“Katrina That Bitch!” Hegemonic Representations of Women’s Sexuality on Hurricane Katrina Souvenir T-Shirts

KRIS MACOMBER, CHRISTINE MALLINSON, AND ELIZABETH SEALE

That Bitch Katrina
Blew Me
Stewed Me
Pretty Much Screwed Me!
No wonder they name hurricanes after women!
(T-shirt slogan seen on http://www.cafepress.com)

IN MARCH 2006, THE AUTHORS ATTENDED THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE Southern Sociological Society held in New Orleans, Louisiana, just seven months after Hurricane Katrina devastated the area. As we walked along Decatur Street, a popular tourist street lined with storefront shops selling New Orleans souvenirs, we saw dozens of t-shirts hanging on store entrance doors, in storefront windows, and as part of sidewalk displays. The majority of these t-shirts referenced Hurricane Katrina. Some criticized the government for slow relief efforts. Others poked fun at Mayor Ray Nagin’s references to New Orleans as a “Chocolate City.” Some t-shirts even joked about the postdisaster civil unrest, mocking the infamous looting incidents. Presumably, these shirts provided a light-hearted take on recent events for tourist products and may serve as a way to recover financially after the economic destruction that New Orleans faced. Indeed, it is common to use humor in response to tragic events (Oring; Schafer). In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, one of the ways that souvenir t-shirt makers found

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humor in the disaster was by playing on the fact that the hurricane has a “female” name.

In 1953, the practice of naming hurricanes began. Only female names were used, building on the stereotype of women as capricious and “stormy.” Chapple writes:

In 1953, the National Weather Service picked up on the habit of Naval meteorologists of naming the storms [hurricanes] after women. Ships were always referred to as female, and were often given women’s names. The storms’ temperament certainly seemed feminine enough, shifting directions at a whim on a moment’s notice. In 1979, male names were inserted to alternate with the female names, to the delight of women’s-libbers everywhere. (Chapple 1)

Some of the most dangerous natural disasters were thus identified only with women. This custom is longstanding; as Romaine points out, the feminine is often equated with destructive and irrational forces that must be subdued by “man.”

On the t-shirts that we evaluated, slogans that centered on the “gender” of the hurricane also tended to sexualize “her,” as in “Katrina Gave Me a Blow Job I’ll Never Forget.” On the one hand, it comes as no surprise that raunchy messages adorn many souvenir products in New Orleans. The “Big Easy” relies on the tourism industry and is renowned for Mardi Gras, an event known in contemporary culture for its hedonistic party scene that showcases men trading beaded necklaces for women “flashing” their breasts. On the other, we can evaluate the gendered and sexualized t-shirt slogans as social messages marketed for public consumption. As Crane and Heeren have conceptualized, the t-shirt is a type of “open text” upon which public messages are “personal graffiti” that reveals attitudes and norms of individuals and associated groups. T-shirts are thus both products of our material culture that are consumed by millions of buyers and wearers each year as well as products of our nonmaterial culture, transmitting and reflecting values and attitudes in the form of public messages.

In the view of gender theorists including R.W. Connell, both material and nonmaterial culture are always gendered. Similarly, Walters, who views culture as a “set of practices that produce identity, subjectivity, and, always, gender” (“Sex, Text, and Context” 223) contends that what appear to be normal representations of women and men have already been worked through the hands of the dominant cultural pro-
ducers (men, and more specifically middle- and upper-class, white, heterosexual men). Women are overwhelmingly portrayed as objects of desire for heterosexual men’s pleasure,¹ in ways that are raced and classed and often imply a violent male spectator (Katz; Kilbourne). These invasive images serve as modes of social control and limit how women’s sexuality is expressed (Holland, Ramazanoglu, and Thomson; Walters). Adopting this framework of androcentric cultural production, we critically evaluate a sample of gendered and sexualized Hurricane Katrina t-shirt slogans. We then consider how the t-shirts, and public response to them, might play a role in the process of disaster recovery.

Gendering and Sexualizing Hurricane Katrina: Evidence from Souvenir T-Shirts

While in New Orleans in March 2006, we collected Hurricane Katrina t-shirt slogans by visiting every shop that sold souvenir t-shirts along a three block section of Decatur Street in the French Quarter (a total of ten shops). For each shirt that referenced Hurricane Katrina, we wrote down the slogan verbatim and took a digital photograph.² We viewed a total of twenty-five different Hurricane Katrina t-shirts (see Appendix A). We coded the slogans using seven, nonmutually exclusive categories: gendered, sexualized, political, cursing, civil unrest, relief/rebuild, and factual/historical.³

Table 1 lists the nine slogans that were gendered, sexualized, or both; only one t-shirt sexualized the hurricane in a way that did not also gender it. T-shirts coded as gendered made explicit reference to Hurricane Katrina (and, occasionally, Hurricanes Rita and Wilma) as “women” by using terms like she, sisters, and girls or other gendered references like bitch (Figure 1). T-shirts coded as sexualized made sexual inferences about the hurricane,⁴ as in, “Katrina Can Blow Me!” (Figure 2).

In the nine gendered and sexualized t-shirt slogans,⁵ we find the prominent use of three linguistic strategies: sexual slang, expletives, and active language that attributes sex acts to “female” (but not “male”) hurricanes. As seen in Table 1, three slogans used sexual slang and/or expletives to refer to Hurricane Katrina: “Katrina That BITCH!”, “I Got Blown, Pissed On and Fucked by Katrina/What a
TABLE 1
List of Gendered and/or Sexualized Hurricane Katrina Souvenir T-Shirt Slogans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slogan</th>
<th>Gendered</th>
<th>Sexualized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Got Blown, Pissed On and Fucked by Katrina/What a Whore</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls Gone Wild/Katrina and Rita</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls Gone Wild/Hurricane Katrina Rita Wilma</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Quarter Hookers/Hurricane Katrina/She</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blew Me like Kat 5</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katrina Can Blow Me!/She Won’t Keep Me Away From Mardi Gras</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katrina Gave Me a Blow Job I’ll Never Forget</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m Here About the Blow Job</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katrina That Bitch!</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Twisted Sisters/Hurricane Katrina/Katrina, Rita, Wilma/The United States Worst Hurricane Disaster in Over 100 Years!</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whore,” and “French Quarter Hookers/Hurricane Katrina/She Blew Me like Kat 5.” As demonstrated with the likening of Hurricane Katrina to a “whore,” many sexual slang terms label promiscuous women

FIGURE 1. “Katrina That Bitch!”
as prostitutes or as objects of sexual conquest, whereas men are more often portrayed as sexual predators and conquerors. Indeed, Sutton explains, far more derogatory terms exist in English for women than for men, words that specifically refer to sexual promiscuity are directed almost exclusively toward women, and sexual slang terms that insult men often simultaneously insult women (e.g., son of a bitch).

On these t-shirt slogans, words like whore and hooker denote “Katrina’s” imagined promiscuity. At the same time, because the storm happened to be named “Katrina,” we also see the use of gendered epithets like bitch, which may particularly resonate with the targeted public. After “her” invasion into normal life, Hurricane Katrina was branded not just a bad woman but a sexually aggressive woman—not just a bitch but also a whore. The gendered expletives connecting “Katrina’s” destruction with “her” imagined lewd behavior make sense, given the semantic connotations of bitch in the English language. As Schultz and Sutton contend, these terms perpetuate gender stereotypes and thus reinforce the ideologies that sustain gender inequality.

Expletives also play a more general role in establishing the tone and content of these t-shirts. Swearing is perceived to be aggressive speech and is often central to the construction of a masculine identity.
(de Klerk; Hughes; Stapleton; Sutton). Consider the slogan, “I Got Blown, Pissed On, and Fucked by Katrina/What a Whore” (Figure 3).

With a black background, stark white text, strong expletives, and no images, this slogan portrays “Katrina” as hypersexual and violent. In employing a masculine “voice,” through sexual slang and strong expletives, perhaps the shirt serves as a vehicle for asserting masculinity—that is, re-asserting masculinity after having been stripped of power and control by a “female” disaster.

We also note the use of the active voice to attribute sexual acts to “female” (but not “male”) hurricanes. In Table 1, five of the sexualized slogans use a variant of the word “blow,” and these word plays refer both to wind generated by a hurricane and to the sexual slang term “blow job.” These slogans (with the exception of “I’m Here About the Blow Job”) identify Katrina as an agent who gives a “blow job” to an implied recipient or subject of the slogan—that is, to a man. It would be strange, and oppositional to how normative sexuality is expressed, to suggest that these slogans imply that Katrina also “blew” the women victims in New Orleans.

Through the use of sexual slang, expletives, and active language, these slogans reconceptualize Hurricane Katrina—a tragic disaster that Americans were at a loss to prevent or manage—as “Katrina.” Katrina the female figure is cast as a “bitch” because “she” was uncontrollable and caused widespread damage as well as a “whore” who “hooked,” “fucked,” and gave “blow jobs.” “She” is castigated not merely for performing sex acts, but for doing so actively, agentively, in an unregulated, uncontrollable manner. These t-shirt slogans are rhetorically powerful devices: men are cast as the unintended victims of pain and the unintended receivers of pleasure; women whose sexuality is unregulated—whores—are cast as deliberately giving both pleasure and pain.

We were interested to know whether popular t-shirt slogans have gendered and sexualized “male” hurricanes. We searched online and focused on one extensive site selling t-shirts about hurricanes (http://www.dopplerduds.com). On one t-shirt, a slogan proclaimed, “Hurricane Charley/Just Like a Man to Get Directions All Wrong.” In this case, it seems that the “voice” of this t-shirt slogan and thus its implicit subject or wearer can be said to be female. Although this slogan depicts Charley as a man by playing on the masculine name just as the t-shirts on Decatur Street depict Katrina, Rita, and Wilma as women, it does not sexualize the hurricane. In fact, only one of the t-shirt slogans about a “male” hurricane used the word “blow”: “My Vacation
was Blown by Hurricane Charley.” The slogan means Hurricane Charley “blew” the t-shirt wearer’s vacation, but the passive language does not make the hurricane an agent, and there is no suggestion that Charley was giving a “blow job.” Thus, on this Web site, and just as we observed on the shirts sold on Decatur Street, the only online hurricane t-shirts that imply that the t-shirt wearer was “blown” or is receiving a “blow job” were found with respect to “Katrina,” “Rita,” and “Wilma.”

Humor as a Reaction to Disasters: Sexism, Solidarity, and the “Collective Mood”

These Hurricane Katrina t-shirt slogans do not simply document a disaster. Rather, gendered and sexualized text and images reinforce subjugating images of women and allude to the Madonna/whore paradox deeply rooted in the dominant gender ideologies of patriarchal society. At the same time, these t-shirts were produced in a specific historical context—in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, one of the deadliest hurricanes in the history of the United States. We examine the slogans in this context, considering public reactions to them and their potential place in disaster recovery.

Public Reactions to the Gendered and Sexualized T-Shirts

Recently, cultural or content analysis has been critiqued for what is seen as an over-reliance on text without attention to how meaning is developed in interaction (Walters, Lives Together). Accordingly, we examined how people make meaning of the t-shirt slogans by engaging in brief, unstructured conversations with a total of twenty-six passersby on Decatur Street. We browsed outside shops that displayed Hurricane Katrina souvenir t-shirts as the focal point of their entrances, and when passersby stopped to browse, we prompted conversation with them to explore their reactions to the slogans. For example, we asked “Do you mind if I ask you a question? What do you think of these t-shirts?” pointing to t-shirts with gendered and/or sexualized messages.

Overall, most people we spoke with did not find the t-shirts offensive. Eleven of the twenty-six thought the t-shirts were “funny,”
“appropriate,” or desirable in some way, while six indicated that they were distasteful, “sick,” offensive, or insulting. The remaining respondents dismissed the shirts as “cheesy” or simply part of the tourist culture one would expect in New Orleans. Of the total number of respondents, we found that men were more likely to say that the t-shirts were “funny.” Women were divided in their support or critique of the t-shirts: some were slightly critical of the images, while others indicated that they appreciated or saw the humor in the t-shirt messages and/or images.

Of the eleven respondents who said the t-shirts were “funny” or said they found them “appropriate” and/or desirable in some way, many immediately reacted to the shirts by laughing or giggling and/or saying, “I think they’re funny.” When probed, several respondents said the slogans were sexually humorous. For example, while on Decatur Street, we sighted two different versions of “Girls Gone Wild” t-shirts. One version, the only one that seemed to target women consumers, displays two hurricane images positioned like breasts on the front of the t-shirt (Figure 4).10

The fact that Hurricanes Katrina and Rita “went wild” prompted the construction of symbolic breasts from pictures of the hurricanes; this image is what several respondents seemed to particularly find

![Image of Girls Gone Wild/Katrina Rita t-shirt](image)
humorous, appealing, or “appropriate.” For example, in reference to the shirt in Figure 4, one older white man said:

I think it’s funny . . . it’s real appropriate for a woman, with the breasts. You know, right there. They’re like two breasts.

We also spoke with a group of five white women—two middle-aged, three young—who liked the t-shirts. One of the young women said,

I like ’em. I think they’re cute. [When asked, “Would you wear one of these t-shirts?”] Oh yeah, I bought one. I have the “Girls Gone Wild” one.

That women found humor in a slogan that portrayed their gender in these terms supports the hegemonic status of such representations of female sexuality. It is little surprise that women were nearly as likely as men (though less supportive of the messages overall) to find the t-shirts appropriate or funny. For one, feminist consciousness remains marginalized. Furthermore, as Kleinman, Levy, and others suggest, women may participate in chauvinism because the male perspective is ubiquitous, accessible, and offers women an illusory power. Women may thus endorse or minimize sexist products or practices as a way to achieve a type of empowerment in the face of patriarchy.

Of the men and women who thought the t-shirts were funny, respondents employed two types of justifications for the slogans. In the first type of justification, respondents dismissed the sexualization of the hurricane as merely part of the rowdy and raunchy New Orleans tourist culture. Six respondents suggested that either the t-shirts were specifically for tourists and/or part of the Mardi Gras spirit. One young woman (a local) told us that anyone who is going to be offended by such shirts should not be hanging out in the French Quarter to begin with (although Decatur Street is supposed to be family-friendly, in contrast to Bourbon Street). She particularly cited the “Girls Gone Wild” shirts as being part of the “breast thing that is a New Orleans culture thing.”

A second justification interviewees gave for dismissing the offensiveness of the shirts was to claim that similarly sexual jokes would have been made about a “male” hurricane. For example, when asked what would have happened if Hurricane Katrina had instead been called Hurricane Kevin, one older white woman claimed:

Sex sells. Especially here in New Orleans. Everything is about tits, tits, tits. Like “show me your tits” and if it was a guy’s name, than
they would probably have a [short pause] cock or something, maybe put balls on the t-shirt, I don’t know. But yeah, they would do the same thing to a guy’s name too, I think.

The implication is that the t-shirts’ gendered and sexist humor is arbitrary. However, our observation of slogans about “male” hurricanes contradicts the claim: we found that hurricanes are gendered and sexualized only when they have women’s names. Moreover, even if sexualized “male hurricane” t-shirts did exist, they would not necessarily parallel the cultural meanings that are invoked by sexualized “female hurricane” t-shirts.

The Gendered and Sexualized Slogans as Disaster Humor

At this point, we take an interactional approach to humor—which, Fine explains, uses audience reaction as an indicator of what is humorous—to consider what it means that these t-shirts are “funny.” Presumably, these t-shirts are intended to be lighthearted and raunchy in a way that recalls contemporary Mardi Gras culture (which is especially marketed to tourists). Although we can only speculate as to the intent of the men and/or women who created and produced these t-shirts, we have seen how audiences reacted to the shirts, which is often to regard them as funny.

As is well documented, humor is a means through which people attempt to define themselves and/or reality, and jokes reveal shared assumptions about what in society is typical, hidden, everyday, obvious, denied, struggled with, and laughed at (Fine; Fiske; Flaherty; Oring). For example, the pervasiveness of “dumb blond” jokes tell us that women’s alleged intellectual inferiority is typically regarded as funny. Thus, a critical look at jokes also reveals social ideologies, since “humor separates the joints of the seemingly seamless social structure, making them visible” (Davis 313). Simply put, jokes tell us what we do and do not value in our society. For instance, Zillman and Cantor find that people enjoy humor that ridicules groups with whom they do not empathize: one of those groups is often women. Men tend to use obscene, sexual, and/or aggressive jokes more often than women (Hay; Kotthoff) and women have traditionally been the subject of these jokes (Kotthoff). Both men and women also tend to have a greater appreciation for humor that disparages women (Cantor).
Jokes about a disaster in particular often take on a sexist tone when a woman (or female persona, name, etc.) is involved. Penley found that many jokes about the Challenger space shuttle explosion centered on Christa McAuliffe, the first civilian teacher in space and one of two women on the seven-member crew. Some of them suggested that a lack of ability on her part as a female teacher caused the explosion. Oring suggests disaster jokes provide a way for people to deal with anxieties, cope with horror, and distance themselves from "the unspeakable," as with the Challenger explosion, September 11, and the death of Princess Diana (Davies; Kuipers). Though perhaps "sick" and cruel, disaster jokes are nevertheless widespread. As Oring suggests, disaster jokes are thus a form of "tasteless" rebellion against what is politically correct.

In our evaluation of Hurricane Katrina t-shirts, we found that some respondents did not approve of the "tasteless" slogans. In contrast to the eleven respondents who said the shirts were "funny," six respondents said they disliked the t-shirts. Three of these respondents explicitly or implicitly criticized the slogans as being sexist. The other three disapproving respondents found these shirts particularly offensive and said that they had been personally impacted by the hurricane.

While the number of people we interviewed is small, responses suggest an important connection between personal experience with the hurricane and taking offense to the t-shirts, as opposed to being personally and spatially detached from the disaster and finding them funny or inoffensive. For example, a young local man who survived the disaster related this view of Hurricane Katrina souvenir t-shirts:

That shit's stupid! I hate 'em. [When probed further:] I don't think they're funny at all . . . I was in the water for three days—and I can't swim—I think it's wrong, trying to make a joke of what happened. That ain't right. Only people who left during it all would wear a shirt like that.

This young man appeared to be offended by the fact that the slogans trivialized the disaster. According to him, only people who "left during it all" (perhaps those residents or tourists who had the financial means to do so) would actually wear one of these t-shirts, because no one who had endured what he had would find the t-shirts funny or appropriate. Similarly, a middle-aged white woman, said,

What do I think about the t-shirts? What does it matter? I lost everything in this hurricane. My whole life is gone.
She then said, because she had lost everything, it made her “feel sick” to see these t-shirts. These responses suggest that those who were personally impacted by Hurricane Katrina disliked its trivialization on t-shirts, a cheap commodity marketed in the aftermath of death and destruction. These reactions, by far the most condemning we heard, confirm that these t-shirts transmit cultural meaning and have social significance.

Overall, these interview responses illustrate how t-shirts are texts that perform social functions. In this case, the sexist and misogynistic messages that most people found funny are indexes of how women’s sexual degradation is not only a taken for granted part of mainstream culture, but also a readily available subject for humor. To many passersby, the fact that these t-shirts branded Hurricane Katrina a “whore” or a “bitch” did not seem confusing, out of place, or unacceptable but rather acceptable, amusing, and appropriate; in other words, normal. Even among those who expressed acute disgust and contempt for the t-shirts, for half of them, their aversion seemed to arise from a reaction to the trivialization and commodification of the tragedy rather than to the gender and sexual degradation on the slogans.

Conclusions

Critically engaging with an ordinary cultural product, we have explored the nature of gendered and sexualized Hurricane Katrina t-shirt slogans. We suggest an implied heterosexual male voice speaks through these slogans and implies a heterosexual male hurricane victim. These slogans reflect and reveal the androcentric and heteronormative imaginations of our cultural producers; the oppressive images and messages they bear are also cultural signifiers that speak both to individual attitudes and to societal ideologies. These t-shirt slogans offer to the public hegemonic representations of women’s sexuality at a time when other media products (e.g., the television show Sex in the City) boast more progressive representations of women and their sexual agency. Thus, we believe it is useful to see forms of cultural expression as media advertising sexism.

The “voice” on these t-shirts positions men as universal subjects, while women’s voices are rendered unheard and their experiences
invisible, as both public observers and victims of the hurricane. Katrina is the only “woman” in this story: she is a destructive, violent, and sexually aggressive woman who calls into question masculinity at a precarious historical moment, the reconstruction of the city of New Orleans. The “jokes” made about “her” parallel other joke cycles in the genre of disaster humor (Mellencamp; Morrow; Oring; Smyth). Indeed, misogynist humor often surfaces at times of disaster, tragedy, and loss—moments of crisis in which masculinity is also in crisis (Corbin; Nye; Provencher and Eilderts). In this regard, Hurricane Katrina t-shirts can be seen as another cultural product that showcases misogynist, “tasteless” humor, using sexism to market commodities in a time of financial and social recovery.¹²

At the same time, some New Orleanians also employ misogynistic language to cope with disaster and tragedy in non-humorous contexts. One photograph taken a few months after the disaster showcased the words “Katrina, you BITCH” spray-painted on the side of a destroyed house in New Orleans. As Clarke and Marshall contend, this graffiti may constitute a way for its author(s) to use “dark humor” to “engage their foe” and regain a “sense of control.” Similarly, buying t-shirts with disparaging slogans directed at “Katrina” may appeal to consumers as a way to reassert control over this disaster. Because the populace must “overcome,” and masculinity is therefore all the more prized, a natural disaster necessitates a maneuver of self-preservation against any threat that is either not masculine enough (e.g., feminine or homosexual) or excessively masculine when it should not be (e.g., a strong “woman” foe).

As Collins suggests, reactions to disasters are often expressed through collective processes of displaying solidarity symbols. In the aftermath of 9/11, he found that the “collective mood” led to public expressions of strength, group solidarity, and national pride that took the form of such symbolic practices as hanging American flags. Similar to, though slightly different from the events of 9/11, are natural disasters, which are more overtly seen as being out of the control of humans—out of the hands of men (and some women) in power, and out of the hands of the public at large.¹³ Although some citizens (especially those who were personally affected) may reject the trivialization of the Hurricane Katrina disaster on a cheap commodity, such as a t-shirt, other Americans may make and buy these souvenir t-shirts as solidarity symbols.
Like American flags, Hurricane Katrina souvenir t-shirts may serve as ritual items available for purchase, whether for comfort or out of solidarity, especially when the buyers are themselves personally removed from the destruction and tragedy. Unlike American flags, however, the t-shirts that represent this catastrophic event as a gendered and/or sexualized “Katrina” do not draw upon nationalistic symbols of solidarity. Rather, they reinvigorate ideologies of male dominance. Drawing upon sexist language and sexual stereotypes, these slogans employ misogynistic humor as a vehicle for coping with disaster and trauma in a public context.

Appendix A

List of Twenty-Five T-Shirt Slogans, Images, and Frequency of Sighting*†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slogan* and image† (n = 25)</th>
<th>Frequency (total number of sightings)†</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>References to Mayor Ray Nagin as Willy Wonka, the mayor of the Chocolate City (image of him dressed as Willy Wonka, et cetera)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Twisted Sisters/Hurricane Katrina/Katrina, Rita, Wilma/The United States Worst Hurricane Disaster in Over 100 Years! (image map of Gulf Coast, hurricane satellite images, and a helicopter)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls Gone Wild/Katrina and Rita/Nothing Stops Mardi Gras . . . NOTHING (image of white women dancers with large breasts, wearing green, gold, and purple beads for Mardi Gras)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Stayed in New Orleans for Katrina and All I Got Was this Lousy T-Shirt, a New Cadillac, and a Plasma TV</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make Levees Not War</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOPD/Not Our Problem Dude/Hurricane Katrina 2005</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various references to other New Orleans politicians</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMA/The Evacuation Plan/(Run Motherfucker Run!)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMA/The New Four-Letter “F” Word</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The alphabetical ordering of the authors signifies their equal contribution to the paper. We thank Donna Bickford, Zachary W. Brewster, Phillip M. Carter, Emek Ergun, Kendra Jason, Jason Loviglio, Denis M. Provencher, and anonymous reviewers for helpful comments on this paper.
1. See Butler (Gender Trouble, Bodies that Matter) on the conflation of sexual orientation, sex, and gender.

2. We counted any one slogan appearing on multiple t-shirts from the same store only once in our total tally.

3. We also browsed five shops on Bourbon Street. By our observation, however, Hurricane Katrina t-shirt slogans on Bourbon Street were very similar to those we saw on Decatur Street.

4. In the feminist theoretical framework we adopt, femininity is conceptualized as being always already sexualized. We do not intend the separate codes “gendered” and “sexualized” to contradict this claim.

5. Not all (or even most) of the t-shirts played on the name “Katrina.” Appendix 1 lists all slogans.

6. In contemporary culture, the word bitch has been reclaimed by some feminists, gay men, etc. (see, e.g., bitch magazine), but in general usage the word remains an offensive and powerful gendered epithet.

7. These slogans were less sexually explicit than those we saw on Decatur Street, but since they referred to both male- and female-named hurricanes, they were suitable for comparison.

8. We interviewed eleven white men, twelve white women, one Black man, one Black woman, and one Latino man. The vast majority of the passersby on Decatur Street, while we were interviewing, were white.

9. The conversations lasted approximately 90 seconds. Two limitations of this method are that respondents were not in a setting where one expects to be asked questions, and that interviews were very short.

10. Two different versions of t-shirts, sighted five times, played on the video series Girls Gone Wild, which depicts usually intoxicated college-aged women who show their bare breasts and are sometimes fully nude.

11. For example, “What were Christa McAuliffe’s last words?” . . . “Hey guys, what’s this button?” For more on Challenger jokes, see Mellencamp, Morrow, and Smyth.

12. We saw three people wearing Hurricane Katrina t-shirts in New Orleans: one middle-aged black woman wearing the “Hurricane Katrina Clean Up Crew” t-shirt, and two young white women (seen separately, in the airport) wearing versions of the “Girls Gone Wild” t-shirts. We did not see any men wearing Katrina shirts, though one male respondent said he might buy the “Girls Gone Wild” t-shirt for his wife.

13. Considerable debate, of course, surrounds how “natural” Hurricane Katrina’s devastation actually was.

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