INTRODUCTION

On handout

Basic Premise: Everyone has many identities that comprise the self. We choose identities to be salient depending on the situation. Salient identities lead to emotions which in turn, are the main guidance for our behavior.

The Problem: If identities are stigmatized, we experience shame that triggers emotions of anger and rage. Violent behavior will be a consequence. If shame is triggered by the experience of a sexual identity, violence will be associated with its source and will manifest in sexual violence.

To illustrate different degrees of shaming and violence this idea is presented comparatively using data and examples of the U.S. and Germany. The cross cultural comparison serves as a measurement rod.

Finally I will address some remedies that lower sexual shame and hereby fight sexual violence at its root.

Again: How does stigmatization of a person lead to violent behavior?

• Stigmatization of identities leads to shame, that in turn leads to reactions with anger and rage.
• Anger and rage provide a fertile ground for violent behavior.
There are two Forms of Shame:
acknowledged and unacknowledged shame.

“Open or acknowledged shame is likely to be discharged, in actions like spontaneous good-humored laughter” (201).

If unacknowledged shame emerges, “spirals of intra-and interpersonal shame” are prompted.

- This leads to shame-rage spirals “which have no natural limit of intensity and duration” (Scheff 201).
- Triggering spirals of shame, rage, or anger, unacknowledged shame has a strong potential for causing hatred and violence.

Stigmatization of a sexual identity is often not openly addressed and therefore causes unacknowledged shame.

I use Affective Meanings to Measure Emotions, Identities, and Behaviors

Affective Meaning are Gut Reactions

Identities, emotions and behavior are sentiments that become important to us by their meaning. Everything we can think of creates and affective reaction. While we are all processing information on the same dimensions of meaning, reactions can be different. Differences in affective meaning are gut reactions mainly determined by cultural and subcultural differences.

Example:
All cat haters, think about a cat.
What do you feel? Hmmmm a cat is good
All cat haters, what do you feel?
Irrrrk a cat, get it, turn your steering wheel, yehh roadkill
Three Basic Dimension of Affective Meaning

EPA profiles
  Evaluation: good, nice - bad, awful
  Potency: big, powerful - little, powerless
  Activity: fast, young, noisy - slow, old, quiet

“But why E, P and A?.. the most important question today, as in the day of the Neanderthal, about the sign of a thing are:

first, is it good or bad for me? (is it a cute Neanderthal female or a sabertooth tiger?);

second, is it strong or is it weak with respect to me? (is it a sabertooth tiger or a mouse?);

third, is it an active or a passive thing? (is it a sabertooth tiger or merely a pool of quicksand that I can carefully skirt?).

Survival of the species has depend on answers to such questions.”(Osgood 1990, p. 247).

Identities, emotions and behaviors cause affective reactions, that is meaning.
Let’s look at the Evaluation of Sexual Identities in Cross-Cultural Comparison

I collected ratings of affective meaning of sexual identities in Texas and Germany.

In addition, I collected ratings on the sexual explicitness of these identities. That is rating that show how sexual an identity is seen: not sexual at all, very sexual.

I chose the twenty most sexual-erotic identities. These identities were rated slightly positive in Germany and negative in Texas. Stigmatization of highly sexual identities happened in Texas but not in Germany.

In a closer investigation of this relationship I used a quadratic curve estimate to regress evaluation of identities on their sexual explicitness rating. In plain English: I want to test if the stigmatization of identities depends on the degree to which they are perceived as sexual.
OVERHEAD

Figure 1: Quadratic Curve Estimated in the Regression of Evaluation on Sexual Eroticism in Germany and America.
Let’s look at the dotted line of the curve for TX. The quadratic function in the U.S. is similar to the one for Germany, but more offset to the left. What does this tell us?

- The U.S. curve drops lower on the right side of the y-axis
  - Identities that received an extremely high sexual-erotic rating are seen as negative.
    - This is in line with the argument that we stigmatize sexual identities in Texas.
  - Comparing this stigmatization to German subjects we obtain a cultural measurement rod, telling us that we are indeed different here in Texas.
    - Yes, we are more likely than Germans to stigmatize sexual identities.

- For the more moderate sexual-erotic identities, the comparison of the saddlepoints or vertexes reveals that in the U.S. identities have to score lower in sexual-eroticism to receive the highest evaluation.
  - Apparently we like identities most if that are sexually ambivalent.
  - Judging from the height of the curve,
    - Texans like identities of sexual ambivalence more than Germans
  - Judging from the horizontal location of vertex of the curve,
    - for Texans to like identities, they have to appear less sexual than for Germans.

- Finally, let us compare non-sexual identities, the left ends of the curves.
  - Identities without any sexual denotation are liked less than identities of sexual ambivalence.
  - This effect is more pronounced in Germany than in Texas.
Let’s Look at the Emotions Involved with Sexual Identities

We can Link Identities, Emotions, and Behaviors by using their affective Meaning

Stigmatization is the assignment of a negative evaluation to an identity.

If stigmatization occurs for sexual-erotic identities, shame arises. Consequently, anger and rage will be associated with the explicit sexual-erotic domain and part of the resulting violence will be associated with its source -- sexuality.

For Texas where we have high levels of stigmatization of sexual identities there will be more shame associated in the sexual domain.
There will be a stronger prevalence of sexual violence and persons with sexual-erotic identities will be more likely to be victims of sexual-violence.

If people successfully confirm their identities in interaction, they experience typical emotions.
• Emotions, typical for an identity, carry the same affective meaning as this identity.
• Once identities with the explicit sexual-erotic meaning are identified, typical emotions can be selected by matching their affective meanings, operationalized as EPA profiles.

Example:
Good people feel good and good things
Bad people feel bad and do bad things
Everyone has many identities. If I chose a sexual erotic identity in a particular situation, I feel according to the meaning of this identity and I act accordingly.
What are the Emotions that Correspond to Sexual Identities?

I select emotions whose affective meanings are closest to typical sexual identities. They express how you should feel
a) about yourself having a sexual identity
b) about others who display a sexual identity

Emotions closest to sexual identities in Texas are
• outraged
• anxious
• impatient
• furious
• nervous
• and angry

Emotions closest to sexual identities in Germany are
• excited
• moved

The stigmatization of explicit sexual-erotic identities leads to emotions that express anger and hostility in the sexual-erotic domain. In contrast to the U.S. findings, emotions of anger and rage are entirely absent in the German sexual-erotic domain.
What is the Behavioral Relevance?

Just like emotions correspond to identities, behaviors correspond to emotions.

- Violent emotions generally call for violent behavior.
- Emotions of passion and love generally call for sexual behavior.

If sexual identities lead to emotions of anger and hostility, people will be more likely to show violent behavior in situations in which a sexual identity is called for.

Cross-cultural differences in the emotions that correspond to sexual identities are reflected in behavior.

Dependent on source, conceptualization and measurement, sexual violence is 2 to 4 times as prevalent in the US than in Germany.
IMPLICATIONS

Potential Remedies

My study indicates a simple remedy for reducing the dramatic level of sexual violence in the U.S.: removing the stigma from sexual identities affects sexual-violence at its roots.

How do we remove stigma from sexual identities?

- We have to change their affective meaning, the basic gut reaction we have towards things.
- If we learn that sexual identities are positive, we feel no shame and we are unlikely to associate violent behavior with sexual identities.
- We learn meaning though agents of socialization. This is interaction with peers, parents, in school or church. \(\Rightarrow\) sex education

One of the problems in implementing this remedy is that people in responsible positions are “culturally challenged.” They, themselves are likely to stigmatize highly sexual-erotic identities and hereby legitimate their persecution.
Can Sex Education achieve a Destigmatization of Sexual Identities?

Demonstrating and discussing sexual identities that are relevant to our youth in the classroom will certainly contribute to the reduction of stigma associated with these identities.

Sex education, however, stands in the context of the local culture that
a) defines limitations and possibilities of sex education
b) extends and supports concepts that are learned in sex education

The limits can be seen exemplified in the change of sex education literature that I briefly discussed cross-culturally.
The support of shame can be demonstrated by artwork that is displayed to please the public.
Unlike avant-garde arts displayed in museums, public bronze statutes and billboard advertising are reflections of local culture.
If time permits:

**Some other indications of Shame**

**Sex Education Literature**

Shame about sexuality is reflected in sex education literature available to kids. I analyzed sexual education in Germany and the US in the last 30 years.

- What is conspicuous, especially in U.S. sex education literature, pictures used in the Seventies as illustrations were largely replaced by sketches in the Eighties.

Examples: The second printing of the Sex Atlas (Haberle, 1978), a standard work of U.S. sex education, still was highly illustrated. Will McBride’s (1974) explicit photographs with accompanying educational text by Fleischhauer-Hardt was produced in Germany and then (1975) translated into English. The English edition was bought by the progressive U.S. parent. While the distribution in Germany continued until a 7th edition in 1986 in Germany, the 1975 edition was the last one in North America. The early work of Will McBride, featured in “Show Me,” already provocative in the Seventies, was not published anymore in North America in the 1980s.

- Finally, in the Nineties, illustrations of the developing nude body vanished almost completely.

Moral panics and crusades in North America created a climate in which sexual abstinence and the systematic persecution of sexuality is the prescribed remedy for the moral integrity of the contemporary U.S. youth (White, 2000).
Shame of Nudity has other Consequences
This can be illustrated by an example here in Lubbock:

- A highly experienced urologist, who worked in a German research and treatment setting before he relocated to Lubbock, told me about cases of testicle cancer that he has never seen in such progressive states in Germany.
- He explains this phenomenon with the shame that prevents local males from consulting a physician even if the changes in the testicles should be obvious to the layperson.
- In the cases of young males he described, sexual constraint, the lack of education, and the consequent shame were deadly in their consequences.

Limitations of Change
Approaches intended to destigmatize sexual erotic-identities and hereby lower the rates of sexual violence raise the questions of feasibility of social change. Change has to happen in an area where cultural biases support stigmatization, and hereby create anger and hostility that are channeled into the lust for power that emerges from the process of social control. This is a social control process in which the stigmatization of sexual identities is an integral part of a self-perpetuating culture of violence.