



# Think Sociology!

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## Thoughts from the Head

Social change in tough times: we are certainly in tough times. Good paying jobs are harder to find, border disputes vex nations, victimization abounds, and the media ensures we know the sensational highlights of it all.

Here in these pages are some deeper looks at social change. Sociologists at UBC, from younger faculty to post doctoral students and graduate students share their insights. They are useful insights, not just into how the world operates, but also into how sociology helps in a myriad of ways to understand that world and its changing social contours.

I continue to be fascinated by the wealth of issues my colleagues pursue, and by the richness of

their insights. This eleventh issue of the newsletter showcases both the diversity of topics pursued here at UBC, and the importance of the contributions. The contributions are often harder to emphasize in the short word counts we demand of colleagues. First you have to know something about the research before my colleagues can detail the outcomes. Demanding word constraints often limit the latter.

But if you want more details, find the authors on our website. Come and visit us at least virtually, and in doing so discover the array of talents housed here in the old ANSO building. And come and visit us physically as well—your picture is likely hanging on our walls. Find it, find your old classrooms, and introduce yourself to some new people. Make it an adventure. ♦



Neil Guppy  
Department Head

## Sexuality and the City in a Post-Gay Era

by Amin Ghaziani



“Gay enclaves face prospect of being passé.” This October 2007 front-page *New York Times* headline predicted the demise of San Francisco’s iconic Castro district. The journalist lamented, “These are wrenching times for San Francisco’s historic gay village, with population shifts, booming development, and a waning sense of belonging that is also being felt in gay enclaves across the nation...as they struggle to maintain cultural relevance.”

The social forces potentially unraveling the fabric of gay enclaves are not unique to San Francisco. Boston’s South End, Chicago’s “Boystown” in East Lakeview, Ft. Lauderdale’s Wilton Manors, Houston’s Montrose, Miami’s South Beach, Montreal’s Village, New York’s Chelsea, Philadelphia’s

“Gaybourhood” in Washington Square West, San Diego’s Hillcrest, Seattle’s Capitol Hill, Toronto’s Church and Wellesley, Vancouver’s Davie Village, Washington D.C.’s Dupont Circle, and the entire city of West Hollywood: each is an example of a gay neighbourhood—and each might be on a list of endangered urban species.

There’s a lot of talk lately about whether gay urban villages are vanishing. Unique commercial spaces such as bars, bookstores, and gay-owned businesses are closing, more straight singles and families with young children are moving in, and gay people and organizations are dispersing throughout the city. But what exactly does it mean that such a neighbourhood is “passé?” More generally, how does

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sexuality inform residential choice (where we choose to live) and urban forms (the character and composition of an entire neighbourhood)?

My forthcoming book, entitled *There Goes the Gayborhood?* (under contract with Princeton University Press), chronicles my quest to find answers. It is a study of the multiple meanings that gay neighbourhoods—or gaybourhoods, for short—have for people today, how they first acquired those meanings, why those meanings matter, their material consequences in anchoring urban gay life, how different understandings of sexuality affect location and migration patterns, and the future spatial possibilities that lay ahead of us.

## The Closet, Coming Out, and Post-Gay Sexual Eras

I find that different cultural conceptions of sexuality explain the variation in gay and straight location patterns and urban forms. The *closet era* (pre-World War II) witnessed the development of discrete places where gays would gather such as public parks, tearooms, and cabarets. These were generally located in bohemian areas of the city, rather than in neighbourhoods that we would today identify as a gay enclave. In contrast, the *coming out era*, which dates from WW II to 1997, witnessed the formation and flourishing of formal gaybourhoods like San Francisco's Castro district and West Hollywood, California.

But something is different today—something that motivated the *New York Times* to declare the death of the gaybourhood. I argue that we have embarked on a new *post-gay era*, a time characterized by an accelerated assimilation of gays into the mainstream. This has many of them seeking residence outside of traditional gay villages, while straights now feel comfortably drawn to them. An exemplary gay male San Franciscan exclaimed, “We don't need the Castro anymore because essentially San Francisco is our Castro.” Similarly, a lesbian couple from New Jersey explained, “We're specifically not moving into gay neighbourhoods here. Here we're just part of a neighbourhood. We weren't the gay girls next door; we were just neighbors. We were able to blend in, which is what you want to do, rather than have the scarlet letter on our heads.”

## Post-Gay Assimilation Effects

Robert Park famously described the city in 1925 as a “mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate.” If I was having a conversation with him today, I imagine we would talk about the factors that are fueling today's putatively post-gay era—especially the urban effects of assimilation. The ongoing assimilation of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people is generating feelings of acceptance and integration, which are reversing an earlier propensity of LGBT people to residentially concentrate. This new socio-psychological profile works in two ways. First, assimilation overextends the queer residential imagination. I say “overextends” deliberately because the queer residential reper-

toire increasingly stretches beyond the delimited streets of just one neighbourhood. The Castro quote from above is an example of this first mechanism through which assimilation affects residential choice. Importantly, this is not exclusively a big city phenomenon. Consider Northampton, Massachusetts, which some people have dubbed “Lesbianville, USA”: “There are other gay enclaves, but there's no place I know where the gay population is so integrated into the community,” said Julie Pokela, a lesbian business owner and former head of the chamber of commerce.

The second mechanism through which assimilation affects residential choice is that it renders queer sexuality virtually indistinguishable from heterosexuality. The New Jersey suburban lesbians who I quoted earlier offer one example. Consider as well the remarks of Dick Dadey, executive director of the Empire State Pride Agenda in New York, “There is a portion of our community that wants to be separatist, [and] to have a queer culture, but most of us want to be treated like everyone is. We want to be the neighbors next door, not the lesbian or gay couple next door.”

Straights are on board the post-gay train, as well. Here's an interesting excerpt from the *San Francisco Chronicle*: “Straights have always lived and shopped in the midst of the homosexual colony, of course, but their numbers are increasing. Two decades of struggle for equal rights have translated into real economic and emotional progress for homosexuals – and many heterosexuals. If the need to carve out a gay oasis made heterosexuals feel unwelcome 10 or 15 years ago, today straight couples are a common sight on the street. If lesbians and gays no longer feel confined to a homosexual safe zone, straights are less likely to be threatened by same-sex attention. Relaxed attitudes about sexual identity have led to a greater permeability in this gayest of neighbourhoods.”

## Challenges to the Post-Gay Thesis

I want to be careful not to overstate post-gay effects. One way to think about this is to disaggregate the notion of “LGBT people.” For example, during the summer of 2010 when I was interviewing in Chicago, several residents remarked on an influx of queer youth of color into the gaybourhood. They were spending more time there to use the services provided by the Center on Halsted, the Midwest's largest LGBT community center. A professor at a nearby university told me, “I think for queer youth across the city, this neighbourhood has become more of a destination than it had been...Since the opening of the Center, there's a lot of people that come to the neighbourhood, queer people, queer youth particularly, that come to this neighbourhood to be gay, and that's very visible in a way that it wasn't before the Center opened [in 2007]...Queer youth of color, often trans-youth, are drawn to the Center because it's there, they go to their programs...If a gay neighbourhood's going to mean anything, if you are going to have a community center to mark it, then this means it's succeeding and actually drawing people from all over the city to come here so that they can

affirm their identity.” Gaybourhoods are still meaningful for these young queers of color, many of whom are often African-American, and some of whom are also gender variant.

A second example stems from same-sex families. Geographically, same-sex couples with children reside in some of the most socially conservative parts of the United States. Same-sex parenting is more common in the South than it is in more socially liberal regions, such as the Northeast or the Pacific states. In fact, many same-sex couples raising children live in states with legal environments that at best are not supportive and at worst are openly hostile toward LGBT individuals and their families. This re-articulates a continued need for safe spaces, challenges the post-gay thesis, and suggests a creative reconstitution of new spatial developments.

### There Goes the Gaybourhood?

How can we make sense of this inconsistent evidence? The answer lies in the methodological principle of representativeness. Steve Seidman, who promotes the notion of a gay life “beyond the closet” (as he titles his book), argues that the post-gay era resonates most with those lesbians and gay men “whose sexual behavior conforms to traditional gender norms, who link sex to intimacy, love, monogamy, and preferably marriage, and who restrict sex to private acts that exhibit romantic or caring capacity.” Plenty of evidence departs from this narrow subjectivity, especially pertaining to the urban experiences of same-sex families with children, transgender individuals, and queer youth of color. Therefore, we need to be cautious about how we interpret the post-gay era, along with its implications for queer spatial patterns.

The post-gay trend is uneven and selective—and there’s no compelling reason to believe that it signals the definitive end of gaybourhoods, either in the U.S. or in Canada where we see similarly conflicting cultural and demographic trends. A careful sociological approach shows that this is not a zero-sum game. ♦



## Discrimination and Social Change

By C. Elizabeth Hirsh

Despite laws preventing it, every day workers are turned away from jobs, passed over for promotions, underpaid, terminated, and harassed on the job because of their sex, race, or ethnicity. Aside from complaining about it to superiors – who might themselves be implicated in the discriminatory behavior – workers’ primary recourse is to turn to the law. In North America, civil and human rights codes allow workers to file formal legal claims with fair employment commissions – and in some cases full-fledged lawsuits – if they feel they have been unlawfully discriminated against at work.

Over the last several years, I’ve been studying the emergence, outcomes, and impact of such legal claims as they’ve played out in workplaces and courts across the U.S. Drawing on legal records from thousands of cases, reports of defendants’ sex and race composition, and interviews with plaintiffs and attorneys, I’ve examined what leads workers to file claims and whether employers improve workplace opportunities for disadvantaged groups following such legal challenges.

So when do workers file formal claims of discrimination? Although some theories suggest that workers would only take legal action in the most egregious of instances, this is not necessarily the case. Based on case narratives, interviews with plaintiffs and the attorneys who represent them, workers often file suit after a long – often, lifelong – history of discrimination and bias. For instance, after describing a long string of stunted opportunities at work, one plaintiff described the incident that led to her filing suit, “I guess it was the last straw, you know.” In this case, the discriminatory behavior (denied promotion) was no different from many of her previous experiences at work; she just got sick of putting up with it.

Plaintiffs also make note of the broader workplace culture and environment in motivating their legal claims. In case narratives as well as my interviews with plaintiffs, workers routinely discuss how gender and racial biases are a part of the everyday workplace culture, above and beyond their personal experience with bias. For instance, a plaintiff in a sexual harassment case reflected on how corporate culture affected her interpretation of harassment, “The workplace is...a crude environment. I never really thought I would be a victim of sexual harassment because I thought I could always stand up for myself....But I wasn’t used

*Continues on page 6&7...*



Amin Ghaziani  
is the recipient of the  
American Sociological Association

### Outstanding Article 2012

*Collective Behaviour / Social Movements* section

for his article:

*“Cultural Anchors and the Organization of Differences:  
A Multimethod Analysis of LGBT Marches on Washington”*

# EGGS, ETHICS, & ETHNOGRAPHY:

## Canada and the Transnational Human Egg Trade



by Heather Walmsley  
*Banting Postdoctoral Research Fellow*

As autumn slowly chills and darkens into winter, many of us will peek at our bank statements in hope of funding a flight south. We might dream of fresh tortillas and salsa, of lush green jungle, or fine Caribbean sand between our toes. Mostly we long for heat, colours, and rhythms that will interrupt our winter palate of dull grey and frigid white.

Some of us though, travel with a deeper need. These are “reproductive tourists” who, after hard years of failing to conceive a child, travel in search of donor gametes (eggs and sperm) and fertility treatments. Globally, such travellers are lured by the cheaper costs of in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) in different jurisdictions, more favourable laws (regarding older women, gay couples, or single parents, or donor anonymity), the promise of high pregnancy success rates, or by hopes of enhancing fertility through yoga, reflexology, and deep relaxation in exotic climes.

### EGGS

Around eighty percent of Canadian reproductive tourists travel to obtain donor eggs, according to recent research. These are generally women with non-functional ovaries, diminished ovarian reserve, or poor egg quality. In 2004, the Assisted Human Reproduction Act prohibited remuneration for oocyte (egg) donation in Canada. Eggs must be given out of the goodness of one’s heart. Donors may be compensated only for basic expenses. Since 2004 there has been little oversight or enforcement, and the media has reported informal egg sales via Craigslist and other forums. Nonetheless, human eggs, in Canada, remain relatively scarce.

Where are Canadian women choosing to travel for donor eggs? What factors influence their choices? What are their experiences of egg donation and cross-border reproductive care? These are the key questions driving the first stage of a new research project – *Canada and the transnational human egg trade* – that I am pursuing in the Sociology Department at UBC, as the recipient of a two-year Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship.

Advertisements for “egg donation packages” abound online. In the United States, clinics such as Shady Grove Fertility Center tailor their services to the Canadian market. Agencies such as Global Egg Donors, IVF Traveller, and IVF Vacation Center advertise packages in the Czech Republic, Cancun, Panama, Barbados, and India. Often, travellers can purchase donated eggs, fertility treatments, medications, screening, and even accommodation and concierge services – for less than the cost of a simple IVF treatment here in BC.

Yet little research has been done to understand exactly where Canadians are travelling, and why. This project aims to

address this knowledge gap, and to complement innovative studies in other locales – work by Marcia Inhorn in the Middle East, Michal Nahman in Israel and Romania, Andrea Whittaker in Thailand, Sven Bergman in Europe, and Zeynep Gürtin-Broadbent in Turkey.

### ETHICS

The Assisted Human Reproduction Act, along with policies in other jurisdictions such as the UK, prohibits payment for gametes in order to prevent the exploitation of women and commodification of children. Critics condemn the open market in human eggs in the United States as an assault on human dignity. Yet national policies and ethics have global impact.

And what *are* the impacts of the growing global traffic in people and gametes, in a context where business (eggs are roughly a \$38 million industry in the US, fertility tourism a \$450 million industry in India) is often legitimised as altruistic donation? What role do Canadian fertility tourists play in the development of overseas markets for eggs, in the lives of overseas donors, and in global gender, racial, and other social inequalities? Critical scholars speak of oocyte tourism as “cannibalism”, “slavery”, “prostitution”, of women’s bodies as “plantations”. Others speak of “reproductive rights”. Often the debate is framed as one between choice and exploitation, agency and oppression.

### ETHNOGRAPHY

In-depth ethnographic research that traces the complex, contradictory, and shifting motivations, stories, and experiences of reproductive tourists and egg donors themselves promises to open up the ground between these extremes of freedom and slavery. This research then will employ a multi-sited ethnographic design. Beginning here in Canada, I will conduct participant observation online in fertility forums, and in-depth interviews with women who are or have considered or experienced travel overseas for donor eggs and IVF. From there the research will follow the trajectories of oocyte tourists themselves, into one or more overseas locations. I will be working on methodological innovation together with my supervisor Susan Cox, an expert in arts-based methods.

This project is inspired in part by a series of deliberative forums I facilitated with the BC public back in 2007 as part of my PhD in Sociology at Lancaster University in the UK, and as a member of Professor Michael Burgess’ Deliberative Democracy and Biobanks research team here at UBC. In those forums, diverse members of the B.C. public expressed deep concern, and division, over the issue of compensation for human tissue donation, and its impacts on global social equality.

The research is also driven by the continually shifting global policy context surrounding gamete donation, and the need for policy to be informed by understanding of donor and recipient

experiences. It is a particularly interesting time for policy relating to reproductive technologies in Canada, given the 2012 Federal Budget announcement that Assisted Human Reproduction Canada will cease to exist, with all functions transferred to Health Canada by 2013. The future of donor anonymity in B.C. is also tenuous, given the Supreme Court's 2011 decision (which has been subsequently appealed) that anonymous donation is harmful to donor offspring. ♦



## MARRIAGE AND WEIGHT: *Does Marriage Make you Fat?*

by Silvia Bartolic

Marriage has been shown to be generally good for one's health but despite this good news for those who are married, marriage has also been linked to weight gain and obesity. Obesity is associated with a number of physical health concerns such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes, as well as psychological and social consequences such as depression and decreased satisfaction with relationships. Motivated by my own marriage related weight changes, I wanted to examine this paradox: on the one hand marriage positively impacts health; on the other it may increase the probability of weight gain.

Those who have studied physical health outcomes of marriage have taken three general approaches. One explanation for the link between marriage and positive health is said to be due to *selection*. Individuals who are healthy are more likely to get married than those who are not. In the case of obesity, obese individuals are shown to be less likely to marry than their thinner counterparts. This approach however, does not explain weight gain that occurs *after* marriage and thus was not helpful in answering my research question. A second approach suggests that marriage provides *protection* by encouraging positive health behaviors and discouraging negative health behaviors as well as increasing access to and awareness of health care and social support in times of need. Studies on the social facilitation of eating, for example, show that marriage partners mimic each other's eating habits (with men generally eating healthier and women consuming more alcohol). The third approach suggests that the *quality* of the marriage might make marriage more or less beneficial to health where poor quality marriages not only lack protective effects but may also cause additional strain. The focus of my research was on this last approach. Could the quality of one's marriage provide insight into the relationship between marriage and weight gain?

Data used for my study was from the Americans Changing Lives survey, a national longitudinal survey of over 3500 individuals in the United States 24 years and older in 1986 (the first wave of data collection). Analyses focused on married individuals between 24-44 years of age who were continuously married over 8 years. I predicted that depression would mediate the link between marital quality and weight (level of marital quality would affect depression which would in turn affect weight) with barriers to leaving (factors that contributed to feeling 'stuck' in the marriage such as dependent children in the household, financial dependence, and acquiring joint assets) moderating this effect of marital quality on depression (barriers strengthening the effect of low marital quality on depression). I also hypothesized that high marital quality would protect one from depression over time and that high marital quality would decrease the need to maintain weight for entrance into the mating market thereby increasing weight over time. Results were expected to differ for the younger group compared to the older group and for males compared to females as re-entering the mating market may be more viable for the younger than for the older and the emphasis on beauty is stronger for females than for males.

Based on cross sectional analyses (analyses at one time point), there is clear support that marital quality affects levels of depression (individuals who were 'happy' with their marriage were less depressed than those who were not). These results were stronger for the younger group (under 34) and for women. Barriers to leaving contribute to feelings of depression but this generally does not occur until later in the marriage and for older individuals. This is likely because it takes time to accumulate enough barriers to feel 'stuck' enough for barriers to have an impact on mental health. Depression did not have an effect on weight in the cross sectional models (consistent with prior research). It may take time for depression to effect changes in weight.

When examined longitudinally, both low marital quality and high barriers to leaving increased depression. Barriers moderated the effect of marital quality for men only (thus feeling stuck only made men in low quality marriages feel worse). Low marital quality increased depression for both genders but only affected weight gain for men over time. In general, marital quality was linked to depression in the longitudinal models. Barriers had a minor effect on depression and depression was not consistently linked to weight. Therefore, as suggested by prior research, it may be that the *transition* in and out of marriage is where the majority of weight change is occurring (within the first 2 years). In addition, weight gain is limited (average weight gain in the range of 5-10 pounds) upon marriage. Thus, marriage may make you gain a clothing size but is unlikely to cause a shift to obese status for most individuals.

(Limitations of the research are not discussed here but should be considered). ♦

## MULTICULTURALISM IN THE MARGINS: Issues of Representation in Canadian Public History Education

by Lily Ivanova

*Lily is a new Master's student and recipient of the Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship.*



My interest focuses upon the implications history education holds for identity formation, citizenship and inclusivity. This issue lies at the heart of one of the more vexing problems of the modern world – with the accelerating pace of human movement around the globe, how do we, if we even can, accommodate the divergent cultural orientations of diverse peoples?

While the prevalence of multiculturalism rhetoric may lead to the assumption of smooth progress, for much of the West, the experience with multiculturalism has been challenging. The Multicultural Policy Index charts the evolution of multiculturalism policies across Western democracies and ranks the majority of European nations as achieving “weak” and “modest” results (MPI, 2010). In comparison, Canada and Australia have consistently been perceived as faring well. Since 2000, both have moved into the category of boasting “strong” multicultural policies, with Canada achieving a score 7.5 for 2000 and 2010.

More than drawing on policy rhetoric to indicate success, the index accounts for the application of these policies in areas including school curriculums, public media, and funding for ethnic organizations to support cultural activities. These findings are consistent with recent research on multicultural inclusion in the Canadian social studies curriculum (Guppy and Lyon, 2011), and assessment of federally funded documentaries like *Canada: A People's History* (West, 2010). It would appear that Canada is indeed achieving great progress in multicultural representation.

However, while there has been much consideration of multicultural inclusion, less attention has been dedicated to examining the particular strategies employed in promoting the in-

clusivity of different ethnic groups. It may be true that there has been more mention of Aboriginal groups in social studies texts, but what does this look like? It will resonate with many that the phenomenon of sidebars in textbooks have often been the place for examining these alternative accounts. Where the traditional Eurocentric narrative continues to run through the page, how easily can we recall something like the residential schools issue presented in a box?

This segregation in narrative exists in more than textbooks. An interesting experiment involves attention to the space allocation of Canada's national museum of human history, the Canadian Museum of Civilization in the National Capital Region. Where the “First Peoples Hall”, narrating the history of Canada's Aboriginal population, is situated on the first level, the “Canada Hall” recounts the history of European settlement on the third level of the building.

In the case of both of these public history tools, it is vital to consider how space allocation affects perceptions of multicultural inclusion. Are segregated narratives a purposeful commentary on a mosaic approach to multiculturalism, to say cultures are separate, but equal? In separating narratives, is it likely that they will be given equal weight? Will they be perceived as having similar value? ... Is Canada truly remodeling a Eurocentric traditional narrative to include ethnic minorities, or is Canadian multiculturalism taking form in the margins of its textbooks? ♦



Grand Hall of the Canadian Museum of Civilization

“Discrimination and Social Change” *Continued from page 3...*

to this corporate environment.”

Similarly, plaintiffs cite the presence or absence of women or visible minorities in various occupations or in top positions as confirming evidence of discrimination. After describing her experience with racial bias, one plaintiff added, “What was even more interesting was that there had only been one other black to reach buyer status in the history of the [company].” Here the plaintiff clearly sees the past record of the employer as validating her claim of race discrimination.

This tendency for plaintiffs to tie their own personal experience with discrimination to the larger workplace environment resonates with my findings from a large-scale, quantitative analysis of the workplace conditions that give rise to legal claims. Examining over 10,000 claims filed with U.S. fair employment agencies in the 1990s and early 2000s, I found that workers were *most* likely to file claims in workplaces where women and racial minorities were over-represented in low-level occupations and where there were few women or racial minorities in powerful, leadership positions. Workers were *least* likely to file claims in sex and race diverse, integrated workplaces

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with progressive diversity policies. Thus, it is not necessarily the most egregious instance of discrimination that generate legal action, but when discrimination occurs in a workplace environment that appears to offer few opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

What do workers hope to accomplish by taking legal action? Though it is possible to win monetary awards in employment discrimination cases, the vast majority of workers who file claims walk away with no benefits – cash or otherwise. When asked, "Why did you decide to take legal action?" most workers cite a desire to bring about change in the workplace and spare others the experience they had. As one plaintiff explained, "...my career suffered and money would've been nice, my true goal was change." Another, "I'm glad that I did it. I have no regrets. I hope that someone else benefits for it."

Given this hope for social change, much of my research has addressed the question of whether or not employers clean up their acts in the wake of legal claims. Analyses of thousands of claims over two decades suggest that they do, but it depends on the context of the dispute, how it's resolved, and who else is targeted. Analyzing patterns of gender occupational segregation (the distribution of men and women across

occupations) in over 2000 private workplaces in the U.S., I found that establishments in industries that had been targeted by multiple claims were more gender integrated than otherwise comparable establishments in industries free of claims. For instance, during the 1990s, the financial services sector was targeted with a number of sex discrimination lawsuits, including one against Morgan Stanley that settled to the tune of \$54 million. Indeed, establishments in financial services took notice of such legal action and progressed toward gender equity in the years following; in other words, the rising tide lifted all boats. In a more recent study of over 100 high-profile lawsuits settled in U.S. courts in the 2000s, I found that lawsuits increased the representation of white women, black women and men in management positions; however gains were largest when settlements involved court-mandated policy changes, such as requirements to establish a diversity office, diversity task force, or affirmative action plan. In short, the conditions surrounding legal claims matter a great deal in determining their effects.

As for the plaintiffs, these "conditional gains" may not be the sort of grand social change they had hoped for when initiating legal action. But they do suggest that legal mobilization is not in vain, and that legal claims play an important role in reducing discrimination and promoting fairness at work. ♦

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