. Evans (1979, 115, 166) argues it was not so much a lack of knowledge or intellectual sophistication that kept women from speaking; rather, it was more a matter of style—the competitive, domineering manner was foreign to many women. Some women mention that the intimidating style was even an impediment to joining SDS.

Another criticism women raised was that the fate of women in SDS was determined by their relationship to men. In particular, a woman had a better chance of “succeeding” in the movement if she was the girlfriend or wife of a male leader. As Evans (1979, 152) put it, a woman’s status could rise or fall according to changes in her sex life. Many women felt that, above all, they were seen as sexual beings, not taken seriously in their own right.

The cumulative effect of these experiences of mistreatment was that many later SDS activists began to see a contradiction between the movement rhetoric of equality and the reality of women’s place in the movement. Women faced the fact that SDS was not truly the participatory democracy they had imagined. Cindy Decker recalls the feeling she had during the last years of the 1960s:

I was more frustrated by the position of women within the movement than anything. Which was . . . a constant source of discussion because here were all these sanctimonious young men going around pontificating about how the world was a bad place and we really ought to change the way people related to black folks and . . . brown folks. But they treated women in totally abysmal ways. That was real frustrating for most women in the movement. It was a constant source of conflict.

All of these issues—the lack of female leaders and the intimidating style of SDS, the exclusion of women from speaking, women doing the mundane tasks, and the treatment of women as sex objects—became the topics of much discussion among women who began organizing consciousness-raising groups in SDS in the late 1960s. As Marge Piercy (1970, 473) put it in her essay, “The Grand Coolie Damn,” which rallied women in the New Left to feminism, “The Movement is supposed to be for human liberation: how come the condition of women inside it is no better than outside?”

Yet, while the view of these women who perceived discrimination is commonly recognized, not all women in SDS agree with this perception of the New Left. A vocal minority of women, all early SDS activists, deny being treated unequally by SDS men. These women argue the whole characterization of SDS as sexist is overblown. Although some of these women acknowledge that not all members of SDS were treated the same, they do not see it in terms of gender. They point, for instance, to insiders and outsiders, pointing to women leaders who commanded authority as part of the inner circle. Other women attribute differences in leadership not to gender but to variations in style, distinguishing, for example, between those who were
quiet and those who were loud, with loud people tending to get more credit than those working quietly behind the scenes.

For many of these early women gender is not viewed as a relevant category of analysis. For some, an individualistic interpretation frames their understanding: Each person is in charge of her own destiny, and individual personality and action, rather than patterns of gender, determine one’s place in the world. Denying that gender was a basis of division, these women not only say that they did not feel discriminated against by their male peers but they felt encouraged and supported by the men in SDS. For example, Helen Garvy recalls when she worked in the National Office as assistant national secretary and had to plan a National Council meeting, a task she had never done before. When Helen expressed doubts to two male leaders, they encouraged her, reminding Helen of her knowledge of the issues. Rather than mistreatment, Helen says she was encouraged and supported by her male colleagues, even “from men who were considered traditional male chauvinists and who got dumped on a lot by the movement.” Helen concludes, “People treat you a lot the way you expect to be treated.” In a similar way, Vivian Rothstein says the movement gave her a chance to develop and be respected at a time when there were few such avenues for women. Vivian felt she was valued more on the Left than anywhere else. For these early activists, SDS provided opportunities and skills unavailable in the larger society.

The majority of YAF women, like early SDS women, deny their secondary status in YAF, saying they did not encounter any discrimination. A common refrain expressed is that YAF was in a state of growth and that everyone was welcome in the organization. Dawne Winter comments,

I didn’t feel that I was being put down because I was a woman. . . . When you’re a minority movement like that, you appreciate everyone who comes in. So it doesn’t matter whether they’re male or female, white, black, yellow, red, whatever.

Several women interviewed had been the chair of their YAF chapter. They uniformly said they felt free of discrimination. These women felt autonomous and respected. Barbara Hollingsworth says,

I never felt discriminated against as far as YAF was concerned. Probably that was because they were so happy to have somebody that a warm body was better than nothing. . . . It never even occurred to me that it was strange that a woman was in my position. . . . It’s only in retrospect that I realize that. . . . It was probably sheer numbers more than anything else. It was just so few of us. . . . YAF just never developed a hierarchy that probably the Left did. . . . Since we were so small, [women] always had a prominent role.

One of the few women who held national office, Carol Dawson, also says she was treated equally and felt her opinions counted as much as anyone else’s ideas.
Emmy Lewis, who was the only female statewide chair of YAF, also says she never witnessed any signs of bias in YAF. Like some early SDS women, she views her experiences in individualistic terms, rather than seeing gender as an important category. Individual personality or expectations of mistreatment, not overt discrimination, determines women’s fate. She concludes it is a woman’s attitude that determines how she is treated:

Sometimes women who are so caught up in this preoccupation of looking for areas where they may be discriminated against—real or imagined . . . sometimes they, I wouldn’t say encourage it, but if you’re looking for trouble, sometimes you get it. It’s a philosophy and an attitude that you carry with you in your life that determines how things work or . . . how you respond to situations. . . . If you think like a victim, you are one.

Yet, surprisingly, there was a vocal minority of YAF women who did perceive discrimination. These women talk of the problems caused by male conservatives. Some women complained about being viewed as sexual objects. Mary Fisk, who held positions as editor of New Guard and was on the National Board of YAF, recalls, “I was smart and pretty, and a lot of guys would just hit on me.” Another woman who complained about this, Marilyn Bradley, says she was a “victim of the age.” In the summer of 1968, she appeared as Miss YAF in New Guard, “wearing little skimpy clothes.” New Guard, YAF’s monthly magazine, regularly featured pinup columns of female activists. Marilyn comments,

I [was] a sex object . . . I felt like I was sort of window dressing at the time. But I didn’t really know how to handle it either. I was kind of wide-eyed and naive and a watcher. That was the role of women and nobody questioned it. So there I was, watching. . . . They all thought I was pretty, but none of them thought I was smart.

Anne Edwards also was aware of sexism within YAF. She recalls a time when she wrote a letter to New Guard in support of an article on conservative feminism, only to be told by the male editor that her letter would not be printed because the issue had run its course and was not important. Anne comments, “I think very often that some of the problems in life were caused by male conservatives.” These YAF women did experience clicks of recognition based on their mistreatment by YAF men.

How do we explain this variation in the perceptions of both SDS and YAF women? Fainsod Katzenstein (1990) points out that individual consciousness is fundamentally shaped by institutions. In both SDS and in YAF, organizational factors affected the likelihood of whether or not these clicks of recognition and perceptions of inequality developed within individual women.

**Organizational barriers to the recognition of sexism.** In SDS all the women who deny discrimination were early activists. The perception by early women that they were not unfairly treated by leftist men is rooted in the reality that their experience
of SDS was fundamentally different from later activists’ experience. Early activists were involved in a small, tight-knit organization in which face-to-face interaction was common. The earliest members were even handpicked by founding members to fit into the group. As pioneers speaking out amidst a time of general apathy, early SDS members relied on each other and welcomed others of like minds. Bound together in a beloved community, a type of gemeinschaft, people knew each other and worked together as a circle of friends. As Dorothy Burlage characterizes those years:

Everybody was so giddy with the opportunity to do something meaningful. . . . The Victorian worries were gone and people were free to be friends without the sort of normal expectations that had been there in the fifties. . . . It felt so good, we didn’t pay a lot of attention to some things that you might have otherwise questioned, like men’s and women’s roles. It seemed so insignificant compared to the general excitement and enthusiasm, that it wasn’t a big issue.

These early members knew each other well and shared a sense of mission. The nature of such group ties created a supportive environment for women and inhibited women from recognizing mistreatment by men. Depending on others like themselves to sustain their activism, women acted to protect the fledgling movement they had created. In a similar fashion, Crenshaw (1989) argues that in the face of white racism, Black women are reluctant to speak out against the sexism of Black men in fear of compromising Black unity and resistance.

Organizational factors also help to explain why most women in YAF did not perceive discrimination. Like early activists in SDS, members of YAF struggled together in a relatively small movement throughout the decade of the 1960s. In fact, the majority of YAF women who deny discrimination resemble those involved in early SDS; pioneers bound together in common cause, happy to find others of like mind. Like their counterparts in SDS, these women were less likely to perceive mistreatment. Unlike SDS, however, as the 1960s progressed, YAF activists increasingly became a minority voice speaking out during a liberal era. This sense of alienation in YAF grew throughout the 1960s, particularly as the New Left gained in strength and number. Members of YAF felt more and more ostracized for holding unfavorable views. This only intensified the sense of mission of both men and women. In this context, it makes sense that many women report being welcomed and appreciated in the movement.

Organizational factors conducive to the recognition of sexism. In the aftermath of SDS’s success in organizing the first large national antiwar march in Washington on 17 April 1965, SDS membership dramatically increased and the fundamental experience of being in the organization changed. As SDS grew, it became more diverse, with conflicting ideological tendencies. People were no longer handpicked to fit into the group. The expansion of SDS also meant that people no longer knew everyone in the organization. The vast majority of activists did not become involved
at a national level; at best, they knew most members of their chapter. Helen Garvy speaks about how SDS’s growth changed the nature of group meetings:

A lot of the change... had to do with the [fact that the] groups got larger. Then it becomes much more shouting matches. People who are good orators and were not intimidated about getting up on speaking platforms tend to become much more important than when the National Council meeting is in a room this size and everybody knows each other and... respects the work that the other people are doing. It’s real different. . . . When you know somebody, you judge them on what you know. I always felt that people respected me because they knew what work I did.

In addition, the growing factionalization and impulse toward ideological purity that characterized the later years of SDS led to a lack of cohesion, a fragmentation of the organization. Thus, the bonds of gemeinschaft were broken, the sense of community no longer superseded the differences between members. Jeanne Friedman speaks about the experience of ideological purity in Stanford SDS during the late 1960s:

One way the sexism was manifest was you had these men... telling you what correct ideology was... The men were the ideologues... telling very politicized women... who were able to read and think themselves... It would translate as sexism under the guise of ideological struggle. The men were the experts, and the women didn’t know anything.

Not only is there a clear “click” of recognition of unequal treatment in these words, but there is no longer a reluctance to interrupt the “we-ness” of the group by drawing boundaries between women and men.

Many women found the dynamics of these later years alienating. Naomi Schapiro recalls the infighting she encountered during her involvement with the Harvard Strike in 1969:

There was a lot of very ugly factional stuff that happened right on the eve of the strike... I really experienced it as a very male way of relating... It was hard to deal with. I just remember some very ugly internal meetings right before the strike happened that really disgusted me... just disgusted me being part of the whole thing.

Not only was the sense of community destroyed, but also because these later activists were not the founders of SDS, they were less invested in maintaining unity. No longer were activists single voices speaking out in the darkness. By now, multiple organizations existed on the Left; one could choose between an array of possibilities for involvement.

In short, the expansion of SDS into a mass organization destroyed the sense of family of the earlier years. The size and the accompanying ideological conflicts created an alienating and hostile atmosphere for later SDS women. Because YAF, on the other hand, never grew to the size of SDS, the organization never had to deal with issues accompanying such expansion. Although ideological factionalism did
develop within YAF, these tensions focused on conflicts between libertarians and traditionalists, not on differences connected to gender. In part, this lack of attention toward gender is connected to the absence of an available language to express discontent.

Stage 2: Framing

For consciousness to develop, individual experiences of sexism must be placed in a larger context. The notion of framing has been used to understand how social movement organizations and leaders provide a way for people to interpret such experiences. Framing becomes problematic, however, before feminist organizations exist to help interpret experience. There must be an available language to express and to understand grievances in order for framing to take place. Jenson discusses the “universe of political discourse” within which a movement acts as being fundamental in challenging traditional conceptions of women. The universe of political discourse sets the boundaries to political action by limiting the range of issues included in the realm of meaningful political debate. “Invisibility can exist for those questions that are, for whatever reasons, never elevated to the status of being ‘political’” (1987, 65). Ultimately, this universe of political discourse acts to inhibit or encourage the formation of new collective identities, challenging old discourses. The prevailing universe of political discourse during the early 1960s made women’s issues invisible, defined outside the accepted definition of political.

Barriers to framing. Early SDS women did not have access to a vocabulary to voice grievances. The prevailing universe of political discourse excluded women’s experiences from the pool of legitimate grievances; they were viewed as personal or diversionary from the real political issues. There was no prevailing language by which to frame discontent. There was a certain taken-for-granted quality to early SDS women’s experiences. As Connie Brown explains,

I felt conscious of not being able to talk [in SDS meetings], but I would say that my consciousness of feminism was not very much... What I remember is just the feeling... would be more on a family level. Like within the family you might think, “Oh God, he’s the boss and he makes us all do what he wants”... just take it for granted that that’s the way it is. Here we had these very high-powered men in our project. We might not like it, but we would assume that that was who was going to run things. (emphasis added)

Another early activist, Barbara Haber, speaks directly to the lack of a language to express such feelings:

My experience [in SDS] first of all was of incredible sexism, for which I did not have a word... I knew that I hated it and I was miserable and I knew I was being excluded. What I didn’t know was that being a woman—it took me... a couple more years before we started talking about that. (emphasis added)
Without a language to label their experiences, these individual feelings were not recognized as being rooted in gender nor were they seen as collective issues. Once women began to meet to discuss common problems, the ideas and language articulated by early feminist groups allowed women to see their personal hardships in a political light. As Cassell (1977, 32) puts it, “When a problem with no name is named ... the problem is not only discovered and defined but also in some ways created. ... A new way of categorizing reality not only names and channels dissatisfaction but also generates it.” Once a terminology or frame is available that labels their experiences, women are able to see their situations as part of a social system, rather than as isolated events. Women active early in SDS did not have access to a language to capture their incipient feelings of unease and discontent.

Similarly for women in YAF, there was an absence of any language of discontent on the Right. Rheingold and Foust (1998) find that general beliefs in egalitarianism have a profound impact on whether or not women develop a feminist consciousness. Because the Right tends to focus on liberty rather than equality, no appropriate framework was easily available as it was for those on the Left. Because the civil rights movement was not central to the vast majority of activists on the Right, there was no analogy to Blacks or a pervasive “master protest frame” by which women could understand their own position. This lack of a comparison group, too, helps explain why the majority of YAF women did not recognize discrimination. There was no relevant discourse (Gamson 1988) by which women could identify as a group.

**Factors conducive to framing.** By the mid- to late 1960s, a frame did develop by which to identify and name sexism within the movement. On the Left, although two older activists were the first to raise the issue of women’s position in the movement, the issue lay dormant for a couple more years. In 1965, two early Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) activists, Casey Hayden and Mary King, wrote “Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo” addressed to “a number of other women in the peace and freedom movements.” They drew the analogy between women and Blacks being part of a caste system in which both were excluded from hierarchical structures of power. King and Hayden also contrasted the movement’s egalitarian ideas with women’s actual subordinate role (King 1987, app. 3). Although reading this memo prompted a group of women to walk out of a national SDS conference a month later, women did not begin to seriously organize within SDS until 1967 (Evans 1979).

By the late 1960s, the language of Black power and colonialism pervaded SDS. Ideological debates were filled with arguments regarding the struggles of Third World people. In contrast to the early women, then, later activists were surrounded by the language of oppression. This available vocabulary or master frame (Snow and Benford 1992) gave legitimacy to women’s concerns, offering not only an articulation of injustice but also a language or frame by which to challenge traditional beliefs. The radical Black power frame provided a language of liberation and
empowerment by which women came to understand their unjust positions. Like the first wave of feminists who learned from their participation in the abolitionist movement (Buechler 1997), so did these activists learn to apply the frameworks of race to their own lives as women. Later activists inherited these ideas, which they used to understand their own position in the movement. Framing allows what was previously taken for granted to be seen as problematic and in need of repair, an injustice that needs to be changed. Women were able to draw on the ideological understanding of the Black struggle for their own struggle as women and to mobilize based on this new understanding (McAdam 1994).

In short, not only did later SDS activists have a different experience within the organization that provoked the recognition of their secondary status, but they also had access to a vocabulary by which to name and openly discuss their experiences of sexism. As Carol Christman put it, the younger women were “able to give names to [their] sense of frustration. . . . By the time I came along a revolution was occurring.” Similar to Polletta’s (1997) findings regarding women in SNCC, later women were able to challenge the group loyalty that made criticism difficult for earlier SDS women.

One further way that later SDS women were pulled toward feminism is through the counterculture. The language of the counterculture intersected with feminist beliefs. Both emphasized the importance of lifestyle, of the personal as political. By rejecting middle-class standards and lifestyles and embracing sexual freedom, the counterculture called into question basic institutions such as marriage and the family, causes that were critical to feminism (Evans 1979). Yet, while later activists embraced the counterculture, early activists rejected it as narcissistic, self-indulgent, and diversionary (Klatch 1994, 1999). This, too, made later women more prone to recognize discrimination and to embrace feminism.

In terms of YAF, the vocal minority of YAF women who did perceive sexism shared some experience that brought them into contact with a language or frame of equality. Traditionalist Anne Edwards, for instance, was one of the few YAFers who did participate in the civil rights movement. During her sit-ins at Woolworths, she certainly was exposed to the language of equality. In fact, in discussing sexism, Anne makes this comparison, saying,

> I think that females who wanted to drive a truck or play quarterback should have [been able to do it] because of the law of the land. . . . Just as with civil rights—I don’t think there should have been obstructions put in the way of women.

Her experiences with civil rights provided Anne with a frame by which to view her own situation as a woman.

Mary Fisk is another traditionalist who identified sexism within the movement. In Mary’s case, she grew up with a mother who was an electronics engineer. Mary describes her mother as “radically liberated.” Certainly Mary’s experience of seeing her mother “work three times as hard as men, for half the pay” provided her with
a vocabulary by which to name her own experiences. She became increasingly disturbed, for example, by the leadership of Phyllis Schlafly within the conservative movement.

The other women who identified sexism within YAF were libertarians. During the 1960s, libertarians took a stand in support of women’s right to abortion, sexual freedom, and gay rights. These positions no doubt brought libertarians into contact with a language of equality. Furthermore, libertarians also embraced the counterculture (Klatch 1994, 1999). Through the counterculture, as well, these women likely discovered a common vocabulary with the incipient feminist movement. In fact, one woman, Marilyn Bradley, says her own involvement in the “human potential movement” and therapy brought her directly to the doors of feminism. By the 1970s and 1980s, to one extent or another, all libertarian women ended up becoming feminists.

Stage 3: Constructing a Collective Identity

The third stage of the formation of feminist consciousness involves identifying with other women and developing a collective identity, a sense of “we-ness.”

**Barriers to the formation of a collective identity.** The organizational bonds that united early SDS women with men into the “beloved community” prohibited women from speaking out against their brothers in the movement. The bonds of trust and overwhelming sense of community during the early 1960s meant women were resistant to destroying this feeling of family. Not only did these experiences of early SDS women mean they did not perceive sexism within the group, but their organizational experiences also prevented them from drawing a boundary between themselves as women versus their male peers. They were reluctant to define a collective identity based on gender that would separate them from leftist men. Similarly, YAF women, fighting alongside YAF men in a right-wing organization during an increasingly liberal era, also created bonds of unity that prevented any recognition of sexism and prohibited women from turning against their male peers.

Intricately connected to this, both early SDS women and YAF women did not see gender as a relevant category, a basis on which to form a collective identity with other women. As discussed previously, some women in both groups adopted an individualistic frame, believing that each person is in charge of her own destiny and that it is individual personality and action, rather than patterns of gender, that determine one’s place in the world. This individualistic frame resonates with broader American political ideology.

This denial of gender as a relevant category led some early SDS women to feel critical and distanced from early feminist gatherings. Dorothy Burlage admits she didn’t feel any allegiance with the women’s movement at the time:

I went to some of the [women’s] meetings, but I kept thinking—I’m embarrassed to say it. . . . “This is frivolous,” that there were people who were genuinely poor
and...people who were genuinely discriminated against because of color. And I
didn't see women as such an oppressed class at that time. I became more sympathetic
over time. ... But initially I thought it was sort of diversionary from issues of race and
class.

Gender was not viewed here in the same terms as, or of equal importance to, class
and race, which were assumed to be “real” political issues. Other women also say
they did not feel it was personally important or appropriate for them to join with
other women. For some early activists, their identity as radicals superseded their
identity as women. Their collective identity alongside radical men prevented them
from identifying with women as a group.

Although many early SDS women eventually did end up becoming feminists,
there is resistance to feminism in their stories that is absent among later women.
They followed different pathways to feminist consciousness than later activists. As
pioneers, some speak of how they saw themselves as exceptional and just “one of
the guys.” For instance, Sue Jhirad says,

I resisted for a long time thinking of myself as a woman because of this...exception. I
was a leader and I could do it. I was just one of the guys basically... Many things hap-
pened to me... in my life which were strongly women’s issues, but I wiped that out
and never thought about it consciously.

For these women, the radicalization to feminism often was abrupt; the clicks of
recognition took them by surprise. Sue Jhirad recalls her first inklings of conscious-
ness at a time when she was trying to balance her commitment to antwar work with
having a job, working on a Ph.D., taking care of her baby, and doing all the house-
work in her marriage. Ignoring her feelings of frustration, Sue decided to organize
women into an antidraft group in Boston. She initiated a meeting that included a
network of her women friends. Sue was furious when this group of women, instead
of organizing, took up the topic of why women are oppressed. Sue remembers:

I thought it was secondary to the issue that men were dying in Vietnam. ... All my
anger and frustration about my situation was stuff that I never articulated politically
because I had no framework for it. Which is an intriguing phenomenon, how a strong,
independent...woman would allow herself to become just a household role without
even seeing that there was anything wrong with it. [That] tells you something about
what life was like before women’s liberation ideology even existed. (emphasis added)

Sue’s experience speaks to the difficulty of formulating feminist consciousness
during the early stages of a movement, before movement organizations exist by
which to frame women’s concerns. Her words also speak to the difficulty she faced
both in recognizing that her problems were based on gender and in identifying with
other women. Soon after this event, Sue Jhirad began going to a few women’s meet-
ings and recalls a sudden awakening:
I just had this complete and total revelation that suddenly everything was sort of turning inside out. I began to see all these things that happened to me in my life of having been raped, having been beaten up by my boyfriend, having a very authoritarian father, doing all this housework. I began to see for the first time...I hadn’t really wanted to face that fact at some level. But these were political questions. I got very engaged in the women’s movement at that point.

By naming her experiences and seeing the political dimension to her own personal troubles, Sue was able to become part of a collective response that resonated with the widely shared experiences of other women. Embedded in a community of other women who were thinking through their experiences, Sue’s collective identity with women solidified and she became involved in feminist groups.

Barbara Haber, another early activist, went through a similar change from initial resistance to a sudden radicalization to feminism. Barbara’s resistance to feminism was intertwined with fear that aligning with women would mean the loss of connection to men. Her change in perspective was accompanied by much pain and confusion. Barbara recalls her experience during an SDS convention:

The women went off to have their own separate meeting... and I didn’t go with them because I was very frightened... I was married and wanted to stay married. More than that even... I wanted the approval of the male leadership. I was the daddy’s girl... My whole life was geared around getting male approval and... I wasn’t going to give up because I’m very obstinate.

Instead of joining the women, Barbara chose to join a group of men. As she listened to their discussion about sex and whether women were passive and tried to put in her own two cents’ worth, Barbara discovered she was a feminist. She remembers her resistance, of being afraid of losing “what I was still striving for.” Barbara’s ambition was to crack the barrier and be accepted by men as the exceptional woman. She was torn between two contradictory views:

There was still that old idea that I could be “the special woman,” the one as smart as men, who men would respect as an equal... The self-hate, the dis-identification with femaleness was still strong in me. On the other hand, I had the growing sense in my gut, “[The women] are right, they’re my sisters, and my only path to survival is to be with them.” But that felt like a terrifying shift.

Barbara’s account illustrates the threat posed by identifying as a woman and a feminist, not only in terms of the fear of alienating men but also in terms of a shift in her sense of self. She was afraid that identifying as a feminist would close off options and pose difficulties in her life. Yet, as she recognized and confronted her experiences of mistreatment, she was able to literally join other women. For feminist consciousness to coalesce, women have to become aware of sharing a common fate with other women and have to recognize the centrality of their identification as women (Gurin and Townsend 1986). Identity based on gender must become salient and take priority. Thus, feminist consciousness entails not only a new way of
making sense of the world but also a redefinition of what it means to be a woman both personally and collectively (Griffin 1989).

Like early SDS women, YAF women also were bound together with men in common cause. United in a conservative movement during an increasingly liberal era, they, too, were reluctant to draw a boundary between “us” and “them” based on gender. Like early SDS women, some YAF women also speak about how they saw themselves as just “one of the boys,” denying gender as an important category. Thinking about her position on the first board of YAF, Carol Dawson reflects,

I just felt like I was one of the boys . . . Never occurred to me that there should be any difficulty whatsoever with a person of my gender being in a position in an organization. It wasn’t until much later, until I’d had children and then went back to work, that I discovered that it could be a problem . . . . You know, I read the same feminist literature everybody does. We’ve all had these experiences. But then, no, it just didn’t seem a problem . . . [I] didn’t think they treated me any differently. I would have noticed if they had.

Carol did not perceive sexist treatment and did not identify with other women during the 1960s.

For the minority of YAF women who did identify sexism in the organization, the fact that there was no larger community of women to discuss such experiences prevented the formation of a collective identity based on gender. Even though traditionalists Mary Fisk and Anne Edwards recognized unequal treatment and were exposed to a frame of injustice, the lack of a larger community did not lead to collective action. There was no discussion or validation of their experiences within a larger social network by which to interpret these incidents of gender inequality and by which to form a common identity. Anne went to a NOW meeting a few times but could not relate to the women there and did not feel compelled to join the organization. Neither Anne nor Mary became active in the feminist movement.

Kriesi (in Klandermans 1988) distinguishes between latent and manifest political potentials. If people become aware of their shared interests and develop a collective identity, a manifest political potential is created. Given that neither of these women (Anne or Mary) were embedded in networks of women with whom they could share these perceptions of unequal treatment, their feelings remained latent. They were surrounded by women who did not identify with feminism and who did not support their views. Also, their identity as conservative women overrode any inclination toward feminism. As Buechler (1997) points out, women’s collective identity is problematic because there are so many cross-cutting allegiances; gender may not be the most salient collective identity for some women. The most salient collective identity of most YAF women during the 1960s was not based on gender. Gender did not hold a significant place in the way they thought of themselves (Gurin and Townsend 1986). Also, given that traditionalist women tend to be devoutly religious, religious ties may counteract any inclinations toward feminism (Klein 1984). In short, YAF women’s unity with men and denial of gender as a basis
of identity, and the lack of collective recognition of sexism, prevented a collective identity with other women to form during the 1960s.

**Factors conductive to the formation of a collective identity.** As we have seen, later SDS women more easily formed a collective identity as women. At the same time that these younger women were pushed toward feminism based on the alienating and divisive dynamics within SDS, they also were pulled toward feminist consciousness by the surrounding ideology of oppression and liberation that resonated with their experiences. Both their perceptions of sexism by male peers and the availability of a language or frame by which to understand their secondary position set the conditions for them to look toward other women. Furthermore, the reality that they were embedded in networks of other women, some of whom were undergoing similar feelings of discontent, provided an organizational context for common discussion and mobilization. Once women began forming small groups, and later on organizations, they were able to articulate women’s unequal position and to amplify the frame of oppression, liberation, and equal rights as applied to Blacks to speak to women’s condition. This articulation offered a pathway for other women to then understand the sexism they encountered, bringing more women into the early feminist movement.

Most SDS women did eventually become feminists, but the emotional pathways differed for early and later activists. While early SDS women did end up joining feminist groups, their motivation was not based on criticism of New Left men. Andrea Cousins, for example, says her involvement in the women’s movement was not a reaction toward the Left but was more “as if all of us [women were] like minnows... That was the way we were swimming... The idea of women getting together was such a soothing idea to me.”

Similarly, Vivian Rothstein says her involvement in the feminist movement during the 1960s was due to her understanding of women’s unequal place in society, rather than to hostility toward leftist men:

> I became a feminist through really valuing underrepresented people getting power... I didn’t come to it from being pissed off at the Left... We were less undervalued [in SDS] than in the rest of society... The common thing is that women on the Left were so mistreated and it made them feminists. That’s really not my experience and I don’t really agree with that theory, frankly... I don’t think that’s what built the women’s movement. Just like no one ever burned a bra. There are lies that are told... not lies, but misinterpretations.

In short, while both early and later women activists developed a collective identity with other women, early SDS women deny unequal treatment by leftist men and say they were provoked by women’s unequal place in the larger society. Later SDS women, on the other hand, felt a growing discontent within the Left, following a different path to feminist consciousness.

As for women on the Right, it was not until the 1970s and 1980s that most YAF women participated in politics based on gender. All libertarian women—to one
extent or another—developed a feminist consciousness and began organizing women to create social change. Experiences in YAF, exposure to the counterculture that resonated with feminism, and libertarian ideology were all conducive to identifying with other women. However, these women became active in libertarian feminist groups, organizing within their own political ideology to advance equality for women (Klatch 1999, 268-71).

Meanwhile, it was not until the mid-1970s and 1980s that traditionalist women developed a collective identity with other women. Traditionalist women also went through a process of gender consciousness. In direct response to the advances and claims made by feminists, these conservative women awakened to issues of gender and found a language and collective identity by which to build the pro-family/anti-feminist movement (Klatch 1987, 1999). These women drew on the skills and resources they developed during their years in YAF, as well as the social networks formed during these years, to build a countermovement to feminism. Together, feminists and antifeminists became part of the same multiorganizational field, in contention over women’s place in society. For women on both the Left and Right, then, involvement in social movements of the 1960s had unanticipated consequences for the development of the feminist and antifeminist movements.

CONCLUSION

This article has focused on the processes that occur before the establishment of social movement organizations, a phase of protest that has been understudied (Polletta 1998). During the mid- to late 1960s, women struggled to make sense of issues and experiences they had prior to the existence of an already formed women’s movement. I have examined three stages in the formation of consciousness: identification of inequality or mistreatment, a language or framing by which to interpret these experiences, and the social construction of a collective identity. Unlike many studies of social movements that analyze how social movement organizations recruit and entice participants to become involved, for these women, there was no already articulated collective identity nor any existing women’s organizations compelling them to join in a feminist movement.

Furthermore, this case study shows that rather than consensus on either the Left or the Right, there was a difference of opinion among both left- and right-wing women regarding whether they encountered gender discrimination within SDS or YAF. Given this contention over women’s issues in both groups, it is clear that predictions about which social movement constituencies are co-optable, that is, available for protest, are not as straightforward as it might appear. The findings suggest that organizational structure plays a key role in either constructing barriers to the formation of feminist consciousness or in facilitating such development. The cases of both early SDS activists and YAF women indicate that when a group or organization is small, marginalized, and/or fighting for survival, community bonds within the organization thwart the development of feminist consciousness. In small, close-
knit organizations in which men and women work closely and know each other well, strong ties to male peers inhibit women from recognizing gender inequality and from creating boundaries based on gender; resistance obstructs the emotional pathway to a collective identity with other women. On the other hand, in large-scale organizations in which people are not closely bound, particularly ones divided by ideological schisms, women are more likely to perceive mistreatment and to align against men.

Yet, what is also necessary for feminist consciousness to develop is a legitimizing set of ideas, a language or frame, that makes sense of inchoate and unnamed experiences. For later activists in SDS, both the experience of being in a large and increasingly divisive organization and the prevalence of an ideology to express discontent allowed women to be critical of their own position within the movement. Within YAF, while most women perceived equality and felt supported by men, the minority of women who recognized discrimination had individual experiences that exposed them to ideas regarding equality, providing them with a framework by which to understand their own situation as women. However, without a larger network or community to discuss these experiences, collective identity remained latent.

This case study also points out the dialectical relationship between the formation of feminist and antifeminist consciousness. The formation of gender consciousness among traditionalist women in YAF developed in direct reaction to the formation of feminist consciousness among leftist women. During the 1970s and 1980s, each group of women defined a collective identity with other women and mobilized to affect fundamental notions of gender. While conservative women acted to protect existing gender arrangements, feminist women—both leftist and libertarian—acted to question the existing social order, challenging traditional gender relations. In short, there are consequences to the development of feminist consciousness, not only in terms of the mobilization of movements to promote equality, but also in terms of fostering gender consciousness and mobilization by those women acting to protect women’s traditional place.

NOTES

1. In addition, phone calls and correspondence from 1997 to 1998 contributed current information about the lives of many activists in this sample.
2. For extensive discussion of the demographic and social background differences between Students from a Democratic Society (SDS) and Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) activists, see Klatch (1999, chap. 2).
3. While SDS membership in December 1964 was 2,500 with 41 chapters, by October 1965 (after the march), membership escalated to 10,000 with 89 chapters. From this point on, SDS membership continued to escalate. By October 1966, SDS claimed 25,000 members and 265 chapters, and by June 1968, membership was estimated to be between 40,000 and 100,000 with 350 chapters (Sale 1973, 664).
INTERVIEWS CITED

SDS Activists

Cindy Decker, October 31, 1990. Cindy Decker is a pseudonym for an anonymous SDS activist.
Jeanne Friedman, October 27, 1990.
Helen Garvy, October 23, 1990.
Barbara Haber, December 6, 1990.
Sue Jhirad, July 26, 1989.
Beth Oglesby, November 19, 1990.
Vivian Rothstein, February 9, 1990.
Naomi Schapiro, October 27, 1990.

YAF Activists

Marilyn Bradley, August 15, 1991. Marilyn Bradley is a pseudonym for an anonymous YAF activist.
Carol Dawson, July 7, 1989.

REFERENCES


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WHICH BODIES MATTER?
Feminism, Poststructuralism, Race, and the Curious Theoretical Odyssey of the “Hottentot Venus”

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This article critiques dominant feminist analyses of the “Hottentot Venus.” It argues that these analyses of the construction of Black women as “other,” which borrow heavily from poststructuralism, make race and gender transhistorical and metaphysical constructs. The article critiques what has become the theoretical orthodoxy on the “Hottentot Venus.” It takes issue with two presumptions in particular: first, that there was a core image of the Black woman in the nineteenth century, and second, that the fear of the anatomy of the “other” is the source of negative representations of Black sexuality. The article proposes an alternative way of understanding the construction of Black women in colonial discourse. It argues that social relations, rather than psychological dispositions, determine how bodies are seen and perceived.

Any scholar wishing to advance an argument on gender and colonialism, gender and science, or gender and race must, it seems, quote Sander Gilman’s (1985) “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature.” First published in a 1985 issue of Critical Inquiry, the article has been reprinted in several anthologies. It is cited by virtually every scholar concerned with analyzing gender, science, race, colonialism, and/or their intersections (Abrahams 1997; Crais 1992; Donald and Rattansi 1992; Fausto-Sterling 1995; Gordon 1992; Haraway 1989; hooks 1992; Lindfors 1999; Loomba 1998; McClintock 1995; Pieterse 1995; Schiebinger 1993; Sharpley-Whiting 1999; Stoler 1995; Strother 1999; Thomson 1997; Vaughan 1991; Wiss 1994).

In the article, Gilman uses Sarah Baartmann, the so-called Hottentot Venus, as a means of showing how medical, literary, and scientific discourses work to construct

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images of racial and sexual difference. Baartmann, a Khoikhoi woman, was taken from the Cape Colony in South Africa and exhibited at the Picadilly Circus in London because of the purported abnormality of her sexual organs. She was said to suffer from both steatopygia (an enlargement of the buttocks) and an elongation of the labia (thus named the “Hottentot Apron”). Baartmann suffered the indignity of public exhibition and became the subject of popular lore and political lampooning before her premature death and subsequent dissection at the hands of Georges Cuvier, a French anatomist. The basic premise of Gilman’s argument is summed up in this frequently quoted passage:

The antithesis of European sexual mores and beauty is embodied in the Black, and the essential Black, the lowest rung on the great chain of being, is the Hottentot. The physical appearance of the Hottentot is, indeed, the central nineteenth-century icon for sexual difference between the European and the Black. (Gilman 1985, 231)

Gilman’s analysis of Baartman was the genesis for a veritable theoretical industry. After the publication of Gilman’s article, Baartmann was, in the words of Z. S. Strother (1999, 1), “recapitulated to fame” and became “an academic and popular icon.” The theoretical groundswell her story precipitated cannot be separated from the growing popularity of poststructuralist analyses of race and gender. The ways in which science, literature, and art collectively worked to produce Baartmann as an example of racial and sexual difference offered exemplary proof that racial and sexual alterity are social constructions rather than biological essences. Thus, her story was particularly compelling for anyone interested in deconstructing difference and analyzing the “othering” process.

The fact that Gilman’s article has been “instrumental in transforming Baartman into a late-twentieth-century icon for the violence done to women of African descent” (Strother 1999, 37) makes it even more critical that we reconsider the ways in which Baartmann, as both subject and object, has been deployed theoretically. In the pages that follow, I will argue that although most studies that discuss Baartmann (or Gilman’s analysis of her) are scrupulous in their use of words like invented, constructed, and ideological, in their practice, they valorize the very ground of biological essentialism they purport to deconstruct.

Thus, in this article, I examine the parameters of inquiry that have structured how scholars have posed their research questions. I am particularly interested in looking at what assumptions about racial and sexual difference inform the theoretical orthodoxy about Baartmann. I argue that most theorists have, following Gilman’s theoretical lead, focused obsessively on Baartmann’s body and its difference. As a result, they have accepted, without question, his core assertion that “by the eighteenth century, the sexuality of the Black, both male and female, becomes an icon for deviant sexuality in general” (Gilman 1985, 228). They have not, however, asked what social relations determined which people counted as Black, and for which people did Blacks become icons of sexual difference and why? Neither have they investigated the important differences that marked how social actors in
different structural locations saw and experienced Baartmann—in particular her very different interpellation into French versus British medicine and science. As a result, their work has actually placed Baartmann outside history.

In the interest of placing Baartmann (and racial and sexual alterity) back within history, the remainder of this article will take issue with, and disprove, three of Gilman’s core assertions. The first assumption I disprove is that Europeans’ fears of the “unique and observable” physical differences of racial and sexual “others” was the primary impetus for the construction and synthesis of images of deviance. The second assumption I challenge is that ideas about Blackness remained relatively static and unchanged throughout the nineteenth century. The final assumption I critique is that Baartmann evoked a uniform ideological response, and her sexual parts represented the “core image” of the Black woman in the nineteenth century. The article will conclude with a discussion of the theoretical lapses that precipitated Baartmann’s recent theoretical fetishization.

WAYS OF SEEING: HIERARCHIES OF VALUE AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF PERCEPTIONS

Long before the first poststructuralist put pen to paper, Emile Durkheim (1982, 34) argued that “social life is made up entirely of representations.” His strongest criticisms were directed against social theorists who naturalized these representations, treating them as the result of universal sensory impressions rather than historically specific cultural creations. He thus argued that

consciousness allows us to know them [representations] well up to a certain point, but only in the same way as our senses make us aware of heat or light, sound or electricity. It gives us muddled impressions of them, fleeting and subjective, but provides no clear, distinct notions or explanatory concepts. (P. 36)

Durkheim argued that representations must be analyzed like social facts (1982, 36). Viewing representations as social facts, he explained, “is not to place them in this or that category of reality; it is to observe towards them a certain attitude of mind.” He was essentially arguing that analyses of psychic impressions must give way to analyses of social relations if the theorists are to arrive at a sophisticated understanding of how we perceive and order our world.

It appears that Gilman (1985, 231) was determined not to repeat the mistakes of a generation of theorists before and after Durkheim when he began his essay with this compelling question: “How do we organize our perceptions of the world?” His analysis suggests that he sees differences as “myths” that are “perceived through the ideological bias of the observer” (1985, 223). However, the ahistorical perspective he adopts on how human beings perceive difference and organize hierarchies of value belies this seemingly radical constructivist stance. Gilman essentially argues that ideas about difference are the unmediated reflex of psychic impressions. In his
analysis, the visible stigmata of racial and corporeal abnormality—what he terms “unique and observable physical differences”—are of key importance (1985, 231). He argues that the scientific discourse of degeneracy, which was key in pathologizing the Other, devolved primarily in relation to non-European peoples as an expression of fears about their corporeal difference.

It is the inherent fear of the difference in the anatomy of the Other that lies behind the synthesis of images. The Other’s pathology is revealed in anatomy. The “white man’s burden” thus becomes his sexuality and its control, and it is this which is transferred into the need to control the sexuality of the Other. . . . This need for control was a projection of inner fears; thus, its articulation in visual images was in terms which described the polar opposite of the European male. (Gilman 1985, 256)

Despite his ahistoricism and psychological determinism, a number of feminist scholars wholeheartedly embraced Gilman’s analysis. Several, following Gilman’s theoretical lead, argued that Cuvier’s dissection was an expression of his inner fears of Baartmann’s anatomical difference and his need for control (Fausto-Sterling 1995; Haraway 1989; Schiebinger 1993; Sharpley-Whiting 1999). Fausto-Sterling (1995, 42) was clearly drawing on Gilman when she argued,

Cuvier most clearly concerned himself with establishing the priority of European nationhood; he wished to control the hidden secrets of Africa and the woman by exposing them to scientific daylight. . . . Hence he delved beneath the surface, bringing the interior to light; he extracted the hidden genitalia and defined the hidden Hottentot. Lying on his dissection table, the wild Baartmann became the tame, the savage civilized. By exposing the clandestine power, the ruler prevailed.

Anne McClintock (1995, 41) also employed Gilman in support of her claim that

it was necessary to invent visible stigmata to represent—as a commodity spectacle—the historical atavism of the degenerate classes. As Sander Gilman has pointed out, one answer was found in the body of the African woman, who became the prototype of the Victorian invention of primitive atavism.

In following Gilman’s lead, and analyzing the discourse of degeneracy as a product of psychological dispositions, these accounts cannot explain the paradoxical stance of the founder of the science of degeneracy, Augustine Benedict Morel. Morel argued “between the intellectual state of the wildest Bushman and that of the most civilized European, there is less difference [emphasis added] than between the intellectual state of the same European and that of the degenerate being” (Pick 1989, 26). Morel’s comments become even more striking when we recall that many scientists and travelers believed that Baartmann was a female member of the so-called Bushman tribe.

Morel’s comments become much more understandable if we proceed from the assumption that social relations, rather than psychological dispositions, provide the background and context for human encounters. Degeneration, as an explanatory
framework, did not develop in response to external others and their corporeal alterity. Rather, the discourse was a response to fears about the blurring of class and status differences within the European polity. This was considered far more threatening than the racial and sexual alterity of non-European peoples. Malik (1996, 112) explained that “for the ruling classes equality and democracy were themselves symptoms of degeneracy.” What was distinctive about the idea of degeneration was that external features were not reliable indicators of its existence. Degeneration was not always (or even primarily) associated with unique and observable physical differences. As Pick (1989) explained, degeneration was considered so dangerous precisely because it was a process capable of usurping all boundaries of discernible identity. Degeneracy was marked by its slow, invidious, and invisible proliferation.

The importance of analyzing social relations, rather than enumerating psychological dispositions, is nowhere more evident than in Georges Cuvier’s stance on the Great Chain of Being. The Great Chain of Being was a theory that speculated all creatures could be arranged on a continuous scale from the lowliest insect to the most highly evolved human. After the publication of Gilman’s article, Cuvier became popularly (and erroneously) associated with the Great Chain of Being (Gordon 1992; Sharpley-Whiting 1999; Strother 1999). Wiss (1994, 29), for example, asserts that “Cuvier, by fractioning the gradual continuities of the ‘great chain of being’ was able to divide humanity into four distinct races.”

What these analyses do not and cannot account for is Cuvier’s stubborn and enduring resistance to the doctrine. As Appel (1987, 50-51) explained,

Of all the speculative theories, the one that most aroused Cuvier’s passions was the eighteenth-century doctrine of the chain of being. It became in effect his bete noire. . . . Cuvier’s main stated objection to the chain was that it was a speculative a priori scheme that went beyond the facts. . . . By 1812 Cuvier had already renounced even the possibility of arranging classes along a scale of perfection.

Cuvier’s stance can be better understood if it is analyzed in relation to nineteenth-century European class dynamics, rather than simply concluding that his actions reflect the generalized psychological dispositions and fears of European men. Indeed, his disaffection for the notion of a Great Chain of Being stemmed equally from sociopolitical as it did from scientific or psychological sources.

In Cuvier’s day, it was commonly believed that speculative philosophies had been the source behind the French Revolution. During the Revolution, scientific theories had been intensely politicized. Thus, Cuvier was acutely aware of the power that unregulated ideas, political or scientific, could have on the masses. The ideas of Mesmer, for example, had been joined to the revolutionary ideas of Rousseau, as were Felix Pouchet’s ideas about spontaneous generation. Cuvier associated speculative theories with materialism and feared that the two taken in tandem could be used to promote social unrest. Speculative theories could, in his opinion, be more easily exploited by the masses who were intent on overturning the social order.
Thus, although Cuvier’s observations about Baartmann suggest that he viewed her as sharing a number of affinities with apes, it is important to note that he never explicitly stated that she was the “missing link.” His reluctance to do so tells us less about his attitudes toward racial and sexual alterity than it does about his attitudes toward class. It demonstrates his profound aversion to any action that could potentially endow the “dangerous classes” claims to equality any legitimacy. This aversion was strong enough to prevent him from drawing the “logical” conclusion about Baartmann, based on his own empirical observations. As strong as Cuvier’s fears about Baartmann’s corporeal difference were, it appears his fears about the potential political equality of his fellow Frenchmen were even greater.

The actions of Cuvier demonstrate that the social relations of nineteenth-century France tell us far more about the process of constructing boundaries between Self and Other than do blanket generalizations about the psychological dispositions of European men. His behavior makes evident the truth of Barbara Fields’s (1982, 148) claim that “the idea one people has of another, even when the difference between them is embodied in the most striking physical characteristics, is always mediated by the social context within which the two come into contact.”

SEX AND SAVAGERY: AFRICA IN THE HISTORICAL IMAGINATION

The ahistorical and psychologically determinist perspective Gilman adopts in his discussions about degeneration and the Great Chain is even more pronounced in his discussions about race. The publication of “Black Bodies, White Bodies” (Gilman 1985) in the anthology “Race,” Writing, and Difference, edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr., was instrumental in securing the article’s place as a foundational text in a postfoundationalist world. The anthology soon became one of the most cited texts in the fields of poststructuralism, feminism, critical race studies, and postcolonial studies. It is not difficult to ascertain why. In the introduction, Gates explains that the purpose of the text was “to deconstruct the ideas of difference inscribed in the trope of race” (Gilman 1985, 2). The title’s use of quotation marks around the word Race announced the volume’s emphasis on critically engaging race as a discursively and socially constructed phenomenon. The characterization of race as a trope, and thus similar to any other kind of figurative language, was clearly meant to decisively and permanently disrupt any notion of race as referring to innate biological or physical differences. Race, as a trope, is the ultimate empty signifier.

Although Gilman’s intention is to argue that perceptions of difference are socially constructed, he focuses on Baartmann’s “inherent” biological differences. He argues that “her physiognomy, her skin color, the form of her genitalia label her as inherently different” (1985, 232). Gilman argues that because of her “unique and observable” physical differences, Baartman “represented Blackness in nuce” (1985, 225). He thus concludes that “while many groups of African Blacks were
known to Europeans in the nineteenth century, the Hottentot remained representative of the essence of the Black, especially the Black female” (225).

Gilman’s theoretical adherents, with little question and much enthusiasm, took up the idea that Baartmann’s physical stigmata transformed her into a representation of “Blackness in nunc.” (Fausto-Sterling 1995; McClintock 1995; Schiebinger 1993; Sharpley-Whiting 1999; Wiss 1994). Donna Haraway (1989, 402), for example, uses Gilman to support her claim that because of their perceived biological differences, “Black women were ontologically the essence of animality and abnormality.”

Most scholars, in accepting Gilman’s declaration about Baartmann’s racial representativeness, have neither historicized nor problematized the idea of Blackness. They have made “the assumption that race is an observable physical fact, a thing, rather than a notion that is profoundly and in its very essence ideological” (Fields 1982, 144). However, as Wacquant (1997, 223) observed, American conceptions of race are better thought of as “folk conceptions” that reflect the “peculiar schema of racial division developed by one country during a small segment of its short history.” The fact that many Baartmann scholars have unthinkingly reproduced commonsense understandings of Blackness as it exists in the contemporary United States is evidenced by two historically untenable assumptions they make about race. The first assumption is that Baartmann’s color and sexual difference not only marked her as different but also rendered her fundamentally the same as all other Black people. The second assumption is that ideas about what constitutes Africanity and Blackness have remained relatively unchanged over time.

The assumption that Khoikhoi people were considered broadly representative of Africans as a whole is central to Gilman’s argument. It allows him to move from a discussion about Baartman to making much broader claims about perceptions of African people as a whole. This theoretical maneuver allows him to argue that Baartmann “represented Blackness in nunc.” However, the reports of nineteenth-century travelers show that this particular assertion also does not withstand historical scrutiny.

Travelers made much of the fact that the Khoikhoi were not Black or brown but yellow or tawny and thus different in important respects from Africans living further North, as well as those on the West Coast (Barrow 1801; Burchell [1827] 1953; Lichtenstein 1812; Pringle 1834; Thompson 1827). Travelers and naturalists also drew sharp divisions between different classes of Khoikhoi people, based on their color, culture, geographic location, and appearance. Barrow (1801, 151), for example, distinguished between the so-called colonial Hottentots or bastard Hottentots, who lived inside the colony, and those in the outlying regions ("savage Hottentots" who “retained more of their original character”). He went on to note that although the “elongated nymphae [Hottentot Apron] are found in all Hottentot women . . . in the bastard Hottentot it ceases to appear" (1801, 281). Other travelers testified to the existence of different “races” within the “Hottentot nation.” George Thompson (1827, 269), for example, remarked that “in personal appearance the Korannas are
superior to any other race of Hottentots. Many of them are tall with finely shaped heads and prominent features.”

Even those travelers who did not make such fine distinctions between individual Khoikhoi people drew sharp distinctions between the Khoikhoi and other Black ethnic groups within the Cape Colony. It was widely agreed that the Xhosa (called variously Kaffirs, Caffirs, and Caffers) and the San (pejoratively referred to as Bushmen) were wholly unlike the Khoikhoi. An article in *The Quarterly Review* remarked that “no two beings can differ more widely than the Hottentot and the Caffre” (Review of *Lichtenstein’s Travels* 1812, 388). Barnard Fisher (1814, 7) likewise commented that “three races more distinct and unlike than the Hottentot, Caffre, and Bushman cannot possibly be.” James Prior (1819, 14) echoed Fisher when he marveled at the “marked differences as appear in the three races of Kaffir, Hottentot, and Bushman.”

The fact that historical evidence suggests that the Khoikhoi did not represent Blackness *in nuce* is important because it forces us to return to the central question posed earlier: “How do we organize our perceptions of the world?” Gilman (1985, 250) imputes a timeless stability to the idea of race. He argues that “the primary marker of the Black is his or her skin color.” However, skin color and hair textures were not stabilized as markers of racial difference until fairly late in the nineteenth century. Barrow (1801, 168), for example, observed that the Xhosa were “dark glossy brown verging on black.” He also described them as having “short curling hair.” Nevertheless, he concluded that they had “not one line of the African Negro in the composition of their persons” (1801, 205). Lichtenstein (1812, 303) concurred with Barrow that “the Kaffirs have in many respects a great resemblance to Europeans. Indeed they have more resemblance to them than either to Negroes or Hottentots.” Thomas Pringle (1834, 413) echoed Barrow when, after describing the Xhosa as being “dark brown” and having “wooly hair,” he declared them as having features that “approached the European model.” What these historical observations suggest is that Blackness is less a stable, observable, empirical fact than an ideology that is historically determined and, thus, variable.

The profoundly ideological nature of Blackness becomes even more apparent when we consider that as Englishmen continued to speculate as to whether the dark-skinned (by contemporary standards) Xhosa should be classified as Negroes, they were convinced that the pale-skinned (again by contemporary standards) Irish most definitely should be. As Cheng (1995, 26) noted, “the Irish/Celtic race was repeatedly related to the Black race not merely in terms of tropes, but insistently as *fact*, as literal and biological relatives.” Indeed, much was made of the “unique and observable physical differences” (to borrow a phrase from Gilman) that separated the Anglo-Saxons from the Celts. Dr. John Beddoe, founding member of the British Ethnological Society, devoted most of his career to establishing that the Irish Celts were not only genetically distinct from, and inferior to, Anglo-Saxons but also bore biological affinity to Negroes. His work served to “confirm the impressions of many Victorians that the Celtic portions of the population in Wales, Cornwall, Scotland, and Ireland were considerably darker or more melanous than those descended
from Saxon and Scandinavian forbears” (Curtis 1997, 20). Beddoe was by no means alone in his estimation of the “Africanoid” origin of the Irish (Bentham 1834; Price 1829; Prichard 1857).

I have gone to such lengths to demonstrate (1) the Khoikhoi were not considered representative of Africans, (2) not all Africans were thought of as Negroes, and (3) not all Negroes were Black for two reasons. My first objective is to challenge Gilman’s core assertions and thus unsettle the theoretical orthodoxy about Baartmann. My second objective is to make a larger sociological point about ideologies concerning racial differences (or any other kind of differences for that matter).

As the above selections from British travel writing, missionary reports, and related ephemera so graphically illustrated, there was not a uniform opinion on the Khoikhoi or other Africans with regard to sexuality, appearance, habits, or otherwise. This is because “race is not an idea but an ideology. It came into existence at a discernible historical moment for rationally understandable historical reasons and is subject to change for similar reasons” (Fields 1990, 101). Races are not clearly demarcated and bounded groups existing “out there” in the world, prior to the process of categorization. English perceptions of the Irish make it clear that the characteristics that we currently identify as important for establishing difference (i.e. dark skin) were not preexisting in the world, simply waiting for someone (scientists, colonialists, travelers, Europeans) to come along and construct a hierarchy of value. Rather, what we see when we look at each other is profoundly mediated by social context. Whether we are looking at the source of discourses of degeneration or impressions of biological characteristics, the end result is the same. An analysis that does not go beyond psychological impressions to consider the importance of social relations will do nothing more than produce theories that explain “not the facts . . . but the preconceptions of the author before he [sic] began his research” (Durkheim 1982, 38).

WHEN AND HOW DO BODIES MATTER?
SCIENCE, SEX, AND IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE

There is no doubt that the express aim of poststructuralist scholarship on Baartmann has been to critique racism and biological essentialism. The question must be asked, therefore, why the theoretical orthodoxy has reproduced the very assumptions it purports to destabilize. Part of the problem stems from the fact that despite theorists’ claims that race is a notion that is essentially ideological, their analyses fail to actually treat it as such. This fact becomes especially clear when we subject Gilman’s most popular theoretical claim to a rigorous sociological analysis.

Writing almost a decade and a half after the article was first published, Strother (1999, 38) observed that Gilman’s assertion that Baartmann’s sexual parts “serve as the central image for the Black female throughout the nineteenth century” remains its most frequently cited statement. This assertion, perhaps more than any other,
was taken up without question (Crais 1992; Fausto-Sterling 1995; Haraway 1989; McClintock 1995; Pieterse 1995; Sharpley-Whiting 1999). Londa Schiebinger (1993, 159), for example, argued that “African women were seen as wanton perversions of sexuality... They served as foils to the Victorian ideal of the passionless woman, becoming, as Sander Gilman has written, the central icon for sexuality in the nineteenth century.” bell hooks (1992, 62) also cites Gilman in support of similar claims, writing that “Gilman documents the development of this image... he emphasizes that it is the Black female body that is forced to serve as an icon for sexuality in general.”

Although writing about ideology, these scholars fail to appreciate the very essence of ideology—what makes them so ideological—is the fact they are riddled with contradictions and marked by continuous conflicts and struggles over meaning. As Mannheim (1936, 9) explained in *Ideology and Utopia*:

> It is with this clashing of modes of thought, each of which has the same claims to representational validity, that for the first time there is rendered possible the emergence of the question which is so fateful, but also so fundamental in the history of thought, namely, how is it possible that identical human thought-processes concerned with the same world produce divergent conceptions of that world [emphasis added]. And from this point it is only a step further to ask: Is it not possible that the thought-processes which are involved here are not at all identical? May it not be found, when one has examined all the possibilities of human thought, that there are numerous alternative paths which can be followed?

Theorists who contend that there was a single ideology, central icon, or core image about Blackness and sexuality in the nineteenth century make two mistakes. First, they discount the extent to which ideas about Blackness were still emerging. Second, their analysis implies that this particular ideology magically escaped the types of conflicts that all other ideologies are subject to. Only by underplaying the existence and importance of ideological conflict can they sustain Gilman’s argument that people from such widely different social locations as French aristocrats, English merchants, displaced peasants, gentlemen scientists, and factory workers held a singular and unified opinion about, and image of, Black women and sexuality.

The available historical evidence strongly contradicts Gilman’s claims about the alleged ideological unanimity of such diverse social actors. Historical sources demonstrate quite clearly that the issue of whether or not steatopygia was a general attribute of Khoikhoi women, and whether Baartmann was considered a typical example of a Khoikhoi person, remained open to debate. Fisher (1814, 8), who compiled a compendium of his journey to the Cape, noted that

there is something like symmetry in the person of a Hottentot, their limbs being neatly turned, but they are for the most part of a diminutive stature, and no just idea of them can be formed from the specimens seen in this country [England], particularly that singular character the Hottentot Venus.
William Burchell (1822, 216) made a similar observation in his *Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa*. After describing a Khoikhoi woman with “a very large and protuberant behind,” he hastened to add that this was not a general condition of the Khoikhoi people:

> The exhibition of a woman of this description, in the principal countries of Europe has made the subject well known to all those who are curious in such matters. . . . I ought not to allow this occasion to pass by without endeavoring to correct some erroneous notions. . . . It is not a fact that the whole of the Hottentot race is thus formed. Neither is there any particular tribe to which this steatopygia, as it may be called, is peculiar. Nor is it more common to the Bushman tribe than to other Hottentots. It will not greatly mislead if our idea of its frequency be formed by comparing it with the corpulence of individuals among European nations.

It might be tempting to conclude that some people are simply more prescient observers than others are or, alternatively, that some people simply harbor less racial prejudice. Although important differences marked the standpoints of travelers in Africa versus pseudoscientists and lay people in England, the access to a wider array of empirical evidence is not the only reason that opinions varied so widely. Rather, what these examples make clear is that ideologies about racial and sexual alterity display the same basic characteristics as other ideologies do. They are internally inconsistent, they are constantly subject to struggle, and they reflect the structural locations of their adherents.

Most studies of Baartman, following Gilman, have focused their attention on the role of science in establishing her sexual alterity (Fausto-Sterling 1995; Haraway 1989; McClintock 1995; Sharpley-Whiting 1999; Wiss 1994). However, because scholars have so readily accepted Gilman’s claim that the mere sight of Baartmann produced a uniform and unvarying ideological response, few have noticed or been motivated to investigate the important differences between British and French representations of her. None have questioned Gilman’s (1985, 235) assertion that Baartmann’s “genitalia and buttocks summarized her essence for the nineteenth century observer.” Thus, they have neither noticed nor analyzed Baartmann’s relatively weak interpellation into British medical and scientific discourses as compared to French. However, as Fausto-Sterling (1995, 33) observed (but did not analyze), “Although a theater attraction and the object of a legal dispute about slavery in England, it was only in Paris [emphasis added], before and after her death, that Baartmann entered into the scientific accounting of race and gender.”

A second key question that goes unremarked and unanalyzed is how and why Baartmann came to reside in Paris at all. Despite the importance of this move, most scholars, following Gilman’s lead, do not take up the issue at all (McClintock 1995; Schiebinger 1993; Wiss 1994). Strother (1999, 33), for example, simply stated that “Baartmann moved to Paris in 1814.” Likewise, Fausto-Sterling (1995, 29) took note of it only to comment that after 1814, she “somehow ended up in Paris.” However, Baartmann didn’t simply move to or end up in Paris. Writing to the *Morning
Chronicle, Baartmann’s original captor, Henrik Cezar, explained that he quickly sold her to “an Englishman” because his “mode of proceeding at the place of public entertainment seems to have given offense to the Public” (23 October 1810). According to Baartmann’s own testimony, she was subsequently abandoned in Paris “by another Englishman” and thus came to be the property of a showman of wild animals.

We might ask why a commodity of such value to the English, both commercially and ideologically, passed through so many hands before she had to be taken out of the country and abandoned. Why didn’t British theaters of anatomy, schools of medicine, or museums jump at the chance to examine and display this bit of curiosity from their newest imperial outpost? Science was critical for rescripting conquest as both a necessary and essentially humanitarian act. Why, then, didn’t British science make greater use of Baartmann’s alterity?

It is important to note that at the time of Baartmann’s exhibition in London, medical science was no less developed or commercialized than in France. There were many large medical hospitals and “theaters of anatomy” wherein the nongentlemanly members of the British scientific community earned their livelihoods. A large portion of these scholars combined medical practice with teaching as a form of economic support. Furthermore, the popularity of medical and anatomical lectures among the lay community was even more pronounced in Britain than it was in France. French scientists were employed by secular public institutions and wrote mainly for other scientists. In London, however, the line between science and show business was easily and often traversed. As Hays (1983, 106) explained, “Lectures on biological subjects could draw on another London resource in addition to the talent of the medical community. They could exploit London’s position as the center of entertainment, spectacle, and display.”

The fact that Baartmann failed to arouse commensurate amounts of scientific interest in England and France illustrates my earlier point that social relations, rather than biological essences, are critical for determining what individuals see when they look at one another. I maintain that Baartmann represented far more in the European imagination than a collection of body parts. Indeed, closer examination of the furor that ensued in the wake of her exhibition demonstrates that what she represented varied (as ideologies are wont to do) according to the social and political commitments of the interested social actors. Baartmann’s exhibition provoked varying and contradictory responses. These responses can be better understood if they are analyzed as part and parcel of larger debates about liberty, property, and economic relations, rather than seeing them as simple manifestations of the universal human fascination with embodied difference.

Despite the popularity of contemporary claims that Baartmann was seen “only in terms of her buttocks” (Wiss 1994, 31), a substantial portion of the British public actually saw her as representing much more. When many people looked at Baartmann, they saw not only racial and sexual alterity but also a personification of current debates about the right to liberty versus the right to property. For many,
Baartmann’s captivity encapsulated the conflict between individual freedom and the interests of capital.

The contemporary debates about slavery provided the context to the Baartmann controversy, and it is within their parameters that it must be understood. Many individuals who opposed slavery on humanitarian grounds, nevertheless, were reluctant to infringe on the property rights of slaveholders. Reformers also balked at ideas of personhood that had the potential to complicate the relationship between capital and “free” labor. There was “a wish to attack slavery but not to infringe upon legally acquired property rights or to question long term indenture or even service for life” (Malik 1996, 64). Thus, Lindfors (1985, 138) incorrectly characterizes the legal battle that occurred about Baartmann’s exhibition as “a classic confrontation between heated humanitarianism and commerce, between the abolitionist conscience and the entrepreneurial ideal, between love and money.” There is a clear connection between the legal furor over the exhibition and how the British envisioned incorporating the Cape into the British Empire.

It is important to note that the society that sued Henrik Cezar, Baartmann’s captor, on her behalf was called “The African Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior of Africa” and sought to play a leading role in opening a new phase in the exploitation of the continent. It was to this end that subscriptions were paid that were then used to subsidize sending travelers and explorers to Africa. Thus, the pertinent contest was never between love and money. Humanitarianism, as expressed in the actions of the African Association, served the interests of the landed and mercantile elite. These men were concerned with securing the global expansion of capitalist relations of production. Commercially minded men recognized the importance of Africa as a place where tropical products such as tea, coffee, tobacco, sugar, and rice, desired by the growing middle-class market, might successfully be grown at less cost. They also saw Africa as a potential market for British manufactures.

High hopes were held out that the Cape Colony could be transformed to meet the objectives of both the merchant and landed elites. However, this transformation was contingent on a proletarianization of the indigenous labor force. This proletarianization required that slavery, the existing system of labor relations, be overturned in favor of a capitalist legal order wherein the Khoikhoi would be legally “free” but more completely open to subjugation as laborers in the developing frontier economy (Keegan 1996). As John Philip (1828, 365), director of the London Missionary society, explained,

By raising all the Hottentots of the colony... a new and extensive market would be created for British goods. We say nothing of the increased consumption of British manufactures... or the increase of our exports which would necessarily arise from the additional stimulus which would be given to the industry of the Hottentots by the increase of their artificial wants.
Thus, it was no accident that the goals of progressively minded landed elites, the mercantile and commercial classes, and humanitarians coalesced so readily in the goals of the African Association. Despite the many points of disagreement between merchants, missionaries, and explorers about how it would be accomplished, most agreed that the Khoikhoi would eventually be proletarianized and made to understand the value (and responsibility) of self-commodification. Humanitarianism readily and easily embraced the cause of economic liberalization, particularly in the areas of productive and commercial relations. The rhetoric of antislavery (which provided a critical backdrop to the opposition to Baartmann’s forced captivity) merged (almost) seamlessly with that of imperial expansion.

The discussions concerning the Khoikhoi at the Cape thus paralleled the legal furor over Baartmann’s exhibition. The question of the ownership of labor power took center stage in both. The immediate concern of the African Association (which sued Baartman’s captor, Henrik Cezar, on her behalf) was to ascertain whether she owned her own labor. As Macauley stated in the affidavit filed on her behalf, his purpose was to determine “whether [Baartmann] was made a public spectacle with her own free will and consent or whether she was compelled to exhibit herself” (quoted in Strother 1999, 43). Those opposed to Baartmann’s exhibition debated less about whether her confinement represented a moral blight than about whether she was owned by someone else, and hence subject to forced exhibition, or if she belonged to herself, and thus was acting freely. For example, the Morning Chronicle (12 October 1810) argued,

The air of the British Constitution is too pure to permit slavery in the very heart of the metropolis, for I am sure you will easily discriminate between those beings who are sufficiently degraded to shew [sic] themselves for their own immediate profit where they act from their own free will and this poor slave.

Thus, in a number of ways, the Baartmann exhibition encapsulated in miniature the debates that were occurring about the labor more generally. Henrik Cezar, her brutal Dutch master, represented the old economic order at the Cape, based on enslavement, forced captivity, and despotism. The African Association represented the coming of a new colonial order based on a “voluntary” commodification of the self and a “willing” capitulation to the dominant logic of capital.

I have explored the widely divergent actions and reactions of the African Association, British travelers, missionaries, and the British viewing public at such length to demonstrate that when Europeans looked at Sarah Baartmann, it was not that they saw only her buttocks. Although her body represented sexual alterity, that was not all it represented. Some observers looked at her and her captivity and saw a particular system of productive relations they wanted to overthrow. Others saw a new area of the world ripe for exploitation and a new way to exploit it. And still others looked and saw the aesthetic antithesis of themselves. Most probably saw a
combination of these and more. Although the members of the African Association, no less than Cuvier, Cezar, and the hordes of British and French citizens who came to gawk at Baartmann’s most intimate parts, no doubt took notice of her difference and believed in some notion of white supremacy, it is a mistake to take their actions as expressions of a single, trans-historical, and unidimensional ideology. If that were the case, it would be impossible to explain why Baartmann’s alterity led one group of social actors to fetishize her exhibition and another to call for its immediate cessation.

Baartmann’s exhibition also makes clear that white supremacy was never the simple expression of color prejudices. Each group of social actors, whether its particular interest was in looking at Baartmann, dissecting her, or sending her home, had its particular brand of racialist ideology, which was reflected in its political program. These political programs, in turn, reflected the social positions of their advocates. Thus, the only way French scientists (or any other group of social actors for that matter) could have imposed their exact understanding of Baartmann, Black women, and Black sexuality on any other group would have been if they could have transformed the lives and social relations of the relevant actors into exact replicas of their own.

CONCLUSION: WHOSE BODIES MATTER?

Artist/scholar Jean Young (1997, 699) wrote that Sarah Baartmann has been “re-objectified” and “re-commodified.” Yvette Abrahams (1997, 46), a South African scholar, also argues that “the genital encounter is not over. It may be seen in much recent scholarship on Sara Bartmann.” The question must be asked why this woman has been made to function in contemporary academic debates as the preeminent example of racial and sexual alterity. This question becomes even more compelling when we consider that Sarah Baartmann was one of thousands of people exhibited and transformed into medical spectacles during the course of the nineteenth century (Altick 1978; Corbey 1993; Lindfors 1999). Examples abound of women with excessive hair (who were primarily of European and Latin American ancestry) that were exhibited in circuses and “freak shows.” These women were not only believed to be the “missing links” between the human and animal worlds but also hermaphrodite hybrids, caught between the male and female worlds (Bogdan 1988; Thomson 1997). However, none of these women (nor the category of excessively hairy women more generally) have been made to stand as “icons” of racial or sexual difference.

We might also return to the example of the Irish. Londa Schiebinger (1993, 156) maintains that “male skulls remained the central icon of racial difference until craniometry was replaced by intelligence testing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.” Nancy Stepan (1990, 43) has also argued that the systematic study and measurement of male skulls was “especially significant for the science of human difference and similarity.” We might also add that nineteenth-century
Ethnologists speculated about the biological basis for the “effeminancy” of the Celtic male. As Curtis (1968, 61) explained, “There was a curiously persistent and revealing label attached to the Irish, namely their characterization as a feminine race of people. This theme of Celtic femininity appears repeatedly.” Yet, to my knowledge, the Irish male skull has never had the dubious distinction of being the central nineteenth-century image for racial and sexual difference between the European and the Black. The fact that Irish male skulls have not been thus characterized reflects less about the available historical evidence than about scholars’ abilities to free themselves from contemporary understandings about what, historically, has constituted a Black experience. For if we compare the amount of ink spilled, the volume of studies done, and the number of corpses examined, it becomes apparent that Irish male skulls were of far more interest, and caused far more speculation about the nature of racial and gender differences, than steatopygious African back-sides ever did.3

Some critics of postfoundationalist theories, like postmodernism and poststructuralism, have argued that they “simply appropriate the experience of ‘Otherness’ to enhance the discourse” (hooks 1994, 424). The lacunae and lapses that mark much of the contemporary feminist scholarship on Baartmann make us pause and ask, Is this simply another case of what Margaret Homans (1994) identified as the tendency for feminist theory to make Black women function as “grounds of embodiment in the context of theoretical abstractions”? Although some might argue that this is the case, this argument fails to consider the diverse strands within feminist theory and the long and intensely varied tradition of feminist thought and praxis. It also discounts the contributions of the many feminists of color that employ postmodernism and poststructuralism in their work (Carby 1999; hooks 1994; Spillers 1987).

Sarah Baartmann’s curious and problematic “theoretical odyssey” cannot simply be explained as stemming from a lack of theoretical fit between postfoundationalist theory and the historical experiences of African and African American women. Rather, the ways in which she has been constructed as a theoretical object highlight the inherent dangers in the deployment of any theory without due attention to historical specificity. In particular, Baartmann’s curious theoretical odyssey points to the problems that occur when race and gender are universalized and, thus, reified; or, in other words, when “commonsense understandings of these categories as they exist in the United States are elevated to the status of social scientific concepts” (Loveman 1999, 894).

Baartmann’s curious theoretical odyssey also points to the dangers of analyzing the construction and perception of human difference as primarily a product of inner psychological drives. Gilman’s pronouncements about Baartmann (and the theoretical “industry” that emerged therefrom) would not have been possible had her exhibition not been largely abstracted from its political and historical context. It was this theoretical abstraction (coupled with a healthy amount of psychological determinism) that made it easier for scholars to momentarily forget that Blackness, as an ideological construction, could not possibly have inspired a singular and
uniform response. Privileging psychological dispositions over social relations also allowed scholars to give Baartmann’s corporeal alterity the power to produce history while momentarily forgetting this alterity was, at the same time, an historical product. Thus, in the final analysis, the theoretical lapses of contemporary social scientists, rather than the actions of nineteenth-century pseudoscientists, are the ones that threaten to finally succeeded in transforming “the Hottentot Venus” into the central nineteenth-century icon for racial and sexual difference between the European and the Black.

NOTES

1. Sarah Baartmann is also sometimes referred to as Saartji Bartman or Baartman.
2. The Khoikhoi are also sometimes referred to as Khoisan and Khoi.
3. By Fausto-Sterling’s (1995) estimate, there were a mere seven articles published between 1816 and 1836 (including Cuvier and de Blainville’s dissection reports on Baartmann) on the subject of Khoikhoi women and steatopygia. There is not a single book-length monograph. Compare this with the hundreds of monographs and articles, published both in Britain and the United States, that used craniology to establish the racial inferiority and Negroid ancestry of the Irish Celt. These articles appeared in journals such as the Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and The Anthropological Review.

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“DOING” RACIALIZED AND GENDERED AGE TO ORGANIZE PEER RELATIONS
Observing Kids in Summer Camp

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Using an interactionist approach, this study compares the ways that older preadolescents established and negotiated peer relations by engaging in racialized and gendered age processes at two summer day camps. The camps differed in their racial compositions, their organization of activities by age and gender, and their rules delineating camper behavior. Campers in both settings used notions of modesty and relations of dominance over younger children similarly in organizing their peer relations. They differed, though, in how they used a stance uncooperative toward adults and a stance of being “just kids” together to create racialized, aged, and gendered boundaries. Thus, campers created peer cultures with variably hierarchical cliques using inclusive and exclusionary dynamics that held each other accountable to emergent and racialized conceptions of gender and age in ways that actively and creatively used the adult cultures around them.

Agentic and interactionist approaches to understanding gender as an actively constructed identity, relation, and practice, produced and reproduced through talk, action, and the organization of social life are no longer new (see, e.g., Kessler and McKenna 1978; West and Zimmerman 1987). Similarly, it is widely understood that race is a socially constructed identity and relation (Omi and Winant 1986, 1993; Outlaw 1990; Smedley 1993). What is more recent is turning these insights toward the study of children, thereby departing from conventional cognitive developmental and socialization theories that focus on the internal processes of individual children. Sociologists increasingly eschew traditional socialization theories conceptualizing children as passing linearly through an invariant sequence of universal stages of development, passively absorbing adult standards of normative

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behavior. Scholars studying the new sociology of childhood seek instead to understand kids' as active agents, as competent social actors, and socialization as a process whereby kids collaborate to organize and negotiate meaning in their social lives (see, e.g., Adler and Adler 1998; Corsaro 1992, 1997; Eder 1995; Fine 1987; Thorne 1993; Van Ausdale and Feagin 1996). The combined emphases on the constructed nature of gender and race and the emphasis on kids' agency have brought about recognition that age, as an identity, relation, and practice, also has a flexible and interactional nature (Laz 1998; Thorne 1993).

This article seeks to further the empirical exploration of the collective socialization practices of kids and the collaborative, simultaneous emergence of age, gender, and race in interaction. In my study, I explicitly set out to compare how kids in two recreational settings—two summer day camps with very different race, gender, and age-based practices—actively and collectively constructed and negotiated a gendered and racialized emergent sense of age as they established and negotiated peer relations. As I will show, campers’ peer relations invoked their engagement in the transition from being seen as children to being seen as young adults, a transition that depended on and employed conceptions of gender and race. Moreover, I will show that the particular social structure and context in which the children found themselves influenced, but did not predictably shape, the ways the kids organized age, gender, and race. That is, the comparative nature of this study shows that the kids established different norms and practices depending on which recreational setting they attended, but kids also demonstrated some similarities in the norms and practices in which they engaged.

THEORETICAL CONCERNS REGARDING THE GENDER, RACE, AND AGE PRACTICES OF CHILDREN

Two of the most important meaning structures that kids construct and negotiate are race and gender. West, Zimmerman, and Fenstermaker developed the language of “doing” gender and “doing” race to elaborate an ethnomethodological conceptualization of gender and race (West and Fenstermaker 1993, 1995a, 1995b; West and Zimmerman 1987), whereby we assign each other to our culture’s gender and racial categories and assess each other’s words and actions according to powerful normative conceptions of the appropriate attitudes and actions for members of those categories in specific circumstances. These assessments of performance emphasize and legitimate differences among people we consider to be of “different” genders and “different” races. We are then held accountable to these assessments. This accountability to the perceptions of the other participants in an interaction draws on the insights of symbolic interactionist theory, especially role taking, the looking-glass self, impression management, and aligning actions (Adler and Adler 1998; Cooley 1902; Goffman 1959; Hewitt 1991; Mead 1934). Accordingly, we develop a sense of ourselves by imagining how others see us (Cooley 1902)—specific significant others at first, community and societal generalized others later (Mead 1934)—and
by using those imagined assessments to guide our actions. We also act in ways that will elicit from others the responses we desire as we negotiate the meanings inherent in an interaction (Goffman 1959) and align our actions to establish shared meanings, especially as they affect our identities (Hewitt 1991). Through these processes, we negotiate the meanings of our social performances. Identities, then, are not fixed but are interactive, requiring group recognition and social validation (Brissett and Edgley 1990; Stone 1990).

Although not ignoring the structural outcomes of gender and race (West and Fenstermaker 1995b), this approach focuses on the processual nature of gender and race. Although not disallowing the seeming rigidity of the existence and nature of gender and race categories in American culture, this approach focuses on the emergent and situational nature of these identities. As Lucius Outlaw (1990, 61) argued, “Although 'race' is continually with us as an organizing, explanatory concept, what the term refers to . . . has not remained constant.” Spelman (1988) argued similarly for gender: During slavery in the United States, male and female slaves were not considered to be men and women in the full sense of the term; that status was reserved for whites alone. Thus, as American race and gender categories themselves, their membership, and their meanings have changed, our interactions invoking them have changed. These two facets of identity that the dominant culture construes as internal and fixed instead are explored as flexible social processes subject to situated interaction, albeit interaction that is historically and culturally (i.e., structurally) bound.

Much of the growing literature exploring kids’ collective gender and race practices elaborates on some of the central theoretical concerns of interactional perspectives. After all, it was Mead (1934) who theorized the importance of play and of games in children’s development of self, as they take on the roles of specific and generalized others. My work elaborates on some of the central theoretical concerns underpinning recent studies depicting how children construct their peer cultures with various gender and race practices and meanings as they develop and establish gendered and racialized selves. I take as a starting point Thorne’s (1993) discussion of how schoolchildren during class and recess engaged in “border work” to erect boundaries between boys’ and girls’ identities and actions. Connell’s (1987) insight into the reproduction of gendered bodies elaborates how play and games can maintain the separation Thorne found. Connell posits that the ways kids “do” gender on a regular basis has cumulative effects on the development of their musculature, physical flexibility, skill in using their bodies, and confidence in their bodies. If only boys play sports, the reproduction of sports-oriented bodies means that sports will stay predictably gendered. Thorne, however, also observed certain individuals who attempted to cross these boundaries (with varying success) and certain situations that provided opportunities for de-emphasizing gendered difference. Thus, kids who constructed themselves consciously as the boys and the girls could, in some circumstances, become just kids together, without that gendered sense of difference. My study provides empirical evidence of how kids allowed the different
settings to influence how they negotiated border work and its crossing, including the effects of the cumulative reproduction of gendered bodies.

While scholars have indicated that race is important in empirically studying gender practices, they have not had much opportunity to include race in their investigations. The often small subsample of children of color in scholars' observations allows only tentative suggestions regarding the significance, or lack thereof, of race. Yet, we know that children include race in their interactional negotiations. Van Ausdale and Feagin (1996) demonstrated that even preschoolers consciously use race to include, exclude, or establish dominance over others in their interactions. We have little evidence of the gender patterns emergent in a racially mixed setting with a "critical mass" of children of color (although see Holmes 1995). We know, however, that gender and race are processes created simultaneously (West and Fenstermaker 1995a). Furthermore, because researchers have underestimated children's capacity to understand race, they rarely observed them in "natural" settings to see how they normally used race to organize their everyday lives but, instead, used methods that forced kids to respond in constrained and artificial ways (Hatcher and Troyner 1993; Phinney and Rotheram 1987; Van Ausdale and Feagin 1996). Thus, we have a gap in our empirical understanding of how gender and race work together and how kids use both gender and race in their negotiated interactions. My work seeks to fill this gap in the literature.

Taking age into account as an emergent property of interaction allows us to see how kids construct a "raced" gender. Spencer Cahill (1986) suggested kids learn early to distinguish themselves from being seen as a baby and to embrace the only other option available—being seen as a big girl or a big boy (see also West and Zimmerman 1987). Thorne (1993) extended this theme: Social practices, not physical maturity, shape the transition from child to teen. She recognized that some of the kids she studied, even though of the same chronological age, were more child oriented (big girls and big boys), and some were teen oriented (little women and little men). Age and gender, then, become dependent on each other. Although there is no parallel to the "big girl, big boy" concept with race, the social competency for which kids strive includes racial interactional competency: awareness of racial classification schemes, correctly identifying people, assigning the appropriate range of expectations to the categories, and negotiating the ways age and gender interact with race. My work develops this perspective, recognizing that kids "do" a flexible sense of age to "do" gender in ways they deem as appropriate. Moreover, my work breaks new ground by providing empirical evidence of the ways in which kids' aged gender constructions are also racialized.

When studying children, it is important to remember, as Eder (1995) emphasized, that adults do not serve simply as role models or socialization agents for the attitudes and practices kids develop. Adults do not merely shape kids. Rather, kids pick and choose among the variety of instructions, admonitions, and information about gender and race they encounter and, in particular situations and contexts, come up with their own constructions. Indeed, kids sometimes adopt an antithetical stance toward adults, adult culture, and official order (Mechling 1986), often
through what Fine and Mechling (1991) referred to as “dirty play,” that is, play of which adults disapprove: dirty, offensive, and rude words or actions that disrupt the innocent, good, and unworldly image of children. This play allows kids to achieve for themselves “control, status, social differentiation, and socialization to perceived adult norms” (Fine and Mechling 1991, 76).

Moreover, even if not intentionally antithetical, children comprising a group have participated in other groups, other roles, and other settings with various understandings of how to turn sets of culturally normative and alternative constructions of gender and race into action (Fine 1987). The specific configuration and culture of the new group will influence the constructions that the group chooses to express, given the constraints and opportunities of the immediate setting. Hence, kids bring identities to a situation—identities that include a variety of adult attempts at socialization—but only through interaction do kids make those identities distinct and manifest. Corsaro (1992, 168) referred to children’s social negotiations with adults as “interpretive reproduction:” “Children creatively appropriate information from the adult world to produce their own unique peer cultures . . . simultaneously contribut[ing] to the reproduction of adult culture” (see also Eder 1995). I will show how the kids’ practices were both unique and reflective of adult constructions.

My study, then, responds to the theoretical concerns of the literature on children’s collaborative, interactional constructions of age, gender, and race in several ways. Through the comparison of two settings, my findings elaborate and provide examples of the importance of context. My study also provides examples of ways in which age and gender depend on each other. Moreover, my work begins to show how gender and race can be studied empirically as simultaneous processes, providing evidence of how kids used a racialized and gendered sense of age to organize their peer relations, sometimes in ways that transcended the influence of setting.

**METHOD**

Summer day camp, a setting that provides activities initiated and directed by kids as well as by adults, seemed a good choice for observing collective socialization. Day camps are settings where kids have some control and power in their choice and manner of activity yet are more externally controlled and predictable than the free-form spontaneity of playgrounds or neighborhoods (Adler and Adler 1998). There is regular and predictable attendance, routines that reoccur often, and a structure to which campers respond. I chose two different day camps that provided differing programs and divergent racial compositions so as to highlight, compare, and contextualize kids’ construction of race. While race is constructed in predominantly white settings, whiteness is often constructed as an invisible racial category, as a neutral experience (see, e.g., Frankenberg 1993; but see also Gallagher 1995). The comparison of contrasting settings helped clarify and underscore the dynamics in the predominantly white one. Contrasting settings also allowed me to assess the impact of social context on the kids’ constructions of
gender and race. One camp was a rather typical camp, and the other was a “cultural awareness” camp (for a more detailed discussion of the two camps, see Moore 1997).

The typical camp was located on the grounds of a middle school. The program was a generalist one, providing a wide range of recreational activities, mostly in an outdoor setting. Sports activities, team games, hikes and scavenger hunts through the woods, crafts, swimming, and singing figured prominently in the camp day. In contrast, the program of the “cultural awareness” camp, located at an elementary school, differed from that of the typical camp in three ways. First, the camp advertised itself as a “cultural awareness” program in the arts. The kids participated in art, music, and theater activities in the morning. Each activity focused on the experiences of people living in a particular culture. Second, afternoon recreational activities resembled those of an after-school program: playing on the playground equipment, playing in the gym, playing on the water slide (or swimming twice a week at a local pool), watching videotaped movies, playing table games, arts and crafts, outdoor sports, hiking, and occasionally reading in the school library. Moreover, as in after-school programs, kids were not separated into camp groups. There were not large groups of kids working on the same task, as at generalist camps like the typical one. Third, and most important, the “cultural awareness” camp had an explicit program of rules and structures intended to encourage kids to learn nonsexist and nonracist ways of being. Camp routines and rules of behavior explicitly sought to challenge gender and racial stereotypes and the significance of gender and racial distinctions. This camp provided occasions where kids’ and adults’ constructions of gender and race were explicitly and deliberately discussed, especially when those constructions clashed. Since the camp focused on gender and race as problematic relations, this setting proved a useful comparison to the typical camp where gender and race were treated as taken-for-granted identities.

The gender and race composition of the camps also differed. Camp groups at the typical camp were separated by gender as well as by age. The camp population was predominantly white: Out of approximately 80 campers, 6 were Black and 1 was East Indian. Of the 15 adults, I was the only racial minority—Black. In contrast, kids at the “cultural awareness” camp were separated only by age for morning art activities. Moreover, the camp had an even mix of white kids and kids of color—mostly Black—as well as a mix of white, Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and mixed-race adults. At both camps, the kids ranged from ages 6 to 12. The differing racial and gender contexts and policies of these two camps allowed me to study how the different contexts affected the ways the children constructed age, gender, and race. For this article, I will follow the camps’ designation of the 6- to 9-year-olds as younger and the 10- to 12-year-olds as older.

The inductive reasoning of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) guided the research design of my study. Participant observation and informal interviewing were the best methods for exploring children’s collaborative interactional constructions. My observations focused on the following categories: friendship and association networks (including composition, frequency of association, intensity, and
tone), the content of the interactions (the allocation of activities and subject matter), explicit verbal formulations of gender and race, the influence of adults, and situations of conflict (especially conceptualizations of gender and/or race as problematic and contestation over the construction and permeability of those boundaries).

While in the field, I added formulations invoking age and indications of how staff and the camp itself constructed gender and race to my focus. Furthermore, I informally interviewed kids and staff during advantageous moments, as when a camper was playing by herself and I joined her and when I had questions about what they were doing or had said. From these data, I developed analytic codes that helped me identify and interpret patterns in the data (Lofland and Lofland 1995).

It is important to gather data from different sources and look at the study population from different angles and in different ways to prevent bias (i.e., to triangulate the data) (Denzin 1978; Graue and Walsh 1998). Thus, informal interviews with campers and staff helped me clarify the content of the interactions I had observed and check my developing interpretations. The comparative design of the study also gave me the opportunity to focus on different subgroups of children both between and within the different settings. These strategies helped me avoid the bias that, for example, following only the popular kids or the most vocal groups would introduce. The data I accumulated provided a multidimensional picture of the interactions of the children who attended these two camps. Further research, though, must add observations of this sort from other everyday settings and from the same kids in a variety of settings to get the fullest picture of the processes and content of kids’ age, gender, and race constructions, and the mutual influence of kids and structure.

As part of my research role, I had to assure campers that, although I was an adult, it was safe for them to let me listen in on their conversations and see their interactions that they normally hid from adults. I took on different research roles at each camp. I was merely an observer at the typical camp, interacting with groups but not in an authoritative role. Since I was not officially tied to any group, I floated between groups and activities, observing many of the kids at various times. As I participated in group activities, kids came to realize that I was not someone who would hold them to camp rules, censure their speech, limit their behavior, or get them into trouble. I took on Fine’s (1987) friend role: positive connection with no authority, although the line between adult and child can never be completely blurred. Thus, the instances where they let me into their world outnumbered the times when I had to deflect their attempts to assert my adult authority (e.g., they would ask me for permission to do something) or when they hid their interactions from me.

In contrast, my role at the “cultural awareness” camp was as a camp counselor, meaning campers saw me as an authority figure who could either sanction or punish certain acts and speech. I was able to minimize that part of the role by claiming ignorance of camp rules since I had never worked there before, a claim that was often genuine. I believe I was successful in minimizing my authority because, toward the end of summer, while sitting with some campers, one of whom was straddling the line between acceptable and unacceptable camp language, another
campersaid to me, “I like you Val; you don’t do anything” in response to my lack of action toward that camper. The kids, then, saw me as a safe person around whom they could continue interacting in peer-approved ways. They were less likely to switch to adult-approved modes of interaction around me.

STRUCTURE OF THE SETTINGS: USING AGE TO “DO” GENDER AND RACE SIMULTANEOUSLY

There were two important distinctions in the structure of the settings to which campers responded in creating locally shared peer cultures: (1) the ways in which the camps organized activities by gender and age, and (2) the sets of rules delineating inappropriate camper behavior. At the predominantly white typical camp, policy and staff practice insisted on rather firm gender boundaries: Camp units were gender segregated, and the daily choices for activities were often gender-typed. Usually, the two morning activity choices were a quiet activity—like arts and crafts—run by a girls’ group counselor, or an active activity—like sports—run by a boys’ group counselor. This was not the sole gendered practice the adults followed. That is, counselors did schedule time for each camp unit to engage in both types of activities, and, periodically, the girls’ and boys’ units would do sports together with mixed-gender teams. However, when offering campers a choice of activity, adults at the typical camp appeared to gender-type and divide the activities. Moreover, camp units at the typical camp were separated by age, and campers spent much of the camp day with kids close to their own chronological age. Indeed, to accommodate all of the campers, the directors typically split the camp into two age-graded halves and scheduled activities accordingly. Thus, each day, the youngest half of camp—6- to 7-year-old girls and boys, and 8- to 9-year-old boys—did one set of activities, while the oldest half—8- to 9-year-old girls, and 10-to 11-year-old boys and girls—engaged in another set of activities. Camp adults, however, treated age boundaries as flexible in two ways: (1) They would shift campers into different age-groups as each camp session’s enrollment changed so that groups would be numerically balanced, and (2) they planned whole camp activities where groups would be age-mixed (as well as gender-mixed). The other important structural feature of the typical camp related to rules regarding language. Although the camp director expected staff to curb hurtful remarks that campers made to one another, there were no explicit rules delineating homophobic comments as inappropriate camper behavior. Thus, staff often ignored the homophobic teasing and the frequent, casual use of the word *fag* that many of the camp boys used to taunt someone, taunting that often indicated that someone was “doing” gender incorrectly. Indeed, I observed the oldest boys’ counselor insist that his group not say that something *sucks* but substitute *stinks* or another word. Yet, I never saw him limit the boys’ use of the word *fag*.

At the “cultural awareness” camp, policy and staff practice tried to interrupt the distinctions kids used to demarcate gender. Hence, unlike the typical camp, both
male and female staff took turns running all types of activities. Even when lining up for the locker room before swim, rarely did the counselors have the kids line up by gender. Neither were recreational activities divided by age, although campers did engage in morning art activities in three separate age-groups—first and second graders, third and fourth graders, and fifth and sixth graders. Directors used this separation to ensure that kids in each of the groups rotated through each of the three art activities, since only two were held each morning. Moreover, the camp rule insisting that participants in an activity had to accommodate any camper who wanted to join their activity was meant to actively encourage the kids to organize their play in ways that disregarded, among other things, institutionalized gender and age divisions. Also, like the typical camp, directors employed some flexibility in assigning campers to age-labeled groups, taking into account perceived maturity and friendship pairings in these decisions. Regarding camper behavior, the “cultural awareness” camp had explicit rules about expressions of prejudice, including homophobic remarks. Such speech would prompt counselors, or experienced campers, to conduct a bias intervention: Staff or experienced campers directed the kids involved to interrogate the remark, its use in the situation and in the larger history of oppression, and to explore alternative choices the kids involved could have made in this situation.

These were the dynamics regarding appropriate and inappropriate expressions of gender and age in the different settings within which the kids created camp-based peer cultures. Within these peer cultures, the ways in which kids constructed their flexible and variable age orientations (Cahill 1986; Thorne 1993; West and Zimmerman 1987) guided how they categorized and held each other accountable for a racialized and gendered sense of age. Indeed, some of the initial questions campers asked upon first meeting ascertained each other’s name, age, and grade. They used age and grade to size up one another in an objective sense: “Gee, you’re older than I am, but I’m going into a higher grade than you.” They also used that information to assess each other’s actions and identity in a more subjective sense. Thus, using Thorne’s (1993) language, some of the campers perceived others and established themselves as more oriented toward being children (big girls and big boys) and some as more oriented toward being teens (little women and little men), even though they were of the same chronological age. The activities they chose, their accounts about those choices, the ways in which they organized their set of playmates, the ways they presented themselves—through all of these practices, campers engaged in a collaborative, mutually constitutive “doing” of a racialized and gendered age and “doing” of a racialized and aged gender.

This collaborative “doing” of age and gender in some instances transcended the influence of the immediate camp setting. Yet, in other instances, the culture the campers created depended on the particular setting. Specifically, the white kids in both camps held each other accountable for their age and gender category membership in remarkably similar ways, despite the very different settings. With few exceptions, white campers constructed firm gender boundaries of difference. The exceptions to this dynamic, however, are related to both age orientation and to the
structure of the immediate setting. The dynamics of the white kids become clear when contrasted with the kids of color, especially since the kids of color constructed predominantly flexible gender boundaries. There was, however, only one setting that had a significant proportion of campers of color. Thus, it is unclear whether the patterns they established also transcend the influence of immediate setting.

FINDINGS

I use the following themes to examine the influence of the structure with respect to the negotiation of the racialized and gendered boundaries of age in the campers’ peer cultures: (1) notions of modesty, (2) relations of dominance over younger kids, (3) a stance uncooperative toward adults, and (4) a stance of being just kids together. White campers in both settings used the first three themes similarly in their racialized age and gender constructions but varied on the fourth by setting. White campers in both settings and kids of color at the “cultural awareness” camp used the first theme similarly, the second theme somewhat similarly, and varied on the third and fourth.

Notions of Modesty: “It’s Gross to Be Naked in Public!”

There was one dynamic that emerged in the peer cultures of all of the kids, white campers and campers of color, at both camps: Boys and girls differently appropriated modesty as part of age. In other words, campers constructed firm age boundaries, boundaries invoking racialized and gendered differences, regarding public nudity. These boundaries emerged while kids changed clothes for swimming. For girls, modesty, even with respect to other girls, was important in the transition from big girls to little women. For boys, modesty was not key for their transition. Moreover, for girls, race was relevant to modesty; for boys, it was not.

At the start of the summer, I noticed that one of the older girls with a child orientation had no qualms about being naked and out in the open in the locker room. By the middle of summer, however, she insisted that “it’s gross to be naked in public.” She even joined a group of girls making fun of another girl who was standing naked in the locker room. The camper’s transformation into a girl with a teen orientation toward nudity exemplifies the difference in age orientation regarding modesty. Both camps’ changing rooms allowed only limited privacy. Thus, nudity and who it was appropriate to be nude with became an issue. Campers with a child orientation—the big girls—walked around in various states of undress and cared only minimally about where they changed, seeking mostly not to be seen by the boys. The teen-oriented girls—the little women—however, also deemed it important to hide their bodies from each other, as when some older girls asked me to hold up a towel as a curtain in front of a curtainless stall for them. These girls invited only a trusted friend to share their changing stall. I even saw one girl in a stall struggle to
put on her suit while she kept her T-shirt on over her neck and draped down over her body. Eventually, many of the teen-oriented girls began to wear their suits to camp and put their clothes on over their wet suits. I noticed, too, that older girls who in other contexts established themselves as big girls also began to hide their bodies from all but trusted, stall-sharing friends as summer progressed, just as the little women did. Hence, even the older big girls began to incorporate modesty into their practices in a way that aligned them more with their chronological peers and less with their orientation peers. The girls’ degree of concern around public nudity, then, showed how they constructed gender and age simultaneously, so that each came to depend on the other.

The occasions when the boys tried to sneak a peek at the girls while they changed clothes indicated that they, too, knew that modesty was the appropriate way for girls—but in their assessment, all girls—to construct gender. Modesty was not, however, how the boys of either age orientation constructed gender for themselves. One of the male counselors at the “cultural awareness” camp told me that he was pleasantly surprised to observe that the boys were quite comfortable with themselves and each other in the locker room. The younger white boys and boys of color would sometimes act silly: dancing around or singing while naked. The older white boys and boys of color would merely change, sometimes casually turning their back and facing the wall or the lockers while changing their pants. If they had been talking, they would continue their conversation with ease. This counselor said that his own traumatic experiences as a young white boy in the school locker room—being shy about his body, trying to shower after most had done so, the other boys verbally and physically attacking him for his discomfort—made him look specifically for similar behavior from the campers. To his delight, he observed no signs of discomfort or suspicion. I also observed the boys’ minimal concern about nudity during a field trip to a park with a pool. Many boys took advantage of the offer to change while an adult held a towel around them, showing no concern if their buttocks poked through. All of the girls, however, insisted on using the cramped locker room, although it meant waiting in a slow-moving line, shortening their swim time. The girls’ actions suggest that the towel did not offer enough protection for either the little women or the big girls.

Notably, most older girls’ friendships maintained racial boundaries. Therefore, there were not many mixed-race pairings in the girls’ stalls at either camp. The girl at the typical camp who for weeks was the only girl of color in the oldest camp group even pulled me into her stall, although I was not changing into a suit. She chose me, an adult but one who shared her racial identity, rather than a white camper. Even though teen-oriented campers, like this girl, typically avoided adult attention, this girl often actively constructed race boundaries in ways that included me as a person to whom she had special claim because of our shared racial identity (for more detail, see Moore 1997). Moreover, older girls at the “cultural awareness” camp, a setting with racial diversity, also maintained racial boundaries through their choice of changing stall partners. Thus, the girls also constructed a racialized
gender through modesty. In contrast, the boys did not use race to organize their locker room behavior.

For kids of color and whites alike at both camps, then, womanhood depended on remaining covered, even with other women, although one could share this intimacy with a similarly raced peer; girlhood depended mostly on remaining covered from boys; manhood and boyhood could parade much more openly. We can see here how age, rather than being a mere chronological designation, was more emergent in the social relations kids established and maintained, social relations with specific norms and practices of appropriateness (Cahill 1986; Thorne 1993).

Relations of Dominance over Younger Kids:
“I’m Going into Fifth Grade; You Mean Nothing to Me!”

As with modesty, the ways in which campers negotiated relations with younger kids as a way to establish age demonstrated a gender divide mitigated by race. For girls—both white and of color—ambivalently helpful relations of control and nurturance over younger kids were relevant for making the transition from big girls to little women. White girls and girls of color, however, appropriated these relations of dominance somewhat differently. White girls dominated, but also played with, younger kids; girls of color dominated them but did not engage in play with the younger kids. In contrast, neither white boys nor boys of color engaged in helpful behaviors, although boys of color sometimes acted in nurturant ways. Thus, relations of dominance over younger kids were not relevant to boys’ age transition.

Teen-oriented girls—both white and of color—at both camps got the counselors to regularly assign them to positions of power over the other campers, as when a group of girls asked the counselors to let them distribute the afternoon snack to the other kids. Some girls even got the counselors to make them into assistant swim teachers during swim lessons. These girls took the hierarchical structure between counselors, counselors in training, and campers and found a niche for themselves above camper status, thus constructing gender as little women instead of big girls.

Activities like doling out a snack can be seen as part of a continuum of helping behaviors, that is, ways to support and assist staff as they take care of the campers. Yet, as Best (1983, 90) also found, this helping behavior was a means toward power and control: “a form of pro-social aggressiveness.” That is, the pro-social function of helping other kids, and subsequently helping staff, was mitigated by the aggressive dominance the girls expressed through helping. This aggressiveness was clear, for example, in the authoritarian way three white girls at the “cultural awareness” camp doled out snacks. They demanded that the kids line up in a perfect single file line, yelling at kids who took a step to the side to see what snack was or kids who turned around to talk. They insisted they would not start until everyone was in perfect order. After waiting close to five minutes, though, the counselors made them start. The girls, then, would only hand out a snack if the kid was at the head of the table and would yell at, or ignore, kids who did not follow their instructions to the letter. Thus, the teen-oriented white girls and girls of color at both camps asserted
control while helping: sometimes nurturing yet sometimes aggressively asserting their will over those younger than themselves as they enacted their positions of authority over the other campers.

The ways in which white little women and little women of color engaged in relations of dominance were only somewhat similar, though, due to the ways teen-oriented white girls at both camps went further by not only helping but also playing with campers younger than themselves. Older white girls were the group who most often engaged in mixed-age play. Hence, they actively contrasted themselves with other campers who they explicitly constructed as younger. I watched two older white girls call to two younger white girls so that they could push them on the swings and then threateningly chase them away when they wanted the swings for themselves. I watched two older white girls play cooperatively with two younger boys—one Black, one white—and then tease them, declaring, “I don’t care about a shrimp like you! What grade are you, first? I’m going into fifth grade! You are nothing; you mean nothing to me!” as the girls walked away. Thus, the teen-oriented white girls at both camps included playful engagement with younger kids as a way to establish an “appropriate” racialized and gendered sense of age, whereas teen-oriented girls of color did not.

The practices of the preadolescent white big girls and big girls of color indicated that they did not feel pressure to establish themselves by developing relations of dominance over kids they viewed as younger. Instead of constructing situations where they would be helping and playing with younger children as little women, they played alone, played with each other, or played with the other kids in their chronological age-group (although perhaps in a younger camp unit). These older kids in the younger groups often played in same-sex groupings but also more than occasionally engaged in mixed-sex play: sometimes cooperatively, sometimes antagonistically. Once in a while, older big girls joined them. The older big girls also periodically chose activities in which boys were the predominant participants and did so without a sense that they had to explain or account for that choice. When the big girls did occasionally play with chronologically younger kids, they did so as status equals, without articulating or highlighting differences in age or status. Moreover, older big girls were the campers who most readily responded to camp adults’ instructions, for example, helping with cleanup after an activity. Although little women could be helpful, they were so on their own terms, in ways that they chose to be helpful.

The little men—both white and of color—constructed gendered age almost solely through a stance antithetical to adult rules. Most of the teen-oriented white boys at both camps and boys of color at the “cultural awareness” camp did not engage in helping behaviors or use younger kids against which to contrast themselves as older, as the girls did. There were, however, a few occasions where a few teen-oriented boys of color at the “cultural awareness” camp did engage in helping behaviors. During a gym playtime, one of the Black boys in the oldest group was playing by himself and a counselor suggested he play with several of the young
boys who wanted to play basketball. The older boy did so, gently and patiently teaching them how to make better shots, how to play as a team, and encouraging their efforts. The counselor later praised the boy for his helping behavior, which pleased the boy. On another day, during a kickball game, a counselor asked another older boy of color to be patient with the younger boys who were playing. The counselors tried to help the younger kids by telling them where to stand, to whom to throw the ball, and when to run. On his own, the older boy started to do this too, helping the younger boys improve their playing ability and praising their attempts. On another occasion, during a field trip to hear a storyteller, another older boy, who considered himself to be “mixed-raced,” turned to the two younger boys behind him who were restless and becoming noisy. The older boy put his finger to his lips and gently “shushed” the boys to quiet them.

These examples raise two important points. First, although the limited number of cases makes it difficult to be certain, it is significant that all of the boys in these examples were teen-oriented boys of color. To be more specific, two of the boys identified as Black, and the mixed-race boy was actively trying to decide where he fit among the race boundaries, sometimes associating more with white kids, sometimes more with kids of color. During the time of the field trip, he identified and hung around with the older kids of color. This finding suggests that unlike the white teen-oriented boys at both camps, at least some teen-oriented boys of color could occasionally construct a helping way of “doing” gender. Masculinity of color in these settings might have been open to child-initiated helping behaviors in a way that white masculinity was not. The second point raised by these examples is that instead of combining helpfulness with assertions of control, like the girls, the boys’ helping behaviors seemed to carry only a nurturing emotion, or at least comraderie. They acted somewhat like coaches for a sports team, encouraging and prodding, but not bullying or humiliating. These boys, then, did not turn helping behaviors into opportunities to be aggressive and controlling, like most of the teen-oriented girls, but rather into opportunities to express attachment and care.

Overall, then, as campers established and negotiated relations of dominance over younger kids, the character of that dominance varied by age, gender, and race. We see that not only is age social and emergent, but it is also clearly interdependent on how kids designate the appropriate way to do gender (Cahill 1986; Thorne 1993). Moreover, gender designations are racialized. We begin to see evidence suggesting that the gendered norms and practices kids of color construct differ from those of white kids (Ferguson Peters 1997; Trotman Reid and Hulse Trotter 1993; but see also Hill 1999).

A Stance Uncooperative toward Adults: Nonparticipation and Unhelpful Behavior

Once again, we see a gender divide regarding the ways in which campers appropriated a stance uncooperative toward adults in their age transition. Girls who
wanted to be little women found various ways to subvert adult authority. Boys simply ignored adult authority and refused to participate. In contrast to the previous themes, though, campers did not incorporate a racialized sense of difference into this pattern.

The explicit contrast with those constructed as younger required all of the teen-oriented girls to distance themselves from adult-initiated childish pursuits or limitations to avoid being seen as children (instead of little women). This meant they had to subvert adult authority since adults saw these campers as children. For example, two of the older white girls at the “cultural awareness” camp went to different staff members, offering each of them a snack from their lunches. When the counselor took it, the girls argued that the rule barring kids from trading or sharing lunch items should be struck down since staff could accept something from a kid’s lunch. They wanted to be subject to the same consideration adults got, not to the rules imposed on the children. At the typical camp, Purple Day was when campers were to wear as much purple as possible to win a prize. Yet, the white and Black little women instructed each other not to wear purple on this day because, they argued, purple was a lesbian color, as demonstrated by the abundance of it during the annual local gay pride march. They then teased those people who wore purple: “Oh, I didn’t know you were a lesbian!” They did so, though, only on the adult-designated Purple Day. Wearing purple other days was fine. These girls, then, felt they “knew better”: Their age orientation guided them away from their perceptions of what adults thought was fun for children and toward being appropriately heterosexual females. Furthermore, to these teen-oriented girls—white and of color—singing camp songs was not cool, especially songs picked and led by the camp director, that is, until they figured out how to sing subversively, in a way that made singing naughty fun. For example, they changed lyrics to create in-jokes: Instead of singing “Jump froggie, jump little froggie . . . ribbit, ribbit, ribbit, ribbit, ribbit, ribbit, croak!” they sang “Jump little ploggie” (a nonsensical rhyming word) to develop their own language, indicating who was in (the little women) and who was out (everyone else). They then sang “ribbit, ribbit, choke!” to humorously kill the frog and to be oppositional. They also parodied other songs, allowing them to distance themselves from innocent childhood. For example, there were parodies expressing romantic and sexual interest in particular boys or songs about killing the children’s character Barney and about getting the HIV virus.

Many teen-oriented girls also engaged in nasty talk (a term made up by the kids of color at the “cultural awareness” camp but that also fits the white girls’ patterns). This is talk dealing with genital hair growth, menstruation, breast development, and raging hormones. Nasty talk stood in contrast to the younger kids’ pride in getting big, which usually centered on the development of leg hair. Nasty talk embodied shame, secrecy, and naughtiness. For example, at the typical camp, each camp group decorated a small tree branch upon which the group hung awards that they earned. Three teen-oriented white girls decided to decorate their own personal branch and to secretly call themselves the puberty girls. They then painted their
branch colors to correspond with three facets of puberty: purple (the darkest color they could find) for pubic hair, red for menstrual blood, and white for "milky" breasts (whether in response to lactation and/or to race, I do not know). While painting their branch, the girls often repeated to each other, "Don’t let the camp director know; don’t let him hear us." The girls were also secretive around female counselors due to their perception of the conflict about “doing” this gendered age: The camp wanted them to be children (imagined to be without sexuality), and they wanted to be teens (imagined with sexuality).

The practices of the preadolescent white big girls and big girls of color indicated that they did not feel pressure to distance themselves from adult-initiated efforts on their behalf. Thus, older big girls at the typical camp wore purple on Purple Day. Indeed, some of them tried to win the prize for wearing the most purple. At both camps, older big girls sang adult-initiated songs and did so without having to subvert the activity (although they also found singing oppositionally to be fun). Thus, their sense of gendered age required less attention to establishing firm boundaries designating appropriate and inappropriate practices.

In contrast with the teen-oriented girls’ subversion of adult authority, teen-oriented boys often just ignored that authority and refused to participate in adult-initiated “childish” pursuits. For example, none of the older boys—white or of color—at either camp sang willingly on their own during adult-initiated sing-alongs. Unlike the older girls, however, they never found a way to participate regularly in singing. At the predominantly white typical camp, as the summer went on, counselors and directors tried to cajole and punish the teen-oriented boys into song participation, to little avail. Even enthusiastic participation by their white male counselor made no difference. The oldest boys (an all-white group) would only sing as a condition for participation in other activities, such as when they were not allowed to swim until they sang. These boys did not make fun of the girls or younger boys who sang or even the older big boys who unenthusiastically but more regularly acquiesced to singing. As little men, though, these boys did not cooperate with the adult request to sing.

The overall picture developing from these data, then, shows that while the little women—both white and of color—integrated strategies that aligned them with adults with strategies antithetical to adults in their racialized and gendered age constructions, the little men—both white and of color—constructed racialized and gendered age practices almost solely through a stance antithetical to adult rules and distancing from silly, childlike sensibilities. In the kids’ peer cultures, age and gender clearly were mutually constitutive, with race sometimes influencing that construction. Moreover, we see that teen-oriented campers had to police their mutually constitutive age, gender, and race boundaries more rigidly, thereby holding themselves accountable to more rigid standards of behavior than did child-oriented campers in their efforts to maintain the high level of status that gendered age orientation gave them (Adler and Adler 1998).
Being Just Kids Together: Romance and Separation from Children

In contrast to the previous focus on the gender divides campers established as part of their age transition, there were times when kids made the boundaries between boys and girls flexible or even permeable. The ways in which campers established these gender relations, though, varied greatly by race. Among the white little women and little men, romance provided the opportunity for getting together. Among the little women and little men of color, rough play and dirty play provided a resource for getting together.

Not until the end of summer were the teen-oriented white girls at the typical camp able to find a way to bring the teen-oriented boys and girls together. The teen-oriented white girls used romance and (hetero)sexuality to establish relations with the older white boys and to use them in their construction of little womanhood. Many of the older campers—mostly white, but including the few girls of color—then interacted together, although in ways that emphasized gender distinctions as heterosexual couples, typically making that gender difference titillating and exciting. The teen-oriented kids focused their attention on the girls' physical attractiveness. For example, in a conversation about breast development, one of the older white girls said to the one older Black girl, “If the boys say they can see your bra, go like this and say, ‘I’m glad you noticed,’” and she put one hand on her jutted-out hip and her other hand behind her head, thus emphasizing her chest. Then they practiced role playing this scenario. The older white boys responded to these sorts of efforts accordingly, using romance in their gender constructions by displaying ribald interest in the girls, in pubertal development, and in sex. For example, when I told some of the older white girls I was going to hang out with the boys, they told me, “Oh, you don’t want to do that. They’re at that horny age where all they talk about is horny stuff” and went on to tell me about one of the boys grabbing one of the counselor’s “boobs” and saying they were silicone. They then talked about a boy who pulled his pants down on the bus and said, “I have hair; want to see?” Romance and (hetero)sexuality, then, for the boys was tinged with aggressive antagonism.

More surprising, though, was how some of the older white kids used romance to negate the emphasis on gender difference. Although not all of the older white girls and boys and few girls of color declared themselves to be dating, the two groups sat together almost as one group during camp activities. Some of the older big girls continued to ignore the boys, pursuing play mostly with other same-sex campers (although still occasionally choosing mixed-sex activities). The same holds for some of the older big boys. All of the teen-oriented and many of the child-oriented older campers in the two groups, however, interacted willingly and cooperatively, in contrast to the antagonistic teasing that occurred before the development of romance. Most important, some of the white campers who were going out with each
other now could be friends. That is, they could be just kids together instead of simply (hetero)sexualized boys and girls. Thus, I saw them play and interact in a relaxed manner with each other, just as they did with their same-sex friends. In contrast, the older white girls and boys at the “cultural awareness” camp did not use romance in their constructions and thus maintained firm gender boundaries between each other.

Unlike the white campers at both camps, teen-oriented kids of color at the “cultural awareness” camp did not construct firm aged and racialized gender boundaries between each other. They often constructed a flexible boundary de-emphasizing gender difference, making them just kids together, rather than the girls and the boys. These older kids of color together “did” gender in a number of teen-oriented ways. One strategy they employed was to limit their interactions with younger kids. Although kids might talk to their younger siblings, they did not establish little womanhood or little manhood by contrasting themselves with someone explicitly constructed as younger. There were three exceptions in which older kids of color interacted with younger kids. The first exception occurred when the kids individually chose an activity (like kickball) and the resultant group was of mixed age. The second exception occurred during one particular snack time, when the older kids of color decided it would be fun to dress up one of the younger white boys in sunglasses and a baseball cap worn backward (cool style). The group instructed the boy in how to perform a cool walk and then had him walk up to a counselor that way and say something in slang (along the lines of “Hey, what’s happening?”). The young boy was pleased with the attention, and the older kids were tickled by the spectacle they had created: changing the usual performance style of this young white big boy to a style closer to their own teen-oriented cool style, a style they identified as part of being Black. These older kids of color entertained themselves by playing a joke about the social construction of race. The third exception occurred because one of the popular older Black boys “allowed” his younger brother to hang around with the older kids of color. The younger brother, however, paid a price for inclusion, for his brother often picked on him, calling him a baby or a copycat, thus reemphasizing age and rendering the boundary only semipermeable.

Instead of playing with younger kids, all of the teen-oriented girls and boys of color separated themselves from younger kids and used each other to establish aged and racialized gender boundaries. They did this by engaging in rough play. For example, for one afternoon’s free play, they caught bees in a jar and then, shaking the jar at one another, attempted to throw the bees at each other. They did this activity behind some tall bushes, hiding themselves from others. Their rough play often involved actively distancing themselves from younger kids since big girls or big boys might get hurt and then be apt to tell the counselors that the older kids of color were doing naughty things. The teen-oriented kids of color avoided adult attention so that they could continue their activity. They especially avoided adults when they wanted to discuss issues related to puberty, which they constructed as nasty talk. The girls and boys of color periodically teased each other with nasty talk, thus
emphasizing gender distinctions, even while they were grouping together to engage these issues. Much of their pubertal teasing revolved around the notion that children were not supposed to speak of such things in a harassing, ribald manner. On one occasion, the girls perceived the teasing about menstruation to be so hurtful that they sought counselor comfort and intervention, but involving adults in this discourse was rare.

Observations show that although most of the teen-oriented girls and boys—of color and white—used “dirty play” (Fine and Mechling 1991) to construct racialized and gendered age boundaries, kids of color at the “cultural awareness” camp engaged in this play together, whereas until romance emerged in one of the camp peer cultures, the white girls and boys at both camps limited their interactions with each other. Thus, campers clearly used what they deemed as the relevant racialized gender boundary, separating child-oriented kids from teen-oriented ones, to navigate their age transition. We see that campers of color maintained more flexible racialized gender boundaries than did white campers, either because of norms they brought with them to camp (Ferguson Peters 1997; Trotman Reid and Hulse Trotter 1993; but see also Hill 1999) or because of some feature within the “cultural awareness” camp. Ironically, it seems as though features of the typical camp allowed white campers to overcome their tendency to separate by gender, whereas the “cultural awareness” camp may have inhibited this integration for white kids.

CONCLUSION

Even though the two recreational day camp settings differed widely in their camper populations, in their organization of activities by gender and age, and in their rules delineating camper behavior, there were some important similarities between the peer cultures kids created at these camps. First, all of the campers constructed similar racialized and gendered age norms regarding modesty and relations of dominance over kids construed as younger. This finding is in line with Cahill’s (1986) theoretical and Thorne’s (1993) empirical work elaborating on age as an emergent process more tied to social than chronological criteria. My observational data indicate that older preadolescent campers found an emergent process of establishing age to be vital in negotiating and policing the boundaries of racialized gender practices. Campers established cliques that varied in status and popularity, given the group’s age orientation, with little women and little men as the most popular and most able to assert control over others, and big girls and big boys at a lesser status level, but still able to assert control over each other.

Second, as exclusive cliques, little women and men had to police their boundaries more rigidly and hold each other accountable to more rigid standards of behavior due to their high-level status (Adler and Adler 1998). Some campers, however, chose freedom from that rigidity over seeking inclusion into high-status
groups. These big girls and boys brought to camp previously negotiated pre-adolescent notions of self that they combined with like-minded others at camp to establish alternative standards of accountability that served as counterhegemonic alternatives to the high-status cliques’ norms (Fine 1987). Moreover, recreational day camps as settings have rather loose structures, with periodic unstable camper attendance, often merely temporary (seasonal) relationships, and few institutional rewards for popularity and status (Eder 1995). These structural features served to limit the pressure that high-status groups could apply to kids excluded from those cliques, especially as compared with the conformity pressures exclusive cliques can wield in settings that kids frequent more regularly such as schools (Adler and Adler 1998; Eder 1995; Thorne 1993; Van Ausdale and Feagin 1996). The racialized and gendered age border work in which all of the camp-based cliques engaged, then, allowed them to establish different types of peer relations with varying norms of control and status within the larger configuration of their locally shared camp peer groups.

In contrast to these camp setting similarities, the differences in racialized, aged, and gendered border work involving the white children’s ability to be just kids together indicate an important difference between the peer cultures kids created in the two very different settings. The structure of the predominantly white typical camp seemed to encourage more flexible border work, whereas, ironically, the “cultural awareness” setting seemed to inhibit this engagement for older preadolescent white campers. Researchers have noted that divergent interests serve to maintain separations between boys and girls, but adults may be able to ameliorate this divergence (see, e.g., Adler and Adler 1998; Thorne 1993). My data elaborate on these adult influences on children’s peer cultures. In the predominantly white typical camp setting, the adults scheduled time for boys’ and girls’ groups to interact as nonantagonistic equals (e.g., as teammates). There were also times when boys’ groups were scheduled to do what most campers and adults perceived as girls’ activities and girls’ groups were scheduled to do what most perceived as boys’ activities. This adult-directed boundary crossing took away some of the risk to kids for engaging in, and learning about, these activities. This engagement and learning, then, made it easier for the girls and boys to come together on their own initiative as kids who could share some interests or who had shared some experiences.

On the other hand, it is interesting to note that at the “cultural awareness” camp, adults assumed that camp rules about equal access to activities, rules against oppressive speech, and the general anti-oppression discourse would encourage boys and girls to interact as equals. Without more active adult-initiated interruption, though, older preadolescent white girls and boys did not act as just kids together. These findings accord with Thorne’s (1993) and Schofield’s (1989) school-based studies and Corsaro’s (1992, 1997) work demonstrating how kids do not simply internalize adult culture but appropriate and use it for their own ends. Campers in my study took the enforced, but not the merely suggested, risk-mediating aspect of the adult culture surrounding them and used it in their emergent border work. This finding also reflects the ways in which Connell (1987) argues gendered bodies are
reproduced: If only boys play sports, the reproduction of sports-oriented bodies and mind-sets means that sports will stay predictably gendered.

Because of sample size, my data cannot compare the kids of color at the “cultural awareness” camp with the very few girls and only one boy of color at the typical camp. A comparison of the kids at the “cultural awareness” camp, however, shows that boys of color there could be more nurturant than white boys, although not as nurturant as white girls and girls of color frequently were. The literature suggesting that Black boys and girls learn more gender role flexibility in their families and communities than do white children can help explain this divergence (see, e.g., Ferguson Peters 1997; Trotman Reid and Hulse Trotter 1993; but see also Hill 1999).

The occasionally more cooperative stance toward adults suggests a flexibility to masculinity of color not present for similar white boys in this setting. Moreover, the ways in which the boys and girls of color often grouped together as kids of color resulted from them forming clique dynamics of inclusion that clearly privileged race category membership and, as such, created more flexible gender boundaries, including looser norms of masculinity. The “cultural awareness” camp offered these kids of color living in a predominantly white community a critical mass of other kids of color for friendship. Further research might explore if kids in settings with this type of larger compositional dynamic consistently create similarly flexible boundaries in their peer cultures. There is also more work to be done in assessing the relative evaluative power of race category membership to gender category membership (as well as other important identity dynamics) that kids of color use in negotiating their peer relations and peer cultures. Studies comparing the peer cultures that the same group of kids create across multiple settings would further illustrate how kids use the structure of various settings in their collaborations. My data, though, allow me to elaborate on the new sociology of childhood’s recognition of kids’ creative collaborations (Adler and Adler 1998; Corsaro 1992, 1997; Eder 1995; Fine 1987; Thorne 1993; Van Ausdale and Feagin 1996). Although the conceptualizations kids bring with them to a setting are important, kids combine those conceptions with those of other kids, those of the adults in the setting, and those embedded into the structure of the setting itself to create unique peer cultures with unique conceptual dynamics delimiting status and behavior (Corsaro 1992, 1997; Fine 1987). The ways in which older kids of color established their exclusive clique involved uniquely collaborative dynamics.

My work adds evidence to the developing picture of how kids establish, negotiate, and use racialized senses of gender, as well as racialized and gendered senses of age, to organize peer relations of status and control. Age, gender, and race are not merely obvious identities but are emergent and interdependent processes. Kids, then, create peer cultures with variably hierarchical cliques using inclusive and exclusionary dynamics that hold each other accountable to these emergent racialized conceptions of gender and age. They do so, however, in ways that actively and creatively use adult cultures around them. It is in interaction that both of these cultures inform each other (Corsaro 1992, 1997). My work further
empirically develops interactionist theoretical conceptualizations of collective and fluid identities requiring group recognition, alignment, and validation (Brissett and Edgley 1990; Cooley 1902; Goffman 1959; Hewitt 1991; Mead 1934; Stone 1990). Adler and Adler (1998) note that kids currently face a new facet of group recognition, alignment, and validation. They extend Mead’s (1934) notions of taking the role of the specific and the generalized other by arguing that as adult-organized after-school activities increasingly take over kids’ leisure time, successful socialization now includes taking the role of a “corporate other,” that is, “anticipating and understanding the organizational perspective” (Adler and Adler 1998, 203). Summer camp is yet another adult-organized, child leisure time activity exposing kids to a corporate other. Indeed, campers in my study were cognizant of the immediate context’s organizational perspective in their racialized, aged, and gendered constructions. My study shows, however, that kids did not merely internalize and imitate the norms of the settings. They engaged in interpretive reproduction (Corsaro 1992), collaboratively appropriating and actively using the conceptions around them. Using this interactionist lens, then, allows us to move away from traditional socialization theories’ limiting focus on children as individuals passing linearly through development as they internalize norms of identity. We can now expand our understanding of children and recognize them as creative social actors who collaboratively negotiate identificatory social meanings as they establish and manage power relations in their peer cultures.

NOTE

1. I use the term kids because that is how children refer to themselves. Children is a top-down term, implying beings still in development; kids implies active social actors (Thorne 1993).

REFERENCES


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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RACE AND GENDER IN SCHOOL SUCCESS AMONG LATINAS AND LATINOS IN COLLEGE

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This article considers how race and gender shape Latina and Latino paths to school success in college. A purposive sample of successful high school and college students was selected. Through interviews, fieldwork, and school records, the researchers find that Latinas navigate successfully through negative stereotypes by maintaining positive definitions of themselves and by emphasizing their group membership as Latina. Young Latino men also see themselves as part of a larger cultural group but tend to have less positive racial and ethnic identities than women do. Typically, they are supported by mentors, such as white athletic coaches, and tend to draw from the meritocratic ethos of sports, regarding their success in individualistic terms. While successful Latinas do not assimilate in the ways predicted by the literature, the young men in this study accept the individualistic and meritocratic ethos of the dominant culture, but with a psychological price.

Assimilation in American society has long been a central concern of sociologists (Glazer and Moynihan 1963; Gordon 1964; Park 1950; Rumbaut and Portes 1990). In Robert Park’s original and influential formulation, the process of assimilation or the acceptance of the dominant culture’s norms and values comes about through an immigrant group’s contact with a new culture. This concept is not only central to research on recent immigrants but to studies in the sociology of education where it is considered key to understanding the success or failure of students from racial ethnic minority and white working-class backgrounds (Bernal, Saenz, and Knight 1991; Fordham and Ogbu 1986; MacLeod 1995; Willis 1977). Students who succeed, these scholars argue, do so because they have assimilated to the dominant norms and values such as individualism, while those who fail do not. Thus, the path to student success is paved through the process of assimilation to an individualistic and meritocratic understanding of the social world.

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Several assumptions inform this understanding of student success. First, success is predicated on assimilation. If students do not conform to the mainstream culture, they will fail. Such an assumption precludes other possible definitions of success, such as students who may be successful academically but are still strongly tied to a culture and an identity that is not white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and individualistic. As Feagin, Vera, and Imani (1996, 51) have observed, the white spaces of universities typically embody “the presumption of one-way assimilation for students of color.” Second, giving up one’s cultural values and group identity for a new one is assumed to be not only an inevitable outcome but a desirable one. Certainly learning to speak English is desirable in a country where other languages typically are not spoken, but learning to speak English in the United States also entails the devaluation and denigration of other languages, cultures, and people (Rumbaut 2000). Our point here is that assimilation may entail positive as well as negative consequences, some that may be damaging to students’ sense of identity and self-esteem as a racial ethnic minority (Rumbaut 1997).

This article provides an empirical and theoretical challenge to the logic of the conventional assimilationist argument by looking at the success of Latino students in college in a midwestern region of the United States. Currently, the high school drop-out rate of young Latinos nationwide is 46 percent (McMillen 1995). While the literature in the sociology of education suggests that students of color must adopt white middle-class behaviors to succeed, our research demonstrates that Latino students construct paths through the terrain of discrimination and prejudice they encounter in schools in much more complex and varied ways. All of the students in our study successfully bridged the transition from secondary school to college. Also, all but one have been continuously enrolled full-time in college, are successfully completing their course work, and are participating in a number of extracurricular activities. Furthermore, all of the students have ties to other Latino students on campus. Consequently, we specifically selected a group of successful Latino students, a group that has rarely been studied (Gándara 1982; Segura 1993), because we were interested in addressing theoretical questions that this particular student population could help us answer.

We will demonstrate that their paths to success did not follow the typical assimilationist trajectory predicted by the literature. Furthermore, there are gendered patterns through which these students construct paths to success in college. Young Latinas in this study navigate successfully through and around negative stereotypes of Hispanics by maintaining positive definitions of themselves and by emphasizing their group membership as Latinas. Furthermore, their positive self-definition is reinforced through supportive relationships with other Latinas earlier in high school and now in college. On the other hand, young Latino men who also see themselves as part of a larger cultural group tend to have less positive racial and ethnic identities than the women. Typically, they are supported by mentors, such as white athletic coaches, and tend to see themselves as having “worked hard,” thus they draw from the meritocratic ethos of sports and regard their success in more individualistic terms. While successful Latinas do not assimilate in the ways...
predicted by the literature, the young men in this study accept the individualistic and meritocratic ethos of the dominant culture, but not without a psychological price. To explain these divergent paths to success, we highlight the different ways both race and gender shape Latinas’ and Latinos’ experiences in college.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the most prominent and popular explanations for the failure of racial-ethnic minorities to graduate from high school and college are individualist accounts that blame children and their families (Coleman et al. 1966; Jencks 1972; Jencks, Crouse, and Mueser 1983; Sowell 1991). This so-called deficiency model attributes failure to the values or culture of particular ethnic and racial groups to adequately socialize their children to become successful academically. By contrast, many sociologists have challenged this model, arguing that schools themselves inadequately prepare minority students for educational success. These studies focus on the impact of segregation on communities of color, past and present discrimination, disparities in funding for inner-city and suburban schools, and the lack of political representation for minority communities at the state and federal level to address such disparities (Foster 1996; Fraga, Mejer, and England 1986; Olivas 1983; Polinard and Wrinkle 1990). These studies represent a tremendously important challenge to the deficiency model. However, they rarely consider schooling experiences from the point of view of students themselves.

Exceptions to this trend focus on oppositional cultures that develop among white working-class or minority youths in high school. For example, Paul Willis’s (1977) study of white working-class teenagers in Great Britain reveals that students who act out by refusing to assimilate to dominant middle-class norms of civility do not succeed in school, thereby reproducing their class position. Jay MacLeod’s (1995) study, Ain’t No Makin It, which compares the experiences of white and Black high school students in a large northeastern city, yields similar findings. The white students in his study who act out by smoking in the halls, missing class, and doing drugs fail and unintentionally reproduce their class position. By contrast, the Black youths who aspire to success and conform to the achievement ideology also fail, hence the phrase “ain’t no makin it.”

Although these more student-focused studies represent an important advance to our understanding of school failure, they contain a number of weaknesses. First, Willis, MacLeod, and many others following their lead tend to theorize a fairly simplistic and dichotomous response on the part of students who find themselves outside the dominant group in high school: Students can either assimilate or resist. In MacLeod’s study, either response produces failure. By contrast, the students in our study respond to their marginalization in much more varied and complex ways. Furthermore, unlike the research of MacLeod and Willis, which focuses on student failure, our study focuses on student success. Finally, none of these studies consider the ways gender may influence processes of exclusion and isolation. Not only is
their focus only on adolescent males, but they fail to think about masculinity as a social construction or about the ways masculinity may contribute to the meanings students and teachers attribute to acting out.

The literature on the sociology of gender suggests that gender matters a great deal in the achievement of school success. Numerous studies in the sociology of education find that girls are less interested in success than boys (Horner 1968) and that girls do less well in school than boys starting in adolescence (American Association of University Women 1997; Mikel Brown and Gilligan 1992; Orenstein 1994). Some of these accounts rely on the early and influential work done by feminist scholar Carol Gilligan (1982), who in her book *In a Different Voice* argued that women consistently pose moral questions in a different voice than men do. In their attempts to resolve moral dilemmas and issues of responsibility, the young women Gilligan studied were concerned with maintaining relationships so that no one would be hurt, whereas men were concerned with abstract notions of universal rights and justice. Gilligan’s point is that women’s difference is not a deficiency but rather a moral strength. She argued that women did not fear success as Matina Horner (1968) had once maintained but rather that women feared the loss of connection and of relationship to others that occurred in individualistic, competitive situations. Furthermore, Gilligan argued that women’s emphasis on the importance of relationships, connection to others, and care is not only a more accurate understanding of the dynamics of social life but it is also an important critique of overly individualistic accounts of psychological development in psychology and of American culture at large.

Gilligan’s explanation for this moral difference derives from Nancy Chodorow’s (1978) psychoanalytic account of the early gender differences that develop between male and female children in their relationship to their mother. For these “difference feminists,” as Chodorow and Gilligan have been called, gender is not only a marker of identity and difference but an asymmetrical system of relationships between women and men. In their understanding, gender becomes the central determinant of one’s life. It is not reducible to class, race, or any other system of inequality. It has its own psychological meanings for individuals and its own internal logic of reproduction.

While this scholarship has been tremendously influential in highlighting the significance of gender as a category of analysis and as a system of self-reproducing inequality, it has been criticized for treating gender as a homogeneous category (Joseph 1981; Segura and Pierce 1993; Stack 1997). In other words, these theorists do not consider racial or class differences between women. Although Mikel Brown and Gilligan (1992) have given attention to race and class in their more recent scholarship, they focus almost exclusively on psychological development and fail to consider the mechanisms and processes within schools that contribute to inequality.

The literature on classroom climate has examined the negative impact on girls caused by the microdynamics within classrooms (Lee 1996; Sadker and Sadker 1994; Sandler 1984, 1996). These studies are important in highlighting the processes and mechanisms that reproduce inequality in face-to-face interactions.
between teachers and students in classrooms. However, they tend to focus exclusively on gender without consideration of the ways in which race, ethnicity, or class differences between students may create similar kinds of dynamics and exclusion.\(^2\) They also ignore how some girls become successful despite the classroom’s chilly climate.

The literature on bicultural socialization provides some insight into the racial dynamics of classrooms and student success. Diane de Anda (1984), for example, argued that the success of students of color is often dependent on their ability to navigate successfully between two cultural systems—the minority culture and the majority society. For de Anda, successful students rely on “cultural translators” who share their cultural heritage. Cultural translators pass on information about their own personal experiences and knowledge of the dominant, white, middle-class culture to help students of color succeed and achieve a bicultural identity. In other words, they teach minorities how to survive in a dominant group environment without compromising their own cultures and identities. By contrast, individuals who rely more heavily on what de Anda calls “models” from the dominant group are less successful in becoming bicultural. Such an account is tremendously useful in helping us understand the racial dynamics that contribute to minority student success in classrooms. For instance, it underscores the importance of teachers who serve as cultural translators to students of color rather than as participants in the creation of a negative classroom climate. However, this research does not explore how gender intersects with race or ethnicity to determine student success.

The theoretical impetus of Patricia Hill Collins’s (1990) work is useful in pushing through this empirical and theoretical impasse. Hill Collins not only recognizes that race, class, and gender are interacting and intersectional aspects of social life but she recognizes the possibilities for collective resistance in the face of oppression and domination. Hill Collins regards the assignment of a racialized identity as one that is structurally imposed. However, she assumes that social actors have more agency than would a pure structuralist, suggesting that though a self-valuing identity, Black women may resist, rather than conform to, controlling images such as the Mammy and the Jezebel. For Hill Collins, Black feminist thought emerges from a conscious identity and practice that Black women exercise to resist an imposed racialized identity. A self-valuing identity is created in what she calls a “sphere of freedom,” a safe space where Black women learn ways to deconstruct controlling images and create more positive identities and self-understandings.\(^3\)

Latinas in our study were aware of the controlling images applied to Hispanic women. Although none of the women talked directly about race or named school experiences as acts of prejudice, discrimination, or racism, they tended to define racism as blatant acts and attitudes practiced by a few irrational social actors. They did talk at length about the ways they saw themselves, their family and friends, and their community as different. Furthermore, they were also acutely aware of the difference between their own educational ability, aspirations and expectations, and the perceptions that their teachers and other authority figures held of them as lazy, uninterested in education, or culturally deficient. Despite the negative valuations they
faced, we argue that these successful young Latinas found ways to carve out safe spaces through their relationships with other Latinas and to successfully construct paths through the predominantly white, middle-class space of high school and college. Consistent with De Anda’s (1984) research, these young women rely on cultural translators who help them to succeed and achieve a bicultural identity. In other words, they have learned how to survive in a dominant group environment and maintain a positive sense of their own cultures and identities.

On the other hand, as men, Latinos experienced certain opportunities and advantages through sports that most of the young women did not. For them, sports provided valuable mentors such as a coach who encouraged them to do well in sports and academics. In addition, competition through sports supported and reinforced the notion that they alone were responsible for their success. Compared to Latinas, these young men relied more heavily on models from the dominant group. Furthermore, their overreliance on dominant group models as well as their unquestioning acceptance of an individualist ethos evoked an out-group orientation as well as some negative self-evaluations.

METHOD

Data were collected by the first author during a two-year period from 1996 to 1998 through a mentor program called “The Bridge” at a large U.S. research university that we call Midwestern University. Latino college students volunteered to participate in the program and mentored Latinos in local area high schools. All 45 college student mentors and 27 high school student mentees who participated in the program were interviewed. Among the college students, 31 were young women and 14 were young men. Their ages ranged from 18 to 25. Among the high school students, 11 were women and 16 were men. Students who participated in the study came from various Hispanic backgrounds, primarily Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Honduran. The majority were from second- or third-generation immigrant and poor or working-class families.

Data were collected through four means: questionnaire, in-depth interviews, observations at local high schools, and school records. The questionnaire provides demographic information about students and their families and surveyed students on their attitudes about participation in school, their ethnic communities, and their future educational goals. Interviews were tape-recorded and lasted from one to two hours. Questions focused on personal goals, experiences, aspirations, and their experience with the mentor program. (Pseudonyms are used for individuals and locations to protect confidentiality.) In addition, information was gathered through observations at field sites at both the high school and university sites.

The fourth source of information derived from the school records provided by the university and the school districts involved. For high school students, this information included attendance rates, courses taken, total credits earned, and scores on competency exams. For university students, the records included grades, credits...
earned, years in college, and academic standing. Student records provided a check between school and student perceptions of success.

Using The Bridge, participants created a purposively selected group of successful Latino students. We consider the high school students successful because they were college bound. For those already in college, we defined all the students successful because they had made the transition to college, achieved passing grades, and intended to graduate. Although all the high school and college students in The Bridge program were interviewed, this is not a statistically representative sample of Latino students in the Midwest, nor was it intended to be. Given the theoretically driven objective of our project, data were analyzed using Burawoy’s (1990) extended case method. Following this method, our intention is to extend and reconstruct existing theory about the processes and mechanisms that contribute to school success among Latinos in this particular social and historical context, rather than to create generalizations about the experiences of Latinos. This article focuses on the Latina and Latino mentors in college, but as will become evident in their personal narratives, their high school experiences are important as well.

**LATINAS: SUCCEEDING THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS**

When asked why they wanted to mentor to Latino kids, the young women in this study were prompted to speak candidly about their experiences in the larger social world and how these experiences informed their school experiences and their desire to become mentors. More than two-thirds of the Latinas said they enrolled in the mentor program because they had a strong desire to help someone like themselves. For example, Emilia, a 23-year-old university senior from Latin America describes herself as having lived two lives: one as a poor daughter of a single mom in Latin America and another as the privileged stepdaughter of a white father in the United States. Emilia grew up in Latin America and came to the United States after her mother married an American working for the government. When asked why she wanted to be a mentor to a Latino student, she said, “The way others think of you as a person of color affects you whether you want it to or not.” She recounted the following story:

My stepfather works for the government. When I was around high school age, he was transferred to an office [in another country.] He went first, and my mother, me, and my brother followed a short time later. We were at the airport in New York waiting to get on the plane . . . Well, the man at the counter called for all family members of these government officials to begin boarding. My mom and my brother and I went to the door. But the man at the counter stopped us and told us this was boarding for special people and that we needed to wait. My mom tried to explain that we were family members, but he just wouldn’t listen [she begins to cry]. I just remember him being so rude. He just assumed that because we are brown, because we weren’t white, that we could not be family members of a government official. But my mother never said anything
rude. She just continued to explain who she was. . . . When he finally realized who we were, he never apologized. *I know what some White people think if you are brown* [emphasis added]. And I want the Latino kids I work with to know that brown people are successful, that we do get degrees, that we are important too. Because they are going to spend a lot of their time in school being treated like this man treated us at the airport.

Emilia’s early experiences with discrimination prompted her desire to work with other Latinos so that they could learn that “brown people are successful” too. Moreover, like the other mentors, Emilia found the program to be a safe space for her. She enjoyed being part of a group where positive meanings were attached to brownness, she liked working with other Latinos, and she liked teaching others how to navigate the treacherous waters of a college that was unwelcoming to its students of color.

For Jennifer, a 25-year-old student of Mexican heritage and a senior in college, the mentor experience produced a heightened awareness about her own community. As a single mother, she was the only parent participating in the mentor program and she also worked in the elementary school in her neighborhood in West Town, a predominantly working-class, Hispanic neighborhood. It was working alone in her own community that provided her “awakening.”

I have always lived in West Town. I have always lived around mostly Latinos and I never thought about it. I know what some people think about Mexicanos, but I never let it bother me. Then I started working in the elementary school with the teachers. I didn’t know how much need there is out there. I mean, I never saw how little my community has—like resources, opportunities. And other people like them, the kids need to see people like them who are educated, who are going to college. These kids are smart, they just don’t have what other kids have. Going to college has really opened my eyes as to what other people have. But I really didn’t see it all clearly until I worked in my own community. I didn’t think about what it means to be Mexicana, Latina, who lives in West Town. I didn’t know how much difference there is between white kids and Latino kids in school. My [Latino] kids need attention. They need things, you know, in the school. They need adults who understand.

Although Jennifer is aware of her difference from white students, she describes herself as a Latina in very positive ways throughout her interview—“I know what some people think . . . but I never let it bother me.” Her conscious understanding of what being different meant appears to have changed when Jennifer worked in her own community. She was taught by her family and chose to think positively about her Mexicano background, and she did not use her difference as a way to explain her own difficulties in getting through school. However, after attending college, she became aware of the privileges people who were not from West Town enjoyed and became attuned to the lack of resources that were available in her own community.

Jennifer’s “awakening” can also be seen as a part of her experience as a mother. Women with children often begin to see the social world in larger terms when children are involved (McMahon 1995). Jennifer was taught to ignore racist attitudes about Mexicanos, and her college experience as well as her experience in the
mentor program taught her that thinking positively about being Mexicano is necessary to succeed in school. Furthermore, having a child who will soon be in the same school where she mentors contributes to her feelings that having relationships with successful Latino adults is vital for these children. Interestingly, although she notes the lack of material resources in the elementary school and her community in general, she also emphasizes the importance of relational resources, “someone to talk to who is like you.”

The majority of mentors had similar reports about the importance of positive relationships with other Latinas in their lives. Marta, a 20-year-old Chicana and a college junior, thought the most important contribution of mentoring is the fact that it is relational, particularly because Latino backgrounds are so varied. When asked why she wants to be a mentor, she says,

Because I know what it is like to be mentored. I just think that having someone talk to you and just, even if it is just one conversation, you know. I mean, they don’t have to be there for the whole year like you know, how we do it in that we are in for a year. I am going to talk to her [mentee] as many times as I can so I mean, who knows. She might not even like the fact that you call at a certain time of the month. She might be mad and feel really bugged. I mean, it could be just one conversation that makes a difference. And if I can just have that conversation and be able to say this is what I am doing and I am a Chicano and this is where my family is and you know, just have some kind of a contact. I think that is important.

Marta believes that having a Latino mentor for Latino kids helps them to see themselves in positive ways, but this is only important to a point because each student is different. Her mentee is from Mexico, and she herself is from the southwestern region of the United States. As she observes, “Yes, I am Mexican, but there is a difference, you know. I am Chicano. I am sure that she looks at me and thinks: ‘You are from the U.S., you have it made.’” Despite her recognition of differences, Marta believes the most important part of mentoring high school Latinos is to help them understand why they are seen as different in school and to establish a real relationship with them.

The most we can do is to provide information and talk to them and ask them what do you think. Go ahead and say, I had such a hard day today and this teacher is getting on my nerves. Just let them know you are real [emphasis added] and not just some university student. That you are struggling just as much as they are in high school.

Through her work with K-12 Latinos and her own experiences, she recognized that going to school at all levels is a family choice for Latinos, rather than an individual one. For Marta, social class and gender play an important part in how Latinos “think about themselves, and too, how other [white] people think about you.” What frustrates her, however, is how little school personnel know about the dynamics of many Latino families, particularly poor families. She says,
I think my mentee wanted to work with a university student because it was her first year in [a midwestern state]. She told me she is interested in learning, and I think she just wanted to know about resources and opportunities. I mean, it is hard to say because I don’t know her situation. I don’t know how serious she is about going to college or anything like that. It is a family choice. I have just come to learn that it is a family choice. Just with working with migrant workers, when we talk about going to college and stuff, it is like, the kid is going to go to school so that means we lose a worker or we lose a paycheck. And then we need to pay for their food and clothes to go to school. I have just come to learn that it is a family choice.

Here, Marta addresses a common stereotype attached to Latinos, specifically that they are not interested in pursuing an education. Several other Latina mentors expressed their disappointment with school authorities who do not understand the fact that Latino families make decisions about education for different reasons than white families do. Many said that school authorities consider going to school a taken-for-granted decision, failing to realize that for many poor and migrant Latino families, one child going to school may be a financial sacrifice for the entire family. High school and college attendance require money for clothes, school materials, lunch money, and transportation. Paying tuition or living expenses at college is rarely a possibility.

Like Jennifer and Marta, Gina emphasizes the importance of positive relationships to survive being considered different in school. A high-achieving college senior, Gina talked freely about being raised by her single mother on the West Coast and living with her extended family: her grandmother, her aunt, and her aunt’s daughter. She says,

I remember my mom teaching me a lot. I read before I started school. So I think I remember wanting to be in school because there was so much out there. And I remember thinking, this doesn’t make sense and that makes sense, and I would think of things and how to relate things. I don’t know if I liked school, but I didn’t like the attitude in school [emphasis added]. There were a lot of gangs and a lot of drugs, and then I started thinking about identity and who they were, people trying to be someone else. And that is where I think, I remember friends of mine wanting to fit in and I know that fitting in and doing that is really important. But I remember also thinking, you give up a lot of who you are by wanting to look and act like the others. During that time period in school I started learning more about me.

Gina goes on to talk about how being a woman and Latina has affected her experience at Midwestern University. She knows that being recognized as other opens the possibility of “thinking of myself negatively.” However, she doesn’t allow others to racialize her in negative ways. When asked how she handles the way she is seen as different by school authorities and mainstream peer culture, she says,

I also feel like a misfit in [this Midwestern state]? I mentioned that it is obvious I am different because, well, I had someone ask, “What kind of food do you eat?” “Excuse me? The same kind of food you eat.” I understand what they are getting at, but it is kind of insulting sometimes. People don’t mean to be harmful, though sometimes they do
and sometimes they just ask me questions because they are curious. I say it is not appropriate. I don’t know. I think it has made me think about not having a day that I see my mom and grandma struggle. My mom and grandma are really strong women and so, being a woman, yeah, that affects me. We are doing fine.)

Watching her mother and other women in her home struggle had a strong impact on Gina providing her with her own set of tools to deal with the racist assumptions.

Some [white] people who like, for example, might ask you about your food or your hair or your skin, or they call you names, that is not right. They are just dumb, they show their ignorance by using those words. And it depends on how the person says it, and the conversation. But there are times that you can tell when someone has said, has chosen those words randomly and didn’t really think about it. And there are those times when . . . well, when they know what they are saying. I never sit still for that. But I don’t allow myself to feel oppressed by it. I think that by letting it be [oppressive] you are giving up. Not giving it up but allowing yourself to be oppressed. So if you understand that people, some people are going to be hurtful, and other people are curious, and other people don’t know how to say stuff. And I can’t be defensive all the time, and I don’t want to be because I don’t feel it is helping. I think that being on the defense is not a nice way to live. I choose instead to have a strong identity . . . a positive strong identity. And I think this is important to talk to your mentee about. I don’t know how you would bring up the subject, because it goes back to the individual. But if it doesn’t come up, you should talk about it. If you don’t, that is not right.

Here, Gina maintains that she chooses how to behave rather than allowing others to define her behavior to fit their assumptions. She does not allow herself “to feel oppressed by it.” Furthermore, she emphasizes her “positive strong identity,” something she hopes to convey to the mentee she works with.

These vignettes demonstrate how young Latinas maintain positive self-definitions and self-valuations in the face of racial discrimination, prejudice, and pejorative stereotypes. As Hill Collins (1990, 140-44) pointed out, when Black women have a safe space, they are able to create such definitions for one another. For these Latinas, safe spaces are created in relationships with friends, family, and community including association with other successful Latino students in spaces such as Latino organizations. These relationships with cultural translators become spaces in which Latinas learn positive meanings and valuations that counter the negative significations operating in schools. In addition, Latinas create new relationships as mentors and in the mentor program because they share what they have learned about being successful Latinas, and they add to their own positive self-understandings by acting as role models.

LATINOS: SUCCEEDING THROUGH ATHLETICS

Like Latinas, young Latino men talked about being made to feel different at school and refrained from talking directly about race or labeling school experiences
as acts of prejudice, discrimination, or racism. They also discussed their desire to mentor and to help others like themselves. Unlike their Latina counterparts, however, these young men tended to talk about themselves in very singular ways, as individuals who worked very hard. Their focus was on ways they, as individuals, were able to change their attitudes about school and achieve school success because of support from a coach who was typically a white male. WhileLatinas talked about their racial and ethnic identity in very positive terms, Latino athletes tended to have more ambivalent and less positive understandings of their identities. If these young men challenged or resisted stereotyping, it was through their success as individuals, rather than through connections to other Latinos.

Given that individualism and meritocracy are central American cultural ideals (Bellah et al. 1985), it is not surprising that Latinos held fast to these ideas. All students are socialized to accept the notion that the character and desire of the individual determines their destiny and that everyone will be rewarded for the hard work they perform. For young Latinos, these ideas were further encouraged through their participation in school athletics, and because most of these students were successful athletes, the notion that they were successful because they worked hard was strongly reinforced.

Ricky, an 18-year-old college freshman, was typical of the majority of young Latinos in this study. In high school, he experienced isolation from others like himself. He comments,

I was not the type to have really good friends that I hang out with, that I call, things like that. I just had friends. People that I talk to. They were not really my type. I just don’t like to get all personal, on a personal level with people because sometimes, I don’t know, I just feel . . . I feel that sometimes you just find more differences and things you don’t agree with that person.

Who did you eat lunch with?

Everyday I sat at a different table. I wasn’t at that personal level with anyone.

The marginalization Ricky experienced in high school was common to almost all of the Latinos in this study. Few had friends who were Latino, and fewer still had close friends among other students of color or among white students in high school or in college.

Like many other young Latino students, Ricky talks about his student life and his feelings about Latinos from his community of origin as being at odds with each other. These feelings surfaced after he attended a conference for university Latino business students.

Basically what it was, there were a lot of motivated people, and they were talking about whatever they felt . . . everyone was just raising their hands. It was good to see that like drive. I’ve never seen like Latinos act that way about education and especially how young they were. They were like sophomores and freshmen in college. I was like, wow, because you never see that when they are coming up through high school. In
elementary, you don’t see like minority students acting that way towards education at all, well, not the ones I came from.

Ricky attributes his surprise that his Latino peers in college had an interest in, and a determination to succeed in, higher education to his experiences growing up with other Latinos. For the Latino youths he knew, education was simply not a priority in their lives: The focus was to get out into the work world right away.

When asked why he was so motivated to succeed in school, he said that his junior year of high school, he started working out of family necessity. That year he turned “away from school,” but got back “on track” through sports. His senior year, he was recruited by a suburban high school to wrestle. Although he continued to work part-time, the coaches, acting as mentors, helped Ricky focus on both wrestling and school. At the same time, Ricky was greatly influenced by his new peers at school.

I saw the success other people were having . . . how they kept going in 10th grade, 11th grade. And then I saw myself, and I was like wow, I dropped out of the race. . . . Most of my influence comes from the economic status that we are at, and like the way our lives are, and I just don’t want to be like that when I grow up. I want to get out of school, get a job, buy a house, buy a car, you know, pay for all my things. Just live a normal life, and I know that a lot of the minority students are in the same situation. And I don’t understand why I want to go back to it [school] and why they don’t want to take advantage of the resources . . . get an education and get out there and make a living for themselves.

Ricky attributes his success to his own initiative in taking advantage of the opportunities offered through sports. Furthermore, sports reinforces the idea that school success is based on merit and that these advantages are open to everyone equally. Consequently, he believes that any problems must lie with the individual or the individual’s family background.

I don’t know why some kids don’t take advantage of school opportunities. It could have to do with the environment, the way they were brought up. Morals I guess. But I really can’t say that, because mine are the same [emphasis added]. I don’t know. I don’t know why they would not take advantage of it. It makes no sense to me.

However, when talking about his mentor experience in the elementary school in the neighborhood where he grew up, Ricky contradicts himself:

I think that a big part that [school] plays a role in shaping their [mentees’] character—because I was sitting there at school and I was looking around the walls, looking at pictures, and just the way the school was built. The resources that they had, classrooms, the desk, computers, it’s like amazing. It’s not fair. It’s not equal. And it’s all in the other school [where he had transferred]. It’s amazing the difference, those kids have amazing resources compared to these kids. Over here, you basically have a teacher—and like the teacher has to purchase teaching aids herself. I felt bad just because there is such a difference there. And they are the ones that need most of the help.
At this point in the interview, Ricky recognizes that the resources where these Latinos go to school are not exactly the great opportunity that he thought many of his community peers had passed up. Instead, he sees a school where both the institution and its children are poor in economic resources.

And now I see the school in my perspective as an eighteen-year-old in college, not as a seven-year old. And it’s amazing, like the difference when I went to school. … When you get out there [in the world] and you experience things that are going on and then you go back to the school and look around and you’re like—what’s going on?

The opportunity to return to a K-12 institution as a college student changed Ricky’s perspective. As he reflects more on his opportunities, he discusses the ways they were made available to him. For instance, he thinks that one of the reasons he was able to go to a different and better school is because his mother drove him there every day. He was also able to participate in school activities because the white coach and athletic director made sure that he obtained financial waivers. “Everyone was making school and everything more convenient for me. They wanted me to succeed, also they made it easier. They helped me out and I took advantage [of the opportunity].”

Much like Ricky, the majority of male athletes in this study link school success to their personal initiative in taking advantage of the opportunities offered to them through athletics. Brian, a 20-year-old college junior, and Reuben, a 22-year-old senior, both equate learning to succeed in school with their participation in sports. The difference between their experiences and Ricky’s is that for Brian and Reuben, sports in their high school years was only one of many opportunities they had. As a swimmer, Reuben learned to compete and developed confidence about his abilities. Although he continued to swim in college, he did not hesitate to give it up when his swimming schedule interfered with his course work and extracurricular activities. He says,

Swimming in high school, and even in college, was important. But what really made a difference is that my mom always taught me to try different things. Giving up swimming was a decision, but it wasn’t like giving it up left me with nothing. I just moved on to the next thing—which is traveling and writing. My mom, and my Dad too in a different way, encouraged me to try whatever I wanted. I guess what I am trying to say is that success is one thing, but having the experience is the important thing.

Sports represents only one part of Reuben’s success story. While Ricky attributes his survival and eventual successful completion of high school to sports, Reuben sees high school sports as one growing experience among many. Michael Messner’s (1990) research suggests that this difference may be related to differential access to social and economic resources. In his study, both middle-class athletes and those from poorer backgrounds found sports to be important in defining themselves as competent and masculine. An important aspect of conventional masculinity in the United States is the ability to rise to the top in competitive athletics.
However, middle-class athletes tended to see sports as a learning situation that would help them in their school years and eventually in their careers, whereas athletes from poor backgrounds tended to see sports such as an eventual profession in football or basketball as the only opportunity to succeed.

There are obvious social class differences in the lives of Ricky and Reuben, and their discussions about school and education reflect these differences. Reuben comes from a middle-class background with professional parents who both have an extensive education. Furthermore, Reuben’s father is white and his mother is Latina. Coming from a family with two middle-class professional parents—and one who is white—has opened up a number of social and economic resources for Reuben. He sees these opportunities as open to anyone who works as hard as he did. However, he also recognizes that having educated parents makes a difference, not so much in terms of financial resources but “because somehow that gives you more freedom to experiment with life—having more choices.” Ricky, on the other hand, comes from a working-class, single-parent home where a high school diploma is considered a great accomplishment.

For Ricky, participation in sports was the opportunity to succeed. Had he not been exceptional at his sport, the opportunity would not have been there. On the other hand, participating in sports for Reuben was one among many choices for success. Had Reuben failed to excel in sports, he would not have been viewed as a failure by his parents, and this one failed opportunity would not have denied him success.

CONCLUSION

The successful college Latinas and Latinos in this study did not assimilate in the ways predicted by the literature. Despite the negative stereotypes they faced, successful Latinas found ways to carve out safe spaces through their relationships with other Latinas and to maintain a positive sense of racial ethnic identity. Consequently, their success in school did not entail giving up their ethnic identity. On the other hand, as men, Latinos experienced certain opportunities and advantages through sports that most of the young women did not. Specifically, sports provided them with a valuable mentor such as a coach who encouraged them to do well in sports and academics. In addition, competition through sports supported and reinforced the notion that they alone were responsible for their success. At the same time, however, these young men often paid a psychological price for their conformity to these norms. The majority had strongly ambivalent feelings about their racial ethnic identities, and although they often associated with other Latinos on campus, they had less social support and shared understanding for being “different.”

The gendered differences we have highlighted speak to the significance of race and gender as categories of analysis that operate together to produce divergent experiences for young Latinas and Latinos. While both Latino women and men
faced racial prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion throughout their school years, young women were able to insulate themselves through supportive relationships with other Latinas in high school and in college, while young men were able to transcend some of these obstacles through participation in sports. Early in their schooling, Latinas sought out and found cultural translators who aided them in becoming bicultural, while Latinos found models from the dominant group who encouraged mainstream success but did not help them learn how to navigate between dominant and minority group cultures. These gendered strategies for success suggest that relationships and connection to others are more important to these young women and girls as Gilligan (1982) and others have argued. On the other hand, athletic ability is more highly valued and encouraged for boys in American culture than for girls regardless of race or ethnicity. Hence, participation in athletics becomes a vehicle for success for these racial ethnic minority boys, but not for girls.

Significantly, however, in contrast to studies that suggest that women’s focus on relationships inhibits competitive achievement, our findings demonstrate how Latinas used relationships as a path to success. By highlighting the raced and gendered strategies, processes, and mechanisms that contribute to school success in this context, our intersectional analysis improves on frameworks that rely solely on gender. Latinas experience a chilly climate in classrooms both as women and as members of a racial ethnic minority. However, rather than succumb to the pressures of this gendered and raced dynamic, they seek out protective relationships, support, and encouragement where they can achieve a positive sense of racial ethnic identity that they carry with them from high school to college. As members of a racial ethnic minority, young Latinos also encounter a chilly classroom, but as men they are encouraged to participate in sports, which becomes a springboard to success. However, once these young men enter college, the gendered advantages promised by sports diminish and race begins to take on more significance in their lives. Because they lacked cultural translators, they had not developed strong positive Latino identities in high school and found themselves at once confused and ambivalent about their racial identity, about other Latinos, and about the general fate of members from their own racial ethnic minority group. In this way, our analysis highlights how the privileges of masculinity promised through sport did not shield them from the psychological injuries and disadvantages shaped by race.

The difficulty these young men had talking about discrimination and their racial identities is reminiscent of findings from other studies. The underlying assumption of individualist thinking is that we can make choices about what we want to do with our lives, the schools we hope to attend, and the number of hours we dedicate to work. By using this language, Latino students like Ricky blame others when they do not succeed, rather than the institutions and social processes that exclude their participation. Given that American educational systems are so infused with this discursive understanding, it is often difficult for students to find appropriate language when they see discrimination or have encountered it themselves. Consequently, as Susan Chase (1995) found in her study of women school superintendents, although many women experienced sex or race discrimination in their professional lives,
they were unable to convey what had happened to them within the cultural logic of individualist thinking—except in very halting and awkward terms.

For Chase, this halting language also reflects a larger tension in American cultural life between individualist ideals and the reality of material inequality and discrimination. It is precisely this tension that Ricky and many of the other Latino athletes in this study came up against when they entered college. Interestingly, while there has been a great deal of research highlighting the disadvantages white girls and young women face in high school and college (American Association of University Women 1997; Crawford and McLeod 1990; Orenstein 1994; Osborne 1995; Pascarella and Whitt 1999; Sadker and Sadker 1994), very sparse attention has been given to the problems encountered by male students of color, particularly Latinos.8 Some studies on academics from white working-class backgrounds speak to the malaise and confusion the young men in our study experienced (Cuadraz and Pierce 1994; Ryan and Sackeray 1984; Tokarczyk and Faye 1993). Academics from white working-class backgrounds often describe feeling “out of place” in this middle-class environment, like “strangers in paradise” (Ryan and Sackeray 1984). Our research points to the intensity of these feelings as well but emphasizes Latinos’ confusion and ambivalence stem not just from dislocations produced by social class but from race as well. Consequently, more research needs to be conducted that considers the problems Latinos encounter in high school and college as young men and as people of color.

These findings also have important implications for social policy. Despite the conservative policy claim that race and gender no longer matter in American society and that affirmative programs are no longer necessary, our research demonstrates that Latinos continue to face discriminatory treatment in high school and college and that such policies are absolutely crucial to getting students of color into college. But policy makers also have to think about what happens when students of color get to college. The mentoring program we studied had many benefits for its students, particularly for Latinas. However, as we have suggested, it did not play as great a role in helping young Latinos to develop positive ethnic identities. The importance of cultural translators who facilitated bicultural socialization in young women suggests that mentors of color could also play a crucial role in college, particularly for young men. Consequently, policy makers need to consider the ways mentoring programs address the needs of both male and female students of color because race and gender often matter in very distinct, but different, ways.

NOTES

1. The terms Chicana/o and Mexican American are generally used to indicate individuals of Mexican heritage, while the term Latina/o encompasses groups not only of Mexican descent but those of Caribbean and Central and South American descent as well. We have used the broader term throughout the article because the students in our sample were of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Honduran descent, as well as from other parts of Central and South America.
2. Although they do not consider the undergraduate experience, Turner, Myers, and Creswell (1999) do use race and gender in their analysis of the “chilly climate” that faculty members of color experience at midwestern colleges and universities.

3. Other scholars such as Feagin, Vera, and Imani (1996) have described the ways students of color create their own racialized spaces in university settings. However, they do not theorize how these sites can facilitate school success among racial ethnic minority students.

4. Only two students in this study were first-generation immigrants: One was from Mexico and another from Puerto Rico.

5. In this literature, success is often conceptualized by looking only at high achievers. For instance, Gandura (1982) looked at college students with high grade point averages who plan to go on to professional or graduate school. Given the fact that so many Latino students drop out along the way in high school and college, we find that this conception of success is overly narrow. It fails to capture how Latino students who may be good, but not high achievers, persist in college despite the considerable obstacles they may face.

6. Two male students had similar experiences through their participation in student government. In each case, they relied heavily on a mentor from the dominant group, or in de Anda’s (1984) term, a “model,” who encouraged them to do well but did not help them to value their racial ethnic identity. While there were only a small number of cases who were not athletes, their experiences underscore the significant role that models from dominant groups play in supporting students of color to become successful in mainstream endeavors but also do not facilitate bicultural socialization.

7. There were three Latinas who also saw sports as a defining factor in their lives. Like the male athletes, these young women had ambivalent feelings about other Latinos in high school who were not athletes. However this began to change after they entered college and became involved in The Bridge program, when they developed closer friendships with Latinos and a more positive understanding of their own ethnic identity.

8. There have been a number of studies on African American men (Fordham and Ogbu 1986; MacLeod 1995; Ogbu 1978). However, by comparison, there have been far more studies on the problems of white girls and women.

REFERENCES


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CONTROLLING IMAGES
AND THE GENDER CONSTRUCTION
OF ENSLAVED AFRICAN WOMEN

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This article examines the antebellum popular culture that was created by pro-slavery intellectuals and that contributed to the subordination of female African slaves. It argues that southern ideologues produced a dominant ideology that facilitated the exploitation of enslaved Black women and contributed to the social construction of their gender. This article contributes to Black feminist theory that, since the early 1970s, has been developing as a counter-hegemonic advocate for the subaltern African American woman.

Contemporary Black feminists advocate a counter-hegemonic race-class-gender ideology based on the tri-dimensionality of the oppression they experience uniquely as Black women. They, as objects of this multi-layered complex, are committed to liberating themselves and their community as sociopolitical subversives. Hence, Black feminist theory consists of a body of knowledge based on the life experience of Black women that interprets their reality, defines their unique standpoint, and facilitates their emancipation from the hegemonic forces of sexism, racism, and classism.

Within this theoretical framework, Black female intellectuals—from Angela Davis (1981), an innovator in the field, to more recent writers like Patricia Hill Collins (1991, 1998)—unfailingly examine the life experience of enslaved Black women by deconstructing what Hill Collins terms “controlling images,” that is, stereotypes used to subordinate African women. For instance, in Sisters of the Yam, hooks (1993, 20) empowers Black women in their struggle against racism by denouncing “white folks” who during slavery used “degrading racial stereotypes” to cast Blacks as “inferior” and “animalistic.”

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I expand this discussion by arguing that proslavery intellectuals created three specific images—the “mammy,” the “Jezebel,” and the “mule”—as preeminent features of the dominant ideology that justified their exploitation of female slaves and that contributed substantially to the social construction of African women’s gender. I also contend that in their writings, these ideologues developed literature in six distinct realms to popularize and legitimate their ideas and to make them a vital element of southern culture. These realms included religion, natural science, popular literature, social science, politics and law, and philosophy.

My research contributes to Black feminist theory since the existing literature (Cannon 1988; Davis 1981; Hill Collins 1991; hooks 1993; J. Jones 1985; Tracy 1995) examines the controlling images without relating them to the broad hegemonic ideology that systemically concretized the female slave’s subordination and without investigating the realms of literature production in which they were created. This previous research assumes the existence of the stereotypes and offers a relatively limited explanation of their political significance.

To argue my position, I begin by reviewing my method of data collection and analysis and then define the three controlling images that southern ideologues created to justify their exploitation of Black women. Next, I examine the literature that popularized these images, and I conclude by documenting the resistance of African women to this ideological domination.

METHOD

Sources

My research is based on an examination of three different bodies of literature that I located using library catalogues, literature reviews, bibliographies, CD-ROM databases, archive holdings, and other similar sources. For the first body of literature, dealing with African bondwomen, I systematically examined hundreds of primary sources in the form of slave narratives and autobiographies, specifically studying “Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project,” an online collection of 2,300 first-person accounts of servitude offered by the Library of Congress (www.loc.gov). I also reviewed material from the Carter G. Woodson Library of Chicago Archival and Manuscript Repositories.

The second body of literature draws on Black feminist thought, which had its genesis in the 1970s when African American female intellectuals began to challenge the Black and white androcentric presentation of Black women in academic and popular culture. I read extensively from this discourse giving focused attention to the work of pivotal scholars such as Toni Bambara, Katie Cannon, bell hooks, Audre Laude, Ntozake Shange, and Alice Walker. Angela Davis’ (1998) “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves” and Patricia Hill Collins’ (1991) Black Feminist Thought contributed substantially to my study of enslaved African women and controlling images.
The third body of literature is composed of hundreds of primary sources including plantation records; travel accounts; newspaper articles; and legal, religious, scientific, philosophical, and political documents produced by proslavery ideologues. The National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC), an expansive online cataloging program (http://lcweb.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/nucmc.html), provided access to hundreds of thousands of resources through online material, selected archives, and manuscript repositories. I also used anthologies such as *Slavery Defended* (Fitzhugh [1854] 1963), a collection of tracts published in the 1800s and featuring various political perspectives in defense of African servitude. After scanning hundreds of sources, I finally used about 300 of them.

**Method of Analysis**

I first studied the historical context of the pro-slavery apologists from 1787 to 1865; then, I reviewed the literature on enslaved Black women and the defense of bondage to identify themes and define analytic categories. Throughout this research, I used primary and secondary documents, emphasizing replication and validation through complementary sources.

Historically, the antislavery movement staged a formidable challenge to African bondage between 1787, when the U.S. Constitution was ratified, and 1865, the end of the Civil War. The economic necessity of Black labor induced by the worldwide demand for cotton goods pressed Southern ideologues to defend the institution at all costs. At the forefront of this conflict, pro-slavery “experts” fought to justify Black servitude by flooding scholarly journals, polemical tracts, “scientific” treatises, religious pamphlets, and other publications with anti-abolitionist propaganda. A consideration of this history was critical to my analysis of the data because it provided grounding in the subject matter, an interpretive framework for the dominant ideology, and a starting point for in-depth analysis.

After reading sources supporting slavery and discussing bondwomen, I analyzed the material to identify iterative themes. From these themes, I created the six ideological categories that are central to my thesis. In addition, I defined the most politically influential writers through a study of their accomplishments and their reputation among their contemporaries; I then cited their works as representative of the literature under investigation. This analysis helped to conceptualize the mule, the mammy, and the Jezebel as controlling images. Although hooks and other scholars (Cannon 1988; Davis 1998; Hill Collins 1991) refer to these same stereotypes, I studied the literature independently and in some instances accepted their conclusions and in others revised them to make certain that the three images were, in my view, thematic and valid.

As Table 1 indicates, I examined six realms of the South’s hegemonic literature production and the three stereotypes they presented. I found that the religious, scientific, and philosophical realms each set forth all three of the images, while the literary realm offered one, and the social science and political realms each reflect two
of the images. The pro-slavery material was more concentrated in the areas of religion and natural science than in the other four realms.

**THE IDEOLOGICAL CONTROL OF ENSLAVED BLACK WOMEN**

I argue that slave owners influenced a number of literary realms to produce the three specific controlling images that solidified their domination of plantation society. These images, which included the mammy, Jezebel, and the mule, constituted an essential element of an ideological system of economic control that confined Black women to a restricted and subordinated sociopolitical space.

I define the mammy image as one that portrays the Black woman as obedient to whites in general, faithful to the master and his family in particular, and happy in her subordination. As an always-on-call, dull-headed, live-in domestic, she cooks, irons, hews wood, carries water, nurses the sick, sweeps the floor, delivers babies, and is unselfishly willing to care for the white children ahead of her own. She is asexual. Therefore, she poses neither threat to the mistress nor temptation to the master and, although they indulge her becoming a bit fussy at times and intruding into household affairs, she never forgets “her place.” Because the mammy is so skillful in the ways of white culture, her owners believe—paternalistically—that she is civilized through her interaction with them. They also consider that because of their influence, she has become more socially acceptable than field hands who have relatively little contact with whites.

The mammy image contributed to the stability of white male domination by portraying an ideal type of the Black female slave in her relationship with her master. Through her genuine devotion to servitude and consent to subordination, the mammy exemplified the ruling class definition of white male superiority and the Black female subaltern.

The second controlling image applied to African women was that of Jezebel, that is, the sex-starved woman, who was childishly promiscuous and consumed by lustful passions. Her sexual aggression, fertility, and libidinous self-expression were considered limitless. The Jezebel image concretized Black female sub-

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**TABLE 1: Six Realms of the South's Hegemonic Literature Production**

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ordination, justifying the rape of African women by white men. According to this portrayal, the African woman truly enjoyed being ravaged by her master and his sons, so that abusing her was simply satisfying her natural desires. Moreover, the stereotype sanctioned the use of Black women as breeders. Some young girls were forced to have as many as five children before the age of 20; their sexual capacity and fecundity were perceived to be interminable. Therefore, the Jezebel image sustained the domination of white men as rapists and breeders.

A third controlling image that slaveholders applied to African women was that of mule. They perceived enslaved women as insensible brutes and subhuman beasts who were only to be valued for their labor. For example, Sarah Gudger, a former slave interviewed in Asherville, North Carolina, recalls that when “Ole Marse” would get “his dander up,” he would “whip you, just like you a mule” (Yetman 1970, 151).

The mule image substantiated African female exploitation by slave masters, overseers, speculators, auctioneers, breeders, and all such men who profited from the enslavement of Black women. Because these slaves were viewed as less than human, they could justifiably be beaten to death, worked to death, and otherwise treated as domestic stock. So, the image of mule justified white male superiority and validated the inferiority of African women and their exploitation as labor units.

LITERATURE DRAWN FROM THE HEGEMONIC CULTURE OF THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH

Six major realms of literature production offered publications that reflected the dominant ideology generally and the controlling images specifically. The ideology emphasized white supremacy and white paternalism, while the images presented African women as mules, mammies, and Jezebels. In the following subsections, I use writings drawn from religion, natural science, popular literature, social science, politics and law, and philosophy to illustrate the range of hegemonic sources that popularized this ideology and imagery.

The Pro-Slavery Ideology in Religious Literature

Christian ministers and scholars, who appealed to the Scriptures and the doctrines of their faith to defend slavery and the subordination of African women, shaped religious institutions. These ruling class intellectuals invariably legitimated bondage and white supremacy by quoting the Hamitic curse of the Old Testament. For instance, Priest ([1853] 1969, 83), one of the most reputable pro-slavery ministers of his day and author of the widely acclaimed Bible Defense of Slavery, argues, “It was from the lips of this man [Noah, the prophet of the Lord] that the everlasting God chose to announce the curse of malediction of servitude and slavery upon Ham and his race [Africans], as it is written, Gen. ix, 25-27.” Priest (1788-1815) goes on to assert that as God sentenced Blacks to bondage, He likewise ordained whites to
rulership. Finally, in discussing the full extent of the Lord’s curse on Africans, Priest states, “If the Supreme Being has seen fit to endow this race with a less quantum of intellectual facilities . . . than he has the white race—what then? . . . ‘all’ God’s works are good and proper” (210).

In the same vein, Reverend Charles Colcock Jones (1804-1863), a reputable minister of the Georgia coast and author of *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes*, builds a case for white paternalism. C. C. Jones (1832, 2) argued that because the Lord, in His “mysterious providence,” destined whites to enslave Africans, who constitute a “nation of Heathen,” planters “are in duty bound to give . . . Negroes the Gospel.” If they neglect this God-given responsibility, continues Jones, the “souls [of Blacks will be] shut out of heaven” where they will “be without Hope and without God in the world.” Therefore, like a father caring for his children, settlers are to preach the gospel to their slaves. However, Christian intellectuals not only employed the Scriptures to legitimate white paternalism, but they also cited them in creating stereotypes of Black women.

Reverend Stringfellow (1788-1869), a Baptist minister of Culpeper County Virginia and one of the most popular pro-slavery apologists of the era, is a case in point. Stringfellow ([1856] 1963, 92) appeals to Leviticus xxv arguing that God’s people have the right “to purchase men and women as property . . . and to will them to their children as a possession forever.” He continues citing Exodus xxi to prove that within the framework of bondage, a master is free to “smite” a disobedient male or female slave, “so far as [is] necessary to produce subordination” (93). If the slave dies as a result of injuries, the master is not culpable, for, indeed, according to Stringfellow, to inflict such punishment is his God-given right. Through this interpretation, he reinforces the image of the African woman as a mule, teaching that owners can use deadly force to compel slave women to serve them. Consequently, enslaved Black women could be worked to death on biblical authority, beaten to death with the blessings of God, or treated like beasts in the name of Jesus.

As part of the same discussion, Stringfellow ([1856] 1963, 96) quotes Paul in reviewing the Bible’s teaching on relations between slaves and their masters:

Servants [to be interpreted “slaves” according to the author] obey in all things your masters . . . not with eye service, as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart.

Masters give unto your servants that which is just and equal . . . knowing that you also have a master in heaven.

Stringfellow’s use of this passage clearly supports the image of the mammy. He teaches masters that it is not only appropriate but godly for slaves to serve them voluntarily, and that they, while remaining indisputably in authority, should be kind to their charges. This helped create and validate the stereotypical mammy who, in the eyes of her owner, faithfully and wholeheartedly served his family without resistance. It also helped define the responsibility of the master. He was to reward the mammy with social freedoms and guarded trust—as long as she remained in “her place.”
Finally, upper-class intellectuals such as Priest, mentioned above, interpreted the Scriptures to portray the Black woman stereotypically as Jezebel. Priest first states that “Jezebel, the worst woman ever heard of in the annals of mankind . . . was a negro woman.” He then explains,

She [Jezebel] used to get down on all fours, in imitation of a beast, and in this attitude would caper and leap about, being disrobed, while the multitude of her priests and the worshipers looked on. . . . She was no doubt . . . guilty of the “foulest” actions, almost too bad to be believed. ([1853] 1969, 193)

Hence, according to Priest, the Word of God taught that Black women were the sexually perverse daughters of Jezebel who derived pleasure from cavorting nude before men.

In conclusion, the religious tracts generally sustained and authenticated the existing political order, citing white supremacy and paternalism as godly and Black controlling images as divinely inspired. Christian intellectuals taught that God had predestined the African to servitude and the European to lordship; the Black to simplemindedness and the European to intellectual prowess; the slave woman to burden bearing, domestic servitude, and libidinous self-absorption and the European to Christian rectitude.

The Pro-Slavery Ideology in Natural Science

A sort of pseudoscience was produced by a school of southern researchers who spoke with erudition and intellectual authority as they created popular views regarding slavery. They systematically arranged a body of facts, followed a set of “proven” laws, and combined observations from anthropology, biology, social statistics, and political history to defend the basic tenets of slavery and to produce controlling images of Black women.

In defending slavery, Dr. J. H. Van Evrie (1814-1896), a well-published and credentialed scholar, published a work in 1853 titled *Negroes and Negro Slavery: The First, an Inferior Race—The Latter, Its Normal Condition*. In this book, Van Evrie upholds the “peculiar institution” and white ascendancy, stating,

The Caucasian brain measures 92 cubic inches—with the cerebrum, the center of the intellectual functions, relatively predominating over the cerebellum, the center of the animal instincts; thus, it is capable of indefinite progression.

The Negro brain measures from 65 to 75 cubic inches—with the cerebellum, the center of the animal instincts relatively predominating over the cerebrum, the center of the intellectual powers. ([1853] 1967, 105-6)

In the anti-abolitionist tract, *White Supremacy and Negro Subordination*, Van Evrie ([1868] 1993) goes on to discuss the paternalistic implications of white superiority. He observes that because “the negro” has “wonderful imitative powers,” the master ought to present him “with a proper example . . . as parents and
guardians are expected to do in the case of children” (251). With this accomplished, Van Evrie continues, slave owners “have fulfilled their duties to [their] ‘slaves,’ and generally the negro is restrained and governed by these examples.”

In terms of controlling images, hegemonic scientists presented Black women as chattel by denying their humanity and portraying them as brutes. For instance, in “The Six Species of Men,” originally published in 1866, the anonymous author (1993, 139), after citing whites as “the master race,” offers anthropological support to prove that “the negro . . . approximates the lower animals.” He then goes on to identify the African woman with aquatic beasts, stating, “the coarse, blunt, webbed fingers of the negress, for example, could never produce those delicate fabrics and exquisite embroideries which are the handiwork of the Caucasian.”

Similarly, in an academic paper published in 1868 and circulated throughout America, Hunt (1993, 106), president of the London Anthropological Society, argued, “The brain of the Negro [man] bears a great resemblance to a European woman or child’s brain . . . while [that of] the Negress approaches still nearer to the ape.” In continuing to dehumanize Black women, Hunt goes on to quote Reade, a fellow scientist, who states, “The women of Africa are very inferior beings. Their very virtues, with their affections and their industry, are those of well trained domestic animals” (116).

This line of discussion reinforces the controlling images of both the mule and the mammy. It pictures African women as beasts suitable for backbreaking labor but incapable of performing precise and exacting tasks—they are as mules. It also portrays them as slow-witted dullards who are able to function as “domestic animals”—they can serve as mammys.

With respect to the image of the Jezebel, the scientific literature unequivocally denounces miscegenation, while recognizing the supposed immorality and seductive nature of African women. Van Evrie ([1868] 1993, 19), for instance, staunchly condemned race mixing with the admonition: “It is in the order of Providence that the whites who abdicate their manhood, and degrade themselves to a forbidden and unnatural level with negroes, must be punished to even a greater extent than their hapless victims.”

However, at the same time, Van Evrie ([1868] 1993, 249) pictures Black women as naturally promiscuous, for, indeed, “in their native Africa . . . polygamy is universal,” and the women are “perfectly willing to change husbands or owners.” Moreover, according to Van Evrie ([1868] 1993, 252), in America, they are sexually indiscriminate and morally unscrupulous, for when “the negro and the negress” are forced to dissolve a marriage, “with new partners and another marriage, [they] are quite as happy as if they had never been separated.” Similarly, Hunt ([1868] 1993, 106) cites Clarke, a fellow scientist, who represents Black women as highly seductive, stating, “A pleasing manner, soft and winning ways, with a low and musical laugh may in strict truth be declared to be the heritage of most of the Negro women.” Hunt is even more explicit in exaggerating the sexuality of African women. He cites Jacquet, Serres, and Huschke, “anatomists worthy of our confidence,” who mention “the elongated neck of the uterus” of the African slave, as they construct a case
for Black inferiority (119). Together, these researchers marshal anthropological and anatomical evidence to prove that African women are oversexed and dangerously alluring.

In conclusion, intellectuals employed their scientific know-how and credibility to create and popularize ideas that legitimized slavery generally and the exploitation of slave women specifically. They created a worldview that justified their racism and sexism: All southerners knew that white people were superior to Black people and that Black women were ignorant and hypersexed—these were considered scientifically proven facts.

The Pro-Slavery Ideology in Popular Literature

Although the literary production of the antebellum era included newspapers, tracts, and other publications, this study focuses on the southern novels. These novels present the ideas of intellectuals who, as creative originators of popular culture, lend an aesthetic element to the production of dominant ideology as they legitimate white supremacy and paternalism and portray Black women as mammys. Historical romances, which dominate this literature, create a worldview that justifies the racism and sexism of southern society, while presenting antebellum culture as orderly, genteel, and supremely decorous. Of the dozens of authors producing this sort of ideology, Caruthers ([1834] 1968, [1841] 1970), Kennedy ([1832] 1962, [1838] 1965), Simms ([1852] 1961, [1854] 1968), and Tucker ([1836a] 1990, [1836b] 1971) are representative. They set forth their pro-slavery arguments employing the patriarchal metaphor of the male landowner who is held accountable for the protection and support of his dependent family and bondspeople. He is their savior and hero. They respect and adore him. In developing this metaphor, writers idealize plantation society, ignoring Black female labor in the fields and sexuality: No slave woman is overworked or underfed or forcefully raped in these novels. Consequently, there is no recurring mule or Jezebel. However, the novelists often present African women as mammys to highlight various features of their relations with whites.

For instance, in *The Scout*, Simms (1806-1870), who between 1825 and 1870 authored more than 80 books and was arguably the most influential novelist of his time, depicts Mira as the quintessential mammy and emphasizes her role in the white family:

> The negro woman . . . was one of the staid family servants such as are to be found in every ancient southern household, who form a necessary part of the establishment, and are, substantially, members . . . of the family itself. The children . . . learn to love them as if they were mothers. ([1854] 1968, 332-33)

Although Mira is “a member of the family,” she is nonetheless stereotypically dull witted. Simms describes her falling asleep when she should be working, observing, “the exhaustion of her faculties of reflection, which is always a rapid affair in all the
individuals of her race, necessarily made her more than ever susceptible to sleep” (333).

Similarly, in Woodcraft, the fourth in a series of seven connected romances, Simms ([1852] 1961, 310) highlighted the love relationship between the mammy and the white child that she “minds.” After many years of separation, Sappho, an elderly Black woman, greets Porgy, a white man whom she had cared for during his youth:

“Dis dah him! Dis day my own chile!” And with sobs of joy she threw her arms about the neck of Porgy. . . . “’My chile! My chile! You no know your mudder muss,—you own Sappho, wha’ bin min’ you when you bin leettle baby, only big like my han.”

In a similar manner, Kennedy (1795-1870), who is cited by many of his contemporaries as more gifted than Cooper and Irving, offers still another perspective on the mammy. In his Swallow Barn, a historical romance, Lucy is the paradigmatic house slave who demonstrates that Blacks are content with bondage and happy to cooperate with their owners. She is “a negro mother who trusts to the kindness of her master” (Kennedy [1832] 1962, 466). As such, Lucy is not unlike other Blacks who, according to Kennedy, “generally agree to whatever is proposed to their minds, by their superiors, with an acquiescence that has the show of conviction” (468).

However, as is the case with the Christian literature and scientific writings, white supremacy and paternalism are consistent themes among the antebellum novelists. Simms’ portrayal of the Sambo as the antithesis of his master is a case in point. Sambo is lazy and shortsighted; his master is resourceful and wise. Simms ([1852] 1961, 178) at once enumerates Sambo’s shortcomings and demonstrates his need for fatherly supervision: “Sambo seldom troubles himself to look out for the morrow. . . . Foresight and forethought are his remarkable deficiencies. He never houses his harvest in anticipation of the storm.” Kennedy ([1832] 1962, 453) is more straightforward than Simms in expressing his views on Black inferiority and white paternalism:

I mean that he [the African] is, in his moral constitution, a dependant upon the white race; dependant for guidance and direction even to the procurement of his most indispensible necessaries. Apart from this protection he has the helplessness of a child.

In sum, the novels validate slavery by producing and popularizing racist beliefs that legitimate the exploitation of Blacks and that substantiate the superordination of whites. Hegemonic intellectuals such as Simms and Kennedy, who represent a host of ruling class authors, institutionalize ideas that sustain social inequality, economic disparity, and political subalternation. Simply put, they produce an ideological base through their fiction that creates a material superstructure in their favor.
The Pro-Slavery Ideology in Social Science

Slavery was justified using sociological, political, and economic analyses and critiquing democracy, capitalism, and socialism. Intellectuals producing this ideology were political economists, social theorists, and geopolitical historians.

George Fitzhugh (1806-1881), a sociologist, political philosopher, and associate judge of the Freedmen’s Court during Reconstruction, is the preeminent representative of these writings. Arguably the most articulate spokesperson for “Negro slavery” in the antebellum South, he gained a lasting reputation through two publications, “Sociology for the South” ([1854] 1963) and Cannibals All! (1857). These controversial works, which held that free labor created class war and anarchy, alarmed northern statesmen such as Abraham Lincoln and inspired southern politicians like Jefferson Davis.

Fitzhugh criticized democracy, arguing that all advanced societies were founded on exploitation and that any attempt to create a free society was foolishly idealistic. To him, the granting of universal liberty was a relatively new form of social organization that had failed in Europe and the northern states. This failure was owing to free competition, which invariably precipitated social degeneration. According to Fitzhugh, domestic slavery was the single economic system without the disadvantages of a free society: It created prosperity and provided a substratum that was content to work for subsistence-level compensation.

In developing this argument, Fitzhugh produced racist ideology and stereotypical images of Black women. Pursuant to racist ideology, in The Universal Law of Slavery, Fitzhugh (1850, 1) argued that “the negro race is inferior to the white race” and that to prevent Blacks from becoming “an insufferable burden to society” and a liability to themselves, southerners were right in “subjecting [them] to domestic slavery.” He goes on to observe, “He the Negro is but a grown up child, and must be governed as a child... The master occupies toward him the place of parent or guardian.” In “The Blessings of Slavery,” Fitzhugh (1857, 1) further argues that this paternalistic relationship is supremely beneficial to the bondsfolk. For, according to Fitzhugh, they “are the happiest, and in some sense, the freest people in the world...they enjoy liberty, because they are oppressed neither by care or labor.”

With these words, Fitzhugh produced dominant ideas that validated the political and material conditions of the southern economy. He contributed to the popular notion that Blacks were inferior to whites and were delighted with servitude. At the same time, he comforted slaveholders, suggesting that without their parentlike supervision, Africans would revert to primitivism and self-destructiveness.

Pursuant to stereotypical pictures of slave women, Fitzhugh produced ideas contributing to the images of the mammy and the mule. Regarding the mammy, Fitzhugh (1857, 2) argued that the slaves of North America had become remarkably civilized through contact with their owners and continued, “Virginia negroes have become moral and intelligent. They love their master and his family, and the attachment is reciprocated. Still, we like the idle, but intelligent house-servants, better
than the hard-used, but stupid outhands.” With this idea, he popularized the notion
that the mammy had genuine affection for, and bonded with, the family that she
served and that although she was inferior to whites, she was more keen witted than
field hands who had less contact with European culture.

In terms of the image of the mule, in “The Blessings of Slavery,” Fitzhugh stated
that bondspeople were not only content to form the economic substratum of southern
society, but they also prospered in this condition. Because of the generosity and
warmheartedness of their masters, they experienced “contentment in the present,
and confident assurance of the future” (1857, 1). Moreover, in the words of
Fitzhugh, “The women do little hard work, and are protected from the despotism
of their husbands by their masters” (1).

These observations sustain the characterization of the African woman as a mule:
They misrepresent her strenuous labor as a field hand, calling it “little hard work”;
they conceal her treatment as chattel property, suggesting that she is carefree; and
they deny her abuse by the master, misrepresenting him as her protector.

In sum, Fitzhugh defended slavery, criticizing the democratic freedoms of the
North and arguing that national prosperity and capitalistic competition were funda-
mentally incompatible. To him, a slave economy using Africans as bondspeople
was the only alternative. As he popularized this idea, he identified whites as slave
masters and caretakers, and Blacks as childlike dimwits. In addition, he represented
African women as mammys, who genuinely loved the families they served, and as
mules, who were not overworked, dehumanized, or abused but were blithesome
domestic workers.

The Pro-Slavery Ideology in Politics and Law

A complex system of governance created public policy and articulated the socio-
economic philosophy of the South. Through the regulation of civil affairs, politics
and the law shaped conventional ideology and popular culture relative to the admin-
istration of the state and the organization of slavery. Like other idea-producing enti-
ties of the period, the political structure created dominant ideology and Black
female stereotypes that reflected the values and beliefs of southern society as a
whole.

The culture of the day viewed slaves as a debased, alien group that could never
be incorporated into the body politic and so had no place in governmental affairs.
Because of their race, planters made Africans the objects of political estrangement
and disfranchisement; indeed, to the planters, slavery was indisputably compatible
with the American constitutional order.

The opinion of Supreme Court Chief Justice Taney (1777-1864) in the Dred
Scott decision of 1857 illustrates this sociopolitical phenomenon. In denying that
Scott, a slave litigating for his freedom, had any civil rights, Taney validated the
arguments of pro-slavery politicians and the legislative philosophy of antebellum
policy makers. His statements confirmed the popularly held notion that Blacks
were inferior to whites and that African women as well as men were justifiably relegated to the status of chattel laborers.

Regarding inferiority, Taney ([1857] 1967, 78) wrote,

They [Africans] were [when the U.S. Constitution was framed] . . . considered as a subordinate and inferior class of beings, who had been subjugated by the dominant race, and whether emancipated or not, yet remained subject to their authority, and had no rights or privileges but such as those who held the power and the Government might choose to grant them.

Taney goes on ([1857] 1967, 78) to argue that Africans were only fit to serve as the white man’s drudge animal:

The negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his [the white man’s] benefit. He was bought and sold, and treated as an ordinary article of merchandise and traffic, whenever a profit could be made by it. This opinion was . . . fixed and universal in the civilized portion of the white race. It was regarded as an axiom in morals as well as in politics.

Although Taney expressed the common perception of Blacks in general, his views nonetheless contributed substantially to the portrayal of enslaved women as mules. At the same time, other elements of the political institution related specifically to African women and identified them as Jezebels.

Policy makers throughout the country legalized the principle of partus sequitur ventrem—a child follows the political condition of its mother regardless of the status of its father. Thus, according to an ordinance of the Virginia Assembly of 1662, Act XII, “Children got by an Englishman upon a Negro woman shall be bond or free according to the condition of the mother” (Guild 1969, 23). In addition, it was legal throughout the land for a master to forcefully violate his bondwomen. For example, a Virginia statute of 1792, Chapter 42, states, “Whatsoever person shall take a woman against her will shall be guilty of a felony, provided that this act shall not extend to any person taking any woman, only claiming her as his ward or bondwoman” (Guild 1969, 30). Concomitantly, a bondsman put his life in jeopardy if he intervened on behalf of his wife or daughter while a white man was raping her. A Virginia code of 1669, Act I, states, “If a slave resists his master and by the extremity of the correction, chance to die, his death shall not be a felony” (Guild 1969, 43). Consequently, a Black man protecting the virtue of his womenfolk was subject to capital punishment by the state.

This body of legislation encouraged the sexual exploitation of African women and destroyed respect for them as human beings. White men could not only rape them with impunity, but they could also increase their own wealth as slave owners by impregnating them. Moreover, because the mulatto offspring became their father’s slaves, the master was relieved of the parental responsibility of providing for them as legitimate children. In addition, planter law forced Black women to
yield to their own sexual degradation. They had no voice in the courts. They could expect no protection from their men. They were denied the right of self-defense: The threat of capital punishment, which prevented their men from defending them, prevented them from defending themselves.

Moreover, the criminal justice system seriously penalized Black and white men for violating white women but allowed them to violate Black women without punishment. For instance, the Virginia Criminal Code of 1848, Chapter 120, read,

Rape by a white person of a [white] female over ten years of age forceably . . . is punished by a penitentiary sentence of ten to twenty years. . . . If . . . committed by a free Negro, the punishment is death, or . . . five to twenty years. (Guild 1969, 165)

However, the law allowed white men to rape African women without charge, as mentioned above, and did not even mention the abuse of Black women by men of color. This legislation reinforced the notion that the chastity of the African woman deserved less respect, honor, and deference than did that of the white woman.

In summary, the political institution created Black female stereotypes that concretized the existing socioeconomic order. Africans were inherently inferior to whites and justifiably dominated by them—Taney institutionalized these values in the Dred Scott decision. African women had no legal protection against white rapists—the state condoned their exploitation and disdained their chastity.

The Pro-Slavery Ideology in Philosophy

The philosophical writings consisted of popular speculation and conventional logic that made inferences based on sound judgment, good sense, and the normal powers of the mind. Social philosophers, as the creators of this literature, borrowed from a variety of different fields, such as science, religion, politics, and history, constructing arguments that were both eclectic and multidimensional.

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), the third president of the United States and the foremost architect of the U.S. Constitution, is one such philosopher. In the years soon following the Revolution, he, as a public intellectual and reputable politician, produced ideas that were read and reacted to by scores of people; his views about Negroes were more widely discussed, in all likelihood, than any others until the mid-nineteenth century. In Notes on the State of Virginia, his only book, published in 1787, Jefferson (1968, 55), while condemning slavery, insists on white superiority, arguing that “blacks . . . are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind.”

In developing this line of thought, Jefferson produces dominant ideology relative to Blacks in general and women in particular. For instance, he wrote, “They [Africans] seem to require less sleep. A black after hard labour through the day, will be induced by the slightest amusements to sit up till midnight . . . knowing he must be out with the first dawn of the morning ([1787] 1968, 51). Jefferson suggests that because Africans require less rest than whites, as demonstrated by their irrespon-
sibluse of free time, their owners are justified in forcing them to work longer days
and to sleep shorter nights than they would white laborers. He goes on to observe
that Blacks are “more tolerant of heat . . . than the whites.” With this, Jefferson
implies that masters should have no misgivings about forcing their slaves to work
strenuously in the open fields and torrid climate of the South. Even though such
conditions would be unbearable for whites, Blacks are capable of surviving them.

Still later in Notes, Jefferson ([1787] 1968, 52) disparages the poetry of Phyllis
Wheatley (ca. 1753-1784), an internationally respected African writer, as “below
the dignity of criticism.” To him, Blacks in general and Black women in particular
are incapable of genuine artistic expression and true creativity. He thereby contrib-
utes to the image of the mule that portrayed African women as dim-witted brutes fit
only for backbreaking labor.

Pursuant to the image of the Jezebel, Jefferson ([1787] 1968, 51) stated, “They
[African men] are more ardent after their female: but love seems with them to be
more an eager desire, than a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation.”
Black women, to him, are accustomed to being treated as objects of passion and
sexual exploitation by their own men and are without the experience of, and perhaps
capacity for, controlled and selfless lovemaking. Hence, their sexual history and
natural inclination predisposes them to accept without complaint and possibly
enjoy forceful abuse by white men. Similarly, again in Notes, Jefferson ([1787]
1968, 50) observed that the male Orangutan prefers “the black woman over those of
his own species.” That is to say, as a matter of course, African women practice besti-
ality with male Orangutans. By this, Jefferson implies that the baseness of these
women places them beyond the boundaries of conventional morality, so that white
men are justified in disrespecting them as human beings and victimizing them as
women.

Confirming the stereotypical mammy, Jefferson ([1787] 1968, 53) stated, “The
improvement of the blacks in body and mind, in the first instance of their mixture
with the whites . . . proves that their inferiority is not the effect merely of their condi-
tion of life.” By virtue of her domestic tasks, the mammy typically had a better
understanding of, and more facility with, settler culture than did field hands. When
Jefferson notes that Blacks improve through contact with whites, he prepares his
readers to appreciate and create the mammy, believing that her Europeanization
confirmed their cultural superiority and their positive influence on her personal
development. That is, her acculturation sustained their attitude of paternalism
toward Africans.

In conclusion, Jefferson, a social philosopher and influential former president,
combines arguments based on reason, personal observation, and social history to
support American slavery, white supremacy, and Black female exploitation. He
characterizes Africans generally and African women specifically as insensitive
(they must be driven), as subhuman (they can be abused), and as imbecilic (they
must be parented). In this respect, his ideas are like those of the other writers who
institutionalized hegemonic ideology and Black female stereotypes.
RESISTANCE OF SLAVE WOMEN TO THE DOMINANT IDEOLOGY

Although some bondwomen capitulated and accepted the identity that the dominant culture assigned them, others resisted—refusing to be mammies, mules, and Jezebels. Their autobiographical reflections contribute immeasurably to an examination of the gender construction of enslaved African women and so to the production of Black feminist theory.

For example, Lulu Wilson, a former Texas slave, recalls how her mother defied the master when he attempted to beat her, as though she were a work ox:

Wash Hodges tried to whip her with a cowhide and she’d knock him down and bloody him up. Then he’d go down to some his neighbor kin and try to get them to come help him whip her. But they’d say, “I don’t want to go up there and let Chloe Ann beat me up.” I heared Wash tell his wife they said that. (Yetman 1970, 323)

Wilson’s mother refused to be treated as a subhuman beast and insensible brute: She repudiated the image of herself as a mule and insisted on preserving her identity as a person.

Similarly, Martha Colquitt, an 85-year old former slave, interviewed in Athens, Georgia, describes the loving care and selfless devotion that her mother and grandmother showered on their family despite their humiliation as house slaves: “At night Ma always spun and knit, and Grandma, she sewed, making clothes for us chillen. Dey done it ’cause dey wanted to. Dey was workin’ for deyselves den. Dey weren’t no work at night” (Yetman 1970, 62). In nurturing their children, these Black women were conscientiously maternal and emotionally responsible; they were providers of mother love and possessors of mother wit. They were not the mentally undisciplined, pathetically obsequious, self-destructive creations of the pro-slavery intellectuals—they defied the mammy image and asserted their womanhood.

The bondwomen were often members of the invisible church, an underground institution in which they worshiped God and committed themselves to Christian morality. Alice Sewell, born in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1851, recalls how she “used to slip off in de woods . . . on Sunday evening . . . to sing and pray”:

We come from four and five miles to pray together to God dat if we don’t live to see it, to please let our chillen live to see a better day and be free, so dat dey can give honest and fair service to de Lord and all mankind everywhere. (Yetman 1970, 263)

These Christian women beseeched God, praying that He in His sovereignty would grant them liberty, so that they could experience a better quality of life and, more important for this discussion, that they might better serve Him and man—and
womankind. They defied the stereotypical portrayal of themselves as Jezebels. They were not immoral women burning with sexual desire for any man—Black or white. Instead, they were pious Christian women hoping to serve God and the rest of humankind and risking physical punishment to worship their Lord. In sum, they were like so many other enslaved African women who resisted the controlling images of antebellum society and opposed the ideology of the dominant class.

**CONCLUSION**

This study contributes to Black feminist theory by expanding the discourse on the production and political significance of controlling images as they relate to the gender construction of enslaved African women. The existing literature, published by such researchers as Hill Collins (1991) and hooks (1989, 1983), examines these stereotypes without relating them to the widespread exploitative culture and dominant ideology of plantation society that systemically concretized the female slave’s subordination. Rather than investigating these hegemonic portrayals in light of the various realms of literature production, as I do here, Black feminist scholars assume the existence of these images apart from their relation to other cultural elements of subordination and, because of this, offer a relatively limited explanation of their political significance. Alternatively, I argue that when hegemonic intellectuals produced these demeaning caricatures, they were making a class-conscious effort to portray Black women stereotypically within an expansive, society-wide culture of systemic exploitation. In short, they helped construct a comprehensive ideological mechanism of oppression. Hence, all realms, with the exception of politics and law, consistently described the bondwomen as mammys. Furthermore, each realm, except popular literature, represented Black women as mules. Slightly less frequent was the image of the Jezebel found in four realms, but not in popular literature and social science. As intellectuals, southern novelists, public officials, Christian ministers, philosophers, social scientists, and natural scientists were, in fact, ideologues for the movement to create a universal southern culture that relegated enslaved females to inferior status and facilitated their subordination.

Future study of this same time period might investigate the resistance of African women to the stereotypical identities imposed on them by the dominant class, focusing on behaviors that militated against their portrayal as mammys, mules, and Jezebels. Alternatively, further research might examine how ruling class ideology contributed to the subordination of Black women as rural sharecroppers between 1877 and 1916 or as urban domestics from 1916 to the 1960s. In the contemporary period, researchers could also build on my examination of these early stereotypes to investigate if and how they serve as prototypes for images used to create present-day subaltern images of Black women.
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WHEN WIVES GET SICK

Gender Role Attitudes, Marital Happiness, and Husbands’ Contribution to Household Labor

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This article examines factors related to husbands’ contribution to housework when their wives become newly impaired. Data are from a sample of 319 married couples who participated in the National Survey of Families and Households, and in which wives developed physical limitations between baseline and five-year follow-up interviews. Using ordinary least squares regression, we found that husbands who have egalitarian attitudes toward marital roles and are happy in their marriage at baseline do more housework at follow-up than husbands who are traditional and/or are less happy. Given the slow rate of change in household division of labor, the lack of public policies to support people with impairment and family caregiving disproportionately burdens women.

The spouse is a major caregiving resource when a married person becomes impaired. However, research has identified considerable differences in the patterns of care provided by husbands compared to wives (Dwyer and Coward 1992; Matthews 1995; Stoller and Cutler 1992). Specifically, wives are more likely to be sole caregivers, while husbands tend to provide care along with other family members and friends (Antonucci and Akiyama 1987; Zarit, Todd, and Zarit 1986). In addition, husbands generally provide less care than wives, particularly in tasks traditionally identified as women’s work, for example, housekeeping and cooking (Allen 1994; Neal, Ingersoll-Dayton, and Starrels 1997; Stoller 1990). Despite the general tendency of husbands to do less than wives in the spousal caregiving role, there is evidence that some men care for their wives as comprehensively as women tend to care for their husbands (Kaye and Applegate 1990). To date, however, we

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understand relatively little about conditions under which husbands are likely to be most or least helpful when their wives become impaired.

This article investigates preimpairment predictors of husbands’ contribution to housework in a sample of married couples who participated in the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH). This study is responsive to, and builds on, two substantial bodies of research: qualitative and quantitative studies focusing on gender differences in spousal caregiving and demographic research on the division of household labor among married couples. The NSFH is an ideal medium for linking these research areas since it allows for an investigation of the influence of couples’ attitudes and perceptions about marriage and, although it is designed for the general population, it also contains health-related indicators that are central to caregiving research. Finally, while the majority of caregiving research has been conducted on elderly people, NSFH respondents represent the full adult age range, allowing insight into whether tomorrow’s elderly men will behave similarly to older husbands of today.

Caregiving as Women’s Work

Differences between men’s and women’s caregiving participation and patterns of care are often attributed to gender role norms that allocate household management, child rearing, and care of sick family members to women, while men are socialized to pursue paid employment (Graham 1983; Revenson 1994). Studies have shown that societal expectations for women to provide care are central to women’s assumption of these responsibilities (Guberman, Maheu, and Maillé 1992; Miller and Kaufman 1996).

Women’s ownership of the caregiving role reflects ownership of household management. While the gender gap in labor force participation has narrowed rapidly, from 46 percent in 1970 to 16 percent in 1995 (Bianchi and Spain 1997), gender roles are changing more slowly in the home setting (Goldscheider and Waite 1991; Steil 1997). However, gender roles are not absolute. There is substantial variation among individuals as well as among situations, as Thompson (1993) has argued. Below, we consider how aspects of a couple’s marriage might account for some of this variation.

Gender Equity and Contemporary Marriages

With the addition of paid employment to the repertoire of women’s roles, Jessie Bernard (1972) predicted that the future of marriage as an institution was dependent on its evolution away from a role-differentiated pattern into a shared-role pattern. In a shared-role marriage, husbands and wives share responsibility for all aspects of maintaining a home and family, including wage earning, household work, and child rearing. Similarly, Goldscheider and Waite (1991) foresee the need for new families characterized by a more egalitarian division of labor at home and in the workplace.
Arlie Hochschild (1989) described three types of marital role ideology that she observed in her study of dual-earner couples. A traditional role ideology is one in which the wife’s emphasis is on the home, while the husband’s is on the working world, even though the wife belongs to this world as well. In a marriage characterized by egalitarian ideology, equal emphasis is placed on work and family for both husband and wife. A transitional role ideology falls somewhere in between; generally, while women’s paid work is viewed as important under this perspective, men’s paid work is valued more highly by both husband and wife, thus situating responsibility for the home in wives’ domain.

Not surprisingly, Hochschild’s finding that men who profess an egalitarian ideology do more household work is supported by other research (Denmark, Shaw, and Ciali 1985; Goldscheider and Waite 1991). Furthermore, Barnett and Baruch (1987) found that wives’ nontraditional attitudes toward gender roles were also associated with greater involvement in household labor by husbands, suggesting that husbands’ motivation may not always be internal.

Decreasing role differentiation within marriage allows for a shift in couples’ motivation to stay together. Economic dependence (among wives) and the obligation to provide for (among husbands) are less influential than in the past. Cancian (1987) described contemporary interdependent marriages as ones in which care and commitment are emphasized over economic necessity.

Does marital happiness per se predict household task sharing? There is some evidence to suggest that wives’ marital happiness is related to husbands’ housework (Deutsch, Lussier, and Servis 1993), but whether or not husbands’ happiness in marriage predicts housework behavior (or vice versa) is not clear (Heaton and Albrecht 1991). Theory suggests that traditionally oriented men are quite happy in their marriages since the majority of the benefits in a marriage structured around gender role lines fall to the husband (Bernard 1972; Graham 1983). As the perceived primary breadwinner, the needs of a husband in a traditional marriage come first, including rest and relaxation in nonworking hours. Wives, working or not, maintain responsibility for household chores and related women’s work, while their wage-earning activity is viewed as supporting or supplementing the primary breadwinner’s efforts. Husbands thus hold both power and prestige in a traditionally oriented marriage, and their labor is confined to one realm, while wives’ labor may span both the home and the working world. Thus, a husband’s marital happiness may not be sufficient to trigger a helping response in a traditional marriage, since his happiness may be situated in a marital role that does not include responsibility for the household realm.

Cohort versus Life Course Influences

Given evidence of the influence of egalitarian attitudes on husbands’ household work, it seems likely that younger men’s cohort experience with the feminist movement and their familiarity with a gender-mixed labor force would lead to greater involvement in housework. However, the study of human development in older
ages suggests that older people become more androgynous in their personalities, with postretirement men becoming more expressive and nurturing, and older women becoming more assertive in their orientation toward life (Breytspraak 1984). Certainly, the role differentiation that has characterized the majority of marriages among today’s elderly couples is less of an issue since the majority of men have exited the labor force, and women are no longer actively mothering. Do stage-of-life-course influences balance out cohort effects? While some studies report an increase in men’s household work following retirement (Goldscheider and Waite 1991), other studies report no change or change that is trivial or short-lived (Brubaker and Hennon 1982; Szinovacz 1989). Other research finds gender equality in patterns of helping elderly disabled spouses with personal care (e.g., bathing and dressing), but substantial gender differences remain in the area of household tasks (Arber and Ginn 1991). Thus, the bulk of research suggests that personality change in older age does not translate into substantial change in the performance of traditional gender-associated tasks.

Other demographic factors relevant to this research are educational status and ethnicity. Goldscheider and Waite (1991) found that men with higher levels of education are more involved in housework, perhaps due to greater exposure to, and acceptance of, societal change. Geerkin and Gove (1983) reported a positive effect of education on husbands’ housework as well, although the association was not strong.

Research findings on the dynamics of husbands’ housework among minority couples are mixed (Daphne and Shelton 1993; Richmond-Abbott 1992). However, in contrast to the composition of white caregiving networks, African American networks tend to include less spousal support and more support from nonfamily members (Connell and Gibson 1997; Johnson and Barer 1990; Lawton et al. 1992). Thus, although Black women are less likely than white women to live alone (Coward et al. 1996), they are also less likely to receive spousal help and more likely to receive help from friends and nonspousal kin. Similarly, Roschelle (1997) found less family support exchanged among African Americans, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans than among non-Hispanic whites, concluding that social isolation and severe economic depression present obstacles to the sharing of resources. However, a clear picture of ethnic differences in spousal caregiving in samples of coresident spouses is not yet available in the literature.

Study Hypotheses

Drawing on Bernard’s (1972) notion of the shared-role marriage and Hochschild’s (1989) observations regarding the dynamics of egalitarian ideology among spouses, we hypothesize that husbands who report egalitarian attitudes toward women will contribute more to housework following wives’ impairment than husbands who report more traditional attitudes.

Since some men are happiest in a traditional marriage, we do not expect husbands’ marital happiness alone to predict subsequent housework involvement.
Instead, we hypothesize that husbands’ contribution will be greatest when he is both happy in his marriage and egalitarian in his attitude (Cancian 1987). Because the literature suggests that wives’ attitudes and perceptions of the marriage may also influence husbands’ behavior, wives’ reports will also be tested (Barnett and Baruch 1987; Deutsch, Lussier, and Servis 1993).

We expect that younger men will contribute more to housework when their wives become impaired than older men, holding attitudes and other factors constant, given their experience with a less role-differentiated society. Husbands with higher levels of education are expected to contribute more than those with less education. Since reported educational effects on men’s participation in housework and child rearing have been in predominantly working-age couples (Geerkin and Gove 1983; Goldscheider and Waite 1991), we also test an interaction of age and education to determine if higher levels of education predict greater housework contribution among elderly men as well. Given the underrepresentation of minorities in the NSFH sample, due to missing spousal interviews (see Data Source section), we do not expect to see an effect of ethnicity. In other words, the least supportive minority husbands are likely to have been “weeded out” by virtue of their missing interviews.

Finally, we pose the question: Will husbands respond differently in an illness situation? We do expect that the severity of wives’ impairment will predict higher levels of husbands’ involvement, since greater impairment is manifested by greater difficulty in task performance. However, we also hypothesize that husbands’ housework behavior prior to wives’ impairment will be a strong predictor of their behavior afterward, since unfamiliarity with women’s work is likely to prevent some men from substantially increasing their contribution to these tasks.

METHOD

Data Source

This study examines both waves of the NSFH. The NSFH is a national sample survey ($N = 13,008$) that covers a wide variety of issues on American family life. Baseline interviews were conducted during 1987 and 1988 (wave 1), with one five-year follow-up interview conducted during 1992-94 (wave 2) (for a detailed description of the NSFH, see Sweet, Bumpass, and Call 1988). A randomly selected adult was interviewed in each household. In addition, a shorter, self-administered questionnaire was completed by the spouse or cohabiting partner of the primary respondent at wave 1, while a full personal interview with the current spouse or cohabiting partner was conducted at wave 2.

The present study examines married couples in which husband and wife were married to each other at the time of both wave 1 and wave 2 interviews, and the wife became physically impaired in the interim (i.e., no functional limitations reported at wave 1, reports limitation at wave 2). Since the prevalence of impairment is
usually low in general population surveys (10.1 percent of the weighted overall
NSFH primary respondent sample has some level of impairment at baseline), we
have benefited from the NSFH design of interviewing the spouses of primary
respondents to maximize the size of our analytic sample. The sample thus includes
both primary female respondents who are newly impaired at the second interview
as well as newly impaired wives of primary male respondents.

We identified 190 cases that were missing spouse interviews and thus not eligi-
ble for this analysis. We compared the characteristics of sample members to those
excluded because either a male or female spouse interview was not obtained, using
information gathered from the respondent. We found that respondents in couples
where the spouse interview was not obtained have significantly less education
(12.1 vs. 12.7 years), have significantly more frequent reports of marital trouble,
and are more likely to be Black than other sample respondents (17 percent vs. 6 per-
cent, respectively) \((p < .05)\). The implications of these differences will be discussed.

**Measures**

*Measures of impairment.* Our sample was selected based on wives’ impairment
data at waves 1 and 2. At wave 1, respondents and spouses were asked, “Do you
have a physical or mental condition that limits your ability to (1) care for personal
needs? (2) move about inside the house? (3) do day-to-day household tasks? (4)
climb a flight of stairs? (5) walk six blocks? (6) do heavy housework? (7) work
for pay?” Possible answers were not at all, a little, and a lot. Wives who reported
no limitations at baseline but a lot of limitation in at least one activity, or a little
limitation in at least two activities at wave 2, were eligible for our analytic sample
\((N = 319)\).

For wives, a continuous variable was created that takes into account both the
number and severity of reported limitations (no limitation = 0, a little = 1, a lot = 2),
with a higher value indicating greater impairment. This approach to creating a sum-
mary variable is supported by recent work citing the validity of a “count” approach
to summarizing dependency in activities of daily living and instrumental activities
of daily living (Spector and Fleishman 1998). The range for wives’ impairment
measure was from 2 to 14, with the median being 4. One-third of wives (33 percent)
had a score of 2 on this measure, indicating the minimal criteria for study entry (a lot
of limitation in one activity or a little limitation in two activities). Thirty-seven per-
cent of wives scored 3 or 4, and the remainder (30 percent) scored 5 or higher. Due
to the nonparametric distribution of this indicator of severity of impairment, we
log-transformed the variable for our analyses. For husbands, impairment status was
dichotomized (yes/no) since 56 percent of men had no impairment and was
included as a control for physiological constraints on housework contribution.

*Measures of household work.* Our primary dependent variable is husbands’ pro-
portional contribution to household work at wave 2. First, we calculated the sum of
reported time per week spent on five tasks, which (with the possible exception of shopping) are traditionally performed by wives. These include (1) meal preparation, (2) dishes, (3) house cleaning, (4) laundry, and (5) shopping. To avoid including extreme outliers, we arbitrarily truncated this summed score at 84 hours per week, for a maximum of 12 hours per day spent on female-associated household tasks. We then divided husband’s hours by the total (husband + wife) couple hours. A parallel measure of husbands’ contribution to housework at wave 1 is included as an independent variable in the multivariate model to determine its predictive power.

We also created a measure of the time spent by other household members on household tasks at wave 2 to control for availability of other helping resources. This variable summarizes the weekly hours all other household members (excluding primary respondent and spouse) normally spend on meals, dishes, cleaning, shopping, and laundry. No comparable reports regarding assistance from friends or family outside the household were available.

Egalitarian attitudes. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with 14 statements pertaining to attitudes toward gender and marital roles. We identified two factors relevant to this analysis through principal components factor analysis, using varimax factor rotation. Our Gender Equality scale consists of sample members’ ratings of agreement (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree) with the following three statements: “Parents should encourage daughters’ independence,” “married partners should have individual freedom,” and “if a husband and wife both work, they should share the household tasks.” Chronbach’s alpha was calculated to determine the internal consistency of this scale, with results of .77 for wives and .62 for husbands. Our Traditional Roles scale also consists of three statements: “It is better if a man works and a woman stays home,” “it is better to get married than be single,” and “preschool children suffer if their mother works.” Chronbach’s alpha on the Traditional Role measure was .67 for wives and .62 for husbands. Scores on the Gender Equality measure were reversed so that both attitudinal measures are scored from 3 to 15, with a high score indicating a more nontraditional view.

Marital quality. Overall, marital happiness was assessed by the question, “Taking things all together, how would you describe your marriage?” The score ranged from 1 to 7, with a higher score indicating a happier marriage. This variable was skewed, with the majority of respondents and their spouses indicating they were either happy or very happy with their marriage. We therefore dichotomized the variable, with 1 indicating happy or very happy in marriage and 0 indicating a rating of less than happy. Marital trouble was assessed by asking, “During the past year, have you ever thought that your marriage might be in trouble?” “Yes” was scored 1 and “no” was scored 0.

Sociodemographic factors. Husband’s age is included in our models as an interval variable. We created a three-level education variable: 1 = less than a high school
Two dummy variables were then included in our model, with high school graduate as the referent group. Husband’s racial ethnic identity is also indicated using two dichotomous variables, with non-White Caucasians as the referent group: (1) Husband is Black (coded 1 if husband identifies himself as Black, otherwise 0), and (2) husband is other race (coded 1 for Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Asian American, or other minority group). Ideally, each of these ethnicities should be represented individually in our models. However, sample size restrictions do not allow for this approach since the combined representation of Latinos from all countries of origin, plus all Asians, plus other minority groups, totals only approximately 5 percent of the analytic sample. Estimates from such small numbers (less than 1 percent of the sample in most instances) would be highly unstable and therefore not meaningful.

The employment hours variables summarize husbands’ and wives’ usual weekly hours of paid work at wave 2, including a second job, and are included to control for time availability of both spouses. We also included the wave 1 NSFH sample weight to assess whether the weight is a significant factor in our analyses, as we are using a small subset of the overall NSFH sample.

**Analytic Approach**

First, we describe the sociodemographic characteristics, gender role attitudes, and perceptions of marital quality of both husbands and wives in our sample. Next, we describe the extent to which the division of household labor changes following the development of wives’ impairment, according to tertiles of wives’ level of impairment (tertile 1 = impairment score of 2, tertile 2 = score of 3 or 4, tertile 3 = score ≥ 5).

Last, using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, we examine whether and to what extent husbands’ prior involvement in household work, wives’ impairment severity, husbands’ demographic characteristics, gender role attitudes, and marital quality influence husbands’ contribution to housework. While we also examined models using change in husbands’ housework as the dependent variable, the fit of the model was better using the husbands’ proportional contribution, and it simultaneously takes into account both husbands’ and wives’ housework contributions. Variables are entered in blocks, which, with the exception of control variables, comprise measures of the major factors of theoretical interest.

**RESULTS**

**Sample Description**

Table 1 presents the sociodemographic characteristics, gender-related attitudes, and marital characteristics for our sample of 319 married couples in which wives
became impaired between 1987-88 and 1992-94. On average, sample husbands are approximately 52 years old, and the wives are 50. Approximately one-quarter (24 percent) of sample husbands are of retirement age (> 65). The average level of education is high, with more than 12 years of schooling reported by approximately 40 percent of the sample. The vast majority of the sample is white (about 89 percent.)

Despite their impairment, wives in this sample spent considerable time working for pay at wave 2, on average a total of 17 hours per week, while husbands average 31 hours. These figures represent a decline of 3 paid work hours per week for husbands since wave 1 and 4 hours for wives.

In general, attitudes toward gender equality and women’s independence appear relatively liberal for both husbands and wives, with an average score of 12 out of a possible 15. Traditional-role scores are lower, averaging 7 for wives and 6 for husbands, again out of a possible score of 15. Marital happiness appears relatively high, with approximately 75 percent of wives and 80 percent of husbands reporting that they are happy or very happy in their marriage at wave 1. Similarly, 25 percent of wives reported marital trouble in the past year versus 20 percent of husbands.

### Longitudinal Change in the Division of Household Labor

We calculated the means and standard deviations for housework at wave 1 and wave 2, in absolute terms as reported hours spent on female-dominated tasks (shopping, meals, dishes, laundry, and cleaning) and in relative terms as husbands’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sociodemographic Characteristics</th>
<th>Husbands</th>
<th>Wives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age(^a)</td>
<td>51.6 (14.3)</td>
<td>49.7 (14.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; High school</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>44.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; High school</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/ethnicity (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic white</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>89.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment hours(^a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave 1</td>
<td>34.5 (22.4)</td>
<td>20.6 (19.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave 2</td>
<td>31.4 (24.2)</td>
<td>16.6 (20.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave 1 attitudes(^a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward traditional roles (range 3-15)</td>
<td>7.5 (2.6)</td>
<td>6.0 (2.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward gender equality (range 3-15)</td>
<td>12.1 (1.7)</td>
<td>11.8 (1.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave 1 marital characteristics (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage is happy (1, 0)</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage in trouble past year (1, 0)</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) \(M (SD)\) presented.
proportional contribution to female-dominated tasks (husbands’ hours divided by total couple hours). For the full sample, wives report spending 31 hours per week on average at these tasks prior to their impairment (wave 1), while husbands spend about 7 hours. At wave 2, wives’ average contribution has dropped to about 30 hours per week, while husbands’ average hours have increased to 8 hours per week (data not shown). Clearly, at both time points, wives spend many more hours on these tasks than husbands, as previous research has suggested (Goldscheider and Waite 1991; Williams 1987).

The dynamics of change in housework reported by husbands and wives are presented by level of impairment severity in Table 2, where it is clear that the greatest increase in help is provided to wives who have become the most impaired. Among the least impaired group, husbands increase their time by approximately 0.8 hours (50 minutes), and wives cut back by approximately seven minutes. Among couples where the wife reports the greatest impairment, however, wives’ average housework declines by nearly 2 hours between waves, while husbands’ housework increases by about 3 hours (significant at \( p < .01 \)). For couples in the middle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tertiles of Wives’ Impairment</th>
<th>Least Impaired (N = 106)</th>
<th>Moderately Impaired (N = 118)</th>
<th>Most Impaired (N = 95)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave 1: Before wives’ impairment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housework hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives</td>
<td>30.4 (19.2)</td>
<td>36.1 (20.6)</td>
<td>37.3 (18.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands</td>
<td>7.0 (6.9)</td>
<td>8.0 (6.7)</td>
<td>6.6 (6.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands’ proportional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contribution</td>
<td>0.20 (0.17)</td>
<td>0.21 (0.16)</td>
<td>0.16 (0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave 2: Following wives’ impairment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housework hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives</td>
<td>30.1 (16.9)</td>
<td>33.1 (15.9)</td>
<td>35.5 (20.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands</td>
<td>7.9 (7.3)</td>
<td>10.2 (9.1)</td>
<td>9.5 (7.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands’ proportional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contribution</td>
<td>0.22 (0.19)</td>
<td>0.24 (0.19)</td>
<td>0.25 (0.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change over time: wave 2–wave 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in housework hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives</td>
<td>-0.12 (16.89)</td>
<td>-2.98 (18.84)</td>
<td>-1.77 (20.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands</td>
<td>0.82 (6.38)</td>
<td>2.25* (7.76)</td>
<td>2.93** (7.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in husbands’ proportional contribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.01 (0.16)</td>
<td>0.04 (0.18)</td>
<td>0.08** (0.19)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\*\( p < .05 \). \*\*\( p < .01 \).
category (moderately impaired), wives’ average housework decline is 3 hours, while husbands’ housework increase is 2.2 hours ($p < .05$).

In terms of proportional contribution, the greatest change is again observed among couples in which the wife is most impaired, with an 8 percent increase in husbands’ contribution reported ($p < .01$). It should be noted that women in this group worked fewer hours of paid work at wave 1 than the sample average for wives (17 hours versus 21 hours). Similarly, their paid work time dropped to 12 hours per week at wave 2, versus 17 for the sample average (data not shown). Lower levels of labor force participation may account for the somewhat higher level of housework performed by these women at wave 1 and also at wave 2, suggesting that there may be a concentration of retirement-age women in this group of women with severe impairment. Husbands may be less inclined to help when wives do not work, as suggested by our multivariate results (see below). It is therefore not surprising that the greatest increase in housework time from wave 1 to wave 2 is among husbands whose wives become relatively severely impaired, although absolute time spent performing housework is still slightly below that of husbands of moderately impaired women. Increase in husbands’ proportion of household work was 4 percent for the moderately impaired group, and change overall for the least impaired group was trivial.

**Modeling Husbands’ Proportional Contribution to Household Work**

Table 3 presents OLS regression models of husbands’ relative contribution to housework at wave 2. In model 1, we examine the influence of husbands’ wave 1 housework and wives’ wave 2 impairment severity. We find that husbands’ baseline contribution to housework is highly predictive of their contribution at wave 2 ($p < .001$), supporting the hypothesis that the greater a husband’s contribution to household labor in good health, the greater his contribution will be when his wife becomes impaired. Severity of wives’ impairment at wave 2 also significantly ($p < .01$) increases husbands’ relative contribution to housework, validating the caregiving nature of this situation. The explanatory power of these indicators is considerable, accounting for 28 percent of the variance in the dependent variable.

In model 2, we add sociodemographic factors and controls for time availability, the availability of other help, and husbands’ impairment status to model 1 variables. Neither age, education, race, nor husbands’ impairment status is significant in this model. However, the more husbands work outside the home, the lower their relative contribution to housework ($p < .01$), and the more wives work outside the home, the greater their husbands’ relative contribution to housework ($p < .001$). In addition, help from others in the household is negatively related to husbands’ share of housework ($p < .01$). Together, this set of background and control variables increases the explained variation (adjusted $R^2$) by an additional 6 percent, to 34 percent.

Wave 1 gender role attitude measures for both husbands and wives are added in model 3. While none of these attitudinal measures contribute significantly to the model, their addition increases the size of regression coefficients for both
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands' proportional contribution to housework at wave 1</td>
<td>6.26*** (.57)</td>
<td>5.61*** (.59)</td>
<td>5.47*** (.59)</td>
<td>5.69*** (.61)</td>
<td>5.59*** (.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives' impairment score $^{1}$</td>
<td>0.53** (.19)</td>
<td>0.68*** (.20)</td>
<td>0.71*** (.20)</td>
<td>0.71*** (.21)</td>
<td>0.81*** (.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands' age</td>
<td>0.01 (.01)</td>
<td>0.02* (.01)</td>
<td>0.01 (.01)</td>
<td>0.02 (.01)</td>
<td>0.02 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband has &lt; high school diploma</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband has ≥ high school diploma</td>
<td>1.24 (.72)</td>
<td>1.43* (.72)</td>
<td>1.41 (.73)</td>
<td>1.87* (.73)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age × Education (&gt; high school)</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband is Black</td>
<td>0.23 (.40)</td>
<td>0.09 (.41)</td>
<td>0.06 (.41)</td>
<td>0.02 (.41)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband is other race</td>
<td>0.57 (.42)</td>
<td>0.52 (.43)</td>
<td>0.51 (.43)</td>
<td>0.56 (.42)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others' housework hours $^{2}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives' paid work hours $^{3}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands' paid work hours $^{4}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband is impaired $^{5}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Survey of Families and Households weight</td>
<td>0.25 (.14)</td>
<td>0.23 (.15)</td>
<td>0.27 (.15)</td>
<td>0.26 (.15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands' traditional roles</td>
<td>0.04 (.04)</td>
<td>0.04 (.04)</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands' gender equity</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives' traditional roles</td>
<td>0.02 (.05)</td>
<td>0.01 (.05)</td>
<td>0.16 (.09)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives' gender equity</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
<td>$^{*}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 3 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Model 3&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Model 4&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Model 5&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands’ marital happiness</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>(.25)</td>
<td>-0.83</td>
<td>(.90)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands’ marital trouble</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>(.26)</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>(.25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives’ marital happiness</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
<td>(.23)</td>
<td>-0.44</td>
<td>(.23)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives’ marital trouble</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>(.25)</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>(.25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands’ traditional role by husbands’ marital happiness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.28**</td>
<td>(.10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives’ traditional role by husbands’ marital happiness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.21*</td>
<td>(.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

a. All coefficients and standard errors have been multiplied by 10.
b. Model 2 = model 1 + husbands’ age, education, race, and control variables.
c. Model 3 = model 2 + husbands’ and wives’ gender role attitudes.
d. Model 4 = model 3 + husbands’ and wives’ marital quality.
e. Model 5 = model 4 + interaction terms.
f. Measure is from wave 2; all others are from wave 1.
husbands’ age and education, such that older age and education beyond high school positively and significantly influence husbands’ housework contribution. However, statistical significance is lost with the addition of both husbands’ and wives’ wave 1 ratings of marital quality in model 4. None of the marital quality indicators added significant influence variation in husbands’ housework contribution.

Hypothesized interactions of marital quality and gender role attitudes were tested, and those that significantly influenced the dependent variable were added to the final model (model 5). With the addition of these terms, the interaction of husbands’ age and education greater than high school is significant ($F = 5.66, p < .05$). Models (not shown) run separately by ages 18 through 64 and by age 65 and older to facilitate interpretation of the interaction revealed that the influence of education beyond high school reverses direction, positively influencing the contribution to housework performed by younger husbands ($p < .01$) and negatively influencing the contribution to housework performed by older husbands, although not to a statistically significant degree.

Finally, the addition of the term for husbands’ marital happiness interacting with husbands’ traditional role attitudes is related to husbands’ housework contribution ($p < .01$), as is a second term interacting husbands’ marital happiness with wives’ traditional role attitudes ($p < .05$). Models run separately for husbands reporting a happy marriage ($N = 256$) and for husbands reporting their marriage was less than happy ($N = 61$) revealed that among husbands who were happy in their marriage, the influence of a nontraditional attitude toward marital roles was strongly and positively related to their housework contribution ($p < .01$). Among husbands who were not happy, the influence of a nontraditional attitude was in a negative direction ($p < .05$). Wives holding a nontraditional attitude toward marital roles did not influence husbands’ housework if their husbands were happy, but among husbands who were not happy in their marriage, wives’ nontraditional attitudes were positively related to their husbands’ housework ($p < .05$). Our final model explains more than one-third of the variance in husbands’ contribution to housework following their wives’ impairment (model 5, $R^2 = .40$, adjusted $R^2 = .35$).

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

We tested the influence of marital happiness and attitudes toward gender equality and marital roles on husbands’ contribution to housework following their wives’ impairment and found, as we hypothesized, that the influence of men’s marital happiness was contingent on their attitudes toward traditional roles. Men who are happy in their marriage were more likely to help only if they also have egalitarian attitudes toward gender and marital roles. Furthermore, an egalitarian attitude toward appropriate roles does not translate into husbands’ involvement in household work unless the motivation is based on an affective marital relationship and is therefore presumably voluntary rather than one of obligation. Cancian’s (1987) typology of the interdependent marriage suggests that such men view housework as
a nurturing response to their spouses’ health-related need for help. In contrast, the finding that wives’ egalitarian attitudes toward appropriate marital roles predict higher levels of husbands’ household work among unhappily married men suggests that obligation (or coercion) rather than desire to help is the driving force underlying housework contribution for these husbands. The interplay of changing societal and marital gender roles and their implications for happiness within marriage is complex and clearly germane to expectations for husbands to assume housework responsibility when their wives become ill.

We interpret these results to be indicative of changing times, a period of roles in transition that may, as Pleck (1979) predicted, go on for some time. Our results suggest that men who support gendered roles within marriage are less likely to help out when their wives develop health problems that compromise physical functioning. Such men may not feel that tasks like housework are rightfully their responsibility but are women’s work. If they are financially able, they may prefer to hire help or to bring in female relatives and friends to help out.

The influence of resources (time and other sources of help) is considerable in this study, indicating that some husbands take on housework by necessity, when wives are employed and when other sources of help are not available. In fact, the effect of other helping sources is underestimated in this analysis, since data on help outside the home are not included in this data set. These findings suggest that some husbands may not “own” responsibility for housework but rather respond to situations of unmet need that cannot be filled by existing resources. Women, on the other hand, feel obliged by their socialization to take on additional tasks related to caregiving, both in their own homes and in the homes of impaired family members, despite the demands of home and work (Guberman, Maheu, and Maillé 1992; Miller and Kaufman 1996).

Our finding of a strong and positive effect of education among younger men is consistent with past research. However, we also find that the effect of education reverses at older ages, although this effect is weak and may have occurred by chance. It is likely that the effect of education is a negligible influence on today’s cohort of elderly men, given that exposure to feminist views were not part of their college experience and that women were a minority in the college classroom. Younger men, on the other hand, have greater exposure to the history of the feminist movement as well as to current feminist attitudes through postsecondary education, relative to peers with a high school education or less. This finding of the importance of higher education for younger but not older men may be an important marker of social change and supports the argument that cohort effects are stronger than life course influences with regard to husbands’ participation in household work. Eventually, younger cohorts will replace the older ones, and if current trends continue, the effect of higher levels of education may be similar across the life course. Contrary to our hypothesis that younger men will help more when wives become impaired, these results suggest that age per se has little discriminatory power and is influential only among the college educated.
How different is the situation in which a wife becomes impaired from marital division of labor in good health? It is reassuring to note from our results that husbands do respond when impairment levels are more severe and perhaps more noticeable in couples' everyday life. However, as we hypothesized, husbands who are most helpful prior to their wives’ impairment are also most helpful afterward, and husbands who are less helpful do not appear to increase their effort substantially. Even at higher levels of impairment, wives in this sample continue to assume primary responsibility for housework. Again, this finding suggests that equalization of household labor among spouses is likely to take time. Closing the gap between men and women’s labor force participation was expedited in part by economic necessity but also facilitated by women’s recognition of the benefits of paid employment, including greater economic power, enhanced self-esteem, and opportunities for social interaction and self-fulfillment. These factors are unlikely to help close the housework gap because all such benefits are largely absent in taking on greater responsibility for the homemaker role. Housework, as we know, is short on benefits and long on burden.

Williams’s (1987) study of sufferers of chronic arthritis may also shed light on this study’s findings of little change in household division of labor, despite wives’ considerable impairment. Williams’s in-depth interviews with married women revealed that they often overestimated their husbands’ help at home and continued to struggle with the majority of household chores themselves. Furthermore, they were effusive in their gratitude for even the most minor task performed by their husbands. Williams concludes that women’s perceptions of husbands’ contribution to housework were greatly exaggerated precisely because they expected very little from them; any deviation from gendered division of labor was perceived to be a substantial contribution.

Although Williams’s sample was of poor, working-class women residing in a London suburb, women’s ownership of the homemaker role is deeply ingrained through socialization processes for the majority of both men and women, regardless of social class. Men may find that an increase in chores of several hours weekly is well received by their wives and find it relatively easy to overlook the fact that the majority of housework is still performed by their wives, despite their compromised health status. Thus, to put our findings in the context of Hochschild’s (1989) typology, while many couples may think they operate under an egalitarian-role ideology, in reality, their lives are conducted under a transitional-role ideology, in which it is implicitly understood than men’s outside work is more important and women still “own” the home. We therefore conclude that Bernard’s (1972) notion of a true shared-role marriage is still far on the horizon.

There is underrepresentation of minority couples in this sample since interviews from minority spouses were more likely to be missing relative to white, non-Hispanic spousal interviews. Similarly, couples excluded due to missing spousal interviews have lower levels of education than sample couples, implying that these results may misrepresent the experience of people with low educational levels.
Since past research indicates that husbands with lower levels of education contribute less to housework than husbands who have attended college (Goldscheider and Waite 1991) and also that minority women are less likely to have any spousal assistance than Caucasian women (Connell and Gibson 1997; Johnson and Barer 1990; Lawton et al. 1992), we conclude that the white, middle-class bias of our sample may have resulted in a rosier picture of husbands’ reaction to wives’ impairment with regard to change in household work.

Finally, our sample is one of relatively newly impaired wives (within the past five years), the majority of whom are experiencing moderate physical limitations. The predictors of husbands’ help may be different, and men’s proportional contribution to housework higher, in a sample of women with more severe, and/or long-standing, impairment. The nature of the health problem(s) causing impairment and whether these conditions are transient or chronic also have relevance to caregiving dynamics, but that information was not available for this study.

Nevertheless, we feel that the nature of the NSFH research design and the measures available in this data set contribute valuable insights into findings from the large number of primarily descriptive studies that report gender differences in spousal caregiving. It is clear that social and relationship factors are important in understanding how people with physical impairment and other disabilities fare under the care of the family network. Future research should focus on the development of even better measures of relationship quality and attitudes relevant to effective caregiving for incorporation into health surveys. For example, while the measures of gender role attitudes used in this research “hang together” empirically, each of our scales contains only three items, and the wording of some items have ambiguous meaning, for example, “it is better to get married than be single” may refer to the economic benefit of marriage rather than a preference for traditional roles. Qualitative research may help in the development of measures that capture the concept of traditional gender role attitudes more precisely.

The scenario presented in this study is not likely to change in the near future. Competing demands, particularly regarding paid work, are not expected to diminish. In fact, policy trends indicate forestalling of retirement age so that families will be working further into the life course than ever before. At the same time, there has been a shift in locus of both acute and custodial care from hospitals and institutions back to the family (Binney, Estes, and Humphers 1993).

In an era characterized by lengthening life spans during which people are living with, rather than dying from, disabling chronic illnesses and conditions, policy trends are to cut back rather than bolster home care and other services that support people with impairment and their families at home. The assumption that all family members are equally capable of providing care and/or financially able to provide care when their loved ones become impaired is simply faulty. As our research has shown, this assumption is particularly unfair to women, who bear the majority of the caregiving burden and whose own need for help in the face of impairment may not be adequately met by husbands unprepared to fill the caregiving role.
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“IF IT’S NOT ON, IT’S NOT ON”
—OR IS IT?

Discursive Constraints on Women’s Condom Use

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Safer sex campaigns for heterosexuals have sometimes targeted women in particular to take responsibility for condom use. In this article, the authors question some of the assumptions underlying this strategy, for instance, the assumptions of women’s relatively unproblematic relationship with condoms and women’s control over condom use. The authors interviewed 14 women about their experiences and views of condoms and of heterosexual relationships more broadly. Using a feminist poststructuralist form of discourse analysis, they examine their accounts in relation to gendered discourses of desire and a coital imperative. They argue that an appreciation of these kinds of discursive influences is important for understanding the complex ways in which women are constrained and enabled to employ condoms for safer heterosex.

‘If it’s not on, it’s not on!’ Slogans such as these exhort women not to have sexual intercourse with a man unless a condom is used. Health campaigns targeting heterosexuals with this approach imply that it is women who should act assertively to control the course of their sexual encounters to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Researchers and commentators, too, have sometimes explicitly concluded that it is women in particular who should be

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targeted for condom promotions on the basis of assumptions such as “the disadvantages of condom use are fewer for girls” (Barling and Moore 1990). As one early report concluded,

Whatever reservations one might have about perpetuating the dominant ideology that it should be women’s responsibility to attend to contraception and, by extension, prophylaxis, our material indicates that this is likely to be a more effective strategy than one that tries to change male reluctance to use condoms. We can envisage health education messages which provide women with role models in Trojan women fashion: sex is conditional on condoms being worn. (Chapman and Hodgson 1988, 104)

Aside from the obvious question of whether women should be expected to take greater responsibility for sexual safety, this approach relies on various assumptions that deserve critical attention. For example, what constraints on women’s abilities to unilaterally control condom use are overlooked in these messages? What assumptions about women’s sexuality are embedded in the claim that the disadvantages of condoms are fewer for women? That is, is safer sex simply a matter of women deciding to use condoms at all times and assertively making this happen, or do the discursive parameters of heterosex work to subtly constrain and contravene this message? Moreover, are condoms as unproblematic for women’s experiences of sex as the logic offered for targeting women implies? These questions demand further investigation given that research has repeatedly shown the reluctance of heterosexuals to consistently use condoms despite clear health messages about their importance.

There is now a strong body of feminist research suggesting that condom promotion in Western societies must compete against cultural significations of condom-less sexual intercourse as associated with commitment, trust, and “true love” in relationships (e.g., Holland et al. 1991; Kippax et al. 1990; Willig 1995; Worth 1989; see also Hollway 1989). Here, we contribute to this body of work, which collectively highlights how women’s condom use needs to be understood in relation to some of the complex gender dynamics that saturate heterosexual encounters. In particular, we critically examine (1) the concept of women’s control over condom use that is tacitly assumed in campaigns designed to promote safer sex and condoms to women and (2) the foundational assumption of such campaigns that condoms are relatively unproblematic for women’s sexual experiences.

We utilize accounts from an interview study of women and condoms, using a form of discourse analysis based on feminist Foucauldian (e.g., Foucault [1976] 1981) analyses of heterosexuality. The theoretical assumption informing this analytic work is that discursive networks form the basis for the ways in which people both talk about their experiences and actually live those experiences. Identifying these cultural systems of meaning through talk allows us to investigate the processes by which subjectivity and, in particular, desires, choices, and identities are discursively produced. Our approach departs from what might be considered a purely linguistic approach to discourse analysis in some important ways. Because we are interested in the relationship between discourse and practice, and because
we regard discourses as including normative practices, we read interview texts not only for what they can tell us about the discursive constructions of sexuality but also for what they can tell us about actual sexual practice and, therefore, the relationship between the two. Our analyses rely on knowing something about the dynamics of heterosex in at least some instances, that is, who does what to whom, and how? This necessitates combining a discursive reading of women’s accounts with a realist reading of their accounts as descriptions of what actually happened in the sexual experiences they have told us about. We acknowledge that this approach relies on contradictory understandings of language (a poststructuralist understanding of language as constitutive of meaning on one hand and a more conventional understanding of language as a transparent medium of description on the other). We argue, however, that it is useful for developing a materially grounded understanding of how the discursive characteristics (meanings and practices) of heterosexual sex can limit possibilities of safer sex for women in heterosexual encounters.

We suggest there are two main discursive arenas that need to be considered in critically evaluating strategies that assume women’s ability to control condom use and the appropriateness of targeting women in particular for messages of (hetero)sexual responsibility. These are (1) a male sex drive discourse (Hollway 1984, 1989) and the corresponding scarcity of discourse around female desire (Fine 1988), and (2) the constraints of a “coital imperative” on how much control women (or men) have in determining what sexual activity counts as “real sex.” We suggest that there are two important points where these kinds of discursive influences converge for women in ways that mediate the possibilities for condom use, that is, the sites of identity and pleasure.

THE STUDY

In-depth interviews were conducted by the first author with 14 predominantly Pakeha women (two women had mixed ethnic backgrounds but primarily identified as Pakeha). Pakeha are non-Maori New Zealanders of European descent, who form approximately 80 percent of the New Zealand population (Statistics New Zealand 2001). Our group of participants does not, therefore, represent the cultural and ethnic diversity of New Zealand. The women’s ages ranged from 22 to 43 years, and 12 of the women were between 27 and 37 years old. They came from diverse work situations and educational backgrounds but could be described as generally middle class. They all had experience of heterosexual relationships and at least some experience with condoms. The women were recruited through word of mouth and included five women known to the interviewer through work contacts, three women who were friends or family members of colleagues, and six women who were recruited by word of mouth by a friend we employed to find women interested in talking about this personal subject. All participants either chose or were given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.
Interviews were semistructured to the extent that all women were questioned about the same broad range of topics, including their past and current experiences with condoms, their heterosexual relationships and practices more generally where relevant, their personal views of condoms, and how they thought others regarded condoms. We were interested in women’s condom use or intended use for both contraceptive purposes and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections. An interview schedule was used as a guide, although the style of the interviews was more conversational than a question-answer format. The aim was to facilitate open, detailed, and reflexive discussion rather than circumscribed answers to predetermined questions. Discussion was allowed to flow on and develop according to interviewee responses but was directed by the interviewer so that all areas of interest previously determined by the researchers were covered. Most interviews were between one and one and a half hours long. All interviews were fully transcribed.

Elsewhere, we have discussed one particular theme from this same interview study—that of the complex discursive production of passivity that can render a woman unable or unwilling to act on her own intentions to use condoms (Gavey and McPhillips 1999).

**ASSERTION, IDENTITY, AND CONTROL**

Either your partner uses a condom or you don’t have sex. If a woman doesn’t look out for herself, who will? We must learn how to say no to a partner who won’t use condoms. It’s either that or abstinence. (Sack 1992, 118)

Public sexual health education fervently promotes the rights of women to demand condom use by male partners. Against a backdrop of implied male aversion to condoms, both the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (1998-2001) and the Family Planning Association (2000) in New Zealand offer mock scripts that despite an air of gender neutrality suggest ways women can assert their right to insist on a condom being used for sexual intercourse. In this section, we consider what these kinds of hard-line “calls to assertiveness” might look like in practice. The excerpt below is taken from the interview with Rose, a young woman in her early 20s. At the very beginning of the interview, in response to a question about her “current situation, in terms of your relationships,” she said, “My last experience was fairly unpleasant and so I thought I’ll really try and um devote myself to singledom for a while before I rush into anything.” In this one-night stand, approximately three weeks prior to the interview, Rose did manage to successfully insist that her partner use a condom. Her account of this experience is particularly interesting for the ways in which it graphically demonstrates the kinds of interactional barriers that a woman might have to overcome to be assertive about using a condom; moreover, it demonstrates how even embodiments of the male sex drive discourse that are not perceived to be coercive can act out levels of sexual urgency that provide a momentum that is difficult to stop. Although the following quote is
unusually long, we prefer to present it intact to convey more about the flavor of the interaction she describes. We will refer back to it throughout this article and want to keep the story intact.

Nicola: So were condoms involved at all in that-
Rose: Yeah um, actually that’s quite an interesting one because we were both very drunk, but I still had enough sense to make it a priority, you know, and I started to realize that things were getting to the point where he seemed to be going ahead with it, without a condom, and I was- had to really push him off at one point and- ’cause I kept saying sort of under my breath, are you going to get a condom now, and- and he didn’t seem to be taking much notice, and um-
Nicola: So you were actually saying that?
Rose: Yeah. I was-
Nicola: In a way that was audible for him to-
Rose: Yeah. (Nicola: Yeah) And um- at least I think so. (Nicola: Yeah) And- and it got to the point where [laughing] I had to push him off, and I think I actually called him an arsehole and- I just said, look fuck, you know, and- and so he did get one then but it seemed-
Nicola: He had some of his own that he got?
Rose: Yeah. (Nicola: Yeah) Yeah it was at his flat and he had them. In fact that was something I’d never asked beforehand. I presumed he would have some. And um he did get one and then you know- and that was okay, but it was sort of like you know if I hadn’t demanded it, he might’ve gone ahead without it. And I am fairly sure that he’s pretty, um- you know he has had a pretty dubious past, and so that worried me a bit. I know he was very drunk and out of control and, um- otherwise the whole situation would never have occurred I’m sure, but still I had it together enough, thank God, to demand it.
Nicola: And you actually had to push him off?
Rose: Yeah, I think- I’m pretty sure that I did, you know it’s- it’s all quite in a bit of a haze, [laughing] (Nicola: laughing) but um, it wasn’t that pleasant, the whole experience. It was- he was pretty selfish about the whole thing. And um- yeah.
Nicola: How much old- how- You said that he was a bit older than you.
Rose: Ohh, he’s only twenty-eight or nine, but that’s quite a big difference for me. I usually see people that are very much in my own age-group. Mmm.
Nicola: And um, you said that it was kind of disappointing sexually and otherwise and he was quite selfish, (Rose: laughter) like at the point where you know you were saying, do you want to get- are you going to get a condom, at that point were you actually wanting to have sexual intercourse?
Rose: Um, mmm, that’s a good question. I can’t remember the whole thing that clearly. And I seem to remember that I was getting um- I was just getting sick of it, or- [laughing] or- I might have been, but my general impression was that it was quite a sort of fumble bumbled thing, and- and it was quite- he just didn’t- he didn’t have it together. He wasn’t- he possibly would’ve been better if he was less drunk, but he was just sort of all over the place and um- and I was just thinking, you know, I want to get this over and done with. Which is not the [laughing] best way to go into- into that sort of thing and um- yeah I- I remember at points- just at points getting into it and then at other points it just being a real mess. Like he couldn’t- he wasn’t being very stimulating, he was trying to be and bungling it ’cause he was drunk. And being too rough and just too brutalish, just yeah. And um-
Nicola: When you say he was trying to [laughing] be, what do you-
Rose: Ohh, he was just like you know, trying to use his hands and stuff and just it- it was just like a big fumble in the dark (Nicola: Right) type thing. I mean I’m sure h- I hope
he’s not usually that bad it was just like- I was in- sometimes- most of the time in fact I was just saying, look don’t even bother. [laughing] You obviously haven’t got it together to make it pleasurable. So in some ways-

Nicola: You- you said you were thinking that or you said that?
Rose: I just sort of- I did push his hand away and just say, look don’t bother. Because- and I thought at that point that probably penetration would be, um, more pleasurable, yeah. But- and then- yeah. And I think I was actually wanting to just go to sleep and I kept- I think I um mentioned that to him as well and said, you know why don’t we- we’re we’re not that capable at the moment, why don’t we leave it. But he wasn’t keen on [laughing] that idea.

Nicola: What did he- is that from what he said, or just the fact that he didn’t-
Rose: I think he just said, ohh no, no, no we can’t do that. It was kind of like we had to put on this big passionate spurt but um it just seemed quite farcical, considering the state we were both in. And um, so I- yeah I thought if- yeah I thought it would probably be the best idea to [laughing] just get into it and like as I- as I presumed- ohh, actually I don’t know what I expected, but he didn’t last very long at all, which was quite a relief and he was quite- he was sort of a bit apologetic and like ohh you know, I shouldn’t have come so soon. And I was just thinking, oh, now I can go to sleep. [laughter] Yes, so I just um- since then I’ve just been thinking, um one-night stands ahh don’t seem to be the way to go. They don’t seem to be much fun and [laughing] I’m not that keen on the idea of a relationship either at the moment. So I don’t know. Who- I- it’s hard to predict what’s going to happen but- mmmm.

This unflattering picture of male heterosexual practice painted by Rose’s account classically illustrates two of the dominant organizing principles of heterosexual sex—a male sex drive discourse and a coital imperative. The male sex drive discourse (see Hollway 1984, 1989) holds that men are perpetually interested in sex and that once they are sexually stimulated, they need to be satisfied by orgasm. Within the terms of this discourse, it would thus not be right or fair for a woman to stop sex before male orgasm (normatively through intercourse). This discursive construction of male sexuality thus privileges men’s sexual needs above women’s; the absence of a corresponding discourse of female desire (see Fine 1988) or drive serves to indirectly reinforce these dominant perceptions of male sexuality.

The extent to which male behavior, as patterned by the male sex drive discourse, can constrain a woman’s attempts to insist on condom use are graphically demonstrated in Rose’s account. The man she was with behaved with such a sense of sexual urgency and unstoppable that although she was able to successfully ensure a condom was used, it was only as a result of particularly determined and persistent efforts. He was unresponsive to her verbal requests and did not stop proceeding with intercourse until Rose became more directly confrontational—calling him “an arsehole” and physically pushing him off. At this point, he eventually did agree to wear a condom and did not use his physical strength to resist and overcome her actions to retain or take control of the situation. We will come back to analysis of Rose’s account later in the article.

Another participant, Anita, who was in her mid-20s, described a very similar experience:
Anita: This one friend and I- I mean I got quite drunk, I have to say, and we had penetrative sex without a condom but then- no I think we- I think we had sex without a condom and then I stopped, and 'cause I was like, no no no, you have to use a condom.

Nicola: What you mean after he’d ejaculated you stopped, or-

Anita: No no no, it was just- (Nicola: You stopped) we did- and like he did put his penis inside me, (Nicola: Right) we were just sort of having sex and I suddenly thought he hasn’t got a condom on, (Nicola: Right) [laughing] ’cause I was really pissed. So was he. And I made him stop, and he said, “ohh no, it’s all right, I trust you.” And I was [laughing] just floored. Fuck you arrogant- what a nerve, and stopped, at that point.

Nicola: What you mean you- you sort of physically stopped him?
Anita: Yeah, I pushed him off (Nicola: Yeah yeah yeah) and said, “That’s not- that’s you know- that’s not okay, I can’t believe you said that.” And, um, I think we had sex with a condom after that.

Rose and Anita did indeed act in “Trojan woman fashion” (Chapman and Hodgson 1988, 104), but their accounts demonstrate how this can be anything but straightforward to do. For both, acting assertively necessitated strong physical resistance and verbal censure. The literature on women’s heterosexual experiences (e.g., Holland et al. 1998), as well as our own interviews for this study, strongly suggests that this will not be an attractive or possible option for many, or even most, women. Indeed, we would argue that advice to women that simply encourages them to be assertive is deeply problematic, not because it is undesirable for women to act with strength and experience real choices in their sexual relationships with men but because these kinds of mottos deny the complex interpersonal and subjective constraints on achieving this. As we will see in later sections, the kind of assertiveness shown by Rose and Anita requires enacting attributes and an identity not compatible with traditional embodiments of female sexuality and thus not readily accessible to some women. Moreover, these kinds of assertive actions not only could expose women to danger (such as physical retaliation from the man) but also may jeopardize her chances of continuing with that particular heterosexual encounter (and, possibly, relationship)—a choice that may be undesirable if not impossible for many women to make. Indeed, Rosenthal, Gifford, and Moore (1998) have argued that some women and men regard “casual sex as a strategy for obtaining the possibility of ‘love’” and that the use of condoms at such times may be seen to risk romance and the promise of love.

Pleasing a Man

The male sex drive discourse constructs masculinity in ways that directly affect women’s heterosexual experiences as evidenced in the above descriptions of Rose and Anita’s experiences. However, as we alluded to above, this discursive framework can also constitute women’s sexual subjectivity in complex and more indirect ways. For example, for some women situated within this discursive framework, their ability to “please a man” may be a positive aspect of their identity. In this sense, a woman can be recruited into anticipating and meeting a man’s “sexual
needs” (as they are constituted in this discursive framework) as part of her ongoing construction of a particular kind of identity as a woman.

Sarah reported not liking condoms. She said she did not like the taste of them; she did not like the “hassle” of putting them on, taking them off, and disposing of them; and that they interfered with her sexual pleasure. However, it seemed that her reluctance to use them was also related to her sexual identity and her taken-for-granted assumptions about men’s needs, desires, and expectations of her during sex. Sarah traced some of her attitudes toward sex to her upbringing and her mother’s attitudes in which the male sex drive discourse was strongly ingrained. She directly connected the fact that “when I’ve started, I never stop” to her difficulty in imagining asking a man to use a condom. As she said in an ironic tone,

If a man gets a hard-on you’ve gotta take care of it because he gets sick. You know these are the mores I was brought up with. So you can’t upset his little precious little ego by asking to use a condom, or telling if he’s not a good lover.

Sarah explained her own ambivalence toward this male sex drive discourse by drawing on a psychoanalytic distinction between the conscious and unconscious mind:

I mean I’ve hopefully done enough therapy to have moved away from that, but it’s still in your bones. You know there’s my conscious mind can say, that’s a load of bullshit, but my unconscious mind is still powerful enough to drive me in some of these moments, I would imagine.

Thus, despite having a rational position from which she rejected the male sex drive discourse, Sarah found that when faced with a man who wanted to have sex with her, her embodied response would be to acquiesce irrespective of her own desire for sex. Her reference to this tendency being “in [her] bones” graphically illustrates how she regarded this as a fundamental influence. It is evocative of Judith Butler’s suggestion “that discourses do actually live in bodies. They lodge in bodies, bodies in fact carry discourses as part of their own lifeblood” (Meijer and Prins 1998, 282). Sarah recalled an incident where her own desire for sex ceased immediately on seeing the man she was with undress, but she explained that she would not be prepared to stop things there:

Sarah: He’s the hairiest guy I ever came across. I mean- but no way I would stop. I mean, as soon as he took his shirt off I just kind of about puked [laughing], but I ain’t gonna say- I mean having gone to all these convolutions to get this thing to happen there’s no way I’m gonna back down at that stage.
Nicola: So when he takes his shirt off he’s just about the most hairiest guy you’ve ever met, which you find really unappealing.
Sarah: Terribly.
Nicola: Um, but you’d rather go through with it?
Sarah: Well I wouldn’t say rather, but I do it.
Sarah also described another occasion where she met a man at a party who said, “do you want to get together? and I said, well, you know, I just want to cuddle, and he said, well, that’s fine, okay.” She explained that it was very important to her to make her position clear before doing anything. However, they ended up having sexual intercourse, because as she said,

Sarah: I was the one. I mean we cuddled, and then I was the one that carried it further.
Nicola: And what was the reason for that?
Sarah: As I said, partly ’cause I want to and partly ’cause if ohh he’s got a hard-on you have to.

For women like Sarah, it seemed that an important part of their identity involved being a “good lover.” This required having sexual intercourse to please a man whenever he wanted it and, in Sarah’s case, to the point of anticipating this desire on the basis of an erect penis. She implied that among people who know her, she would have a reputation as a woman who had enjoyed sex with a lot of men, and thus she would subconsciously expect a man to think she was silly if she suggested using a condom—“Why make the fuss, you know.” Given these expectations, and her belief that most men do not like condoms, it is not surprising that she had developed an almost fatalistic attitude toward her own risk of contracting HIV, such that she could say, “There’s a part of me that also says, as long as I’m clear and not passing it on, I’m not gonna worry. You know, and if I get it, hey, it was meant to be.”

For understanding the actions of Sarah and women like her, the assertiveness model is not at all helpful. In these kinds of sexual encounters, Sarah’s lack or possession of assertiveness skills is beyond the point. What stops her from acting assertively to avoid undesired sex are deeply inscribed features of her own identity—characteristics that are not related to fear of assertion so much as the production of a particular kind of self. Well before she gets to the point of acting or not acting assertively, she is motivated by other (not sexual) desires, about what kind of woman she wants to be.

In a similar way to Sarah, an important part of Sally’s identity was having “integrity about sexuality.” She explained her position in relation to not “leading somebody on” in terms of a desire for honesty:

And so- and I- that really was clinched somehow that you didn’t lead somebody on and so that’s part of— that’s one of the sort of ways in which I understand that contract notion, really. And so maybe that had something to do with how I see myself about being a person with a reasonable- with integrity about sexuality. I won’t go into something with false promises kind of thing.

Prior to these comments, Sally talked about the origins of her beliefs about this kind of contractual notion where it was not possible to be physically intimate with someone unless you were prepared to have intercourse. She remembered feeling awful about touching a man’s penis when she was younger:
I had been unfair because of the belief that men somehow you know it’s tormenting to them to leave a cock unappeased (N: [laughter]) [laughing] basically or something like that.

Like Sarah, Sally too reflected on her experiences in a way that highlights the limitations of attempting to influence sexual behavior based on understandings of people as unitary rational actors. Sally discussed a six-month relationship with a past lover in which she had not used condoms. She said that she had made the decision not to use condoms because she already had an intrauterine device (IUD) and because they were seen to connote a more temporary rather than long-lasting relationship (a view ironically reinforced by the advice of a nurse at the Family Planning Clinic):

Sally: It’s like condoms are about more casual kinds of encounters or I mean- I mean, I’m kind of- um they are kind of anti-intimacy at some level.

Nicola: And so if you’d used condoms with him, that would’ve meant-
Sally: Maybe it would have underscored its temporariness or its- yeah, its lack of permanence. I don’t understand that. What I’ve just said really particularly. It doesn’t [seem] very rational to me. [laughter]

Nicola: [laughter] No it very rational and I-
Sally: [indistinguishable] it seems to be coming out of you know, somewhere quite deeper about um- I think it goes back to that business about ideals stuff. And I think that’s one of the things about not saying no, you know. And that the ideal woman and lover- the ideal woman is a good lover and doesn’t say no. Something like that. And it is incredibly counterproductive [softly] at my present time in life. [sigh/laugh]

Sally’s reference to the ideal woman who is a good lover (because) she does not say no implicitly recognizes the strength of male sex drive discourse and its effect on her sexual experiences. In a construction that is similar to Sarah’s, Sally refers to this kind of influence as “deeper” than her “rational” views. She presents an appreciation of this kind of cultural ideal as internalized in some way that is capable of having some control over her behavior despite her assessment of this as “counterproductive.”

Engaging in Unwanted Sex

Many of the women in this study recounted experiences of having sex with men when they did not really want to, for a variety of reasons. This now common finding (e.g., Gavey 1992) underscores the extent to which women’s control of sex with men is limited by various discursive constraints in addition to direct male pressure, force, or violence. As Bronwyn said, it is part of “the job:”

Nicola: You said that you enjoy intercourse up to a point. Um, beyond that point, um, what are your reasons for continuing, given that you’re not enjoying it?
Bronwyn: Ohh I just think it’s part of my function if you like [laughter] that sounds terribly cold-blooded, but it is, [laughing] you know, it’s part of the job.
Nicola: The job of—
Bronwyn: Being a wife. A partner or whatever.

Rose’s account of her confrontational one-night stand, discussed previously, can be seen to be influenced in complex and subtle ways by the discursive construction of normative heterosexuality in which male sexuality and desire are supreme. She described the encounter as being quite unpleasant and disappointing, both sexually and in the way that he treated her—with respect to condoms and more generally throughout the experience. She described his actions during the encounter as clumsy and not the least bit sexually arousing (“He wasn’t being very stimulating, he was trying to be and bungling it because he was drunk. And being too rough and just too brutish”) and at one stage she suggested that they give up and go to sleep but he rejected this idea very strongly. Despite the extremely unsatisfactory nature of the sexual interaction and despite Rose’s demonstrated skills of acting assertively, she did continue with the encounter until this man had had an orgasm through vaginal intercourse. It is difficult to understand why she would have done this without appreciating the power of the male sex drive discourse and the coital imperative in determining the nature of heterosexual encounters.

Although she did not define herself as a victim of the experience, Rose’s account also makes clear that somehow she did not feel it was an option to end sex unless he gave the okay:

It was sort of like- and I guess in that case he didn’t have my utmost respect by that point. But it was sort of like, um, you know, he’d- he seemed to be just going for it, and I really really- I was drunk and sort of dishevelled and- and pretty resigned to having a bit of loose un- and unsatisfactory time which I didn’t have a lot of control over.

She partially attributed this lack of control over the situation to the fact that the encounter took place at his flat, but this seems to be reinforced by underlying assumptions about sexuality and the primacy of his desires:

Um, but it was kind of like he had his idea of what was going to happen and um I sort of realized after a while that he was so intent on it and the best thing to do was to just comply I guess, and make it as pleasurable as possible. Try and get into the same frame of mind that he was in. And- and yeah. Mmm, get it over with. It sounds really horrible in retrospect, it wasn’t that bad it was just lousy, you know. It was just sort of a poor display of [laughing] everything. I suppose. Of intelligence and- and good manners. [laughter]

Part of the reason for the ambivalent nature of her account (swinging from describing what happened in very negative terms to playing down the experience as a poor display of manners) can be argued to originate from her positioning within a kind of liberal feminist discourse about sex. She had made a point of saying that she did not think things went in stages and defining herself in opposition to a model of female sexuality as fragile and in need of protection. The result of the connection
between this liberal discourse of sexuality and that of the male sex drive is that she is left with no middle ground from which to negotiate within a situation of this kind. The absence of an alternative discourse of active female sexuality leaves her in a position of no return once she has consented to heterosexual relations and when certain minimal conditions are fulfilled (for her, this was the use of condoms). If heterosexuality were instead discursively constructed in such a way that women’s sexual pleasure was central rather than optional, it makes sense that Rose may have felt able to call an end to this sex—which was, after all, so unpleasant that it led to her resolve to “devote [herself] to singledom for a while.”

THE QUESTION OF PLEASURE

“I’m probably atypical from what I read of women in the fact that I personally don’t like condoms.” Sarah made this comment in the first minutes of the interview, and then much later she shared her assumption about how men regard using condoms: “Most men hate it. I’ve never asked them, but . . . that’s the feeling I have from what I’ve read or heard.” Sarah’s generalized views about how women and men regard condoms echo dominant commonsense stories in Western culture. That is, most men do not like using condoms—a view shared by 80.5 percent of women in one large U.S. sample (Valdiserri et al. 1989), while women do not mind them. To explain her own dislike of condoms, Sarah was forced to regard herself as atypical. In the following section, we will discuss evidence that challenges the tacit assumption that condoms are relatively unproblematic for women.

Enforcers of the Coital Imperative: Condoms as Prescriptions for Penetration

Research on how men and women define what constitutes “real sex” has repeatedly found that a coital imperative exists that places penis-vagina intercourse at the center of (hetero)sex (Gavey, McPhillips, and Braun 1999; Holland et al. 1998; McPhillips, Braun, and Gavey 2001). The strength of this imperative was also reflected in the current research—as one women explained, “I don’t think I worked out a model of being with someone like naked intimate touching which doesn’t have sex at the end of it” (Sally defined sex as penis-vagina intercourse during the interview). Although this coital imperative could be viewed as forming part of the male sex drive discourse examined above, it is addressed separately here as it has particular consequences for safer sex possibilities.

Condoms seem to reinforce the coital imperative in two interconnected ways, both in terms of their symbolic reinforcement of the discursive construction of sex as *coitus* and through their material characteristics that contribute at a more practical level to rendering sex as finished after coitus. In the analyses that follow, we will be attending to the material characteristics of condoms as women describe them. As discussed earlier, we adopt a realist reading of women’s accounts here. What the
women told us about the ways in which condoms help to structure the material practice of heterosex casts a shadow over the assumption that condoms are unproblematic for women’s sexual experience. These accounts illuminate how the male sexual drive discourse can shape not only the ways people speak about and experience heterosex, but also the ways in which a research lens is focused on heterosexual practice to produce particular ways of seeing that perpetuate commonsense priorities and silences (which, in this case, privilege men’s pleasure above women’s). That is, the ways in which condoms can interfere with a woman’s sexual pleasure are relatively invisible in the literature, which tends, at least implicitly, to equate “loss of sexual pleasure” with reduced sensation in the penis, or disruption of desire and pleasure caused by the act of putting a condom on. As the following excerpts show, the material qualities of condoms have other particular effects on the course of sex. These effects are especially relevant both to the question of a woman’s pleasure and to the way in which the coital imperative remains unchallenged as the definitive aspect of heterosex.

While many of the women said they like (sometimes or always) and/or expect sexual intercourse (i.e., penis-vagina penetration) when having sex with a man, many of the women noted how condoms operated to enforce intercourse as the finale of sex. Several women found this to be a disadvantage of condoms, in that they tend to limit what is possible sexually, making sex more predictable, less spontaneous, playful, and varied. That is, once the condom is on, it is there for a reason and one reason only—penile penetration. It signals the beginning of “the end.” Women who identified this disadvantage tended to be using condoms for contraceptive purposes and so were comparing sex that involved condoms unfavorably to intercourse with some less obtrusive form of contraception such as the pill or an IUD, or with no contraception during a “safe” time of the month.

For example, Julie found that condoms prescribed penetration at a point where she could be more flexible if no condom was involved:

That’s what I mean about the condom thing. It’s like this is the act you know, and you have to go through the whole thing. Whereas if you don’t use condoms, you know, like he could put it in me and then we could stop and then put it in again, you know, you can just be a bit more flexible about the whole thing.

The interconnection between the material characteristics of condoms (its semen-containing properties require “proper use”) and the discursive construction of the encounter (coitus is spoken about as “the act”) has the effect of constraining a woman’s sexual choices and leaving this generally unspoken coital imperative unchallenged. The discursive centrality of coitus within heterosex is materially reinforced by the practical difficulties associated with condoms, as Deborah said,

Once you’ve put on the condom . . . that limits you. Once you’ve got to the stage in sex that you put a condom on, you then- it’s not that you can’t change plans, but it’s a hassle if you then decided that you might like to move to do um- you might like to
introduce oral sex at this stage, as opposed to that stage, then you have to take it off, or you don’t, or-

Similarly, Rose said,

Well that’s the one problem, I suppose with condoms, is that you’ve already had penetrative sex with one and you either decide to um stop that and go onto something else, or you’ve finished and maybe you want to start again later, is that, you know, it’s got that- you can’t have oral sex because of that horrible taste. Or you can, but it really- it really does taste quite yucky.

And Suzanne, commenting about the unpleasant smell and taste of condoms, said, “And so like once it’s on you’re sort of committed to penetration, in a way. Um, as your sex.”

Thus, condoms not only signalled when penetration would take place, but their use served to reinforce the taken-for-granted axiom of heterosexual practice, that coitus is the main sexual act. Furthermore, one woman (Sally) described how the need for a man to withdraw his penis soon after ejaculation when using a condom disrupted the postcoital “close feeling” she enjoyed. These excerpts can be seen to represent a form of resistance to the teleological assumptions of the coital imperative; women’s accounts of desiring different forms of sexual pleasure (including, but by no means limited to, emotional pleasures) may provide rich ground for exploring safer sex options. This potentially productive area has yet to be fully exploited by traditional health campaigns, which perhaps reflects the lack of acknowledgment given to discourses of female sexual desire and pleasure in Western culture in general (see also Fine 1988).

Some women also talked about the effect using condoms had on their sexual pleasure by using the language of interruption and “passion killing” more commonly associated with men. Sarah, who rarely used condoms, said that “it breaks the flow”:

I have a lot of trouble reaching an orgasm anyway, and it’s probably one of the reasons I don’t like something that’s interrupting, because I do go off the boil very quickly. Um, once it’s on and it’s sort of decided that penetration tends to be what happens. I don’t suppose it’s a gold rule, but it seems to be the way it is. So you know there’s no more warm-up.

Unlike health campaigns directed at the gay community, which have emphasized the range of possible sex acts carrying far less risk of HIV infection than penile penetration, campaigns aimed at heterosexuals have done little to challenge the dominant coital imperative. Health campaigns that promote condoms as the only route to safer sex implicitly reinforce this constitution of heterosexuality and the dominance of the male sex drive discourse. As the responses of the women in this study demonstrate, this reluctance to explore other safer sex possibilities may be a missed opportunity for increasing erotic possibilities for women at the same time as increasing opportunities for safer sex. The fact that all of these women spent
some time talking about the ways in which condoms can operate to enforce the
coitalthemperativeorreduceithierdesireindicatestheimportanceoftakingwomen’s
pleasureintoaccountwhendesigningeffectivesafersexprograms. That is, it may
simplynotbevalidtoassumethat “thedisadvantagesofcondomusearefewerfor
girls”(BarlingandMoore1990)ifweexpectwomen’ssexualdesiresandpleasures
tobetakenasserioulsasa men’s. Special effort may be requiredto ask different
questions to understand women’s experiences in a way that doesn’tuncritically
acceptavisionofheterosexasinherentlyconstrainedthroughthelens ofthecoital
imperativeandmalesexdrivediscourses.

DISCUSSION

Research on sexual coercion has shown that women may have limited control
over the outcome of (hetero)sex even in the absence of directforceor violence from
their male partners (Gavey 1992). Discourses of normative heterosexuality, such as
those discussed in this article, play an important role in maintaining power dynam-
ics between men and women. In the context of safer sex, the same cultural scripts
that serve to legitimize various levels of coercion also limit the ways in which
women may control the course and outcomes of heterosexual encounters. As the
accounts of the women in this research show, power is infused in discursive con-
structions of normative heterosexuality, organized around a male sex drive dis-
course and a coital imperative, in ways that limit women’s control and safer sex
options. Anecdotal reports suggest that some women have been beaten and raped
because they have tried to negotiate safer sex (Bell 1989; Read 1990; and see
MacPhailandCampbell2001, for reference to this happening in South Africa). In
the absence of direct force, however, identities can be discursively produced in
ways that render us particular kinds of subjects (e.g., “good lovers”), for whom
desires associated with being this kind of person can override any desire for con-
donum use (where that would be incompatible with this particular type of
personhood). The question of a woman being assertive, then, to ensure that her partner
wears a condom, will not even arise if her own desire for a condom to be worn is
exceeded by these other kinds of desires. More simply, the strong ethic of individu-
alism that is reified within the concept of assertiveness (Crawford 1995) arguably
runs counter to dominant constructions of femininity. Moreover, contemporary ide-
als of reciprocity (see Gilfoyle, Wilson, and Brown 1992), mutuality, sharing, and
giving arguably render the whole notion of assertiveness a delicate achievement
within the context of sexual relatedness (especially without recourse to an analysis
of gendered power).

Achieving condom use is not a challenge of immense proportions for all women,
however. Some of the women in this study demonstrated that they had embraced
sentiments like the “If it’s not on, it’s not on” slogan as their own in ways that were
strong and positive. Both Rose and Anita, for example, recalled situations in which
they described themselves as being very “drunk,” but it was nevertheless a high priority for them not to have sexual intercourse in such circumstances without a condom. These two women were seemingly able to act in these ways with relative ease; they were clear that they wanted the men to use condoms, they were clear about their rights to insist on this, they were clear they did not like what was happening, and they were apparently unafraid of acting physically and verbally to change this. The ability of these women to act from a position of strength and determination is perhaps cause for optimism about the discursive possibilities available to women. However, for a range of complex reasons, this sort of action is not easy for all women in all circumstances (Gavey 1992; Holland et al. 1998). Rose and Anita’s accounts also highlight both the limits and the possible consequences of enacting resistance to dominant constructions of heterosexuality. On one hand, their physical responses toward the men placed them in a position outside traditional notions of femininity, and their actions may have jeopardized future relations with their male partners. On the other hand, while the men they were with acted in ways that dramatically reduced their appeal, neither woman at that stage extricated herself from the ongoing sexual encounter. Less optimistically, then, it is perhaps only when casual sex is characterized by neither emotional nor physical pleasures that the conditions lend themselves to women asserting condom use. It is striking, for example, that the specter of romance is not particularly evident in the alcohol-facilitated one-night stands Rose and Anita described. As Warr (2001) and others have argued, romance can provide a context in which “even the self-interest of physical pleasure is often irrelevant” (243) to the attainment of other kinds of pleasures associated with love or “emotional intimacy and warmth” (243) and where “sex is figu- rative for an exchange of self” (242) in ways that contradict thinking about sex in terms of health risk (see also Rosenthal, Gifford, and Moore 1998).

Holland et al. (1998) have argued that heterosexual relations as they stand are premised on a construction of femininity that endangers women. Evidence for this position can be drawn from the current study as the interaction of discourses determining normative heterosexuality produces situations in which women are unable to always ensure their safety during sexual encounters. Holland et al. (1998) have argued that a refiguring of femininity is needed to ensure that women have a greater chance of safer heterosexual encounters. One of the prerequisites for change of this kind would be acknowledgment of the discourses of active female desire, which have traditionally been repressed (Fine 1988). Indeed, our research here suggests that the claim that condoms are “relatively unproblematic” for women is based on a continued relegation of the importance of women’s sexual pleasure, relative to men’s. Without challenging the gendered nature of dominant representations of desire, and more critically examining the coital imperative, condom promotion to women is likely to remain a double-edged practice. As both a manifestation and a reinforcement of normative forms of heterosex, it may be of limited efficacy in promoting safer heterosex.
NOTES

1. It should be emphasized that Sarah’s mother’s attitudes would have been in line with contemporary thought at the time. Take, for example, the advice of “A Famous Doctor’s Frank, New, Step-by-Step Guide to Sexual Joy and Fulfillment for Married Couples” (on front cover of Eichenlaub 1961, 36), published when Sarah was nearly an adolescent:

   Availability: If you want good sex adjustment as a couple, you must have sexual relations approximately as often as the man requires. This does not mean that you have to jump into bed if he gets the urge in the middle of supper or when you are dressing for a big party. But it does mean that a woman should never turn down her husband on appropriate occasions simply because she has no yearning of her own for sex or because she is tired or sleepy, or indeed for any reason short of a genuine disability. (Eichenlaub 1961, 36)

2. While some sexuality education directed at teenagers might be more likely to encourage alternatives to coital sex, and hence broader definitions of safer sex (e.g., Family Planning Association 1998; see Burns 2000), this is still less evident in material designed for the “mature sexuality” of heterosexual adults.

REFERENCES


Nicola Gavey is a senior lecturer and member of the Gender and Critical Psychology Group within the Department of Psychology at the University of Auckland. Her research and teaching interests focus on the intersection of gender, power, and sexuality, particularly in the arena of heterosexuality.

Kathryn McPhillips is a clinical psychologist working in a community organization that provides services for women and children who are survivors of sexual violence. Her involvement in research has centered on issues of gender and power, along with consequent issues of safety for women and children.

Marion Doherty is currently doing postgraduate study in clinical psychology at the University of Auckland. She recently completed a master’s thesis that examined discourses around filmic portrayals of women and sexuality and in particular how people responded to the portrayals of women in nontraditional heterosexual roles.

Busby’s anthropological description of life in a fishing village in South India is a riveting account of the everyday dynamics, exchanges, and interactions of men and women, as well as a systematic theoretically driven analysis of these gendered events. How are men and women separated through their work, their capacities, and their roles? What underlying conceptions of gender differences drive these separations? What implications do these differences have for gender relations? These are some of the key questions the study seeks to address from within the context of its ethnographic account. It is to the author’s credit that the book manages to be readable without being simplistic, blending thick description with sophisticated theoretical insights in a style that does not take for granted familiarity with either anthropological or feminist jargon.

Even as the book presents memorable characters and gripping narratives using textual strategies reminiscent of fiction and at times poetry, the study interrogates and challenges the universalism implicit in contemporary Western feminism’s theorizing of gender differences and the body. Whereas constructions of the body in current social and cultural theory highlight the performative aspect of gender and the notion of fluid identities, Busby’s study emphasizes the idea that formulations of gender identity and the body need to be understood within specific cultural and historical contexts. Gender in the South Indian fishing community context, as the analysis delineates, is essence, process, and representation. Everyday performance reinforces and rewrites that which is already inherent in the body, the different sexual substances with which men and women are born. Gender in this particular setting cannot be adequately interpreted through a lens that privileges fluidity, since gender differences are seen as fixed and categorical, demarcating the life paths, familial affiliations, and ultimately characters of those born female or male.

After a preface that briefly describes the circumstances of the fieldwork and an introduction that situates the study geographically and theoretically, the ethnography is laid out in three parts. The first part is concerned with explaining differences between men and women, how these differences are manifested through performance in everyday life, and how these differences are perceived as being concretized in the body. Men go out to sea to fish. Women stay onshore, manage home and finances, and supplement the household income through fish vending. Men, although adept at battling the elements, are thought of as foolish in money matters. Women, although without the strength and expertise to go fishing, are considered intelligent in their handling of money. The second part focuses on the merging of differences between men and women through the conjugal bond. Production of a household and the reproduction of a family are made possible only through the union of opposite, yet equal, genders. The final part qualifies this dominant discourse of gender harmony by looking at contexts where men and women come into conflict. Power struggles ensue between men and women where Hindu concepts of hierarchy or Catholic patriarchal ideologies modify ideals.
of gender equality and complementarity. The third section also includes the conclusion where the author takes the discussion full circle to theories of the gendered body to explicate how these do not fully account for the perspectives illustrated through her study.

This book is as much a rich portrayal of men and women engaged in the commonplace and humdrum activities of their lives as it is a compelling exploration of the limits to the concept of performance for an anthropology of gender. The analysis, however, is too centered on what Renato Rosaldo (1989) has called "cultural patterns." Especially when reading the first part of the book, which focuses on how gender plays out in the different trajectories mapped out for men and women, one wonders about the deviants, those on the margins, who for some reason fail to subscribe to norms of performance deemed suitable by dominant discourses in their community. What about the little girl who tries to catch fish? What about the little boy who prefers the fish-selling domain of his mother? The study would have been even more enlightening if it had taken into account the ways in which gender norms are at times subverted or challenged through alternative performances.

REFERENCE


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A welcome collection of Esther Newton’s research and personal essays, this book begins with Newton’s account of how reading Margaret Mead’s cultural relativist approach to gender and sexuality in Coming of Age in Samoa both eased her coming-out process and ignited her interest in anthropology. Mead’s voice provided solace during Newton’s gender nonconformist teenage years, reminding her that “everything is relative” and promising “other worlds, [other] possibilities than suburban California in the 1950s.” This volume traces the development of Newton’s anthropological and lesbian-feminist imagination, and it is divided into four parts that mark intersecting changes in her professional and personal identity—“Drag and Camp,” “Lesbian-Feminism,” “Butch,” and “Queer Anthropology.”

The first section includes excerpts from Newton’s early ethnographic work on drag queens in Chicago and Kansas City and gay and lesbian theater/performance art in Cherry Grove, an island resort community in New York. For historians of gay and lesbian culture, the most compelling contribution of Newton’s essays on drag and gay theater is her skillful analysis of gay male “camp” sensibility. She traces the relationship between this light, parodic theatrical style (a central element of the drag queen performances she observed) and the British tradition of censoring authentic representations of gay and lesbian lives. From a feminist perspective, however, the prize essay is a more recent piece that challenges the
assertions of queer theorists that lesbian forms of gender expression, whether butch-femme or drag (king), can be characterized as simply manifestations of lesbian participation in the camp and drag traditions introduced by gay men. Highlighting the importance of ethnographic inquiry into drag and camp, Newton argues that lesbian drag performances in the gay male-dominated theatrical culture of Cherry Grove were employed less as a campy subversion of gender roles and more “to destabilize male monopolies and to symbolize and constitute the power of the lesbian minority” (p. 66). Newton deftly demonstrates that queer “performance” theory alone cannot capture the power relations in which local gender performances are situated.

This collection sets a high standard for methodological reflexivity, feminist disclosure, and personal examination. The author grapples with erotically charged relationships with participants, the complexity of insider and/or outsider status as a closeted lesbian studying gay men in the 1960s, and the political and/or personal tensions between lesbian-feminist academics and their colleagues. The second section of the book focuses on feminist socialization and the ideological distance between feminism and other institutions, particularly academia. In an essay on feminist consciousness-raising groups, for example, Newton and Shirley Waltons compare feminist socialization to religious conversion. They argue that feminist conversion involves making sense of previously unexplained (or “unsocialized”) experiences and often involves symbolic “bridge-burning acts” that separate feminists from their prefeminist values and communities. In another essay with Waltons, in which the two writers exchange intimate journal entries, Newton extends the concept of “the closet” to account for the aspects of the self that are closeted in academia: “The closet stands for everything legislated out of academic life. The closet contains not only my homosexuality but also my aliveness, my integrity, my rebelliousness” (p. 149).

Newton’s artful ability to weave personal experience through sophisticated analyses of gender and sexuality is particularly evident in the third section of the book, boldly titled “Butch.” Included here is Newton and Walton’s provocative essay on the need for a “more precise sexual vocabulary” that distinguishes between erotic identity, erotic role, erotic acts, and sexual preference, each of which has been falsely conflated with gender identity. While this essay has offered a groundbreaking new schema for understanding sexual desire that both reflects and, I believe, now influences discourse within sadism/masochism communities, one of its most notable features is the authors’ entree into the subject matter: a story about their shared sexual experience and epiphanic discovery that they were sexually incompatible because they were both “tops.”

The fourth section explores academic homophobia and chronicles Newton’s painstaking efforts to confront homophobic colleagues. She also reflects on significant advances made by anthropologists who study gender and sexuality and who provide the evidence to support social constructionist theories of sexual identity.

This volume is both provocative and accessible enough to be used successfully in undergraduate courses on field methods, women’s movements, and gay and lesbian studies. It may also be a stimulating resource in a graduate course on professional socialization in anthropology or sociology. This book can serve as a compelling example of the epistemological complexities of feminist memoir projects. Newton’s work points to a particular set of white lesbian-feminist pleasures and problems and, unavoidably, leaves others unexplored. Overall, this book will be of benefit to anyone who is interested in queer and/or feminist ethnography.
and especially to scholars concerned with the relationship between content and context, method and identity.

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The staggering toll taken by America’s almost two-decade-long incarceration binge is by now starkly apparent. From 1986 (when the “war on drugs” was declared) to 1999, there has been a 119 percent increase in the rate at which we imprison our citizens. Less publicized has been the impact of these soaring incarceration rates on women. Although only 6 percent of the nation’s incarcerated population, women’s incarceration rate rose by 195 percent during this period. As Sandra Enos points out, this adds another dimension to the carnage wrought by the “war”; while most prisoners are parents, women are more likely than men to be primary caretakers of children. At prevailing incarceration rates, upwards of 230,000 children are currently separated from their mothers.

Enos’s aim is to shed light on the crucial question of who is providing care for these children and to explore how women maintain identities as mothers and “do” mothering from behind bars. To address these issues, she has interviewed 25 inmate mothers in one state prison for women. The result is an account whose strength lies not only in answering these questions but also in its attention to the fundamental role played by race in shaping paths to prison and the living situations of children of incarcerated mothers.

Enos’s central findings add to those of other studies, indicating that placements of children of incarcerated mothers vary systematically by race. White mothers typically had children living either with husbands or in foster care, while African American women almost invariably placed children with family, usually their mothers. The explanation for these differences lies in women’s accounts of how they came to be in prison and in culturally embedded and racialized ideas about families.

Drawing on Miller’s (1986) Street Woman, Enos finds that white women pursued the “runaway” path to prison. Separated from their families in their teens, often as a result of abuse, they turned to the streets and were introduced to crime by boyfriends. These circumstances mitigate against placement of children with their families. Ideas about child rearing play a role as well, however. White inmate mothers view their parents as having “paid their dues” in raising children and believe their mothers would see taking primary responsibility for their grandchildren as an unwelcome obligation. African American women became involved in crime through contacts with boyfriends and other relatives but were generally not estranged from their mothers, whom they described as having done the best they could to protect their daughters from the temptations of the street. In contrast to white women, African American inmate mothers came from communities with long traditions of shared child keeping, so placement with mothers or other family members was an obvious choice. Race is clearly an important factor, but class probably also matters, although it is not considered here. The white women interviewed came mostly from middle-class backgrounds, contexts
in which children may be much more likely to be evaluated as burdens than resources, even when voluntarily accepted.

Other chapters discuss how women manage challenges to their claims of identity as good mothers and their strategies for negotiating crime, drug use, and motherhood. This was one of the most frustrating sections of the book. Without providing any systematic analysis of the connections between drug use and crime for the women in her sample, Enos conflates crime with drug addiction; offenders seem to be, by definition, addicts. Although this has been an article of faith in the war on drugs, a substantial body of research contradicts this easy equation. Much crime is not driven by, or even connected to, drug use, as many of Enos’s cases demonstrate. Assuming, rather than critically examining, the link between drug use and crime simply reinforces the logic feeding the current epidemic of overincarceration. The book closes with practical recommendations derived from the findings, such as increasing support for both foster and family caretakers of children displaced from their homes through their mother’s incarceration.

There are some missing pieces here, such as the perspectives of these inmates’ children and their caregivers. Even so, this is an important work. Given that the incarceration binge shows few signs of abating, attention to these issues is long overdue. My hope is that this pathbreaking book will be joined by other research that will help to complete our picture of the connections between the lives of incarcerated women, their children, and our communities.

REFERENCE


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Ann Goetting has written a fascinating book that describes the life stories of 16 women who have been victimized by, and left, abusive men. The book examines the psychological nature and family backgrounds of the abusers and the victims, as well as sociological factors that contribute to abuse (such as culture or patriarchy). The impetus for the book was Goetting’s personal experiences in a family of abuse. Goetting states that she wrote the book because she wants people to understand battering so that it will stop happening.

The first chapter outlines some of the major research debates about battered women. Goetting describes previous studies that examine whether spouse abuse is mutual. Some researchers have argued that women abuse men as frequently as men abuse women. These researchers often use the Conflict Tactics Scale, a quantitative survey instrument that asks respondents to identify how they resolve conflict, typically with their spouse or partner. This measure has been used to argue that spousal abuse occurs equally as frequently between men and women. In concert with many scholars who study domestic violence, Goetting argues
that the Conflicts Tactics Scale is not a valid measure of mutual spouse abuse because it ignores context and de-emphasizes the reasons why people engage in physical conflict (e.g., self-defense vs. unprovoked physical abuse).

In addition to central debates in the domestic-violence literature, the first chapter describes the battering process. Goetting describes the typical battering man and typical victim. The battering man is often charismatic and caring. The victim often has low self-esteem and fears abandonment. The battering usually escalates simultaneously with increased intimidation and fear. According to Goetting, the ability to leave the abusive relationship is a process that can take several years. It typically begins with a personal catalyst or wake-up call, or an external catalyst such as a change in laws.

The strength of the book is the descriptions of the life stories of a culturally, socially, racially, and economically diverse sample of women. Goetting contacted women at abuse shelters and through personal friends. The sample includes economically and socially privileged women, which demonstrates that even highly educated women with resources can become involved with battering men. The women also were from diverse cultural backgrounds. One chapter describes the life story of Netiva, a woman who was raised in Israel and moved to the United States as an adult. Her social isolation from her familiar culture of origin indirectly contributed to her experiences of abuse. The stories show how abuse can be connected to many issues, including cultural beliefs of some ethnic groups and even eating disorders of victims. These stories indicate that context is paramount in understanding the experiences of these women, even though some of them have similar family backgrounds and are abused by similar types of men.

The book closes with a chapter written explicitly for battered women, including information on hot lines and agencies. In addition to describing methods for getting out of abusive relationships, Goetting discusses several improvements in the criminal justice system, such as the passage of stalking laws, and changes in health insurance policies, which used to list abuse as a lifestyle choice similar to smoking or skydiving.

Some scholars might be critical of the book for not conforming with the traditional scientific method. There are no hypotheses tested, nor are there any analytic interpretations of the respondents’ quotes. Despite what some academics might view as a limitation, the personal biographies of the women contained in this collection are rich in detail. They would be an excellent source for a course on violence against women. One could assign this book in an advanced undergraduate course or a graduate course and ask students to analyze why each woman was unique, why these women stayed in the abusive relationship, and how they were able to get out. Common themes and unique factors emerge when one approaches the collection of life stories in this way. Some women stay in these relationships because of early-childhood family issues (they either experienced or witnessed abuse in their family of origin), cultural beliefs about men and women’s appropriate marital roles, economic necessity, or fear of more damaging physical abuse. Some women were able to get out of the relationship after they attended self-esteem courses or obtained more education. This book is an excellent source for students or academics interested in gender, family, and domestic violence. It takes a compassionate approach to this social problem by describing the stories of 16 courageous women.

Motherloss is pathbreaking research not only because it deals with the neglected topic of death but also because it provides insights into how narrative analysis could reframe sociological research to better capture the reality and complexity of people’s lives. This book is based on a three-year study of 60 men and women who lost their mothers when they were 10 to 15 years old. By studying those who have lost the most from the traditional nuclear family structure, Davidman powerfully reveals the limitations of this structure and the consequences of Americans’ tendency to deny death.

Davidman begins her book with Sheryl’s narrative in which the experience of Palestinian women who “grieve with their entire body” is contrasted with her own experiences after her mother’s death. Sheryl, like most of Davidman’s respondents, was told little about her mother’s illness and death and was not encouraged to express her deep feelings of grief. Instead, she was encouraged to be strong and was told everything would be okay. This silence around death contributed to the sense of disorder that mother loss brought to the lives of most of these people and forced them to struggle on their own to create narratives that would restore a sense of order and a sense of self.

Since most of Davidman’s respondents were from families in which their mothers had been both the major caregiver and emotional teacher, they were left with a sense that their mothers were irreplaceable. Reading how most of these respondents found it difficult to receive adequate care as children and had little guidance expressing their grief powerfully reveals the limitations of the traditional nuclear family. In contrast, Darlene’s narrative of being raised in an African American extended family shows that mother loss need not be so traumatic. Because she was already skilled in caregiving and saw these tasks being shared by aunts and other extended family members, she described her transition to becoming a mother figure for her siblings as smooth and natural. While the limitations of traditional nuclear families are revealed through these narratives, the reader is not presented with clear alternatives. Although the breakdown of gender roles helps, as Davidman notes, it is unlikely that many families will adopt the extended family structure. Nor is it likely that most parents will give children greater adult responsibilities to ease a sudden transition into adulthood.

Davidman stresses the importance of narratives for helping people refashion their biographies and thereby reconfigure a sense of self following major life disruptions. However, since story lines for death were not provided by religious or other societal traditions, most of her respondents had to develop their own scripts. This led to some interesting variations in personal narratives. Where some respondents reacted to multiple early losses with an increased sense of depression, others told how multiple losses provided an avenue for growth and a greater sense of peace through the acknowledgment of deep feelings.

More important, most of the stories she heard differed from a linear model of Western success in which people move beyond the disruption of their mother’s death. Instead, the memories of early loss resurfaced especially as other deaths, births, and major events recreated a sense of longing and required a continual reconfiguration of their sense of order and sense of self. These nonlinear narratives also helped respondents to integrate the seemingly contradictory outcomes of their mother’s death. For example, many spoke of having a greater need for caring from others as adults, as well as feeling more independent and capable of relying on their own resources.
Davidman succeeds well in her goals of bringing deeper emotions into academic discourse, breaking down boundaries between private and public domains, and breaking down boundaries between academic disciplines. In particular, she hopes that this study will be a model for enriching social sciences with methods and perspectives of the humanities, and indeed it is. Her analysis of narratives as both cyclical and multidimensional provides key insights into better ways to capture the complexity and richness of human experience. Current social science methods often presuppose a linear mode of data collection and analysis, while her flexible approach to narrative interviewing allowed nonlinear experiences to emerge. The narratives she presents integrate fragmentary experiences and contradictory outcomes in a way that better captures the complexity of human life.

In summary, Davidman’s book provides social scientists with an excellent model of how to study people in more humanistic modes. She also provides social scientists from many substantive areas with an example of how to better understand social issues by studying those who had the most to lose from current arrangements. This type of approach may require the depth of courage demonstrated by Davidman in facing the difficult emotions surrounding loss and disruptive events, but the outcomes of such work will surely add to the depth and richness of our understanding of human experience.

DONNA EDER
Indiana University


Celebrating the Family: Ethnicity, Consumer Culture, and Family Rituals. By Elizabedt Pleck. Boston: Harvard University Press, 2000, 328 pp., $55.00 (cloth), $22.95 (paper).


These three volumes, all fine works of social history (the first two by historians, the third by a sociologist), cover the period from colonial America to the present. While they represent three diverse foci, their content overlaps in a manner supporting and verifying the data and conclusions drawn by all these authors. All three volumes make crystal clear the importance of the hierarchal structure of gender associated with the American family until the end of the twentieth century.

In Public Vows, Nancy F. Cott masterfully shows how public authority has shaped the institutions of marriage and family. It does this through the immediate community of kin, friends, and neighbors whose approval and disapproval are keenly felt; by the actions of state legislators and judges who define and set the terms of marriage and divorce; and through the laws and policies of the federal government that provide incentives and disincentives to specific marriage forms and practices.

After reading this book, I became far more aware of how “public” definitions and constraints have shaped this institution we think of as “private.” I am also more aware of how
those public definitions were shaped by diverse national power struggles, such as conflicts with Native Americans, the Civil War and its economic aftermath, the Mormon challenge to monogamy, and the control of the flow of immigration. The U.S. system of gender relies on the structure of marriage, and thus marriage has been powerful in shaping the entitlements and obligations of men and women. For example, coverture (the legal doctrine of marital unity denying personhood to the wife) was the civil ideal upheld by courts and federal law. Indeed, policies and values about marital hierarchy have been integrated with policies and values about citizenship and voting rights in American society. In short, Cott reveals the history of marriage as a public institution and shows how the proper form of marriage and its necessity have been embedded in national policy choices and political rhetoric.

*Celebrating the Family* traces the development of family rituals (especially birth, coming of age, marriage, and death) and holidays (specifically Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, Chinese New Year, and Passover) through the nation’s first 200 years. Most U.S. holidays, as now practiced, were Victorian inventions, rather than evolving from earlier centuries. Pleck provides extremely detailed descriptions of the evolution of family celebrations during three periods of change, and her account of these rituals is especially sensitive to the experience of the poor, single people, gays, ethnic groups, and others on the margin. In colonial times, holidays were carnivalesque and tended toward rowdy, cathartic release. There was little attention to ritual, and these affairs were public and community events. As people needed to affirm the values of domestic warmth, intimacy, and family affection, the sentimental holiday emerged as the Victorian ideal. The nurturing wife and mother was at the center and carried most of the responsibility for these family celebrations. These rituals celebrating home and family served as a display of status and wealth. After World War I, and especially after the 1960s, celebrations began to move outside the home, reflecting a postsentimental attitude. Changes in women’s roles, ethnic group consciousness, the development of a consumer culture, and increasing popular entertainment all supported this shift.

In *Black Working Wives*, Bart Landry develops a specific idea about middle-class Black culture. Decades before the white feminist movement, middle-class Black wives initiated what became the late-twentieth-century white feminist ideal of combining domestic and employment roles, thus creating more egalitarian marriages. He indicates the headline story about families should not be an increase in single parents, a high divorce rate, or the postponement of marriage and increasing cohabitation. These trends have not transformed the two-parent family system, but changing gender roles within the family have done so.

In this book, Landry provides a superb history of the Black family that once again dispels notions of matriarchy and instability. In building his case, Landry must traverse old ground, establishing (1) that 75 percent of Black families during slavery and 90 percent during emancipation were headed by two parents, (2) the desire of Blacks for legal marriage because it was also associated with citizenship entitlements (as indicated in *Public Vows* as well), (3) the difficulty of Black women in preserving sexual virtue in the face of the attitudes and behaviors of white slave owners, and (4) the preferences of Black working-class women for working at home (by taking in laundry or boarders) to escape the oppressive and demeaning work available outside the home.

The author’s point is that most Black women had to work. Middle-class Black women, especially, unlike the early white feminist reformers, embraced a favorable view of working women and their professional aspirations. Black middle-class women fashioned a competing ideology that supported the needs of an oppressed Black community and their own
desires for gender equality by developing a consciousness of themselves as competent and influential. In 1940, 4 of 10 Black middle-class wives (compared with 2 of 10 white middle-class wives) worked; in 1960, 60 percent were employed (compared with 38 percent of white middle-class wives); and by 1994, this number was 86 percent (compared with 76 percent of white middle-class wives).

These scholarly historical reviews dovetail with one another in a supportive fashion. All three bring us to a new and revolutionary present. Cott tells us that by the 1980s, the states and the nation had lost their grip on the institution of marriage. The new contractual emphasis moved understandings of marriage toward the private side. One of the most significant legal signs of change was the downfall of the marital rape exemption. Dissolving this privilege of the husband eliminated a historically central feature of marriage and laws associated with the ideal of marital unity.

Pleck describes the growth of postsentimental attitudes in rituals and holidays that grew in part from the overburdened women who produced them. As these celebrations increasingly move outside the home, the service industry takes over women’s work. These changes result from the social and sexual revolutions, increasing divorce, growth in cohabitation, and the willingness of women to bear and rear children alone.

Landry points out that middle-class Black women have not shared white women’s preference for remaining at home. Now, when the great majority of families are dual-earner families, there are still three major obstacles, he says, to uniting men and women in both home and work spheres. These include an outdated philosophical approach to child care, a corporate culture that has viewed work as the domain of married men, and the reluctance of husbands/fathers to compensate for their wives’ movement into the labor force with increased effort in the arena of the home.

The detailed histories of marriage as a public institution controlled by political power and rhetoric; of family rituals and holiday celebrations that emphasized the traditional family structure but shifted with its changes; and of the role of the Black family (especially Black middle-class wives) in providing the model for the more egalitarian, two-earner family represent sound scholarship. These books are important reading for any family scholar.

DANA VANNOY
University of Cincinnati, Emerita


Harrell’s book is not a traditional academic volume; it reads more like an interesting set of stories about three different women. Based on life-history interviews, the stories relate the experiences and perceptions of three spouses of junior enlisted Army men. Their stories depict the everyday life circumstances of these women, but they are not placed within any context of past research or academic literature. The three women included are part of a larger sample of junior enlisted Army wives that Harrell interviewed for her dissertation. Chapter 1 discusses the rationale used in selecting the location for the original interviews. There is no information provided about the demographic characteristics of the individuals in the complete sample. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 present the stories of the three women in their own words.
Chapter 5 summarizes each story briefly and discusses why Harrell believes these women’s experiences epitomize those of all junior Army wives.

The stories are very poignant and paint a picture of the challenges faced by young couples confronting the reality of the Army bureaucracy. The pay for junior enlisted members is extremely low. On top of that, spouses have difficulty contributing to family income because military bases are often located in economically depressed areas where it is difficult to find jobs, much less jobs that pay more than the minimum wage. Furthermore, because military members are frequently moved to different installations, spouses develop the intermittent labor force patterns associated with low pay and few (if any) benefits. Both the military member and the spouse are typically young and have only a high school education. Dana’s story in particular reflects the problems of many junior enlisted Army families—financial difficulties associated with low family incomes combined with high debt. These problems are compounded by the fact that military stations are far away from the family support structures that are available to civilian couples in similar situations. Finally, their husbands are often deployed on temporary duty assignments, leaving the women on their own to manage the house, take care of babies, and handle any crises that occur.

In the last chapter, Harrell suggests that the book has “implications for military leaders and policymakers concerned with the military programs and institutions that serve or affect the junior enlisted community” (p. 109). She then comments that she cannot make any recommendations because there are no solutions that will fit all members of the military community. If she cannot make any recommendations after extensive research, it seems unlikely that military leaders and policy makers will be able to come up with any after reading the three stories presented in the book. Perhaps placing the three stories into the larger context of her interviews would have helped. I could not help wondering what proportion of her larger sample had the same experiences as the women about whom I was reading. Using the extensive amount of research available on military members and their families could help readers understand why the three women Harrell selected are good choices to represent the situation of junior enlisted wives. Since she has not framed the women’s stories in these larger perspectives, the substance of the interviews is likely to be lost.

Despite the lack of a larger framework to give broader meaning to the interviews, Harrell’s book will capture readers’ interest. The women whose experiences appear in the book tell an important story about their everyday lives in the military community. The stories are quite moving and give voice to women too often ignored.

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