Real Men Know Everything: Examining celebrity-driven anti-trafficking campaigns

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For every political issue, it seems that there is a celebrity spokesperson. Film star Susan

Sarandon is a regular speaker at the March for Women's Lives, which supports reproductive

rights. Pop star Madonna created the charity "Raising Malawi" to draw attention to children's

health and education in the African country. And basketball star LeBron James has spoken

publicly against racist policing practices in the United States. While it may be easy to dismiss

these actions as mere examples of celebrity self-promotion, one cannot deny that celebrities like

Sarandon, Madonna, and James are also acting as "norm entrepreneurs"—individuals interested

in challenging and changing norms, broadly defined as beliefs about appropriate behavior for

actors with a given identity (Kangas, Mikko, and Varjonen 2014, Sunstein 1996).

Examining celebrities' norm entrepreneurship is important in this "late modern" or "late

democratic" moment, defined by technological advances, elite dominance of (and public

disengagement from) the political process, and demands for market-based solutions to social

problems (Bang 2007, Marsh, Hart, and Tindall 2010, Brockington and Henson 2014). Even

though they are not democratically elected, celebrities' high profiles and legions of fans place

them in a unique position to draw public attention to various issues, shape how the public

understands them, and even influence relevant policy developments. In response, political

scientists have examined celebrities' roles and impacts in the American polity and, more recently,

they have considered celebrities' roles as norm entrepreneurs in international politics (Budabin

forthcoming).

This paper builds on this work by looking at celebrity norm entrepreneurship regarding

sex trafficking, a high-profile issue that has captured the attention of journalists, policymakers,

the public, and, of course, celebrities (Haynes 2014). Specifically, I consider a pioneering

example of this norm entrepreneurship: Ashton Kutcher's and Demi Moore's "Real Men Don't

Buy Girls" (Real Men) campaign, which was released in 2011 through YouTube, and featured one-minute videos of prominent male celebrities performing domestic tasks. I use this case to ask what it teaches us about celebrity-driven norm entrepreneurship. Namely, what does it indicate about how celebrities communicate norms to the broader public, and to what effect?

Using interpretive methods of analysis and drawing from literature regarding norm entrepreneurship and celebrities and politics, I argue broadly that Real Men indicates how celebrities may communicate norms through their personas and deployment of various performative strategies. In the case of Real Men, Kutcher et al. create a "common" persona to engage the target population (men who may solicit sex), and their performative strategies involve gendered discourse about what real men "do" to enact and convey a "male responsibility" norm. This gender norm has risen to prominence in recent tears and holds that *men's* participation in prostitution constitutes inappropriate behavior that victimizes (young) women and fuels sex trafficking.[1] However, I argue further, while such norm entrepreneurship may engage audiences, it also reinforces the status quo. In the case of Real Men, this is apparent in how its performative strategies reify highly traditional gender ideologies and notions of sex trafficking—namely, that sex trafficking is a heterosexual phenomenon driven by individual males. The remainder of this paper discusses Real Men's broader lessons about norms, gender, and social change.

Literature Review

Within political science, extensive research exists about norms, norm entrepreneurship, and celebrities and politics. As Finnemore and Sikkink write, norms have been central to the study of politics for at least two millennia. Defined as "standards of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity," norms "embody a quality of 'oughtness' and shared moral assessment" (Finnemore and Sikkink, 891-92). Human societies are marked by their vigorous discussions of

norms, set(s) of shared norms, and means for imposing costs on norm violators (Haidt 2007, Haidt 2001). Effectively, a norm's main purpose is to persuade-- that is, to change actor preferences, or challenge current collective meaning (Payne 2001). However, norms are not "things"—static concepts with fixed boundaries that are taught, internalized, and adopted when codified in to law (Krook and True 2012, Clapp and Swanston 2009). In fact, as I explain more below, norms are vague, fluid and evasive *processes* that are adopted in diverse contexts and framed by diverse actors (Krook and True 2012).

In political science, international relations (IR) scholars have devoted the most attention to norms. Here, scholars in the social constructivist school argue that shared ideas and knowledge are the key building blocks of international reality because they construct common understandings and intentions (Ruggie 1998). Norms—as ideas-- thus set the terms for what is the normal behavior of (nation) states, and they play a key role in explaining the international spread of new policies (Towns 2012). Examples of norms here include the value of science policy (Finnemore 1993); the invitation of foreign election observers (Hyde 2011); and the de-legitimization of landmines (Price 1998), to name just some.

Give the diversity of norms, scholars have devoted considerable attention to how they emerge, spread, and impact international politics. In general, this happens through a three-stage process involving their emergence, acceptance, and internalization, where norms acquire a taken-for-granted quality and are no longer a matter of broad public debate. And two mechanisms dominate explanations of this diffusion in IR scholarship: institutions, where norms are embedded and generated; and advocacy by norm entrepreneurs, who are motivated by principled ideas and seek to change international or domestic behavior (Hyde 2011). This paper, with its focus on celebrities, is concerned with the latter—norm entrepreneurs.

In his study of the social construction of deviance, Howard Becker (1963) coined the term "moral entrepreneur" to describe actors involved in the making, promotion and enforcement of norms. As Adut (2004) summarizes, Cass Sunstein (1996) later termed these actors "norm entrepreneurs," defined as those who are interested in changing social norms, and they include either charismatic individuals or social movements who create or promote new norms. However, norm entrepreneurs not only promote novel norms, they also wage crusades to enforce norms that are already established and codified (Adut 2004). Examples of notable norm entrepreneurs thus include the banker Henry Dumant, whose efforts singlehandedly created and promoted the prevailing norm that medical personnel and those wounded in war be treated as neutrals and non-combatants. Similarly, the international campaign for women's suffrage can be traced to the ideas and efforts of individual women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, among others (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998).

What factors thus motivate these individuals, especially since norm entrepreneurship "involve[s] … risks as well as potential benefits for those who carry th[is] out" (Adut 2004 531)? Norm entrepreneurs have to work within and define their norms against existing (and possibly popular) norms, and as a result they may have to act inappropriately to advance their agenda. For example, to promote voting rights for women, suffragists often chained themselves to fences or engaged in hunger strikes (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). Given these potential costs, Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) argue that while norm entrepreneurs' motivations may be hard to explain, these often involve some kind of reference to empathy, altruism, and ideational commitment.

How, then, do norm entrepreneurs operate? Effectively, they engage in the process of "framing," where they make an issue resonate with relevant audiences by providing a singular interpretation of a particular situation, and then by indicating appropriate behavior for that

context (Nadelmann 1990, Payne 2001, 39). Of course, normative persuasion may not come solely through a frame (for example, it may come through coercion), and frames are often disputed and compete with each other (Payne 2001). But generally, norm entrepreneurs use some sort of organizational platform such as international governing bodies or NGOs to make their frames resonate with the broader public and secure the support of state actors. Then, after norm entrepreneurs have persuaded a critical mass of states to become norm leaders and adopt new norms, the norm has arguably reached a threshold or tipping point, after which it either "cascades" or dies (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998).

Within political science, scholarship regarding norm entrepreneurship has highlighted the actions of "serious" figures-- advocates, academics, and political leaders (to name just some examples). However, this scholarship has devoted less attention to celebrities-- persons who attract large audiences and are well known in the realm of popular culture, including sports, entertainment, and fashion (Lindenberg, Joly, and Stapel 2011, Haynes 2014). Arguably, this omission is reasonable: a quick skim of the news routinely finds celebrities arrested for drunk driving, making unreasonable demands on movie sets, and cheating on their partners, which raises real questions whether they are even capable of normative entrepreneurship of any sort (especially when compared with upstanding figures like Susan B. Anthony). Cynically, one could ague that they do this only to improve their reputations and public images. Yet celebrities have long been part of the American (and global) political landscape, and they are increasingly staking normative claims in the polity. Consequently, they merit scholarly consideration.

Celebrities as Norm Entrepreneurs

In the U.S., celebrity entertainers played a relatively minor role in politics and broader national discourse until the mid-twentieth century, mainly because they were constrained by their

contractual agreements with Hollywood studios, and because Hollywood was on the defensive against government accusations of communism (Demaine 2009, Gamson 1994). In the 1960s, however, the Hollywood studio system was declining and social turmoil was mounting in the United States. All of this set the stage for celebrity entertainers to become politically active, and many embraced this enthusiastically, such as Jane Fonda, who visited Vietnam, and Charlton Heston and Paul Newman, who debated nuclear disarmament on national television (Demaine 2009).

But the decline of the Hollywood studio system is not the only factor explaining celebrities' growing engagement in the polity; as scholars have noted, various conditions of "late modernity" or "post-democracy" have also facilitated this. For one, communication technologies have collapsed the distance between celebrities and ordinary life, as the popularity of reality TV and YouTube attest (Bystrom 2011), and they have also drawn closer links between celebrities and topical issues (Biccum 2011). But as the public has grown closer to celebrities, it has also disengaged from the political process (Brockington 2014). Simultaneously, neoliberal political trends emphasizing market-based solutions to social problems have led states to broaden the discursive arena to incorporate more elites into the policy-making process, including corporate actors, the charitable sector, and celebrities (Bang 2007, Hart and Tindall 2009, Brockington 2014). The result is elite dominance of the political process, where, in part, celebrities use their media expertise to convince the public that they have the answers to the problems they face (Bang 2007, Hart and Tindall 2009).

Since the 1980s, as these conditions have escalated, celebrities have entered the American political realm en masse (Demaine 2009), beginning with Bob Geldof's 1985 recording of "Do They Know It's Christmas" and the related Live Aid concerts in 1985. As

evidence of the growing relationship between communications technologies, celebrities, and the public, Richey documents that "An estimated two billion people watched the concerts, and the telethon raised almost $150 million, the largest ever at that time" (2008 716). Since then, scholars have documented a veritable explosion in celebrities' engagement in a range of causes, including movements regarding conservation and LGBT rights (Meyer and Gamson 1995); electoral politics, including both Democratic and Republican electoral campaigns and get-out-the-vote efforts (Payne, Hanlon, and Twomey 2007, Nolan and Brookes 2013); testimony before Congressional committees (Demaine 2009); and international diplomacy (Choi and Berger 2010), development (Biccum 2011, Brockington 2014), and humanitarian aid (Repo and Yrjölä 2011).

So what is the impact of this veritable celebritization of the polity? On the one hand, celebrities may have a positive impact because their high profiles bring issues to the public's attention (Demaine 2009), and they also provide "information shortcuts" for average citizens (Frizzell 2011). But on the other hand, scholars have documented that celebrities often do more harm than good. They often lack the training and knowledge about the issues they address, and they tend to over-simplify issues (Dieter and Kumar 2008, Demaine 2009). Moreover, they often take attention away from the local activists who are more familiar with and committed to the issues on the ground (Meyer and Gamson 1995, Cooper 2007). As well, celebrities are rarely accountable for the solutions to social problems that they propose (Haynes 2014), and these solutions are often highly commercialized. For example, Project RED, which was founded in 2006 by Bono and Bobby Shriver "to get businesses and people involved in the fight against AIDS,"[2] focuses on chic consumerism, thus masking the social and environmental trade and production relations that underpin poverty, inequality and disease, particularly in Africa (Richey and Ponte 2008).

Yet despite these problems, celebrities *are* a large and growing part of the political landscape. Whether they are speaking out against developing Walden Pond, or encouraging us to vote in an upcoming election, they are trying to change norms—beliefs about appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity. And the emerging scholarship that exists about celebrities' norm entrepreneurship indicates that they may activate and promote norms. Lindenberg et al (2011) examined the effects of a normative message, presented by a celebrity, on a group of college students in Denmark. Although this study is limited in scope, its findings show that "the prestige-generating power of success makes celebrities special and gives them the power to exert normative influence" (2011, 103). Moreover, celebrities may not only activate norms, but *promote* them as well. As Alexandra Budabin (forthcoming) shows in her study of Mia Farrow's activism regarding the Beijing Olympics, celebrities can engage in norm promotion to draw attention to an issue, secure an organizational platform, build state support, and shape policy-making.

This paper builds on this scholarship by considering the communicative aspect of celebrity norm entrepreneurship—namely *how* celebrities convey norms to the public, and to what effect. Here I consider celebrities as "communicative figures" – those who, at a given historical moment, have the necessary symbolic capital to propose an altruistic disposition of acting and feeling as exemplary *public* dispositions for all to share (Chouliaraki 2012, Dyer 2004). However, for all of their symbolic capital, celebrities (contra *InTouch* magazine) are not "just like us"—their good looks, money, and rare talents, for example, make them seem un-relatable to the public. Therefore, as communicative figures, celebrities must create and manage a *persona*—a public image—through strategies of humanization that both domesticate their extraordinariness (so that they seem relatable to the public) *and* construe "an altruistic self that is

compatible with the ethos of humanitarianism" (Chouliaraki 2012, 7). These strategies often include language and actions that emphasize what "we all" have in common (e.g. through phrases such "our common humanity," or "like any mother, I believe…").

When they engage in norm entrepreneurship, celebrities' communicative strategies may also be *performative*. As Judith Butler (2011) writes, a performative is a discursive practice that produces what it names, but it can only do this in reference to the law or accept norm, code etc. that is cited (and thus performed) in the act. According to Lilie Chouliaraki (2012 ,5), performativity thus "acknowledges the transformative force of individualized acts of performance within a matrix of normative relations of power." In the case of celebrities, they may state or advocate for a norm, but this statement (performance) is dialectical —it reiterates the norms that "precede, constrain and exceed the performer," and it is not simply an expression of their own individual will or choice (Chouliaraki 2012). The remaining pages thus examine Ashton Kutcher and Demi Moore's "Real Men Don't Buy Girls" (Real Men) campaign to indicate how, through personas and performative strategies, celebrities may communicate norms, and to what effect.

Methods

To study Real Men, I collected qualitative data and employed interpretive methods of analysis. The data for this project included, centrally, the Real Men videos, which are available at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL95E64A6AEEED5718, and the Facebook page for the Real Men campaign (https://www.facebook.com/dontbuygirls). To understand the context in which the campaign was developed and released, and the responses to its release, I also collected scholarly and news articles about Real Men, many of which are cited below. To understand Real Men's reach and impact, I contacted a representative from the DNA

(Demi and Ashton) Foundation (now THORN Digital Defenders), which sponsored the campaign. They provided me with a list of the campaign's media coverage and a chart (based on their own data) that documents the campaign's reach and impact (See Appendix 1). I also had various email and phone conversations with representatives from THORN. To date, I have not been able to secure a conversation with Mr. Kutcher, Ms. Moore, or their representatives.

To understand how Real Men represents a case of "norm entrepreneurship" and communicates the male responsibility norm to the public, I used interpretive methods of analysis. Put simply, interpretivism takes language and other texts/artifacts seriously and focuses on problems of meaning "that bear on action as well as understanding" (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006: p. xii). However, since interpretations are never fixed, one must also look for actors' (and institutions') specific, situated meanings and meaning-making practices in a given context, while understanding that multiple meanings are possible (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012).

In my analysis, I focused on Real Men's discourse-- the interactive process of conveying ideas, which include normative ideas about "what is good or bad about what is" (Schmidt, 2008: pp. 304-306). Discourse occurs through both images and verbal text (Rose, 2012), and in the Foucauldian sense it can serve a disciplinary function by strongly encouraging subjects to act in certain ways. However, discourse is not a "thing" but a *process*-- it is often conveyed and exchanged among a range of actors in varied contexts (Schmidt, 2010). Often, it is conveyed for the purpose of "social persuasion," where discourse partners—individuals who are respected for their wisdom (or, in the case of celebrities, their talent)-- use language and evidence to support a particular norm or explain a norm violation (Haidt, 2001, 829). Ideally, this social persuasion will evoke different emotions and ultimately encourage individuals to see an issue in different ways (Kahneman, 2013; Haidt, 2001; Greene and Haidt, 2002).

To understand how Real Men conveys the male responsibility norm to the public, I interpreted the campaign materials' normative discourse by immersing myself in their content and surrounding materials, including related news and scholarly articles and websites. Like Mona Lena Krook and Jacqui True, I viewed "norms as anchored in language and revealed by repeated speech acts, leading to a semblance of permanence or institutionalization" (Krook and True 2012, 105). I was particularly attentive to gender ideologies—that is, ideas about the ways power should be arranged and enacted according to the social constructs associated with sexed bodies (Duerst-Lahti 2008). Therefore, when I observed the Real Men videos, I looked for recurring ideas or language to understand and identify normative patterns and themes related to gender and the male responsibility norm specifically (for example, repeated references to types of "appropriate" male behavior) (Marshall and Rossman, 1995; Patton and Patton, 2002). I would list the themes, and then think of the connections among them and how they illustrate celebrities acting as norm entrepreneurs.

Sex Trafficking, Celebrities, and the "Male Responsibility" Norm

Celebrities' concern about sex trafficking emerged in the 1990s, following the UN's Beijing conference, when gender equality norms rose to prominence and diffused widely (Krook and True 2012). At the time, there were efforts to "mainstream" gender analyses and understandings into processes of policy development and political participation (Krook and True 2012, True and Mintrom 2001). Although gender equality has not yet been achieved globally, the norm is promoted by many political leaders and policymakers, by international financial bodies such as the IMF (Katrin Elborgh-Woytek 2013) and the World Bank (where this is now part of the organization's Millennium Development Goals), by major philanthropic organizations such as the Gates Foundation (Gates Foundation 2014), and at meetings of world business and

government leaders, such as the Davos conference (CBS 2013). Not surprisingly, celebrities

have also jumped on the gender equality bandwagon: they are visible, popular, and publicly

influential here, speaking out regarding issues including reproductive rights (e.g. Susan Sarandon

and Whoopi Goldberg), domestic violence (e.g. Charlize Theron, Annie Lenox, Daniel Craig,

Orpah Winfrey, David Schwimmer, Halle Berry), transgender rights (e.g. Laverne Cox), and

women's empowerment (e.g. Beyonce), to name just some.

But among gender equality issues, human trafficking—and sex trafficking in particular—

has become the ultimate *cause celebre.* Human trafficking is defined as "the recruitment,

transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or

other forms of coercion… for the purpose of exploitation" (United Nations 2014). However, in

public discourse the term has become synonymous with (if not eclipsed by) *sex* trafficking,

particularly since the mid-1990s, when increased attention to gender equality broadly highlighted

increased labor migration in response to globalization and the feminization of poverty. All of this

fuelled media coverage of Latin American and Asian women illegally trafficked to work in

brothels in Western Europe, among other locations, including the U.S. (Gozdziak and Collett

2005, Soderlund 2005). This global attention to sex trafficking also coincided with events at the

local level, when various cities faced growing public and political concerns about street

prostitution in newly gentrifying urban centers (Hubbard, 2004; Hubbard et al., 2008), leading to

criticisms from feminist advocates that the resulting arrests targeted far more women than men.

These events raised issues of gender equality: women appeared to be victimized in the sex

industry, and they have always disproportionately bore the burden of arrest for prostitution

offenses.

In order to draw attention to and ameliorate these gender inequalities, a broad-based movement to formed quickly to fight sex trafficking, particularly in the US, a key destination for trafficked victims (O'Brien 2011). Various anti-prostitution norm entrepreneurs, including members of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (catw.org), and journalists such as Nicholas Kristof at the *New York Times*, waged a moral crusade of sorts, facilitating the emergence of what I term the "male responsibility" norm, which holds that men's demand for commercial sexual services harms women, fuels trafficking, and must be punished. To support and promote this norm, advocates worked to frame sex trafficking as an issue of male responsibility by disseminating research and stories through the media about *men* victimizing women in prostitution, and by conflating all prostitution with sex trafficking (Weitzer, 2005; Weitzer, 2010b). In most versions of this story, male "social deviants" force women and girls (paradigmatically from the "Third World," but also "in our own backyard," in the US) into sexual slavery (Chuang 2010).

Although there was (and is) ongoing uncertainty about the scope of sex trafficking (Pinto 2011, Weitzer 2005, O'Brien 2011), celebrities quickly joined the anti-sex trafficking movement by engaging with formal institutions of government, and by acting extra-institutionally. Regarding the latter, as Dina Haynes (2014) documents, in 2005 the State Department named singer Ricky Martin one of its "Heroes Ending Modern Day Slavery," and in 2006 he was invited to testify before Congress about sex trafficking as a "celebrity witness." And in 2012, eight months after learning about sex trafficking from her teenage daughter, actress Jada Pinkett Smith accepted an invitation to address the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the topic. Additionally, celebrities have been active about sex trafficking in international governing organizations, such as the United Nations. As Haynes documents, "Mira Sorvino is Goodwill

Ambassador to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the "guardian" agency for the UN Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. Nicholas Cage was appointed Goodwill Ambassador for Global Justice for UNODC, and … Ricky Martin and Lucy Liu are UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors [regarding issues of] human trafficking and… child sexual exploitation, and Emma Thompson "joined forces" with UN Gift to raise awareness on human trafficking" (Haynes 2014 31). In addition to these collaborations with national and international governing agencies, celebrities have also be part of local government efforts to detect and fight sex trafficking. For example, in New York City, Sarah Jessica Parker and Gabourey Sidibe worked with the Brooklyn DA's office in 2010 to create public service announcements about sex trafficking in Brooklyn (Burger 2010).

Celebrities have also engaged in extensive extra-institutional (public) advocacy about sex trafficking. In just some examples, Jada Pinkett Smith created the website "Don't Sell Bodies" (http://dontsellbodies.org), which provides links to trafficking hotlines, statistics about trafficking, and links to the U.S. federal government's annual *Trafficking in Persons* Report. In another example, actress Emma Thompson focused her attention on "the issue of human trafficking of women and young girls by co-curating an interactive New York City art exhibit." Titled "Journey," the exhibit uses seven shipping containers to chronicle the "seven stages" of a trafficked woman's experience. "Thompson hope[d] that the exhibit helps people understand the plight of those forced to work in human trafficking" (Vo 2010 1).

This list of examples is not exhaustive, but it indicates the great extent of celebrities' engagement with sex trafficking. As the following pages explain, Real Men was one of the earliest normatively entrepreneurial examples of these efforts, as indicated by its use of celebrities, interactive media technologies, and messaging.

Real Men: the personas and performative strategies of celebrity norm entrepreneurship

Kutcher and Moore are celebrities: they are both well known for their work in the entertainment field. Moore is the ex-wife of action star Bruce Willis and a prolific actress in her own right, famous for her performances in film classics such as *Ghost, GI Jane,* and *A Few Good Men.* Kutcher, known for his performances in *That 70s Show* and *Punk'd*, was sixteen years younger than Moore, and when they married in 2005, the tabloids made a production about his integration into Moore's family, regularly featuring photos of Kutcher with Moore's and Willis's three daughters (Scout, Rumer, and Tallulah).

Kutcher and Moore went from prolific entertainers and tabloid fodder to anti-sex trafficking norm entrepreneurs through their development of empathy, altruism, and ideational commitment. This occurred soon after they were married, when Kutcher saw a documentary on *Dateline* about sex trafficking in Cambodia, and this sparked his empathy and altruism for victims. As he declared in a 2011 press release, "I was watching six and seven year old girls be raped for profit… I don't want to live in a world where these things are happening and I'm not doing anything about them" (Kavner 2011).

To "do something" about this issue, Kutcher and Moore had to establish their credibility and create a platform for their norm entrepreneurship. After all, why should the public view the stars of *Punk'd* and *GI Jane* as credible anti-sex trafficking advocates? To bolster their knowledge and demonstrate their ideational commitment, Kutcher and Moore studied sex trafficking and considered their next steps with Trevor Neilson, their "philanthropic advisor." Neilson, a former staffer in the Clinton White House travel office who now runs the Global Philanthropy Group, was an early supporter of Bono's Africa initiative, and he has since helped

steer the charitable endeavors of celebrities such as Barbra Streisand and Angelina Jolie (Holson 2010).[3]

Like many other norm entrepreneurs, Kutcher and Moore used a combination of philanthropic, technological, and organizational platforms to speak against sex trafficking. In 2010, with help from Neilson's Global Philanthropy Group, they created the DNA Foundation (Demi and Ashton Foundation) to save children from child sexual slavery. Kutcher, an early technology investor and enthusiast (he was one of Twitter's first adopters), was then invited to speak at a September 2010 panel on technology, social media, and philanthropy at the Clinton Global Initiative, which "seeks to leverage celebrity influence in the political and entertainment fields to encourage philanthropy in the USA" (Brockington 2014 ,94). Coached by Neilson, he told the assembled group how the DNA Foundation was using social media to combat sex trafficking by helping more women and girls access technology (Huffington 2010). Later, in November 2010, Kutcher and Moore also spoke to the United Nations at a panel announcing the UN-sponsored fund for victims of human trafficking.

Having demonstrated their commitment to the issue, Kutcher and Moore then began to develop a particular persona in order to humanize themselves—after all, as people with extraordinary beauty, talent, and resources, they could not appear out of touch with the public if they were going to convince them to take this issue seriously. Therefore, to show that stars are "just like us," they adopted a "common" persona by affecting the shock and horror that the general public would presumably feel about forcing young girls into sexual slavery. As Laura Holson (2010) reported, Kutcher tearfully told the audience of 500 at the (well-publicized) UN event in November 2010 that "slavery, globally, is a dirty little secret" and that the average age

of a sex slave is 13. Moore also tearfully told a story about a child prostitute she met in LA who was forced to sit in a tub of ice if she did not earn $1,500 per night.

Kutcher and Moore further honed their persona as fellow upset and outraged citizens when they created and launched Real Men at another Clinton Global Initiative event on April 11, 2011. At this event, they framed sex trafficking as an issue of male responsibility. As Kutcher stated (again) at the Clinton Global Initiative, "The average age of a girl involved in the sex trade is 13… And the average man who buys a girl is 30-years-old, has no prior criminal record, and has a well-paying job" (Kavner 2011). And so, according to Kutcher, the "Real Men Don't Buy Girls Campaign" contains a message that specifically addresses the male psyche, which he hoped that others would disseminate. As he said to the audience, "Once someone goes on record saying they are or aren't going to do something, they tend to be a bit more accountable … We wanted to make something akin to a pledge: 'real men don't buy girls, and I am a real man.'"

At this time, the male responsibility norm itself was not new; as noted previously, other advocates promoted it since the 1990s. However, Kutcher's and Moore's Real Men campaign was entrepreneurial in its use of technologies, celebrity figures, and normative messaging. Specifically, Real Men deployed particular performative strategies—gendered, discursive practices—to produce the male responsibility norm, and it did this by referring to the widely acknowledged norm that men are often *irresponsible*. As Table 1, below, indicates, it does this through videos that star and feature various prominent male celebrities (and two female celebrities, Eva Longoria and, occasionally, Jessica Biel) performing a domestic task incorrectly.

<center>**<Insert Table 1 about here>**</center>

These videos all follow a similar format to the most widely viewed video starring Sean Penn and featuring Ed Norton (322,314 views), which is illustrated below, in Figure 1. As the screen shots

indicate, the video opens in a dimly lit wood-paneled living room, where a man with his back to us (Penn) is hunched over an ironing board. Jazzy music plays in the background, and the viewer can hear hissing and see the steam from the iron. The camera turns to face Penn, and then text on the screen appears, read by a deep masculine voice: "Real men know how to use an iron." A pull away shot reveals that Penn is in fact ironing a cheese sandwich. The next shot is overlaid with text that is read by the same deeply masculine voice: "real men don't buy girls". Then Penn reappears, taking a bite out of what is now a grilled cheese sandwich. His face then fades in to a picture frame with the title "Real Man" below it. Then another framed picture of Burt Reynolds appears with the same text, followed by 2 other celebrities (who I did not recognize). Jessica Biel appears next, standing beside a framed picture of Edward Norton, and she says to the camera, "Edward is a real man. Are you?" Then, the screen is black, with text reading, "Take a stand against child sex slavery," and two textboxes below it say, "I am a real man" and "I prefer a real man," with the link "demiandashton.org" below it. An over-laid web prompt encourages the reader to "Click here to create and share your own Real Men video now!"

<center>**<INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE>**</center>

Viewers could also add their own photo and insert themselves into the campaign.[4] According to data obtained from the THORN Foundation (see Appendix 1), the campaign was popular: 1.6 million people participated in it (a representative from the THORN Foundation could not specify the nature of this participation [Interview, January 22, 2015]); traffic to demiandashton.org increased 2,117% in the first week of the campaign; and online mentions of the terms "child sex slavery" and "real men don't buy girls" increased 1,120% and 2,738%, respectively, in the first month of the campaign.

Real Men as (gender) norm entrepreneurship?

Real Men conveys the male responsibility norm to discourage men from soliciting sexual services from girls. However, when we examine the *performative* aspects of this campaign, it becomes clear that Real Men is less an example of norm entrepreneurship, and more a case of norm reification. Recall, per Butler, that a performative is a discursive practice that produces what it names, but this production depends on a reference to an accepted norm (or law, etc.). In Real Men, the discursive practices include statements and videos regarding the slogan "real men don't buy girls." As the pages below illustrate, by stating and showing what "real men" do, the campaign variously produces the idea of a real man by referencing more broadly accepted norms about masculinity and sex trafficking. Yet in so doing, the campaign actually promotes and *reproduces* highly traditional norms about men, sex trafficking, and gender equality.

Let's begin with the campaign's oft-repeated slogan that "real men don't buy girls." This slogan produces the male responsibility norm by referencing the widely accepted norm (codified in laws, popular discourse, etc.) that purchasing sexual services from girls constitutes inappropriate male behavior that must be punished. While few would agree that it is normatively acceptable for anyone to force a girl into sex work, the statement that "real men" do not "buy girls" discursively re-produces more traditional gender norms. Namely, it holds men in the role of a protector, a "tired and harmful trope" (Auguston 2014, 1), while simultaneously presuming "dominative masculinity" (Young 2003) by casting men who engage in prostitution (as johns or pimps) as predators who endanger young girls. In addition to reifying dominative masculinity, Real Men also emphasizes diminutive femininity by objectifying girls and rendering them silent and invisible. Here, girls are cast as young and innocent objects for purchase, not animate human beings, which silences them in public discourse and ignores that young people do exercise agency in the sex trade. For example, they often leave pimps or other facilitators, and they form

friendships and take other actions to protect themselves from violence, such as carrying weapons (Curtis et al. 2008, Marcus et al. 2014). While this agency may be very constrained, it indicates that girls (and boys) in the sex trade are not simply objects for purchase.

Real Men also references the widely held norm that men are incapable of (feminized) domestic tasks and behaviors. This is particularly apparent in the videos, where the men act as clueless individuals who cannot make a cheese sandwich, shave, or do their laundry. As a performative strategy, the ads reference conventional normative beliefs about men's domestic shortcomings to produce their opposite: that men are responsible, capable, and should "know better." But in so doing, Real Men also reinforces more traditional notions of masculinity, namely that men "cannot" perform these domestic tasks that women are presumably able to complete. While one may argue that Kutcher et al. used this performative strategy to engage the audience with humor (presumably, if men watch the ads and laugh, they will be receptive to the normative message about sex trafficking), this strategy has the disturbing effect of likening simple, benign domestic tasks to sex trafficking. In effect, the campaign says that knowing how to use a remote, make breakfast, or ask for directions is akin to knowing that one should not to purchase sexual services from young girls.

By having men perform domestic tasks incorrectly, the campaign also references and reinforces norms of (male) celebrity privilege. Although the ads feature three men of color (Foxx, Drake, and Mustafa), all of the men featured are otherwise privileged by their wealth, able-bodied-ness, and access to networks of other celebrities and wealthy individuals. While one may argue that men in this position should be aware of and advocate for disadvantaged girls, the manner in which they do this demonstrates a lack of sensitivity about the issue. In effect, the ads

"reek of frat boy humor" (Cizmar, Conklin, and Hinman 2011), making light of a serious issue (sex trafficking) in a way that only privileged men could publicly get away with.

Real Men's strategies also reinforce limited notions of sex trafficking. By stating "Real men don't buy girls," the campaign casts the purchase of sexual services (and sex trafficking specifically) as a *heterosexual* phenomenon, where (English-speaking) males are dominative predators who perpetrate the majority of harms against girls (who are always victims in the prostitution transaction). In so doing, Real Men minimizes the fact that boys and queer youth also engage in sex work (Marcus et al. 2014, Curtis et al. 2008), thereby rendering this population invisible. Moreover, by casting sex trafficking as a heterosexual phenomenon driven by individual men, the campaign ignores that men are not the only individuals who may facilitate entry in to the sex trades. In fact, research by Anthony Marcus et al (2014) about sex trade-involved youth in Atlantic City and New York City shows that they often have more complicated relationships with the individuals who facilitate their sex work, and these individuals are not always (violent, older) men. As Marcus et al. write:

> Less violence was reported by youths who were using sex work to contribute to domestic units shared with individuals they described as a "roommate," "partner," "husband," "best friend," or "girlfriend." Given that these relationships often involved an adult who was providing the type of facilitation services typically expected of pimps (e.g., marketing, security, financial services), these relationships were definable under the TVPA[*Trafficking Victims Protection Act*] framework as human trafficking (Marcus et al. 2014 232)

Although Marcus et al's study was based on a limited sample, it indicates that dominative men are not the only individuals who may facilitate sex work and/or sex trafficking. However, Real Men ignores this and, in so doing, reinforces a narrow understanding of the individuals that young people engage with in the sex trades.

Real Men's reiteration of the male responsibility norm also references neoliberal norms of individual responsibility, thereby minimizing the broader structural factors that motivate young people to engage in sex work. Extensive research indicates that many young people begin trading sex because they have left unstable homes, and/or they need food, clothing, shelter and other resources; less often, they are bribed and kidnapped by individual pimps and johns (Curtis et al. 2008, Marcus et al. 2014, Phoenix 2002). Arguably, the broader public provision of food, shelter, education, and other resources would do more to limit young peoples' entry into sex work. However, Real Men performatively undermines this reality by emphasizing individual men's roles in perpetuating the sexual exploitation of young girls.

Concluding Discussion

Ashton Kutcher's and Demi Moore's Real Men campaign raises questions about celebrity norm entrepreneurship: namely, how do celebrities communicate norms to the broader public, and to what effect? As the previous pages demonstrated, this paper argues that celebrities act as communicative figures that may deliver normative messages through their creation of a persona, and through their deployment of various performative strategies. In Real Men specifically, the celebrities use a "common" persona and refer to stereotypical gender norms in order to promote a "male responsibility" norm. But in so doing, the campaign actually reifies more traditional gender norms and limits understandings of sex trafficking. The remainder of this paper discusses these findings' implications for norm and celebrity politics scholarship, and for how we think of norms and social change more broadly.

First, this paper adds to scholarship about norm entrepreneurship by considering celebrities, who have largely been ignored here. Of course, there are good reasons for this omission: celebrities are unelected; they are not issue experts; and they seem superficial,

especially compared the norm entrepreneurs who have been subjects of scholarly attention. However, a quick glance at any news outlet or political venue routinely features a celebrity speaking out against genocide (George Clooney) or calling on global leaders to address public health problems (Sharon Stone), among other issues. Effectively, these celebrities are engaging in norm entrepreneurship, and while we may roll our eyes at this, the growing volume of celebrity norm entrepreneurs is hard to ignore. Therefore, as Dan Brockington so trenchantly notes, "The study of celebrity is not a shallow or trivial exercise. … If it is vacuous, then we need to explain its popularity and success. Rubbish may be rubbish, but the study of rubbish is scholarship" (Brockington 2014 88).

In studying the arguable rubbish of celebrity norm entrepreneurship, this study goes beyond indicating that celebrities do engage in norm entreprenurship (as others have already done so well) to look at the *details* of this activity. Namely, the paper highlights celebrities' communicative strategies—how they deliver norms to the public, and to what effect. Examining this is important because while celebrities may not be the most qualified spokespeople for a particular issue, they are often highly skilled communicators with access to vast networks of adoring fans (Demaine 2009). In the case of Real Men specifically, the featured celebrities endeavored to communicate the male responsibility norm through a persona that humanizes them in the public eye, and through performative strategies that produce the idea of male responsibility by referencing existing norms about male behavior. However, this norm communication is also problematic. Although Kutcher et al. were likely well-intentioned, the campaign ultimately reified various stereotypical norms of male behavior while making light of a serious issue. While it is not possible with current data to determine Real Men's impact on viewers, its high profile and wide reach indicates that many people at least saw the campaign. Although the campaign

was criticized (Cizmar, Conklin, and Hinman 2011), more research is needed to understand how its communicative strategies (and other efforts like it) impact the public.

Second, this paper adds to scholarship regarding celebrities and politics, mainly by highlighting two negative implications of celebrities' engagement in the polity. First, the findings here bolster previous findings that while celebrities may draw public and political attention to an issue, their lack of expertise leads them to misrepresent and misinform the public and political leaders. These shortcomings are particularly evident in Real Men. Although Kutcher and Moore hired a philanthropic advisor to guide their efforts, Trevor Neilson and the Global Philanthropy Group are not sex trafficking experts. As a result, Kutcher provided a lot of incorrect information to the public through his norm entrepreneurship. This was most apparent when Kutcher and Moore released the videos, and Kutcher stated that the average age of entry in to prostitution is 13 years of age (a statistic that is routinely reported by government officials and the news media). However, as Maggie McNeill documents, this in fact a mathematical impossibility that appears to have originated as a misrepresentation of "the average age of first *noncommercial* sexual contact (which could include kissing, petting, etc.) reported by *underage* girls in one 1982 study (Silbert and Pines 1982) as though it were the age they first reported selling sex" (McNeill 2014). As McNeill and others have documented (Weitzer 2005), since prostitution is illegal in the United States, there is actually no representative, accurate survey of sex workers that could accurately present their average age of entry.

By pointing out these inaccuracies in Kutcher's normatively entrepreneurial endeavors, I am not stating that sex trafficking is a non-issue and/or that men are incapable of raising awareness about it. Instead, I am indicating how, in the course of staking normative claims, celebrities may distort the issues they speak about because they lack relevant expertise. And even

when they have expert advisement, this may not be related to the issue. In Kutcher's and

Moore's case, Neilson et al. are experts about messaging and capturing public attention, which

likely explains why Kutcher et al. referenced certain shocking statistics and stories about sex

trafficking. However, Real Men indicates that celebrities may not be willing to correct their

mistakes. When confronted by the *Village Voice* about his inaccurate statistics, Kutcher

responded angrily that they were only questioning him because their parent company, Village

Voice Media, owns Backpage.com. This site advertises adult sexual services and has long been

accused of promoting the commercial sexual exploitation of children (Cizmar, Conklin, and

Hinman 2011).

In addition to showing celebrities' lack of expertise, Real Men indicates a third

shortcoming of celebrity norm entrepreneurship and political engagement: this often fuels

celebrities' self and product promotion. In just some examples, although Kutcher and Moore

divorced in 2011, Moore continued to be active regarding sex trafficking, forming a partnership

with the Tiffany & Co., the luxury jeweler, to sell diamond handcuff pendants, the proceeds of

which presumably went to help victims of trafficking (Haynes 2014). To further their public

awareness efforts in 2012, Moore and Kutcher filmed a public service announcement about

human trafficking for the Department of Homeland Security.[5] And to promote his technology

interests, the couple renamed the DNA Foundation "THORN Digital Defenders," and they

expanded its mandate to "partner across the tech industry, government, and NGOs and leverage

technology to combat predatory behavior, rescue victims, and protect vulnerable children" (see

wearethorn.org). With these expended technological efforts, Kutcher became the first person to

amass 1 million Twitter followers (which no doubt benefited his investment in the company),

tweeting often about sex trafficking (Haynes 2014).

Finally, this paper draws attention to the complexity of norms more broadly, particularly in the late-modern (or, post-democratic) era. As noted previously, political science scholarship about norms tends to view them as fixed entities, when in fact they are vague, fluid and evasive *processes* that are adopted in diverse concepts and framed by various actors (Krook and True, 2012). Specifically, Real Men demonstrates how technological developments and celebrity politics—two significant features of late modernity—may complicate norms and their communication to the public. As the discussion above showed, Real Men endeavored to communicate a male responsibility norm regarding sex trafficking (and, by extension, a gender equality norm). However, the campaign's discourse actually highlighted norms of male *irresponsibility* and gender *inequality* by drawing upon stereotypical ideas about male behavior and narrowly gendered understandings of sex trafficking. As a result, Real Men's normative message was ultimately unclear, thus highlighting norms' complexity, dynamism, and potential for distortion, particularly when they are communicated through celebrities.

Of course, Real Men does not represent all celebrity norm entrepreneurship; however, it does indicate how celebrities may engage in this and ultimately reify more traditional (and problematic) norms. Therefore, future research must consider celebrity norm entrepreneurship in more detail, across a wide range of cases. Do other examples such as Sarah Jessica Parker's and Gabourey Sidibe's anti-trafficking ads for the New York City government (noted above) deploy similarly performative strategies? Are there examples of this norm entrepreneurship (regarding trafficking or other issues) that actually wage effective challenges to problematic norms? Answering these questions will enhance understandings of celebrities' growing roles in the polity, and the prospects for normative and policy change more broadly.

ENDNOTES

[1] I use the terms prostitution and sex work somewhat interchangeably, I am concerned mainly

[2] See http://www.red.org/en/about. When customers purchase select products from various partner companies, such as Apple or Starbucks, a portion of the sale goes towards the fight against AIDS. To date, according to red.org, "We've raised over $300 million to date through the sale of (RED) products."

[3] According to their website, the Global Philanthropy Group "works with individuals, foundations and corporations to design and implement strategies informed by our rigorous approach and breadth of experience." See http://www.globalphilanthropy.com/services/services-main.asp

[4] Currently, when you click the link, it takes the viewer to a Facebook page, "Dnafoundation Community," with little traffic (only 102 "likes" as of January 13, 2015) and no apparent place to create or insert your own "Real Men" video.

[5] The ad is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvT-Us792Hg

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Table 1: Real Men Don't Buy Girls videos (overview)*

Starring celebrity	Title	Featured activity	Other featured/named celebrities	Number of views (as of Jan 2015)
Ashton Kutcher	Real Men Do Their Own Laundry	Kutcher takes of dirty socks, throws them in the garbage, and takes a new pair out of a package	Eva Longoria Ariana Huffington	286,105
Sean Penn	Real Men Know How to Use and Iron	Penn irons a grilled cheese sandwich	Jessica Biel Edward Norton	322,426
Bradley Cooper	Real Men Know How to Make a Meal	Cooper opens a cereal box, pours milk inside, and eats out of the box with a large serving spoon	Eva Longoria Conan O'Brien	276,328
Justin Timberlake	Real Men Prefer a Close Shave	Timberlake attempts to shave with a chainsaw	Eva Longoria Piers Morgan	167,037
Isaiah Mustafa	Real Men Have a Sense of Direction	Mustafa walks blindfolded (and shirtless) through a parking lot and gets in to a car	Eva Longoria Pete Cashmore	113,743
Jamie Foxx	Real Men Know How to Use the Remote	While watching The Apprentice, Foxx opens a beer bottle with the remote	Eva Longoria Donald Trump	69,853
Drake	Real Men are Distrustful of Robots	Drake beats up a robot **[video content no longer available]**	Eva Longoria David Spade	63,322

Source: Real Men Don't Buy Girls video page on YouTube, available at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL95E64A6AEEED5718
* NOTE: this presents the most-viewed versions of the videos. Other identical versions exist where, at the end, Longoria will refer to another celebrity
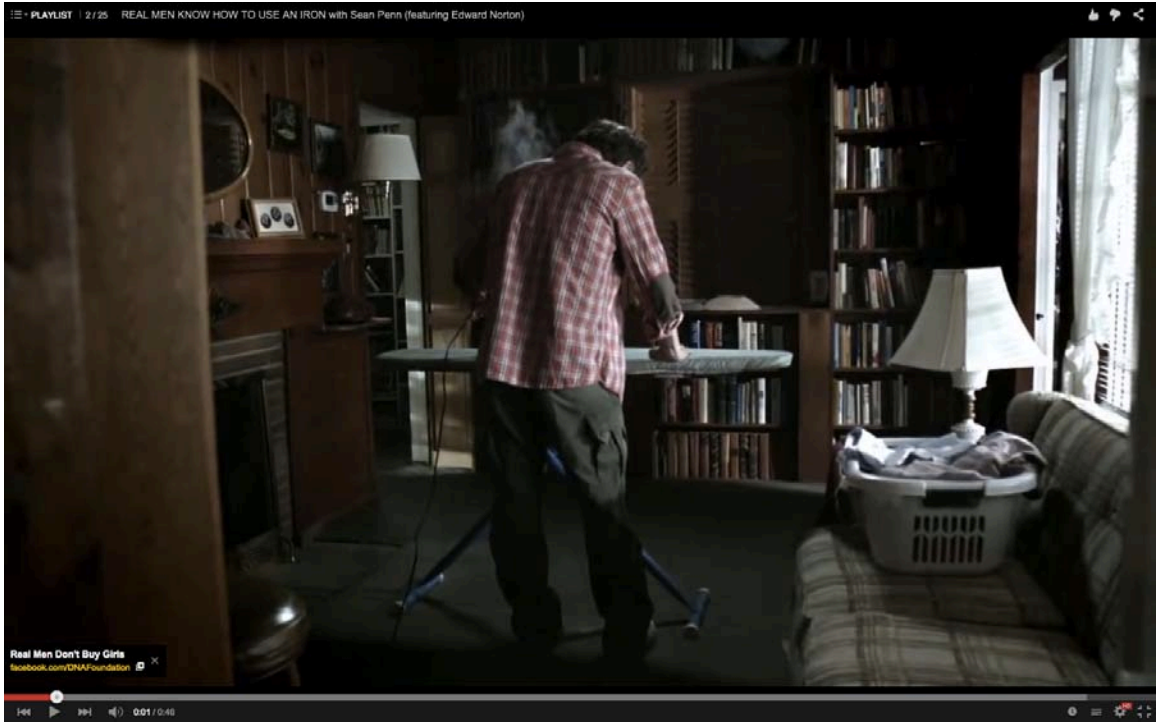
Figure 1

Figure 1

Figure 1

Figure 1

Impact:

Number of people who participated in the "Real Men Don't Buy Girls" campaign:	1.6 million
Increase in site traffic to www.demiandashton.org	2,117% (in first week of campaign)
Educational engagement on www.demiandashton.org (Note: Average web page viewing time across the web is 57 seconds. Source: http://www.marketingcharts.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/nielsen-average-internet-usage-home-work-april-2009.jpg)	Average time on site: 2 min, 30 sec. Top pages visited: Get Informed & Take Action.
Increase in online mentions of relevant terms during campaign: - "child sex slavery" (505 mentions 3/2010; 6,121 in 4/2010) - "real men don't buy girls" (236 in 3/2010; 6,699 in 4/2010)	1,120% increase 2,738% increase
Incremental growth of DNA-inspired anti-trafficking community on Facebook and Twitter (starting at baseline of 54,000):	71,000 new people
Number of calls to the Polaris Project's National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline directly tied to campaign:	133 calls