MISSION STATEMENT

Advocates’ Forum is an academic journal that explores implications of clinical social work practice, social issues, administration, and public policies linked to the social work profession. The Editorial Board of Advocates’ Forum seeks to provide a medium through which SSA students can contribute to public thinking about social welfare and policy in theory and practice. Above all, Advocates’ Forum serves to encourage and facilitate an open, scholarly exchange of ideas among individuals working toward the shared goal of a more just and humane society.

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Advocates’ Forum is published by the students of The University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration (SSA). Submissions to the journal are selected by the editorial board from works submitted by SSA students and edited in an extensive revision process with the authors’ permission. Responsibility for the accuracy of information contained in written submissions rests solely with the author. Views expressed within each article belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial board, the School of Social Service Administration, or The University of Chicago. All inquiries and submissions should be directed to:

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student-journal-advocates-forum

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ON THE COVER
Photo by Lloyd DeGrane
FROM THE EDITORS

The publishing of this journal is a collective and somewhat unseen effort. Before becoming the tangible product that you now hold, the Advocates’ Forum was the labor of authors and editors who spent many hours researching, writing, editing, and collaborating to produce a dynamic journal that reflects the diverse voices and concerns of the field of social work. This journal requires vast amounts of collective time and energy to come together. The labor of Advocates’ Forum, like much of social work, is a labor of love, and the compensation is not necessarily quantifiable, particularly since most of it is unpaid. Our compensation, instead, derives from the satisfaction of collaboratively creating a journal that represents and serves the social work community. We have thought a great deal about the ways in which the production of this journal is reflective of the untold labor – physical, emotional, and mental – that exists in the field of social work without being compensated except through the satisfaction of having done a good thing.

This journal is a collective effort of many hours of financially uncompensated labor in all forms, making this final product something of which we are immensely proud. We find it necessary, this year in particular, to name and acknowledge the ways in which social workers’ invisible labors of love go unnoticed and unpaid. The 2019 Editorial Team, all 15 individuals listed in this journal, spent countless hours reading, evaluating, and collaborating on the final product of this journal. Through each meeting and every conversation, they have been gracious, empathic, and intensely goal-driven, making our unpaid work of coordinating and planning easier and more enjoyable. Beyond our incredible team, though, our fellow social work students at SSA have spent an unbelievable amount of time writing, editing, and honing pieces for submission; this includes the eight authors published in the 2019 Advocates’ Forum as well as many more who submitted.

Our selection of articles this year is representative of the varied voices and forms through which social work happens. We have chosen to include both empirical and creative pieces, in hopes that we are able to represent well the work of social workers from many traditions. Portia Bajwa, Kelsey Foreman, and Charlotte Sall’s article explores the role of social norm theory and domestic violence reporting in Bihar, India, using a nuanced and comprehensive analytical approach. Em Creahan’s piece uses both original, visual art, and poetry to weave a reflective narrative of queerness, self-discovery, and rediscovery. Chloe Glispie’s article reflects on the role of self-identity and personal history to inform an individual social
worker’s praxis. John Moulder’s article examines the relationship between music and nostalgia and makes recommendations for therapeutic practice with older adults. Jason Straussman’s article embarks on a qualitative, ethnographic analysis of a Hyde Park church that intertwines faith and social justice values. Elizabeth Weiss’s article delves into a vulnerable examination of the role of state apparatuses, hegemonic masculinity, and systems of control in her own relational and educational experiences. We are excited to share these pieces with you. The 2019 Advocates’ Forum would not exist without the hard work and incredible insight into the field of social work that these authors have provided.

We would like to extend our gratitude to everyone who helped make this year’s journal a success. We are grateful to all the authors who submitted their work and for their contributions to current conversations at SSA and beyond. We want to thank Daniel Listoe, PhD, for working with our authors to edit their pieces into beautiful final products. Thank you also to Associate Professor Susan Lambert for her support and wisdom this year as our Faculty Advisor; to the Dean of Students Office for their service to Advocates’ Forum and the students of SSA; to Director of Marketing and Communications, Julie Jung, for her patience and advice; and to the SSA SGA, for their volunteer service to Advocates’ Forum and the broader SSA community. And, of course, to our dedicated and brilliant Editorial Board and to you all, the students of SSA and our readers.

Shay Gonzales
Kaitlin Pelech
Elizabeth Weiss
Co-Editors-in-Chief
EXPLORING THE LOW RATES OF REPORTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN BIHAR, INDIA

Portia Bajwa, Kelsey Foreman, and Charlotte Sall

Abstract
This needs assessment study explores the underreporting of domestic violence against women survivors. It focuses on the Indian state of Bihar, which has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in the nation and yet a low rate of reporting. Social norm theory is used as a lens to explore this discrepancy. The study draws on secondary data from the India 2015-2016 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) to examine: (1) the extent to which there is a discrepancy between the prevalence of domestic violence and the rate of reporting DV for married women in the state of Bihar, and (2) how barriers to reporting domestic violence relate to social norms in Bihar. Results from a multivariate logistic regression (N = 1053) indicate that social norms are not predictive of the rate of reporting DV in Bihar. Possible explanations for these findings are discussed.

Over the past 40 years, domestic violence (DV) has emerged as a global concern and is now recognized as a human rights issue (Kishor & Johnson, 2004; Heise, 2011). The United Nations (1993) defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence” related to “physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.” Despite the fact that DV has gained worldwide recognition as a social problem, its prevalence is underestimated, and cases of DV are notoriously underreported (Felson & Pare, 2005; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). Understanding why cases go unreported is key to developing appropriate and effective interventions aimed at reducing DV (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2004; Koenig, Stephenson, Ahmed, Jejeebhoy, & Campbell, 2006).

In India, domestic violence is one of the most common crimes against women. An estimated 21 percent of women over the age of 15 have experienced abuse from their husbands (Chaudhary, 2013). The state of Bihar, one of the least developed in India, with comparatively low levels of female literacy and autonomy (Jejeebhoy & Santhya, 2018), has
the country’s highest rate of DV: 59 percent of ever-married women are estimated to have experienced domestic abuse (Chaudhary, 2013; Chachra, 2017; “Bihar,” 2008). Much of this information comes from a national health survey as well as statistics on dowry-related deaths, as many women do not utilize official reporting systems (such as contacting the local police) and do not feel comfortable disclosing their DV experiences to members of their community (Krishnan, 2017).

While some research suggests that the lack of reporting to official systems relates to a lack of awareness of women’s rights and protections (Krishnan, 2017; Jhamb, 2011), other findings suggest that India’s social norms—including patriarchy, religious and cultural beliefs about marriage, and asymmetrical gender expectations (Koenig et al., 2006; Chaudhary, 2013; Chachra, 2017)—help sustain DV (Koenig et al., 2006; Ahmed-Ghosh, 2004). These norms can perpetuate notions that DV is justified (Chaudhary, 2013; Sahoo & Raju, 2007). Furthermore, those who wish to report abuse fear the consequences, which may include divorce, family disillusionment, lack of financial resources, or spousal retaliation (Chachra, 2017; Kalokhe et al., 2017). In addition, there is a lack of trust in the institutional criminal justice system when it comes to reporting DV (Kishor & Johnson, 2004; Abrams, Belknap, & Melton, 2001).

The current study is a preliminary needs assessment that seeks to examine: (1) the extent to which there is a discrepancy between the prevalence of domestic violence and the rate of reporting DV for married women in the state of Bihar; and (2) how barriers to reporting DV relate to social norms in Bihar.

REPORTING IN BIHAR

The system of reporting DV in Bihar is shaped by the 2005 Protection of Women Against Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) (Dubochet, 2012; Jhamb, 2011). Under PWDVA, Bihar is expected to protect women from domestic violence by providing immediate shelter services and orders of protection (“An Analysis,” 2016). Thirty-five out of the thirty-eight districts in Bihar have a helpline where individuals are able to report domestic violence (Krishnan 2017). Despite these resources for reporting, 86 percent of women claimed that they were not aware of these institutions, and of the women who were aware, 80 percent said that they would not know how to go about the process of reporting DV to the helplines (Krishnan, 2017). These findings indicate a gap between the systems in place for reporting DV and the likelihood of victims to report.

Although the PWDVA was created as a system to increase rates of reporting DV, the outcomes have not improved much due to inconsistent
and biased implementation (Govinderajan, 2016). Even when women make use of the system, court visits can be delayed for years (Govinderajan, 2016). Due to these limitations of official systems of reporting in Bihar, it is also important to consider reporting to unofficial systems, such as social supports. These modes of reporting can have a positive impact for the women in terms of increasing their coping strategies and enhancing their overall safety. Additionally, increasing the amount of people who know about the violence increases society’s overall awareness of DV prevalence and subsequent perceptions that DV is problematic. Allowing for more open discourse on the topic of DV may positively affect a woman’s willingness to report (Paluck & Ball, 2010).

SOCIAL NORM THEORY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REPORTING

Social norm theory provides a framework for understanding the problem of domestic violence reporting (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1986). The theory posits that individual behavior is motivated by perceptions of how other members of social groups think and behave, regardless of the accuracy of those perceptions (Berkowitz, 2005; Paluck & Ball, 2010). Termed “pluralistic ignorance” (Miller & McFarland, 1991; Toch & Klofas, 1984), these misperceptions have strong power over individual behavior (Berkowitz, 2005). Norm theory operates under the premise that actions are grounded in attitudes, so behaviors only change once underlying beliefs are restructured (Paluck & Ball, 2010). Although norm theory was created in a Western context, interventions based on the framework have been implemented and evaluated across the globe (Heise, 2011). Thus, norm theory can be utilized as a lens for attempting to understand India’s cultural values around domestic violence and reporting.

Evidence from studies in low- and middle-income countries documents that both the wife’s level of acceptance toward beating and the husband’s level of control over female behavior are predictive of a country’s DV rate (Uthman, Lawoko, & Moradi, 2009; Rani, Bonu, & Diop-Sidibe, 2004; Guoping et al., 2010). In terms of reporting, perceptions of being alone in their experience can exacerbate the feeling of isolation and prevent women from sharing, even to a friend (Felson & Paré, 2005). Given the high prevalence of domestic violence in Bihar, norm theory suggests that many women may not realize the true rates of DV. Thus there may be a confluence of (1) societal norms regarding attitudes toward domestic violence and (2) pluralistic ignorance whereby women feel alone in their experiences of violence, which could account for low rates of reporting.
NORM THEORY AND EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

Norm theory calls for interventions that are preventative, targeting root causes of social problems (Berkowitz, 2005; Heise, 2011). As a result, interventions often do not show immediate outcomes, so few evidence-based practices document their success (Heise, 2011). One strategy aimed at changing social norms is awareness-raising campaigns. For example, Oxfam’s “We Can” campaign was created to address social norms that contributed to violence against women in Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan (Raljan & Chakraborty, 2010). A mixed methods impact evaluation of “We Can” suggests the campaign has succeeded at increasing societal acceptance of women who speak out about their experiences with domestic violence (Raljan & Chakraborty, 2010; William & Aldred, 2011). Another norm-targeting strategy is edutainment programs, which are interventions combining media and dialogue to effect social change. One such example is the 2008 “Bell Bajao” campaign, begun by the Indian organization, Breakthrough, with the goal of using multimedia and grassroots organizing to change norms surrounding DV (CMS Communication, 2011). In a pre- and post-test evaluation (pre N=1204; post N=1590), there was a significant decline in the belief that an abused wife should remain silent (15.8% baseline; 5.7% endline) (Heise, 2011). While interventions targeting social norms are increasingly popular, their effectiveness has not yet been thoroughly evaluated.

JUSTIFICATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Social norms affecting domestic violence and reporting are deeply entrenched, yet norm theory offers a framework for designing future interventions to address these norms. While evaluative research on norm-based DV interventions is still fairly underdeveloped, preliminary evidence shows that norms can be changed with well-designed interventions (Raljan & Chakraborty, 2010; William & Aldred, 2011; Bradley et al., 2011; CMS Communication, 2011).

METHODS

Sample

The sample was obtained from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) Program from the results of the India 2015-2016 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4), which is a nationally-representative household survey that provides data for a wide range of indicators in the areas of population, health, and nutrition (IIPS & ICF, 2017). A two-stage sample design was used. First, cluster sampling was employed to select either
villages (rural) or Census Enumeration Blocks (urban). Second, random selection was used to select individual households within those (IIPS & ICF, 2017). Of the 572,000 respondents included in the total sample, approximately 46,000 women and 6,000 men lived in Bihar (IIPS & ICF, 2017).

This study’s sample included only married women who received the DV module and who then declared to have experienced any form of violence (emotional, less severe physical, severe physical, and/or sexual violence) (N = 1053). The sample was constricted based on the dataset, which did not include DV experiences outside of marriage (most likely due to traditional cultural norms surrounding intimate relationships in India).

**Study Design and Data Collection**

The present study utilizes secondary data obtained from the original DHS survey, which was administered through questionnaires from March 16 to August 8, 2015 via individual interviews. Information was collected in 19 languages (including Hindi, Bengali, and Punjabi) using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) (IIPS & ICF, 2017).

To ensure privacy and anonymity, an informed consent statement was read aloud before each interview, and any information collected was de-identified upon completion of data processing (IIPS & ICF, 2017).

**Measures**

All variables were measured through questions from the NFHS-4 questionnaire. The official questionnaire consisted of approximately 400 possible questions for women (430 if the DV module was included) (DHS, 2017b), and 55 were included in the present study.

**Experience of domestic violence.** A woman’s experience of DV was measured from responses to 25 dichotomous questions based off of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus & Douglas, 2004; Begum, Donta, Nair, & Prakasam, 2015; Rowan, Mumford, & Clark, 2018). Examples of these questions include, “Did your husband/partner ever insult you or make you feel bad about yourself?” and “Did your husband/partner ever push you, shake you, or throw something at you?” (DHS, 2017a). If the woman was previously married, these questions were also asked of her previous husband(s). If the answer was yes to any of these questions, the respondent was then asked about the frequency (“Often,” “Sometimes,” or “Not in the last 12 months”) (DHS, 2017a). Based on the answers to those questions, the type of DV that a woman experienced was then classified into four broad categories: emotional violence, less severe violence (physical), severe violence (physical), and sexual violence (DHS, 2017a).
Follow-up questions were asked to determine whether or not the woman experienced lasting physical effects from the violence. Four dichotomous questions were used to determine this, including “Have you ever had bruises because of your husband/partner’s actions?” and “Have you ever had severe burns because of your husband/partner’s actions?” (DHS, 2017a). For the present study, these four questions were compiled into a composite score ($\alpha = .63$) representing the severity of the physical effects of violence. If the woman answered yes to any of the questions, it was coded as 1, and if she answered no, it was coded as 0. The minimum score was 0 (no lasting physical effects from the violence) and the maximum score was 4 (all four of the lasting physical effects that the DHS survey measured).

**Reporting domestic violence.** Whether or not a woman told anyone about her experience of DV was measured through one dichotomous question. If the woman answered yes to any of the questions regarding type of violence experienced, the woman was then asked “Have you ever told anyone about this?” (DHS, 2017a).

**Risk factors.** Risk factors of DV were measured using a dichotomous question of whether or not the respondent’s husband drinks alcohol (DHS, 2017a).

**Social norms.** Social norms related to justification of DV were measured through five dichotomous questions, including “Is beating justified if the wife doesn’t cook food properly?” and “Is beating justified if the wife argues with the husband?” (DHS, 2017b). The answers to these questions were compiled into a composite score measuring attitudes toward DV ($\alpha = .83$). “Yes” responses were coded as 1 and “No” responses were coded as 0. The maximum composite score is 5, signifying a belief that inter-spousal physical violence is generally justified, and the minimum score is 0, signifying that beating is generally unjustified.

The respondents’ opinions on social norms related to women’s empowerment and gender roles were measured through five questions, including “Who should have the greater say when deciding what to do with the money the wife earns from her work?” and “Who should have the greater say when making major household purchases?” (DHS, 2017b). For this study, these questions were recoded into a binary variable of the wife having either no power or some degree of power. “Husband” was coded as 0, representing the wife having no power, “Wife” and “Wife and husband jointly” were coded as 1, representing the wife having some degree of power, and “Don’t know/depends” was coded as missing due to the small number of respondents ($n = 15$). These five questions were compiled into a composite score ($\alpha = .83$) where the minimum score was 0, signifying that the wife should not have any power over household decisions, and the
maximum score was 5, signifying that the wife should have at least some degree of power over household decisions.

**Control variables.** Based on prior peer-reviewed studies on domestic violence in India, the following sociodemographic characteristics were included as control variables: wife and husband’s age, wife and husband’s education level (no education or some education), wife and husband’s employment status (currently employed or not currently employed), type of residence (rural or urban), religion (Hindu or Muslim), total number of children, and wealth index (poor or not poor) (Begum et al., 2015; Rowan et al., 2018).

**RESULTS**

A multivariate logistic regression was run to assess which factors are associated with whether or not married women in Bihar reported their experience of domestic violence to anyone. The factors in the regression analysis included sociodemographic characteristics of both the husband and the wife, variables relating to the experience of violence, and variables relating to social norms (See Appendix).

Controlling for all other variables, the wife’s level of education is the only sociodemographic variable significantly associated with whether or not she reported her DV experience to anyone (β = .75, p = .01). Women who had some level of education were twice as likely to report their DV experiences when compared with women with no education (ExpB = 2.12). Respondent’s wealth index is marginally significant (β = -.63, p = .06).

Of the experience of violence variables, and keeping all other variables constant, whether or not women experienced emotional violence is significantly associated with reporting (β = -.84, p = .001). Women who experienced emotional violence were 58 percent less likely to report DV when compared with women who did not experience emotional violence (ExpB = .43). It is important to note that this variable does not represent women who exclusively experienced emotional violence. This finding indicates that the women who experienced emotional violence alone or in combination with physical violence were less likely to report DV than women who experienced physical or sexual violence without accompanying emotional violence.

Additionally, keeping all other variables constant, whether or not the husband drinks alcohol is significantly associated with reporting (β = -.53, p = .03). Women were 41 percent less likely to report their DV experiences if their husband drank alcohol (ExpB = .59).

Finally, controlling for all other variables, lasting effects of violence is significantly associated with reporting (β = .30, p = .03). Women who
exhibited lasting physical effects of violence (bruises, burns, scars, etc.) were 34 percent more likely to report than women who had no lasting physical effects of violence (ExpB = 1.34).

When controlling for all other variables, neither attitudes toward DV being justified ($\beta = .002, p = .97$) nor the women’s empowerment scale ($\beta = .03, p = .65$) are significantly associated with whether or not women reported DV.

DISCUSSION

The data confirm a substantial discrepancy between women experiencing DV and women reporting it: out of the 1,053 women who experienced some form of domestic violence, only 94 women (8.9%) stated that they reported it to someone.

According to the logistic regression model used for this study, there are several predictors that influence whether or not a woman reports, and these explanations are important when considering women’s possible motivations for remaining silent and subsequent policy recommendations aimed at addressing this discrepancy.

**Experience of emotional violence.** Women who experienced emotional violence were 58 percent less likely to report than those who did not experience emotional violence. These findings align with previous research, as women who experience less severe forms of violence are less likely to report that violence (Naved, Azim, Bhuiya, & Persson, 2006; Rowan et al., 2018). It is important to note that these women may have experienced other forms of DV as well, suggesting that emotional violence significantly decreases the likelihood of reporting other forms of DV. The literature suggests that emotional abuse is often the first type of DV that a woman experiences (Karakurt & Silver, 2013), and women who experience emotional violence before other types of violence may be less inclined to report because they may grow accustomed to violence that gradually increases in severity (Naved et al., 2006; Rowan et al., 2018).

**Lasting physical effects of violence.** Women who have shown lasting physical effects of violence are 34 percent more likely to report DV. Lasting effects of violence may be a sign of more severe abuse, which could explain why this variable predicts reporting. Additionally, women who experience severe abuse might consider their lives to be in danger, the desire for survival outweighing the social stigmas and risks of reporting (Rowan et al., 2018; Fanslow & Robinson, 2010). Another hypothesis is that someone may have seen cuts or bruises on a woman and directly asked her about violence, thus prompting her to report.
Husband drinks alcohol. Women were 41 percent less likely to report DV if their husband drank alcohol. This finding may reflect the perceived risk that accompanies reporting DV. It is likely that women whose husbands drink believe that there is more risk in reporting the violence they have experienced, as reporting could lead to violent retaliation if the husband were to find out (Berg et al., 2010).

Women’s education. The only other significant predictor of reporting was the woman’s level of education. Women who had some level of education were more than two times as likely to report domestic violence as women with no education. This finding reflects how more educated women may be more aware of their rights as well as of the official reporting systems that exist in Bihar (Rowan et al., 2018; Andersson et al., 2010).

Social Norms and Reporting
The present study initially sought to utilize norm theory as a framework for understanding the low rate of reporting in Bihar. If India’s social norms portrayed domestic violence as a natural and acceptable part of marriage, then norm theory would suggest that these perceptions influence individual behavior, thus hindering women’s likelihood to report (Berkowitz, 2005; Paluck & Ball, 2010). None of the social norm variables, however, predicted whether or not a woman reported her experience with DV. Neither women’s empowerment variables nor overall social attitudes toward DV significantly impacted the rate of reporting.

Instead, the data painted a different picture. The mean for the women’s empowerment composite score was 3.55 out of 5, signifying that most respondents believe that women should hold at least some power in household decisions. Additionally, the mean for the DV composite score was 1.78 out of 5, meaning that there were, on average, between one and two situations where respondents thought that spousal beating was justified. This indicates that the social norms (that women should have some power and that DV is generally not justified) contradict the study’s initial review of the literature about gender norms in India (Uthman, Lawoko & Moradi, 2009; Rani, Bonu, & Diop-Sidibe, 2004; Gouping, 2010). The discrepancy between the social norms in the literature and the social norms in the sample illuminates a conceptual challenge with using norm theory to explain low rates of reporting in Bihar.

One hypothesis for this study’s social norms results is social desirability bias, meaning that women may have selected social norms based on what they thought the right answer should be instead of what they actually believed to be true. Another explanation for the unexpected social norm data relates to the study’s sample. By definition, social norms are the
perceived norms of an entire community (Berkowitz, 2005; Paluck & Ball, 2010). In this study, however, data on social norm variables was collected only from women who have experienced some form of domestic violence. Utilizing a more representative sample (including men and women who did not experience DV) to examine Bihar’s social norms may lead to results that are more reflective of the literature on social norms in India. Lastly, these social norm results are limited in that they only measure attitudes toward domestic violence being justified and beliefs that women should have some power when making household decisions. These social norms are not inclusive of all norms that can potentially influence a woman’s likelihood to report DV in Bihar.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The use of secondary data presented a significant challenge for the present study. Due to fear of survey fatigue, DHS restricts the number of questions in each module, therefore limiting the DV measures for this study. A wider array of questions would be necessary to gain a fuller picture of the factors contributing to the low rate of reporting in Bihar. Data pertaining to how and to whom domestic violence was reported would further contribute to knowledge of reporting and stigma. Notably, the variable of reporting DV only provided information on whether or not a woman reported her abuse, not to whom it was reported. The lack of information on whom the DV was reported to limits our knowledge on the use of formal versus informal systems of reporting. Future research should utilize a refined definition of reporting to better understand women’s motivations when choosing whether or not to report to both informal and formal systems.

Another notable challenge is that investigation of the discrepancy between prevalence-of-DV and reporting-of-DV relies on self-reported data. This poses a few conceptual challenges. All women who indicated that they experienced some form of domestic violence reported that violence to the surveyor, which then led to the question of whether they told someone else about the DV they experienced (the question about reporting). The fact that the data collection inherently relies on self-reports while seeking to measure reporting adds a layer to response bias that must be noted. To address this challenge, future studies should consider working with community-based groups to conduct surveys. These local groups may be able to collect more reliable data on sensitive topics like DV, since they are “insiders” that community members would be more likely to trust compared to external surveyors.

Finally, there are likely more women who experienced violence than who admitted it in the survey, so there are many challenges in interpreting
the accuracy of the data. This challenge emphasizes the need for data on how women report their DV experience (what they share and do not share, how honestly they describe the frequency and severity of their experiences, and what happens when they do report). Considerable attention should be given to designing a culturally sensitive survey instrument in order to more effectively measure domestic violence and reporting in Bihar. Only with a more robust understanding of the factors contributing to low reporting can interventions be developed to address this problem.

REFERENCES


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**APPENDIX**

*Significant factors of whether or not women reported their experience of domestic violence.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Experienced any emotional violence</td>
<td>-.838</td>
<td>.250</td>
<td>.433**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experienced any severe violence</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>.278</td>
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<td>Experienced any sexual violence</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>.252</td>
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<td>Husband/partner drinks alcohol</td>
<td>-.526</td>
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<td>.295</td>
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<td>Women’s empowerment composite score</td>
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<td>Age of women</td>
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<td>.017</td>
<td>.991</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age of household head</td>
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<td>.993</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of children ever born</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of residence: Rural vs. urban</td>
<td>-.345</td>
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<td>.708</td>
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<td>Wealth index: Poor vs. not poor</td>
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<td>.749</td>
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PORTIA BAJWA is a second-year master's student at the School of Social Service Administration with a focus on clinical social work and global social development. She is currently placed at Heartland’s Marjorie Kovler Center, where she provides psychotherapy to torture survivors who are seeking asylum in the United States. Her academic interests center on mental health and trauma recovery across an array of cultural contexts. Prior to enrollment at the University of Chicago, Portia worked as a teaching assistant in Spain. She earned her bachelor's degree in Psychology at the University of Washington in Seattle.

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CHARLOTTE F. SALL is a second-year social administration master’s student pursuing a certificate in Global Social Development Practice. Her academic interests include refugees and migratory populations, organizational theory, program evaluation, and comparative perspectives to social work. Prior to SSA, Charlotte worked with Roma youth in Serbia and taught English in rural South Korea. For her second-year field placement, Charlotte spent six months at an education non-profit in New Delhi, India, where she focused on research and evaluation of early childhood interventions. Charlotte graduated from Princeton University with a degree in sociology.
RADICAL MAPPING: A BECOMING

Em Creahan

Author’s Note

We are all continually and intimately in relationship with the spaces we inhabit, a sense of place that informs self-revelation and self-love—shifting our perception of the self as we forge new paths made visible, and reflect on old lines of being. This piece builds a map to offer a geography of healing—inviting movement, observation, an unfolding, and ultimately, transformation. As social workers, we recurrently cultivate an awareness of self that integrates an understanding of our multidimensional positionalities—this work offers a space for this process that is inclusive of queer potential and personal memory.

I am from strong women,
Honeysuckle laughter,
Open fields meet ocean breeze,
Suburban sprawl, motionless clock with nothing to do.

I am from strong women,
White skin, white wealth, white privilege;
Dismantle, decenter, deconstruct.
Empower, build up, sprawl—

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I am from strong women,
Butterfly dances and spreading limbs,
Mindful actions, transformation
Open, yourself the door

I am from strong women
On stolen soil,
Communal blood spilled in capital conquest;
Dismantle, decenter, deconstruct . . .

*Life’s a long undressing.* I came across this line the other day in a book by experimental filmmaker, James Broughton¹. He took this line from Walter de La Mare’s² tale, *The Return*, and now I take it from him—our geographies intersect, shared space of knowing. I envision myself walking the length of life, unraveling layers of self through movements between places. Life’s a long undressing. Each day we are closer to its end, and each day we become intimately more aware of ourselves and the spaces we occupy.

It is not death I fear,
but the demise of being;
?
?
the slow unravelling of self,

I wrote this note one year ago but now see its error. This process of unwinding, rather than demise, is one of emergence: removal of the excess to be made whole. Remove: societal norms, trauma, expectations. Liminal, luminous, boundless: words we are taught to describe our manifold existence.

Space: Chicago, red city,
sun’s embrace:
warmth of clay earth reflected in stacked bricks—the buildings whisper, “come in …

are you

here?”

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Beckoned to move forward with acceptance of self, you feel it then, the natural rhythm calling you home along geographical lines that map your identities.

The lick of the wind becomes the Earth’s warm breath whispering: I love you — permission given from the universe of things to open yourself to multiple ways of being.

then I understood—
unavoidable quiver;
queer potential, undulating,
echoing absence in the lives I’m not living.

Present full self, embodied.

Endless.

I think of moving pieces, the here and there, human connection in cross-sections of mapped trajectories. I think of a run in my tights, torn existence, running between trains, these enamel blue walls. The reflection of myself meets the gaze of the reflection of them—mystification of gaze in reflection, shadow world, other, parallel planes, parallel us, caught in this moment of queer time reflected back to reality, reflection is reality, observation cut through.

If we chart our own planes of being, superimposed, does this create a new map of the world, unbound from Other’s expectations?

I recently read José Esteban Muñoz’s introduction to his great work, Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity.

Muñoz borrows from Oscar Wilde, and I borrow from Muñoz now, A map of the world that does not include utopia is not worth glancing at. Words borrowed ensure co-construction of queer utopia made true. Queer

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identity is our utopia, that radical space of softness that holds potential for future freedom. Queer utopia is our threshold into new worlds, this world reimagined.

This essay gave voice to my queer identity, one I don’t always make space for. As my map of being continues to unfold through the process of becoming (this liminal process of examining the where, the what, the who) demarcations are being made to point to my own signs of queer futurity.

... I am going home, warm love;
Hazy corner lit by green glow of Neighbor’s house;
Distant resonance, snow-lined corridors,
Whispering laughter while sleep falls.

I am going to the Open space,
Dismantled dominance, revolution;
Awakened
With a queer understanding.

I am going to be a woman,
Who defies the expectation
Of what it is to be Woman;
Gender haunts, radical softness.

I am going to resist
Narratives I didn’t write.
I am becoming,
More than I was, then.

EM CREAHAN is a second-year master’s student at the School of Social Service Administration. Her interests include investigating the relationship between art practice and social work to expand the application of art practice as a mode of healing from trauma, at both the individual and community levels. After completing her social work education Em intends to continue engaging in community organizing work in spaces that integrate and elevate place-based, collectively expressed creative processes. She holds a B.A. in international studies and a minor in nonprofit leadership from the University of Florida.
NARRATIVES TO LIVE BY:  
THE EXPLORATION OF PAST AND PRESENT FOR THE FUTURE

Chloe Glispie

Abstract
This first-person essay attempts to promote the usefulness and necessity of vulnerability for social work. In it, I share personal stories for the sake of what Mary Ellen Kondrat calls reflective awareness; working in and through these stories to better understand myself, the importance of self-narration, and the ways in which vulnerability is requisite for social work. This essay thus aims to implore others to think of their own narratives, critically evaluate them, and share them in ways that may seem uncomfortable, because collective vulnerability is the only way to bring about collective societal growth.

During my short time at the University of Chicago’s School for Service Administration, I’ve been taught the benefits of vulnerability. Vulnerability is not only beneficial for one’s mental health, but it builds community, promotes social growth, and generates higher quality connections. As a prospective therapist, I want to use this essay to practice the uncomfortable, yet necessary, task of being vulnerable. Since I’ll be asking clients to bare their emotional selves, I thought it necessary to do it first myself, and prove that being open and vulnerable about who we are, where we’re from, and what we struggle with, understandably brings fear and anxiety, but also freedom and new connections.

We live in a “suck it up” society. We are told that our strength lies in the walls that we build, not in the doors we can open. It seems the most effective way to live life is to hold your cards close to your chest because self-exposure has no real benefit, right? The very function of social work is the opposite of this idea.

In fact, in social work, we believe the real way to survive is to be vulnerable and emotionally exposed. For me, there is anxiety and fear in this. I wonder how my community of fellow academics will see me, how my biological family will see me and how my family of faith will see me after I expose my experiences. The possibility of rejection from
any of these communities is enough to give me pause. I still question if it’s fair that I include them in an essay and exercise that they didn’t ask to be a part of. However, I’ve made peace with these apprehensions by remembering that our journeys being intertwined is proof that we are genuinely connected, and that, secondly, by being as honest as possible, I ensure that no matter what other reactions my respective communities might have, they may still respect what I am writing here. I know our stories are nothing to be ashamed of, and without that shame, only my truth, critical reflection, and growth remain. I’m hoping that this is enough for everyone who reads this.

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I have always enjoyed telling stories, especially personal ones. I find it interesting how my thinking, memory, and feelings about experiences become fluid as I gain more knowledge about life and invest them with new meanings. I recognize that I am constantly creating new rules, boundaries, and expectations for myself to live by, while, at the same time, returning to certain tales from my childhood. I’ve also learned that from these stories and experiences, I’ve adopted different internal working models, or rules and boundaries that shape my life. In other words, I use my stories about my experiences to give myself identity.

I am African American and Christian, and for a long time I attributed my family’s privacy to these two identities. While I was consistently getting in trouble for “talking too much,” my mom was schooling my sister and me on the necessity of privacy. I grew up hearing stories about serious offenses committed within the family, stories in which no one would call the police. When I asked why, I was told that it was just something that was never done. Everything was to be solved within the family.

When I asked my mom if someone in the church wrongs you, is it a sin to sue them, she said, “Yes.” She told me that God would not want me solving Christian problems with the “outside.” This is when I first learned that the distinction between us (Christians) and them (non-Christians) was so stark that I could defy societal systems of justice just to protect a fellow Christian.

During the weekly prayer circles at church, I loved talking about the exciting things that happened in my house. This reporting took the form of “praise reports” for all the great things I’d experienced that week and “prayer requests” meant to ease some of my family’s subsequent struggles. I wanted God to take care of things, but I didn’t consider the fact that it was not just God listening to my prayer request but other church members as well. One Sunday, I asked God to turn our lights back on after the
electricity was shut off for an unpaid bill. After my Sunday school teacher came up to my mom and asked if she needed financial assistance, I got a whooping.

When I reflect on that day in the prayer circle, I don’t think I would have gotten disciplined for praying that God made sure that we had everything we needed. This type of prayer request can be defined as “open.” But the details that I used in my prayer request crossed a boundary. My mom wasn’t obsessed with perfection, but the line we weren’t to cross was one that marked vulnerability. I learned very quickly not to cross that line. As I got older, this lesson was affirmed because I learned that while sharing personal struggles can yield help in the form of advice and sometimes resources, sharing my struggles would sometimes turn into fodder and gossip for those waiting for me to fail.

Now that I am an adult I see how private I am about the issues and challenges that I face. I trust in myself while also avoiding the embarrassment that comes with sharing mistakes. This has sometimes confused the people I love; they’ve expressed concern about whether they are truly gaining access to me. Though this dynamic worries me for my more cherished relationships, in some ways, I also enjoy this. I like being seen but also being a mystery. I like presenting the cover while denying access to my pages. But I know this comes at a price. It can leave me feeling overwhelmingly lonely at times, and I can see this play out with my classmates at SSA and with those I meet out in the field. While I may be open to hearing and understanding others, I am not always open to being understood.

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When I was five years old, my mom secretly moved my sister and me away from my father, to a completely different part of Chicago. She left him no way of finding us. After years of verbal and financial abuse, my mother had had enough. I saw great power and autonomy in her decision. She had taken absolute control of her fate and that of her children. She tended to remind my sister of this whenever my sister would endure a cycle of estrangement and reconciliation with her teenaged boyfriends. I took this as a lesson about romantic relationships—bad relationships didn’t just end on their own and the only way to end them, no matter the logistics, was abruptly.

My introduction to romantic relationships was abusive in nature, and I too witnessed the cycles of disrespect and disappointment that I had seen play out with my mother and my sister. My first relationship was with a man who was ten years my senior. The relationship was a pattern of him
baiting me with “official relationship status.” I assumed that his consistent pursuit of me represented love, a love that he was not yet ready to admit to himself. This relationship ended with university lawyers, policy change, and a very broken heart. My next relationship was even more difficult to escape. It was filled with verbal and emotional abuse and infidelity. Although this relationship was draining me, I could not end it on my own. The loss of my grandmother, thoughts of her legacy and her hopes for my future, helped aid in my escape.

This experience with domestic violence helped me understand the emotional and mental stripping of one’s autonomy. Every time I wanted to leave my ex-boyfriend, I was truly, truly exhausted. Every time I was called names, I was ready to leave. I thought his desperation would finally bring about change, and because change never came, I was always tired.

There is an all-too-common American narrative rooted in the myth of absolute autonomy: “Pull yourself up by the bootstraps” we say. This belief undermines the systematic and emotional obstacles that leave people in destructive cycles. When I relate this narrative to domestic violence, I also see now that it problematically insinuates that the only time a woman can exert power in an abusive relationship is at the very end. This undermines the strategic harm reduction tactics that abused women use to keep themselves and their families safe in the face of abuse. It also doesn’t make much sense that somehow a woman is weak throughout the entire relationship, but then suddenly finds strength. I operate under the belief that strength begets strength. If a woman finds strength at the end of a relationship it’s because it was always there and it is important for survivors to know that.

I work now as a domestic violence counselor. I worry about becoming jaded and falling back into old ideals of strength and oversimplifying the experiences of any client because I do not want to blame the survivor. I don’t want to contribute to, or aid in others, perpetuating the low self-esteem that keeps victims bound to their abusers in the first place.

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On the surface, these stories of mine seem very different. One speaks to the importance and necessity of privacy while the other speaks to one’s autonomy, or lack thereof, in an abusive relationship. Both, however, explore themes of control. When it came to my family, my mother made the rules. She decided what qualified as open and what qualified as vulnerable. In my early romantic relationships, it turns out that I didn’t feel I had as much control over my emotional and physical person as I’d been taught I should have.
Kondrat (1999) famously explains the need for the consistent presence of self-reflection in the professional and personal life of a social worker. I believe I am now in possession of what Kondrat calls reflexive awareness, or “the self’s awareness of how their awareness is constituted in direct practice” (p. 460). I am conscious of my beliefs, values, strengths, and limitations and the ways in which they emerge from experience and practice. I am aware of myself and how I experience life, but I know that maintaining this awareness takes work and consistent effort.

Analyzing how I feel during interactions is a recent behavior change. During my abusive relationship, I would suppress my feelings and compartmentalize. This was the only way I could cope with balancing an extremely taxing and toxic relationship and an already stressful college life. Looking back, I understand what Kondrat (1999) means when she claims that we cannot compartmentalize ourselves out of the world. “Individuals,” she writes, “are engaged in constant transactions with other human beings and with other systems in the environment [that] reciprocally influence each other” (p. 462). This means no matter how small I made myself in attempts to avoid negative “transactions,” it still wouldn’t be enough to make the relationship emotionally healthy.

Working to understand the reasoning of the circumstances surrounding my relationships has given me hope. According to Kondrat (1999), the goal of critical reflectivity is to understand the “sociohistorical reality” that shapes overall lives and an individual’s “capacity to transform that reality” (p. 469). When I can see my ex-boyfriend as less of a monster and more as a human being, it gives me understanding, which, I hope, is the first step to forgiveness. By giving him a new story, or a new narrative, I can contextualize my experiences with him differently.

Doctors Richard and Jonathan Buckman (2016) argue that narratives have tremendous power: “Within the new stories, people live out new self-images, new possibilities for relationships and new futures” (p. 395). They argue for a form of therapy built on narratives, narratives built from the words of the client. If, as they say, “stories are a form of social control” (p. 400), by helping clients shape their own stories, I might help them be both open and vulnerable, as well as ultimately, in control.

In my work as a domestic violence counselor I want my clients to feel they have control throughout their relationships. I want to encourage women to know that they not only have the power to end dangerous and harmful cycles, but they also have power during the relationship. They are not weak because they are not making the decisions that others feel they should. Charles Garvin (2016) articulates a feminist therapy that “focuses on [the] woman as the agent,” while recognizing the “social, historical, and political context” that she finds herself in.
Helping my clients understand their autonomy and strength during abusive relationships is a personal and professional goal of mine. Contextualizing my own stories, coming to see their lessons in new lights, and developing a greater sense of critical reflectivity has been crucial in moving me towards that goal. But there is one very important component that pulls all of this together; that truly solidifies my freedom and that of my current and future clients. It is a willingness to pull these stories out of their dark resting places and analyze, grieve, and appreciate them with the silent support of those around me; simply put, to be vulnerable and reap the benefits of the solidarity that comes with it.

REFERENCES


CHLOE GLISPIE is a second-year student at the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration. She received a bachelor’s degree in Comparative Human Development from the University of Chicago in 2016, and will be receiving her master’s degree in the Spring of 2019 focusing on Clinical Psychodynamic and Family Systems therapy. Her current field placement is the Barr-Harris Children’s Grief Center. She is interested in conducting research on relationships within the black community including grandparent resentment, effective therapy styles for traumatized black men and much more. She intends to use this research to create practical programs that emotionally advance the black community.
By 2050, approximately 394.7 million people will be 80 or older. By comparison, in 1950, only 14.5 million adults were over 80. There has, indeed, been a “significant rise in life expectancy in almost all regions of the world, contributing to an increasingly older population” (Bergman et al. 2013, p. 61). As a result of this demographic trend, there will be an increase in the need for older adult services, including the need to meaningfully attend to this burgeoning population during the end of life period.

We see in Erik Erikson’s (1963) developmental theory that as people age their final stage of psychosocial development revolves around a life review, wherein they reflect upon their lives and take inventory of them. In Erikson’s eighth stage, the developmental task is to attain deeper integrity rather than despair. In order for integrity to prevail, one must come to a self-understanding of one’s life fortified with a sense of its meaning and purpose. He writes, “only in him who in some way has taken care of things and people and has adapted himself to the triumphs and disappointments adherent to being, the originator of others or the generator of products and ideas—only in him may gradually ripen the fruit of these seven [prior] stages. I know no better word for it than integrity” (p. 268). In other words, the quest for integrity requires a making sense of one’s past and life path.

Here we might recognize a human proclivity for order and meaning, but a proclivity that may well require assistance, focus, and effort in order for integrity to deepen and to achieve what Erikson calls wisdom and equanimity at the prospect of death. Achieving greater cohesion and integration is precisely what is required to cultivate greater peace and well-being during this critical developmental stage (Rogers, 2016).

In my experience of facilitating groups of adults, music and nostalgia have been powerful partners in the service of self-expression and personal integration. This paper proposes the use of music in group settings to help older adults in Erikson’s eighth stage. I have seen how music can stimulate
the positive effects of nostalgia and has thus validated my sense that Erikson (1963) was correct in his insistence on the struggle older adults undergo in the search for meaning and cohesion as they process important life events and relationships in order to better attend to the end of their life. I argue that nostalgia can be effectively employed in the process of reviewing one’s life. Indeed, the power of music to stimulate nostalgia, and nostalgia’s powerful role in the process of life review, and its potential to lead to personal integration, positive affect, meaning and self-continuity warrants a deepened understanding of its potential and expanded use in clinical settings. The spiritual advantages that music provides such as enhanced meaning and reverence for one’s life seem to hold the power to make powerful contributions for older adults achieving integrity, and perhaps gracefully, navigating the final chapters of life.

DEFINING NOSTALGIA

There has been a slow evolution, spanning the course of the last three centuries, in how nostalgia is understood. While widely seen as an illness between the 17th and 19th centuries, more recently it has evolved into a more esteemed mental process. Numerous contemporary studies support the idea that nostalgia is a powerful inner resource that not only can propel us toward social connectedness, self-continuity, and spiritual wellness, but might prove to be a trustworthy ally in prompting us toward the construction of a renewed self and society (Routledge, Sedikides, Wildschut & Juhl, 2013).

For example, Constantine Sedikides and Tim Wildschut (2018) have conducted extensive research that focuses on the relationship between nostalgia and a number of variables important for the well-being of older persons. These include a sense of belonging, personal meaning and self-acceptance. Sedikides and Wildschut assert that empirical findings over the last 15 years suggest that indeed, far from being a medical disease or a psychiatric disorder, nostalgia is in fact an invigorating psychological resource that engenders hope and meaning in individuals. They have found, across numerous studies, that the act of nostalgizing, they argue, is indicative of those who find meaning in their lives and a sense of value in the key episodes of their existence. This active cultivation of nostalgia generates a memory form that “pertains to momentous or cultural-life-script occurrences. These occurrences are textured and self-defining. They depict the individual as having a key, if not central, place in a sequence of germane and ritualistic episodes that are enriched by the presence and roles of close others” (p. 49). By increasing social connectedness and self-continuity, and that by “enriching people’s lives with meaning, nostalgia
contributes to motivated goal pursuit, psychological equanimity, and psychological or even physical health” (p. 57).

In addition to retrieving the past and its potential meaning, nostalgia also assists in inventing the future. As Jill Bradbury (2012) writes, “narratives of the past may provide resources for articulating future possibilities” and that nostalgia stems not from a longing for the way things were as from futures that never were realized, from possibilities that were foreclosed in the unraveling events within one’s life. Her work underscores the ways in which nostalgic retrieval of the past offers resources for future possibilities. Nostalgia “is the desire not to be who we once were, but to be, once again, our potential future selves” (p. 1).

FROM MUSIC TO NOSTALGIA IN SENIOR CARE
Music has been shown to be an effective means of evoking nostalgia because it has the capacity to transport the listener to past times and places of their life, as well as to awaken associated emotions which are otherwise inaccessible. Andrea Creech, Hilary McQueen, Susan Hallam and Maria Varvarigou (2013) summarize a formidable body of research that demonstrates that music offers older adults a powerful potential for enhanced social cohesion, personal development and growth. They cite growing evidence that social networks focusing on participation in music reduce levels of depression and isolation, and increase well-being and social connectedness and conclude that “music offers a medium through which older people can re-connect with their youth, experience vitality and feel empowered” (p. 92).

Emelia Michels-Ratliff and Michael Ennis (2016) conducted a study that explored the relationship between nostalgia, memory, and music. Consistent with previous research, their study found that participants’ experience of nostalgia was primarily a “positive experience” however much it might be interlaced “with negative affect.” Furthermore, they found a significant correlation between nostalgic recollection and meaning, such that “even though nostalgia is often tinged with sadness, it is usually an experience people want to have. Because the negative affect is experienced as meaningful, it is not entirely unwanted” (p. 383).

Cultural sociologist Lauren Istvandity (2017) performed a systematic review of research (1996-2016) that focused upon music and reminiscence therapy, involving review and reflection upon one’s life and the use of life histories in the service of well-being. Through her systematic review, she found growing evidence that four out of the five studies examined confirmed that elderly participants experienced positive effects from music and reminiscence therapy. Furthermore, she explains that, “the
overlap of the use of music and reminiscence between these two therapies is rather germane. Studies across the domains of psychology and sociology demonstrate that music can effectively trigger autobiographical memories with strong emotional content and that an individual’s personal memories of music are closely tied to their self-identity and life story” (p. 19). She concludes that the review of existing research demonstrates the positive effects of such therapies upon the stress, anxiety, and depression levels and mental well-being of participants.

Clinical studies have shown the benefits of listening to music for older adults. Christopher Kaufman, Lori Montross-Thomas, and Sean Griser (2018) recognized that this connection had not been examined in a national, representative, population-based sample. In response, they compiled data on 5,797 participants from the 2012 Health and Retirement Study and the 2013 Consumption and Activities Mail Survey. Participants reported the prevalence of certain health conditions, the number of hours they listened to music each week, as well as social, cognitive, physical, and spiritual activities. Those who consistently listened to music reported fewer health problems and significantly higher engagement in cognitive, social, spiritual, and physical activities.

The aforementioned research underscores the power of music to evoke nostalgia for the purpose of accessing significant memories and emotions constitutive of a person’s life. The retrieval of meaningful life material becomes a catalyst for personal renewal. Nostalgia offers tremendous potential in its ability to place a person’s emotionally laden autobiographical memories at the service of building a hopeful future. Nostalgia evoked from music is a meaning making tool for the clinical social worker to use in helping older adults to find meaning in their past, to renew and reclaim their present, and to create a desired future.

MUSIC NOSTALGIA AND WELLNESS SESSIONS

The wellness sessions proposed in this paper are conceived of as weekly sessions for 90 minutes, with an overall duration of six to eight weeks. The purpose of this Music Nostalgia and Wellness Program is to provide a platform for elders to use music and nostalgia in a group setting to strengthen the sense of integrity they take from their understanding of their lives. Each session should begin with the social worker articulating for the group the importance of confidentiality, listening (i.e. no side conversations), and respect for the differences within the group. Together with the social worker facilitating, participants discuss the musical soundtrack of their lives and work out how these selections and memories—acts of nostolgizing—relate to their values. By highlighting
significant experiences, they work to knit together their lives. This sense of connection gives them greater coherence, purpose, and meaning. The goals of the using music and nostalgia within a group session are thus twofold. The first goal of the group is to increase the members’ feeling of social connectedness and mutual support. Through playing music for the sake of nostalgia, and interpersonal sharing, the second goal is to increase participants’ self-reflection, self-acceptance and sense of personal meaning, in regard to the important events and experiences within their lives.

Small, closed groups of seven to ten adults work well. They are brought together to listen to self-selected passages of music and share the importance of these passages for them. This approach differs from traditional music therapy because the participants select the music that is played and direct the process. This is not to suggest that there is no merit or value to music therapy and the way it is practiced. However, it is significant that music therapy proceeds differently. Contemporary music therapy views its enterprise as “a clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship” (American Music Therapy Association, 2018). Music therapists design music sessions for individuals and groups depending on an assessment of their needs. Participants in traditional music therapy are subject to musical interventions and are often involved in activities such as music improvisation, music and imagery sessions, and music performance.

The Music Nostalgia and Wellness Program, conversely, is radically client-centered. There are no predetermined treatment plans or calculated musical interventions. Contrary to being a therapy group these wellness sessions are designed for support. Pelech, Basso, Lee, and Gandarilla (2016) explain this distinction this way:

support groups are different from interpersonal counseling or therapy groups. The purpose of a support group is to assist members to restabilize through compassionate and concerned interactions in the group. Support groups reinforce strengths, reframe problems as opportunities for change and provide the space for group members to disclose issues related to common problems. (p. 56)

This approach offers a new inroad to working with older adults to mutually support one another and explore the developmental tasks of deepened integrity and self-continuity as well as the spiritual quest for deeper unity, peace, transcendence, and meaning near the end of life.

THE STRUCTURE OF SESSIONS

I propose that facilitators use a semi-structured agenda determined in advance but recommend that this structure be combined with a good
measure of flexibility to allow for spontaneity. Because the group will engage members by inviting them to introduce and play musical pieces that have importance to them, I ask members who wish to share music at the next meeting to think about their selections and share them with me three days in advance of when the group is scheduled to meet. This will assist in preparing for the meetings and making sure that selected music is prepared and cued up to be played at the following meeting. In this way, the basic structure of the meeting is determined by both myself and group members.

Each session begins with articulating for the group the importance of differences between the musical selections, the value of them for each individual, and the importance of their presence within our group. Creating and maintaining a safe environment for diversity to be expressed is a chief aim of one’s work as a facilitator. This is instilled by modeling openness, accepting diversity and encouraging group members to conduct themselves in a similar manner. It will demand that the clinician relate to and include those who might be in a minority or a socially oppressed group with equal respect and consideration.

Music serves to empower members of oppressed minorities, subcultures, and countercultures. Often enough, music is a vehicle that connects individuals. Therefore, honoring the music that powerfully connects with participants’ life narratives and their struggles and joys is of central importance to the process of Music, Nostalgia, and Wellness, and demands continued vigilance. The goal of the group is to uphold inclusivity that is open to diversity. The beauty of music is that it can touch and unite people who are quite diverse (e.g. with different outlooks, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic classes) and who otherwise might not perceive common ground between themselves.

Sessions typically begin with a check-in that allows group members to briefly disclose how they are doing. Time will be allotted to address any of the themes or issues that have arisen in the group from the previous meeting and to provide an outline and plan for the meeting, even as there is permission to depart from that plan if it is important for the group. The musical selections provide content that will be the basis for individual reflection and group discussion throughout most of the meeting.

Group members will choose a song to play for the group, have the opportunity to introduce it, talk about its personal meaning for them as well as share any important events or people that it might call to mind. There is also time for group sharing and feedback related to what the music evokes in all participants. Finally, five to ten minutes will be devoted at the end of the meeting to summarizing the material, emotions, and group experience and bringing the meeting to a close.
In summary, the clinical social worker overseeing the session must be attuned to the meaning that the music has for a participant and to reflect its importance back to the participant through the course of the session. Second, the social worker should invite group feedback that can help participants integrate the content of their life narrative. In this way, the social worker allows group participants to support each other as they engage their respective memories and aid one another. Finally, the social worker must be sensitive to the ways in which music and conversation can have different impacts on various members of the group and to the dialogue that ensues.

CONCLUSION
Older adults can suffer from isolation and are at a developmental stage where they are prone to review their life and seek to integrate important experiences into a cohesive narrative. Music is a formidable ally and nostalgia a meaning-making tool that has tremendous potential to assist older adults with integrating their experiences during this developmental stage within the final chapters of their life (Routledge, Sedikides, Wildschut and Juhl, 2013). The purpose of the Music, Nostalgia, and Wellness Group is to increase participants’ level of self-acceptance, personal integration, social connectedness, and perceived meaning (of one’s life) through music, nostalgia and group process.

However, additional research is required. Kaufman, Montross-Thomas, and Griser (2018) suggest that future studies might examine music as a public health initiative for older adults. One goal of future research should be to discern individuals and groups that might not benefit from nostalgia. For example, those who have experienced significant trauma might be triggered by nostalgic music to recall painful memories. Other individuals with certain conditions or life experience might not respond favorably to music and nostalgia. As with all forms of healing, caution, discernment, and research are indispensable allies that guide clinical practice. Nevertheless, based on current evidence, nostalgia has shown promise in redeeming the past and creating a revitalized future.

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FREEDOM ON EARTH: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF HYDE PARK’S UNIVERSITY CHURCH

Jason Straussman

Abstract

Despite growing secularization and the retreat of religion into private life (Chaves & Anderson, 2014), religious identity and belief continue to have a significant influence on social justice action for many Americans (Ammerman, 2013). This article explores the relationship between religion and social justice action through an ethnographic study of University Church in Hyde Park, Chicago. It traces how social justice is talked about among congregants and how it is embodied through the church service. The analysis reveals how the language congregants and leaders use around social justice problematizes common binaries of sacred and secular, illuminating the often complex relationship between religiously motivated beliefs and progressive values. The racial diversity of the church itself allows members to embody these principles of social justice, but in ways that expand traditional understandings of the relationship between faith and social justice.

University Church sits on the corner of 57th Street and University Avenue in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago. Its structure is quasi-gothic, with a stone staircase and large heavy doors. The crimson red brick is adorned with politically provocative posters and slogans. One sign reads, “Black Lives Matter,” and another, “Equal Access for All God’s Children.” In the yard lies a blue picket sign saying, “Pray for Justice for Laquan.” Other signs proclaim the church as a welcoming space. Rainbow banners signify solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community. Founded in 1894, University Church has existed through politically charged periods that range from desegregation, through the Civil Rights era, to decades of “urban renewal.” In 1980, University Church, with a largely white congregation at the time, merged with a predominantly African American church that was struggling to support its congregation.

University Church is now part of the New Sanctuary Movement and has housed undocumented families. The front of the church features a narrow staircase leading up to bright, red gothic doors, over which a
banner announces the “Sanctuary Café,” a space where college students, activists, and community members come to work, eat, sip, and meet. It indeed evokes a feeling of security and sanctity. Through the red gothic doors lies the Anglican-styled sanctuary with vaulted ceilings and stone walls. The flying arches help lend the space its rich acoustics. Stained glass windows, electric candles, and chandeliers create its light. There are four sections of pews that face the pulpit—two in the front and one on the left and right side, each lined with red cushions. In front is an adorned communion table. New Culture Hymnals are placed in each row. Sharpened pencils lay next to blank offering slips.

Over the past two decades, the United States has become increasingly secular. Surveys from the Public Religion Research Institute (2017) and the National Congregation Study (Chaves & Anderson, 2014) attest to the growing number of people who indicate they are non-religious. Weber (1980) saw secularization as a process of demystification and rationalization, a process through which religious identification was replaced by humanistic institutions. Within the trend of secularization has come a retreat of religion from the public civil sphere to the private sphere (Chaves & Anderson, 2014). Some churches have responded to secularization by bringing social issues into religious space. This response has come from both evangelical (Zerai, 2010) and progressive congregations (Wood, 1999).

While evangelicals share little theological commonality with progressive congregations, both have been prompted to engage with public and political issues in order to remain relevant (Zerai, 2010). Evangelicalism is traditionally aligned with culturally and politically conservative values (Harder, 2014). However, a growing number of evangelical churches are embracing the importance of social justice (Gassaway, 2014; Gardner, 2018). Progressive churches typically adopt secular values and pursue social justice issues as key elements of their congregational identity and practice (Todd & Allen, 2011). They embrace actions and values related to causes. Delehanty (2016) describes this trend in terms of pastors and ministers using racial bridging practice, political education, and community involvement, all in order to move their congregation to engage in issues of systemic injustice.

Another way of understanding this is to consider what Reinhold Niebuhr describes as Christian realism, or the balance between the counter-cultural imperative of the Christian message and the political realities and processes of the world as it is (McKeogh, 2007). Niebuhr contends that since power exists, and since humans are imperfect, the only way to live out Christian ideals is to engage in political discourse.
Faith is the hope that you are able to live out Christian values in a deeply ambiguous world (Kapic & McCormack, 2012).

University Church provides an excellent opportunity to explore these dynamics because it situates itself within this stream of progressive Christianity. This essay asks, therefore, what are the ways that social justice is used and talked about in the congregation and how is it embodied within the congregation? As Lichterman (2008) points out, the elasticity of the term “social justice” means that any interrogation about social justice must be sensitive to the variety of ways it is used (Ammerman, 2003). I argue that beyond talking about social justice and providing activities and networks to participate in social justice activities (Todd & Allen, 2011), the service itself provides a way for congregants to embody these values. This is due first to the demographic makeup of the congregation, but also the practices established in the service.

The language used around social justice in the church problematizes binaries of sacred and secular. This fusion also takes place in the service as social justice becomes embodied and enacted.

METHODOLOGY

I used participant-observation to collect data during four field site visits to the church. I visited Sunday mornings between 10:30 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. and stayed for the social hour that followed each service. My method of documenting these observations was through handwritten field notes in a journal. I performed two in-depth interviews with one young adult congregant, and with senior pastor, Julian DeShazer (the names of informants and congregational members have all been changed to protect confidentiality while Pastor Julian has been preserved because he is a public figure). These interviews each lasted 45 minutes and were semi-structured. In addition to in-depth interviews, I collected conversations I had with congregants both during service and afterward at the social hour. Finally, I collected church bulletins that provide service outlines, announcements, and special events.

I used the Outline of Cultural Materials (OCM) suggested by Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) to begin the process of coding. I placed field notes and interviews into three columns: 1) field notes; 2) codes; and 3) reflections (Davies, 2008). After reading through all my field notes, four categories emerged: 1) church processes; 2) activities in the church; 3) mission and values of church members and leaders; and 4) the setting of the church. The first group of items incorporates codes that deal with congregants’ interactions with each other. I coded for a variety of interactions (verbal, non/verbal, physical touch, physical space, etc.) and themes related to
dynamics in the congregation (old vs. new, tensions, feelings of harmony, etc.). This category is meant to capture the way people talked about other congregants and ideas about church participation. The second category relates to the programming of the church, activities advertised at the church, volunteer opportunities, and social justice awareness. I chose this category to capture elements of the service itself and better understand what activities were frequently talked about.

The third category relates to the mission of the church and the perceptions of congregants. I chose social justice to code because of the frequency of use. This made me curious about all the different ways people talked about social justice, and I used this information to build a semantic range. Another code, Theological beliefs, helped categorize how congregants, lay leaders, and pastors talked about theology. After gathering general themes, I coded for sub-categories within theological belief. For example, every sermon included at least one aspect of liberation theology, which is a belief that God is on the side of the oppressed and actively working to liberate people (Gutierrez, 2003). Sometimes these theological beliefs were explicitly named, other times they served as a backdrop for action. Finally, the fourth code related to the church itself as a material structure and symbolically as a religious institution. Items in this category also represent the symbolic setting of the church and what it means in the context of a congregation.

I originally assumed that I could dissect the ways in which sacred and secular language were being used that would fit neatly into categories. However, the process of coding revealed the theological and secular ways of talking about social justice were part of a complex situation that resisted the sacred/secular dichotomy.

**Rationale for Collection**

I used participant observation because it allowed me to see how congregants interacted with each other in a natural way and provided rich data on how social justice principles were enacted in the service. By placing myself in the service for four weeks, I began to establish rapport with congregants and even had one woman ask me, “when are you going to become a member already?!” In-depth interviews were helpful because they allowed me to probe deeper into the beliefs and experiences of key informants. I wanted to get a sample from a congregant that is involved in the church and a leader in the church in order to compare their perspectives on social justice in the church.
My first service at University Church was right before Columbus Day. A man with thin gray hair and a long white beard shuffled up to the microphone. He listed off the scourges of colonialism and asserted the need for global solidarity. “We should not be saying God bless America,” he punctuated, “but God DAMN Columbus Day!” With this conclusion, the congregation erupted in “amens” and applause.

Pastor Julian is African American, born and raised on the South Side of Chicago. He is both an academic and an activist, splitting his time between managing the field education for McCormick seminary, pastoring University Church, and maintaining his hip-hop career as rapper, J.Kwest. Pastor Julian describes himself as “a systems guy” and his leadership style fits into what Delehanty (2016) refers to as “sustained activism,” which is an attempt to address inequality through systemic transformation and long-term community change. Answering a question about how the church decides what activities to get involved in he says:

A lot of people get excited and energized and as a leader, I want to have systems in place. A lot of churches are “moment” churches—we are looking at the long-term.

His sermons and announcements are filled with explanations of injustice that stem from systemic oppression. In one sermon, he links neighborhood violence to “heroin, police funding, and the drug trade.” In the same sermon, he argues the suffering of Puerto Rico is due to global warming and condemns financial companies for “swooping in to save the day for pennies on a dollar.”

As we sit down to enjoy fruit and coffee after service, I ask one woman how the congregation has changed over the last 10 years. She says:

It has changed a lot. They didn’t have Pastor Julian before. I attribute a lot of the change to leadership. There were people who were involved here before, but it didn’t feel the same. I can’t really put the words to it. It feels fuller. There is something about it in the air.

When she finishes talking, she is asked by the woman across the table hanging up a “voting facts” blurb if she is missing any information. She replies, “No, I think you have it all.” She turns to me and says, “Party politics we shouldn’t have in the church. But politics should definitely be in the church.” Another example of system-level language around social justice involves finances. One Sunday, a lanky man with glasses and a sweater takes to the stage to announce the need to start a “finance
committee at the church.” Anticipating an aversion to talking about money in a church, he says:

I know it is difficult to talk about money, but we need to do better. We need to look at sexism, racism, and capitalism and stare it down—in our lives and in the church.

From the pulpit to the pocketbook, everything is interrogated through this lens of systems of injustice.

One of the strategies of liberal progressive churches has been to shy away from exclusively Christian language (Zerai, 2010). This is not the case at University Church. There is a dynamic of the secular and the sacred. For example, while declaring the root cause of Puerto Rico’s suffering to be climate change and U.S. neglect, Pastor Julian argues that “the church in Puerto Rico has ‘seen the face of God’ and continues to wrestle with God.”

This tension between the sacred and the political is brought out during an interview with one young adult leader in the congregation. When asked about the role her faith plays in social justice, she challenges my attempt to dichotomize faith and action. Instead, she claims that she sees faith and social justice as inseparable:

Everything we do as human beings. Everything we build is supposed to be done to the glory of God. And bringing the kingdom of God down to earth and making that a reality here on earth. So this idea of the separation of church and state. It’s not a separation of God and state. It’s a separation of very specific beliefs, and we know that God is a pluralistic God and that there needs to be space for everyone. What you go back to are these core tenants of belief which are Justice and Mercy.

All these examples point to the complex dance of religious and secular language. In one sentence, Pastor Julian claims that the call of God goes “beyond citizenship.” Yet, later he implores the congregation to be “good informed citizens of God” by showing up to the court to push for a consent decree. The interchangeableness of divine and humanistic language problematizes the binary of sacred and secular and dives into an ambiguity that American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr called Christian realism, which requires “preserving a sense of responsibility for achieving the highest measure of order, freedom, and justice despite the hazards of man’s collective life” (McKeogh, 2007, p. 129).

Elements of the Service
For all the contemporary activism the church is engaged in, it is still remarkably traditional in terms of the rites, rituals, and elements of the
service; the hymnody and prayer. It is precisely in some of these elements of the service that the mix of divine and secular language emerges. This is most salient during communal prayer.

Time in each service is given for congregants to raise both their concerns and their praises. A deacon circles the room smoothly beckoning through the microphone “prayers? prayers? anyone?” The piano in the background sprinkles jazzed notes into the slow marching of the organ. Two musical worlds are woven and fused to the simple, repetitive structure of a *Taizé* chant —“Oh Lord hear our prayer.” Against this background, prayers are offered. While some members share concerns for healing, new jobs, and surgeries, many make prayer requests about social justice issues. One man asks for justice for the employees of the neighborhood Treasure Island grocery store, which is going out of business. Another asks for peace and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula. A third congregant notes the ongoing conflict in El Salvador and asks for a prayer for the communities there. Equal importance is given to both kinds of prayer as congregants affirm, “Oh Lord hear our prayer” at the end of each request.

The most common qualifier to prayer concerns is: “but God is good.” For instance, Grecia, who runs the Sanctuary Café, offers a “praise and prayer request” one Sunday. Through held-back tears she shares:

I just really need to admit today that I’m tired, church. I’m just so tired. But this is also a praise because God is doing so many great things.

Other petitioners display a similar pattern. One follows up their delay in back surgery with “but God is good.” Another congregant prays for a job and ends their petition by saying “but I know God is good.” One explanation for this apparent contradiction might be that congregants’ attempt to qualify their statements in order to indicate their continued devotion and save face. Another reason might be a cognitive dissonance (Dewalt, 2002) that reflects a deeper ambivalence about the presence of the divine. What both explanations lack is the possibility that these ideas live together. The qualifier that this is also a “praise” illustrates that both suffering and divine work do not need to be exclusive.

Theodicy, an attempt to reconcile the goodness of the divine with the existence of evil, is one of the greatest dilemmas in theology (Kapic & McCormack, 2012). One attempt to resolve this dilemma is liberation theology (Gutierrez, 2002). Heavily influenced by the work of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutierrez believes that God is active in the liberation of the oppressed and displays a preferential treatment of the poor (Gutierrez, 2002). Black Liberation theologian James Cone’s extraordinary work, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (2011), brings this theological prospect to the suffering of African
Americans in the United States. Cone utilizes the symbol of the cross to argue that God is revealed in the suffering of the oppressed and draws a striking parallel with lynching. Cone (2011) writes that:

It is precisely until we can see the cross and the lynching tree together, until we can identify Christ with a “recrucified” black body hanging from a lynching tree, there can be no genuine understanding of Christian identity in America, and no deliverance from the brutal legacy of slavery and white supremacy. (p. 34)

For Cone, and for members of University Church, these prayers reveal a belief that God is not only concerned about suffering and societal injustice, but that God is present amid the suffering.

Em[body]ing Faith
Beyond how congregants and leaders talk about social justice is the question of how these principles are lived out in the church. At a demographic level, the church prompts a setting where social justice can be carried out. The integration of a black and white congregation answers Martin Luther King’s indictment that 11:00 am on Sunday was the nation’s “most segregated hour.” A congregation member points this out when telling the story of the merger:

Like, we have a soul food potluck that we started doing many years ago when two congregations merged. One was a historically white congregation the other was a historically black congregation. And they wanted to do that, because it was the black congregation that was coming into the congregation and they wanted them to feel welcome and that is a big tradition that happens every year now. And it has its roots in this kind of idea of reconciliation and racial justice.

In this context, the sharing of food opens into a new tradition. In the same way, “Pass the peace,” where members physically pass peace to each other through handshakes, is not just a spiritual greeting, but an act of racial reconciliation (Wuthnow, 2003). This is important because it brings up the notion of embodiment central to the preaching and theology of the church. The Western Judeo-Christian tradition tends to emphasize the platonic idea of dualism, which treats the body as only a vessel for the soul and an obstacle to be overcome (Olson, 2013; Kapic & McCormack, 2012). University Church, however operates closer to the ideas and insights of the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, who conceives of embodiment as the affirmation that human experience is fundamentally physical and material (Hitchcock, 2008).

Pastor Julian affirms this idea in a sermon on Luke 22:19 where Jesus declares to his disciples during the last supper, “take this and eat. This is my body, broken for you.” A few weeks before, a pastor from a Quechua
village came to speak for Latinx History Month. Pastor Julian reminds the congregation that the pastor’s village had been destroyed by the Spanish, who brought colonialism and communion. The traditional idea of a priest is someone who remains anonymous because they are in persona Christi (in the person of Christ). Pastor Julian finds this idea anemic at best, and violent at worst. He believes who is giving communion is just as important as the communion itself. It is of utmost importance that “the hands holding the cup are the ones who had their village erased by Christianity!” Pastor Julian implores the congregation to embrace an embodied understanding:

What if the signs and symbols both matter. What if the body matters just as much? We must take the body seriously. We must take back our bodies. Many glorified God but ignored racism. Jesus said, “take my body!”

The sermon is followed by quiet reflection as Pastor Julian’s words linger and bodies sit firmly rooted in the pews. Pastor Julian points out during one sermon that liberation and freedom are not meant for the next life but now: “Freedom on EARTH, as it is in heaven” he exclaims. This is a far cry from revivalist preaching about people being raptured from a decaying and hellish earth. This is a spirituality of rock, earth, and soil; a spirituality that sees more than a soul and asks for justice for a black body that was, in Cone’s horrific reminder, discarded, murdered, and slain. This is a Christianity where being human matters.

The service always concludes with a benediction where everyone holds hands and sings “the Lord bless you and keep you. And make his/her face to shine upon you.” This blessing is usually sung happily, and the atmosphere is energetic and welcoming. Young children sway back and forth. Congregants look around and smile at one another, singing along familiar and comfortable. Young adults and older people hold hands, smiling at each other, and laugh, filling the space with warmth. They leave the service to go about their daily lives of grocery stores, coffee shops, and appointments.

DISCUSSION

This project explored the ways that University Church frames and talks about social justice. It found how much these languages co-exist, the systems framework (secular) and spiritual framework integrated in what Todd and Allen (2011) highlight as a “paradoxical” relationship between religion and social justice. In investigating the relationship between social justice and spirituality, race emerged as a central issue. Race was frequently discussed during the service and many of the groups and opportunities
offered in the church related to issues of racial injustice. This is not surprising given the history of the congregational merger, Hyde Park’s continued battles with segregation and racial injustice, and the national discourse around race in America.

This is not to say that University Church does not face challenges in practicing racial justice. One member recounted the difficulty of embodying the purported values of the Church during flashpoint events, such as when a grand jury in St. Louis County declined to charge Ferguson, Mo. police officer Darren Wilson in the shooting death of unarmed teenager, Michael Brown, which gave cause to the protest cry that “Black Lives Matter”:

After the verdict came out in St. Louis. One member of the church, who had been in the church for a long time [stated with emphasis]. White guy. Got up and said, “all lives matter.” And woah. There are people who are nodding along with that, right?

Despite these differences, the church stayed committed to conversation and dialogue by inviting members of Black Lives Matter to come and speak:

And we had a conversation with some Black Lives Matter advocates and they basically said, “This is a young people's movement. A young people of color's movement. Specifically, black people. And if you want to support this, you need to follow our lead.” And the church did.

This example highlights that a commitment to social justice does not mean the church is homogenous in its beliefs. However, it does mean that people are willing to engage in dialogue and as this congregant put it, “willing to learn and change.”

This is one of the great contributions University Church makes for other congregations. Willingness to engage in discourse and the ability to change and grow are not typically associated with religious institutions that tend to prize tradition and orthodoxy (Delehanty, 2016). What is unique about University Church is its ability to embrace its very particular social and political context and wrestle with questions about larger social issues. Paul Tillich (1996), who towards the end of his life taught at the divinity school at University of Chicago, calls this the method of **correlation**. For Tillich, it is our search for meaning and our experience of our own humanity that drive the questions that theology answers. These “ultimate concerns” as Tillich calls them, are always evolving as we our embedded in a world of injustice, oppression, and existential uncertainty. University Church does this by wrestling both theologically and socially in the context it is placed.
There is a concern that “social justice” has become fashionable, a recognizable selling point institutions and churches use as recruitment strategies—attracting younger members to join and engage. As Zerai (2010) notes, even evangelical churches are engaging more in social justice issues in order to remain relevant. Interviews with new members hint at this when asked about why they decided to attend University Church. One congregant says: “I’m looking for a church that is LGBTQ+ affirmative and social justice oriented and when I saw the signs I knew this was the church for me.” While there is nothing wrong with acknowledging it is both a matter of relevance and a matter of values for University Church, as more churches seek to engage in social justice, this question will continue to be asked.

Further questions include what resources congregations have for contributing to social justice efforts. More research can be done perhaps using a racial equity framework (Garces & Gordon da Cruz, 2017) to assess the degree congregations are able to achieve racial equity. Another question is the role of leadership in moving congregations towards social justice. Delehanty (2016), and this ethnography, focused largely on the role of leaders, but future projects can explore what strategies congregants and lay people use to engage in these issues. Finally, how does participation in social justice impact membership and participation in the congregation? As more and more churches are closing and many millennials are distancing themselves from participation in churches, this question becomes increasingly relevant.

CONCLUSION

At a time in which secularization is increasing and the role of faith is being withdrawn into private life, University Church offers a unique synthesis of progressive secular values and spiritual motivations for social justice. The need to categorize and separate these two sources of belief and action formation does an injustice to the paradox and complexity of not only religious belief but the function of belief itself. University Church reminds us that we are all an amalgamation of the world through which we pass. The church itself is a part of a larger social and political context that informs its decisions and activities. For churches like University Church, there is a crucial element of transformative action in order to allow members to live out their diverse values. As religion in America is shifting, more churches are deciding how they are going to engage in the world. For University Church, this means a commitment to transformative action in the community and beyond. As Pastor Julian reminded us one Sunday, Jesus taught us to pray for “freedom on earth, as it is in heaven.”
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IDEOLOGICAL STATE APPARATUSES AND ME: AN EDUCATIONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Elizabeth Weiss

Abstract
This reflective essay analyzes the gross mishandling of intimate partner violence and sexual violence within my school. It draws on Marxist and feminist conceptions of labor, gender, and sexuality, and primarily Althusser’s concept of the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). It connects personal experience to the dominant ideologies of our capitalist society, ideologies that perpetuate the exploitation and subordination of women.

To truly love ourselves, we must treat our stories with respect, but not allow them to have a stranglehold on us, so that we free our mutable present and beckoning future from the past.

—Sharon Salzberg, Real Love: The Art of Mindful Connection

From the ages of 16 to 19 I was in an abusive relationship. My abuser, who I will refer to as D, continued to harass me into my mid-20s. Each story of sexual harassment and abuse that surfaces is coupled with those who are close to the accused, insisting that they had no idea that their coworker/husband/son/brother/lover/friend was capable of such behaviors. In my experience, many adults knew well that I was experiencing Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). My parents knew. His parents knew. My therapist, our teachers, various coaches, school administrators, and our peers. They all knew. Nonetheless, after college he won a seat in the Wisconsin State Senate drawing on the support of many of our childhood friends. As the #TimesUp and #MeToo movements have brought to light the pervasive violence against women, reflecting on my own abuse at the hands of someone who is now in politics has become an almost daily preoccupation.

For a long time, I struggled to feel safe in school. My friends became frustrated with my relationship, and I became increasingly isolated. When
something would happen during the school day, I had nowhere to turn. This feeling of social isolation led to feelings of shame and insecurity that bled into my personal and professional life long after the relationship had ended. It greatly impacted my future feelings of safety within relationships, schools, and work. I write this as a white, queer, middle-class woman with a professional degree and the hopes of using my story and experience to find clarity and meaning making of a messy and violent experience. I draw from Marxist and feminist conceptions of education, labor, gender, and sexuality in conjunction with Althusser’s (1971) concept of the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) to better understand the gross mishandling of IPV within my school community. In the end I will show how these policies and practices were reflective of the dominant ideology of a capitalist system that relies on the exploitation and subordination of women. I will conclude by proposing implications for social work practice and the importance of lifting up communities of color and LGBTQ folks in conversations of IPV, sexual harassment, and sexual violence.

REPRODUCTION

Schools are socially constructed systems that either grant or prevent access to resources in the form of skills, social and cultural capital, and opportunities that aid in the reproduction of American “society” (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Bourdieu, 1980). What we learn in school greatly varies depending on individuals and the contexts in which they are situated. Bowles and Gintis (1976) provide a Marxist analysis of schooling in the United States and highlight how school curriculums and behavioral norms are highly correlated with the socio-economic status of the students that the schools serve. They found that students were matched with a curriculum that taught them the knowledge and habits that would allow them to seamlessly transition to the layer of the workforce befitting their class status—what is made available to students, the limitations presented to them in schools, mirror and normalize the “minimal possibilities for advancement” and “inferior job situations” once they enter into the labor market (p. 132).

These limitations and minimal possibilities are not merely articulated, but rely on the students’ internalization of the social relations expressed in them. Education is, therefore, essentially the transmission of “a system of dispositions” that enmeshes students in existing alignments of social capital, race, and gender. Student aspirations come to match their perceived competencies (Bourdieu, 1980; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). As Davies (1983) points out, the sexual division of labor is crucial to capitalism (p. 42). Given that women have historically been restricted
to child bearing, domestic labor, and their ability serve the needs of the nuclear family, this division has clear implications for their access to education and the job market, and arguably how women behave in romantic relationships.

Research has shown that between 30 and 50 percent of teens experience IPV, as victims, perpetrators, or both (Banyard, Cross, 2008; O’Keeffe et al. 1986). Yet, IPV, which includes psychological, physical, and sexual abuse, is still often treated as an anomaly. The effects of IPV are similar to other forms of trauma: higher rates of depression, PTSD, substance use disorders, and physical health symptoms correlated with exposure to toxic stress. In a study of teen IPV, victimization was correlated with lower feelings of school attachment, which was defined as enjoyment, perceived fairness of the rules, thoughts of dropping out, and the value placed on the education being received (Campbell, 2002). The same study speculated that the students’ grades and drop-out rates were mediated by higher rates of substance use and depression among victims. Despite the high rates of IPV and its dire effects, when I was in high school, there were, to the best of my knowledge, few to no resources for teens to learn about healthy relationships or sexuality. Whether it be through the poor school policy or the cascading effects of trauma, operating under these assumptions, the experience of IPV appears to be functioning as a tracking mechanism that inhibits the educational attainment of young girls, in turn impacting their future access to the job market.

THE “SILENT NOISE” OF THE IDEOLOGICAL STATE APPARATUSES

In his article “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)” Althusser (1971) explores the ways social conditions—the pre-conditions of labor power—are shaped through ideology. He draws a distinction between the repressive tools of the state and the dispersed, institutional settings that shape consciousness. In contrast to state apparatuses (e.g. the military) which control first by violence and second by ideology, he argues Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA), like schools, control the conditions of production through subjugating individuals to the ruling-class ideologies. Whereas state apparatuses are unified through a central government, ISAs are decentralized and manifold. They exist in our media, religious spaces, and cultural expressions: “cramming every ‘citizen’ with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism,” racism and sexism (Althusser 1971, p. 11).
Althusser argues that the pervasiveness of the messaging renders the noise of the ISAs “silent.” As echoed by Bowles and Gintis (1976), Althusser argues that the private internalization of ideology unconsciously controls the will and behavior of individuals and their relations to the means of production. A recent survey by Stop Street Harassment and the UC San Diego Center on Gender Equity and Health found that in their lifetime 81% of women and 40% of men experience sexual harassment, assault, or both (Kearl, 2018). The survey showed that a majority of individuals report that these acts occur in public spaces or institutions like schools (K-12) or the workplace and that 57% of women reported that the first rates of incidence occurred between the ages of 0-17 (Kearl, 2018). These acts are so prevalent and so public that they become normalized, or as Althusser argues “silent,” which perhaps offers us insight into why many people are shocked when an individual speaks out against these acts.

As we struggle to provide relevant education to young people on sex, relationships, and consent in public schools, young people are navigating sexual harassment and sexual violence in environments that are at best unresponsive to their needs at very young ages (CDC 2014 in Planned Parenthood, n.d.) and, at worst, hostile to their victimization. I have certainly heard the label “slut” thrown at women who choose to come forward with their experiences of sexual violence. Their sexual histories are used against them, as if being raped is just the by-product of choosing to be sexually active. In high school, I remember several girls in my grade coming forward at times with accusations of rape and recall the messaging among my peer groups to have been rather callous and dismissive. On one occasion, a student chose to leave school after she came forward; the school environment became extremely hostile towards her. I wish I could say that I was an ally to her then, but I was sadly also skeptical of her claims.

While peer influence certainly plays a role in reinforcing passive scripts of female identity, what I found so striking in my experience was the array of administrative actions and inactions that explicitly and implicitly communicated that my needs were not as important as my male partner and that I could not rely on institutions to offer me safety. On one occasion, after helping after school with a fundraiser, D tracked me down to “talk.” What quickly escalated into a verbal fight went on for an hour. My teacher went looking for me after I hadn’t reported back to her after the event. She found us—I remember feeling ashamed, sweaty, and upset. The next day, the vice-principal called me to her office to discipline me for “having intercourse” on school grounds, her assumption based on my disheveled appearance when the teacher found us. I had yet to have sex at the time and tried to explain how my appearance was caused by a fight, not “intercourse.” After insisting over and over again that nothing had
happened, she let me go, telling me that “I needed to have more respect for myself as a woman” and reprimanded me for the length of my skirt as I left her office. To my knowledge, no one ever talked to D about what they thought he had been doing.

In the last year of our relationship, the abuse began to escalate to physical acts of violence. We had broken up at the end of senior year and he went into my senior art exhibition, which included several cropped photographs of him, and stole the photographs. When my art instructor and I went to retrieve the photographs from him, he pulled them out of his locker and ripped them up in the middle of the hallway while screaming at me. At this point, the school did intervene but by calling his father, a prominent politician, while leaving my family out of the conversation. I was repaid $50 for my works of art but no other disciplinary action was taken.

As an Ideological State Apparatus, my school perpetuated the ideology of patriarchy by indoctrinating students in stereotypical and heteronormative gender roles. Both of these instances clearly communicated that the administration was more interested in policing my sexuality and protecting my abuser rather than offering me protection. Their administrative actions were based in an ideology that privileged the well-being of men, and, as someone within that institution, I likewise internalized the belief that men and their needs were superior to my own. This lasted for many years and contributed to “the reproduction of the relations of production” through teaching me to privilege others’ needs above my own. This, in turn, resulted in the exploitation of my emotional and domestic labor in future relationships. Not only was this ideology used to impact how I viewed myself functioning in romantic relationships, it normalized the very sexual harassment I would also encounter in the labor market. The school policy reflected and reproduced the sexist conditions of the workplace all the while instilling in me a functional, passive and compliant series of dispositions (Althusser 1971).

At the same time, I was immersed in the ideologies of “purity” from my church and simultaneously fed hyper-sexualized scripts of femininity from the media. My peers were also wrestling to make meaning from their own experiences and the ideologies that they were confronting. All of these things entangled with one another made it very difficult for me, and those closest to me, to recognize what was happening. While I don’t feel any inclination to excuse or forgive my abuser for his violent behavior, I can also see why his own indoctrination into the pervasive sexist ideologies that permeate our culture could make it difficult for him to confront his own behavior or find other means of addressing the deep pain and insecurity that I can only guess he carried.
MOVING TOWARDS MY BECKONING FUTURE
Moving beyond my abusive relationships required me to learn how to love myself. This took years of informal schooling from my queer, feminist, and creative community. I eventually found myself in messy paint studios and sweaty electronic dance parties. I found myself in the embraces of lovers and friends and sexual empowerment. I found myself in a community that taught me to grant myself fluidity and hold myself accountable. I found myself in meditation and in yoga. It was my informal education outside institutions and alternative ideologies that allowed me to heal. I have since moved beyond the messaging that I was to be compliant, that my sexuality was shameful, and that abuse was to be expected. Recognizing my strength and resilience and learning to love myself through this healing process, along with protective factors and the privilege I embody, played a major role in being able to grow out of these experience.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK
We often ask survivors to rely on our criminal justice system in addressing issues of IPV, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. As a survivor whose abuser is currently sitting in office, this insistence to trust our criminal justice system and government has always struck me as asinine. This reliance on a state apparatus is not only ineffectual, as a majority of cases of sexual assault aren’t ever “solved,” but also perpetuates “carceral feminism,” or a feminism that fails to take into account how relying on the criminal justice system poses significant danger for people of color, LGBTQ folks, and sex workers (Harris, 2018; Press, 2018). In place of the carceral feminist approach, Kelly Hayes and Miriame Kaba (2018), Chicago-based organizers and abolitionists, call for “transformative justice,” which they define as “community process developed by anti-violence activists of color, in particular, who wanted to create responses to violence that do what criminal punishment systems fail to do: build support and more safety for the person harmed, figure out how the broader context was set up for this harm to happen, and how that context can be changed so that this harm is less likely to happen again (para. 5).” In other words, to undermine the ISAs, we must also look outside of the state apparatus for healing and, as social workers, citizens, and human beings, engage our imaginations in forging new relational solutions, centering the most vulnerable voices throughout our work.

We must, therefore, also trace the through lines of ISAs from our families to our churches, schools, cultural institutions, and professional settings. In schools, this means teaching young people about IPV, sexual harassment, sexual violence, consent, and healthy relationships. In
Chicago, organizations like the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health (ICAH) conducts peer-led workshops for youth and youth-led workshops for adults to support further learning about sexual and relationship health. The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network have free resources available to ensure that we are teaching LGBTQ-inclusive sexuality education. The Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence published a curriculum review of evidence-based practice-informed prevention curriculums (Curriculum Review of Evidence Based and Practice Informed Prevention Approaches to Adolescent Dating Abuse, Sexual Assault, and Stalking, N.D.) as well as a collaborative planning tool for schools to address teen IPV (Advocacy Resources, N.D.; Collaborative Planning Tool for Multi-faceted Prevention Initiatives, N.D.). In agency settings, this work could start with reviewing agency policies to ensure that they protect and support workers in instances of sexual harassment. Metoo.org offers local and national resources and toolkits through their websites that can be used across various settings.

The current public reckoning with sexual violence and harassment makes me hopeful that young people today will see that IPV is unacceptable. In addition to shifting these conversations in the media, we can and must shift our practices in schools to ensure all students’ safety regardless of their gender, sexual identity, race/ethnicity, and class. This will require us to push back on the functional, ideological, and economic underpinnings that privilege the well-being of some at the cost of others. It will require us to attune our ears to the otherwise silent “noise” of our ideologies.

REFERENCES


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