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On the Cover: Naturalization ceremony. Uncle Sam with a woman participant, Baltimore, July 1986. Source: United States Customs and Immigration Services History Office and Library.

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Meeting Children's Needs in an Era of Accountability

Katie Kerstetter

Evanston Elementary School

In a large suburban community in Maryland, about a half hour drive from the White House, students at Evanston Elementary are entering their classrooms on the first Monday after their winter holiday break. Ms. Brown, a first grade teacher, is reminding her students about their morning routine. "Let's go, Brenda, jacket away," Ms. Brown says. "I like how you are sitting with your book open. Do you need to blow your nose?" Ms. Brown asks a girl as she bends over to fold down the collar of another student's shirt.

"Diego, go ahead and sit and eat your breakfast because we only have a few minutes left and maybe we'll find your glove as you unpack," Ms. Brown advises a boy who is hovering around the cubby area near the entrance to the classroom. "Laurence, come over here so I can check your work. It's number seven on the chart."

Ms. Brown checks a few other students' homework papers and then calls Laurence over again. "I finished writing in my book," Laurence says after walking over to Ms. Brown's desk. "Your assignment book," Ms. Brown corrects him. "You are supposed to do that number nine. How many weeks have you been here?" Ms. Brown pages through his assignment book to find out. "Three weeks. So, you should have this routine down. If not, you can look up at the chart," she says, referring to the pocket chart with the morning schedule on the chalkboard at the front of the room.

Say it that way

At 7:50 AM, a bell rings over the Public Announcement System, indicating the start of the official school day. A boy stands up, puts his breakfast trash in the bag the food came in, and then throws it away. A girl eats what looks like a turnover as she walks to throw her breakfast trash away. All of this happens without prompting from Ms. Brown.

"Okay, boys and girls, let's get started," Ms. Brown says and begins to count down from ten to one. "Maryland is ready. I'm going to give them two points," Ms. Brown says, referring to a group of students who have cleared their desks in preparation for the first lesson and thus have earned two points in the classroom's table points competition.

"Laurence, let me see your eyes up here," Ms. Brown says to the student she earlier admonished for not knowing the morning routine. The boy looks up, rests his chin in his hand, and sighs.

Ms. Brown projects sentences on the screen that say, "Good morning, class. Happy Monday! We did not have school on Friday because of the snow. What did you do on your snow day?" Ms. Brown reads the sentences aloud and then calls on several students to respond. "I sled," a student says. "I went sledding," Ms. Brown corrects him. "Say it that way."

Ms. Brown circles the word so that it is highlighted on the projector. The learning day has begun.

Several other students share how they spent their snow day. "Find and frame the word 'snow,'" Ms. Brown says. She calls on a girl with a raised hand who comes up to the projector screen and puts her fingers on either side of the word "snow." Ms. Brown circles the word so that it is highlighted on the projector. The learning day has begun.

Achievement Charter School

About nine miles away from Evanston Elementary, students are coming from different quadrants of Washington, DC to start their school day at Achievement Charter School. In Ms. Kelly's first grade classroom, a girl enters the room with a man who is holding a tray of school breakfast in one hand. Ms. Kelly is on the carpet in the middle of the classroom, hugging another girl from behind. Five students — four girls and a boy — are sitting on a low cubby shelf at the front of the carpet. They have white boards and dry erase markers and they are watching the three girls dance. The students sitting on the cubby shelf hold up their white boards. One of the white boards has three columns of numbers written in dry erase marker, which looks like a series of scores for each dancer. The three girls start to dance again, this time singing a song aloud in unison. When they finish, the students on the cubbies hold up their small white boards again. One says "8" and another says "100%."

The beanbag chair

Laura, another student, comes into the room and stands just inside the classroom door for a few moments. She seems disturbed by something, possibly all the sound coming from the carpet.

"Laura, look at the habitat," Ms. Kelly encourages her, motioning toward the classroom's terrarium.

"Lori," she says. "Yay!" a girl says as she moves to the front of the carpet to lead the other students in correcting…a passage Ms. Kelly has written on the white board. "You are the teacher," Ms. Kelly says to her.

"Why?" Laura says in a slightly grumpy voice as she walks toward the mesh container on the other side of the room. "Oh gosh!" she says, her eyes close to the mesh, as she sees that a multitude of crickets has hatched overnight. "Bryan, if you're going to sleep, go ahead. If not, I'm going to take you downstairs soon," Ms. Kelly says to one of her students. Bryan walks to a desk at the front of the carpet and takes out red, noise-cancelling earphones from inside of the desk. He walks back to the classroom library and curls up on a beanbag chair.

Ms. Kelly picks a popsicle stick out of a black plastic cup. "Lori," she says. "Yay!" a girl says as she moves to the front of the carpet to lead the other students in correcting the spelling, punctuation, and capitalization of a passage Ms. Kelly has written on the white board. "You are the teacher," Ms. Kelly says to her.

Take a break

Lori is a commanding presence at the front of the carpet. She stands on the cubby shelf with her back to the white board and tells a fellow student to sit on her bottom.

Lori asks Ms. Kelly for the plastic cup of popsicle sticks. She picks out one of the sticks and calls on a boy. He pauses. "You can skip if you want to," Lori tells the boy, but he declines. "Do you want me to come back?" She asks him, and he indicates that he does. Lori picks another popsicle stick. "Tamara, take a break," Lori says to a girl who is talking, using the school's term for a "timeout." "Ooooh," several students say. Ms. Kelly looks like she is trying to suppress a smile. "She's the teacher now," Ms. Kelly tells the students.

In 2012 — just over a decade after the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) — I conducted interviews and participant observations at two public elementary schools in the Washington, DC region: Achievement Charter and Evanston Elementary. I was curious about how schools and their teachers respond to the social, emotional, and material needs of their students amidst the pressures of school reform policies that require schools to demonstrate high levels of academic achievement.

School Choice

The passage of NCLB made two significant changes to the Kindergarten to grade 12 (K-12) public education system in the U.S. First, it created a system of accountability for public schools based on high-stakes standardized testing and second, it facilitated the development of "school choice" models that sought to provide students with choices beyond their neighborhood school.

The standardized assessments that states were required to implement as a condition of receiving federal funding were often characterized as "high-stakes" because schools that consistently failed to meet targets could be required to undergo reconstitution — to close and reopen with a new staff and/or curricula — and their students had the option of attending an alternate school, including a public charter school.

With a learning first orientation, the school emphasized a clean division of labor between the preparatory work required for schooling and the *learning day*…

Through my research project, I sought to uncover, from the standpoint of children and their teachers, how schools are organized and equipped to meet the non-instructional needs of their students within the current school reform environment.

How do school reform policies constrain and enable schools in their attempts to meet students' social, emotional, and material needs?

As schools attempt to meet children's needs, what are the consequences for the types of noncognitive skills that are transmitted to students and the types of caring labor that are required of teachers?

Learning First

From my observations and interviews at Achievement Charter and Evanston Elementary, I discovered that while both schools serve a student population that is predominately low-income and both are subject to the requirements of standardized

testing and accountability policies, each school's approach is different in meeting students' social, emotional, and material needs and in the types of noncognitive skills that are transmitted to students through this work.

The experiences of teachers in Achievement Charter and Evanston Elementary point to some of the perils and possibilities that have emerged a decade after the passage of high-stakes school reform policies.

Source: pixabay.com

At Evanston Elementary, a traditional public school that has struggled to meet school reform mandates, the school day was often characterized by what I refer to a *learning first orientation*. As a school that had been labeled as "underperforming" according to reform policies, its teachers were under continuous pressure to demonstrate that they could improve the academic achievement of their students.

With a learning first orientation, the school emphasized a clean division of labor between the preparatory work required for schooling — eating breakfast, checking homework, gathering materials — and the *learning day*, which focused primarily on the transmission of a particular set of cognitive skills and the assessment of those skills.

Students at Evanston Elementary were frequently engaged in various forms of testing and assessment, and teachers were required to report, via an online system, a certain number of graded assignments for each student in each subject per week. The strong focus on achievement and assessment appeared to bleed into teachers' interactions with students, which tended to be more directive in nature and oriented toward following a set of directions and routines.

Integrative Approach

At Achievement Charter, a public charter school that has demonstrated the ability to successfully meet school reform mandates, the school and its teachers practiced what I refer to as an *integrative approach*.

Rather than separating the preparatory work for learning from the learning day, the school institutionalized a curriculum that integrated social and emotional learning into the academic curriculum and granted teachers ample resources and latitude with which to meet students' basic needs, such as sleep, within the boundaries of the school day.

…the transmission of a particular set of noncognitive skills has developed that may have promise for helping low-income students...

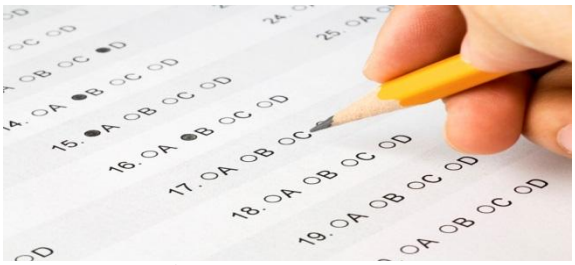
The focus on social and emotional learning at Achievement Charter appeared to influence the transmission of a set of noncognitive skills that sociologists have associated with an emerging sense of ease in interacting with middle-class institutions, including an ease in communicating with adults and peers (as Lori demonstrated in the vignette above). This focus also equipped facility with skills in conflict resolution and negotiation.

The transmission of these noncognitive skills also sets Achievement Charter apart from an academically successful subset of public charter schools, often referred to as "no-excuses schools," which scholars have recently begun to critique for their authoritarian approach to school discipline.

The experiences of teachers in Achievement Charter and Evanston Elementary point to some of the perils and possibilities that have emerged a decade after the passage of high-stakes school reform policies.

On one hand, high-stakes standardized testing policies appear to be influencing the social organization of public schools, particularly those that have been labeled as falling short of school reform goals, in ways that narrow the curriculum to a set of cognitive skills and habits that promote students' performance on standardized tests. Previous research

has examined how NCLB has narrowed schools' curricula to focus instructional time primarily on tested topics, and how schools labeled as "failing" have allocated more time to test preparation instruction.



Source: Alberto G, flickr.com.

In the case of Evanston Elementary, a focus on meeting the substantial requirements of school reform policies has led the school to emphasize skills in following directions and deference to authority, skills that contribute to successful test-taking behaviors but may not equip students to interact as easily with adults and peers and particularly in ways that are valued by middle-class institutions and institutional actors.

Accountable Schools

On the other hand, school reform policies that encourage the authorization of public charter schools such as Achievement Charter have created the opportunity for new forms of schooling to emerge. (Although, it should be noted that not all charter schools adopt a similarly integrative approach to learning.) In the case of Achievement Charter, instruction focused on the transmission of a particular set of noncognitive skills has developed that may have promise for helping low-income students interact with middle-class institutions with more ease, including providing students with a toolkit of habits and dispositions they can draw on to help them successfully navigate secondary and post-secondary schooling.

The substantial financial resources that Achievement Charter was able to mobilize to pursue its integrative approach and the autonomy it was granted as a public charter school to extend its school day and year to accommodate additional types of learning, raises important questions about prospects for expanding these benefits to a broader population of students.

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The Ten Frugalities of Affluent Climate Activists

Jean Léon Boucher

I was born into a large Roman Catholic family and had a homemaker mom and working-class dad who were raised during the Depression. It was here that I learned the habits of frugality and never imagined that affluent people could be frugal too. But, that's what I found during my research on climate change activism in Washington, DC. Climate change activists are those folks trying to persuade corporate and governmental bodies to step-up the policy response to global climate change.

Last fall (2015), with a team of graduate students, I surveyed 153 climate change activists in order to learn what motivated them. Some were present when Pope Francis spoke at the US Capitol and others attended different protest actions at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Freedom Plaza, and the American Petroleum Institute. Though I had a lot of activists respond to my questionnaire, I was interested in the most affluent. After sorting my data I interviewed 28 individuals in greater depth — these were people with household incomes over $100,000.

Taste of Necessity

I have interests in social class and social reproduction (*social reproduction* is the way social status and culture is passed down through family generations), so I asked people questions about their family origins and the education, occupation, and wealth of their parents and their grandparents. Besides finding that nearly all climate activists came from left-of-center families, I also found that about half of my interviewees identified with some form of frugality retained from their childhood. Not everyone practiced the same type of frugality nor did they have the same motivations, but I encountered a set of stories in which I identified about ten different frugalities among affluent activists.

Moreover, I also found that these activists were reproducing what Pierre Bourdieu ([1979]1984:178) called a "taste of necessity," defined as the preference (due to economic conditions) that the poor and working classes have for certain goods and practices, even after the necessity had dissipated. I list these frugalities below.

The Ten Habits

(1) As expected, some activists spoke of a frugality due to economic constraint (e.g., being born into poverty), like Bourdieu's *taste of necessity*, people had no choice but to be frugal, but even as the necessity was now gone, like a type of momentum, some now affluent activists still maintained their frugal habits.

The results of the interviews show that frugality is far from simple. It can vary in its causes and motivations…

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(2) Somewhat connected to necessity but with less economic constraint, there was a frugality that tended toward thrift and cost savings in order to have resources for other purposes. Some activists spoke of conserving money in one area of their lives for the sake of another.

Demonstration at the American Petroleum Institute, Washington, DC. Source: Jean Léon Boucher.

(3) There was a "waste not" frugality; which is a responsibility to conserve for its own sake — a mindfulness/conscientiousness — as if resources were sacrosanct and had their own worth. This was a type of morality, and resources were seen as a common store of goods that other entities (people, animals, or plants) shared. Some interviewees spoke of an obligation to use items to the full extent of their useful life; (they only consume precisely what was needed; or why buy something new when the old one still worked?)

(4) There was a related "waste not" frugality that was repackaged as environmental stewardship; this was a type of moral obligation to walk gently on the earth.

(5) Some respondents said they were cheap — like miserly — and another added a caveat that they just didn't want to buy what they termed

"*stupid shit*." Being cheap or miserly is another type of frugality in its own right; however, it was sometimes associated with one of the other frugal motivations like thrift, mindfulness, or environmental stewardship.

…frugality—like a dying cultural phenomenon—appears to decline as people become wealthier.

(6) There seemed to be two types of *oppositional frugality*: (a) one that avoided giving money to utilities or corporations who "do just fine." This type is seemingly motivated by protecting one's belongings from the manipulative grasp of institutional others; and also (b) a more intense and related rebellious/spiteful frugality: this type is resistant and almost combative at the hint of manipulation or injustice—against consumer culture, corporations, or the human causes of climate change.

(7) One interviewee spoke of a frugality related to some economic downshift movements called *degrowth* and *buen vivir* — Spanish for *living well*. (Demaria et al. 2013; Illich 1973; Latouche 2009, 2014). These movements promote frugality for purposes of environmental preservation and conviviality. The intent is to simplify one's life — with its multiple benefits — in a tradeoff for time with family and friends. Interestingly, Bourdieu ([1979]1984:179) also theorized a "convivial indulgence" which he attributed to the lower classes and their *taste for necessity*. Put simply, those of modest means have more social fun.

(8) I also encountered a *nostalgic frugality*, like the hanging of one's laundry or wearing tattered clothes reminiscent of childhood. This frugality was deeply meaningful and seemed like something of an animist devotion: an "offering to the gods" of one's memory. For instance, one respondent expressed what a wonderful experience it was for her to hang her laundry and remember her grandmother while also reducing her carbon footprint.

(9) Similarly, there was frugality *for its own sake*; a learned frugality that departed from necessity and motives and simply became habit. As one interviewee who still cut her own hair quipped, "It's an ideology!" She felt locked into certain behaviors and though she had "reasons" for her frugality, her frugality was somehow outside the realm of reason.

…anything that helps activate people to promote awareness of climate change has got to be a good thing.

(10) Finally, there was a type of playful or competitive frugality; practiced for fun or sport. For instance: who can buy the nicest cheap dress or get the best deal on a shopping item.

Passing It On

The results of the interviews show that frugality is far from simple. It can vary in its causes and motivations — from constraint to habit to nostalgia — and even people of affluence can preserve behaviors that seem to contradict their economic status. Moreover, similar to the way second-generation immigrant children lose their parents' foreign language skills, frugality — like a dying cultural phenomenon — appears to decline as people become wealthier.

I must reiterate though that only a minority of activists were highly committed to frugality; some even tried to pass it on to their children, who were not always receptive. There were other activists who made fun of frugality; looked down on it, thinking it was silly. This dynamic reveals an interesting tension among affluent climate activists.

They are not a monolithic group, neither in personal habits nor motivations, though they can unite for a common cause. Although I don't think frugality will necessarily "save the planet," I don't see how it can hurt: anything that helps activate people to promote awareness of climate change has got to be a good thing.

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Sociology in the District – Interpreting the Name *Redskins*

J.L. Johnson

The 2016 season of the National Football League begins with seemingly less talk about the controversy of the name *Washington Redskins*. In seasons past, whether or not Washington should change its name has been a wedge issue. Opponents of the name have said the label 'Redskins' disrespects Native Americans and symbolizes America's racist history. According to opponents of the name, the name needed to go. Those who preferred keeping the nickname said the label 'Redskins' honors Native Americans. The label isn't racist, and to say otherwise is race-baiting. To proponents, the name needed to stay. And anyway, proponents of the name would tell you, Native Americans themselves do not find the name offensive. The debate raged on cable sports TV. Arguments in sports bars were less politically correct. The team's owner Dan Snyder famously or infamously, depending on your opinion, refused to ever change it.

In 2004, social scientists at the University of Pennsylvania published results of a survey of Native-Americans that supported claims made by the proponents of the name. A high percentage of surveyed Native-Americans were not offended that Washington's football team was called the Redskins. That seemed to settle it, until opponents of the name rightly pointed out flaws in the study.

The sample was inaccurate. Americans with tenuous claims to Native Americanness participated. More damaging was that the survey excluded many Native Americans living on reservations. Noting that the matter was not sociologically settled, many sports writers and their editors rebuked Snyder and ceased using 'Redskins' in print, unless they were specifically covering the name controversy. Some TV sports commentators followed suit. The debate continued unabated.

Sampling Errors

Quietly, the *Washington Post* corrected some of University of Pennsylvania's sampling errors and redid the survey. Researchers took more care to contact Native Americans on reservations, and in May 2016, John Woodrow Cox, Scott Clement, and Theresa Vargas published the findings. The second survey confirmed the results of the first. A very high percentage of Native Americans (90%) were not offended that Washington's football team is called the Redskins. The findings were a major blow to opponents of the name, as even journalists who refused to use the name in print were forced to admit their concern might be misplaced.

So the *Washington Post*'s survey results seemed to settle the issue before the 2016 season, quieting the debate, providing ample evidence for the name to stay. What can be said?

How does a name that is offensive to some White Americans, Black Americans and some Native Americans hold a different meaning for 90% of Native Americans?

Here, sociologists urge caution, both against despair that the name won't be changed and against conviction that the name will remain. Sociologists themselves have debates, and one of their more passionate debates is over the pros and cons of the differences between quantitative and qualitative research. Though the arguments grow complex, basically, quantitative survey work is contrasted to the more qualitative approach of spending extended time on reservations, exploring the meaning of race as it emerges in the everyday lives of Native Americans.

Disputes about the *Washington Post*'s survey tend to be "quant-centric," meaning fights within the boundaries of doing survey research, like arguing that the *Washington Post* survey may still include many Americans with tenuous claims to Native Americanness in the same way the University of Pennsylvania survey did. But there is a way to apply the sociological debate about quantitative and qualitative research to the *Washington Post*'s results.

Source: pixabay.com

Everyday Contexts

My home in sociology is the field of symbolic interaction, which focuses our attention on everyday context. We form questions around the problem of interpretation. This doesn't mean we are uninterested in surveys. We certainly do not reject that 90% of surveyed Native Americans don't care about the name. Instead, the survey's findings raise difficult questions about interpretation. How does a name that is offensive to some White Americans, Black Americans and some Native Americans hold a different meaning for 90% of Native Americans? On the very survey questions themselves, many competing levels of interpretation might be in operation. Here's Herbert Blumer in 1969, on the different meanings that are hidden in quantitative work; (keep in mind that "variable analysis," means quantitative research):

> In my judgement, the crucial limit to the successful application of variable analysis to human group life is set by the process of interpretation or definition that goes on in human groups. This process, which I believe to be the core of human action, gives a character to human group life that seems to be at variance with the logical premises of variable analysis.

We need to include these accounts of personal experience as dynamic elements of public opinion to tell the fuller story of the Washington Redskins and what the name means to Native Americans…

One takeaway from this point-of-view is that Native Americans, when hearing a question about the offensiveness of the name 'Washington Redskins,' may rank it low on the list of community issues that concern them. This list isn't necessarily unaffected by the race relations between White Americans and Native Americans at the heart of the name controversy, though it would take different kinds of concerns and questions to find out if they are.

Relevance of Race

If you are a STEM person, someone who prefers the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, you may be critical of this approach as "soft" science. But it is impossible to deny that the relevance of race varies from person to person. The question of how Native Americans qualitatively experience the nickname 'Redskins' can explain how those different meanings form in everyday life. A fuller account of such contexts of meaning must consider whether or not Native Americans have contact with White Americans at football games, obtaining a motif for the nickname. Consider the Native American couple who attended a Redskins game in 1974 and left the game as ardent change-the-name activists. As the wife recalls in Hunter Walker's 2014 article in *Business Insider*:

> We're football fans and we can separate the team name from the game, so we went to a game. And we didn't stay for the game at all, because people started—someone said something, 'Are you this or that?' So, we started to answer, then people started like pulling our hair. And they would call us that name and it was very weird for us. So, we just left and never went to another game. That just solidified it for me because it wasn't just name-calling, it was what the name had promoted. That's the example of what objectification is. You strip the person of humanity and they're just an object and you can do anything [to them].

Different Meanings

Of course, people inclined to side with survey findings have a point when they say that the wife's account magnifies just one personal experience. The story is anecdotal, based on a sample of one, to prove that the name is offensive and therefore should be changed. Again, caution could be exercised. We need to include these accounts of personal experience as dynamic elements of public opinion to tell the fuller story of the Washington Redskins and what the name means to Native Americans, especially because these different experiences cause different meanings.

An either/or approach to the Washington Redskins' name controversy should be avoided. Forming your opinion by privileging just one approach over the other, survey findings over the valid process of meaning-making or one person's account over aggregate opinion, is unsatisfactory to both camps in the debate.

Source: pixabay.com

Walls and *Emails* and a Whole Lot of Outrage

Maria Valdovinos

Among the many social issues that could have taken front and center stage in this incredibly perplexing election year, these are the first two thoughts that pop into my head: Walls and Emails. Granted, 2016 is not over, and this is not to say that social issues of critical importance have not been addressed on the political stage. They most certainly have.

How far these issues have penetrated into society's consciousness, however, of this, I am less certain. (I thought to myself; if only societal issues such as *eviction* were peppered with the same type of conviction that *walls* and *emails* have been addressed in this election year's rhetoric.)

Summer Reading

One of my summer activities was to read Matthew Desmond's work *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in The American City*. I set out to read his book not because of any particular interest in the topic of eviction, but rather because I read a number of reviews praising his writing style. When journalists praise the writing style of a sociologist, it must be something to check out!

At around the same time, I came across a *Washington Post* story by Terrence McCoy titled "As the nation's capital booms, poor tenants face eviction over as little as $25." This is a compelling title that stopped me in my tracks. In McCoy's story we are introduced to Brittany Gray, a resident of Brookland Manor in the District, who was facing eviction for the fifth time since 2014. Each time, the eviction notice was the result of owing less than $50 on her rent.

The Facts

For a lot of us, $50 dollars is the expense of a cheap night out on the town. But for the folks in McCoy's Washington, DC and Desmond's Milwaukee, being short on rent is inevitable and often a calculated decision between shelter and food in any particular month. Among the facts and figures reported by Desmond and McCoy are: (1) Rent comprises upwards of 70% of the monthly income of Milwaukee's poor, making it almost impossible for them to fully pay rent and still have money left over for food and other basic necessities (Desmond 2016). (2) Each eviction leaves a record; much like a criminal record that makes it difficult to secure a job, an eviction record makes it increasingly harder for an individual to secure future housing (Desmond 2016). (3) Washington, DC's annual census for the homeless in 2016 found that there were more than 4,600 children and parents and approximately 1,000 homeless single adults in the District (Dvorak 2016). (4) There is an exploitative market in private housing for the urban poor (Desmond 2016).

"…generalizability in this case potentially means that evictions related to poverty are happening everywhere and that we should probably pay attention to it."

These facts are surprising because eviction and the mechanisms of the private housing market for America's poor have been largely overlooked in the poverty literature. So has the link between eviction and homelessness, according to Desmond.

Generalizability

In one of his poignant discussions, Desmond ponders the question of generalizability. Researchers put a premium on studies that are generalizable, but in practice what does generalizability really signify? As Desmond notes, generalizability in this case potentially means that evictions related to poverty are happening everywhere and that we should probably pay attention to it.

Perhaps it was Desmond's intimate way of delving into this problem, depicted in the relationships he describes in his book that drove the point home and was reinforced by Terrence McCoy's report. I began to wonder, *"Where is the societal outrage here?"* And whatever happened to the "*rent is too damn high*" guy. Yes, that guy, Jimmy McMillan of the Rent is Too Damn High Party who ran for governor of New York in 2010. It turns out he retired from politics at the end of last year because he found voters to be 'brainwashed' (Howard 2015).

…how do we transform that societal outrage into practical solutions…?

Transforming the Outrage

I find the political stage and media to be remiss in giving so much attention to *walls* and *emails.* Then there's the question of whose responsibility it is to plug the loopholes that allow such types of structural violence against the poorest and most vulnerable members of our society to continue.

While Desmond wonders whether we must all pay attention to it, in his concluding remarks he does seem to make an appeal to future researchers and sociologists to develop *"a robust sociology of housing that reaches beyond a narrow focus on policy and public housing. A new sociology of displacement that documents the prevalence, causes and consequences of eviction. And perhaps most important, a committed sociology of inequality that includes a serious study of exploitation and extractive markets"* (p.333).

Robust. New. Committed. These are the words that stand out in our quest to make unique contributions to effect societal change against the many forms of structural violence affecting the most vulnerable among us. Perhaps, we should look critically inward as much as we tend to look critically outward. How do we transform that societal outrage into practical solutions that are robust, new and committed?

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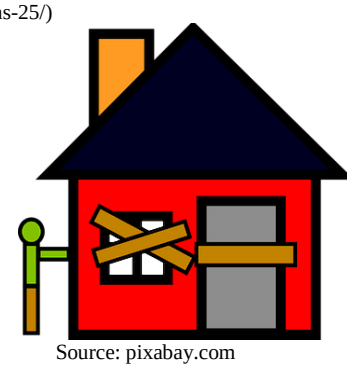

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DCSS

Panel Discussion

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Spring 2017

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Ask a Sociologist

What kept us from joining in?

Carol Petty

Dear Sociologist,
I saw a *Black Lives Matter* protest at 14th and U Street the other day. A lot of people stopped to watch. I got the feeling we were mostly agreeing with the speakers, but none of us joined them despite their similarity in age to us. So, I am wondering why. What kept us from joining in?
Sincerely,
Inexplicably Reluctant

Dear IR,
Many reasonable concerns can arise in this moment to prevent your participation. Perhaps you will not be received; maybe you don't belong there. This just isn't *your* issue; all manner of vulnerabilities surface.

The moment of decision passes, and courage fails you. Or, perhaps some priority pulls just a bit more forcefully: *I've got somewhere to be; what if this takes a while?* Practical matters and social fears permeate this kind of reluctance. But, at a broader level, social and cultural forces inform reluctance, shaping the content of our priorities and hesitations.

Political Voice. Source: pixabay.com

Chief among these is the exercise of political voice and its complicated American backdrop. Attempts to study people's political lives here have, historically, been met with suspicion and just a tinge of fear. In a 1991 study of political process, researchers Williams and Demerath got surveys back blank, save for terse comments: "the answers to these questions are private" or "my husband said there was no way I should answer this." And, in popular culture, the lovably exaggerated libertarian Ron Swanson endears viewers with his passion for apathy, virtue in self-interest, and boundless concern for privacy.

…this form of expression retains a close semblance with privacy. A tweet happens alone. My Facebook Feed impedes the obnoxious. Intimacy and solitude persist.

Swanson's worldview, definitions of politics as private, and suspicion regarding political inquiries may appear to the American audience as almost natural.

But, there is nothing timeless or "natural" about the contemporary state of political participation. Influenced by mundane organization, historical antecedent, technological change, the scandalous, the tragic forms of political participation and their contents vary across time and society.

Self-interest and apathy for what does not serve it, concern for privacy, and suspicion of breaching it in our current context shape the styles of political participation that are seen as worthwhile, and inform the contents of political priorities.

"Civic etiquette made imaginative, open-minded, thoughtful conversation rare in public, frontstage settings. The more hidden the context, the more public-spirited conversation was possible."

What, given this basic backdrop, steers you and your friends away from adding your voices to this political protest? A common place question comes to mind: What good would it do? What good would come of it? A strictly utilitarian, self-interested approach to political participation would say, *nothing*, and *especially nothing* if you're not Black.

Being influenced by this perspective, consciously or unconsciously, doesn't necessarily mean callousness of personal character. Rather, a utilitarian, practical self-interest permeates American models for political participation. Even early 19th century observations of life in America (Alexis De Tocqueville comes to mind), accentuated the dominance of practical concerns, and disdain for theory in the political consciousness of Americans.

Source: pixabay.com

From a more theoretical perspective, though, public settings punctuated by a motley of voices, where people deliberate and exercise judgement, especially with regard to difference, *constitute* democratic life. A society oriented toward a theorized ideal of democracy, for example, would confer priority onto a political protest over an appointment.

Working, instead, from practical and immediate maps, employing vocabularies of motive framed in self-interest, we're inclined to sift this opportunity into a rubbish bin of frivolous, even risky affairs.

The practice of reserving political, public-oriented discussion for backstage settings creates informal standards and expectations, to which, wittingly or unwittingly, we hold ourselves and others.

In recent years, the capacity to uncover the political leanings of the everyday person has rapidly expanded through new media. Yet, this form of expression retains a close semblance with privacy. A tweet happens alone. My Facebook Feed impedes the obnoxious. Intimacy and solitude persist.

Wherein lies resistance to making the political public? Nina Eliasoph, in *Avoiding Politics*, engaged with the peculiar cultural etiquette of political silence in public spaces.

Based on research with volunteers, activists, and community actors, she found that "what marks a context as clearly 'public' is often precisely the fact that the talk is so narrow, not at all public-minded. Civic etiquette made imaginative, open-minded, thoughtful conversation rare in public, frontstage settings. The more hidden the context, the more public-spirited conversation was possible. Politics evaporated from public circulation" (Eliasoph 1998:230).

The practice of reserving political, public-oriented discussion for backstage settings creates informal standards and expectations, to which, wittingly or unwittingly, we hold ourselves and others.

Source: pixabay.com

So, given the narrowness of public talk, jumping in for an afternoon protest about ideas you believe in might just be terribly gauche. Cultural repertoires shepherd us to safe, predictable terrain; saving face outranks political voice, and the priority of practical self-interest works to discredit actions oriented toward the ideal.

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Wearing Gay History: Using T-Shirts as Narratives

An Interview with Eric Nolan Gonzaba by Briana Pocratsky

On September 12, 2016, The Sociologist interviewed Eric Nolan Gonzaba about Wearing Gay History*, an online archive that explores lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender identities though material culture. Eric Nolan Gonzaba, Founder and Director of* Wearing Gay History*, is currently a doctoral student in American history at George Mason University studying 1970s-1980s lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) nightlife in the Mid-Atlantic. Gonzaba is a member of the Board of Directors of the Rainbow History Project, which aims to collect and preserve LGBT history in the Washington, DC area. He is a contributor to OutHistory, a blog that aims to explore LGBT history.*

The *Wearing Gay History* website includes material culture from the past 40 years gathered from archives across the United States. The project uses an everyday item, the t-shirt, to uncover and make available often unknown narratives regarding LGBT history.

According to Gonzaba, each t-shirt tells a story in relationship to specific historical and social locations: "By looking at these diverse shirts, the collections often don't necessarily deal with the communities that they were a part of and so one of my arguments is how interconnected LGBT communities are during the time they were wearing these t-shirts. From the late '60s and the early '70s to the present day, you have a communication, if not migration of people, across geographic lines. I think the shirts prove that by having them at different archives and owned by different people at different times, (like going to a Gay Pride March in New York City or going to the March on Washington), people are exchanging ideas and shirts and comingling in a way, and I think the shirts show that."

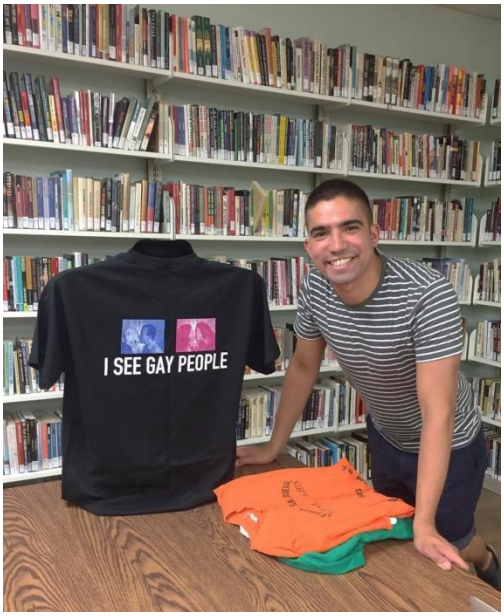
Gonzaba explains that *Wearing Gay History* originally began in 2014 as a small project for a graduate class at George Mason University. For the project, Gonzaba digitized the entire LGBT t-shirt collection in the Chris Gonzalez Library and Archives in Indianapolis, Indiana. From there, Gonzaba continued adding collections from different archives across the country to the online archive, and *Wearing Gay History* grew into a larger project. To archive the images and make them available to the public, Gonzaba uses Omeka, an open source archival web platform created at George Mason University's Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media.

"The idea is that these shirts carry not only diverse meaning, but that they can have diverse meanings to different people."

Goals of Wearing Gay History

One objective of Wearing Gay History is to challenge the "bicoastal bias" of queer history. Gonzaba elaborates on the bicoastal bias of queer history and how Wearing Gay History addresses this concern:

"One of the goals of Wearing Gay History is to uncover LGBT histories, and one of the ways we can do that is to look for sources that are nontraditional. One of the nontraditional sources that I'm most interested in is the idea of material clothing, particularly the t-shirt, which can uncover histories of queer people who aren't necessarily in San Francisco or New York and combat bicoastal bias of queer history."



Eric Nolan Gonzaba at the Gerber/Hart Library and Archives of Chicago, Illinois. Source: Wearing Gay History.

Wearing Gay History includes material culture not just from these two cities often associated with American LGBT culture but also from Philadelphia, Chicago, Indianapolis, Minneapolis, and San Antonio. Gonzaba continues to add items from cities across the United States and the world. The project is also designed to uncover the often ignored history of diverse LGBT culture. Gonzaba emphasizes the diversity of LGBT culture, which, he says, is often reduced to an oversimplified conception.

Gonzaba believes that through the digitization of the t-shirts, the diversity of the LGBT community became readily apparent: "*Wearing Gay History* has taught me about the diversity of queer communities. And you'll have things like pride shirts, leather shirts, lesbian t-shirts, drag queen and drag king shirts. There are different events, and they deal with topics that are overtly political, like anti-violence projects.

But, some t-shirts have nothing to do with politics, like simply a pun. The idea is that these shirts carry diverse meanings to different people. That idea has led me to think about this social movement as diverse and not monolithic."

Washington, DC and LGBT Culture

Gonzaba notes that many of the t-shirts found in Washington, DC archives or associated with the District tend to be direct and simple: "What's fascinating to me is that the DC t-shirts will often say something like 'Gay Pride '71,' and it's just a very simple shirt.

But they have the word 'gay' and often a lot of shirts don't have that. The 'DC Gay Switchboard' is one of my favorites. It's a simple shirt with the lambda symbol, which was a symbol of gay politics.

"One section of the exhibit, called "Sisterfire," shows how the DC area specifically played a vital role in the emergence of women and lesbian musicians in the mid-1970s."

The shirt says 'DC Gay Switchboard' and has a phone number on it. It is often called a support line, which it was to an extent. But, it was a switchboard that was meant for visitors in town to call and ask for the hours or directions to gay bars. The switchboard became this lifeline in a place when you didn't have Google. It became a way to connect to a community in a place that you weren't familiar with or talk about things if you needed support. It was completely volunteer run." Gonzaba also adds that many t-shirts that reference Washington, DC are actually found in archives outside of the area.

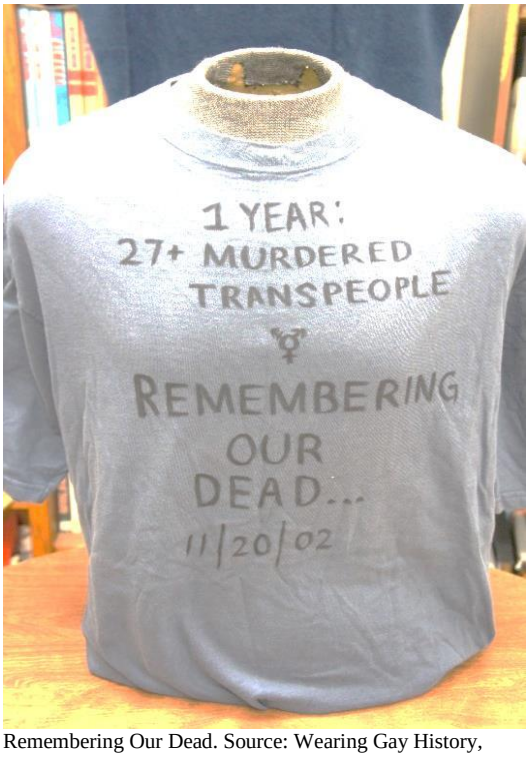
"…this shirt meant so much to somebody that they spent a good deal of time writing out very neatly names on it…"

"The interesting thing about the items involving DC in the collection is that the items aren't necessarily from the DC archives but from other archives across the United States. They usually involve DC trips, like March on Washington. I say that because one of my favorite shirts is DC-related but not necessarily from DC.

My goal was to try to get a shirt from every state, and I have almost all of them. My first Alaska shirt, which is from the 1979 March on Washington, was their delegation shirt for the March. It simply says 'National March on Washington for Lesbian & Gay Rights.'

Sisterfire 1984. Source: Wearing Gay History, University of Southern Maine Special Collections, Portland, Maine.

"It brings me back to how these shirts can be overtly political, they can deal with issues that are overlooked…"



Remembering Our Dead. Source: Wearing Gay History, Chris Gonzalez Library and Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Besides the shirt saying 'Lesbian & Gay Rights,' there is a penguin on the shirt. Unless you read the shirt, you wouldn't have any idea it's connected to gay history or politics. That's something I like; the simplicity of it and yet it means a lot. You can tell a group from Alaska came all the way to DC for that event."

In addition to digitizing material culture from archives and adding them to the online collections, Gonzaba creates exhibits about specific t-shirts as a way to provide context and highlight the t-shirt's significance. One exhibit on the website, titled "A Lesbian Capital: Odd Girls in Washington DC," explores lesbian activism, which is largely omitted from American queer history. Gonzaba explains how the exhibit attempts to address this omission: "I created the exhibit because of a recent concern among lesbian activists in DC, especially among social circles on Facebook and Twitter, about the erasure of lesbian spaces in Washington, like the closing of the oldest lesbian bar in all of Washington and all of the country actually. And I wanted a means for these lesbian activists to see their history and possibly explore, negotiate, and engage with it in different ways." One section of the exhibit, called "Sisterfire," shows how the DC area specifically played a vital role in the emergence of women and lesbian musicians in the mid-1970s.

Remembering Our Dead

Of the thousands of t-shirts that Gonzaba has digitized for *Wearing Gay History*, there is one in particular that stands out to him: "The one I always come back to is the first transgender shirt that I ever digitized. It was in the Indianapolis archives, and it was a very serious topic, which is violence against trans people. It's called 'Remembering Our Dead,' and what I like about it is even though it's relatively recent history, (it's from 2002), it's completely handmade so it is written by somebody.

Remembering Our Dead. Source: Wearing Gay History, Chris Gonzalez Library and Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.

They list 27 people who have been murdered because of their transgender identity including a couple Hoosiers, people from Indiana. It brings me back to how these shirts can be overtly political, they can deal with issues that are overlooked, and they can be handmade, which I think is amazing. What is great about this is that this shirt meant so much to somebody that they spent a good

deal of time writing out very neatly names on it. So, I think it's a very powerful shirt."

The Future of Wearing Gay History

Currently, *Wearing Gay History* includes 3,352 clothing materials, most of which are t-shirts, from 16 archives across the United States in addition to Canada and South Africa.

Although occupied with dissertation writing, Gonzaba plans to continue working on *Wearing Gay History* as there are already another 1000 items waiting to be posted on the site.

When asked about his goal for the future, Gonzaba emphasizes the importance of connecting his research to more publics: "My dream is for *Wearing Gay History* to be connected to different platforms through different means so that it is more accessible to people and not just the researcher.

I think if there is a *Wearing Gay History* 2.0, it's to make it more accessible by figuring out ways to target even more audiences to get people to use it more, whether that's through creating interactive timelines or games or focusing on social media aspects.

I still am trying to figure out the best way to reach a wider public because the goal of the website is education."

To learn more about *Wearing Gay History* and to explore the collections and exhibits, visit http://www.wearinggayhistory.com/

Write for *The Sociologist*.

Send us your insights about our life.

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Annual Banquet

Thursday, May 25, 2017

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DCSS President Lynda Laughlin,
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