

Sociological Focus

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North Central Sociological Association
Presidential Address
Micro Lessons for the Macro World
Robert Shelly

Reflections on Teaching: North Central
Sociological Association 2008 John F.
Schnabel Lecture
Notes on Biography and History: All You
Really Need
Jay Weinstein

Research Note
Religious Affiliation and Poverty
Explanations: Individual, Structural, and
Divine Causes
Ted M. Brimeyer

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Workers
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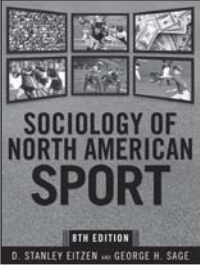
North Central Sociological Association
Presidential Address
Micro Lessons for the Macro World 201
Robert Shelly

Reflections on Teaching: North Central
Sociological Association 2008 John F.
Schnabel Lecture
Notes on Biography and History:
All You Really Need 215
Jay Weinstein

Research Note
Religious Affiliation and Poverty
Explanations: Individual, Structural,
and Divine Causes 226
Ted M. Brimeyer

Personal Brand in Online Advertisements:
Comparing White and Brazilian
Male Sex Workers 238
Voon Chin Phua and Allison Caras

Deploying for Deliverance: The Digital Divide
in Municipal Wireless Networks 256
Andrea Tapia and Julio Angel Ortiz



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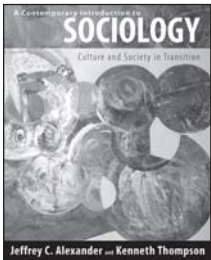
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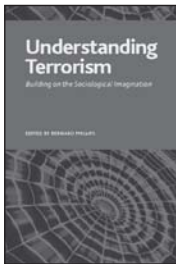
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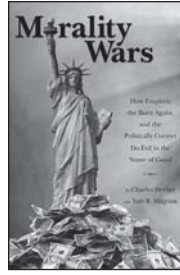
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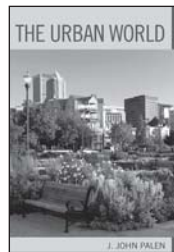
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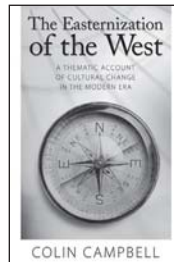
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North Central Sociological Association Presidential Address: Micro Lessons for the Macro World

*Robert Shelly**
Ohio University

Microsociological studies employ a variety of techniques to examine relationships between social actors. Some of these studies focus on real-world situations and strive for high levels of face validity. Others focus on abstract social situations and strive for theoretical validity. This paper examines three areas of research that employ the latter approach to identify theoretical principles that produce valuable insights about real-world issues. Illustrations of the principles are presented as examples of the value of abstract, theoretical, experimental work in understanding events in the “real” world.

One of my mentors tells the story of reading Marx’s *Das Kapital* as a high school student and deciding to become a sociologist based on the experience. I can claim no such lofty introduction to the study of social inequality, though two early experiences contributed to my later development as a sociologist. When I was in high school, Vance Packard, a 1950s social critic, published *The Status Seekers* (1961). This book described in not very flattering terms how people in our society were engaged in status competitions with their neighbors to have the biggest and best house, car, boat, and other consumer goods. (For all you youngsters out there, this was before color TV, the Internet, cell phones, and iPods.) At the same time I was reading this work, my father shared the fact that his parents and sister were portrayed in a novel written by one of his high school classmates. *Whistle Stop* (1941) by Maritta Wolff contained a description of the snooty family who lived at the top of the big hill in town and their snobbish daughter—not a very flattering portrait of my grandparents and aunt. What this pair of experiences did was sensitize me to issues of social inequality at the local level, that is, in face-to-face social contact.

It took a few years, but I eventually turned these early experiences into a career-long interest in the study of social inequality in microsettings. I do not know whether I fell into the abstract approach because I realized that who had the flashiest car or biggest

*This manuscript was prepared as the presidential address for the annual meeting of the NCSA, which met in Cincinnati, Ohio, in March 2008. I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Steve Carlton-Ford for constructing Figure 2 from some very poor notes. The editorial staff of *Sociological Focus* has also provided thoughtful and helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay. I am very appreciative of their contributions. For more information, please send e-mail to shelly@ohio.edu.

boat and the meaning of which car and boat could change overnight or because of some intellectual insight that these were transient. (Does anyone still drive a Packard or an Edsel and expect to impress the neighbors?) I became interested in abstractions of these situations. To capture what I feel is important about such studies, I want to focus on some deceptively simple questions and answers. These will illustrate the value of understanding principles that allow us to predict outcomes from knowledge of structural arrangements between actors in a social situation. Some points must be made here before we proceed. First, actors are unitary (Berger, Eyre, and Zelditch 1989). This means that no matter how many are present in the situation as members of one group, it is possible to represent the group as a single entity and that aggregation may mean that we treat members of political parties, business firms, and nation states as if they are one actor. Second, it is necessary to carefully specify precisely what sort of situation we are analyzing. These points have become known as the “identification of scope” and “initial conditions” in experimental social psychology. Finally, we need to recognize that manifestations of different cultural meanings may have similar explanations in the sense that social structural similarities may affect behavior in similar ways. A variety of situations may be analyzed with these points in mind. My focus is on situations that involve the allocation and distribution of resources and how these allocations and distributions of power and status affect behavior in small-scale social settings.

Now the deceptively simple questions I want to pose:

1. Why do parliaments in multiparty systems often produce situations in which governments are fragile?
2. Do you want your boss on the jury? This question actually has several parts. How do inequalities in face-to-face interaction develop? How do people communicate advantages and disadvantages when interacting? Can we reduce these inequalities?
3. How does power manifest itself in exchange networks? What implications does this have for globalization?

I have pursued each of these questions in my research career. Two of them were dead ends for me, and one has been the focus of most of my research.

FRAGILE GOVERNMENTS

In the late 1950s and for about a decade and a half, interest flourished in the study of coalitions in small groups. The work focused on how different resource arrangements in groups of participants who were playing a game might produce different outcomes. This was the subject of my master's thesis research (Shelly 1968). Briefly, participants in these studies had resources that allowed them to move toward a goal at different rates. Different distributions of resources produced different outcomes. For instance, if one of the participants had sufficient resources to dominate the others or exercise veto rights, this person generally resisted pleas from others to join coalitions and won the race to the goal. On the other hand, if two of the participants could

form a coalition and defeat the third, even though the third possessed the plurality of resources, they frequently did so.

Figure 1 presents these different sets of initial conditions. In the situation where one position commands enough resources to exercise veto rights, the formation of coalitions is not effective. In the situation where no position has veto rights and coalitions can assemble enough resources to win against an actor with a plurality of resources, then coalitions are common and effective.

A. Situations where one actor can veto the action of others:

$$A > B > C \text{ and } A > (B + C)$$

B. Situations where coalitions can overcome the plurality of resources:

$$A > B > C \text{ and } A < (B + C)$$

Figure 1. Distribution of Resources in Groups and the Likelihood of Coalitions

Studies by Vinacke and his colleagues (Chaney and Vinacke 1961; Vinacke and Arkoff 1957), Caplow (1956, 1959), Psathas and Stryker (1965), and Gamson (1961a, 1961b) identified the very simple principles at work in these situations. Before we get to the punch line, we need to discuss the scope and initial conditions of the situation. As scope conditions, we posit that actors are pursuing a goal, only some of them can reach the goal, they know the distribution of resources, and they know how many resources are needed to reach the goal. Initial conditions include the distribution of resources among the actors and rules about how to form a coalition, such as how to contact potential partners, negotiate, and seal the deal. In retrospect, these sound simple in the sense that the ideas are easily identified, and research questions are easy to formulate based on these initial conditions. For instance, what role does the distribution of resources play? Do contact rules matter? How are negotiations structured? Do “weak” members benefit when they can ensure a win? How robust are coalitions? In other words, is it possible to alienate someone from a winning coalition? If it is, what does an actor have to offer to break an initial deal?

Sounds like a research career in the making, does it not? Well, sort of. Gamson’s work appeared before I completed my thesis work, and, in rapid succession, two books by sociologists demonstrated that this was an area that had no future for a budding scholar with an interest in the abstract principles. Theodore Caplow’s *Two Against One* (1968) answered almost all of the questions posed above in discursive form. Richard and Lynn Ofshe (1970) published *Utility and Choice in Social Interaction* and addressed the formal and abstract issues untouched by Caplow. As a result of this pair of blows to the ego, it became apparent that research opportunities were limited for a sociologist with an experimental interest in analyzing distributions of power and its effects on subgroup formation. It would be possible to study multiparty parliaments searching

for conditions where the research results from the laboratory applied such as multi-party parliaments, and perhaps even apply the ideas in two party legislatures, but the basic principles were known and conditions under which vulnerabilities developed were understood.

Now for the punch line from the study of coalitions in the laboratory. The principle at work, when you do not control a majority of resources, is captured by the line "strength is weakness." This is a very simple paradox defined by the initial conditions imposed by the distribution of resources, and it leads to some interesting consequences. First, if you have more resources than a potential partner, but not enough to exercise a veto, you will have to give up more than your "fair share" to ensure a coalition to defeat the most advantaged member. Second, it is possible to fracture a winning coalition, if you are willing to give up even more of your resources to entice a defection. Third, people learn who is a reliable coalition partner and who is not. All of these results come from studies of three or four persons in group settings playing simple games, but the principles are applicable in many parliamentary and legislative systems and some alliance structures between nation states.

Real-world applications are visible in parliaments every day. The Israeli Knesset notoriously gives more power to fringe political parties in the form of ministerial appointments and voting rights. This is to ensure that winning coalitions can be formed with one of the two major parties who never seem to win enough seats to form a government. The Italian Parliament is unstable to the point of being dysfunctional, because parties switch coalitions regularly. In the United States Congress, voting blocks based on coalitions mobilized around particularized local interests have kept the pork barrel system intact, even though both major parties recognize the detrimental effects the system has on the level of public trust and the actual ability of government to carry out effective national policy. Each of these examples is a manifestation of the "strength is weakness" principle. In each case, a majority is possible only with two or more actors (parties or voting blocs) forming a coalition, the actors have to agree on the division of rewards whether the reward is a ministry or a road to nowhere, and coalitions can be fractured if the offer made to entice defection is good enough. Each of these points can be identified in the laboratory studies of coalition formation. An implicit remedy is also present in these laboratory studies: election systems with majority results needed to form a government and discipline to hold the group together as a unified actor solve the problem created by "strength is weakness" in plural political systems.

DO YOU WANT YOUR BOSS ON THE JURY?

This question is important because it embodies many issues we face in everyday life. Relative status and how it is enacted in groups that are solving tasks has important effects in a wide range of social situations. For instance, we know that persons who are well educated, or occupy high social position in society, or who are male, or of European origin are more likely to affect jury decisions about guilt and innocence than

are persons who are not well educated, occupy low social positions, are female, or of African origin. How does this occur? Why does society accept these as reasonable and appropriate? Why do the incumbents in disadvantaged positions accept these social facts as much as those in positions of advantage? How do people signal their relative standing in the group? Are we able to overcome these invidious distinctions with social interventions? I have spent most of my career working on these questions.

First, the early work on how actors interact in groups provides an important foundation for the theoretical understanding of these problems. The major advances here are based in the work of scholars who began studying social interaction near the end of World War II. Robert F. Bales and his students at Harvard provided the major impetus for this work in two distinct venues. Bales himself developed many of the early techniques in his studies of groups of Harvard undergraduates and reported on them in *Interaction Process Analysis* (1950). Fred Strodbeck (Strodbeck, James, and Hawkins 1958; Strodbeck and Mann 1956) and his collaborators applied these ideas to the study of juries, and Joseph Berger (1958) developed them further in his study of groups of homogeneous undergraduates at Harvard.

The work eventually led to the development of expectation states theory and the research program associated with it (cf. Wagner and Berger 2002). The theory has been extensively tested, revised, retested, and found to be a powerful predictor of behavior in task groups with varying goals and of varying size. I am particularly interested in discussing three research topics within this tradition. First, what processes are at work to create interaction differences in face-to-face groups? This topic has fascinated me since I read Fisek and Ofshe's 1970 article on this topic (Fisek and Ofshe 1970). Second, what mechanisms do we employ to communicate our relative social standing to others during social interaction? This question is blatantly the issue in Packard's *The Status Seekers* (1961) and has become the focus of substantial research in recent years. Finally, can we overcome the invidious distinctions based on membership in social categories that are treated as status characteristics in society? This work has been the focus of the late Elizabeth Cohen and her collaborators (cf. Cohen and Lotan 1997). In the interest of brevity, I will address each of these questions only briefly.

The answer to the first question is deceptively simple in one sense and enormously complex in another. The simple part of the answer is that socially labeled attributes such as one's sex, race, or occupation are assessed by other members of a group in a comparison process, and expectations for future activity are based on these comparisons. The cultural meanings assigned to these attributes are "status characteristics" and are instantiated in a group of people interacting with one another. Individuals with advantages are expected to be more proficient at the group task, and those who are not advantaged are expected to be less proficient at the task. These expectations are acted out in the group. If I am in a group with members of groups who have advantages over me, say the president of the university, I defer, because I expect that he will contribute more valuable ideas to solving the group task than I will. Similarly, if I am working with our building janitor, I am likely to think I will make better contributions if we stay away from his areas of expertise. In both instances, each of the individuals will accept this state of affairs as will I, and the pattern will persist. This

process occurs in groups with membership that has heterogeneous properties—that is, there is a distribution of status characteristics tied to members of the group (Fisek, Berger, and Norman 1991).

In groups with homogeneous membership, the process is much more complex. In such groups, members interact with one another and form expectations on the basis of evaluations of the contributions of other members of the group. This is also a comparison process, but it is based on performance rather than preexisting differences. My contributions are compared to the contributions of others, with the reflected appraisals of my contributions forming the basis for expectations about future performance. The expectations developed in these initially homogeneous groups lead to interaction inequalities that are every bit as robust as those in the case of heterogeneous groups. What is also interesting is that this process may occur as quickly as in heterogeneous groups, members willingly accept this state of affairs, and the patterns persist over time (Shelly and Troyer 2001).

Thus far we have identified how inequality is established in a group. How is it communicated to others as the group interacts? One way this happens is by means of status cues (Berger, Webster, Ridgeway, and Rosenholtz 1986). These are covertly and overtly expressed symbols that include a variety of behaviors. Covert cues are expressive cues and may be thought of as messages given off. Overt cues are indicative cues and may be thought of as messages given. For instance, we can identify a number of expressive cues associated with a particular position in social ranking systems. Such cues may include how one sits at the table, looks at the other person while talking or listening (Dovidio, Brown, Heltman, Ellyson, and Keating 1988), what vocabulary one uses (Nath 2007), how complex the ideas presented in speeches are (Shelly and Shelly 2004), or how one decorates one's home for the holidays (Shelly and Shelly 2008). Each of these acts symbolizes a claim for status given off to others in the situation. The concept explains very well the process that Packard was highlighting in *The Status Seekers* with his discussion of bigger, fancier houses, automobiles, and boats. Actors may not even be aware they are giving off such cues.

Indicative cues, on the other hand, are deliberate statements on the part of actors to assert a status claim. Statements about professional qualifications, occupational position, or claimed knowledge are examples of this type of behavior. Often, they are explicit pleas for standing in the group. For example, statements such as “I am a physician” or “I know about complexity models of social systems” are assertions about an occupational role and knowledge respectively. They may or may not be successful in asserting status, but they are clearly claims for status in a group setting. Indeed, an interesting research question may arise if we consider the possibility that such cues may not succeed when presented by someone who has relatively low social standing—as was related by Professor Shari Diamond of the Northwestern University Law School (2007) in a presentation at Ohio University in May 2007. Professor Diamond studies jury deliberations and related a story about one jury that was deliberating a suit based on a claim from an injury received in an automobile crash. The juror, a woman, said “I am a nurse, I know about this injury, and there is no way this occurred as a result of the accident.” The jury still found for the plaintiff in this case. The moral

of the story is that we still do not understand fully how indicative verbal cues may interact with clearly visible status characteristics in group settings to affect interaction and influence.

This last example provides a nice transition to a discussion of how invidious inequalities based on socially evaluated categorical attributes, or diffuse status characteristics, may be reduced. We have had a basic understanding of how to accomplish this for about twenty-five years (Pugh and Wahrman 1983, Wagner, Ford, and Ford 1986). Unfortunately, for our sociological sensibilities, this early work showed that lower status persons have to outperform higher status persons on the group task to overcome disadvantages of occupying the low status positions in society. This means women have to outperform men, African-Americans have to outperform European Americans, and so forth. This state of affairs is not quite so bleak as we may think, however.

Research conducted by Elizabeth Cohen and her collaborators (cf. Cohen and Lotan 1997) has demonstrated the fact that expanding the number of roles in a group, emphasizing the importance of multiple abilities, and distributing roles across members of the group to create “level” playing fields reduces the impact of categorical attributes on interaction inequality as measured by participation in the group discussion and influence. Additional evidence that the nature of the task may have some impact on how important diffuse status characteristics are in establishing interaction inequality in task groups has also been reported recently (Chizhik, Alexander, Chizhik, and Goodman 2003, Goar and Sell 2005). There is also anecdotal and experimental evidence (Hopcroft 2006) that the importance of race and gender as categorical indicators of inequality is declining in the larger society, though not sufficiently to reduce discrimination based on them.

To provide an answer to the question I began this section with, “Do you want your boss on the jury?” the answer is that “it depends.” It depends on who else is on the jury in terms of comparative social standing in the larger society. If your boss is advantaged with respect to other members, then he or she is likely to be more successful in persuading the jury. If the indicative and expressive cues given off by your boss, such as appeals to specific expertise, the use of formal words, complex sentences, and use of space at the table are consistent with a high status claim, then your boss is more likely to be successful in persuading the jury. And, finally, the complexity of the task and its subdivision into complex parts may lead to your boss being “more equal” in the eyes of other jurors. Under these circumstances, the quality of the argument takes on more value. All of these points assume that your boss is likely to favor you in the deliberations. If not, then, no, you do not want your boss on the jury as he or she will be persuasive.

WHO MAKES A GOOD TRADING PARTNER?

Twenty years ago an article by Barry Markovsky, David Willer, and Travis Patton (1988) caught my attention. They analyzed the structure of exchanges in social networks of varying size and shape. The work identified what have come to be known as

negatively connected strong and weak power structures and predicted the outcomes of negotiations between individual incumbents in the various positions. A bit earlier, work by Cook and Emerson (1978) had focused on exchanges involving reciprocity, instead of negotiation, in weak power structures. Figure 2 contains examples of the two types of networks. In negatively connected networks, only one exchange is allowed per cycle or round. In such networks, choosing a deal with B_1 means that A cannot agree to a deal with B_2 in the same cycle of exchange. In the strong power network, individuals who choose to engage in an exchange with one person from the A position are able to accumulate large reward advantages as a consequence of being able to play off weaker individuals against one another. This competitive advantage may be exercised within rounds of negotiation or across rounds.

As I read this article, I experienced an epiphany. My “Aha!” moment” led me to think this was a very succinct explanation for world systems theory (Wallerstein 1974, 1980, 1989), which was then enjoying a large following as an explanation for trade advantages enjoyed by developed countries at the expense of the less developed. One did not need to understand economic change, agricultural policy and technology, ethnic and racial policy, or any other cultural tool of historical explanation. It was sufficient to simply draw the network and determine whether it was a strong or weak power, whether positions were negatively or positively connected, and, consequently, whether multiple exchange was prohibited or allowed. Strong power networks beget unequal trade. Weak power networks beget equal trade. The effects are stronger in negatively connected networks than in positively connected networks.

Explaining social change in international trade became deceptively simple. One either acquired new trade partners to expand the network and create a weak power network from the previously instanced strong power network or altered the terms of exchange from negative to positive connection, so that exchange could take place with multiple partners at the same time. I offer some tentative revisionist history to illustrate the points. For instance, the American revolution succeeded because the colonies were able to establish commercial and political ties with the French and Dutch as a result of diplomatic efforts of Adams, Franklin, and others—no need to lionize George Washington or ascribe the failure of the British military effort to bad command or the debt problems of the British Crown (Li 1996).

A nomothetic explanation for profound changes in social and political history was at hand. In addition to explaining the American revolution, the theory also had the capacity to explain the success of Lincoln and the United States in suppressing the Confederacy. Grant was not necessarily a better general than Lee. Lincoln was able to enforce the blockade and keep cotton from reaching Britain. Rather than force the Union to fight a two-front war, British industrialists developed cotton production in Egypt, effectively creating a new trading partner and altering a strong power network that favored the American South as a supplier of cotton to a weak power network that disadvantaged the South, even after the war. Although these analyses have not been pursued by Willer and his collaborators, they have explored the collapse of the Roman Empire (Simpson and Willer 2002) and the ability of the Medici family to

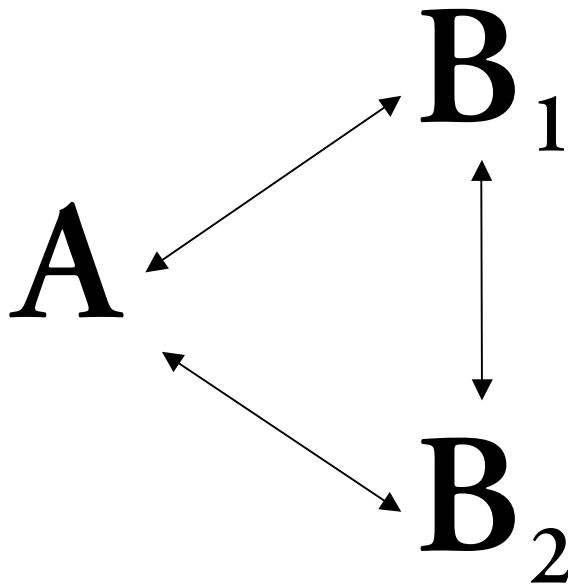
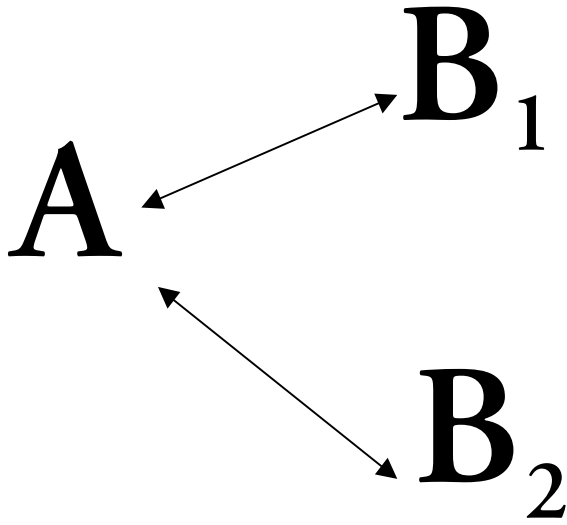


Figure 2. A strong power network (upper figure) and a weak power network (lower figure): Only one exchange is allowed per exchange cycle in each network.

control the politics of Renaissance Florence through marital alliances (Corra and Willer 2002).

Based on this reading, I was emboldened to attempt an analysis of the collapse of the Warsaw Pact based on the principles applied in the analysis of collapse of the Roman Empire. Simpson and Willer identified a key element in the collapse of Rome as the alteration of the client relationship maintained by Rome with its conquered border societies. In its period of success, Rome was able to maintain a strong power relation with these border populations so they would protect the border with a minimum of Roman resources and actually send resources to Rome. As Rome became overextended, the ability to enforce these exchange patterns declined and the border societies looked to others as exchange partners. These others were able to alienate exchange relations from Rome and toward themselves, weakening the border insurance enjoyed by Rome. In other words, the strong power network became a weak power network and created a disadvantage for those in the center. As resource flows declined, Rome became vulnerable to external pressures and eventually succumbed to internal pressure and invasion.

This seemed to be a very strong model to apply to the collapse of the Warsaw Pact. Identifying the actors and the structure of the network was not a problem. Each of the Warsaw Pact nations was well known and the exchange patterns early in its history were easy to identify. This was a strong power network advantaging the Soviet Union. Resources flowed to Moscow out of proportion to Moscow's contributions to the economies of the Pact nations. If the analysis were to be successful, it required that I be able to trace flows of goods and services between the various members of the network. If Simpson and Willer were correct, at some point in the economic history of the Warsaw Pact I would be able to identify an inflection point when trade outside the Pact increased and trade inside, especially with the Soviet Union, declined. Identifying this point, and any lags associated with it, would provide important evidence about the collapse of alliances based on coercive exchange—as well as serve as an interesting and timely case study. At least this is what I thought.

Unfortunately, there are no good data available in the public arena that assesses trade flows for the Soviet Union or Warsaw Pact for the Cold War era. I naively thought that reliable international trade data would be available for this period. As far as I can determine, they do not exist in any easily accessible form. This excursion ended with a full file of material in my office, but no completed project.

To return to the question I began with: Who makes a good trade partner? It depends on your position in the network, who your neighbors are, how the neighbors are connected to one another, and the rules of the exchange. If you are in a powerful position, such as A in the strong network in Figure 2, you want to trade with weak members of the network. Your returns will be greatest in this situation if the network is also negatively connected. If you are in a weak position in a strong power network, hope for a pliant neighbor; you need an ally. Identifying and exchanging with such an individual can facilitate a redefinition of the relationship with the powerful position. If you are in a weak power or positively connected network, all you need is a willing partner. There may be better deals out there, but you can often do well maintaining an established relationship with a willing partner.

Work is just beginning on questions of accumulation of resources in complex networks in which actors have multiple ties with superordinate and subordinate entities (Willer 2003). Although the structure of the network and the nature of exchange have proved to be very powerful analytic tools, understanding how accumulated resources may be translated into advantages in such a network is an exciting new area of investigation, an area that has the capacity to identify and pose questions that require answers as a consequence of the emergence of highly mobile capital in recent years. For instance, the United States has developed a substantial outflow of capital to developing economies in recent years. This has concentrated in two societies: China and India. The extent to which these countries are able to absorb this resource transfer and employ it in negotiations with other states in the world economy is an intriguing problem. It may be that American capital will indirectly contribute to the economic development of vast stretches of Africa as the Chinese and Indians invest in these societies. Understanding answers to the research questions thus posed in the small group laboratory may be much easier than addressing them in the “real world.”

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I wish to conclude this address with two comments. First it is important that I recognize individuals who have contributed to my development as a researcher. Joseph Berger and Murray Webster became research mentors and collaborators in the mid-1980s as I was developing the series of investigations that focus on how various forms of social structures affect the development of inequality in interaction hierarchies in task groups. Their intellectual contributions to my work are substantial, and I am extremely grateful for their assistance and support. David Willer has also been a source of inspiration and good conversations about his work. We may not see eye to eye, but his insights and ideas are much appreciated. Finally, I want to recognize the contributions of my wife, Ann, to the recent work on status cues and their importance in the development and expression of inequality in microsocial settings. Her insight and comments have contributed substantially to our recent work. She is truly helping to “drive the bus” of our research collaboration.

The second point I want to make is that abstract, theoretically motivated work has great potential to help us understand real-world problems. The potential contributions of the research trajectories I have outlined are due to the cumulative understanding developed from such research programs. Although sociologists have debated whether or not the discipline has cumulative knowledge, or is even capable of it, I have been pleased to be a part of the development of three such success stories in the field (cf. Berger, Willer, and Zelditch 2005 for a discussion of cumulative theory). Although two of them were personal dead ends in the sense that I did not contribute to the accumulating knowledge, each of the three has important contributions to make to the discipline and to the value of the field to the larger society.

To summarize the substance of this essay: (1) strength is weakness if you do not have a majority of the votes in a democratic system, (2) you can overcome disadvantages if

you are better than the advantaged person *or* if you expand the attributes on which rankings are based, and finally (3) who you can trade with and the rules of negotiation are powerful determinants of history.

Robert Shelly is Professor of Sociology at Ohio University. He has investigated inequality in social interaction throughout his career and is continuing investigations on cues employed by persons that are instances of subordination and superordination. His research has appeared in *Sociological Focus*, *Sociological Perspectives*, *Current Research in Social Psychology*, and *Social Psychology Quarterly*.

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Reflections on Teaching: North Central Sociological Association 2008 John F. Schnabel Lecture: Notes on Biography and History: All You Really Need

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CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

I want to begin by thanking our teaching award committee chair, Kathy Rowell, for the very kind, and largely undeserved, introduction. And, of course, my sincere gratitude goes to the NCSA, the fine organization over which I will be presiding this year, for selecting me for the award. As I told the selection committee, I cannot, in good conscience, take personal credit for the achievements recognized by the award. This is not the result of false modesty or some perverse form of self-deprecation. Rather, it is because I have been lucky enough to have learned from people whom I really do consider outstanding sociologists, teachers, and—equally important—outstanding human beings. And I don't believe that I have (yet) achieved their level of expertise and competence. I do promise to keep trying, however; and my new status as a Schnabel Award winner will certainly serve to motivate me in this direction. That noted, I can and do enthusiastically join the committee in endorsing the principles for which the award proudly stands.

Those of you who know or knew one or more of the sociology teachers who influenced me most will understand how high the bar has been set. Here is a partial list (in alphabetical order): Bennett Berger, Alvin Gouldner, Joseph Gusfield, Irving Louis Horowitz, J. Edward Hulett (more about Ed in a moment), Roger Krohn, Louis Schneider, and my PhD Dissertation Chair, Paul Wiebe. I repeat, it is a partial list.

You will note that John F. Schnabel is not among these. In fact, I did not know John at all. But I do know that he was a dedicated sociologist and teacher of sociology. Former ASA executive officer Bill D'Antonio and our great friend Carla Howerly remembered John in this way:

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[John] joined the Sociology Department at West Virginia University (WVU) in 1972, and retired as professor emeritus in 1997, after a 25-year career in teaching and administration. . . . In 1987, John received West Virginia University's Outstanding Teacher Award. He was also a guest professor at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, developing new ways of teaching undergraduate students in large classes.

[He] became a major advocate for teaching undergraduates, both within the ASA and within the North Central Sociological Association. He was an early volunteer in the ASA's Projects on Teaching, leading many workshops on innovative teaching especially in large introductory courses. He was active in the Section on Undergraduate Education and was tireless in serving in various leadership roles and as a mentor to new faculty. John played a key role in the ASA's Membership Committee, as its first and most enthusiastic chair. He helped institutionalize the Department Resources Group, a network of consultants on teaching. Active and committed to the North Central Sociological Association, John would always appear on the program leading a workshop on teaching. (D'Antonio and Howery 2005)

It is obvious that with such accomplishments, I, like any of us, would be proud to be remembered as his peer.

HOW I DID IT

Most of you will probably remember the sequence in Mel Brooks's *Young Frankenstein* in which Gene Wilder, playing the role of the grandson of Victor Frankenstein, laments the fact that his grandfather had not left behind notes or simple instructions on how to create a living human from inanimate body parts. But, as he searches the bookcase in his grandfather's laboratory, he discovers a book, *How I Did It* by Victor Frankenstein. Well, I regret that I cannot provide you with anything nearly as concise, although many of us have equated the teaching of undergraduate sociology—especially “Intro to Soc 101”—with bringing the dead back to life.

On the other hand, if I had to take a stab at telling you “how I did it,” I would probably reach back a few decades to the writings of John Lennon. It is a message that has inspired me—and millions of others. I first heard it in 1966, when I was a graduate student at McGill University. Some of you (alas, fewer as the years pass) will remember that it was introduced on the first worldwide live TV broadcast. Feel free to join me in repeating Lennon's first principle: “All you need is love. / All you need is love. / All you need is love, love. / Love is all you need” (Lennon and McCartney 1967). I believe that if you can embrace these sentiments—if you can remember this—remember to love sociology, to love teaching, and to love your students—yes, and even love your department chair, you can't go too far wrong.

This is the gist of my “how I did it” message. The rest is merely an extended footnote. But in the time that I have left to talk, I can elaborate by sharing some reflections from my career as a sociology teacher, biographical and pedagogical. I hope that

you might be able to combine them with your own insights and experiences, and, in the process, find something that will improve your own approach.

NOTES FROM MY BIOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

As I will discuss in a later section of this address, I believe that one of the most powerful insights that sociologists have to share with their students is C. Wright Mills's concept of sociology as the intersection of biography and history. Before discussing it in the pedagogical context, I begin with a personal illustration. Because I believe strongly in the concept, I am sure that each of you, in your own unique way, can reconstruct your own evolution as a sociology teacher along similar lines.

The decision to become a sociologist was made late in my high school days at Senn High in Chicago. Sociological insight was just beginning to diffuse to the general culture, there were already several books in wider circulation that carried the message, and sociology was becoming a popular undergraduate major. The books that influenced me most included *The Lonely Crowd*, by Riesman, Denny, and Glazer; *The Status Seekers*, by Vance Packard; and *On the Road*, by Jack Kerouac. Although a diverse reading list, they shared the common theme of questioning the taken-for-granted world of the late fifties. By the time I graduated high school in 1960, *Pleasantville* was beginning to become a colored movie.

Like most of my friends, I began undergraduate studies “downstate” at the University of Illinois. This was also a time of political awakening. Although I was too young to vote at the time, like many of my peers I was caught up in the enthusiasm for John F. Kennedy, and during my first semester I rang doorbells to bring out voters in the (then solidly Republican) Champaign-Urbana area.

At the University of Illinois I met several really fine teachers and some smart fellow students as well. Among other things, I learned a deeper and more sophisticated way of seeing beyond commonsense reality. The sociologists included Bennett Berger (years later, I named my son after him) and Ed Hulett. Nonsociologists important in my undergraduate career were anthropologist Oscar Lewis, philosopher D.W. Gottschalk—a Kant and Spinoza scholar, and philosopher Reinhardt Grossman. I took a lot of philosophy, math, and anthropology as an undergraduate and later, and they have served me well to this day. My first encounter with Ed Hulett is worth sharing.

Like a number of Illinois faculty during that era, Ed had strong ties with the Chicago School, having received his PhD at the University of Chicago in 1939. Perhaps the best known of the sociologists to make the trek from Hyde Park to Urbana was Florian Znaniecki. Hulett succeeded Znaniecki as department chair at Illinois and was a staunch classic symbolic interactionist (I believe that he knew Mead and Cooley—he certainly knew Thomas and Znaniecki).

During my second semester at Illinois, I took Hulett's “Intro to Sociology” class. Early in the semester I made an appointment to see him. When I arrived at his office in Lincoln Hall, I was so nervous that I momentarily considered walking away. But, having gained the courage to enter, I sat down and said (I'll never forget it): “I am

going to be a sociologist, and you are my role model” (obviously not missing an opportunity to display my expertise in symbolic interactionism). He asked me why I had made that choice. Did I come from a family of academics? No, I told him, my family had been in the funeral business in Chicago for generations. He smiled broadly. “Let me show you something,” he said. He reached into his drawer and handed me a little pocket sewing kit—with needles, thread, and a little thimble. On the cover of the kit was written “Hulett Funeral Home, Hattiesburg Mississippi.” I had a soul mate. And you can believe that he and I discussed the affinities between sociology and the funeral business, via marginality and appreciation of the importance of family, and the like. This was the beginning of a long relationship with Ed, and I later served as his TA.

Following graduation in 1963, I stayed at Illinois for my first year of graduate school and served as a teaching fellow. During that period I had my first class with Louis Schneider, the toughest and most brilliant teacher I ever had. I had the good fortune to establish a lifelong relationship with Lou, and, following his death in 1976, I worked with his widow, Josephine, to publish some of his writings—including a collection to which Robert K. Merton contributed a foreword and a previously unpublished manuscript on Bernard Mandeville. It was Schneider who introduced me to the work of Pitirim A. Sorokin (Sorokin was a mentor to Merton, who was Schneider’s dissertation chair). My interest in Sorokin, and especially his work on “creative altruism,” has grown over the years to the point that it is now my major area of research. I also had a course in political sociology with the erudite Joe Gusfield, who had just published his award-winning *Symbolic Crusade*. At the University of Illinois and everywhere, it seemed, sociology was one of the most popular disciplines, and was, to use Bennett Berger’s term, “culturally resonant.”

It was also during my first year of graduate school that I taught my first course. It was a section of introductory sociology and it met once a week: 8:00 Saturday morning. As you can imagine, it was in this context that I mastered the art of monologue.

Indelibly stamped on my memory from that period are the events that began the morning of Friday, November 22, 1963. I woke up with a fever and sore throat, and I worried that I would not be able to make it to teach my class the next day. I stayed in bed and turned on the TV. The rest is history. The president had been killed, and classes were cancelled for several days. Thus, with the speed of an assassin’s bullet, a time of great idealism became an era of political struggle and confusion.

Political polarization was a major theme during 1964–1965, with the civil rights and antiwar protests dominating the headlines. In the fall of 1964, I transferred to Washington University where I completed my MA under the tutelage of two of the dominating (and intensely political) figures in sociology at the time, Al Gouldner and Irving Louis Horowitz. Washington University, like other schools across the country, had become a generator of the counterculture. It was there that I and many of my peers began to view sociology as the master discipline for countercultural thought and activity.

Following graduation from Washington University, I was accepted for, and, after a brief delay, began PhD studies at McGill University in Montreal. Montreal in

1966–1967 was certainly not far removed from events in the States. But it was, after all, in a different country, a different culture, and things were to be far less chaotic there than at similar schools south of the border. There I first heard Lennon's first principle and, now I understand, traded my identity as a political activist for one as an apprentice antiestablishment intellectual. It was a good department—just prior to the arrival of Immanuel Wallerstein. The teacher who influenced me most was Roger Krohn, an insightful sociologist of knowledge. Krohn introduced me to the works of Joseph Ben-David and Thomas Kuhn. And I knew Andre Gunder Frank, who was teaching at nearby Sir George Williams University.

By 1969, I was ABD at McGill. I returned to the United States and transferred back to the University of Illinois. The civil rights movement was relatively quiet, sociology no longer the “hot” field that it had been during the previous decade, and political and intellectual protest seemed much less important than finishing my PhD and beginning a career. During this period at Illinois, I met Harvey Choldin. Under his tutelage, I became increasingly committed to demography (I had been introduced to the subject at Washington University by Nicholas J. Demerath). And I was fortunate to meet Paul Wiebe, an Indian-born American who had been doing research in South India and the city of Madras, in particular. Through this contact it became possible for me to do my dissertation in Madras and to begin a lifelong interest in India.

I returned from my first trip to India in the summer of 1972, defended my dissertation, and took my first tenure-track job at the University of Iowa. Notwithstanding great relationships that I developed with Lyle Shannon and Carl Couch at Iowa, the five years I spent there were unhappy. I found the atmosphere stifling, and it was there that I learned the degree to which teaching and applied research are not necessarily valued in an aspiring research-oriented department.

The main highlight of my period at Iowa occurred back in India, where I served the 1975–1976 academic year as a Fulbright Professor at the School of Planning in Gandhi's adopted hometown of Ahmedabad. I was one of a very small number of social scientists at a technical school, and I was delighted by the contrast between the enthusiasm these architects, engineers, and planners had for learning and applying sociology and the disdain shown for these activities at my home university. Following my return to Iowa, I was occupied with getting out and finding a job more congenial to my growing interests.

Thanks to Mel Kranzberg, the premier historian of technology, whom I had met in 1974 at Iowa State and then again during my travels in the Philippines, I learned about, and eventually was hired for, a position at Georgia Tech.

I was at Georgia Tech for nearly ten years, between 1977 and 1986. Applied sociology and solid teaching to nonmajors were not only encouraged, they were central to the mission of the School of Social Sciences. I enjoyed considerable success during those years, including publication of dozens of articles on application-oriented subjects and three books, including the one that remains my favorite, *Sociology/Technology: Foundations of Postacademic Social Science*. I also participated in the creation of Georgia Tech's first-ever degree program in social science: The MS in Technology and Science Policy.

The final chapter in my teaching career began in 1986 when I took the position of Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology at Eastern Michigan University. This period has been marked by leadership and advocacy for teaching and applied sociology, a lot of teaching, and an active period of research and publishing. My last three major books (including the one I am now working on) are textbooks. Shortly after my move to Michigan I joined and became active in the NCSA.

AN ELABORATION

In reading earlier drafts of this biography, I noted a few related themes that, beyond Lennon's first principle, provide some coherence to four decades as a sociology "teacher/scholar"—I like that term, don't you? They are: (1) sociology as technology (and the place of altruism); (2) the intersection of history and biography (and reflexivity); and (3) the integration of teaching, research, and service as a sociological imperative.

Sociology as technology (and the place of altruism). For me, and probably for many of you as well, a major reason why I love sociology is that I believe in its potential to help create a better world. This is the basis of the founding of the field during its three births (via Adam Smith and the Scottish moralists in the late eighteenth century, St. Simon and Comte in the early nineteenth century, and Marx in the mid-to-late-nineteenth), and it is something I never hesitate to share with my students. I believe that sociology is a science—"know why"—albeit an unusual one, but it also is and was always meant to be a technology—"know how"—for improving human relationships. The Talmud speaks of a commandment to repair the world, *tikkun olam*; and I can think of no better tool than sociology to fulfill this commandment.

There are many ways in which this principle can be illustrated. Among the best known of these is Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* and the role it played in the momentous 1954 *Brown v. the Board of Education* decision. Some of you might also be aware that the discovery that HIV/AIDS is an STD was made by a sociologist (for a history of this work, see Avert 2006). And most of you know that the embattled Oslo Accords for peace in the Middle East were drafted by the Norwegian sociologist Terje Rød-Larsen. But most of the "repairing of the world" we undertake is on a much smaller scale and rarely makes the headlines: consulting work that helps an organization operate more effectively, community organizing in which ethnic tensions in an urban neighborhood are diminished, evaluation of a local day care system that improves delivery and lowers costs, and so on. Of course, this does not make them unimportant.

The point is that our concepts, theories, and perspectives, indeed, the sociological imagination itself, stress relativism, multiple viewpoints, social construction of reality, value conflict, and the like. These tools give us a unique vantage point from which we can see *through* social problems (from the micro to the macrolevel) that others can

only look *at*. And this is a key first step toward solving, or at least mitigating, such problems.

I also believe that it is no coincidence that during sociology's second birth, the term *altruism* was coined (by Comte). Altruism (now often—and unfortunately—referred to as “prosocial behavior”) is widely studied—including by classic sociologists such as Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim—and is an elusive and an endlessly fascinating phenomenon. Since Sorokin dedicated himself to the study of altruism in the early 1950s, a search has been underway to explore ways in which its promotion can improve human relationships. For the past several years, I have joined this quest, and, whenever possible, I have engaged my students in it. A number of my students have selected altruism as the topic of term papers and MA theses, and I believe that it is some of the best work I have personally supervised.

Recent research on altruism, especially that of Kristen R. Monroe, has revealed a key connection that reaffirms the intimate role that it plays in the sociological way of looking at the world: the perception of a common humanity. Monroe has shown that altruistic people tend strongly to believe in a common humanity and to treat differences—such as class, ethnicity, and gender—as secondary. To them, every human being is a member of their “in-group.” Sociology, of all of the scholarly disciplines, teaches consciousness of a common humanity. It is not that we do not also credit social differences as consequential; in fact, this is the gist of sociological explanation and theory. However, we understand these differences as *variables*, as derivative, caused by socialization and culture, subject to change through time in both intended and unintended ways. (By the way, I believe that this is why sociologists are often put off by racial explanations and certain aspects of sociobiology. That is, these approaches deny a common humanity and view the differences as hard-wired.)

On history and biography. C. Wright Mills's observation in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959) was and remains one of the most oft-quoted passages in the sociological literature, and with good reason. Mills wrote of “the quality of mind essential to grasp the interplay of [people] and society, of biography and history, of self and world” (4). Setting aside the multitude of profound implications this has for our work and our lives, let me focus specifically on how it relates to the job of teaching sociology. As a teacher of sociology, one is neither more nor less than *obliged* to teach about: A. oneself—which, of course, includes the “I,” the “me,” and the generalized and significant others; B. the times in which we and our students are living; and C. how the two intersect. But here are some cautions: the first task borders on the narcissistic—and this is surely an excess that needs to be avoided. The second can easily become overly abstract and thus irrelevant, and we certainly don't want to fall into this trap. And the third can spill over into a forfeit of free will, turning the instructor into a chameleon who always takes on the patterns of the habitat, espousing the mood or views that happen to be popular at the moment. We need to be aware of over-identification with historical/political realities as much as we need to be aware of the tendency toward feigned “detachment”—as in “value free.” This too is a pitfall of which we must be wary. Thus, this basic principle of good sociology teaching carries

with it a negative corollary that counsels fighting the tendencies toward narcissism, abstract irrelevancy, and the “chameleon effect.”

On occasion, a sociology teacher can avoid such excesses, strike the proper balance, and successfully demonstrate how the historical and biographical intersect. More rarely, but of even greater importance, the teacher can help students understand and realize (as in “make real”) that they are part of history, and that history is part of them, that they are both being shaped by it and helping to shape it. When this occurs, the teacher is achieving something unique, valuable—even life-changing.

This can entail something as general and close to the roots of sociological thought as achieving understanding of the concept of a generation (as Karl Mannheim and Bennett Berger, among others, analyzed it), how—as a sociocultural phenomenon—it differs from a demographic cohort, how it is shaped by commonly experienced episodes, and how belonging (or not belonging) to one can determine one’s values and attitudes. Or it can entail something as commonplace as realizing that when a student selects a major in college, it is both a personal matter and a matter of peer influence and cultural and economic conditions at the moment such a decision is made. That is, a student is selected by a major as much as the student chooses one. John Schnabel’s experiences reflect both of these:

In 1961, [John] earned a Master’s Degree in Sacred Theology at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. He served a number of Lutheran churches in Indiana, culminating as senior pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Elkhart, IN 1965–69. [Thus, his biography recapitulated the history of our field as an offshoot of the Social Gospel Movement.]

The social, political, economic, and military upheavals of the 1960s gradually led John to the social sciences, and in the fall of 1969, John enrolled in the doctoral program in sociology and anthropology at the University of Notre Dame. (D’Antonio and Howery 2005)

On reflexivity. I would argue that the practice of reflexivity is a methodological extension of the history/biography interface. Here is a fairly succinct definition: “In sociology, reflexivity is an act of self-reference where examination or action ‘bends back on,’ refers to, and affects the entity instigating the action or examination. In brief, reflexivity refers to circular relationships between cause and effect. A reflexive relationship is bidirectional; with both the cause and the effect affecting each another in a situation that renders both functions causes and effects. Reflexivity is related to the concept of feedback and positive feedback in particular” (Wikipedia 2008).

Comte referred to sociology as “queen of the sciences” and positioned it at the top of the hierarchy of the sciences because it is the only field whose proper subject matter includes science itself. Sociologists have often been criticized for being overly self-involved. But as we have learned from W. I. Thomas, the Frankfurt School, our colleague Larry Reynolds, and others, this is neither fad nor foible. Rather, reflexivity is an indispensable asset.

Robert Burns lamented about our inability to “see ourselves as others see us.” Yet, as I have found useful to help my students understand, as Mead and Cooley taught

us, this is precisely what the “other” and the looking glass self are all about. It is closely related to the operation known as *Verstehen*, one of the most distinctive and important methodological tools in our repertoire. And it is one of the most valuable lessons we have to teach.

The power that reflexivity gives us and our students is one that carries over into all aspects of our lives, as Peter Berger taught in his *Invitation to Sociology*, possibly one of the most influential works in many of our and our students’ careers. The power of reflexivity is at the heart of the sociological imagination and the sociological way of looking at the world. And it is one of the things that support the examined life.

On teaching, research, and service. College and university faculty members in every field are universally expected to “perform” in three major areas: at my school, they are referred to as “instructional effectiveness,” “scholarship and creative activity,” and “service to the department, university, and community.” It is a serious matter because contract renewal, promotion, and tenure decisions depend on one’s evaluations in these areas.

In practice, the ways in which these are applied vary widely. Service has become a soft category—just about anything counts, including, at some schools, holding office hours and contributing to the United Way. Some departments emphasize that they are heavily involved in teaching (and inflate the course load accordingly). Others pride themselves with having primarily a “research mission,” and reduce teaching loads and raise expectations for certain kinds of publications accordingly. Of course, a large teaching load does detract from the amount of research and publishing one can pursue. And expectations for winning grants and publishing articles in leading refereed journals definitely cut into the time one can spend on classes. In fact, in some fields, these trade-offs are necessary and useful (Einstein argued against the expectation that research physicists should teach undergraduate courses).

Unfortunately, or, perhaps, fortunately, for sociologists the three types of activities are integral parts of a whole. A sociology teacher must have some research experience in order to convey credibly what it means to think sociologically, to distinguish the sociological way of looking at the world from the opinions about and attitudes toward social relations that fill our students’ minds. Conversely, many of our best research insights come from exchanges in the classroom. And what is broadly referred to as “service” is for the sociologist the opportunity to engage in the laboratory of life, to apply the insights and skills from the classroom and from research to contributing to the creation of a better world. Needless to say, the proportions of one’s time and energy dedicated to each of these activities will vary according to the kind of school or organization in which one works. But some amount of each is necessary to fulfill the sociological mission.

In this respect, the practice of sociology is a form of academic service learning (ASL) writ large. Much has been written about ASL and its strengths and limitations. Nearly all of this focuses on specific projects and exercises with one class or another. What I am suggesting here is that the obligation of the sociologist to take seriously the teaching-research-service triad entails ASL as *a way of life*.

THANKS AGAIN

Let me close this address by reiterating my thanks to you and to the Schnabel Award selection committee for the honor and to the NCSA for its tireless work in promoting the teaching of sociology in the region and beyond. Now, I have saved for last an expression of my deepest gratitude to the group to whom I owe the most for any successes that I may have achieved as a sociology teacher. That is my students. For over forty years they have patiently instructed me in the ways and power of the love of sociology. They have often said and written some nice things about me. But even their finest compliments cannot come close to expressing how much I appreciate *them*.

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Research Note:

Religious Affiliation and Poverty Explanations: Individual, Structural, and Divine Causes

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Prior studies of people's explanations for poverty have relied upon individual, structural, and fatalistic explanations. This paper explores an additional explanation for poverty, divine intervention. Using a sample of 360 college students, I show that divine intervention is a distinct explanation for poverty. I then examine if or how six religious groups—conservative, African American, and mainline Protestants, Catholics, the nonaffiliated, and those with “other” beliefs—differ in their views of individual, structural, and divine explanations for poverty. Results show that members of conservative Protestant denominations are more individualistic than Catholics and the nonaffiliated. African American Protestants were significantly more structuralist than conservative Protestants. African American Protestants are more likely than conservative Protestants, and both are more likely than Catholics, the nonaffiliated, and those with “other” beliefs, to believe that divine intervention is an important explanation for poverty.

As the gap between the rich and poor widens and 12.5 percent of the population live below the poverty line, how people make sense of this growing inequality and what factors influence their beliefs should be of interest to both social scientists and policy makers. In his seminal work examining how people account for poverty, Feagin (1975) identified three explanations. The first, focusing on the individual, places the blame squarely on the shoulders of the poor themselves—the result of attitudes and behaviors that prevent their escape from poverty. The second focuses on how the structure of society fails to provide people with jobs and opportunities. The third explanation, fatalism, points to factors beyond people's control, including bad luck and random chance.

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In this paper I argue that divine intervention should be included as an additional explanation for poverty. In the following sections I review the research on poverty explanations, focusing on the influence of religion. I then argue that the prevalence of belief in divine intervention indicates that it may be an additional explanation for poverty. Items measuring divine intervention are included in a survey to examine if people attribute poverty to the “will of God” or a “lack of faith.” Using factor analysis, I show that these items create a distinct explanation for poverty. I then examine how six religious groups—conservative, African American, and mainline Protestants, Catholics, the nonaffiliated, and those with “other” beliefs—differ in their views of individual, structural, and divine explanations for poverty.

RELIGION AND STRATIFICATION BELIEFS

Irrespective of race, gender, or social class, most people use individual explanations for poverty. But women, racial minorities, and members of lower social classes simultaneously rely on structural explanations (Hunt 2002; Klugel and Smith 1986). A large body of research has focused on religion’s role in people’s explanations. Some researchers have examined explanations for poverty without specifying a racial group. Others have focused on the explanation of racial differences in poverty rates. Studies not specifying racial differences have divided Protestants by race and have found that white Protestants and Catholics are more likely than the nonaffiliated and Jews to rely on individualistic explanations (Feagin 1975; Hunt 2002; Klugel and Smith 1986). Structuralist explanations for poverty are more likely to be used by Jews and African American Protestants than by white Protestants and Catholics (Feagin 1975; Hunt 2002).

Studies focusing on racial differences in poverty rates have further divided the white Protestant category into mainline and conservative groups. They found that religious conservatives are more likely than others to hold individualistic explanations (Edgall and Tranby 2007; Emerson, Smith, and Sikkink 1999; Hinojosa and Park 2004; Hunt 2007). Catholics and mainline Protestants are less likely than the nonaffiliated to cite discrimination as a cause for African American poverty (Hinojosa and Park 2004), while mainline Protestants are more likely than conservative Protestants to use structuralist explanations (Emerson et al. 1999).

The third explanation for poverty, fatalism, has been the least studied of the three. Feagin (1975) found that 26 percent of African American Protestants and 21 percent of white Catholics said fate was important, but only 17 percent of white Protestants and 12 percent of Jewish respondents felt this way. Hunt (2002) asked how important “just bad luck” was in explaining poverty. He found that African American Catholics, compared to white Catholics and Jews were more fatalistic than Protestants.

An additional explanation for poverty that has received little empirical attention is the belief in divine intervention. In a recent study of explanations for both poverty and wealth, Hunt (2004) asked how important the following statement is in explaining

poverty: "it is God's will that some people are poor." Overall, 15.6 percent of participants said God's will is very important in explaining why people are poor. Multivariate analyses revealed that African Americans and Latinos, compared to whites, and those with lower incomes and less education, were more likely to attribute economic status to divine intervention. Unfortunately, a measure of religious affiliation or beliefs was not included as an independent variable in the analysis.

DIVINE INTERVENTION AND POVERTY

People's faith in divine intervention can be seen in both historical and contemporary beliefs. This belief is pervasive in the United States as evidenced by a 2005 Harris Poll, which found that 73 percent of adults believe in miracles. Historically, the divine right of kings was used to justify inequality between royalty and the masses. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber argued that the Calvinist belief in predestination created salvation anxiety. People deduced that their success in economic pursuits indicated whether they were part of the saved or the damned. Though people had to work hard to be successful, material success was preceded by the blessing of God.

Though beliefs in a divine right and predestination may not be viewed as mainstream beliefs of the American public, people still commonly attribute their success to God. In popular culture, for example, it is common to see celebrities thank God for their awards, along with spouses, directors, and a long list of colleagues. In the world of sports, whether it be a goal, a homerun, or a touchdown, athletes commonly point to the sky, get down on one knee to pray, and thank God (and their mothers) for their abilities.

A contemporary religious movement, the Faith Movement, has emerged with a teaching known as "prosperity theology" (Jackson 1987) or "the health and wealth gospel" (Hollinger 1991), which is primarily associated with Pentecostals and Charismatics. The movement has been discussed in both the academic and the popular press. Regarding economic success, Hollinger (1991:55) explains, "There is no question that for the faith adherents financial prosperity is a divine promise signifying God's blessing upon those whose faith is great enough to expect it." Leaders of the movement cite passages from the Bible that support their claims that God wants people to be wealthy (Jackson 1987; Van Biema and Chu 2006), but in order to become wealthy people must devote themselves to God.

In addition to success, people may also attribute peril to God. The punishment theory of disease relies on the belief in divine intervention. "According to religious versions of the theory, illness is divine punishment; it is inflicted on humans to punish them for an offense . . . to warn them to become more virtuous" (Kopelman 2002:234). In a similar vein, poverty may be viewed as punishment on the poor for lack of virtue and faith in God.

The prominence of beliefs in divine intervention encourages the exploration of an additional two-part explanation for poverty. Based on the ideas of predestination

found in the divine right of kings, Calvinism, and popular culture, one's position in the stratification system may be based on *God's will*. Those holding this view see poverty as emanating from sources beyond people's control, sources that may be similar to fate. The second part emerges from the beliefs of punishment theory and the faith movement. Based on this ideology, it may be God's blessing that determines people's fortunes—but only after the person has shown or professed *faith in God*.

CULTURAL TOOLS AND POVERTY EXPLANATIONS

Recent research examining the relationship between religious beliefs and social attitudes has drawn on the work of Swidler (1986). She suggests that culture be viewed “as a ‘tool kit’ of symbols, stories, rituals, and world views, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems . . . [and] construct strategies of action” (273). Based on her work, Emerson and his colleagues (1999) argue that religious subcultures have distinct tool kits. Focusing on the conservative Protestant subculture, they argued that traditional beliefs have created a distinct tool kit emphasizing “accountable freewill individualism,” “anti-structuralism,” and “relationalism.” Access to this tool kit inclines group members to rely on individual explanations for poverty and discount structural explanations as “shifting blame” and to find them irrelevant. They found that conservative Protestants, compared to mainline Protestants, were more individualistic and less structuralist in their explanations of poverty. Emerson and his fellow researchers (1999) show that subcultures are likely to use different tools to explain poverty (e.g., individual or structural) and that additional tools may also be available (e.g., divine intervention).

Religiously conservative African Americans occupy social locations that result in distinct life experiences (Edgell and Tranby 2007). Although overt forms of discrimination have been outlawed, the economic experiences of whites and African Americans remain very different. In a review of racial prejudice, Quillian (2006:305) points out that recent audit studies have concluded that “discrimination in labor markets is pervasive and strongly favors” whites over minorities. Compared to whites, African Americans are approximately 2.5 times as likely to be unemployed and to have average family incomes that are \$20,000 less than those of whites (Mishel, Bernstein, and Schmitt 2001). In addition to social location, African American religious traditions offer tools to understand inequality. Although some researchers have been divided in their assessments of the influence of the African American church on civil rights (Hunt and Hunt 1977; Marx 1967), religious leaders have often been at the forefront of movements challenging dominant institutions and their entrenched discriminatory practices (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; McGuire 2002). Due to these experiences, African American Protestants should be more structuralist than other Protestants in their explanations of poverty.

In comparison to the Protestant tradition, Greeley (2000) argues that the Catholic tradition has been more group oriented. According to Williams (1999:24), Catholic ideas of the public good have “contributed a noticeable strain of communitist thinking

and practice that has often run counter to both conservative and liberal Protestantism's emphasis on the individual." This communal thinking has led to involvement in the labor movement and support by American Bishops for worker rights. This collectivist orientation can also be seen in the pastoral letters of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops that show a "concern for the collective insurance of social justice" that appears liberal when applied to economic policy (Williams 1999:24). This tradition provides Catholics different tools in the explanation of poverty (Edgell and Tranby 2007). Empirical research shows that Catholics and Protestants differ significantly with regard to the belief that income differences are too large and that the government has a responsibility to help the poor (Greeley and Hout 2006). This group orientation makes Catholics more inclined than Protestants to support structural explanations for poverty.

An additional tool that may be used to explain poverty is the belief in divine intervention. Although 73 percent of adults believe in miracles, recent studies show that conservative and African American Protestants are more likely than others to hold this belief. Using data from the 1991 and 1998 ISSP religion modules, Greeley and Hout (2006:22) found that African American and conservative Protestants were significantly more likely than mainline Protestants to believe that "the course of our lives is determined by God." Mansfield, Mitchell, and King (2002) studied people's beliefs regarding divine intervention in relation to health. They surveyed 1,052 households in eastern North Carolina in 1997 and found that evangelical Protestants and African Americans were significantly more likely to believe that God played a role in healing than were mainline Protestants and whites. In an analysis using the 1998 ISSP religion module, Catholics are significantly less likely than mainline and conservative Protestants to believe in religious miracles (author analysis). Based on these studies, conservative and African American Protestants should be more likely than others to use divine intervention as an explanation for poverty.

DATA AND MEASURES

This study uses data collected in the spring of 2007 from students at a large regional university in the Southeast. I used a systematic sampling design to select students. The university is divided into various colleges, and I selected two majors from each. I used the university course schedule to select classes within each major to survey, beginning with the highest level undergraduate course for each major. I contacted course instructors via e-mail and asked if their students could be surveyed at the end of a class meeting. If an instructor did not grant permission, or failed to respond, I selected the next professor on the list. If an instructor granted permission, students were surveyed during the last 15 minutes of a class period. A total of 16 classes with an official enrollment of 406 students were surveyed, and 361 surveys were completed.

The dependent variables in the study are people's explanations for poverty. Participants in the study responded to 11 items measuring these explanations on a four-point scale from "not at all important" (1) to "very important" (4). A factor analysis

of the items identified four scales with eigenvalues exceeding one. Table 1 shows the items, the student-rated level of importance for each measure, and the alpha coefficients for each scale. The individualist index ($\alpha = .64$) consists of three items: lack of savings and proper money management skills, lack of effort by the poor themselves, and personal irresponsibility, lack of discipline among the poor. The structuralist index ($\alpha = .71$) includes four items: failure of society to provide good schools for many people, low wages in some businesses and industries, prejudice and discrimination, and failure of private industry to provide enough jobs.

Table 1. Poverty Explanation Scales: Individualist, Structuralist, Divine Intervention, and Fatalism (N = 361)

Scale Items and Statistics	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
A. Individualist Scale (Alpha = .64)			
1. Lack of savings and proper money management	4.5	32.8	62.7
2. Lack of effort by the poor	22.7	45.7	31.7
3. Personal irresponsibility, lack of discipline among the poor	22.6	48.2	29.1
Scale mean = 3.21			
B. Structuralist Scale (Alpha = .71)			
1. Failure of society to provide good schools for many people	18.3	43.9	37.7
2. Low wages in some businesses and industries	14.0	49.9	36.1
3. Prejudice and discrimination	31.3	40.3	28.5
4. Failure of private industry to provide enough jobs	37.7	42.3	20.0
Scale mean = 3.00			
C. Divine Intervention (Alpha = .57)			
1. Lack of faith in God	55.9	25.8	18.3
2. It is God's will that some people are poor	77.8	17.4	4.8
Scale mean = 1.98			
D. Fatalism Scale (Alpha = .28)			
1. Lack of ability and talent among those who are poor	50.1	37.2	12.7
2. Just bad luck	78.7	18.8	2.5
Scale mean = 2.12			

The belief that divine intervention plays a role in explaining poverty ($\alpha = .57$) included two items: "lack of faith in God" and "It is God's will that some people are poor." "Lack of faith in God" was seen as very important by 18.3 percent of the sample, while only 4.8 percent saw "God's will" this way. The two fatalistic items, "lack of ability and talent" and "just bad luck," had a low reliability ($\alpha = .28$) and are not included in further analyses. An attempt to combine the fatalism and divine intervention items resulted in a scale with a low reliability ($\alpha = .38$), indicating that the two are not a single measure.

The independent variable in the study is denominational affiliation. Students were asked "What religion, if any, were you raised in?" Students had a choice of Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, other, and none. Those who chose Protestant and "other" were asked to include their denomination and/or additional information. Using Greeley and Hout (2006) as a reference, respondents were divided into six denominational groups: conservative ($N = 128$), mainline ($N = 72$), and African American Protestant ($N = 79$), Catholic ($N = 50$), no religious affiliation ($N = 17$), and "other" ($N = 15$).

Control variables for the analysis include gender, political ideology, and family income. Due to the regional nature of the sample, only four African Americans belonged to non-Protestant denominations, resulting in the African American Protestant category also being a control for race in the sample. Demographically, the sample is 66.1 percent female. To measure political ideology, students were asked on a five-point scale to indicate their views, from "very liberal" (1) to "very conservative" (5). The measure had a mean of 3.21 and a standard deviation of .90. In order to measure family income, students were asked to approximate where their families stood in comparison to the typical family in the state. The questionnaire explained to respondents that, "In this state, the typical household income is \$43,000. Please indicate where your family's income was, when you were 18, compared to the typical family by circling the appropriate X." The response categories were on a seven-point scale from "\$20,000 or less" (1), the middle category was labeled \$43,000 (4), and the highest category was labeled \$100,000 or more (7). This format was used due to the assumption that most students would not know their parents' income but would have a perception of their status relative to others. The mean reported income was 5.07 with a standard deviation of 1.69.

RESULTS

I used ordinary least squares regression to examine the relationship between religious denomination and poverty explanations. For each of the poverty explanations, two models are shown. The first model examines the relationship between the explanation for poverty and denomination. "Denomination" is dummy coded, and the conservative Protestant category is used as the comparison group. The second model includes the control variables with denomination.

Table 2 shows the results of the regressions for each of the poverty explanations. Models 1 and 2 display the regression coefficients for the individualist scale. Without

controlling for other factors, Model 1 shows that African American Protestants, Catholics, and those with no religious affiliation are significantly less individualistic than conservative Protestants. Mainline Protestants and those with “other” beliefs do not differ significantly from conservative Protestants. In Model 2, after controlling for gender, political ideology, and family income, Catholics and those with no affiliation remain less individualistic than conservative Protestants. Mainline and African American Protestants and “others” do not differ from conservative Protestants. The finding that Catholics and the nonaffiliated are less individualistic than conservative Protestants challenges the hegemonic power of the individualist explanation. Although some have argued that Catholicism has been Protestantized, this finding supports Williams’s (1999) argument that Catholic teachings have resisted the dominance of individualism. The more politically conservative respondents and those

Table 2. Regression Models: Poverty Explanations

Variables	Individualist Scale		Structuralist Scale		Divine Intervention Scale	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Denomination						
Mainline Protestant	-.097 (.078)	-.092 (.076)	.036 (.074)	.057 (.070)	-.156 (.114)	-.137 (.111)
African American Protestant	-.185* (.075)	.052 (.085)	.608*** (.072)	.438*** (.078)	.431*** (.110)	.659*** (.124)
Catholic	-.243** (.091)	-.208* (.091)	-.087 (.086)	.000 (.083)	-.456*** (.133)	-.347** (.132)
No religion	-.289* (.133)	-.267† (.139)	-.132 (.127)	-.115 (.127)	-.744*** (.194)	-.582** (.202)
Other	-.118 (.133)	-.115 (.137)	-.091 (.126)	-.015 (.125)	-.381* (.194)	-.426* (.199)
Female		-.028 (.063)		.367*** (.057)		.291** (.091)
Conservative political ideology		.182*** (.036)		-.150*** (.033)		.260*** (.053)
Family income		.052** (.019)		-.034* (.017)		.014 (.027)
N	357	339	356	339	356	339
Intercept	3.33	2.44	2.89	3.32	2.05	.858
Adjusted R ²	.024	.109	.182	.309	.112	.183
F-value	2.72*	6.18***	16.84***	19.91***	9.99***	10.44***

† p < .10; * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

from wealthier families are more likely to blame the poor for their circumstances, while gender fails to reach significance.

Models 3 and 4 display the results of the regression of the structuralist scale on religious affiliation and the control variables. According to Model 3, only African American Protestants are more likely than conservative Protestants to use structuralist explanations for poverty. After the introduction of the control variables in Model 4, African American Protestants remain significantly more structuralist than the other groups. Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine if the differences are attributable to religion, social location, or both. Unexpectedly, Catholics are not more structuralist in their explanations of poverty than Protestants. This finding may stem from the fact that being Catholic does not affect a person's economic standing and may enhance chances for economic mobility (Keister 2007). Each of the control variables significantly affects the structuralist explanation. Females are more likely to use this explanation, while the politically conservative and those from wealthier families are less likely to view poverty as dependent on the structure of society.

Finally, Models 5 and 6 show the results of the regression of the divine intervention scale on religious affiliation and control variables. In Model 5, we see that African American Protestants are significantly more likely than conservative Protestants to use this explanation for poverty, while mainline Protestants do not differ from conservatives. Catholics, those with no religious affiliation, and those with "other" beliefs are less likely to perceive God as a cause of poverty. After entering the control variables, each of the denominational groups, with the exception of mainline Protestants, remain significantly different from conservative Protestants. Additionally, females and political conservatives are more likely than men and liberals to view this as an important explanation for poverty.

DISCUSSION

Using a sample of college students from the Southeastern United States, this study examines the role of religion in explaining the causes of poverty and contributes to the debate concerning beliefs about the causes of poverty. First, this study shows that divine intervention should be used as an explanation for poverty in addition to individual, structural, and fatalistic explanations. Although the respondents viewed the individualist and structuralist explanations for poverty as more important overall, 18.3 percent viewed "Lack of faith in God" and 4.8 percent saw "God's will" as very important. Though divine intervention does not appear to be challenging the dominance of these two explanations, the study shows that a sizable minority hold strongly to this belief.

The study also shows that the belief in divine intervention as an explanation for poverty is a tool that is distinct to the Protestant tradition and is most prevalent among conservative and African American denominations. The results of the regression of the divine intervention scale show that for African American and conservative

Protestants this belief is another tool that can be used to help explain economic outcomes (Swidler 1986). The nonreligious, Catholics, and those holding “other” beliefs do not see this as a viable explanation for poverty. The lack of significance for Catholics and those holding “other” religious beliefs suggests that one’s faith in divine intervention is dependent on holding a Protestant ideology, but more analysis is necessary to confirm these results. The belief in the importance of divine intervention is strongest among African American Protestants. This belief may help people to rationalize inequality within the African American community, especially the higher wealth of some, due to all members facing similar structural impediments. Additional research should examine if this belief in divine intervention in economic affairs is a result of the spread of the faith movement in the African American church or due to other factors.

Finally, the study suggests that an individual’s explanations for poverty may be contingent upon whether one is asked to explain poverty generally or in terms of racial/ethnic differences. Earlier studies examining the differences between conservative and mainline Protestant explanations for poverty focused on higher rates of poverty among blacks (Edgall and Tranby 2007; Emerson, Smith, and Sikkink 1999; Hinojosa and Park 2004; Hunt 2007). In this study, mainline Protestants did not differ from conservative Protestants in their explanations for poverty. This may be due to the regional nature of the sample or the lack of racial specification in the dependent variable. Further studies should be undertaken to examine how the racial/ethnic group specified in the question wording affects people’s explanations for poverty.

Though this study finds a relationship between religion and poverty beliefs, some caution must be taken. An attempt was made to locate a national data set that could be used to address the issue of poverty and divine intervention, but secondary data of this nature were not available. The intent of the research was to explore the prevalence of divine intervention and the possibility that it was a distinct explanation for poverty beliefs. The regional nature and size of the sample make it impossible to generalize the findings to the general population. Additionally, due to a lack of religious variance in the African American respondents, the separate influences of race and religion could not be addressed. Future research, employing a nationally representative sample, is necessary to further explore and establish the relationship between religion, race, interactions between the two, and people’s belief in divine economic intervention.

Although people’s explanations for poverty and the “tools” they use to make sense of it are interesting in themselves, Swidler (1986) earlier pointed out that cultural beliefs offer strategies for action. Both the individualist and structuralist explanations for poverty can be linked to policy choices. For example, the individualist explanation is manifest in the 1996 “Welfare to Work” law, which requires people receiving benefits to obtain employment or attend job training. Strategies of action that would emanate from the structuralist explanation include increasing wages and the enforcement of equal opportunity, but people holding these views are not usually in positions of power to bring about these changes.

Unlike the other explanations, the belief in divine intervention does not offer a viable, interventionist vision for social policy, and those holding this view might push for reductions in or an end to help for the poor. Researchers adopting a Marxist perspective have criticized religion for being an opiate of the masses by its focusing on other worldly issues rather than people's material conditions. This belief in divine economic intervention turns the focus of religion to worldly issues, but may be even more problematic because it says not only is the "next life" dependent on religious faith—so is this one. The belief in divine intervention as an explanation for poverty and the possible ramifications that may accompany its spread should be of interest to both researchers and policy makers now and in the future.

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Personal Brand in Online Advertisements: Comparing White and Brazilian Male Sex Workers

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We examine marketing strategies used by Brazilian and white American male sex workers in their online advertisements and the degree to which ethnicity is emphasized as an aspect of personal branding. The results show that both groups emphasize similar aspects that are important in the sex trade, particularly their physical attributes, although emphasis and details vary. The results also suggest that male sex workers are cognizant of ethnic and racial preferences or fetishes and use them to enhance marketability in their online advertisements.

Historically, issues “pertinent to the individual sex worker have been explored at length within the literature from the conceptualization of the sex worker as deviant” (Browne and Minichiello 1996:51). Many of the issues that researchers commonly examine, such as HIV/AIDS, drug and alcohol use, and history of childhood abuse and violence, also directly or indirectly contribute to and continue to support the negative view of sex work. Although these studies are important and require attention, the association of sex work with social problems fails to show the diverse experiences of sex workers and downplays any potential positive aspects of sex work. As West (1993:324) concludes, the “most important conclusion to come out of this survey is the danger of generalisations about male sex workers. There are enormous variations in lifestyle, in the organisation of the business, in the environment in which it is carried on, in the sexual activities involved.”

In recent years, an increasing number of researchers has argued that “the intrinsic nature of sex work is not all oppressive, and that there are different kinds of worker

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and client experiences and varying degrees of victimization, exploitation, agency, and choice” (Scott et al. 2005:321; see also Browne and Minichiello 1996). For some workers, sex work is an occupational choice, and the decision to enter the trade is a rational one (Browne and Minichiello 1996; Calhoun and Weaver 1996; Sanders 2005; Uy et al. 2004; Weitzer 2005). Some sex workers view their work as transitional, undertaken while they await opportunities for other jobs. Others, perhaps more entrepreneurial and independent, treat sex work as a career choice (e.g., Marino, Minichiello and Disogra 2003). Koken, Bimbi, Parsons, and Halkitis (2004:29) report that some Internet escorts even reframe “sex work away from the stereotypical social problem model to sex work as a legitimate form of work which can be a constructive and positive force in the lives of those in the commercial sex industry as well as those who seek their services.”

Sex work is no longer restricted to traditional venues. With improvements in transportation and communication technologies, many sex workers are advertising their services in a global market via the Internet. “Escorts now have websites, which include photos and descriptions of their services, and potential clients are able to e-mail these escorts or find them in popular Internet chat rooms” (Parsons, Bimbi, and Halkitis 2001:102). The popularity of Internet usage and its global accessibility provide sex workers with a cost-effective way to advertise their services. Websites providing advertisement space for sex workers range from catering to only one specific city to covering a worldwide market. Even when sex workers are advertising on a website specific to a city or region, they are often mobile, offering delivery of their services, sometimes across state and national borders (see Pruitt 2005).

Further, studies indicate that sex workers could be active agents in strategizing and positioning themselves in the market. For example, Sanders (2005) reports that some of the female sex workers in her sample actively shape their work identities and play an expected version of the prostitute role as a business strategy to attract and retain clients. In fact, some of the strategies employed by some sex workers are based on marketing principles used in other industries. This paper contributes to the current literature by using theoretical frameworks from two disciplines, marketing and sociology, to examine online sex workers’ advertisements. We examine the *personal branding* of white American and Brazilian online rent boys. Specifically, we compare and contrast marketing strategies used by both groups and the degree to which ethnicity is emphasized as an aspect of personal branding.

MARKETING PERSONAL BRAND

Like any type of business advertising, sex workers highlight their strengths and downplay their less marketable characteristics. “Self-marketing consists of those varied activities undertaken by individuals to make themselves known in the marketplace” (Shepherd 2005). Prework routines, such as body-building and dieting, are often employed to enhance the “self” that is for sale. On the job, strategic clothing and make-up are employed for self-promotion. Traditional sex workers have advertised

directly to potential clients by walking the streets in their costumes. The evolving sex trade may utilize indirect advertisement strategies as well. For example, online sex workers attempt to entice potential clients with written descriptions and photographs.

To stand out among others, a sex worker needs to develop a personal brand that comprises a set of his or her unique characteristics (Shepherd 2005). Personal branding generally involves three stages: first, individuals discover key attributes about themselves; second, they construct a convincing and powerful narrative around these attributes; third, they develop a strategy to promote the visibility of their brands (Shepherd 2005). In addition, Peters (1999) suggests that a strong marketing strategy takes into consideration the clients' preferences. In other words, sex workers write their advertisements strategically, considering their strengths and weaknesses and how these traits will sell in the marketplace.

The principles of successful advertising are similar in sex work and in other "legitimate" businesses. Sex workers, in most cases, make rational choices and learn to maximize profits and minimize risks (e.g., Luckenbill 1984). The important considerations are to provide adequate information, develop a personal brand, and to use ethnicity, race, or nationality to differentiate their brands.

First, sex workers generally provide enough information so that a potential client can prescreen advertisements. Sex workers can review the advertisements of their coworkers. Sex workers might also know one another and can discuss or share ideas. Not surprisingly, Pruitt (2005) finds a high percentage of online sex workers report the same characteristics as other sex workers in their advertisements, even though the details of the content vary. For example, he notes that 98 percent of the advertisements reported the age of the worker, but the reported ages ranged from 18–50. Other characteristics frequently mentioned are penis length, race, "specialization" in terms of sex acts they are willing to perform, and contact information.

Second, sex workers are likely to differentiate themselves from others by developing a personal brand. Zukin and Maguire (2004:180) posit that "the process of individualization . . . [is] a reflexive, ongoing, individual project shaped by appearance and performance." Online sex workers present their appearances and performances first on screen. They identify their strengths and accentuate them in their advertisements.

Third, sex workers can decide whether to use their ethnicity, race, or nationality as a distinguishing marker in their personal brands. The decision to employ such a strategy depends on the extent to which sex workers view their ethnic, racial, or national sexual stereotypes as advantageous. Of course, for the same group, the impact of their stereotypes may vary depending on the audience. For example, being black might negatively affect one's economic mobility in the corporate world, but can be considered highly desirable in the sex market (e.g., Perlongher 1987).

ETHNIC BRANDING

We use the concept of "ethnic branding" to refer to branding that packages a collective stereotypical image or ideal, regardless of whether that image is based on culture,

appearance, or both. In this case, ethnic branding includes race and nationality branding. Although ethnicity, race, and nationality are distinct concepts, they are intertwined in common usage, and our language potentially complicates discussion of them, particularly when the subjects are cross-national. For example, "Asian" is considered a race in the United States, but not by Asian people born and raised in Asia. "Chinese" is an ethnicity in the United States, but it also represents a nationality. Dávila's (2001) research illustrates how Latino immigrants' national identities can be interpreted as ethnic identities by both themselves and others.

Ethnic branding is developed not only to enter a niche market, but also as a way to sell a "cultural package." By associating a brand with an ethnicity, the marketer is trying to create a more encompassing image with fewer words. For example, by associating a product or service with Argentina or Korea, people who have Argentine or Korean origins may feel comfortable with the product or service, while others may find it exotic and, thus, appealing. However, simply mentioning one's ethnicity is only one step. Studying 25 Mexican-American entrepreneurs, Corsino and Soto (2005) found that these business people employed specific ethnic strategies to frame economic transactions as social relationships. These strategies helped anchor the ethnic experience, and included such things as decorating the business location with physical representations (e.g., photographs and recognizable cuisines), displaying knowledge of their ethnic culture and language (e.g., using appropriate dialect), and anchoring interactions within a familiar structure (e.g., a family atmosphere). "This issue of genuineness or authenticity is especially poignant for ethnicity [and] . . . requires a cultural competence, a set of experiences, a heritage that grounds and goes beyond the strategic use of key ethnic terms, the arrangement of merchandise, the display of patriotic colors, and the like" (Corsino and Soto 2005:248–249).

Racial or ethnic sexual stereotypes are often hyped as "the long-held ideological tendency to eroticize [non-westerners and] . . . has been pervasive since the rise of western dominance" (Evans et al. 2000:540). In her study of dildos, Alavi (2004:89) argues that "these dildos are constructed to reinforce the stereotype of the 'big black cock,' which supports the ideas that black men are sexually aggressive." In his book, *HUNG: A Meditation on the Measure of Black Men in America*, Poulson-Bryant (2005:75) talks about his experiences with black sexual stereotypes that reinforce the popular belief that "The size is the color. The color is the size." Carballo-Diéguez and his fellow researchers' (2004:166) work on sexual behavior variations among Latino gay and bisexual men finds that individuals' judgment of gender and sexual stereotypes "points to the stereotype of darker or black men being more sexually potent than white men."

Indeed, sex workers often advertise their ethnicity, race, or nationality as part of their personal brand. Potential clients sometimes concoct sexual fantasies based on racial or ethnic sexual stereotypes. Zurbriggen and Yost (2004:289) posit one definition of sexual fantasies as "private mental events whose sole purpose would seem to be to induce pleasurable feelings of sexual desire and arousal." Fantasies could be a form of an internal dialogue or a scenario that "provides a frame of reference against which people can judge and understand their experience and test out how they can

best engage in sexual encounters” (Browne and Minichiello 1994:242). Such fantasies could include a particular penis size, acts of domination or submission, or even having sex with people of specific races and with particular accents. The rituals of ethnicity can be encased in language, mannerisms, and so forth, verifying the fantasy image clients have in their minds, provoking either a sense of familiarity for coethnics or excitement in exoticism for others. Thus, ethnic branding can be interpreted as a way to market a particular fantasy to increase sales.

BRAZILIANS AS A CASE STUDY

Brazilian sex workers serve as an interesting case study. Brazil’s reputation as a sexually more permissive country is distinctive in South America. For example, one event popularly associated with Brazil is the Carnival. According to Green (1999:3), “permissiveness during Carnival, so the stereotype goes, symbolizes a sexual and social regime that unabashedly accepts fluid sexual identity, including male-to-male sexuality.” Carnival is an event not only for tourists and the locals, but also for many sex workers who congregate there for both pleasure and business (e.g., Kulick 1998). Albeit not consistently supported, “the predominant, popular, international image of Brazilian sexuality carries connotations of the exuberance and display of carnival, scenes of Rio de Janeiro, and a sense of freewheeling sensuality and hedonism” (Ford et al. 2003:53). This view of Brazil often translates to Brazilians being perceived as sexually adventurous and passionate lovers. The stereotypical image of Brazilian men being mulatto, muscular, and well hung further enhances their desirability as sexual partners. With these positive stereotypes, particularly for the sex trade, Brazilian sex workers may choose to highlight their ethnicity in order to boost their business.

DATA AND METHODS

The Internet is popular among sex workers, because online marketing can be highly interactive, relatively low-cost, and efficient. It also provides a relatively safe and discreet avenue for both sex workers and their clients to connect (Pruitt 2005). Different websites tend to have a specific country or region focus, even though they cover many countries. The website we examined for our research was “Rentboy.com.” We selected the website and searched through it in the spring of 2006. This site focuses on U.S. and European markets, though it includes sex workers’ advertisements from all over the globe, featuring workers from major cities in more than thirty countries. Brazil has its own sites, but the number of advertisements is much smaller. The site we chose has a sufficient number of advertisements from both Brazilian and white American sex workers to allow us to make strong comparisons. The website advertisements are arranged by cities within each country in alphabetical order. Access to the advertisements is free, but users must consent to the stipulations of the site, which include a

self-declaration that the viewer is over 18 years old. The site also offers links to other sites, primarily for sales of pornography and sexual products.

Using this website's search engine, we first searched for Brazilian rent boys using key words including "Brazil," "Brazilian," "Brazilians," "South America," "South American," "Latino," and "Latin American." We accepted all Brazilian rent boys' advertisements found using the keyword search. In addition, we performed a systematic sampling of all advertisements by taking every 25th advertisement to screen for Brazilian sex workers who might have eluded the keyword search. With the search results from these two methods, we performed another round of screening to remove duplications or any advertisements that were not clearly Brazilian. The final Brazilian sample size consisted of 55 sex worker advertisements (representing 55 distinct sex workers).

Similarly, we conducted a systematic sampling method to collect white American sex workers' advertisements, because the number of advertisements in the U.S. was almost 1000. We systematically picked the third advertisement in the first city listed in each state. We picked the sixth advertisement, if the third advertisement was not white. In some cases, when none of the advertisements in a state qualified, we selected two from the next state. We confirmed that sex workers were white based on the posted photographs and self-descriptions. The final sample size of white American sex workers' advertisements was 49 (one cross-state duplicate was cut from the sample).

For verification, we reviewed all posted materials including personal websites if available, and looked for foreign telephone numbers and mentions of city or country of birth or upbringing. Before sampling from the website, we periodically examined the website to review the advertisements and to observe any systematic changes over time. On several occasions, we viewed all the online advertisements. As a result, for both samples, we used a stringent selection process and discarded any advertisement for which we could not confirm that the sex worker was Brazilian or white American. Potential selection bias exists whether we adopt stricter or looser selection criteria; with no way to ascertain which selection bias has a more severe impact on the results, we opted for a stricter selection. This was not an issue as the advertisements that we deleted were either duplications or clearly did not qualify (e.g., mentioning country of origin).

Although some sex workers provided a link to their personal websites, we coded information only on the page sampled. Like studies on online personal ads (e.g., Phua and Kaufman 2003), we assumed that sex workers include the most relevant information to attract clients. Some sex workers relied mainly on their photographs to solicit business and wrote very brief self-descriptions. We did not analyze any photographs, but focused on the written descriptions. With the written descriptions provided by sex workers, we performed a two-stage coding process: first, by open coding broad themes and second, by focused coding, analyzing each sentence, phrase, or word using those identified themes (e.g., Esterberg 2002). This approach allows themes and issues in the advertisements to emerge, rather than structuring the analysis using predefined frameworks. We coded 23 categories, such as, "Description of

Body,” “Description of Penis,” “Propositions/Sexual Acts/Preferences,” “Age,” and “Race.”

In addition, we converted the information into a dataset to perform basic statistics that reveal the prevalence of the themes in the sample population. We performed Pearson Chi-square tests to determine if the differences between groups were statistically significant. All tests were conducted whether a person mentioned or did not mention a particular characteristic; characteristics with more than one category are grouped together. To elaborate our points, we used excerpts from the advertisements without any editing, using an ellipsis in places where we truncated the quotations to highlight the relevant excerpt.

A Package Deal

In this section, we present information on services offered in the advertisements to illustrate rent boys’ strategy to market a package deal. In later sections, we focus on how they emphasize physical attributes and their ethnicity to create a personal brand. We use the term “rent boy” to describe sex workers in subsequent sections, since that is the term used in the data.

Ages range from 20 to 37 years old for Brazilians and 20 to 35 years old for white Americans. All rent boys in this study provided one or more photographs, even though not all of them have a clear face shot. Common personality descriptors in the advertisements include sensual, affectionate, honest, masculine, talented, and romantic. In the descriptions provided below, wording, spelling, and punctuation from the ads have been maintained.

White Americans’ descriptions include: “sensual, seductive, affectionate [and] romantic” and “I’m an easy-going, sexy, masculine all-American kinda guy, very friendly & intensely sexual. . . . Educated, honest, intelligent, reliable, professional and extremely discreet.”

Brazilian sex workers’ descriptions consist of: “I am down to earth, easy going, fun to talk with and sensual” and “My strengths: Feelings, romance, joy for life, listening, understanding and giving positive impulses.”

Both groups of rent boys also provided information about the services and scenes they are willing to provide or enact, including fantasies and fetishes such as posing—body worship, water sports, and spanking.

These services and scenes include the following: For white Americans: “Into all aspects of safe, sexual dominant fantasies and fetishes—posing-body worship-water sports-spanking, etc. Safe & Discreet” and “Hung eight, able to put on a show for you. Boy next door, that likes to play with the Adults any time of the day.” Another reads: “Also available for: KARATE, WRESTLING and TUSTOE. Into all actions & variety of scenes: leather, prepy boys, verbal, role play. Offering full body massage as a BONUS:/Swedish, Deep tissue or Shiatsu/3 years in massage school, trained in Japan.”

Brazilian ads provide the following: “I am into all scenes (straight, gay or bi)” and “Fully versatile but love to TOP and can always be open to adventurous suggestions . . . Into fetishes? let me show you my fetish and kinky side. I offer a ‘no rush service.’”

Another reads: "I am a very classy gentleman with a very fun and exciting wild side, who loves to spoil and pamper you as much as u can handle. I am a very sexy, attractive male who loves to please and satisfy. Take advantage of it."

Some sex workers, however, specify their limitations: "I'm pretty much up for anything as long as it is safe and not severely abnormal" and "i don't get into anything that involves blood, scat or urine."

In most advertisements, rent boys avoid portraying an image of offering robotic or nonemotional services, instead offering a "no rush service" and suggesting that the buyer will get an hour, a night, or a week of an unforgettable experience. This boyfriend experience offered is similar to the girlfriend experience (GFE) offered by indoor female sex workers. The expectations listed for this experience vary, ranging from willingness to kiss, to provide companionship beyond sex acts, to having emotional or intellectual connections. A website, "Girlfriend Experience Escorts," specifically mentions that "All our girls must meet the GirlFriend Experience client service guidelines where we specify exactly how you are to be treated like a King!" The guidelines are not, however, specified on the website. Similarly, lack of details in the advertisements prevents a detailed examination of this service.

One distinct nonsexual service more commonly offered by Brazilian sex workers is services for tourists; these services include car service, tour companionship, and sight-seeing tours. For example, part of one Brazilian advertisement reads: "If you need someone to show you around town I am available. Own my car and know Rio very well." These differences suggest that Brazilian rent boys' advertisements mainly target non-Brazilian clients. The fact that their advertisements in Brazil were in English (some were bilingual) and that they offered tourist-related services support that assertion. Brazilians, being more likely than white Americans to mention their familiarity with other languages (particularly Spanish and English), also suggests that foreigners are their targeted clients. Although this may reflect that the website is based in the United States, informal reviews of Brazilian-based websites indicate that Brazilian rent boys are likely to offer tour-related services.

The finding that some sex workers offer nonsexual services (and even the sex service is presented as an unforgettable experience) is consistent with studies on female sex workers who offer more than sex as a service (e.g., Brennan 2004; Lucas 2005). In Lucas's (2005:534) study, her interviewees claim that "they not only satisfy a client's sexual need but also can make him feel happy, more confident, relaxed, and less alone." Brennan (2004) reports that some of her interviewees plan to get the men to fall in love with them, while they deliver the expected and agreed upon sexual services.

Selling Body Parts

In both groups, more than two-thirds of rent boys mentioned their good looks, using terms like "model looks," "handsome," and "good-looking" (Table 1). Height and weight are also frequently reported. About 20 percent in both groups talk about their body hair, indicating that they are hairy, smooth, or shaved. About 10 percent more white American rent boys (57 percent) mentioned their body type as either muscular, lean, or in-shape, when compared with Brazilian rent boys (47 percent). A firm body

Table 1. Percentage Self-Reported Characteristics/Services in Advertisements

	White American (N = 49)	Brazilian (N = 55)
Looks (e.g., attractive/handsome)	71	64
Height*	47	66
Weight	41	58
Body hair		
Hairy	8	4
Smooth	12	16
Shaved	2	0
Body type		
Muscular/built	18	26
Lean/slim	8	7
Other (e.g., athletic)	31	15
Penis* (e.g., shape or size)	25	55
Circumcision*		
Cut	10	9
Uncut	4	35
Buttocks	14	16

*Statistically significant at 0.05 using Pearson chi-square tests (Fisher's exact test is used when a table that does not result from missing rows or columns in a larger table has a cell with an expected frequency of less than 5). All tests are conducted for whether a person mentioned or did not mention a particular characteristic; characteristics with more than one category are grouped together.

in the sex market is a selling point, but it also reflects what Klein (1989:25) calls "a conflux of contradictory characteristics," with a hard body representing manliness, while gay sex diminishes hegemonic masculinity. The fact that none of these differences is statistically significant, except for height, suggests that rent boys offered these characteristics as standard information.

More than double the percentage of Brazilian rent boys mentioned their penises' shape or length than the percentage of white Americans, and the difference is statistically significant. "Horse-hung," "thick tool," "amazing cock and balls," "beer can," "weapon of mass destruction," "nice package," and "heavy machinery" are some of the descriptors for their penises. By far, "hung" and "thick" are the most commonly used, either as stand-alone descriptors or in combination with other words, such as "thick and hung," "very well-hung," and "delicious thick cock." Among the 25 percent of white Americans who reported their penis size, the range is between seven to nine inches. Reported penis size among the 55 percent of Brazilians who mentioned it ranges from seven to twelve inches.

About 10 percent of white American rent boys mentioned that they are circumcised and four percent that they are uncircumcised. Thirty-five percent of Brazilian rent boys

reported being uncircumcised and nine percent report being circumcised. Although some clients may be uninterested in uncircumcised penises, others may be partial to them. In countries like the United States, where the majority of male newborns are circumcised (Marin 1999), some North American men may want to have sexual interactions with men who are not circumcised. The difference between the numbers of Brazilian and white American rent boys mentioning whether they have a circumcised or uncircumcised penis is statistically significant. Being uncircumcised could be seen as a foreign trait, which therefore boosts the rent boys' ability to fulfill certain client fantasies. Providing penis information is a unique feature of Internet escorts, since it is "an important determining factor in choosing an escort" for some customers (Pruitt 2005:199). Rent boys also reported the shape of their buttocks, with "bubble butt" being the most popular descriptor. Other buttock descriptions include "hot ass," "bootylicious," "dimple with tight ass," and "muscle butt." However, the difference in whether Brazilian or white American rent boys described their buttocks is not statistically significant.

Gender, Sex, and Sexuality

The differences between whether Brazilian or white American rent boys mentioned their sexual orientation, sex act, and gender role are not all statistically significant (Table 2). The results suggest that it is important to advertise this information. Here, the variations of what they mentioned are important; if, for example, they mentioned their sexual orientation, we examine what descriptors they used.

Marketing strategies play into the decision of whether or not to publish one's sexual orientation. In his study of adult bookstores' clientele, Tewksbury (1990:269) argues that "the way individuals publicly present themselves may both restrict and create behavioral possibilities." Similarly, rent boys manage their images to solicit clients. To encourage potential clients to hire them, rent boys may prefer not to identify with any sexual categories. Only 10 percent among white American rent boys mentioned their sexual orientation; 2 percent mentioned being straight, and the other 8 percent listed being bisexual. Among Brazilian rent boys, 2 percent mentioned being gay; 2 percent listed being straight, and the other 4 percent listed "bisexual." Although some clients may prefer gay rent boys, as they assume that these workers may be sexually less inhibited and unlikely to commit hate crimes, others may prefer the image of a straight trade—a "forbidden fruit." There may be many reasons for a client not to hire an escort who claims to be homosexual. The client may identify himself as heterosexual, and, furthermore, might be married with children, wanting to keep this liaison confidential and secret. Other clients may not identify their actions as homosexual, but, rather as strictly sexual and they may not want to hire a gay man. If the two men agree that they are getting together only for sexual reasons, then they can have sex freely without threatening the client's masculinity.

Similarly, 51 percent and 60 percent of white American and Brazilian rent boys, respectively, did not mention any preference or restrictiveness in sex acts that they are willing to perform. Such a move could be interpreted as a strategy to appeal to a wider market with their sexual versatility. Revelations of their sexual orientation or limitations

Table 2. Percentage Self-Reported Gender/Sex Characteristics in Advertisements

	White American (N = 49)	Brazilian (N = 55)
Sexual Orientation		
Gay	0	2
Straight	2	2
Bisexual	8	4
Sex Act		
Top (inserter in anal intercourse)	16	22
Bottom (insertee in anal intercourse)	4	0
Versatile	29	18
Gender Role		
Masculine	12	22
Very masculine	6	13
Feminine	0	0
Straight-acting	6	0
Male Type*		
Boy	16	24
Man	6	7
Guy	12	29

*Statistically significant at 0.05 using Pearson chi-square tests (Fisher's exact test is used when a table that does not result from missing rows or columns in a larger table has a cell with an expected frequency of less than 5). All tests are conducted for whether a person mentioned or did not mention a particular characteristic; characteristics with more than one category are grouped together.

in sex acts could be seen as a poor marketing tactic. Except for those who have strict limitations on what they would do, rent boys might benefit from appealing to a larger client base, negotiating in person for mutually satisfactory terms for the transaction.

This lack of position in sex acts contradicts what Parker (1999) posits in discussing male prostitution in Brazil. Parker (1999:46) reports that much "the same distinction between perceived active and passive roles is even more obvious in the increasingly prominent world of male prostitution, where . . . the miche (hustler) [is] an almost equally exaggerated masculine figure thought to be generally available for the active role but unwilling to perform the passive role." Based on that, one would expect more Brazilian rent boys clearly stating their preference for being "a top" (the inserter in anal sex). One possible explanation is that the rent boys in this study are different from the hustlers Parker (1999) alluded to in his book in terms of socioeconomic status and target clientele. Another possible explanation could be that like many younger gay men Parker studied, these rent boys' manhood is not threatened by sex acts. Instead, the sex of desired partners and gender roles are more important in determining who is a man. However, Parker's (1999) point is not entirely refuted: among those Brazilian rent boys who mentioned their sex act preferences, none reported willingness to be exclusively "a bottom" (the insertee in anal sex). Compared to white

Americans, a higher percentage of Brazilian rent boys (22 percent versus 16 percent) mentioned that they are exclusively a top. Eighteen percent of Brazilian rent boys reported being versatile (a person who can play both the inserter and insertee roles in anal sex), compared to 29 percent of white Americans. Clearly, Brazilian sex workers are not a monolithic group, and the fluidity of sexuality over time and space provide additional dimensions to their diversity.

No one in either group mentioned being feminine, with most self-identifying as “masculine” or “very masculine.” This result supports earlier explanations that sex acts (mostly performed in private) are less threatening to manhood for Brazilian rent boys than are the publicly displayed gender role performances. This result is also consistent with studies on gay dating where most advertisers self-identified as masculine and preferred the same in partners (e.g., Phua 2002). Being masculine is a highly marketable trait. “Straight-acting” is used only by white American rent boys and not by Brazilian rent boys. The term is an American construct and has yet to infiltrate into Brazilian English lexicon. These findings suggest that clients are buying *gender*, as the sex of the person is assumed; in this case, the preference for masculinity is evident not only because of the emphasis on masculinity but also because of the absence of femininity in their descriptions.

About 60 percent of Brazilian rent boys use the words “boy” (24 percent), “man” (7 percent), and/or “guy” (29 percent) to reaffirm their male status whereas only 34 percent of white American rent boys use those terms. The difference is statistically significant. For white Americans, a higher percentage emphasize their youthfulness by stating their “boy” status (16 percent) than using “man” (6 percent) or “guy” (12 percent). Not surprisingly, both masculinity and youth are prized characteristics, as suggested by this sample.

Explaining the differences between white American and Brazilian rent boys’ advertisements not only reveals marketing strategies but also brings to light some aspects of their distinct sexual and gender systems. When compared with their white American counterparts, more Brazilian rent boys emphasize their masculinity and assert their active sexual roles. This reflects the sexual system in Brazil that traditionally focuses on and continues to emphasize outward display of hegemonic masculinity and male active sexual roles. Scholars have posited that traditional Brazilian sexual culture is organized by sexual roles (e.g., Parker 1999). Under this sexual system, a man’s sexuality and masculinity will not be questioned as long as others perceive him as taking a man’s role in sex acts, regardless of the sex of his partner. In some situations, he could even boost his virility by being desired by both sexes and having an abundance of sexual partners catering to his sexual satisfaction. In short, this supposedly traditional sexual system underscores a basic binary gender system as the foundation for sexuality (e.g., Green 1999). However, the sex of the desired partner (as opposed to the desired gender or the sex acts) is becoming more important as a determinant of sexual identity in Brazil, but it is still less prevalent than in the United States where debates on sexual identity politics have a longer and more prominent history.

Differentiating Self-branding by Ethnicity

In the earlier section, ethnic stereotypes of Brazilian and white American rent boys in part help create fantasy images for sale. However, both Brazilians and white Americans explicitly mentioned their ethnicity, and the difference between the two groups mentioning these characteristics is statistically significant. For Brazilians, the terms used include “South American,” “Brazilian,” “Latin,” and/or references to Brazil, while white Americans use phrases such as “Italian-Irish,” “American,” or specific references to their blond hair and blue eyes. Among white Americans, only 5 out of the 49 rent boys emphasized that they are “all-American.” Although the phrase “all-American” is usually used to mean “a regular guy” or someone who is “wholesome” by those familiar with American terminology, this term also confirms the worker’s nationality. For example, no matter how wholesome or regular a person is, he is unlikely to use the term “all-American” to describe himself unless he is an American.

Thirty-nine of the fifty-five Brazilian advertisements mentioned that the sex workers were currently outside of Brazil, with most of them living in the United States. All Brazilian rent boys in Brazil mentioned that they are Brazilian, whereas white Americans appear to take their “American-ness” as a given.

Examples of rent boys’ emphasis on their “Brazilianness” include: “I am originally from Brazil and you can see the Latin in me” and “I’m 21 years old originally from Rio de Janeiro in Brazil . . . People calls me ‘The boy from Ipanema’ cause I’m cute like the beach and have the Brazilian way on my blood.” Another reads: “I am in my 30’s and from Brazil. English is a second language to me, so I still have that sexy portuguese accent.”

We are not suggesting that the ethnic differences within white Americans are not important or that they are less marketable. Whiteness is a prize in most racialized societies, even if most individuals in that country are not white. Thus, being white is already an advantage, regardless of one’s ethnicity. However, the distinction between Brazilians and other Hispanic groups is critical, particularly given differences in their countries’ geopolitical and economic histories and current global statuses that shape others’ perceptions of their social identities (Beserra 2006).

Fifteen percent of Brazilian rent boys mentioned their eye color, 13 percent stated their hair color, and 13 percent described their skin color—compared to 31 percent, 20 percent, and 8 percent among their white American counterparts (Table 3). The difference between the two groups is statistically significant for mentioning eye color but not for mentioning hair color and skin color. Those white Americans who mentioned their eye and hair color alluded to these features as blue and blond, respectively. Because of its culturally rich and diverse history, “Brazilians evaluate race primarily according to phenotype, offering a plethora of fluid and ambiguous categories” (Goldstein 1999). This works for marketing their Brazilianness: their understanding of race prevents them from fitting neatly into racial categorizations in other countries as these categories carry with them different social and historical meanings (Guimarães 2001); their perceived positive sexual stereotypes as mulattos encourages

them to be more ambiguous about their racial category and to exercise their choices depending on the situation. Perlongher (1987) posits that in Brazil, black sexuality represents virility, and thus is prized and marketed to whiter skinned clients, but darker skinned clients are considered less desirable; even if they are white Brazilians and look no different from white Americans or white Europeans, they may not want to compete as a white rent boy in an international market but rather to sell themselves as Brazilians.

Table 3. Percentage Self-Reported Ethnicity-Related Characteristics in Advertisements

	White American (N = 49)	Brazilian (N = 55)
Ethnicity*	10	100
Eye color*	31	15
Skin color	8	13
Hair color	20	13

*Statistically significant at 0.05 using Pearson chi-square tests (Fisher's exact test is used when a table that does not result from missing rows or columns in a larger table has a cell with an expected frequency of less than 5). All tests are conducted for whether a person mentioned or did not mention a particular characteristic; characteristics with more than one category are grouped together.

CONCLUSION

Desire for Brazilian or white American rent boys may be a form of ethnic or racial fetish, if clients are fixated only on their Brazilianness or Americanness for sexual gratification. Racial fetish is one of more than ninety types of fetishes listed on the website, "Sexual Fetishes: Information on Unusual Sexual Fetishes and Sexual Activities." The object of a fetish desire is not necessarily an inanimate object, but could be an action, sexual act, or a physical human organ. Other fetishes listed on the site include semen fetish, muscle fetish, and hair fetish; many others require performance rather than physical attributes. Some potential clients might have a fetish for Brazilians or white Americans and thus seek them out to fulfill their desires. Clients are able to buy time with an individual who is, or comes close to, the living version of an imagined fantasy. Hoping to be hired, rent boys could concoct fantasy images for potential clients using strategic marketing language. Ethnic branding renders a person both exotic and invisible (e.g., Dávila 2001). From a sociological perspective, this is interesting because the product is "indicative of links between cultural representations, business strategies, and social practices" (Zukin and Maguire 2004:177).

Not all clients who seek out Brazilians or white Americans have a Brazilian or Latino or white American fetish. Some clients may be "color-blind," while others may prefer certain sex workers for other reasons. For example, the effect of monetary exchange rate differentials in countries could create a demand for sex workers in tourist areas or in less wealthy countries. Regardless of reasons, using ethnic brands

for marketing in sex work suggests that rent boys are cognizant of ethnic and racial preferences or fetishes and use them to advantage. Ethnicity could be interpreted as an additional feature for differentiating their personal brand. This supports previous research that argues that ethnicity could be treated as a commodity, and in this case, marketed in the sex trade. Although both groups mention their ethnicities, the implications could be different: for white Americans, their emphasis on ethnicity reinforces their privileged status, and for Brazilians, their exoticism.

In this paper, we examine personal branding between white American and Brazilian online rent boys' advertisements. Specifically, we compare and contrast marketing strategies used by both groups and the degree to which ethnicity is emphasized as an aspect of personal branding. The results show that both groups emphasize similar aspects that are important in the sex trade, particularly their physical attributes, although the prevalence of emphasis and the details vary. These physical characteristics include attractiveness, penis size, body type, and height and weight.

The commodification of ethnicity or individual characteristics for sale in the sex market is not uncommon. On the topic of medicine and the development of a market for body parts, Williams-Jones (1999) posits that society has diminishing concerns about personhood and physical integrity. Williams-Jones (1999:11) discusses the "tendency to see a person's body as a collection of objects that are separable and commercially transferable," which could quickly lead to exploitation and dehumanization, particularly of people at the margins of society. Although rent boys literally cannot sell individual parts, they are figuratively selling themselves in parts in accordance with the fetish argument. They attempt to sell individual parts of their bodies as commodities. Clients are offered a person who is put together by selected traits—a penis, muscles, skin tone, smoothness or body hair, hair color/type, eye color, and so on. Each of these commodities is a potential fantasy or fetish of clients. Clients audition rent boys to play in their fantasies. Although relationships may develop from these encounters, the initial (or even subsequent) fantasy components of the relationship exist.

The success of rent boys depends only partially on their advertisements. The determining measurement of success is the ability to seal the transaction to the satisfaction of all parties. Further studies should examine success and include research with rent boys and their clients through in-depth interviews and or surveys. Topics might include whether the information provided is authentic; interpretations of both rent boys and clients should be considered. Further research should also explore the similarities and differences between female and male sex workers' online advertisements to see if such advertisements are gendered. Nonetheless, this paper provides a cross-sectional view of how ethnicity can be used for personal branding in the sex market; its use and social significance vary, depending on the group. As such, this paper adds to the growing research on male sex work online (e.g., Pruitt 2005).

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Deploying for Deliverance: The Digital Divide in Municipal Wireless Networks

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The use of information technology (IT) is growing; access and use differ among those from different races, ethnicities, income and education levels, jobs, ages, and genders. Although some argue that broadband technology could be the platform for universal access, the benefits are still debatable for municipalities providing access. The authors discuss how public officials have decided to lead, support, and usher in an era of rapid IT development through wireless broadband networks to address digital divide concerns, and how these claims may meet—or fail to meet—expectations. The purpose of this paper is twofold: (1) to propose a fruitful investigative overview of U.S. cities claiming that a municipal wireless network will bridge the “digital divide”; and (2) to employ discourse analysis to examine the digital divide language 24 municipal wireless networks (MWNs) use.

The goal of this paper is to examine a hotly contested, complex, and very localized sociotechnical space, the advent of municipal wireless networks (MWN), and their intended role in alleviating the digital divide. Broadband access to the Internet is commonly believed to be essential for all, yet it is not available to all. Not everyone has the skills necessary to use information and communications technologies, yet these skills are seen as increasingly necessary to navigate everyday tasks. To address this digital divide, municipalities are stepping in to offer wireless broadband Internet access (Ortiz and Tapia 2006; Tapia 2006; Tapia, Maitland, and Stone 2005; Tapia, Maitland, and Stone 2006; Tapia, Maldonado, and Ortiz 2006; Tapia and Ortiz 2006).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, three issues have come together to bring about the municipal wireless networks. Primarily, much of the United States of America suffers from poor broadband penetration compared with the rest of the industrialized world. This is often blamed on unreliable and slow service, high prices,

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and a low-density, distributed population. Secondly, the development of a formal, national-level telecommunications policy in the United States is being outpaced by technological change. Finally, the invention of unregulated wireless broadband technologies permits the provision of broadband access at minimal cost. These issues leave local governments trapped between a population demanding universal, high quality broadband service at affordable prices and slow-to-respond telecommunication providers and federal policy makers. This tension has prompted more than 350 municipalities in the United States to develop and deploy affordable wireless broadband networks, covering not only municipal officials' growing needs, but those of their citizenry as well.

The way in which public officials document the goals of these municipal projects is our core interest. The public documentation of municipal wireless networks provides particular insights in understanding the public discourse on the digital divide—its importance, its severity, and its solutions. The purpose of this research is to understand and make visible the underlying assumptions made by these officials when they promise ubiquitous wireless accessibility. Our research questions are:

1. Do public officials who tout municipal-sponsored wireless broadband projects believe they will narrow the digital divide?
2. If they do, what are the stated mechanisms through which municipal wireless projects can be characterized as a technological solution to social problems experienced by these cities?

Although this research is introductory, we hope to ask these questions as a means to begin constructing a preliminary theory of MWNs that takes into consideration the digital divide. In this paper, we focus on preliminary findings from online documentation of 24 cities in the process of building or considering MWNs in order to narrow the digital gap.

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Information technology has become central to our knowledge economy, and, thus, is wedded to wealth, power, and prestige. There is a strong belief that people who have access to and the skills to use the Internet are more successful both economically, with respect to education, jobs, and earnings, and socially, participating more in terms of political and civic engagement, and that they receive more government services and other public goods than those who do not (Katz and Rice 2002; Kennard 2001; Oden 2004; Oden and Strover 2002; Tufekcioglu 2003): "Immediate and asynchronous connectivity together with the diversity of information accessible via the computer can, furthermore, increase social inclusion and social position" (Oden 2004:5). Increased access to the Internet also provides greater access to education, income, and other resources (Benton Foundation 1998; Bucy 2000; Hoffman and Thomas 1998, 1999; Strover 1999).

The digital divide reflects persistent gaps in access to the Internet based on race, ethnicity, education, and income. Depending on the source of data, white Americans are 14 to 22.6 percent more likely than African Americans to have access to the Internet and 6 to 22.5 percent more likely than Latinos. Americans with a college degree are 21 to 34.1 percent more likely to have access. Americans who earn more than \$30,000 are more likely to have access than those who earn less (Mossberger, Tolbert, and Stansbury 2003; Pew Internet and American Life Project 2000; U.S. Department of Commerce 2000). The gap between those who can afford broadband and those who cannot persists in the United States, despite growth in the total number of broadband connections. According to a 2003 U.S. Census Bureau survey of homes with an Internet connection, more than half of households with incomes above \$100,000 a year have broadband, while fewer than one-third of households with incomes below \$100,000 do. At the margins, the gaps are even wider. Almost 60 percent of households with annual incomes above \$150,000 have a broadband connection, while fewer than 10 percent of households with incomes below \$25,000 do (Turner 2005).

These dismal statistics have not gone unnoticed. During the Clinton/Gore administration, the presidency championed the Internet and used the power of the federal government to encourage its growth. The Internet's rapid diffusion in the U.S. during the late 1990s was influenced by a wide range of federal policies: the privatization of the Internet early in the decade; the decision to exempt online sales from federal tax; Commerce Department grants for projects that brought new communication technologies to low-income communities; and the federal "E-rate" policy of subsidizing investments in Internet technology by public schools and libraries (DiMaggio, Celeste, and Shafer 2004). Such efforts follow a long tradition of "universal service" programs that attempt to provide low-cost telecommunication services both to low-income persons and those living in areas where it is costly to provide such services (e.g., rural areas) (Ortiz and Tapia 2006; Tapia 2006; Tapia, Maldonado, and Ortiz 2006; Tapia, Maitland, and Stone 2005; Tapia, Maitland, and Stone 2006; Tapia and Ortiz 2006). Despite efforts to provide low cost access to the all segments of the U.S. population, a digital divide exists.

The digital divide reflects ongoing social inequalities in the United States, explained by both the lack of vision as well as by entrenched social, economic, and political systems (Bagasao, Macias, Jones, and Pachon 1999). These systems of social inequality not only shape diffusion rates, but also the use of IT, in ways that reinforce existing inequalities rather than mitigate them (DiMaggio 2001; Kling and Lamb 2000; Kvasny 2002; Kvasny 2006; Kvasny and Keil 2006; Kvasny and Payton 2005; Kvasny and Trauth 2002; Kvasny and Truex 2001). Broad patterns of social inequality in education, work, consumption opportunities, and democratic participation are at the heart of the digital divide and continue to broaden the gap.

Moreover, while more individuals are gaining access to the Internet daily, the gap between the haves and have-nots is widening in terms of use, technical competence, and information literacy. It is unclear whether this digital divide is caused by economic issues (e.g., cost of basic services), education, or social issues (e.g., perception

of the use of the Internet). If mere access to information services does not affect the digital divide (or even widens it), then new understanding is required to assist policy development and cyber infrastructure implementation and dissemination. Without such an understanding, tax dollars can be wasted and well-intentioned investments in the national cyber infrastructure could actually exacerbate the digital divide.

The discussion about the nature of the digital divide has two principal voices; those who have conceived it as a technological penetration, or simple access issue, and those who have seen access to information and communication technologies as only the tip of the iceberg—meaning that the divide is more than digital—it is cultural, educational, and socioeconomic. This first group viewed the digital divide through the lens of a decades-old policy commitment to the principle of universal telephone service. Those who do not use information and communication technologies *choose* not to use them. The contrasting point of view finds that, in addition to persisting gaps in access to information and communication technologies, gaps in skills and usage may be a larger social problem (DiMaggio and Hargittai 2002; Gordo 2000; Lazarus and Mora 2000; Oden and Strover 2002; Servon 2002; Van Dijk 2001; Warschauer 2003). These scholars have stressed the cultural, educational, political, and socioeconomic aspects of the digital divide and believe that while access is being addressed, many other gaps widen. From this point of view, government and industry has focused too narrowly on addressing the access issue by providing devices to schools and communities. Since these policy makers have not defined the digital divide in terms of skills and competence, they have not invested in training, teaching, and technical assistance that would better address the issues.

Understanding the digital divide in terms of access to computers and the Internet is necessary—but not sufficient to understand the whole problem of digital social inequality. Other key issues are technical competence and information literacy. Technical competence is the ability to operate a computerized or electronic device, such as the ability to use a word processor, send e-mail, and use spreadsheets and databases. Information literacy is the ability to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and use the information. The skills divide replicates the access divide—those who lack skills tend to be older, less-educated, poor, African American, and Latino. This same pattern of disparity characterizes both technical competence and information literacy (Tolbert, Stansbury, and Mossberger 2001).

Information technology skills and access should be seen as public goods, because, like education and libraries, they are capable of providing positive externalities associated with economic growth and democratic governance (Mossberger, Tolbert, and Stansbury 2003:5). Critical technological skills raise the level of human capital in the economy, particularly in the context of a knowledge-based economy. Computer and information technologies are tools for participation in the economy and the political arena (Westen 2000). This provides a strong case for government intervention to provide access to all citizens, not just those who are already advantaged. Meinrath (2006) explains, quoting Ben Scott, policy director for Free Press: “A third of the country has no Internet access of any kind, and another third is stuck with dial-up.” The long-standing and historic nature of this problem supports the critique that this systemic

problem has become institutionalized in our economic and regulatory structures—“the market is an imperfect mechanism for delivering essential communications services. Providers will naturally gravitate toward business models that maximize return on investment. In monopoly and oligopoly markets, this leads to the systematic exclusion of low-income consumers,” states Scott. “Moreover, there is little incentive above the bottom line to spend resources on technology training, equipment distribution, and digital inclusion.”

Some authors have pushed for broadband Internet access to be considered essential, like water, gas, electricity, and waste disposal, a necessity rather than a luxury. If this is truly the case, then one could argue that the patchwork of private companies now offering broadband access are exacerbating the problems in rural and urban pockets of poverty in the same way other forms of private utilities have done in the recent past. This leads us to assert that treating broadband Internet as a public utility has the potential to alleviate some of the causes and symptoms of poverty and social exclusion. This assertion should be tested.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For the purposes of this work, we adopt a social informatics perspective. Social informatics is the analysis of the social context of computing. Social informatics research focuses on exploring, explaining, and theorizing about the sociotechnical contexts of ICTs (Kling and Lamb 2000; Sawyer and Eschenfelder 2002; Sawyer and Rosenbaum 2003; Sawyer and Tapia 2003). Although social informatics does not claim to be a theory, *per se*, it directs a researcher’s attention to the social environment in which the social and technical are engaged in a mutual change process.

Within the social informatics perspective, several valuable theories have emerged—such as the social shaping of technology and actor network theory. In both of these theoretical areas, the technological artifact is placed within a network of actors who influence the artifact’s definition, development, design, and use. Taken together, they share a critical approach and investigate the ways in which social, institutional, economic, and cultural factors shape the direction and rate of innovation, the form and content of technological artifacts and practices, and the outcomes of technological change for different groups in society (Bijker 1995; Bijker, Hughes, and Pinch 1987; MacKenzie and Wajcman 1985; Williams and Edge 1996).

The social shaping of technology (SST) begins with the assumption that technology is a dynamic relationship among inventions, economic institutions, and culture in the context of large and intricate systems (Hughes 1987). This perspective highlights that the material characteristics and actions of any technology are shaped by the social actions of the designers, the specific uses of that technology, and the evolving patterns of use over time (Bijker 1995; Law and Bijker 1992; Mackay and Gillespie 1992; MacKenzie and Wajcman 1985; Williams and Edge 1996). From this theory, we draw key concepts, such as a sociotechnical ensemble and a boundary object.

We draw from the SST perspective because it facilitates the examination of the larger context of technological change, the processes of technological change, and, most specifically, the content of the technological change itself (Williams and Edge 1996). Central to the SST framework is the concept of choice, in that technological innovation and development can be represented by a series of choices of one technological path over another through a process of negotiation—sometimes leading to irreversibility and lock-in of certain technologies (Arthur 1989; Callon 1994; Collinridge 1992; Cowan 1992; Rosenberg 1994). And, finally, the SST perspective is particularly adept at exposing the governance, control, and political motivations behind technological choice and development, critically exposing privilege and power (Bijker 1992; Hard 1993; Latour 1988; Winner 1977; Winner 1980). Although many sociotechnical theorists have focused on the innovation stage of technological development, SST allows a central place for the stage of implementation and stresses the nonlinear, transformative, interpretive, and iterative nature of this stage (Williams and Edge 1996). Fleck (1988) describes this process as “innofusion,” a struggle between design, trial, exploration, and use, as spiral, interactive, and complex.

The actor network theory (ANT) of Latour and Callon (see Callon 1987 and Latour 1988, 1992, 1993) developed as an analysis of scientific and technological artifacts. ANT’s theoretical richness derives from its refusal to reduce explanations to either natural, social, or discursive categories, while recognizing the significance of each (see Latour 1993, 1991). The complex, network-dependent nature of artifacts is captured by ANT’s conception of them as social-technical hybrids and simultaneously real, discursive, and social. The actor network theory has been used to conceptualize and examine how actor-networks are convened out of a heterogeneity of humans and artifacts, including information technology. An actor network comes into being via what Callon terms a “process of convergence.” Convergence is the process of forming alliances between various human and nonhuman actors. From this theory we draw key concepts of convergence and inscription.

Theoretically, we reject both technological determinism and social constructivist approaches in favor of the mutually constituted view of material technologies as shaping and being shaped by evolving social processes. Both polarized frameworks have problems with agency: constructivists give none to technology, and the technological determinists attribute none to society. Both are linear, one-dimensional—they “black-box the artifact” and address only the outcomes of technological change (Feenberg 1991).

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

To assess the arguments made by the cities deploying MWNs, we conducted a discourse analysis of the cities considering a MWN or already building a MWN. By “discourse analysis,” we mean a way of approaching a problem. Discourse analysis does not provide a concrete answer to problems based on scientific research; rather, it

enables access to the ontological and epistemological statements behind a project, an assumption, a method of research, or—to provide an example from the field of library and information science—a system of classification (Budd and Raber 1996). In other words, discourse analysis enables us to reveal the hidden motivations behind a text or behind the choice of a particular method of research to interpret that text. The methodological technique of discourse analysis is not new and has been applied to organizations and information science (Forrester 1997; Frohmann 1994; Tuominen 1997).

Discourse is, therefore, a complex and arguable term with a history in many different disciplines. However, Van Dijk's (1985) approach to discourse as "language usage" and discourse analysis as the examination of "text and talk in context" is helpful in encapsulating what is perhaps the main feature of discourse analysis: examining a significance in how social context works together with the use of language. Researchers from both the social and linguistic framework traditions share this belief. As a result, they perceive discourse as a type of social action. For both traditions, the goal of discourse analysis is to understand how the use of language has social content and effects. They ask how language is used, why it is used, by whom, and in what circumstances (Hastings 2000).

Since June 2005, our research team has created a dynamic and evolving database of all municipal wireless initiatives in the United States (see Ortiz and Tapia 2006; Tapia 2006; Tapia, Maitland, and Stone 2005; Tapia, Maitland, and Stone 2006; Tapia, Maldonado, and Ortiz 2006; Tapia and Ortiz 2006). As of June 2006, we have a total of 357 entries. The data that we have collected span multiple categories, including information on the shape, form, uses, and technologies of the municipal network itself; the business plan and/or service delivery plan; the status of the development/deployment of the network; the social impacts of the network; and the marketing language used by the owners and users of the network.

The database has been populated through a variety of methodologies. In most cases, information was obtained through the use of the Internet, using crawling techniques through municipal sponsored websites, press releases, public documents and online news and weblogs. In addition, when information proved scarce or dubious, we called municipalities, supplementing and verifying information over the phone.

As of June 2006, 166 municipalities (approximately 46 percent) textually addressed either universal service, social inclusion, or the digital divide in some way. All 357 municipalities gave some form of economic development as their primary reason for deploying an MWN. Drawing from one subsection of fields from the database, we have compiled all texts from these cities. Although the documents we analyzed do not form a complete picture of the intentions of the cities' representatives, they are snapshots in time and space of rhetorical and public speech; we read them literally in terms of the discursive event. We have chosen a sample of 24 out of 166 cities that serve as the best examples of these municipalities. This is a nonrandom sample chosen to emphasize the four prevalent themes that we found among the 166. (See Table 1.)

Table 1. Sample of Municipalities

Akron, OH	Muskegon, MI
Buffalo, NY	New Haven, CT
Cabin John, MD	Philadelphia, PA
Cambridge, MA	Portland, OR
Chicago, IL	San Diego, CA
Charleston, SC	Sandoval County, NM
Grand Rapids, MI	San Francisco, CA
Hartford, CT	Scottsdale, AZ
Houston, TX	Seattle, WA
Long Beach, CA	St. Louis Park, MN
Miami, FL	St. Paul, MN
Milwaukee, WI	Suffolk County, NY

We established our coding framework a priori, based on our review of the literature on the digital divide. Initial coding was done by one of the authors. This was compared to the coding of one co-author and one undergraduate research assistant. As is typical in dual coding efforts, differences in the coding of an article were resolved through discussion. We developed twelve key codes through this negotiation of understanding. (See Table 2.)

Data collection was a three-fold process. First, we searched the stored texts for any mention of the aforementioned codes. Second, if a code was present, then the data source was marked and reviewed. Last, we noted and stored the type of discussion to be compared with all other instances found.

Table 2. Analytical Terms within the Code for Digital Divide

Digital Divide	Information Rich and Poor
Digital Gap	Low-Income
Digital Inequality	Social Inclusion
Disadvantaged	Social Exclusion
Disenfranchised	Underprivileged
Information Haves and Have-Nots	Underrepresented

ANALYSIS: A LIMITED TYPOLOGY FOR DIGITAL DIVIDE IN MWN DOCUMENTATION

We have developed a typology based on our analysis of the texts addressing the digital divide associated with the 166 cities. We have developed this four-fold typology to better discuss our results and to demonstrate the relative frequencies of the forms occurring in the data. A typology allows us to develop a schema in order to identify those traits or themes that form an applicable foundation on which to assign individual examples to different categories. A typology allows us to begin to clarify the range of digital divide terminology in an attempt to create a common language used across all these municipalities. The authors would like to emphasize that this typology should be seen only as a means to simplify the presentation of our findings. The paucity of data in this space demonstrates that it is far too early to see any true patterns in the ways municipalities discuss the digital divide within their jurisdictions.

Below we list the four themes that emerged for the data. For each of the themes we provide several illustrative quotes from the 24 sampled cities. The four themes are listed in order from those that directly address the digital divide the least to those that address it the most.

Theme One: Ubiquitous Connectivity Creates an Identity and Revitalizes the Community

This is the least direct of all four themes. This theme is based on a tenuous connection between city branding, economic development, and a trickle-down effect of narrowing the digital divide. These municipalities addressed the digital divide by seeing it as a principally economic problem to be solved mostly through the support of business, education, and training. By providing stable, reliable, low-cost, and ubiquitous broadband service to local public and private institutions, economies would be stimulated and the causes of poverty lessened. Approximately 32 cities fell into this category.

Cambridge, MA. “The main goal of the project is to provide internet access to Cambridgians who live in public housing. The city’s partnership with MIT will affect town-gown relations positively” said City Councilor Henrietta Davis of the Wireless Technology Committee” (<http://www-tech.mit.edu/V125/N65/wirelesscambridge.html>).

Seattle, WA. “Using technology as a tool to help businesses in our communities attract more customers is another way the City is working to strengthen our neighborhoods,” said Mayor Greg Nickels (<http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us>).

Cabin John, MD. “The Cabin John Citizens Association is an organization of concerned citizens dedicated to addressing the concerns of the Cabin John community. The CJCA’s fundamental goal is to preserve and promote the identity of Cabin John as a community” (<http://www.muniwireless.com/reports/docs/CabinJohnRFI.pdf>).

Akron, OH. “The city of Akron’s wireless initiative will help bring us into the forefront when it comes to technological advantage and creativeness. It should also help in slowing the exit tide of young technicians moving away and keep them right here in Akron” (<http://www.ci.akron.oh.us>).

*Theme Two: Internet Access Seen as a Utility—
the City’s Responsibility toward Citizens*

This theme draws on two central concepts, the Internet as both a utility and a responsibility. These cities addressed the digital divide indirectly, stating that it was the government’s responsibility to provide for education, training, and economic opportunities for its citizens, which, in turn, would narrow the digital divide. Although this theme emerged from our data, it was by no means the most prevalent. This theme was noted in approximately 14 cities.

Chicago, IL. “Chicago’s CivicNet is an initiative of the City of Chicago and the Mayor’s Council of Technology Advisors to create the new infrastructure Chicago needs to compete for jobs, to improve education, to train the Internet work force, and to eliminate digital divide. Chicago is taking steps that are appropriate for a government—such as building roads and highways and water and sewer systems. To compete in the Internet age, a whole new infrastructure is needed—one that can carry high speed communications” (<http://www.cityofchicago.org/civicnet/RFQInformation.html>).

St. Louis Park, MN. “The City adds wireless as another service on utility bills (just as water, sewer, and solid waste are other utility services)” (<http://www.stlouispark.org>).

*Theme Three: Ubiquitous Wireless Broadband
Will Increase Accessibility and Usage*

This theme is based on two fundamental beliefs, (1) citizens who do not use the Internet do not do so because they do not have access, and (2) providing access to these citizens will increase Internet usage. Approximately 43 municipalities made a textual connection between increased access and increased usage. However, as we have seen from our review of the literature, ensuring access alone is never enough to combat the digital divide.

Miami, FL. “We will be announcing a partnership with the MicroSoft Foundation who will donate 100 new computers for our parks in an effort to bridge the digital divide. Our E-Parks program will build computer labs in all of our major parks” (<http://ci.miami.fl.us/cms/mayor/1284.htm>).

Sandoval County, NM. “One of the main reasons for building the county system is to bring rural residents high speed Internet access,” Mann said. “Many people in the state’s rural areas do not have access to high-speed Internet service, which is particularly helpful for students and business owners” (<http://www.freenewmexican.com/news/34454.html>).

San Diego, CA. “In an ongoing effort to remove inequities in our society and promote technology inclusion, the [City of San Diego] is launching a public awareness campaign to promote community technology centers. These centers are located in areas of the county where computer and Internet access are statistically lower than average. They provide residents with access to computers and high-speed Internet connections free of charge, along with technical support and training in English and Spanish” (<http://www.waittoundation.org/news/digital.html>).

Muskegon, MI. “The [Digital Divide Investment Program (DDIP)] is intended to mobilize broadband investment in geographic regions where high-speed Internet service may not be available or where such service is unaffordable for the average low to moderate income (LMI) household. Lowering end-user monthly service costs will increase broadband adoption rates in LMI communities. Increasing broadband adoption rates in LMI communities is the ultimate goal of the DDIP” (http://www.co.muskegon.mi.us/digitaldivide/digital_divide_rfp.pdf).

Theme Four: Providing Low-Cost Access to Low-Income Areas Translates into Increased Social Benefits

This theme makes a similar claim to that made in theme two, except that it moves from access to the Internet directly to social benefits for the disenfranchised. These cities claim that by providing Internet access, they will create economic, educational, and social opportunities for those traditionally excluded from such opportunities. This theme was the most prevalent. Approximately 94 municipalities had some language referring to the social benefits of wider Internet access.

Philadelphia, PA. “A wireless city will be a strategic investment in the people of the city. It will provide an infrastructure that can assist in bridging the digital divide that now exists and prevents many individuals and families from obtaining the full measure of the opportunities generated by the Internet because they can’t afford the cost of wired broadband Internet access. This limits educational opportunities, job opportunities, and participation in many dimensions of modern society. Eventually it results in segments of the population forever lagging behind their peers. The potential of citywide wireless access to reinforce educational programs from elementary school through university may be the greatest long-term potential benefit to individual Philadelphians and to the collective health of the city. One goal of [Wireless Philadelphia] is to overcome the digital divide, to train small businesses and disadvantaged people” (<http://www.govtech.net/digitalcommunities/story.php?id=96864>).

San Francisco, CA. “As the United States lags behind other nations in equipping our citizens for the global economy,” he said, “San Francisco understands that universal, affordable, wireless broadband access is essential to boost our economic, social and educational opportunities. . . . Providing universal, affordable, wireless broadband access is just the first phase of our new TechConnect strategy that will bring the promise of technology to low income and disadvantaged citizens” (<http://www.govtech.net/digitalcommunities/story.php?id=96864>).

Houston, TX. “In October 2005, the Honorable Mayor Bill White announced the City’s intent to expand the downtown initiative to make wireless broadband Internet access available throughout the entire City. This includes universally available and affordably priced Internet access for residents, businesses and visitors to the City, helping to promote economic development and digital inclusion” (<http://www.houstontx.gov/it/wirelessrfp.pdf>).

Milwaukee, WI. “It will create tremendous growth for a locally owned company and will open the door to new jobs, job training and other social and educational opportunities.” Mayor Barrett championed the Milwaukee Wireless Initiative as a big step toward bridging the “digital divide’ and for the promise it brings to low-income citizens and neighborhoods in critical need of access to online information and opportunities” (http://badgerherald.com/news/2006/02/03/milwaukee_plans_wire.php).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Theoretically, our research is housed inside a social informatics framework in which social groups and technologies mutually constitute each other. We reject the deterministic point of view, clearly stating that technologies are not the central causal factor of social change. In light of the literature concerning the digital divide, we have further evidence to support this, in that most authors believe that granting access to the Internet alone will not solve the problem of social exclusion in the information society. Access, coupled with changes in education, training, Internet content, culture, and economic stability, has the potential to close the gap.

However, it must be noted that all of the language used by these municipalities to promote and describe the potential future impacts of their municipal networks is strongly deterministic in nature. Technological determinism is often seen as the central force in the modern world, more important than any other social factor in determining change. Technological change is viewed as both a necessary and a sufficient condition, determining all other social change (McGinn 1991:74). Early instances of technological determinism were linked to positive social change, moral and material improvements, progressive social agendas, and liberation (Smith 1994). It is in this light that each of the four themes states that by adding a municipally sponsored wireless network and granting Internet access to their citizens, several things will happen, including greater usage of the Internet, increased economic development, more job opportunities for the disenfranchised, more education and training opportunities, and improved social conditions for users. All point to a direct connection between wireless Internet access and the closing of the digital divide. Dianah Neff, then CIO for the City of Philadelphia said:

The digital divide is local. Spurring economic development is a local issue . . . 58 percent of Philadelphia’s population has access to the Internet. In its more affluent neighborhoods, the number is more than 90 percent. In low income and minority neighborhoods, though, the numbers tumble to as low as 10 percent. . . . We cannot afford to lose those neighborhoods. We want to ensure that our

families and children have the abilities they need to compete in the 21st Century. (<http://www.wi-iplanet.com/columns/article.php/351556>)

It must be noted that while technological determinism can be applicable and useful in situations that are characterized by high degrees of control and short time frames, it has limited value in dynamic and complex situations that unfold over longer periods of time. Technological determinism cannot adequately account for the interactions between technologies, the people who design, implement, and use them, and the social and organizational contexts in which the technologies and people are embedded. The language used by these municipalities implies a simplistic, direct-effects view of solving the problem of the digital divide, which will, no doubt, fail.

In contrast, this research is firmly grounded in the belief that technology is part of culture: certain technological innovations occur while others do not; certain new technologies flourish while others do not; certain technologies are diffused globally-universally, while others are not; and some technologies are used in unintended and unexpected ways, while others are not (Bijker 1992, 1995; Feenberg 1991; Latour 1986, 1999; Shields 1997; Winner 1986). We see a MWN as a sociotechnical ensemble, in which technology and social institutions cannot be treated as separate entities. There is a complex web of mutual dependency among all relevant social groups, devices, expertise, and information (Bijker 1995). These elements of the ensemble, whether human or technical, must work together to produce a functioning whole. The development and deployment of MWNs is a complex and interdependent set of relations among people, their organizational rules and roles, and various computing resources (Orlikowski and Iacono 2001).

Providing Internet access is not enough to solve the problem. It must be part of an ensemble of social and technical solutions. According to Ben Scott, policy director for the Free Press, "For meaningful digital inclusion to occur, the goal of the network should be universal, affordable access for all members of a community. To reach this goal means more than just building a network infrastructure; it means attaining goals of equipment distribution, technology training, and social services" (as quoted in Meinrath 2006). In 2006, several cities had moved from discussing municipal wireless projects and their impact on the digital divide to creating digital inclusion programs, which include more than access alone. For example, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Minnesota Public Radio reporter Brandt Williams summarizes the views of Catherine Settani, executive director of the Community Technology Empowerment Project: "[The city] will likely include more technical literacy programs for low-income people and immigrants who are learning to speak English. She says the city wants to also add about 200 free Internet access points. U.S. Internet has agreed to contribute \$500,000 up front to help and five percent of revenues per year, totaling an estimated \$10 million over a seven-year period. Settani says the money will likely go to help organizations that are already working to close the digital divide" (http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2006/09/05/mppls_wifi/).

Mayor Gavin Newsom of the city of San Francisco announced that San Francisco "is poised to become the first major city in the country to offer free universal wireless

Internet access . . . free wireless as the first step in a larger initiative to create a comprehensive digital inclusion strategy that includes computer hardware, technology training, and Internet access targeted at helping bridge the digital divide for low-income communities. This agreement to bring free universal wireless Internet access to San Francisco is a critical step in bridging the digital divide that separates too many communities from the enormous benefits of technology. Ubiquitous WiFi will change how residents access education, social services and economic opportunities” (http://sfgov.org/site/mayor_index.asp?id=52549).

The city of Chicago also released a request for proposals (RFP) for constructing and managing its future citywide wireless network. The concept of digital inclusion was a central focus in the Chicago RFP: “It calls for the winning bidder to work closely with Chicago’s public schools, institutions, and community groups to develop low-cost access, training and content development programs” (<http://muniwireless.com/municipal/1566>). In Philadelphia, the city has begun to form partnerships with Norris Square Civic Association (a grassroots, community-based development corporation), the People’s Emergency Center (a nonprofit computer technology center), Lutheran Children and Family Services (a church-related, nonprofit social service agency), and the Philadelphia School District (City of Philadelphia 2006). For example, the People’s Emergency Center’s (PEC) WiFi project in West Philadelphia split their T-1 line, normally dedicated to office use, and created a WiFi network for the neighborhood. Although “families living in the neighborhood were able to subscribe to the wireless broadband network for only \$5 per month, . . . many residents could not afford a new computer to access the network, and residents with computers often lacked the skills to use it effectively.” Thus, the PEC began their current computer refurbishing, technical support, and training class programs (Stone 2004).

Within the social informatics perspective, we also find both the concepts of “inscription” and “boundary objects” as useful theoretical tools to help analyze the digital divide discourse as used by these municipalities in describing the potential for their MWNs. “Inscription” is a process by which various stakeholders who have political, social, and economic interest in a sociotechnical artifact attempt to protect and ensure their interests regarding the artifact. Often this is done through the process of defining the artifact through the use of language (Akrich 1992; Akrich and Latour 1992; Callon, Law, and Rip 1986; Latour 1992; Latour and Woolgar 1986).

Municipal governments, Internet service providers, state and federal legislators, device designers, and potential users all represent relevant social groups who have political interest in shaping the MWN. Our data point to the fact that MWNs are sociotechnical objects that are being textually defined in the public sphere as a solution to the complex problem of the digital divide. In the case of these 24 cities, city officials have made a direct, causal link between the deployment of municipal broadband systems and the narrowing of the digital divide gap. These city officials have made textual efforts to “inscribe” the MWN with concepts of social inclusion, utility status, social revitalization, and equality. We are driven to ask, considering the

paucity of data making a clear link between MWNs and narrowing this gap, what governmental officials seek to gain by making these—perhaps unfounded—claims. From our earlier literature review, we also know that delivering broadband Internet access to impoverished and disenfranchised neighborhoods or institutions does not, in fact, narrow the gap. It is possible that these municipal labeling efforts reflect a need to sway taxpayers toward a more favorable stance concerning the development of MWNs, especially in the light of continued state and federal legislation that threatens continued municipal deployment. Although we do not believe that merely adding low-cost broadband Internet access to impoverished neighborhoods without additional educational programs and low-cost devices, will, indeed, narrow the gap, we concede that the growing use of such language has brought the digital divide issue to the forefront of many large municipalities, demanding much needed political attention.

In many ways, this is a new frontier for research in this social-political-technological realm. The questions are immense, the current research is meager, and the implications are far-ranging. Although some research suggests MWNs enhance economic development activity (Lehr, Osorio, and Gillett 2005), there is no academic research supporting the claim that they also address the digital divide. Little research has been conducted that actually examines the role of discourse, such as digital divide context, in planning and implementing MWN initiatives in the United States. Recent research (see DiMaggio 2001; Kling and Lamb 2000; Kvasny 2006; Kvasny and Keil 2006; Kvasny and Payton 2005) suggests that the success of digital divide projects depends on a variety of factors such as training, education, user perceptions of IT, and the organization's past experience with using IT.

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