



THURD

the honors  
undergraduate  
research journal

# The Honors Undergraduate Research Journal

2016

Joe C. and Carole Kerr McClendon Honors College  
University of Oklahoma  
Volume 15

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Volume 15  
2016  
Norman, OK, USA

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## Women of the Wild: Women, Outdoor Sport, and Changing Gender Roles

*Sarah Capps*

Today, a quick Internet search will reveal that shooting, hunting, fishing, mountain climbing, and camping are all recreational activities that fall into the category of “outdoorsman” sports. As the name “outdoorsman” suggests, people did and do associate these activities with masculinity. In such sports, men supposedly distance themselves from cities and homely comforts. Some activities demand extreme physical exertion as well as the exercise of violence and power. Despite such stereotypes, plenty of women today enjoy these pastimes. Women’s involvement in outdoorsman sports suggests a trend of women who defied gender norms and associations and whose participation over time made the idea of an “outdoorswoman” more commonplace. So when did women become involved in these recreational activities? Who were these trailblazers and how did they justify their participation in such masculine pastimes? As it turns out, women have long participated in these recreational activities. In some sports, such as mountain climbing, women were involved from the inception of the sport in the United States. As outdoorswomen, their actions challenged Victorian gender ideals which emphasized domesticity for women. The rise in popularity of women’s outdoor sports both reflected and helped to develop a new gender ideal, the New Woman.

To tell the story of the predominantly white, middle- and upper-middle class women who participated in these sports between 1858 and 1930, this paper focuses on the lives and writings of just four representative women. Julia Archibald Holmes was a feminist and the first white woman to climb Pikes Peak. Isabella Lucy Bird was an English writer and world traveler. She climbed Longs Peak with the aid of male guides but without the aid of a husband. Annie Oakley was a sharpshooter and celebrity. Never one to wear bloomers, Annie beat men in shooting competitions and always

looked like a Victorian lady as she did so. Finally, Lou Henry Hoover was a First Lady who loved to camp and who worked to bring a love of the outdoors to other young women through her work with the Girl Scouts. Representative of a larger movement of women in outdoor sport, these four figures participated in a transition of gender ideals from True Womanhood to the New Woman. Rather than reject True Womanhood entirely, they embraced aspects of Victorian femininity and used them to help justify their activities as outdoorswomen.

During the nineteenth century, the prevailing gender ideal for white women centered around the home. In her seminal article, the historian Barbara Welter refers to this Victorian feminine ideal as “The Cult of True Womanhood.”<sup>1</sup> She notes, “The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.”<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this article, the two most relevant virtues are submissiveness and domesticity. Many Americans in the nineteenth century saw men as “the movers, the doers, the actors” while women were “passive, submissive responders.”<sup>3</sup> While men went out into society to be leaders, women ideally acted as virtuous followers. Therefore, the proper “sphere” for women was the private sphere of the home. Women contributed to society through their roles as “daughter, sister, but most of all as wife and mother.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, women made contributions in relation to their male family members. Society expected women to perform domestic tasks that corresponded to what people perceived as their delicate and nurturing nature. They were nurses to the sick, housekeepers, and seamstresses.<sup>5</sup> They were also “expected to have a special affinity for flowers” and for letter writing.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966): 151.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 164-5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

Although Welter sees True Womanhood as a description of nineteenth-century women's reality, other historians conclude that public and private spaces overlapped. Women of color and lower-class women were not confined to the home because they worked.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, Welter's description fails to take female institutions and organizations into account. These groups used the language of domesticity to participate in politics. By doing so, they blurred the lines between the public and private spheres. Historians now recognize that True Womanhood is a gender construct, rather than an absolute description of the limitations society imposed on women. The idea of "spheres" is a metaphor for describing networks of power and the way power is distributed.<sup>8</sup> The historian Nina Baym describes public and private distinctions as a metaphor for "different ways of behaving in the same space."<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the urban and environmental planning scholar Daphne Spain argues that "separate spheres" refers to the way space is gendered. Institutions that hold knowledge and power are gendered male. Together with biological justifications, men use this gendering to deny women access to important social spaces. Restricting women's access to knowledge perpetuates the unequal distribution of power.<sup>10</sup> Although Spain makes this argument in relation to constructed spaces, such as medical and law schools, naturally occurring spaces are also gendered. Outdoor recreational sites were masculine spaces. Together, masculine outdoor space and arguments about women's biological weakness denied women mobility and the ability to exercise and display power over their bodies.

Although historians reject the idea that separate spheres described women's reality, nineteenth- and twentieth-century

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<sup>7</sup> Monica M. Elbert, introduction to *Separate Spheres No More: Gender Convergence in American Literature, 1830-1930*, ed. Monika M. Elbert (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000), 6.

<sup>8</sup> Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *The Journal of American History* 75, no.1 (June 1988): 28.

<sup>9</sup> Nina Baym, *American Women Writers and the Work of History, 1790-1860* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 11.

<sup>10</sup> Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 5.



Americans were familiar with the metaphor. The English scholar Monika M. Elbert explains that it "is not to say that a separate sphere for women did not exist, or to suggest that the middle class ideology of the cult of domesticity was not emulated by the underclasses to some degree, but that an essentialist, reductionist position is dangerous in coming to terms with the diverging experiences of different kinds of women."<sup>11</sup> Separate spheres ideology prescribed patterns of behavior for women which society labeled as "proper." When women deviated from the True Womanhood gender construct, they had to justify their deviance to avoid social censure. However, the historian Estelle Freedman notes, "those few women who explicitly rejected [True Womanhood's] inequalities could find little support for their views."<sup>12</sup>

Outdoorswomen deviated from "proper" Victorian femininity because they acted in masculine ways in male spaces. Although the historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has demonstrated that separate spheres presented women with a positive opportunity for female bonding and community, notions of True Womanhood limited nineteenth-century women who had an affinity for the outdoors.<sup>13</sup> Their decision to leave the domestic sphere and participate in demanding physical activity clashed with the belief that women were the weaker sex. Likewise, women's participation in outdoor sport was frequently done in association with sporting clubs. Like other groups during the Progressive Era, many of these clubs lobbied for political reform. For example, the Sierra Club participated in the growth of environmentalism by demanding the preservation of wild spaces.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the sporting clubs that women joined presented them with institutional frameworks that helped them to participate in public discourses. Additionally,

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<sup>11</sup> Elbert, introduction, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Estelle Freedman, "Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism, 1870-1930," *Feminist Studies* 5, no.3 (Autumn 1979): 515.

<sup>13</sup> See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1975): 1-29.

<sup>14</sup> Susan R. Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars: Mountains, Gender, and American Environmentalism* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 25.

women's successes in outdoor sport challenged the notion that women should be submissive to men. As outdoor sports became more popular, women began competing against men or competing without their aid. Annie Oakley frequently beat men at shooting competitions when women were a minority in the sport. Likewise, female climbers popularized the "manless climb" because they believed that the presence of men prevented them from reaching their full potential. Male climbers often disregarded designated climb leaders if they were female or otherwise undermined female climbers' efforts.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, some female climbers rejected Victorian expectations of submissiveness and left men behind altogether.

Nevertheless, changes to gender ideals are gradual rather than immediate. Too much change at one time produces backlashes against nonconformist behavior. Therefore, while the actions of outdoorswomen challenged the Victorian feminine virtues of domesticity and submissiveness, women had to justify deviant behavior. They did this by drawing upon aspects of Victorian femininity. As they did so, they blurred the delineations between male and female spaces and behavior. Perhaps the use of True Womanhood was calculated, or perhaps it stemmed from their personal preferences. In any case, the lives and actions of outdoorswomen provide insight into the way Victorian femininity was challenged and altered over time.

## The Climbers

Of the four women discussed in this essay, Julia Archibald Holmes was the first to make her name as an outdoorswoman. She was born in 1838 in Noel, Nova Scotia to John and Jane Archibald. However, early in her childhood the family moved to Massachusetts and then to Kansas. Growing up, Holmes's parents introduced her to politics. Her father was a staunch abolitionist and her mother was both an advocate for women's rights and a friend to Susan B. Anthony. The Archibalds provided their Lawrence home as a site for

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 116-17.

abolitionist meetings and as a stop on the Underground Railroad.<sup>16</sup> This politicized upbringing influenced Holmes as an adult. In 1858 she and her husband joined a group of gold seekers headed to Colorado. To make the trip, Holmes donned a pair of bloomers. Both supporters and opponents of women's rights considered this "American costume" to be the "official uniform of suffragists in the 1850s."<sup>17</sup>

It was on this trip west that the couple decided to climb Pikes Peak. They packed six days of provisions and set out on August 1, 1858.<sup>18</sup> In between hours of climbing, they camped on the slopes of the mountain until, on the morning of August 5, they reached the summit.<sup>19</sup> Holmes and her husband left their names on a nearby rock to commemorate their ascent, which had been to an elevation of some 14,110 feet.<sup>20</sup> Male climbers had already explored the summit of Pikes Peak. It is also likely that Native American climbers had reached the top, although there are no records of who these people may have been. However, as she stood at the peak and gazed around her, Julia Archibald Holmes became the first white woman to experience the view.

Although not the first white woman to scale Longs Peak, another Colorado mountain, Isabella Lucy Bird became its most famous female climber following the publication of her travel letters. Bird was an English writer and world traveler. In Britain, "she had been destined to follow the life of reticent seclusion and social benefaction deemed fitting for the daughter of a Victorian cleric."<sup>21</sup> However, Bird suffered from a chronic spinal injury and doctors prescribed touring as the cure. Following their advice, Bird "escaped to the mountains" and eventually became a prominent

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<sup>16</sup> Janet Robertson, *The Magnificent Mountain Women: Adventures in the Colorado Rockies* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Julia Archibald Holmes to Lydia Sayer Hasbrouck, Fort Union, 25 January 1859, in *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries & Letters from the Western Trails, vol. 7: 1854-1860*, ed. Kenneth L. Holmes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 206.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>20</sup> Robertson, *The Magnificent Mountain Women*, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Ernest S. Bernard, introduction to *Isabella Lucy Bird's "A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains": An Annotated Text*, ed. Ernest S. Bernard (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 3.

travel writer.<sup>22</sup> Before arriving in Estes Park, Colorado, in 1873, Bird traveled to Australia and then Hawaii where she spent her time climbing and horseback riding before sailing for California.<sup>23</sup> Bird recorded the details of both her stay in Estes Park and her climb up Longs Peak in letters to her sister Henrietta, which she later edited and published as the travel book *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*.<sup>24</sup> In it, Bird detailed how she scaled Longs Peak on the back of "a very old, iron-grey horse" named Birdy while wearing what she called "a Hawaiian riding dress."<sup>25</sup> She also described Rocky Mountain Jim, her strange climbing guide. Bird wrote that Jim was "the queerest figure of all . . . With his one eye, his gaunt, lean form, and his torn clothes, he looked more like a strolling tinker than the honest worthy settler that he is."<sup>26</sup> Together, Bird and Jim walked and rode in a party with two other men and "probably gained a total of at least five thousand vertical feet."<sup>27</sup> After the climb, Bird wrote twelve more books and traveled "to Tibet, China, Japan, Korea, India, Turkey, Persia, and Morocco."<sup>28</sup>

Holmes and Bird's mountain climbing challenged ideas of True Womanhood because it positioned them as active women operating outside of the domestic sphere. Before setting out on the climb, Bird's host in Longmont asked whether she "feared cold, if [she] could 'rough it,' if [she] could 'ride horseback and lope.'"<sup>29</sup> Although Bird rode a horse up the mountain, the host's questions demonstrate that climbing was connected to the idea of physical hardship. He implied that one must be physically capable and willing to face nature and one's own fears in order to reach the summit. Bird herself echoed this idea. She wrote, "We left the softer world behind, and all traces of man and his works, and plunged into

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Robertson, *The Magnificent Mountain Women*, 16.

<sup>25</sup> Isabella Lucy Bird, *Isabella Lucy Bird's "A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains": An Annotated Text*, ed. Ernest S. Bernard (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 74-5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>27</sup> Robertson, *The Magnificent Mountain Women*, 15.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>29</sup> Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, 89.

the Rocky Mountains."<sup>30</sup> With this sentence, Bird implied that they were far from the domestic sphere. Not only were they outside the home, but also they were outside the man-made city as a whole.

Additionally, one of the most visible ways in which Holmes, Bird, and other mountaineering women challenged the ideals of Victorian femininity and separate spheres was by their adoption of bifurcated garments for active wear. Victorian dress was heavily gendered; women wore floor-length skirts, hoops, and corsets as well as high collars and tight sleeves.<sup>31</sup> These restraining elements discouraged physical activity for middle- and upper-class women. Victorian women's fashion valued modesty over mobility and "Pants were associated with dress reformers, children, laborers, and even prostitutes."<sup>32</sup> However, during the 1840s and 1850s a diverse group of women tried to change Victorian fashions in order to normalize pants or shorter skirts.<sup>33</sup> Holmes actively participated in this dress reform movement when she climbed Pikes Peak in bloomers, or the "American costume."<sup>34</sup> Her outfit consisted of "a calico dress, reaching a little below the knee, pants of the same, Indian moccasins for [her] feet, and . . . a hat," which she found to be "beyond value in comfort and convenience, as it gave [her] the freedom to roam."<sup>35</sup> Because of her outfit, Holmes wrote that her travel letters would be of interest to her "sisters in reform."<sup>36</sup> Rather than call her climbing attire a bloomer costume, Bird called her outfit a "Hawaiian riding dress."<sup>37</sup> This outfit "consisted of full Turkish trousers worn under a skirt that reached to her ankles."<sup>38</sup> However, some in her party could not identify the difference

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>31</sup> Sarah A. Gordon, "'Any Desired Length': Negotiating Gender Through Sports Clothing, 1870-1925," in *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender, and Culture in Modern America*, ed. Philip Scranton (New York: Routledge, 2000), 26.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>33</sup> Gayle V. Fischer, "'Pantalets' and 'Turkish Trowsers': Designing Freedom in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century United States," *Feminist Studies* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 111.

<sup>34</sup> Julia Archibald Holmes to Lydia Sayer Hasbrouck, 25 January 1859, 194.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>37</sup> Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, 75.

<sup>38</sup> Robertson, *The Magnificent Mountain Women*, 16.

between bloomers and a Hawaiian riding dress. Bird's mortification upon discovering this fact indicates that Bird wanted freedom of movement but did not wish people to associate her with radical women's rights activists.<sup>39</sup> To avoid social censure, many female climbers wore skirts while traveling to the mountain and then removed their skirts to reveal bloomers once they were on the slopes.<sup>40</sup>

Women's adoption of male garments threatened the Victorian gender system and produced a backlash against the dress reform movement. Critics of the new dress warned of the problems they believed bloomers would cause in media such as political cartoons. One political cartoon, "Women's Emancipation," appeared in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1851. In it, three central female figures are depicted in bloomers. However, they have also incorporated other elements of male dress, such as bold plaid and check patterns, top hats, bowties, and walking sticks. One of the women even smokes a cigarette in public.<sup>41</sup> The cartoon suggests a popular critique of the dress reform movement: women who donned male garments would not stop with pants. They would adopt other male dress and even masculine behavior until women resembled men. As the historian Gayle Fischer notes, by wearing pants "women appropriated male dress, and, by association, male privilege and power."<sup>42</sup> This was highly threatening, especially in a political atmosphere where women activists were demanding the right to vote. For this reason, critics quickly marginalized the dress reform movement.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, sport increasingly allowed women to justify their adoption of pants. The historian Sarah A. Gordon argues that "the idea that the clothes were only for play made them less of a threat to anyone who perceived them as challenging women's

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>40</sup> Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars*, 102.

<sup>41</sup> "Woman's Emancipation (Being A Letter Addressed to Mr. Punch, With A Drawing, By A Strong-Minded American Woman)," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, August 1851, 424.

<sup>42</sup> Fischer, "'Pantalets' and 'Turkish Trowsers,'" 112.

<sup>43</sup> Gordon, "'Any Desired Length,'" 25.

traditional styles."<sup>44</sup> Because there was no precedent for female sports clothing, women adopted clothing innovations which seemed practical and appropriate to them.<sup>45</sup> For example, E. Butterick Co. sold patterns for "gymnasium suits, walking and biking skirts, and knickers" to wear underneath outdoor attire.<sup>46</sup> As active women adopted and adapted these patterns, they created new notions of femininity that revolved around movement and autonomy. However, they still drew upon notions of Victorian modesty in their clothing designs. As women increasingly participated in sport, they "began to ask what could be worn to preserve modesty and femininity, yet allow for ease of movement and comfort."<sup>47</sup>

By the early years of the 1910s, bloomers were commonplace clothing for mountain women. Pictures of mountaineering parties reveal that both women and men donned pants when they climbed. Often, it is nearly impossible for viewers to tell men from women.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, by 1905 Enos Mills, the Longs Peak innkeeper and an advocate for the creation of Rocky Mountain National Park, insisted that women should not climb in long skirts because they "impeded the wearer and were dangerous to everyone in the party."<sup>49</sup> Rather, Mills advised lady mountain climbers to wear bloomers.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, by donning pants, Holmes and Bird participated in the beginnings of a movement for sports clothing reform.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>48</sup> See "In the Olympic Mountains, August 2 to 23, 1913," photograph, ca. 1913, *Mountaineers Collection online*, University of Washington Libraries, <http://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/mtn/id/1987/show/1513> (accessed March 27, 2015); and Frank Jacobs, "Album 08.110 - Hiking party on Stevens Glacier, with Gordon pole straddling a crevasse, June-August 1919," photograph, ca. 1919, *Mountaineers Collection online*, University of Washington Libraries, <http://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/mtn/id/2460/rec/45> (accessed March 27, 2015).

<sup>49</sup> Robertson, *The Magnificent Mountain Women*, 25.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 25.

Women also justified their climbing in part through the way they described nature. Outdoor sport involved leaving the home and traveling to a masculine and public space. The historian Linda Kerber notes, "Men's space normally included the central community meeting place and the fields" while "Women's space, by definition, is what is left: sleeping enclosures, gardens."<sup>51</sup> Masculine outdoor spaces allowed men to reinforce notions of men's strength and personal achievement through their nature writing. By the late nineteenth century, masculine sublimity was the convention in this genre.<sup>52</sup> Male alpinists wrote that mountains were "foreign, exotic, desolate, and mysterious, if not grotesque" as well as "chaotic, raw, barren, irregular, and frightening."<sup>53</sup> Men portrayed successful ascents as a triumph over a feminized nature.<sup>54</sup> Rather than merely replicate these conventions, women displayed a different gendered understanding of the environment in their nature writing. The historian Susan R. Schrepfer argues that nineteenth- and twentieth-century women "reshaped the masculine versions of sublimity" by "using their own historically constructed, metaphoric ties to nature, the study of botany, and powerful Victorian visions of domesticity and motherhood."<sup>55</sup> These new "feminine sublimes" instead emphasized the "warmth, life, intimacy, freedom, and comfort provided by the natural world."<sup>56</sup> The feminine sublime connected women's subjectivity to nature and justified women's presence in outdoor spaces. It also justified women's participation in the discourse concerning those places.<sup>57</sup>

The feminine sublime is present in both Holmes's and Bird's accounts of their ascents. Their descriptions of the landscape and their interactions with it echoed the comforts of home. Holmes and her husband camped in a place that they dubbed "Snowdell." She described this campsite as "a little nook we are making our

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<sup>51</sup> Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds," 31.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>53</sup> Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars*, 41.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.



home in for a few days."<sup>58</sup> Later in her account, she again referred to Snowdell when she recorded, "Today we remain at home resting, writing and admiring the mocking landscape."<sup>59</sup> Although her description of the peak as "mocking" echoes representations of masculine sublimity, it is a far cry from other accounts that portray landscapes as barren, strange, or frightening. Rather, the description has the overall effect of incorporating the mountain within accepted female space. The domestic rhetoric convinces readers that Holmes's presence on the mountain felt as natural to her as being in the home because she performed the same activities in both locations.

Additionally, Holmes's preoccupation with flowers extended female space to the mountain. Upon observing some "little flowers," Holmes wrote, "it has the effect to carry me back in imagination to the days of my childhood, in my Eastern home."<sup>60</sup> Her focus on flowers echoed gendered divisions within the sciences in the Victorian era. The historian Vera Norwood writes, "Certain areas [of the sciences], such as botany, appeared completely feminized."<sup>61</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century when Holmes and Bird were writing, botanical study was "linked to women's domestic responsibility."<sup>62</sup> The flowers might have been growing on the side of the mountain, but they also suggested descriptions of gardens and other homely manifestations of nature. This further associated Holmes's description of her climbing experience with female space and by doing so legitimized her actions in relation to Victorian femininity.

While traditions of masculine sublimity in nature writing influenced Bird's account of her own ascent, there are unconventional descriptions in her book which more closely reflect feminine sublimity. Although Bird often emphasized the dangers of

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<sup>58</sup> Julia Archibald Holmes to Lydia Sayer Hasbrouck, 25 January 1859, 206.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>60</sup> Julia Archibald Holmes to Jane Archibald, vicinity of Pikes Peak, 2 August 1858, in *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries & Letters from the Western Trails*, vol. 7: 1854-1860, ed. Kenneth L. Holmes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 214.

<sup>61</sup> Vera Norwood, *Made From This Earth: American Women and Nature* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 47.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

nature like “the Rocky Mountain lion, the grizzly bear, and the cowardly wolf” as well as “the chasms of immense depth, dark with the indigo gloom of pines,” she also described her surroundings using the language of domesticity.<sup>63</sup> She wrote that she saw “parks so beautifully arranged by nature that [she] momentarily expected to come upon some stately mansion.”<sup>64</sup> As they used images of home to describe the wilderness, women justified their participation in outdoor sports by both broadening female space and by minimizing the dangers of the wilderness.

Bird and Holmes not only described mountains using domestic imagery, but also they associated nature with protection. True Womanhood assumed that a proper woman submitted to the male figures in her life. While men portrayed nature as an opposing force that they expended all their strength to conquer, women described nature in terms of comfort. This suggested that women were not being active or dominant by heading to the mountains. Climbing was not a struggle because nature protected them. After their time at Snowdell, Holmes and her husband camped in a bear den. Holmes wrote that this den had spruce trees outside of it which “stretch[ed] their protecting arms over our heads.”<sup>65</sup> Likewise, Bird noted that she received protection and comfort from life on the mountain. She wrote, “a group of small silver spruces away from the fire was my sleeping place. The artist [God] who had been up there had so woven and interlaced their lower branches as to form a bower, affording at once shelter from the wind and a most agreeable privacy.”<sup>66</sup> These descriptions imply a way in which women could be both properly submissive and successful outdoorswomen. Because nature provided protection and comfort rather than opposition and struggle, women climbers like Holmes and Bird minimized the focus on physical achievement in their own writings. Nature took an active role in helping them and compensated for women’s supposed weakness. By emphasizing the

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<sup>63</sup> Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, 95.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>65</sup> Julia Archibald Holmes to Lydia Sayer Hasbrouck, 25 January 1859, 211.

<sup>66</sup> Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, 108.

feminine aspects of their behavior, Holmes and Bird made their presence in male spaces seem less threatening.

When nature was not enough to protect them, men stepped in. To an extent, both Holmes and Bird remained properly submissive because neither one climbed alone. Holmes climbed with her husband while Bird climbed with Mountain Jim. Bird even depended on Jim to reach the summit. She admitted that she "had no head and no ankles, and never ought to dream of mountaineering."<sup>67</sup> She confessed, "I am only humiliated by my success, for 'Jim' dragged me up, like a bale of goods, by sheer force of muscle."<sup>68</sup> The historian Janet Robertson argues that this really occurred because "Bird was no shining example of cardiovascular fitness; she was overweight and flabby from riding horses rather than walking."<sup>69</sup> Although this episode corresponds to physical realities, Bird's athletic inability also makes her actions less threatening to Victorian gender norms. She portrayed herself, not as a single woman boldly climbing a mountain, but as a woman whom men guided and who did not realize what she had gotten herself into. Bird would not have been able to finish what she started if not for the men around her. Because Holmes and Bird relied on men as companions and physical aids, they still adhered to Victorian notions of women's dependence on and relative weakness in comparison to men.

While the portrayal of mountains as places of comfort suggested that there was no reason why True Women could not climb, the association of mountains with spirituality provided a reason as to why they should. True Women were the home's moral center because Americans expected women to be more pious and virtuous than men. The writings of Holmes and Bird reflect this belief because they imbued nature with religious importance. Holmes wrote, "Everything on which the eye can rest fills the mind with infinitude and sends the soul to God."<sup>70</sup> Likewise, Bird and her party witnessed a sunrise while climbing the mountain. She recalled, "The

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>69</sup> Robertson, *The Magnificent Mountain Women*, 14.

<sup>70</sup> Julia Archibald Holmes to Jane Archibald, 2 August 1858, 215.

sun wheeled above the grey line, a light and glory as when it was first created. 'Jim' involuntarily and reverently uncovered his head and exclaimed, 'I believe there is a God!' I felt as if, Parsee-like, I must worship. . . . The earth and heavens were new created. Surely 'the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands!'"<sup>71</sup> By drawing on religious imagery, these descriptions implied that women's climbing was more than just permissible. Rather, due to women's association with piety, Bird and Holmes suggested that climbing was proper behavior for women because it brought them closer to God.

Although they made their ascents more than a decade apart, Holmes and Bird were pioneer women in the sport of mountain climbing. Whether calculated or an unconscious reflection of the times during which they lived, their writings identify mountains as public female space and describe a distinctly female way of behaving there. This behavior justified female mobility and adventurousness by employing rhetoric that emphasized their adherence to characteristics of True Womanhood.

### The Sharpshooter

Rather than climbing mountains like Bird and Holmes, Annie Oakley made her name by hunting and sharpshooting. Born in Ohio in 1860 as Phoebe Ann Moses, Oakley grew up in poverty and began hunting in order to feed her family.<sup>72</sup> In 1865, her father Jacob was outside when a hard blizzard hit their home. Frostbite caused him to lose the ability to use his hands and the damage eventually proved fatal. His death further impoverished the already poor family. It was around the time of this catastrophe that Oakley took down her father's hunting rifle and killed her first game to feed her mother and siblings.<sup>73</sup>

Oakley improved her skills and eventually began entering shooting competitions. Just fifteen years old on Thanksgiving Day

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<sup>71</sup> Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, 109.

<sup>72</sup> Glenda Riley, *The Life and Legacy of Annie Oakley* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 3.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

1875, she participated in a match against the sharpshooter Frank Butler, who had been appearing at both the Cincinnati theater and the Coliseum on Vine Street. It was Oakley's first time on a shooting range as well as her first time shooting at targets from a mechanical trap. Nevertheless, she won. While Butler "missed his last shot," Oakley "scored twenty-five out of twenty-five."<sup>74</sup> Frank and Annie made a connection that day; they later married.

As a team, Frank functioned more as a manager and agent while Oakley became the face of the act. Together they worked the vaudeville circuit until they made the career decision which cemented Oakley's connection with the American West. In 1885, Oakley traveled out to audition for a spot in Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Park. After seeing Oakley practice her shooting, Nate Salsbury, Cody's business partner, hired her on the spot.<sup>75</sup> Until her retirement in 1913, Oakley traveled around the country and even to Europe with Cody's Wild West show.<sup>76</sup>

Oakley's participation in shooting and Wild West shows reworked gender norms because these activities associated women with guns and power, which were masculine elements. Because guns were mechanical tools that lessened the importance of physical stature, the slight Annie Oakley was able to beat men at shooting competitions and take the lead role in shooting shows. In her act, she utilized men "as assistants" and shot objects out of their hands.<sup>77</sup> Oakley's relationship with firearms and her male assistants worked alongside her enormous success as a performer to force the public to reevaluate notions of women's weakness as well as women's relationships to violence.

Her participation in shooting sport opened the door for other women to shoot and be accepted as capable of handling guns. Oakley was aware of this and she used her celebrity to try and draw other women into the sport. When Oakley gave shooting exhibitions, she frequently extended invitations that explicitly

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

welcomed the attendance of women shooters.<sup>78</sup> As a consequence, large numbers of women went to see her shoot. Some even formed clubs in her honor, such as the ladies of “the Annie Oakley Rifle Club of Newark.”<sup>79</sup> Oakley also maintained friendships with women shooters who worked in the show circuit.<sup>80</sup> She even gave shooting lessons to young female shooters.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, increasing women’s involvement was one of Oakley’s biggest political causes. It was important to her because she considered physical activity to be “pleasant and healthy” for women.<sup>82</sup> Additionally, she argued that women should learn to shoot because women were physically weaker than men. Therefore, they needed to know how to handle firearms so that they might have protection when faced with danger.<sup>83</sup>

Oakley’s involvement in the Wild West shows also defied Victorian femininity because it gave her physical mobility. As the historian Virginia Scharff notes, we understand movement “in fundamentally gendered terms. Movement belongs to men. Women, supposedly, move seldom and reluctantly, and when they do, it’s a departure from their real stories, not a central plot line. The freedom to move is a marker of social power and legitimacy.”<sup>84</sup> For Oakley, shooting was more than just a recreational activity; shooting was employment. Oakley was a workingwoman who traveled both around the country and across the Atlantic for her work. In a time when society expected women to be homemakers, Oakley’s work meant being away from home, out of doors, and on the road. Although in her private life Oakley advocated for female domesticity, she did not follow her own advice. Because she traveled so frequently with the Wild West show, she was rarely at

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-67.

<sup>81</sup> “Annie Oakley with an eleven year old pupil,” photograph, ca. 1920, from MS 006 William F. Cody Collection, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, <http://library.centerofthewest.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/BBOA/id/2788/rec/15> (accessed March 27, 2015).

<sup>82</sup> Riley, *The Life and Legacy of Annie Oakley*, 139.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>84</sup> Virginia Scharff, *Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement, and the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 3.

home. Therefore, her role as a workingwoman distanced her from accepted female spaces.<sup>85</sup> In addition to the fact that shooting was associated with the outdoors, her work with the Wild West shows placed her firmly in the context of the masculinized, mythic West. Oakley's act was based on movement, action, and violence. She rode horses, smashed glass targets, sprinted, and did cartwheels.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, in relation to the actions her audience watched her perform, Oakley adopted elements of masculine behavior within male spaces.

However, unlike Holmes and Bird, Oakley firmly adhered to Victorian notions of femininity in her appearance. Although her actions seriously challenged notions of True Womanhood, Oakley formed her public persona around Victorian femininity in order to help justify her non-normative behavior. Not only did Oakley never seek the vote, but also she never wore bloomers.<sup>87</sup> No matter the physical activity she engaged in, Oakley did it while dressed like a proper Victorian lady. In one publicity photo of Oakley as a young woman, she wore a fitted jacket which was completely buttoned.<sup>88</sup> She also wore a white, collared shirt with a ribbon tied in a bow under the collar. Oakley's jacket was tucked into a pleated skirt that reached past her knees. Rather than donning bloomers under her skirt to improve mobility, Oakley wore leggings. She did not wear her hair up, nor did she cover it with anything except a wide-brimmed hat. Instead, her brown hair fell down her back in waves. This made Oakley look girlish. On the whole, her outfit was simple and demure and properly conveyed a sense of middle-class Victorian ladyhood. For viewers, the only indication of Oakley's sportswoman identity is the rifle in her hands. However, the gun appears out of place in relation to her dress. In later pictures, Oakley posed not only with a gun, but also with her many shooting medals

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<sup>85</sup> Riley, *The Life and Legacy of Annie Oakley*, 124.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>88</sup> "Annie Oakley," photograph, ca. 1889, from MS 006 William F. Cody Collection, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, <http://library.centerofthewest.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/BBOA/id/2773/rec/40> (accessed March 27, 2015).

pinned to her chest.<sup>89</sup> Although this gives yet another indication of Oakley's shooting prowess, she does not appear any less feminine due to her clothes and hair. Oakley's choice in dress balanced the masculinity of her physical activity and mobility. In appearance, the five feet tall, 110 pound Oakley was girlish and pretty but also nonthreatening.<sup>90</sup> Her dress made her seem like a carefree young girl, rather than a woman in possession of gun power. In her act, Oakley drew on this childish femininity to increase her popularity. She sometimes did cartwheels or stamped her foot and pouted when she missed a shot.<sup>91</sup>

Nevertheless, Oakley also participated in the movement for athletic clothing reform. Oakley sewed many of her own show costumes, adopting elements she felt were both ladylike and practical.<sup>92</sup> She even designed her own cycling outfit to avoid the bloomers that so many other female cyclists wore. The outfit consisted of laced gaiters, knickerbockers, "a skirt extending halfway below the knee, a loose-fitting bodice of white silk, and an Eton-style jacket."<sup>93</sup> What made the outfit special, however, was that each gaiter had an eyelet sewn onto it and Oakley's skirt had "a corresponding elastic with a hook" sewn onto the underside.<sup>94</sup> This allowed Oakley to hook her skirt to her gaiters while she cycled to prevent her skirt from rising. Oakley encouraged other women to adapt and reform their outfits as well. During a tour of England, many women asked Oakley what she recommended ladies wear while shooting. Oakley told them that they would have to design new outfits that were not so tight-fitting and impractical. Long skirts could trail in the mud and damp and shooting was impossible when a tight-fitting bodice limited one's mobility.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> "Annie Oakley holding a rifle," photograph, ca. 1890, from MS 006 William F. Cody Collection, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, <http://library.centerofthewest.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/BBOA/id/3530/rec/2> (accessed March 27, 2015).

<sup>90</sup> Riley, *The Life and Legacy of Annie Oakley*, 21.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 52, 57.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-115.



Although Oakley shunned any connection to the women's rights movement, her actions still fell outside of socially sanctioned female behavior. Even though audiences admired her, Oakley rejected aspects of True Womanhood because she was a sportswoman. Shooting not only gave Oakley power, but also the opportunity for both physical and social movement. Her passion for the sport of shooting provided Oakley with employment, which in turn meant money and travel. In order to offset what many perceived as Oakley's masculine behavior, Oakley considered it imperative that she dress like a Victorian lady. This made her seem less threatening. It therefore helped her to justify women's participation in shooting sports.

### **The First Lady Girl Scout**

Oakley was still an undiscovered child sharpshooter when Lou Henry Hoover was born on March 29, 1874 in Waterloo, Iowa. Due to her mother's asthma, the family moved from Iowa to Texas, then to Kansas, and finally to California. Hoover's father was a country banker who early on instilled a love of the outdoors in his daughter. He taught Hoover to fish and ride horses by the time she was six.<sup>96</sup> Later on, Hoover would attribute her interest in the Girl Scouts to the days she spent camping with her father. In a letter she wrote:

To me the outing part of scouting has always been the most important. The happiest part of my own very happy childhood and girlhood was without doubt the hours and days, the sometimes entire months, which I spent in pseudo-pioneering or scouting in our wonderful western mountains with my father in our vacation times. So I cannot but

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<sup>96</sup> Nancy Beck Young, *Lou Henry Hoover: Activist First Lady* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 6-7.

want every girl to have the same widening, simplifying, joy-getting influences in her own life.<sup>97</sup>

Hoover's early interest in the outdoors also influenced her choices as a young woman in college. After graduating from the San Jose Normal School, Hoover chose to enroll at Stanford in 1894 in order to pursue a degree in geology. She believed a study of science combined well with her love of the outdoors.<sup>98</sup> It was in a geology lab class that Lou got to know Herbert, who was studying to be a mining engineer. She was the only girl in the class, and their courtship took place on geology trips.<sup>99</sup>

The opportunities open to Hoover and the actions she took demonstrate the emergence of the New Woman more clearly than the lives of Holmes, Bird, or Oakley. It should be noted that there is danger in suggesting that there was only one sort of American woman. Women were and are a diverse group of people; race and class differences affected their lives. However, there were trends in women's dress and behavior that indicate the emergence of a new gender ideal among women born between the late 1850s and 1900. Men and women must work to maintain belief in gender constructs. When human behavior deviates too far from a construct, a new one must be created or articulated.<sup>100</sup> As women across the nation enrolled in women's colleges and joined women's political and athletic organizations, their behavior drew attention to overlapping gendered space. Because the distinctions between male and female and public and private spaces became increasingly difficult to define, the constructs of separate spheres and True Womanhood no longer applied to women in a believable way. The New Woman emerged as the gender construct that helped people conceptualize

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<sup>97</sup> Lou Henry Hoover Speech, Girl Scouts in Articles, Addresses, and Statements, LHH Subject File, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum. <http://www.ecommcode.com/hoover/hooveronline/lhbio/archive/women/outing.html> (accessed March 27, 2015).

<sup>98</sup> Young, *Lou Henry Hoover*, 9-10.

<sup>99</sup> Virginia Swain, "Weds College Waiter and Laughs at Snobs" *Hutchinson News*, May 15, 1926.

<sup>100</sup> Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds," 26-7.

the gendered changes to women's behavior, relationships, and spaces.

While women did not gain equality with men, there was a shift toward women's increased political involvement and social independence. Women born during this time had access to women's institutions, such as clubs and reform groups, which their mothers' generations built. They used these institutions to expand the opportunities open to them. At the same time, a large number of New Women attended women's colleges and professional training programs. Although women had never lived their lives completely within the domestic sphere, these trained and educated New Women increasingly ventured into public spaces and roles.<sup>101</sup> Until recently, society had gendered these patterns of behavior as male. However, New Women claimed access to them "by the extension, rather than the rejection, of the domestic sphere."<sup>102</sup> The New Women took their newfound political and social power and advocated for greater sexual freedom. New Women asserted increased sexual independence and equality with men in marriage.<sup>103</sup> They advocated for birth control and better reproductive healthcare. They also delayed marriage for longer than their mothers' generations. Some forwent marriage entirely. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg summarized the trend: "In short, the New Women, rejecting conventional female roles and asserting their right to a career, to a public voice, to visible power, laid claim to the rights and privileges customarily accorded bourgeois men."<sup>104</sup>

Hoover was a part of a generation of women which benefitted from those who struggled before. Although Hoover "ignored the ideological wars within the feminist movement in favor of practical work," the previous generation of women activists made her work possible.<sup>105</sup> Hoover was able to attend Stanford without

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<sup>101</sup> Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1985), 176.

<sup>102</sup> Freedman, "Separatism as Strategy," 518.

<sup>103</sup> See Estelle B. Freedman, "The New Woman: Changing Views of Women in the 1920s," *The Journal of American History* 61, no. 2 (September 1974): 373.

<sup>104</sup> Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1985), 176.

<sup>105</sup> Young, *Lou Henry Hoover*, 4-5.

accepting the political role of feminist. Nevertheless, Hoover still worked to expand acceptable roles for women. Unlike Holmes, Bird, and Oakley, she relied on large clubs and organizations, such as the Girl Scouts and the National Amateur Athletic Federation, to increase women's involvement in athletic and outdoor activities. These institutions were already operating when Hoover joined them because previous generations had made women's political work through women's clubs acceptable behavior. Her use of clubs, reform groups, and national organizations reflected broader social changes. The second generation of New Women was more active in women's voluntary organizations.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, Hoover used the gains of the previous generation of feminists in both her personal and political lives.

There were still limitations to women's equality with men, however. After Hoover graduated from Stanford with a geology degree in 1898, she could not get a job. Rather than advocate for reform, Hoover married.<sup>107</sup> As a married woman, Hoover still worked. However, the work she did was unpaid and voluntary. As the wife of an independently wealthy, globetrotting engineer and later as the First Lady, Hoover was upper class. Her class status made her career path possible.<sup>108</sup>

In her work with the Girl Scouts, depression relief, and women's athletics, Hoover blended politics and domesticity by applying the language of True Womanhood to outdoor sport. Nowhere was this more apparent than in Hoover's work with the Girl Scouts. Girl Scouting was a combination of mobility, outdoor adventure, nature appreciation, activism, and domesticity. Girl Scouting activism at once exemplified the New Woman and embraced elements of Victorian femininity because Hoover and other leaders reformed the Girl Scouts as a national organization that helped girls participate in homemaking, athletic, and community-building activities.

During the time she was involved with the Girl Scouts, Hoover helped to take an organization geared toward nature

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

appreciation and transform it into a national organization. She increased the amount of girls participating in outdoor activities by increasing the membership of the Girl Scouts. With Hoover as the Girl Scouts' Honorary President, the leadership implemented a five-year plan to increase membership from 200,000 to 500,000 girls.<sup>109</sup> By 1935, the plan had increased the Girl Scouts' membership by 85 percent, to 382,971 members.<sup>110</sup> Hoover also helped create the Lone Scout program, which allowed girls to become scouts even if they lived in rural communities far from Girl Scout troops.<sup>111</sup> During Hoover's involvement with the Girl Scouts, the organization also increased its membership and involvement among minority girls. As First Lady, Hoover endorsed scholarships for European and Native American girls who wanted to establish troops in Native communities.<sup>112</sup> She also indirectly worked to improve the experience of African American scouts by funding camp fees for poorer girls. She did not do anything to desegregate their facilities, although the discrimination did concern her.<sup>113</sup>

Additionally, the five-year plan reworked the Girl Scouts' governing structure to make it more democratic and less "cliquish."<sup>114</sup> The new Girl Scouts was headquartered in New York City and had four departments for "education, equipment, field, and publications. Regional committees mediated between local councils and the national headquarters."<sup>115</sup> The growth and democratization of the Girl Scouts was part of a shift away from women participating in outdoor sport as exceptional individuals, as exemplified by Holmes, Bird, and Oakley. Instead, the Girl Scouts embodied women's mass participation in outdoor sports. This reflected the emergence of the New Woman because the Girl

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>111</sup> Rebecca Christian, "'Don't Forget Joy!': Lou Henry Hoover and the Girl Scouts," in *Lou Henry Hoover: Essays on a Busy Life*, ed. Dale C. Mayer (Worland, WY: High Plains Publishing Co., 1994), 45.

<sup>112</sup> Young, *Lou Henry Hoover*, 128.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 119.

Scouts allowed girls access to public spaces in larger numbers than ever before.

The Girl Scouts also challenged True Womanhood through the institution's emphasis on sport and self-sufficiency. In addition to the fact that camping and nature appreciation demanded that the girls spend time outside the domestic sphere, some connected the history of the Girl Scouts to non-normative gender behavior. Juliette Gordon Low started the organization in 1912 in Savannah. She modeled it on the English Girl Guides which itself was a model of the English Boy Scouts. When the Savannah scouts participated in activities on their athletic field, they wore bloomers. To "keep from scandalizing passersby," they hung a curtain around the field.<sup>116</sup>

However, when Hoover joined the Girl Scouts in 1917, she engineered a Girl Scout program that justified girl's activism, athleticism, and independence by associating them with domesticity. Hoover's brainchild was the Little House program. Although the Little Houses offered cabins and other facilities for girls to camp and play in, this outdoor appreciation was accompanied by lessons in domesticity.<sup>117</sup> At the Little Houses, girls could practice "cooking, housekeeping, and gardening."<sup>118</sup> However, the historian Nancy Beck Young points out that this emphasis on domesticity was hardly an unaltered repetition of True Womanhood ideology. She writes, "This domestic philosophy was not about restricting women to the home but about using homemaking skills to bring people together in community."<sup>119</sup>

Therefore, Hoover blended public and private behavior and spaces by fusing traditional notions of women's domesticity with community involvement. After the five-year plan brought the Scouts a large organizational base to draw upon, Hoover used her position as First Lady to mobilize the Girl Scouts for grassroots community relief projects during the Great Depression. The scouts became part of the "women's division of the President's emergency committee

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<sup>116</sup> Christian, "Don't Forget Joy!" 41.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>118</sup> Young, *Lou Henry Hoover*, 36.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

for employment."<sup>120</sup> While their activism, community outreach, and mass organization reflect elements of New Woman gender ideals, the forms their relief efforts took harken back to True Womanhood domesticity. Girl Scouts' depression relief work fell into four categories: "food, clothing, medical care, and Christmas relief."<sup>121</sup> Girls largely focused on clothing the poor, feeding babies and schoolchildren, and making Christmas toys for children without any.<sup>122</sup>

Hoover's work with the Girl Scouts helped to justify women's participation in outdoor sport as well as their involvement in politics. In addition to the fact that her status as First Lady was a legitimizing factor for the national organization, the direction in which she took the Scouts incorporated public politics within female space.

## Conclusion

Gender roles do not change over night. Additionally, the delineations between the public and private spheres are not clear. Frequently, these spheres overlap. Although outdoorswomen pushed the boundaries of acceptable behavior for women by participating in sport, they justified this participation by using the language and behavior of Victorian femininity. For some, this was a calculated decision. For others, the use of the very feminine ideal that their actions were otherwise reworking reflected personal preference or a limited understanding of what it meant to be and behave like a woman. Although outdoorswomen were willing to defy gender expectations when it came to athleticism, this did not mean that they were willing to disregard all Victorian notions of what it meant to be feminine.

Nevertheless, over time women's behavior and relationships changed enough that gender constructs shifted away from True Womanhood and allowed space for the New Woman.

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<sup>120</sup> "Thanks Women for Aid Given Unemployed: Mrs. Hoover Talks Via Radio for President," *Chicago Tribune*, March 24, 1931.

<sup>121</sup> Young, *Lou Henry Hoover*, 136.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

The years between 1850 and 1930 were a time of women's increasing political involvement and social independence. During this period, women such as Holmes, Bird, Oakley, and Hoover negotiated acceptable behavior and appearance for women through their participation in outdoor sport. Some women, such as Julia Archibald Holmes, openly accepted the identity of women's rights activist and broadcasted this identity by donning bloomers. Others did not openly declare themselves to be feminists. Yet, looking back on their actions, we cannot say that they were not feminists. Not content with domesticity, outdoorswomen claimed both public and wild spaces as appropriate spaces for women. They did this by camping and fishing, by shooting and skiing, and by scaling mountains in droves. As they did so, they broke records, bested men, and had fun.

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# A Grand Evasion: How Corporations Deprive Workers, Government, and Society by Widespread Tax Avoidance

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## Abstract

Corporate tax avoidance is a growing concern for the stability of America. Corporations are able to avoid paying their dues to society and instead extract economic rents from both workers and the government. This paper will begin by proving that the typical neoclassical assumptions about marginal productivities are flawed and that corporations have wage setting power. The second section will include an analysis of the strategies for and the prevalence of corporate tax sheltering, including a few case studies. The third section will address the negative externalities of tax avoidance on citizens and the government, and the fourth section will culminate the argument with a discussion of possible reform measures, including an extremely creative idea. The goal is to illuminate the irresponsibility of corporate tax avoidance and to encourage cooperative global efforts to redistribute income from the companies who hoard profits to the citizens they take it from.

## Introduction

In *The New Nationalism*, Theodore Roosevelt insightfully claimed, "We think that normally and in the long run the rights of humanity, coincide with the rights of property . . . But we feel that if in exceptional cases there is any conflict between the rights of property and the rights of man, then we must stand for the rights of man" (241). This fundamental notion about the preeminence of humanity over property has noticeably eroded in the last forty years, as capital owners have collected an increasing and disproportionate piece of the nation's output. As Steven Greenhouse, journalist and author of *The Big Squeeze*, observes, "the nation's economic pie is growing, but corporations . . . have not given their workers a bigger

piece" (5). In fact, by 2006, "corporate profits climbed to their highest share of national income in more than six decades, while wages fell to their lowest share since the Great Depression" (Greenhouse 38), a trend that accelerated after the neo-liberal deregulation of corporations and the tax code in the 1970's. The correlation between skyrocketing corporate profits, plummeting corporate tax receipts, and stagnating real wages is not a fluke—rather, the story of modern corporate governance is a story of corporations *looting* both the American government and the American people.

One of the primary mechanisms driving the concentration of corporate profits is large scale, intentional corporate tax avoidance. Given that corporate tax avoidance "promotes social inequality and undermines public confidence in the tax law" (Dowling 179), it seems obvious that the literature of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which dives into corporate ethics and integrity, would focus heavily on the issue. However, CSR "has scarcely begun to question companies in the area where their corporate citizenship is most tangible and most important: the payment of tax" (Christensen, "The Social" 37). Therefore, this paper will attempt to fill the gap in CSR literature and contest that corporate tax avoidance, especially offshore tax sheltering by multinationals, is both socially irresponsible and economically undesirable. This discussion will begin by giving a legitimate reason for undertaking such an endeavor, namely that neoclassical assumptions about marginal productivity are flawed and that redistributive policies are just and necessary. Next, after examining the strategies for and the scope of corporate tax sheltering and evaluating the ramifications of these avoidance strategies on society, this paper will offer a few reforms that the global regulatory community could undertake to change the corporate tax code. Modern corporations have shirked their responsibility to society and tax policy must be overhauled to restore fairness in an environment that regularly places the rights of property over the rights of man.

## A Flawed Neo-Classical Assumption

A foundational variable in neoclassical economic models, the *marginal product of labor* is defined as the additional output obtained from adding an additional unit of labor. Traditional neoclassical models predict that competitive, cost-minimizing, and profit-maximizing firms hiring in a competitive labor market comprised of utility maximizing individuals will be forced to pay a wage equal to each worker's marginal product of labor. These assumptions help to explain why neoclassical economists disapprove of a minimum wage—since competitive labor markets drive the wage to an equilibrium level where the price of labor is exactly equal to the value of labor, minimum wage laws simply interfere with market forces that set a fair wage and that create the highest possible output at the lowest possible cost. Tyler Cowen, economics professor at George Mason and author of the blog “Marginal Revolution,” follows this logic to explain wage stagnation: “The sad reality is that many of these [laid-off] workers you don’t want at all . . . I believe these ‘zero marginal product’ workers account for a small but growing percentage of our workforce” (57). As a dutiful marginalist, Cowen assumes that market forces set wages directly proportional to worker productivity; stagnating wages simply reveal stagnating productivity, an analysis directly in line with neoclassical tenants. This section will endeavor to debunk such an oversimplified correlation between productivity and wages.

Contrary to Cowen’s assertion, evidence actually suggests that real firms do not pay workers their marginal product of labor. Adam Isen, economist at the University of Pennsylvania, conducted an ingenious study to prove this point. After finding instances of accidental employee death in small firms, Isen tracked the immediate changes in both the firm’s payroll and its output. Isen, after adjusting for variance in relative wage levels, geographic location, and decreased tax costs due to lower output, found that firm revenue falls much less than labor costs, “allowing [him] to reject the null hypothesis that workers are paid their marginal product” (3). In fact, Isen writes that “workers are on average paid

no more than 85 percent of their marginal product" (3). This surprising finding, which casts neoclassical assumptions under serious doubt, is affirmed by Robert Frank of Berkley. Frank argues that standard neoclassical predictions are "sharply at variance with pay schedules observed in practice," estimating that "the most productive members within an organization appear to be paid substantially less than their marginal products while the least productive members appear to be paid substantially more" (570). It seems clear, then, that marginal productivity and wages are not as simplistically intertwined as Cowen and the other neoclassicists believe.

The next step in understanding the ramifications of this incongruity is to understand what causes such a discrepancy. Frank and Isen offer a variety of reasons for the difference between wage levels and marginal productivity, a majority of which are natural frictions of a labor market composed of conscious individuals. Frank asserts that workers value the consistency of corporate hierarchies and actually prefer workplaces where wages are determined by tenure and rank instead of productivity (570), while Isen claims that the heterogeneous preferences of workers with regards to location, working conditions, and benefits account for the observed incongruity (25). None of these tensions truly condemn the neoclassical models; they simply overlay some real-world inconsistencies. However, Isen also introduces a far more insidious explanation: "Wielding some amount of market power over their potential workforce, a traditional monopolist faces an upwards sloping supply curve for labor and can set the price" (25). This is the explanation that shatters neoclassical assumptions about productivity—firms, operating with monopolistically competitive power, as nearly all major firms do in practice, have the power to set wages rather than take them. Simply put, firms pay workers less than their marginal product *because they can*, allowing powerful companies to extract economic rents from their labor à la Karl Marx.

Only this rationale can explain the divergence of real wages and corporate profits since the 1970's. As observed by Greenhouse, "From 1947 to 1973, productivity and the average wage rose . . . in tandem, with each roughly doubling. But from 1973 to 2006,

productivity jumped by 83 percent while the average hourly wage essentially remained flat” (39), all while corporate profits have grown to “take the highest share of national income since the government started measuring [it] in the 1920’s” (Porter). These statistics bear out that corporations increasingly deny wage increases because they possess the power to do so, especially in an American economy marked by instability and frequently high unemployment since the 70’s. Workers have the choice between accepting the low wages that corporations set or making nothing, while corporations are incentivized to keep wages as low as possible to maximize profits—quite a noxious combination that directly results in historically high profits and historically low wages. Corporations do not pay workers their marginal product, but instead assert their dominance to reimburse labor only fractionally, destroying neoclassical assumptions about marginal productivities.

While including this discussion of marginal productivities may seem trivial, it is actually foundational for properly justifying corporate tax reform. To rightly argue for changes, it is paramount to determine a motive for doing so. This flawed assumption, and the hands-off policies it encourages, provides one. If corporations were exploiting tax shelters in an effort to pay workers a wage commensurate with their productivity, then the impetus for redistributive tax policy withers. However, if imperfectly competitive firms, as many are in practice, abuse power to manipulate wages, as it appears they do, redistributive policies become vital to ensuring fairness and stability in the labor market. Before suggesting reforms, however, the next section will develop an image of the current environment of corporate tax avoidance in order to suggest that corporations intentionally skirt their tax obligations.

### **Prevalence of and Strategies for Corporate Tax Sheltering**

Corporations not only abuse their market power to pay wages lower than their workers’ marginal productivity, but also to avoid their tax responsibilities to the federal government. Pulitzer Prize winning journalist David Kocieniewski argues that despite an official corporate tax rate of 35 percent in the US, which is higher

than only Japan and is often cited to thwart reform efforts, American corporations actually pay far less taxes than other nations (“US Business”). Corporate taxes account for only “1.3 percent of the nation’s gross domestic product” while “Most industrial countries collect more from companies, about 2.5 percent of output” (Kocieniewski “US Business”). The fraction of federal income maintained by corporate taxes has also collapsed, as Kocieniewski notes: “corporate share of the nation’s tax receipts [has fallen] from 30 percent of all federal revenue in the mid-1950’s to 6.6 percent in 2009” (“G.E.’s Strategies”). Importantly, the drop-off in corporate tax receipts cannot be explained by falling corporate profits, which have doubled since November 2001 and nearly quadrupled since the end of WWII (Greenhouse 5, 41). Corporations pay nearly 40 percent less of their profits in taxes than they did in the post-war period (Porter). Quite simply, corporations pay a historically and globally miniscule amount of taxes, begging the following question: what systemic factors create an environment where such aggressive tax avoidance is possible? This section will contest that globalization of the capital market, which allows corporations to shelter their income internationally, is the main force behind modern corporate tax avoidance.

Admittedly, the US tax code itself must accept some responsibility for falling corporate tax receipts, as the highly complex tax laws filled with loopholes, exemptions, and opacity permit and encourage creative accounting, making US companies the global leaders in tax avoidance (Kocieniewski “US Business”; Dowling 175). However, given that the US tax code has been messy for generations, it appears that something far more powerful and universal has taken place—globalization of the tax market. The rapid and recent increases in communication and information technology make capital a highly mobile asset, allowing corporations to shuffle profits all over the world at the click of a mouse. Rather than domestic tax code shortcomings, accessible global markets “constitute the most serious compliance issues threatening the American tax system” (Desai 145). As the world shrinks, corporations’ power to avoid taxes grows.



Corporations take advantage of a globalized capital market to capitalize on quirky international tax rules by *tax sheltering*. Broadly defined, offshore tax sheltering, also known as profit laundering, tax arbitrage, or the utilization of tax havens, “is the practice of using artificial transactions to shift revenue to low tax countries while recognizing expenses in high tax countries” (Dowling 176). The most common method of tax sheltering is *transfer pricing*, defined as “subsidiaries in different countries [charging] each other for goods or services ‘sold’ within the group” (Wooldridge). The strategy is eloquently simple, especially easy for firms that rely on intellectual property (IP), an asset that is highly mobile and notoriously hard to value. An American corporation, facing a tax rate of 35 percent, “buys” services, IP, or even goods from a foreign subsidiary of itself, counting the domestic expense as a cost that is not taxed. The subsidiary, which, to stress, is just another arm of the same corporation in a different country, counts the transaction as a “sale” and records the transaction value as revenue subject to the tax rate in the foreign country. This tax arbitrage, which is an accounting trick that creates no real value, explains why “the top five countries for American affiliates, measured by jobs, are Britain, Canada, Mexico, China and Germany” while “Measured by reported profit they are the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Ireland, Canada, and Bermuda” (Porter), all countries with highly favorable corporate tax codes. By simply moving profits by sham transactions, corporations shield a large fraction of their income from US taxation.

In addition to transfer pricing, corporations use a second strategy for sheltering that relies on expatriating currency. America does not tax corporate income until it is repatriated into US dollars, allowing corporations to spend and amass cash abroad without ever paying taxes; in fact, “American firms hold \$1.5 trillion overseas, 60% of their total cash” (Wooldridge). Additionally, a strange loophole in the tax code allows corporations to repatriate currency temporarily and tax-free by using “revolving short term loans between head office and subsidiaries to minimize profits” (Dowling 176). This exception considers loans under 60 days long as non-taxable foreign cash holdings—as if the cash never returned to the

country. Corporations use this strategy to “provide a steady flow of liquidity . . . and unbroken funding” (Wooldridge) to their American division by loaning themselves money from foreign subsidiaries. Corporations simply hold their income in a rotating turntable of short-term loans, which is easy given modern technology, in order to finance domestic operations with the company’s own cash but without the burden of paying income taxes. These short-term loan taxing rules combine with transfer pricing regulations to make corporate tax sheltering highly profitable and, unfortunately, quite simple.

A few short case studies, focusing on the behemoth corporations General Electric and Microsoft, drive home the prevalence of these two sheltering methods. Microsoft, based largely on intellectual property, reshuffles income by transfer pricing through subsidiaries in Puerto Rico, Ireland, and Singapore, areas with an average tax rate of just 4 percent (Wooldridge). These three subsidiaries booked 55 percent, or \$15.4 billion, of Microsoft’s 2011 global profit while employing only 2.2 percent of the company’s workforce (Wooldridge). In fact, the subsidiaries’ “1,914 employees generated an eyebrow-raising \$8m of profit each, compared with \$312,000 each for the 88,000 working in the rest of Microsoft” (Wooldridge). By using transfer pricing on IP to shift earnings from technology developed, sold, and consumed in America to low-tax countries, Microsoft shields over half of its profits from American taxes. On the other side of the same coin, G.E, which relies on goods rather than IP, exploits foreign income and loan rules not only to avoid taxes, but to *collect* them. In 2010, G.E reported global profits of \$14.2 billion, but paid nothing in income taxes, instead collecting a \$3.2 billion refund from the government (Kocieniewski “G.E’s Strategies”). In fact, “in the last five years, G.E has accumulated \$26 billion in American profits and received a net tax benefit from the I.R.S of \$4.1 billion” (Kocieniewski “G. E’s Strategies”). As these examples reveal, corporations take advantage of the globalized world to carry out tax sheltering on an unprecedented and highly profitable scale. As the next section will demonstrate, such tax avoidance has far reaching consequences for the global economy.

## Undesirable Domestic and Global Impacts of Corporate Tax Avoidance

Socially irresponsible tax sheltering has a plethora of negative economic consequences. This section will prove that tax sheltering shifts the tax burden to labor, precipitates a race to the bottom in global tax policy, and handicaps government programs. Combined with the previous discussion about marginal productivities, it becomes obvious that corporate tax sheltering harms both society and citizens and must cease.

First of all, not only do corporations extract rents from labor by paying non-neoclassical wages, but they also force workers to bear the brunt of federal taxes. Corporations take advantage of the mobile nature of capital to create state-less income, something that labor does not have the capacity to do. While income taxes are designed to be progressive, corporations have the means to avoid most of their tax burden, making the income tax effectively a regressive tax on labor. In fact, "in 1953 families and individuals paid 59 percent of federal revenues and corporations 41 percent . . . this ratio has now shifted to approximately 80:20 in favour [sic] of corporations" (Christensen, "The Social" 39). Subject to the tangible requirements of human life (that corporations are, of course, not required to uphold) citizens find themselves powerless to dodge taxes like multinationals. Instead, Americans must pay up to support a government deprived of corporate tax revenue, implying that tax avoidance further restricts the real value of wages already under pressure from corporate power over the labor market.

Secondly, tax avoidance encourages global tax competition that no country can stop but all countries suffer from. Reuven Avi-Yonah, director of the International Tax Program at the University of Michigan Law School, focuses heavily on this point. Avi-Yonah argues that developing nations, desperate for capital inflows to spur growth, grant corporate tax breaks in an effort to invite foreign direct investment. In fact, even more developed countries like Ireland find crafting lax tax codes highly profitable due to the taxable corporate income that such codes attract. As a result, nations become competitors in a global tax market, fighting to set

the most inviting corporate tax laws to steal business transactions away from highly developed nations like the US. And the US, in turn, is powerless to impose taxation on corporate foreign income because, if it did, “new multinationals would choose to become residents of jurisdictions that do not tax such foreign source income” (Avi-Yonah 1577). Thus, Avi-Yonah contests, the race to the bottom in corporate tax policy results in a classic multiple-player assurance game: all developed countries would benefit from taxing the foreign holdings of multinationals, but no country is willing to change their laws to do so out of fear of capital flight. The mobility of capital ties the hands of developed nations like the US and forces them to accept a status-quo global environment that emboldens corporate tax avoidance.

The powerlessness of the US government to change the global tax situation plays directly into the third consequence of corporate tax sheltering: the elimination of social welfare programs. It is estimated that the government loses upwards of \$100 billion in tax revenue annually due just to corporate tax sheltering, and this value could be even higher given measurement difficulties (Dowling 176). The government is also forced to spend millions in bureaucratic costs to handle the complexity of corporate tax regulation. The 2010 G.E tax return was 57,000 pages long, and the IRS established permanent offices in two HP facilities and has been continually auditing them since 1962 (Dowling 176). As a result, “globalization and tax competition lead to fiscal crises for countries that wish . . . to provide social insurance” (Avi-Yonah 1576). This externality of tax avoidance is especially detrimental, as social insurance policies are increasingly needed to combat stagnating wages and income inequality. But without tax revenue, such policies become impossible, crippling the effectiveness of government.

In the end, corporate tax sheltering is not a victimless crime—tax avoidance punishes citizens and governments, both of which are increasingly unable to grab hold of ballooning corporate profits. Considering the incongruity between marginal productivities and wages, the prevalence of corporate tax sheltering, and the rippling negative effects of corporate tax avoidance, the problem is clear: corporations have reneged on their

responsibility to workers and society. And, while difficulties persist, the next section will demonstrate that solutions to this insidious problem do exist.

## **Corporate Tax Reform**

After identifying the problems associated with corporate tax sheltering, the challenge becomes developing policies that can combat it—this section will detail both a subtle and a radical proposal. First, however, it is important to consider the work of David Weisbach, professor of law at the University of Chicago, who discusses how substitution effects could render certain genres of tax reform ineffective. Weisbach first notes that tax shelters are, by nature, non-homogenous and widely available. Were the government to outlaw certain types of shelters by specific rules in the tax code, a few corporations might stop sheltering income, but the vast majority would simply substitute a different flavor of tax shelter. Weisbach contests that “it is highly inefficient to attack most shelters, at least on a piecemeal basis” and suggests that a tax code relying on rules would muddy up the tax code and “be subject to easy manipulation” (10, 14). Because corporate accountants are highly flexible and incentivized to avoid taxes, any case by case, rules-based approach would be unable to outlaw every type of sheltering activity, rendering this strategy impractical. Weisbach’s second point touches on the substitution effects of tax reform as they relate to punishments. Weisbach notes that obscenely high sanctions for even minor forms of tax sheltering would probably not discourage major offenders, who have already decided that currently strict ramifications are worth the risk, from continuing their tax avoidance. Weisbach asserts that for “a tax payer who engages in a minor type of evasion . . . [there would be] no incentive to avoid more egregious evasions” (12). In this way, legislating piecemeal rules or boldly high penalties creates substitution effects that negate the impact of such policies. Understanding Weisbach’s cautions lays an important foundation for evaluating potential reforms—for a policy to be effective, it must meet Weisbach’s criteria. Both proposals in this section do just that.

Initially, however, it is essential to note that a meaningful portion of the global community must undertake communal reform if the effects of tax competition are to be overcome. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), comprised of economically powerful nations vulnerable to the abuses of tax sheltering, could have enough clout to impose a meaningful new global tax standard. Encouraging international cooperation is admittedly highly difficult and subject to diverse political pressures; in fact, Christensen notes that “the principal barrier . . . towards achieving these goals [of tax reform] is the lack of political will on the parts of the governments of the leading OECD nations” (“Looting Continues” 193). This fact, however, can also be taken optimistically: under intense revenue pressures and citizen discontent, governments may have no choice but to cooperate, removing the only roadblock to meaningful reform. As Avi-Yonah points out, “international governance is not impossible” (1676), and it is the only way to change the current environment.

Understanding that any proposal must be undertaken on an OECD—if not a global—scale, it becomes possible to discuss reforms, beginning with an approach that operates within the realm of current tax standards. The current tax code, filled with explicit rules and definitions, hamstringing regulatory agencies and forces them to evaluate the form, and not the intention, of transactions. While the crafty transfer pricing abuses of Microsoft are clearly undertaken only to avoid taxes, the ability to make a sale is completely legal, and regulators are unable to use discretion when evaluating these dealings. To combat this, the OECD should adopt a general anti-avoidance rule which “authorizes the tax authorities and the courts to vault substance over form” (Dowling 179). Armed with a legal impetus to use discretion, regulators would be empowered to discount the strict definitions of the law and instead differentiate between transactions made for a business purpose and those made solely to avoid taxes. This simple reform would cut out a mountain of loopholes; allowed a touch of human awareness, the tax code could evolve to combat new offshoring threats without the need for constant retooling. This would immediately increase

corporate tax revenue by rendering all flavors of offshoring for the sole purpose of tax avoidance illegal.

The second, and more radical, solution comes from Edgar L. Feige, Professor Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin, Michele Boldrin, economics professor at the University of Washington in St. Louis, and Harry Huizinga, professor of international economics at Tilburg University. Feige *et al.* suggest eliminating every form of tax worldwide, except for one: the Automated Payment Transaction tax (APT) which would consist of an “automatically assessed and collected . . . flat tax levied on all transactions” (475). This tax would be progressive, since the richest corporations, traders, and individuals carry out “a disproportionate share of total transactions and therefore bear a disproportionate burden of the tax despite its flat rate structure” (475). The APT tax, ironically, relies on the very same technological revolutions that made tax sheltering possible (like computerized payments) to destroy it. Sham transactions, short-term loans, sketchy payments—it does not matter. Every transaction, no matter the motivation, would be automatically and immediately taxed, completely disincentivizing tax sheltering. In fact, under this paradigm, the frequent transactions associated with tax avoidance would actually increase a company’s tax burden. Feige *et al.* estimate that, even if substitution effects decrease transaction volumes by one-half, the APT tax would only need to be around .6% per transaction to maintain revenue neutrality (500). If transactions fell less sharply, which seems likely given the small amount of the tax, or if the tax were increased, the APT could easily increase government revenue. While this proposal is admittedly bold, it washes away the muddled tax code built on complicated rules and replaces it with a transparent, progressive, and automatic system. If nothing else, the APT tax offers a fascinating glimpse into just how radically the tax code needs to be reformed if governments are to overcome tax sheltering.

In the end, either a global anti-avoidance policy or an APT tax could eliminate large swathes of corporate tax sheltering, and both strategies meet Weisbach’s criteria and avoid the pitfalls of setting more rules or heightening punishments. With some careful negotiations between OECD countries, there exist multiple policy

reforms that could curtail corporate tax avoidance and increase government tax receipts worldwide. Governments could then share the wealth with citizens through social insurance policies, effectively redistributing income from corporations whose profits are soaring to workers whose wages are stagnating.

### **Conclusion: Placing the Rights of Man over the Rights of Property Once Again**

After dispelling the neo-classical notion that workers are paid their marginal productivities and evaluating the prevalence of tax sheltering by American corporations, it becomes clear that American companies have reneged on their social responsibilities. Corporate profits have skyrocketed while wages and tax receipts have stagnated or fallen, resulting in a sharp and painful divide in the American economy between capital owners and laborers. The discussion about the causes of income inequality is complex, but it is clear that the wealthiest corporations use tax avoidance to extract rents from both citizens and the government, directly contributing to growing inequality. As a result, "income inequality in the United States is so great that it more closely resembles the inequality of a third world country" (Greenhouse 5). Discouragingly, corporations, by refusing wage increases and shifting the tax burden to individuals, have both created the need for a social safety net and undermined the ability of the government to provide one.

Finally, because the very system of capitalism itself, which values profit-making over all else, endogenously incentivizes private tax avoidance, regulatory steps must be undertaken to tame the profit-maximizing beast. Corporations, whether they like to admit it or not, bear some responsibility for the well-being of the society from which they profit—corporate profit hoarding represents a fundamental breakdown in American notions of fairness and equality that should be counteracted. The American government has a duty to reform the corporate tax code and redistribute the revenue to workers, and weapons like the general anti-avoidance rule or the APT tax are available if America facilitates global cooperation. However, without such changes, the "nation of the



people" will never return to Roosevelt's image of a nation that justly places the rights of man over the rights of property.

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## Le Prix du Sucre

Alanna Courts

Today's society, as many before it, views sugar as the embodiment of pleasure, luxury, and jubilation. Society's infatuation with sugar is seen in the figurative usage of the word sweet, the association of children with sweetness, the belief that sugar makes one giddy, and the necessary presence of sugar at joyous celebrations. What festivity would be complete without the consumption of sugary delights? Yet, the role sugar played in the project of empire and the long-standing effects of the sugar trade tell a bleaker tale of a commodity stained with the blood of humans and marked with the treachery of consumerism. Though numerous commodities, or more specifically cash crops, helped to shape society, sugar is unmatched in its effects on economies, cultures, politics, health, and the environment. The study of the sugar revolution reveals "the transformative power of a single commodity" that is best termed as "crop determinism" (Higman 213). The immense influence of sugar and the similar current cash crop domination expose the power of agriculture in our society and, ultimately, the power of consumers and their desires. The conditions that gave birth to the sugar revolution in the Caribbean and the consequences of commodity globalization display the unparalleled power of sugar in society then and now, as well as the lengths humans are willing to go in order to maintain a consumer-based economy.

Sugarcane was first grown in Asia and the South Pacific and was first domesticated in Indonesia and New Guinea. From there, sugar spread across the globe to other tropical climates through trade routes and subjugations. During the Crusades, Crusaders survived on sugarcane grown in the Muslim territories, which led the invaders to develop a taste for the sweet stalks. Elizabeth Abbott, in her book *Sugar: A Bittersweet History*, states that Crusaders "transformed Europeans into sugar producers" and "also laid the foundation for global conquest" (18). Not long after, the Black Death struck Europe, causing there to be a severe shortage of

laborers and increasing the demand for slaves. In 1441, a Portuguese ship captain sailed along the west coast of Africa and decided to capture a group of natives in order to please the prince of Portugal. This act led to the start of the oversea African slave trade. Several decades later, Cristoforo Colombo voyaged to the Caribbean to inform the Taino people that Pope Alexander VI deemed their land the property of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. Colombo brought with him the sugarcane grown in the Canary Islands. After planting the sugarcane, Colombo noted "how readily it rooted and grew" (Abbott 24). Thus, the seeds for the sugar revolution in the New World were planted (Abbott 11-24).

By the early 1600s, consumption of sugar surpassed the consumption of honey. The uses of sugar ranged from sculptures, used to display power and extravagance, to material for roofs to cures for colds (Abbott 15-16). By this time, sugar wasn't just a commodity for the wealthy. Anyone and everyone had access to the sweetener and its products. According to Russell R. Menard, in his article "Plantation Empire: How Sugar and Tobacco Planters Built their Industries and Raised an Empire," the "annual consumption of sugar in England and Wales stood at just over two pounds per head in the 1660s; by the late 1680s it had reached just over four pounds per capita" (322).

Sugar is known today to be an addictive substance. The addictiveness of sugar no doubt played a large role in its popularity, but the popularity of three other addictive substances paved the way for sugar as a food item in all homes. Coffee, tea, and chocolate emerged as food sources at the same time that planters and merchants cultivated and sold sugar. Coffee, tea, and chocolate are all naturally bitter, but are also physiologically stimulating, just like sugar. The use of sugar turned these already popular products into even more "heavenly brews" (Abbott 50). Sugar also gave a way for low-class workers in Europe to consume more calories for less money (Abbott 50-51). Sugar was able to satisfy the needs of all social and economic classes in Europe. The world stage was set for consumerism, and the addictive, sweet substance was the perfect universal commodity.

The continued mass production of sugar was made possible by the simultaneous, and correlated, boom in the African slave trade. Soon after the Portuguese began kidnapping west African natives and bringing them to Portugal as slaves, the rest of Europe adopted the practice. Slaves in the British territories were mostly used as unpaid labor on sugar and tobacco plantations. Therefore, since the "British Empire owed its life to plantation crops," it also owed its life to the work of slaves (Menard, "Plantation Empire" 312). The work of slaves was so crucial to the success of the British Empire that Menard calls sugar slavery "a rational and efficient use of the available worker" ("Plantation Empire" 318). Menard also explains that the slave trade "earned substantial returns to scale and large profits" (29). B. W. Higman, in his article "The Sugar Revolution," designates sugar slavery as "a rational market choice" (224). Abbott writes that over the course of four hundred years, the African slave traders took "at least thirteen million Africans from their homes and killed upward of two million" (Abbott 77). Of the eleven million that survived being kidnapped from their homes, six million were sold to owners and investors in the sugar industry (Abbott 77). From the beginning of the journey till the end, slaves were degraded, abused, and murdered, all for the consumption of sugar. Before slaves could board the transport ship, they were subject to an examination by a surgeon who "twisted, poked and prodded," which "was designed to degrade as much as to select" (Abbott 77). Abbott records that the slaves who passed the examination were packed onto crowded ships where they were made to sleep in an area filled with their own human excrement (78). Those who survived the voyage were brought to the slave markets where "potential buyers jabbed, squeezed limbs, handled genitals, [and] inspected orifices" (Abbott 80). Slaves were inspected like cattle, and just as cattle were whipped, so were slaves. After buyers purchased the slaves, they were brought back to the plantation and began their training. Slave drivers would whip a disobedient slave or, in some cases, sever a limb to subjugate them. They "simply had to be productive" in order to satisfy the consumer demand for sugar (81). Consumers were ready to pay money for the sweet product

and producers were willing to go to any lengths to provide it, even if it meant the commoditization of people.

The institution of a plantation was complex in its rules, traditions, and social constructs. Higman cites Sidney Mintz when he describes the plantation as “an absolutely unprecedented social, economic, and political institution” (Higman 222). The slaves were divided into specialized work groups called gangs. After being separated into these groups, slaves had “a life expectancy estimated at seven years” (Abbott 87). Some slaves, mostly women, were assigned to work on assembly lines, where they refined sugar from cane juice for eighteen to twenty hours. Because of the dreadful working conditions and unbearably long shifts, many women would fall asleep at the assembly line causing them to fall into the mills meant to crush sugarcane. In order to prevent the slave women from dying by being crushed in mills, overseers would carry a hatchet with them, so that if a slave woman’s body were to get caught in the mill, the overseer could chop off the limb that was stuck (Abbott 88-89). Abbott harkens back to Voltaire’s *Candide* where a Surinamese slave says, “it is at this price that you eat sugar in Europe” (89). Slaves were not only expected to plant, tend to, harvest, and process sugarcane. They were also made to do “before-day jobs” which included shoveling animal excrement and collecting feed for the livestock. Then, they began their work on the fields. The slaves worked until ten in the morning, when they would take a break for lunch, but often slaves had no food and were forced to sneak a slice of sugarcane. If the slaves were caught stealing the crop, they were severely punished. In one particular case, a large plantation owner, Thomas Thistlewood, forced a slave to defecate into another slave’s mouth (Abbott 92-93).

Food on sugar plantations was scarce, except for the massive fields of sugarcane of course. The colonial slave laws required that a minimum amount of meat and fish, rice and flour, and plantains to be rationed to slaves, but these laws were not enforced, so plantation owners often did not abide by the law and were never punished. Abbott writes that most plantations provided their slaves a food allowance of “two or three miserly meals, a breakfast of tassajo-dried, salted beef-and a dinner of plantains and

Indian corn, or a potage of sweet potatoes" (106). The rest of a slave's provisions were expected to be grown and harvested by the slaves themselves from a small patch of dirt near their quarters. Slaves were sometimes also allowed to keep a small amount of livestock. With this food, slaves were able to create their own traditions, some new and some from their homelands. Several plantation owners also allowed their slaves to sell their goods to the owner himself, a neighboring plantation owner, or at a nearby town market (Abbott 106-108). Abbott notes that "ironically, one of the most profitable goods [at the town markets] was sugar" (108). In this way, slaves became consumers and thus; even more essential parts of the world of sugar. Slaves showed persistence by forming their own economic systems, social traditions, and rules, yet these were all structured by sugar. Higman writes that "sugar transformed society in every area it touched," and slaves were the most fitting example of this undeniable truth (228).

Sugar most notably dominated every aspect of a slave's life, but it also dominated the world economically, politically, demographically and technologically, as well as affecting the world population in a more quotidian way. The sugar boom is often called the sugar revolution, because according to Mintz, as quoted by Higman, "'sugar epitomizes the transition from one kind of society to another'" (226). Sugar transformed the world economy by setting up the model for mass production and trade on an ever-growing scale. The desire to produce sugar as efficiently as possible led to major advancements in agricultural technology. As the consumption of sugar doubled and tripled, much of the world's diet changed. The sugar industry also brought the slave trade to an all-time high. This fact reveals aspects of a consumer society that aims to satisfy the needs of paying customers while simultaneously desecrating the lives of millions of others. The political influence of merchants in the early British Empire helped to further shape the world into a consumer-driven society, rather than a human rights-driven society. The purpose of legislation is often thought to be for the betterment of the people, but as seen in the sugar revolution, it is often deliberately intended to benefit those who are willing to pay to protect their interests. In a consumer culture, commodities are the

most vital part of the economic system, no matter the means used to obtain them. The growth of sugarcane also drastically altered the areas where it grew. The slave trade used to support the sugar industry changed the Caribbean demographic from native people to a mix of Africans, natives, Creoles, and white Europeans. The change of demographic, consequently, transformed the local cultures. New traditions, languages, and religions formed from the intermixing of numerous peoples in the Caribbean.

The copious facets of society transfigured by sugar centuries ago are still prominently represented in the present-day world. Perhaps most directly influenced by sugar are our diets, which have increasingly incorporated sugar, causing diet-related diseases to amplify. Far more noticeable are the social effects that the use of slavery has had on race relations, especially due to the spread of African slavery to the United States. The treatment of blacks has yet to fully recover from the dehumanizing institution of slavery. One artist, Kara Walker, made this clear in 2014 with her work titled "A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby" (Smith 2014). The art piece was entirely constructed from sugar in an old Domino sugar factory. The sculpture was shaped like the Egyptian sphinx, but with stereotypically black female features. The sculpture wore a bandana atop its head to remind viewers of a time when slavery was a widely accepted practice.

The consumerist culture that flourished in the sugar revolution still thrives. The importance of this commodity over all else, especially at a low price, can be observed in almost all food industries of today. The technologies spawned to meet sugar demand have also remained and are now used in production of today's cash crops. The "crop determinism" of sugar is also present today, but other cash crops like corn and soy have joined sugar as powerful commodities that influence local, state, and national politics (Higman 213). Though more people today may be aware of the impact that agricultural industries have on politics and society as a whole, just as people present during the sugar revolution, most people today do not know, or simply may not care, how the goods they purchase affect the lives of others. This suggests that a lack of



transparency is at the heart of any consumer-centric system, such as the economic system of most countries today.

From the lands of New Guinea and Indonesia to the Canary Islands and then to the Caribbean, sugar travelled far and took insidious root in societies across the globe. As consumer demand for sugar rose, slave labor emerged, prices fell, and the sugar revolution was born. The boom of the sweet delight became a blood-stained industry that would resonate throughout the world for centuries. Today, the consumer-focused economy and the food industry are modeled after the systems constructed to create the sugar revolution. Societal practices are still influenced by the institution of slavery a century and a half after its abolition. A majority of people continue to be blind to the truth of agricultural practices and power. This is the price that society has paid for the consumption of sugar.

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## Arabella Buckley's Epic: Uniting Evolutionary Epic & Spiritualism to Account for the Evolution of Morals from Mutualism

*Jordan Larsen*

In 1859, Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species (The Origin)*, outlining his theory of evolution through the mechanism of natural selection. With this text, he employed and shaped the genre of evolutionary epic, one of the most significant narrative formats of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Characterized by a progressive synthesis of scientific knowledge covering vast sweeps of time and aimed at readers of variable class, profession, and education, the evolutionary epic became a useful genre for Victorian science writers and popularizers.<sup>1</sup> In his conclusion to *The Origin*, Darwin laid the foundation of the debate over the narrative of evolutionary epic. The final lines of his text read:

Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been and are being evolved.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science: Designing Nature for New Audiences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), Google Books ed., 220.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species By Means of Natural Selection; or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, (London: John Murray, 24 November 1859), 490, accessed November 25, 2015, <http://darwin-online.org.uk>.

We encounter Darwin's epic narrative here: the drama of the "war of nature, from famine and death," full of competition, allows his mechanism, lawful development through natural selection, to result in the "exalted" higher animals, humans. While Darwin's diction provides evidence of his markedly progressive view of evolution, less clear are his convictions of theism or materialism and of mutualism or competition in the epic of evolution. Though he added the phrase "breathed by the Creator" to his second edition of *The Origin* a few weeks after the first edition's publication,<sup>3</sup> whether this edit reflects a theistic understanding of natural selection or an attempt to appease theistic readers and friends remains ambiguous. Subsequent editions of *The Origin* retained the edit, and apologists on each side of the evolutionary epic's theist-materialist debate retained their positions.

All popularizers of evolution following Charles Darwin emphasized either the theistic or materialistic version of the evolutionary epic. While most of his contemporaries interpreted his theory of natural selection as evidence of competition ruling nature, science writer and popularizer Arabella Buckley was the first to characterize Darwin's theory of the evolution of morals as mutualistic rather than materialistic, and she did so through a unique consolidation of evolutionary epic and spiritualism. Barbara T. Gates, a scholar of Victorian women, has pointed out that a commitment to the maternal tradition and social responsibility drove Buckley's contribution to the evolutionary narrative, culminating in her emphasis on the mutuality of nature.<sup>4</sup> Historian of science popularization Bernard Lightman adds that Buckley's spiritualistic beliefs directed her popularization through the genre of evolutionary epic, noting that while Gates provides a detailed account of Buckley's narrative techniques and goals, her exclusion of Buckley's religion restricts her analysis.<sup>5</sup> In light of the conversation between these scholars, I aim to demonstrate that the

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species By Means of Natural Selection; or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, (London: John Murray, 1860), 490, accessed November 25, 2015, <http://darwin-online.org.uk/>.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara T. Gates, *Kindred Nature: Victorian and Edwardian Women Embrace the Living World*, (Chicago: University of Chicago

<sup>5</sup> Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 239.

significance of Buckley's distinctive, mutualistic addition to the debate on the evolution of morals lies in her theory of traducianism, neatly unifying evolutionary epic, mutualism, and spiritualism.

Locating Arabella Buckley's position in the debate over the nature of evolution first requires an examination of the discussion between English naturalists Alfred Russel Wallace and Charles Darwin concerning natural selection's pervasiveness. The co-discoverer of natural selection, Wallace remained one of Darwin's and natural selection's biggest advocates until 1869. In a letter to Darwin dated March 24 of that year, Wallace revealed that he had written an upcoming *Quarterly* article exploring the limitations of natural selection for the first time.<sup>6</sup> His message distressed Darwin, for Darwin responded, "I hope you have not murdered too completely your own and my child."<sup>7</sup>

The anticipated *Quarterly* article was Wallace's review of Sir Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*. At the end of his review, Wallace disclosed his new doubt that natural selection developed the moral and mental capabilities of humans. He wrote, "while admitting to the full extent the agency of the same great laws of organic development in the origin of the human race as in the origin of all organized beings, there yet seems to be evidence of a Power which has guided the action of those laws in definite directions and for special ends."<sup>8</sup> The human body may have evolved through natural selection, he allowed, but the mental and moral natures of humans are too perfect for the mindless mechanism, and must have been directed by a deity. Unable to explain the origin of man

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<sup>6</sup> Alfred Russel Wallace to Charles Darwin, 24 March 1869, Darwin Correspondence Database, accessed December 18, 2015, <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/entry-6681>.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Darwin to Alfred Russel Wallace, 27 March 1869, Darwin Correspondence Database, accessed December 18, 2015, <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/entry-6684>.

<sup>8</sup> Alfred Russel Wallace, review of *Principles of Geology; or the Modern Changes of the Earth and its Inhabitants considered as illustrative of Geology*, by Sir Charles Lyell, *The Quarterly Review* 126, no. 252 (04, 1869): 393, accessed November 25, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/2512425?accountid=12964>.

without the existence of a creator, Wallace presented his transition to a theistic view of evolution.

Darwin, disappointed by Wallace's suggestion of natural selection's limitations, responded by adjusting his work on *The Descent of Man* to more prominently stress his naturalistic account of the evolution of morals. As evidenced by Darwin's addition of "by the Creator" in his later editions of *The Origin* and his support of theistic popularizers of evolution like Asa Gray, Wallace's belief in a creator was not the cause of Darwin's disapproval. Rather, Darwin rejected Wallace's human exceptionalism necessitating divine intervention to design morality. In *The Descent of Man*, published on February 24, 1871, Darwin dedicated a chapter to "Moral Sense." He attributed the evolution of human morals to social instincts, particularly the parental and filial affections, and provided multiple examples of social instincts in the lower animals. Even pelicans, he wrote, demonstrate the noble moral of sympathy by feeding a blind companion.<sup>9</sup> Responding to Wallace's human exceptionalism concerning the evolution of the higher faculties, Darwin penned, "the difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, is certainly one of degree and not of kind," maintaining the lawfulness of natural selection throughout human development. Therefore, unlike Wallace, Darwin concluded that morals are no exception to the laws of natural selection and have descended through the animal kingdom, culminating in human morality.

Out of the gap between Wallace's attribution of the evolution of morals to a creator and Darwin's theory rooted in natural history emerged a middle ground advocated by Arabella Buckley. She was able to advance this position due in large part to her connections to the British scientific scene. Born on October 24, 1840, in Brighton, England, Arabella Burton Buckley was the daughter of John Wall Buckley, a vicar, and Elizabeth Burton

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: John Murray, 24 February 1871), 77, accessed November 25, 2015, <http://darwin-online.org.uk/>.

Buckley, a devout spiritualist.<sup>10</sup> Little is known about her childhood. In 1864, Buckley began a position as secretary for Sir Charles Lyell, a leading geologist of the period and author of *Principles of Geology*, the very subject of Wallace's significant review.<sup>11</sup> Her time with Lyell influenced her place in scientific society, her ideas, and the direction she would take her professional life. Serving as his secretary from 1864 to 1875, Buckley took Lyell's dictation, copied his texts, and managed his correspondence.<sup>12</sup> Lyell's work, particularly his support of uniformitarianism, influenced Darwin as he wrote *The Origin*; Lyell contributed to the leading thoughts on the natural world during the Victorian Period and helped shape Arabella Buckley's conception of natural history.<sup>13</sup> Buckley's introduction to the foremost men of science and exposure to their ideas were significant products of her association with Lyell, for during this time she became acquainted with Charles Darwin, T. H. Huxley, and Alfred Russel Wallace. After Lyell's death, Buckley became a science lecturer, popularizer, and writer. The professional correspondences she maintained with these men and their approval of her subsequent works suggest Buckley's merit in the male-dominated world of Victorian science.

While Wallace and Darwin debated the capacity of natural selection, a review of *Descent of Man (Descent)* titled "Darwinism and Religion" appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* in May of 1871, just three months following the publication of *Descent*. The author, signing the essay with only an A.B., was Arabella Buckley,<sup>14</sup> who argued that the theory of moral sense laid out by Darwin does not compromise the existence of God, the nobility of consciousness, nor the hope for immortality.<sup>15</sup> Buckley supported Darwin's theory

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<sup>10</sup> Barbara T. Gates, "Buckley, Arabella Burton (1840-1929)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/54371>.

<sup>11</sup> Gates, "Buckley, Arabella Burton."

<sup>12</sup> Gates, *Kindred Nature*, 53.

<sup>13</sup> Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 239.

<sup>14</sup> *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* accessed October 15, 2015, <http://wellesley.chadwyck.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/search/search.do>.

<sup>15</sup> Buckley, Arabella B. "Darwinism and Religion," *Macmillan's Magazine*, 1859-1907 24, no. 139 (May 1871): 46, accessed October 15, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/6152934?accountid=12964>.

of the evolution of morals through natural selection and asserted its dignity, denying that this origin leads to a materialistic worldview. Instead, addressing Wallace and others who doubted natural selection's ability to produce the higher faculties of intelligence and consciousness on one hand and materialists such as T. H. Huxley on the other, she reconciled lawful evolution with theology.

With this article, her first published work, Buckley positioned herself between Darwin and Wallace to advocate a middle-ground narrative of evolution. Though Darwin was not a materialist, many of his contemporaries saw him as one; Buckley saw the necessity of writing this essay to emphasize the compatibility of Darwin's evolution of morals with theology. She defied materialists, describing the fallacy of their "supposition that evolution by law, whether organic or inorganic, can dispense with the necessity of a present overruling Creator."<sup>16</sup> Natural selection offered a mechanism for evolution but did not provide a first cause, an origin of life. For Buckley, a creator was necessary as the first cause, and even the scientific advancements of the Victorian Era could not disprove the possibility of a deity.

While rejecting materialists' claims that evolution by natural law discredited a creator, she also rejected theists' claims that a creator discredits evolution by natural law. Likely addressing Wallace and those of his opinion, Buckley recognized that "many who would concede without hesitation the evolutionary origin of their bodily frame, shrink with great pain from such a derivation of their mental and moral nature."<sup>17</sup> An evolution by natural selection for the body but creation by God for the mind and morals – Wallace's argument in his review of Lyell – does not follow the laws of nature. Like Darwin, Buckley maintained that "the foundation of our consciousness is made to rest upon the purest of instincts: that of the parental and filial affection, while the powers through which it has been developed all arise out of a network of laws."<sup>18</sup> Unlike Darwin, however, she asserted that a theory of lawful natural selection does not disprove immortality. She argued that just as

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<sup>16</sup> Buckley, "Darwinism and Religion," 47.

<sup>17</sup> Buckley, "Darwinism and Religion," 46.

<sup>18</sup> Buckley, "Darwinism and Religion," 46.

God indirectly created the human body by gradual development through the animal kingdom, so too has He indirectly created the human soul, which developed and continues to develop consciousness, morals, and immortality along the way, she argued.<sup>19</sup> For her, a spiritual first cause is necessary, but not for divine intervention in human development. Thus, natural selection holds as a consistent law of nature while remaining compatible with theism.

In the final section of "Darwinism and Religion," Buckley applauded Darwin's novel exploration of morals through the lens of natural history, emphasizing his unification of the rival intuitive and utilitarian moralists through his philosophy of the natural selection of morals. Natural selection follows a "principle of utility in the strictest sense, but of utility founded upon an instinct of unknown origin as pure and devoid of self-seeking as the intuitionist can desire."<sup>20</sup> If, as Darwin believed, morals are developed from parental and filial affections, mutualism is the rule of nature, not competition. Buckley assured theists and others that they need not worry about evolution's selfishness, the sense of survival of the fittest being popularized by others, for the good of the community is the origin and aim of our noblest moral nature. Publishing her essay just three months following *Descent of Man*, Buckley was the first to advocate a mutualistic reading of Darwin's work.

Arabella Buckley first revealed her evolutionary narrative through "Darwinism and Religion," demonstrating an emphasis on theism and mutuality while maintaining natural selection's lawfulness and situating her ideas between the arguments of Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace. Following "Darwinism and Religion" and her position as Lyell's secretary, Buckley focused her time as a science lecturer, popularizer, and writer. Her works were well reviewed by her contemporaries, who noted their "liberal, while also reverential"<sup>21</sup> and "wholesome" tone and recommended

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<sup>19</sup> Buckley, "Darwinism and Religion," 50.

<sup>20</sup> Buckley, "Darwinism and Religion," 51.

<sup>21</sup> Review of *Winners In Life's Race*, by Arabella Buckley, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), originally published in *The American Naturalist*, vol. 18, No. 1 (01, 1884), 49, accessed September 17, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2450821>.



their use in schools.<sup>22</sup> Buckley's first book, *A Short History of Natural Science* (1876), offered an outline of numerous branches of science with the characteristically evolutionary epic aims of educating and peaking the interest of readers. Her following texts were more imaginative, though still dedicated to education, particularly that of children. In *The Fairyland of Science* (1879) and its sequel *Through Magic Glasses* (1890), Buckley "instructs children in the wonders of a science that should seem to them as magical the wonders of a fairyland, and far more accessible."<sup>23</sup> As Barbara T. Gates describes in *Kindred Nature*, Buckley urged young readers to employ not only their observation skills but also their imaginations in the study of natural history. Buckley paralleled the magic of fairies and magicians with the power of science and scientific understanding. Drawing upon the idea that contemporary and revisable scientific theory is, like a fairy story, a fiction based in human imagination, she created narratives that transcend human sensory experience to describe to children the scientific phenomena that often transcend human sensory experience.<sup>24</sup>

"Darwinism and Religion" demonstrated Buckley's theistic evolutionary narrative, but Gates argues that Buckley's evolutionary narrative, driven by a commitment to the maternal tradition, is principally mutualistic. Gates describes Buckley as "a knowledgeable and authoritative popularizer of science who also accepted the woman's social responsibility to teach morality to the uneducated and the young."<sup>25</sup> In addition to *Fairyland of Science* and *Through Magic Glasses*, Buckley penned *Life and Her Children* (1881), *Winners of Life's Race* (1882), and *Moral Teachings of Science* (1891). These titles alone offer an idea of Buckley's progressive, mutualistic comprehension of evolution, but Gates further demonstrates Buckley's commitment to mutuality through both her content and literary conventions.

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<sup>22</sup> Review of *Life and Her Children*, by Arabella Buckley, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), originally published in *The American Naturalist*, vol. 18, No. 3 (03, 1884), 274, accessed September 17, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2450775>.

<sup>23</sup> Gates, *Kindred Nature*, 52.

<sup>24</sup> Gates, *Kindred Nature*, 57.

<sup>25</sup> Gates, *Kindred Nature*, 51.

Though Darwin first suggested the evolution of morals as arising from the social instinct of parental and filial affection, Buckley was the first to overtly emphasize parenting and mutualism in shaping the higher faculties of man, Gates argues. In *Winners of Life's Race*, the title referring to the vertebrate animals, Buckley wrote, "The great moral lesson taught at every step in the history of development of the animal world [is] that amidst toil and suffering, struggle and death, the supreme law of life is the law of SELF-DEVOTION AND LOVE."<sup>26</sup> This sentence resembles Darwin's conclusion to *The Origin*, in which he stated, "from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows." This parallel provides more evidence of Buckley's popularization of Darwinian evolution, with a "pioneering" emphasis, as Gates would attribute to her,<sup>27</sup> on mutualism. Buckley filled her books with stories of sympathy in nature, detailing, for example, the loyalty of pet snakes, in an effort to educate children in both morals and natural history. With this goal of a moral and natural history education for children, Gates claims, Buckley follows in the Victorian maternal tradition of science popularization by women for children. Buckley modified this tradition, however, through her masterful use of the evolutionary epic.

While Charles Darwin did much to shape the evolutionary epic, it was already a popular genre among Victorian science popularizers. In the introduction to "The Evolutionary Epic," David Amigoni and James Elwick reveal how "by telling stories about development, the epic format helped legitimize evolution with popular audiences,"<sup>28</sup> particularly the children Buckley wrote for. Amigoni and Elwick outline the characteristics of the genre of evolutionary epic as progressive and rhetorical, featuring deep

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<sup>26</sup> Arabella Buckley, *Winners of Life's Race, or The Great Backboned Family*, (London: Edward Stanford, 1882), 353.

<sup>27</sup> Gates, *Kindred Nature*, 61.

<sup>28</sup> David Amigoni and James Elwick. Introduction to "The Evolutionary Epic," edited by Amigoni and Elwick. Vol. 4 of *Victorian Science and Literature*, edited by Gowan Dawson and Bernard Lightman, ix-xxi. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), xv.

time, competition, and the division of labor.<sup>29</sup> Though Barbara T. Gates does not specifically use the term evolutionary epic, she describes Buckley's use of its characteristics in her argument for Buckley's mutualism.

With respect to progressivity, Buckley's writing fits the description: Gates details her narratives of nature, with the backboned animals cast as epic heroes, the winners of life's race. Buckley, like Darwin, believed that human form and human consciousness are nobler than those of the lower animals, and did not focus on degeneration through evolution. Gates also makes a case for Buckley's use of deep time. She argues that Lyell likely influenced Buckley's incorporation of deep time and non-human narration, because he played with scope and perspective in order to communicate the great expanses of geology.<sup>30</sup> An account of evolution must address a long range of time and cover a wide range of disciplines, and Buckley achieved both by employing strategies of fiction, as in *The Fairyland of Science*, and by shifting narration outside of the human perspective, as in *Life and Her Children*. While Buckley believed that mutualism, not competition, ruled nature, she acknowledged that competition drove progress. As part of the progressive evolutionary epic, competition presents the drama of a struggle resulting in triumph, similar to the narrative of literary epics. Amigoni and Elwick also point out the characteristic division of labor, and how some popularizers argued that the division of labor regarding sex played a role in the maternal development of sympathy,<sup>31</sup> a sentiment Buckley would likely support based on her attribution of morality to parental and filial affection.

Buckley included each of these characteristics of evolutionary epic in her writing, but the one most pertinent to Gates' argument for mutuality is the epic's rhetorical nature. The rhetoric of epic is manifest in the personification of nature, use of metaphors, and appeals to historicity.<sup>32</sup> Gates describes how

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<sup>29</sup> Amigoni and Elwick, "The Evolutionary Epic," xv.

<sup>30</sup> Gates, *Kindred Nature*, 53.

<sup>31</sup> Amigoni and Elwick, "The Evolutionary Epic," xvii.

<sup>32</sup> Amigoni and Elwick, "The Evolutionary Epic," xix.

Buckley personified life, giving it a maternal, sympathetic quality in *Life and Her Children*. Similarly, parenting was a central metaphor for Buckley, and she found ways to express the parallel of mutualism in nature to mutualism in human society. Appealing to historicity, Buckley attempted to convince her readers of the value in learning about the development and origins of an object, convinced that an understanding of the origins of social instincts leads to the comprehension and enhancement of morals. As Amigoni and Elwick reveal, utilizing the genre of evolutionary epic helped popularizers engage their audiences; Gates shows that the epic format also helped Buckley demonstrate the mutuality of evolution and educate readers in the maternal tradition.

Arabella Buckley's evolutionary narrative was decidedly mutualistic, but was it pioneering, as Gates claims? Historian of science Thomas Dixon contends in *The Invention of Altruism* that Buckley's "moral categories and evolutionary explanations are essentially Darwinian" and notes that he differs from Gates in her assertion that Buckley's account of sympathy was innovative and corrective with respect to Darwin.<sup>33</sup> He allows that Buckley went beyond Darwin in her emphasis on parenting and theology, but he denies her originality, stating, "like him, she did not offer any account of the primal origins of these affections."<sup>34</sup> However, Buckley's unique perspective to the debate over the evolution of morals may be found in the innovative way she related evolution to religion, a topic Gates leaves out of her argument. Though Gates offers a detailed account of Arabella Buckley's evolutionary narrative as characterized by mutualism and the genre of the epic, she fails to address the overwhelming influence of Buckley's religion, spiritualism.

As scientific advancements of the nineteenth century undermined the foundations of traditional religion, Victorians increasingly turned to spiritualism for comfort and answers about

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<sup>33</sup> Thomas Dixon, *The Invention of Altruism: Making Moral Meanings in Victorian Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 64.

<sup>34</sup> Dixon, *The Invention of Altruism*, 64.

death and the afterlife.<sup>35</sup> In *An Elusive Victorian*, Martin Fichman defines spiritualism as a “belief that departed souls...could influence and communicate with humans, usually through a medium by means of physical phenomena or during unusual mental states such as trances.”<sup>36</sup> While many Victorians viewed spiritualism as occult, radical and unscientific, numerous men and women of science and high society were spiritualists during the nineteenth century. In fact, some of the most important communication technologies such as the telegraph arose from efforts to communicate with the afterlife.<sup>37</sup> Several men of science tried to marry science and spiritualism through psychical research, aiming to establish a scientific foundation for the phenomena and claims they witnessed at séances and from mediums. Fichman claims that spiritualism was a “vehicle for mediating between the often competing claims of traditional religions and modern science,” and could be “epistemologically significant, politically influential, and emotionally rewarding.”<sup>38</sup>

One of the most notable spiritualists of the scientific world was naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace. According to Fichman, Wallace “considered spiritualism as a fruitful standpoint from which to explicate the broader meaning of evolution, particularly at the moral and intellectual level,” and viewed natural selection and spiritualism as “mutually supportive elements in the grander scheme of things.”<sup>39</sup> In his correspondence with Charles Darwin, he attributed his change of belief in natural selection’s pervasiveness to his encounters with Spiritualism.<sup>40</sup> The séances he observed with a critical eye, he always noted, led him to maintain that a higher spiritual power guided human evolution. However, a rejection of

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<sup>35</sup> *Science and the Séance*, BBC, video, 59:06, broadcast August 31, 2005, accessed September 25, 2015. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_fDnV31J30](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_fDnV31J30).

<sup>36</sup> Martin Fichman, *An Elusive Victorian: The Evolution of Alfred Russel Wallace*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 139.

<sup>37</sup> *Science and the Séance*, BBC.

<sup>38</sup> Fichman, *An Elusive Victorian*, 140.

<sup>39</sup> Fichman, *An Elusive Victorian*, 159.

<sup>40</sup> Alfred Russel Wallace to Charles Darwin, 24 March 1869, Darwin Correspondence Database, accessed December 18, 2015, <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/entry-6681>.

lawful natural selection did not always follow a belief in spiritualism, for Arabella Buckley herself was a spiritualist.

While Barbara T. Gates' examination of Buckley's mutualism and rhetorical strategies provides a detailed argument for the evolutionary narrative Buckley constructed, Gates' exclusion of Buckley's spiritualism restricts her analysis. In his 2007 *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, historian of science Bernard Lightman investigates Buckley's religion and demonstrates that it informed and encouraged her work on popularizing and writing about evolution.<sup>41</sup> He asserts that scholars have mistakenly ignored Buckley's spiritualism, for "if the subtext of Buckley's works is connected to her spiritualist leanings, then her entire conception of the evolutionary epic will be seen in a different light."<sup>42</sup> Though Wallace was better known as a spiritualist, Lightman claims it was Buckley who played the leading role in uniting spiritualism and the evolutionary epic. For the details in which Gates demonstrates mutualism, Lightman makes a case for spiritualism. Buckley infused her mutualistic epic with a theology of nature, evident in her stories of morals and virtues in animals. Her anthropomorphization of life, such as *Life and Her Children*, reflects her proposed process for the evolution of morals involving the spirit, or life principle.<sup>43</sup> In *Moral Teachings of Science*, she discussed immortality and referred to souls as spiritually uniting all life through evolutionary connections, an innovation not gleaned from Darwin and one that goes undiscovered by neglecting Buckley's religious life and thought. Without an understanding of her spiritualism, as Lightman asserts, Buckley's evolutionary narrative is incomplete.

In addition to writing about spiritual evolution, Arabella Buckley explored spiritualism through experiences with mediums and séances, and through correspondence with spiritualist family and friends. Introduced through Lyell, Buckley maintained correspondence with leading men of Victorian science such as Thomas Henry Huxley, Darwin, and Wallace even after Lyell's death.

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<sup>41</sup> Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 239.

<sup>42</sup> Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 239.

<sup>43</sup> Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 250.

As the first two men disapproved of spiritualism, she kept her spiritualist convictions out of her letters to them. Many members of scientific society criticized Wallace for his active spiritualism; Lightman argues that Buckley concealed her beliefs from Lyell, Darwin, and Huxley to maintain her credibility as a scientific author.<sup>44</sup> Throughout *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, Lightman references Buckley's ambiguity and her secrecy concerning her spiritualistic beliefs. Lightman uses a November 14, 1880 letter from Darwin to Buckley to demonstrate Darwin's conviction that Buckley held "ambivalent" religious views similar to Darwin's at this point in time, and to further suggest that Buckley hid her true religious beliefs.<sup>45</sup> In the letter, Darwin praises Buckley's evolutionary epic *Life and Her Children* and goes on to say, "it will be a very savage heretic-hunter who will persecute you. I daresay that you will escape, and you will not be called a dangerous woman."<sup>46</sup> It may be a stretch to believe this comment is enough to claim that Darwin understood Buckley's religious tone to be falsified for the sake of popular approval. After all, Buckley sent Darwin a copy of *Life and Her Children*, a text that both Gates and Lightman have shown to be saturated with mutualism and spiritualism. Buckley's works and correspondence demonstrate that she laid her spiritualism out quite openly and simply left it out of her personal correspondence if her correspondent did not engage it.

Though Buckley's correspondence with Darwin focused primarily on popularizing evolution, fellow spiritualists Buckley and Wallace openly corresponded over spiritualism from 1863 to 1913.<sup>47</sup> In their letters, they discussed séances, the skills of mediums, and spiritual literature, and debated the scientific validity of spiritualism. Wallace credited Buckley as being his closest friend during this period. He trusted her more than anyone else, Fichman reveals, and confided in her alone about his financial hardships; Buckley subsequently worked with Darwin to secure a civil service pension

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<sup>44</sup> Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 239.

<sup>45</sup> Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 252.

<sup>46</sup> Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 252.

<sup>47</sup> Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 242.

for Wallace.<sup>48</sup> Their bond is particularly evident in a letter written to Wallace by Buckley on April 25, 1874. Wallace's six-year-old son Bertie had just died from scarlet fever. Buckley offered her condolences, and then shared a spiritual communication she may have had with Bertie. She was careful, prefacing with "I should hesitate to send so soon after your loss if I did not know that you are able to balance probabilities and take it for what it is worth."<sup>49</sup> The communication she received as medium suggested that Bertie was well and was being watched over by deceased relatives. She continued, respectful but optimistic, "How wonderful it is how completely Spiritualism alters one's idea of death!" This correspondence demonstrates the comfort spiritualism brought to family members of the dead and helps explain the surge in spiritualism during and after war. Wallace and Buckley maintained communications until Wallace's death in 1913.

Though they discussed spiritualism as close friends and admired each other's work, Wallace and Buckley did not maintain the same spiritualistic beliefs. Buckley detailed her form of spiritualism in an 1879 essay titled "The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution." In this significant article, she offered a more fleshed out position on spiritualism informed by science. Bernard Lightman notes this article as furthering her spiritual evolutionary epic, but he falls short in demonstrating its importance in outlining a unifying theory for the evolution of the moral faculties.

In "The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution," Buckley first noted that materialists are unable to show how molecular action can produce consciousness, an argument similar to the one in her "Darwinism and Religion" essay eight years earlier. The mechanism of natural selection reinforced the theory of evolution, but many questions about the origin of life and consciousness remained unanswered. She proceeded to discuss how the spiritualist accounts for the origin and nature of consciousness. The spiritualist

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<sup>48</sup> Fichman, *An Elusive Victorian*, 181.

<sup>49</sup> A.B. Buckley to A.R. Wallace, 25 April, 1874, "Wallace Letters Online." *Natural History Museum*. Accessed December 18, 2015. <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/research-curation/scientific-resources/collections/library-collections/wallace-letters-online/519/519/B/details.html>



"assumes that man has a dual nature, consisting of a soul or spirit united to a bodily organism," she quickly established.<sup>50</sup> However, spiritualists have no more evidence of a first cause than materialists; various doctrines explaining the nature of consciousness must then be tested to eliminate erroneous theories. Buckley, well versed in scientific discourse, noted that tests may only help eliminate error rather than provide a positive conclusion,<sup>51</sup> evidence of her attempt to legitimize spiritualism through science, the goal of many psychical researchers. Buckley offered three options for the origin of the soul, each considered at some point within sects of the Christian Church: creationism, metempsychosis, and traducianism.

The first mechanism for the origin of the soul, creationism, declares that a deity creates a soul to be joined to each new body. Creationism is the doctrine endorsed by the Church of England and most Christians worldwide and the doctrine Wallace appeared to favor with his belief in spiritualism necessitating divine intervention. However, Buckley swiftly found fault with it. For her, the special creation of individual souls did not hold with a beneficent God nor the laws of evolution or thermodynamics. A beneficent God would not create an impure soul with original sin and mental deficiencies; creationism is thus incompatible with theodicy, another tenet of the church.<sup>52</sup> In an additional appeal to scientific authority, Buckley maintained that soul creation does not align with the laws of thermodynamics, because individual existence cannot continue to increase. Further, it does not fit with evolution, for at what point could the soul be transferred, and how could a child resemble her parents in ability and temperament if a deity specially creates each soul? Buckley concluded that "the whole series of facts which were incomprehensible on the theory of soul creation now find their natural explanation in evolution, as a compound of the inheritance and accumulated experiences of each new individual."<sup>53</sup> She rejected creationism as the mechanism for the origin of the soul.

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<sup>50</sup> Arabella B. Buckley, "The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution." *The University Magazine*, 1878-1880 3, (01, 1879): 2. Accessed October 15, 2015. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/6977006?accountid=12964>.

<sup>51</sup> Buckley, "The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution," 2.

<sup>52</sup> Buckley, "The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution," 2.

<sup>53</sup> Buckley, "The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution," 6.

The next option Buckley presented was metempsychosis, the belief that souls “existed from the beginning of all things, and have passed successively through many bodily forms, being released from an organization at its dissolution only to enter after a time into another and newly-born creature.”<sup>54</sup> This originally Eastern doctrine of metempsychosis found favor with the ancients as well as some contemporary philosophers, including William Knight, professor of moral philosophy at St. Andrews in Scotland.<sup>55</sup> Knight argued that the transmigration of souls, or renewal of existence, is the only explanation for the origin of souls compatible with theodicy, immortality, and science.<sup>56</sup> Reincarnated souls suffer or thrive based on how they lived their past life, and an immortality founded on the transmigration rather than constant increase of new souls fits with thermodynamics. But metempsychosis fails Buckley’s test concerning the laws of inheritance. “The necessity of a previous existence to account for the peculiarities and weaknesses of our nature cease to exist...if we assume that the whole of our being at birth is the result of the inheritance of the experiences of all who have gone before us,” she argued against metempsychosis.<sup>57</sup>

Therefore, traducianism, the inheritance of the life principle, or soul, from one’s parents, remained as Buckley’s mechanism for the origin of soul and the evolution of morals. Buckley united evolution and theology by concluding that the life principle, or spirit, is passed from animals to their offspring, drawing experience and individualization from each generation. As she explained, “if we allow the whole being of a child to be inherited from his parents, the possible combinations are so infinite that we have a sufficient explanation of all sudden varieties; and it is not only unnecessary, but irrational, to call in a previously developed soul to account for mental characteristics.”<sup>58</sup> These mental characteristics, as well as morals, are localized and transmitted through the soul and evolve

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<sup>54</sup> Buckley, “The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution,” 2.

<sup>55</sup> William Knight, “The Doctrine of Metempsychosis,” *Fortnightly Review* 1865-1934 24, 141 (09, 1878): 425, accessed October 9, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/2466152?accountid=12964>.

<sup>56</sup> Knight, “The Doctrine of Metempsychosis,” 440.

<sup>57</sup> Buckley, “The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution,” 4.

<sup>58</sup> Buckley, “The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution,” 6.

through lawful natural selection. Buckley supported her conviction from 1871 that Wallace need not reject the lawful development of human morality through evolution by her acceptance of and revisions to traducianism.

Compatible with the sciences of evolution and thermodynamics as well as theodicy and an immortality gradually developed through the animal kingdom, traducianism passed Buckley's scrutiny. She also appealed to religious authority, stressing that early fathers of the church held beliefs in traducianism too. Tertullian, St. Gregory, and St. Augustine advocated it, though the church later condemned it for implying materiality of the soul.<sup>59</sup> She admitted that the early church would not favor traducianism's alliance with evolution because evolution only slightly differentiates the moral and mental nature of humans and lower animals, but she contended that the modern church should find no fault with traducianism, particularly because it requires a first cause that she believed was spiritual and theistic.<sup>60</sup> While Buckley's spiritualism did not align with typical Christian creationism, she demonstrated that traducianism is compatible with both religion, Christian or otherwise, and evolution, even maintaining the pervasive lawfulness of natural selection. An analysis of her evolutionary epic is not complete without a synthesis of her ideas on mutualism, the evolutionary epic, and spiritualism.

In traducianism, Buckley finally found a mechanism for the reconciliation of the evolution of morals and religion. Just as the human body evolves gradually from the lower animals, she theorized, so too has the soul been evolving and individualizing, gradually progressing in moral and mental power and capacity for immortality. Her theory is original and comprehensive, addressing numerous scientific and social questions of the Victorian Period. However, the term traducianism appears nowhere in modern scholars' analysis of Buckley, and most discount her spiritualism. In light of the conversation between scholars Gates and Lightman, I argue that the significance of Buckley's distinctive, mutualistic

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<sup>59</sup> Buckley, "The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution," 6.

<sup>60</sup> Buckley, "The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution," 7.

addition to the narrative on the evolution of morals initiated by Darwin lies in her theory of traducianism, neatly unifying evolutionary epic, mutualism, and spiritualism.

Buckley best demonstrated this unification in "The Soul, and Theory of Evolution" when she concluded, "If, then, we can conceive permanent impressions accumulating through countless generations of animals, leading to developed instincts, emotions, and passions, and thus on to the complex nature of man, who through savage life gains new experiences; then the upward struggle, with all its difficulties and pain, finds an explanation and a moral justification."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Buckley, "The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution," 8.

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## Space and the Psychology of Personality Types: How Personality Influences Reactions to Architectural Space

*Chase Miller*

Researchers in both architecture and psychology agree that open office plans can have significant negative consequences for employees. This, though, is where universal agreement ends: researchers in both fields have struggled to identify specific and repeatable negative effects of open offices. Some studies have linked open plans to privacy concerns and decreased job satisfaction (Oldham & Brass, 1979, p. 267; Brennan et al., 2002, p. 279), but others have found better communication and increased job satisfaction for some types of employees (Zalesny & Farace, 1987, p. 253). Employee reactions to open office spaces seem to vary by task, organizational status, age, and a myriad of other factors, which makes it difficult for architects to determine how offices should be designed.

The mixed results on open offices are indicative of larger problems in the environment-behavior field. Psychological research should inform architectural design solutions, but before that can happen, communication between architectural and psychological researchers must improve. The environment-behavior discipline provides a forum for this communication, but current research in the field is published in several different journals and interested parties are unlikely to see all relevant studies. For example, environment-behavior researchers often ignore purely psychological research that might be relevant to their studies of behavior and perception.

This paper reviews literature on open offices and personality characteristics to illustrate how psychological research can enhance environment-behavior research. Psychological research suggests that personality dimensions like introversion/extraversion may explain mixed responses to open offices, but personality factors are largely ignored in existing environment-behavior studies. Architects strive to design specifically for their clients and occupants, but are often forced to

guess about how occupants will respond to a space. Improved communication between designers and psychologists may lead to better understanding of how different people react to the same architectural spaces.

## Open Offices

Studies of open offices illustrate problems with the environment-behavior field, and psychological research on personality can help researchers better understand mixed results from these studies. Studies of open offices in the environment-behavior field often reach conflicting conclusions that could be better understood if architectural researchers took personality differences into account when designing studies and analyzing results. The idea that architectural research often produces conflicting results on open offices is not new: in 1986, *Building Design and Construction* editor Christopher Olson wrote that research on open office plans led to mixed conclusions about productivity and employee satisfaction (p. 90). Similarly, researchers have presented the idea that these mixed results may be related to social and psychological variables. For example, Dan Soen warned that in studying the effects of environment on social structure, researchers must not forget that social structure also alters the physical environment (1974, p. 44). Intuitively, perceived office environments are highly dependent on the personalities of the people working in them, but environment-behavior research has largely ignored personality factors in studies of open offices. Instead, researchers have tried to develop theoretical frameworks that explain and predict general reactions to open offices.

## Theoretical Perspectives on Open Office Plans

Three conflicting theoretical perspectives on open offices influence interpretation of mixed research results. In general, the 'social relations' perspective emphasizes open offices' potential to foster workplace communication and personal relationships, and the 'sociotechnical' approach argues that the lack of acoustical and

visual barriers in open offices prevent meaningful interactions that can only happen in private spaces. The 'symbolic meaning' perspective focuses less on communication and privacy, and explores physical status symbols as determinants of employees' reactions to spatial characteristics.

A 1979 study by Greg Oldham and Daniel Brass outlined the social relations perspective on open offices. Oldham and Brass explained that proximity encourages interaction, which increases attraction and task productivity (1979, p. 269). Judging by the popularity of open offices, this perspective has been the dominant one: a lack of visual barriers will encourage people to share work-related and personal information, which will increase their job performance and allow them to form friendships at work. Oldham and Brass note that while empirical research has shown that open plans do encourage more social interaction and better communication, it has been difficult to link open office characteristics to work performance or job satisfaction (1979, p. 269).

Rashid, Wineman, and Zimring analyzed two open-plan offices and found, as predicted by the social relations perspective, that increased accessibility and visibility led to more face-to-face interaction (2009, p. 444). Like Oldham and Brass, though, the authors found that increased accessibility, visibility, and face-to-face interaction did not have statistically significant impacts on job satisfaction (2009, p. 445). While some conditions in open offices are consistent with the social relations perspective, the framework does not explain why increased interaction and visibility do not lead to increased job satisfaction.

Despite the intuitive appeal of the social relations perspective, Oldham and Brass found more support for the sociotechnical approach. Consistent with sociotechnical theory, an organization's move to an open plan office resulted in fewer friendship opportunities, less supervisor feedback, lower concentration, and lower task significance (Oldham and Brass, 1979, p. 278). Work satisfaction, interpersonal satisfaction, and internal motivation also declined, as predicted by sociotechnical theory (Oldham and Brass, 1979, p. 278).



Also consistent with the sociotechnical framework, Brennan et al. found that a move from a traditional office to an open one decreased satisfaction and perceived productivity (2002, p. 279). The move also created more physical stress and strained coworker relations, and there was no evidence that employees adapted over time to view the open office more favorably: six months after the move, dissatisfaction and stress were at their highest (Brennan et al, 2002, p. 293).

While there is certainly evidence to support the sociotechnical perspective, there are other explanations for these negative outcomes after a move to an open office. Oldham and Brass did collect data twice after the move, but they allow that dissatisfaction in the short term could be due to change, and not the environment itself (1979, p. 281). Brennan et al. found that dissatisfaction still existed six months after the move, but it may simply take more than six months for employees to adjust to changes in office plan (2002, p. 293). The results could also have been affected by changed organizational practices or perceived status of employees after the move.

Mary Zalesny and Richard Farace argue for a symbolic meaning approach to understanding office environments. Zalesny and Farace found that a move to an open office affected professionals least and clerical and managerial staff most (1987, p. 240). This result contrasts with Sundstrom, Burt, and Kamp's study (1980, p. 114), which found no difference in a move's effect on different types of employees and tasks. Zalesny and Farace explain that physical environments convey information about organizational and personal status (1987, p. 242), so from a symbolic meaning perspective, open plans distribute status symbols throughout the organization, which is good for lower level employees but bad for higher level ones (1987, p. 243). Higher level employees may perceive the loss of private offices "as a symbolic loss of status and the accompanying right to greater privacy" (Zalesny & Farace, 1987, p. 253). From this point of view, higher level employees experience lower job satisfaction not because privacy is inherently valuable, but because the loss of privacy signals the loss of status.

Psychological researchers have also studied status symbols in the workplace. While Zalesny and Farace focused on how status symbols affect employees' perceptions of their own status, Kimberly Elsbach explained that office arrangements and items can also impact individuals' perceptions of others' status (2004, p. 99). As the case of symbolic meaning exemplifies, environment-behavior and psychological researchers often study similar topics from different angles, and better communication would likely benefit both fields.

The symbolic meaning perspective differs from the social relations and sociotechnical approaches in that it allows for different people to respond differently to the same spatial change. The approach focuses on differences in status between employees, but the seemingly intuitive idea that responses to spatial characteristics may differ among individuals is important for future research.

Zalesny and Farace conclude that "the significant interactions found between organizational position and change in work environment suggest that individual and organizational factors generally ignored in this type of research may influence both employees' reactions to environmental changes and the changes themselves" (1987, p. 254). The reference to 'individual factors' seems to beg for analysis of personality dimensions, but the authors instead focus on the possibility that different types of employees derive job satisfaction from different sources. They suggest that professionals draw intrinsic satisfaction from their work, while clerical and managerial employees find extrinsic satisfaction through interactions with colleagues (Zalesny & Farace, 1987, p. 255), which would explain why a move to an open office, and the accompanying change in social interactions, had a larger impact on clerical and managerial employees. This is plausible, but it is curious that personality factors and other explanations for uneven reactions to architectural features have not been more thoroughly explored since Zalesny and Farace's 1987 study.

Environment-behavior researchers' inability to settle on any one theoretical perspective is likely due to employees' varying reactions to office spaces. It is possible some people react as the social relations framework predicts, some react as the sociotechnical framework predicts, and some react as the symbolic meaning

framework predicts, muddying aggregate results. Psychological ideas about personality may clarify mixed results or suggest new research directions. An investigation of privacy in office environments helps illustrate how personality dimensions can affect reactions to space and augment environment-behavior research.

### **Privacy in Open Offices**

Privacy is at the core of disagreement between the sociotechnical, social relations, and symbolic meaning frameworks. The symbolic meaning perspective focuses primarily on physical status indicators, while the social relations approach warns that too much privacy impedes communication, and the sociotechnical framework argues that in-depth communication can only occur in adequately private environments. Existing environment-behavior research does not link these perspectives to personality dimensions, but psychological studies of introversion and privacy suggest that the social relations view is informed by extraverted values, while the sociotechnical view is informed by introverted ones. Introverts value privacy and close, meaningful relationships (Stone, 1986, p. 371; Pederson, 1982, p. 13), and the sociotechnical approach emphasizes that a lack of privacy in open offices causes distraction and inhibits meaningful conversation. In contrast, extraverts are less bothered by noise (Fowles et al., 1977, p. 130) and draw energy from being around people, and the social relations framework predicts that less physical divisions lead to better communication and workplace relationships.

Olson found that despite other mixed results from studies of open offices, employees universally desired more privacy (1986, p. 90). Privacy, though, is not as simple a concept as it first appears. Sundstrom, Burt, and Kamp noted that architectural privacy and psychological privacy are different conditions. Architectural privacy is a physical feature, whereas psychological privacy is a mental state (1980, p. 101). An area may include visual and acoustical barriers, but these do not guarantee that occupants will perceive it as a private space. Many studies do not make the distinction between architectural and psychological privacy, even though they evaluate

one or the other: studies that ask respondents for their attitudes about privacy in a space measure psychological privacy, whereas studies that use enclosure, noise levels, or sightlines as proxies measure architectural privacy.

Sundstrom, Burt, and Kamp hypothesized that architectural privacy and psychological privacy are causally related and that workers with more complicated tasks need more privacy and freedom from distractions (1980, p. 102). The authors did not, though, find that less privacy led to more social interaction (Sundstrom et al., 1980, p. 113). This result is inconsistent with other studies (Rashid et al., 2009, p. 444; Oldham & Brass, 1979, p. 269) and with the social relations approach, but the authors noted that their study used workers who were already working in an open office, not workers who had just moved. Open plan offices might foster social interaction at first, but the social activity could revert to 'normal,' pre-move levels after some time as employees adjust to the new space, which would explain why this study did not find that less privacy led to more social interaction. It is also possible that personality mediates the relationship between privacy and social interaction. Psychological research on introversion/extraversion and privacy preferences supports this idea, and could explain why a connection between visibility and social interaction has been so difficult to establish.

Dianna Stone found that introverts and people with strongly held values about control of information tended to perceive more invasions of privacy than extraverts or those without strongly held values (1986, p. 371). This suggests that the introversion/extraversion dimension can explain Zalesny and Farace's mixed results. Zalesny and Farace found correlations between job functions and perceptions of privacy in an open office (1987, p. 253), and based on Stone's research, it is possible that job title acted as a proxy for introversion or privacy preference. Open offices create a lack of architectural privacy for everyone, but introverts experience a greater decrease in psychological privacy, which creates a disparity in how employees evaluate the privacy of open offices.

Darhl Pederson's psychological research provided further evidence that introverts have different privacy preferences than extraverts. Pederson studied several dimensions of privacy and found that introverts tended to prefer isolation and intimacy with family (1982, p. 13). Interestingly, introverts preferred geographical isolation to merely being shielded from others and unobserved (solitude) or being unnoticed in a crowd (anonymity) (1982, p. 12). The fact that individuals have preferences for types of privacy, in addition to preferences for levels of overall privacy, is important for environment-behavior research like that of Rashid, Wineman, and Zimring. Rashid et al. found that despite increased accessibility and visibility, perceived privacy increased in the new open office (2009, p. 445). This suggests that there are other ways to influence perceived privacy in open offices beyond visibility and accessibility, and that for the participants in the study, geographical isolation (or some other element of privacy) was a more important component of psychological privacy than visibility and accessibility.

Lisa Block and Garnett Stokes also found evidence for the importance of personality to privacy perceptions in open offices. This was a fairly unique study, in that it controlled many aspects of the environment rather than studying a natural move from a traditional office to an open one: study participants were randomly assigned to different spaces and questioned about their perceptions of privacy. This allowed the authors to isolate factors and draw more specific conclusions than many other environment-behavior researchers could. Controlled experiments, rather than 'naturally occurring quasi-experiments,' are crucial to future environment-behavior research because of the wide variety of variables relevant to the field. In studies that examine organizational moves from one office to another, too many spatial and interpersonal variables change to draw any conclusions about causal relationships. Studies should use control groups and manipulate one variable at a time to discover how elements of open offices impact their occupants. This seems basic, but too often researchers attempt to determine how open offices as a whole change their occupants' behavior, which makes findings hard to explain or generalize.

In their controlled experiment, Block and Stokes found that work satisfaction was greater in private offices, especially when study participants were working on complex tasks (Block & Stokes, 1989, p. 277). The authors also claimed that individual personality differences were most relevant to privacy concerns in open offices, as opposed to perceptions of other spatial characteristics (Block & Stokes, 1989, p. 295).

Block and Stokes found that satisfaction in private offices was likely due to a desire to work alone, not status concerns, because study participants were randomly assigned to private spaces and no status markers were associated with the offices (Block & Stokes, 1989, p. 295). While participants could have generated status comparisons independently, this provides evidence that privacy affects satisfaction and other perceptual variables independently of symbolic meaning.

Since privacy affects job satisfaction, and introverts have a greater need for privacy than extraverts do, the lack of privacy in open offices is likely to more negatively affect introverts' job satisfaction. Why, though, do introverts have strong privacy preferences, and why is privacy so important to job satisfaction? Psychological research suggests that stress is the mechanism for these correlations.

### **Stress in Open Offices**

Privacy and introversion are also related to different perceptions of stress among individuals. Stress, while largely ignored in existing environment-behavior research, has been extensively studied in psychology. Fowles, Roberts, and Nagle found that introverts' skin conductance response (level of nervous system arousal) was more responsive to changes in stress and stimuli at low levels, but responded about the same as extraverts' SCL at high levels of stimulation (1977, p. 130). According to the authors, this supports an existing theory that introverts have a "weak nervous system" that responds more to initial stress and builds up a "protective inhibition" as stress increases, which results in lower SCLs at higher levels of stimulation (1977, p. 130). From this point

of view, when introverts complain of increased stress in an open office, they are likely still in a low-stimulation situation. Introverts may respond comparatively well to extreme stimulation and stress, but they are more bothered by changes from no stimulation to moderate stimulation, which could explain mixed reactions to the increased noise levels in open offices. While extraverts are not bothered by increased noise and stimulation after a move to an open office, introverts may experience decreased job satisfaction because of stressful overstimulation, leading to disparate assessments of privacy and job satisfaction in the new space.

Fowles et al.'s conclusion that introverts experience stress at lower levels of stimulation than extraverts do (1977, p. 130) may be related to Pederson's finding that introverts prefer geographical isolation to anonymity or solitude (1982, p. 12). Since introverts prefer low stimulation, a preference for spatial removal from others makes sense. Introverts avoid stress in low-stimulation environments, so they prefer forms of privacy that limit stimulation.

Thayer et al. explored stress as a mechanism for decreased work satisfaction in open offices. According to the researchers, factors associated with job satisfaction like good ventilation, natural light, views, and privacy affect physiological measures of stress (vagal mediated HRV and morning cortisol rise) (Thayer et al., 2010, p. 437). The authors concluded that "the physical work environment may affect at least some of the underlying physiological factors associated with the negative health effects of increased work stress without the subjects being consciously aware of a stressful experience" (Thayer et al., 2010, p. 437). This kind of study is important for the future of environment-behavior research. To truly understand how spaces influence behavior and to apply this understanding to architectural practice, researchers and designers must understand the mechanisms that mediate space's effects on behavior, whether these mechanisms are stress reactions, personality dimensions or something else entirely.

Synthesizing conclusions from environmental and psychological research produces a much clearer picture of stress and privacy in open offices than either type of research could generate alone. Introverts prefer privacy and isolation because they

experience stress at relatively low levels of stimulation, and in open offices with little privacy, introverts experience more stress than extraverts do. And because stress negatively affects job satisfaction, introverts likely experience lower job satisfaction in open offices than extraverts do, contributing to mixed results in studies of open offices' effects on job satisfaction.

If the introversion/extraversion dimension is the true driver of differences in perceptions of privacy and job satisfaction in open offices, why have researchers found correlations between attitudes about open offices and non-personality variables like organizational status? Psychological research also suggests that people of similar personality types tend to end up in the same professions and levels within organizations through self-selection, selection by others, and attrition. Boone, van Olffen, and Roijakkers found that personality influences students' choice of educational path and subsequent career (2009, p. 74), and Sutin et al. found that different personality characteristics were correlated with various dimensions of career success (2009, p. 80). Chauhan and Chauhan noted that employees in the same organizational position tended to have similar Myers-Briggs personality types (2006, p. 370). This suggests that when higher ranking employees and lower ranking employees respond differently to a space, or when offices in different industries respond differently to similar changes, differences in personality traits among organizational levels or across industries may be the underlying cause. Future research should include both personality variables and organizational ones to investigate the effects of each on reactions to architectural space.

This hypothesis that introversion/extraversion mediates responses to open offices is just one example of how psychological research might explain mixed conclusions in the environment-behavior field. More than anything, relationships between personality dimensions and architectural features need to be empirically tested. Ignorance of individual personality differences, though, is not the only problem with existing environment-behavior research.



## Common Problems with Environment-Behavior Research

The environment-behavior field is relatively young, and researchers have had problems defining its parameters and agreeing on consistent methodology. In addition to specifically integrating individual differences into analysis of reactions to space, researchers need to address several other issues.

Research in the field tends to look for monolithic, one-to-one correlations between spatial features and behavioral changes. This is likely because researchers have had some success finding these universal correlations in the past. For example, Mehta and Zhu found that red environments lead participants to perform better on detail oriented tasks, and blue leads to better performance on creative tasks (2009, p. 1226). Some reactions to architecture might be universal, but researchers must use controls to investigate whether or not reactions depend on personality or some other nuance of the spatial environment. Rashid et al. noted that in their study that face-to-face interaction did not increase uniformly everywhere in the office (2009, p. 444), and this kind of analysis is too rare. Studies often treat spaces as if they are uniform and expect to see overarching behavioral patterns throughout the space. There is now a body of evidence to suggest that such general patterns rarely emerge, and research needs to move beyond looking for them.

Researchers might also gravitate towards simple, general correlations because they make better headlines. For example, a 2013 CNN article noted that people thought curvy architecture was more beautiful and emotional than architecture with straighter lines (Adams). This conclusion is interesting and easy to understand, but not all correlations in the environment-behavior field are so straightforward, and researchers should avoid hoping that they will be.

Some mixed results in the environment-behavior field are likely due to problems in research design. Architects usually do not learn research methods in school, so they and other researchers from design backgrounds may be prone to mistakes in study design or statistical analysis. Many studies of open offices discussed above

analyzed an organization's move from a traditional office to an open one, which provides a convenient way to study the same people in different environments. However, none of these studies used control groups, and many lacked objective criteria to evaluate behavior. Amos Rapoport argued that that environment-behavior research can help establish better criteria for successful architecture and reduce reliance on shallow design judgments like 'I like this' or 'I don't like this' (2008, p. 277), but many environment-behavior studies fail to establish objective quantitative criteria even within their own experiments, let alone accepted criteria for the whole field.

A study by Peponis et al. provides an excellent example of how environment-behavior studies can establish criteria and measurement methods for spatial and behavioral analysis. The authors rightly point out that "development of techniques for describing spatial behaviors is critical to the development of theories of layout function" (2004, p. 472). The authors created diagrams of movement in spaces with labeled points of interest throughout the space, and analyzed the diagrams with various software (Peponis et al., 2004, p. 472). This seems simple, but many studies rely on participant self-reports even when objective criteria might be developed. Peponis et al. created spatial diagrams by hand, and today's technology could improve the data that feeds into analysis software. For example, the NBA uses motion-tracking sensors to monitor player movement (Goldsberry, 2015), and similar technology could be applied to architectural research.

Environment-behavior researchers need to design studies that take into account individual differences in reactions to space and define measurable criteria for analysis of spatial and behavioral characteristics. Researchers have done many interesting studies on open office environments, but the lack of control groups and measurement of personality dimensions limited the conclusions of these studies.

## Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research

Environment-behavior researchers have found that employees do not react uniformly positively or negatively to changes in office spaces, that employees prefer some elements of open offices and some elements of traditional ones, and that preferences vary by organizational status. These mixed results have led to several theoretical perspectives on responses to open offices, but psychological research suggests that personality characteristics like introversion may be the underlying cause of differing attitudes about office environments.

Introverts and extraverts have different privacy preferences, which may help explain why employees in similar spaces do not always react similarly. Introverts highly value privacy, so they may react negatively to the public nature of open offices. Increased visual and auditory stimuli in open offices likely stress introverts more than extraverts, and since stress contributes to decreased job satisfaction, introverts may experience lower job satisfaction in open offices. Extraverts, who are relatively less stressed by increased noise and visual information, may not experience the same decrease in job satisfaction, contributing to mixed evaluations of open office spaces. Differences between introverts and extraverts also might explain conflicting theoretical perspectives on open offices: the social relations framework describes extraverts' reactions to open offices, while the sociotechnical framework describes introverts' reactions.

Open office research in the environment-behavior field and psychological personality research provide an example of how psychological theories can clarify mixed findings in the environment-behavior field. Because many other kinds of environment-behavior research also largely ignore personality dimensions and other psychological factors that might influence behavioral reactions to architectural space, researchers should design future studies to investigate how individuals' psychological characteristics mitigate reactions to space.

Future research in the environment-behavior field should include psychological factors as independent variables, utilize

control groups, and deliberately manipulate single variables to observe their effects. Research should also follow Peponis et al.'s example and establish quantitative criteria for spatial characteristics and behavior (2004, p. 472). Similarly, researchers should emulate Rashid et al. (2009, p. 444) and study specific features within spaces, rather than analyze whole spaces as if they had no internal variation. Once researchers study specific features and understand how personality characteristics mitigate reactions to them, conclusions from several studies can be combined to understand how entire spaces affect behavior. There is certainly merit to top-down study of behavior in spaces, but these studies would greatly benefit from bottom-up understanding of the features that make up those spaces and how personality might cause variation in individual responses to space.

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## ***El curandero actual: Preserving Indigenous Identity through Mexican Folk Healing's Chants***

*Auston Stiefer*

### **Introduction**

*Curanderismo* is a syncretic form of Mexican folk healing whose origins date back to the Spanish colonization of the Americas. This medical system, drawing from both indigenous healing practices and Catholic spirituality, has been preserved throughout history by marginalized indigenous groups lacking access to biomedical healthcare. Today, variations of *curandero* practices are commonly practiced throughout Mexico as far south as the states of Oaxaca and Morelos and spanning far north, past the Rio Grande and even into Colorado. These practices coexist with modern biomedicine despite a long history of the repression of indigenous peoples by Europeans, and thus represent a reconciliation between these two cultures.

This paper seeks to analyze the extent of the reconciliation between indigenous practices and Western Catholicism present in modern *curandero* practices. Specifically, this investigation will focus on the role of chants, prayer, and music used by modern *curanderos* as facilitators of healing. Likewise, it will examine the proper historical and cultural contexts of modern *curandero* movements which celebrate specific healers who have died but whose practices and methods have been preserved. Finally, this analysis will be tied with the resurgence of indigenous identity promoted by the *indigenismo* movement for social change and activism in Mexico.

### **An Overview of *Curandero* Practice and Cosmology**

The word *curanderismo* comes from the Spanish *curar* ("to heal") and refers to a system of folk healing utilizing natural products such as eggs and herbs in addition to song, chants, and prayer during ritual to treat illness (Torres 2006:5). Eliseo Torres, vice-

president for student affairs at the University of New Mexico and son of a *curandera* healer, describes this approach to healthcare as having various techniques in which practitioners develop unique specialties (Torres 2005:4). He too asserts that “the *curandero*... feels his power comes from God,” reflected in the common use of Catholic icons in both the auditory mode of prayer and chants as well as in the physical mode of crucifixes and candles (Torres 2006:21).

*Curanderos* are often the subject of folklore themselves and are celebrated beyond their deaths as great healers. Significant lives in *curanderismo* are remembered through legends retold and reshaped by adherents to the practices promoted by these healers. This is one way in which the cultural context which facilitates healing is constructed. As philosopher Claude Lévi-Strauss originally asserted while analyzing healing songs of the Cuna people of Panama, “narrative aims at recreating a real experience in which the myth merely shifts the protagonists” (Lévi-Strauss 1963:94). In the context of *curanderismo*, contemporary healers who ascribe to certain historical *curanderos*’ methods of therapies tap into their power via these retold legends which form part of the cultural framework around patients within this medical system.

### **Colonial Mexico and Repression of *Curanderismo* during the Spanish Inquisition**

After analyzing the cosmology of practicing *curanderos*, it is necessary to examine the initial point of contact between the two cultures whose centuries of interactions have produced the Mexican folk healing performed today. This will place modern practices into the proper historical context, as the form of *curandero* healing performed today is syncretic and has developed over time. Spain’s colonial control of Mexico – called New Spain in the 1500s – represented the clash between the cultures of two of the world’s most powerful civilizations: the Aztec and the Spanish. During this period, the peoples of these distinct cultural groups interacted at a fundamental level, evident in the creation and growth of a new racial classification: the *mestizo*, children of peninsular Europeans and



indigenous peoples. Because many *curandero* practices are facilitated in the home and passed from one generation to the next, one can assert that the cultural exchange between the Spaniards and indigenous peoples also encompassed the realm of healthcare.

Additionally, it is important to examine the state of medical care within the burgeoning political establishment of seventeenth century colonial Mexico which created this cultural exchange. Due to a scarcity of Western doctors in the colonial era, "the [Spanish] Crown was politically conscientious in establishing a legal medical system for Spaniards, thus protecting the group in power" according to Noemí Quezada, historian of pre-Columbian Central America (1991:37). This meant that the indigenous peoples of the colony were left with only the *curandero* as their medical provider. While these healers were necessary in the attempts to maintain public health of the already marginalized indigenous groups, the *curanderos* were often publically tried by the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition on the grounds of accusations of "healing by incantation" or the use of a hallucinogenic "divinatory aid" (Quezada 1991:41). Such constant interaction between the *curanderos* and the Catholic Church in the attempts to catholicize the native peoples of Mexico impressed religious motifs, icons, and prayers on indigenous culture and healing.

Even after the presence of Europeans in New Spain for only a century and a half, evidence of syncretism began to emerge. Quezada relates the case of Agustina Rangel, a *curandera* sentenced by the Holy Office in 1687, who attributed her healing powers to "the grace of God and of the Holy Virgin" (Quezada 1991:49). Catholic religious icons had not existed in the pre-Colombian Americas of the fifteenth century. While this incorporation of Catholic beliefs into *curandero* cosmological understanding of healing may have been fostered in attempts to avoid incarceration or torture, the appearance of Catholic motifs lasts even today. Just as the Holy Office required people confessing of seeking *curandero* healing to recite the Apostles' Creed three times after attending mass (Quezada 1991:51), modern *curanderos* also "[say] the Apostles' Creed three times" during certain healing ceremonies (Torres 2006:24). This connection is important as it

provides evidence of the historical artifact of the Spanish Inquisition which shaped the cosmology of *curanderismo* practiced today.

### ***El Niño Fidencio* and the *Fidencista* Movement**

One prominent variation of *curanderismo* is witnessed today in Espinazo, a city in the southern Mexican state of Morelos, where thousands of people make annual pilgrimages to celebrate the life of the *curandero* El Niño Fidencio who was born in 1898. Adherents of this *curandero's* specific modes of healing call themselves the *fidencistas* and have elevated this healer to the status of a folk saint. This is seen in their specific attention paid to Fidencio's age at death, which they claim was thirty-three, the same age as Jesus Christ at his death (Burbanck 1997:202-212). This celebrated parallel between the life of a folk healer and the most important Catholic religious figure once again reflects the role of syncretism in the construction of modern *curandero* cosmology. The holiness attributed to Christ in Western Catholicism is one quality which validates Fidencio's efficacy in healing. Another significant parallel between both figures is sexual abstinence. Another name given to El Niño Fidencio by his followers is "El Guadalupano," meaning "the son of Guadalupe," due to "Fidencio[']s never marr[ying] and remain[ing] a virgin" throughout his life (Burbanck 1997:202-212). These ideals of physical purity in the Catholic Church too expand the legitimacy of Fidencio's power in the minds of his practices' adherents.

The mechanisms for accessing Fidencio's power involve music, prayer, and trance which retell prominent biographical events as well as focus on Fidencio's status as a folk saint. Fidencio in life was said to surround himself with musicians who performed wherever he went to conduct healing ceremonies (Torres 2006:44). While living, he created a motif of music and dancing which characterized his particular variation of *curanderimso*. Hence, *fidencista* ceremonies are characterized by the central role of "melodic narrative..., singing, chanting, and praying to El Niño" (Torres 2005:19). During the later portion of his life, according to the *fidencistas*, El Niño Fidencio entered a trance after asking to be

left alone for three days in order to heal from an illness; he was later found with a slit in his throat when his followers returned to him (Burbanck 1997:202-212). Due to this, the nature of trance states is necessary to activate Fidencio's healing power, as the celebrated *curandero* died while in trance.

Eliseo Torres from the University of New Mexico recounts the works of a contemporary *curandero* known as Chenchito during his stay in Espinazo, the hub of *fidencista* activity, during a 1985 festival celebrating Fidencio. Torres recalls watching "over one hundred people [waiting] to receive Chenchito's blessing" (2005:76). During each healing performed by Chenchito, this *curandero* would "chant a prayer" as "his eyes rolled back in his head [and] his voice began to change" while putting on symbolic clothing in order "to become El Niño" (2005:77). This connection to El Niño Fidencio facilitated by trance is what empowers his *fidencista* adherents, as they channel his spiritual energy while diagnosing and treating afflicted members of their communities. Like music, trance is a central part of the life narrative of Fidencio used by the adherents of his practices. By retelling El Niño Fidencio's life through song and chants, the adherents of his healing methods contribute to the social and cultural construction of the connection that exists between every *fidencista* and El Niño himself. This connection is hence strengthened during trance states to the extent of blurring the separation between the *fidencista's* individual identity and that of El Niño Fidencio. This is a manifestation of what medical anthropologists Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock call the "body politic" observed in various cultural contexts (1987:23). This anthropological phenomenon refers to "relationships ... about power and control" resulting from "expanding ... social controls regulating [a] group's boundaries" (1987:23-24). In the context of public health, *fidencistas* sacrifice their individuality in order to combat the threat of illness in the Mexican folk communities. Their personal habits too are often altered in order to reflect the purity of El Niño. Scheper-Hughes and Lock assert that a prevailing quality of the "body politic" is the "strong concern with matters of ritual and sexual purity" (1987:24), which is confirmed by Eliseo Torres in his case study of the *fidencista*

Chenchito who models his lifestyle to match that of Fidencio: one filled with rituals utilizing music and herbs to heal people without recompense and reflective of the chaste Fidencio (2005:24).

### **María Sabina and the Resurgence of Traditional Mazatec Ceremony in Catholic Churches**

Another prominent figure in *curanderismo* whose work has drawn attention to Mexican folk healing and indigenous identity is María Sabina of the Sierra Mazteca in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca. Before the 1950s, the Sierra Mazteca people were fairly isolated until banker and mycologist Gordon Wasson arrived in the Sierra on “self-financed research on the global use of hallucinogenic mushrooms” (Faudree 2013:80). In his visits to this area, he found himself as a participant in the *velada* healing ceremony of the Mazatec Indians, which utilizes hallucinogenic mushrooms partnered with Mazatec musical chants that are “highly structured, repetitive, elevated in diction and syntax, figurative, poetic [and] sometimes archaic” (Faudree 2013:81). These two elements induce a trance state on the healers, allowing Mazatec *curanderos* to “translate the words of divine sources... through words and visions” (2013:81) which are used in the diagnosis of illness. These highly structured chants too are themselves considered to have medicinal qualities in Mazatec culture according to Brown University anthropologist Paja Faudree in her work on indigenous revival in Mexico (2013:81). Within the Mazatec cultural framework constructed by the importance of language used in chants as well as the spiritual significance placed on them, the musicality of chants partnered with the psychoactive mushrooms used in the *velada* create a nearly-hypnotic environment which facilitates healing in the patient.

María Sabina was one of the *curanderas* adept in performing these *velada* healings whom Wasson encountered in his travels. In 1957, he published the first of many articles, titled “Seeking the Magic Mushroom,” in *Life* magazine, replete with photographs of this *curandera* to whom he appropriated a pseudonym. (Faudree 2013:83). He did this despite Sabina’s

warning that a great dissemination of this sensitive cultural information “would be a betrayal” to the Mazateca people (Wasson and Wasson 1957:304). This marked the beginning of the mycotourist influx in the Sierra Mazateca region of the 1960s. Soon after the publication of Wasson’s article, “*jipis* (hippies) flooded Huautla [Sabina’s village], seeking the visions and communication with primordial knowledge” Wasson claimed to have found (Faudree 2013:85). This type of cultural expropriation was problematic, as Americans pursuing “new age” healing or merely hallucinogenic experiences flooded the region, disrupting the customs associated with *velada* healing in the Sierra Mazateca region. In the Mazatec cosmology, these mushrooms used in ceremony were essentially spiritual beings, evident in the terminology used to describe them (2013:82), due to their necessity in facilitating communication with spiritual beings imparting knowledge on healers. Americans bought their way into these ceremonial healings kept private before the 1960s, while the Mazatec spent their lives within the cultural context which gives these ceremonies healing capabilities. The mycotourists’ actions too beckoned “divine retribution” as they did not observe the “taboos associated with the mushrooms” involving sexual abstinence, appropriate timing of mushroom consumption, and simultaneous use of other psychoactive substances like marijuana (2013:87). This hedonistic *jipi* (hippie) activity too was the basis of the Catholic Church’s movement into the Sierra Mazateca by the early 1970s (2013:76).

María Sabina, as well as her chants, gained initial fame from Wasson’s articles and are continually studied as a source of the resurgence of indigenous cultural in Mexico. Gordon Wasson also recorded Sabina’s chants during a 1957 *velada*, which are now accessible through the Smithsonian Folkways databases (Sabina 1957). These chants with alternating pitch and syncopation between repeated syllables have been the subject of analysis and fascination by poets, playwrights and authors alike ever since Wasson’s contact with the Mazatec (Faudree 2013:90). Sabina found herself converted into “an icon of ... indigenous culture” (2013:89) as her famous chants were performed in the traditional Mazatec language,

which prompted discourse on the meaning of indigenous identity and the “authenticity” of some ostensibly indigenous healers and practices.

Although the origin of this fixation on indigenous culture in Oaxaca began with misappropriation of cultural symbols and practices, it did result in the establishment of the Mazatec Indigenous Church: evidence of the syncretism witnessed today in *curandero* practices. These church services utilize songs and prayers in the indigenous Mazatec language and even include the use of the region’s hallucinogenic mushrooms as “the Mazatecs’ indigenous host... replacing Catholic communion wafer as the prime vehicle for divine purification and transformation” (2013:171). The influence of the Christian church was brought to this region in the 1970s to combat the seemingly immoral effects of the Mazatec mushrooms on touring Americans. Ironically, in a matter of decades, this paradigm was completely inverted, allowing for the coexistence of the Western church with the indigenous *velada*’s influence in Oaxaca.

### ***Indigenismo* and the Preservation of Culture through the Lives of Celebrated Healers**

The lives of *curanderos*, their practices, and their songs are remembered by contemporary folk healers who recreate the methods of successful healers of the past. University of New Mexico professor Eliseo Torres cites the folk tales recalling the works of *curanderos* Teresita Urrea and Don Pedrito Jaramillo in addition to El Niño Fidencio in his works on Mexican folk healing (Torres 2005) and asserts that this retelling of *curanderos*’ stories is a common theme across Mexico. María Sabina too has been elevated to the status of a folk saint, even “a goddess” according to Latin American anthropologist Ben Feinberg (2006:115) in her home village of Huautla. There is a striking difference between these two healers’ nostalgic celebrations however. El Niño Fidencio’s death in 1938 was followed by decades of the adherents of his philosophies practicing his specific healing methods utilizing music and natural products for various conditions. As these methods worked during

Fidencio's life and for the *curanderos* who used his healing processes, they became part of the localized style of *curanderismo* in Espinazo. Sabina's healings, on the other hand, were already contextualized within the culture of the indigenous Mazatec of Oaxaca. Sabina gained attention as an individual within a larger cultural context, as Wasson specifically focused on her in the photographs and recordings he published in the 1950s. Sabina's death in 1986 (Feinberg 2006:115) is far more recent than those of Fidencio and other *curanderos* celebrated today as saints. This suggests that another cultural agent is at work.

Sabina is celebrated as an icon of indigenous identity within the *indigenismo* movement. Ben Feinberg defines *indigenismo* as "discourses of 'authenticity' ... in order to advance various political [and social] agendas" (2006:109). The attention placed on Sabina during her life has been utilized by this movement for the promotion of indigenous and mestizo groups in popular Mexican culture. Feinberg cites a Mazatec woman referring Sabina and her chants in the indigenous language as a claim to indigenous "authenticity" (2006:121). While this "strategic essentialism" runs the risk of one cultural group perpetuating self-attributed stereotypes, it does create a tangible form of sentient identity recognizable by members of other cultural groups (2006:117). Applied to Sabina, this is the grounds for *indigenista* groups' quoting her Mazatec chants on chapels constructed in her honor (Feinberg 2006:115) as well as their focusing on her life in the inaugural edition of *La Faena*, the magazine dedicated to the "Cultural Heritage of the Mazatecos" first published in 2000 (2006:129). Sabina proved to be the perfect historical figure whose internationally well-known life could be strategically used to divert attention to a continually developing social movement which had previously been used solely to romanticize a nostalgic past of the pre-Columbian era. As *curanderismo* continues to play a role in this growing discourse on indigenous practices as constituting part of modern national identity, it too helps reconcile the historic opposition of its practices by the Western Catholic Church still present in Mexico today.

## Universalities in other Variations of *Curanderismo* Practiced outside of Mexico

Because *curandero* healing is the syncretic product of Aztec and Incan etiologies and Catholic ideologies, it exists across Latin America in various forms within multiple cultural contexts. By examining the similarities across the *curanderismo* varieties practiced within these separate contexts, one can draw conclusions about the overarching nature of the syncretic process which occurred during Spanish colonization across a wide expanse of civilization. Two specific phenomena related to those previously analyzed are the role of music using indigenous language in the Shipobo-Conibo *curanderismo* of the Peruvian Amazon and the coexistence of the Moravian Church with the Miskitu people's *curandero* healers, known as the *sukya*, in Nicaragua.

The role of indigenous language in Shipobo-Conibo *curandero* healings is specified and has a spiritual role in music which facilitates the curing of disease. Ethnomusicologist Bernd Brabec de Mori chronicles eight case studies of patients treated by Peru's *curanderos* in his 2009 publication in the Journal for Medical Anthropology. He provides an overview of "the fairly complex [healing] system" of this region, in which "for every disorder, there is an appropriate [indigenous] term" (2009:129). Likewise, "songs ... build a kind of foundation for further [healing] techniques" such as those involving the psychoactive product *ayawaska* (2009:131). The role of music in this Amazonian variety of *curanderismo* resonates with the importance music has in both the *fidencistas* movement and the Mazatec *velada* ceremony. Healers in these latter groups use music in order to facilitate trance states which allow the healing process to occur. While the *fidencistas* channel El Niño Fidencio himself through this trance, the *velada* practitioners like María Sabina enter trance in order to communicate with ancestral wisdom. However, Amazonian healers use music which is considered to have acoustically curative properties (2009:133-134). It too is important to note the similarities in the use of indigenous Shipobo-Conibo language in healings utilizing hallucinogenic *ayawaska* and Mazatec language used in the chants partnered with



the psychoactive mushrooms of the *velada*. This supports the importance of indigenous language as an integral facilitator of *curandero* practices and evidence that these languages have survived after centuries of persecution since the arrival of the Spaniards.

Comparisons can also be drawn between the Catholic Church's influence in both the *fidencista* and Mazatec healing cosmologies and the Moravian Church's influence in the Nicaraguan Miskitu's understanding of the *sukya* healer's legitimacy. According to anthropologist Mary Helms, "only the [Moravian] Church of God [was] found in Miskitu villages" after nearly 80 years of Western Church establishments in Nicaragua (1971:185). The resulting effects of this influence is evident in Miskitu cosmological understanding that "the [evil, disease invoking] shaman [whom the *sukya* combats] holds his power through connivance with Satan" (1971:186). This convergence of ideologies reflects that of the *fidencistas* who legitimize the indigenous healing practices used by El Niño Fidencio by comparing his life to Christ. This reveals a universal connection between Christian holiness and healing and between Christian evil with disease. The presence of hallucinogenic, ceremonially healing mushrooms in the Mazatec Catholic Church further extends this connection.

## Conclusion

The influence of Western Catholicism, while gradually accommodated over the course of centuries, is inextricable from *curanderismo* as it is practiced today. This proves the reconciliation of the two clashing cultures of Spanish colonization – indigenous peoples and Westerners – has been achieved. Numerous artifacts of the cultural trauma created in the genocide and repression of native cultures pursued throughout Latin American history as the marginalization of indigenous peoples. Hence, *curanderos* filled the need of healthcare providers to these disadvantaged groups. *Curanderismo* was necessary for those who survived initial contact with the West, and its practices survived by accommodating Catholic ideologies into its cosmology of disease and treatment.

This form of healing, however, still preserves indigenous identity despite the syncretism observed in the Christ-like attributes appropriated to El Niño Fidencio to legitimize his healing power, the use of the Apostles' Creed in many common *curandero* rituals, and the placement of the Mazatec mushrooms used by María Sabina in Catholic Church services. In fact, it is by this syncretism that aspects of indigenous knowledge have moved to the forefront of Mexican identity. By celebrating the aspects of indigenous culture which shape modern *curanderismo*, practitioners and adherents of these methods take ownership of these phenomena as icons of their culture.

Thus, springs its use in the *indigenismo* movement to reclaim indigenous identity and advocate for historically disenfranchised groups. Unlike the "hyper-spectacularization and hyper-spiritualization of indigenous cultures" described by Karl Neuenfeldt in his depiction of modern "new age" healers (1998:74), members of this movement are part of these indigenous communities themselves. They focus on certain qualities of their cultural heritage in order to give themselves tangible, readily recognized identity. They seek not to create the "traditional cultural voyeurism" (1998:78) sought by "new age" healers that is reminiscent of the 1960s *jipis* who expropriated the ceremonial Mazatec mushrooms used by Sabina. Rather, they do the opposite; *indigenistas* use their identified symbols, such as those associated with *curanderismo*, in order to promote the rights of indigenous peoples and mitigate the historical wrongdoings that are a legacy of Spanish conquest.

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## Between a Poor and a Poorer Place: Why Welfare Should View the Labor Market as the Problem Rather than the Solution to Poverty

*Jesse Coker*

### Abstract

This paper seeks to argue, in direct contrast to Clinton's reforms in the 1990s, that the modern American welfare state should view the secondary labor market as the primary problem low income citizens face rather than the solution to poverty. Section I will summarize the history of welfare in the US by describing how an illegitimate caricature of welfare recipients precipitated a shift towards welfare-to-work policies. Section II will show that the secondary labor market, where welfare recipients are forced to work, harms low-wage workers and that the welfare-to-work program TANF does not improve recipients' outcomes either during or after the program. Section III will conclude by taking a review of welfare policies and arguing that welfare should focus on structural labor market problems rather than welfare-to-work or basic income guarantee schemes.

### Introduction

In 1854, Abraham Lincoln proclaimed, "The legitimate object of government is to do for a community of people whatever they need to have done, but cannot do at all, or cannot so well do, for themselves, in their separate and individual capacities."<sup>1</sup> Historically, Americans expect their government to provide assistance to the poor, elderly, and disabled, something that Lincoln emphasizes. However, since the dawn of the welfare state with the New Deal in the 1930s, the amount, scope, type, and duration of

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<sup>1</sup> Abraham Lincoln, Qtd. in "The Object of Government," *Civil War Trust*, 1 July 1845, <http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/primarysources/the-object-of-government.html>.

welfare assistance has remained politically and philosophically controversial. Welfare, in many respects, fundamentally contradicts the nation's imagination of the American dream, a tension that precipitated a massive shift towards the welfare-to-work policies of Bill Clinton and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), enacted in 1996. Even today, Americans prefer work to welfare. Studies report that "nearly half of all Americans believe the government overspends on anti-poverty programs,"<sup>2</sup> that 44 percent of Americans believe "government aid to the poor does more harm than good by making people too dependent on government assistance,"<sup>3</sup> and that an overwhelming "83% of American adults favor a work requirement as a condition for receiving welfare aid."<sup>4</sup> Moreover, even though the modern welfare state reflects these work-first sentiments, 80 percent of Americans are dissatisfied with federal handling of poverty and 72 percent are dissatisfied with labor and employment issues, suggesting that reform is incredibly important.<sup>5</sup>

The biggest problem with modern welfare is that broad work requirements, like those imposed by TANF, force recipients to engage in an atrocious and low-wage secondary labor market that does little to improve worker outcomes, success, or income. Therefore, this paper will argue that reform of the secondary labor market must take place before any welfare policy can succeed—the secondary labor market is the problem to address rather than the

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<sup>2</sup> "49% Say Current Programs Increase Level of Poverty in U.S.," *Rasmussen Reports*, 19 July, 2012,

[http://www.rasmussenreports.com/public\\_content/business/general\\_business/july\\_2012/49\\_say\\_current\\_government\\_programs\\_increase\\_level\\_of\\_poverty\\_in\\_u\\_s](http://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/business/general_business/july_2012/49_say_current_government_programs_increase_level_of_poverty_in_u_s).

<sup>3</sup> "Welfare," Pew Center for the People & the Press Political Survey, *Pew Research Poll Database*, 22 Feb. 2015. <http://www.pewresearch.org/question-search/?keyword=welfare&x=0&y=0>.

<sup>4</sup> "83% Favor Work Requirements for Welfare Recipients," *Rasmussen Reports*, 18 July 2012.

[http://www.rasmussenreports.com/public\\_content/business/jobs\\_employment/july\\_2012/83\\_favor\\_work\\_requirement\\_for\\_welfare\\_recipients](http://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/business/jobs_employment/july_2012/83_favor_work_requirement_for_welfare_recipients).

<sup>5</sup> Jeffery M. Jones and Steve Ander, "Americans Praise Gov't Work on Natural Disasters, Parks," *Gallup*, 12 Jul. 2013,

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/163487/americans-praise-gov-work-natural-disasters-parks.aspx>.

solution to promote. By describing the history and format of modern American welfare, analyzing the challenges associated with welfare-to-work policies due to the problems in the secondary labor market, and reviewing reform options, it becomes clear that traditional welfare efforts should refocus on worker protection, security, and education. Working is good for citizens and the economy, but asking low-wage workers to achieve the American dream in an abysmal secondary labor market is unproductive and unrealistic.

## Section I: The History of American Welfare

In order to discuss reform of the modern welfare state, it is important to understand its historical development and the details of its administration. Katz broadly defines the welfare state as the "collection of programs designed to assure economic security to all citizens by guaranteeing the fundamental necessities of life," which includes private sector, nonprofit, and government assistance measures.<sup>6</sup> Defined in this way, it is clear that the welfare state has existed since the colonial era. Even before the Constitution, which claims to "promote the general welfare" in the preamble, the colonies implemented a variety of public assistance measures modeled after British poor laws.<sup>7</sup> Since then, the welfare state has been a source of much political, social, and economic controversy, resulting in an ever-changing and Frankensteinian system that "resembles a massive watch that fails to keep very accurate time. . . fabricated by different craftsmen who usually did not consult with one another."<sup>8</sup> This section seeks to examine the workings of this watch by analyzing the political and social trends related to welfare over the past century and describing how modern welfare is administered.

Katz writes that, prior to the 1960s, welfare "signified a broad and progressive program with wide public support," explaining the surge in the number of assistance programs at the

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<sup>6</sup> Michael B. Katz, *The Price of Citizenship* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001), 9.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10

beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> While many welfare and worker protection programs were implemented during Gilded Age reforms, the modern welfare state developed with Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930s. The New Deal introduced the public assistance programs Aid to Dependent Children (ADC)—later to be renamed Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)—and Old Age Assistance, which provided means-tested cash benefits to poor families and the elderly.<sup>10</sup> Along with these programs, the Economic Security Act of 1935 also created Social Security, which provides retirement benefits to all Americans and was modified in 1965 to include the healthcare assistance programs Medicare and Medicaid. Together, Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security are the three largest public assistance programs in the United States. It is important to clarify that social insurance programs, like Social Security and Medicare, require the payment of premiums as a prerequisite for receiving aid and are therefore distinct from the cash assistance welfare programs, like AFDC, that will be the focus of this article.<sup>11</sup>

The broad initial support for welfare that Katz describes began to erode as the century wore on. While social insurance programs were—and remain—popular with Americans, support for cash assistance programs dwindled. Shapiro analyzes trends in survey data over the course of the twentieth century and finds that “very large majorities, often more than 80 percent,” support old age pensions and Social Security, consistent with “higher levels of support for spending on health care, Social Security, and assistance to the poor, compared to ‘welfare.’”<sup>12</sup> Despite the fact that “the cost of social insurance programs dwarfs public assistance,”<sup>13</sup> Americans overwhelmingly approve of Social Security and Medicare while remaining skeptical of cash assistance programs. This disconnect is

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Robert Y. Shapiro, “From Depression to Depression? Seventy-five Years of Public Opinion Toward Welfare,” *Annual Fall Research Conference of The Association of Public Policy Analysis and Management*, Washington, D.C., (5-7 November 2009): 10.

<sup>13</sup> Katz, 11.

due to a foundational tension between public assistance and the American ethos of hard work, determination, and the American dream. Shapiro writes that the distinction between social insurance and cash assistance programs “reflects a fundamental individualism that esteems individual responsibility and individual initiative.”<sup>14</sup> Katz agrees, categorizing this distinction as a “war on dependence” and writing that dependents “[seemingly] interfere with relations between productive, working citizens” and that “the tendency of capitalism . . . is to clear the market of all but active and able citizens.”<sup>15</sup> These authors emphasize that cash assistance structurally contradicts American values because Americans imagine it as a mechanism for delivering unearned benefits to lazy, underserving dependents.

American politicians in the ‘80s and ‘90s took advantage of this ideological tension to structurally redefine welfare as “welfare-to-work.” Momentum for the re-imagining of AFDC, “the most disliked public program in America,”<sup>16</sup> began with Ronald Reagan and his depiction of the “welfare-queen” in a 1976 campaign speech. Reagan painted a caricature of a Chicago woman who “used 80 names, 30 addresses, [and] 15 telephone numbers to collect food stamps, Social Security . . . as well as welfare.”<sup>17</sup> Reagan went on the claim, “Her tax-free cash income alone has been running \$150,000 a year,” a bold statement that caused the shocked crowd to audibly gasp.<sup>18</sup> Despite the fact that, according to Krugman, this was “a gross exaggeration of a minor case of welfare fraud,” Reagan’s rhetorical strategy worked.<sup>19</sup> The welfare queen became “the embodiment of a pernicious stereotype” that “marked millions of America’s poorest people as potential

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Y. Shapiro and Benjamin I. Page, *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in American’s Policy Preferences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 118. Qtd. in Shapiro, “From Depression,” 6.

<sup>15</sup> Katz, 26.

<sup>16</sup> Katz, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Josh Levin, “The Welfare Queen,” *Slate.com*, 19 Dec. 2013, [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/history/2013/12/linda\\_taylor\\_welfare\\_queen\\_ronald\\_reagan\\_made\\_her\\_a\\_notorious\\_american\\_villain.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history/2013/12/linda_taylor_welfare_queen_ronald_reagan_made_her_a_notorious_american_villain.html).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Paul Krugman, “Republicans and Race,” *New York Times*, 19 Nov. 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/19/opinion/19krugman.html>.



scoundrels,” and Reagan coopted the public outrage against welfare recipients to “sell voters on his cuts to public assistance spending.”<sup>20</sup> Reagan’s speech aligned perfectly with the American distaste for cash welfare noted by Katz and Shapiro and gave a rhetorical rallying cry for welfare reform.

Bill Clinton would finish what Reagan started, ushering in the “end of welfare as we know it” by signing The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWORA) in August 1996, which passed with broad bipartisan support.<sup>21</sup> Eight out of ten Americans applauded the new bill, which replaced AFDC with the welfare-to-work program Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).<sup>22</sup> TANF represented the manifestation of the public’s outrage against the undeserving poor and the imagined welfare queen, reshaping welfare in many important ways. First, PRWORA “eliminated a federal entitlement to cash assistance,” and instead gave the states discretion to design their own cash assistance programs.<sup>23</sup> Secondly, PRWORA enforced time limits and ruled that individuals could not receive benefits for more than 60 months, or 5 years, in their lifetime. Finally, and most importantly, PRWORA focused heavily on work incentives and “pushed [recipients] much harder to find employment and leave the rolls,” tying welfare benefits to workforce engagement.<sup>24</sup> As a result, by 2002 “at least 50 percent of all recipient families and 90 percent of two-parent families were required to be working,” a marked increase from the 87 percent of AFDC mothers who did not have a job just nine years earlier.<sup>25</sup> TANF continues to remain the only major cash assistance welfare program to this day.

In conclusion, Clinton succeeded in refocusing public assistance on the welfare-to-work TANF scheme, building on

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<sup>20</sup> Levin, “The Welfare Queen.”

<sup>21</sup> Rebecca M. Blank, “Evaluating Welfare Reform in the United States,” *National Bureau of Economic Research*, NBER Working Paper 8983 (June 2002): 4.

<sup>22</sup> Katz, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Blank, “Evaluating Welfare Reform,” 4.

<sup>24</sup> Blank, 8.

<sup>25</sup> “Mothers Who Receive AFDC Payments: Fertility and Socioeconomic Characteristics,” *U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Commerce*, Mar. 1995, <https://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/statbriefs/sb2-95.html>.

society's increasing disdain for the underserving poor on welfare. TANF relies on "the mantra, 'get a job, any job, then get a better job'" and presumes "a stepping stone career ladder in the low-wage economy," which fits well with the American ethos of hard work and dedication.<sup>26</sup> With the historical and ideological foundation of American welfare in place, the following sections will seek to debunk these welfare-to-work assumptions and argue that the low-wage labor market is ill-equipped to improve worker outcomes in the way TANF imagines is possible.

## Section II: From a Poor to a Poorer Place

From the government's perspective, TANF worked. Between 1994 and 2000, welfare caseloads plummeted by 56.5 percent,<sup>27</sup> while the share of recipients who received assistance the year before reporting that they were presently employed skyrocketed from 19.8 percent in 1990 to 44.3 percent in 2000.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, the program did exactly what it was *supposed* to do, as TANF cut welfare caseloads in half and doubled workforce participation. This section asks if it *should* have done so in the first place; evidence suggests no. Rather than judging TANF by macro variables like caseloads and workforce participation that reveal little about the quality of life of individual recipients, TANF should be evaluated by two simple criteria: how well recipients fare while on the program and how well these recipients fare when their benefits expire. This section will argue that TANF fails based on both criteria because of unaddressed structural problems in the secondary labor market. A far cry from the notion that working improves outcomes, data suggest that both during and after a stint on TANF, recipients suffer in terms of income, opportunities, health, and family success.

Since most TANF recipients are forced to work in the secondary labor market,<sup>29</sup> it is crucial to understand the disturbing

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<sup>26</sup> Frank Ridzi, *Selling Welfare Reform: Work-First and the New Common Sense of Employment*, (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 10.

<sup>27</sup> Blank, 17.

<sup>28</sup> Blank, 19.

<sup>29</sup> Joel F. Handler and Yeheskel Hasenfeld, *Blame Welfare and Ignore Poverty and Inequality* (New York, Cambridge University Press: 2007), 317.

nationwide trends in low-wage work. On top of wage stagnation for “virtually the entire period since 1979,” characterized especially by stagnation in the low-wage labor market,<sup>30</sup> low-wage workers are employed in “dead” occupations that leave little room for advancement. Modern low-wage service jobs almost never lead to promotions up the corporate hierarchy, leading Handler and Hasenfeld to conclude that “employment mobility is a myth.”<sup>31</sup> From 1999-2001, only 17 percent of low-wage workers were able to escape low wages via a promotion with their original employer, a measurement taken *before* the unemployment struggles of the Great Recession.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, low-wage workers increasingly face nonstandard, part-time work. Only 29.1 percent of workers in the secondary labor market work a traditional work week, with many employed in odd-hour, part-time jobs.<sup>33</sup> Employers in the secondary labor market rarely provide healthcare or other benefits to their workers, and premiums are actually higher for low-wage than high-wage workers.<sup>34</sup> Low-wage jobs are also characterized by low stability and high turnover, and “half of the [low-wage] jobs [have] an annual turnover rate exceeding 50 percent and a third exceeding 80 percent.”<sup>35</sup> In short, the secondary labor market where TANF forces recipients to work is a disaster. Employees face low-wage, service level jobs with high turnover, low benefits, and little room for promotion or advancement.

The primary goal of welfare is to raise family incomes, and TANF sets out to use this abysmal secondary labor market as a substitute for government provided income. Blank finds, however, that across a variety of studies, mandatory work programs show no evidence of increasing income, as “earnings appear to be entirely offset by losses in public assistance income . . . [meaning] these

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<sup>30</sup> Lawrence Mishel and Heide Shierholz, “A Decade of Flat Wages,” *Economic Policy Institute*, Briefing Paper #365 (21 Aug. 2013): 3.

<sup>31</sup> Handler and Hasenfeld, *Blame Welfare*, 251.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>34</sup> Drew Altman, “Low-Wage Workers Feel the Pinch on Health Insurance,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 18 Sep. 2014, <http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2014/09/18/low-wage-workers-feel-the-pinch-on-health-insurance/>.

<sup>35</sup> Handler and Hansfeld, *Blame Welfare*, 249.

programs have no anti-poverty effects.”<sup>36</sup> This problem is due to the benefit reduction rate (BRR), or the effective marginal tax rate on earned income that results from declines in welfare benefits as earnings rise. The BRR is very high, almost 90 percent in some states, which strongly reduces the impact of working on family incomes.<sup>37</sup> A high BRR also reduces the incentives for recipients to pursue promotions, as a higher wage job results in an almost equal reduction in welfare benefits, further contributing to the lack of career advancement among welfare recipients. This leads to the simple but troubling conclusions that TANF programs “show that employment is increased and welfare use is reduced, but net income is either largely unchanged or reduced. Few [state TANF] programs have generated substantial gains in incomes or declines in poverty.”<sup>38</sup> TANF relies on the secondary labor market to subsidize welfare, which results in lower government spending but no increase in income for recipients.

Problems in the secondary labor market and the lack of income increases result in many negative effects on TANF recipients during their five-year benefit window. TANF mothers with disabilities, large families, or young children face extreme challenges when working, meaning that TANF enrollees with these characteristics are actually “more likely to be food insecure” and “in poorer mental health.”<sup>39</sup> TANF not only hurts the health of recipients, but also their children. Child care is prohibitively expensive and poorly subsidized, meaning that welfare families pay between 25 and 40 percent of their income for child care, if they choose to consume it.<sup>40</sup> As a result, TANF parents frequently leave children with non-parental caregivers, resulting in “more than 70 percent of all children under the age of 5 of working mothers [being] cared for by someone other than their parents” and 50 percent of

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<sup>36</sup> Blank, 66-7.

<sup>37</sup> Gregory Acs et al. “Does Work Pay? An Analysis of the Work Incentives under TANF,” *The Urban Institute*, Occasional Paper Number 9 (July 1998): 17.

<sup>38</sup> Handler and Hansfeld, *Blame Welfare*, 64.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Muennig, Rishi Caleyachetty, Zohn Rosen, and Andrew Korotzer, “More Money, Fewer Lives: The Cost Effectiveness of Welfare Reform in the United States,” *American Journal of Public Health* 105, no. 2 (Feb. 2015): 324.

<sup>40</sup> Handler and Hansfeld, *Blame Welfare*, 260.

TANF mothers relying on grandparents to serve as primary caregivers.<sup>41</sup> This can have highly negative effects on child performance: a comprehensive survey of teachers reveals that welfare children are “sleepy, [unable to complete] homework, too tired and unprepared to succeed in school, often sick, and falling behind academically.”<sup>42</sup> Without a consistent parental presence, children struggle to succeed, meaning that TANF perpetuates poverty by undermining the ability of welfare children to prosper. By forcing recipients to engage in the secondary labor market without child care support, TANF harms family outcomes across a variety of statistical areas.

The second, and probably more condemning, problem with TANF is the failure of recipients after they leave the program. Because TANF benefits are capped at 60 months, a variety of “leavers studies” have evaluated leaver success and determined that TANF does little for recipients’ long term prospects. After welfare benefits expire, work in the secondary labor market simply does not improve outcomes, as over 50 percent, and maybe as much as 74 percent, of welfare leavers are still poor.<sup>43</sup> Across states, studies indicate that only one-fifth to one-quarter of leavers find employment in “good” jobs with wages above the minimum wage and that “the net income of welfare leavers in the year after they exited welfare is lower than their income prior to leaving.”<sup>44</sup> Families that left welfare after 2000 under TANF were actually *less* likely to find work than families that left in the early 1990s under AFDC, resulting in an increase in the unemployment rate of low income single mothers.<sup>45</sup> Time limits, which are supposed to serve as an incentive to work, do more harm than good, and “more than 81 percent [of TANF recipients] had household income below the poverty line when interviewed a year and a half after hitting the time

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 257; 258.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>43</sup> Blank, “Evaluating Welfare,” 60.

<sup>44</sup> Shawn Fremstad, “Recent Welfare Reform Research Findings: Implications for TANF Reauthorization and State TANF Policies,” *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, 31 Jan. 2004, <http://www.cbpp.org/research/recent-welfare-reform-research-findings>.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

limit."<sup>46</sup> A plethora of studies agree: TANF does *nothing* to improve the future labor market prospects of recipients. TANF simply postpones poverty for a short duration, leaving recipients stranded and unable to find jobs or assistance after their welfare expires.

In conclusion, "the 1996 welfare reform . . . serves to undermine the long-term empowerment of poor workers and their families by reinforcing their commodification in a global market."<sup>47</sup> TANF forces people to engage in the dismal secondary labor market with little support, resulting in poor family and child outcomes and no decrease in poverty. Furthermore, after TANF benefits cease, leavers are abandoned to the whims of the labor market and remain poor and unemployed. The presupposition that welfare-to-work programs provide opportunities to move up the career ladder is entirely false, meaning that TANF represents a cost-cutting mechanism for delaying poverty rather than a longer-term solution for eliminating it. Consistent with this assertion, Ridzi argues that TANF both disembodies and disempowers recipients by "[enforcing] working responsibilities but not work or safety net rights" and "[diverting] families to [the] labor market rather than protecting them from its vagaries."<sup>48</sup> TANF, by enforcing the American dream without equipping recipients to achieve it, fails as a welfare system. The next section will provide realistic and labor-market focused solutions that could address these structural problems while still acknowledging American beliefs about welfare.

### Section III: Reform Options

With an understanding of the history of American welfare and the shortcomings of TANF in place, it becomes possible to evaluate reform measures. This section will first demonstrate that a basic income guarantee, one of the most popular measures suggested by progressive reformers, is both politically, culturally, and economically infeasible. Instead, reform efforts should focus on improving the secondary labor market and empowering low-income

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Ridzi, 254.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

workers to succeed. This tactic acknowledges Americans' overwhelming preference for work over welfare while still improving the long-term outcomes of welfare recipients and their families.

A basic income guarantee (BIG), also known as a universal demogrant or credit income tax, is "a universal cash benefit paid to all citizens . . . regardless of income, wealth, or work history."<sup>49</sup> A BIG policy has gained momentum among progressive reformers and is used, in a variety of permutations, by most socialist regimes in northeastern Europe, including Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, and Sweden. A BIG, in the form of a negative income tax, was actually suggested by the great free market advocate Milton Friedman, and famous economists James Tobin and Robert Lampman also supported different forms of the BIG.<sup>50</sup> The goal of a BIG is to simplify the tax code and the welfare system by transferring cash payments directly to citizens, which intends to reduce poverty without the complications of the means-tested welfare bureaucracy.<sup>51</sup>

Initially, the transparent and redistributive features of the program seem appealing; however, after examining the BIG literature, it becomes clear that a BIG would be neither practical nor successful in America. Sheahen synthesizes a variety of BIG proposals and formulates a single recommendation for an American BIG system. Sheahen estimates that it would cost just under \$1.9 trillion annually to guarantee every citizen in America a poverty level income, which translates to \$10,000 per adult and \$2,000 per child. Sheahen admits that "It's a scary number," but goes on to describe how America could afford the program.<sup>52</sup> Sheahen suggests eliminating 138 tax loopholes, eliminating certain exemptions and deductions from the tax code, cutting over 100 welfare programs (including the EITC and farm subsidies), slashing the defense

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<sup>49</sup> Iwan Garfinkel, Chien-Chung Huang, and Wendy Naidich, "The Effects of a Basic Income Guarantee on Poverty and Income Distribution," USBIG Discussion Paper No. 014 (Feb. 2002): 2.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

<sup>51</sup> Allan Sheahen, "It's Time to Think BIG! How to Simplify the Tax Code and Provide Every American with a Basic Income Guarantee," USBIG Discussion Paper No. 144 (Feb. 2006): 1-3.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

budget by over 35 percent, reversing the Bush tax cuts from the early 2000s, reintroducing the higher income tax rates from 1994, and changing a variety of other tax filing and reporting regulations.<sup>53</sup> At the end of these accounting gymnastics, Sheehan argues “it is not impossible to provide a full BIG to all Americans.”<sup>54</sup>

Au contraire. While Sheehan makes the math work, he completely neglects the political realities of the United States. The American government, due to a variety of issues beyond the scope of this paper, is extremely slow-moving and reluctant to change. Cutting the defense budget, obliterating federal programs, and overhauling the tax code work far better on paper than in practice, and it is unrealistic to expect these sweeping reforms to be introduced, especially all at once. Additionally, even if the government wanted to introduce such a drastic paradigm shift, the American people would likely not. As discussed previously, Americans overwhelmingly and consistently prefer work to welfare, meaning that this kind of unearned cash transfer would provoke massive public disapproval.

These political realities, however, are not the most condemning critique of the BIG plan. Troublingly, all of these reforms would be necessary just to guarantee a *poverty level* income, which has been shown repeatedly to grossly underestimate the actual cost of living for low-wage families. Handler and Hansfeld write that “the official measure of poverty does not provide a good estimate of how many people are poor . . . most people agree that the poverty line is unrealistic.”<sup>55</sup> In fact, Handler and Hansfeld find, using more reasonable estimates of living costs developed by the National Academy of Science, that “the rate of poverty for the full-time working family is 40 percent higher than the official rate.”<sup>56</sup> Therefore, this kind of politically unlikely overhaul and \$1.9 trillion expenditure would only provide income support at a meager, unlivable level. As a result, the BIG fails from both a political and

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>55</sup> Handler and Hasenfeld, *Blame Welfare*, 21.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*



economic perspective, meaning that alternative reform measures are necessary.

The goal of welfare reform should be to improve the long-term outcomes of welfare recipients in a feasible and culturally sensitive way. Rather than a BIG, reform efforts should focus on overhauling the secondary labor market where TANF forces most welfare recipients to work. This model accepts the popularity of welfare-to-work ideology in America while still empowering low-income families to succeed and prosper in the long-term. By instituting a plethora of worker training and security programs, this new policy paradigm would “re-focus on work but place workers themselves at its center.”<sup>57</sup> This paper expands on the foundational work of Ridzi, Handler, Hansfeld, and Katz in order to suggest five core policy measures that America should implement. The first three suggestions focus on increasing the income and future job prospects of welfare recipients while the second two suggestions focus on increasing the happiness, health, and family security of welfare recipients.

First, America should invest in public work projects to rebuild the nation’s crumbling infrastructure, especially in times of economic crises. Public work programs provide jobs and income support to the unemployed, improve the nation, and are responsive to economic downturns, meaning these programs can be viewed as a strategic investment rather than an unpopular expenditure. Secondly, America should increase the minimum wage, directly raising the income levels of low-wage workers. A higher minimum wage incentivizes participation in the labor market and mandates that secondary labor market jobs provide at least a livable income. Thirdly, America should invest in subsidized job training and human capital development programs. The government could offer scholarships for trade school and higher education, pay subsidies to workers and firms who participate in corporate-sponsored apprenticeships, increase funding to poor schools, and expand and develop larger job training programs. This would improve the long-term labor market prospects of welfare recipients and encourage

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<sup>57</sup> Ridzi, *Selling Welfare*, 263.

promotions and steady employment, allowing recipients to stay employed even after their TANF benefits expire.

In addition to these three reforms, which target increasing lifetime incomes, America should consider two additional reforms that focus on worker happiness and success. Fourthly, America should vastly increase spending on child-care, offering large subsidies to welfare families to pay for child-care services and making prekindergarten a requisite part of public education. This would grant low-wage families, and especially single mothers, the freedom to work without the burden of finding and paying for child-care services, while also stabilizing and improving the lives of welfare children, who suffer mightily from the work incentives imbedded in TANF. Finally, America should implement a variety of worker protection laws, including guaranteed paid maternity and paternity leave, expanded healthcare coverage, subsidized retirement programs, and mandated vacation time. These policies, which are commonplace in most other developed countries, increase work incentives by making work more feasible and enjoyable while recognizing the importance of health and family stability to worker success. In short, improving the labor market in these ways would transform the imagined benefits of welfare-to-work policies into realities by addressing the structural labor market problems that prevent TANF from improving recipient outcomes. All five of these reforms would empower low-wage workers across the nation, allowing welfare to truly reduce poverty rather than simply postpone it.

### **Conclusion: Viewing the Secondary Labor Market as the Problem, Not the Solution**

Over the course of the twentieth century, America increasingly shifted toward welfare-to-work policies, culminating with the creation of TANF in 1996. This program decreases caseloads and increases work effort, but recipient income does not increase during the program and welfare leavers are ill-equipped to succeed after their TANF benefits expire. This paper argues that the disastrous secondary labor market is responsible for these

problems. TANF moves welfare recipients from a poor place, poverty, to an even poorer place, the low-wage labor market, without providing the education or protections necessary for them to succeed there. By investing in public work projects, a higher minimum wage, human capital development programs, child care, and worker protection laws, America can improve the long-term outcomes of welfare recipients by equipping them to survive in the labor market even after their TANF benefits end. These reforms recognize both the preference Americans have for work over welfare and the realities of the American political system, making them more realistic than the popular basic income guarantee. If America is going to ask welfare recipients to work, it must provide the resources necessary for them to succeed when doing so. Unless the secondary labor market is greatly improved and low-wage workers are protected, TANF will remain a short-term, ineffective, and damaging program.

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# Dinner and a Date: the Misguiding Nature of Expiration Dates and Their Influence on Consumer Food Waste Behavior

*Lisa Fiedler*

## **Abstract**

Food waste is largely considered one of the greatest paradoxes of today: while millions of people in the world starve, we waste an astonishing amount of the food we produce. One factor that produces a substantial amount of food waste is the consumer misinterpretation of food date labels, which are inconsistent, confusing, and misunderstood. This study is a comprehensive overview of the history of food dates in the United States, the failures of the current system, an analysis of current consumer perceptions of food dates, and concrete recommendations for needed actions to solve this food date labeling crisis.

## **Introduction**

Food waste is a global issue that is taking a toll on the economy, the environment, and social equity. One aspect of food waste that has been largely ignored in academic research is the negative influence of expiration dates. Expiration dates, which for the purpose of this paper is an all-encompassing term including but not limited to sell-by, use-by, and best before dates, are ambiguous in their differences. This ambiguity leads to confusion among consumers, retailers, and lawmakers, as dates are often incorrectly perceived as “discard-by” dates. Currently, there is a gap in relevant research about how influential expiration dates are on consumer food waste behavior.

This study aims to fill the existing research gap by analyzing survey results in order to understand the role of expiration dates and how they may lead to wasteful consumer behavior. Additionally, this study provides a comprehensive overview of past and current roles the government has taken in regards to expiration dates and

makes suggestions on types of legislation that must be presented in order to clarify the meanings of expiration dates. By restructuring the current guidelines, or lack thereof, for expiration dates, a significant amount of food waste in United States can be deterred.

According to Hall, Guo, Dore, & Chow (2009), food loss per capita in America has continuously increased over the past decades by 50%. While addressing the issue of expiration dates may not solve the food waste crisis, it will help substantially. And at this point, anything and everything must be done.

## Food Waste

Food waste has countless negative impacts on the environment and countless causes influence how much food waste comes out of the system. Some of the primary drivers of food waste are often considered to be our need for perfect produce (Aubrey, 2015a; Aubrey, 2015b; Godoy, 2015), our ever-expanding portion sizes (Bloom, 2011; Husted, 2012), and the growing disconnect between the farm and our plates (Bloom, 2011; Patel, 2012). The collective impact of these troubles sends us an extremely clear message: “all that food we’re allowing to rot is creating billions of tons of greenhouse gases and costing us precious water and land” (Barclay, 2013, para. 3). A recent report from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2013) put the crisis into further focus by reporting that in 2007, the global volume of food waste was estimated to be at 1.6 *gigatonnes*. Clearly, food waste is an important environmental concern that must be looked into further.

One of the more complicated impacts of food waste to quantify is the amount of resources used to produce food that is simply wasted. According to Davis (2014), “the production and distribution of food uses 80% of the freshwater, 50% of the land, and 10% of the energy currently consumed by the U.S. each year” (8). This is of course for all food, not only food that is eventually sent to the landfill unused, but considering that most statistics for American food waste land around 40%, that is a lot of resources being used to simply cultivate matter to fill a landfill. Hall, Guo,

Dore, & Chow (2009) estimate that 25% of freshwater in the United States goes into the production of wasted food. It is also projected, in a separate study done by the McKinsey Global Institute (2011), that by reducing food waste by a mere 30%, the United States could repurpose around 100 million acres of farmland.

Even more damage is done when this wasted food hits the landfill. When food waste is left to rot in a landfill, it produces methane. In Jonathan Bloom's (2011) book titled *American Wasteland* he writes, "methane has been found to trap heat far more effectively than carbon dioxide" (16), and "landfills are the second leading source of human-related methane emissions in the United States" (16). Food waste is also the main culprit in groundwater pollution through leachate. Although newer landfills are designed with a liner that mostly keeps leachate from reaching the groundwater, older landfills continue to seep toxic ooze into our water supply (Bloom, 2011). The newer landfills, which often become faulty and end up eventually seeping leachate, unfortunately do not provide a solution to trap or reduce methane emissions (Bloom, 2011); no matter how you look at it, food waste is an issue that needs to be dealt with for the sake of the environment, public health, and supply chain efficiency.

The global problem of food waste cannot be boiled down to a single issue: it is an interconnected matter with no common source or solution. Unfortunately, this makes food waste difficult to tackle on a large scale, so sizeable, collective action is rarely taken on a national scale. Recently, structural changes have been made to deal with food waste, with legislation banning food waste in large institutions being passed in countries like France (Chrisafis, 2015) and states like Massachusetts (Kaplan, 2014). These separate legislations function similarly, with the end goal of diverting unused food to charities, animal feed, or compost instead of disposing it in landfills.

Legislation like the MassDEP Commercial Food Waste Disposal Ban, which took effect on October 1, 2014, tackles one aspect of the food waste problem, but food waste does not stem from one single issue ("Commercial," 2015). Fortunately, food waste topics can be easily divided into the following sectors:



primary producers, food processors, retailers, and consumers. Consumers create the largest percentage of waste (Overgaard, 2015), largely stemming from the fact that it is extremely difficult to substantially change consumer behavior.

Expiration dates, a contributor to food waste that encompasses all food sectors, will require a complete overhaul of the current system for true change to occur. This change must occur top-down, like the MassDEP Commercial Food Waste Disposal Ban, because there are many ill-defined actors involved in the process of food labeling and dating.

## **Expiration Dates**

Even though dates are a single difficulty in the greater scheme of food waste, it is essential action be taken on a national scale because the problem must be addressed on all levels. Uniformity, or the lack thereof, is a critical issue that begs resolution when redesigning the dating system. In this section we will discuss the historical rise of food dating in America and the complications with the dating system we have today.

An important distinction to make before continuing is the difference between open and closed dating schemes. Open dates, which are where our focus lies, are dates intended for consumer or store use. These dates are always a calendar date and encompass our definition of an expiration date. According to the USDA, open dates are not a safety date (United States Department of Agriculture, 2015) – although we will find they are often interpreted as such. Closed dates, on the other hand, are packing dates and numbers not interpretable to the consumer, and are meant to be solely used by the manufacturer. Closed dates will not be further discussed in this study, as they should have no impact on consumer behavior.

## **History of Food Dating**

America's complicated food dating system began after the 1940s when families began to move off their farms and into the

cities and suburbs. For better or worse, once people's lives began to separate from their food source, they began to understand less and less about their food, where it came from, or how the food system worked. This process accelerated through the 1970s as Americans moved towards packaged and processed foods, and "by the 1970s, consumer concern surrounding the freshness of food crystallized" (Natural Resources Defense Council & Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, 2013). According to a report published in 1979 titled "Open Shelf-life Dating of Food,"

Consumers are concerned over whether or not the food they purchase is fresh. A U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) consumer survey in 1971 showed that 20 percent had complaints about food product freshness; a Nielson survey in 1973 turned up 50 percent with such complaints. A 1978 survey further supported this concern by noting that of all the problems on the minds of consumers when they shop for food, making sure that food in supermarkets is fresh heads the list. (Office of Technology Assessment, 1979, pg. 1).

In the 1970s, some supermarkets had voluntarily adopted open dating systems (Natural Resources Defense Council & Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, 2013). At the time, 89 percent of consumers expressed in a nationwide survey of 250,000 shoppers that they were in a favor of a dating system, as some consumers were concerned that their food was becoming stale sooner than expected and had no idea how old the food was they were purchasing (Comptroller General of the United States, 1975).

By 1973, ten states and two local governments had adopted laws regulating open dating for certain food products; by 1975, the General Accounting Office advocated a uniform date labeling system to Congress (Comptroller General of the United States, 1975). However, though the aforementioned 1979 report "Open Shelf-life Dating of Food" listed many benefits of an open-dating system such as increased consumer confidence and better

product handling by retailers, the report admitted, “there is little or no benefit derived from open dating in terms of improved microbiological safety of foods” (Office of Technology Assessment, 1979, pg. 5). Unfortunately, the lack of connection of dates to hard microbiological science has persisted, and the government even until now hardly ever oversees the dates stamped onto food by the manufacturer.

In a particularly extraordinary period in the 80s, Congress actually made an attempt to regulate the open dating system through legislation, but the National Association of Food Chains testified before Congress that federal regulations would only lead to additional costs and that the food industry was already spending millions on labeling (Natural Resources Defense Council & Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, 2013). Congresswoman Nita Lowey (D-NY) has continued to fight for regulation since then, introducing the Food Freshness Disclosure Act in 1999, and reintroducing similar bills in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009 (Natural Resources Defense Council & Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, 2013). According to the Natural Resources Defense Council & Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic (2013), “the bills proposed to amend the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act by adding the requirement of applying uniform freshness dates on food. Uniformity would be achieved by requiring that all freshness dates be preceded by the phrase ‘best if used by’” (p. 7). Although this legislation is not comprehensive enough, it would be a step in the right direction for a more uniform and regulated dating system.

### **Date Regulation Today**

Currently, a gaping hole in date labeling legislation still exists across the United States, creating a major problem for consumers who are unable to rely on the message expiration dates send. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council & Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic (2013):

Inconsistency exists on multiple levels, including *whether* manufacturers affix a date label in the first

place, how they choose which label category to apply, internal inconsistency *within* each label category due to the lack of formal legal definitions, and variability surrounding *how* the date used on a product is determined. (pg. 8)

Phil Lambert, who is informally known as the Supermarket Guru, adds to this discussion by saying “consumers are totally confused by sell-by and use-by dates, which is why one of the things we’ve pushed for a number of years is to just have a use-by date” (Bloom, 2011, pg. 163).

While the Supermarket Guru is correct to argue for a simplified dating system, simply reducing the current system to one use-by date will not solve the confusion, especially since federal laws do not consistently address expiration dates (Natural Resources Defense Council & Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, 2013). Although Congress has the authority to oversee date labels because of the Commerce Clause (U.S. Const. art. I, § 8), the USDA does not advocate for a uniform food dating system in the United States (United States Department of Agriculture, 2015). While two agencies, the Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, generally take care of food labeling, no agency has been given explicit authority to regulate labels since there is no comprehensive labeling legislation.

While the FDA and the USDA both partially oversee labels, they only have the power to regulate certain foods. They share oversight for eggs and produce, but the regulation for the remaining food classes is quite distinct. The Natural Resources Defense Council & Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic (2013) explain that under the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1983, the Nutritional Labeling and Education Act of 1990, the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act of 1966, the Infant Formula Act of 1980, and the Food Safety Modernization Act of 2011, the FDA has the authority to regulate all foods except for meat, poultry, and fish. They continue by attributing the regulation of meat and poultry to the USDA, citing the Poultry Products Inspection Act of 1957, the Federal Meat Inspection Act of 1906, the Perishable Agricultural

Commodities Act of 1930, and the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (Natural Resources Defense Council & Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, 2013). Because both the FDA and the USDA have the power to regulate misbranding or misleading labels, they in theory should have the power to regulate the current dating system – which is highly misleading to consumers.

Instead of regulating date labeling on food products, the federal government offers several voluntary guidelines. One voluntary guideline is provided by the National Institute of Standards and Technology. Their 2015 NIST Handbook has a section titled “Uniform Open Dating Regulation,” and while their model allows foods to be sold after their expiration date given that the food is of good quality, it does not tackle the idea that consumers might not be interested in buying expired food when the difference between and the nature of expirations dates are still unclear (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2015). Another voluntary guideline is the FDA Food Code, which is often voluntarily adopted by states because of its certification by food safety experts (Natural Resources Defense Council & Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, 2013). Unfortunately, like the NIST Handbook, the FDA Food Code is weak in many areas; while the code does suggest labeling requirements for shellfish, ready-to-eat foods, and reduced oxygen packaged foods, the code does not attempt to improve the clarity of food dates for consumers (United States Public Health Service & Food and Drug Administration, 2013).

In light of lacking federal regulation, some states have taken it upon themselves to regulate food dating internally. This is problematic not only because state laws are not as static as federal laws, but also because different dating schemes across states are a major inconvenience for interstate commerce. For example, in 2012 Georgia passed legislation that made all expiration dates (Pull-By, Best-By, Best Before, Use-by, and Sell-by) synonymous (Natural Resources Defense Council & Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, 2013), preventing the sale of products after the sell-by, use-by, and best before dates alike. This legislation differs greatly from other states, especially when considering that nine states, including New

York, do not require date labels at all (Natural Resources Defense Council & Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, 2013). To complicate things further, date labeling can also be controlled at a local level when states fail to provide any recommendations. For example, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council & Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic (2013), Baltimore does not allow the sale of perishable food that is past its expiration date, whereas the state of Maryland has no similar regulation. This variance from city to city only leads to greater consumer confusion.

Expiration dates need to be more clearly defined; we are so disconnected from our food that we no longer are able to tell when food is good to eat because many consumers misinterpret dates. In Van Garde & Woodburn's (1987) study "Food discard practices of householders" participants were asked to determine whether or not specific packaged foods were safe to eat. Their results show that many people do not understand what information is relevant when figuring out the microbial safety of foods, leading to more food waste than is necessary (Van Garde & Woodburn, 1987). In the following sections we will examine the survey data and results, which will allow us to further identify and analyze the failures of the current dating scheme.

## **Methods**

In order to advance our understanding of the role expiration dates play in consumer behavior, I collected data using paper surveys (IRB Number 6152). The surveys were passed out in public and semi-public facilities, like the Norman Public Library and the Sooner Mall. When deciding whom to give surveys to, I purposefully targeted middle-aged participants because they are more likely to have concrete shopping habits compared to younger or older shoppers who may be in the stages of adjusting to living independently.

Though the survey in its entirety is included in the Appendix, the selection of the questions warrants further explanation. Questions were limited in order to confine the survey to one page, front and back, in order to not intimidate possible

participants. Also, questions were almost entirely qualitative in nature. This is not only because self-reported quantitative statistics such as how much money is spent on food that is merely thrown away per month are likely to be severely underestimated, but also because the goal of this research was to discover the role expiration dates play when consumers decide to throw away food, which by its nature requires little quantitative data. When consumers were given the choice to write in a number, such as in questions 3 and 14, and they provided a range, the largest number in the range was chosen. This was done to provide a consistent method among the results, but also to somewhat counter the trend of underestimation.

## Findings

The first and most obvious finding provided by the survey is how little of a role food plays in many consumers' lives. This is exemplified in Figure 1 and Figure 2, which show how many times a month respondents go grocery shopping and the importance the role of sustainable food plays in their everyday decisions, respectively. Additionally, though the data is not graphically represented, the amount respondents reportedly ate at restaurants was extremely unexpected, with a couple of responses stating they ate at a restaurant an average of seven times a week.

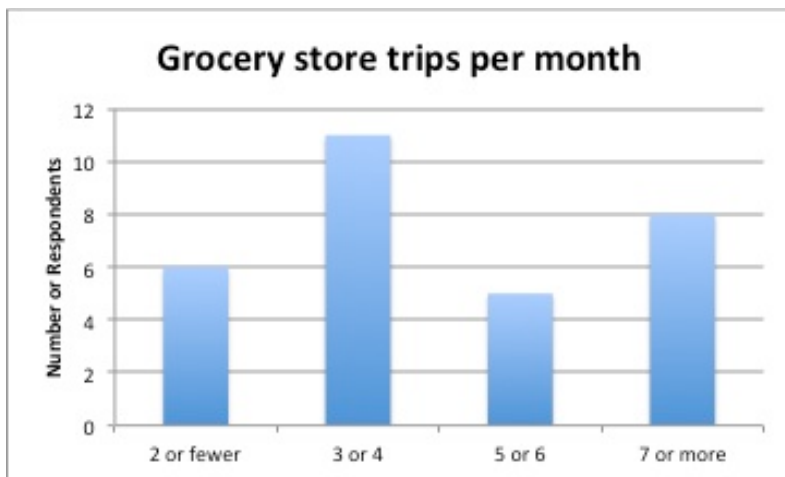


Figure 1. While most respondents reported to go grocery shopping about once a week, a surprising number also reported to go grocery shopping as little as twice a month.

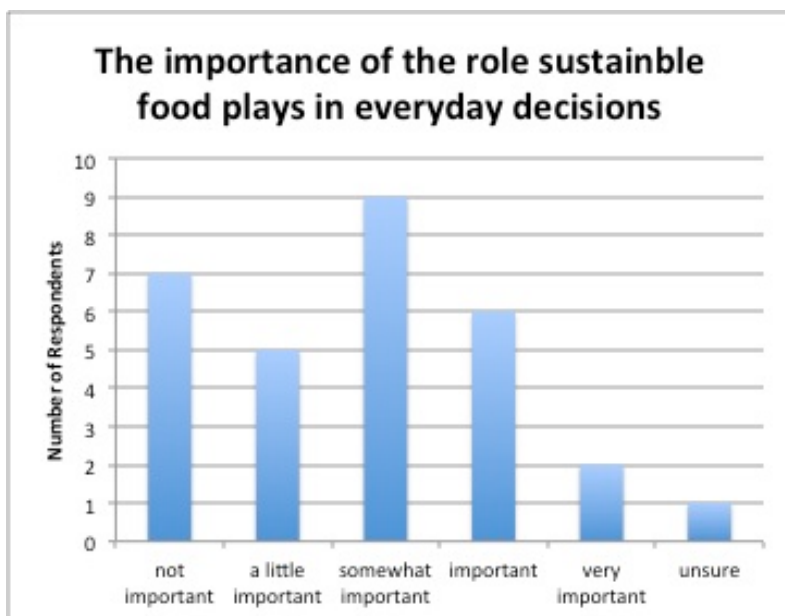


Figure 2. A majority of respondents did not consider sustainable food to be an important factor in their decisions regarding food.

Perhaps the most significant results the survey showed are that a majority of respondents are highly confident in their ability to



distinguish between different expiration dates, yet not a single respondent correctly identified the legal differences, or lack thereof, of the dates. The number of people who claimed to know the difference in the dating system versus those who admitted to not knowing is graphed below in Figure 3. One respondent, who openly admitted to not understanding the difference in the dates, wrote, "not sure, it is very confusing to figure out the sell-by, use-by and best before dates," while another responded with "sadly, no. I could make some guesses, but I have a hunch they'd be incorrect."

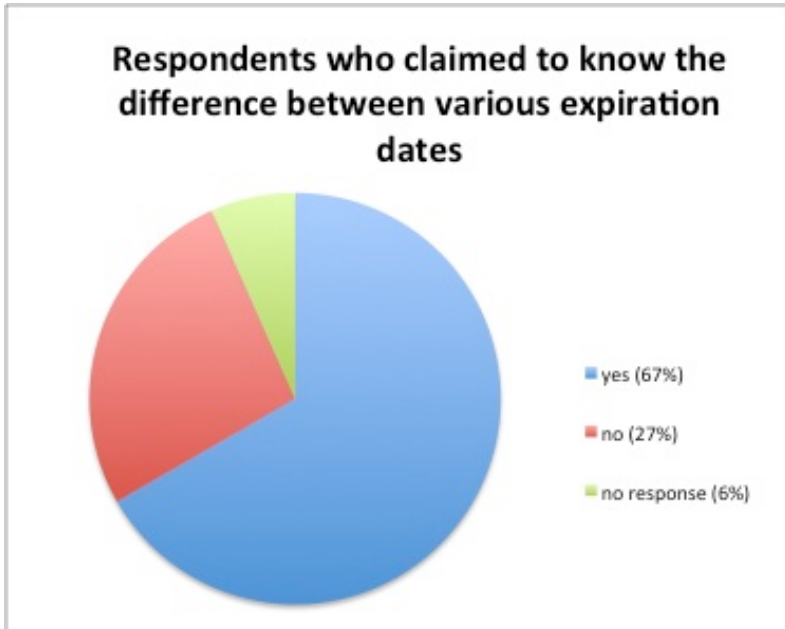


Figure 3. Two-thirds of respondents claimed to know the difference between expiration dates, but not one of them correctly identified the differences.

Despite the fact that consumers have a complete misunderstanding of food date labels, Figure 4 illustrates that many of them rely on the dates to make decisions when deciding to purchase or consume a product. In a similar vein, Figure 5 shows that one-third of consumers trust dates so much they will throw away food simply because it is past the expiration date, and will not further examine it before making that decision. While the people who reported to check the food further than the date before throwing away often did so by looking, smelling, and tasting the

food, not one respondent reported to consider the storage history of the food, which is the most important factor in terms of microbial safety.



Figure 4. This graph shows that nearly all respondents at least sometimes check the dates on packaged food before purchasing or consuming it.

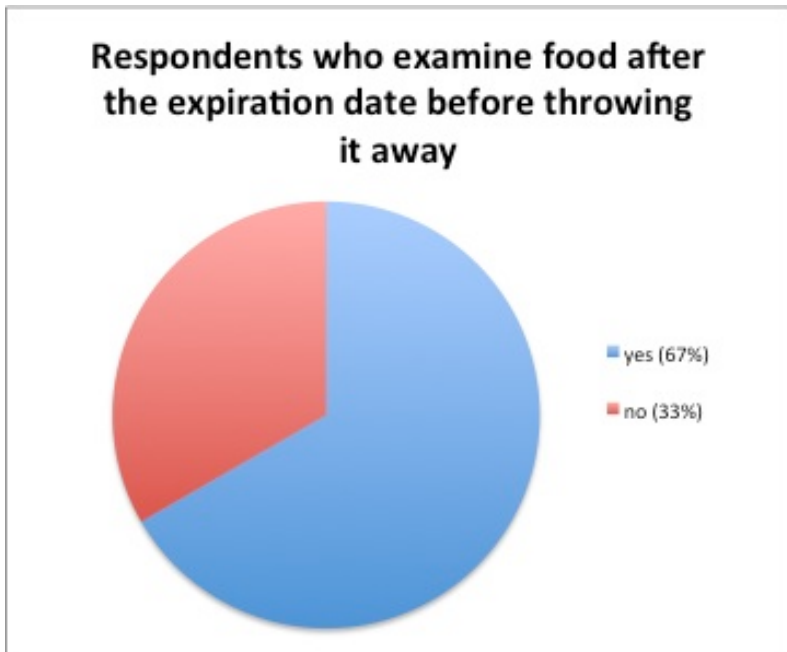


Figure 5. This pie chart illustrates how one-third of respondents fail to examine their food further than the date before deciding to throw it away.

In Figure 6 we explore this relationship between the perception of food date validity and its effect on food waste further by comparing three five-number summaries with each other. The results of this graph indicate that people who perceive food dates to be a good indicator of food quality or food safety self-report higher food waste levels than those who are skeptical of the soundness of food date labels.

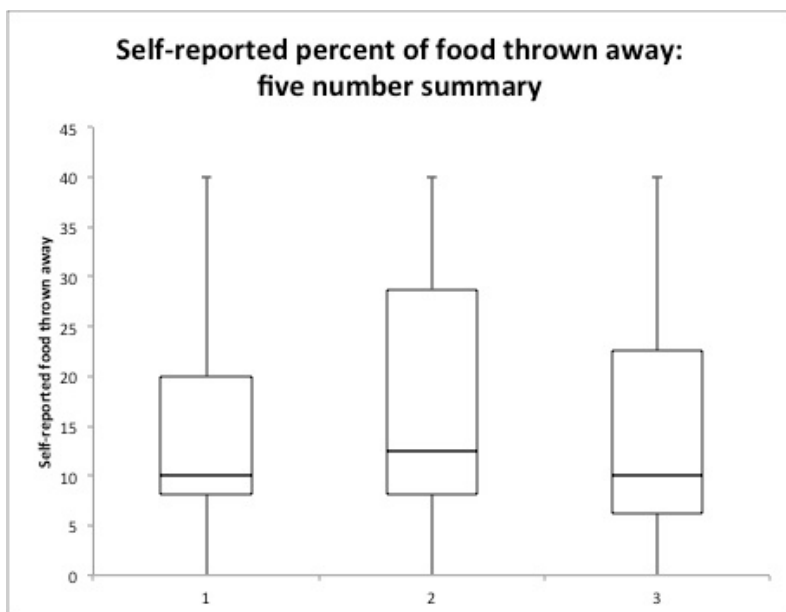


Figure 6. In this figure, the first category represents the overall summary of self-reported food thrown away. The second category represents the summary of self-reported food thrown away for respondents who somewhat or strongly believe that food dates are a good indicator of food safety. Similarly, the third category represents the summary of self-reported food thrown away for respondents who somewhat or strongly believe that food dates are a good indicator of food quality. As we can see, particularly for those who believe dates correctly reflect food safety, the self-reported food waste levels are higher for those who take food date labels more seriously.

Figure 7 and 8 are both highly optimistic. Respondents were asked how likely they would be to buy food past its sell-by date at a discounted price. As Figure 7 displays, a majority of respondents reported that they would be very or somewhat likely to buy the expired food. And Figure 8, in a similarly positive note, shows that food waste is a topic of concern for consumers.



Figure 7. This graph shows that if expired, but still clearly edible, food is sold at a discounted price, a majority of consumers would be likely to buy it.



Figure 8. This graph shows that reducing food waste is on the minds of consumers.

## Analysis

The results of our survey indicate that consumers value the message, albeit confusing, expiration dates send. Unfortunately, our trust is being placed in meaningless terms with no legal definitions. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council & Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic (2013), a loose interpretation of expiration dates is as follows:

1. "Production" or "pack" date: the date the food was manufactured or put in its final packaging.
2. "Sell by" date: information for retailers when controlling stock. This date leaves plenty of shelf life for the consumer to safely consume the food after the date has past.
3. "Best if used by" or "best before" date: an estimate of the date when the food will no longer be at its top quality, but still safe to eat.
4. "Use by" date: similar to the "best before" and "best if used by" dates, it is a manufacturer's estimate for when the product is no longer at its peak quality.
5. "Freeze by" date: simply a reminder that the product's quality can be preserved if it is frozen.
6. "Enjoy by" date: currently no standard interpretation for this date.

However, these interpretations can vary from manufacturer to manufacturer, and even from product to product. The report "Current State of Food Product Open Dates in the U.S." – which was prepared by the FDA in 2003 – found that the use of open dates by manufacturers varied widely due to the lack of a nation-wide standard (Food and Drug Administration, 2003). The Food and Drug Administration (2003) writes that "each company has its own

definition of the end of shelf life, with some accepting a predetermined degree of change and others finding that no change in quality is acceptable" (p. 3-2). Additionally, many manufacturers admit to severely underestimating expiration dates in order to protect the integrity and quality of their products, but also to maximize profits at the expense of the consumer (Food and Drug Administration, 2003). If even manufacturers cannot agree on consistent definitions, consumers have no way of differentiating between the diverse meanings; yet they still interpret expiration dates as law, leading to an exorbitant amount of unnecessary food waste.

Even though dates are meant to be a slack indicator of quality, our results show that many consumers are under the impression that these dates are correlated with safety. One respondent reported that she did not throw away foods "unless they became harmful for health due to expiration dates," while another wrote that "it is a habit to discard food that is expired according to the label." These findings are consistent with a report from the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (2004), which also showed that most people believe consuming food past its expiration date poses health risks. This unnecessary reliance on dates causes consumers to ignore more relevant factors, such as storage history, when deciding whether or not food is edible, as Figure 5 shows.

Retailers aren't any better when it comes to waste from dates. According to Bloom (2011), some stores have become so overzealous about dates and what message a displayed product past its sell-by date would send to consumers that they will throw out products before the expiration date even approaches. This is the case particularly with baby formula, which is regulated much more strictly than other products, and cannot be sold when it has 60 days left until its use-by date (Bloom, 2011). And manufacturers are just as misinformed as retailers: in Aubrey's (2015a) story for *NPR*, she explains that some manufacturers end up dumping food that still has two weeks left until its sell-by date because it would be too close to the expiration date for grocery stores to accept the order by the time it arrived. This is not only an economic loss for the

manufacturer, but it also contributes to methane emissions, resource use, and climate change.

Figure 6 demonstrates that a relationship between the perceived trustworthiness of food date labels and the reported amount of food waste does exist. If consumers believe food date labels accurately reflect the safety of foods, they are more likely to waste food. A report by WRAP (2011), states, "date labels are reported as being one of the most important pieces of information that consumers look for on food packaging." Both educating consumers about the true nature of food dates and comprehensively changing food date legislation can rectify this.

Figure 7, which graphed the likelihood of consumers to buy expired products at a discounted price, was strangely optimistic compared to our other findings. However, the findings are consistent with existing literature, and programs to sell expired products at a reduced cost could be put into place in the U.S. easily by implementing strategies used in Denmark. Maia Lindstrøm Sejersen, the spokeswoman for Danish supermarket chain Dansk Supermarked, argues that selling expired food at a cheap price is good business because "any grocer would rather sell something than throw it away" (Overgaard, 2015). Danish consumers now pride themselves on saving money on these reduced items, and selling these items has inspired Dansk Supermarked to improve their food waste reduction efforts even further.

## Conclusions

The United States is in dire need of a new food dating system in order to promote clear communication between producers, manufacturers, retailers, and consumers. These recommendations, resulting from an analysis of the food waste problem, the history of food dating in the United States, and the findings from the survey on the influence of expiration dates on consumer food waste behavior, requires that the United States establish a nationally consistent dating system. Under a new system, I recommend the following:



1. The open dating system must truly only be for consumers; therefore, sell-by dates should not be visible past the retail level. Sell-by dates, which are guidelines for grocery stores and are of no use to the consumer, are easily misunderstood to be safety dates. Changing sell-by dates to a closed dating system will reduce consumer confusion.
2. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council & Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic (2013), food date “language should be standardized, unambiguous, and should clearly delineate between safety-based and quality-based dates” (p. 24). This study supports this recommendation and would even argue it must be taken a step further. The new national policy should replace all remaining open dates (best if used by, best before, use-by, freeze by, packed on, and enjoy by) with one simple phrase: “Best quality assured before MM/DD/YY.” The uniform language, where every word is clear and serves a purpose, would communicate that dates are meant as an indicator of quality much better than the current system does.
3. To further reduce food waste, dates on non-perishable food products, like canned food and dried grains, should be removed entirely. Foods like these rarely have a noticeable deterioration in quality except for when the packaging is damaged. If manufacturers are at first uncomfortable with the concept of not dating food, they could have the option to use the phrase “Best quality assured within XX days of opening.”
4. The dates selected for the “best quality assured before” label must be based on hard science and cannot be underestimated so that the manufacturer benefits at the expense of consumers. Aside from baby formula, there is no federal regulation for what date manufacturers decide to put on packaging (Bloom, 2011; Natural Resources Defense Council & Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, 2013). If the methods used

to determine “Best quality assured before” dates were transparent, it would hold manufactures accountable for selecting dates that more accurately predict the quality of the food.

These recommendations are more comprehensive than any previous American legislation and should diminish food waste by reducing, or even eliminating, consumer confusion.

In order for a new dating system to replace the current one and for food waste to be reduced, many actors including the food industry, the federal government, state governments, and consumers must work together. Recommendations for these select actors are as follows:

1. The food industry must move sell-by dates to the closed dating system and begin selling expired products at a discount. Changing sell-by dates to the closed dating system would make it incomprehensible to consumers; therefore, consumers would not have a reason to be confused by them. The food industry in the United States should also make it status quo to sell food that is past or near its peak quality date. As this analysis shows, consumers are receptive to this practice, and retailers only benefit from the extra income from food that would otherwise just be thrown away.
2. The federal government should pass legislation that would establish a clear and uniform dating system, like the system afore recommended. This legislation should also coordinate the roles of the FDA and USDA – as their roles are currently ill defined and their authority sometimes overlaps.
3. Until comprehensive federal legislation is passed, state governments should work to fill the gaps in federal regulation. Some primary, concrete steps they may take are making sell-by dates invisible to the consumer and repealing overzealous laws that promote diverse dating schemes between states.

4. Consumers should educate themselves and those around them about the true meaning of current food date labels. Understanding that the current food date system is not trustworthy would be a major step in reducing food waste. Additionally, consumers should take steps to become more connected with their food, which will lead to them placing more value on food as well as gaining a deeper understanding as to when food is still safe to eat.

Although it is, of course, ideal that these recommendations for actors are all worked towards, the easiest step forward is for consumers to educate themselves on the actual meaning of food date labels. The awareness alone would help combat additional food waste while the remaining actors works towards substantial policy changes.

While ending food date label confusion will not solve the global crisis of food waste, it is a critical and logical step in downsizing the problem. This study demonstrates that the current confusing nature of food dates does influence the amount of food that consumers waste, and it is imperative that the current system is improved upon in order to reduce consumer misperception. Many aspects contribute to the overall problem of food waste, so no course of action is inherently more important than another. Tackling the lack of clarity in the United States' food dating system is a concrete plan of action and should be an issue that everyone can agree requires attention.

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U.S. Const. art. I, § 8.

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## Appendix

### 1. On average, how many times a month do you go grocery shopping?

2 or fewer  
7 or more

3 to 4 times, or roughly once a week

5 or 6

2. Where do you regularly shop for groceries in the Norman area? You may list more than one.

3. On average, how many times a week do you eat out? \_\_\_\_\_

4. How important is the role of eating sustainable, organic, fair-trade, or GMO-free food in your everyday decisions regarding food?

(not important) 1            2            3            4            5 (very important)  
Not sure

5. How important is the role of reducing food waste in your everyday decisions regarding food?

(not important) 1            2            3            4            5 (very important)  
Not sure

6. The dates on food packaging are a good indicator of when food is no longer safe to eat. This statement is:

Very true            Somewhat true            Neutral            Somewhat untrue  
Very untrue

7. The dates on food packaging are a good indicator of when a food's quality is no longer at its best. This statement is:

Very true            Somewhat true            Neutral            Somewhat untrue  
Very untrue

8. I check the date on packaged foods when deciding whether or not to buy the product.

Always            Almost always            Sometimes            Almost never  
Never            Not sure

9. I check the date on packaged foods before consuming them.

Always            Almost always            Sometimes            Almost never  
Never            Not sure

10. Do you know the difference between sell-by, use-by, and best before dates? If yes, please explain the differences.

11. If a food you enjoy was past its sell-by date, but still clearly edible, how likely would you be to buy the product at a discounted price?

Very likely   Somewhat likely   Indifferent   Unlikely   Very unlikely  
Not sure

12. When you find a product you have purchased that is past its use-by date, what do you normally do?

13. When you have food that is not dated by the USDA (i.e. homemade meals, restaurant leftovers, fresh fruits and vegetables, etc.), how do you decide when to eat or when to throw out the food?

14. What percentage of purchased food do you normally end up throwing away?  
\_\_\_\_\_ %

15. What foods do you find yourself throwing away most often, regardless of the look, smell, or taste, by the date on the package?

16. Why are you throwing away food?

17. What could you do in your household to eliminate food waste?

18. What is your age?

Under 18   18-25   26-35   36-50   51-70  
71+

19. What is your highest level of education?

High school   Professional Degree   Undergraduate Degree  
Graduate Degree or equivalent  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

20. How do you rank your annual household income?

Less than \$40,000   \$40,001-\$60,000   \$60,001-\$80,000   \$80,001-  
\$100,000   \$100,000+

21. How many people are in your household? \_\_\_\_\_

## But Where Are All the Women? Examining the Often Overlooked Role of Women in and against Islamist Extremism

*Alissa Rice*

### Introduction

Over the past several decades, Islamist extremism has become an omnipresent topic in discussions of global politics, national security, and international relations. However, women have been conspicuously absent from such discourse. Although women play a unique and profound role in both the perpetuation and opposition of Islamist extremist movements, female voices are consistently overlooked and neglected in both the mainstream media and academic scholarship. This dearth of women's perspectives is particularly appalling considering that women are often the population segment most intensely affected when religious extremism takes hold in a society. When women are excluded from the conversation and denied a seat at the table, an important component of the discourse is lost. Because women often serve as the backbone of the family and, by extension, society, they are likely to be a key factor in countering Islamic extremism and must, therefore, be an integral part of the conversation in order to find a solution.

Although political theorists at one time believed that religion was on the decline as a global political force, the consensus amongst contemporary scholars is quite the contrary—rather than fading into obscurity, religion has emerged as a powerful influence in the wake of increasing modernization and globalization<sup>1</sup>. Islam, as the world's second largest religion<sup>2</sup>, is no exception to this trend. An Islamic resurgence began with intellectuals in the first half of the

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<sup>1</sup> Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott, Timothy Samuel Shaw, *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* (New York: W.V. Norton, 2011), Chapter 1.

<sup>2</sup> "Muslim Details," Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project, Accessed April 26, 2015, <http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/religions/muslims>.



20<sup>th</sup> century and by the 1970s had become politically influential globally. This revival of Islam in the public sphere led to Muslims the world over demanding regimes that favored Islamic law and morality<sup>3</sup>. Regrettably, this reemergence of religion in public life and international politics has given rise to an increase in religious extremist groups and movements, which include many Islamist and radical Muslim campaigns. Women play a variety of roles in extremist organizations including that of the victim, supporter, dissident, or active participant<sup>4</sup>. This study will attempt to examine the role of women in modern Islamist extremist movements. I will analyze the contributions of women in the formation and maintenance of such movements and the motivations of women who support or join. Additionally, I will investigate current efforts and tactics to hinder Islamist extremism, and the ways in which feminism and women's empowerment can be mobilized to counter Islamist extremism.

### **The Utility of Women for Islamist Organizations**

Though rarely seen at the forefront of radical Muslim organizations, women are, nonetheless, vital to the quotidian operations of extremist movements. Women participate in Islamist movements as both supporters and active participants, and their contributions to the organizations vary based upon the goals of the movements and whether or not the Islamist group has chosen to work within the legal political processes of a country or outside of it<sup>5</sup>. According to a 2007 report produced by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, women have recently begun to occupy a more important place in the Islamist political movements of the Middle East and are becoming more influential in shaping the

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<sup>3</sup> Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott, Timothy Samuel Shaw, *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* (New York: W.V. Norton, 2011), Chapter 1.

<sup>4</sup> Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Rafia Barakat and Liat Shetret, "The Roles of Women in Terrorism, Conflict, and Violent Extremism: Lessons for the United Nations and International Actors," Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, April 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Omayma Abdellatif, and Marina Ottaway, "Women in Islamist Movements: Toward an Islamist Model of Women's Activism," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 1, 2007, Accessed April 26, 2015.

politics of these movements<sup>6</sup>. The authors of the study, Omayma Abdellatif and Marina Ottaway, argue that women within Islamist extremist groups have "made important inroads in Islamist movements by creating strong women's branches and pushing for broader political participation and representation"<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, although women are rarely the focus of media attention as members of Islamist organizations, they play an important role in the politics and operation of such movements.

Just as female political participation within Islamist organizations has increased in recent years, female terrorism is also on the rise<sup>8</sup> as part of the Islamist extremist movement. Women's role in terrorism and jihad has increased in large part due to the tactical and strategic advantage of women as perpetrators of violence<sup>9</sup>. Because men are viewed as the standard depiction of terrorists, women are able to gain much greater access to targets and are, therefore, tactically advantageous for Islamist terrorist groups. Because of the rarity and unexpected nature of such acts, the perpetration of terrorist acts by women, is also strategically advantageous for Islamist terrorist groups because it often garners more media attention and awareness for the organization's cause than terrorism perpetrated by men.

The reason for Islamist groups' recruitment of women is simple: the inclusion of women makes for a stronger organization. Carnegie scholars Omayma Abdellatif, and Marina Ottaway detail the way in which women contribute to the strength of Islamist organizations:

The key role women play in Islamist organizations is understandable, however, if one considers the enormous attention paid by Islamist movements to building strong organizations, getting their

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Karla J. Cunningham, "Cross-Regional Trends in Female Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26, no. 3 (2010): 171-95.

<sup>9</sup> Brigitte L Nacos, "The Portrayal Of Female Terrorists In The Media: Similar Framing Patterns In The News Coverage Of Women In Politics And In Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no. 5 (2005): 435-51.

message out to large segments of the population, and providing financial support and health and educational services to those in need through their networks of charitable organizations.<sup>10</sup>

Women are an invaluable resource for Islamist groups that wish to gain large-scale support throughout the Muslim world, as they are often influential in converting their family members to the cause of Islamism. Because women within Muslim society have typically been ascribed the traditional roles of wife, mother, and nurturer, they are often charged with being the guardians of religious, cultural, and social values<sup>11</sup>. Through marriage, women are often able to convert their husbands and in-laws to Islamism, as they can introduce radical contacts into the lives of men<sup>12</sup>. Additionally, women can be useful in the financing of a movement, as well as in the implementation of outreach efforts of the organization.

Furthermore, as an intrinsic element of society, women must also be an intrinsic element of any movement that hopes to revolutionize society, making their inclusion necessary for the success of Islamist organizations. Nowhere is this more visible than in the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), a largely Sunni jihadist group which seeks the establishment of a new caliphate - a unified Islamic state that would span much of the Middle East<sup>13</sup>. This goal would be impossible without the inclusion of women. The recruitment of women into ISIL is, therefore, not merely a means of expanding the organization but "is the essential building block of a

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<sup>10</sup> Omayma Abdellatif, and Marina Ottaway, "Women in Islamist Movements: Toward an Islamist Model of Women's Activism," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 1, 2007, Accessed April 26, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Rafia Barakat and Liat Shetret, "The Roles of Women in Terrorism, Conflict, and Violent Extremism: Lessons for the United Nations and International Actors," Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, April 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Jessica Davis, "Women and Radical Islamic Terrorism: Planners, Perpetrators, Patrons?" Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, May 2006, Accessed April 27, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Zachary Laub, and Jonathan Masters, "Background Briefing: What Is ISIL?" PBS, June 24, 2014, Accessed April 27, 2015.

future society."<sup>14</sup> It is to this end that the Islamic State has established all-female branches of the organization, such as the al-Khansaa Brigade,<sup>15</sup> and produced propaganda operations aimed specifically at women, such as the al-Zawra campaign.<sup>16</sup>

In countries with election-based political systems and universal suffrage, Islamist political organizations and parties must seek to win the support and votes of women as well as men. Because Muslim women are more likely to be persuaded to support Islamist political organizations when other women approach them, Islamist groups need both male and female activists. Among Islamist movements that participate in the legal political processes of their countries (including the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Party for Justice and Development in Morocco, Hizbollah in Lebanon, and Hamas in Palestine) the potential role of women in advancing political goals has been of considerable focus since the conception of such organizations.

Strengthening the organizational structures of women's branches as well as engaging women in crucial political tasks such as election campaigning and voting on election day have been at the heart of the movements' strategic efforts to capitalize on the presence of women in their ranks.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, some Islamist parties have even fielded female candidates in an effort to win the votes and support of women<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Vivienne Walt, "Marriage and Martyrdom: How ISIS Is Winning Women," *Time*, November 18, 2014, Accessed April 27, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Kathy Gilsinan, "The ISIS Crackdown on Women, by Women," *The Atlantic*, July 25, 2014, Accessed April 27, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Windrem, "ISIS Slips On Family-Friendly Guise to Lure Women, Children, FBI Director Says," NBC News, November 4, 2014, Accessed April 27, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Omayma Abdellatif, and Marina Ottaway, "Women in Islamist Movements: Toward an Islamist Model of Women's Activism," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 1, 2007, Accessed April 26, 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Omayma Abdellatif, and Marina Ottaway, "Women in Islamist Movements: Toward an Islamist Model of Women's Activism," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 1, 2007, Accessed April 26, 2015.

## The Motivations of Islamist Women

Despite the ostensible incompatibility of Islamist extremism and women's interests, women are joining Islamist organizations in increasing numbers. Their motivations for doing so are highly varied and dependent upon personal and cultural background. Motivations for joining with Islamist movements differ greatly between Muslim women living in the societies where extremism is rampant and Muslim women living in Western liberal democracies. In societies inundated with extremism, women often join with Islamist movements out of more primal motives of safety and security, out of a sense of desperation to make their political views heard, or out of sectarian and tribal loyalties. Western women, on the other hand, typically join with Islamist movements out of more psychologically based motives, including religious ideology, feelings of alienation from western culture and politics, lack of purpose or fulfillment in their lives, and romantic visions of Islamism buoyed by extremist propaganda campaigns.

In portions of the Middle East and Africa where Islamist terror groups have seized significant power, many Muslim women are persuaded to join with Islamist groups out of fear for their safety and security as well as that of their children and families. In war zones, women commonly bear a disproportionate amount of fallout from the conflict. They are often subject to material deprivation in times of scarcity, harassment in militarized areas, and vulnerability to rape or assault<sup>19</sup>. In areas where radical Islamist organizations have seized power or are attempting to seize power through violence, women may feel that membership within an Islamist organization will offer them protection. In Iraq, for example, there have been reports of Iraqi women who have taken up arms as members of the Islamic State in the wake of militarized conflict, as a way to combat danger and insecurity<sup>20</sup>.

Islamist groups may also appeal to the political interests of women, which are similar in many ways to their male counterparts.

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<sup>19</sup> Nimmi Gowrinathan, "The Women of ISIS," The Council on Foreign Relations, August 21, 2014, Accessed April 26, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

Women in the Middle East/North Africa region often hold political views that reject Westernization and seek to reclaim their culture from outside influence. This phenomenon can be observed in Akbar Ahmed's work, *Islam Under Siege*, in which he argues that it is the dissipation of traditional Muslim concepts of social cohesion, such as *asabiyya*, at the hands of Western interference in the Islamic world that have led to feelings of defensiveness and the sense among many Muslims that their society and way of life is under siege. The consequential result of this increasing globalization is a form of hyper-*asabiyya*, or the sort of extreme group loyalty resulting in radicalism and chaos, and a distorted sense of honor among many Muslims. Ahmed contends that it is these two factors that explain the rise of Islamist violence and radicalism, and the movement away from principles of Islam that promote peace and toleration<sup>21</sup>.

Although this phenomenon is rooted in religious sentiment and focuses on a desire to rid Islam from corrupting Western influence, it also has much to do with the sectarian and tribal divisions that characterize the traditionally Islamic world. In the Islamic State struggle, sectarian divisions play an enormous role. "The conflict in Iraq is also rooted in identity: at its base, the fight is a sectarian struggle between Sunni and Shiite Muslims."<sup>22</sup> The Islamic State is composed primarily of Sunni Muslims, a sect that has been oppressed under the Shiite regime since it seized power following the 2003 war and the deposition of Saddam Hussein<sup>23</sup>. Islamist movements often capitalize on politics of identity for recruitment of women, targeting women who feel oppressed because of their sectarian or tribal loyalties. One example is the all-

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<sup>21</sup> Akbar Ahmed, *Islam Under Siege: Living Dangerously in a Post-honor World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003)

<sup>22</sup> Nimmi Gowrinathan, "The Women of ISIS," The Council on Foreign Relations, August 21, 2014, Accessed April 26, 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Kulsoom Rizvi, "Shia and Sunni Muslims – do you know the difference?" Your Middle East, September 23, 2014, Accessed April 26, 2014.

female *al Khansaa* Brigade of the Islamic State, which actively recruits women who feel oppressed as Sunni Muslims<sup>24</sup>.

Finally, Islamist movements offer women a means of political expression when there are few alternatives. When women are marginalized and given little political agency, violence and extremism become a form of political power. Thus, the past four years have seen increasing numbers of women actively engaging in terrorism, including suicide bombings, fueled by the Syrian war<sup>25</sup> and a desire to have their political opinions heard. This is true of the Chechen "Black Widows", a group of female suicide bombers, who have killed hundreds of civilians in Russia since the first attack in 2000. The Chechen people are an ethnic minority living primarily in Russia's North Caucasus region. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Chechen separatists began an organized independence movement, resulting in two wars and an ongoing insurgency<sup>26</sup>. The "Black Widows" are a group of jihadist women, believed to act out of a sense of revenge and hatred for their Russian occupiers coupled with a desire to become martyrs<sup>27</sup>. Because the Chechen people desire independence but have little political recourse in Russia, acts of extremism and terrorism have become one way in which women can make their views known.

While women in traditionally Islamic and war-torn societies are typically motivated to join Islamist movements by intrinsic needs and a lack of political choice, it is more difficult to understand the factors that motivate Western women living in liberal democracies to join Islamist movements. According to current estimates around 200 women, 10% of Western recruits, have left Europe for Iraq or Syria over the past two years in order to join radical Islamist

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<sup>24</sup> Nimmi Gowrinathan, "The Women of ISIS," The Council on Foreign Relations, August 21, 2014, Accessed April 26, 2015.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Bergen and Emily Schneider, "Rise of the female jihadists," CNN, January 10, 2015, Accessed April 27, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Preeti Bhattacharji, "Chechen Terrorism (Russia, Chechnya, Separatist)." Council on Foreign Relations, April 8, 2010, Accessed March 28, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Bryan Glyn Williams, "The Brides of Allah: The Terror Threat of Black-Widow Suicide Bombers to the Winter Olympics," Huffington Post, February 12, 2014, Accessed April 27, 2015.

movements<sup>28</sup>. The typical profile of a Western female recruit is that of a young woman with some post-secondary education from a first generation immigrant family that is typically a visible minority from a Muslim country<sup>29</sup>.

Religion is usually a primary motivator for Western women who join Islamist extremist organizations. The women may consider Western legal systems as contradictory to the teachings of Islam and may seek out a life under Sharia<sup>30</sup>. However, because many of radicalized Western women have grown up at a distance from Islam, they are more likely to accept radical teaching of Islamist recruiters without skepticism. Many of the female Islamist recruits speak little to no Arabic and are therefore unable to read the Quran or Hadith for themselves. They are, instead, forced to rely on interpretations of others that often neglect important elements of Islamic theology in favor of a more radical, political Islam<sup>31</sup>.

In addition to religious motivations, Western women are often drawn to Islamist organizations out of a search for purpose in their lives. These women are often taught that they can help to restore Islam to past greatness and fulfill their divine purpose by aiding in the establishment of a new Caliphate<sup>32</sup>. Political motives also come into play, as many women are drawn in to Islamist movements through the propaganda of a utopian political system that will be established by Islamist activities<sup>33</sup>. Because most Islamic women feel a sense of alienation and marginalization in their Western home countries, the appeal of a utopic society in which they are welcomed and appreciated is evident.

However, perhaps the most influential motive for Western Muslim women to join Islamist extremist movements is the

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<sup>28</sup> Steven Erlanger, "In West, ISIS Finds Women Eager to Enlist," *The New York Times*, October 23, 2014, Accessed April 27, 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Siamak Nooraei, "Jihadi Motives: Why Do Western Women Join the Islamic State?" *Foreign Policy Journal*, January 16, 2015, Accessed April, 27, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Steven Erlanger, "In West, ISIS Finds Women Eager to Enlist," *The New York Times*, October 23, 2014, Accessed April 27, 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Siamak Nooraei, "Jihadi Motives: Why Do Western Women Join the Islamic State?" *Foreign Policy Journal*, January 16, 2015, Accessed April 27, 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Erin Marie Saltman, "Why are British women leaving the UK to join Isis in Iraq and Syria?" *The Independent*, September 10, 2014, Accessed April 27, 2015.



sophisticated social media based propaganda campaigns that are targeted towards young, Western, Muslim women. These propaganda campaigns present a romanticized version of life in a Caliphate. "For some women, becoming the wife of a jihadist also plays into romanticized notions of serving a 'real man' who is fighting for the ultimate cause: the 'caliphate.'"<sup>34</sup> The Islamic State has been particularly adept at using propaganda to recruit Western women to their cause:

ISIS insurgents have been masterful manipulators of social media. Aside from creating YouTube videos trumpeting their crimes from the battlefield in high definition, they have also established outlets such as the Zora Foundation, specifically aimed at drawing women to their cause by offering tips, travel advice and even recipes for battle snacks.<sup>35</sup>

A recent manifesto on the role of women in the Islamic State movement clarifies the true position of women in the Islamic state. The document, entitled "Women in the Islamic State: Manifesto and Case Study", was uploaded to the Internet by the al Khansaa Brigade, a women's branch of the Islamist State. Though it was widely circulated among Arabic-speaking members, Western analysts largely overlooked the document until it was translated by the anti-terrorist think tank, Quilliam Foundation. "Its [the manifesto's] objective is clear. This is a piece of propaganda aimed at busting myths and recruiting supporters."<sup>36</sup> These types of propaganda are important for understanding the motives of women who enter into Islamist organizations.

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<sup>34</sup> Erin Marie Saltman, "Why are British women leaving the UK to join Isis in Iraq and Syria?" *The Independent*, September 10, 2014, Accessed April 27, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Shiv Malik, "Lured by Isis: how the young girls who revel in brutality are offered cause," *The Guardian*, February 21, 2015, Accessed April 27, 2015.

<sup>36</sup> Charlie Winter, "Women of the Islamic State: A manifesto on women by the Al-Khansaa Brigade," *The Quilliam Foundation*, February 2015, Accessed April 27, 2015.

## Women-led Initiatives to Counter Islamist Extremism

While the roles and motivation women play in perpetrating Islamist Extremism are complex and will require further research to fully understand, women can undoubtedly play a critical role in countering Islamist radicalization. Many of the traits that make women valuable to Islamist extremist movements also make them valuable to counter-extremist movements. The role of women as transmitters of cultural, religious and social values within Muslim society has been used as a crucial tool of extremist groups in recruitment<sup>37</sup>; however, it can also be used to counter extremist recruitment. According to the United States Institute of Peace, women play a critical role in countering and preventing extremism and radicalization:

Not only do women's participation in a community – formally or informally – strengthen its fabric, women themselves are among the most powerful voices of prevention in their homes, schools, and communities. Women as mothers, caretakers, partners, teachers, and faith leaders – can, uniquely, help build the social cohesion, sense of belonging, and self-esteem that youth might need to resist the appeal of a violent group. Community engagement in [countering violent extremism] requires the participation of women to be successful.<sup>38</sup>

If women can be mobilized and empowered to oppose extremism the effects on extremist organizations could be substantial.

While intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations have made some efforts to engage women in peace

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<sup>37</sup> Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Rafia Barakat and Liat Shetret, "The Roles of Women in Terrorism, Conflict, and Violent Extremism: Lessons for the United Nations and International Actors," Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, April 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Georgia Holmer, "Resilience for Women Countering Violent Extremism," United States Institute of Peace, March 6, 2015, Accessed April 26, 2015.

building and conflict resolution, they have paid little attention to the actual and potential contributions of women in efforts to counter Islamism both in Western and Muslim-majority countries. The UN has adopted several resolutions attempting to advance the status and ensure the rights and freedoms of women. These measures include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>39</sup>, which acts as a bill of rights for women; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action<sup>40</sup>, which enshrines the commitments of governments to enhance women's rights; UN Security Council Resolution 1325<sup>41</sup>, which confirmed the need to include women in conflict prevention and resolution decisions; and the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals<sup>42</sup>, which set goals of promoting gender equality (among other development objectives).

There are currently several important grassroots counter-extremism movements led by women, many of which focus on the force of women and girls' education, Islamic feminism, and empowering Muslim women as activists as ways to check Islamist extremism. Some of the most influential of these groups include the Malala Fund, which works to guarantee education for women; Inspire, which empowers women to directly confront extremism and create a counter-narrative; and the Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) Initiative, which utilizes women's traditional roles to counter and prevent terrorism. In addition to these organizations, there are a number of female Muslim scholars who argue in favor of Islamic feminism as a way to counter Islamist extremism.

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<sup>39</sup> General Assembly resolution 34/180, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, A/RES/34/180 (18 December 1979), available from [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/34/180&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/34/180&Lang=E).

<sup>40</sup> UN Fourth World Conference on Women "Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action" (1995), available from [http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa\\_e\\_final\\_web.pdf](http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Security Council resolution 1325, S/RES/1325 (2000), available from [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325%282000%29](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325%282000%29)

<sup>42</sup> General Assembly resolution 55/2, *United Nations Millennium Declaration*, A/RES/55/2 (2000), available from <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

Education of women is one of the most powerful forces in transforming society and countering violent extremism, and it has inspired fear in many radical Islamist groups that attempt to limit women and girls' access to education. Boko Haram militants in Nigeria have repeatedly targeted girls attempting to attend school and receive an education<sup>43</sup>. Likewise, in Afghanistan, girls going to school face acid attacks at the hands of the Taliban<sup>44</sup>. Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani advocate for women's education, was also the target of an attack and was shot by the Taliban for her activist efforts in 2012<sup>45</sup>. She has since continued to advocate for girls' education and started the Malala Fund, which "empowers girls through quality secondary education."<sup>46</sup> At an address to the UN General Assembly, Yousafzai stated her belief that the education of women can counter extremism:

The extremists are afraid of books and pens. The power of education frightens them. They are afraid of women. The power of the voice of women frightens them. This is why they killed 14 innocent students in the recent attack in Quetta. And that is why they kill female teachers. That is why they are blasting schools every day because they were and they are afraid of change and equality that we will bring to our society.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Emily Gustafsson-Wright and Katie Smith, "Abducted Schoolgirls in Nigeria: Improving Education and Preventing Future Boko Haram Attacks," Brookings Institution, April 17, 2014, Accessed April 27, 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Allie Torgan, "Acid attacks, poison: What Afghan girls risk by going to school," CNN, August 2, 2012, Accessed April 27, 2015.

<sup>45</sup> "Malala's Story," Malala Fund, <http://www.malala.org/#main/malalas-story/>, Accessed April 27, 2015.

<sup>46</sup> "What We Do," Malala Fund, <http://www.malala.org/#main/what-we-do/>, Accessed April 27, 2015.

<sup>47</sup> "The full text: Malala Yousafzai delivers defiant riposte to Taliban militants with speech to the UN General Assembly," The Independent, July 12, 2013. Accessed April 27, 2015.

Because women's education is so powerful in combatting extremist ideology, it must be a continual focus in anti-extremism efforts, making organizations like the Malala Fund critically important.

Groups like Inspire take a more direct approach to empowering Muslim women to combat extremism. Inspire is a UK-based NGO working to "empower women to support human rights and to challenge extremism and gender discrimination."<sup>48</sup> The group's "Making a Stand" campaign involves British Muslim women rejecting terror and violence practiced in the name of Islam by extremist groups. Sarah Khan, the director of Inspire, has stated that the campaign encompasses empowering Muslim women to: "challenge hatred and extremism wherever we find it; exert influence in our Mosques and communities; create local support networks and partner with statutory agencies; equip our communities with counter-narratives and help families identify the signs of radicalisation."<sup>49</sup> Inspire and groups like it are important in their encouragement of Muslim women to speak out against false representations of Islam by extremist groups.

The Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) Initiative, an Austrian research-based NGO, takes a different approach to countering extremism. SAVE capitalizes on Muslim women's traditional societal role as mothers to prevent youth radicalization. The organization heads projects such as "Mothers Schools", which "provides [mothers with] know-how and skills training to recognize and respond to early warning signs of potential radicalization in their children."<sup>50</sup> These types of projects utilize the same attributes of women that are often co-opted by Islamist groups to transmit extremism (connectedness with family and ability to transmit values).

Finally, Islamic feminism, which seeks to reconcile women's empowerment and Islam through the feminist interpretation of Islamic texts, can also be used to counter extremism. Islamic

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<sup>48</sup> "About Us" Inspire, <http://www.wewillinspire.com/about-us/>, Accessed April 27, 2015.

<sup>49</sup> "Making a Stand," Inspire, <http://www.wewillinspire.com/making-a-stand/>, Accessed April 27, 2015.

<sup>50</sup> "Projects Underway," Women Without Borders, <http://www.women-without-borders.org/projects/underway/42/>, Accessed April 27, 2015.

feminism seeks to undermine the traditional patriarchy posited by religious authorities through arguing that Islam, if understood and interpreted correctly, does not support the subordination of women. Nayereh Tohidi, Director of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at California State University, Northridge summarizes the position of reformist feminist scholars:

As a theological as well as political response, these reformers maintain that the norms of society and the norms of God are at odds. An egalitarian revision, therefore, is not only possible but also necessary. In reclaiming the 'egalitarian past,' reformist feminist scholars note that before these religions became closely associated with state power ... women did hold positions of leadership.<sup>51</sup>

Islamic feminist scholars such as Leila Ahmed, Riffat Hassan, Fatima Mernissi, and Ziba Mir-Hosseini "see modern liberal and gender egalitarian reformation of Islam as a requirement for the success of a broader societal and political reform toward democracy, pluralism and civil rights, including women's rights."<sup>52</sup> Ziba Mir-Hosseini, an Islamic feminist scholar has done extensive work on the issue of how Islamic feminism is both, in some sense, a product of and a solution to Islamist extremism.

One neglected and paradoxical consequence of the rise of political Islam is that it has helped to create a space, an arena, within which Muslim women can reconcile their faith and identity with their struggle for gender equality. [Islamists'] very project – 'return to the Shari'a' – and their attempt to translate the patriarchal notions inherent in orthodox interpretations of Islamic law into policy,

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<sup>51</sup> Nayereh Tohidi, "'Islamic Feminism': Perils And Promises," in *Middle Eastern Women On The Move*, The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2003.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

provoked increasing criticism of these notions among many women, and become a spur to greater activism.<sup>53</sup>

If Muslim women are empowered to see themselves as equal to men through a feminist interpretation of Islamic texts, they can serve as powerful activists against extremism and radical Islamist ideologies.

## Conclusion

Women, though rarely seen as influential in discussions of Islamist extremism, have an important role to play as both promoters and challengers of extremist movements. Within Islamic organizations, women play an essential role in day-to-day operations, recruitment and outreach operations, and sometimes acts of violence and terrorism. Although motivations for supporting such groups vary according to personal and political experience, there are some generalities that can be seen across the broad groups of Muslim women living in Muslim-majority countries and Muslim women living in Western countries. Women in Muslim-majority countries tend to support Islamist extremist groups for reasons of personal safety and security, sectarian/tribal conflict, and from a lack of ways to express political views. However, women living in Western countries tend to support Islamist extremist groups because of radicalized religious ideals, a search for purpose in their lives, and feelings of alienation and marginalization in Western political systems. All of these factors leave women vulnerable to the propaganda of Islamism.

However, women can also serve an important role in countering extremism. This can be done by empowering women through education, direct activism, and the co-optation of traditional women's roles within the home and family. Islamic feminism may also serve an important purpose as it reconciles

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<sup>53</sup> Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "The Quest for Gender Justice: Emerging Feminist Voices in Islam," *Islam* 21 1, no. 36 (2004).

Muslim identities of women with gender-equality and empowerment. Because of the powerful role that women can have in combatting Islamist extremism, it is absolutely essential that they be included in anti-extremism efforts. In both mainstream academia and the media there is often a lack of input from women. Allowing more female voices to be heard can significantly improve the quality of such discourse.

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## About the Authors

**Sarah Capps** is a senior English and history double major from Norman, Oklahoma. In both majors, her studies focus on the history of the American West; she is especially interested in Oklahoma, Native American, and gender history. In her spare time, Sarah loves to read books, watch soccer games, and bake. After graduation, Sarah will attend the University of Oklahoma College of Law where she hopes to study juvenile law.

**Jesse Coker** is a junior from Nashville, TN and is working towards dual degrees in biochemistry and economics. Jesse plans to attend graduate school for chemical biology and pursue a career in drug discovery. If he is lucky, Jesse will use his spare time to write as an op-ed columnist about public policy and economics. Jesse's favorite meal is Kraft macaroni and cheese, cooked for exactly six minutes and twelve seconds. Jesse is grateful to THURJ for including his work and is honored to contribute to a publication that encourages and recognizes the exceptional undergraduate research conducted at OU.

**Alanna Courts** is a third-year microbiology major minoring in African studies. She is from Lafayette, Louisiana. Alanna interned with the Oklahoma City-County Health Department and currently, volunteers for the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma. Alanna's academic interests include French, food studies, public health, and pathogenic microbiology. She plans to attend graduate school for public health and to pursue a career as an infectious disease epidemiologist. Her dream is to one day work with MSF (*Médecins Sans Frontières*). In her spare time, Alanna enjoys dancing, cooking, playing board games, and hanging out with her cat, Trixie.

**Jordan Larsen** is a junior history of science major from Sioux Falls, SD. Interested in the history of medicine and medical humanities, Jordan particularly enjoys exploring interactions between literature, spirituality, and science. During her sophomore year, she studied abroad in Arezzo, Italy, where she learned about medical education

and care during the Italian Renaissance. Jordan loves to read historical fiction, play Gustav Holst on her clarinet, and bake (then eat) strawberry cream cheese-stuffed French toast. After graduating from OU, Jordan hopes to attend medical school and become a physician.

**Chase Miller** is a senior architecture major from Norman, OK. He is interested how psychology research can inform architectural and economic theories. In the summer of 2011, Chase studied in Italy, which inspired him to add architecture as a major in addition to economics. In his spare time, Chase enjoys writing, making music, hiking, woodworking, and playing basketball. After graduation, he plans to pursue architectural licensure and eventually start his own architecture firm.

**Auston Stiefer** is sophomore from Lawton, Oklahoma, pursuing dual majors in Spanish and Public Health Sciences. He is a Medical Humanities Scholar specializing in cross-cultural perspectives in medicine and has research interests in medical anthropology, social epidemiology, and health disparities. Outside of the classroom, Auston enjoys campus involvement with various organizations and is currently training for the Oklahoma City Memorial half-marathon. He too loves exploring all of the coffee shops and local art venues in Norman and the OKC metro area.

**Lisa Fiedler** will be graduating in May with a BA in Environmental Sustainability and a minor in International Studies. Her fascination with food waste and its negative impacts on the planet stems from her year abroad in the Netherlands, where she volunteered for the food rescue organization Taste Before You Waste. This fall, Lisa will continue her studies in order to obtain a Master's degree in Urban Planning. Until then, she can often be found on campus working at the OU Writing Center or planning Green Week events!

**Alissa Rice** is a senior from Stillwater, OK majoring in political science and French. She is interested in the intersections of feminism and global politics. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling

and hiking with her fiancé. She is actively involved in local politics, having worked on several campaigns and interning in the Oklahoma state legislature. After graduating from OU, Alissa plans to attend law school and work in the nonprofit sector.

### About the Cover Artist

**Matthew Herndon** is a junior computer engineering major from Washington, Oklahoma. Matthew is interested in music, hardware and software development, and learning new things. During the summer of his freshman year, Matthew participated in the Honors at Oxford program, where he took the Honors Colloquium class Banned Books in Great Britain and played a great deal of croquet. In his spare time, Matthew enjoys spending time with his friends and reading. After graduation, Matthew hopes to either attend professional school or get a job.