

Section I

WHERE TO BEGIN

“Begin at the beginning,” the King said, very gravely, “and go on till you come to the end: then stop.”

Alice in Wonderland—Lewis Carroll

Lewis Carroll’s advice is obviously good for telling a story. But it is also good for planning a journey or a research project. We, the authors and editors of this book and the authors whose work is presented, have made this particular journey more than once. Our purpose here is to provide some guidance and advice so that you may plan your own research journey and better understand the research of others. Our advice is practical. We have no vocabulary quizzes for you. We hope that you will begin with your own questions, and end with your own answers.

To help you on your way, we have provided a kind of road map through the research process, shown in Figure 1.1. Throughout the book, we will be checking the map and marking our progress. Some chapters will also have a more detailed close-up of the map for the immediate tasks at hand. But do not be fooled by the straight lines. As with most journeys, you may find that you must frequently double back to the last stage, regroup, and set out again a little bit differently. Some of this backtracking is revealed in the more detailed maps that belie the simplicity of the big map.

MOTIVATION

This section, and this book, begins with the big questions: Why do we do what we do? What’s our motivation? Our inspiration? And where do we start? In more practical terms, we ask what makes a good research question and where do we get one? These are also the first things that you need to ask yourself as you begin a new research project. To answer such questions we will begin with the words of some of our profession’s current luminaries.

Each year at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association (ASA), the Association’s president has the privilege and responsibility of saying something important to the rest of us about our chosen field of work. Our first two readings are the texts of two recent presidential speeches: Troy Duster’s from 2005 and Cynthia Fuchs Epstein’s from 2006. These addresses provide a good starting point for how two preeminent scholars conceptualize social science research in their respective fields. Moreover, their insights are important for us because they speak to the relationship between

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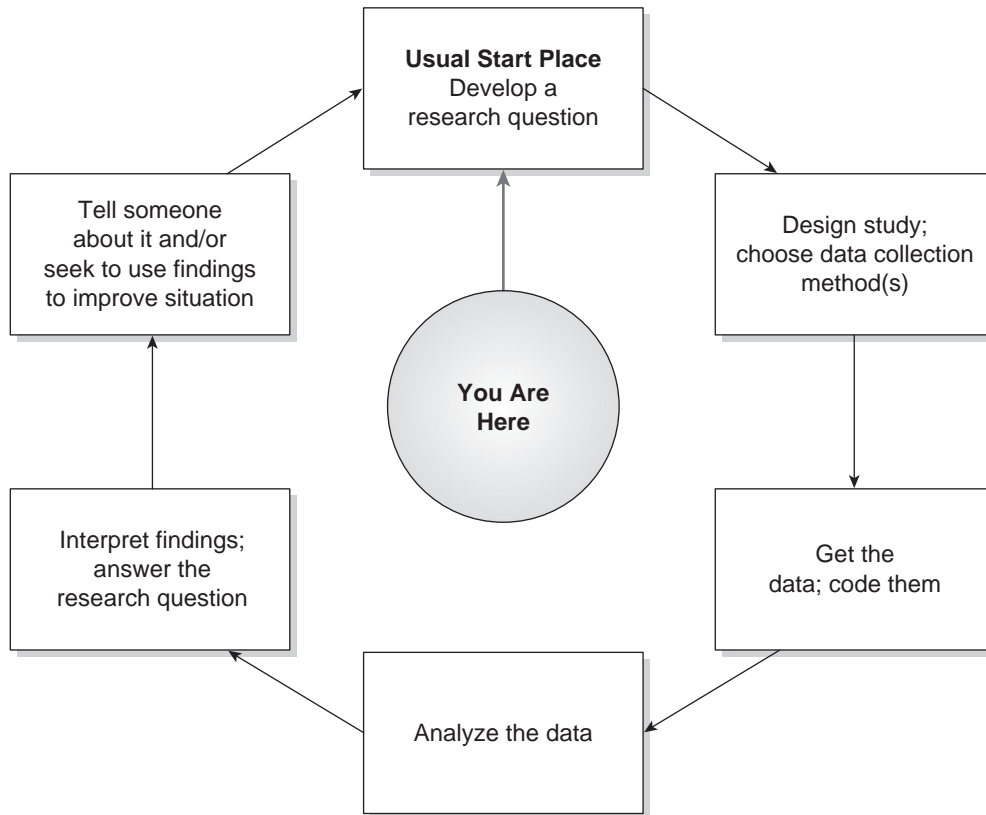


FIGURE 1.1 The Road Map

sociology as a profession and the social world in which we live and work. Their concerns about gaps and weaknesses in the social sciences can guide you to strengthen your work.

Research in the social sciences is different from research in the natural sciences. Most of the natural world behaves according to consistent patterns for reasons that may be studied in controlled laboratory settings. Some of these patterns and reasons are immutable, and therefore considered physical “laws.” People aren’t like that. The social world is a moving target. As our knowledge of the natural world has increased, human society has gotten only more complex, more interdependent, and more

unpredictable. In addition, humans are sociable creatures, so the actions of individuals cannot be separated from the actions and reactions of others around them. Throw in the larger and more complex forms of association—organizations, corporations, neighborhoods, communities, families, clans, ethnicities, states, nations, and more—and the puzzle becomes a swirl of possibilities.

For some, it may seem “natural” to compare the social sciences to the physical sciences. Thus they propose a scientific inquiry that focuses on observable and recurrent social behavior. But this comparison is troubling on several important, misleading, and even dangerous

points. One significant danger is what Troy Duster calls the “reductionist challenge to sociology.” *Reductionism* refers to efforts to measure all kinds of complex social phenomena in ways that reduce them to a single dimension. You might, for example, “reduce” the concept of love to the number of times you see people kiss. Clearly it’s easier to think about and measure, but it misses the complex reality.

The comparison between the social and natural sciences becomes reductionist in two ways. First, by reducing the concept of “science” to the classic model of laboratory research in the natural sciences, we ignore virtually all of what is unique to sociology. In engineering, you have to measure something only once to know its value. In sociology, the more you measure the more variations you uncover. As we’ve discussed, this is primarily due to the differences in what the two fields observe. But if we reduce all sciences to only measured facts and calculations, then sociology appears to be a weaker, less reliable science rather than a science of less consistent subject matter.

The second problem follows from the first. If we assume that the measures of the hard sciences are the only correct measures, then we must reduce all kinds of complex social phenomena to things that can be measured in a lab. Broad concepts like one’s “state of mind” are reduced to brain scan patterns. Stress is just a physiological response, learning is a series of scores on standardized tests, and antisocial behaviors, or prosocial behaviors, are just genetically coded responses to external stimuli. “Ideas” are pushed aside in favor of “facts,” without concern for whether the facts that we have provide the information that we need. Yet, ideas and attitudes clearly are shaped by such things as social norms and historical legacies that are shared within a society even as they are interpreted individually.

Part of Duster’s motivation, then, is to ensure that social scientists are able to weigh in on social questions. He also reminds us that we pretty much have an obligation to do so. Duster begins with the observation that it is not possible for us to agree on the “facts” of the social world because we all

experience the world differently: “The obvious reason for different interpretations of what people see is that individuals bring very different personal and social histories, perspectives, sexual orientations, religious or secular views, and so forth.” Whether the glass is half full or half empty may depend on whether or not you were the one who got to drink the first half.

Duster has also examined the workings of several large, multidisciplinary study panels to explore the question of where our facts come from and how we decide what we need to know. He demonstrates that while it might seem that scientists are looking at the world and “discovering” its workings, in reality social processes determine what we will look for and how we will look for it. These decisions go a very long way toward determining what we will find. Science is a social act. However **objective** our measures may be, our values and interests are reflected in the questions we ask.

Thus, once you have identified the subject matter for your work, the first and most important stage in the research process is to formulate an executable and relevant **research question**, or questions. We can think of this task as having three major parts, as shown in Figure 1.2.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

The research question is the central point of a research project. Above all else, it must be answerable, and that means that the question must be clear, precise, and unambiguous.

Given the uncertainties described above, one of the most important tasks in the social sciences is to figure out what we need to measure in order to answer our research question. Most research starts with **conceptualization** or the formal definition of what our major terms and concepts will mean in the context of our study. Unlike dictionary definitions, which attempt to list all conventional uses of a term, conceptual definitions provide specific working definitions of key ideas as they are to be used for the given study.

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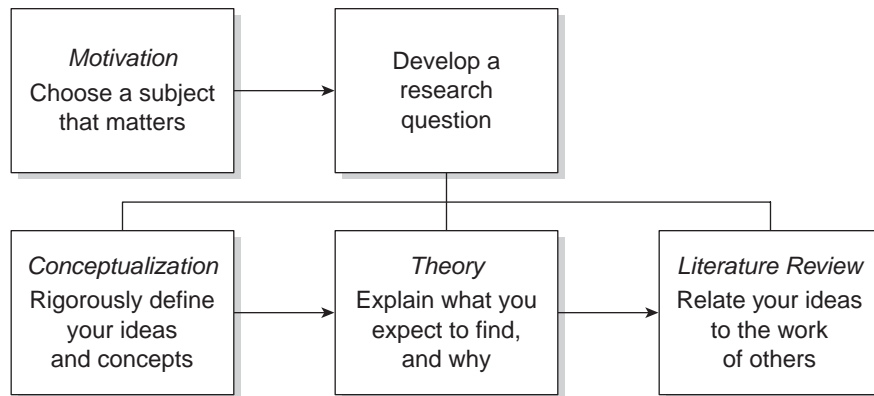


FIGURE 1.2 The Research Question Detail Map

Consider the most familiar of social concepts—gender. In her address to the ASA, Cynthia Fuchs Epstein identifies gender and gender-based inequalities as **social constructs**—concepts that are given meaning in a particular way through choice and experience. Gender differences are commonly represented as “natural” differences based in the biology of sex differences. Gendered inequalities are therefore perceived as inevitable and unchanging. Yet Epstein notes that the conventional descriptions of gender differences are unrelated to biological phenomena, and cannot actually explain differences in social roles, values, or outcomes.

Epstein further demonstrates that the socially defined construct of gender differences consistently devalues the roles of women in society and fosters male privilege. She notes that the **reification** of these concepts means that we do not have to endorse or even agree with these outcomes in order to participate in them.¹ As long as gender inequality is perceived and treated as somehow “natural,” we can hardly even perceive it as a set of choices, let alone question

these choices. And of course she demonstrates that the cost of this inequality can be measured not simply through the insults and annoyances that occur within the workplace or on the street, but in lives lost, violence, and poverty.

Among other results, this demonstrates the power of **conceptualization**. This is the stage in the research process where we identify our key concepts and clearly explain both what we mean by those terms and what we don’t mean. The conceptualization stage helps us to distinguish the formal assumptions that we’re making about our concepts from other ideas that might be out there. In doing so, conceptualization helps us define the scope of our research. Under the once dominant **paradigm** of “functionalism,” for example, inequalities were presumed to be natural and useful functions of the social order. The best and smartest researchers, working from this perspective, could then ask what functions inequalities served—how was society improved by such divisions—without really stopping to ask *if* society really is served by them. Drawing more on a “critical” paradigm, gender studies

¹“Reification” is the process of making something real by believing in it. Social differences are real in their consequences, even if they have to be continuously defined and described in order to exist.

and feminist sociology have redefined the concept of inequality as a social **dysfunction**. This minor change in our working definitions opens up a vast new world of research. Inequality is still the same thing, but our conceptual definition of what it means and how it relates to gender has been dramatically altered. Noting this shift, Epstein encourages us to open up newer and broader areas of research that might have been overlooked until recently.

THEORY IN RESEARCH

Research is an empirical quest for knowledge. We collect and analyze data about the social world to understand it better. **Theory** guides our both our questions and our interpretations of any data we find. Our theories about the world suggest ideas that need to be investigated, and our findings raise questions and suggest modifications in our theoretical models. Theory and research are thus partners in the development of knowledge, in constant dialogue with one another.

Theories come in many sizes. In Thomas Kuhn's famous formulation, a paradigm is a grand theoretical framework, or a way of seeing the world overall, within which specific puzzles can be raised and various solutions tested. We also have more manageable propositions within those paradigms, which Robert Merton called macro-, meso-, and micro-theories. Macro-theories tend to address great historical narratives, like the causes of war or revolutions. Meso-theories look at middle-ground ideas, such as how patterns of traffic, or crime, or popular culture change within some social circumstances. Micro-theories tend to favor small events like interpersonal exchanges and the use of gestures and expressions. On a day-to-day basis, each new bit of research has the potential to alter the details of any given theory about any subject, at any of the micro, meso, or macro levels. But the big paradigms, the sets of assumptions about the world, remain fairly stable. When an existing paradigm becomes weighed

down by too many observations and ideas that don't seem to fit, a **paradigm shift** may occur in which the whole perspective is cast down and replaced. Kuhn called such events **scientific revolutions**. One example was the revolution in thinking that occurred when the geocentric model of the solar system (that the Earth is at the center of everything) gave way to the present heliocentric model, with the Sun at the center. Many early astronomers had grappled with the puzzles raised by the assumption that the Earth was stationary, but it took generations of work before such a major shift away from that assumption could take hold.

In our third reading, Herbert Gans raises significant questions about the sociological paradigm of **functionalism**. Functionalism, or structural-functionalism, has roots that go back to Durkheim and was the dominant paradigm in American sociology for much of the mid-20th century. (Gans's article was first published in 1972; earlier versions had been in the works since 1964.) Functionalist analysis begins with the assumption that, over time, society adjusts and regulates itself organically, the way a body heals. At any given moment, we don't have to assume that everything should be perfect, but we would tend to assume that anything that served no useful function at all would eventually be eliminated or discarded. These assumptions frequently seem to work, and they have provided a great deal of guidance to researchers. Robert Merton, for example, noted that many enduring social phenomena appear to be dysfunctional on the surface, but actually provide some other, underlying purpose. He called the surface function "the **manifest function**" of a thing, and it was that part that most closely related to our motives or desires. The **latent function**, on the other hand, often revealed why something lasts even when our motivation appears to be to get rid of it. In a particularly influential application of this idea, Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore published a paper in 1945 on "some principles of stratification" in which they attempted to explain why persistent inequalities of socioeconomic

status and life chances might be functional to society, even if we all can agree that they cause great harms.

The Davis–Moore piece became one of the most widely cited, and often criticized, theories of its time. For many, their work showed that efforts to help the poor would always fail, that poverty was “natural,” and that those who had great wealth probably did little to create the conditions under which others lived in abject poverty. To critics, this thesis simply absolved us, as individuals and as a society, from any responsibility for inequality and more or less blamed the poor, including those born into poverty, for their own troubles.

Taking a lead from Jonathan Swift’s *A Modest Proposal* (1729), Gans extends the Davis–Moore thesis to the point where its limitations become visible. Gans suggests 15 ways in which persistent poverty is functional for those members of society who are not poor. None of these functions is likely to be identified by anyone as representing their actual motives, but all are possible. Modestly, Gans offers several possible conclusions from this case. First, instead of asking *whether* or how something is functional for society, we might do better asking *for whom* it is functional. Does some identifiable social group benefit from the persistence of poverty? Do they

have any impact or not on what we do? For that matter, who benefits from a widespread belief in the Davis–Moore thesis? Second, Gans suggests that the latent effects of poverty, those that benefit the rest of us, are so great that we might not want to eliminate poverty if we could. And third, almost as a cautious attempt to be thorough, Gans raises the possibility that functionalism does not actually explain poverty, inequality, or stratification. Hence, it might be about time for a paradigm shift. And indeed, one was taking place during those years while Gans was developing his argument.

Generally, we identify one or more promising theoretical frameworks to explain what we’re studying *before* we collect any data, and we use the theories to help decide what data to collect. Choosing a promising theory—including a description of the relations among our concepts—and from that, generating testable predictions (hypotheses) about how those relations will work in our study is called **deductive reasoning**. Whereas choosing to group a number of cases together to find the patterns among them and thereby proposing a new theory to explain those patterns is referred to as **inductive reasoning**. Both involve applying theories to empirical observations in order to explain social events.

BOX 1.1 KARL MARX (1818–1883)

Considered one of the intellectual fathers of Communism, Karl Marx also made several noteworthy contributions to social research methods. In his book *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), Marx developed an important case-study design to interpret the forces that led to Louis Bonaparte’s consolidation of power after his coup of 1851. In the *Grundrisse* (1858) he elaborated an innovative approach to the study of political economy. *Das Kapital* could be regarded as the first book employing a world system perspective. Of course, Marx is best known for his contributions to social theory. His claim that political, social, and economic processes followed consistent and measurable rules of conflict and resolution generated new ways of perceiving society that helped merge philosophy with the scientific foundations of the social sciences. Finally, his views on alienation as related to work, control over work, and work processes are still highly influential in research on organizations, the economy, and labor relations.

REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

Where do we get our theories from? In social research, we mostly draw upon previous research to formulate our explanations of the puzzles we observe. Even when we disagree with the reasoning and conclusions of those we read, the exercise of reviewing the existing literature related to our research topic is useful because it forces us to examine and carefully define our assumptions. If, for example, we wished to investigate how jurors evaluate DNA evidence in a trial, we might begin with Troy Duster's research for a theoretical explanation of how nonscientists perceive data from the biological sciences, from which we could make predictions about what a jury would find credible or not. We might incorporate some of the works cited by Gans to understand how subjective judgments bias trials. This would allow us to improve our predictions by considering the role of uncertainty and moral judgment in the decision process. Further, we could include some of Epstein's interpretations of how preconceived notions of gender-appropriate behavior might lead jurors to view certain narratives as more or less believable. Bringing those ideas together, we could propose a theoretical framework that incorporated status, power, and technology in relation to the credibility of evidence.

An illustrative demonstration of the usefulness of doing literature reviews to generate theories can be found in our fourth reading, in which Mark Musick reviews an exhaustive research literature on *theodicy*—"religious beliefs related to the meaning of suffering"—in order to improve our theorizing on the relationships between religion and well-being. His analysis proceeds carefully, from the classic works on the positive functions of religiosity, through more focused research on the individual impacts of specific kinds of beliefs. Focusing these issues further, Musick begins to construct a coherent picture of how different Christian theodicies might impact the lives and well-being of contemporary Americans. This portion of his conceptual review

includes matters of comfort, hope, and meaning construction, all of which are viewed in the context of ideas about how we make healthier choices, how we face uncertainty, and how we cope with trauma.

Once the philosophical and practical features of theodicy have been explicated, Musick turns to the question of individual well-being. Having independently established the expected patterns of how specific Christian theodicies operate, he develops a set of interpretive frameworks to explain how well-being might depend on them. Notice that the review presents more than one pattern for the **independent variable** and more than one way that it can affect the variables that depend on it. This is because the literature review portion of a study is not a claim for a single truth. It is a logical argument that while many outcomes are possible, some are more likely than others. The presentation of findings and ideas that have come before this provides the motivation for the actual research that is about to be presented. Researchers use this review, including works with which they disagree, to place their own work in relation to what is known, what is suspected, what is argued over, and what remains to be found. In this way, researchers build on the findings of those who have studied these issues before.

In this case, having established a plausible relationship between types of belief systems and personal health, the author has drawn the reader into a conversation that has long been under way. Here, Musick introduces his third major concept: race. In the United States it is well known that "the Black Church" is different in practice from other churches. (As Epstein might point out, White Christians are able to call their institutions "the church," while African Americans must qualify theirs as the "black" version.) Using existing literature, then, the author has established that race matters, that theodicy matters, and that theodicy tends to differ by race. To this he adds references to show that health outcomes and other measures of well-being also differ by race in the United

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States. The seemingly simple review of what is known or observed about several significant concepts, examined together, practically beg the study's research questions: Do church practices and beliefs explain a part of the difference in health? And if so, how might this relationship work?

CONCLUSION

Research begins with a puzzle or a problem to be solved, or something that needs to be investigated. The researcher develops questions based on these topics or issues. A topic can be

anything from “how can we build a more just society” to “what’s up with all of these reality TV shows?” But the research question has to be something that can be answered through the careful collection and analysis of empirical data.

All this is preparation. We begin with our questions, which suggest relationships among things in the world. We conceptualize our terms and relations, and theorize on the processes that link them. We review what others have found or theorized about our concepts. We decide where our study fits in with this body of past research. Now we are ready to begin our work.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If the natural sciences are not the best model for social science research, then what is?
2. What is the role of discovery, and what is the role of creativity in the research process?
3. Let's say your review of the previous research and of the theoretical literature leads you to want to ask very different questions than what you have found so far. What might you do?
4. In these four selections, there is an underlying theme of conflict. Why is “conflict” such a pervasive issue in understanding society? What groups of people in society might be expected to emphasize the role of conflict? (Hint: Think about those with power vs. those without power.)

WEB RESOURCES

The following links can provide you with more detailed information on the topics discussed in this section. You may also go to www.sagepub.com/lunestudy where you will find additional resources and hot-links to these sources.

American Sociological Association Theory Section: <http://www.asatheory.org/>

International Social Theory Consortium: <http://www.cas.usf.edu/socialtheory>

York University Critical Social Theory: http://www.fsc.yorku.ca/york/istheory/wiki/index.php/Critical_social_theory

Bibliography and Data Related Literature: <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/ICPSR/citations/index.html>

Comparative Perspectives and Competing Explanations

Taking on the Newly Configured Reductionist Challenge to Sociology (2006)

Troy Duster

The centennial of the American Sociological Association (ASA) is an appropriate time to step back and take a full sociohistorical view of how the discipline emerged and developed. Sociologists know well that the ways in which a field of inquiry is organized, professionalized, and institutionalized is a large part of its story—but it is only part of the story. Thus, the history of the association is not coterminous with the history of the discipline (for full history of the association, see Rhoades 1981 and Rosich 2005). There is often some contestation. This may be voiced by members of a group within a larger boundary who try to stretch the field in new and unchartered ways, because they experience their group's perspective as either thwarted or ignored. Those limits are sometimes pushed to the point of secession and reformation.

A clear illustration comes from the origins of the ASA itself as a “breakaway” organization, a recurring theme in the continuous unfolding and remaking of the discipline over the full century. In 1904, sociologists were part of the American Economic Society. The sociologists found the limiting focus upon markets and the economy too restrictive of their intellectual aspirations and research projects, and bolted from the economists to form the American Sociological Society¹ in 1905—holding their first annual meeting in 1906.²

Similar to the sociologists' initial breakaway from the economists, the newly founded sociological association would in time reflect the iron law of oligarchic tendencies (Michels 1966). Achieving sufficient professional coherence to patrol the boundaries and shape what was legitimate, the association in turn spawned its

SOURCE: From “Comparative Perspectives and Competing Explanations: Taking on the Newly Configured Reductionist Challenge to Sociology.” *American Sociological Review*, 71(1), (Feb., 2006), pp. 1–15. Reprinted with permission.

¹This was the original name and was changed to the American Sociological Association in the late 1950s.

²With some bemusement tinged with considerable irony, the *Guardian* reported on the 99th annual meeting of the ASA and subtitled the article, “US Sociologists Are Finally Challenging the Intellectual Stranglehold of Economists” (Steele 2004).

own breakaway organizations in the 1950s and 1960s. A segment that wanted sociologists to have more engagement with pressing social issues separated to form the Society for the Study of Social Problems. The discipline was caught short by the Watts Uprisings of 1965 and its cascading effects over the next three years through the urban disturbances of Detroit, MI and Newark, NJ. African American sociologists wanted more focus on issues of racial injustice and they broke away to form the Association of Black Sociologists. Similarly, sociologists in the emerging feminist movement demanded more focus on gender issues and spun at least partially away from the ASA to form Sociologists for Women in Society. The tale goes on and on: The symbolic interactionists broke to form The Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction, and those who wanted to see more applications of social science knowledge formed the Society for Applied Sociology. Yet if there is a common thread that bonds most of the discipline together, it is based upon a general acknowledgment of the powerful role that social forces play in explaining human social behavior. This has been a consistent century-long counterpoint to the tendency to deploy either individual level or even smaller units of analysis (blood, genes, neurotransmitters) to account for scholastic achievement, crime rates, and even racism.

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON THE SAME PHENOMENON, ROUTINE FEATURE OF OUR LIVES

There is nothing unusual or strange about the idea of social position determining what an individual sees. In the early twentieth century, Karl Mannheim's (1936) brilliant monograph spells out this tendency as one of the first principles of the sociology of knowledge. The obvious reason for different interpretations of what people see is that individuals bring very different personal and

social histories, perspectives, sexual orientations, religious or secular views, and so forth.

Alfred Schütz (1955), the eminent phenomenologist, posits a fundamental domain assumption underlying human exchange inside a given group's boundaries, the so-called "assumption of the reciprocity of perspectives":

I assume, and I assume that my fellow [hu]man assumes, that if [s]he stood where I stand, [s]he would see what I see. (p. 163)

When that assumption is routinely violated, there are limited choices—one of those being to form a new group of like-minded people. Under certain conditions, that can be a healthy development, a strategy to nurture and strengthen a fledgling perspective. But the danger is that this can result in a retreat from engagement with alternative perspectives. This article is about a particular version of like-mindedness and is divided into three sections. Part one documents a series of developments in which a wide range of seemingly unrelated inquiries have something vital in common—an attempt to explain human behavior or health conditions by looking only at data *inside* the body. I focus primarily on health and crime, because these are areas on the cutting edge of high technology application in molecular genetics—areas I have worked in for more than two decades (including membership on the National Advisory Council for Human Genome Research). Similar observations could be made about other arenas and research programs in those arenas. Indeed, part two describes the increasing challenge to sociology, a dramatic tilt in data collection, research agendas, research programs, and funding decisions that lean in the direction of increasing data and information on processes inside the body—while defunding or blocking access to research on forces outside the body. Part three suggests ways in which sociologists can meet this challenge by engaging in research on data collection at the very site of knowledge production to illuminate the social forces shaping the construction of knowledge claims.

PART I: DISCOVERY OF COMPETING PERSPECTIVES ON "BASIC PROCESSES"

During the mid-1970s, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) convened a group of academic researchers (social as well as natural scientists) to address the state of knowledge about mind-altering substances. The multidisciplinary panel was composed of individuals with experience in research on mind-altering substances. Some had expertise with drugs like heroin and cocaine, others with psychotropic medicine, others with alcohol. When the topic turned to alcohol, the question was posed, "Why is the rate of alcoholism so high among Native Americans, Aborigines in Australia, and in Canada, First Nations' People?" According to the Indian Health Service, for example, the age-adjusted death rate from alcohol was more than seven times higher for Native Americans than for the general U.S. population (Beauvais 1998:255).

I along with my fellow social scientists thought the answer was obvious. These three broadly defined groups all experienced two centuries of displacement: They were sometimes forcibly and sometimes violently removed from their native soil, frequently shunted off to land where they had no knowledge of the local terrain. As a result of this displacement, their diets were dramatically changed, social organizations and economies destroyed, family structures disrupted, circumstances of work fundamentally altered or obliterated. And finally, members of each group (Native Americans, Aborigines, and First Nations' People) have been provided with easy access to cheap alcohol (Beauvais 1998; Beresford and Omaji 1996:1135; Spicer 1997). We thought, "That might drive some to drink!"

Our colleagues from the natural sciences (neurosciences and molecular genetics), looking at the same astronomically high rates of alcoholism, said that they were searching for neurotransmission patterns or specific genetic markers more likely to exist *in common* among Native Americans, Aborigines, and First Nations'

People. Indeed, one of the prevailing hypotheses was the claim of higher prevalence of "alcohol dehydrogenase polymorphisms in Native Americans" the ADH2*3 allele (Wall et al. 1997). Another claim is that Aborigines and Native Americans lack a protective gene mutation for the enzyme aldehyde dehydrogenase (Kibbey 2005).

All of us on the NAS panel were observing the same high rates of alcoholism among specific populations. The natural scientists—despite the overwhelming empirical evidence of social disruption—were committed to research they termed neuroadaptation at the molecular or cellular levels, seeking distinct neural circuits in the brain that explain the high rates of alcoholism in these populations. Instead, the social scientists were emphasizing the need to understand the role of forces outside the body for explaining the high rates of alcoholism among these three groups: social, historical, political, economic, and cultural forces. As early as 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville ([1835] 1966), while embracing the European perspective on the indigenous population of the United States as barbaric, nonetheless had this to say:

When the Indians alone dwelt in the wilderness from which now they are driven, their needs were few. They made their weapons themselves, the water of the rivers was their only drink, and animals they hunted provided them with food and clothes. The Europeans introduced firearms, iron, and brandy among the indigenous populations of North America; they taught it [them] to substitute our cloth for the barbaric clothes which had previously satisfied Indian simplicity . . . [and] they no longer hunted for forest animals simply for food, but in order to obtain the only things they could barter with us. (p. 296)

This is the big picture and a far cry from genetic reductionism, where the disruption of Schütz's assumption of the reciprocity of perspectives could hardly be more complete, and the consequences of the victory of one perspective over another can hardly be overestimated. For

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example, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) claims its mission is to “support and conduct biomedical and behavioral research on the causes, consequences, and treatment, and prevention of alcoholism and alcohol problems” (NIAAA 2005:2). However, the Strategic Plan of the NIAAA for 2001–2005 directs the institute to pursue the following seven goals:

1. Identify genes that are involved in alcohol-associated disorders.
2. Identify mechanisms associated with the neuroadaptations at the multiple levels of analysis (molecular, cellular, neural circuits, and behavior).
3. Identify additional science-based preventive interventions (e.g., drinking during pregnancy and college-age drinking).
4. Further delineate biological mechanisms involved in the biomedical consequences associated with excessive alcohol consumption.
5. Discover new medications that will diminish craving for alcohol, reduce the likelihood of post-treatment relapse, and accelerate recovery of alcohol-damaged organs.
6. Advance knowledge of the influence of environment on the expression of genes involved in alcohol-associated behavior, including the vulnerable adolescent years and in special populations.
7. Further elucidate the relationships between alcohol and violence.

Midanik (2004) points out that this list is decisively focused on processes inside the body. Indeed, even when the list finally concerns the influence of the environment (item no. 6), that influence is directed toward “the expression of genes.” The NIAAA list also hints as to how and why sociological explanations of alcoholism began losing out to strong claimants pursuing “scientific investigations” of “basic processes occurring inside the body.

Indeed, on the very related matter of selective funding strategies that privilege research inside the body, the paradigmatic fight over how best to explain high rates of alcoholism described in the previous section has had direct consequences on what research gets funded. In 1990 at the NIAAA, 64 percent ($n = 347$) of all research grants ($n = 539$) went to biomedical/neuroscience investigators. In 2002, the number of grants for biomedical/neuroscience research increased to 494 (Midanik 2004:221), while the total number for epidemiology was 70.

The tendency to privilege internalist approaches to the explanations of complex social behaviors reached its zenith in the shifting approach by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to the study of violence that was revealed in the early 1990s.

Basic Processes Versus the Sociocultural Explanation of Violence: The NIH Controversy

The following section is a partial transcript of the meeting of the National Mental Health Advisory Council on February 11, 1992. These are the unedited remarks of Frederick Goodwin, at that time the director of Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration (ADAMHA). After these remarks, Lewis Sullivan, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, then “demoted” Dr. Goodwin to the position of Director of the National Institute of Mental Health:

If you look, for example, at male monkeys, especially in the wild, roughly half of them survive to adulthood. The other half die by violence. That is the natural way of it for males, to knock each other off and, in fact, there are some interesting evolutionary implications of that because the same hyper-aggressive monkeys who kill each other are also hyper-sexual, so they copulate more and therefore they reproduce more to offset the fact that half of them are dying.

Now, one could say that if some of the loss of social structure in this society, and particularly within the high impact inner city areas, has removed some of the civilizing evolutionary things

that we have built up and that maybe it isn't just the careless use of the word when people call certain areas of certain cities jungles, that we may have gone back to what might be more natural, without all of the social controls that we have imposed upon ourselves as a civilization over thousands of years in our own evolution. This just reminds us that, although we look at individual factors and we look at biological differences and we look at genetic differences, the loss of structure in society is probably why we are dealing with this issue and why we are seeing the doubling incidence of violence among the young over the last 20 years.

Goodwin's remarks provoked a storm of controversy that, as noted, resulted in his so-called official demotion to being *merely* director of the National Institute of Mental Health.³ But the controversy was beyond a single demotion, and it peaked in print and electronic media stories just as the first Bush administration (George H. W. Bush) was ending.

In late 1992, the Director of the NIH appointed a special panel to investigate the entire NIH portfolio on violence. I was among the more than two dozen appointees. During the first quarter of 1993, all agency heads at NIH were required to pull into a single portfolio any research funded in the recent period that dealt with violent behavior, including antisocial and aggressive behavior. Our task was to review the full range of studies in order to recommend where funding might best be directed to cover gaps in our knowledge about violence.

The vast majority (over 80 percent) of studies in the portfolio dealt with either the individual or smaller units of analysis (cells, neurotransmitters, genes). Yet the lack of balance in the research presented to the panel was so extreme that members from the natural sciences, psychiatry, and psychology felt the need to explain and justify this to the social scientists on the panel. The social

scientists pointed out that we already know that violence (even variably defined) occurs in selected communities more than in others, and in selected social groupings more than in others. However, members of the biological sciences communicated one recurring theme—they were much more concerned with what they kept referring to as basic processes. They granted that the rest of us “non-scientists” might have a point—social, cultural, political, and economic forces might also explain varying levels of violence in a society. However, they were adamant in asserting that they were after more basic, and thus, more enduring truths about explanations of individual proclivities to violence. The biological scientists believed that if they could learn how to explain the mechanisms that control neurotransmission, then they would understand the more fundamental scientific problem. The rest could be addressed by “policy” and that was not their department, not as scientists *qua* scientists.

In the current version of what constitutes the parameters of science, any attempt to account for human behavior with a unit of analysis larger than the *individual* person is vulnerable to being called “political,” “soft,” humanistic, and not amenable to scientific investigation. In contrast, anything that coincides with the individual's body or that is a subset of that body (biochemistry, neurophysiology, molecular genetic, cellular) is regarded as at least an amenable candidate for scientific investigation.

Yet sociologists have a particularly important role to play in reshaping and redressing the imbalance in the portfolio and, ultimately, in conceiving the nature of the problem of “violence in society.” When the unit of analysis is enlarged, there is the increasing adoption of a public health approach to studying violence that tries to take some of the conventional wisdom from studies of cardiovascular disease, cancer,

³Whether this was an actual demotion has long been contested, since a reorganization of the combined national institutes of drug administration (NIDA), alcohol (NIAAA), and mental health (NIMH) that was synthesized under the rubric of ADAMHA was in process during the previous year.

and infectious disease: i.e., the best way to prevent mortality and morbidity is through education, community-based prevention, and intervention strategies.

The official statistics indicate that the homicide rate among African Americans in key at-risk age groups is 12 times greater than that of whites (see Michigan national study 2005). Could whatever is meant by the term *basic processes* inside the body have any chance of explaining that level of difference? Could a scientist believe that the basic processes are so different between blacks and whites without proffering a biological theory of racial differences?

Whatever the domain assumptions, the picture fits well with the earlier account of the attempt to explain the high rate of alcoholism among Native Americans, namely, that the search for alcohol dehydrogenase polymorphisms occurs inside the body. An analysis of the role of displacement from native lands begins outside the body. As crude and rudimentary as it may sound, this distinction is replicated across many fields of inquiry, from cancer research to studies of educational achievement gaps, from high crime rates to hypertension and heart disease.

One-half of all cancers are diagnosed among people living in the industrialized world, though this group constitutes only one-fifth of the world's population (Steingraber 1997:59–60). The World Health Organization collected data on cancer rates from 70 countries and concluded that at least 80 percent of all cancer is attributable to environmental influences (Proctor 1995:54–74). Reporting problems and earlier deaths in the rest of the world may possibly explain some of these differences, but migrant studies are among the most powerfully persuasive devices that can be deployed to sharpen and isolate the environmental sources of the high incidence of cancer:

Migrants to Australia, Canada, Israel and the United States all illustrate this pattern. Consider Jewish women who migrate from North Africa,

where breast cancer is rare, to Israel, a nation with a high incidence. Initially, their breast cancer risk is one-half that of their Israeli counterparts. But . . . within thirty years, African-born and Israeli-born Jews show identical breast cancer rates. (Steingraber 1997:61–62)

In one of the most compelling environmental studies of cancer ever conducted, researchers found a statistically significant association between the use of agricultural chemicals and cancer mortality in 1,497 rural counties (Pickle et al. 1989).

In the United States, the rate of prostate cancer for African Americans is double that for white Americans. If we begin with these figures without any sense of history, sociology, or epidemiology, then it seems scientifically legitimate to ask, “Is ‘race’ as a biological concept playing a role?” Indeed, just as there are molecular geneticists searching for genes that predispose Aborigines and Native Americans to alcohol abuse by looking only inside the body, there are those looking for an answer to higher rates of prostate cancer among blacks—those searching for so-called candidate genes in this “special population.”

However, given the data with which this article is introduced, a far more plausible explanation comes from an analysis of the sustained structural location of American blacks, derived from more than three and a half centuries with a predominant social location at the base of the U.S. economic structure (a higher proportion in poverty, and living closer to toxic waste sites; Bullard 1990; Sze 2004, forthcoming).

The story of four decades of research into the causes of cancer repeats with an even more dramatic challenge to sociology, a story that echoes those about hypertension and heart disease. What is at stake here is far more consequential than who gets funded. We have moved into new and challenging territory when the implications of where the explanation is located determines whether medicines will be

developed for special populations versus a consideration of social interventions. To illustrate, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved for the first time a drug aimed specifically at a racial group in the spring of 2005. In the rationale for the drug's development, and in the lead-up to the nature and character of the paradigmatic fight over this development, here is what the chief executive officer of that drug's manufacturing company had to say in Griffith's (2001) *Financial Times* article:

Illnesses that seem identical in terms of symptoms may actually be a group of diseases with distinct genetic pathways. This would help explain blacks' far higher mortality rates for a host of conditions, including diabetes, cancer and stroke.

Until now, these gaps have been attributed largely to racism in the healthcare sector and widespread poverty among African Americans. (p. 16)

The BiDil Story and the Medicalization of the Sources of Hypertension

In a classical piece of epidemiological research, Klag et al. (1991) show that, in general, the darker the skin color, the higher the rate of hypertension for American blacks. They conclude that the issue of race in relation to heart problems is not biological or genetic in *origin* but biological in *effect* due to stress-related outcomes of reduced access to valued social goods, such as employment, promotion, and housing stock. The effect was biological (e.g., hypertension) but the origin was social. But a competing perspective, now ratified by an extraordinary decision by the FDA, locates the problem primarily inside the body of African Americans. Patented and marketed to be specifically prescribed for blacks, isosorbide dinitrate hydralazine (BiDil) is a combination drug designed to restore low or depleted nitric oxide levels to the blood to treat or prevent cases of congestive heart failure. The manufacturer originally intended the drug for the general

population, and race was irrelevant. Early clinical studies revealed no compelling results, and an FDA advisory panel voted 9 to 3 against approval.

In a remarkable turn of events, however, BiDil was reborn as a racialized intervention. One of the investigators reviewed the data and found that African Americans in the original clinical trial seemed to show better outcomes than whites. Because the study was not designed to test that hypothesis, a new clinical trial would have to be approved. However, rather than setting up a study design to see whether BiDil worked better in one group than another, in March 2001 the FDA approved a full-scale clinical trial, the first prospective trial conducted exclusively in black men and women with heart failure.

In the early spring of 2005, anticipating FDA decision on approval in late spring, NitroMed (2005)—the company that developed BiDil—released a statement that was an attempt to provide a race-specific justification for approval of the drug:

The African American community is affected at a greater rate by heart failure than that of the corresponding Caucasian population. African Americans between the ages of 45 and 64 are 2.5 times more likely to die from heart failure than Caucasians in the same age range.

The numbers are technically correct, but the age group 45 to 64 years only accounts for about 6 percent of heart failure mortality, while patients over 65 years of age constitute 93.7 percent of the mortality. Moreover, for the over 65 age group, the statistical differences in heart failure mortality between African Americans and Caucasians nearly disappear. Yet we have the FDA approving a new drug designed for African Americans, and we have a paradigmatic fight tilted dramatically to account for the sources of hypertension inside the body (see quote from *Financial Times* on page 6 of this article).

I reference that *Financial Times* quote again because it sharply identifies the nature of the

contestation between where to best explain and how to intervene. Even more dramatic is this quotation from an article by Leroi (2005) summarizing the implications of DNA marker identification by race:

In one promising test run, Neil Risch's group at Stanford University showed that African Americans with hypertension have a higher probability of African ancestry for two genomic regions—6q24 and 21q21—than their nonhypertensive relatives (Zhu et al. 2005). If this result is replicated it will no longer be possible to claim that racial disparity in the rates of disease is due entirely to socioeconomic factors or even the direct effect of racism itself. (p. 3)

Leroi (2005) and others working from this perspective conclude that, if African Americans with a particular genomic region marker “have a higher probability of hypertension” than those without that marker, then this is evidence that the marker explains the hypertension. This in turn leads to a discussion of the kinds of challenges facing sociology, not just in matters of trying to explain different health outcomes for different groups, but fending off the increasing attempts to give so-called scientific authority to explanations of phenomena as wide ranging as crime and violence on the one hand and academic achievement on the other.

PART II: WHAT IS THIS INCREASING CHALLENGE TO SOCIOLOGY?

The challenge comprises four interrelated parts: 1) the tendency to prioritize and selectively fund so-called scientific work inside the body to explain complex social behavior and health outcomes; 2) the quick emergence and proliferation of national DNA databases; 3) the destruction of or blocked access to data on the social, economic, and political aspects of health, employment status, and social stratification; 4) the

attendant “molecularization of race” (Fullwiley 2005) in practical applications of human molecular genetics, from the delivery of pharmaceutical drugs to the attempt at identification of a person's race by “ancestral informative markers” in the DNA.

In 2003, the NIAAA discontinued the Alcohol and Alcohol Problems Science Database, a vital resource for social science researchers, clinicians and policy makers. This decision is part of an alarming overall strategy, the tip of an iceberg. As of January 7, 2005, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, by its own admission, purged 20 reports with vital social data from its Web site, such as the following 3 reports:

- Briefing on the Consequences of Government Race Data Collection on Civil Rights (May 2002);
- Native American Health Care Disparities Briefing Summary (February 2004); and
- Briefing on Tragedy Along Arizona-Mexico Border: Undocumented Immigrants Face Death in the Desert (August 2002).

Behavioral geneticists are quickly searching for genetic markers (and sometimes even coding regions) that they can associate with complex behavioral phenotypes, such as criminality, risk taking, violence, intelligence, alcoholism, manic depression, schizophrenia, and homosexuality. In the last decade, researchers have claimed links exist between DNA regions and cognitive ability in children (Chorney et al. 1998:159–66), crime (Jensen et al. 1998), violence (Caspi et al. 2002), and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (Smalley et al. 2002).

New developments in population genetics now promise to explore the contributions of genetic differences to phenotypic differences between groups. The haplotype map, for example, is designed to look at sections of the DNA to find markers with the purpose of making such differentiations. These new molecular techniques allow researchers to correlate markers for racial

background with behavioral outcomes, such as violence and impulsivity. Thus, these techniques are poised to usher in a whole new era of scientific justification for theories of racial and ethnic differences in social behaviors.

Social and cultural factors always influence human genetic research, beginning with the issue of why certain behaviors are chosen for genetic analysis. During the last decade, scientific and popular literature propagated overly simplistic genetic explanations to a variety of complex social behaviors, such as sexual preference, risk-seeking behavior, shyness, alcoholism, and even homelessness. There is a history of using genetic explanations to account for and justify differences in social stratification and the behavior of those at the bottom of the economic order (Black 2003; Kevles 1985; Reilly 1991). These converging preoccupations and tangled webs interlace crime and violence with race and genetic explanations.

For decades, social scientists have documented the substantial inequalities between school districts in the United States. In recent years, the increasing retreat of the white middle classes to private schools has exacerbated these differences in many urban areas (Kozol 1991). And even a century ago, the claim has been made that intelligence quotient (IQ) differences between both individuals and groups are better explained by genetics (Kamin 1974). However, previous claims about the genetic basis of IQ differences have used mainly correlational data or twin studies and adoption studies—all relying on data outside the body, and only then making an inference about genetic differences. With new computer chip technologies linked to DNA

profiling, behavioral geneticists now are able to focus on data that will permit them to better ask about patterns in the DNA.⁴

Why should sociologists be concerned about this? First, institutions are systematically destroying more and more databases of social factors and social processes.⁵ This decreased access to social data is coupled with the simultaneous increase in DNA collection from ordinary citizens that has all the features of an inexorable technological juggernaut. The United Kingdom has been in the vanguard of these developments, but there is every indication that this will not be for long.⁶ In April 2004, the UK Parliament passed a law permitting police to retain DNA samples from anyone, arrested for any reason, including people who are not charged with a crime. Anyone can have their DNA sample taken and stored. The UK database already contains 2.8 million DNA “fingerprints” taken from identified suspects, plus another 230,000 from unidentified samples collected from crime scenes (BJHC 2005). Samples are being added at the rate of between 10,000 and 20,000 per month.⁷ The aim is to have on file a quarter of the adult population’s DNA—a figure that exceeds 10 million, making it by far the largest DNA database in the world.

Ancestral Informative Markers: Identifying Race From Inside the Body via DNA

In the last decade, researchers using molecular genetic technologies have made remarkable claims in the scientific literature, including the

⁴For example, Chorney et al. (1998) claimed to find a DNA marker for insulin-like growth factor 2 (IGF2R) on chromosome 6 based on an analysis of 102 students. Actually, their study explained only 5 percent of the variance.

⁵In 1999 (the last year of the Bill Clinton administration) the Department of Labor published its extensive report on domestic violence against women. The National Council of Research on Women (2004) notes that the new recommissioned study on the same topic was due to be published in 2004 but is missing from the Web site of the Department of Labor.

⁶In April 2005, the Portuguese government announced its intention to collect DNA from all of its residents (Boavida 2005).

⁷This was before the bombings in London in early July 2005.

claim that it is possible to estimate a person's race by looking at specific markers in the DNA (Lowe et al. 2001; Shriver et al. 1997). The social implications reach far beyond personal recreational usage, where the individual submits a DNA sample and "discovers" the percentage of ancestry that comes from Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, or the Asian continent.⁸ Companies are touting and marketing forensic applications, the direct consequence of a successful intervention in a sensational serial rape-murder case.⁹

Tang et al. (2005), make yet another claim about the capacity to use DNA to identify race, followed by an explicit challenge to the sociologists of race who maintain that "race is only a social construct":

Genetic cluster analysis of the microsatellite markers produced four major clusters, which showed near-perfect correspondence with the self-reported race/ethnic categories. (p. 268)

On February 4, 2005, the Stanford University public information office released the following statement (Zhang 2005) to the press:

A recent study conducted at the Stanford Medical School challenges the widely held belief that race is only a social construct and provides evidence that race has genetic implications. (p. 1)

The DNA data collection in the United States has been a fairly recent and quickly expanding venture. In 1994, the U.S. Congress passed the DNA Identification Act, authorizing the Federal

Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to establish a national DNA database, the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS). Only since the mid-1980s have most states been collecting DNA samples and only from sexual offenders. But within a decade, all 50 states were contributing to CODIS with a capacity to interlink state databases and using DNA samples from a wide range of felons. At one time, the system had 9 states cross-linking approximately 100,000 offender profiles and 5,000 forensic profiles. In just three years, that number jumped to 32 states, the FBI, and the U.S. Army now linking approximately 400,000 offender profiles and 20,000 forensic profiles. States are now uploading an average of 3,000 offender profiles every month (Gavel 2000). Although searching within such a large pool of profiles may seem daunting, computer technology is increasingly efficient and extraordinarily fast. It takes less than a second—about 500 microseconds—to search a database of 100,000 profiles.

The further expansion of the databases is inevitable. The U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill (H.R. 3214 "Advancing Justice Through DNA Technology Act of 2003") that will expand the original CODIS to include persons merely indicted and not necessarily convicted. In 2004, California voters passed Proposition 69 that permits collection and storing of DNA for those *merely arrested* for certain crimes by 2008, thereby joining four other states collecting DNA on the same premise. The Violence Against Women Act of 2005 contains the following provision that DNA

⁸Many Web sites, such as AncestrybyDNA.com, provide information so that a person can apply for a kit to submit his or her DNA sample for the company to analyze and report the estimated proportion of a person's ancestry that is purportedly from one of several large continental groupings.

⁹In 2003, police in Baton Rouge, LA, were unsuccessful identifying a serial rapist-murderer, after interviewing over 1,000 white males who fit what one witness described as the likely suspect. A DNA sample was tested and analyzed by a company claiming it could discern that the suspect (based on DNA analysis) was 85 percent African ancestry (Touchette 2003). The prime suspect was apprehended and identified to be African American. Since then, the DNA testing company advertises its success on the Web and markets its expertise to police departments nationally.

samples can be obtained from people merely detained under federal authority:

Sec. 1004. Authorization to Conduct DNA Sample Collection from Persons Arrested or Detained under Federal Authority.

- (a) In General-Section 3 of the DNA Analysis Backlog Elimination Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 14135a) is amended—(1) in subsection (a)
- (A) in paragraph (1), by striking ‘The Director’ and inserting the following:
- (A) The Attorney General may, as prescribed by the Attorney General in regulation, collect DNA samples from individuals who are *arrested or detained* under. (italics added)

As governments increase the number of profiles in the databases, researchers will increase proposals to provide DNA profiles of specific offender populations. Twenty states authorize the use of databanks for research on forensic techniques (Kimmelman 2000).

The emerging challenge to social theory will be substantial, precisely because the imprimatur of scientific authority tilts to so-called basic processes or to a parallel notion that locates the explanatory power to data collected inside the body. Of course one position is that collecting these data is valuable in that researchers can then assess empirically the relative explanatory power of competing explanations. The problem with this position is the role of the supercomputer in the generation of seductive but meaningless correlations to DNA markers. Although this matter would seem to be highly technical, it can be explained quite simply: Each human has 3 billion base pairs of DNA. Any two humans across the globe share 99.9 percent, or complete duplication, of their DNA sequences. However, that remaining 0.1 percent difference means that there are at least *3 million points of difference* between any two people, or any two groups of people. Current supercomputer technology can therefore find differences

between *any* two groups of persons, whether or not those differences have any bearing on the manner of gene expression. A supercomputer can be programmed to find differences in the DNA sequences between any two arbitrarily and randomly selected groups of people. I have used the example of dividing an audience at a lecture into two groups, A and B, just by drawing an arbitrary line down the center of the audience. That would be trivial research that has little credibility and less chance of funding. However, if those two groups happen to coincide with socially significant categories (e.g., race, ethnicity, social class, or caste position), the demonstrated differences would feed easily into a competing explanation of the manifest differences between groups that necessarily resonate in (that) society.

Thus, the problems that need to be addressed are as follows:

1. Increasing pressure for national DNA databases;
2. Destruction of more and more databases about social categories;
3. A research agenda, waiting in the wings, to do single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNP) profiling;
4. Ever expanding and racially marked DNA databases, and the inevitable search for competing explanations of human behavior.

PART III: WHAT SOCIOLOGISTS CAN DO TO MEET THE COMING AND GROWING CHALLENGE

Sociologists can stand on the sidelines, watch the parade of reductionist science as it goes by, and point out that it is all “socially constructed.” That will not be good enough to rain on this parade, because of the imprimatur of legitimacy increasingly afforded to the study of so-called basic processes inside the body. What can and should the discipline do?

Sociological Research and Sociological Work at the Site of "Rate Construction"

While this argument is indeed about social construction, sociologists need to spend more time showing how the rates got constructed.¹⁰ How analysts theorize about social life has direct consequences. The sharply different approaches to the study of deviance, law, and the criminal justice system best illustrate these consequences. In the middle of the twentieth century, two competing schools of thought dominated research and theory in this area. Columbia University represented one orientation, where Robert Merton ([1949] 1990) and his students examined the relationship between the worlds of deviants and normals through an empirical strategy that relied heavily upon official statistics reported by police departments. Researchers assumed the collected FBI's Uniform Crime Reports accurately reflected deviant and criminal behavior. Those working in this tradition occasionally engaged in field site research, but the dominant tendency presumed there was not a large gap between official crime statistics and that of the phenomenal world of action, and that theorizing from these databases warranted little caution or concern.

The University of Chicago, which had a long and strong tradition of what they called "natural setting" research, represents the competing orientation. Unlike Columbia, the Chicago researchers were committed to close observation of the so-called hobo, gang, or prostitute. They spent years in what might now be described as an embedded strategy of data collection. Their practitioners literally went to those spaces that any common sense actor perceived to be the setting for deviance. According to the folklore, one of the most celebrated sociologists of the era got "caught with his pants down" in an up-close ethnography of prostitution; the university

administration and the *Chicago Tribune* demanded that he be fired. This tale is a more colorful illustration of Chicago researchers' commitment to studying deviance in its natural setting. Still, researchers did not conduct their field work on white collar crime or in corporate settings. The accepted domain assumptions were to simply document the behaviors and practices of those already located in the existing categories.

In short, Chicago researchers and Columbia researchers approached the study of deviance in significantly different but fundamentally important ways. However, both schools conducted their work in a "taken-for-granted" empirical world.

Within this context, a third set of players challenged the epistemology of the whole playing field and ultimately shifted the focus of theory and research. Aaron Cicourel (1967) and Egon Bittner (1967) persuaded the police to let them ride with them on their routine rounds, permitting them to observe the wide discretion police used in their arrest procedures. Meanwhile, David Sudnow (1965) observed the actual processes of the Public Defender's office and recorded the ways prosecuting attorneys worked together to selectively secure guilty pleas from some individuals, while other individuals were able to bargain for better deals. Erving Goffman (1959) penetrated mental hospital wards and studied intake decision-making that blazed a trail for the next generation of mental health researchers. Yet deviance was merely the vehicle for obtaining a better understanding about how social institutions and organizations construct rates (and order). For example, Irving Zola (1966) sat in medical clinics, observing doctor-patient communication, the subject of his now classical study of how Jewish, Italian, and Irish patients present very different symptoms for the same physical condition, shaping how medical

¹⁰This segment is based on a short article previously published in *Social Problems* (Duster 2001).

doctors interpret, diagnose, and categorize (rate construction). This had obvious implications for how theorizing from “raw rates” could be completely distorted. Knowing that the Irish tend to be more stoic and the Italians more expressive in reporting the same symptoms has profound implications for developing a theory of ethnic differences in health and illness.

These researchers engaged in a methodology that seemed to parallel or complement the Chicago School, that is, field work in the natural setting. Yet the basic assumptions were very different, since Chicago researchers were trying to find out more about deviants’ true characteristics. This newer approach began during the first decade of the new journal *Social Problems* and raised a very challenging question: “What are the social processes that account for why some get classified in a category and others do not, *even though both are engaged in the same or similar behavior?*”

When Kitsuse and Cicourel (1963) tried to publish their classic article on the uses and misuses of official statistics in social science, each major sociology journal (the *American Sociological Review*, the *American Journal of Sociology*, and *Social Forces*) rejected it—some reviewers explicitly argued that this was an attack on the citadel. Reviewers aligned with both traditions (Columbia and Chicago) worried that “if this were true (that official statistics grossly misrepresent social reality), we would have to go back to the drawing board and re-orient theory and research.”¹¹ Howard Becker had just taken over the editorship of *Social Problems*, the breakaway journal of the *Society for the Study of Social Problems*. A different set of reviewers with a sharply different perspective urged publication. In the next few years, several published articles effectively challenged and

substantially replaced earlier schools. The 1960s exploded with more competing paradigms, from conflict theory to ethnomethodology to Marxist theory. Each had its own approach to the study of deviance and normality. But it was the professional skepticism regarding automatically accepting official statistics that had the most profound impact upon the developing epistemological crisis of the field.

The Importance of Data Collection at the Site of Knowledge Production

There are powerful organizational motives for police departments to demonstrate effectiveness in “solving crimes.” It is a considerable embarrassment for a police department to have a long list of crimes on their books, for which no arrest has been made. No police chief wishes to face a city council with this problem. Thus, there are organizational imperatives for police departments to clean up the books by a procedure known as “cleared by arrest.”

Few matters count as much as this one when it comes to reporting police activities to the public (Skolnick 2002; Skolnick and Fyfe 1993). To understand how arrest rates are influenced by this “cleared by arrest” procedure, it is vital to empirically ground this procedure by close observation.

Here is the pattern: Someone (P) is arrested and charged with committing a crime (x), such as burglary for example. There are several other burglaries in this police precinct. The arresting officers see a pattern to these burglaries and decide that the suspect is likely to have committed several on their unsolved burglary list. Thus, it sometimes happens that when P is arrested for just one of those burglaries, the police can clear by arrest the

¹¹Kitsuse (1962) would also argue that the “social reaction” approach to deviance requires that the investigator go out into the field and study the social responses to deviance in its natural setting. So, while this approach affirms the “natural setting” methodology of the Chicago School, it asks the investigator to look at the social patterns in the discretions and strategies of sorting, naming, and classifying.

15–20 other burglaries with that single arrest. This can show up as a repeat offender in the statistics, though there may never be any follow-up empirical research to verify or corroborate that the police arrest record (rap sheet) accurately represents the burglaries now attributed to P.

But researchers can corroborate this activity as a pattern only by riding around in police cars or doing the equivalent close up observation of police work (Jackall 2005). And yet, if social theorists take the FBI Uniform Crime Reports as a reflection of the crime rate, with no observations as to how those rates were constructed, they will make the predictable “policy error” of assuming that there are only a small number of people who commit a large number of crimes. The resulting error in theorizing would be to then look for the kind of person who repeatedly engages in this behavior (as if it were not “cleared by arrest” that generated the long rap sheet). It is a very small step to search for explanations inside the body. In an earlier section, I mention the use of ancestral informative markers to attempt to identify a person’s race. The U.S. prison population has undergone a dramatic shift in its racial composition in the last 30 years. The convergence of this social trend, along with the burgeoning redefinition of race as something determined by DNA patterns, will be a challenge to sociology at many levels, from the attempted reinscription of race as a biological or genetic category, to attempted explanation of a host of complex social behaviors. That challenge can only be met by doing what the social researchers of a previous generation did with police work, namely, going to the very site at which those data are generated.

To meet this challenge, social scientists will have to do the kind of research that documents

how these categories are constructed. We need to treat so-called ancestral informative markers as the subject of close inquiry and observation. That means, rather than accepting or rejecting axiomatically, we need to penetrate the logic of this kind of work and determine just how subjects are sorted into categories that claim the DNA belongs to someone with “85 percent” African ancestry.¹²

In sum, if social construction is to be more than a comfortable shibboleth easily received by those who already accept its premises, it must be buttressed by investigations at key empirical sites that show the social forces at play in the construction. Otherwise, sociologists will be left watching the parade from the sidewalk, asserting to a resonant audience of like-minded social scientists that it is all “socially constructed.” Meanwhile, incarceration rates continue to soar, DNA databases fill to the brim, and competing explanations have greater resonance.

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¹²One important model is that of Fullwiley (2005), an anthropologist who enters the laboratories of these researchers to see how they constitute the “ancestral informative markers.”

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Great Divides

The Cultural, Cognitive, and Social Bases of the Global Subordination of Women (2007)

Cynthia Fuchs Epstein

The world is made up of great divides—divides of nations, wealth, race, religion, education, class, gender, and sexuality—all constructs created by human agency. The conceptual boundaries that define these categories are always symbolic and may create physical and social boundaries as well (Gerson and Peiss 1985; Lamont and Molnar 2002). Today, as in the past, these constructs not only order social existence, but they also hold the capacity to create serious inequalities, generate conflicts, and promote human suffering. In this address, I argue that the boundary based on sex creates the most fundamental social divide—a divide that should be a root issue in all sociological analysis if scholars are to adequately understand the social dynamics of society and the influential role of stratification. The work of many sociologists contributes to this claim, although I can only refer to some of them in the context of a single article.

The conceptual boundaries that determine social categories are facing deconstruction

throughout our profession. Once thought stable and real in the sense that they are descriptive of biological or inherited traits, social categories such as race and ethnicity are contested today by a number of scholars (Barth 1969; Brubaker 2004; Duster 2006; Telles 2004). Indeed, sociologists are questioning the underlying reasoning behind categorical distinctions, noting their arbitrariness, and further, the ways in which they tend to be “essentializing and naturalizing” (Brubaker 2004:9).¹ Yet, not many of these critical theorists have included *gender* in this kind of analysis.² Where they have, such work tends to be relegated to, if not ghettoized within, the field of “gender studies.”³

Of course, the categories of race, ethnicity, and gender are real in the sense that—as W. I. Thomas put it in his oft-quoted observation—“if men [*sic*] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (cited in Merton [1949] 1963:421). Categorization on the basis of observable characteristics often serves as a

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¹Brubaker also cites the contributions of Rothbart and Taylor 1992; Hirshfield 1996; and Gil-White 1999 to this perspective.

²Duster (2006) does include gender.

³For example, see Epstein 1988; Lorber 1994; Connell 1987; Ridgeway 2006; Bussey and Bandura 1999; Tavris 1992.

mobilizing strategy for action against (or for) people assigned to the category and may even force them into a grouplike state (Bourdieu 1991; Brubaker 2004). Alternatively, categorization may create conformity to a stereotype—in the process known as “the self-fulfilling prophecy” (Merton [1949] 1963). But it is one thing for individuals to engage in categorical thinking, and another for social scientists to accept a category with its baggage of assumptions. Today, many social scientists use popular understandings of race, ethnicity, and gender as if they were descriptive of inherent or acquired stable traits, and they treat them as established variables that describe clusters of individuals who share common traits. In this manner, social scientists are no different from the lay public, who, in their everyday activities and thinking, act as if categories are reliable indicators of commonalities in a population.

The consequences of such categorization may be positive or negative for those in a given category. For example, people of color face far more suspicion from the police than do whites, and favored male professors benefit from the evaluation that they are smart and knowledgeable while comparatively, favored female professors tend to be evaluated as nice (Basow 1995). Yet, unlike the basis on which social *groups* may be defined, categories include individuals who may never know one another or have any interaction with each other. However, they may all share selected physical traits or relationships. Skin color, hair texture, genitals, place of birth, and genealogy are among the determinants of categories.

I consider *gender* to be the most basic and prevalent category in social life throughout the world, and in this address, I explore the life consequences that follow from this designation for the female half of humanity. Gender is, of course, based on biological sex, as determined by

the identification of an individual at birth as female or male by a look at their genitals. This first glance sets up the most basic divide in all societies—it determines an individual’s quality of life, position on the social hierarchy, and chance at survival. The glance marks individuals for life and is privileged over their unique intelligence, aptitudes, or desires. Of course, persons who are transgendered, transsexual, or hermaphrodites⁴ do not fit this dichotomous separation, but there is little recognition of categories based on sex other than male and female in almost every society (Butler 1990; Lorber 1994, 1996).

SEX DIVISION AND SUBORDINATION

The sexual divide is the most persistent and arguably the deepest divide in the world today. Of course, it is only one of many great divides. Boundaries mark the territories of human relations. They are created by “cultural entrepreneurs”⁵ who translate the concepts into practice—rulers behind the closed doors of palaces and executive offices; judges in courtrooms; priests, rabbis, and mullahs; leaders and members of unions and clubs; and teachers, parents, and the people in the street. The great divides of society are enforced by persuasion, barter, custom, force, and the threat of force (Epstein 1985). The extent to which boundaries are permeable and individuals can escape categorization, and thus, their assignment to particular social roles and statuses, is a function of a society’s or an institution’s stability and capacity to change. The ways in which boundaries may be transgressed make up the story of social change and its limits. They are the basis for human freedom.

Of all the socially created divides, the gender divide is the most basic and the one most resistant to social change. As I have suggested before

⁴I have used these commonly used terms, but alternative words such as “trans” and “intersex” are deemed more appropriate by some scholars and advocates.

⁵I offer this concept following Becker (1963) who writes of “moral entrepreneurs”; Brubaker (2004) who writes of “ethnopolitical entrepreneurs”; and Fine (1996) who writes of “reputational entrepreneurs.”

(Epstein 1985, 1988, 1991b, 1992), dichotomous categories, such as those that distinguish between blacks and whites; free persons and slaves; and men and women, are always invidious. This dichotomous categorization is also particularly powerful in maintaining the advantage of the privileged category. With regard to the sex divide, the male sex is everywhere privileged—sometimes the gap is wide, sometimes narrow. Some individuals and small clusters of women may succeed in bypassing the negative consequences of categorization, and in some cases they may even do better educationally or financially than the men in their group. Among women, those from a privileged class, race, or nationality may do better than others. But worldwide, in every society, women as a category are subordinated to men.

I further suggest that the divide of biological sex constitutes a marker around which all major institutions of society are organized. All societal institutions assign roles based on the biological sex of their members. The divisions of labor in the family, local and global labor forces, political entities, most religious systems, and nation-states are all organized according to the sexual divide.

Cultural meanings are also attached to the categories of female and male, which include attributions of character and competence (Epstein 1988, see Ridgeway 2006 for a review). These situate individuals assigned to each category in particular social and symbolic roles. There is some overlap in the roles to which females and males are assigned, but in all societies sex status is the major determinant—it is the master status that determines the acquisition of most other statuses.

Of course, biological sex does prescribe humans' reproductive roles (e.g., child bearer, inseminator). But there is no biological necessity for a woman to become a mother, even though only women can become biological mothers, and a man may or may not choose to become a

biological father. Therefore, we can conclude that *all* social statuses and the roles attached to them are *socially* prescribed. Further, norms prescribe (or proscribe) detailed behavior fixed to all social roles. And, because statuses are universally ranked, the statuses women are permitted to acquire usually are subordinate to men's statuses. Furthermore, women's roles are universally paired with roles assigned to men, in the family, in the workplace, and in the polity. Virtually no statuses are stand-alone positions in society; all are dependent on reciprocal activities of those who hold complementary statuses. These too are socially ranked and usually follow the invidious distinctions that "male" and "female" evoke. Almost no statuses are free from gender-typing.

These observations lead me to proposals that I believe are essential for comprehensive sociological analysis today, and to call for the elimination of the boundary that has separated so-called gender studies from mainstream sociology.⁶

Given the ubiquitous nature of sex-typing of social statuses, and social and symbolic behavior, I propose that the dynamics of gender segregation be recognized as a primary issue for sociological analysis and attention be paid to the mechanisms and processes of sex differentiation and their roles in group formation, group maintenance, and stratification.⁷ I further suggest that

- Females' and males' actual and symbolic roles in the social structure are a seedbed for group formation and group boundary-maintenance.
- All societies and large institutions are rooted in the differentiation and subordination of females.
- The more group solidarities are in question in a society, the stronger the differentiation between males and females and the more severe is women's subjugation.

The enforcement of the distinction is achieved through cultural and ideological means that justify

⁶A number of sociologists have specifically called for a greater integration of feminist theory and studies within the mainstream of American sociology (e.g., Chafetz 1984, 1997; Laslett 1996; Stacey and Thorne 1985).

⁷I am not the first to make this plea (e.g., see Acker 1973; Blumberg 1978; Chafetz 1997).

the differentiation. This is despite the fact that, unlike every other dichotomous category of people, females and males are necessarily bound together, sharing the same domiciles and most often the same racial and social class statuses. Analyses of these relationships are difficult given the ways in which they are integrated with each other and the extent to which they are basic in all institutions.

There is, of course, variation in societies and the subgroups within them, and a continuum exists in the severity of female subordination. Indeed, subordination is not a static process and it varies from almost complete to very little. The process is dynamic in shape and degree. Women gain or lose equality depending on many elements—the state of an economy, the identity politics of groups or nations, the election of conservative or liberal governments, the need for women’s labor in the public and private sectors, the extent of their education, the color of their skin,⁸ the power of fundamentalist religious leaders in their societies, and their ability to collaborate in social movements. But even in the most egalitarian of societies, the invidious divide is always a lurking presence and it can easily become salient.

It is important to note that women’s inequality is not simply another case of social inequality, a view I have held in the past (Epstein 1970). I am convinced that societies and strategic subgroups within them, such as political and work institutions, *maintain their boundaries*—their very social organization—through the use of invidious distinctions made

between males and females.⁹ Everywhere, women’s subordination is basic to maintaining the social cohesion and stratification systems of ruling and governing groups—male groups—on national and local levels, in the family, and in all other major institutions. Most dramatically, this process is at work today in the parts of the world where control of females’ behavior, dress, and use of public space have been made representations of orthodoxies in confrontation with modernism, urbanism, and secular society. But even in the most egalitarian societies, such as the United States, women’s autonomy over their bodies,¹⁰ their time, and their ability to decide their destinies is constantly at risk when it intrudes on male power.

The gender divide is not determined by biological forces. *No society or subgroup leaves social sorting to natural processes.* It is through social and cultural mechanisms and their impact on cognitive processes that social sorting by sex occurs and is kept in place—by the exercise of force and the threat of force, by law, by persuasion, and by embedded cultural schemas that are internalized by individuals in all societies. Everywhere, local cultures support invidious distinctions by sex. As Jerome Bruner (1990) points out in his thoughtful book, *Acts of Meaning*, normatively oriented institutions—the law, educational institutions, and family structures—serve to enforce folk psychology, and folk psychology in turn serves to justify such enforcement. In this address, I shall explore some spheres in which the process of sex differentiation

⁸There is, of course, a growing body of scholarship on women of color. See, for example, Baca Zinn and Dill (1996); Collins (1998); and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2003).

⁹Martin (2004) and Lorber (1994) both consider gender to be a social institution.

¹⁰The most obvious example is the right to have an abortion, which through *Roe v. Wade* (1973) withdrew from the states the power to prohibit abortions during the first six months of pregnancy. In 1989, *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* gave some of that power back. Since that time, President Bush and other legislators proposed a constitutional amendment banning abortions, giving fetuses more legal rights than women. This remains a deeply contested issue in American politics (Kaminer 1990). The National Women’s Law Center has expressed concern that the current Supreme Court cannot be counted on to preserve women’s “hard-won legal gains, especially in the areas of constitutional rights to privacy and equal protection” (2006). In many other places in the world women are not protected by their governments. In 2005, the World Health Organization found that domestic and sexual violence is widespread. Amnesty International reports tens of thousands of women are subjected to domestic violence, giving as examples Republic of Georgia and Bangladesh where, when women go to the authorities after being strangled, beaten, or stabbed, they are told to reconcile with their husbands (Lew and Moawad 2006).

and the invidious comparisons between the sexes are especially salient.

THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN THE PROFESSION OF SOCIOLOGY

It is fitting that my presidential address to the 101st meeting of the American Sociological Association should begin with an analytic eye on our profession. I became the ninth woman president in the ASA's 101 years of existence. The first woman president, Dorothy Swaine Thomas, was elected in 1952, the second, Mirra Komarovsky, almost 20 years later—two women presidents in the first seven decades of the existence of the association. Seven others have been chosen in the 23 years since.¹¹

We nine women are symbolic of the positive changes in the position of women in the United States. Our case is situated at the high end of the continuum of women's access to equality. Similarly, our profession has devoted much research attention to women's position in society, though the findings of scholars on the subject are often not integrated with the profession's major theoretical and empirical foci. Many radical voices in the discipline refer to "gender issues" only ritualistically. This is so even though sociological research on gender is one of the major examples of "public sociology" of the past 40 years.

When I was a sociology graduate student at Columbia University in the 1960s, there were no

women on the sociology faculty, as was the case at most major universities. The entire bibliography on women in the workplace, assembled for my thesis (1968) on women's exclusion from the legal profession, was exhausted in a few pages. However, it included Betty Friedan's ([1963] 1983) *The Feminine Mystique*, with its attack on Talcott Parsons's (1954) perspective on the functions of the nuclear family and his observation that women's role assignment in the home had exceedingly positive functional significance in that it prevented competition with their husbands (p. 191).¹² She also attacked Freud's ([1905] 1975) theories that women's biology is their destiny, that their feelings of inferiority are due to "penis envy," and his contention "that the woman has no penis often produces in the male a lasting depreciation of the other sex" (Freud 1938:595, footnote 1).

Friedan contributed to both the knowledge base of the social sciences and to the status of women. I believe she did more than any other person in modern times to change popular perceptions of women and their place in the world. While not the first to identify the dimensions of women's inequality,¹³ Friedan put theory into practice, building on the attention she received when *The Feminine Mystique* was published. At a moment made ripe by the sensibilities of the civil rights movement and the growing participation of women in the labor force, she took up a challenge posed to her by Pauli Murray, the African American lawyer and civil rights activist, to create "an NAACP for women."¹⁴ With the encouragement and participation of a small but highly motivated group of women in government,

¹¹Information from ASA: <http://www.asanet.org/governance/pastpres.html>. The current president, Frances Fox Piven, brings the number of women presidents to 10 in 102 years.

¹²It is curious that his further observation that the relationship was also "an important source of strain" (p. 191) has rarely been acknowledged, although Friedan did note this in *The Feminine Mystique*.

¹³These include (but of course, the list is incomplete) John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor, Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Sojourner Truth, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Emmeline Pankhurst, W.E.B. DuBois, Emma Goldman, and in the years just preceding Friedan's book, Simone de Beauvoir (1949), to whom she dedicated *The Feminine Mystique*, and Mirra Komarovsky (1946; [1953] 2004).

¹⁴I interviewed Friedan in 1999 about the origins of NOW for an article I was writing for *Dissent* (Epstein 1999a).

union offices, and professional life—white women, African American women, and women from Latin American backgrounds (a fact that has gone unnoticed far too long)—and with the participation of the third woman ASA president, Alice Rossi, Friedan founded the National Organization for Women in 1966. Working through NOW, Friedan set out to provide political support for implementation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex as well as race, color, religion, and national origin. The changes accomplished by the organizational work of Friedan, and a number of other activists¹⁵ and scholars,¹⁶ were nothing short of a social revolution. It is a revolution of interest to sociologists not only for its creation of women's rights in employment and education but because *it became a natural field experiment establishing that there was no natural order of things relegating women to "women's work" and men to "men's work."* Yet, like most revolutions it was limited in its accomplishment of its stated goals and its principles are constantly under attack.

But the revolution did motivate research. There has been an explosion of scholarship on the extent of sex divides on macro and micro levels. Social scientists have documented in hundreds of thousands of pages of research the existence and consequences of subtle and overt discrimination against women of all strata and nationalities and the institutionalization of sexism.

The number of studies of the differentiation of women's and girls' situations in social life has grown exponentially in the 40 years since the

beginning of the second wave of the women's movement. This work has pointed to women's and girls' vulnerabilities in the home and the workplace; their lower pay and lesser ability to accumulate wealth; their exploitation in times of war and other group conflicts; and the conditions under which an ethos of hypermasculinity¹⁷ in nations and subgroups controls women's lives. Some of the work of sociologists and of our colleagues in related disciplines has persuaded legislators and judges in many countries to acknowledge the inequalities and harsh treatment girls and women face. Pierre Sané, the Assistant Secretary General of UNESCO, has noted the synergy between social research and human rights activities, and he stresses in international meetings¹⁸ that women's rights must be regarded as human rights and enforced by law.

Let us remember that the "woman question" as a serious point of inquiry for the social sciences is relatively new. In the past, wisdom on this subject came primarily from armchair ideologists, philosophers, legislators, judges, and religious leaders. With few exceptions,¹⁹ these theorists asserted that women's subordinate position was for good reason—divine design, or for those not religiously inclined, *nature* mandated it. Today, a new species of theorists hold to this ideology—fundamentalist leaders in many nations, churches and religious sects in particular—but also scholars, some in the United States, in fields such as sociobiology and evolutionary psychology (e.g., Alexander 1979; Barash 1977; Trivers 1972; Wilson 1975). This

¹⁵One was Gloria Steinem, who worked with Friedan to establish the National Women's Political Caucus. Steinem became a notable public speaker on behalf of women's rights and established the national magazine *Ms.*, which reports on serious women's issues.

¹⁶Friedan recruited me as well in the formation of the New York City Chapter of NOW in 1966. Through her auspices I presented a paper on the negative social consequences for women of segregated help-wanted ads in newspapers at hearings of the EEOC in 1967 on Guidelines for Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and to establish guidelines for the Office of Federal Contract Compliance in 1968.

¹⁷For work on men see especially the work of Kimmel (1996); Connell (1987); Collinson, Knights, and Collinson (1990); and Collinson and Hearn (1994).

¹⁸The most recent was The International Forum on the Social Science-Policy Nexus in Buenos Aires, February 20 to 24, 2006.

¹⁹For example, John Stuart Mill (1869), *The Subjection of Women*.

was perhaps predictable, if my thesis is correct, because women had started to intrude into male ideological and physical turf in the academy and elsewhere in society, upsetting the practices of male affiliation. The prejudices that pass as everyday common sense also support this ideology, often with backing from sophisticated individuals responsible for making policies that affect girls and women.²⁰ They have been joined by some well-meaning women social scientists—a few possessing iconic status²¹—who have affirmed stereotypes about females’ nature on the basis of poor or no data.²²

FEMALE SUBORDINATION IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

The “woman question” is not just one among many raised by injustice, subordination, and differentiation. It is basic. The denigration and segregation of women is a major mechanism in reinforcing male bonds, protecting the institutions that favor them, and providing the basic work required for societies to function. To ignore this great social divide is to ignore a missing link in social analysis.

I will not illustrate my thesis about the persistence of the worldwide subordination of the female sex with pictures, graphs, or charts. Instead I call on readers’ imaginations to picture

some of the phenomena that illustrate my thesis. Imagine most women’s lifetimes of everyday drudgery in households and factories; of struggles for survival without access to decent jobs. Imagine the horror of mass rapes by armed men in ethnic conflicts, and of rapes that occur inside the home by men who regard sexual access as their right.²³ Imagine also women’s isolation and confinement behind walls and veils in many societies. Some examples are harder to imagine—for example, the 100 million women missing in the world, first brought to our attention by the economist Amartya Sen (1990), who alerted us to the bizarre sex ratios in South Asia, West Asia, and China. He pointed to the abandonment and systematic undernourishment of girls and women and to the poor medical care they receive in comparison to males. International human rights groups have alerted us to the selective destruction of female fetuses. It is estimated that in China and India alone, 10,000,000 females were aborted between 1978 and 1998 (Rao 2006). Also hidden are the child brides who live as servants in alien environments and who, should their husbands die, are abandoned to live in poverty and isolation. And there are the millions of girls and women lured or forced into sex work. In the Western world, only the occasional newspaper article brings to view the fact that African women face a 1 in 20 chance of dying during pregnancy (half a million die each year).²⁴

²⁰A pinpointed policy was enacted recently. Seeking to override a 1972 federal law barring sex discrimination in education (Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964), the Bush administration is giving public school districts new latitude to expand the number of single-sex classes and single-sex schools (Schemo 2006). My own review of studies on the impact of segregated education shows no benefits (Epstein 1997; Epstein and Gambs 2001).

²¹Here I refer to a number of “standpoint” theorists such as Belenky et al. (1986), Smith (1990), Hartstock (1998), and of course Carol Gilligan (1982) whose initial study showing a difference in boys’ and girls’ moral values and moral development was based on eight girls and eight boys in a local school and 27 women considering whether to have an abortion. See also Helen Fisher (1982), an evolutionary anthropologist. These views typically assert that women are naturally more caring, more accommodating, and averse to conflict.

²²See my analysis of this literature in Epstein (1988).

²³For more horrors, see Parrot and Cummings (2006).

²⁴Perhaps the best-known eye into this world is that of Nicholas Kristof, the *New York Times* writer, whose Op Ed articles chronicle the horrors faced by women in Africa and the inaction of Western societies to redress them (for example, the United States cut off funding to the United Nations Population Fund, an agency that has led the effort to reduce maternal deaths, because of false allegations it supports abortion) (Kristof 2006).

The persistent segregation of the workplace, in even the most sophisticated societies, in which girls and women labor in sex-labeled jobs that are tedious, mind numbing, and highly supervised, is out of view. Unseen too are the countless beatings, slights, and defamations women and girls endure from men, including intimates, every day all over the world.

Insistence and Persistence on "Natural Differences"

These patterns are largely explained in the world as consequences stemming from natural causes or God's will. Here, I limit analysis mainly to the view of *natural causation* as the *master narrative*—the narrative that attributes role division of the sexes to biology. Some believe that early socialization cements the distinction. It is clear that strong religious beliefs in the natural subordination of women determine the role women must play in societies.

Biological explanation is the master narrative holding that men and women are naturally different and have different intelligences, physical abilities, and emotional traits. This view asserts that men are naturally suited to dominance and women are naturally submissive. The narrative holds that women's different intellect or emotional makeup is inconsistent with the capacity to work at prestigious jobs, be effective scholars, and lead others. Popularized accounts of gender difference have generated large followings.²⁵

But the set of assumptions about basic differences are discredited by a body of reliable research. Although there seems to be an industry of scholarship identifying sex differences, it is

important to note that scholarship showing only tiny or fluctuating differences, or none at all, is rarely picked up by the popular press. Most media reports (e.g., Brooks 2006; Tierney 2006) invariably focus on sex differences, following the lead of many journals that report tiny differences in distributions of males and females as significant findings (Epstein 1991a, 1999b). Further, the media rarely reports the fact that a good proportion of the studies showing any differences are based on small numbers of college students persuaded to engage in experiments conducted in college laboratories and not in real-world situations. Or, in the case of studies indicating the hormonal relationship between men's aggression and women's presumed lack of it, a number of studies are based on the behavior of laboratory animals. Other studies compare test scores of students in college, rarely reporting variables such as the class, race, and ethnicity of the population being studied. Even in these settings, the systematic research of social scientists has proved that males and females show almost no difference or shifting minor differences in measures of cognitive abilities (Hyde 2005) and emotions.²⁶ And there may be more evidence for similarity than even the scholarly public has access to, because when studies find no differences, the results might not be published in scholarly publications. The Stanford University cognitive psychologist Barbara Tversky (personal communication) notes that when she has sought to publish the results of experiments on a variety of spatial tasks that show no gender differences, journal editors have demanded that she and her collaborators take them out because they are null findings. Even so, we can conclude that under conditions of equality, girls and women

²⁵The works of John Gray (1992), the author of *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* and spinoff titles have sold over 30 million copies in the United States. See also Deborah Tannen's (1990) *You Just Don't Understand* on the presumed inability of men and women to understand each other on various dimensions, repudiated by the work of the linguistic scholar Elizabeth Aries (1996).

²⁶There has been a recent flurry over reported differences in male and female brains (cf. Brizendine 2006; Bell et al. 2006) and reports of a 3 to 4 percentage difference in IQ. The brain studies are usually based on very small samples and the IQ studies on standardized tests in which the differences reported are at the very end of large distributions that essentially confirm male/female similarities (see Epstein 1988 for a further analysis).

perform and achieve at test levels that are the same as or similar to males—and, in many cases, they perform better.²⁷

The American Psychological Association has reported officially that males and females are more alike than different when tested on most psychological variables. The APA's finding is based on Janet Hyde's 2005 analysis of 46 meta-analyses conducted recently in the United States. They conclude that gender roles and social context lead to the few differences. Further, they report that sex differences, though believed to be immutable, fluctuate with age and location.²⁸ Women manifest similar aggressive feelings although their expression of them is obliged to take different forms (Frodi, Macaulay, and Thome 1977). A 2006 report from the National Academy of Sciences found that after an exhaustive review of the scientific literature, including studies of brain structure and function, it could find no evidence of any significant biological factors causing the underrepresentation of women in science and mathematics.²⁹ Sociologists too have found women's aspirations are linked to their opportunities (Kaufman and Richardson 1982). I observe that like men, women want love, work, and recognition.

So, given similar traits, do women prefer dead-end and limited opportunity jobs; do they wish to work without pay in the home or to be always subject to the authority of men? In the past, some economists thought so. The Nobel

Laureate Gary Becker (1981) proposed that women make rational choices to work in the home to free their husbands for paid labor. A number of other scholars follow the rational-choice model to explain women's poorer position in the labor force. Not only has the model proven faulty (England 1989, 1994), but history has proven such ideas wrong. The truth is that men have prevented the incursions of women into their spheres except when they needed women's labor power, such as in wartime, proving that women were indeed a reserve army of labor. As I found in my own research, when windows of opportunity presented themselves, women fought to join the paid labor force at every level, from manual craft work to the elite professions. Men resisted, seeking to preserve the boundaries of their work domains—from craft unionists to the top strata of medical, legal, and legislative practice (Chafe 1972; Epstein 1970, [1981] 1993; Frank 1980; Honey 1984; Kessler-Harris 1982; Lorber 1975, 1984; Milkman 1987; O'Farrell 1999; Rupp 1978).

Social and economic changes in other parts of the West, and in other parts of the world, provide natural field experiments to confirm this data from the United States. In the West, where women have always been employed in the unpaid, family workforce, a revolution in women's interest and participation in the paid workplace spiraled after the First World War. In the United States, from 1930 to 1970 the participation of

²⁷A 2006 *New York Times* report shows that women are getting more B.A.s than are men in the United States. However, in the highest income families, men age 24 and below attend college as much as, or slightly more than their sisters, according to the American Council on Education. The article also reports that women are obtaining a disproportionate number of honors at elite institutions such as Harvard, the University of Wisconsin, UCLA, and some smaller schools such as Florida Atlanta University (Lewin 2006a). A comparison of female and male math scores varies with the test given. Females score somewhat lower on the SAT-M but differences do not exist on the American College Test (ACT) or on untimed versions of the SAT-M (Bailey n.d.).

²⁸Girls even perform identically in math until high school when they are channeled on different tracks. In Great Britain, they do better than males, as noted in the ASA statement contesting the remarks of then Harvard President Lawrence Summers questioning the ability of females to engage in mathematics and scientific research (American Sociological Association 2005; see also Boaler and Sengupta-Irving 2006).

²⁹The panel blamed environments that favor men, continuous questioning of women's abilities and commitment to an academic career, and a system that claims to reward based on merit but instead rewards traits that are socially less acceptable for women to possess (Fogg 2006).

married women ages 35 to 44 in the labor force moved from 10 percent to 46 percent and today it is 77 percent (Goldin 2006). The opening of elite colleges and universities to women students after the 1960s led progressively to their increased participation in employment in the professions and other top jobs. This was the direct result of a concerted effort to use the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to force the opening of these sectors. Ruth Bader Ginsburg and her associates in the Women's Rights Project of the ACLU fought and won important battles in the Supreme Court and Judge Constance Baker Motley, the first African American woman to become a federal judge, ruled that large law firms had to recruit women on the same basis as men to comply with the equal treatment promised by the Civil Rights Act.

Yet even as the ideology of equality became widespread and brought significant changes, the worldwide status of women remained subordinate to that of men. Stable governments and a new prosperity led to something of a revolution in women's statuses in the United States and other countries in the West, notably in Canada with its new charter prohibiting discrimination. There was also an increase in women's employment in the paid labor force in the 15 countries of the European Union, including those countries that traditionally were least likely to provide jobs for women, although the statistics do not reveal the quality of the jobs (Norris 2006). And, of course, women's movements have been instrumental in making poor conditions visible. In countries of the Middle East, the East, and the Global South, women are beginning to have representation in political spheres, the professions, and commerce,

although their percentage remains quite small. Women's lot rises or falls as a result of regime changes and economic changes and is always at severe risk.³⁰ But nowhere are substantial numbers of women in political control; nowhere do women have the opportunity to carry out national agendas giving women truly equal rights.³¹

Structural gains, accompanied by cultural gains, have been considerable in many places. Most governments have signed on to commitments to women's rights, although they are almost meaningless in many regimes that egregiously defy them in practice. And, of course, in many societies women have fewer rights than do men and find themselves worse off than they were a generation ago.³²

In no society have women had clear access to the best jobs in the workplace, nor have they anywhere achieved economic parity with men. As Charles and Grusky (2004) document in their recent book, *Occupational Ghettos: The Worldwide Segregation of Women and Men*, sex segregation in employment persists all over the world, including in the United States and Canada. Women workers earn less than men even in the most gender-egalitarian societies. Charles and Grusky suggest that the disadvantage in employment is partly because women are clustered in "women's jobs"—jobs in the low-paid service economy or white-collar jobs that do not offer autonomy. These are typically occupational ghettos worldwide. While Charles and Grusky observe that women are crowded into the nonmanual sector, women increasingly do work in the globalized manufacturing economy—for example, in assembly line production that supplies the world

³⁰Hartmann, Lovell, and Werschkul (2004) show how, in the recession of March to November 2001, there was sustained job loss for women for the first time in 40 years. The economic downturn affected women's employment, labor force participation, and wages 43 months after the start of the recession.

³¹In Scandinavian countries, women have achieved the most political representation: Finland (37.5 percent of parliament seats), Norway (36.4 percent of parliament seats), Sweden (45.3 percent of parliament seats), and Denmark (38 percent of parliament seats) (U.N. Common Database 2004; Dahlerup n.d.). Of course, women in some societies still do not have the right to vote, and in a few, like Kuwait, where they have just gotten the vote, it is unclear whether they have been able to exercise it independently.

³²This is the case in Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Gaza, and Lebanon as fundamentalist groups have gained power, even in those regimes that are formally secular.

with components for computers or in the clothing sweatshops in Chinatowns in the United States and around the world (Bose and Acosta-Belén 1995; Zimmerman, Litt, and Bose 2006; see also Bao 2001; Lee 1998; Salzinger 2003).

Many women in newly industrializing countries experienced a benefit from employment created by transnational corporations in the 1980s and '90s. They received income and independence from their families, but they remained in sex-segregated, low-wage work, subject to cutbacks when corporations sought cheaper labor markets. As to their suitability for heavy labor, it is common to see (as I have personally witnessed) women hauling rocks and stones in building sites in India and other places. Throughout the world, where water is a scarce commodity it is women who carry heavy buckets and vessels of water, usually on foot and over long distances, because this has been designated as a woman's job and men regard it as a disgrace to help them. Apparently, in much of the world, the guiding principle of essentialism labels as women's jobs those that are not physically easier, necessarily, but rather those that are avoided by men, pay little, and are under the supervision of men.

Of course, women have moved into some male-labeled jobs. As I noted in my book on the consequences of sex boundaries, *Deceptive Distinctions* (1988), the amazing decades of the 1970s and '80s showed that women could do work—men's work—that no one, including themselves, thought they could and they developed interests no one thought they had, and numbers of men welcomed them, or at least tolerated them.

My research shows that women may cross gender barriers into the elite professions that

retain their male definition, such as medicine and law (Epstein [1981] 1993), when there is legal support giving them access to training and equal recruitment in combination with a shortage of personnel. Women made their most dramatic gains during a time of rapid economic growth in the Western world.

I first started research on women in the legal profession in the 1960s, when women constituted only 3 percent of practitioners (Epstein [1981] 1993). When I last assessed their achievements (Epstein 2001), women composed about 30 percent of practicing lawyers and about half of all law students. The same striking changes were happening in medicine (they are now almost half of all medical students [Magrane, Lang, and Alexander 2005]), and women were moving into legal and medical specialties once thought to be beyond their interests or aptitudes, such as corporate law and surgery. Yet, even with such advances they face multiple glass ceilings (Epstein et al. 1995). Only small percentages have attained high rank.³³ And it should come as no surprise that men of high rank,³⁴ the popular media (Belkin 2003), and right-wing commentators (Brooks 2006; Tierney 2006) insist that it is women's own choice to limit their aspirations and even to drop out of the labor force. But this has not been women's pattern. Most educated women have continuous work histories. It is true, however, that many women's ambitions to reach the very top of their professions are undermined. For one thing, they generally face male hostility when they cross conventional boundaries and perform "men's work."³⁵ For another, they face inhospitable environments in male-dominated

³³The current figure for women partners in large law firms (those with more than 250 lawyers) in the United States is 17 percent, although women are one-half of the recruits in these firms (National Association for Law Placement cited in O'Brien 2006; Nicholson 2006).

³⁴A national survey of 1,500 professors (as yet unpublished) at all kinds of institutions in the United States conducted by Neil Gross of Harvard and Solon Simmons of George Mason University shows that most professors don't agree that discrimination—intentional or otherwise—is the main reason that men hold so many more positions than do women in the sciences (Jaschik 2006).

³⁵In studies of jobs dominated by men that are seen as requiring traits that distinguish men as superior to women in intellect or strength, it is reported that men's pride is punctured if women perform them (see Chetkovich 1997 on firefighters; Collinson, Knights, and Collinson 1990 on managers).

work settings in which coworkers not only are wary of women's ability but visibly disapprove of their presumed neglect of their families. Women generally face unrelieved burdens of care work in the United States, with few social supports (Cosler 1974; Gornick 2003; Williams 2000). And they face norms that this work demands their *personal* attention—a *female's attention*.

Even in the most egalitarian societies, a myriad of subtle prejudices and practices are used by men in gatekeeping positions to limit women's access to the better, male-labeled jobs and ladders of success, for example, partnership tracks in large law firms (Epstein et al. 1995). Alternative routes for women, "Mommy tracks" have been institutionalized—touted as a benefit—but usually result in stalled careers (Bergmann and Helburn 2002). Husbands who wish to limit their own work hours to assist working wives usually encounter severe discrimination as well. Individual men who are seen as undermining the system of male advantage find themselves disciplined and face discrimination (Epstein et al. 1999; Williams 2000). In the United States this may lead to the loss of a promotion or a job. In other places in the world, the consequences are even more dire.³⁶

In the current "best of all worlds," ideologies of difference and, to use Charles Tilly's (1998) concept, "exploitation and opportunity hoarding" by men in control keep the top stratum of law and other professions virtually sex segregated. Gatekeepers today don't necessarily limit entry, as that would place them in violation of sex discrimination laws in the United States or put them in an uncomfortable position, given modern Western ideologies of equality. But powerful men move only a small percentage of the able women they hire (often hired in equal numbers with men) upward on the path toward leadership and decision making, especially in

professions and occupations experiencing slow growth. Most rationalize, with the approval of conventional wisdom, that women's own decisions determine their poor potential for achieving power.

Inequality in the workplace is created and reinforced by inequality in education. Newspaper headlines reported that more women than men get B.A.s in the United States today (Lewin 2006a), "leaving men in the dust." But a report a few days later noted that the increase is due to older women going back to school, and that women's degrees are in traditional women's fields (Lewin 2006b).

But women's performance and acceptance in the world of higher education in the United States is the good news! Consider the rest of the world. In many countries girls are denied *any* education. Consider, for example, the case of Afghanistan, where the Taliban still are attempting to resume power. In July 2006, they issued warnings to parents that girls going to school may get acid thrown in their faces or be murdered (Coghlan 2006).

Consider that in Southern Asia 23.5 million girls do not attend school and in Central and West Africa virtually half of all girls are also excluded (Villalobos 2006). While poverty contributes to poor educational opportunities for boys as well as girls in many parts of the world, girls' restrictions are far greater. Some fundamentalist societies permit women to get a higher education, but this is to prepare them for work in segregated conditions where they serve other women.

The sex segregation of labor as measured by sophisticated sociologists and economists does not even acknowledge women's labor *outside* the wage-earning structure. Women and girls labor behind the walls of their homes, producing goods that provide income for their families, income they have no control over. Thus, millions of girls and women are not even counted in the labor force, although they perform essential work in the economy (Bose, Feldberg, and Sokoloff 1987).³⁷

³⁶For example, when the magazine publisher Ali Mohaqeq returned to Afghanistan in 2004 after a long exile he was imprisoned for raising questions about women's rights in the new "democracy." Afghan courts claimed his offense was to contravene the teachings of Islam by printing essays that questioned legal discrimination against women (Witte 2005).

³⁷Women have been unpaid workers on family farms or in small businesses, taking in boarders, and doing factory outwork (see Bose et al. 1987 for the United States; Bose and Acosta-Belén 1995 for Latin America; and Hsiung 1996 for Taiwan).

In addition, females can be regarded as a commodity themselves. They are computed as a means of barter in tribal families that give their girls (often before puberty) to men outside their tribe or clan who want wives to produce children and goods. Men also trade their daughters to men of other tribes as a form of compensation for the killing of a member of another tribe or other reasons.³⁸ Harmony is re-equilibrated through the bodies of females.

There is much more to report about the roles and position of women in the labor force worldwide—my life’s work—but there are other spheres in which females everywhere are mired in subordinate roles. Chief among them are the family and the social and cultural structures that keep women both segregated and in a state of symbolic and actual “otherness,” undermining their autonomy and dignity. Nearly everywhere, women are regarded as “others.”³⁹

Mechanisms Creating “Otherness”

To some extent, women are subject to the process of social speciation—a term that Kai Erikson (1996) introduced (modifying the concept of pseudospeciation offered by Erik Erikson) to refer to the fact that humans divide into various groups who regard themselves as “the foremost species” and then feel that others ought to be kept in their place by “conquest or the force of harsh custom” (Erikson 1996:52). Harsh customs and conquest certainly ensure the subordination of girls and women. I shall consider some of these below.

KIN STRUCTURES. In many societies brides are required to leave their birth homes and enter as virtual strangers into the homes of their husbands and their husbands’ kin. Because of the practice of patrilocality they usually have few or no resources—human or monetary. Marrying very young, they enter these families with the lowest rank and no social supports. About one in seven girls in the developing world gets married before her 15th birthday according to the Population Council, an international research group (Bearak 2006). Local and international attempts to prevent this practice have been largely unsuccessful.⁴⁰

In exploring the actual and symbolic segregation of women I have been inspired by the work of Mounira Charrad in her 2001 prize-winning book *States and Women’s Rights: The Making of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco*. The work of Val Moghadam (2003) and Roger Friedland (2002) also informs this analysis. Writing of the relative status of women, Charrad points to the iron grip of patrilineal kin groups in North African societies. She notes how Islamic family law has legitimized the extended male-centered patrilineage that serves as the foundation of kin-based solidarities within tribal groups so that state politics and tribal politics converge. This supports the patriarchal power not only of husbands, but also of all male kin over women so that the clan defines its boundaries through a family law that rests on the exploitation of women. Her study shows how Islamic family law (Sharia) provides a meaningful symbol of national unity in the countries of the Maghreb. This has changed in Tunisia, but it remains the case for

³⁸There are numerous references on the Web to the use of women given in marriage to another tribe or group in the reports of Amnesty International, for example in Papua New Guinea, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Fiji.

³⁹The characterization of women as “other” was most notably made by Simone de Beauvoir ([1949] 1993) in her book, *The Second Sex*.

⁴⁰Struggles between human rights activists in and out of government and fundamentalist regimes have shifted upward and downward on such matters as raising the age of marriage of girls. For example, attempts by Afghanistan’s King Abanullah in the 1920s to raise the age of marriage and institute education for girls enraged the patriarchal tribes who thwarted his regime. Fifty years later a socialist government enacted legislation to change family law to encourage women’s employment, education, and choice of spouse. The regime failed in the early 1990s due to internal rivalries and a hostile international climate (Moghadam 2003:270) and the Taliban took power. In the early 1990s they exiled women to their homes, denied them access to education and opportunities to work for pay, and even denied them the right to look out of their windows.

other societies—Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Afghanistan, southeastern Turkey, parts of Iran, and southern Egypt. As Moghadam (2003) points out, the gender dimension of the Afghan conflict is prototypical of other conflicts today. During periods of strife, segregation and subordination of women becomes a sign of cultural identity. We see it clearly in the ideologies of Hamas and Hezbollah, Iran, Chechnya, and other Islamic groups and societies, and in the ideologies of fundamentalist Christian and Jewish groups. Representations of women are deployed during processes of revolution and state building to preserve group boundaries within larger societies with competing ideologies, and when power is being reconstituted, linking women either to modernization and progress or to cultural rejuvenation and religious orthodoxy.

Few social scientists have paid attention to the role of kin structures and their accompanying conceptual structures in the minds of players in national and international politics, but I believe this negligence persists at our peril as we experience conflicts between kin-based collectivities in the world.

Of course, human sexuality has much to do with the cultural sex divide. The fact that men desire women sexually, and that women also desire men, means that they are destined to live together no matter what the culture and family structures in which they live. And sexuality could, and can, create equality through bonds of connection and affection. As William Goode (1959) points out in an important but perhaps forgotten paper, “The Theoretical Importance of Love,” love is a universal emotion. As such it threatens social structures because the ties between men and women could be stronger than the bonds between men. Thus, everywhere the affiliations made possible by love are contained in various ways.

In societies in which marriage is embedded in a larger kin structure beyond the nuclear family, the practices and rules of domicile and the conventions around it have the potential to undermine the

possibility of a truly affective marital tie, one that could integrate women in the society. A couple may face a wall of separation—apartheid in the home in separate parts of the compound or house. Or, they may be community-bound or homebound in fundamentalist religious groups within larger secular societies such as the United States (e.g., the Jewish Satmar community in New York [where women are not permitted to drive] [Winston 2005] or some Christian fundamentalist communities where women are required to home-school their children).

I shall now focus on some other symbolic uses of sex distinctions that facilitate the subordination of women.

HONOR. Females are designated as carriers of honor in many societies. Their “virtue” is a symbolic marker of men’s group boundaries. As we know from Mary Douglas (1966) and others, we can think about any social practice in terms of purity and danger. In many societies, females are the designated carriers of boundary distinctions. Their conformity to norms is regarded as the representation of the dignity of the group, while males typically have much greater latitude to engage in deviant behavior. To achieve and maintain female purity, women’s behavior is closely monitored and restricted. As Friedland (2002) writes, religious nationalists direct “their attention to the bodies of women—covering, separating and regulating” (p. 396) them, in order “to masculinize the public sphere, to contain the erotic energies of heterosexuality within the family seeking to masculinize collective representations, to make the state male, a virile collective subject, the public status of women’s bodies is a critical site and source for religious nationalist political mobilization” (p. 401).

The idea that girls must remain virgins until they marry or their entire family will suffer dishonor is used as a mechanism for women’s segregation and subordination all over the world. It is also used as justification for the murder of many young women by male family members

claiming to cleanse the girls' supposed dishonor from the family.⁴¹ In particular, we see this at play in parts of the Middle East and among some Muslim communities in the diaspora.

When a woman strays from her prescribed roles, seeks autonomy, or is believed to have had sex with a man outside of marriage, killing her is regarded as a reasonable response by her very own relatives, often a father or brother. In Iraq, at last count, since the beginning of the present war, there have been 2,000 honor killings (Tarabay 2006), and United Nations officials estimate 5,000 worldwide (BBC 2003). In the summer of 2006, the *New York Times* reported that in Turkey, a society becoming more religiously conservative, girls regarded as errant because they moved out of the control of their parents or chose a boyfriend, thus casting dishonor on the family, are put in situations in which they are expected and pressured to commit suicide. Suicide spares a family the obligation to murder her and face prosecution (Bilefsky 2006). Elsewhere, such murders are barely noted by the police.

Female circumcision is also intended to preserve women's honor. In many areas of the African continent, girls are subjected to genital cutting as a prelude to marriage and as a technique to keep them from having pleasure during sex, which, it is reasoned, may lead them to an independent choice of mate.

Conferring on women the symbolism of sexual purity as a basis of honor contributes to their vulnerability. In today's genocidal warfare, the mass rape of women by marauding forces is

not just due to the sexual availability of conquered women. Rape is used as a mechanism of degradation. If the men involved in the Bosnian and Darfur massacres regarded rape as an atrocity and a *dishonor* to their cause, it could not have been used so successfully as a tool of war. Further, we know that the Bosnian and Sudanese rape victims, like women who have been raped in Pakistan, India, and other places, are regarded as defiled and are shunned, as are the babies born of such rapes.

CLOTHING AS A SYMBOLIC TOOL FOR DIFFERENTIATION. The chador and veil are tools men use to symbolize and maintain women's honor. Although men, with some exceptions,⁴² wear Western dress in much of the world, women's clothing is used to symbolize their cultures' confrontations with modernity, in addition to clothing's symbolic roles. Presumably worn to assure modesty and to protect women's honor, the clothing prescribed, even cultural relativists must admit, serves to restrict women's mobility. Hot and uncomfortable, women cannot perform tasks that require speed and mobility, and it prevents women from using motorbikes and bicycles, the basic means of transportation in poor societies. Distinctive clothing is not restricted to the Third World. Fundamentalist groups in Europe and the United States also mandate clothing restrictions for women.⁴³

Of course, clothing is used to differentiate women and men in all societies. In the past, Western women's clothing was also restrictive (e.g., long skirts and corsets) and today, as women

⁴¹A United Nations (2002) report found that there were legislative provisions "allowing for partial or complete defense" in the case of an honor killing in: Argentina, Bangladesh, Ecuador, Egypt, Guatemala, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Peru, Syria, Turkey, Venezuela, and the Palestinian National Authority (of course law does not equal practice). For example, in Pakistan and Jordan honor killings are outlawed but they occur nevertheless.

⁴²In demonstrations in societies led by religious leaders, men typically wear Western-style shirts and trousers although their leaders typically choose clerics' robes and turbans. Leaders of countries outside the "Western" orbit often choose distinctive dress—robes, beards, open neck shirts, and other costumes for ceremonial occasions or to make political statements.

⁴³Hella Winston (personal communication, September 30, 2006) told me that in the orthodox Jewish community of New Square in New York State, a recent edict by the rabbi reminded women they were to wear modest dress, specifying that "sleeves must be to the end of the bone, and [to] not wear narrow clothing or short clothing." They were not to ride bikes or speak loudly.

have moved toward greater equality, women and men are permitted to wear similar garb (such as jeans and T-shirts). Of course, fashion prescribes more sexually evocative (thus distinctive) clothing for women than it does for men.

TIME AND SPACE. How can we speak of the otherness and subordination of women without noting the power of the variables of time and space in the analysis? In every society the norms governing the use of time and space are gendered (Epstein and Kalleberg 2004). People internalize feelings about the proper use of time and space as a result of the normative structure. Worldwide, the boundaries of time and space are constructed to offer men freedom and to restrict women's choices. In most of the world, women rise earlier than do men and start food preparation; they eat at times men don't. Further, sex segregation of work in and outside the home means a couple's primary contact may be in the bedroom. If women intrude on men's space they may violate a taboo and be punished for it. Similarly, men who enter into women's spaces do so only at designated times and places. The taboo elements undermine the possibility of easy interaction, the opportunity to forge friendships, to connect, and to create similar competencies. In the Western world, working different shifts is common (Presser 2003), which also results in segregation of men and women.

There are rules in every society, some by law and others by custom, that specify when and where women may go, and whether they can make these journeys alone or must appear with a male relative. Some segregation is to protect men from women's temptations (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Iran, the Satmar sect in Monsey, NY) and some to protect women from men's sexual advances (e.g., Mexico, Tokyo, Mumbai). But the consequence is that men overwhelmingly are allotted more space and territorialize public space.

A common variable in the time prescription for women is surveillance; women are constrained to operate within what I am calling *role zones*. In

these, their time is accounted for and prescribed. They have less *free* time. In our own Western society, women note that the first thing to go when they attempt to work and have children is "free time." Free time is typically enjoyed by the powerful, and it gives them the opportunity to engage in the politics of social life. Most people who work at a subsistence level, refugees, and those who labor in jobs not protected by the authority of the dominant group, don't have free time either. Slave owners own the time of their slaves.

A THEORY OF FEMALE SUBORDINATION

All of this leads me to ask a basic sociological question. Why does the subordination of women and girls persist no matter how societies change in other ways? How does half the world's population manage to hold and retain power over the other half? And what are we to make of the women who comply?

The answers lie in many of the practices I have described and they remain persuasive with a global perspective. I propose an even more basic explanation for the persistence of inequality, and often a reversion to inequality, when equality seems to be possible or near attainment. In *Deceptive Distinctions* (1988) I proposed the theory that the division of labor in society assigns women the most important survival tasks—reproduction and gathering and preparation of food. All over the world, women do much of the reproductive work, ensuring the continuity of society. They do this both in physical terms and in symbolic terms. Physically, they do so through childbirth and child care. They do much of the daily work any social group needs for survival. For example, half of the world's food, and up to 80 percent in developing countries, is produced by women (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations n.d.; Women's World Summit Foundation 2006). They also prepare the food at home, work in the supermarkets, behind the counters, and on the conveyor belts that package

it. In their homes and in schools, they produce most preschool and primary school education. They take care of the elderly and infirm. They socialize their children in the social skills that make interpersonal communication possible. They are the support staffs for men. This is a good deal—no, a great deal—for the men.

Controlling women's labor and behavior is a mechanism for male governance and territoriality. Men's authority is held jealously. Men legitimate their behavior through ideological and theological constructs that justify their domination. Further, social institutions reinforce this.⁴⁴

I shall review the mechanisms:

We know about the use and threat of force (Goode 1972).⁴⁵ We know as well about the role of law and justice systems that do not accord women the same rights to protection, property, wealth, or even education enjoyed by men. We know that men control and own guns and the means of transport, and they often lock women out of membership and leadership of trade unions, political parties, religious institutions, and other powerful organizations. We know too that huge numbers of men feel justified in threatening and punishing females who deviate from male-mandated rules in public and private spaces. That's the strong-arm stuff.

But everywhere, in the West as well as in the rest of the world, women's segregation and subjugation is also done *culturally* and through *cognitive* mechanisms that reinforce existing divisions of rights and labor and award men authority over women. Internalized cultural

schemas reinforce men's views that their behavior is legitimate and persuade women that their lot is just. The media highlight the idea that women and men think differently and naturally gravitate to their social roles.⁴⁶ This is more than just "pluralistic ignorance" (Merton [1948] 1963). Bourdieu ([1979] 1984) reminds us that dominated groups often contribute to their own subordination because of perceptions shaped by the conditions of their existence—the dominant system made of binary oppositions. Using Eviatar Zerubavel's (1997) term, "mindscapes" set the stage for household authorities and heads of clans, tribes, and communities to separate and segregate women in the belief that the practice is inevitable and right. Such mindscapes also persuade the females in their midst to accept the legitimacy and inevitability of their subjection, and even to defend it, as we have seen lately in some academic discourses.

The mindscapes that legitimate women's segregation are the cognitive translations of ideologies that range the spectrum from radical fundamentalism to difference feminism; all are grounded in cultural-religious or pseudoscientific views that women have different emotions, brains, aptitudes, ways of thinking, conversing, and imagining. Such mind-sets are legitimated every day in conventional understandings expressed from the media, pulpits, boardrooms, and in departments of universities. Psychologists call them schemas (Brewer and Nakamura 1984)—culturally set definitions that people internalize. Gender operates as a cultural "superschema" (Roos and Gatta 2006)

⁴⁴Where religious laws govern such areas of civic life as family relations, inheritance, and punishment for crimes, for example, they invariably institutionalize women's subordinate status.

⁴⁵As one of many possible examples: When hundreds of women gathered in downtown Tehran on July 31, 2006 to protest institutionalized sex discrimination in Iran (in areas such as divorce, child custody, employment rights, age of adulthood, and court proceedings where a woman's testimony is viewed as half of a man's), 100 male and female police beat them. Reports also noted a tightening of the dress code and segregation on buses and in some public areas such as parks, sidewalks, and elevators. Another demonstration on March 8, 2006 was dispersed as police dumped garbage on the heads of participants (Stevens 2006).

⁴⁶The recent book by Louann Brizendine (2006), which asserts that the female and male brains are completely different, offering such breezy accounts as "woman is weather, constantly changing and hard to predict" and "man is mountain," has been on the top 10 on the Amazon.com book list and led to her prominent placement on ABC's 20/20 and morning talk shows. Thanks to Troy Duster for passing this on.

that shapes interaction and cues stereotypes (Ridgeway 1997). Schemas that define femaleness and maleness are basic to all societies. Schemas also define insiders and outsiders and provide definitions of justice and equality.

In popular speech, philosophical musings, cultural expressions, and the banter of everyday conversation, people tend to accept the notion of difference. They accept its inevitability and are persuaded of the legitimacy of segregation, actual or symbolic. Thus, acceptance of difference perspectives—the idea that women often have little to offer to the group, may result in rules that forbid women from speaking in the company of men (in a society governed by the Taliban) or may result in senior academics' selective deafness to the contributions of a female colleague in a university committee room.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I want to reiterate certain observations:

Intrinsic qualities are attributed to women that have little or nothing to do with their actual characteristics or behavior. Because those attributions are linked to assigned roles their legitimation is an ongoing project. Changing these ideas would create possibilities for changing the status quo and threaten the social institutions in which men have the greatest stake and in which some women believe they benefit.

Is women's situation different from that of men who, by fortune, color of skin, or accident of birth also suffer from exploitation by the powerful? I am claiming *yes*, because they carry not only the hardships—sometimes relative hardships—but the ideological and cognitive overlay that defines their

subordination as legitimate and normal. Sex and gender are the organizing markers in all societies. In no country, political group, or community are men defined as lesser human beings than their *female* counterparts. But almost everywhere women are so defined.

Why is this acceptable? And why does it persist?

So many resources are directed to legitimating females' lower place in society. So few men inside the power structure are interested in inviting them in. And so many women and girls accept the Orwellian notion that restriction is freedom, that suffering is pleasure, that silence is power.⁴⁷

Of course this is not a static condition, nor, I hope, an inevitable one. Women in the Western world, and in various sectors of the rest of the world, have certainly moved upward in the continuum toward equality. Thirty-five years ago I noted how women in the legal profession in the United States were excluded from the informal networks that made inclusion and mobility possible. Now, noticeable numbers have ventured over the barriers. Similarly, there has been a large increase in the numbers of women who have entered the sciences,⁴⁸ business, medicine, and veterinary medicine (Cox and Alm 2005). This has changed relatively swiftly. Women didn't develop larger brains—nor did their reasoning jump from left brain to right brain or the reverse. Nor did they leave Venus for Mars. Rather, they learned that they could not be barred from higher education and they could get appropriate jobs when they graduated. The problem is no longer one of qualifications or entry but of promotion and inclusion into the informal networks leading to the top. But the obstacles are great.

In his review of cognitive sociological dynamics, DiMaggio (1997) reminds us of Merton's notion of "pluralistic ignorance," which

⁴⁷For example, a recent poll cited in the *New York Times* (June 8, 2006) indicates that a majority of women in Muslim countries do not regard themselves as unequal (Andrews 2006). Of course, this attitude is widespread throughout the world, including Western societies.

⁴⁸Comparing percentages of women attaining doctorates in the sciences from 1970–71 to 2001–2002 the increases were: Engineering .2–17.3; Physics 2.9–15.5; Computer Science 2.3–22.8; Mathematics 7.6–29.

is at work when people act with reference to shared collective opinions that are empirically incorrect. There would not be a firm basis for the subordinate condition of females were there not a widespread belief, rooted in folk culture, in their essential difference from males in ability and emotion. This has been proven time and time again in research in the “real” world of work and family institutions (e.g., Epstein et al. 1995) and laboratory observations (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1966; Frodi et al. 1977; Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1999).

We know full well that there are stories and master social narratives accepted by untold millions of people that have no basis in what social scientists would regard as evidence. The best examples are the basic texts of the world’s great religions. But there are also societywide beliefs of other kinds. Belief systems are powerful. And beliefs that are unprovable or proven untrue often capture the greatest number of believers. Sometimes, they are simply the best stories.

We in the social sciences have opened the gates to a better understanding of the processes by which subordinated groups suffer because the use of *categories* such as race and ethnicity rank human beings so as to subordinate, exclude, and exploit them (Tilly 1998). However, relatively few extend this insight to the category of gender or sex. The sexual divide so defines social life, and so many people in the world have a stake in upholding it, that it is the most resistant of all categories to change. Today, Hall and Lamont (forthcoming; Lamont 2005) are proposing that the most productive societies are those with porous boundaries between categories of people. Perhaps there is an important incentive in a wider understanding of this idea. Small groups of men may prosper by stifling women’s potential, but prosperous nations benefit from women’s full participation and productivity in societies. Societies might achieve still more if the gates were truly open.

Sociologists historically have been committed to social change to achieve greater equality in the

world, in both public and private lives. But in this address I challenge our profession to take this responsibility in our scholarship and our professional lives; to observe, to reveal, and to strike down the conceptual and cultural walls that justify inequality on the basis of sex in all of society’s institutions—to transgress this ever-present boundary—for the sake of knowledge and justice.

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Reading

The Positive Functions of Poverty¹ (1975)

Herbert J. Gans

Over 20 years ago, Merton (1949, p. 71), analyzing the persistence of the urban political machine, wrote that because "we should ordinarily . . . expect persistent social patterns and social structures to perform positive functions which are at the time not adequately fulfilled by other existing patterns and structures . . . perhaps this publicly maligned organization is, under present conditions, satisfying basic latent functions." He pointed out how the machine provided central authority to get things done when a decentralized local government could not act, humanized the services of the impersonal bureaucracy for fearful citizens, offered concrete

help (rather than law or justice) to the poor, and otherwise performed services needed or demanded by many people but considered unconventional or even illegal by formal public agencies.

This paper is not concerned with the political machine, however, but with poverty, a social phenomenon which is as maligned as and far more persistent than the machine. Consequently, there may be some merit in applying functional analysis to poverty, to ask whether it too has positive functions that explain its persistence. Since functional analysis has itself taken on a maligned status among some American sociologists, a secondary purpose of this paper is to ask whether it is still a useful approach.²

SOURCE: From Gans, H. The positive functions of poverty. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 78(2), pp. 275–289. Copyright © 1972, The University of Chicago Press. Reprinted with permission.

¹Earlier versions of this paper were presented at a Vassar College conference on the war on poverty in 1964, at the 7th World Congress of Sociology in 1971, and in *Social Policy 2* (July–August 1971): 20–24. The present paper will appear in a forthcoming book on poverty and stratification, edited by S. M. Lipset and S. M. Miller, for the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. I am indebted to Peter Marris, Robert K. Merton, and S. M. Miller for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

²The paper also has the latent function, as S. M. Miller has suggested, of contributing to the long debate over the functional analysis of social stratification presented by Davis and Moore (1945).

 II

Merton (1949, p. 50) denned functions as “those observed consequences which make for the adaptation or adjustment of a given system; and dysfunctions, those observed consequences which lessen the adaptation or adjustment of the system.” This definition does not specify the nature or scope of the system, but elsewhere in his classic paper “Manifest and Latent Functions,” Merton indicated that social system was not a synonym for society, and that systems vary in size, requiring a functional analysis “to consider a *range* of units for which the item (or social phenomenon H.G.) has designated consequences: individuals in diverse statuses, subgroups, the larger social system and cultural systems” (1949, p. 51).

In discussing the functions of poverty, I shall identify functions for *groups* and *aggregates*; specifically, interest groups, socioeconomic classes, and other population aggregates, for example, those with shared values or similar statuses. This definitional approach is based on the assumption that almost every social system—and of course every society—is composed of groups or aggregates with different interests and values, so that, as Merton put it (1949, p. 51), “items may be

functional for some individuals and subgroups and dysfunctional for others.” Indeed, frequently one group’s functions are another group’s dysfunctions.³ For example, the political machine analyzed by Merton was functional for the working class and business interests of the city but dysfunctional for many middle class and reform interests. Consequently, functions are denned as those observed consequences which are positive *as judged by the values of the group under analysis*; dysfunctions, as those which are negative by these values.⁴ Because functions benefit the group in question and dysfunctions hurt it, I shall also describe functions and dysfunctions in the language of economic planning and systems analysis as benefits and costs.⁵

Identifying functions and dysfunctions for groups and aggregates rather than systems reduces the possibility that what is functional for one group in a multigroup system will be seen as being functional for the whole system, making it more difficult, for example, to suggest that a given phenomenon is functional for a corporation or political regime when it may in fact only be functional for their officers or leaders. Also, this approach precludes reaching a priori conclusions about two other important empirical questions raised by Merton (1949, pp. 32–36), whether any

³Probably one of the few instances in which a phenomenon has the same function for two groups with different interests is when the survival of the system in which both participate is at stake. Thus, a wage increase can be functional for labor and dysfunctional for management (and consumers), but if the wage increase endangers the firm’s survival, it is dysfunctional for labor as well. This assumes, however, that the firm’s survival is valued by the workers, which may not always be the case, for example, when jobs are available elsewhere.

⁴Merton (1949, p. 50) originally described functions and dysfunctions in terms of encouraging or hindering adaptation or adjustment to a system, although subsequently he has written that “dysfunction refers to the particular inadequacies of a particular part of the system for a designated requirement” (1961, p. 732). Since adaptation and adjustment to a system can have conservative ideological implications, Merton’s later formulation and my own definitional approach make it easier to use functional analysis as an ideologically neutral or at least ideologically variable method, insofar as the researcher can decide for himself whether he supports the values of the group under analysis.

⁵It should be noted, however, that there are no absolute benefits and costs just as there are no absolute functions and dysfunctions; not only are one group’s benefits often another group’s costs, but every group defines benefits by its own manifest and latent values, and a social scientist or planner who has determined that certain phenomena provide beneficial consequences for a group may find that the group thinks otherwise. For example, during the 1960s, advocates of racial integration discovered that a significant portion of the black community no longer considered it a benefit but saw it rather as a policy to assimilate blacks into white society and to decimate the political power of the black community.

phenomenon is ever functional or dysfunctional for an entire society, and, if functional, whether it is therefore indispensable to that society.

In a modern heterogeneous society, few phenomena are functional or dysfunctional for the society as a whole, and most result in benefits to some groups and costs to others. Given the level of differentiation in modern society, I am even skeptical whether one can empirically identify a social system called society. Society exists, of course, but it is closer to being a very large aggregate, and when sociologists talk about society as a system, they often really mean the nation, a system which, among other things, sets up boundaries and other distinguishing characteristics between societal aggregates.

I would also argue that no social phenomenon is indispensable; it may be too powerful or too highly valued to be eliminated, but in most instances, one can suggest what Merton calls “functional alternatives” or equivalents for a social phenomena, that is, other social patterns or policies which achieve the same functions but avoid the dysfunctions.

III

The conventional view of American poverty is so dedicated to identifying the dysfunctions of poverty, both for the poor and the nation, that at first glance it seems inconceivable to suggest that poverty could be functional for anyone. Of course, the slum lord and the loan shark are widely known to profit from the existence of poverty; but they are popularly viewed as evil men, and their activities are, at least in part, dysfunctional for the poor. However, what is less often recognized, at least in the conventional wisdom, is that poverty also makes possible the existence or expansion of “respectable” professions and occupations, for example, penology,

criminology, social work, and public health. More recently, the poor have provided jobs for professional and paraprofessional “poverty warriors,” as well as journalists and social scientists, this author included, who have supplied the information demanded when public curiosity about the poor developed in the 1960s.

Clearly, then, poverty and the poor may well serve a number of functions for many nonpoor groups in American society, and I shall describe 15 sets of such functions—economic, social, cultural, and political—that seem to me most significant.

First, the existence of poverty makes sure that “dirty work” is done. Every economy has such work: physically dirty or dangerous, temporary, dead-end and underpaid, undignified, and menial jobs. These jobs can be filled by paying higher wages than for “clean” work, or by requiring people who have no other choice to do the dirty work and at low wages. In America, poverty functions to provide a low-wage labor pool that is willing—or, rather, unable to be unwilling—to perform dirty work at low cost. Indeed, this function is so important that in some Southern states, welfare payments have been cut off during the summer months when the poor are needed to work in the fields. Moreover, the debate about welfare—and about proposed substitutes such as the negative income tax and the Family Assistance Plan—has emphasized the impact of income grants on work incentive, with opponents often arguing that such grants would reduce the incentive of—actually, the pressure on—the poor to carry out the needed dirty work if the wages therefore are no larger than the income grant. Furthermore, many economic activities which involve dirty work depend heavily on the poor; restaurants, hospitals, parts of the garment industry, and industrial agriculture, among others, could not persist in their present form without their dependence on the substandard wages which they pay to their employees.

⁶Of course, the poor do not actually subsidize the affluent. Rather, by being forced to work for low wages, they enable the affluent to use the money saved in this fashion for other purposes. The concept of subsidy used here thus assumes belief in a “just wage.”

Second, the poor subsidize, directly and indirectly, many activities that benefit the affluent.⁶ For one thing, they have long supported both the consumption and investment activities of the private economy by virtue of the low wages which they receive. This was openly recognized at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, when a French writer quoted by T. H. Marshall (forthcoming, p. 7) pointed out that “to assure and maintain the prosperities of our industries, it is necessary that the workers should never acquire wealth.” Examples of this kind of subsidization abound even today; for example, domestics subsidize the upper middle and upper classes, making life easier for their employers and freeing affluent women for a variety of professional, cultural, civic, or social activities. In addition, as Barry Schwartz pointed out (personal communication), the low income of the poor enables the rich to divert a higher proportion of their income to savings and investment, and thus to fuel economic growth. This, in turn, can produce higher incomes for everybody, including the poor, although it does not necessarily improve the position of the poor in the socioeconomic hierarchy, since the benefits of economic growth are also distributed unequally.

At the same time, the poor subsidize the governmental economy. Because local property and sales taxes and the ungraduated income taxes levied by many states are regressive, the poor pay a higher percentage of their income in taxes than the rest of the population, thus subsidizing the many state and local governmental programs that serve more affluent taxpayers.⁷ In addition, the poor support medical innovation as patients in teaching and research hospitals, and as guinea pigs in medical experiments, subsidizing the more affluent patients who alone can afford these innovations once they are incorporated into medical practice.

Third, poverty creates jobs for a number of occupations and professions which serve the poor, or shield the rest of the population from them. As already noted, penology would be miniscule without the poor, as would the police, since the poor provide the majority of their “clients.” Other activities which flourish because of the existence of poverty are the numbers game, the sale of heroin and cheap wines and liquors, pentecostal ministers, faith healers, prostitutes, pawn shops, and the peacetime army, which recruits its enlisted men mainly from among the poor.

Fourth, the poor buy goods which others do not want and thus prolong their economic usefulness, such as day-old bread, fruit and vegetables which would otherwise have to be thrown out, second-hand clothes, and deteriorating automobiles and buildings. They also provide incomes for doctors, lawyers, teachers, and others who are too old, poorly trained, or incompetent to attract more affluent clients.

In addition, the poor perform a number of social and cultural functions:

Fifth, the poor can be identified and punished as alleged or real deviants in order to uphold the legitimacy of dominant norms (Macarov 1970, pp. 31–33). The defenders of the desirability of hard work, thrift, honesty, and monogamy need people who can be accused of being lazy, spendthrift, dishonest, and promiscuous to justify these norms; and as Erikson (1964) and others following Durkheim have pointed out, the norms themselves are best legitimated by discovering violations.

Whether the poor actually violate these norms more than affluent people is still open to question. The working poor work harder and longer than high-status job holders, and poor housewives must do more housework to keep

⁷Pechman (1969) and Herriott and Miller (1971) found that the poor pay a higher proportion of their income in taxes than any other part of the population: 50% among people earning \$2,000 or less according to the latter study.

⁸Most official investigations of welfare cheating have concluded that less than 5% of recipients are on the rolls illegally, while it has been estimated that about a third of the population cheats in filing income tax returns.

their slum apartments clean than their middle-class peers in standard housing. The proportion of cheaters among welfare recipients is quite low and considerably lower than among income taxpayers.⁸ Violent crime is higher among the poor, but the affluent commit a variety of white-collar crimes, and several studies of self-reported delinquency have concluded that middle-class youngsters are sometimes as delinquent as the poor. However, the poor are more likely to be caught when participating in deviant acts and, once caught, to be punished more often than middle-class transgressors. Moreover, they lack the political and cultural power to correct the stereotypes that affluent people hold of them, and thus continue to be thought of as lazy, spendthrift, etc., whatever the empirical evidence, by those who need living proof that deviance does not pay.⁹ The actually or allegedly deviant poor have traditionally been described as undeserving and, in more recent terminology, culturally deprived or pathological.

Sixth, another group of poor, described as deserving because they are disabled or suffering from bad luck, provide the rest of the population with different emotional satisfactions; they evoke compassion, pity, and charity, thus allowing those who help them to feel that they are altruistic, moral, and practicing the Judeo-Christian ethic. The deserving poor also enable others to feel fortunate for being spared the deprivations that come with poverty.¹⁰

Seventh, as a converse of the fifth function described previously, the poor offer affluent people vicarious participation in the uninhibited sexual, alcoholic, and narcotic behavior in which many poor people are alleged to indulge, and which, being freed from the constraints of affluence and

respectability, they are often thought to enjoy more than the middle classes. One of the popular beliefs about welfare recipients is that many are on a permanent sex-filled vacation. Although it may be true that the poor are more given to uninhibited behavior, studies by Rainwater (1970) and other observers of the lower class indicate that such behavior is as often motivated by despair as by lack of inhibition, and that it results less in pleasure than in a compulsive escape from grim reality. However, whether the poor actually have more sex and enjoy it more than affluent people is irrelevant; as long as the latter believe it to be so, they can share it vicariously and perhaps enviously when instances are reported in fictional, journalistic, or sociological and anthropological formats.

Eighth, poverty helps to guarantee the status of those who are not poor. In a stratified society, where social mobility is an especially important goal and class boundaries are fuzzy, people need to know quite urgently where they stand. As a result, the poor function as a reliable and relatively permanent measuring rod for status comparison, particularly for the working class, which must find and maintain status distinctions between itself and the poor, much as the aristocracy must find ways of distinguishing itself from the *nouveau riche*.

Ninth, the poor also assist in the upward mobility of the nonpoor, for, as Goode has pointed out (1967, p. 5), "the privileged . . . try systematically to prevent the talent of the less privileged from being recognized or developed." By being denied educational opportunities or being stereotyped as stupid or unteachable, the poor thus enable others to obtain the better jobs. Also, an unknown number of people have moved themselves or their children up in the socioeconomic hierarchy through the incomes earned from the provision of

⁹Although this paper deals with the functions of poverty for other groups, poverty has often been described as a motivating or character-building device for the poor themselves; and economic conservatives have argued that by generating the incentive to work, poverty encourages the poor to escape poverty. For an argument that work incentive is more enhanced by income than lack of it, see Gans (1971, p. 96).

¹⁰One psychiatrist (Chernus 1967) has even proposed the fantastic hypothesis that the rich and the poor are engaged in a sado-masochistic relationship, the latter being supported financially by the former so that they can gratify their sadistic needs.

goods and services in the slums: by becoming policemen and teachers, owning “mom and pop” stores, or working in the various rackets that flourish in the slums.

In fact, members of almost every immigrant group have financed their upward mobility by providing retail goods and services, housing, entertainment, gambling, narcotics, etc., to later arrivals in America (or in the city), most recently to blacks, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans. Other Americans, of both European and native origin, have financed their entry into the upper middle and upper classes by owning or managing the illegal institutions that serve the poor, as well as the legal but not respectable ones, such as slum housing.

Tenth, just as the poor contribute to the economic viability of a number of businesses and professions (see function 3 above), they also add to the social viability of noneconomic groups. For one thing, they help to keep the aristocracy busy, thus justifying its continued existence. “Society” uses the poor as clients of settlement houses and charity benefits; indeed, it must have the poor to practice its public-mindedness so as to demonstrate its superiority over the *nouveaux riches* who devote themselves to conspicuous consumption. The poor play a similar function for philanthropic enterprises at other levels of the socioeconomic hierarchy, including the mass of middle-class civic organizations and women’s clubs engaged in volunteer work and fundraising in almost every American community. Doing good among the poor has traditionally helped the church to find a method of expressing religious sentiments in action; in recent years, militant church activity among and for the poor has enabled the church to hold on to its more liberal and radical members who might otherwise have dropped out of organized religion altogether.

Eleventh, the poor perform several cultural functions. They have played an unsung role in the

creation of “civilization,” having supplied the construction labor for many of the monuments which are often identified as the noblest expressions and examples of civilization, for example, the Egyptian pyramids, Greek temples, and medieval churches.¹¹ Moreover, they have helped to create a goodly share of the surplus capital that funds the artists and intellectuals who make culture, and particularly “high” culture, possible in the first place.

Twelfth, the “low” culture created for or by the poor is often adopted by the more affluent. The rich collect artifacts from extinct folk cultures (although not only from poor ones), and almost all Americans listen to the jazz, blues, spirituals, and country music which originated among the Southern poor—as well as rock, which was derived from similar sources. The protest of the poor sometimes becomes literature; in 1970, for example, poetry written by ghetto children became popular in sophisticated literary circles. The poor also serve as culture heroes and literary subjects, particularly, of course, for the Left, but the hobo, cowboy, hipster, and the mythical prostitute with a heart of gold have performed this function for a variety of groups.

Finally, the poor carry out a number of important political functions:

Thirteenth, the poor serve as symbolic constituencies and opponents for several political groups. For example, parts of the revolutionary Left could not exist without the poor, particularly now that the working class can no longer be perceived as the vanguard of the revolution. Conversely, political groups of conservative bent need the “welfare chiselers” and others who “live off the taxpayer’s hard-earned money” in order to justify their demands for reductions in welfare payments and tax relief. Moreover, the role of the poor in upholding dominant norms (see function 5 above) also has a significant political function. An economy based on the ideology of *laissez-faire*

¹¹Although this is not a contemporary function of poverty in America, it should be noted that today these monuments serve to attract and gratify American tourists.

requires a deprived population which is allegedly unwilling to work; not only does the alleged moral inferiority of the poor reduce the moral pressure on the present political economy to eliminate poverty, but redistributive alternatives can be made to look quite unattractive if those who will benefit from them most can be described as lazy, spendthrift, dishonest, and promiscuous. Thus, conservatives and classical liberals would find it difficult to justify many of their political beliefs without the poor; but then so would modern liberals and socialists who seek to eliminate poverty.

Fourteenth, the poor, being powerless, can be made to absorb the economic and political costs of change and growth in American society. During the 19th century, they did the backbreaking work that built the cities; today, they are pushed out of their neighborhoods to make room for “progress.” Urban renewal projects to hold middle-class taxpayers and stores in the city and expressways to enable suburbanites to commute downtown have typically been located in poor neighborhoods, since no other group will allow itself to be displaced. For much the same reason, urban universities, hospitals, and civic centers also expand into land occupied by the poor. The major costs of the industrialization of agriculture in America have been borne by the poor, who are pushed off the land without recompense, just as in earlier centuries in Europe, they bore the brunt of the transformation of agrarian societies into industrial ones. The poor have also paid a large share of the human cost of the growth of American power overseas, for they have provided many of the foot soldiers for Vietnam and other wars.

Fifteenth, the poor have played an important role in shaping the American political process; because they vote and participate less than other groups, the political system has often been free to ignore them. This has not only made American politics more centrist than would otherwise be the case, but it has also added to the stability of the political process. If the 15% of the population below the federal “poverty line” participated

fully in the political process, they would almost certainly demand better jobs and higher incomes, which would require income redistribution and would thus generate further political conflict between the haves and the have-nots. Moreover, when the poor do participate, they often provide the Democrats with a captive constituency, for they can rarely support Republicans, lack parties of their own, and thus have no other place to go politically. This, in turn, has enabled the Democrats to count on the votes of the poor, allowing the party to be more responsive to voters who might otherwise switch to the Republicans, in recent years, for example, the white working class.

IV

I have described fifteen of the more important functions which the poor carry out in American society, enough to support the functionalist thesis that poverty survives in part because it is useful to a number of groups in society. This analysis is not intended to suggest that because it is functional, poverty *should* persist, or that it *must* persist. Whether it should persist is a normative question; whether it must, an analytic and empirical one, but the answer to both depends in part on whether the dysfunctions of poverty outweigh the functions. Obviously, poverty has many dysfunctions, mainly for the poor themselves but also for the more affluent. For example, their social order is upset by the pathology, crime, political protest, and disruption emanating from the poor, and the income of the affluent is affected by the taxes that must be levied to protect their social order. Whether the dysfunctions outweigh the functions is a question that clearly deserves study.

It is, however, possible to suggest alternatives for many of the functions of the poor. Thus, society’s dirty work (function 1) could be done without poverty, some by automating it, the rest by paying the workers who do it decent wages, which would help considerably to cleanse that kind of

work. Nor is it necessary for the poor to subsidize the activities they support through their low-wage jobs (function 2), for, like dirty work, many of these activities are essential enough to persist even if wages were raised. In both instances, however, costs would be driven up, resulting in higher prices to the customers and clients of dirty work and subsidized activity, with obvious dysfunctional consequences for more affluent people.

Alternative roles for the professionals who flourish because of the poor (function 3) are easy to suggest. Social workers could counsel the affluent, as most prefer to do anyway, and the police could devote themselves to traffic and organized crime. Fewer penologists would be employable, however, and pentecostal religion would probably not survive without the poor. Nor would parts of the second- and thirdhand market (function 4), although even affluent people sometimes buy used goods. Other roles would have to be found for badly trained or incompetent professionals now relegated to serving the poor, and someone else would have to pay their salaries.

Alternatives for the deviance-connected social functions (functions 5–7) can be found more easily and cheaply than for the economic functions. Other groups are already available to serve as deviants to uphold traditional morality, for example, entertainers, hippies, and most recently, adolescents in general. These same groups are also available as alleged or real orgiasts to provide vicarious participation in sexual fantasies. The blind and disabled function as objects of pity and charity, and the poor may therefore not even be needed for functions 5–7.

The status and mobility functions of the poor (functions 8 and 9) are far more difficult to substitute, however. In a hierarchical society, some people must be defined as inferior to everyone else with respect to a variety of

attributes, and the poor perform this function more adequately than others. They could, however, perform it without being as poverty stricken as they are, and one can conceive of a stratification system in which the people below the federal “poverty line” would receive 75% of the median income rather than 40% or less, as is now the case—even though they would still be last in the pecking order.¹² Needless to say, such a reduction of economic inequality would also require income redistribution. Given the opposition to income redistribution among more affluent people, however, it seems unlikely that the status functions of poverty can be replaced, and they—together with the economic functions of the poor, which are equally expensive to replace—may turn out to be the major obstacles to the elimination of poverty.

The role of the poor in the upward mobility of other groups could be maintained without their being so low in income. However, if their incomes were raised above subsistence levels, they would begin to generate capital so that their own entrepreneurs could supply them with goods and services, thus competing with and perhaps rejecting “outside” suppliers. Indeed, this is already happening in a number of ghettos, where blacks are replacing white storeowners.

Similarly, if the poor were more affluent, they would make less willing clients for upper- and middle-class philanthropic and religious groups (function 10), although as long as they are economically and otherwise unequal, this function need not disappear altogether. Moreover, some would still use the settlement houses and other philanthropic institutions to pursue individual upward mobility, as they do now.

The cultural functions (11 and 12) may not need to be replaced. In America, the labor unions have rarely allowed the poor to help build cultural monuments anyway, and there is

¹²In 1971, the median family income in the United States was about \$10,000, and the federal poverty line for a family of four was set at just about \$4,000. Of course, most of the poor were earning less than 40% of the median, and about a third of them, less than 20% of the median.

sufficient surplus capital from other sources to subsidize the unprofitable components of high culture. Similarly, other deviant groups are available to innovate in popular culture and supply new culture heroes, for example, the hippies and members of other countercultures.

Some of the political functions of the poor would, however, be as difficult to replace as their economic and status functions. Although the poor could probably continue to serve as symbolic constituencies and opponents (function 13) if their incomes were raised while they remained unequal in other respects, increases in income are generally accompanied by increases in power as well. Consequently, once they were no longer so poor, people would be likely to resist paying the costs of growth and change (function 14); and it is difficult to find alternative groups who can be displaced for urban renewal and technological "progress." Of course, it is possible to design city-rebuilding and highway projects which properly reimburse the displaced people, but such projects would then become considerably more expensive, thus raising the price for those now benefiting from urban renewal and expressways. Alternatively, many might never be built, thus reducing the comfort and convenience of those beneficiaries. Similarly, if the poor were subjected to less economic pressure, they would probably be less willing to serve in the army, except at considerably higher pay, in which case war would become yet more costly and thus less popular politically. Alternatively, more servicemen would have to be recruited from the middle and upper classes, but in that case war would also become less popular.

The political stabilizing and "centering" role of the poor (function 15) probably cannot be substituted for at all, since no other group is willing to be disenfranchised or likely enough to remain apathetic so as to reduce the fragility of the political system. Moreover, if the poor were given

higher incomes, they would probably become more active politically, thus adding their demands for more to those of other groups already putting pressure on the political allocators of resources. The poor might continue to remain loyal to the Democratic party, but like other moderate-income voters, they could also be attracted to the Republicans or to third parties. While improving the economic status of the presently poor would not necessarily drive the political system far to the left, it would enlarge the constituencies now demanding higher wages and more public funds. It is of course possible to add new powerless groups who do not vote or otherwise participate to the political mix and can thus serve as "ballast" in the polity, for example, by encouraging the import of new poor immigrants from Europe and elsewhere, except that the labor unions are probably strong enough to veto such a policy.

In sum, then, several of the most important functions of the poor cannot be replaced with alternatives, while some could be replaced, but almost always only at higher costs to other people, particularly more affluent ones. Consequently, *a junctional analysis must conclude that poverty persists not only because it satisfies a number of functions but also because many of the functional alternatives to poverty would be quite dysfunctional for the more affluent members of society.*¹³

V

I noted earlier that functional analysis had itself become a maligned phenomenon and that a secondary purpose of this paper was to demonstrate its continued usefulness. One reason for its presently low status is political; insofar as an analysis of functions, particularly latent functions, seems to justify what ought to be condemned, it appears to lend itself to the support of conservative ideological positions, although it can also have radical implications when

¹³Or as Stein (1971, p. 171) puts it: "If the non-poor make the rules . . . antipoverty efforts will only be made up to the point where the needs of the non-poor are satisfied, rather than the needs of the poor."

it subverts the conventional wisdom. Still, as Merton has pointed out (1949, p. 43; 1961, pp. 736–37), functional analysis per se is ideologically neutral, and “like other forms of sociological analysis, it can be infused with any of a wide range of sociological values” (1949, p. 40). This infusion depends, of course, on the purposes—and even the functions—of the functional analysis, for as Wirth (1936, p. xvii) suggested long ago, “every assertion of a ‘fact’ about the social world touches the interests of some individual or group,” and even if functional analyses are conceived and conducted in a neutral manner, they are rarely interpreted in an ideological vacuum.

In one sense, my analysis is, however, neutral; if one makes no judgment as to whether poverty ought to be eliminated—and if one can subsequently avoid being accused of acquiescing in poverty—then the analysis suggests only that poverty exists because it is useful to many groups in society.¹⁴ If one favors the elimination of poverty, however, then the analysis can have a variety of political implications, *depending in part on how completely it is carried out.*

If functional analysis only identifies the functions of social phenomena without mentioning their dysfunctions, then it may, intentionally or otherwise, agree with or support holders of conservative values. Thus, to say that the poor perform many functions for the rich might be interpreted or used to justify poverty, just as

Davis and Moore’s argument (1945) that social stratification is functional because it provides society with highly trained professionals could be taken to justify inequality.

Actually, the Davis and Moore analysis was conservative because it was incomplete; it did not identify the dysfunctions of inequality and failed to suggest functional alternatives, as Tumin (1953) and Schwartz (1955) have pointed out.¹⁵ Once a functional analysis is made more complete by the addition of functional alternatives, however, it can take on a liberal and reform cast, because the alternatives often provide ameliorative policies that do not require any drastic change in the existing social order.

Even so, to make functional analysis complete requires yet another step, an examination of the functional alternatives themselves. My analysis suggests that the alternatives for poverty are themselves dysfunctional for the affluent population, and it ultimately comes to a conclusion which is not very different from that of radical sociologists. To wit: *that social phenomena which are functional for affluent groups and dysfunctional for poor ones persist; that when the elimination of such phenomena through functional alternatives generates dysfunctions for the affluent, they will continue to persist; and that phenomena like poverty can be eliminated only when they either become sufficiently dysfunctional for the affluent or when the poor can obtain enough power to change the system of social stratification.*¹⁶

¹⁴Of course, even in this case the analysis need not be purely neutral, but can be put to important policy uses, for example, by indicating more effectively than moral attacks on poverty the exact nature of the obstacles that must be overcome if poverty is to be eliminated. See also Merton (1961, pp. 709–12).

¹⁵Functional analysis can, of course, be conservative in value or have conservative implications for a number of other reasons, principally in its overt or covert comparison of the advantages of functions and disadvantages of dysfunctions, or in its attitudes toward the groups that are benefiting and paying the costs. Thus, a conservatively inclined policy researcher could conclude that the dysfunctions of poverty far outnumber the functions, but still decide that the needs of the poor are simply not as important or worthy as those of other groups, or of the country as a whole.

¹⁶On the possibility of radical functional analysis, see Merton (1949, pp. 40–43) and Gouldner (1970, p. 443). One difference between my analysis and the prevailing radical view is that most of the functions I have described are latent, whereas many radicals treat them, as manifest: recognized and intended by an unjust economic system to oppress the poor. Practically speaking, however, this difference may be unimportant, for if unintended and unrecognized functions were recognized, many affluent people might then decide that they ought to be intended as well, so as to forestall a more expensive antipoverty effort that might be dysfunctional for the affluent.

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Reading

Theodicy and Life Satisfaction Among Black and White Americans (2000)

Marc A. Musick

Social scientists have long been interested in the relationship between religion and individual well-being. Allport (1950) and others (e.g., Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi 1975) noted the importance of religion for adjustment and integration. More recently, Idler (1987) predicted that religion would have important consequences for well-being through four mechanisms: (1) religion provides a sense of comfort in times of trouble; (2) the integrative aspect of religion

gives access to a large network of potential support providers; (3) religious norms discourage behaviors that might lead to health problems; and (4) religious beliefs furnish a cognitive framework through which people can better understand the meaning of pain, suffering, and death.

The theory underlying religion and well-being has not advanced greatly over the past century. Some of the more innovative work being done today extends the theoretical concepts used by

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Durkheim ([1897] 1951) and Allport (1950). For instance, Ellison and George (1994) examined the impact of religion on social integration and support (see also Bradley 1995). Others examined the comfort dimension of religion showing how religion inhibits the translation of stressful conditions, such as ill health, into worse mental functioning (e.g., Idler 1995; Johnson and Spilka 1991; Koenig *et al.* 1993). A number of others investigated the impact of religious prohibitions of unhealthy or deviant behavior on physical health (Gardner and Lyon 1982; Phillips and Snowdon 1983; Payne *et al.* 1991). In sum, most of the extant research on religion and well-being can be traced to Durkheim's assertion of the importance of religion for well-being.

As the literature on religion and well-being grows, one facet seems to receive less attention than the others: studies that examine the impact of theodicy (i.e., religious beliefs related to the meaning of suffering) on well-being seem to be in short supply. Given the potential importance of such beliefs for well-being (Idler 1987), more evidence is needed to determine whether this is indeed a plausible line of inquiry. Several authors have purported to examine the effects of theodicy but fall short because they rely on a proxy measure—denominational affiliation (e.g., Ferraro and Albrecht-Jensen 1991; Musick 1996).

The purpose of this paper is to further the study of religion and well-being by focusing on the effects of specific theodicy beliefs in addition to the more traditional indicators of religious activity. Further, I will argue that the effects of these beliefs are not the same across all social contexts; rather, personal characteristics (i.e., race) and social factors moderate the relationship such that the effects of theodicy are stronger for some groups than for others.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

Sin and Evil in Christian Theodicy

Sociological writings on theodicy are certainly not new. Weber (1946) discussed at

length both the meaning of theodicy and its implications. He emphasized that one function of religion was not to do away with life's problems but to help explain them. Berger (1967) draws heavily upon Weber's work to develop his ideas about theodicy. In proposing a definition of theodicy, Berger explains:

The anomic phenomena must not only be lived through, they must also be explained—to wit, explained in terms of the *nomos* established in the society in question. An explanation of these phenomena in terms of religious legitimations, of whatever degree of theoretical sophistication, may be called a theodicy (p. 53).

Because individuals experience problems and traumas, they must have a system of belief that accounts for those experiences. As Berger goes on to argue, there can be any number of plausible theodicies. However, all of the possibilities share the single purpose of providing meaning. In this vein, Berger notes:

If theodicy answers, in whatever manner, this question of meaning, it serves a most important purpose for the suffering individual, even if it does not involve a promise that the eventual outcome of his suffering is happiness in this world or the next. It would, for this reason, be misleading to consider theodicies only in terms of their 'redemptive' potential. Indeed, some theodicies carry no promise of 'redemption' at all—except for the redeeming assurance of meaning itself (p. 58).

Although theodicies need not necessarily hold redemptive value, many nevertheless do. Given that a vast majority of Americans belong to the Christian faith (Roof and McKinney 1987), I focus here upon the implications of Christian theodicy. According to Stark (1972), the two core beliefs in Christian theology are mankind's fall from grace and the promise of redemption. More specifically, because of original sin and mankind's fall from grace due to sin, all of humanity is cut off from God and redemption. However, because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the possibility of redemption remains.

Taking these two core elements of Christian belief and setting them beside the definition of theodicy given by Berger, it appears that the *sin* aspect is that which is most appropriately termed Christian theodicy (see also Berger 1967). This aspect of the Christian belief system is its theodicy because it *explains* why bad things happen. That is, the presence of sin in the world and in mankind is the explanation for the problems that befall individuals and societies.

The redemptive portion of Christian beliefs does not explain why bad things happen, they merely suggest that for the true believer, eventual bliss will come. In the hypothesized relationship between religion and health, this redemptive aspect of the Christian core belief dyad may best be referred to as part of the comfort aspect of religion (Glock, Ringer, and Babbie 1967). If one thinks of religious beliefs in terms of their importance for coping, then it is important to keep the two elements separate. The theodicy, or explanatory, component provides individuals with a framework whereby they may understand and find meaning in a problematic life circumstance. Once the problem is understood, the religious adherent may then draw upon the comforting power of religious belief to provide hope (Koenig 1994). Indeed, it is religion's ability to provide meaning and hope for the future, even in the face of current life adversity, that may have such powerful effects for well-being.

It is the combination, meaning and comfort, which sets religion apart from other social institutions. To take the example of the social cohesiveness hypothesis (Idler 1987) one can imagine any number of groups other than religious bodies which could provide access to supportive others. However, these groups will lack the underlying foundation of belief that gives religion such power in people's lives.

Theodicy and Life Satisfaction

Although the Christian belief system places the concept of sin at the core of its explanation

for suffering, individual adherents can vary by the importance they place on sin as being responsible for the suffering of humanity. It stands to reason that people who voice a theodicy that emphasizes evil and sin will not be as satisfied as those who see the world in more benevolent terms. Why would this be true?

People who see the world in terms of evil and sin will tend to devalue the material world. Adherents to these sorts of religious beliefs tend to be members of religious groups that are best classified as what Weber (1946) terms, "otherworldly" religions. They are also those most likely to follow the Bible's assertion that Christians should resist the world: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15). For those who follow this belief system, only elements of the sacred and redemption will be valued.

It is possible that this devaluation of the material world leads one to be less satisfied with it. Several researchers (e.g., Campbell *et al.* 1976; George 1981) have noted that perceptions of satisfaction are based on cognitive assessments of life situations rather than affective ones. These cognitive assessments tend to be stable over time and are rooted in comparisons to external elements. In thinking about theodicies of evil and life satisfaction, we could regard the external referent as the world as it should be. In other words, compared to the ideal world where there is no evil and sin (e.g., heaven), the material world simply is not good enough in the eyes of these believers. For that reason, dissatisfaction is likely to result.

Some contemporary Christian literature takes this rejection of the world one step further. According to one author, the powers of Satan are at work in the world to destroy Christianity (Marrs 1988). The language used in these writings is akin to language that might be used to describe warfare. Consequently, from this perspective, Christians are, in the words of Ellison and Musick, "persecuted soldiers of the

Lord, valiantly struggling against ungodly forces in an unsympathetic, even hostile, world” (1993: 382). Living in a world characterized by this level of hostility and chaos is not conducive to feelings of satisfaction. Rather, satisfaction will come only with redemption in the afterlife.

Race and Sin Theodicies

Recent research has emphasized the importance of separating Whites from Blacks when examining the relationship between religious factors and well-being. Studies of religion and health that have done so have shown differential effects by racial group (e.g., Ellison 1995; Ferraro and Koch 1994; Musick *et al.* 1998). Consequently, it may be possible that the effects of theodicy on life satisfaction may differ between Blacks and Whites. There are several possible reasons for these potential differences. First, as Taylor *et al.* (1996) recently showed, Blacks report greater levels of religious activity and attachment than Whites (see also Levin, Taylor, and Chatters 1994). Moreover, there is some suggestion that the content and function of Black religious services tends to vary from those of Whites (Gilkes 1980; Griffith, English, and Mayfield 1980).

Second, the Black church has historically been one of the most influential institutions in the lives of African Americans (Chatters and Taylor 1994; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990); thus, their experience in the church and their relationship to it and other parishioners tends to be different than those relationships for Whites. Indeed, for Blacks living in certain areas of the country (e.g., rural South), the church is a “semi-involuntary” institution (Ellison and Sherkat 1995; Nelsen and Nelsen 1975). In other words, all or most Blacks living in these areas will be attached to the church and will see it as an essential part of their social and personal lives.

Third, given greater levels of deprivation in terms of health and other resources among African Americans (Mutran 1985; Manuel 1988), the Black church serves an important role

in providing an outlet for the attainment of personal and social resources among its members. For example, Blacks often use the church as a source of social support (Taylor and Chatters 1986, 1988), social status (Moore 1991), racial identity (Moore 1991), and self-esteem (Hughes and Demo 1989). In sum, for the reasons listed above, examining the individual consequences of religion without separating respondents by race may hide important distinctions between racial groups.

The reasons outlined above for dividing the analyses by race could plausibly be applied to any study of religion and well-being. However, in considering the relationship of sin theodicies to well-being, we must take special consideration of the important role of religious belief in the lives of African Americans. According to Cooper-Lewter and Mitchell (1986), it is impossible to understand the current experience of African-American religionists without understanding their belief in the world as being a fundamentally good place. These authors argue that without such a conception, African Americans could never have survived the bondage of slavery or the century and a half of travails that followed emancipation. As these authors note, “Even the worst inhumane treatment never convinced most slaves to accept Calvinist theories of total human depravity. They often sang of sinners, but they never expressed a loss of hope” (1986: 69). The key to our understanding the possible differential impact of a sin theodicy between the races lies in the latter statement made by Cooper-Lewter and Mitchell. On the one hand, African Americans can believe in the basic sinfulness of mankind and the world, but on the other, they never lose the hope that comes with believing in a fundamentally good God who can, and does, bestow blessings on his people. So, although a given African American may acknowledge a sin theodicy, the effects of holding that theodicy will not be as great as that for Whites due to the religious belief system in which that sin theodicy is set.

Moderating Factors of the Relationship Between Theodicy and Well-Being

As stated previously, we should not expect that the effects of a sin theodicy on life satisfaction will be the same across all individuals but rather should vary by other factors. The first such factor is the degree to which the believer is integrated into the church. As noted previously, uncertainty of belief is an ever-present menace in pluralistic society. One reliable way to maintain beliefs is to interact with others who share those beliefs. Not only does frequent interaction with fellow adherents shield believers from temptations or from ideas that challenge their own, but as Berger and Luckmann (1966) argued, interaction through verbal and non-verbal means reinforces those shared beliefs (see also White 1968). It follows that the situation of non-integrated believers is precarious: Not only are they embedded in a world which they are supposed to reject, but they must also face challenges to their beliefs without the support of others of a like faith. In short, I expect that the negative effects of a sin theodicy will be greater for believers who are less integrated into their religious community.

The second factor that should moderate the effect of sin theodicies on life satisfaction is the presence of other stressful circumstances. Simply stated, persons who face other stressors (e.g., financial problems, loss of a loved one) may be more vulnerable to the effects of the sin theodicy. This line of thinking is consonant with the vulnerability hypothesis in stress research: The effects of certain risk factors on psychiatric morbidity are heightened among persons who are experiencing some form of chronic stress (Kessler, Price, and Wortman 1985; George 1992). The primary explanation for this effect is that chronic stressors tend to drain psychological and social resources that might otherwise be used to cope with a specific risk factor. If holding a sin theodicy is a risk factor for dissatisfaction, then we would also expect that experiencing stressful situations makes one more

vulnerable to the effects of that theodicy. It might also be the case that stressful circumstances serve as a validation of one's negative view of the world. In sum, I expect that the effects of holding a sin theodicy will be strongest among those who experience other forms of stress.

Given the arguments presented above, I offer the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Theodicies that place more emphasis on sin and evil are associated with less life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: The negative effects of holding a sin theodicy on life satisfaction are stronger among Whites than Blacks.

Hypothesis 3: The effects of holding a sin theodicy vary by levels of interaction with fellow believers such that the negative effect is strongest among those who interact less frequently.

Hypothesis 4: The effects of holding a sin theodicy vary by levels of stress such that the negative effect is strongest among people experiencing stressful circumstances.

METHODS

Data for the study come from the General Social Survey (Davis and Smith 1991) distributed by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research. The survey, which has been collected on a yearly basis from 1972 to 1994 (with the exception of years 1979, 1981, and 1992), has been used in numerous previous studies and has been shown to be both reliable and representative of the adult population of the United States. The GSS is an independently drawn sample of persons eighteen years or older who are English speaking and live in the United States in non-institutionalized settings. I use data from 1987 (N = 1,819) because it contains all of the variables needed for my analyses as well as an oversample of Blacks. Missing cases for independent variables were imputed using the mean value for ordinal and continuous variables and the mode for dichotomous ones; however, no imputation was made for the dependent variable.¹ Due to these missing

cases, the sample size used in the final analyses is 537 for Blacks and 1,215 for Whites. All respondents who reported their race as other than White or Black were excluded from the analyses.

Measurement

The hypothesized relationships are tested using multivariate ordinary least squares regression. Life satisfaction is measured using an index composed of several items asking about satisfaction with different domains of life (e.g., family life, friendships). Theodicy is measured using a two-item index first created by Ellison and Musick (1995) termed “Ubiquity of Sin.” The two moderating factors—interaction with the religious group and stressful circumstances—are measured using frequency of church attendance and two stressors: financial problems and life events. Because there will be some overlap with theodicy and religious affiliation, I control for whether the respondent reports belonging to a conservative Christian denomination, which is most likely to advocate theodicies about sin and evil. It may also be the case that any relationship we observe between sin theodicies and life satisfaction is due to distrust of others. That is, persons who see the world in terms of evil fundamentally distrust others, and as such, have low levels of life satisfaction. To adjust for this possibility, I include a three-item measure of distrust in the multivariate models. Finally, the models are adjusted for several other sociodemographic factors that are commonly shown to affect individual well-being (e.g., gender, education).

Dependent Variable

Life Satisfaction. ($\alpha = .71$) Life satisfaction is measured using a five-item index that gauges satisfaction in different life domains. Respondents are asked how much satisfaction they receive

from their city, hobbies, family life, friendships, and health. Higher scores on the index indicate more satisfaction.

Independent Variables

Ubiquity of Sin. ($\alpha = .63$; $r = .46$) The measure of theodicy I use is the “Ubiquity of Sin” scale used previously by Ellison and Musick (1995). The scale indicates the degree to which respondents feel that the world and the people in it are evil or sinful. For each of the items in the measure, respondents were asked to place themselves on a seven point scale between two beliefs about the world. For the first question, the two beliefs presented are “the world is basically filled with evil and sin,” and “there is much goodness in the world that hints at God’s goodness.” The two statements that make up the second question are “human nature is basically good” and “human nature is fundamentally perverse and corrupt.” The overall index is coded such that higher values indicate a belief that the world is filled with sin and is basically corrupt.

Church Attendance. The measure of church attendance approximates the “associational” or formal type of religious participation (Lenski 1963). The eight response categories are: (0) never; (1) less than once per year; (2) about once or twice per year; (3) several times per year; (4) about once a month; (5) two or three times per month; (6) nearly every week; (7) every week; and (8) several times per week.

Conservative Protestant Denomination. I use the scheme of Roof and McKinney (1987) to classify denominations into conservative versus non-conservative groups. The denominations which fall into the conservative portion under this method include: Southern Baptist, Independent

¹Most of the variables with imputed values were missing 2% or less of their cases. However, approximately 8% of the cases were missing for income and traumatic episodes. I constructed dummy variables to indicate those people who were missing on each item and included them in the final analyses. However, because they had no significant impact on the model, I dropped them from the analyses.

Baptist, National Baptist Convention (Black respondents only), Evangelical Congregational, Assemblies of God, Brethren, Church of Christ (except United Church of Christ), Churches of God, Church of God in Christ, Evangelical, Evangelical Reformed, Full Gospel, Foursquare Gospel, Holiness, Nazarene, Missouri Synod Lutheran, Pentecostals, Sanctified, Sanctification, Seventh-Day Adventist, and other small evangelical and fundamentalist groups.

Stressors. The first stressor is a measure of the number of *life events* (e.g., death, divorce, disabilities) the respondent experienced during the previous year.² The original responses on this item ranged from one to four; however, because of skewness towards the lower end of the distribution, the variable was recoded to reflect one or more events versus none. The second stressor, *financial strain*, gauges whether respondents' financial situation had been getting better, worse, or stayed the same during the past few years. The item is coded such that respondents who report their finances as getting worse receive a score of one, and all others receive a zero.

Interpersonal Distrust ($\alpha = .64$). This three-item summated scale is coded such that higher scores indicate greater distrust (Demaris and Yang 1994). Data for the three items were gathered using the following questions: (1) "Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair?"; (2) "Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves?"; and (3) "Generally speaking, would you say that

most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?"

Sociodemographics. The four sociodemographic items included are gender (0) = male, (1) = female, age (in years), education (in years of schooling), and family income (20 categories ranging from under \$1,000 to \$60,000 and over).

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Associations

Table 1 reports mean levels of the variables used in the analyses, by race. According to this table, a majority of respondents in both races are female and the mean age is about forty-four years. White respondents tend to have both higher levels of education and family income than Blacks. In terms of the religion variables, Blacks report higher levels of ubiquity of sin, and church attendance, and are more likely to be affiliated with a conservative Protestant denomination. Blacks also report more life events and distrust than Whites.

Table 2 displays the unadjusted correlations between all of the variables in the analysis, by race. Correlations for Blacks are above the diagonal and those for Whites are below. Among Blacks there are several significant correlations. Life satisfaction is positively associated with education, family income, and church attendance but is negatively correlated with distrust and both stressors. Ubiquity of sin is negatively associated with education and family income but is positively associated with distrust.

²The point that is being made in the analyses with regard to the stressful situations is that respondents faced with such a situation, will fare worse than those who do not face such problems. Although the traumatic events measure may appear inadequate at tapping these ongoing problems, I do not believe this is the case. The measure itself does tap a specific event bounded in time (e.g. death of spouse or divorce), but it also serves as a proxy for ongoing difficulties. For example, one who has been divorced within the past year may still be going through readjustment problems in terms of relocating, claiming custody of children, or adjusting to new friendship dynamics among friends. Similarly, a job loss or spousal death, while both bounded in time, may have stressful repercussions that last for years.

Among White respondents, the pattern of association is similar to that for Blacks; however, due to the larger sample size, more of the correlations are significant for Whites. There are

a few notable exceptions. Among Whites, the association between ubiquity of sin and life satisfaction is negative and significant. Conservative Protestants tend to report higher levels

TABLE 1 Descriptive Statistics of Variables Used in the Analyses, by Race (Unadjusted Least Squares Means Estimates)

Variable	Range	Mean and Standard Deviation		Difference ^a
		Blacks	Whites	
Sociodemographics				
Female	0–1	.62	.56	*
		(—)	(—)	
Age	18–89	43.15	45.90	**
		(17.68)	(17.61)	
Education	0–20	11.65	12.68	***
		(3.46)	(3.10)	
Family Income	1–20	10.53	13.57	***
		(4.98)	(4.74)	
Religion Variables				
Ubiquity of Sin	1–7	3.67	3.06	***
		(1.61)	(.137)	
Church Attendance	0–8	4.59	3.93	***
		(2.31)	(2.60)	
Conservative Protestant	0–1	.60	.23	***
		(—)	(—)	
Other Variables				
Financial Strain	0–1	.19	.19	*
		(—)	(—)	
Life Events	0–1	.41	.34	**
		(—)	(—)	
Interpersonal Distrust	0–3	2.09	1.24	***
		(.99)	(1.10)	

NOTES: ^a Asterisks indicate a significant difference between means. **p*< .05; ** *p*< .01; ****p*<.001.

of ubiquity of sin and lower levels of life satisfaction. This finding supports the contention of others that a measure of denominational affiliation can serve as a proxy for some religious beliefs (e.g., Ferraro and Albrecht-Jensen 1991). However, given the low magnitude of the correlation among both Whites and Blacks, it is clear that denomination serves as a poor proxy for theodicy beliefs.

Regression Models for Black Respondents

Table 3 reports the multivariate regression models for life satisfaction and all of the independent covariates among Black respondents. The first model in this table reports the baseline model whereas the second includes three cross-product interaction terms. According to the coefficients in the first column, income and church attendance are positive predictors of life satisfaction. In contrast, Blacks reporting some financial strain or one or more stressful life events have lower levels of satisfaction. Most notable, however, is the fact that ubiquity of sin has no effect on life satisfaction among Blacks.

The second model in Table 3 includes all of the independent covariates in addition to three cross-product interaction terms. Recall that I expect that the effects of ubiquity of sin are strongest among those reporting low church attendance and more financial strain and stressful life events. Given that none of the interaction effects are significant, these hypotheses are not supported for Blacks.

Regression Models for White Respondents

Table 4 displays the results of the regression of life satisfaction on ubiquity of sin and the other covariates for White respondents. According to the

results in the first model, holding a sin theodicy is associated with lower levels of life satisfaction. Other significant predictors in this model include education, family income, financial strain, life events, and distrust. Among the other religion variables, only service attendance has an effect on life satisfaction. Consistent with earlier studies of religion and well-being, higher levels of attendance predict greater satisfaction.

The second model in Table 4 includes the hypothesized moderating effects between ubiquity of sin, church attendance, financial strain, and life events.³ First, the interaction effect between ubiquity of sin and church attendance is positive and significant. The positive sign indicates that the negative effect of ubiquity of sin is strongest among those who attend church least often. The anticipated effect for the next two interaction terms is that the negative effect of ubiquity of sin is strongest among those reporting more stressful circumstances. The significant negative coefficient for the life events measure supports this speculation. An F-test calculated to determine whether the addition of the cross-product terms significantly added to the explained variance in the model indicates that the change in explained variance is significant ($F = 5.23; p < .01$).

Because cross-product regression coefficients are often difficult to interpret, it is sometimes useful to specify the interaction effect in other ways. Table 5 reports the adjusted mean levels of satisfaction by levels of the interaction terms. In these models, ubiquity of sin and attendance are split at their means. Note also that the mean levels shown in Table 5 are adjusted for all of the other independent covariates included in the previous models. For the interaction between church attendance and ubiquity of sin, the results indicate that among low attendees, higher levels of ubiquity of sin beliefs are associated with significantly less life satisfaction; however, for high attendees (attend once a month or more),

³In analyses not shown here, I tested each of the interaction effects in a model that included only that term and the main effects. The results for the interaction effects in these models were very similar to those reported here in terms of both magnitude and significance level.

TABLE 2 Unadjusted Correlations Between Variables, by Race (Blacks Above Diagonal, Whites Below)^a

<i>Variables</i>	v1	v2	v3	v4	v5	v6	v7	v8	v9	v10	v11	v12	v13
v1: Life Satisfaction	—	.02	-.06	.16	.17	-.08	.13	.01	.06	.04	-.16	-.14	-.17
v2: Female	.04	—	.05	-.07	-.24	-.01	.20	-.05	.26	.01	.02	.01	.02
v3: Age	.05	.06	—	-.45	-.08	-.03	.17	.02	.30	.03	.02	.05	-.08
v4: Education	.08	-.05	-.33	—	.28	-.13	-.01	-.09	-.19	.02	-.01	-.10	-.12
v5: Family Income	.23	-.12	-.17	.40	—	-.11	-.10	-.08	-.13	-.04	-.07	-.18	-.10
v6: Ubiquity of Sin	-.19	-.05	-.06	-.16	-.12	—	.03	.07	.04	-.06	.01	.04	.24
v7: Church Attendance	.16	.11	.15	.04	.03	.03	—	.09	.46	.21	-.01	.00	.07
v8: Conservative Protestant	-.07	.01	.01	-.15	-.05	.11	.07	—	.06	.04	-.02	.02	.04
v9: Prayer	.07	.24	.23	-.11	-.14	.01	.49	.11	—	.23	-.07	.03	.00
v10: Belief in Afterlife	.08	.06	-.05	.03	.05	-.04	.26	.14	.28	—	-.02	-.04	-.07
v11: Financial Strain	-.13	.02	.03	-.05	-.16	.05	-.00	.01	.06	.00	—	.08	-.01
v12: Life Events	-.09	.03	.11	-.15	-.12	.02	.01	.03	.02	-.01	.10	—	.03
v13: Interpersonal Distrust	-.26	-.01	-.18	-.19	-.16	.26	-.14	.12	-.04	-.02	.10	.02	—

NOTES: ^aCoefficients in bold type are significant at $p < .05$.

TABLE 3 Estimated Net Effects of Ubiquity of Sin and Other Covariates on Life Satisfaction Among Black Respondents (OLS Regression Estimates; $n = 537$)

	<i>Model 1^a</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Sociodemographics		
Female	.081/.039	.083/.040
Age	-.002/-.042	-.002/-.042
Education	-.025/.085	.024/.085
Family Income	.025/.127**	.025/.124**
Religion Variables		
Ubiquity of Sin	-.019/-.030	-.037/-.059
Church Attendance	.058/.133**	.084/.194
Conservative Protestant	.047/.023	.047/.023
Other Variables		
Financial Strain	-.356/-.139***	-.692/-.270**
Life Events	-.189/-.093*	-.224/-.110
Interpersonal Distrust	-.130/-.129**	-.131/-.130**
Interaction Effects		
Ubiquity of Sin		
x Church Attendance	—	-.006/-.057
x Financial Strain	—	.089/.143
x Life Events	—	.011/.023
Intercept	4.923	4.890
Adjusted R ²	.099	.098

NOTES: ^aUnstandardized Coefficient/Standardized Coefficient. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 4 Estimated Net Effects of Ubiquity of Sin and Other Covariates on Life Satisfaction Among White Respondents (OLS Regression Estimates; $n = 1,215$)

	<i>Model 1^a</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Sociodemographics		
Female	.066/.036	.062/.034
Age	.001/.013	.001/.011
Education	-.020/-.068*	-.022/-.073*
Family Income	.037/.194***	.037/.194***
Religion Variables		
Ubiquity of Sin	-.086/-.129***	-.051/-.077*
Church Attendance	.049/.138***	-.005/-.015
Conservative Protestant	-.084/-.039	-.087/-.040
Other Variables		
Financial Strain	-.161/-.068*	-.067/-.029
Life Events	-.125/-.065*	.197/.102
Interpersonal Distrust	-.140/-.168***	-.140/-.169***
Interaction Effects		
Ubiquity of Sin		
x Church Attendance	—	.016/.162*
x Financial Strain	—	-.027/-.041
x Life Events	—	-.100/-.185**
Intercept	5.640	5.777
Adjusted R ²	.140	.149

NOTES: ^aUnstandardized Coefficient/Standardized Coefficient. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 5 Moderated Effects of Ubiquity of Sin on Life Satisfaction Among White Respondents (Adjusted Least Squares Means)

	<i>Low Ubiquity of Sin</i>	<i>High Ubiquity of Sin</i>	<i>Difference^a</i>
Church attendance			
< once a month	5.65	5.41	***
> once a month	5.76	5.69	
Financial strain			
Finances did not worsen	5.70	5.60	
Finances worsened	5.65	5.27	**
Stressful life events			
No events	5.69	5.65	
1+ events	5.71	5.31	***

NOTES: ^aAsterisks indicate a significant differences in mean level of life satisfaction between levels of ubiquity of sin. ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

ubiquity of sin has no effect, on life satisfaction. The hypothesized interaction between stress and ubiquity of sin also gained support from these analyses. That is, higher levels of ubiquity of sin result in lower life satisfaction only among respondents who reported either having financial problems or one or more stressful life events. Note, however, that although the pattern of effect of the ubiquity of sin/financial strain test follows the hypothesized direction, it does not provide support for the hypothesis because the cross-product term in the regression model is not significant,

Black-White Differences in the Effects of Ubiquity of Sin

The second hypothesis speculated that the effects of ubiquity of sin would be stronger for Whites than for Blacks. Recall from Tables 3 and 4 that the negative effect of ubiquity of sin is indeed

stronger for Whites ($b = -.086$; $p < .001$) than for Blacks ($b = -.019$; n.s.). In order to determine whether this difference is significant, I computed a two-tailed t-test based on the difference in coefficients for ubiquity of sin in the baseline model.⁴ This computation yielded a t -score of 2.00 indicating that the difference in coefficients is significant at $p < .05$. Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan (1990) proposed an alternative for testing differences in coefficients across models.⁵ Using the equation proposed by Jaccard and his colleagues yields a t -score of 5.51 ($p < .001$). In sum, the effects of holding a sin theodicy on life satisfaction are significantly greater for Whites than for Blacks.

DISCUSSION

The major hypothesis in this paper argues that respondents who emphasize a sin theodicy have

⁴The equation for testing differences in coefficients between models is:

$$\frac{b_{1b} - b_{1w}}{[(SE_{1b})^2 + (SE_{1w})^2]^{1/2}}$$

lower levels of life satisfaction compared to those who see humanity and the world in more positive terms. This expectation is supported in the White subsample: Respondents who tend to view the world more in terms of sin and evil report lower levels of life satisfaction. This effect remained net of a number of other variables, including church attendance, religious affiliation, and distrust of others.

The second hypothesis predicts that the effects of holding a sin theodicy on life satisfaction are stronger for Whites than for Blacks. The results provide support for this hypothesis. Indeed, not only is the effect of holding a sin theodicy stronger for Whites, but such an effect does not even appear for Blacks. This finding provides further support for the notion that when examining the linkages between religion and various measures of health and well-being, researchers should split the sample along racial lines before testing proposed effects.

The third and fourth hypotheses predict that the effects of holding a sin theodicy would vary by levels of church attendance and stressful circumstances. These hypotheses receive support in the White subsample. In the regression models and in the means models, the results indicate that those respondents who are less integrated into the church group (i.e., attend church less frequently) do indeed suffer more from higher levels of ubiquity of sin beliefs than those who are more integrated. This should be true if integration in the church group acts as a barrier against outside ideas and serves to reinforce beliefs held in common by the group.

The other hypothesized interaction effect is between stressful situations and ubiquity of sin beliefs. In this instance, I expected that because the additional stressors would make respondents more vulnerable to the effects of holding a theodicy emphasizing evil and sin, the effects of that measure would be strongest among those who report facing stressful circumstances. This

hypothesis receives support in the White subsample, but only for the life events measure.

Note that service attendance, net of the other religion variables, was a strong positive predictor of life satisfaction in both subsamples. This finding is meaningful because it highlights the dual nature of religion's effect on well-being. That is, on one hand, religion serves an integrative component which boosts levels of life satisfaction for congregants. On the other, certain religious beliefs are associated with lower life satisfaction. The lesson is that the relationship between religion and health is somewhat complex: individuals can attend church frequently, but the positive effects of such attendance can be offset by a conservative theodicy. Indeed, as shown in Table 5, the mean level of life satisfaction for those Whites reporting high levels of service attendance and ubiquity of sin beliefs are almost identical to the mean for Whites who attend services less often but also report low levels of ubiquity of sin beliefs.

Study Limitations

Due to the data used in this study, the analyses have certain limitations. One such limitation is the cross-sectional nature of the General Social Survey. Because the variables were measured contemporaneously, it is difficult to ascertain the causal ordering between the variables. However, as Bern (1970) noted in describing the hierarchy of belief structure, religious beliefs are usually of the first-order variety. That is, they occupy a place in our belief hierarchy that occurs just above our zero-order beliefs or those which "are the 'nonconscious' axioms upon which our other beliefs are built" (p. 6). Religious beliefs, being of the first order, will tend to precede all of our other higher order beliefs. It stands to reason, then, that outcomes such as life satisfaction, being somewhat

⁵The equation for testing differences in coefficients across models from Jaccard *et al.* (1990: 49) is:

$$\frac{b_{1b} - b_{1w}}{\left\{ (SSE_b + SSE_w) / [(n_b + n_w) - 4] (\sum X_{1b}^2 + \sigma X_{1w}^2) / (\sum X_{1b}^2 \sum X_{1w}^2) \right\}^{1/2}}$$

Where SSE_b is the sum of squares error for Blacks and SSE_w is the sum of squares error for Whites.

more transient in nature, will be a higher order of belief. Consequently, they will be affected by a lower order belief (e.g., a religious one) but not the opposite. So, although I cannot ascertain the causal ordering of these variables given the cross-sectional data, there is ample warrant to believe that theodicy will precede life satisfaction and not the converse. Nevertheless, the study would have profited from panel data which would allow testing the effects of the theodicy on changes in well-being over time. Future research should again test for these effects using such data.

Future Directions

Recently, the John Templeton Foundation in collaboration with the National Institute for Healthcare Research (Larson, Swyers, and McCullough 1997) issued a report on spirituality and health that arose out of a conference on the topic. Citing the growing amount of studies linking religion and spirituality to positive health outcomes, the authors of the report issued several mandates to researchers regarding future examination of the subject. One of these mandates is to “Elucidate not only the potential salutary [sic] clinical effects of religion and spirituality, but also the potential negative effects” (p. 8). The purpose of this study is not specifically to uncover “negative” effects of religion on well-being; however, in considering the effects of theodicy, such a perspective is necessary. Given the findings of this study and the theory on which it is based (see also Ellis 1962, 1980), researchers of religion and health should make efforts to uncover the possibility of negative effects.

There are a number of areas in which investigators might look for such relationships. For example, a number of authors have argued that the church often provides support for individual members. However, it might also be the case that certain church groups place excessive demands on members, either in terms of conforming to behavioral norms or to acting on behalf of the church. These demands may in turn have negative repercussions for health and well-being (Krause and Ellison 1999). Another possibility for

negative effects lies with certain types of religious coping (Pargament *et al.* 1999) or beliefs that might constrain religious individuals from acting in ways that are conducive to well-being. In terms of the latter, one could think of the authoritarian personality. Adorno and his colleagues (1950) argued that the ability to remain flexible and open to new experiences would foster successful adaptation and be conducive to better mental health. In contrast, as Batson and Vintis note:

The closed-minded individual blocks out new information, refusing to adjust his or her view of reality in its light. Over time, such closed-mindedness can leave the individual living in a reality of illusion that is quite divorced from his or her experience (1982: 220).

Batson and Vintis go on to cite a number of studies that have shown that individuals who hold more conservative or orthodox religious beliefs tend to have more rigid and authoritarian personalities (see also Lenski 1963). In sum, while the integrative and comfort aspects of religion can have benefits for the individual, other aspects of the religious experience may have very different effects. A recent working group on religion and spirituality assembled by the National Institute on Aging and the Fetzer Foundation have made efforts to elaborate some of these possible pathways (Idler *et al.* 1998). Yet, much work in this area remains. Without such efforts, researchers will never have a full understanding of the effects of religion for individual health and well-being.

These findings also point to other avenues along which future research should proceed. First, future studies should not rely on denomination as a proxy for theodicies and other beliefs. While I find that White conservative Protestants are more likely to hold theodicy beliefs emphasizing sin and evil, the correlation is modest ($r = .11$). Among Black respondents, the correlation is insignificant. As such, whenever possible, researchers should not rely on denomination as a proxy for complex belief structures.

Finally, these analyses provide further evidence for the importance of considering the possibility

that the effects of religion on well-being may vary by other factors. For instance, I find that stress moderates the relationship between religion and well-being. Others (e.g., Idler 1995) have argued that health problems might moderate this relationship in terms of the comfort hypothesis. In this line of inquiry, the researchers expected that the comfort religion provides would be most needed, and therefore most useful, for those experiencing some difficulty. One author (Musick 1996) found that the effects of religious activity were indeed stronger for those with physical limitations or health problems than for those without. In sum, researchers need to consider the possibility that other factors, such as stress, may moderate the effect of religion on well-being.

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