Being a contemporary Pagan in the United States today means having a concealable stigmatized identity.\textsuperscript{1} Goffman's pioneering work in 1963 is a wellspring of enquiry. It gave rise to numerous studies expanding his theory of stigmatized identities, identity management strategies, and the consequences of employing particular identity management strategies.\textsuperscript{2}

The purpose of the current study is to explore contemporary Paganism as a stigmatized identity. It will establish the prevalence of adverse events experienced by Pagans as a result of prejudice. The study will also investigate the perceptions of risk Pagans associate with their identity. Finally, the study will explore the relationship between the stigmatized identity and the so-called "broom closet," in which Pagans must choose to conceal or disclose their stigmatized identity.

\textit{Literature Review}

In brief, Goffman posits that certain identities are stigmatized and are associated with a generalized judgment that there is something bad about the moral status of those who possess the "mark." The content of the prejudices always presupposes some moral deficiency or status of the "marked" as a suspicious "other." Those who have stigma have discredited social identities.

Goffman enumerates three primary types of stigma. The first are what he calls "abominations of the body," which are the different types of obvious physical deformities. The second type of stigma is associated with the individual's character

\textsuperscript{1} Barner-Barry; Reid; Tejeda
\textsuperscript{2} Goffman
and is considered to indicate individual moral blemish. The third he calls “tribal” stigmas, which are associated with groups, including race, ethnicity, religion, and nations. ³

Some stigmas are concealable, such as minority sexual orientations (LGBTA/Queer), hidden disabilities, non-normative religious identities, and status as a previously incarcerated person, where identity is not inherently discredited but is discrreditable. In other words, individuals with a concealable stigmatized identity have the possibility of avoiding prejudice directed at them by concealing their identity. This is called “passing.” When someone “passes,” there is a disconnect between his or her actual social identity and the “virtual” social identity created by the assumptions made by others. This “passing” may be unintentional or it may be intentional, enabled through the conscious attempts of stigmatized individuals to hide their true social identity.

In cases of concealable stigmatized identity, information control is critically important. For those who intentionally employ a strategy of “passing,” a variety of techniques are often employed. One is to conceal, often intentionally creating biological fictions that can construct a false virtual identity. Another technique Goffman names is “covering,” in which the person employs methods to obscure or hide a stigmatized identity without directly creating a fiction. This technique allows the “normals” to make incorrect assumptions and encourages those assumptions. Another strategy sometimes used is to eschew “passing” and embrace voluntary disclosure, in which the person with the discreditable identity chooses to reveal it in

³ Goffman, p. 4
the hopes of mitigating the consequences. This strategy precludes the dangers of involuntary disclosure, which not only brings about the transformation of the individual’s identity from discreditable to discredited, but also can increase the putative validity of moral failing if the individual is perceived to have “lied” about who he or she is.

Since the publication of Goffman’s *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, a tremendous amount of research has investigated the psychological consequences of “passing” and “disclosure.” The reasons why people with concealable stigmatized identities opt for strategies of “passing” are to avoid the threats of prejudice, social exclusion, and punishment.\(^4\) DeJordy defines punishment as both the bestowing of negative consequences and the withholding of positive consequences for those who have a discredited identity.\(^5\) Punishment directed towards stigmatized individuals include the following: loss of jobs; loss of housing; social isolation and exclusion; abandonment by parents and close others; loss of child custody; loss of promotion and advancement opportunities; loss of professional networking opportunities; status loss; and hate crimes, including violence.\(^6\) Additionally, having a stigmatized identity is directly linked to negative physical and psychological health outcomes.\(^7\)

These dangers are not only theoretical. Pachankis discovered that people with stigmatized identities often have a realistic assessment of hostile environments.

\(^4\) DeJordy; Fuller, Change & Rubin; Jones & King; Link & Phelan; Pachankis; van Dam
\(^5\) DeJordy, p. 514
\(^6\) DeJordy; Fuller, Change & Rubin; Jones & King; Link & Phelan; Pachankis; van Dam
\(^7\) Beals, Peplau, & Gable; Link, Struening, Rahav, Phelan & Nuttbrock; Luhtanen; Quinn & Chaudoir; Pachankis; Rosario, Schirimshaw & Hunter; van Dam
and engage in “passing” behavior based on accurate threat assessment.\(^8\) Similarly, M.A. van Dam discovered that lesbians in the southern United States have less identity disclosure than in other areas because they have fewer protections and their risk is higher.\(^9\) Furthermore, certain professions are strongly tied to individual credibility, such as those who work with children. Here the risk of adverse effects is higher and a greater number of stigmatized individuals choose concealment where possible.\(^10\)

In addition to avoiding negative consequences, individuals who have a concealable stigma may employ a “passing” strategy in order to achieve a sense of belonging with the dominant culture, or to fulfill familial obligations and expectations.\(^11\) Amongst those who disclose, one of the significant risks is that they can lose relationships that are important to them, especially when those relationships were predicated on assumptions that the stigmatized individual had a “normal” identity.\(^12\) Avoiding this situation is a powerful motivation to employ a “passing” strategy.

One of the greatest threats to someone who is “passing,” also known as being “in the closet,” is that they will suffer involuntary disclosure. Beals & Peplau discovered that unintentional disclosure is deeply stressful and that those who discover a concealed stigmatized identity through a third party have a more negative reaction than those who are told through voluntary disclosure.\(^13\)

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\(^8\) Panchankis.
\(^9\) Van Dam
\(^10\) Clair, Beatty & MacLean
\(^11\) Fuller, Chang & Rubin; Newheiser & Barreto
\(^12\) Ragins
Therefore, if a stigmatized individual employing a “passing” strategy is unintentionally exposed, the prejudicial responses are exacerbated. Furthermore, Jones & King discovered that when an individual discloses later in their interactions, the responses tend to be more negative and are characterized by higher levels of suspicion and distrust.14

A significant danger of employing a “passing” strategy is that keeping the stigmatized identity secret reinforces the notion that the identity is objectively shameful because it is worthy of being kept secret. This increases the sense of negative self-evaluation in the person keeping the secret and increases the perception of negative moral status attributed to the stigmatized individual should the true social identity be discovered.15

Perhaps most importantly, “passing” causes a number of important negative psychological effects. The fact that the authentic social identity and the virtual social identity are divergent produces identity dissonance and feelings of inauthenticity that are damaging to the individual.16 The feelings of inauthenticity lead to a greater sense of alienation.17 The constant vigilance required to maintain a separate identity requires a high cognitive load and constant self-control, leading to ego-depletion and exhaustion, which can affect performance.18 The psychological tension of maintaining a dual identity causes increased suspiciousness, cognitive

13 Beals & Peplau
14 Jones & King
15 Pachankis
16 Chaudoir & Fisher; DeJordy; Frable, Platt & Hoey; Jones & King; Newheiser & Barreto; Ragins;
17 Newheiser & Barreto
18 DeJordy; Fuller, Chang & Rubin; Pachankis; Ragins


preoccupation, avoidance, social anxiety, negative self-assessment, and a diminished sense of self-efficacy.¹⁹ All of these psychological effects contribute to challenges across the domains of life.²⁰

Another psychologically problematic effect of “passing” is that individuals who are “in the closet” may experience more unfiltered negative opinions about their hidden stigma on a close scale. Fuller, Change and Rubin discovered that closeted homosexuals were more likely to be exposed to direct homonegativity than their “out of the closet” peers.²¹ These experiences created a feedback loop for the “closeted” individuals, reinforcing their decision that it is not safe to disclose, diminishing their self-esteem, and creating a higher sense of perceived risk, which is related to anxiety and “stigma consciousness.”²² Furthermore, in one study “closeted” homosexual participants also expressed feelings of guilt for not taking the opportunity to challenge the perceptions of the dominant culture about homosexuality and interpreted their own silence as contributing to the violence against homosexuals.²³

The psychological strain of employing a “passing” strategy also creates challenges in relationships. For example, Newheiser and Barreto discovered that although people with concealable stigmatized identities have a preference for hiding rather than disclosing with an intention of increasing their sense of belonging in their social context, in fact hiding reduces feelings of belongings because the

¹⁹ Pachankis
²⁰ Ragins
²¹ Fuller, Chang & Rubin
²² Pinel
²³ Fuller, Chang & Rubin
inauthenticity and a reduction in intimate disclosure. In that study, not only did the “concealer” experience inauthenticity; other people also perceived that lack of authenticity and reacted negatively, even though the specific stigmatized identity was hidden.\textsuperscript{24} In fact, although the motivation for adopting a “passing” strategy is often to avoid the punishment of isolation, the effect of not being able to share an authentic identity and having the strain of making sure that one does not experience involuntary disclosure, are often alienation and isolation.\textsuperscript{25}

Those who employ “passing” strategies are, quite simply, not able to experience the intimacy of having those with whom they interrelate reflect back to them and affirm their true identities and internalize feedback about their genuine selves.\textsuperscript{26} Their relationships are, therefore, always constrained.\textsuperscript{27} This lack of affirmation of the genuine self is both directly psychologically damaging and represents a tremendous opportunity cost. Beals, Peplau and Gable have discovered that disclosure of a concealed stigmatized identity is related to higher self-esteem and more satisfaction with life.\textsuperscript{28} Voluntary disclosure enables individuals to create a coherent and integrated sense of self.\textsuperscript{29} Appropriate self-disclosure is directly related to increased trust, affection, positive psychological affect, and decreased alienation.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{24} Jones & King
\textsuperscript{25} DeJordy; Fuller, Change & Rubin; Pachankis.
\textsuperscript{26} DeJordy; Pachankis
\textsuperscript{27} DeJordy
\textsuperscript{28} Beals, Peplau & Gable
\textsuperscript{29} Chaudoir & Fisher; Clair, Beatty & MacLean; Ragins
\textsuperscript{30} Rosenfeld
However, in order for disclosure to be positively associated with well-being, including physical and psychological health, the reaction the disclosing individual receives has to be positive.\textsuperscript{31} Chaudoir and Fisher discovered that a neutral reaction was not related to any benefit of disclosure, while Hunter found that homosexual teens who encountered negative reactions to disclosure were more likely to subsequently abuse alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana.\textsuperscript{32} In a study of homosexuality and disclosure, the participants reported more negative reactions from family members than from friends.\textsuperscript{33}

Part of the challenge for those who have concealable stigmatized identities is that unless they actively disclose more information than is required by “normal” people they often are unintentionally “passing,” because their peers make incorrect assumptions about them. Therefore, for example, a lesbian has to actively disclose more about her sexuality than is typical for the rest of society in order not to have an incongruent virtual identity.\textsuperscript{34} This results in a loss of privacy and frequent concerns about appropriateness of disclosure, such as whether or not to discuss sexuality in the workplace.\textsuperscript{35}

There are a number of factors and calculations that are antecedent to decisions to disclose a concealed stigmatized identity. Stigmatized identities that have legal protections are more likely to be disclosed. The lack of specific legal protections, especially in the workplace, increases the perception of risk.\textsuperscript{36} Within

\textsuperscript{31} Jones & King; Luhtenen.
\textsuperscript{32} Chaudoir & Fisher; Hunter
\textsuperscript{33} Beals & Peplau
\textsuperscript{34} DeJordy; Ragins
\textsuperscript{35} Cain
the workplace, formal non-discrimination policies that have a history of enforcement increase the likelihood of disclosure, as do transparent hiring and promotion decisions.\(^{37}\) Perceived supervisor and organizational support for non-discrimination, especially if there are other stigmatized individuals in positions of influence, positively affect the likelihood of disclosure.\(^{38}\)

The presence of allies is a critically important antecedent to disclosure. This includes the presence of others who have revealed invisible differences and the presence of "wise" others who are knowledgeable about and supportive of the difference.\(^{39}\) Miller and Berg emphasize the importance of "openers," who are individuals who excel at perspective taking, like people, have low anxiety, high self-esteem, and tend to be open and disclosing themselves. People who are normally low disclosers tend to disclose to an opener.\(^{40}\)

Some people with concealable stigmatized identities may choose disclosure or experience unintentional disclosure when trying to gain accommodations. So, for example, a lesbian may disclose her sexuality in order to request benefits for her same-sex partner, or a person with a hidden disability may have to reveal the disability in order to receive an accommodation in work or school. An unintentional disclosure could result from an employee from a minority religion asking for his or her holy days as leave, such as a Pagan asking for Beltane off each year.

\(^{36}\) Clair, Beatty & MacLean; Ragins; Van Dam

\(^{37}\) Clair, Beatty & MacLean

\(^{38}\) Ragins

\(^{39}\) Clair, Beatty & MacLean; Ragins

\(^{40}\) Miller & Berg
The most important factors individuals consider when determining whether to employ a disclosure strategy are both prior adverse effects experienced by either themselves or similar others and the risk assessment of likely harm.\textsuperscript{41} Reactions to prior disclosures and experiences of rejection directly increase the perception of risk of further disclosures.\textsuperscript{42} Newheiser and Barreto discovered that the perceived risk of negative consequences of a discredited stigmatized identity is directly correlated to the decision to employ a reveal or conceal strategy and Jones and King determined that it is the primary predictor of disclosure.\textsuperscript{43} In fact, the anticipation of negative outcomes itself is directly related to a number of consequences including psychological stress, negative affect, and avoidance.\textsuperscript{44}

When a group of people is stigmatized, such as the “tribal” stigmas of religion or national origin, members of the group may engage in communal activities to determine acceptable information management strategies. Since 9/11, Muslims and people of Middle Eastern descent have faced increased stigmatization.\textsuperscript{45} Through methods such as “backstage rehearsals” and “deep education,” communities have created their range of internally acceptable responses to stigma management and prepare, in advance, for challenges.\textsuperscript{46} The creation of these communal contexts for determining strategies are also venues in which experiences of oppression and discrimination are shared and affect more than just the individual who experienced

\textsuperscript{41} Clair, Beatty & MacLean; Jones & King; Link, \textit{et al.};
\textsuperscript{42} Jones & King; Link, \textit{et al.};
\textsuperscript{43} Jones & King; Newheiser & Barreto
\textsuperscript{44} Link, et. Al.; Pinel; Quinn & Chaudoir;
\textsuperscript{45} Marvasti; O’Brien; Ryan
\textsuperscript{46} O’Brien
the adverse effect. Often the strategies created are “normalizing” and emphasize the similarities, downplaying the importance of the stigma.

Another method of managing a stigmatized identity is to take an activist and resistance strategy. In this type of approach, someone with a concealable stigmatized identity may decide to publicly disclose in order to confront the prejudice, to present the difference of identity as equally valid, and change the stigmatized status.\footnote{Bernstein; Clair, Beatty & MacLean; Levey & Pinsky; Marvasti; Poindexter & Shippy; Ryan} This strategy has been used to great effect by the Gay Pride movement.

A group of professional psychics studied by Evans, Forsyth and Foreman utilized a resistance strategy. Being a psychic is a concealable stigmatized identity in a society in which scientific knowledge is viewed as being legitimate and paranormal beliefs and ways of knowing are not. In the study by Evans, Forsyth and Foreman the psychics were professionals operating in New Orleans. There they experienced a marginalized status both because their ways of knowing are not valued, and they also experienced threats and harassment by the “Bible thumpers” who opposed them on religious grounds. The psychics engaged in resistance, defining themselves through their professionalism and also asserting the validity of “mystical” ways of knowing.\footnote{Evans, Forsyth & Foreman}

Much like the psychics, contemporary Pagans bear two types of stigma. First, their individual practice includes magic and psychism, which is stigmatized as irrational and is, therefore, a stigma associated with individual character and

\footnote{Bernstein; Clair, Beatty & MacLean; Levey & Pinsky; Marvasti; Poindexter & Shippy; Ryan\footnote{Evans, Forsyth & Foreman}}
individual moral standing. Stigmatized identities that are considered “controllable,” meaning that individuals who have them have exercised choice, are judged more harshly than those who have a stigmatized identity that is not considered controllable, such as those who have a physical disability. Almost all Pagans converted from another religion, which means that they have chosen the tainted identity. Furthermore, their religious practices, including magic, are undertaken by choice. Therefore, the stigma associated with the individual character Paganism is considered “controllable” and Pagans likely to be judged more harshly. In addition, as a group of religions, Paganism also bears a tribal stigma in which the whole group is tainted by a suspicious “otherness.”

The academic literature on contemporary Paganism itself is emergent and as yet little research has been conducted related to Paganism and stigma. Siân Reid’s study in Canada, published in 2005, consisted largely of interviews that discussed Paganism as a stigmatized identity, but also indicated that the stigma against Paganism was decreasing. Reid’s study investigated the process of disclosure, or “coming out of the broom closet,” and discovered that it is highly contextual for most participants who choose a disclosure or a “passing” strategy and is based largely on interactional circumstance rather than necessarily representing an overall life choice.

Carol Barner-Barry’s work provides an important legal analysis of the challenges faced by contemporary Pagans in the United States in securing and

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49 Reece; Reid
50 Ragins.
51 Reid
enforcing their rights as a religious minority in "a majoritarian America." She presents a wealth of evidence detailing specific instances in which Pagans' rights have been challenged or infringed. Her wide-ranging analysis covers the obstacles and limitations to legal protections that Pagans face in numerous domains, including the courts, the educational system, the workplace, housing discrimination, and harassment by law enforcement. She provides evidence of instances in which Pagans have been harassed, intimidated, bullied, and violently attacked in hate crimes. Her penetrating analysis makes a clear case that Pagans are a stigmatized minority who suffer real consequences from prejudice, but because it is a qualitative and philosophical treatise about Pagans and the law, it does not provide a sense of the prevalence of these experiences.52

Similar to Barner-Barry's work, Bradford Stewart's law review discusses cases in which he argues that the courts violated the rights of Pagans. The specific cases analyzed include instances in which a Pagan's religious identity was a factor in parental rights, including child custody decisions; employment discrimination; and the use of the stigma of Pagan identity to undermine the credibility of Pagan witnesses as a form of character assassination.53

A recent and important contribution to the literature is Manuel J. Tejeda's set of studies investigating the discrimination of Pagans in the workplace.54 He found that 100% of his sample indicated that they are fearful of discrimination, not just in the workplace, but also in other aspects of society and that they are concerned

52 Barner-Barry
53 Stewart
54 Tejeda
about disclosure. He discovered that Pagans experience pervasive prejudice in the workplace. In particular, participants that are professionals requiring licensure were most worried about experiencing involuntary disclosure. Involuntary disclosure was related to much more serious victimization, but within his sample any disclosure was deleterious. Motivations not to disclose their Pagan identity include exposure to threats of conflict, micro-aggressions and fear of alienation and rejection. The subjects reported high levels of anxiety and hyper-vigilance to maintain their closeted "virtual" social identity. Both covert and overt discrimination, harassment and ridicule in the workplace are common and experienced at rates "that appear to be at least twice as high as the reported discrimination experienced by members from the Abrahamic faiths."\textsuperscript{55} Those who reported involuntary disclosure experienced twice as much victimization as those who voluntarily disclosed. The effects of workplace discrimination against Pagans affect job satisfaction and have career consequences. Additionally, Tejeda discovered that after accounting for covariates, "Pagans still reported earning significantly less than respondents of the Abrahamic faiths."\textsuperscript{56}

**Purposes of this Study**

The current study is exploratory and seeks to illuminate three areas. First, it investigates the prevalence of various types of discriminatory victimization experienced by Pagans as a result of their stigmatized identity. This large-scale,

\textsuperscript{55} Tejeda, p. 18
\textsuperscript{56} Tejeda, p. 16
national survey provides quantitative evidence that complements the work of both Barner-Barry and Stewart that analyze specific instances of discrimination.\textsuperscript{57} Secondly, the study seeks to determine the prevalence and level of perceived risk experienced by Pagans in relation to a number of types of discriminatory victimization. Finally, relationships between the stigmatized identity and disclosure status, also known as “the broom closet,” are explored. It is hoped that this will contribute to the literature by furthering the understanding of the challenges and patterns of victimization faced by this stigmatized, minority population and in suggesting additional areas for further enquiry. It is further hoped that the results of this large-scale national survey will provide baseline data that can be used in the future for determining whether the stigmatization of Pagans in the United States is increasing or decreasing.

\textit{Methodology}

The current study is the third focused area of inquiry that is based on an analysis of data taken from “The Pagan/Witch/Heathen Community Needs Assessment Survey.” This online instrument was designed by the author and conducted through the SurveyMonkey platform (\texttt{www.surveymonkey.com}) from January 23, 2012 through May 1, 2012.

The full survey consisted of 314 information points. Most of the data are nominal and ordinal. Participation was limited to citizens and residents of the United States who were eighteen years of age or older at the time of the survey.

\textsuperscript{57} Barner-Barry; Stewart
The target population for this survey is people who identify as being a practitioner of some form of what goes under the broad umbrella of “contemporary Paganism.” One of the striking characteristics about this religious population is that it largely lacks formal institutional membership structures like churches from which a sample frame could be generated. Additionally, Helen Berger, in “The Pagan Census Revisited,” discovered that 79% of her respondents identified as solitaries. Contemporary Pagans are also considered a hidden population because they are stigmatized and not readily identifiable. Snowball sampling is an appropriate method for studying hard-to-reach populations, such as contemporary Pagans.

This online survey was promoted using a variant of snowball sampling that is appropriate for the medium. After the study was opened, a press release was published on Witchvox (www.witchvox.com) describing the study and providing the link. The author created a public “event” on Facebook that provided information about the survey and the link and asked people to consider participating and inviting others. A number of Pagan blogs picked up news about the survey, published the link and encouraged their readership to participate and share. The link to the survey was widely shared through Facebook and resulted in 3,314 completed surveys, including some U.S. military personnel who were stationed

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59 Tejeda, “Skeletons in the broom closet.”
abroad at the time of completion. All completed surveys were included in the analysis.

The instrument contains several sections: demographic information; information about the respondents’ Pagan identities; activities that comprise overall religious practice; impediments to practice; risk assessment; negative experiences; and questions addressing how the respondents learn and stay connected. The survey was constructed through an iterative process and the author relied on partners from a wide variety of Pagan traditions for corrective feedback. The segments of the survey that address risk assessment and negative experiences were originally constructed by the author from a list of topics generated by reading Pagan literature, especially reports through the Pagan segment of the internet that indicate concern and negative interactions with the dominant population. Part of the researcher’s motivation is to discover how widespread some of these adverse encounters are and the level of risk perceived by Pagans as a result of their Pagan identity and practice. Once a full draft of the entire instrument was created, it was sent out to a list of contacts with instructions to think about their experience and the experiences of anyone they knew and to be sure that the questions were inclusive. They were also asked to comment on any wording that seemed confusing or misleading. After the feedback was received, the instrument was modified and sent out to a second group of contacts with the same instruction, and the survey was revised again.

The segment of the survey that forms the primary basis for the analysis in this study was framed by the following explanation: "This section is about gauging
how likely it is that negative things would happen TO YOU in your current life circumstances as a result of being Pagan/Witch/Heathen. In your current life circumstances do you think you would face any of the following BECAUSE you are Pagan/Witch/Heathen?" The topics were then formulated into rating scale questions that forced a distinction between something being considered a risk or not a risk. Each potential negative effect was listed with the following options: “very unlikely; unlikely; likely; very likely; N/A." Additionally, instances of negative experiences were also captured. Respondents were asked: “Have you ever personally experienced any of the following BECAUSE you are Pagan/Witch/Heathen?” They were given a list of negative experiences with the options: “Yes; No; Unsure.”

The data were analyzed using SPSS. In order to test the severity of the perceived risks, a value of 1-4 was assigned to each of the answers “very unlikely; unlikely; likely; very likely.” In order to analyze the prevalence of risk, those that answered that a risk was likely or very likely were added together and those who answered that a risk was unlikely or very unlikely were also added together, transforming ranked data into nominal data. Relationships between perceived risk and negative experiences were investigated using chi square tests for independence and testing for effect size. Similarly, chi square tests for independence were also used to investigate the relationship between perceptions of risk and negative experiences with a number of demographic variables and responses concerning Pagan identity and reported impediments to practice. Additionally, a comparison of means was performed on some of the measures of risk assessment and certain
nominal variables, such as whether or not the respondent is in "the broom closet," or has already reportedly experienced workplace harassment. Where there was variation that required more thorough analysis, independent sample T tests were utilized to check statistical significance.

In any non-probability sampling methodology, bias is a concern. The survey was conducted and promoted completely online. It is possible that older and poorer people are under-represented. It seems likely that leaders and clergy are significantly over-represented in this sample—of the 3,318 respondents, 989 (29.8%) self-identified as clergy/leaders. Additionally, and perhaps because of the high level of participation by clergy/leaders in this study, solitaries appear to be under-represented. In Berger's latest study, 79% identified as solitary, but only 52% of this sample claim to be solitary, with another 6% transitioning between groups. \(^{61}\) Clergy/leader status has a strong correlation to level of advancement and years in the religion. It is, therefore, likely that this population represents an overall more experienced, committed, and accomplished group than would be found if random selection were possible.

**Limitations to this Study**

The data used in this study is based on self-report and, as such, includes an inherently subjective element. So, for example, a perceived risk may or may not reflect an actual objective risk; however, it does still say something valuable about how the participants perceive their vulnerability. Furthermore, in asking for a report on adverse events experienced "because" of their Pagan identity, it is the

\(^{61}\) Berger for the Patheos and Presentation
participant who made the causal attribution and it may or may not be objectively accurate. Only those who definitely answered “yes” were included in the counts of adverse events, but “unsure” was an option. So, for example, 42 people answered that they were unsure if they had been the victims of domestic violence as a result of their Pagan identity. Presumably they are not unsure about whether they had experienced domestic violence but rather were unsure about whether or not their Pagan identity was a factor in their victimization. It is possible that some respondents incorrectly assigned attribution, but the inaccuracy could go towards either undercounting or over-counting.

**Survey Results and Discussion**

There are several domains in which having a stigmatized identity can affect the life of the individual. The survey focused on perceptions of risk and histories of adverse events in the household and personal relationships; in the workplace; interactions with specific social institutions; and interactions with the public.

**False Accusations**

A potential threat that cuts across all domains listed is the specter of false accusations. The threat of being faced with false accusations has a long history, dating back to charges of blood libel and conspiring with the devil that were leveled in the historical witch persecutions, to the “Satanic Panic” that was especially prevalent in the United States in the 1980’s. Barner-Barry; Reid; Stewart; Wright, Stuart A. “Satanic Cults, Ritual Abuse, and Moral Panic: Deconstructing a Modern Witch-Hunt,” in Helen A. Berger, *Witchcraft*
view the possibility of being falsely accused as a significant risk. One of Tejeda’s participants who worked in childhood education voiced concerns about her identity being discovered, claiming that “I’ve no doubt I’d become a target saying they want to protect their kids. And then bring up Hansel and Gretel.” Of the current sample of 3,318 contemporary Pagans, 39.4 percent (1,306) claimed that in their current life circumstances having false accusations made against them because of their Pagan identity was a risk, with 12.4% (411) saying that such an occurrence would be “very likely.” It is probable that the fear of facing false accusations may interrelate with other risks and adverse events. Given the high prevalence and the possible implication that false accusations could be a method for “legitimating” adverse events rooted in prejudice, a deeper analysis of this fear and an investigation of whether it reflects real experiences is worthy of further research.

**Household and Personal Relationships**

In total, 19.4 percent (643) of the participants are not partnered and 80.6 percent (2,675) are in some form of partnership. This population includes substantial numbers of sexual minorities (N=3,289, Gay/Lesbian = 8.9%; Bisexual = 26.9%; Heterosexual = 62.7%; Celibate Identity/Asexual = 1.6%) and those who have a Transexual/gender non-conforming identity. Therefore, many contemporary Pagans have layered stigmatized identities and, as a group, they are more likely to

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*Tejada p. 10*
live in households that do not meet the structural norms of the dominant society and may not have the same level of legal protections. This situation is changing and numerous states have approved same sex marriage since the time this survey was conducted. However, non-legally recognized domestic partnerships are only one category of household structure that does not have legal protection. Others include poly-amorous partnerships that are household based and long-term households that are comprised of non-romantic partners. Of those participants who provided their gender identity (N=3,272), 72.7 percent (2,378) are female; 24 percent (787) are male; and 4.5 percent (108) are transsexual/gender non-conforming.

Table 1. Household Structure and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status (N=3273)</th>
<th>%Female (N=2378)</th>
<th>%Male (N=787)</th>
<th>%Trans (N=108)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never Partnered</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently single, partnered in the past</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total single</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Domestic Partnership</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-legally recognized domestic partnership</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poly-amorous partnerships</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term household with non-romantic partner(s)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitioning in or out of marriage (engagement/separation)</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Legally Recognized Unions/Households</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Non-Legally Recognized Household Structure</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although, at the time of the data collection, the lack of legal recognition was clearly affecting Gay and Lesbian Pagans the most (49.5%) and almost one third of Bisexual Pagans (32.5%), a significant percentage of Heterosexual Pagans (17.4%) are also in household structures that are not legally recognized. Asexual Pagans are the smallest segment of the sample, but over a quarter (27.5%) are living in non-legally recognized household structures. The fact that so many Pagans are living in households that do not have the same level of legal protection as married households is likely to increase perception of risk about the stigma of Pagan identity in the domain of household and personal relationships. The ways the multiple stigmatized identities experienced by many Pagans interact is worthy of deeper investigation.

Table 2. Household Structure and Sexual Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status (N=3257)</th>
<th>%Gay/Lesbian (N=289)</th>
<th>%Bisexual (N=879)</th>
<th>%Heterosexual (N=2038)</th>
<th>%Asexual (N=51)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never Partnered</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently single, partnered in the past</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Single</strong></td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Domestic Partnership</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Legally Recognized Unions/Households</strong></td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-legally Recognized Domestic Partnership</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total in</strong></td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the 80.6 percent (2,675) of participants who have partners, 27.4 percent (734) of the partners are Atheist/Agnostic, which is the most prevalent religious orientation for the partners. By comparison, only 11.9 percent of the overall population in the United States identify as atheist or agnostic. Although 76 percent of the overall population are Christian, only 19 percent (507) of people who are partners with Pagans adhere to a form of Christianity.64 Because many Pagans have multiple religious identities, participants were permitted to choose as many as were relevant for their partners, as well as for themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marriage/Marriage-like Arrangements</th>
<th>5.2</th>
<th>11.0</th>
<th>2.7</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poly-amorous partnerships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term household with non-romantic partner(s)</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitioning into or out of marriage (engagement/separation)</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Non-Legally Recognized Household Structure</strong></td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

64 “Table 75: Self-Described Religious Identification of Adult Populations.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Identity</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pagan</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaman</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strega</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiccan (Lineage-Based)</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiccan (Self-Identified)</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witch</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Religion/Atheist/Agnostic</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unitarian</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainline Protestant</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox Christian</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentalist/Evangelical</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reform Jew</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Jew</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox Jew</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taoist</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confucian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribal Religion</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shinto</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data seem to suggest that Pagans, who are a small religious minority, find religious differences between themselves and the dominant religion in the country to be salient in their partnerships, preferring partnerships with those who do not adhere to any religion at all to those who are Christian.

Many participants reported past adverse events in the household and personal relationships that they attributed in some way to be “because” of their Pagan identity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adverse Event</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tension without confrontation in your household</td>
<td>1271</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arguments in your household</td>
<td>1090</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These data indicate that, for Pagans who are partnered, their stigmatized Pagan identity is a potential source of strife in their personal relationships and households. There is no strong, statistically significant relationship between any particular religious identity of the partner and the adverse events. Although the most potent forms of negative events (domestic violence and having the Pagan identity influence a negative custody decisions) are comparatively rare, they are not unimportant and, combined with the rather high relative prevalence of reported emotional and mental abuse, probably affect the level of perceived risk for the greater community since known adverse effects of similar others is a strong contributor to perception of risk.65

Concerning perceived risk, participants were asked to assess how likely they believe it to be that they might personally experience a particular adverse event in their current life circumstances as a result of their Pagan identity. They rated the risk as “very unlikely,” “unlikely,” “likely,” or “very likely.” In the table below, likely and very likely responses are combined to demonstrate whether the participants, in the aggregate, think there is a real risk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Adverse Event</th>
<th>Total Likely/Very Likely (N=3318)</th>
<th>% Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice from family members</td>
<td>1848</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice from friends/potential friends</td>
<td>1501</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice from potential romantic partners</td>
<td>1155</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

65 Jones & King; Link et.al.
Among those respondents who are parents, there is more concern about the possibility of negative legal custodial decisions, with 28.2 percent of Pagan parents listing this as a risk, and 12.8 percent considering negative legal custodial decisions to be a very likely outcome. Possible bullying concerns Pagan parents, with 43.4 percent believing that it is likely or very likely that their children will be bullied because of their parent’s Pagan identity and 15.7 percent believing this possibility to be very likely. This may partially explain why 34.6 percent of this sample who are parents are not raising their children as Pagans.  

There are a number of relationships between the experience of adverse effects in the household and perceived risk that are of particular concern. Those who have experienced domestic violence as a result of being Pagan are more likely than those who have not to believe they will be denied housing because of their Pagan identity, ($X^2(1, N=3310) = 48.891, p < .000, \phi = .122$). They are more likely to believe that their Paganism will factor into a negative divorce decision, ($X^2(1, N=3310) = 33.705, p < .000, \phi = .101$). They are also more likely to believe that they will be denied appropriate social services ($X^2(1, N=3310) = 38.448, p < .000, \phi = .108$). Similarly, they are more likely to believe that they will be denied appropriate healthcare on the basis of their Pagan identity ($X^2(1, N=3310) = 54.961, p < .000, \phi = .129$). Finally, they were more likely to believe that they will experience false

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66 Reece, obstacles
accusations being made against them as a result of being Pagan \((X^2(1, N=3310) = 58.478, p < .000, \phi = .133)\).

Those who have experienced mental and emotional abuse as a result of being Pagan are similarly more likely to believe that they have a greater risk of being denied housing \((X^2(1, N=3310) = 100.366, p < .000, \phi = .174)\); have their Paganism factor in a negative divorce decision \((X^2(1, N=3310) = 85.501, p < .000, \phi = .161)\); be denied appropriate social services \((X^2(1, N=3310) = 133.386, p < .000, \phi = .201)\); and be denied appropriate health care because of being Pagan \((X^2(1, N=3310) = 109.540, p < .000, \phi = .182)\). Like victims of domestic violence, they are more likely to perceive a greater risk of having false accusations made against them because of their Pagan identity, \((X^2(1, N=3310) = 230.367, p < .000, \phi = .264)\). Those who have experienced mental and emotional abuse because they are Pagan are more likely than those who have not to believe that they will face prejudice from potential partners \((X^2(1, N=3310) = 102.777, p < .000, \phi = .176)\); from friends or potential friends \((X^2(1, N=3310) = 138.702, p < .000, \phi = .205)\); and from family members \((X^2(1, N=3310) = 107.761, p < .000, \phi = .180)\). This, therefore, indicates a greater likelihood of social isolation.

These patterns complicate the lives of those living in abusive relationships. In order to leave such a relationship, the person may need to find new housing, initiate divorce proceedings, seek social services and medical care, and may require greater support from friends and family. Thus Pagans who are abused in their domestic relationships because they are Pagan have less confidence in their ability to receive necessary support because of prejudice. Therefore, the data suggest that
the prejudice associated with the stigmatized identity of being Pagan creates a feedback loop in which those Pagans who are being abused have greater perceived risk of adverse effects due to stigma that is directly related to the required support and activities for leaving an abusive relationship. This is an area worthy of further research in those fields, such as social work and psychology, which are concerned with creating strategies to combat intimate abuse.

The risk of social isolation as a result of prejudice is a real concern for the participants in this study. When asked from whom they hide their practices, 56.3 percent of the sample hide their practices from someone. Almost as many (55.7 percent) respondents consider it likely or very likely that they will face prejudice from their family members and 45.3 percent expect to face prejudice from friends or potential friends. These data suggest that many Pagans may adapt a strategy of “passing” in order to avoid alienation and isolation, but research indicates a heavy psychological cost of such a strategy and that it often does not work. Therefore, these results indicate that prejudice against Pagans is probably causing real interpersonal and psychological harm to members of this religious minority.

**Work Environments**

According to *The American Time Use Study*, most Americans spend more of their time awake in their workplace than with their families. Therefore, the
workplace is the social context in which most Pagans spend the most time. Because most Pagans are dependent upon their employment for their livelihood, the threat of adverse events resulting from prejudice in the workplace not only has social ramifications, but can directly impact material well-being. In his pioneering study, Manuel Tejeda found that

[...]he findings expose the marginalization and discrimination of a religious minority within the United States whose society and constitutional establishment seek an unrestricted practice of religious belief with the expectation that individuals of faith should be free from fear of persecution. The current study found both qualitative and quantitative empirical support for widespread workplace discrimination against Pagans.\(^69\)

Many Pagans in the current study do perceive that their Pagan identity puts them at risk for discrimination in the workplace.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Adverse Event</th>
<th>Total Likely + Very Likely (N=3318)</th>
<th>% Total Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not hired for a job</td>
<td>1375</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment in the workplace</td>
<td>1238</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denied promotion or a raise</td>
<td>1079</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fired from a job</td>
<td>843</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data suggest that participants view the greatest risk as being labeled and rejected prior to having the opportunity to prove themselves to be worthy employees. They are also concerned that they will face additional hurdles within the formal processes of promotions, raises and termination, but participants do not perceive those risks to be as prevalent as the danger of being discredited prior to hire.

\(^{69}\) Tejeda, p. 17
The fact that 37.3 percent of the sample believes they are at risk for harassment in the workplace as a result of being Pagan suggests a widespread problem of hostile work environments encountered by this vulnerable population. Tejeda's study found that harassment and ridicule in the workplace were not uncommon.70

The perception of risk of prejudicial treatment in the workplace reported by participants is greater than the reported number of participants who claim to have experienced adverse events in the workplace, but those numbers are still quite high and confirm Tejeda's findings. Of the 3,318 respondents, 22.5% (747) claim that they have experienced workplace discrimination as a result of being Pagan. Beyond just ridicule, 13.4 percent (443) of respondents claim to have experienced threats or intimidation in the workplace. Not surprisingly, there is a positive relationship between those who have a history of experiencing an adverse event in the workplace and a heightened perception of risk of future adverse events in the workplace. For example, there is a moderate relationship between having experienced workplace discrimination and being more likely to believe that one's Pagan identity might result in being denied a promotion or raise ($X^2(1, N=3303) = 323.461, p < .000, \phi = .313$).

Probably resulting from the perceived risks of facing prejudicial encounters in the workplace, 35.4 percent (1176) of the sample hide their practices from their co-workers and/or employers. Additionally, as discussed in a previous article, 56.5 percent (1876) identify the fact that their holidays are not recognized by their

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workplace as an impediment to their religious practice.71 The issue of information control in relationship to religious holidays is a potential conundrum. In order to receive the same benefits as other religions, a Pagan employee may have to disclose her/his identity in order to be excused from work, which could result in adverse events resulting from the stigma associated with a Pagan identity. A Pagan employee who chooses to remain “in the broom closet” may ask for the same holy days off without disclosure, but if the employment period is of sufficient length, this could lead to involuntary disclosure if someone realizes that the employee takes Pagan holidays off each year, and involuntary disclosure has the worst outcome.72 A Pagan employee may, therefore, choose not to take her/his holy days off from work, which may negatively affect the individual’s religious practice.

Social Institutions

Prejudice from stigma can also affect the quality of life experienced by the stigmatized individuals by coloring their interactions with the institutions that comprise our society. Some institutions, such as our educational system, dramatically affect future opportunities for employment and, consequently, material well-being, as well as being a significant context for psychological and social development. Institutions such as social services and the health and medical professions offer critical support to citizens in situations in which they are particularly vulnerable. The political system, the courts and the military are all

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72 Tejeda
institutions of state in which, in a putatively democratic society, all citizens should have equal voice and equal responsibility and be assured that their essential rights are upheld.

The educational system is of special importance because the compulsory education of minors is one of the primary channels for socialization. It is also largely determinative of future educational and employment opportunities. Interestingly, as discussed in a previous article, conflict with the dominant culture's educational system and Pagan beliefs and practices is both highly prevalent and ranked as the most important obstacle to practice by this sample. A past history of discrimination in educational institutions because of being Pagan was reported by 15.9 percent (528) of the sample. The perceived risk of facing harassment in educational systems was higher, with 37.3 percent (1,239) indicating that it was likely or very likely. This instrument was largely intended to be exploratory and did not make a distinction between the years of compulsory education and higher education, nor did it elucidate more details about the nature of the discrimination or potential harassment. Given the central importance of the dominant culture's educational system both in terms of socialization and as the primary credentialing body that largely determines the scope of employment opportunities, this is an area that is worthy of further, focused research.

The educational system is also one of the main arenas through which individual citizens develop social networks that may lead to opportunities, but it is not the only social institution to do so. Many voluntary organizations not only

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provide opportunities for members to create a greater sense of meaning in their lives, but also function as centers for networking, which can lead to increased status and opportunities. When asked to assess the likelihood that their Pagan identity would lead to being denied membership in voluntary organizations, 32.6 percent (1,082) of the sample said that they believed it was a real risk.

The fact that Pagans who are in abusive relationships are more likely to believe that they will be denied appropriate social services and healthcare because they are Pagan has already been discussed. Within the overall sample, 21 percent (696) state that being denied appropriate social services because they are Pagan is a risk, whereas 14.1 percent (467) believe they are likely or very likely to be denied appropriate health care as a result of their stigmatized identity. The perception of risk for being denied appropriate healthcare was one of the lowest assessments of risk with almost half (48.5 percent, 1,608) believing it to be very unlikely that a Pagan would be denied appropriate healthcare because of being Pagan. This reflects a reasonably high level of confidence in the healthcare system, but those who are in abusive relationships have less confidence.

Participants were asked whether or not they believed that their Pagan identity would negatively affect their service in government. In hindsight, this question should have been rephrased and broken into multiple questions. It is unclear whether the respondents were answering if they believed that their Pagan identity would be held against them if they should work professionally in the civil government or if they were responding to the likelihood that Pagan identity would negatively affect any Pagan’s ability to be elected. However, of the 78 respondents
who are Pagans employed in the civilian government, 29.5 percent (23) stated that it is likely or very likely that their Pagan identity would negatively affect their service in government. Given that the level of protection and scrutiny of treatment of protected classes is often greater in civilian government than in the private sector, this is noteworthy. In a representative democracy, prejudice that prevents groups from full participation is an important threat to the integrity of government and can have a dampening effect on citizen engagement. Whether the prejudice that Pagans experience leads to a loss of confidence in the government and lower levels of political participation is worthy of investigation.

There were 31 current members of the military in this sample. When asked how likely they believe it to be that their Pagan identity would negatively affect their military service, 41.9 percent (13) believed it to be a risk, with 22.6 percent (7) saying that such an effect is “very likely.” There is some recent documented history of both prejudice against Pagans in the Armed Forces and some attempts to redress these issues.74

The judicial system, including law enforcement, the courts, and the prison system, holds the disciplinary authority of the state. Its primary functions are to ensure that the rights of citizens are upheld, including the right to safety, and to stop those who would violate those rights. The courts, which are not beholden to a majoritarian electorate in the same way as the legislature, have often been the best venue available to oppressed minorities. However, stigmatized minorities often also

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have troubled relations with the judicial system in terms of prejudice in law enforcement and by judges and juries.\textsuperscript{75} Because of the capacity for the judicial system to use the power of the state to seize a person’s property, to take her/his children, deny an individual’s physical freedom through imprisonment, and even to legally kill a citizen, it is essential that minorities be safe from prejudice in this domain.

The most prevalent area of concern for Pagans regarding law enforcement is that 56 percent (1,858) believe it is likely or very likely that their ritual tools would be classified as weapons. Many Pagan traditions include within their sacred rites the use of consecrated daggers (athames), swords, and spears.\textsuperscript{76} This finding suggests an anxiety that should a rite be interrupted or should a Pagan be stopped going to or from a ritual, the lack of knowledge on the part of a law enforcement officer could lead to negative consequences.

Over a third (34.1 percent, 1,133) of the respondents expressed that having their rites disrupted by law enforcement is a real possibility. Most Pagans worship in private residences and 32.4 percent (1,076) of this sample hide their practices from their neighbors.\textsuperscript{77} It is likely that fear that their neighbors will have law


\textsuperscript{76} Davy; Magliocco in Lewis; Baker in Lewis; Lewis encyclopedia

\textsuperscript{77} Berger, A Community of Witches; Davey, Introduction to Pagan Studies.
enforcement disrupt their rites is part of the motivation for concealing Pagan practice. The potential for harassment by law enforcement is also a concern held by many Pagans. These data cannot answer why so many Pagans fear harassment by law enforcement. It may be the legacy of the “Satanic Panic” or could be related to the fear of false allegation reported by 39.4 percent (1,306). Whatever the reason, 29.4 percent (974) of the sample considers it likely or very likely that they will face some form of harassment by law enforcement.

Moreover, 41.1 percent (1,364) believe that their Pagan identity would result in prejudice in criminal procedures should they be accused of a crime. Again, given the severity of potential consequences in criminal proceedings, this is an alarmingly high proportion of Pagans who are expressing a lack of confidence in fair treatment in the criminal justice system.

As mentioned previously, within the context of family law, 28.2 percent (487, N=1,724) of Pagan parents believe their Pagan identity could lead to a negative legal custodial decision. Of those Pagans who were legally married at the time of the survey (N=1,448), 20.2 percent (293) believe that their Pagan identity could be used against them in a legal divorce decision. In all of these cases, the majority of Pagans believe that their Pagan identity would not be effectively used to prejudice the courts against them; however, given the magnitude of potential consequences, the numbers indicating a lack of confidence in the judicial system are disturbingly high, and developing a better understanding of the specific reasons for this lack of confidence is an important topic for further investigation.
The Public

Outside of organizational domains, stigmatized minorities may experience prejudice and adverse effects from the public. The direst example is violent hate crimes. Fortunately, there are few members of the sample (0.7 percent) who reported having been the victim of a violent hate crime because they were Pagan, and yet, 22 people being victimized is 22 too many. The reported fear of violent hate crimes, as detected in perceptions of risk, is far greater, with 31.9 percent (1,060) believing it likely or very likely that they might experience such a crime as a result of their Pagan identity. Of that number, 10.8 percent (357) believe it to be very likely.

This high prevalence of fear of violent hate crime is likely related to the more common frequency of receiving threats or being intimidated in public, which was reported as a past experience by 22.6 percent (749) of the respondents combined with the likely effect of stories of harassment being shared among the Pagan communities. Most Pagans were not raised in Paganism, and threats and intimidation from the religion of their birth is also a concern. Approximately 4% of the sample identify as both Christian and some form of Pagan and another 80.9 percent (2,685) converted from Christianity. Receiving threats or being intimidated by members of a previous religion or current non-Pagan faith was reported by 21.9 percent (725) of the participants. Of the 725 who have been the victims of threats or intimidation from a former or current non-Pagan religion, 25.9 percent (188) left a fundamentalist or evangelical form of Christianity, which is

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more than statistically would be expected and was confirmed to be significant using a chi square test for independence ($X^2(1, N=3297) = 85.567, p < .000, \phi = .161$).

Given the prevalence of experiences of harassment, it is perhaps not surprising that 39 percent (1,294) consider it to be likely or very likely that they will be harassed in public on account of their Pagan identity. Interestingly, an even higher proportion, 45.1 percent (1,497) of the participants, consider it likely or very likely that their rites will be disrupted by members of the public. It is unclear if this is expressing a perception of risk for the kinds of public rites that are sometimes held at Pagan Pride Days that may draw protestors, if this is expressing concerns about neighbors disrupting private rites, or if this is an expression of concern about something more specific. Instances of both private rites being disrupted and public rites being disrupted are reported by Barner-Barry.\(^79\) However, since this question was meant to be exploratory and it did reveal a high level of concern, the dynamics of various forms of public harassment of Pagans is worthy of further investigation.

The Broom Closet

As discussed by Tejeda, the "broom closet" is real.\(^80\) The "broom closet" is the colloquial term used by many Pagans to express using a "passing" strategy to avoid the effects of prejudice. The evidence thus far discussed also indicates that both the threats of adverse effects as a result of bearing a stigmatized identity are real and the perceptions of risk associated with a Pagan identity are not insignificant. Many

\(^79\) Barner-Barry  
\(^80\) Tejada
contemporary Pagans conceal their Pagan identity in order to avoid the effects of stigmatization, but, as discussed, concealing one's identity comes at a cost. Of the sample, 43.7 percent (1,450) of the participants said that they do not hide their religious practices from anyone, while 56.3 percent (1,868) hide their practices in at least some domains. However, when asked whether or not they were "in the broom closet," 58.7 percent (1,949) claim to be out in most domains, including work. This situation is even murkier because 60.8 percent (2,018) of the sample identify having to hide their practices because of prejudice to be an impediment to their practice.  

It is difficult to know how to interpret this diversity of answers from a single data set other than to acknowledge that disclosure of stigmatized identity is more complex than a binary answer of "in" or "out" of the "broom closet" and that considerations of information management of identity is highly concerning to Pagans, whichever strategies they may adopt.  

There are many factors influencing whether a Pagan chooses to conceal or reveal that identity. In Tejeda's study, professionals were more likely to adopt a non-disclosure strategy. This survey supports that finding, although the effect size is small. A chi square test for independence revealed that among those who are currently employed, Pagans who are professionals were more likely to be in the broom closet ($X^2(1, N=1983) = 12.014, p < .001, \phi = .078$).  

A chi-square test of independence was performed to determine the relationship between having a partner who was identified as "Pagan" and choosing a  

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81 Reece obstacles  
82 Tejeda
strategy of disclosure. The relationship had a small effect, but was statistically
significant, \( \chi^2(1, N=3275) = 50.374, p<.000, \phi = .124 \). Participants who are partnered
with Pagans are more likely to be out of the broom closet in most of their life than
those who are partnered with non-Pagans.

There is also a direct relationship between self-reported level of
advancement in a Pagan tradition and whether or not one chooses to adopt a
disclosure strategy. People who rank themselves as intermediate are more likely to
disclose than those who rank themselves as beginners, and those who rank
themselves as advanced are more likely to be out of the broom closet than those
who identify as intermediate (\( \chi^2(2, N=3261) = 230.151, p <.000, \phi = .266 \)). It seems
a likely conjecture that as Pagans advance in their expertise, Paganism will have
greater saliency in their actual identities, generating a higher psychological and
social cost to adopting or maintaining a "passing" strategy. This theory cannot be
tested with the current data, but if it is correct, it could explain why those who are
more advanced are more likely to reveal their status as Pagans. It is also possible
that those who are more advanced are more likely to feel a responsibility to engage
in an activist and resistance approach to their identities.

Those who are "out of the broom closet" report more adverse events as a
result of their Pagan identity, as tested by chi square tests for independence in some
domains, but the effect sizes are relatively small. Those who are "out of the broom
closet" do report having experienced more workplace discrimination (\( \chi^2(1,
N=3275) = 16.545, p <.000, \phi = .071 \)); more discrimination in educational
institutions (\( \chi^2(1, N=1983) = 16.974, p <.000, \phi = .072 \)); and more threats and
intimidations in public ($X^2(1, N=3275) = 50.119, p < .000, \phi = .124$). The other adverse events were not clearly related to being in or out of the “broom closet.”

In some categories, those who are “in the broom closet” have a greater perception of risk than those who are “out of the broom closet,” as measured on a four point scale in which any thing over a 2.0 indicates an aggregate assessment of risk. The following were verified for statistical significance using Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances and a t-test of Equality of Means. The statistical significance of each is .000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Broom closet</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice from friends/potential friends</td>
<td>In broom closet</td>
<td>1326</td>
<td>2.5287</td>
<td>.96989</td>
<td>.02663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Out of broom closet</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>2.19551</td>
<td>.00218</td>
<td>.02270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False accusations made against you</td>
<td>In broom closet</td>
<td>1326</td>
<td>2.3884</td>
<td>.95758</td>
<td>.02630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Out of broom closet</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>2.1806</td>
<td>.97411</td>
<td>.02206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment by law enforcement</td>
<td>In broom closet</td>
<td>1326</td>
<td>2.1131</td>
<td>.94091</td>
<td>.02584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Out of broom closet</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>1.9779</td>
<td>.94620</td>
<td>.02143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given that studies of other stigmatized populations indicate that those who are most vulnerable tend to adopt a “passing” strategy as based on an accurate reading of risk, it is likely that the increase perception of risk held by those who are in the broom closet is related to their real situations. This is, of course, particularly
concerning because it means that the most vulnerable are most likely to adopt a “passing” strategy, with a greater risk of involuntary disclosure and its worse outcomes, and to bear the additional psychological strain required to avoid involuntary disclosure. A more sensitive instrument might reveal more about both experiences and perceptions of risk between those who are and are not adopting a disclosure strategy. This is an important area of inquiry and would be worthy of further, focused studies.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research

The results of this study provide quantitative evidence confirming that contemporary Pagans within the United States experience prejudice as a result of bearing a stigmatized identity and it attests to considerable anxiety on the part of many Pagans concerning possible threats arising from their stigmatized identity. Furthermore, it verifies that information control and whether to adopt a “passing” strategy or to disclose the stigmatized identity is a complex and salient issue for contemporary Pagans.

Throughout the analysis, avenues for additional research have been suggested, but there are a few overarching areas worthy of further enquiry. The results of this study show that being Pagan is a concealable stigmatized identity and prior research has demonstrated that other populations managing concealable stigmatized identities experience deleterious effects to their well-being as a result. It is likely that Pagans suffer similar deleterious effects in regards to their physical

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health and psychological well-being, but this cannot be confirmed with the data from this study. This is an area deserving of further study.

Similarly, research on other concealable stigmatized populations indicate that disclosing the stigmatized identity leads to better outcomes for psychological well-being when it is safe to do so. Research on other groups has demonstrated which factors are antecedents for both disclosure and for positive outcomes for the disclosing individual. Much of this literature has been conducted on minority sexual orientations. Whether or not the patterns regarding disclosure hold true for Pagans is worthy of further research.

This study furthermore revealed that Pagans are concerned with information control and disclosure, and that their collective relationship to issues of disclosure is complex and not adequately described simply in binary terms. The common assumption from Goffman to the present is that those who adopt a “passing” strategy do so to avoid the effects of prejudice. The literature on other concealable stigmatized identities suggests that sometimes the motivation for disclosure is in order to take an activist stance. This study cannot discern the motivations of individuals in adopting disclosure or “passing” strategies. An important area for future research is to investigate in more depth the phenomena of the “broom closet” and the motivations of Pagans in relationship to varying situations of disclosing and concealing their Pagan identities.

Finally, the current study provides a snapshot of reported adverse events and perceived risks for a stigmatized identity. It is hoped that future studies will
provide additional data and allow longitudinal studies that can track trends for these issues over time.

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