

# Ritual Disrobement at Mardi Gras: Ceremonial Exchange and Moral Order\*

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## *Abstract*

*This article examines public nudity and gifts of beads in the French Quarter of New Orleans at Mardi Gras as components of a new ceremonial exchange ritual. The three ritual paradigms identified are based on the (1) social and spatial relationships between actors and the (2) provision of symbolic goods and services. The central focus is public disrobement, a ritual interpreted in terms of cultural codes involving market relations, gender, and hierarchy. What seems to be mere debauchery is an expression of moral commitment to an economic system in which conventional notions of gender and hierarchy are deeply embedded. Three main questions are addressed: How does ritual develop? Why does it take the general form it does? What accounts for variation in ritual performances? Results from an analysis of 1,205 interactions during the 1991 Mardi Gras festival show that (1) both males and females participate in ritual disrobement in exchange for ceremonial beads, (2) gender patterning in the character of the ritual is shaped strongly by spatial configuration, and (3) the ritual order of exchange is a function of the hierarchical symbolism inherent in the relation between balcony and street.*

Blanche Dubois: I'm not properly dressed.

Mitch: Well, that don't make no difference in the Quarter.

Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)

During the days preceding Lent nudity is a common sight in New Orleans. Mardi Gras is a prepenitential festival — hence, licentious. Of course, the intemperate reputation of the French Quarter is long-standing. But the extent of

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public nudity — the open display of breasts, buttocks, and genitals — is surprising to tourists and even locals who have not been there for the past few years. These displays consist of exhibitionistic “flashing,” that is, individual acts of disrobement. Such acts are deviant in most social contexts and are officially proscribed even during Mardi Gras, yet they remain common for both sexes. Intimate body parts — ordinarily concealed even from close friends — are unveiled for the acclaim of strangers, sometimes numbering in the hundreds. Our objective here is the explication of this “strangeness” as a ritual enactment of widespread cultural codes. A practice that seems to be mere debauchery is an expression of moral commitment to the market economy as well as conventional notions of gender and hierarchy.

Rituals embedded in ceremonial gatherings are central to social integration. Durkheim ([1912] 1965) argued that everyday life is different in important ways from sacred times — ritual helps to define the sacred realm and set it apart from the defiling elements of the profane. Goffman (1967) and Collins (1988) extended the study of ritual to everyday life, focusing on social practices that produce and maintain trust, but their work owes much to the anthropologists who first described ceremonial exchange. Boas (1966), Lévi-Strauss ([1949] 1969), Malinowski (1922), and Mauss ([1925] 1967) pioneered this concept in the context of premodern societies as a way of describing transactions that occur for symbolic and ultimately social ends rather than utilitarian value.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of these early studies for the development of subsequent theory is hard to overemphasize. Homans (1958), Gouldner (1960), and Blau (1964) used them to illustrate the point that exchange has symbolic and integrative roles. These sociologists were not interested in ceremonial exchange for its own sake, and most analyses of the detailed structure of such phenomena were the province of anthropology (Macintyre 1983). In the modern context, studies of ceremonial exchange have generally been limited to traditional gift-giving between kin and close friends (Caplow 1984). Yet the importance of relations with strangers (Lofland 1973) and the associated need for trust implies that *ceremonial exchange rituals between strangers* should be important in the modern world.<sup>2</sup> The Durkheimian roots of Wuthnow's (1987) theory of moral order imply that microrituals of trust are not functionally equivalent to the consecrated gatherings that characterize premodern peoples.

Where are the ceremonial exchange rituals in modern society? How do they develop and how are they organized? The analysis here addresses these questions for a new set of practices revolving around public disrobement and gifting during Mardi Gras in New Orleans. We show that these practices constitute a set of three closely related “ritual paradigms,” that is, performance rituals that express and reveal the moral order of contemporary society through the invocation of important cultural codes. By employing a combination of structural and dramaturgical arguments, the precise nature of ritual performance can be understood through the logic of the ceremonial exchange process.<sup>3</sup>

*Disrobement* refers to the exposure of intimate body parts in social actions that are (1) brief (leaving most of the body covered), (2) performed by non-professionals, (3) targeted to strangers. “Gifting” is the practice of throwing or handing objects — in this case, beads — without a reciprocal performance apart from shouting or begging. We identify three basic ritual forms, or paradigms,

from the social and spatial relationships between participants and the provision of symbolic goods and services. Briefly, the *command paradigm* consists of an elite group of riders, costumed as masked aristocrats, casting gifts downward into a crowd. In the *market paradigm* disrobement (exposing breasts, penis, or buttocks) occurs in exchange for beads. In the *veneration paradigm* women disrobe from balconies to the acclaim of street revelers. While the first two paradigms are consistent with initial observations and theoretical expectations, the evidence for a third paradigm requires a more involved inductive argument to be introduced in the third section of the article.

These paradigms are described in order of their historical emergence. Our central focus is the exchange of beads for public disrobement, the principal ritual action in the French Quarter. In disrobement, spatial relations interact with gender and the temporal ordering of exchange to form distinctive ritual patterns that express cultural codes involving market relations, gender, and hierarchy. Symbolic resources are assembled in ways that uniquely dramatize the most significant regions of consensus and dissensus constituting the contemporary moral order. The sacred character of ceremonial rituals is most clearly evident in public performances by women on balconies, while street exposures by both sexes reflect the routine transactions of commercial life.

To demonstrate this we address three fundamental problems in the interpretation of ritual: origin, structure, and variation. First, how did public nudity at Mardi Gras come into existence? Second, what are the forms of ceremonial exchange? Third, what accounts for observed differences in the ritual performance itself? The emergence of ritual paradigms that organize action and the relations between ritual elements are important to the argument. Deviant acts in a sacred context imply a requirement for legitimation that can be met through the use of elements from preexisting ritual practices, resulting in the innovation of new ritual paradigms. The persistence of a practice is affected by its consistency with widespread cultural codes. In the case of Mardi Gras, new forms of exchange emerged as an alternative to traditional gifting, establishing a new ritual order that is first and foremost a *symbolic expression of moral commitment to the market in the profane, everyday world*. We return to this interpretation in the discussion.

In the first section of the article the development of the command and market paradigms is examined in the social and historical context of pre-Lenten celebrations. This exploration of ritual origins is based on documents and interviews with New Orleans residents and merchants, festival participants, and police officers. In the second section, the general forms of gifting and disrobement in the French Quarter are described through a sample of videotaped behavior at Mardi Gras. In the third section, we account for observed differences in ritual actions by analyzing these performances in terms of gender, hierarchy, impression management, and ritual ordering.

### Ritual Origins: The Symbolic Universe of Mardi Gras

Cultural practices — whether routinized or ritualized — may be viewed as items in a tool kit or symbolic repertoire (Swidler 1986). The symbolic setting of

Mardi Gras contains few, if any, elements that are genuinely "new" in cross-cultural context. The difficulty is in distinguishing between the *diffusion* of practices from earlier Carnival celebrations and their *independent invention* — particularly where practices seem to be derived from such fundamental social processes as competition and identity work. In this section the spatiotemporal context of Mardi Gras is described in order to show how ritual paradigms have developed as distinctive interactions constructed from a combination of preexisting symbolic components.

Scholarship on American Carnival is sparse and none of the major sources discusses public nudity as an important element of Gulf Coast celebrations (De Caro & Ireland 1988; Edmonson 1956; Kinser 1990; Osborne & LaBorde 1981).<sup>4</sup> This omission is not surprising, and it is one reason for our belief that ritual disrobement, contrary to popular wisdom, is of comparatively recent origin. Our best estimate is that the practice was innovated in the mid 1970s and did not become widespread until the 1980s.<sup>5</sup>

The difficulty of discovering the actual origins of practices (as distinct from origin accounts) has its roots in the propensity to construct tradition in the immediate wake of innovation. Our ethnographic observations in the French Quarter began in 1983 shortly after the development of disrobement, yet when we began to ask systematically about recollections we were often told that the practice had "always existed" or "been around forever." While it may not literally be true that "no one knows" how and when it began, that disrobement became an instant tradition seems clear.

The question of origins is both historical, since individuals or groups must initiate the practice, and functional, since persisting practice has been subject to some process of diffusion or maintenance. The symbolic idiom of Mardi Gras has grown significantly larger over the past two centuries, beginning with simple dancing, masking, and parading at various times between Christmas and Lent. By the 1840s, a diverse array of semiotic sources had been plundered: the winter balls of white plantation society, Caribbean festivals, black adaptations of African customs, and the practices of Anglo-Americans migrating westward as well as Spanish and French subcultures in New Orleans.<sup>6</sup> Yet mid-nineteenth-century Mardi Gras had little continuity and minimal organization.

#### KREWES AND QUETES

New immigrant groups, a rapid increase in population, and continual racial tensions rendered it unlikely that an annual celebration involving general intemperance could persist without either high levels of conflict or an institutionalized structure.<sup>7</sup> The solution was the founding of associations called "krewes," permanently organized parading societies (Comus in 1857, followed by Rex in 1872).<sup>8</sup> Their membership was elite, white, male, and extremely secretive.

By the early twentieth century, the two main ingredients of contemporary Mardi Gras were in place. First, elite Carnival societies organized private balls and, more importantly, spectacular parades along the main avenues of the city in which krewe members masqueraded as royals and nobles. Second, the general populace engaged in street masquerading and parading, in particular

black "tribes" that adopted the costuming and symbolism of plains Indians and engaged in confrontations or mock warfare. The idea of the elite krewe was appealing but at the same time so pretentious that it was soon parodied by the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club, a black association that mocks the well-heeled white krewes by parading in blackface as an African tribe.

The commercial potential of the annual festival was not lost on the merchants of New Orleans. By 1900 approximately 100,000 tourists flocked to the city to see elaborate processions involving carriages (later floats), horsemen, flambeaux carriers, and the maskers who posed as king, queen, and court. Moreover, the riders were *throwing* objects down into the clamoring multitudes.

The practice of casting has multiple sources. Pelting at Mardi Gras dates to at least the 1840s, when youths cast flour, dirt, or confetti on pedestrians.<sup>9</sup> Positive *quetes* in which participants go in search of gifts such as money or food were well-established Carnival forms in Europe and the Caribbean by the nineteenth century (trick-or-treating at Halloween is a contemporary example).<sup>10</sup> Parade throwing may thus be viewed as a "reverse quete," since the processioners themselves provide the tokens rather than the audience. In the 1840s sugar-coated almonds were thrown from carriages; the knights of the Krewe of Rex were casting peanuts and candy in the 1880s.

In the past quarter century the number of krewes at Mardi Gras has proliferated. Truck floats, rigged with crepe over flatbeds, allowed increasing participation by middle-class New Orleanians who did not belong to the elite krewes.<sup>11</sup> The establishment of the popular "super-krewes" in the 1960s, such as Bacchus and Endymion, ushered in an era of larger floats and increasing volumes of "throws." Through these permutations the main ritual paradigm remained constant: *masked aristocrats, riding through thousands of people on raised platforms, casting beads, "doubloons," and other tokens into the crowd.* In this allegory, the upper class — the hereditary elite of an agrarian social order — offers gifts to the shouting, scrambling peasants. Since largesse is an expression of the command economies that characterize agrarian societies, this kind of exchange may be described as a *command paradigm*.<sup>12</sup>

The command paradigm contrasts with the "market" paradigm in which an action (public disrobement) is performed either before or after the receipt of beads. Moreover, while the command paradigm always involves a raised thrower, in the market paradigm the thrower may stand in any of several spatial relationships to the recipient. Yet the key difference between the two is the changed relationship between thrower and recipient of beads. A market in which recipients offer a specific service has developed out of an encounter where they were dependent on chance, or the arbitrary favor of the thrower.

#### THE FRENCH QUARTER

Until 1973 the parade routes along the wide boulevards of St. Charles Avenue and Canal Street included the French Quarter, the site of old New Orleans. But the quarter's eighteenth-century streets were too narrow for the increasing number of parade spectators and the increasing size of floats. By the mid 1970s, most central-city parades ended at or near the district but were forbidden to enter. The quarter is roughly laid out in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: The French Quarter



The French Quarter, marketed after the Civil War as the "City That Care Forgot" by trading on its reputation for Latin romance, is the principal tourist magnet of New Orleans. The Vieux Carré Commission established strict building requirements to preserve its appearance of elegant courtyards and picturesque wrought-iron balconies, limiting the size of buildings to three stories. The area was traditionally associated with expressions of overt sexuality and disinhibition. From the late nineteenth century until its official closure in 1917, Storyville operated as a licensed red-light district adjacent to the quarter.<sup>13</sup>

## THE LEGITIMATION OF NUILITY

The infamy and allure of Bourbon Street, which bisects the quarter lengthwise, rested on burlesque clubs that proliferated in the 1950s.<sup>14</sup> These establishments often operated with open doors so that passersby — even those who were not potential customers — could indulge in glimpses of the show, appropriately scandalized.<sup>15</sup> In the 1960s the quarter began to develop a second identity, serving as residence and cultural center for a large number of Southern gays in an atmosphere of permissiveness and relative acceptance. Public nudity was not uncommon in the commercialized context of bars and other businesses catering to the gay community.

In the burlesque clubs of Bourbon Street, routinized stripping and voyeurism are practiced continually by professional dancers and tourists. But mere nudity in the context of a paid performance is not "disrobement," defined above as exhibitionistic exposure by nonprofessionals. Any brief, alfresco display of private bodily regions to strangers is regarded as deviant in most other spatiotemporal contexts. Disrobement, as practiced at Mardi Gras, has virtually the same relational and behavioral topography as exhibitionism ("flashing"), a type of action that is regarded as criminal and thought to warrant punishment or therapy (Cox & Daitzmann 1980).<sup>16</sup> In spite of the general loosening of norms at Mardi Gras, disrobement requires legitimation.

The theoretical issue here is barely distinguishable from the practical one that, we believe, resulted in the creation of a ceremonial exchange ritual. *Since disrobement is a form of deviant action, its performance may be legitimized by the resourceful acquisition of a generalized medium, the currency of the symbolic universe.*<sup>17</sup> Such legitimation required a motivated action that was widely understood and accepted as self-explanatory (that is, self-legitimizing) by observers and coparticipants.

In the profane world, the accumulation of wealth is a basic motivation that requires no special accounting practices — in a market economy the desire for money is simply assumed as part of the natural attitude or "mundane reason" that undergirds our understanding of social reality (Pollner 1987). Role performances geared toward acquisition of this generalized medium of exchange are so universal that only extreme or illegitimate manifestations rise to the level of conscious awareness. In the sacred world of Carnival the central motivation and the need for associated performances remain constant. However, the motivation is transferred to the accumulation of a ritual currency that has special value for a limited time. The most significant tokens, or ritual objects, are long strings of plastic beads, which acquire worth exclusively during Mardi Gras.<sup>18</sup> Adornment by cascades of beads symbolizes successful participation in the ceremonial context.<sup>19</sup>

Disrobement, as we show in the next section, does not occur randomly, as a function of simple inebriation or moral laxity, but rather as a set of structured variations on a *market paradigm*, the exchange of nudity for beads. This pattern constitutes an alternative ritual order during the Carnival season. We argue in the conclusion that it is first and foremost a symbolic expression of moral commitment to the market in the profane, everyday world.

A ritualized linkage between long beads and nudity was established no earlier than the mid 1970s and spread so rapidly that there is no firm evidence of a unique origin. Most likely it was innovated many times in the space of two or three festivals as a result of three interdependent factors: (1) the banning of parades in the French Quarter; (2) a dramatic increase in the quantity and quality of tokens thrown from floats, deflating the value of short strings of beads while introducing variation in length and quality; and (3) innovative exhibitionism.

Although there is no reason to doubt that sporadic exhibitionism had occurred in the quarter much earlier — particularly during the late 1960s<sup>20</sup> — two accounts of origin are of particular significance. First, the “straight” tourist promenade of Bourbon Street ends where gay clubs predominate, beginning with the 800 block (Figure 2). In the early to mid 1970s, gay revelers began the practice of “weenie wagging” near this intersection, briefly draping the penis over a balcony railing or displaying it on the street. This was generally viewed as an expression of sexual freedom — and for the closeted audience, perhaps a taunting advertisement. But it did not involve exchange, apart from the expected shock of heterosexual tourists. This behavior persists but is far overshadowed by its successor, ritual disrobement.

The second proximate source was an annual gathering at a second-story apartment on Royal Street. Royal Street is filled with galleries and antique stores. It is never as crowded as Bourbon Street, with its burlesque clubs, bars, and restaurants. Many in the Royal Street group were practicing nudists and few paid any attention to the various states of undress indoors. At the 1975 festival, in an attempt to prolong the interaction with the crowd beneath the balcony, several members of the group exposed themselves and solicited actions from the group below:

You know, once you've done it, it's over so fast . . . it's like “that was no fun.” So maybe, just the idea of teasing these people . . . let's see how many people we can get here in exchange for how many people can you get down there . . . and just kinda stretch it out as long as you can.

Women were prominent in the group. One female artist designed a sign with the bold letters “SHOW YOUR PENIS” and stood holding it on the balcony. At her urging a costumed male friend stood on the street below, enticing male pedestrians with an offer: in exchange for compliance, the woman would display her breasts.<sup>21</sup> Other members of the group joined in:

It's always better if someone else does it. You don't wanna be the only one. . . . Of course, I would exchange for men. You know, I would wanna see a man's.

It always took a little egging from R.A. He always went downstairs in those days. Now he doesn't have to.

Sometimes a reciprocal exchange of nudity would be negotiated. In other cases, beads were exchanged for nudity:

For us it wasn't a big deal. We always thought we were giving them a big thrill. . . . One time I got one of these *huge* enameled Pete Fountain doubloons in exchange for a look. It was always a bargain thing. What are you going to give me if?

The beads were just part of the enticement. If you had been to the parades and the parades were skimpy and you didn't get your beads.

Not long afterward, a second sign was displayed: "SHOW YOUR TITS," soon to be commercialized on t-shirts, buttons, and a variety of French Quarter paraphernalia. By the late 1970s, it had become a chant and a slogan. Nudists at these early events described their innovation as a public imitation of the early childhood game ("you show me yours and I'll show mine") or luring the bystanders for a moment into an alternative behavioral code:

How neat it was: the idea that you could ask somebody to do something so foreign to 'em — or as far as you know. This beautiful forty-ish-year-old woman . . . grayish hair, with her husband. [We said] "Show your tits — we'll throw you some beads." Everybody's there and stuff. And she wants to and looks at her husband and [he says] "go ahead." And then she has to fiddle with her, ah, sweater thing — cause [at] some Mardi Gras it's cool — and lift up her bra and do this. And just prouder 'n hell to break through this barrier. [Laughs.] And then we bombarded her with beads and stuff. And then they walk off.

In sum, gay flashing, while clearly disrobement, was widely observed but not generally adopted. More important is that the nudist's bargain of a reciprocal exhibitionistic exchange was not adopted, while the exchange of beads for nudity diffused immediately. The 1991 tapes described below contain not a single instance of reciprocal nudity, either same-sex or cross-sex. In the next section we provide a more systematic description of the ritual behaviors that became common in the 1980s.

## Ceremonial Exchange

### INTERACTIONAL BOUNDARIES

Both qualitative and quantitative observations were made during the years 1983 through 1996.<sup>22</sup> Since the main focus of the present analysis is the structural relation among specific types of action and not the backgrounds or individual motivations of performers, we sought a spatiotemporally defined field of interaction. The primary festival celebrations, incorporating most of the major parades and tourist travel, encompass the pre-Lenten interval from Saturday through Fat Tuesday.<sup>23</sup> This four-day period defined our main temporal boundary.

Pedestrian traffic is heaviest through the commercial south and west of the French Quarter. Revelers meander along Bourbon, Royal, Chartres, and Decatur before and after the parades. They pass through Jackson Square, its cathedral and park, and along the Mississippi River (see Figure 1). The west end of Bourbon Street is closed to vehicular traffic and this pedestrian mall becomes the principal locus of activity. Each block of Bourbon Street acquires a character based on (1) the number and distribution of businesses (e.g., bars, restaurants, souvenir shops, burlesque clubs); (2) the presence or absence of a hotel (there are three); and (3) its location relative to pedestrian traffic flow. For the

performance of ritual behavior, the number and distribution of balconies is equally critical.<sup>24</sup>

Strolling down Bourbon, especially at the slow pace required by even moderate numbers on this narrow street, it is easy to get the sense of a lengthy expanse of hotels and bars. Noise levels are high, ranging from 80 dB during the day (84 dB peak) to 85 dB after dark (90 dB peak).<sup>25</sup> The smell is acrid except near the sidewalk entrance of restaurants where the scent of Creole food overshadows the beer and Hurricanes being consumed, spilled, and crushed under foot. An apparently limitless throng of people appears both above, on balconies, and below, on the street. During the daytime hours, the crowd is dominated by people in their twenties and thirties, casually dressed, in groups of two or three, with relatively few children. Our best estimate is that about one-quarter of the participants are from Louisiana.<sup>26</sup>

The main crowds and interactions are actually located along five short blocks. This area determined the boundaries for the videotaped data used in the following analysis.<sup>27</sup> The first two blocks northeast of Canal Street are relatively inactive, occupied by restaurants and stores. The buildings here possess few balconies. The gay district begins at St. Ann Street, at the east end of two half blocks that link Bourbon Street to Jackson Square through St. Louis Cathedral. Our spatial boundaries are defined by the range from the third through seventh blocks, including 73% (106/146) of all commercial establishments along Bourbon Street.

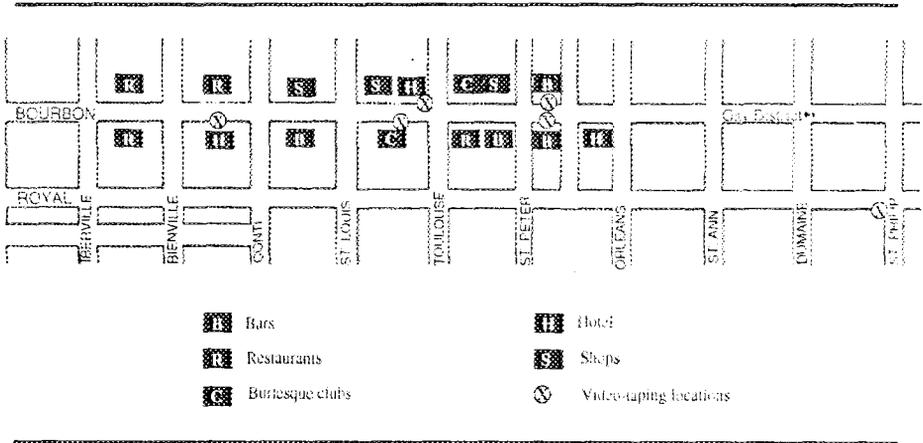
#### SITE SELECTION

We selected camera locations at the beginning, middle, and end of this stretch in the 300, 500, and 700 blocks (Figure 2). These sites represent several alternative sociospatial configurations including both street-to-street and balcony-to-street interactions. We placed cameras on both balconies and streets during the day and on the balconies at night.<sup>28</sup> In addition, one site in the 900 block of Royal Street was employed for comparative purposes. This area is uncrowded and consists of facing residences where small private gatherings participate in the command paradigm on the outskirts of the main tourist center.

In all we used twenty-two videotapes to record approximately 40 hours of crowd interaction, of which 36 hours, 45 minutes, were usable for coding and analysis.<sup>29</sup> For the main Bourbon Street sites we filmed at least five times in each location. Each site was filmed on each of the four days with one exception.<sup>30</sup> The Royal Street location was substituted for the 700 block of Bourbon on Mardi Gras day.

What effects did the visible presence of a videocamera have on the behaviors under investigation? Our subjects were not volunteers, nor indeed were they aware of being objects of sociological interest. Cameras, both still and video, are so abundant in the quarter during this period that an unrecorded instance of public nudity is rare.<sup>31</sup> With recording devices so conspicuous, the behavior of participants must take their presence into account. Reproduction and preservation of behavior must be viewed as an inherent part of modern festival interaction. We are not aware of any instances in which the presence of our cameras discouraged participation.<sup>32</sup>

FIGURE 2: Detail of Bourbon and Royal Streets, Showing Dominant Businesses and Data Collection Locations



## CODING

Interactive coding is problematic because both the variables and the units of analysis are subject to construction by the investigator. The objective of a comprehensive inventory of forms of action must be balanced against the fact that hundreds of thousands of individual behaviors and social interactions are observable in even a few hours of videotaped crowd behavior. Our present focus on interaction rituals is restricted, but even our expectation that public nudity and observable exchanges would be a relatively unambiguous form of social action was quickly dispelled. Hence, the tapes were coded twice, the first time for initial counts of action types and simple structural variables. This preliminary analysis resulted in the adoption of the following *general* criteria for inclusion of an action:

- (1) Distinctive behavioral performance involving forms of disrobement.<sup>33</sup>
- (2) Refusal to perform as indicated by a shake of the head, an arm gesture, or a clear "No."<sup>34</sup>
- (3) Valuables received without a performance.<sup>35</sup>

The second pass through the data allowed us to confirm actions using a conservative approach to uncertain actions and code three dozen variables pertaining to such factors as location, behavior, and appearance.<sup>36</sup>

*Structure:* Camera location; day (Saturday through Tuesday); time of day (five-minute intervals); tape time (five second intervals); location of target<sup>37</sup> (balcony or street); and audience.

*Status:* Sex; age; race of person(s) targeted.

*Group:* Size of group targeted; number of men and women; size, race, and sex composition of audience,<sup>38</sup> crowd density on the street.

*Behavior:* Type of action; active solicitation or negotiation; duration of performance; presence of simultaneous performances; chanting; circling; beads or other valuables thrown before and after performance; redistribution of tokens; crowd reaction.

*Appearance:* Target wears long beads, costume, or provocative clothing.

## Results

We first confirm the existential proposition that disrobement behavior occurs often enough to merit serious interest. Table 1 presents the distribution of three types of action for the Bourbon and Royal locations. Three things are important to note. First, disrobement is quite localized. Even as close to the central area as the 900 block of Royal, public nudity is rarely observed, though the practice of throwing from balconies is common.<sup>39</sup> Second, refusals to disrobe are extremely rare. Almost half these refusals occur on the first day of filming; the ratio of disrobements to refusals for the last three days is 14 to 1. We examine this low rate of refusals in the next section.

Third, public exposure is extremely common on Bourbon Street during Mardi Gras.<sup>40</sup> In rounded figures, 30 hours of videotaping yielded 500 episodes of disrobement. Including instances that are merely "probable," the number of episodes is closer to 700, a rate of more than 23 episodes per hour for the three locations, or more than once every three minutes.<sup>41</sup>

## EXCHANGE

In a contemporary American context, such a high rate of public exhibitionism over a sequence of days is unparalleled and clearly requires explanation. We believe that were it not for the development of a spatiotemporally specific symbolic interaction, made possible by the availability of a figurative currency and the innovation of a formal pattern, such deviance would be much less prevalent — though of course there is no way of demonstrating this empirically. In the sacred festival context, disrobement transcends conventional perceptions of exhibitionism by occurring as the central component of a ceremonial exchange ritual whose driving mechanism is the competition for wealth and its public display.

The idea of a market paradigm entails that *ritual legitimation of deviance is accomplished through performances that result in acquisition and accumulation of currency that is worthless outside but valuable within the symbolic universe.* Specifically, disrobement should occur in connection with the receipt of ceremonial currency and refusal should occur in its absence.

Table 2 shows that the association between performance and the receipt of beads is powerful on Bourbon Street.<sup>42</sup> Seventy percent of disrobements were accompanied by throws of beads while refusals to disrobe were *never* associated with the receipt of beads.<sup>43</sup> Put differently, the odds of receiving beads for disrobement are roughly 2.3 to 1. There are *no* odds on receiving beads for refusing because it did not occur in our sample of videotaped interactions.

TABLE 1: Type of Action by Street Location<sup>a</sup>

	Bourbon Street	Royal Street
Disrobement	55.4 (504)	4.7 (14)
Refusal	6.0 (55)	0 (0)
Beads without disrobement	38.6 (351)	95.3 (281)
Total	100% (910)	100% (295)
$\chi^2$	287.2	
Degrees of freedom	2	

<sup>a</sup>  $p < .0001$

It might be argued that beads are obtainable without disrobement and therefore disrobement is unnecessary to accumulate wealth. Many people, to be sure, acquire tokens over the course of these four days without engaging in public nudity, as Table 1 indicates.<sup>44</sup>

There are two main responses to this observation, based on the competition for wealth and the existence of these rival ritual paradigms. Of the thousands of revelers who strolled down Bourbon Street during thirty-six hours of videotaping, only 351 received long beads without disrobing. Although we cannot precisely estimate the probability because a count of specific participants is impossible, disrobement increases the chances of receiving beads by at least an order of magnitude. If each participant were treated as a case, the substantial difficulty of acquiring beads without disrobement would be obvious.<sup>45</sup> In this context, it is not impossible to acquire a long string of beads, but no significant accumulation of symbolic wealth is likely unless participants (1) are children,<sup>46</sup> (2) purchase beads in shops, or (3) disrobe.

The ritual form practiced for the past century is associated with begging by spectators along parade routes and gifting by the riders above. The development of the new pattern, exchanging beads for disrobement, marks a crucial difference. This difference is captured in the idea of a market paradigm. Here *participants gain control over the conditions of the exchange, making possible the exercise of personal choice in negotiated transactions.* Although long beads constitute a general symbolic currency, variation in length, shape, composition, and color creates the opportunity for the development of an additional value.<sup>47</sup> Not simply quantity, but also diversity of wealth may be displayed.

Symbolic beggars have a very low likelihood of receipt and cannot influence when and what kind of tokens are thrown.<sup>48</sup> There are only two instances in which refusers attempt to choose specific strings of beads and only five in which nonperformers receive beads after attempting to select them.<sup>49</sup> Nonperformers who receive beads select them in fewer than 1% of cases, while performers (visibly) select their tokens better than 16% of the time. These nonperformers are more than three times as likely as performers to be engaged

TABLE 2: Disrobement and Refusal by Receipt of Beads<sup>a</sup>

	Disrobement	Refusal
Target received beads	70% (341)	0% (0)
N	488	55
$\chi^2$	103.3	
Degrees of freedom	1	

<sup>a</sup>  $p < .0001$

in "soliciting" with outstretched arms or by shouting. In the absence of performance, the traditional command paradigm obtains: largesse in response to pleading or simple nonselective throwing.

### Variations in Ritual Performance: Gender and Hierarchy

To this point the origin and structure of two ritual paradigms have been described in general terms. Over the course of the study we began to note a form of disrobement that did not fit either command or market paradigms because no exchange of beads is involved. In this section we examine important variations in the ritual that lead to the identification of a *reverence paradigm* that expresses the moral codes of gender rather than economic structure. The argument proceeds from an examination of differences in participation by gender to the effects of spatial configuration on action. Next, the nature of refusal and its relationship to impression management is considered, concluding with a discussion of the symbolic power of elevation.

#### MEN AND WOMEN

Table 3 shows the breakdown of action types by gender on Bourbon Street. Most disrobements are by women, but men are significantly involved as well ( $N = 87$ ).<sup>50</sup>

There are also gender differences in *what* is exposed. Genitalia of both sexes are displayed, but there is more variation in male disrobement. Women display breasts almost exclusively, while men expose both genitals and buttocks.<sup>51</sup>

The greater variation among men results from the fact that "mooning," while not the standard ritual form, is usually sufficient to merit a throw of beads.<sup>52</sup> Men are sometimes reluctant to display genitalia and buttocks are a substitute. This may be due to (1) the association of penis exposure with "deviant" exhibitionism as contrasted with the obscene playfulness of mooning, and (2) cultural sensitivity regarding genital size.

Men are not only less likely to disrobe than women. They are substantially more likely to receive beads *without* disrobing than women (Table 3). Since men

TABLE 3: Type of Action by Gender<sup>a</sup>

	Men	Women
Disrobement	28.7 (87)	70.0 (417)
Refusal	.1 (3)	8.6 (52)
Beads without disrobement	70.3 (213)	22.5 (136)
Total	100% (303)	100% (605)
$\chi^2$	198.2	
Degrees of freedom	2	

<sup>a</sup>  $p < .0001$

account for only half as many total (coded) actions as women, the difference is quite large: 70% of male actions involved the unilateral receipt of beads, as compared with 22% of all female actions. Why should this be the case?

#### STREET GIFTING AND THE COMMAND PARADIGM

The explanation is largely compositional. Men are more likely to receive beads because there are more men than women on the street.<sup>53</sup> Street and balcony are not interchangeable positions with respect to their ceremonial significance. Like riders on the grand floats of St. Charles Avenue, balcony revelers occupy a privileged position. In the command paradigm, wealth is symbolically distributed to the masses via the gratuities of a numerically small elite. A unilateral transfer of wealth expresses inequality in the possession of currency, of course, but gifting itself is only half the ritual. Occupancy of high social position is principally symbolized by elevation, such that the distribution of gifts from higher to lower *social* positions occurs from higher to lower *physical* positions (Schwartz 1981). The spatial configuration that characterized the development of throwing from floats at parades expressed both the hierarchy of class relations and its associated resource differentials.

We suggested above that the existence of gifting alongside the exchange of beads for disrobement shows that the market paradigm has not supplanted the command paradigm in the French Quarter but coexists with the new form. However, this would be true only under the restrictive condition that unilateral transfers of currency are typically "downward," from higher to lower. That is, reception without performance should be characterized by balcony throwers and street targets rather than street to balcony or same-level exchanges (street to street, balcony to balcony). Balcony receptions represent a "ritual inversion" and are not meaningful within the command paradigm. Gifts that are not higher in origin and lower in reception fail to express the class hierarchy, though they could symbolize other sorts of social relations.

In fact, for the vast majority of gifts, long beads are thrown to targets on the street from the balconies above. The cross-classification of position of target by position of primary audience shows that in 88% of all cases,<sup>54</sup> throwers on balconies give to catchers on the street. Street-to-street exchange occurs in fewer than 4% of all cases, and a balcony-to-balcony transfer was evident only once in this sample. The "upward" (street-to-balcony) configuration occurs less than a dozen times (3.1%) on Bourbon Street. Clearly, the spatial location of participants makes a difference. It is exceedingly rare, in any event, for balconies to receive tokens as gifts. Why, after all, should the masses provide gifts to the elite? When participants on balconies receive beads, it is nearly always in exchange for performance.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to this normative spatial relationship, we noticed two unexpected temporal features of the practice. (1) Gifting occurs more often during the daytime (before 6 P.M.) than at night by odds of nearly 4 to 1. (2) It occurs frequently in "clusters" of activity: temporally related sequences in which many strings of long beads are thrown consecutively without intervening performances.<sup>56</sup> In these cases, which account for approximately half of all gifts, street participants orient collectively to an "active" balcony, seeking attention by yelling and gesturing with outstretched hands, exactly as the crowds along parade routes clamor for notice by the riders. Balcony throwing may either be directed (often preceded by pointing to a person) or simply nonselective downward casting.<sup>57</sup> Since gifting occurs downward, any random distribution of recipients favors men by virtue of their greater number.<sup>58</sup>

#### GENDER AND HIERARCHY

In the late 1980s we began to suspect that two paradigms no longer accurately described the spectrum of ritual action. Spatial configuration is the key to understanding gender differences in participation and the emergence of a third ritual form. Disrobement by women began to acquire a different character, a character that is evident from gender differences in elevated action, impression management, and ritual ordering.

We estimated that the male/female ratio on the balcony is 1.68.<sup>59</sup> Even so, it is accurate to say that while the street is the domain of men, balconies are the domain of women. Table 4 shows the percentage of all actions occurring in elevated and unelevated positions in which women are the main participants.

The results show clearly that gender differences are especially large with respect to action at specific locations. Women account for almost all three types of elevated action including most of the gifts, all the (few) refusals, and *more than 98% of all disrobement*. Males exposed themselves from balconies in only three cases.

With respect to street-directed action, women still account for most of the refusals but their share of gifts drops by half. Men, as we have seen, are more likely to receive beads unilaterally. The proportion of female disrobements falls to just under .75, indicating that although (1) women still dominate disrobement (particularly in view of the lower prevalence of women on the street), (2) virtually all male disrobement occurs on the street. Ignoring the two types of action that occur infrequently, the behavior of targets may be summarized as

TABLE 4: Gender Composition of Action Type and Location<sup>a</sup>

	Street Percent Female	Balcony Percent Female
Disrobement	74.3% (328)	98.3 (176)
Refusal	94.2 (52)	100 (3)
Beads without disrobement	38.0 (337)	66.7 (12)
Totals	(717)	(191)

<sup>a</sup> Cell values represent percent of action involving female targets and total number of cases. The generalized Cochran-Mantel-Haenszel statistic for the table is 77.074 ( $df = 2$ ,  $p < .0001$ ), indicating that the association between action type and location depends on gender.

follows: male involvement is limited to disrobement or receipt of gifts on the street, while female involvement includes disrobement in both locations as well as refusal or receipt on the street.

#### REFUSAL

The pattern of refusal offers insight into the nature of these extraordinary differences and the symbolic significance of elevation. First, we have observed that almost half of all refusals occur on the first day, which suggests some process of change or ritual socialization. Second, though most of the refusals are by women, this generally happens on the street during the day. Third, participants on balconies refused in only three cases. It seems evident that refusals in general are uncommon, but refusals by women on balconies are extremely rare.<sup>60</sup>

With respect to disrobement, as against simple throwing, refusal is not equivalent to nonparticipation. Everyone who passes down Bourbon Street — including chefs, shopkeepers, and residents — is a potential recipient of throws.<sup>61</sup> Every tourist on a leisurely stroll, equipped with a drink, a camera, and a string of beads, is a potential target and willing voyeur.<sup>62</sup> The majority of people do not engage in exhibitionistic exposure. They form part of the audience, perhaps soliciting exposure or even throwing beads, but do not publicly disrobe. They are nonparticipants, but they do not refuse, which involves solicitation and visible rejection.

So in spite of its rarity, the pattern of refusal does not mean that virtually anyone will disrobe on Bourbon Street during Mardi Gras. If people were randomly entreated, refusals would be numerous.<sup>63</sup> Rather, the low rate of refusal suggests that *participants correctly identify potential targets and neither solicit nor throw to those who are unlikely to disrobe.*<sup>64</sup>

"Ritual identification" is the process of specifying in advance those who are likely to disrobe. Although it is permissible (nonsanctionable) to solicit virtually anyone to uncliothe, those without currency do not solicit except under special

conditions, and those with beads to dispose of are not interested in wasting time on nonparticipants. Yet since the majority of exchange occurs *between* levels, verbal communication is often limited to collective chanting of the kind innovated above in the script for the nudist's bargain.<sup>65</sup>

How, then, is ritual identification accomplished? Impressions by potential performers are often managed under constraints imposed by distance and visibility. Readily observable cues of dress and accoutrements together with gestures are used as indicators of one's status with respect to disrobement ritual. For women or men, alluring or revealing clothes are an important feature promoting identification.<sup>66</sup>

Yet people can — and do — change their minds about disrobement.<sup>67</sup> Deviant action is sometimes hard to imagine out of context. Such participants have no preplanned means of indicating their entry into the market. In these cases, status is demonstrated through the "socio-logic" of the ritual itself. The most important and attended sign of ritual participation is adornment with long beads. The argument that beads are impossible to accumulate in the absence of disrobement is nothing more than the commonsense of participants. Therefore, ornamentation with beads *functions as an indicator of willingness to disrobe*.<sup>68</sup>

Beads are a generalized medium of exchange that can themselves be displayed, unlike paper currency. Their length, heft, coloration, segmentation, and motility make them appealing objects of acquisition. Heaped around the neck, they please the visual, tactile, and auditory senses. The duality of exchange and display, acting as both currency and costumery, allows beads to perform their secondary function. More than a simple display of wealth, as a sign of successful participation, embellishment becomes an act of transformation into a ritual object. The behavior of onlookers operates in terms of a labeling principle: the best indicator of future deviance is past action — as indicated by a highly visible and valued marker.

#### ELEVATION AND FETISHISM

The ritual power of female elevation is symbolized in embellishment but is most evident in its consequences for the exchange process. The relationship of positioning with exchange and the question of exchange order are considered as evidence for a third ritual form, which may be called a *veneration* paradigm.

Refusals from balconies are rare because ascendance promotes a metamorphosis of identity. Accompanied by markers of appearance and gesture, women may be transformed into ritual objects. The highest scores on our indicator of impression management (as well as the greatest volume of beads) are observed for balcony performers and for females. So it might seem, from the low rate of refusal and the high level of adornment, that women on balconies would be the most active participants in the competition for wealth.

And yet they are not. Owing to the continuing significance of gender differences in sexuality, women sometimes adopt the identity of ritual objects who *perform for the veneration of the crowd*. We have seen that when participants on balconies receive beads, it is nearly always in exchange for performance, since command throwing is directed downward. But to say that beads are thrown to balconies only in exchange for performances does not imply that

balcony participants disrobe only for beads. The exchange of tokens for disrobement depends on hierarchical positioning as well.

Table 5 is restricted to disrobements on Bourbon Street. Although 70% of all exposures involve an exchange of beads, the likelihood is much lower on the balcony than the street. While 82% of street disrobements are associated with throws, less than half the balcony targets receive beads for a particular action. "Pure performance" from balconies is about as common as the exchange of beads for nudity.

The association of reciprocity and position is important. Because of the high visibility of balcony participants, disrobement is more "public" than on the street. At night, the audience may number in the hundreds and the density of the crowd is sometimes so high no movement along the street is possible. A large proportion of the celebrants are men,<sup>69</sup> inebriated from street sales of beer and liquor, laughing and shouting, necks craned as their attention is riveted on the balconies above.<sup>70</sup> Women on balconies often disrobe for adulation rather than beads.

That balcony participants should be able to require reciprocity, if they so choose, is extremely likely on theoretical (as well as observational) grounds. Balcony exposure is a ritual performance but also a collective good in the sense that no one on the street can be excluded. Although the individual incentive to provide such a good is small, the cost — a string of plastic beads — is both discrete and negligible. Someone in a large crowd of people should be willing to bear such a cost for a valued performance. When tokens are desired by women on balconies, they are more readily available than for street performers whose audience is small. The obligation of reciprocity will be fulfilled by one or more onlookers below. This availability, in addition to higher levels of adornment, means that the accumulation of symbolic currency itself is not the only factor governing balcony disrobement.

#### RITUAL ORDERING

The issue of obligation may be raised in connection with ritual identification to introduce what constitutes the best evidence of ritual power. Often the *temporal relation between actions* has ritual meaning, as well it should, since the order in which actions occur is a fundamental property expressing power and deference in social relations.

Exchange between strangers depends on trust. In exchanges without formal control mechanisms, an initiating actor must trust a receiving actor to carry out the latter half of a bargain. In the ceremonial exchange ritual considered here, actors know very well what is expected of them, but two problems confront potential exchange partners. First, inhibitions on this form of deviance remain strong outside Mardi Gras. Potential performers may decide against disrobement. Second, beads are physical currency. Once thrown, they are rarely returned. We expected, based on theoretical grounds and our own daytime observations, that performances would occur *before* throwing.

Participants sometimes engage in actions wherein they disrobe without fully unclothing. The most common form is for a man to raise his shirt, exposing his chest, or a woman might show brassiere instead of breasts. This permutation is

TABLE 5: Receipt of Beads by Location<sup>a</sup>

	Street	Balcony
Target received beads	82% (260)	47.3% (81)
N	317	171
$\chi^2$	63.4	
Degrees of freedom	1	

<sup>a</sup> Bourbon Street disrobements only.

$p < .0001$

a form of disrobement, of course, but it is not the traditional ritual. We counted 52 such actions by men and 28 by women. Such "mock" disrobement is more common than refusal, but much less common than disrobement. Since the form is not the preferred exhibition (yet is modeled on the ritual), we thought it would be associated with the exchange of beads, but less often than disrobement proper. Indeed, it is sufficiently similar to disrobement that beads are sometimes thrown, but in fewer than 14% of cases (compared with about 70% of actual disrobements).

The rationale for an examination of this form is the light it sheds on the meaning of ritual ordering. In short, *throwing that precedes mock performances represents ritual misidentification or renegeing*. Onlookers who present tokens before a performance have exhibited trust that is, either in actuality or intention, unwarranted by the behavior it anticipates. So the *timing* of exchange in relation to the behavior of onlookers and performers should indicate this variance in the ritual pattern (Table 6).

Clearly, the audience of potential throwers does not often commission actions that fail to transpire. Mock performances are only once preceded by beads.<sup>71</sup> This is not because, as we were led to expect by the trust argument, performances always precede the tokens that reward them. In fact, the reverse occurs about a tenth of the time in traditional disrobement.

Since targets of trusting throws nearly always disrobe, one might argue that onlookers are simply precise in their identifications. Shall we conclude that the crowd is never deceived by performers who are unwilling to meet their ritual obligations? In one sense this is the case, as Table 6 shows, but this is true for a specific reason.

*The ritual ordering must reflect the hierarchical symbolism that inheres in the relation between balcony and street.* The spatial configuration manifests a principle of vertical classification in which "social inferiority is conceived as being lower, social superiority as higher" (Schwartz 1981:5).<sup>72</sup> Although women are generally disadvantaged, the archetype of vertical opposition is employed in a status reversal, elevating those who are socially inferior to a position of symbolic power. Women on balconies undergo a figurative transformation of identity

TABLE 6: Order of Exchange by Type of Disrobement<sup>a</sup>

	Mock Disrobement	Traditional Disrobement
Beads received before performance	1.2% (1)	8.9% (44)
N	80	497
$\chi^2$	5.54	
Degrees of freedom	1	

<sup>a</sup>  $p = .019$

wherein breasts become objects of male fetishism.<sup>73</sup> Elevation and impression management combine to focus attention on the potential for exposure by specific actors, while the symbolic superiority of the balcony (as well as the availability of beads from the audience) endows them with bargaining leverage. A consensus regarding disrobement either develops or — in a small number of cases — is rejected, generally within a period of two minutes.<sup>74</sup> Ordering in the exchange of beads for nudity indicates this symbolic power.

Table 7 shows that elevation is strongly related to ritual ordering. For disrobements on Bourbon Street that are accompanied by beads, fewer than 3% of street targets received beads beforehand, while 45.7% of balcony targets received beads before disrobing. Street disrobements are much more likely to be followed by beads than balcony disrobements.

The timing of exchange, therefore, is *massively affected by the location of the performer*. Street disrobement results in a symbolic fee for service. The performer is never permitted the opportunity to defer or default because tokens almost always follow the performance. Balcony performers, by contrast, control the conditions of exchange, determining both whether and when it occurs. Street onlookers throw before performances when they have no choice but to do so (as indicated by gestures), and balcony performers fulfill their ritual responsibilities once tokens have been provided.<sup>75</sup>

The results of the bivariate analysis in this section were confirmed by a multivariate (loglinear) model of disrobement that incorporated time, location, appearance, gender, and exchange order (see Appendix). A model with eight two-factor associations fits the data quite well ( $p = .92$ ), leaving out the association of order with appearance and order with gender. The implication is that controlling for the effects of location and time of day, gender is unrelated to the likelihood of receiving beads before a performance. Women receive beads first only when they are on balconies at night.

The sacred character of the public performance is expressed in forms of action and veneration that do not apply to street exposures. Balcony performers rarely refuse and rarely mock the ritual. They frequently demonstrate *noblesse oblige* by requiring only the fetishism of street masses. But they are in explicit

TABLE 7: Order of Exchange by Location<sup>a</sup>

	Street	Balcony
Beads received before performance	2.7% (7)	45.7% (37)
N	258	81

<sup>a</sup> Disrobements on Bourbon Street involving receipt of beads.

control. Not only may women on balconies require homage before the event, they select their preferred tokens more often, and are sometimes showered with beads afterward that are too numerous to catch.<sup>76</sup> Balcony disrobement is often accompanied by teasing from performers and cheers and chanting by the audience. The duration of exposure, when it finally occurs, is longer, and the exhibition is punctuated by the light of flash cameras.

In the third paradigm, women on balconies are exhorted and venerated. Compliance is distinctly voluntary. Male partners often solicit beads or chants from the crowd, acting the role of procurer to a collectivity. Women are subjected to the commanding repetition of "show your tits," a rhythmic, determined, and sometimes thunderous challenge. A stationary core of idolaters orients toward a particular woman, pointing with outstretched arms in synchronization to a chant that grows progressively louder until transformed into cheers at the moment of disrobement. The words and behavior are aggressive, even belligerent, yet those on the balcony are unperturbed, for the balcony is a protected enclave. They may draw out the game of negotiation and flirtation until a dense crowd becomes crushing and emotional energy peaks.

## Discussion

These results show that ceremonial exchange, far from being limited to premodern societies, can emerge naturally from preexisting symbolic repertoires in the industrialized world. We argue that the practices surrounding public disrobement and gifting at Mardi Gras can best be understood as a group of related ritual paradigms organized in terms of markets, gender, and hierarchy. Our interpretation hinges on three points. (1) Ceremonial exchange is not simply unstructured hedonism but a ritualized enactment of the economic markets that characterize contemporary society. (2) Freedom of choice and negotiations over value are essential to ritual based on a market paradigm. (3) Variability in performance is important to the "multivocality" of ritual, expressing the diversity of contemporary gender relations.

## LEGITIMATION AND ACCUMULATION

For outsiders and first-time participants, nudity in the French Quarter during Mardi Gras seems like an extreme form of exhibitionism. How could disrobement diffuse so rapidly and become so popular in such a short period of time? Because a practice that appears to be simple decadence is a ritualized expression of fundamental social understandings.

In his classic exposition of the modern disjuncture between culture and capitalism, Bell (1976) argued that the 1950s witnessed the beginning of a shift in the basic American value pattern from achievement as "doing" to "consumption and display." By the 1970s — the same period during which disrobement began to occur — the transition to the "impulse quest as a mode of conduct" was complete, with sex the most important motive and the center of the new morality. The "contradiction," according to Bell, centers on the fact that when capitalism loses its initial work ethic, only hedonism remains as its justification — an anticognitive and anti-intellectual mode at odds with the functional rationality of the economic sphere.

But the primary ritual paradigm in the French Quarter is the *exchange of beads for disrobement*, involving a market in which both nudity and currency are available for acquisition through negotiated transactions. Participation in the symbolic universe requires either possession of the currency or willingness to disrobe, as the following episodes make clear.

(Sunday night) A woman stands on the street with a man, eyeing a long string of white "pearl" beads held by an elevated male. She engages him in gesture and conversation but steadfastly maintains he should throw the beads as a gift. After five minutes the transaction seems about to break off: "Sorry, I've got to save them," he says. She raises her shirt briefly and receives the beads.

(Tuesday afternoon) A man stands on the street facing away from two middle aged women, who disrobe next to him for another man. Realizing what has happened, he responds: "Hey, I missed that." A third woman, walking past at the time, tries to be helpful: "You just have to ask them. They'll do it for beads." He asks and the two women examine the beads around his neck for several seconds, observing "These are, well, they're not bad," and "These are really too small." Finally, they say: "No. We can't. Listen, you've got to go and get some better beads. Maybe we'll see you," proceeding down the street.

A general awareness of French Quarter exchange practices is common but does not substitute for experience. In the first case, a woman is convinced, reluctantly, that she will not receive the desired beads without exposure. In the second case an apparent novice receives explicit instruction on correct practice by three more knowledgeable participants, who stress the importance of long beads.

That hedonistic and rational elements should be combined in disrobement ritual is surprising only if one views markets and monetary transactions as neutral symbols. Quite the contrary, with its emphasis on choice, contingency, and social comparisons, market experiences are associated with emotional arousal.<sup>77</sup> The market is not simply a mechanism for the exchange of goods and services.

Wuthnow (1987) has argued that the market is a system to which individuals are morally committed, an integral aspect of both their basic values and their assumptions about reality. Market activities are an important form of public participation, permitting social actors to discharge moral obligations to society by exercising self-interested choice. One's behavior as a consumer is more than an instrumental economic calculation. It is a symbolic-expressive way of acting responsibly toward the larger society, fostering a sense of self-worth. The essence of the marketplace, imbued with moral significance, is the free exchange of goods and services for some generalized medium such as money. To participate in the market is to develop a sense of personal control in a "contingent response situation" (Lane 1991).

The importance of beads as a generalized medium of exchange seems clear: it requires no special socialization for revelers at Mardi Gras to appreciate the significance of the paradigm of beads for disrobement *once they accept that beads are the symbolic currency*. Lifetime participation in the market for consumer goods means that accumulation needs no further justification as a motivated action within the ritual system. In the French Quarter, nudity was sporadic and random before the connection between disrobement and beads allowed the accumulation of capital. Since disrobement is a form of deviance in most other contexts, it did not become common until its performance was legitimized by its linkage to symbolic wealth.

The importance of this linkage is indicated by the following: two available social forms — reciprocal nudity and masquerading — were not linked to disrobement, though either could have served such a legitimating role. We saw earlier that the "nudist's bargain" involving reciprocal and simultaneous display of nudity was innovated and rejected at precisely the same time as the market paradigm developed. This rejection is extremely important since there is no *prima facie* reason for it. But reciprocal nudity has no particular resonance. It does not invoke the same deep cultural meanings and does not connect with the value of accumulation as did the disrobement ritual that rapidly diffused.<sup>78</sup>

If sexual interactions involving biological or psychological motivations were fundamental, a ritual of reciprocal nudity would now be widespread at Mardi Gras. It is still possible for two individuals to disrobe together. How does such a transaction occur?

(Monday night) Two Hispanic women stand on a balcony, dangling long beads from the ironwork and shouting at two men passing on the street: "Show us your dick." One of the men lowers his pants, and the woman on the right throws him the beads. Immediately after catching them he looks up at the woman and shouts: "Show your tits." She raises her shirt and he throws the same pair of beads back to the balcony.

Such episodes are extremely rare: in the vast majority of cases a single exchange takes place. What is unusual about this case is that individuals engage in reciprocal but nonsimultaneous nudity mediated by beads, and the string of beads returns immediately *to its original owner*. Of course, there is no instrumental reason for this: the commitment is to the form of the ritual itself.

A second practice, historically associated with deviant action in many festival contexts, including Carnival, is masking. The covering of facial features serves an important symbolic role whether these features are wholly shielded or

simply partly concealed. A temporary, special, or sacred identity is symbolized by a mask, which disguises or alters the everyday identity. Since Mardi Gras is quintessentially a festival of masks, and since disrobement occurs in an urban setting with viewers who are granted a very public glimpse of the private, masking would seem an obvious way to maintain the boundary between a genuine "self" — one who is not lewd, abnormal, or perverted — and a social "actor" who temporarily plays the role of libertine, pimp, or whore.

We assumed at the outset that participants in disrobement would dramatize their deviant identity and cloak the self. This is not the case.<sup>79</sup> Those who disrobed *had no interest in concealing their identity*, either symbolically or in actuality. There is no need to conceal one's identity when one engages in the legitimate acquisition of beads during Mardi Gras.<sup>80</sup>

We can now directly address the question of whether disrobement is primarily (1) a strategy for the accumulation of wealth or (2) a form of hedonistic deviance that requires legitimation. The former stresses the large number of celebrants, the relative difficulty of success through begging, the desire for and display of symbolic currency. The latter stresses the publicity of aberrant action and the avoidance of the deviant label. Our account suggests that such a contrast is misleading: disrobement is a ritualized expression of moral commitment to the *combined* markets of performance and consumption. The exchange of beads for disrobement serves this function better than reciprocal nudity or masking. What seems an expression of hedonism is a calculated market (i.e., moral) choice to enter the symbolic economy.

The distinction between accumulation and legitimation is spurious in this context because it fails to recognize the duality of the market and the nature of market ritual as a paradigm with variations. Each is a partial account. If beads simply serve a legitimating function, then multiple disrobements would require only one legitimating throw, yet this is generally not the case. And sheer acquisitiveness does not explain the observed ritual ordering. Balcony displays are public performances that require homage or tokens, while street exposures reflect the routine transactions of commercial life. Street displays involve both men and women, and are more often accompanied by beads, not because there is any greater need for street celebrants to legitimate exhibitionism, but because the exchange process is accompanied by fewer social rewards. Often street transactions exhibit the degree of routinization associated with buying a soft drink from a street vendor.

Even the actions we describe as veneration developed subsequent to and retain strong links with the market paradigm of disrobement for beads.<sup>81</sup> Ritual action can symbolically resolve ambiguities or contradictions between aspects of social and cultural structure — in this case, between accumulation as a consequence of negotiated market transactions and the hedonistic behaviors of display and voyeurism. As long as the market and veneration paradigms operate together over the Mardi Gras period, disrobement is contextually situated as nondeviant — but only in highly restricted circumstances.

## MARKETS AND CHOICE

The command paradigm in which masked aristocrats gift beads to the masses below represented the dominant form of ceremonial exchange at Mardi Gras since the nineteenth century. Throwers sometimes targeted particular individuals, but most gifting involved random casting into a crowd of symbolic beggars. The receipt of tokens depended on favor or luck. As a new ritual order developed, random gifts of beads gave way to the specificity of a targeted relation where buyers and sellers negotiate the terms of a bargain. The difference between command and market paradigms is not mere nudity. As opposed to chance acquisition, the act of disrobement dramatizes the freedom of the marketplace through personal choice. Participation in the market is more than making an exchange. For both buyers and sellers it involves scanning the available choices, comparing them, often deciding not to enter a particular transaction.

Even the possession of beads and willingness to disrobe does not guarantee an exchange. The willingness to strike a bargain also depends on negotiations over value:

(Sunday afternoon) A woman on a balcony dangles a long string of beads for two men passing on the street, asking them to disrobe. One of the men says he is not interested in those long beads but something of higher quality. He asks her to disrobe instead. The woman examines the beads around his neck and responds that they aren't worth the trouble. The men continue to another balcony.

(Tuesday night) Two men approach a woman on the street, examining the beads around her neck. One singles out the longest strand of beads, which hangs nearly to her knees, and holds the end of it in his hand. The woman shakes her head: "No, you can't have these white ones. I'm saving them."

In the first encounter there is an expressed desire by both parties for both currency and display, yet no ritual action takes place. In the second, the price is too high. Sellers seek to obtain certain prices for their services, whereas consumers participate in the market just as surely by *refusing* certain offers as by accepting them.

If one function of ritual is to dramatize the moral order, then market rituals are inherently a special category. Traditional rituals are highly structured in terms of the precision and ordering of action. Indeed, they are often thought defective or in need of repetition if rules are violated. Rituals that express or articulate the market cannot involve absolute or mechanical rules since they must allow for negotiation and decision in a dramatic or formal context. This includes particularly the freedom to decide whether to participate.

## MULTIVOCALITY AND FORMS OF PERFORMANCE

In closing, we return to a traditional argument regarding ritual, that it is multivocal, simultaneously possessing a multiplicity of meanings (Turner 1969). Usually it is taken for granted that differences in the social characteristics of the audience are responsible for this.<sup>82</sup> These results have shown that an alternative source of multivocality is *variability in ritual performances* such as those docu-

mented here. Moreover, such variations are much more likely to occur in the context of market rituals than in other rites and protocols owing to the importance of choice. The sense of inevitability that contributes to familiarity, security, and faith in other sacred contexts destroys the characteristic that distinguishes the market as a social form. Market rituals are nonetheless effective in dramatizing social patterns other than the market itself, because their architecture is conducive to innovation (variation) and the diffusion of new forms.

But if choice is so important, how is it possible that such *patterned* variation occurs? The answer is that market relations are systematically interwoven with invidious social distinctions, among which gender, class, and ethnicity are the most prominent.<sup>83</sup> Exchange relations in contemporary society do not occur in an idealized free market setting but under conditions of unequal opportunity and discrimination. It is not surprising that disrobement rituals express these conditions through structural relations among elements. Differences in participation by gender and the striking role of hierarchy in the emergence of the veneration paradigm constitute a symbolic recapitulation of social distinctions. The most convincing evidence for this is the *reversal of ritual ordering that occurs according to the position of the person disrobing*. Elevation in space symbolizes elevation in status, increasing the bargaining power of the performer, who determines whether and when to require ritual offerings.<sup>84</sup>

If uncertainty in contemporary gender relations is formulated as a question, the ritual answer is as follows:

Women may enter the economic marketplace and the competition for wealth, but while they will be permitted a moderate level of aggressiveness toward men, they remain on a pedestal for men to worship and control as sexual objects.

Since market rituals promote variation, there is no one "meaning" to disrobement. The moral order can be reinforced and simultaneously undermined. It is better to view ritual as dramatizing moral codes than as "reinforcing" them, which it does only partially, for a subset of participants.

Nothing in our account should be taken to imply that ritual disrobement exists because it meets a fundamental social need. Ritual innovations are maintained because they are rewarding to those who practice them: consistency with macro structures is only one aspect. These social rewards are the most important reason that ritualization continues to be important and the reason that moral commitment to the market is enacted in the Carnival context.

The sacred, according to Durkheim ([1912] 1965), is found in the emotionalism of collective gatherings. Balcony disrobement is a public ritual in which an archaic, even elemental fascination with breasts and fertility is concentrated on strangers who reveal secrets but not the self. Such gatherings do not prevent conflicts or promote solidarity outside the ritual context. The emotions produced are as temporary as the rite.

Ceremonial exchange is important as a fundamental social phenomenon whether or not it has wider social implications. Malinowski's Kula involved no collective effervescence. The great potlatches described by Boas involved interest-bearing investments of property and precise status rankings. Durkheim's gatherings, although they generated great emotional energy, did not

involve trust among a collection of unrelated strangers, which is recent in human history and difficult to produce. Continued use of these examples makes it seem, quite erroneously, as if sacred, ceremonial exchange rituals are restricted to primitive peoples. Ritual disrobement at Mardi Gras shows its importance in the modern context as well.

## Notes

1. The most famous example was Malinowski's (1922) Kula Ring, involving the exchange of necklaces for armlets around a chain of islands.
2. Wuthnow (1987) notes that Goffman's work on rituals seems compelling because evidence is in the domain of shared experience, while anthropological work succeeds even with sketchy evidence because it deals with societies about which little is known. Studies of exchange rituals are a "tangle of categories pulled from widely different thinkers" (Grimes 1985:3). In sociology there are studies of political and legal ceremony, life-cycle rituals, and crowd behavior studies of games and spectacles (Gusfield & Michalowicz 1984). Most other work on rituals is by theologians, anthropologists, and historians of religion.
3. The structural approach examines the internal relations among cultural objects, particularly the ways that elements of those objects are juxtaposed and the restrictions on meaning imposed by these relations. The dramaturgic (or expressive) approach focuses on ritual and ideology, with reference to the social motivations and uncertainties that are the preconditions for the emergence of ritual forms (Wuthnow & Witten 1988).
4. We follow Kinser's (1990) history for basic events and dates.
5. The earliest published evidence we could find of disrobement is a photograph without explanatory text in *Figaro*, a New Orleans weekly, depicting exposed breasts from a Bourbon Street balcony. Since the date of publication (1 Feb.) precedes the 1978 Mardi Gras, the photo may have been taken at the 1977 festival.
6. Mardi Gras in New Orleans is not a colonial, Catholic, or "pagan" festival. French settlers did not celebrate Carnival in any regular way. Neither is the *courir du mardi gras*, or "Cajun mardi gras," an important influence. The festival began to acquire its modern features only after the influence of Anglo-Americans, who formed the first parading societies (Kinser 1990). Although the festival is temporally tied to Lent, Catholic influence on the festival has never been significant except as a justification for indulgence. The period of abstinence it is intended to precede is in actuality seldom observed. Finally, although there is a good deal of pagan symbolism, even European Carnival celebrations have no documented connection to pre-Christian observances. If anything, Renaissance humanism is symbolically dominant in the costuming and parades.
7. The existence of Free People of Color, a class below whites but above slaves, added complexity to racial tensions that already existed.
8. The leader of Rex was the appointed "King of Carnival," often issuing "edicts." One of the first edicts instructed the governor of Louisiana to "disperse that riotous body known as the Louisiana State Legislature," a command that, to the chagrin of many since, was not carried out.
9. In European Carnivals of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, ashes, dirt, and excrement were thrown.
10. Carnival in late medieval Europe involved the house-to-house collection of food. Dancers were rewarded with coins in Jamaican celebrations of "John Canoe." A main event in the Cajun Mardi Gras is the procession of riders on horseback from house to house, collecting the ingredients for a gumbo.
11. Huey P. Long, the populist governor of Louisiana, was too lowborn for membership in an elite krewe. One such krewe mocked his campaign slogan, "Every Man a King," but with the emergence of truck floats it would soon come to pass.

## APPENDIX A

The results in the main body of the analysis are based on two and three-way contingency tables. To eliminate the possibility of spurious relationships and since a pair of variables can exhibit a marginal association in a different direction from their partial association (Simpson's paradox), a loglinear model was estimated to obtain a more complete multivariate structure for disrobement. We estimated a loglinear model because the structure of relationships among time of day, spatial location, appearance, gender, and order is more important than a set of effects on a dependent variable (i.e., all variables are treated as "response" variables).

Classificatory variables include (1) location of target (balcony = 1, street = 0), (2) time of day (after 6:00 P.M. = 1, before 6:00 P.M. = 0), (3) sex (female = 1, male = 0), (4) order of beads (beads received only after disrobement) = 1, beads received before = 2, no beads received = 0), and (5) a dichotomous indicator of impression management (ritually attired = 1, not ritually attired = 0), as measured by the presence of more than five strings of beads or alluring clothing.

A loglinear model estimates the 48 cell frequencies produced by this five-way cross-classification as a maximum likelihood function of all the specified interactions in a given model. Expected cell counts may be compared with the actual frequencies using the likelihood-ratio chi-square as a goodness-of-fit test. We added .5 to all cell counts in the model to avoid zero cells and considered only hierarchical models. Tests of significance for terms in the preferred model are shown in Table A1, generated by comparing the difference in L.R.  $\chi^2$  between the preferred model and a series of models each leaving out one term (for given degrees of freedom).

Eight of the ten possible two-factor associations are significant in the final model (Appendix B). The two-factor terms we were able to discard, since they provided no improvement in fit from the terms already in the model, are the association of appearance with exchange order and the association of sex with order. No three-factor or higher-order interactions are needed to produce expected cell frequencies that are very close to the observed values ( $p = .92$ ).

Appendix C provides parameter estimates in order to confirm the direction of the bivariate associations presented as percentage tables in the text. A positive value for a two-factor term indicates a positive association of the two designated values. Balcony disrobements are typically by women, at night, with beads more likely to be thrown before the performance. Disrobement at night is more often by women and is associated with beads beforehand. Finally, ritual appearance, a dimension touched on only briefly in the text, is higher for women, during the day, and on balconies.

12. The command paradigm, though it involves symbolic reference to another kind of economic structure, emerged within the context of a market economy as well.

13. Perhaps the most unusual quete, an inversion of role relations, was the throwing of money to spectators by Storyville prostitutes who dressed as little girls in the Baby Doll parades of the period.

14. Several of these were operated as "gentleman's clubs," including that featuring Blaze Starr, the consort of Louisiana governor Earl K. Long.

## APPENDIX B: Model Selection Statistics

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Preferred Model (N = 485)			
	Degrees of Freedom	L.R. $\chi^2$	Prob. Level
AT, AS, AL, TS, TL, TO, OL, SL	31	20.52	.924
Comparison with Models That Omit These Terms			
TS	1	4.01	.045
TL	1	88.82	<.001
TO	2	5.70	.058
OL	2	66.51	<.001
SL	1	13.99	<.001
AT	1	5.84	.016
AS	1	11.31	.001
AL	1	7.39	.007

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T: Time  
 S: Sex  
 L: Location  
 O: Exchange order  
 A: Attire

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15. This voyeuristic "glimpsing" has a direct parallel in the disrobement ritual that eventually developed.
16. The National Survey of Crime Severity rates public exposure more serious than such crimes as carrying a gun illegally, cheating on tax returns, stealing an unlocked car, robbery with injury, and passing bad checks (Wolfgang et al. 1985).
17. This idea of a generalized medium is similar to Parsons's (1970) concept in that all such media, including money, are symbolic modes of communication. While the idea of a generalized symbolic currency undergirds the concept of a disrobement paradigm based on the market, no assumptions are made about the motivations of actors who participate in the ritual — only that within the population at risk, there are some who find the deviant act rewarding.
18. We have not been able to determine with any precision when beads were first introduced, but they are mentioned without remark in Young's (1931) history of Comus.
19. The monetary cost of beads varies widely. In the early 1990s, a 36" string of plastic white "pearl beads" (12mm) varied in price from \$2.99 each at a Bourbon Street tourist shop to \$2.95/dozen at the Accent Annex, a popular carnival store three miles from the French Quarter.
20. For the counterculture, the 1969 film *Easy Rider* was a virtual advertisement for Mardi Gras. Both preexisting and ideologically inspired disinhibition affected sexual behavior in the French Quarter.
21. The earliest evidence we could find of reciprocal nudity is a 1975 photograph of four males with lowered trousers and drawers. Behind them a photographer points a camera at the facing balcony. It is worth noting that each looks downward at his own genitals rather than at the balcony.
22. Qualitative observations were made every year except 1989. Systematic videotaping was conducted in 1991.

## APPENDIX C: Parameter Estimates for Preferred Model

	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	p-level
Location (balcony) by sex (female)	.3799	.1016	< .001
Location (balcony) by time (night)	.6748	.0716	< .001
Location by order			
Beads after/balcony	-.7262	.0941	< .001
Beads before/balcony	.4771	.1375	< .001
Time (night) by sex (female)	.1462	.0730	.045
Time by order			
Beads after/night	-.2267	.0980	.021
Beads before/night	.3245	.1536	.035
Attire (yes) by time (night)	-.1418	.0585	.016
Attire (yes) by sex (female)	.2040	.0606	< .001
Attire (yes) by location (balcony)	.1697	.0624	.007

23. Hotels, which are booked approximately a year in advance, often require reservations for a four-night block from Saturday through Tuesday. The police terminate celebrations at the stroke of midnight on Tuesday by the simple method of removing people from the balconies and restricting pedestrians to the sidewalks on Bourbon Street. In short, they encourage participants to leave by eliminating the kind of hierarchical interactions discussed below.

24. We used the 1940 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps as a first approximation of architectural geography in the quarter. Since many of the businesses change ownership frequently, we mapped the current status of establishments and private dwellings, including up to three stories of balconies.

25. On Mardi Gras night noise levels reach 100 dB.

26. This figure is taken from a street survey of participants we conducted in 1992 (N=69).

27. Some activity occurs on Royal Street, the north-south streets linking Bourbon and Royal, and occasionally, on Mardi Gras day, even Chartres and Dauphine (Figure 1).

28. Owing to crowd density, it was not possible to film from the street after dark. Videotaping occurred during the afternoon, the evening, and, in two of the three sites, at night, subject to minor restrictions by managers of the properties.

29. We excluded one tape because of poor video quality and one because it was turned off for a period of time during filming. Our sampling rule was that once taping had begun it should continue uninterrupted until the end of the taping session.

30. In two of the three blocks we were able to film from both sides of the street as well as the street itself. We videotaped at two of the three hotels.

31. Often a dozen or more images of disrobement are made simultaneously, sometimes with purpose-built devices to extend the reach of recorders.

32. In one instance our camera seemed to encourage it.

33. Excluded from the outset were "simple" and nearly universal contextual behaviors such as arm waving, jumping, shouting, begging, and holding hands above the head in an attempt to catch beads, as well as strolling and chatting. Originally we included more complex varieties of "Performances Involving Motion" such as dancing or doing pushups (a "wartime" innovation because of the proximity of 1991 Mardi Gras to the Gulf War). However, these forms are relatively rare (only three instances) and were excluded from the analysis.

34. Although there is no evidence in the absence of a verbal solicitation that a refusal to perform is actually a refusal to disrobe, the rarity of other kinds of performance makes this the

most likely assumption by far. A refusal is not counted as a refusal if subsequently followed by a performance and it could still be followed by the receipt of beads.

35. Cases where the *recipient* of beads is not visible are not coded. We included long strings of beads (by far the most common token) as well as colorful plastic cups and stuffed animals. Note that we did *not* include all thrown objects, in particular "doubloons" (anodized aluminum coins), short strings of beads (defined as strings that cannot easily be placed over the head with one hand), or short strings with plastic medallions. The volume of these items has become so large that they no longer possess value in the negotiation of Carnival disrobement and are often simply left on the ground.

36. As we cleaned the data, the tapes were viewed a third time to resolve inconsistencies in action types and values. We use only a limited set of these variables in the results section, but the analysis of the full data set informs our story.

37. A "target" is an individual who disrobes, refuses, or receives beads.

38. Owing to missing data and low reliability on these variables, we used audience size and composition data only for background purposes, but they largely confirmed our observations. Two surveys using ground observers were also analyzed but are not used in this report.

39. Disrobement occurs along the parade routes as well, especially in certain areas, but this is outside the scope of the present study.

40. The findings reported here were a surprise to us. Although we had observed the phenomenon develop since 1983 and had by this time a good sense of the microstructure of interaction, qualitative observation simply did not prepare us for many aspects of these ritualized encounters. We initially supposed that with the videotaping procedure just described we might capture between two and three dozen instances of disrobement over the four-day period. Interviews with merchants in 1992 revealed that often those whose shops are located in the area are only vaguely aware of street rituals. In short, qualitative and quantitative approaches do not substitute for one another and both are required for a full analysis.

41. This figure of 700 instances includes approximately 200 instances of action that were unclear owing to the positioning of our cameras or to the presence of a circle of onlookers, but they were likely instances of disrobement. These instances are not included in the analysis. In terms of their relationships with other variables, they operate as actual disrobements.

42. The remainder of the results refer to Bourbon Street actions only.

43. Since a refusal is inherently aversive for the solicitor(s), one would not expect that beads would be forthcoming from that particular individual, but someone else might provide them. The question of exchange order will be considered in the next section along with the issue of why disrobements sometimes occur without beads.

44. We do not claim that specific participants did not ever engage in the practice, only that they did not in the instances videotaped. The point that long beads may be obtained without disrobement, though obviously factual, seems particularly discordant to regular participants, who attest to the extreme difficulty or outright impossibility of getting long beads. Just as we grossly underestimated the frequency of disrobement, the frequency with which long beads are thrown without performance is underestimated by participants. The reason for this is simply the large number of possible catchers, rendering it an unlikely occurrence for any individual participant.

45. Less than 14% of those who disrobe are without long beads, compared with more than 38% of those who receive beads without disrobing. Conversely, more than 55% of those who disrobe are already wearing more than five strings, compared with fewer than 20% of those who do not disrobe. We emphasize that this evidence is only suggestive, since it is not possible to determine how either group received the beads.

46. Children often receive tokens but never disrobe. Since young children are considered unsuitable for solicitation and disrobement, they participate exclusively in the command paradigm.

47. That is, beads are currency with more or less value, or "denominations." It is almost inevitable that objects that are physically different should be differentially valued, as the hierarchical classification of shell objects in the Kula. This analogy should not be pushed too

far, however. Although the value of length is consensual, there is no widespread agreement as to the difference among specific varieties of beads.

48. Those who "select" beads are much more likely to be wearing beads already than those who do not ( $\chi^2 = 20.15$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .0001$ ).

49. In the former case the refusals may have occurred *because* throwers were unwilling to part with particular strings (that is, failed negotiations rather than unwillingness to disrobe). In the latter it is not possible to say whether the beads that were thrown were the ones desired and it seems likely in at least two of these cases that an expected disrobement did not occur. We can determine this only in a limited number of instances even for cases of disrobement. The market paradigm does not entail that selection is necessary because long beads are themselves valuable regardless of their particular characteristics. However, negotiations over beads have become more common in recent years as diversity has increased.

50. Although we cannot produce a quantitative estimate, male disrobement has increased significantly since the mid 1980s, though it remains limited to the street. Our qualitative impression in the mid 1990s is that there is very little difference in the absolute count of male and female disrobements.

51. Men expose genitals over two-thirds of the time (70%) and buttocks in the remaining instances. Female genital exposure is rare but increasing in frequency.

52. Penis exposure is more than six times as likely as buttock exposure to be accompanied by beads, but "mooning" is still more likely to result in beads than not by a factor of 1.7. "Mooning" is considered offensive in most contexts but here it is rewarded.

53. Sex ratios were calculated from the 300 through the 700 block of Bourbon Street. All persons on balconies were enumerated and a sample (observer stationary) of those on the street. This procedure was repeated afternoon and night both Monday and Tuesday. The male/female ratio is 1.87 overall (4,032/2,151). It is higher on the street (2.12) than the balcony (1.68), and at night (2.07) than during the day (1.71).

54. If Royal Street is included, balcony-to-street exchange constitutes 93% of all events.

55. Tourists in the three hotels pay a premium for rooms with balconies above Bourbon Street. Onlookers frequently assume that balcony revelers are wealthy, but many of the balconies are accessible to the public with a small cover charge or none at all (dance clubs, bars, or restaurants). While elevation was associated with high social status during the elite parade era, it now bears only a symbolic relationship with class.

56. We arbitrarily defined periods of "high volume" throwing as at least three instances per minute. These sequences are somewhat more likely during the day than at night, but the relationship, while significant, is not strong.

57. Since the sex ratio of street revelers during the day (997/543=1.84) is higher than the sex ratio of those who receive beads without disrobement (213/136=1.57), it is likely that targeted throwing favors women. Indeed, this should be the case, for there are more men on the balcony in daytime as well (986/617=1.6).

58. Height and aggressiveness could also produce an advantage for males in competitive catching. Though we were not able to evaluate aggressiveness, there are few qualitative indications that women are more passive in their catching behavior. The socialization of parade novices often involves telling a rule followed by an exemplary story (1) "Never bend down to pick up a bead. You've got to step on it first." (2) "Even little old ladies will stomp on your hand." However, given a catching ratio lower than the sex ratio, as indicated above, these factors are probably unnecessary.

59. The lowest sex ratio was observed on balconies in the afternoon on Mardi Gras day, but it was still far from equal (744/523 = 1.42).

60. This happened three times (once during the day and twice at night).

61. Virtually everyone will stoop to pick up a long string that lands on the street. Throughout the study the authors adopted a policy of nonparticipation in all aspects of the ritual except this. Refusal to accept direct gifts is considered churlish.

62. This characterization, while it often applies to Saturday, Sunday, and Monday during the day, does not capture the situation at night and during Mardi Gras day. On the 300, 500, and

700 blocks crowd density is so high pedestrians are sometimes "frozen" in place, with two "trickies" along the sidewalks.

63. Counterfactuals are always subject to dispute, but our interviews bear this out.

64. There is a general form of solicitation implied by standing on a balcony, dangling strings of beads without throwing them. This behavior is sometimes accompanied by swinging or raising beads, which indicates willingness to exchange.

65. Chanting, in actuality, occurs in only about 4% of all cases.

66. Refusers are slightly more likely to be dressed this way, which suggests that at least some of these interactions are failed negotiations.

67. The greatest cheers are reserved for those who are "hard sells," who do not appear to be ritual objects but are persuaded to disrobe.

68. The explanation would be circular if applied to the first instance of disrobement.

69. The highest sex ratio was observed on Tuesday night on the street ( $420/160=2.62$ ). However, since "movers" rather than "standers" were counted, it is quite likely that this underestimates the proportion of males directly under an active balcony.

70. Anatomical architecture is the most important reason that there are so few male disrobements at night. Crowd density requires that street participants expose themselves while perched on the shoulders of a partner.

71. For the other ten mock performances, tokens were provided afterward. Nothing prohibits individuals from throwing to a mock performer who is regarded as somehow entering into the spirit, if not the letter, of the ritual.

72. Schwartz (1981) holds that the source of the meaning and consistency of vertical polarity is the association between statural advantage and authority in childhood. He notes that the power of the opposition is so great that when lower status groups are given power or resources, they are depicted as "raised up," leaving the axis or direction of symbolism constant. It is in this sense that Goffman (1976) speaks of the symbolization of high social place by high physical place as a "delineative resource" that conventionally shows men above women in advertisements.

73. It would not be true to say that disrobement in general is an erotic ritual, especially since many street disrobements have such a matter-of-fact quality.

74. The lengthiest bargaining session observed was 7.5 minutes, but 95% of all actions occur within two minutes.

75. It might be argued that street targets have a greater capacity to cheat (walk away without performing), and so would be less likely to receive beads in advance. This reasoning is wrong because balcony receivers can just as readily walk inside and frequently do so when they do not wish to be solicited. In fact, at night it is much easier to walk inside a hotel room or an establishment than to move down the street, but this is precisely when throws are most likely to precede performances.

Qualitatively, we observed that participants are not interested in getting something for nothing, since ritual participation is itself a value. On many occasions when a street performer does not receive beads because of a poor throw, crowd density, etc., someone else provides the beads. It seems important to the collectivity that the exchange be successfully completed, even though the balcony thrower has fulfilled his or her obligation with the first throw.

76. This may explain the greater adornment of elevated performers even though they do not always demand beads for performances. For both street and balcony disrobements, one string of beads is sufficient for an exchange to take place.

77. In Lane's (1991) phrase, markets are "theaters of emotion" (58-70).

78. Streaking, which involved public nudity, was a fad, not an annual ritual, and died out quickly (Aguirre, Quarantelli & Mendoza 1988).

79. In early nineteenth-century Carnival balls, masks served exactly this function. The *Gazette* was scandalized at the Theatre St. Philippe: "We have not witnessed anything so immoralizing and offensive. Ladies with their faces covered, it is true, but every other part of the body exposed" (as quoted in Young 1939:16). Costumes of any variety were worn by about 3% of participants — whether or not they disrobe — and masks are extremely rare. The maskers on

Fat Tuesday were much more involved in parading and displaying their costumes than disrobement. Though we have no independent evidence of this, many in the past decade have noticed a decline in the number of costumes worn in the French Quarter, precisely the period in which the quality and quantity of beads has increased.

80. One might say a currency that is worthless is exchanged for a self that is false. There is no blurring of the distinction between self and actor (Wuthnow 1987:72-73).

81. Generally, those who disrobe for veneration have already acquired beads. That is, a single act of disrobement is interspersed between exchanges and so acknowledges the superiority of the balcony through a reversal of the typical exchange order.

82. Grimes (1985), in his review of ritual studies, notes the rarity with which the details of specific ritual actions are central to scholarly analyses, which tend to concentrate on social context. Actual variations in ritual performance are therefore obscured.

83. Deegan (1989) identifies capitalism and sexism as two of the four "core codes" of contemporary society. A case can also be made for race in American society and there is much to be learned from its ritual expressions at Mardi Gras. Although the number of blacks is relatively high, as indicated by a race ratio that is more nearly equal than the sex ratio ( $W/B = 1.62 = 144/89$  on Mardi Gras night, as compared with a sex ratio of 2.62), blacks are virtually absent from the balconies and few participate in disrobement.

84. We asked some two dozen people about their knowledge of the ritual ordering for balconies. Almost no one was aware of the fact that beads precede performances on balconies. It was assumed that they represented payment for services. Of course, this is the correct ritual ordering for street exchange.

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