READINGS IN ENGAGED ANTHROPOLOGY

Out in Public

Reinventing Lesbian/Gay Anthropology in a Globalizing World

Edited by Ellen Lewin and William L. Leap

WILEY-BLACKWELL

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Some of the contributors to this volume submitted their essays several years ago and we owe them special thanks for their patience while we brought in other contributors and concluded negotiations that would make the volume a concrete reality. As has been the case with our other collections, *Out in the Field* and *Out in Theory*, this volume had its genesis in a number of sessions the two of us have organized at meetings of the American Anthropological Association and the Society for the Anthropology of North America (SANA). These were events that stimulated conversation and debate with many of our colleagues, opportunities that sharpened our arguments and helped us to clarify our thinking on many matters. We are grateful for all of these discussions, even when the outcome was disagreement with our interlocutors.

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Introduction

Out in Public: Reinventing Lesbian/Gay Anthropology in a Globalizing World

William L. Leap and Ellen Lewin

Out in Public is our third edited collection addressing the emerging field of lesbian/gay anthropology and the issues of concern to the lesbian, gay, and other researchers who are defining the ongoing direction of this field. *Out in the Field*, our first collection, examined lesbian/gay dimensions of ethnographic fieldwork, analysis, and writing. *Out in Theory*, our second collection, surveyed various efforts to build lesbian/gay related ethnographic theory. Now, in this project, lesbian and gay anthropology engages issues lying outside of the ethnographic domain, as anthropology has traditionally defined it. Instead of focusing centrally on method or theory, as such, the concern in this volume is with real-world applications. This includes particular projects where anthropological intervention has affected the everyday lives of lesbian/gay people, the strategies various anthropologists have used to create effective intervention and change, resulting in a sometimes uneasy relationship between lesbian/gay anthropology and applied/public anthropology, as well as the application of ideas drawn from lesbian/gay anthropology to the analysis of other, seemingly unrelated, phenomena.

Defining Lesbian/Gay Anthropology

We use the term *lesbian/gay anthropology* to refer to an intellectual, political, and theoretical stance that has grown out of the experiences of lesbian/gay life in the USA during the last decades of the 20th century. These experiences emerged, in part, in response to the workings of normative heterosexuality in everyday life and were shaped by other considerations defining subject position during this time period. Part of the lesbian/gay project in anthropology has been an effort to reshape anthropological research so that it engages the particulars of lesbian/gay experience more effectively. Equally important to that project has been a reluctance to be satisfied

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with documentation of diversity, or what Kath Weston (1998) has aptly termed the work of ethnocartography, and an eagerness to move toward a more complex engagement with (homo)sexual politics in all domains of late modernity.

As a result, what began as studies of "lesbian" and "gay" experiences cross-culturally now regularly acknowledges a much broader range of non-normative sexualities, and anthropological discussions of those sexualities address the regulatory practices that assign them marginal status (or, at times, not so marginal status) within particular social settings.[1] In turn, these broader perspectives have sharpened the lens through which "lesbian" and "gay" experiences themselves are now being theorized, and underscore the need to examine these experiences within their social, historical, and ideological locations rather than independently of the workings of political economy.

Pursuing "broader" and "deeper" lines of inquiry have led those working in lesbian/gay anthropology to bring issues of practice, as well as method and theory, into the emerging conversation about sexuality, subjectivity, and culture.[2] In most cases, the anthropological engagement with practice has been unavoidable, given that assertions of same-sex identity have suggested ways of talking back to the assumptions of sexual and social normativity and the structures of power on which those assumptions are based. For years, anthropologists chose to downplay homosexuality's transgressive dimensions, focusing instead on the orientalized nature of sexual diversity or on the "deviant" nature of same-sex-related status and role. That homosexual presence and practices could be theorized more affirmatively and less exotically has become a recurring theme in lesbian/gay anthropology; such inquiry leads to a close analysis of regulation, oppression, and resistance.

Ultimately, drawing on Habermas' notion of public sphere formation, lesbian/gay anthropology is concerned with the processes through which "private [same-sex identified] persons come together to form a public, . . . [and to] deal with matters of general interest without subject to coercion" (1989:231), as well as with the processes that work against the emergence of such formations. These are questions about sexual citizenship, belonging, public morality, and social justice, as much as they are questions of desire, personal identity and erotic interest; different approaches to answering these questions provide the subject matter for the chapters in this collection.

Lesbian/Gay Anthropology and Applied Anthropology

The engagement with practice that has become integral to lesbian/gay anthropology in recent years has also been informed by the interests in "practical problem-solving" and "making knowledge useful" that are central to the subfield of applied anthropology. However, as the essays in this collection will show, lesbian/gay anthropology is not attempting to "help" members of exotic, undeveloped communities, or even to outline agendas leading to the "solutions" for whatever "practical problems" beset them, on the order of more conventional "applied" tasks like building water treatment plants, creating consumer cooperatives, or blueprinting better schools. The practical problems facing lesbian/gay constituencies include, in the abstract, sexual oppression and heterosexual privilege, and in everyday life, homophobic violence, employment, and job-site discrimination, along with denial of access to health care and other social services. None of these "problems" can be "solved" through "application" of lesbian/gay anthropology's benevolent wisdom, and none of them will be affected if lesbian/gay anthropology intends only to collect "more and better" research data on lesbian/gay experience. The more appropriate agenda is two-fold: (1) to expose the particular conditions through which homophobia and heteronormativity gain authority in everyday life, and (2) to demonstrate the willingness of lesbian/gay subjects (and of others on the sexual margin) to talk back to that authority rather than to become subordinated by it. Pursuing such an agenda will not automatically "solve problems" or promote social change. But it will bring into sharper focus the mechanisms of power against which lesbian/gay (and other sexual) subjects are already struggling and document the social costs (and for some, the social benefits) stemming from regulatory control. And certainly, such sharpened focus will contribute to local efforts at resistance.

In other words, for purposes of this discussion, public anthropology refers to a form of anthropological praxis that is organized differently from the older and more familiar subfield called applied anthropology. Rather than creating initiatives whose primary purpose is "practical problem-solving" or other forms of issue-oriented work directed at culture change, public anthropology recognizes that problem-solving and change are ongoing experiences at indicated sites, and that local constituents are deeply engaged within those experiences and their consequences. Public anthropology provides witness to the presence of those local experiences, not pre-empting local voices but certainly, at times, amplifying them. And as part of that witness, public anthropology explores those experiences within their regional or broader social contexts, or otherwise discloses dimensions of those experiences that local constituents may not fully observe.[3] By doing so, public anthropology constructs new alliances between scholarship and activism, transforming the texture of the academic project, and the resources available to constituency-based public intellectuals and political workers, while broadening issue-centered understandings of the "public" at large.

Examples of such work include Esther Newton's (1972) depiction of drag queens coping with low wages and bleak working conditions on the Midwest USA showbar circuit in the 1960s, and her later (1993) analysis of community dynamics in a gay summer resort; Walter Williams' (1986) efforts to give a human face and a historical context to American Indian "berdache" traditions; Ellen Lewin's demonstration that commitments to parenting and family formation are not in conflict with lesbian or gay sexualities (1993, 1998, in press); Gil Herdt and Andrew Boxer's (1993) description of US teenagers' efforts to position "coming out" as a rite of passage rather than an act of individual desperation; Bill Leap's (1996, 2001) suggestions that gay men's "knowledge of language" is more complex than lisping speech and camp vocabulary; Tom Boellstorff's exploration of the intersections of sexual sameness and nationalism in "new order" Indonesia; David Valentine's unpacking of the issues that make transgender disquieting for self-identified "normal" heterosexuals and queers; Christa Craven's involvement in the struggle to sanction direct-entry midwifery in the Commonwealth of Virginia; Roger Lancaster's (2003) critique of anti-gay efforts to mythologize "the gay gene" in popular press and other news media; and Leap's (1999b) studies of men having sex with men in public places, which have been useful in combating police harassment of members-only "sex clubs" in the DC area, building arguments for the defense on behalf of men arrested in police "sting operations," and also bringing some much needed clarity to the issues of sexual subjectivity that surfaced during the recent Senator Craig/Bathroomgate affair. Many of the case studies appeared in *Out in the Field* and *Out in Theory*. Consistent with the argument in this section, while some of these scholars may identify as applied anthropologists in some settings, none of them position the work described here, or any of the work in lesbian/gay anthropology, within the domain of applied anthropology. The reasons for this separation are several, as we explain in the following section.

Lesbian/Gay Anthropology, Again in the Moment

As was the case with our other collections, the impulse to assemble *Out in Public* comes at a particular moment in the history of lesbian/gay studies in anthropology. For *Out in the Field*, the moment was defined by the need to affirm lesbian/gay presence in fieldwork and data interpretation, when more conservative forces were arguing against such "partisan" inquiry. For *Out in Theory*, the moment was marked by the growing awareness that lesbian/gay ethnography needed to address a range of issues extending far beyond conventional domains of the sexual.

For *Out in Public*, the moment involves a seemingly unprecedented explosion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer visibility and, with that, equally widespread expressions of reaction and objection to a non-normative sexual presence that refuses to be discreetly contained. In the USA, we have explicitly gay characters in television programs and motion pictures, celebrities freely offering statements of their own same-sex preferences, endorsements of domestic partner benefits, and "equal protection" guarantees by private businesses and academic institutions and (in some ways, most tellingly here) the US Supreme Court's decision undermining the legal basis of anti-sodomy statutes in *Lawrence v Texas.* At the same time, contentious public debate over same-sex marriage has been raging while an increasing number of states have voted to "define" marriage exclusively in heterosexual terms. Other debates, such as those that have surrounded the ordination of openly lesbian/gay clergy and increased efforts to ban any affirmative references to homosexuality in public school classrooms, have made clear the continued marginalization of non-normative sexualities and genders in the US context.

But in settings outside of the USA, trends have been quite different: there are guarantees of equal protection on the basis of sexual orientation in the South African constitution; endorsements (as we complete this volume) of same-sex marriage in Canada, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Spain, and only slightly limited "civil unions" in other locations; and an increasingly vocal public outcry over imprisonment and threatened execution of same-sex identified women and men in various third-world locations. In other words, issues having to do with minority or transgressive sexualities and genders have increasingly become central to diverse political discourses and agendas both in the West and in the developing world. These are developments that occur not in isolation from one another, but as part of dialogues seemingly intensified by globalization and transnational flows of people and information.

Lesbian/gay anthropology's position within the profession of anthropology and within academe as a whole has certainly benefited from this new visibility. Unlike the case we found when we began the planning for *Out in the Field* in the early 1990s, discussions of lesbian/gay cultures and related topics are now regularly included in undergraduate and graduate course offerings in anthropology, and textbooks and other instructional resources are available to support this instruction. Doctoral dissertations on lesbian/gay and related themes are no longer a remarkable occurrence, and neither are articles addressing these themes in the professional journals. Yet it would be unfair to account for lesbian/gay anthropology's new visibility and vitality entirely in terms of the broader cultural climate. Some lesbian/gay anthropologists – including scholars who have contributed to this collection and/or others in this series – have been active in fostering such visibility through their research, publications, advocacy within the profession, and other forms of risk-taking. In certain instances, their being "out in public" has denied them the visibility and professional status that many of us now enjoy.

So to what extent does a lesbian/gay anthropology concerned with method, theory, *and practice* represent the work of individual initiative? To what extent does it indicate a reconfiguration of lesbian/gay interests within the discipline, or suggest the beginnings of a new kind of engaged anthropology of sexuality? To what extent is this work grounded in an anthropological praxis of broader inquiry or reflective of non-academic discourses of sexual visibility and openness? In other words, how "out in public" has lesbian/gay anthropology really become? Answers to these questions begin with some reflection on the history of anthropological studies of homosexuality, thinking here not so much about the topics of study that have emerged over time (for that, see Gayle Rubin's [2002] essay and related pieces in *Out in Theory*), as about the social and academic politics that surrounded and gave shape to such inquiry. In the main, however, answers to these questions emerge from the case-study discussions presented in the individual chapters in this collection, and we conclude the introduction essay with remarks that overview the organization of the collection and thematic focus of the essays.

At a Distance from "Queer" and "Applied" Terrains

Lesbian/gay anthropology, as presented in the following essays, is a very different intellectual terrain from that sampled in our first edited collection, *Out in the Field*. At that time, we were eager to help lesbian/gay anthropology claim its rightful place within the profession. Now lesbian/gay anthropology's status within anthropology, and within academe generally, appears to be on more solid terrain. Lesbian/gay anthropology began to establish its own visibility within the programs of the scholarly meetings, the indexes of the professional journals, and the topical specialties of anthropological graduate programs. Moreover, concerns with a politics of difference, rather than descriptions of sexual differences, suggest an alignment with the interests of queer theory, and interests in practice as well as theory suggest a similar alignment with the interests of applied anthropology.

The papers in this collection will argue, however, that neither of these alignments is tightly drawn. In fact, part of the vitality of lesbian/gay anthropology lies in its distance from queer theory and from applied anthropology as traditionally defined.

Lesbian/gay anthropology and queer theory

While queer theory has been influential in shaping what lesbian/gay anthropology has become and is becoming, lesbian/gay anthropology is not the same thing as queer anthropology. Yes, identity politics has been replaced by other, more timely, discussions in lesbian/gay anthropology, but claims to identity – specifically, identities based on non-normative and transgressive sexualities – factor prominently in the inquiry because such claims figure visibly, if variably, throughout *all* facets of late modern experience. Importantly, queer theory reminds us, identities are not stable constructions and can never be permanently claimed; of interest, then, is how the fluidity of particular categories unfolds in everyday life and, perhaps, how certain fluid categories gain the appearance of stability and permanence. These are, at base, ethnographic questions, and they require research in the field in order to answer them. Queer theory's problematic relationship to the particulars of lived experience cannot be pushed aside here. The primary data sources informing queer theory have been literary or philosophical texts, rather than ethnographic ones; even the recent work in language and desire assumes that people's accounts of their own experiences are of secondary importance to theory-building compared to the authorial claims of Freud and Lacan. In some ways, the situation resembles the early 20th century contrast between the grand theorizing of ethnology and the more localized depictions of ethnographic inquiry. Granted, lesbian/gay anthropology was, for a time, obsessed with local depiction, in the absence of broader theory (Weston 1998). But the following chapters will show that lesbian/gay anthropology has broadened its vision sufficiently to ensure that the analytical flattening derived from such data-centered inquiry is now being corrected.

Public anthropology and the "diss"-tance tactics of queer theory

But it isn't just identity politics that leads to a rejection of affiliation with the public anthropology project. There is also a commitment to maintain distance from conditions of real-world engagement that is deeply embedded in many areas of queer theory. Under such circumstances, those who use the queer theory paradigm to frame their studies of sexuality and gender will find that site-specific, subject-specific concerns like giving witness to local struggles, positioning struggles within regional contexts, and building alliances between academe and activism are irrelevant to their inquiry.

Teresa de Lauretis articulated this idea as early as 1991, in her introduction to a special issue of *differences* exploring the topic "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities." Contrasting the in-your-face politics described by slogans like "we're here, we're queer, so get used to it," and the discussions in the special issue with titles like "Tracking the Vampire," "Street Talk/Straight Talk," and "Daughter of the Movement: The Psychodynamics of Lesbian S/M Fantasy," de Lauretis observed, "as the essays [in this collection] will show, there is very little in common between Queer Nation and queer theory" (1991:xvii). Similar arguments surfaced in the late 1990s, when some scholars objected (and rightly so!) to the identity-centered focus in gay language research, but proposed, as a corrective measure, shifting to a more decontextualized exploration of the interface of language and desire. Under this framework, the speaking/desiring subjects and the specifics of object choices were of no consequence for studies of linguistic practice – and therefore of no interest to linguistic theory. As queer theory always insisted, identities are products of social experience, so they can never serve as the starting point from which meaningful social theory is then constructed (Cameron and Kulick 2003; see also, Kulick 1999:622, n. 43, and 2000). For queer theory, the focus is more detached, more general, more discursive – which means that the contextual, the concerns of the subject, and other components of textuality of everyday life – including its political struggles – are rendered less and less important in the queer analysis.

This is how we understand Jarrod Hayes' provocative – but to those who have been victimized by state-sanctioned homophobic and heterosexist violence, ultimately offensive – suggestion that "the nation" is not a bastion of heteronormative privilege, but a construction deeply rooted in queerness.

> Nationalist discourses that define the Nation by positing marginal sexualities as foreign are not stating what is already the case but actively excluding [*sic.*]. If there must be such an effort to exclude the queer from the Nation . . . and show she is an outsider trying to invade, the queer must always be inside already; that is, in some ways the Nation is always already queer (2000:15–16).

And similarly, when Lee Edelman argues that

> queerness names the side of those "not fighting for the children," the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism (2004:3),

he makes an important point about the enduring commitments of right-wing, fundamentalist rhetoric to *hetero*-normative family values and, thereby, about the critique of the anti-heteronormative, anti-family stance that is implicit in queer theoretical positions. At the same time, in placing queerness as a binary opposition to this right-wing argument, Edelman disregards the commitment to "fight for the children" that is already foregrounded within some arenas of everyday queer experience (Lewin 1993, 1998, in press). By Edelman's standards, interests in children and family exclude some queer persons from the queer project, regardless of their same-sex identification and the political struggles that such identification entails. Someone following Edelman's perspective would not be prompted to acknowledge that there is political work at stake in same-sex marriage – which is, of course, the starting point of the engagement with such a topic when studied from the perspective of public anthropology. Similarly, while Hayes wants us to imagine that the nation is always already queer, public anthropology is more likely to insist (following Althusser, and deliberately ignoring the Freudian invocations of the argument) that the nation is deeply embedded in hetero-patriarchal masculinity – and has institutional resources at the ready through which to prove the point.

Admittedly, there are colleagues working in queer theory who, contra to Hayes and Edelman, insist that their theory-building must affirm everyday political realities and not disguise them. Roger Lancaster's *The Trouble with Nature* (2003) is one such study, and his detailed critique of the mythologizing of the "gay gene" in the public media demonstrates convincingly how queer theory can speak loudly with a public voice. The same is true for David Valentine's reflections on the emergence of "transgender" as a distinctive form of sexual subjectivity (2007). E. Patrick Johnson (2005) has proposed a new style of queer theory whose combination of theory and praxis will be more relevant to the conditions of marginal sexuality based at distances from domains of whiteness. José Muñoz's (1999) writings on dis-identification make a similar suggestion for linking queers of color, gender performance, and everyday politics.

We do not want to argue that there is no room for public critique within the terrain of queer theory – but we do wish to note that certain well-established currents in queer theory do not support discussions of sexuality and gender that are so closely aligned with public concerns. Scholars have to engage those currents if they want to do cutting edge work in sexuality/gender studies. Under these circumstances, anthropological inquiries into queerness that favor more detached, discursive reflection and avoid public witness become entirely understandable.

Whether queer theory can integrate ethnographic description into its theoretical musing, and undermine its detachment – or as Sherry Ortner (1995) would call it, "ethnographic refusal" – remains to be determined. This detachment of theory and lived experience has not been unnoticed, however. It helps to explain why less than 1% of the respondents to the NGLTF Policy Institute's Black Pride Survey 2000 reported using the term *queer* to identify their sexual orientation. As their comments explain, Survey respondents consider the term *queer* to be closely connected to whiteness and privilege, and, thereby, to be explicitly coded in terms that are irrelevant if not antagonistic to black people's lives (Battle et al. 2002:18–20).

Background: Tracing Lesbian/Gay Anthropology's Moves toward the Public Arena

Anthropology's earliest concerns with homosexuality were positioned squarely within the context of "the other," with some anthropologists (though certainly not all of them) acknowledging the presence of homosexuality in the indigenous populations of Indian America, Africa, and the Pacific Islands. In some cases, anthropologists used depictions of a "primitive" homosexuality to further the critique of Freudian psychology initiated, for other reasons, by Malinowski, Kroeber, and Mead. More frequently, these remarks were anecdotal and, in the context of the larger work, often incidental. Still, they argued for the place of homosexuality on the "great arc of culture," and thereby anticipated arguments in the foundational literature in lesbian and gay anthropology that would emerge from fieldwork during the 1950s and 1960s (Lyons and Lyons 2004).

The creation of this literature coincided with the years of international recovery and realignment following World War II, e.g., the Korean War and its aftermath, the emergence of post-colonial nationhood in African and Southeast Asia, and the time of the Vietnam War. Throughout this period, applied anthropology was encouraging a greater anthropological involvement in "practical problem-solving" tasks, and changing world politics created ample opportunities for such involvement. The emergence of gay liberation struggles in urban areas of the USA and other North Atlantic domains offered equally compelling incentives for anthropologists to align "applied" understandings of intervention and change with real world struggles against sexual oppression. Curiously, sexuality did not receive the amount of attention within applied anthropology given to development, health/illness, business, or education. And at this time there were no self-identified lesbian/gay anthropologists ready to speak on behalf of such work within or outside of the applied "field."[4]

In the early 1970s lesbian and gay-identified scholars in other academic disciplines began organizing "gay caucuses" and related interest groups within their professional organizations and, in the case of the Gay Academic Union, more generally. By 1978, members of the American Anthropological Association who were interested in the topic of homosexuality created a similar association, the Anthropological Research Group on Homosexuality. ARGOH did not have a formal or official relationship with the AAA. It was, instead, an informal organization, and its self-proclaimed focus on "research" allowed membership in ARGOH to address a range of intellectual and personal interests in homosexuality without requiring that individuals make their sexual orientation a matter of public record. Early members of ARGOH never anticipated that the group, or its successor, would become a regular section within the AAA umbrella, and were reluctant to endorse such a move because of the public disclosure of membership lists that these connections would unavoidably require.

ARGOH's creation was prompted, in part, by a prolonged debate within the AAA regarding whether studies of homosexuality constituted a legitimate and appropriate topic for anthropological inquiry. Ultimately, many more people endorsed the right of inquiry than ever joined ARGOH or actually conducted such studies on their own. But the successful outcome of that debate, combined with ARGOH's formation, established the groundwork for a more visible lesbian/gay presence within the profession. Any number of early figures in lesbian/gay anthropology, who prior to this time had not had access to such a network of scholars with similar interests, soon claimed position within ARGOH's professional terrain,[5] and many of the popular reference points informing today's discussions of homosexual experience worldwide – North American "berdache," ritualized homosexuality in Melanesia, India's *hijra*, drag queens in Chicago and Kansas City – gained visibility within mainstream anthropological discourse during this time as well.

Newton's *Mother Camp* (1972) is especially noteworthy in this context. This study offered the first anthropological discussion of homosexuality that used mainstream social theory (e.g., Goffman's reflections on stigma) instead of sexual psychology to theorize aspects of homosexual experience. It is also significant in that it anticipated the discussions of gender performativity that would become foundational to queer theory in the 1990s (Rubin 2002; see also Butler 1990:136–137; Halberstam 1998:231). Newton's synthesis of lesbian/gay ethnography and social theory is echoed in Lancaster's use of "performance" and "shame" to decipher conflicting expressions of masculinity among lower middle-class urban Nicaraguan men (Lancaster 1992:235–278 – and see also a similar argument in Guttman [1996] on urban Mexican masculinity), Herdt's rethinking of US-based gay teenagers' coming-out processes based on his studies of Sambia "male initiation" (Herdt 1999), and Kulick's proposal that studies of "lesbian and gay language" be broadened to engage the interface between language and Lacanian understandings of desire (Cameron and Kulick 2003; Kulick 2000).

Besides rethinking how the sexual can be theorized, Newton's work actively engaged the economic dimension of drag performance and performers, citing the abysmal working conditions in the clubs and the exploitative wages paid to the artists. Here Newton's work also raised questions about a public gay culture that accepts such exploitation unproblematically. This discussion anticipated the critiques of sexuality, race and class later developed by Kath Weston (1990), Jeff Maskovsky (2002), and Karen Brodkin (2000), which have now become obligatory features in anthropological discussions of lesbian/gay life.

In both of these concerns, *Mother Camp* marked the beginning of a more problem-oriented approach to lesbian/gay experiences which was supported and encouraged by emerging anthropological interest in feminist theory and in the broad terrain signaled by "women's issues."[6] These problem-oriented studies of homosexuality grappled with experiences of discrimination, misogyny, homophobia, and anti-gay violence in traditional societies, in colonial settings, and in the post-colonial terrain.[7] Frequently, the conditions these studies described coincided with issues of interest to practitioners and policy-makers engaged in applied research projects. Yet none of this work led to a greater interest in lesbian/gay issues in applied anthropology, or to an integration of lesbian/gay studies within the work of applied anthropology projects based in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia, or the Pacific Islands.

The AIDS pandemic did have that effect, however. While mainstream society, and mainstream anthropologists, remained indifferent to AIDS, a small cadre of applied anthropologists became key players in culture-centered AIDS research, including Ralph Bolton, Doug Feldman, Gil Herdt, Stephanie Kane, Lee Kochems, Norris Lang, Patricia Marshall, Janet McGrath, Merrill Singer, and Melanie Sovine. Some of these researchers had already worked with lesbian/gay issues in anthropology. Most had not, however, and by including references to same-sex desires, identities, and practices in their research agendas, these researchers began a dialogue between lesbian/gay anthropology and applied anthropology that had not been evidenced before this time.[8]

Notably absent from that dialogue was a detailed discussion of lesbian/gay erotic practices, sexual identities and other components of everyday lesbian/gay sexual politics. The anecdotal comments of previous years were suggestive in this regard, but not sufficiently informative, and newer research strategies designed to explore sexual practices through broad-based sampling and fixed-alternative questionnaires were proving to be equally limited in their insights (Bolton 1992, 1995). Thus while the emergence of an applied anthropology of AIDS increased lesbian/gay visibility within applied anthropology, it also imposed restrictions on what that visibility could legitimately entail. What was necessary was a return to interests in sexual activity and sexualized identity which had played into critiques of Freudian theory almost seventy-five years before, and that return would have to take place within an intellectual location where studies of sexuality were not so curtailed.

Now, with ethnographic method much more developed and ethnographic theory much more refined, studies of "the sexual" could address a richer array of themes than had been the case in those earlier studies, including addressing questions about researcher positionality which, in previous years, were left unexamined in scholarly publications (Leap 1999b; Murray 1996; Newton 1996). The emergence of queer theory in cultural studies, literary studies and elsewhere also encouraged sharper ethnographic reflections, particularly in those instances where understandings of queerness led anthropologists to reexamine and enhance understandings of homosexual experience in "well-researched" ethnographic areas (Elliston 1995; Roscoe 1994). In effect, applied anthropology's work with AIDS notwithstanding, lesbian/gay anthropology continued to be firmly grounded within the social/cultural terrain. ARGOH's transformation into the Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists (SOLGA) in 1987, the successful incorporation of SOLGA, as an "interest group," into the organizational structure of the AAA, and the creation of an AAA Commission to identify issues affecting lesbian/gay anthropologists, as lesbians and gay men and as members of the profession, and finally SOLGA's emergence as a regular section within the AAA organizational structure served to underscore and solidify this positioning.

From Academe to Public Engagement

Through these developments, SOLGA essentially "came out of the closet," emerging as an identity-based section on the same model used for the Association of Black Anthropologists and other organizations representing particular constituencies and populations within the profession. These moves to increase lesbian/gay visibility also prompted the emergence of the method and theory now closely associated with lesbian/gay anthropology, and with the first two books in this series (Lewin and Leap, eds. 1996, 2002).

The story does not end here. In large part, alliance-building, visibility, and new ways to theorize sexual identities and sexual cultures have been academically-focused projects, undertaken in the hope that lesbian/gay anthropology will someday gain the same degree of status enjoyed by the traditional anthropological subfields and interest areas. But alliance-building, visibility and theorizing have also brought workers in lesbian/gay anthropology into closer conversation with individuals and groups whose sexuality has been an object of study in earlier times, but who have not been active players in the research process themselves. Frequently, as Williams (1986), Lang (1998), Blackwood (1999), Manalansan (2003), and others remind us, workers in lesbian/gay anthropology may already be connected to these constituencies, and the combination of personal and theoretical perspectives which informs studies of local sexualities can be an asset to the research process, but also, at times, an obstacle.

In this sense, lesbian/gay anthropology's being "out in public" moves far beyond earlier, facile distinctions between "us" and "them," or "insider" and "outsider," distinctions that prompted debates over "etic" vs. "emic" perspectives in mid 20th century literature on ethnographic method, and encouraged more recent notions of the anthropologist-as-halfie as articulated by Abu-Lughod (1991) and Narayan (1993). Much more relevant to lesbian/gay anthropology in such instances are analogies with the ambiguities of place which dominate the ethnographic inquiry of scholars like Patricia Zavella (1996) and José Limón (1989) and the continuing efforts of those scholars to mediate personal and professional location within local settings that are not their own.

Paralleling the ambiguities of the research process are issues associated with the presentation of research findings to non-specialists. Part of the problem here stems from the need to develop a user-friendly vocabulary for discussions of sexual meanings that is capable of maintaining the intent of technical theory while avoiding any appeal to simplistic or stereotypic references. For example, hoping to underscore the idea that "lesbian" and "gay" are not universal categories of sexual identity, some researchers have begun to use phrases like "men who have sex with men" or "same-sex identified, female bodied persons" when discussing forms of sexual subjectivity in cultural settings other than their own. Audience members, accustomed to "lesbian" and "gay," may be distracted by these cumbersome terminologies and overlook the well-intended theoretical and political positions that motivate them.

Additionally, some researchers argue that sexual identities are unstable and transitory, at the same time that activists find that essentialized understandings of sexual identity are more effective when attempting to influence policy. Similarly, researchers provide evidence that same-sex couples can enjoy stable, supportive relationships, while members of lesbian/gay communities react to such examples as endorsements of assimilation and middle-class conformity. Ironically, some conservative "pro-family" advocates also make use of such evidence to show how the sanctity of marriage and the family will be severely compromised if such alternative domestic arrangements are allowed to take root in domains conventionally designated as Judeo-Christian. Such appropriations of cross-cultural data are an unintended consequence of efforts to communicate research findings outside of academe. Finding ways to correct the distorted understandings of human sexuality and to undermine the backlash against sexual marginality that such arguments present are additional tasks confronting lesbian/gay anthropology as it looks beyond the university setting.

Here, the disjunction between lesbian/gay public anthropology and applied anthropology introduced in the beginning of this essay becomes especially problematic. That applied anthropology's commitment to practical problem-solving has limited relevance to the complexities of lesbian/gay experience has already been noted. Similarly, while applied anthropology has claimed to be the segment of the profession that creates the blueprints for "making knowledge useful" and "putting people first," lesbian/gay concerns – or lesbian/gay people – have never figured prominently in these concerns, and probably would have even less so, had the AIDS pandemic not taken center stage in applied professional discourse.[9] The scholars who have established the parameters of applied anthropology in American or western European settings, including such figures as Margaret Mead, Solon Kimball, George Foster, John van Willigen, Michael Cernea, and Erve Chambers, are not influential figures in the projects described in this collection, and their writings do not figure prominently in the references cited in the several chapters.

So, surprising to report, as rich as the work on gay/lesbian/queer topics might be, very little of it is included in the conversations that circulate in the foreground of applied anthropology as we know it in the profession today. Except for articles addressing HIV/AIDS, articles on gay/lesbian/queer topics simply do not appear in *Human Organization*, *Practicing Anthropology* or the *NAPA Bulletin* – and articles on these themes are not included when editors organize special issues for these publications.[10] Sessions on queer themes appear infrequently at the professional meetings sponsored by the Society for Applied Anthropology and the national and local associations of practicing anthropologists; and plenary panels at these meetings do not include queer issues when they take stock of past practices, current trends or new directions. Queer themes are absent as well from the textbooks and other publications used in anthropology classrooms to orient students to key concerns in public anthropology (Erickson 2006; Forman 1995; González 2004) and these themes are also left unnamed in the inventory of books and edited collections that make up the "public anthropology series" published by several academic presses.[11]

The exclusions that emerge under these conditions have implications for employability of queer (and other) graduate students who want to do work on queer topics within a public anthropology framework. Will this work be recognized as public anthropology by more established scholars, or will it be labeled as "merely queer" – and thereby relegated to the questionable status of identity-based and personal – when students submit their credentials in a job search? Similar questions apply regarding submission of essays to professional journals where assumptions about the terrain of public anthropology do not coincide with queer identity struggles.

The reasons for this disjunction between "applied" and lesbian/gay public anthropology are multiple, and echo many of the themes which have kept lesbian/gay anthropology on the sidelines of the discipline as a whole for so many years (Commission Report 1997). Part of the problem lies in the fact that the commitment to social change guiding the "applied" work described in these scholars' writings has been closely tied to structures of power, and therefore is of limited usefulness to projects seeking to engage everyday experiences of marginality, diversity and difference. Rephrased slightly, applied anthropology's indifference to lesbian/gay concerns parallels the erasure of third-world efforts at self-determination outlined in Escobar's (1995) and Gupta's (1998) critiques of development anthropology, the self-serving perspectives informing assumptions of health and illness in medical anthropology which Farmer (1999, 2003) and others have identified, as well as the enduring challenges to the apolitical, business-as-usual anthropology challenged in *Reinventing Anthropology* (Hymes ed. 1972). Mohanty (1988) and Spivak (1993) raise similar concerns in their critiques of the Eurocentric biases embedded in western feminist theory, as does Guha (1999) in his reflections on the shortcomings of colonial historiography, and Fanon (1963) in his rejection of seemingly self-evident connections between "nation" and "culture." So the conditions here are not unique to applied anthropology's efforts to "define" and "resolve" real-world problems, but speak to a reluctance to address real-world conditions of diversity and inequality that is broadly evidenced within social science as a whole.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the orientation of the lesbian/gay anthropology in this collection is closely aligned with several of the intellectual and political traditions that have long called into question that reluctance and its consequences. These traditions include Gramsci's writings about organic intellectual formation and resistance to hegemony (1971), the critical sociology of culture envisioned by Raymond Williams (1977), Stuart Hall (1980) and other figures in British cultural studies, and the sense of engaged social inquiry proposed by Gledhill (2000) and Smith (1999). Connecting lesbian/gay anthropology with these traditions also aligns it with efforts to create a public anthropology, informed by commitments to practice, engaged in the work of social critique, and guided by a vision of social justice.

Overviewing the Scope of this Collection

So what are those engaged in lesbian/gay anthropology actually doing to move the inquiry in such directions? How do they do this? Why do it? And in what ways has the inquiry proven successful? Our approach posits a public anthropology framed in terms of strategies that might address underlying causes and concerns. Without this level of analysis, proposals for band-aids and possibly ill-considered interventions are at best ineffective, and at worst detrimental to the well-being of their targets.

To answer these questions – and to demonstrate that lesbian/gay anthropology is, or is starting to be, “out” in public – we have organized the papers in this collection in terms of five general themes.

I. Out in Public: Reflecting on Experience

The chapters that constitute this section reflect divergent experiences of lesbian/gay anthropology and ethnography as practitioners understand the fluidity of their positions. In her chapter, **Esther Newton** examines her experience of appearing on The Phil Donahue show and discovering that she quickly lost control of the terms of that engagement. “Show-biz” priorities had far more to do with the terms of the appearance than any concern with the kinds of educational and political goals that are central to the work of both anthropologists and activists. What is required if an activist intervention is to succeed in the ratings-obsessed world of television?

Héctor Carrillo draws on ethnographic research with Mexican gay and bisexual men to reflect on the complicated political and practical intersections of his own evolving identity with his work in HIV prevention programs. Carrillo’s personal reflections lead him to examine issues of how openly-gay researchers and practitioners can contribute to or detract from the efficacy of HIV-prevention programs. Was he an insider or an outsider, and how did these fluctuating categories shape his ability to complete his research?

In his chapter, **E. Patrick Johnson** describes his project collecting life stories from same-sex identified black men in the American south, and reflects on the tensions surrounding his own positionality as researcher and research subject as the project unfolded. As a performance studies scholar, Johnson’s objectives in carrying out this research were to represent the men’s sensibilities in a theatrical setting.

II. Sexual Sameness is not a Self-Evident Terrain

There was a time when researchers assumed that lesbian and gay were labels for specific, seemingly stable identities. Then researchers argued that these identities were not stable at all, and reducing discussions to "lesbian" and "gay" or any single notational site flattened our understandings of these rich, dynamic, and complex domains of experience. Now it is clear that same-sex and transgender identities are neither fixed nor totally fluid, but are claims to social and sexual/gendered locations that are both informed by details of economy, history, and ideology and also inform other ways that those conditions impact people's lives. These papers explore instances where people press those claims and explore the consequences of those efforts.

Karen Brodkin reflects on research she undertook with political activists in Los Angeles and on the tendency of her openly-gay narrators to not think about their sexuality in connection with their work as organizers. She uses this analysis to reflect on the ways in which intersectional perspectives can more fully inform our work in public anthropology.

Ellen Lewin draws on narratives gathered from gay fathers in the USA to consider how self-designations of gayness are formulated and continued over time. Fatherhood opens up possibilities for affiliation and identification not present for childless gay men, leading men to reflect on how they know they are gay. Lewin argues that these meanings are more unstable across the spectrum of our research than we might generally acknowledge.

Natasha Sandraya Wilson addresses questions of identity among the low-income black patrons of a lesbian bar in New Orleans. Virtually all the members of the community, regardless of their gender identity, are biological mothers of children whose fathers are often away, most typically serving prison terms, and the maintenance of "lesbian" identity is impeded by these conditions. While the fieldwork was completed before Hurricane Katrina, Wilson considers the impact of the disaster on the survival of this community.

III. Unpacking the Engagements between Sexuality and Broader Ideological Positions

Part of public anthropological inquiry is to unpack disguised assumptions that are at stake in particular moments of human experience and to demonstrate the likely consequences of human experience as it unfolds in those moments. The task of public anthropology is to help build this scientific knowledge of the mechanism of recognition, and assist subjects in their efforts to disrupt the ideological structures that define and control them.

Rachel Watkins reconsiders the legacies of the Tuskegee syphilis experiments, focusing on the heteronormative assumptions that have shaped ongoing discussions and critiques of their impact. She shows that these assumptions make full comprehension of the breadth of the experiments impossible, reflecting pervasive readings of black bodies both at the time of the experiments and more recently.

Scott Morgensen discusses the self-consciously "rural" subculture of radical faeries in Northern California. Despite the centrality of imagined rural life, however, Morgensen found that radical faerie culture was firmly situated in urban locales, where the image of living in rural communities served as an ideal that was rarely actually achieved. His paper speaks to the many situations in which anthropologists' interpretations diverge from those held dear by their informants and points to some of the intellectual and ethical dilemmas that come with this kind of public anthropology.

Elijah Edelman uses life story narrative to disclose the ethnographic shortcomings of "stealth," the post-op trans subject's refusal to disclose trans status which is normalized and valued by the psycho-medical establishment but negotiated differently and with difficulty by individual subjects.

Margot Weiss explores the uncomfortable similarities between consensual BDSM interrogation scenes and what media/commentary termed "sadomasochism" at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. By juxtaposing SM and torture, she reads both the Abu Ghraib photographs and the interrogation SM scene performatively – that is, in terms of their audiences, the ways they negotiate and produce meanings, and their social, cultural, and political contexts.

William Leap examines Washington, DC's plan to build a baseball stadium in an area of the city containing low-profile housing and a number of gay-oriented dance clubs, show bars, and sex clubs. He focuses on the lack of gay-community protest over the loss of this space, and wonders what characteristics of gay space, in a context of urban restructuring, *would* be sufficient to prompt such protest?

IV. International and Local Formations of Same-Sex and Transgender Identities

How do same-sex and transgender identities articulate within the broad context of what Appadurai has termed "the global now"? The movement of North Atlantic meanings of "lesbian" and "gay" in late modern, neoliberal conditions bring these categories into conflict with constructions having separate histories, both indigenous and colonial in basis. Papers in this section focus on ways anthropologists study circulation and local/global conflict.

Megan Sinnott uses ethnographic data gathered in Thailand to question the systematic invisibility of female same-sex relationships across the ethnographic and queer literatures. She focuses most closely on the differing spatial configurations of two gay-rights organizations based in Bangkok, one focusing on women's and the other on men's issues.

Florence Babb considers how images of "coming out" and "being visible" are deployed by gay and lesbian activists in the post-Sandinista political climate of Nicaragua, particularly focusing on the borrowing of "international" gay symbols from the USA and elsewhere. Babb's paper examines the quandaries these strategic moves present to the activist anthropologist, particularly as such moves rely on a kind of strategic essentialism that scholars of lesbian and gay issues are apt to mistrust.

Harris Solomon focuses on how engaged ethnography can point to the interdiscursive boundaries where sexuality becomes enmeshed within scientific knowledge-making and its attendant public debates. By examining the divergent discursive appeals to sexuality and science in HIV-advocacy work in India, the paper highlights the need for anthropological attention to the intersections between advocacy and ethnography.

Rudolf Gaudio uses Nigerian and international news media accounts of a "same-sex wedding party" in a North Nigerian city as a starting point for exploring how categorization and translation become tools of transnational domination and discursive violence. His attention to the subjects' own accounts of such events reveals their keen awareness of these global processes, but also their reluctance to embrace the international sexual identities (gay, lesbian, queer) that those processes seek to impose. Even so, the consequences of reluctance are usually obscured by more visible discourses that assume gay presence and then evaluate it against standards of international human rights or national heteronormative morality.

V. Sexuality and Neoliberal Citizenship

Citizenship is a terrain that reconciles local and global contexts, but it is also a formation that opens new opportunities for public construction of sexual meanings in late modernity.

Mark Graham focuses on how the European Union (EU) uses sexuality to frame the project of European integration and the attempts to create a sense of European identity among the citizens of the continent. He looks at how the rights of LGBT citizens have become part of the process of European integration and, in particular, how LGBT sexuality is intertwined with the evolving content of what it means, culturally, socially, and politically, to be a citizen of the EU.

Chris Tan's essay offers a critique of the offer of employment within the civil service that Singapore's former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong made to gay Singaporeans in 2003. Tan shows that the policy stands in contrast to the inability of Singapore's main gay-rights activist group to be formally registered, the already substantial presence of gay Singaporeans among civil servants, the retention of the anti-sodomy laws, and finally, the failure of government agencies to implement any of the policies mentioned in Goh's statement.

Lavinia Nicolae examines the issues informing the debates surrounding the legalizations of same-sex "marriage" and civil unions in New Mexico. Her account focuses on the changing shape of the arguments proponents of LGBT rights mobilized over the course of several years of (still-unresolved) debates over the issue. In response to intensifying opposition, images of the same-sex couple or family evolved, as proponents of the legislation sought to destigmatize, and in particular, desexualize the lesbian and gay citizens they represented. Through these maneuvers, the concerns of transgendered New Mexicans were erased from the agenda, while gays and lesbians were presented as different from other citizens only in that they lacked certain legal protections.

Notes

1. Included here are the many transgender constructions that build on normative distinctions between female and male, as well as identity-specific constructions like Native American two-spirit identities, Northern Thai *kathoey*, or South African *isi tabane*, where the sexuality associated with the construction is often positioned outside of the female/male dichotomy.
2. By *practice*, we refer to a commitment to do more than merely "study" the particulars of social experience. As Marx wrote so cogently in the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it" (Marx 1845:145).
3. Althusser has observed:

   > To recognize that we are subjects . . . this recognition only gives us the "consciousness" of our incessant (eternal practice of ideological recognition [)] . . . but in no sense does it give us the (scientific) knowledge of the mechanism of this recognition. Now it is this knowledge that we will have to reach, if you will, while speaking in ideology, and from within ideology we have to outline a discourse which tries to break with ideology, in order to dare to be the beginning of a scientific (i.e. subject-less) discourse on ideology. (1971:173)

   The task of public anthropology is to help build this scientific knowledge of the mechanism of recognition, and thereby assist subjects in their efforts to disrupt the ideological structures that define and control them.
4. Indeed, while several past presidents of the Society for Applied Anthropology have been gay or lesbian, only one of them, Sue-Ellen Jacobs, revealed her sexual orientation while serving the term of office. And repeated efforts to create a lesbian/gay interest group within the SfAA have proved to be unsuccessful.
5. Esther Newton, one of the scholars whose work appeared in the years before ARGOH (see the discussion in the following paragraphs), has described her experiences in academe during this period in "Too queer for college" (Newton 1987, reprinted in Newton 2000:219–224).
6. Here, as was now the case in lesbian/gay anthropology, earlier anecdotal studies of "women's cultures" were being replaced by more tightly theorized discussions of women's economic, social, and ideological experiences and sharply drawn critiques of the regulatory apparatuses that delimit women's "place" under state power. The resulting anthropological conversation helped curtail some of the less cautious theorizing that had come to dominate popular discussions of women's experience in traditional and contemporary societies, and part of that conversation insisted that the lesbian presence be acknowledged, not ignored or peripheralized in those discussions. Indeed, cross-cultural evidence cited in anthropological studies of lesbian experience made clear that female-centered sexualities were not merely mirror-images of male-centered sexualities, and had to be examined on their own terms in each cultural context (Blackwood 1986).

7. See, for example, the range of topics and cultural locations examined in the essays in Blackwood ed. 1986, and Murray ed. 1987.
8. A particularly discordant moment in this debate occurred at the roundtable session on "AIDS and the Social Imaginary" held at the 1992 AAA meetings in San Francisco, a city that was particularly hard hit by the epidemic. At this session, several leading cultural anthropologists presented papers which reduced the AIDS pandemic to an abstract intellectual construction, in effect, to something that was "good to think." The organized protest of this session, during which SOLGA members and supporters sported T-shirts proclaiming "These Natives Can Speak for Themselves," significantly increased SOLGA's visibility at the AAA meetings and precluded the members' efforts to make SOLGA a section of the AAA.
9. And the motives for applied anthropology's interests in AIDS were not entirely compassionate as Michael Clatts (1993) explained in an essay that still deserves careful reading.
10. Queer concerns, and the work being done by queers and our allies to address those concerns, are not represented in the essays in "The Future Lies Ahead" Applied "Anthropology in Century XXI" (Hackenberg and Hackenberg, eds. 2004). See further comments on the arguments orienting this collection, below.
11. Paralleling this omission, references to queer concerns do not appear in the detailed discussion of public anthropology that the editor of one of these series has posted to a website designed to promote public anthropology as a terrain of activity within the profession (http://publicanthropology.org).

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Part I

Out in Public: Reflecting on Experience

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Chapter 1

My Date with Phil Donahue: A Queer Intellectual in TV-Land

Esther Newton

In 1994 I had a journalist girlfriend named Jane Rosette who had spent ten years covering the AIDS epidemic. Wise in the ways of that to me unfamiliar realm, she would frequently disparage this or that activist or public figure as a real "media slut," someone who would do anything to get their opinion noticed by the press or their face on TV. That fall my media promiscuity quotient would be tested when a woman who introduced herself as a producer for the Phil Donahue television talk show telephoned. She invited me with alluring flattery ("we understand you are a nationally known expert on female impersonation"), to appear on the show, along with the three lead actors, Terence Stamp, Hugo Weaving, and Guy Pearce, from the newly released Australian film, *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* and "some others," to be taped about three days hence. As I fell over myself agreeing to do the show I could hear Jane's voice in my head whispering, "media slut."

There are good reasons why progressive intellectuals are rarely seen on American television. Our politics and our whole enterprise are disrespected by the powerful, and with the role of the public intellectual shrinking, particularly on the left, we have mostly retreated into academia where our opinions are seldom asked by the outside world and we mostly say we don't care. So why did I jump into the media fray? I was no wannabee media celebrity like Camille Paglia. The real bait was promoting my newly published book, an ethnohistory of the gay community of Cherry Grove. It had been well reviewed, but the thought of being able to reach the millions who watched the Donahue show – that was an author's sweet dream. Who doesn't want to be read?

Digression number one: actually it depends on whom you want to be read by, a strictly specialist audience or a broader one. These issues predate the "bad writing" contest that once lampooned jargony academic writing in the pages of *Lingua Franca*; in my own discipline, Margaret Mead was reviled by many because her books were widely read and she appeared on radio and television. The decision whether, as an intellectual or artist, one wants to appear on television is related to questions of

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economic survival, morality, politics, and language, as well as a trepidation factor – does one want to subject oneself? Because media appearances are stressful and morally ambiguous: as one gay media critic put it: "If you speak, you must prepare to be used."[1]

Tossing and turning over these issues that night, it suddenly occurred to me that I had not even asked the producer who the other guests she had mentioned in passing might be. The next morning I called and asked exactly who else would be appearing. Besides the actors, there would be a live drag queen, she said, and "someone who doesn't approve of female impersonation." When I insisted on knowing who this was, she admitted it was a Dr Paul Cameron. That's when the alarm siren finally wailed. Paul Cameron, I knew vaguely, was some kind of right-wing anti-gay ideologue.

I needed to know more about Cameron and there were only a couple of days until the taping. I got on the telephone to acquaintances in NGLTF and to old friends including Larry Gross, a professor of communications at the Annenberg School at Penn. Within 24 hours Larry faxed me pages of information on him gleaned from the internet, journals, and newspapers without which I would have felt totally unprepared.

Cameron, a born-again Christian, had a PhD in psychology, but he had been fired from the University of Nebraska, after which he had established a think tank called the Institute for Scientific Investigation of Sexuality (ISIS) and toured the country as a speaker for right-wing groups and an expert-for-hire in anti-gay political campaigns. He was an early and enthusiastic practitioner of "ex-gay" therapy. As of 1994 ISIS had published a number of virulently anti-gay pamphlets that were distributed to policy-makers and ultimately used in the widely distributed right-wing video, the "Gay Agenda." Citing his own research and that of others, Cameron claimed in graphic and deliberately scary language to have found that both gay men and lesbians were wildly promiscuous and diseased; that gay men in particular should be tattooed and quarantined. The articles mentioned that he was very difficult to debate because his arguments jumped around "like a pinball machine . . . you try to build up a case, and the argument changes."[2]

I must admit to being naively puzzled about why the Donahue producers had asked Paul Cameron to be a guest on a show about *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert,* the adventures of two drag queens and a transsexual who travel by bus across spectacular Australian outback. Why would Phil Donahue, whose reputation was liberal, have a homophobe like Cameron on his show, I vaguely wondered. My main concern, however, was whether I should go on the show at all. Cameron might be a nut, but he had far more media experience than I, and would my presence lend him credibility? But both Larry Gross and Sue Hyde, then with NGLTF, advised me to go on the show with the goal of exposing Cameron as a bigot on national TV.

I called the Donahue producer back and said I would go on the show on two conditions: that Donahue plug my book, and that Donahue would expose Paul Cameron's scholarship as a sham. Widely criticized by psychologists and sociologists, Cameron had been ejected from the American Psychological Association in

December 1983 for misrepresenting the work of other scholars and for using dishonest research methods. The producer said that Donahue was aware of this and would mention it during the show, and that he would certainly plug my book.

Now for digression number two. In the remaining day before the show, I fretted about what to wear. What should an out butch lesbian wear on national television? How to present oneself, especially visually, is a highly charged issue for all gay people, indeed for all members of stigmatized groups, who are always in painful relation to the stereotypes that dominant groups hold about us. Does one want to prove that one is nothing like the stereotype? Or that despite looking like the stereotype one is both scintillating and just like the girl next door? Without going into all the complexities involved here, my issue on the show was how to dress up without what for me would have been the sell-out of wearing lipstick and a dress, or alternatively, risk becoming a spectacle rather than an "expert" by wearing what I am most comfortable in, pants, shirt and jacket. Ironically, in an effort to look presentable enough as a woman to seem professional, I wore a red blouse, probably signaling to Donahue and Paul Cameron that I was a television neophyte, since red "bleeds" and looks bad on-screen.

I had elected to arrive early to watch a showing of *Priscilla* with the studio audience. They seemed to enjoy the movie, and as it turned out, there were a lot of gay people and sympathetic straights in the audience and only one openly hostile woman. At least I wasn't going to face an audience packed with right wingers.

In the first segment Donahue chatted with the actors about their experience as "straight guys" acting in the film, and differentiated between drag queens and transsexuals (overall I had the impression that Donahue was ill prepared throughout and was basically winging it). "What's going on here," he asked rhetorically, implying that movie drag was becoming as ubiquitous as popcorn. Then he introduced me as an anthropologist, mentioned my book (though not the title) and added: "you are a politically active, out of the closet lesbian person, so your interest in gayness . . . is more than just in passing." Though taken off guard, I assented. (Paul Cameron's sexuality never came up.) The Chiron (the letters on screen) read "anthropologist" rather than "out lesbian" which would have further undermined my "expert" credibility.

Next the female impersonator Coco Lachine, who was Empress of the Court of New York that year, though Donahue didn't say so, performed a lip synch version of "I Will Survive." Then, during the commercial break, the producers brought Cameron out and tried to seat him next to me, which is when I realized that my being an expert on drag was just a footnote in the show's agenda; what they really wanted was a cat fight between me, an out lesbian, and Paul Cameron. This was their idea of exciting television. Wholly unprepared, I had a visceral reaction and could not sit next to this man, even if every one of my books wound up remaindered, and I threatened to walk off the set. The impasse was broken by Hugo Weaving who urged the actors to seat themselves so that Cameron could not sit next to me.

Phil introduced Cameron, who was a chubby, innocuous looking and slightly effeminate white guy in a suit, as "chairman of the Family Research Institute . . ."

Immediately Cameron went into his spiel: Gays are promiscuous; they spread AIDS, their "lifestyle" leads to death. There are reaction shots of me frowning angrily and of the audience laughing at him. When Phil asks Cameron if AIDS patients should be quarantined, he answers "yes" and repeats his spiel as a reaction shot shows the actor Guy Pearce laughing at him.

Then the drag performer Coco Lachine, a petite Filipino with a slight accent, came on stage in drag and calmly sat down next to Cameron, saying "don't we make a lovely couple?" In the next sentence, though, she denounced Cameron for "spreading hate." Ignoring this and the comment of an audience member that Coco had raised money for charity and "I don't see how he hurts anyone," Cameron returned to the theme that homosexuality leads to death.

In the next segment Phil held up my book and briefly plugged it, but after the next commercial break, instead of coming back to my book, he asked me how, as a lesbian, I feel about drag in the gay community, and I used this opportunity to discuss aspects of *Priscilla* that I thought were sexist and racist. Worthy as that was, by the next commercial break I realized that Donahue was not going to expose Cameron as I had been told. I passed a message to him that I wanted to speak right after the break.

When Donahue called on me I inserted my message about how Cameron had been kicked out of the APA for dishonest research; that his "scholarship" was a sham and that in any case he knew nothing about drag, the supposed theme of the show. Interestingly, an audience member brushed aside my attack on Cameron as elitist ("regardless of his credentials" he said sarcastically, as if a supposed expert's credentials were irrelevent) while attacking Cameron for not having a message of love and tolerance, which I take to be the basic ethos of talk show land. Meanwhile Cameron ignored both me and the audience member and repeated that gay people are diseased, that they aren't "holding up the sky" by "producing and reproducing" and that they molest children.

* * * *

Over all, the Donahue show was probably a better venue for gay intellectuals or artists to get a fair hearing than any talk show that existed then or now, with perhaps the exception of the Charlie Rose show on PBS.[3] Neither Donahue nor the audience sympathized with Cameron's views; in fact both audience and the actors did their best to ridicule and shame him, efforts to which he appeared impervious. He got his points across (although he never succeeded in effectively plugging his book); without counting up the exact minutes, Cameron had much more air time than any other guest, and probably four times as much as I did.

I didn't go into the taping with the pre-recorded talking points that Cameron had; instead, except for my intervention denouncing Cameron as a discredited expert, I simply responded to the two questions Donahue put to me. No audience member directed a question toward me; Cameron's outrageous statements monopolized their attention. During the taping I was preoccupied with not losing my temper, especially after the producers sprang their "ambush" by trying to seat Cameron next to me.[4] I did accomplish my two goals of having Donahue plug my book, though only in passing, and of exposing Cameron, though I had to do it myself. But perhaps Cameron should have been my role model? This was also Malcolm X's strategy, after all. He ignored white reporters' provocative or inane questions and used the air time to promulgate his own views. But my academic training and rather reserved temperament would make that difficult for me, even if I had a sharper ax to grind than I do. Certainly had I been in Cameron's position, put down by the audience and other guests, I would not have been able to hold my ground as well.

Obviously there are contrasting strategies for stigmatized people to pursue, especially when there are guests from "the other side," meaning, for queers, single minded homophobes, as is too often the case. On this Donahue show, the impersonator Coco Lachine was willing to put her gender deviance on full display, and still managed to denounce Cameron with humor and an appeal to tolerance and love. I tried to minimize my difference and maximize my professionalism – not a comfortable trade-off, but actually Coco and I made a pretty good team.

In dealing with talk shows (or any kind of panel), queers should first insist on knowing the names of the other guests. Venue and context are almost everything in determining how we will be seen and whether we have any chance of being heard within the frame of the media agenda. Probably the most successful queer intervention ever was made by the young HIV-positive Cuban-American Pedro Zamora on *The Real World* on MTV, but I think that José Muñoz overestimates Zamora's agency and underestimates his luck.[5] The producers hold so many cards; for example they could have easily cut my denunciation of Cameron, or chironed me as "admitted lesbian" rather than as "anthropologist." Still, I gambled that to promote my gay book, to be visible as an out lesbian intellectual, and to oppose Cameron, it would be worth the risk of failing or of being ridiculed, and it was. Though after the show sales of my book briefly spiked up, in retrospect the main benefit accrued to my self-confidence. Tempted by television, yes, but no media slut because I had been willing to walk out rather than sit next to the despicable Paul Cameron. Out-gunned by Cameron's fanaticism and media savvy, yes, but not smashed. The next time, if there is one, I won't wear red.

Notes

1. Joshua Gamson, "Do Ask, Do Tell: Freak Talk on TV," pp. 329–334 in *The Columbia Reader on Lesbians and Gay Men in Media, Society and Politics*, Larry Gross and James D. Woods, eds., New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
2. Quoted in the *Advocate*, Oct. 29, 1985, p. 30.
3. Charlie Rose has a one-on-one interview format, which precludes the sensationalized cat fight atmosphere that has become even more prevalent in the intervening years. Joshua Gamson thinks even these "screamfest" shows like Ricki Lake offer queers opportunities for agency.

4. Gamson discusses the famous ambush case of Jonathan Schmitz on the Ricki Lake show that led to Scott Amedure's murder by Schmitz and wound up in court. According to Gamson, the ambush is a staple of what Neil Gabler calls "exploitalk TV" (p. 332).

   > Fieger's emphasis in the case was that the corporations needed to assume responsibility for the consequences of what he claimed was "ambush television." Yet Jenny Jones announced February 17 that she had scheduled another "Secret Gay Crush" show taping for February 22. Jones said then, "I don't think this is the kind of show that can be ignored forever. I really think this topic has the potential to work. Yes, we hit a bump-in-the-road on our first gay crush show, given the fact that a guy was killed. But what are the chances of that happening again? I mean, the only lesson that could possibly have been learned from the previous show was that we should accept everyone, regardless of sexual preference."
   >
   > The object of gay Ryan Davis' secret crush is non-gay Drake Boyd, and while Schmitz at least knew he was appearing on a "secret crush" show, Boyd was told he was appearing to be reunited with his mother. At her news conference, Jones described Boyd as "a little edgy" and as being "awful mad about something" when she'd last spoken with him on the phone. "So after I got off the phone with him," she said, "I wrote in teeny-tiny letters on the contract that he has to sign to be a guest that the show isn't responsible for anything that happens afterward. I don't think anything will happen but, God forbid if it does, we have all our bases covered." Jones even had Davis' and Boyd's mutual friend Patti Miller present to say, "I have known Drake for a long time, and I know he is going to be really, really mad. In fact, he always tells me when he is drunk that if Ryan ever hit on him he would kill him. But that is only when he is drunk."

   (PlanetOut Website, March 28, 2000)
5. José Estéban Muñoz, "Pedro Zamora's *Real World* of Counterpublicity: Performing an Ethics of the Self," pp. 143–160 in *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Chapter 2

Changes and Challenges: Ethnography, Homosexuality, and HIV Prevention Work in Guadalajara

Héctor Carrillo

I arrived in Guadalajara in the summer of 1993. This was a time when gay and lesbian activists in the city were at a crossroads. A local gay and lesbian rights movement had existed since the late 1970s, organized by a small cadre of male and female activists, with the outspoken Pedro Preciado[1] as its best known figure. Pedro had run unsuccessfully for public office in the 1980s, and he and other activists had established ties with counterparts in Mexico City and other Mexican cities, as well as with international gay and lesbian rights organizations. The Guadalajaran activists' participation in annual meetings of the International Gay and Lesbian Association (ILGA) had led Pedro to convince the organization to hold its 1991 meeting in Guadalajara. This was to be the first time that ILGA would convene in the developing world.

Unfortunately, the meeting in Guadalajara proved extremely hard to organize because of strong local opposition. Social conservatives were instrumental in ensuring that no hotels or conference centers offered space for the meeting, and that the local government denied police protection to meeting attendees. Holding the meeting without police protection was too risky in the midst of a severe anti-homosexual guerilla campaign that already had resulted in graffiti messages on walls around the city, death threats to gay and lesbian activists, and even a bomb explosion in Preciado's gay disco. To avert a disaster, the Mexican organizers decided to move the ILGA meeting at the last minute to more liberal Acapulco. However, news about the dangers of having the meeting in Guadalajara had spread to the ILGA membership and the Acapulco meeting was less well attended than expected.

A different kind of crisis had also taken a toll on the movement. Beginning in the mid 1980s, cases of AIDS began appearing among Guadalajaran homosexual men, and the local official response to the health threat was regarded generally as poor. As in many other places, homosexual men and their allies were the first ones to respond to the emerging epidemic, first by creating educational programs within existing gay groups, and later by forming AIDS-specific organizations that

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did not focus exclusively on homosexual men. These new organizations afforded some anonymity to homosexuals who were less inclined to participate in an openly gay or lesbian group. At the same time they provided a space for these men to find social support both from other gays and lesbians and from sympathetic heterosexuals (mostly young, but, initially, also older women, including the mother of one local gay activist and her friends). But the central focus of these new organizations was AIDS, not gay rights, and at the time of my arrival several of the groups were invested in achieving the kind of de-homosexualization of AIDS that was occurring in many other places, including cities in the US. Saying that AIDS affected all, not just homosexuals, was seen as a way to reduce the stigma associated with the disease. Among the younger gay men in the organizations, there were some rumblings and frustration about this, but also fear that doing something explicitly gay could have grave consequences for those involved.

In 1993, Pedro Preciado, now in his thirties, appeared to be tired and burnt out. A man who was extremely close to him was dying of AIDS. Pedro now owned a new gay disco, but he also had a bleak perspective about the potential for gay organizing in the city and he bitterly expressed disappointment about the lukewarm response to his efforts, even among gay people. I was surprised to realize that his group had somehow developed a reputation as being dominated by working-class, effeminate men, which did not sit well with some middle-class men for whom passing as "regular" masculine men was a priority. The latter tended to live double lives and to carefully manage to whom they disclosed their same-sex sexual and romantic attraction. Some of them were extremely critical of the "*locas*" ("crazy women," a derogatory term used to refer to effeminate men) who they perceived were most willing to be out on the street demanding gay rights. A local lesbian activist, Guadalupe López, was more optimistic, but her group's efforts reached directly only a small audience of committed lesbian participants who attended workshops and social events.

Pedro, Guadalupe, and others reached a broader audience only when they were interviewed by reporters, or invited to debate with social conservatives on national television and radio talk shows. In their media work they presented a much stronger front, particularly when directly confronting extremely homophobic stances by powerful conservative figures who saw homosexuals as deviant and sick.

That these debates were taking place on national television was in itself a sign of hope, however, as gays and lesbians were thus becoming more visible in Mexican society. And there were other reasons to be hopeful. For instance, young gay activists in local AIDS organizations were beginning to question the absence of a strong, openly gay component to their efforts, particularly since most of the cases of AIDS in the city affected homosexual men. Some of these men were breaking the mold of living homosexual double lives and were increasingly bringing young heterosexual friends and family members into their social circles, so much so that some of these men were showing up with groups of sympathetic heterosexuals in gay discos and bars. In pursuing greater visibility and integration in their lives, however, they were not necessarily seeking to adopt what could be seen as a "North

American" gay lifestyle. They were not merely copying strategies related to "coming out of the closet" in a way that could be characterized as a simple extension of models of gayness that had become prevalent in countries such as the USA. Instead they sought local ways of enacting their sexual lives more openly but without creating what in the USA people sometimes refer to as "gay ghettos."

As I began to interact with gay people in Guadalajara, I was impressed and energized by their reflections on this issue, in part because in the USA I had become someone disenchanted with gay lifestyles that were foreign to me. I had led a somewhat open gay life years earlier in Mexico City, my home town, in the early 1980s, and the kinds of strategies that Guadalajaran men were pursuing were not unfamiliar to me. Later I came to understand that urban Mexican gays' selective disclosure and secrecy about their sexual orientation also had a productive side. For these men, the enactment of this strategy was not incompatible with seeking greater visibility and integration, and many saw it as an advantageous strategy to effect change without disrupting other highly valued forms of social interaction within Mexican society.

This is the social environment that surrounded homosexuality in Guadalajara when I arrived. Because I was a Mexican national and someone who had participated in gay life in Mexico City, I expected that I would easily access and fit into male homosexual circles. I had conducted community-based work in San Francisco for almost six years, and I had provided support to emerging AIDS-related services in Mexico City during the late 1980s. So, similarly, I arrived with the expectation that I would easily be able to support AIDS educational efforts in Guadalajara. It took me some time to realize that, because of the eight years that I had spent studying and working in the San Francisco Bay Area, I was bringing with me more baggage than that which filled my suitcases.

AIDS and Anthropology

The history of the relationship between anthropology and HIV/AIDS research has been well documented. The literature suggests that anthropologists have engaged in several phases of reflection about this topic over the course of the AIDS epidemic.[2] Each juncture is marked by the publication of collections of important articles that have resulted from panels organized by well-known anthropologists and ethnographers, among them several who are openly gay or lesbian.[3] Those collections contain insightful reflections about anthropology's contributions to the field of AIDS research, and they illustrate the evolution of the roles that anthropologists and ethnographers have played in this field. They are also suggestive of shifts in perception about the roles that anthropologists could play in the future, not only in AIDS research, but in applied research about other topics of urgency to sexual minorities.

In the early stages of this history, in the early to mid 1980s, anthropologists working on AIDS were concerned with crafting a place for the discipline in a field of study that rapidly became dominated by epidemiological and medical research first, with the subsequent addition of quantitative social psychological research (Bolognone 1986; Des Jarlais 1986; Feldman 1986; Friedman 1986; Gorman 1986; Kotarba 1990; Lang 1986; Stall 1986). The dominant approaches focused on individuals' risk for HIV and were largely informed by social psychological theories of individual behavior (Parker 2001). By contrast, anthropologists at this time had begun to recognize that the human behaviors that facilitated the transmission of HIV were deeply cultural, and that the solutions to the epidemic depended in part on the achievement of widespread cultural changes (Bolognone 1986; Feldman 1986; Kotarba 1990; Stall 1986). A handful of anthropologists had been involved in AIDS research from the beginning of the epidemic, and they were also keenly aware that their methods of inquiry often allowed them to access research populations, some of which were hard to reach due to marginalization and stigma, in ways that epidemiologists and quantitative behavioral researchers typically could not (Des Jarlais 1986).

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, anthropologists (along with sociologists and others) were more clearly and pointedly articulating specific critiques of the dominant models of HIV research, and making concrete proposals about epistemological changes that they thought were needed within the field of AIDS behavioral research as a whole (Berridge 1991; Bolton 1992; Gatter 1995; Holland, Ramazanoglu, and Scott 1990; Parker 2001; Parker and Carballo 1990; Parker and Ehrhardt 2001; Parker, Herdt, and Carballo 1991). They emphasized the importance of considering the social and cultural contexts in which sexual and drug-related behaviors were enacted, which constituted a strong critique of the individualist models that informed most existing research at the time (Parker 2001; Parker and Carballo 1990; Parker, Herdt, and Carballo 1991). They also were increasingly critical of the tendency in epidemiology and social psychology to investigate HIV-risk-related behaviors without paying attention to the meanings that those behaviors had for individuals within the various populations at risk from HIV (Bolton 1992; Parker and Carballo 1990; Parker, Herdt and Carballo 1991). Similarly, they were concerned about the absence of a strong focus on interpersonal relations and power differentials in HIV research, which seemed so crucial to understand fully why well-informed people might be unsuccessful at protecting themselves against the virus (Parker and Carballo 1990).

A third stage in this history resulted from anthropological work conducted mostly during the 1990s, and crystallized in publications around the turn of the century (Herdt 2001; Parker 2001; Schoepf 2001). Social science work conducted during that decade had integrated an added awareness that the field of AIDS research as a whole had to consider structural factors and forms of inequality, or what some authors called "structural violence," that severely limited effective HIV prevention (Herdt 2001; Parker 2001; Schoepf 2001). Social scientists throughout the 1990s increasingly proposed that it is not enough to consider the cultural contexts in which behaviors take place, but that instead AIDS researchers also must engage in their analyses the kinds of structural inequalities that deeply affected many vulnerable populations. This broader focus was regarded as necessary to achieve a kind of long-term change that was now regarded as necessary to reduce the impact of AIDS and HIV transmission around the world. And along with this focus on structural factors, there was increased interest in accounting for forms of local agency and for the pragmatic strategies upon which individuals and groups in various parts of the world relied, which constituted potential tools to promote locally-relevant cultural and structural change that could help reduce the impact of AIDS.

As this history unfolded, scholars writing about these topics became increasingly open about the dual role that anthropologists would have to play as researchers (with a focus on epistemology) and as agents of change (with a focus on affecting policy and AIDS educational strategies in the locations where the research was being conducted) (Herdt 2001). The literature suggests a widespread, tacit consensus among scholars who worked on AIDS that theirs was foremost applied research, and that the potential theoretical contributions of this research constituted a great bonus but were not necessarily the primary goal (Bletzer 1995; Bolton 1992; Carrier and Magaña 1991; Clatts 1994; Gatter 1995; Kotarba 1990; Schoepf 2001).

It is interesting that advocacy for this role for anthropologists overlapped somewhat with a period during which the discipline of anthropology engaged in intense questioning and profound suspicion about whether anthropological/ethnographic inquiry could yield knowledge that could be regarded as "truth" (Kotarba 1990, Herdt 2001). Some scholars have noted that, in light of the urgency of a disease such as AIDS, there was no time to waste in rumination about the epistemological crisis of the discipline, especially when people were dying and the knowledge and action that anthropology could generate was so badly needed to save lives (Kotarba 1990; Schoepf 2001). Furthermore, as some scholars have noted, anthropologists working on AIDS became less wary of their potential role as agents of change or, in other words, managed to overcome the taboo of non-intervention in the field (Broadhead and Fox 1990; Herdt 2001; Schoepf 2001). In a different epoch anthropologists who became agents of change in the places that they studied risked becoming labeled, negatively, as "going native" (Bolton 1992; Herdt 2001). In this sense, Herdt (2001) also notes Kath Weston's perspective that it is increasingly difficult within gay and lesbian studies to tell who is an ethnographer and who is a native, as gay and lesbian ethnographers often are studying their own communities and taking both roles as ethnographers and informants.

Openly Gay Ethnographers in AIDS Research

I find it striking that, with a few exceptions, there has been little specific discussion in this literature about what it means to be an openly gay or lesbian ethnographer who studies AIDS.[4] Absent also is a substantial analysis of the particular roles as researchers and agents of change that openly gay and lesbian ethnographers have played while conducting AIDS research. I am sure that this absence does not reflect a lack of awareness, as many of the writers of this literature are themselves openly lesbian or gay in their personal and professional lives, but rather perhaps an implicit premise that, of course, the quality and impact of AIDS research conducted by openly gay or lesbian ethnographers has benefited considerably from the researchers' subjectivities and personal experiences.

There is, however, value in discussing explicitly the roles that openly gay and lesbian anthropologists/ethnographers take while conducting AIDS research, because it is often not simple to strike a balance in the field among those various roles – as researchers, educators, policy-makers, and activists – as all of them seem simultaneously so crucial when conducting studies on (homo)sexuality and AIDS. I would argue that the question of balance becomes particularly difficult to answer when, in the process of conducting their research, gay and lesbian ethnographers witness or experience various forms of discrimination and homophobia, even of violence toward gay people, while also seeing hopeful signs of change in the actions that local gay people take to improve their own lives.

In this chapter, I reflect on my own experiences as a (mostly) openly gay ethnographer who conducted research on sexuality and HIV prevention in Guadalajara, Mexico in the mid 1990s. During the two years that I lived in Guadalajara, I played simultaneous roles as ethnographer and HIV/AIDS educator and activist. Those roles continued in one way or another after my departure and leading up to the publication of *The Night Is Young: Sexuality in Mexico in the Time of AIDS* (Carrillo 2002), and then up through the book's subsequent translation into Spanish and publication in Mexico in 2005.

The book and other publications, however, were not the only products of my research. In this chapter, instead, I focus mostly on what I consider other relevant products – those that relate to my participation in the field and to the small contribution that my presence in Guadalajara may have made to local AIDS prevention and to the pursuit of gay and lesbian rights. Moreover, as part of this reflection I examine the ways in which the results of my research and my efforts to disseminate them in Mexico (both formally and informally) may have altered, even if minimally, the field of my study.

My goal also is to make explicit the particular impact of my being openly gay on the study itself, as well as on those who participated in it, and the various vicissitudes that confronted me due to my being open about my sexual orientation in the course of implementing this research. I touch on how being openly gay may have affected the AIDS-related activities in which I participated while living in Guadalajara, and also how my being an openly gay Mexican who had spent several years in the USA may have stimulated conversation about local gay lifestyles and helped question stereotypes about homosexuality among non-gay people whom I met while in the field. In addition to a sense of urgency about AIDS, during my time in Guadalajara I developed a similar sense of urgency about "doing something," even if minimally, that could contribute to local processes for the pursuit of lesbian and gay rights that were already underway when I arrived.

First Contacts

My first field contact with gay men in Guadalajara took place one sunny fall morning when I showed up at the office of CHECCOS, a local AIDS agency, to volunteer. The CHECCOS office was located on the second floor of a house in an urban, middle-class neighborhood, on a block where most houses had been transformed into commercial spaces. Seated at the only desk in a large room was the coordinator, with whom I had spoken a few days before over the phone to make an appointment for a volunteer interview. As I would have done when applying for a volunteer position in AIDS organizations in the Bay Area, I arrived prepared with a copy of my resume and an elaborate speech about my skills and experience conducting HIV-prevention work in San Francisco and what I could offer to the organization.

I was biased by my previous experiences in the highly formal and professionalized world of AIDS services in San Francisco and by my institutional interactions with CONASIDA, the state-funded national AIDS program in Mexico City. I was expecting to meet the CHECCOS coordinator in a private office, and to have a formal interview where she would look through a dossier of volunteer opportunities and help me determine which one would best fit my skills, experience, and schedule. Instead, in the agency's one-room office I found not just the coordinator, but also a group of CHECCOS members sitting around a large table folding brochures for an upcoming event. Clearly there was no expectation that my conversation with the coordinator would be private.

Looking a bit puzzled, the coordinator let me make my speech, while the other CHECCOS members listened attentively. When I finished, I asked what volunteer opportunities she might have for me. She simply pointed to the table where the brochures were being folded. In the AIDS organization in San Francisco where I had worked, folding brochures was a task given to the less-skilled volunteers. I had come with expectations of a "higher-end" volunteer job. But here all volunteers participated in all activities, most of which were of a rather basic nature. Despite my initial disappointment, this proved to be a large blessing in disguise. Activities such as collective brochure folding or, as I later learned, even just hanging out in the office for hours, provided valuable opportunities for socializing and making contacts with people who later gave me entry into a number of social networks, gay and heterosexual. I realized that in these interactions gay men and their non-gay allies developed a strong sense of community, and the never-private room occupied by the CHECCOS office constituted a kind of secluded liberated space that was only disrupted by the occasional visitor (like me, that first day) whose sexual orientation or attitudes about homosexuality were unknown to the CHECCOS regulars.

That first day at CHECCOS, as I folded brochures along with everyone else, the other volunteers eventually began to ask me questions. These questions – I later realized – were significant indicators of the kind of reflections about my subject position in which I needed to engage, and which I had in no way anticipated.

I could tell that they were curious about whether I was gay, but they did not ask me directly. I realize now that, despite my having been away from Mexico for eight years, I clearly still knew the subtle, if unspoken ways that men who were not overtly effeminate commonly used in Mexico in order to signal to other men that they were gay, often while being surrounded by unsuspecting people. I am certain that I was sending those signals, because I was receiving similar signals in return. But by my presenting myself forcefully as a successful Mexican who attended graduate school abroad and who had expertise in the field of HIV prevention, people in the room were ready to accept what they thought was a necessity among homosexuals who were professionals: that I might be rather discreet about my sexual orientation.

Being Out as a Gay AIDS and Sexuality Researcher

Indeed, later in my fieldwork I learned that many heterosexual people in Guadalajara could not conceive that homosexuals could be successful professionals, and instead they had stereotypical images of effeminate men who worked in certain professions made available to them by society, such as hair dresser, clothing designer, and so forth. I soon understood that by being open about my sexual orientation, I could contribute a little to changing local stereotypes and prejudices about homosexuality. Compared to other men whom I met in Guadalajara, I probably had less to lose, as I did not have a boss who could fire me or parents who would kick me out of their house. And, yet, despite my general decision that I would not hide my homosexuality, I also confronted a difficult dilemma in deciding how open I could be in which settings, which is a topic to which I will return repeatedly in the pages that follow.

My assessment is that being open about my sexual orientation mostly had a positive impact on the research, and that it also facilitated my connections with the many people with whom I interacted on a regular basis, gay and non-gay. I often felt that being open about my sexual orientation also opened up spaces for discussion – that people could then reveal to me things that otherwise they might have felt inclined to keep secret and that would be absent in my data. Furthermore, participants who were gay or lesbian themselves could then contrast the strategies that they used to manage the disclosure of their sexual orientation with the kind of openness that I enacted. Furthermore, I was pleased when, after realizing that I was gay, non-gay people who were previously unsuspecting had to confront their own biases and begin the process of knowing, perhaps for the first time, an openly gay man who did not necessarily conform to the stereotypes that they carried in their mind.

Yet I also realized that in other situations being assumed to be heterosexual was also productive for the research because, operating on that assumption, people disclosed to me their negative opinions about homosexuality. In some instances they were extremely open about expressing homophobia because they expected that

I would agree with them. Those experiences, though rather painful, constituted helpful data for my study.

Because of this constant strategic shifting between these two presentations, which I chose depending on the leads offered by my interlocutors and my particular goals on any given occasion, I often found myself feeling like a chameleon that changed colors according to the setting and the moment. This was analytically significant too, because it was an eloquent reminder of the accommodations that I had made constantly as a young student and professional when I lived and worked in Mexico City, and it was similar to what many gay men and lesbians in my study did as a means of daily survival. And yet, I also realized, within those strategies there was a fair amount of flexibility to be open about being gay in some spaces and with some people, so it was far from "being in the closet."

In the sections that follow, I discuss first the small possible contributions that my being openly gay may have made to the pursuit of local gay rights in Guadalajara and to local discussions about what it means to be a gay person in contemporary urban Mexico. Next I touch briefly on instances in which people assumed me to be heterosexual or when they expressed overt homophobia, and how I struggled to decide when to be silent about my sexual orientation and when to reveal that I was gay. Finally, I describe my participation in AIDS programming during my time in Guadalajara, and I reflect on the value of efforts to disseminate study findings within the field of study.

Changing Attitudes about Homosexuality

During my time in Guadalajara, I had several opportunities to help dispel local myths about homosexuality, most often at a very micro level. On one such occasion, the aunt of a male teenager who had just been found by the family interacting sexually with a male cousin asked me if I would be willing to meet her and her sister for breakfast. The young man's parents had reacted very negatively to this discovery, and the aunt, who had contact with CHECCOS and prided herself on being progressive, was keen on convincing her sister that there was nothing wrong with her son's sexual preference. As part of her goal to influence her sister, she wanted her to realize that there was such a thing as a successful, not effeminate, and self-accepting homosexual. I personally had no problem with male effeminacy, but I understood that this woman merely intended to question some of her sister's stereotypes about male homosexuality. In our conversation, I found myself attempting to answer, using my own personal experience, many of both women's questions about homosexuality and suggesting to the mother that she not reject her son even if he decided to lead a life as a homosexual. In the course of this conversation I also shared with them some of the negative reactions that my own family in Mexico City had had when they discovered that I was gay, and how difficult a period that had been for all.

This was a very small action, but later I realized that it possibly contributed, among many other things, to what turned out to be a very nice end to this story. A few years after this breakfast took place, I learned that this young man, now in his mid-twenties, had started the first Latin American, internet-based gay radio station, and he had also successfully negotiated to air a weekly gay show through the University of Guadalajara's radio station. I contacted him, and he invited me to do a radio show during one of my visits to Guadalajara. I was amazed to find out that the gay internet radio station was based in his family home, and that his mother, who had so many doubts and prejudices about homosexuality when I first met her, had become a strong supporter of her son's efforts in promoting gay rights throughout the Spanish speaking world.

Small actions that may have had profound effects, occurring in the course of everyday life during fieldwork, also commonly took place during my regular interactions with self-identified gay men. Gay men who I was just getting to know were very suspicious about what they perceived to be my boldness in relation to being openly gay. In the process of getting to know these men I made many cultural faux pas that led these men to question me strongly about my actions.

Let me offer one example. At the end of my first afternoon volunteering for CHECCOS, a young man, Enrique, walked out of the office at the same time as I did. During the group conversation in CHECCOS he had talked energetically about his learning English, about a recent trip to Europe, and about his desire to become "a man of the world." He walked with me to my car, and at that point he asked me whether I would like to see him again socially. I offered him a ride home, and from then on I befriended him. I have discussed Enrique's story elsewhere (Carrillo 1999, 2002). At the time he was twenty years old and in a relationship with a 40-year-old man who was a professional and who had never disclosed his homosexuality to his family.

Enrique's family had found out recently about his being homosexual, and seeing their rejection he had denied it as a way to not lose his status in his family. Enrique was extremely selective about disclosing his homosexuality and cautious about where he allowed himself to act more freely. In the first weeks of our friendship, I learned that, without noticing, I did certain things in his presence that Enrique found to be too risky and threatening. For instance, one time I drove him to his English school, which was located on a street that was fairly dark and empty at night. I stopped about one hundred feet from the entrance and there was no one around. As Enrique made a motion to step out of the car, I moved to kiss him socially on the cheek, just as I did customarily when I said goodbye to my male friends in San Francisco. His reaction was vehement. Extremely upset by my action, Enrique asked me never to do that again in a public setting. He was very angry and concerned that someone from his school could have seen this happen. When I recovered from the shock of his reaction, I fully empathized with him. I would have done exactly the same when I was his age and living in Mexico City, as I was struggling to accept how to manage disclosure of my sexual orientation.

Gay men's questioning of my personal strategies reflected both strong curiosity about how gays enacted their lives in places like San Francisco – and about the kind of "normalization" of gay life to which I had become accustomed there – and also a sense that some of the personal strategies that I had acquired in the USA were inappropriate for Guadalajara. Those strategies often did not fit well with how men in Guadalajara imagined they wanted to pursue gay rights. Gay men in the circles that I accessed wanted to explore ways in which they could become more visible in Guadalajara but without disrupting their strong ties with their families and heterosexual friends – they wanted to push boundaries, but in ways that made sense to them within a Mexican cultural setting. They were exploring new ways of being gay and Mexican, and they understood that, even if different from those used in the USA, their strategies were not necessarily inconsistent with a "more global" goal of pursuing gay rights.

However, in their processes of reflecting and discussing, these gay men also sometimes decided to implement some strategies that transgressed the rules of the local culture that previously were not so palatable – rules that they wanted to test, sometimes rather spontaneously. One time when I returned to Guadalajara from San Francisco, not long after the incident with Enrique that I described, I was greeted upon arrival with social kisses at the airport from Enrique and two other friends. This happened in front of a crowd of onlookers, likely most of them heterosexual, who were waiting for their friends and relatives to come out of the customs area. This time I was also shocked because I was not expecting that these men, who were now my friends, would take this deliberate action and turn the banal event of picking me up at the airport into an opportunity to make a statement about gay liberation. I took this to be as much about them as it was about them showing me that change in Mexico was possible. As we crossed, arm in arm, through the crowd that had witnessed this "openly gay" act, and in the absence of any negative reactions, we were all ecstatic about our newly achieved visibility.

Emboldened by the responses that these men had to the exploration of new freedoms, and by their curiosity about my life in San Francisco, I felt increasingly freer to share with them how I lived my gay life in the USA. These discussions opened a window for me to learn more about the logic of the kind of double life that many of these men had constructed for themselves, as well as to observe the struggles that they faced in seeking a more integrated life in which in which they could expand the settings in which they could disclose their homosexuality. And they also helped me understand aspects of my own dissatisfaction with American life and American gay life, including what I sometimes perceived as an unnecessary separation between the worlds of family life and gayness, and an extreme sense of individualism.

In our conversations these men often asked me questions about my life in San Francisco, seeking corroboration of what they had heard elsewhere about the city, and those who had traveled took the opportunity to comment on what they themselves had had the occasion to observe in gay areas of other US cities. We would often gather around cups of coffee in cafes to talk about these issues, or in the few homes of those who did not live with their families. Then, in 1995 I had returned to California during the time of San Francisco's gay pride and had recorded the local television broadcasting of the parade. I brought this tape back and showed it to a group of about a dozen gay men who gathered to watch and later discuss their viewpoints on this kind of political and cultural expression. In the discussion, they were particularly impressed by marching groups that represented the "normalization" of gay life – contingents such as the gay and lesbian police and firefighters, PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), and gay parenting groups made the most impression. Their discussion centered around whether Guadalajarans would ever see this kind of "normalization" of local gay life.[5]

It would be pretentious of me to say that my presence changed these men. They were all already on a path to changing themselves and they were seeking local ways of improving their gay lives. My presence and participation most likely was just a small support, but one that confirmed to them nonetheless that what they desired was not unrealistic. These conversations and the reflections that they triggered, I came to understand later, were consistent with much broader changes in relation to homosexuality that were happening in Mexico at the time, and which have resulted in considerable shifts in social attitudes about gay men over the last decade, particularly among the middle classes. Within the groups with whom I socialized, I was constantly impressed by how some of the discussions resulted in small, and not so small, practical steps taken by individual men.

It should come as no surprise that several of the men in these circles of friends subsequently enacted rather dramatic changes in relation to their gay lives in ways they found consistent with a Mexican gay lifestyle, and several became activists and agents of change who continue to fight for gay rights in Guadalajara. Enrique later convinced his parents to allow him to live with a male lover in a house that his father owned, and brought the lover into the family life and the parents into their relationship in ways that I had thought were impossible for him when I first met him. He decided that he needed to be open about his homosexuality in his job, and currently, at the age of thirty-two, he holds a top position in an international hotel where he not only is openly gay but also brings his partner and his immediate family to work-related social events. He now leads an integrated and fairly open gay life, but also one that seems compatible with Enrique's extended-family life. My impression is that he has never told many relatives openly that he is gay, and he instead lets them wonder why he has not married a woman or who the man who comes to family gatherings is (perhaps assuming that all involved tacitly "know" that they are a gay couple).

Another young man in this group, who at the time was an up-and-coming young star in the local branch of an international computer corporation, began having communication with the corporation's gay and lesbian association in the US. Despite his facing the possibility of being fired for this, he forcefully became the Mexican and Latin American representative for the company's gay and lesbian association. Later he bravely confronted the glass ceiling that was imposed on him as a result of his seeking to extend the influence of the corporation's gay and lesbian association into Mexico and Latin America. And others are now the openly-gay leaders of local gay activist and AIDS groups and offer services to new generations of young gays and lesbians.

Experiencing Homophobia

As I conducted this research in Mexico, I experienced another less hopeful side of the same coin, which took shape in the many ways in which homophobia snuck into everyday interactions, particularly when unsuspecting heterosexuals assumed that I could not possibly be gay. Only once, while walking with a friend along one of Guadalajara's main avenues in the middle of the afternoon, perhaps acting somewhat "obvious," did I experience the raw violence of the insults that heterosexual strangers sometimes feel entitled to shout at gay men. As we left a restaurant after a very enjoyable lunch, a car with four young men shouted at us several gay derogatory epithets as they drove by. They did not stop, and this form of violence took place in a fleeting moment and rather unexpectedly. At that moment my friend and I laughed it off, but later the experience lingered in my head and made me feel vulnerable. I thought that it was an important event as part of my research. As an adult I had never before been called names because of my homosexuality, and this was a reminder of what many men and women, particularly those who do not conform to gendered expectations about demeanor, suffer on an ongoing basis.

Another troubling example took place soon before my departure from Guadalajara in 1995, when I was asked by an AIDS group to teach a workshop on HIV transmission and risk assessment in a training that for the first time was being organized by and for gay men. By this time, some of the younger gay volunteers in AIDS organizations had begun exploring the idea of holding educational events that openly targeted gay men, and this was the first training that was exclusively for gay volunteers. When I arrived at the site of the training at approximately 10 a.m. Sunday, there was much commotion. A few minutes earlier the police had shown up threatening to shut down the place and arrest everyone on charges of immorality. Apparently, someone had tipped them off that a homosexual orgy was to happen there that morning. The training had been advertised widely, so many people would have had access to information about the location and time. Everybody there assumed that someone who was homophobic and opposed to the group's work had called the police and misrepresented what kind of event was taking place. Once things calmed down, however, the training was able to continue without further incidents.

There were other moments in which homophobia showed its ugly head, in subtle and not so subtle ways, including the jokes about *homosexuales* that were commonly told in heterosexual circles and when there was no suspicion that anyone present could be "one of those." And on those occasions people were always shocked if I made my gayness explicit, and then seemed rather confused and disempowered. One time I was having lunch with heterosexual friends and they had invited a male friend who, upon learning that I lived alone in Guadalajara, assumed that I must be single and offered to introduce me to some "girls" whom he was meeting that night. When I said "no thanks" and explained simply that I was gay, a sheet of ice descended upon the room and he remained quiet for a long time. He did not seem particularly homophobic, though, and after a while he recovered and continued participating animatedly in the conversation.

Perhaps the most blatant form of homophobia that I experienced while in Guadalajara was during a talk to college students in a Jesuit university. I had been invited by the daughter of an AIDS activist who was interested in having me share some of my work and thoughts about sexuality in a class on social issues that she was taking. This university has a reputation for being rather progressive, in part because the Jesuits are regarded as being among the most progressive and socially-conscious among the Catholic orders. The students were great, and they had some good points to make and many questions. What I did not anticipate was the bomb that the professor threw at me in the last minute when, after more than an hour of presentation and conversation with his students, he asked me if I was gay and, upon learning that I was, proceeded to disqualify everything that I had said in class by suggesting, rather directly, that my sexual orientation made me less than credible. This was a blow, and one that stayed with me for days after, because it came from someone who I did not expect could hold gay people in such low regard.

In social interactions in which people openly expressed homophobia, I had the hardest time keeping my cool and maintaining a sense of research objectivity. I felt a responsibility toward standing up and confronting the situation, usually simply by making it clear that I was gay. And yet, if what I was doing was part of a formal interview or discussion group for the study, somehow I managed to detach and treat the incredibly negative opinions that were being expressed solely as data. I have never been able to fully understand the difference in my reactions. My point is that, in some of the latter cases, for reasons that I do not entirely comprehend, I did not feel the need to take a stance and "change the field" by intervening and disclosing my own sexual orientation. Instead, I tended to ask my interlocutor about his or her degree of contact with gay people, what informed their opinions, how much they really knew about homosexuality, and even how they would feel if a son or daughter turned out to be gay.

The Task of HIV Prevention

I now turn to a discussion of the other role that I took while conducting fieldwork in Guadalajara and that was in some ways more central to my research: my work as an openly gay AIDS educator and activist. In 1993, HIV-prevention activities in Guadalajara were carried out by a handful of community-based organizations, including CHECCOS, with very little money and rudimentary organizational structures. The other local player in the world of HIV prevention was the state-funded AIDS office (COESIDA Jalisco) that was perceived at the time as largely ineffective. For several years COESIDA had been used as a political trampoline for doctors who may have been more interested in their next political move than in deeply attending to the emerging epidemic.[6]

Overall, the most common AIDS educational activities in the city were the distribution of pamphlets about AIDS at public events, talks given by volunteers to groups that solicited them, and volunteer training workshops that simultaneously constituted educational workshops on AIDS and sexuality. The latter were attended by small groups mostly comprised of college students, homosexual men, and people with HIV. Additionally, leaders of the different AIDS groups were sometimes invited to participate in television or radio shows, often to debate with social conservatives, or were interviewed periodically for newspaper articles. Media coverage of AIDS tended to increase around the time of a yearly street march and educational event organized in observance of the US-based International Candlelight Memorial or around World AIDS Day.

In 1993 the placing of large social marketing billboard and poster campaigns about condoms and safe sex developed by the National AIDS Council (CONASIDA) in Mexico City, which fell locally under the responsibilities of the state AIDS office, had been blocked by social conservatives. Conservative groups instead had created their own billboard messages emphasizing abstinence, fidelity, and heterosexual marriage as the only appropriate measures against the disease. However, the same conservative groups had not been able to block more sex-positive messages that were broadcast through national television. No educational campaigns directly targeting gay men, then the group most affected by the disease in Guadalajara, existed in the city.

My first tasks as an AIDS volunteer at CHECCOS were to fold brochures, as I already discussed, and then to distribute them at the *Fiestas de Octubre*, a month-long event that simultaneously resembles a state fair and a commercial exposition, the largest event of its kind in Guadalajara. Soon after, however, the CHECCOS leadership asked me to take on other volunteer responsibilities, requesting in turn that I conduct some of the workshops for their training program; draw up a coordination plan for prevention activities; and help the organization seek funding for an informational newsletter, which was to be based on the daily AIDS updates distributed via e-mail by the US Centers for Disease Control.

This work was enacted within the parameters of the models that were used by AIDS organizations in Guadalajara and elsewhere at the time. Those models typically focused on the dissemination of information, and the acquisition of personal knowledge, perceptions of personal vulnerability, and an attitude of personal potential to enact behavioral change. But, as I have described, by the late 1980s a number of scholars in the social sciences had begun to question whether a purely individualistic approach would suffice to curb the AIDS epidemic. There was growing evidence that cultural meanings associated with gender, sexuality, and drug use, as well as relational dynamics and the social and cultural contexts in which human behavior was enacted, had to be considered in order to understand fully why people might not be capable of protecting themselves against HIV.

Furthermore, a sense was emerging that some of the barriers to HIV prevention operated at macro-structural levels that required interventions on a larger scale, and that HIV prevention ought to pay attention to stigma, discrimination, and social inequality.

My research was influenced by these emerging schools of thought about HIV prevention. However, as I was conducting my fieldwork, I was not sure about how to bring together what people were telling me in interviews and conversations about their sexuality and what we were doing in the AIDS organizations. It was not until later, after I analyzed my data more fully, that I began to see a strong discrepancy between the prescriptions included in HIV-prevention messages and the realities of many urban Mexicans' sexual lives. Among other things, people talked to me about the importance of sexual passion and romance, as well as spontaneity and trust during sex. They described their dislike of the interruption introduced into sex by condoms, and in particular the expectations about explicit condom negotiation. Such comments increasingly led me to see the limitations of health educational models that were in place in Guadalajara and that appeared to be informed by the premises of models common in public health methods there and elsewhere.

When I first went to Guadalajara, drawing on my AIDS work with Latino populations in California, I wanted to investigate more deeply the meaning of terms such as "cultural sensitivity" in relation to HIV prevention. I felt that those who used the term in the USA at the time when referring to Latinos(as) often simply meant that materials needed to be translated into Spanish, or that certain issues that were regarded as taboo in Latino cultures could not, and should not, be touched. I suspected that the "cultural adaptation" of AIDS prevention models implied more than that, and I refused to equate "cultural sensitivity" with not attempting to alter so-called "traditional" Latino(a) values, particularly since some of those values seemed so oppressive to women and to sexual minorities in general. But I had not anticipated that what people told me in Guadalajara would cause me to question deeply my own assumptions about what I saw as core aspects of HIV-prevention messages.

While I was in Guadalajara, I taught very technical workshops on how HIV could pass from person to person, and I participated in workshops aimed at helping volunteers find ways of convincing people that safe sex and verbal negotiations about condom use were erotic. Over time, I saw a large gap between those educational strategies and the strategies that those in Guadalajara who were successful at implementing HIV prevention used – strategies that often implied the introduction of condoms in sexual encounters without any form of verbal negotiation. And I also began to understand that, because of power differentials and other forms of inequality between sexual partners, in some sexual encounters there were many barriers to negotiating or to even suggesting safe sex. In those cases the health educational task seemed to require addressing issues broader than just condom negotiation and safe sex.

I have discussed these issues more extensively elsewhere (Carrillo 2002). Here I focus on the events that took place when I returned to Guadalajara to describe my research findings, as I was engaged in the process of writing a book based on this research, and later after my book was published in Spanish and I returned to further disseminate my findings. As I was coming to these realizations after I had left the field, I decided to return to Guadalajara to present my findings to HIV-prevention educators from the governmental AIDS program and from community-based groups. About forty people attended my presentation at COESIDA, many of whom were new, young AIDS educators whom I had never met before. My talk was based on quotations from my interviews that illustrated different themes that I discussed in my book in relation to the construction of sexual identities in Mexico, sexual education, sexual communication, the formation of sexual ideologies, the roles of national actors (including the media, government, and the Catholic church), and local perceptions about passion, love, trust, and what I called "the sexual moment." I addressed the implications of my findings about these issues for HIV-prevention strategies, and about the need to account for cultural expectations, relational dynamics, and situational and contextual factors in designing new strategies to help Guadalajarans protect themselves and their sexual partners against HIV infection.

My talk was well received, particularly by the younger educators in the room. I could sense, however, a certain discomfort among some of the senior educators present, the ones whom I knew the most from my time in Guadalajara. I was happy to see that some of the quotations from my interviews about passion, love, and spontaneity, and my findings about the discrepancies between sex and HIV prevention, seemed to resonate with people in the room. I interpreted the senior educators' discomfort as a sign of the same discomfort that I felt when I had to question my own assumptions. These educators were supervising existing AIDS programs that were guided by information-oriented public health models commonly used in Mexico and around the world. My findings questioned the premises of those models. The overt enthusiasm about my findings among some of their subordinates probably further compounded the issue. I left hoping that my presentation would generate some discussions that would lead local HIV educators to question the premises with which existing HIV prevention programs had operated for a long time.[7]

My book was published in the USA in 2002, and on another trip to Guadalajara I brought a few copies to give to some key players, but I worried that few would be inclined to read a thick volume in English.[8] I was eager to have the book translated and published in Spanish, and thankfully that happened, but not until 2005. I returned again, this time to Guadalajara and Mexico City, and with the hope that I could contribute more broadly to the public discourse on sexuality and AIDS in Mexico at the same time that I promoted the book to as wide a readership as possible.

I was lucky in that the Mexican press that published my book in Spanish, which publishes both academic and popular books, was well set to publicize it. I worked with two very savvy professionals from the press who themselves seemed to have a personal investment in promoting change about sexuality and AIDS within Mexico (they both also had close gay friends and felt that changes in attitudes about homosexuality in Mexico were in order). In the course of the ten days that I spent in Mexico in late 2005, they arranged more than thirty-five interviews with the media in Mexico City and Guadalajara, and via phone or e-mail with reporters in other Mexican cities. In preparation for this trip, I mobilized my personal contacts in Mexico City and Guadalajara to organize four book presentations, one in each city oriented toward academics and one in each city targeting community-based gay and sexuality-related activists and AIDS educators. I saw these activities as part of my responsibility as an openly gay AIDS researcher to return to the field and continue to effect change, including promoting discussion on gay and lesbian rights in Mexico. I felt that in this way I could continue to contribute to altering the field that I had set out to study more than a decade before.

Among many other personal highlights of this work, I found myself talking on Mexican national television about what gay men do with each other sexually, in response to direct and rather "normalized" questions by a very curious young female reporter about the ins and outs of anal intercourse. Later people in Guadalajara told me that not only had this short interview been aired (I had my doubts about what the producers of this early-morning national news show would do once they saw the footage), but that it had been selected to re-air during a "Best of 2005" special that recapped the show's successes during the year.

Conclusion

Mexico has changed very considerably, socially, culturally, and politically, since the time I arrived in Guadalajara in 1993 to conduct the research that has inspired my reflections in this chapter. In relation to gay issues, during the past decade there have been many examples of progressive changes in attitudes toward homosexuality; more balanced representations in the mass media, including very didactic attempts on their part to promote the acceptance of gay people; explicit state-sponsored efforts to reduce homophobia; a growing official discourse against all forms of discrimination, including discrimination against sexual minorities; and most recently the passage of a civil union law in Mexico City that confers similar rights to gay couples as to heterosexual unmarried couples. But as the political currents shift over time, and new governments come and go, there are always fears of historical regressions that one wishes would be impossible once gains toward greater equality have been made. On the AIDS front, there have been successes in Mexico in partially curbing the rates of spread of the epidemic in some places and among some groups, while the concern increases about the disease as the virus enters other locations and is acquired by new generations of Mexicans.

Based on my reflections throughout, I end by reiterating that in the process of investigating AIDS as well as sexuality-related topics, openly gay and lesbian ethnographers are afforded many opportunities to contribute, even if modestly, to local processes of change that already are underway in most places around the globe. Such processes of change, though likely influenced by what is happening elsewhere, most often have a local flavor and are enacted through local forms of questioning about past inequalities and forms of oppression. Therefore any contributions to such efforts need to be deeply engaged with the histories of change in the places we study and cannot simply be imposed from outside. I am fully in agreement with other scholars who have recognized that there is no incompatibility between conducting sound anthropological research and simultaneously participating in local efforts of change, particularly in conducting investigation of life and death matters such as AIDS.

Notes

1. I use real names for public figures such as gay and lesbian activists, and pseudonyms for interview participants.
2. This discussion also involved sociologists, and there is a parallel and separate history, though not as extensive, of publications addressing the role of sociology in AIDS research. As Holland, Ramazanoglu, and Scott (1990) indicated, sociologists concerned with AIDS not only focused on sexual cultures but also investigated a number of other issues relevant to AIDS. The same could be said about anthropologists (Lang 1986).
3. These include a special issue of *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* (Vol. 17, No. 2) in 1986, a special issue of *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* (Vol. 19. No. 3) in 1990, a special issue of *The Journal of Sex Research* in 1991, a collection of articles edited by Gilbert Herdt and Shirley Lindenbaum in 1992, and a special issue of *AIDS and Behavior* (Vol. 5, No. 2) in 2001, among others.
4. See brief mention of the participation of gay researchers in AIDS research in Carrier 2001, and Pollack 1992.
5. Since then, a PFLAG chapter has opened in Mexico City. In 2005, I had the opportunity to attend the *Marcha de Orgullo* (Gay Pride Parade) in Guadalajara and noticed that there was now a contingent of parents, siblings, and friends of lesbians and gays that joined the parade.
6. A turn of events took place in 1994, after candidates of the conservative party PAN were elected for city mayor and state governor, after many uninterrupted years of governments led by the official party PRI. AIDS activists and educators became very concerned because of PAN's conservative reputation and its perceived connections to the most conservative factions of the Catholic church. There were fears that the PAN would close COESIDA which, despite its inefficiency, coordinated HIV testing services in the city and managed all federal funds that arrived from Mexico City. But instead of closing the office, the new state government appointed as director a progressive doctor who had been a player in community-based AIDS work. The new state government officials belonged to a faction of PAN that was moderate, and they greatly emphasized the participation of civil society in government, thus wanting someone for the post who was previously a community leader and not a career politician. As a result the position effectively stopped being purely political, and the new director was instrumental in reforming the office. For the first time in COESIDA's history she hired openly gay men to coordinate programs within the state agency.

7. In the organizational arena, considerable innovation seemed to have taken place at COESIDA, including an explicit effort to decentralize HIV prevention activities and disseminate them more generally throughout the state of Jalisco, of which Guadalajara is the capital.
8. As may be a common experience with ethnographic works, I later found out from a friend that former participants in my research who were still involved in AIDS work had spent time trying to figure out who was who in the book (since I had used pseudonyms for all study participants) and what I had said about them in particular.

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Chapter 3

Going Home Ain't Always Easy: Ethnography and the Politics of Black Respectability

E. Patrick Johnson

There is a well-known cliché that suggests, "Home is where the heart is." For me, this could not be truer, for although I currently live in the Midwest, my southern roots are constantly showing. Since my move to Chicago from Durham, NC in 2000, I have had the good fortune to meet and make many good friends. Indeed, many of the friends that my partner and I have met over the past few years are also transplanted southerners who came "up South" because of a new job opportunity as I did, to try out "city" life besides Atlanta, to attend college, or to "escape" the South. Whatever our reasons for leaving the South, the South never left us. Whether it's that alien accent that emerges when talking to our parents over the phone, those small "country ways" that we hang on to no matter how "citified" we become, or that longing for the soft spoken gentility whispered from the lips of elders that can take the edge off of any stressful day, we are our region's children. No amount of migration will change that. I was reminded of this when I returned to the South to conduct interviews with black gay men who were born, raised, and continue to live in the South for my book, *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South – An Oral History* (2008).

Listening to those men's stories not only grounded me, but it also took me back to divinely remembered places in my own history. They were telling *my* story while narrating their own – stories that remind me of summertime in the foothills of western North Carolina, when folks in my neighborhood sat on their porches and spun stories for hours on end.

But going home ain't always easy, especially if you are an openly gay, black southern academic returning to do research on a population that, in some ways, wishes to remain "hidden in plain sight." Navigating the vast terrain of identity politics within the context of a place like the South proved to be tricky, even though (or perhaps especially because) I am a southerner. There were times when I betrayed the codes of southern civility I had been brought up to believe were the proper way to carry one's self. At other times, however, my own politics and preconceived notions

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about what it means to be "out" forced me to confront the complexities of how one's "public" face is always already implicated in one's private space.

The point here is that the social mores of the South dictate a passive aggressive stance toward any transgressive behavior, especially the activities, behaviors, and indulgences that undermine its religious philosophies – e.g., drinking, gambling, adultery, and homosexuality, to name a few. So rather than "disrespect" the women of the house, men who gather to drink will do so outside on the back porch and have the alcohol concealed in a paper bag or disguised in a soft drink can or bottle; instead of doing "hard core" gambling like poker or the slot machine, many southerners, especially women, will go to bingo night or surreptitiously buy a lotto ticket; men and women who have a "friend" on the side are careful not to bring any offspring from such extra-marital affairs around the "legitimate" children so as not to "embarrass" the family; and homosexual liaisons between supposedly "straight" men and known gay ones are handled similarly to any extra-marital affair: it's allowable as long as the indiscretion is not "flaunted." For example, during one of my visits to Tuscaloosa, Ann McCarthy, one of the people who helped me find men to interview, actually called one of her neighbors who has been married to the same woman for close to forty years and who has four sons, to inquire if he would be interviewed for the book. His protestations (I could hear his raised voice through the phone while I sat three feet away at Ann's kitchen table eating her fried chicken) that he is not gay did not faze Ann as she nonchalantly reminded him, "Robert, why are you acting like you ain't gay? Everybody know that you and June Bug been carryin' on for years, including Betty Sue.[1] You know you need to come on over here and talk to this child. He's writin' a book on gay men in the South." The "click" on the other end of the line did not faze her either, as she continued to go through the phone book to find men whom she, and apparently the entire community, "knew" were "that way."

Ann "outing" Robert transgresses the boundaries set between him, his lover, his wife, and the community that established a complicity of silence about him and June Bug "carryin' on." The gentility, acts of politesse, and complicity of silence around taboo issues in southern tradition often takes precedence over one's individual need to *name* that identity or *flaunt* that transgression. On the one hand, this kind of willful denial upholds institutionalized forms of oppression. On the other, it provides a space to peacefully co-exist and/or sometimes, in a paradoxical way, affirm one's identity or relationship. In other words, gays may transform those codes of gentility into queer codes of desire, gender and class performance, or creative expression. This is particularly true for black gay men who are involved in the church where their "silence" about their sexuality actually opens a space to "speak in tongues" about their identity in more nuanced ways. As James T. Sears reminds us, "Southern history is never simple and seldom straight" (Sears 2001:4). Indeed, as the stories I collected detail, the South is always already queer.

In this essay I offer a methodological and political meditation on the issues that arise when conducting ethnographic research on a population of which the researcher is a part and for whom the researcher wishes to advocate. By drawing on my experiences in the field conducting oral histories of black gay men of the South, I raise questions about how lesbian/gay ethnographers confront issues of positionality in the face of disciplinary pressures to be self-reflexive about one's place in the field on the one hand, and the researcher's own desire not to privilege her own story on the other. Further, I ruminate on how the move from the page to the stage (from private reading to public performance) might offer a way to navigate the politics of whose story is actually being privileged and for what purpose. Ultimately, I see this research as a "living archive" that will serve as a resource not only for other researchers, but for a general public that may never have been exposed to the life histories of sexual dissidents. In this way, this public history project is very much a project in public anthropology, one that does more than just disclose events in people's lives, but encourages them to think about how these life narratives intersect with the histories, experiences, and events in their own lives. Hopefully, such a history will open up spaces for public reflection on the way that race, class, gender, sexuality, and region affect our relationships to "home."

Advocating History: Writing *Sweet Tea*

The idea for a book on black gay men of the South came to me in the summer of 1995 while attending a summer picnic hosted by the black gay organization US HELPING US, People Into Living, INC, in Washington, DC. This organization "specializes in HIV/AIDS prevention and support services for black gay and bisexual men." Seated at a picnic table under a tent just a few feet from me were a group of "old timers" – black gay men whose average age was around sixty-five – who were talking about their gay lives "back in the day." Between the laughs and lies, grins and guffaws, tears and testimonies, were glimpses into remarkable lives: these were living archives of faces, places, events, deaths, births, past sins, and sex. I became spellbound and captivated by these stories in the same manner I did when I was a child listening to the stories of my grandmother. The difference, however, was that unlike my grandmother's stories, which validated my family and *black* history, the stories that these men told validated my black and *queer* history. At that moment, I knew that I would some day write a book that documented these stories. Unfortunately, none of the men who were present at that picnic are still alive, except in my mind's eye. The echoes of their withered voices and the image of their shiny gold teeth, colorful clothing, and weathered faces are embroidered across the landscape of the history gathered between the pages of the book. Now, 12 years later, I have been afforded the opportunity to document this part of history while other men are still here to tell their stories.

Moreover, the research arose both out of my interest in valorizing the voices of a demographic of men who seldom get a chance to speak about their experiences as southerners in relation to their sexuality and race and, I suppose, out of my longing for validation of my own story of being a black queer southerner. Over the course of 18 months, I collected the narratives of over seventy black gay southerners, from ages 19–93. On the occasion of each of these interviews, which were mostly conducted in these men's homes, I found my own life story in dialogic tension with their stories. Their story was and was not my story. The stories about growing up poor, being brought up in the church, trying to pray my gayness away, singing in the choir, and being called a "sissy" rang true to my experience. The stories about molestation, living a transgendered life, being put out of the house, being homeless, and being sexually promiscuous were not as close to my experience, however. And yet those stories, too, were familiar – and certainly ones in which I was implicated. They were indeed what Richard Schechner refers to as the "not me" and the "*not* not me" (Schechner 1988).

Many of the stories of black queer life have gone undocumented. Partly due to the neglect of historians of the South, black sexual dissidents' complicity of silence around issues of sexuality, and a ubiquitous taciturnity on the part of southerners about things of a "private nature," these omissions and silences all collude to keep the stories of southern black gay men's lives, like most taboo things in the South, hidden in plain sight. With few exceptions, until recently most histories of gay life in the USA have focused on urban spaces on the east and west coasts – places like New York and San Francisco.[2] I agree with Brett Beemyn's assessment that "a subtle elitism that views all but a few major metropolises as backward and entirely inhospitable to gays also contributes to this oversight" (Beemyn 1997:1). Moreover, the general perception of the South as inhospitable has kept some scholars of gay history from excavating what, to my mind, is a more complicated space in which to negotiate one's (homo) sexuality. I argue, like Robert McRuer in another context, for a reexamination of the queer possibilities in the South, and am "interested in what (perhaps more radical) cultural work can be done when . . . 'everywhere' includes such an apparently marginal and inhospitable place" (McRuer 1993:222).

Rather than approach this project employing a traditional text-based historiography, I felt it was important to employ oral histories as the key methodology. As a southerner, I have the gift of the gab and that of graciousness, to say nothing of the southern Baptist Christian ethos that guides my every move – despite my desire to have it otherwise. Therefore, I knew that not only would I be comfortable actually interacting with these men, but I also knew that I could get them to open up to me in a way that they might not open up to a non-southerner, a non-black person, or even a self-identified non-Christian. Like Zora Neale Hurston, I knew that "[black gay men] are most reluctant at times to reveal that which the soul lives by" (Hurston 1990:2). Moreover, oral histories, as John Howard has noted, in some way provide an easier route into the lives of sexual dissidents, especially in the face of archivists, families of deceased queers, and other holders of queer history who are reluctant or unwilling to allow access to materials. Referring specifically to doing research on gay life in the South post-World War II, Howard writes:

> Difficulties in researching and uncovering the history of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals in the United States are compounded when the inquiry is focused on a section that has been particularly hostile to sexual difference – the American South. Archivists and university administrators often express reservations about the validity of the field; families seeking to preserve the "good name" of their relatives routinely deny access to materials; and, as in any other part of the country, traditional historical sources remain largely silent with regard to homosexuality prior to the 1960s. Thus, oral history serves a vital role in reclaiming the lesbian, gay, and bisexual past, especially in the South. (Howard 1997:213)

Howard's commentary reinforced my instinct to approach the living – to interact with these men in their own environs to provide a fuller picture of the lives they performatively narrated.

Unlike Howard, I am not a historian by training and therefore I was not interested in asking the same questions that a historian might ask. Nell Painter suggests, "Making sense of the past is the work of historians, who create *historical narrative*" (2005:iv, emphasis in original). But rather than creating such an historical narrative as the researcher and placing a priority on my interpretations, I was more interested in the meanings and symbols embedded in the act of storytelling – of bearing witness to one's life.

In his seminal 1985 essay entitled "Performing as a Moral Act: Ethical Dimensions of the Ethnography of Performance," Dwight Conquergood (1985) not only outlines the contours of what constitutes an ethical methodological approach to the ethnography of performance, he also presents a moral imperative for ethnographers to engage in what he coined as "dialogic performance." Disavowing the various pitfalls of performative stances toward the Other – including the custodian's rip-off, the enthusiast's infatuation, the skeptic's cop-out, and the curator's exhibitionism[3] – Conquergood advocates that performance ethnographers performatively engage the Other "as a way of having intimate conversation with other people and cultures. Instead of speaking about them, one speaks to and with them" (Conquergood 1985). Supplanting his apt and oft cited quote that "opening and interpreting lives is very different from opening and closing books," Conquergood was committed to an ethical stance toward ethnographic methods as well as performance praxis – that is, a call to action in the pursuit of social justice for the disenfranchised.

Ethnography, cultural studies, and performance studies have all experienced many shifts and turns since Conquergood's incisive essay. Indeed, Conquergood himself began to recast the notion of dialogism, suggesting that "conversation" and "dialogue" were not sufficient tropes to describe the differential power relations between researcher and the researched – indeed, that the ethnographic encounter is a site of contestation and negotiation – leading him to coin the term "co-performative witnessing" to describe the ways in which the researcher and the researched are co-actors who are invested in the meaning-making process, but whose goals and line of vision are rife with social, cultural, and political investments. What remains in Conquergood's work, however, is a commitment to performance as a critical method for mining the ways in which the disenfranchised make meaning of their lives.

To construe this research as co-performance means not only acknowledging that both the researcher and the narrators are performing for one another; it also entails "paying attention" in a way that engages the bodily presence of both the researcher and the researched in the moment of the narrative event. This methodology, according to D. Soyini Madison, requires that "You not only do what the subject does, but you are intellectually, relationally, and emotionally invested in their symbol making practices and social strategies as you experience with them a range of yearnings and desires – coperformance is a doing with deep attention to and with others" (Madison 2006:323). Thus, it was also important to me that I conduct an *oral* history project that would take advantage of my training in performance studies and ethnography, for the sensuousness of performance ethnography – the smell, taste, touch, sight, and sounds of the cultural space of the Other – is also a part of the southern way. Critical performance ethnography alters the traditional relationship between researcher and subject, demanding an ethical response from the researcher in witnessing and validating the narrative of the interviewee. Their relationship becomes reciprocal, and the importance of dialogue cannot be overestimated. Instead of the traditional hierarchical positions, the encounter is analogous to an invitation to dinner at a southern home in which the researcher is the guest and is asked to help by shelling peas, chopping onions, or setting the table. I was the invited dinner guest (in some instances I mean this quite literally) of these black gay male southerners who wished to share their life histories. I did more than attentively listen to their narrative performances – my presence actually validated and affirmed their stories. This was not a one-way exchange, however. It was a conversation, which is why, unlike other oral histories in which the interviewer's voice has been excised to create a sense of an uninterrupted story, I, in many instances, retain the questions I asked that prompted these narratives. I also retain many of the narrators' stutters, pauses, and tangents to capture their voices in a way that did not render their speech "sterile" and to capture the performative nature of southern speech in general, and black gay vernacular speech, specifically. Their stories also validated my own life story as a southern born and raised black gay man. These stories filled the air of living rooms, dining rooms, sun rooms, hotels, bars, and coffee shops, the pregnant pauses filled only by the sounds of clocks, turned down television sets or stereos as the anticipation of what words to say next or what question to ask was stifled by a previous indelible reverie. To be sure, not all of our communions were romantic expeditions. Tears, contempt, condescension and indifference were also very real emotions in that space we call performance. But it is the dialogic experience of co-performative critical ethnography that makes it such a valuable tool in engaging the lives of the Other, the self, and the self and Other in each other's eyes.

Employing oral histories and critical performance ethnography as methods for this particular project also seemed apropos given the importance of the oral tradition in African American culture, and especially of African American culture in the

South. As classic ethnographies of black folks like Hurston's *Mules and Men* and Gwaltney's *Drylongso* demonstrate, the interaction between the researcher and informants is crucial to providing a multi-textured perspective (Gwaltney 1993; Hurston 1990). For example, many of my contacts for this book were black women who solicited men to talk to me. My conversations with them were invaluable. Indeed, their recollections of black gay men in their communities helped contextualize many of the narratives in the book. Therefore, it's not just the words of the narrators that are important, but also the words and performances of those around them as well. These women's stories as well as the "gossip" about others imparted by the narrators are what John Howard refers to as "twice-told stories" or "hearsay." He writes: "This hearsay evidence – inadmissible in court, unacceptable to some historians – is essential to the recuperation of queer histories. The age-old squelching of our words and desires can be replicated over time when we adhere to ill-suited and unbending standards of historical methodology" (Howard 1997:5). As an ethnographer, I wanted to capture the fullest picture of the lives I am portraying – part of that process was being observant not just with the five senses, but also with my own intuition and what southerners refer to as "motherwit."

An ethnographic approach to these oral histories allowed for a more honest "self-reflexive" rendering of these stories. While self-reflexivity within performance ethnography seems, at this point, commonplace or taken for granted, it is important to note that there are still ethnographic studies in which the researcher upholds a colonial gaze. My conducting this research, however, was not motivated by a need to exploit or imperially gaze upon the lives of these men. Indeed, a critical performative ethnographic approach demands that the researcher not only be conscious of one's privilege (in my case, class and institutional affiliation), but that she also uphold an ethos of social responsibility toward the advocacy for the people about whom she is researching.[4] I want to validate these men's stories by sharing them with a wider audience, but I also had an ethical responsibility to assist those who desired my help. Self-reflexivity also means putting my own body on the line – that is, sharing my own history as a black gay man born in the South. Where appropriate then, I share parts of my own queer southern history alongside that of the narrators.

Finally, framing these narratives and the ethnographic process as performance destabilized notions of *the* truth and focused more on "truth" as experienced in the moment of the storytelling event. In this way, the narrator's "experience" of his life is acknowledged and validated, but also corroborated by the presence of the ethnographer. Both are aware, however, that they are performing for the Other – that this social interaction, however "real," is nonetheless a "fragile fiction."[5] Walter Benjamin captures this process when he writes: "The storyteller takes what he tells from experience – his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale" (Benjamin 1969:87). Here again, we are pointed to the co-performative witnessing inherent in critical ethnography that disavows a static representation of the Other or the self, as both journey on a collaboration toward making meaning of the social and cultural world around them. As such, these narrative performances, according to Kristin Langellier and Eric E. Peterson, have "the potential to disrupt material constraints and discourse conventions. . . ." (2004:4). For the men I interviewed and for me, those material constraints were multiple and in some cases include poverty, lack of education, lack of access to health care, and social and racial inequality – material constraints not easily disrupted through storytelling. But, as de Certeau aptly reminds us: "What the map cuts up, the story cuts across" (1984:129).

When I began to do research for the book, my thought was to seek men out over the internet, especially in chat rooms. I thought better of this idea for two reasons. Firstly, I did not want people to mistake my intentions. When I was single, I frequented chat rooms often and was familiar with any number of pick up lines – seeking out someone for "research" was one of them. Better to not give someone the wrong impression or have to work my way out of an awkward situation. The second reason I decided not to go that route concerned my own safety. I was going to be meeting most of these men for the first time and I had no idea what situation I would stumble upon. Thus, I thought it better to be no more than one person removed from those I interviewed. The word of mouth method was effective because it kept at bay fears I may have had about approaching strangers, while it also eased the anxieties of the narrators because at least we had someone in common whom they trusted, and therefore they trusted me.[6]

Many of the men welcomed the invitation to be interviewed and were eager to tell their stories, especially older men or transgendered people – perhaps because they were at an age or so flamboyant that they were less concerned about what others thought. A few of them even welcomed me into their homes overnight or at the very least prepared me a meal. Others agreed to be interviewed, but never showed up for the meeting. I can only imagine that they were afraid of exposing their identity to a stranger. As a researcher, this was frustrating not only because of the expense of travel, but also because many of those who stood me up communicated that they had interesting stories to tell. In a few cases, I rescheduled, which, on one occasion, was prompted by Ann McCarthy chastising one of her neighbors for not showing up. She was particularly peeved because she had prepared Sunday dinner for all of us, as the interview was to take place at her home. After waiting 30 minutes for this interviewee to show up, Ann called him and read him the riot act. While he gave an excuse about why he couldn't make it, it later turned out that he had gotten cold feet and had to "pray on it [agreeing to do the interview]." After a subsequent phone conversation with me, however, he agreed to reschedule and I made yet another trip to Tuscaloosa to speak with him.

To be fair, I understand some of these men's reluctance to share their stories given the current political and social climate not only in the South, but also around the country. The queer community is experiencing a backlash across the country because of the conservative Bush administration and because states are passing or have passed more and more anti-gay laws. Black religious leaders in particular are siding with white anti-gay conservatives in a way heretofore unseen by the institution of the black church – an institution that would, as one of my informants put it, "shut down if all of the sissies exited."[7] The extreme of this anti-gay sentiment and alignment with political conservatives is exemplified in the following quote in the February 2004 *New York Times* article by the Reverend Gregory Daniels of Chicago: "If the KKK opposes gay marriage, I would ride with them" (Phillips and Lewis 2004). In addition, on December 11, 2004, a group of southern black ministers, led by Bishop Eddie Long of New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta and the Rev. Bernice King, eldest daughter of Martin Luther King, Jr., led a "Re-Ignite the Legacy" march in front of the King Center in protest of gay marriage, hiding behind a "sheet" of a different kind.[8]

Naturally, these incidents and the corresponding rhetoric of hate don't inspire those who might be struggling with their sexual identity to trust that a stranger can "protect" them from retaliation. John Howard had a similar experience when trying to secure black Mississippian oral history narrators for his project. According to Howard, however, it was his whiteness and class status that seemed to be a deterrent for blacks talking to or trusting him: "Generally speaking, African Americans seemed reluctant to participate in my project, cautious about revealing the names of other persons (regardless of assurances of anonymity), less likely to invite me into their homes, less likely to speak to me at length. For reasons well exemplified by the historical events chronicled here . . . many African Americans rightly are wary of white middle- and upper-class interlocutors" (Howard 2001:299). In my experience it was true that the men in *Sweet Tea* expressed relief or felt more comfortable when they discovered that I was black and myself a southerner; however, my being so "openly" gay sometimes mitigated this "comfort" in similar ways to how Howard's whiteness denied him access to people and information. Thus, it was important for some that we meet on "neutral" territory for the interview, like my hotel room or a mutual friend's home, but not at their place of residence. It appeared that my presence could be explained – to family members, to non-gay friends, etc. – because of my blackness (in a way that Howard's whiteness could not), but at the same time, my perceived gayness – vis-à-vis my effeminacy and my openness about my sexuality – could implicate the men by association.

As someone born in a black community in the rural South, I know first hand the ways in which one internalizes the notion that "it's harder to be queer in the South than in the rest of the nation" (Smith 1997:381). I don't mean to suggest that there is no merit to this myth, for many of the stories these men narrate speak to the difficulty of being gay in the South. But, for as many "horror" stories, there are an equal number of encouraging and inspiring ones. Nonetheless, for all of my "openness" about my sexuality, I did have one experience in the field that reminded me of the ways in which notions of black respectability manifest internalized homophobia.

The experience happened when I traveled home to Hickory, North Carolina to interview "Chaz," a pre-operative transgendered person who lives "her" life as a woman Monday through Saturday night and "his" life as a man on Sunday in order to sing tenor in the mass choir at my home church. My experience of Chaz in the field exemplifies my own culpability in the code of silence around my homosexuality in the context of my hometown and engages the politics of (black) respectability. It also speaks of the ways in which being "out" is a contextual state of being rather than an impervious one.

While I suspect that most of the people in my hometown have figured out that I am gay, the topic has never come up in any discussions I have had with the townspeople. And for all of my progressive politics, not once have I ever mentioned my (white) partner of ten years, even though he has accompanied me home on several occasions. I am not being self-aggrandizing when I say that my story represents the model black ascension narrative in the eyes of both the black and white folks in my hometown, especially given my single parent, public housing background. "See what happens if you work hard and get good grades?" they tell the younger black kids. "You too can get a PhD." To reinforce this belief, my hometown gave me my own day and celebration for being the first African American born in Hickory to receive a PhD. To buttress this bootstrap narrative, the wording on the cake at the celebration read: "From Zero to Hero." What the townspeople and probably even my own family don't know is that it was partly my queerness that motivated my overachievement. It was the sense that, if I could only deflect attention away from my "high" butt, soprano voice, noticeable lisp, penchant for dolls and my Mama's wigs – the things a homophobic bully's wet dreams are made of – if I could focus attention away from some of the fundamental parts of who I was coming to know as "me," by working extra hard for the "A" in school; by joining every possible high school club; by running for and winning senior class president; by working my soprano voice to out-sing all of the girls in the soprano section in the church choir; by becoming a class clown and using my own overweight body as the "butt" of jokes; by being the "good" son who sends money home to help out when none of my other siblings come through; by agreeing to give speeches and lectures for the community to inspire young kids to stay in school and off drugs; then and only then, perhaps, when the unspoken yet devastating news finally came that I am queer, it wouldn't be so damn disappointing or matter at all. I do not mean to suggest here that all of the achievements over the course of my life have been motivated by my trying to circumvent my family and community's disappointment about my being gay. But I would be lying to them and to myself if I did not acknowledge that the "fact" has been a large part of my overachievement. It soon became part of the reason that when I went home I only stayed long enough to guarantee that I only ran into a few people, despite my mother's insistence that I call a hundred "play" aunts and godmammas to let them "holla at me." Not having to lie about "when I'm getting married" (*I would have a long time ago if you hadn't voted for Bush, Sir*) or "when I'm going to have children" (*Well, most states have made it illegal, Ma'am*). But these rebuttals never pass my lips. Instead, I smile the polite, gracious smile that many of us queer southerners have learned to perfect, and ease some variation of the lie from my lips to their ears the subtext of which says, "Kiss my ass, you lowdown heifer. You know good and well that I'm a fag. How dare you ask me questions that you already know the answers to in an attempt to embarrass me in front of my Mama?" without anyone in the room flinching, but also understanding the signifying that has just transpired. Indeed, I was, and to some degree still am, invested in the façade of black respectability undergirded by a southern Christian ethos. It's my Achilles heel, even after all of this time and living in a big city in a house with my partner. Like Joseph Beam laments, "I cannot go home as who I am" (Beam 1986:231). And so, the upshot of this story is, I was embarrassed to be seen in public with Chaz because "she" undermined the "reputation" that I had established as the "perfect" native (heterosexual) son. Hair coiffed, face beat back into her temples,[9] French manicured toenails, donning black leather pants and an off-the-shoulder pink mohair sweater, Chaz was fierce and I was envious of her audacity to embody her "ass splitting truth" (Hemphill 2000). As we sat in Chili's restaurant catching up on church and community gossip, Chaz challenged all of my progressive politics by just being who she is in the world. As with Chaz, many of the narrators in *Sweet Tea* reminded me and those of us who have traveled "the dirt-road-cum-boulevard to gay self-actualization – to identity, community, and political movement – [and who began] in the dark hinterlands of naïveté and deprivation, and [ended], happily, in the bustling corridors of wisdom and illumination" (Howard 2001:27), that if we think we have cornered the market on "liberation," then we are sadly mistaken.

And yet, the story is complicated even more when one thinks about the politics of being out in the South. While I understood Chaz's audacity to be true to who he/she is – and all of the flamboyant accoutrements that that entails – perhaps I was also still smarting from the death of my dear friend and former student, Curt, who was responsible for me finding many of the men that I interviewed for the book. Just two months after I began the research for *Sweet Tea*, Curt was found in his apartment in Durham, NC, naked, bound and gagged in the hallway outside his bedroom, and had been stabbed over 22 times – three of the stab wounds proving fatal. The suspect, an "acquaintance" according to the newspapers (Swift 2004a), had stolen the van that Curt had rented to transport items to an event at Duke University where he worked as a minority graduate student recruiter. They found the van not too far from town and eventually arrested the assailant after a co-worker at a Burger King tipped the police off that he had been holding several electronic items in his locker and was selling them at a local pawn shop. None of Curt's friends wanted to believe that Curt had lost his life over a television set and a DVD player. What we all thought, but never voiced, was that it was a trick gone bad. That's the only thing that could ever explain the *how* of it – but not the *why* of it.

My interview with Chaz took place just five months after Curt's death. Although I understood the circumstances of Curt's murder to be specific to the life decisions that he had made about how to express his sexuality, perhaps subconsciously my being embarrassed to be "out" in public with Chaz inspired fear that what happened to Curt could happen to me – and to Chaz. This subconscious fear, however, was guided not by a general awareness of the potential homophobic violence to which any LGBT person is exposed; rather, it was specific fear of such violence occurring in the South, and more specifically, in my hometown. Chaz, then, became the catalyst for me to confront not only my internalized homophobia, but also my own internalized prejudice about the region I called home. In other words, I bought into the prevalent discourse regarding the South as inhospitable to queers – something that belied my motivation for me conducting this research in the first place. My position as an "out" researcher, in this particular instance, was called into question because of the tension between my public reputation in my hometown, my personal politics about LGBT rights, my desire to debunk public perceptions about what it means to be black and gay in the South, and my personal pain of having just lost a friend to homophobic violence.

From Page to Stage: Performing *Sweet Tea*

I always knew that this research would eventually become a staged performance. Initially, I considered adapting a script from the oral histories and casting a show of eight to twelve actors. After more thought, however, I decided not to turn the performance into a full stage production with multiple cast members and instead make the show a solo piece with me performing excerpts from various narratives. Pragmatically, I knew the show would be more mobile if it were only me and I also felt that I had a closer understanding of the circumstances and context of each of the interviews and the non-verbal cues that accompanied each interview. I also made this decision because I saw it as an opportunity to use performance to ask larger questions about how to stage ethnographic fieldwork. For instance, how does moving the narratives from the printed page and the mostly private space of a reader to the stage with a public audience alter their meaning? What does the dramatization of the researcher's relationship to the researched and to the audience reveal that the book version only implies? What are the ethics of performing these narratives in the absence of the narrators? How does the researcher keep the focus on the men and their stories rather than the researcher and his talents as performer?

While working through these questions I began to think about some of these contemporary issues in performance ethnography and how my particular research and ethical conundrum is not an anomaly, but one that other performance ethnographers have grappled with over the years. Nonetheless, in this reflexive, "temperature taking" moment, I want to use the occasion of my own research to revisit once again the relationship between self and Other in performance ethnography. While we have, for the most part, moved beyond the positivistic ethnographic models of modernity and contemporarily take for granted a "self-reflexive" mode of inquiry, what are the "trouble spots" of self-reflexivity? In other words, when does reflexivity threaten the "critical" in the term "critical performance ethnography" by colonizing the space of the Other for which the research is supposed to account? In speaking on this subject, D. Soyini Madison writes: "We understand that our subjectivity is an inherent part of research, but in critical ethnography it is not my *exclusive* experience – that is autobiography, travel writing, or memoir (or what some people call *autoethnography*). I contend that critical ethnography is always a meeting of multiple sides in an encounter with and among the Other(s), one in which there is negotiation and dialogue toward substantial and viable meanings that make a difference in the Other's world" (Madison 2005:9). Here, Madison makes a distinction between what she sees as "critical ethnography" and "autoethnography," by linking critical ethnographic practice with political and social advocacy for, and a steady focus on, the Other. I wonder then, in a case such as mine, if there is a way to conjoin critical ethnography and autoethnography in a way that adheres to Madison's call to "make a difference in the Other's world."

In her short but deftly crafted 2006 essay, "Marking New Directions in Performance Ethnography," Della Pollock outlines what she believes are five productive directions for performance ethnography research: international, immersive, incorporative, integrative, and interventionist (Pollock 2006). For the sake of my discussion here, I want to focus on two of these directions – immersive and integrative – as they relate to my current oral history project on black gay men of the South and in order to demonstrate both the uses and limits of performance ethnography.

Pollock describes "immersive ethnography" as an ethnography in which "the self-subject of the researcher is immersed in the cosubject, entangled with, even ravished by the cocreative process such that the subjectivity of the researcher is diffused within, even to the point of disappearing into, the field's body. Accordingly, we no longer see the scholar 'I' at work but we certainly feel her passion, his grace" (Pollock 2006:326). Pollock's mission here encouraged me to think more critically about my engagement with the men I interviewed in relation to the politics of representation in the site of performance – that is, when I made the conscious choice to move these narratives from the page to the stage, how the "cocreative process" might be foregrounded such that my subjectivity is diffused, and yet the audience might feel my passion and grace. The move I make to incorporate, as best I can, this immersive stance, is to play clips of part of the interview during the performance. In this way, the audience gets to hear the men's voices in relation to mine. The other performance choice I made actually draws on the aesthetics of oral interpretation,[10] whereby the other is not fully embodied, but rather suggested through voice and small gesture and the presence of the text. In the performance, for instance, I never allow the audience to fully suspend disbelief: the script is ever present and I include the questions I asked of the interviewee. I find that this performance method allows for a new way of documenting ethnographic material that doesn't fully accommodate the aestheticization of cultural performance in ways that undermine the complexity of the intersubjective experience shared between researcher and researched.

On the other hand, I am not fully convinced that my performance accomplishes Pollock's call for an interventionist ethnography. Her formulation of interventionist ethnography revolves around the notion of empathy as a taken-for-granted objective of performance studies. She writes: "To the extent that empathy in any way reflects desire for unmediated identification, it may be implicated in the rank nativism it, hermeneutically, hopes to combat. It may in turn foreclose on critique by holding the researcher and his/her audience close, or as close as desire for unmediated knowledge will permit. Whether because of the possibility of perpetuating racisms, limiting critique, or generating more productive relationships between ethnographer, field, subjects, and reader/viewers/participants, it seems worthwhile to investigate and potentially to intervene on the presumed value of empathy in performance ethnography" (Pollock 2006:327). Here, Pollock's point is well taken, for while it is true that, as one of the goals of many of us engaged in ethnographic research, we desire the audience with whom we share this work to be moved to act, to speak, or to critically reflect on the representation of the lives presented before them. I would hope, however, that empathy as avowed through unmediated identification would be mitigated through the very process of performativity. That is, the fact that a performance is always already mediated through the lens of the spectator's own social location may interfere with an uncritical empathetic leap from self to other – if indeed we want to disavow empathy as Pollock suggests, or if I'm reading her suggestion wrong and what she's asking for is merely that we complicate how we theorize empathy.

Examining my performance of these men's narrative more closely, I believe that my performance does steer clear of the "unmediated" empathetic leap to which Pollock refers. Rather than eschew empathy, I desire to cull. Namely, I want to humanize these men and their lives so that the bigot that may not otherwise be predisposed to engage the story of a black gay man from the South might, in some instances, be moved to think differently about homosexuality and/or about race and region. Here is where my position as an out academic might actually be put into service in a productive way – as a way to advocate on behalf of this marginalized group. For some of these men, for instance, being open about their sexuality is not an option – not because they are necessarily closeted in the ways that are often theorized in simplistic readings of the "closet," but because their sexuality is mitigated by other identity markers such as class and race that disavow privileging sexuality in a visibility/invisibility, out/in binary. My role as performance ethnographer, then, serves as a mediator between the audience and other in the other's "absence," yet still communicates the substance of their lives in ways that alter others' perceptions and belief systems about homosexuality – and especially in the South.

One way to begin to work through this conundrum might be to think of ethnographic research on subjects whose subject position is closely aligned with but not exactly the same as the researcher in the same way that Mae G. Henderson theorizes the role of the black woman teacher in the black women's literature classroom. Henderson poses the question: "What does it mean to teach the Other when the Other is the self?" In the specific instance of my research on black gay men of the South, reframing Henderson's formulation of how to teach the Other when the Other is the self to how to research the Other when the Other is the self might prove productive. Henderson suggests that one move toward answering this question is "to locate oneself in the body – that is for the teacher [researcher] to represent herself as embodied text – produced by certain personal and historical experiences." For Henderson, achieving embodiment requires more than "re-figuring the traditional and stereotypical" or "privileging the personal at the risk of the socio-political as a primary category of analysis"; rather, she suggests that the teacher [researcher] must "listen to the otherness within – that otherness which is defined not in its relation to the Self as Same, but in its relation to Self as Other" (Henderson 1994:436). Henderson's call is not that different from Conquergood's notion of dialogic performance, except that Henderson locates the dialogic process within the self as an Other rather than *between* the self and the Other. Employing Henderson's formulation might help us discover yet more productive ways to invigorate our sometimes overdetermined methodological strategies of engaging the Other.

As the proliferation of ethnographies of LGBT communities conducted by those who are a part of those communities persists – which I think is a good thing – we need to be ever mindful of how we represent ourselves in relation to our "kin." In other words, how do we negotiate the *terrain* of the self without getting mired down *in* the self – a solipsistic exercise of intellectual and apolitical masturbation? How do we highlight the Other and implicate ourselves in the work/performance of ethnographic research? How do we negotiate the space of the Other without condescension and imperialist impulses? Again, while these issues are not new, I believe that we have embarked upon a contemporary moment when the taken-for-grantedness of self-reflexivity has lulled us into a quietism surrounding the ethics of the ethnographic process. The fever of solipsism has run amuck; another temperature taking is long overdue.

Marlon Riggs (1989) critiqued the homophobia of the black community in much of his work. One memorable line from his film *Tongues Untied* is "I cannot go home as who I am." After the experience I had conducting research and writing *Sweet Tea*, I would have to alter Riggs' slogan slightly to suggest that "I cannot go home as who I *was*," for I was undeniably changed by the experience of conducting this research. I do not wish to idealize the men I interviewed or to romanticize my experience because they are not innocent subjects and all of my experiences in the field were not easy or pleasant. But the exchange that occurred between us was more than just about me pulling out a tape recorder and gathering stories. Rather, it was about the preservation of the undocumented lives of men who have and continue to contribute to the maintenance of black southern life. *Sweet Tea* only begins to mine the multiple and rich histories waiting to be let loose and shared with the rest of the world. Indeed, they are the stories that make going home a little bit easier.

Notes

1. All names used here are pseudonyms.
2. A few southern gay historians have attempted to correct this oversight by producing a number of very important texts on southern queer history. Chief among them are James T. Sears, John Howard, Carlos L. Dews, and Carolyn Leste Law, to name but a few. These scholars' texts fill a critical gap in the historical record by documenting the lives of the LGBT community in southern and rural communities. They have also been invaluable resources for the research for *Sweet Tea*, paving the way for scholars like me to contribute to this growing body of knowledge. While these books are

crucial to the understanding of the queer South, none of them focus exclusively on race or document histories from the entire South, including states that were a part of the confederacy, such as Oklahoma and Missouri. *Sweet Tea* also covers a broad range of age, class, gender, and educational demographics that have heretofore never been discussed in histories of queer southerners.

3. Conquergood (1985) characterizes these stances accordingly: The Custodian's Rip-Off is marked by "selfishness and plagiarism"; The Enthusiast's Infatuation is marked by "superficiality and singles' bar cruising"; The Skeptic's Cop-Out is marked by "cynicism and stony silence"; and The Curator's Exhibitionism is marked by "sensationalism and tourists' stare." In the center is Dialogic Performance, which is marked by "genuine conversation."
4. For more on the ethics and responsibility of the ethnographer, see Madison 2005: 5–8.
5. See Geertz 1968.
6. I do not wish to imply here that there is "inherent" danger in meeting men on the internet. Indeed, I met my current partner online. I also do not wish to appear prudish about sexual "hookups" or "tricks" garnered through chat rooms. For the purpose of this research, however, I believe that contacting subjects online would not have been the most productive way to obtain subjects for this book. One downside to this, however, is that the sample of narrators is skewed toward those with a college education.
7. In his latest novel, E. Lynn Harris actually dramatizes what happens when all of the gays of a church in Atlanta decide to walk out. See Harris 2006.
8. Indeed, Freddie Styles, one of the narrators in *Sweet Tea*, suggests that Bishop Eddie Long himself is gay and discloses alleged "inappropriate" behavior between Long and his (Freddie's) nephew. While this is only speculation, it does point to the hypocrisy of individual ministers and the black church in general.
9. This is a vernacular phrase among black gay men that means that a person's makeup is applied very well and very heavily.
10. Here, I am referring to the oral interpretation of literature, which emerged from the discipline of elocution. At some institutions, like Northwestern University, oral interpretation eventually became "performance studies." For more on the history of oral interpretation see Bacon 1979.

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Part II

Sexual Sameness is not a Self-Evident Terrain

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Chapter 4

The Personal Isn't Always Political

Karen Brodkin

This is a story about what I learned when I gave a talk at the Lavender Languages Conference about my research with labor activists. It started when Bill Leap invited me to speak at the Conference 2005 about "anything you want" as he so helpfully put it. I am not a linguist and I don't do research on sexuality. Being an out lesbian hadn't made me into an instant expert on queer language, which is what the conference was about. I was finishing a book about labor and immigrant workers' rights organizers in Los Angeles' vibrant immigrant workers' movement. The book was based on the narratives of the organizers, who were mainly children of Latina/o or Asian immigrants. I decided to talk about the political "work" that personal narratives – theirs and others' – do for social movements in the hopes of opening a discussion about the specifically political work that coming-out stories and other forms of gay, lesbian and queer narratives have done for gay and lesbian liberation and queer political activism.

As I put the talk together, I saw that there were some loud silences in the organizers' narratives and my analysis of them. Two of the 16 narrators were lesbians, a couple, and one was a gay man, but their sexuality was a very small part of my discussion of identities. Although the gay man told a powerful story about coming out as an organizer in his interview, neither of the women talked about their sexuality in theirs. But they were quite out as queer women of color, and I was out to them as a lesbian. I realized that I did not ask specifically about sexuality in the interviews, except as part of "race, gender, class and sexuality," and that I came out to them during or after the interview as part of informal talk or socializing. Queer and straight activists talked about multiple facets of their identities – ethnic, class, and gender. So I began to wonder about the women's silences – and about mine.

The question I had was pretty narrowly focused: why did I and two out of three organizers who were out about their sexuality find it "not very relevant," for explaining how they came to be activists, as one of them put it when I asked about it later. Why was this not part of their political identity in *immigrant worker*

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organizing? So I decided to bring the question to the Lavender Languages Conference to see if the other speakers and delegates could help me find an answer. To do that I needed to make clear what I meant about the work that narratives do for creating a social movement; and also to make clear the way I used the concept of political identity. I'll do this first. Then I will turn to the organizer who talked about how important it was for him to be gay in his organizing life, to unpack more deeply the meanings of political identity and the spaces and non-spaces for sexual identities in this movement.

The short answer to my question is that context shapes the extent to which one can make parts of one's identity *political*. Being out may be an individual choice, but making "out" have political consequence depends on the relationships of queers and the movements they participate in. That is the second part of the story.

The Work of Narratives

The narratives of political activists are simultaneously very individual and personal things, and equally collective and negotiated creations. In many social movements activists talk about the transformations in their lives and the way they see the world differently than they did before they became politically conscious. These narratives are explanations of why *they* became political, and why others like them might do likewise.

What do these narratives look like? A few are written; most are oral; some are told as fragments in speeches; some are written as whole books. The narratives of each movement have their own conventions through which they create collective political subjects. I think, for example, of African American "slave" narratives – Frederick Douglas' is the most famous – but these narratives were a well-developed part of the anti-slavery and first Black Freedom movement, as well as the second – here I think of Ann Moody's classic, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*. The Central American sanctuary and liberation movements of the seventies and eighties generated their own set of narratives with their own conventions and collective subjectivities – think of Rigoberta Menchu's *I Rigoberta Menchu*. Coming-out stories are also political narratives, in the sense that they have also created a queer family of collective and political subjectivities – the political actors of the post-Stonewall lesbian, gay and queer movements.

The work of telling one's life story, of crafting and presenting a political self, is intellectual work. It makes sense of the world, of the teller's place in it, and her/his life's meaning as a historical actor. In public tellings, the narrator explains all this to her/himself and to a wider audience. Political narratives work by bearing witness, by direct experience with not only what's wrong but flesh and blood people who are at once "ordinary," embedded in a cultural context, and models for seeing an ordinary, typical, tradition differently.

In telling these stories to themselves, to one another, and to audiences, activists create a collective political subject in whose name social movements act, and who give that movement meaning to participants and the wider society. Every social movement is marked by a set of signature identities – the subjects in whose name the movement acts – and by a repertoire of practices and a vision of alternatives to the present. The meanings of practices and alternatives rest upon the political identity of the movements' participants. I've argued that the personal narratives and the collective identities they create are what give social movements their explosive personal and collective energy, a kind of nuclear fission, that takes the form of transforming individuals into something bigger than themselves and conveys the sense that together participants can change the world (Brodkin 2007).

Political identities: Here I need to make an extended detour to describe how organizers' narratives created a particular kind of collective political actor whose experiences "explained" the goals and actions of Los Angeles' immigrant workers' movement.

The labor movement has not always been a movement. But in the periods when it has, immigrants and their children – European in the early 20th century, and Latin and Asian American at the end of the century – figure prominently, together with African Americans, in transforming moribund unions into broad-based social justice movements. Los Angeles in the nineties was one place which became a labor movement hot spot, and children of immigrants, especially women, were at its center. My research focused on extended interviews with organizers, mainly in their twenties and early thirties, mainly children of Latin American and Asian American immigrants and refugees, mainly college educated. I asked them to explain why and how they became full-time activists.

In other work (Brodkin 2007, 2003), I've argued that these personal stories are the foundations of new, collective political identities and repertoires that mark this movement. Narratives and the identities they create do real work; they reinterpret Mexican, Vietnamese, Salvadoran, Filipino, and other cultures and migration histories to show social justice movements to be natural and necessary outgrowths of their particular cultural histories.

Here, I will discuss three specific ways that activists' narratives created new political agents and reinterpreted their national and ethnic heritages in ways that showed their movement's goals as both socially just and culturally right. First, they reinterpreted culturally authentic ways of being a man and a woman. Second, they reinterpreted the nature of relations between immigrant parents and their children, the 1.5 or second generation. Third, they reinterpreted immigrant dreams of success. These three analytic moves challenge prevailing myths in the USA about immigrants and their cultures – and at least as important, their interpretations do crucial personal work to change the meanings of their often painful experiences in moving between two seemingly incompatible worlds into experiences that connect them and those worlds to one another. Their rethinking makes for epiphanies about who and what they are part of and releases a very contagious sense of power, connection to others, and potential to do great things that resonates with non-activists and that characterizes the emotional register of social movements. What follows are narrators' rethinkings – or spins – on manhood and womanhood, what migration does to relations between parents and children, and what "the immigrant dream" looks like in their home cultures and communities.

Gender: Narrators' views on what culturally appropriate womanhoods and manhoods look like challenge both American stereotypes about the cultures of new immigrants and some of the ideals within many of those cultures. One way that mainstream America "others" new immigrants is by making invidious comparisons between its own, alleged, "modern," "egalitarian" construction of gender in contrast with equally alleged "traditional," "patriarchal" views of gender in new immigrant cultures. Just as there is no shortage of sexist traditions in any culture, there are also plenty of alternatives and challenges to them within all cultures. Narrators work within and against these discourses to transform their notions of womanhood and manhood.

When I met Suyapa Portillo, she had already been a hospital worker organizer with SEIU Local 399's Catholic Healthcare West campaign, done a short stint as an organizer for the Screen Actors Guild, and was then working on welfare reform at CHIRLA, the Coalition for Immigrant Rights. She grew up and went to Pitzer College in the Los Angeles area, where she first became involved in political activism around racism. She was born in Honduras. For Suyapa, her mother's fear for the safety of her politically active son was the catalyst to radically change her own life and Suyapa's.

> I was born in Copán, Honduras, Central America, and when I was about seven years old, I was a regular kid growing up in a little town. My dad was a teacher in the school; and he would get the newspaper every day, and all the newspapers from the region. One day looking through the newspaper he noticed my brother's picture in the paper saying that the students were taking the university, and that the military was surrounding the place. So of course, that evening we got on the bus and headed to the university in the capital; we lived pretty far from the capital. And I think that's when it clicked to me that my brother was involved in these issues. He is my brother and was the one who played with me all the time when I was little; he is 12 years older than me. That it was the first time I became aware of what students were doing.
>
> Ever since then our lives took a different turn in the sense that our parents divorced – there were a lot of family problems. My mom decided to leave the country after that, maybe a couple, three years later, leave my dad for personal reasons, and leave the country because she wanted to take my brother out of the environment because she was very afraid for his life.
>
> Then, when the opportunity came, this guy was transporting people to the US for $2,000, she borrowed the money and we began our journey. We left the little town and went to the city where my mom worked as a secretary. She never left me. My brothers were already in college, so I was the youngest one. She figured out how to get to the US and together we came by land.
>
> We got caught by immigration, so we were detained for a month. And this is in 1983 when the worst of the Central American bloodbath was happening. When they were interrogating my mom they thought she was a Nicaraguan Sandinista or something, so we were taken to interrogation separately, off from the group. There was a group of people detained and interrogated all night. I didn't know what was going on.

Suyapa described her mother as simultaneously culturally "typical," and non-traditional in the sense of external and internal stereotypes about how women should be. The story of her mother's journey to the USA from Honduras is a core family story that Suyapa uses to explain how both she and her mother became the people they are. When they crossed into the USA, Suyapa and her mother were detained for a month, and Suyapa experienced her own transformation from being "a normal kid" to being treated as a racialized other. In the course of making do with low waged jobs, her mother became a member, and ultimately, an activist and officer of the hotel and restaurant workers' union in Los Angeles. Suyapa tells her mother's story as one of woman's liberation and coming into her own – while also remaining deeply rooted in her immigrant and ethnic community.

John Delloro was a community organizer for SEIU's hospital campaign when I interviewed him, but I also knew him from his activism for garment worker justice when he was a student at UCLA. He described both parents, but especially his mother, as strong people. His mother came to the USA from the Philippines to work as a nurse. But she arrived in Newark, New Jersey as it went up in flames in 1968 in rioting after Martin Luther King's assassination. So, John noted, "she has always had sort of an edge to her."

> My mother and father are very strong, especially my mother. To give you a sense of what my mother is like, I remember this one situation that sticks in my mind where there's a head nurse, a supervisor, entered the room that they are working in. And she's an RN in critical care, and the head nurse says, "What are these beds doing here? Why aren't they moved?" And my mom said, "Well, no one said anything to us. We were not aware of that." The supervisor gets on the phone, and she's like "these people don't know what they are doing." And all the nurses are Filipino, and my mom took real offense to that. My mom turns to her while she's on the phone and says, "Listen, I'm a professional, and no one told us to move these beds." And what happened next was the woman just ignored her.
>
> My mom was very upset about that, being referred to as "these people" and being treated like that. And so she demanded from the woman an apology, and the woman ignored her and walked off. So my mom went above her and went to her boss and complained. And so she called and complained every day for three weeks, and then finally at the end of the month, the supervisor finally went up to my mother and apologized. And she wouldn't give up until she got that apology, so I think that made a big difference having someone like my mother and my father, who very early on stressed that we should stand up for ourselves.

Norma Martinez was working for Californians for Justice, organizing mainly among high school students in Southeast Los Angeles. Her father and mother came from very poor families in Mexico, and migrated to the USA in search of a better life. Both worked factory jobs, doing shift work – her mother worked nights and her father worked days – so someone would always be with the five kids. Describing her parents' relationship, Norma said:

> My mom was probably responsible for most of everything. But I mean one of the things that my mom prided herself on was my father really helped out a lot, and it was really unusual and so, [speaking as her mother] "You probably won't get a man as nice as your father. So watch out, don't think that this is the way it is." They pretty much shared everything, and my mom pretty much ran the household, but everything was pretty equal. He cooked if he was at home, and he did a lot of stuff at home and if she couldn't do it. But she didn't think that that was the way that it was – like that wasn't the norm, so she wanted to warn us and save us from that.

What Norma took from her mother's messages – intended and unintended – was that giving and demanding respect and agency for herself was also a specifically Mexican way of being a woman.

> By raising us that way we were already not going to choose that. We weren't going to choose that because she gave us so much freedom and choice that we weren't going to choose that, but she was doing it because she thought that that was what we were going to do – not so much that she thought that men are mean, but that's just the way it is. Women do the work. And I don't want you to do all the work. I think that you shouldn't do all the work. And I think her thinking about it isn't as clear – it's not like as radical – women shouldn't do – because she is still very much thinking like you should clean, you should do this. But she just wanted us not to do it so much, or she wanted it to be easier. But by doing that we [Norma and her sisters] realized that that was not the kind of life that we wanted so that we wouldn't do it anyway and none of us do it anyway.

Most narrators talked about their mothers – perhaps because most were women – as modeling ways of standing up for themselves and what they believed. But Milton Pascual talked about his father and his uncles as modeling ways of being Salvadoran men that emphasized emotional nurturance and responsibility toward others. Milton was an organizer with HERE, the hotel and restaurant employees' union, when I interviewed him. He was also from a Salvadoran family that was well represented among this union's organizers. Narrating the breakup with his girlfriend during college, Milton recalled.

> At that point I didn't know what I was going to do with myself. So I called my dad, and I tell him – I was crying on the phone. I was like "Dad, this is going on. What can I do? Give me suggestions" because at this time me and my dad were really close. And he is like "Don't move an inch. I will be right there in like ten minutes," and he got there in five minutes, and I guess at the same time that he hung up with me he called my uncles. And they came to me and they aided me, and they said to me, "Look, you're too young, you're only 22. You have your life ahead of you and plenty of women out there that really will appreciate you as a person." So he was telling me this to make me think positive.

One of Milton's uncles who was an organizer for HERE, the hotel workers' union, was also fellow Salvadoran Douglas Marmol's lead organizer, and the person who encouraged Douglas to come out of the closet, to recognize that being gay was one form of Salvadoran manhood.

Douglas Marmol found a home place in HERE, only in part because it is a predominantly Latina/o union. Douglas wasn't demographically marginal by race or ethnicity at work because, as a food service worker at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), he worked with many other Latina/o workers. Douglas is from a political lineage. His uncle is Miguel Marmol, Salvador's most famous revolutionary writer. However, Douglas came to the USA as a teenager and went to work in a series of food service jobs. He encountered HERE when he worked at one of the airport food concessions. Already familiar with unions and the benefits they offered, he became active in the union drive, and ultimately the union asked him to be a worker organizer. This is a position that HERE has negotiated in its union contracts. Workers may take a six-month leave from their job to work as a union organizer, after which they return to their job. Worker organizers can take multiple organizing leaves. While on leave, their salaries are paid by HERE. When I interviewed him, Douglas was on his third leave to work for the union full-time.

He was very clear about the way his gay and his worker identities fit together.

> Because I got involved in the union, I could come out of the closet. I'm gay. People would ask me and I would say no, because in Latin America, they don't accept that. My family doesn't know yet, but I'm in the course of telling them now. That is why the union makes me be a leader, saying "not because you're black or you're brown or you're gay or you're this, we all come together and stand together and fight for it, for what is right."
>
> I have the courage to tell people I'm gay and I see [more] respect from them than before. I learned [that] when I went to Indian gaming. I worked with this organizer and when he did my evaluation, I would say that I was gay to my friends, but not to the other organizers there. So he told me, "Why do you? It doesn't matter if you're black, white, brown, if you're short, big stomach, if you want to be respected you need to respect yourself first and be able to command respect." And he told me those words.

The union became truly a home place for Douglas when it explicitly welcomed him as a gay and Latino man. I will return to Douglas' analysis of his political identity later.

Connection between generations: Readers of the mainstream press and of a large slice of social science literature might learn about the ways that the experience of migration tends to separate parents and children. The latter learn the new culture and language more quickly and often have to negotiate various bureaucracies for their parents. Kids think their parents are old-fashioned and parents think the kids are losing their culture, becoming assimilated and disrespectful. As with stereotypes about gender, the stories of a generational divide have some truth. Narrators recognize generational differences and tensions, but they frame them very differently. In their views, these tensions are part of a larger family and cultural project, rather than about whether or not to assimilate – which is not an issue.

Quynh Nguyen was working as a community organizer for the United Food and Commercial Workers' Union when I interviewed her. Her family were refugees from the Vietnam war; initially resettled in Canada, they later migrated to the USA.

> I think my family's struggles had a very subconscious effect on me. I didn't grow up thinking of social justice. I just let myself in with a latchkey from the time I was five. We did garment work on the floor of the apartment and I thought it was fun. I prepared myself for poor treatment for being a foreigner. But I also absorbed my parents' pain and anger and stubbornness that this isn't the way it's supposed to be.

Norma Martinez described her parents bussing her across class and race borders to a school in an affluent, white part of Los Angeles. She explained that it was part of their desire to build a better life for the family by crossing national and social borders.

> [My mother] wanted the best for us, and she [bussed us to school] because of that. All of us have done different things in our lives, but she is very proud.
>
> I went to University High School in West LA. I got bussed all my life to the white schools. My younger sister and I were the ones that continued. We were considered gifted students and both my sister and I, along with other people, got bussed. But very few other people, and they put us in all these special classes.
>
> For myself, when I got to junior high school, a lot of my friends were friends that I used to get bussed with. I saw that they didn't – it was also like the students who were in these classes didn't want to get associated with the regular students who weren't as smart as they. So they wouldn't get invited to all these things that I would. So I thought it was really unfair. My friends that I used to get bussed with thought I was not wanting to be their friend. But the people that I was around most of the day were these people that were from the west side because they were in my classes. So when I went to high school, I didn't want to be in these classes. I had AP Biology and I failed out of AP Biology because I didn't want to be there. I used to ditch with my friends that got bussed with me. And I didn't do as well academically as I could have, I think because of that. I didn't want to – you know, I didn't – I wanted to be with my friends who I got bussed with.

When Norma rejects bussing – and when she and other narrators talked of the pain they experienced in being bussed – she does not reject her parents, nor does she reject their identification with their working-class ethnic community. She and other narrators also identify as parts of working-class ethnic communities. Instead, they reinterpret the meaning of success and what a better life looks like.

Redefining success as collective rather than as individual mobility: Here the challenge is to the Horatio Alger myth of hard work and individual success and upward economic mobility. Both the myth and the activists emphasize hard work. They talked a lot about how their parents work amazingly hard for a better life. But success does not look the way it does in the self-made man ideology. Quynh Nguyen talked about her parents teaching her to help others in the Vietnamese refugee community, by their example, and by enlisting her in their work.

> My family had a much deeper political influence on me than just making me angry. I got the strongest example of social responsibility from my parents. While they were not politically active, they were always helping people in some way. There was always a friend or stranger at the kitchen table getting help, whether it was with their family problems, finding a job, sponsoring their kids from Vietnam, or trying to understand their IRS forms. I would be told to translate for them, writing letters to landlords, or going to social security hearings. I still get calls to translate documents for friends of relatives. My parents always gave me a sense that no matter how little you have you always have something to help with.

Liz Sunwoo, who was with the Korean Immigrant Workers' Advocates, also told how her parents saw themselves as responsible to others and giving to the Korean community, and beyond. Here she discusses how the 1994 Los Angeles uprising transformed, or broadened their ethical stance to include political activism.

> Looking back, I think definitely a lot of my activism is rooted because of my parents. With my parents [religion] was always [about] doing what is right and just loving all people. [My father] always brought that to our family. They are really people who gave of themselves for something greater. And looking back I think it really influenced me. I don't think they intentionally set out to do that. I think consciously they wanted us to be good people though.
>
> When I think about [activists], I think of people who are very strong and passionate and put themselves out there. I never thought of my parents that way because, they have never been confrontational until – and I know every Korean American says this, the riots happened. The Korean American Society started to organize these peace rallies. And then my parents were like "We are going to go to LA." They took me and my cousins and my brother out to LA, and we participated in the peace rally. I was just really shocked that my parents would do that.
>
> Before that I was always, not introverted, but kind of fearful. When I saw my parents being so free, like they didn't worry about me walking off, and stuff like that, and they were holding hands with people that were singing "We Shall Overcome," and it was very surreal to see my parents, who I always felt would be very non-confrontational, and also not able to stand up for themselves because of language or whatever. And when I saw them in the rally, I was really shocked like they are taking a stand for something, They pushed me out there to hold a sign on the street for peace, and then they were wrapping the banners around my body, and it was really emotional, a traumatic turn in my life. I think for young Korean Americans my age, one way or another the rally has affected us. For me that's when I really felt empowered, and that's when I first heard the Korean American women's [voices] and I was like wow, and my mother was a speaker.
>
> Yes, it really changed the way I thought of being involved in the community, and how to impact a community wider than our little community in Torrance.

In their narratives, success became collective – helping others in the community as well as oneself – and making a respected place in society for immigrant cultures. Sometimes this includes challenging the racism and xenophobia of the mainstream.

Activists also acknowledge that it's a struggle to get their parents to see it this way. Clean, enjoyable work that pays well are most people's first thought of what success looks like. Quynh reported on her struggle to have her parents understand that her union organizing is another form of their work to bring the whole community up.

> For years, my father told his friends I was working for unions to get experience so I could be a labor attorney. But more recently, the Coalition of the Labor Union of Women had a banquet where they presented awards to labor organizers past, present, and future. I received the award representing the future, and I invited my parents. They were for the first time proud of my work, and so that was a breakthrough. I wasn't so marginal. There is a place in this society for what union organizers do.

It wasn't unusual for narrators' parents to hope they'd be doctors or lawyers. What's important here is that the narrators show them another form of success they can connect to.

> My parents have also participated in my organizing, especially when I'm involved with Vietnamese workers. They help me translate, proofread; I seek their advice all the time. I sometimes seek their contacts and friends for community outreach to support worker campaigns. My mother especially had a sense of what I do during the Farmer John campaign. She knew every blow because she and I translated every leaflet. We bonded over political language and thoughts I never knew growing up. I think she has definitely accepted my work.

These are three conceptual, analytic and political reinterpretations of experiences and family goals that are widely shared in working-class immigrant communities. But these activists have rewoven key elements – figuring out culturally appropriate ways of being women and men, of parents and children retaining cultural membership and adapting it to new circumstances; and reinterpreting "the American dream."[1]

I've used these three themes to show how these activists, children of Asian and Latin American immigrants, have put their ethnicity at the forefront of their political identities. They've rooted their ideals of woman- and manhood in their communities; they've viewed working-classness from the perspective of these communities; and they see collective action by these communities as a humane and socially just form of success. They have given birth to a new set of political identities that show working-class Los Angeles as made up of communities of immigrant women and men who are organizing to claim both cultural citizenship and working-class entitlement to a decent life. They act as members of ethnic communities that are made up of men and women, parents, children and sometimes grandparents. Their activism flows "naturally," self-evidently from the political identities they have created.

Sexuality and Silence

So how come being gay, lesbian or queer was part of Douglas Marmol's repertoire of political identities, but wasn't part of the package that Suyapa Portillo or her partner Eileen Ma presented in their narratives? This was the question I brought to Lavender Languages (just to make the gender dimension explicit; none of us thought this explained the differences). The ensuing discussion made me aware that if my being out didn't help me understand how sexuality would be part of a labor political identity, there was no reason to expect that it would be obvious to others. As a result of that discussion, I went back to my interviews to see if any of the three narrators had said anything I missed because of my blinders. I also wrote to Suyapa and Eileen to ask if they intended not to talk about sexuality, and if they wanted to be out in their bios for the book. Here is what I learned.

Eileen Ma was the narrator who had the most extensive experience with union organizing, having worked as a trainer for the AFL-CIO's Organizing Institute and been on many campaigns across the country. In her interview, she focused on analyzing deeply the strengths and weaknesses of labor union practice. She was less interested in a life story narrative. At the point I interviewed her, she had become disenchanted with unions. She was particularly critical of union attitudes toward and treatment of workers and women of color. When I wrote to her about sexuality, she had shifted her organizing to work with Power U, an organization working for social and environmental justice and against gentrification in Miami.

Her thoughtful response raised some of the same questions that conference participants brought up.

> I think Suyapa and I are both very out individually and as a couple, so that should or could be reflected in any way that you feel is appropriate. If it didn't come up in the interviews, I'm not sure I'd alter that. I do think, however, that in my experience sometimes heterocentrism works just so subtly, including creating environments in which it's very hard to feel comfortable talking about one's homosexuality or the importance of that in one's life. As an example, I think it's always really easy and natural for husbands to talk about or mention their wives and girlfriends about their boyfriends; but for gay partners unless you are asked or invited to discuss your relationship, it is as easy and natural to omit the information because it seems peripheral or like a whole other issue. I am not sure if I am talking about internalized homophobia or external heterocentrism. I really don't remember the dynamic I felt during our interview or if I felt comfortable or not talking about myself as a queer woman. And maybe it doesn't matter. The main thing, I think, is that if the book deals with straight relationships and if your straight subjects happened to volunteer a lot about their straight relationships for consideration, it would seem reasonable to make sure that the same reflections be asked of gay subjects and their relationships – for balance or to acknowledge difference – even if they did not volunteer it. Otherwise it's an inadvertent form of "closeting" or silencing, maybe? If you don't ask the question, you don't get the answer; and if people don't think you want to

> know, they don't volunteer it. I think whether or not we have been "closeted" in the book depends on what space is given or taken for relationships in general – and maybe an assessment of who felt empowered to say or share what in the interview process.

Eileen Ma reflected how heterocentrism – mine especially, but also the context's, and perhaps to some degree hers – likely discouraged talking about one's relationships or sexuality by subtly setting a context where "it seems peripheral or like a whole other issue."

If heterocentrism silenced our discussion of relationships, we are still left with the question of why one's sexuality seemed to be peripheral to one's repertoire of political identities in a labor context. I think that Douglas Marmol provided part of the answer, when he constructed gay sexual identity as simultaneously a personal and a political identity.

I missed this when I did my initial analysis of Douglas' interview. Now, I suspect I missed it because I think of sexuality as more personal than political – or that queer politics is about struggles for social recognition of our personal relationships. Douglas' narrative challenges that view. Earlier, I quoted Douglas as attributing his commitment, his ability and willingness to become a union organizer, to his lead organizer making it clear that his union accepted him as a gay Salvadoran man.

Acceptance was the catalyst for becoming an activist in a way that allowed him to bring together struggles for economic and sexual justice. Douglas spelled out how being welcomed in HERE was key to his becoming a political activist, around sexuality as well as class justice. First, it freed him to act politically, to demand respect, as an out gay man.

> I feel great. Now you know I'm out, and then whoever tells me something, if they just start to disrespect me I stop them because I said that's not right, I respect you and that's the way that I want to be respected.

Douglas applied the generic (and usually vague) union message of "respect" to all of him, including his sexuality. As he heard earlier, to command respect, one needs to respect oneself – all of oneself including one's sexuality.

That his gay identity is part of his identity as a working-class Latino man helped him expand his social circles, and his sense of himself as able to be a resource for other gay people as well as for other workers.

> I go to the gay clubs. I go to all different places. And before I wouldn't go and now I do. In July I went to a party at Las Memorias/The Wall [a gay organization that created a pioneering public art project commemorating Latino/as who died of HIV/AIDs]; and before I wouldn't. So I went there and I had had fun and met a lot of people. The places that I go sometimes they are not activists, political activists. And if I meet somebody, and I know they are have having trouble, I tell them I do this, and that's good.

Douglas has also brought his gay and labor activism together in helping to organize two conferences in Los Angeles for gay and lesbian activists in the labor movement.

Building on the foundation of organizational respect and support for his entitlement to respect from others, Douglas created a political practice for himself that combined union activism with a certain amount of gay activism. This suggests that part of the process of integrating multiple forms of marginality into a movement involves conceptualizing those identities in public and political ways, finding the political spaces within and among one's organizations to make one's sexuality relevant to activism.

It is way too simple to say that Douglas was able to incorporate his gay identity into the repertoire of political identities that made up his immigrant worker activist subjectivity because his union helped him create institutional room for it. I believe that HERE has been among the most open of Los Angeles' activist unions in this respect, I'd guess more so than the unions Suyapa and Eileen worked with. Still, there has got to be more to explaining precisely the process by which actors make their sexual identity specifically political, something to take on the public road, even when institutional forces and heterocentrism would silence it. We need to better understand the interpersonal and institutional dynamics that foster or block the transformations of the queer families of identity from personal to political in progressive social movements. In turn, understanding how we make our sexual identities political as parts of our multiple race, class and gendered politicized identities can help us to a clearer grasp of how intersectional political identities work in the real world of social movements.

Note

1. Although narrators give their interpretations an explicitly political frame, they are not that different from narratives of a much wider spectrum of children of new immigrants. See, for example, Aida Hurtado's *Voicing Chicana Feminisms: Young Women Speak Out of Sexuality and Identity* (2003).

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Chapter 5

Who's Gay? What's Gay? Dilemmas of Identity Among Gay Fathers[1]

Ellen Lewin

What sorts of people are the constituency for gay and lesbian anthropology? Can we easily recognize them and be sure that we are focusing on the correct target? Scholars of gay and lesbian life have long pondered how behavior and identity may or may not correspond, overlap, or reconfirm one another, without reaching firm conclusions. These questions are not just philosophical or methodological diversions; they can assume real significance when we start to think about how to intervene in the larger world on behalf of our "people." Who are those people and how do we go about figuring out what our responsibilities to them might be?

Scholarship across the disciplines on matters variously designated as lesbian, gay, queer, transgender, or homosexual has depended on shared imaginings of what, in fact, those labels mean. Such work has been fueled sometimes by identity politics, which inspired the formation of this field (or these fields) of inquiry, and sometimes by taken-for-granted assumptions about how boundaries should be drawn around phenomena of interest. It has also not uncommonly reflected researchers' preferences for working with particular kinds of people whose sexuality or sexual identity is understood to be non-normative or transgressive in terms of criteria that may or may not be explicit. The result has been that studies of behavior, identities, social forms, and cultural expression have tended to understand the subject of study as stable and definable. This is perhaps a surprising characterization of the field, since much of the work generated has drawn extensively on post-modern and post-structuralist theories that advertise themselves as challenging concepts of fixed identities and questioning formations of the "real" wherever they occur. Indeed, this sort of generic skepticism is presumably at the heart of queer theory, as "queering" has been widely interpreted to be an enterprise that throws a conceptual monkey wrench into conventional expectations about gendered and sexual identities.

In this essay, I will make two arguments, one based on my reading of some of this literature, and the other emerging from ethnographic research I conducted with gay fathers in two large metropolitan areas in the USA. My reading of gay,

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lesbian, and queer scholarship has convinced me that despite the claims that many of its practitioners make, the field actually instantiates a rather rigid and limited understanding of who is who and what is what in the domain of sexual identities, and in doing so, promotes the very essentialism it claims to abhor. Further, I will argue that such understandings exclude large swaths of gay experience insofar as they naturalize active subversion as a necessary element of queerness. I will use narrative materials from my interviews with gay fathers to cast doubt on definitions of "gay" in particular as they are understood and lived by my narrators. Finally, I will contend that the ambiguities these narratives present cast doubt on the stability of our object of study and definitions of the population who may benefit from any public interventions they may produce.

This undertaking is timely in view of the objectives of this volume: to specify some of the circumstances under which lesbian and gay anthropology can inform public interventions or help to define the terms under which such public engagement might be contemplated. It is in terms of our need to define terms that I offer these reflections, as a vital matter at hand is about whom gay and lesbian anthropology speaks. What are our criteria for designating one person "gay" and another "not gay," "queer" or not "queer"? Must our standards correspond to those of our interlocutors, and what are we to make of discrepancies when these occur? While many of us have had little trouble acknowledging the ambiguities that arise when trying to attach the term "gay" to some person or behavior in another historical time or in a different cultural setting (Padgug 1989; Vance 1989; Wekker 2006) – hence the renowned debates over essentialism and constructionism – it seems that these lessons evaporate when we train our lens on matters closer to home.[2]

Scholars who have sought to understand the meanings of queerness and to define the parameters of queer cultures have used on a variety of metaphors drawn from political and cultural foundations. Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, for example, have used the phrase "queer nationality" to characterize the complex of subjectivities they identify as central to queer political action, most notably in the cultural expressions associated with Queer Nation and the content of zines emanating from various self-consciously queer cultural sites (Berlant and Freeman 1993). These forms share a reliance on a "power of transgression" that parodies convention in all its varied expressions, including confronting gays and lesbians seen as insufficiently "out" (Berlant and Freeman 1993). In a related move, Judith Halberstam makes a claim for the existence of "queer time" and "queer space," explaining that they "develop . . . in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction. They also develop according to other logics of location, movement, and identification. . . . [T]he queer 'way of life' [encompasses] subcultural practices, alternative methods of alliance, forms of transgender embodiment, and those forms of representation dedicated to capturing these willfully eccentric modes of being" (Halberstam 2005:1). She goes on to acknowledge the partiality of this formulation when she admits, "Obviously not all gay, lesbian, and transgender people live their lives in radically different ways from their heterosexual counterparts, but part of what has made queerness compelling as a form of self-description in the past decade or so has to do with the way it has the potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space" (Halberstam 2005:1–2). With astonishing assurance, formulations such as these obliterate the legitimacy of gay and lesbian identities crafted along less self-consciously transgressive lines. They may exist, we are told, but they are not very interesting. Or, as Michael Warner puts it, in a derisive gesture at what he calls "defensive and apologetic" queers,

> [I]t is true enough that many gay men and lesbians have had little to do with the extremes of queer sexual culture. They might be happily coupled veterinarians in a suburban tract home with nothing more scandalous on their minds than wearing white linen after Labor Day. Well, bully for them. (Warner 1999:48–49)

The work of more empirically inclined researchers has sought to document the "real" lives of gay and lesbian people found in various material circumstances and geographical locations and thus has provided an essential counterbalance to the idealized definitions generated by cultural studies scholars. But the rich field of gay/lesbian/queer community studies, which has produced a variety of provocative accounts of how particular kinds of communities develop and sustain themselves, also, perhaps inadvertently, contributes to the reification of "lesbian" and "gay" as coherent, readily recognized identity positions. Much of this work has been generated by historians, with particularly noteworthy examples in the work of George Chauncey (on New York), Nan Boyd (on San Francisco), Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons (on Los Angeles), and Marc Stein (on Philadelphia) (Boyd 2003; Chauncey 1994; Faderman and Timmons 2006; Stein 2000). Ethnohistorical studies of working-class Buffalo lesbians (Kennedy and Davis 1993) and of the gay summer resort Cherry Grove (Newton 1993) have also made visible a range of historical variability that has characterized gay and lesbian communities. John D'Emilio's now classic study of the solidification of gay communities in the 1950s and 1960s (D'Emilio 1983) and Allan Bérubé's account of the importance of World War II in creating the foundation for the formation of gay and lesbian identities (Bérubé 1990) add to our understanding of how specific historical conditions can foster or impede particular kinds of cultural developments.

While this body of literature would seem to support a flexible, situational reading of gay and lesbian identities, its emphasis on describing the contours and capacities of gay communities has in some ways had a very different effect. Sociological and anthropological works have followed the lead provided by community-based research in focusing on the attributes of particular kinds of communities, sometimes defined spatially (Krieger 1983) and other times according to the boundaries created by identities or subcultural variations (Levine 1979; Newton 1972). On the one hand, these scholars have made the important point that gay communities possess a sort of cultural logic and are coherent formations arranged around principles other than random expressions of deviance. Like the work of anthropologists whose accounts of cultures remote from their readers have engendered respect for the complex, if different, foundations that shape the experiences of people living in these locations, studies of the richness of others' cultures and societies make powerful claims for tolerance.

But on the other hand, the notions of boundedness that often emerge in these accounts can create an image of gay (and other) communities as impermeable, rigidly defined entities in which historical continuity amounts to closure on membership. Krieger's study of a lesbian community in a Midwestern college town situates all persons not part of the "community" as remote and irrelevant; other authors, while not explicitly claiming that non-gay people have no significant role in the lives of their subjects, simply leave such contacts out of the equation (Levine 1979; Newton 1972; Newton 1993). We get the impression, from many of these studies, that contacts between gays and non-gays are rare, non-existent, or necessarily unpleasant and irrelevant when they do occur. We also are rarely asked to consider the matter of how the boundaries drawn around these communities have been constituted. Who's in? Who's out? Are these matters of affiliation or identity to be assumed to be settled and permanent? Are they invariably drawn as presented?

Steven Epstein's provocative analysis of the problems that inhere in social constructionism, with its penetrating interrogation of both essentialist and constructionist readings of homosexuality, settles on an ethnic group metaphor for homosexuality that starts to move the discussion away from these rigidly bounded images.

> If "ethnicity" is to serve even as an analogy for comprehending gay and lesbian group identity, then ethnicity must be understood as something that is neither an absolutely inescapable ascription nor something chosen and discarded at will; as something neither there from birth, nor something one joins like a club; as something that makes one neither fundamentally different from others, nor fundamentally the same. It is in the dialectics between choice and constraint, and between the individual, the group, and the larger society, that "identities," "ethnic identities," and "gay and lesbian identities" emerge. (Epstein 1987:43)

Other exceptions to these tendencies have made their way into the literature and should be noted here, for they drive much of the approach I will take in this essay. Kath Weston's important study of gay and lesbian kinship, *Families We Choose* (1991), paved the way for an understanding of the ambiguities that sometimes characterize gay community definition. She shows how ideas about kinship, including the relationships gay men and lesbians call "chosen," cannot be understood without consideration of the relationships based on biological kinship that also continue to be present in the lives of community members. Gay men and lesbians maintain both biological and chosen kinship bonds and, what's more, use their understanding of biological bonds to frame the meanings they attach to "gay family." The metaphoric connections between these kinship domains cast them as parts of a common cultural system, one that offers a significant revision of David Schneider's earlier work on American kinship (1968).

In a different approach, William Hawkeswood's (1996) study of gay black men in Harlem situates his subjects in a world shaped by blackness and by intersecting meanings of kinship. These men see themselves most fundamentally as part of a larger black community; their involvement with other gay men is punctuated with their obligations to biological kin, members of their churches, and other community institutions. The interconnectedness of these domains emerges in the phrase "one of the children," a double entendre that speaks to both gay identity and family affiliations.

Christopher Carrington's study of gay and lesbian domesticity (1999) also makes visible the permeability of gay community borders. Because he attends to the ways that class shapes the social possibilities to which gay and lesbian couples have access, he cannot help but expose the ways that residence and social network patterns reflect material differences. Less affluent couples were less likely to live in gay "ghettoes" because of the costs of housing in these locations, and they were more likely to socialize on a regular basis with family members and non-gay neighbors in the mixed or mainly straight areas where they lived. In Carrington's account, living an exclusively "gay" life demands material resources and a degree of autonomy not available to people in less secure financial circumstances. His study focused on the private domains of gay and lesbian couples; we might expect that extending his reach to an examination of their connections in public, i.e., at their jobs, would uncover further "mixing" of gay and straight worlds. And sociologist Arlene Stein (2002) has focused on gay–straight interactions in her provocative study of controversies over gay rights that erupted in a small town in Oregon.

My work on gay kinship and family formation has also led me to appreciate the fragility of boundaries between gays, lesbians, and the straight world, particularly as they reveal how kinship connections become critical for lesbian mothers and gay fathers in ways that non-parents may not need to acknowledge, in terms of both the importance of these links in providing concrete support and their cultural significance. Lesbian mothers I studied, for example, emphasized the importance of lineal and kinship-based ("blood") relationships, readily characterizing biological ties as the most reliable and steadfast in their worlds. They viewed lesbians who were not mothers, whom they often called "single," as fundamentally different from them, incapable of understanding their "real" identities (Lewin 1993). Similarly, I argue in my study of same-sex commitment ceremonies that couples almost universally organized such rituals so that attendance would be as "inclusive," i.e., gay and straight, as possible. These were events, I show, that reach across boundaries to communicate claims to belonging in larger social collectivities than the "gay community" (Lewin 1998). The ceremonies also reveal complex understandings of gay communities themselves, as celebrants sometimes crafted events to reflect their loyalties to what might be considered distinct subgroups of a wider gay collectivity, e.g., square dancers, uniform and leather enthusiasts, and "bears."

William Leap (2002) has done something similar in his study of how gay men draw maps of "gay Washington, DC." The men's varying ethnic and economic locations, as well as other preferences they revealed, were reflected in distinctive constructions of "gay space," few of which corresponded to the sorts of accounts that might turn up in guide books. Importantly, "gay DC" intersected variously with presumably non-gay DC in ways that particularly highlight the significance of race in how men understand the space they use – and do not use – and making clear that assumptions about the relationship between sexual behavior, identity, and the use of urban space are rarely warranted.

But even as scholars were crafting approaches to lesbian and gay life that highlighted how rarely what are called gay communities and identities are as sharply etched as the convenient labels would suggest, some researchers have continued to enshrine the notion that gayness consists in qualities that are patently definable. In his 2003 book on gay men in suburbia, for example, sociologist Wayne H. Brekhus described men who lived in suburban areas near New York City. Some of those he interviewed felt that their gayness was not the leading component of their identity, often defining it as an accidental trait, like height or eye color, that didn't adequately represent their preferences and accomplishments. As one man explained, "When I put a label on myself, 'gay' is way down on the list as to how I define myself" (Brekhus 2003:74). Brekhus categorizes men who offer such accounts as "integrators" who, he explains, are hybrids of "gay and suburban attributes that are manifested at the same time," in other words dismissing his informants' understanding of their own identities. He continues, "The suburban gay integrator is an identity centaur whose suburban and gay sides mix to create a worldview that is neither exclusively suburban nor exclusively gay" (Brekhus 2003:75). In this formulation, "gay" and "suburban" are understood as fundamentally contradictory "sides," virtually by definition, with "suburban" implying some bundle of (unspecified) characteristics assumed to be inconsistent with "gayness." So completely does Brekhus segregate gayness from the values that might influence gay men to live in the suburbs that he fails to take note of gay fatherhood or of gay men who hoped to become fathers in the suburban locales where he worked. Since many gay fathers I interviewed were motivated to move to suburbs after they had children, I can only assume that men with children didn't register as "gay" in his search for subjects.[3]

In contrast to an approach that posits "gay" as a core identity that can only be minimized or relativized if an individual is "denying" who he *really* is, I will present some accounts offered by men I interviewed to demonstrate how fatherhood may lead gay men to rethink the configuration of various dimensions of their identities.[4] While none of the men I spoke with repudiated gay identity as part of who they were – they did, after all, participate willingly in research focused specifically on gay fathers – fatherhood led them to question what exactly is meant by "gay" and who is entitled to call himself that.

The men's accounts reveal their awareness of fundamental cultural contradictions that arise when one tries to claim that he is both gay and a father. Following recent work by Elizabeth Povinelli, one might frame gay fathers' cultural difficulties as problems of "incommensurability" (Povinelli 2001). Povinelli uses approaches from the philosophy of language that understands incommensurability as a kind of linguistic indeterminacy, i.e., "a state in which an undistorted translation cannot be produced between two or more denotational texts." This leads her to pose more general questions about how "the inconceivable [is] conceived" (2001:320). Expanding on these concerns, Tom Boellstorff, writing about the predicament of gay men in Indonesia who also identify as Muslim, suggests that individuals facing such dilemmas devise strategies for making their dual identities intelligible or "grammatical" to themselves and to the various constituencies with whom they interact (Boellstorff 2005a).

The challenges gay fathers encounter in establishing versions of their identities that make sense to them involve both practical difficulties – finding a way to become fathers and managing continuing relationships with children – and cultural obstacles – whether these originate in the discourses of homophobic opponents of gay and lesbian families or in the exclusionary orthodoxies of queer politics. Though the specific features of these difficulties are distinctive, both ultimately draw on the same prejudices about gay men and children: that parenthood is intrinsically incompatible with homosexuality. I would further suggest that such biases ultimately imply that gay men are morally unfit to parent, however covert such assumptions might be in the discourse of gay rights.

"All the Very Normal Sort of Things"

Russ Anderson and Jason Williams live in a town house in a Chicago suburb. After they had been together for about five years, they began to discuss having children. Jason, who is African American, was especially skeptical about whether they could become adoptive parents. He suspected that gay men simply wouldn't be allowed access to adoption and also wondered whether it would be fair to bring a child into a family without a mother or into a family with two fathers. But Russ, who is white, described parenting as something he had always wanted to do, and while he had never considered embarking on parenthood as a single man, or thought specifically about how a gay man might manage to become a father, felt strongly that they should try.

Russ and Jason briefly considered having a child with a surrogate, but once they discovered the cost of such procedures, decided that only adoption would be feasible. In an effort to bring Jason around, Russ brought home numerous articles from psychological and other academic journals, all of which indicated that there is no long-term negative impact on children who grow up with same-sex parents. Once Jason had been convinced that there was nothing unethical about pursuing fatherhood, they took another step: joining a group for gay and lesbian couples who wanted to become parents. Attending this group further helped to demystify the process that lay ahead: As Russ explains,

> We met other normal people. Very normal couples who wanted children. And they were talking about how they were going about it and looking for doctors. . . . and looking for lawyers and looking for hospitals. And just all the very normal sort of things that a couple would need to be doing. It helped a lot.

Meeting other gay and lesbian prospective parents not only made parenthood seem accessible, but provided them with practical information about how to proceed. They learned, for example, that international adoption would be out of reach for them financially, but that as an interracial couple they would be viewed preferentially for a domestic adoption of a black or mixed-race child. Referrals from the group helped them to find a private agency that specializes in precisely these kinds of placements, matching pregnant women with adoptive parents, and when birth mothers agree, finding children for same-sex couples. Advice from other group members also helped Russ and Jason navigate through the thicket of bureaucratic procedures that all adoptive parents face: home visits, foster parent licensure, and (for those adopting across racial boundaries) a class on transracial adoption specifically targeted at the white member of the couple. They also learned about the specific legal barriers they would have to negotiate, most crucially relating to second-parent adoption, which would allow both men to be legal parents.

Probably most central, however, to what Russ and Jason gained from belonging to the prospective parents' group was a sense that their desire for a family was "normal." The other people they met in the group seemed to have similar values to theirs and were trying to become parents for the same sorts of reasons: primarily the desire to count as a "family." As time went on, members of the group achieved their goals and moved on, proving that the obstacles presented to gay parenting were not insurmountable. The support Russ and Jason received in the group also made the changes that parenthood would make in their lives seem more manageable. Believing that parenthood required more child-friendly living arrangements, they moved from the city to a suburban area where they could more easily find a house with a backyard and have access to high-quality public schools. They began to stay home more in the evenings – largely to save money for the expenses of adopting – but gradually found themselves less interested in bar-hopping and gay nightlife, which had, in any case, become less accessible from their new location. Their move to the suburbs also coincided with their joining a local Episcopal church and once the adoption was final, they began to form friendships with other parents they met in the neighborhood, through playgroups or day care, very few of whom were gay. While they claimed that their view of themselves as "gay" had not changed, the daily rhythms of life had clearly situated that identity in a very different context. Indeed, Russ and Jason not only became parents, but essentially reconfigured most features of ordinary life, a shift that was facilitated by their discovery that gay parents could be "normal." Once they found that they could live in this new way, it also became clear to them that they would be able to navigate not only the practical, but also the moral, challenges they understood to be intrinsic to fatherhood.

Being a Father, Becoming Gay

For some men who became gay after having fathered children in a marriage, the incommensurability of gay and paternal identities emerges in the course of trying to establish themselves as gay men, and particularly as they sought out sexual and romantic partners. Joe O'Reilly, a divorced father in his early forties who lives in a Chicago suburb, has struggled to maintain a close relationship to his two children while also experiencing the social and emotional upheavals of coming out. Many of our conversations focused on disappointments he had experienced in relationships with men and particularly on the vicissitudes of dating, much of which he negotiates via the internet.

Joe and his former wife have joint custody of the two children, ages 6 and 8, and he is committed to playing a very active role as a parent. This means that Joe cannot even contemplate living anywhere other than the suburban community where his wife also lives, with his living arrangements and work schedule carefully planned so that the children's school placement and daily lives do not require geographical dislocation. The divorce, which followed an intense personal struggle and several years of intensive psychotherapy, has left him struggling to manage his financial obligations to the children while also trying to sustain an active social life. The process has not been easy. The first man he dated claimed to love children, but once the children were actually in his life, became impatient with the constraints they imposed on his time and freedom. Joe has had similar experiences with other men as well.

> Sometimes I've found [boyfriends] sit and brood because they don't want to not be the center of attention and there's drama involved and there's attention involved and there's time and there isn't enough to go around with kids. . . . A lot of men that I have started to see, they thought they could [share me with the children], and they thought it was an interesting idea . . . and then . . . couldn't after the reality set in terms of my time [and] . . . who I devoted it to. Nobody wanted to play effectively second best, and although I never looked at it that way, because for me that was apples and oranges – the love for your children is very different from the love you have for a partner or someone you expect to spend your life with – but that was the effect in that it was divided affection and it wasn't satisfactory.

Joe's anxiety about trying to manage a life as a gay man along with his commitments as a father, and particularly his deep desire to settle into a stable, committed relationship, were sharpest when he talked about his efforts to find "Mr Right." One man, in particular, resented having to move to the suburbs to live with Joe and chafed whenever time with the children conflicted with plans he had made. Joe described him as someone whose relationship with his own blood relatives was minimal. He explained, "He had a very sort of negative idea about family. You know, his family was his friends." While Joe's financial obligations to his former wife have left him with little disposable income, the economic pressures of fatherhood pale in comparison to the logistics of dating, particularly as he now seeks to meet men on the internet. He showed me pictures of men he was interested in dating, and asked my opinion about how he should go about the delicate matter of telling them about his children. When should he reveal the fact that he is a father? Would a partner resent the time and attention he devotes to his children, and are men who feel that way worth his time? Is it appropriate to bring his children to gay events, like the annual Pride Parade, and to introduce them to his gay friends? Can he establish himself as a gay man in the same way that men who don't have children seem so easily to achieve? Most pointedly, do basic definitions of fatherhood and gayness collide in ways that make them intrinsically unmanageable?

Elusive Gayness

Other gay fathers are more directly engaged in renegotiating their identities in ways that seem fully to accept the discursive distance between gayness and fatherhood. But while these men understand being gay and being fathers as contradictory domains, they do not necessarily ground these understandings in the same definitions or undertake the same sorts of strategies to manage them.

For Lawrence Lock, who lives in a working-class Chicago suburb, becoming a parent was framed in counterpoint to the painful realization that he was gay. He is white, a deeply religious man who grew up and was educated as a southern Baptist but was ousted as music director of a large Baptist church when he came out to his pastor. It had been his lifelong dream to be a father, but he feared that he might be gay, which in his view would preclude fatherhood on moral grounds. "So I remember praying *constantly* for God to change the way I felt about men," he told me, until at the age of 33 he could no longer deny his feelings, realizing that God could no more make him straight than "turn me into an elephant." Still, relationships never seemed to work out for him. He described himself as "no good at this relationship with adults thing," a realization he reached after a series of "dysfunctional" relationships. Uncomfortable with gay bar life, the only kind of collective gay life he knew about, he reached the decision that he should instead seek out parenting as an appropriate vehicle for his need to "love somebody."

The two African American brothers he adopted, both seriously disabled, were initially placed with him as foster children. He feels strongly that he has been called by God to parent these boys, becoming animated as he details their progress since they came to live with him and his intense connection with them. Being the boys' father has enabled him to do something "important," rather than "wasting [time] on entertainment things," things that, in his words, "just don't matter anymore." Among those "things" is clearly being gay as more than an abstract identity. Further, now that he has two children, he believes that the likelihood of his making a romantic connection is even slimmer, explaining that "if you tell a gay man that you have two children at home it tends to stop conversation."

Some gay fathers' narratives point to parenthood as a condition that imposes particular spatial, temporal, and material constraints that limit their ability to engage in indexical "gay" activities. In this view, "gayness" becomes reconfigured as one set of daily practices that are replaced by another, the new set more child-oriented and rooted in domesticity. One suburban Chicago father, Len Olson, told me that the difference in what gayness means to him since he and his partner adopted their son, now 3, in Guatemala, can be summed up in reference to their opera attendance. He said that now, if they're lucky, they might get to one or two operas each year. They used to purchase a subscription for the entire season of Chicago's Lyric Opera, and Len clearly saw opera attendance as an activity closely associated with gay identity (see Koestenbaum 2001; Robinson 2002).

Now that Len and his partner Richard Parsons are parents, however, going to the opera has become a difficult chore, requiring a substantial financial outlay for tickets, dinner, parking, and babysitting, costs that compete with the many other expenses they face as a family. It also means going to bed late, problematic for the chronically sleep-deprived parents of a toddler. Beyond this, however, now that he has adult, i.e., parental, responsibilities, going to the opera just doesn't seem as important as it once did. At the same time, however, he recalls opera attendance almost nostalgically, as a memento of a past life.

"We've Joined Another Club"

What counts as a "gay" pastime, however, is far from uniform. In some men's narratives, particular activities were identified as "gay" because they were done in the company of other gay men, rather than because they are stereotypically gay. I spent one evening in the home of Chris O'Neil and John Stone, the parents of 3-year-old twin girls born through gestational surrogacy, who described the desire to have children as something that they had once assumed was simply impossible. Chris described the long process that led to his becoming comfortable with his gay identity after years of feeling lonely and different. "I thought that being a gay parent would be yet again an isolating experience. I finally had found this big community, a community of people that I've had a lot in common with – a gay community – then to take this next step would be isolating."

Not long after beginning their relationship, the two men began cautiously to investigate parenthood. They attended workshops at a gay clinic and were encouraged by the fact that gay men and lesbians in their friendship circle, and particularly two men who lived in an adjoining town house, had become parents or were considering doing so. While becoming part of a community of gay fathers was not necessarily what Chris and John visualized, knowing other gay parents gave a face to the desire they experienced, and a gay face at that. Their eventual move from Lake View (the Chicago neighborhood popularly known as Boys Town) to suburban Oak Park also turned on their knowledge that gay and lesbian families were a well-established part of that community, that some of their friends with children had already moved there, and that their daughters would not have to bear the burden of being the "only" such children in their school or neighborhood. Living in Oak Park, it seemed, would not force them to choose between being parents and being gay.

The birth of their daughters strengthened their relationships with other gay and lesbian parents, but, to their surprise, it also created the basis for friendships with straight parents. Soon after they moved to Oak Park the two men met a straight couple with children about the same age as their daughters. When they learned that they both had subscriptions to the same theatre series, they decided to order their tickets for the same nights so that they could go together (and share a babysitter). Still, children loom large in this relationship. Chris explained, "It's the common interest thing. . . . We rattle on and on and on about the kids."

These changed social connections make clear that parenthood alters the connection of identity to daily practices and activities. Being gay is now a condition embodied in the two men's relationship and in their personal histories rather than in specific interactions with a community or immersion in gay-oriented or gay-populated pastimes. Paradoxically, this means that they sometimes feel that being gay has become a less central part of ordinary consciousness, but also that it is sometimes more salient. John reflects, "I almost feel like *more* gay because I'm not in a gay neighborhood and in many social situations, I'm the only gay person there." But Chris notes that the process sometimes goes in the opposite direction.

> I'm less aware of being a gay man now that I'm not doing all of those things, like having the "Will and Grace" type banter with your friends . . . , people acting queeny . . . to be funny. There's no time for that. When you're living more tightly in the gay community, I think you're far more aware of being gay, of being part of that community. And now I feel less aware of it on sort of a daily basis. I guess I feel like we've joined another club and this club is the club of parents of 3-year-old girls.

In this dynamic, gayness seems both to be contained in particular kinds of activities with other gay persons and to be a function of conscious self-awareness in some contexts. But it also emerges in response to perceived hostility or discrimination. It's not needed, it would seem, when no threat is apparent. "What's great to me is that there are so many couples who treat us like normal parents," John explained, almost with surprise.

Thus, although John and Chris don't seem to consider that their newfound experience of being normal erases their gay identities, some fathers humorously suggest that fatherhood has exactly that effect. When I asked Paul O'Hara and Keith Michaels, another suburban couple, how parenthood had affected their lives as gay men, they exchanged a knowing look. Paul then turned to me and said, "Oh, we're not gay anymore. We pick our friends by what time their kids' nap time is." This tongue-in-cheek comment precisely encapsulates the nature of the conflict between gay and paternal identities, as gay fathers clearly understand the assumptions that make their existence "ungrammatical."

The Shifting Ground of Gay Identities: Who's Gay? What's Gay?

Gay fathers' accounts of their lives do not simply reveal a starting point for defining gay identities. Instead, they point to a number of questions that might be productively asked about what, in fact, gayness "is" and how it can be understood in relation to other aspects of identity formation and "non-gay" other arenas of action and sociability.

For some fathers, parenthood enables a move from a position of being an "outsider" to ordinary social life to one that registers as "normal." While such concerns would seem to mark these men as craven accommodators who discard gay pride in favor of "fitting in," I would argue that such conclusions fail to consider the range of subjectivities that may be associated with being gay – whether one is a father or not. That is, for a person who yearns to participate in a broad social universe not defined solely by membership in a gay community, parenthood may provide new opportunities for seeking such interaction. It may also merely extend connections that already have been in place, allowing the formation of new links based on shared parenthood.

Russ and Jason, for example, were agreeably surprised when the people they met at a group for prospective gay and lesbian parents proved to be "normal." While they don't say directly that they feared such people would be other than normal, the discovery stands as noteworthy for them because it opened the door to a new way of being in the world – moving to the suburbs, joining a church, organizing a life around family concerns. These were desires that they couldn't quite articulate, it seems, until they solidified their plan to become parents. The group also showed them that fatherhood was not an impossible goal and gave them access to information essential to choosing a pathway to achieving it. But besides the practical importance of the group, Russ and Jason's narrative suggests that presenting a vision of a new way to be in the world was an even more vital benefit. Russ and Jason remain gay, of course, but have now been able to configure that identity as a private attribute that exists in dialogue with their desires to be part of a larger collectivity.

In the case of Joe O'Reilly, the formerly-married gay father who struggles with ways to combine his commitment to his children with the process of establishing a gay social existence, the issue of incommensurability is painful and immediate. He wonders how to meet potential boyfriends, when to reveal his parental status to them, and how to manage the disappointment that comes when men he dates turn out to devalue parenthood. His bewilderment over how to orchestrate these two central parts of his life is palpable, particularly as the dating rituals of the gay world are still new to him. Joe is especially anxious about when children can appropriately participate in gay events, an issue that has to do both with his concerns for their welfare and with his public image as a gay man. His experiences of disappointment and betrayal in some past relationships make clear that the questions he asks are far from rhetorical. Establishing a gay identity does not easily co-exist with being a father in Joe's experience.

For other men, like Lawrence Lock, parenthood resolves a moral dilemma that attached to his ideas about what it meant to be gay. Lawrence associates being gay first with sinfulness, and then with superficiality and dysfunction, but nonetheless an unavoidable element of who he is. He sees himself as lacking in qualities that enable him to sustain an adult relationship, but given his religious principles, that lack is also a source of potential goodness. Adopting his sons, both children who need enormous amounts of dedication to survive and thrive, offered him an opportunity to transform his gayness into a special kind of virtue. That he sees fatherhood and having an adult gay social life as incompatible speaks both to his limited experience of gay life and to a moral calculus he uses to plan his actions.

Other accounts point to ways in which fatherhood undermines longstanding ideas about how to know one is gay. These have less to do with sexuality per se than with domains of interaction associated with being gay. For Len Olson, the change in his life since becoming a father can best be explained with reference to opera attendance. Opera serves as a powerful trope for everything Len considers as part of a bigger category that might be called gayness, but which could just as easily be labeled as consisting in a particular cultural sensibility understood to be shared with (among others) gay men. Because going to the opera is an extravagant activity, in terms of both financial costs and time commitment, it stands as the opposite of fatherhood. Opera means putting momentary pleasure ahead of long-term financial obligations; it means staying out late and being tired in the morning; most of all, it seems trivial when compared to the new "big picture" produced by parenthood.

In the case of Chris and John, fatherhood raises questions about how they knew they were gay in the past. Is one gay because he's involved in activities with other gay men, because he engages in a particular kind of banter? Or is one gay because he finds himself surrounded by straight people who remind him of his difference? Chris and John are no longer sure of how daily experience situates them as gay, and now that they are friendly with non-gay neighbors with whom they share membership in a new club – the parents of 3-year-old girls – old affiliations seem remote. They ask a vital question about whether identity is reinforced by immersion in a given world or by isolation from others with whom one shares that identity. Thus, they are pleased to be treated with respect by non-gay people who are now key members of their networks, even if they continue to be surprised by the ease with which they have made this transition and to wonder about its meaning for who they are. Paul and Keith make a similar point in remarking on the new standard they use for choosing friends – ascertaining when their children take their naps. This wry observation encapsulates how gay identities are most typically delineated when they are confirmed and reconfirmed in overlapping, repetitive social arenas. Do they evaporate without this source of confirmation? Probably not, though they do seem to have shifting significance both in fathers' perceptions of themselves and, very likely, in the way others perceive them.

I've presented excerpts from gay fathers' stories that point to some features of gay identity to which we need to attend. These identities are not necessarily driven by parallel experiences or beliefs; different men may come to view themselves as gay for radically different reasons and may see such identity as sustainable – or not – in distinctive ways. For some men, gayness inheres in themselves as an interior, inchoate, and essentially individual element that remains regardless of how they live their lives. For some others, being in a relationship or choosing men as sexual partners constitutes the foundation of gay identity, while for still others, being gay requires constant nourishment through interaction with other gay men and participation in paradigmatically "gay" pastimes. Although the accounts these fathers offer are varied, they all return to a theme of being contributing members of society, constituents in a broad and diverse world, as recurrent elements to which they attach value. This sometimes means that being fathers changes or complicates their gay identities. Reducing them to idealized or universalized conceptions of gay identity erases complex attachments that make them who they are, and we owe it to them to recognize them as they understand themselves.

The issues that emerge from these accounts have ramifications beyond the world of gay fatherhood. They remind us that we are obliged, as anthropologists, to elucidate the meanings that real people bring to their social and cultural lives. Such obligations are matters of scholarly rigor but they are also elements of an ethical mandate – to represent people in ways that elucidate their own understandings of themselves and that enhance the clarity of their voices. It seems easier for anthropologists to meet these responsibilities when they work in non-Western locales, where the immediacy of cultural difference is palpable. But in studies based closer to home, even in the very locations where some of us have made our homes and with people who might be (or are) in our own friendship circles, many of us seem to lose our way, confounding what we see with what we think ought to be there. More deeply, many of us have great difficulty situating sexual identities and behaviors contextually, as we might readily do with other sorts of identities. It seems less problematic for scholars to see that ethnic and racial identities may be mediated by such factors as class and gender, or that the dynamics that accompany immigration or occupation might play out in fluid identity formations and permeable community boundaries. The widespread rejection of the rigidities of structural functionalism, after all, has been the foundation of anthropological scholarship over the past few decades, and the intersectional analyses favored by feminist anthropology have also been influential.

Managing difference in relation to the expression of non-normative sexualities has been a troublesome area for lesbian and gay anthropology, as several of the essays in this volume also assert. We continue to be perplexed, in this connection, with the refusal of some people who might be categorized behaviorally as "gay" to so identify, or when they do, to understand sexual identities as definitive of every feature of their lives. These seeming discontinuities are particularly sharp among people of color in the USA as they are for some of the men I have described here who define (or are, perhaps, forced to define) the sexual and "other" parts of their identities as incommensurable, as inherently ungrammatical. In this respect, gay fathers (or gay black men, or Latina lesbians, or union activists) subscribe to the same doctrine that animates queer theory and that results in representations of communities and identities that are as impermeable and rigid as the accounts of "tribes" and "clans" favored by our forebears. This is a doctrine of singularity, based on a perception of the most stigmatized or transgressive identity as trumping all others across time and space. Just as such formulations fail to consider whose stigma or transgression is definitive, they also offer up one-dimensional subjects for study, people whose own voices are discredited and whose complex actions never make it into the stories we tell.

Notes

1. Some portions of this chapter appear in Gay Fatherhood: Narratives of Family and Citizenship in America. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
2. These tendencies are much less pervasive in studies of non-normative sexualities outside the North American and European context. The ethnographic literature that has emerged in recent years carefully locates the phenomena studied within broader social and cultural patterns. See, for example, Boellstorff 2005b; Lancaster 1992; Sinnott 2004; Wekker 2006; Wilson 2004. Some earlier work in this field, however, tended to be concerned with demonstrating the ubiquity of queerness, and thus blurs behavior, identity, and meaning in ways that imply that gayness has universal attributes. See, for example, Herdt 1981; Williams 1986; but contrast Elliston 1995; Lang 1996; Strathern 1980.
3. One of my informants commented on such biases as follows: "If you want to be invisible, walk down Castro Street with a stroller."
4. I conducted research with gay fathers between 1999 and 2003 primarily in the Chicago area, but also in the San Francisco Bay area, in and around Los Angeles, and in Iowa City, Iowa. There were 95 fathers (or in a few cases, prospective fathers) among the narrators, including men who had adopted or used surrogacy to become parents, men who had become parents during earlier heterosexual relationships, and a small number of men who were raising jointly-parented children with lesbian mothers. All names in this essay are pseudonyms.

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Chapter 6

A Queer Situation: Poverty, Prisons, and Performances of Infidelity and Instability in the New Orleans Lesbian Anthem

Natasha Sandraya Wilson

> You said I keep you satisfied here, so tell me why you go over there? . . . Please don't put me in the middle of a three-way love affair, don't you know that three's a crowd.
>
> Excerpt from the lesbian anthem

People begin gathering chairs around the front of the stage, a partitioned-off section of the dance floor, when the disc jockey (DJ) announces that it is almost time for the drag show to begin. Makayla, a very popular drag queen, emerges from the cigarette and marijuana smoke-filled air to step onto the makeshift stage. She serves as the Mistress of Ceremonies (MC) for many of the drag shows at the Groove, a small nightclub in New Orleans' 7th Ward. She starts off with some camp humor – a mixture of insults and compliments that is both highly imaginative and full of swearing. My cameras start rolling. I am here to film the drag performance of the "lesbian anthem." Makayla goes on to announce that Kim, a *fem* or female bodied woman (FBW), will be the next performer. The music begins, and before Kim even walks out onto the stage, the melody hits the crowd and almost immediately, everyone starts to say, "Awh, yeah!" Some people raise their drinks in the air and lower their heads, a gesture that indicates something that has personal resonance. Arms fly into the air with palms facing up and fingers spread apart. Some fingers begin to snap while arms are still up in the air and everyone's body is moving back and forth with the rhythm of the song. Makayla comes back to the microphone and says, "Y'all know what this is. This the lesbian motherfucking anthem." The audience's movements intensify, as Makayla's words seem to have excited them more. One woman shouts, "That's right, three hoes is too many hoes."[1] Makayla responds, "That's right, three really is a motherfucking crowd." The lesbian anthem begins.

The performance of the lesbian anthem, which is a lip-synched drag performance, has long fascinated me. Part of my fascination has been in watching how the African American women[2] in this small 7th Ward New Orleans nightclub, performers and audience alike, respond when it is performed. Everyone, it seems, without exception,

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sings her heart out while acting out with the movements suggested in the lyrics of the song. However, my fascination with the performance of the lesbian anthem has been accompanied with bewilderment. A major source of my bewilderment has come from trying to understand the place of the lesbian anthem in a community of women who do not describe or talk about themselves as lesbians, more typically choosing to describe themselves as "being gay" or "in the gay life." Anthems are songs that are representative of a community (usually a nation); they are used to invoke a shared vision, history, experience, or consciousness. How is the lesbian anthem representative of a community of people who do not call themselves lesbians? Further perplexing, the song they have chosen as their anthem, *Three's a Crowd* by rhythm and blues singer Milira, has absolutely nothing to do with female same-sex desire. Instead, the song speaks of the undesirability of a three-way love affair.

To understand the meaning of the "lesbian anthem" one must examine the performance at the Groove in terms of the wider cultural and political economic realities that shape the lives of these women. I will argue in this chapter that this performance represents an instance in which the patrons of the Groove use a ritualized cultural performance to help them make sense of and negotiate the multiple political, economic, emotional, and personal contradictions of their lives. Although these cultural performances do not provide a material basis for transcending the structural limitations in their lives, they do help the women in this community give voice to and contest their positions.

Through the use of performance-based theories that view performance as a communicative event, I will look at both the performance and text of the song these women call the "lesbian anthem." In providing a contextual analysis of the lesbian anthem, I will also examine how it constitutes an explication of how gender, racism, and poverty work. As a communicative event, the anthem is used to articulate and process the women's experiences; the public nature of these events renders them ritualized cultural performances – patterned, rule-based, connected to various sensory stimuli that engender emotional intensification and create what Victor Turner calls *communitas* (1982).

Although I will use performance-based theories in this paper, the crux of my argument is directly connected to the political economic and material conditions that shape the lives of my informants and their communities. This paper is not about how some people with several marginalized identities hop on a stage to act out something that is *passing* or *fleeting*. Instead, this paper shows how those people use the "stage" to make sense of and/or "process" the *enduring* disparities in their lives. This paper forces a consideration of the role of what Angela Davis (2002) has so aptly called the "prison industrial complex" in the lives of poor African Americans. In addition, my analysis depends on an awareness of the way welfare "reform" and other structural adjustment programs work in the lives of same-sex women couples. As such, this paper challenges notions that same-sex sexuality and social and economic affluence go hand in hand (Badgett 2001; Maskovsky 2002). Performance-based theories can help get at or be used interpretively to understand the elements present in a performance, but only direct examination of political institutions and domains and how they operate in people's everyday lives can help provide critical insight and create the necessary dialogue one is forced to consider when examining the lesbian anthem.

I refer to the people I worked with as "women," though not all members of this community consider themselves women. There are three main categories of gendered persons in this community: female bodied women (FBWs), female bodied men (FBMs), and male bodied women (MBWs). FBWs and MBWs function and perform in this community as women, whereas FBMs function and perform as men. As I will show below, it is important to acknowledge the structure and function of gender in this community in order to understand the way the lesbian anthem operates.

The "lesbian anthem" is a lip-synched or "drag" performance that involves the participation of both the performer on the stage and the audience. The Groove, where the performance takes place, functions as the central space for the public performance of life events. As I indicated above, the lyrics of the anthem do not concern lesbianism or same-sex desire, but are instead about the undesirability of a three-way love affair. We shall see that this representation of infidelity allows FBWs to both contest and acquiesce to the infidelity of their FBM partners who routinely cheat on them as a way to perform masculinity.

The anthem's text also speaks to the difficult decisions FBWs and FBMs are faced with when they must accommodate "returning men" who come home after a prolonged absence, usually through the revolving door of the prison industrial complex. Because these returning men are the fathers of their biological children – both FBWs and FBMs are virtually all mothers – and because these women are aware of the racism that pervades the criminal justice system in the USA, they are under great pressure to incorporate these men back into their lives even after they have established relationships with other women. This particular reality compromises their efforts to maintain an autonomous and authentic "gay" subjectivity. Gayness, as they experience it, must be constantly negotiated amidst poverty and returning men. It is also compromised by the intensely gendered patterns of partnership and kinship formation that are characteristic of this community.

The Anthem in Context

Although this project has as its central focus the lives of women who are in or participate in same-sex relationships, it has important implications far beyond the scope of interrogating sexuality. I argue what black feminist theorists have maintained for decades: that systems of oppression are interlocking (Davis 1981; Collins 2000; hooks 1989, 2000; Lorde 1984, 1985; Smith 1998). This should hardly seem like a point that needs repeating, yet repeatedly theories about identity, especially sexual identities, have approached queerness as obliterating other identities (Sedgwick 1990; Warner 1993). Barbara Smith comments:

> I am particularly struck by the fact that for the most part queer theory and queer politics, which are currently so popular, offer neither substantial antiracist analysis nor practice. Queer activists' understanding of how to deal with race is usually limited to their including a few lesbians or gay men of color to their ranks, who are expected to carry out the political agenda that the white majority has already determined (1998:88).

I thus draw directly on Cathy Cohen's approach to the connection between (homo)sexuality and identity formation:

> Beyond a mere recognition of the intersection of oppressions, there must also be an understanding of the ways our multiple identities work to limit the entitlement and status some receive from obeying a heterosexual imperative. For instance, how would queer activists understand politically the lives of women – in particular women of color – on welfare, who may fit into the category of heterosexual, but whose sexual choices are not perceived as normal, moral, or worthy of state support? Further, how do queer activists understand and relate politically to those whose same-sex sexual identities position them within the category queer, but who hold other identities based on class, race and/or gender categories which provide them with membership in and the resources of dominant institutions and groups? (Cohen 1997:442)

In the community to which patrons of the Groove belong, behavior that seems to epitomize queerness (a term these women never use in describing themselves) can also be used to enact or engender a sense of normality. That is, by taking on the gestures, adornment, speech, and various other expressive forms not considered normative for the anatomy of a particular body, one can perform a normative role in a community that structures gender and family along lines that both parallel and diverge from those of the dominant culture.

My use of what one might consider progressive queer theory is a way to show the progressive and radical potential of queer theory to reach beyond sexuality to interrogate and demonstrate how oppressions rooted in sexuality are also rooted in other forms of oppression. This allows my project to become particularly useful in answering the calls of scholars like William Leap who explains:

> It is one thing to bring the destabilizing presence of queer theory into discussions of language, sexuality, and gender. Treating queerness as an obligatory starting point for those discussions, or as the cornerstone for the intellectual enterprise of which the discussions are a part, is an entirely different matter. In fact . . . foregrounding queerness in such a fashion is likely to obscure critical social realities which progressive discussions of sexuality and gender need to expose (Leap 2002:45).

For the participants in my research project, "being black" is indeed the starting point of identity formation, with being poor the next. Indeed, many of the women who are the focus of this study were poor before "becoming gay" by virtue of their racialized, gendered, reproductive (i.e., their status as mothers), and class positions. Through the use of ethnographic data and a detailed examination of the performance and lyrics of the lesbian anthem, I will show their longing for an autonomous gay subjectivity that is cut off, circumscribed, and made unstable due to the political and social forces I outlined earlier.

Although this chapter is not explicitly about kinship, an account of how kinship works in this community, especially how gender is performed based on normative ideas about kinship, is an essential component to understanding how this community functions and why the anthem has so much cultural currency. Kinship relationships are highly gendered in this community, a fact that becomes particularly visible when individuals are called upon to enact kinship roles that would have been expected of men were they not periodically absent.

Kinship provides the arena in which both normative and transgressive gender and sexual roles intersect. Understanding gender and kinship as cultural categories can also help elucidate those moments in my research where queering the body becomes an act that simultaneously transgresses (or queers) and assimilates (or creates a sense of normality), as it is a way to fulfill kinship and gender roles otherwise absent in a community because of structural violence and racism. Many of the women in this study were already biological mothers and heterosexual before they met their same-sex partner. However, because they were also single, black, and poor, they "transgressed" cultural norms about acceptable motherhood and family. Same-sex relationships provided a context within which these women were able to fulfill maternal and gender expectations that otherwise eluded them, even as they challenged these very norms.

Poor, Black, Female, and Gay in New Orleans

> . . . being a black woman in New Orleans is hard, it's hard. You have to be strong to be a black woman in New Orleans, 'specially a black gay woman in New Orleans . . . Kim

The lives of the women I worked with in New Orleans are filled with the hardships that particularly affect their ability to maintain stable gay or lesbian identities. Mainly because of the larger social and economic realities they face, consistent lesbian identity is difficult to achieve, framed not solely by sentiment or desire, but by material conditions that cannot be ignored.

All of the people who participated in this study are natives of New Orleans and over half come from the 7th Ward where the Groove, the bar and nightclub that is their central meeting place, is also located.[3] Many of those who are natives of the area still live there, but because of recent gentrification, some have been forced to more affordable areas of the city. The 7th Ward of New Orleans is one of the oldest neighborhoods in the city and is the location of a once-affluent Creole community (for further discussion of Creole culture in Louisiana see Dominguez 1986; see Hirsch 1992 for a discussion of the role of 7th Ward Creoles in New Orleans politics).

The 7th Ward is bordered on three sides like an irregular triangle with the Mississippi River at the apex, Elysian Fields and Bayou Saint John on the two sides. Most people, both native and non-native, think of the wards of New Orleans as single neighborhoods, but each ward, of which there are 13, is composed of multiple neighborhoods and some wards like the 7th include neighborhoods that are differentiated by both economics and race. For example, the 7th Ward is mostly bordered by large and expensive plantation style homes of the affluent, but within just a few blocks, it is not uncommon to see dilapidated or substandard housing where the occupants are very poor. According to the 2000 US Census, 31.3 percent of the households in the 7th Ward had an annual income of less than $10,000 and 15.2 percent had an annual income between $10,000 and $14,999. Nearly half of the households in the 7th Ward have incomes below the national poverty line of $14,500 and 74.9 percent of households have incomes below the figure calculated as a "living wage for Louisiana, $28,714 for a family of four" (US Census 2000). All of the women I worked with reported annual incomes of between $7,000 and $11,500.

The Community

Expectations regarding behavior, partnership, work (both waged and non-waged forms of work), speech, and other forms of social organization are determined by one's gender role. In other words, social expectations and organization are not determined or dependent on whether or not one has a female or male body, but on one's gender presentation. In this community one is either a "man" or a "woman" and there is no place for androgyny.

This gay community has in common with many other gay and lesbian communities in the USA the centrality of the bar (see D'Emilio 1983; Hennessy 2000; Newton 1979, 1993; Read 1980; Rubin 2002). The social and sometimes economic lives of the people in this community revolve around the bar and nightclub the Groove. However, this community has several defining characteristics that set it apart from gay and lesbian communities in the USA that have been studied in the past.

The first of these defining elements is that most of the female bodied persons – both women and men – became mothers in past heterosexual unions. This reality puts these FBWs at a distance from conventional understandings of "gay" subjectivity, in which gay identity and parenthood have been seen as mutually exclusive or contradictory (Lewin 1993). Because the status of female bodied persons as mothers is directly connected to past heterosexual unions their identities as gay persons is destabilized as they are pressured to re-accommodate their children's fathers when they return from long absences, many of which involve extended prison sentences. The reality of prison looms so large in the daily consciousness of the people in this community and the larger African American community that women, usually those who are mothers, girlfriends, or wives of men in prison, have organized weekly chartered bus trips to the state prison located in Angola, Louisiana[4] about four hours away by car.

The disappearance of what some anthropologists call "marriageable" men is common in many African American working poor communities in the USA (Mullings and Wali 2001). Along the same lines that Mullings has described, the disappearance of their children's fathers due to the growing prison industrial complex's aggressive recruitment of men from their communities has great consequences for these low-income women as well. Just as these women must do the work of organizing bus trips to the state prison, they also must do the work of re-accommodating these men back into their and their children's lives when they return. These women are acutely aware of the intense racial inequality African American men face in the American justice system, and at least in part as a response to that, they feel the pressure to welcome these men back into their lives even after they have established long-term relationships with other women.

A further challenge to these women's gay subjectivity comes from the prevalence of sexual assault. This is a particularly agonizing experience for FBMs who typically have a very masculine gender presentation and understand themselves to function in their community as "men." I was told stories of FBMs who were or had become pregnant because of rape. Women are often reluctant to report such assaults because they were engaging in illegal activities with the men involved, typically drug dealing. Because it is not uncommon for such women to be illiterate, they face difficulties accessing information about abortion and are unable to fill out official forms. They are left with constant reminders of their vulnerability – the children that result – and feel exposed as not being a "real man."

The Groove is central as a venue for the public expression of sentiments and family dramas, often enacted in highly gendered public performances. Engagements, anniversaries, and birthdays all provide opportunities to perform kinship in public. However, not all of these public performances are celebratory events. The Groove is also the most important venue for the airing of inter- and intra-family hostilities, with particular regard to infidelity. Even the act of infidelity, which is typically a private event, becomes a public performance that includes the response of the person who has been cheated on. Public visibility helps temporarily to stabilize what is usually a vacillating and unstable gay identity.

Besides the "blood" families women in this community belong to and form, they also participate in chosen kinship, by which they create gay kinship units. Despite being actively chosen – each woman selects "parents" and "children" – the gendered work of kinship is rigid, with expectations based on standards that dictate the behavior of FBM and FBW (butch/stud and fem) or FBM and MBW (butch/stud and drag queen). The union of either kind of couple leads to their adopting "children" of any age (i.e., "children" might be older than "parents") who informally adopt the surnames of their fathers in the gay life. Connection to a particular "family," as indicated by surname, can confer prestige, especially for drag performers.

Members of this community rarely use their given or legal first names; rather, when they perform they are introduced by their gay family names, which insure a warm reception from the audience. Besides these surnames, most people in this community have nicknames or “community names” that allude to some aspect of their personality or projected identity. For example, many studs have at the beginning of their community name “Cool” preceded by the first initial of their feminine given names, for example, Cool B or Cool D. Fems or FBWs often have a hyper-feminine, hyper-sexual-racialized, or hyper-infantilized community name, like “Baby Girl,” or “Brown Sugar,” or “Sweet Black.”

Choosing a Family: Proving Loyalty, Knowing the Rules, and Coping with Infidelity

Perhaps because of the general anxiety surrounding the impossibility of maintaining a constant gay identity, kinship and other forms of social arrangements in the community are gendered in very inflexible ways. Fems, especially “new fems,” are often expected to be particularly zealous in demonstrating their loyalty to their gay families, organizing family events such as birthday or anniversary celebrations for their partners or their mother or father, public occasions usually occurring at the Groove. Partnerships can only consist of one “woman” with one “man”; that is, FBWs can only partner with FBMs and FBMs can only partner with FBWs or MBWs. These arrangements are very rigid and there is little or no tolerance for other partnering possibilities. Ace, an FBM, put it this way:

> My point of view of it is like, you know it’s like everybody says, two men can’t live together and two women can’t live together. So I mean a lot of it touches on heterosexual, you know, dealings and stuff you know . . . it’s like I think things would change. You know by me being butch and I’ve been butch, she met me as butch you know. And I met her as fem. I’ve had situations like that happen to me [and] it’s like, damn! I can’t do it! I can’t be with no other dude!

These sentiments echo those documented in other working-class lesbian communities, such as Kennedy and Davis’ research in Buffalo, New York. They note, “Butch-fem roles established the guidelines for forming love relationships and friendships. Two butches could be friends but never lovers; the same was true for two ‘fems’ ” (1989:244). Such attitudes about the gendering of partnerships extend in this community to naming practices as the couples in this study adhere to patrilineal naming customs. One’s family affiliation or identity is designated by taking on the surname of the FBM patriarch in a family.

For example, most couples at some point in their relationship adopt “children” into their family line: the “children” assume the surname of their father in the gay life. These adult “children” choose their parents and the number of children a person has becomes a status symbol. When children choose mothers, the FBM who is the partner or their mother automatically becomes their father and they take on the family name associated with that FBM. The discourse around family shows that "paternity" is a marker of "legitimacy." Having a father who "claims you" is a sign of worth and value both in the family you are adopted into and in the community in general. On the other hand, when children choose fathers, they have the option of deciding whether they want their father's current partner to become their mother, as "legitimacy" is not dependent on the identity of one's mother.

However, being chosen as a mother has several important implications. The first is that people in the community see her as reliable and loyal to both her children and the community. The second is that women who are chosen as mothers are in the process of building their own interpersonal networks of people they can count on to help them fulfill child care and other responsibilities that increase when they enter into partnerships with FBMs. One of the primary jobs they usually inherit is child care, as they become responsible for "mothering" both their and their FBM partner's biological children. The third, which I will discuss below, is that FBWs will have recourse when or if their FBM partners cheat on them if they have the support of a family (for further discussion of how kinship works and is organized in other same-sex communities in the USA see Hawkeswood 1996 and Weston 1991). Family lineage also can determine whether or not a person can perform drag and how the audience will receive the performance. It also in some ways determines the amount of recourse accessible when an individual is wronged either by his/her own family or by members of another family. This becomes particularly important in situations where FBWs are cheated on by their FBM partners.

As I mentioned above, FBMs must contend with the fragility of their "manhood" and the instability of their identities, as well as with their anxieties about the reliability of FBWs. Because of this, FBMs are more likely to participate in activities that seem to compensate for this situation. One of the most overt and public of these is their involvement in extra-marital affairs. These affairs are carried out in public in the Groove or in straight clubs where drag queens or MBWs who are members of the FBM's family perform. Although this cheating is sometimes tolerated because it is seen as part of the privilege of being a man and being head of a family, both FBWs and MBWs contest this privilege in particular ways.

For example, during a performance an FBW or MBW might perform songs with texts or lyrics about infidelity. I witnessed one such occasion during a drag queen (MBW) show in a straight bar. The studs or FBMs were sitting in the audience with their "other" partners and each drag queen performed one or two songs that were about men cheating on women and how unhappy it had made the women. During this performance three drag queens performed one song in particular back to back, after which most of the gay people in the audience knew the drag queens were "just being messy." To be messy usually refers to creating some sort of social distress through such acts as gossiping or the spreading of rumors (see Barrett 1999 on "messiness" and drag queens).

However messy the drag queens were "just being" their performances had the desired effect, which was a verbal and then physical fight that broke out in the bar between one of the FBMs and his "other" partner. One song chosen, for example, is an old 1970s rhythm and blues song by Shirley Brown, *Woman to Woman*. In this song, the protagonist calls the woman her husband is having an affair with on the telephone and proceeds to have a telephone conversation with her "woman to woman" about her dissatisfaction with their behavior and that she was willing to do whatever was necessary to keep her man. The song went like this.

1 Hello, may I speak to Barbara
2 Barbara, this is Shirley
3 You might not know who I am
4 But the reason I am calling you is because
5 I was going through my old man's pockets this morning
6 And I just happened to find your name and number
7 So woman to woman
8 Now I don't think it's being anymore than fair
9 To call you and let you know where I'm coming from
10 Now Barbara, I don't know how you're going to take this
11 But whether you be cool or come out of a bag on me
12 You see it doesn't really make any difference
13 But it's only fair that I let you know
14 That the man you're in love with, he's mine
15 From the top of his head to the bottom of his feet
16 The bed he sleeps in and every piece of food he eats
17 You see, I make it possible . . .
18 So I'm telling you these things to let you know how much I love that man . . .
19 I think you'll understand just how much I'll do to keep him. . . . I ain't gonna let you break up my happy home.

The two drag queens who performed this song repeatedly that night were a part of the family of the woman who was being cheated on; in fact, one of them was her daughter. Because the woman who was cheated on had family who witnessed the infidelity, particularly a daughter, her dissatisfaction with her partner's cheating had a voice.

Although many forms of social inequality plague the lives of the women I worked with, particularly the FBWs, cheating was always in their immediate consciousness and they spent a great deal of energy in their daily conversations speculating about whether or not their FBM partners were cheating on them. After all, the lesbian anthem is about the discontent of being in a "three-way love affair." These women use songs, usually old or contemporary rhythm and blues songs, to make sense of being cheated on and to make their grievances public.

It is perplexing, however, that FBM infidelity practices are so institutionalized and expected in this community, as one of the biggest fears expressed by FBMs is that their FBW partners will "go straight" again. Equally perplexing is how institutionalized staying in or "sticking in" relationships with FBMs is despite their cheating. Again cheating, fighting about cheating, acceptance of cheating, and "sticking in" a cheating relationship seem to be scripted cultural performances. One of the songs FBWs and MBWs perform that alludes to this acceptance is an old rhythm and blues song from the 1970s by the Soul Children entitled *I'll Be the Other Woman*. In this song, the woman protagonist explains that she is willing to accept her status as the "other woman" in her relationship as long as the person she is having the affair with promises not to be with anyone else other than his wife:

1 I'll be the other woman
2 All your life
3 Just as long as I'm the only one
4 Other than your wife
5 Your wife
6 How would she feel
7 If she caught us together
8 The same way I would feel
9 If I caught you with another
10 Home I know comes first
11 And second to that I'll be
12 But when you're not there with her
13 I want you right here with me

[chorus]

14 I'll be the other woman
15 Just as long as I know
16 I'm the only other woman you make love to
17 I'll be the other woman
18 But I've got to know
19 I'm the only other woman you're gonna make love to.

The first time I saw this song performed, women, both FBWs and MBWs, in the audience shouted aloud to the performer and to each other how they were not the "other" woman, but that they were the "only" woman. Interestingly enough, instead of shouting that they were the "only" woman to their partners (whom they may have suspected of cheating) they shouted to each other and the performer. This shouting seemed to be an indirect way of staking a claim to a particular FBM, verbally marking their territory for the benefit of other women in the audience.

Performing the Anthem

> I am nervous, I was shaking . . . once I hit that stage, it all just disappeared. And why I say performing, because I lose myself into that. Through the song, anything [I'm] going through I could release it on that stage . . . Kim

Kim speaks of releasing "anything" she is going though on the stage. The stage becomes the place where life's dramas can be expressed, as the women in this community have found a way to transform drag performances into a time and space where they can make their personal sociopolitical grievances and their life's joys public. This transformation of time and space affects not only the drag performer, but the audience as well, as the audience and performers interact though gestures that affirm and recognize a shared experience. Victor Turner reminds us that "an experience is itself a process which presses out to an 'expression' which completes it . . . A performance, then, is the proper finale of an experience" (Turner 1982:13). In this sense, a performance is a form of communication between the performer and the audience – a cultural performance. Performing the lesbian anthem creates a ritualized sense of place and space where both the drag performer and the women in the audience attempt to simultaneously reconcile and contest the multiple forces that shape their lives.

The song they have chosen as their anthem, *Three's a Crowd*, allows them to articulate and communicate their experiences to both themselves and each other. In some ways, this cultural performance acts as a mirror through which both the performer and the audience see themselves. Barbara Myerhoff explains, "Cultural performances are reflexive in the sense of showing ourselves to ourselves. They are capable of arousing consciousness of ourselves as we see ourselves. As heroes in our own drama, we are made self-aware, conscious of our consciousness" (Myerhoff 1992:234).

When the DJ announces the lesbian anthem, the audience lights up with excitement and people's bodies begin moving to the song's familiar melody. The rhythm, along with dim lighting, smoke-filled air, and the smell and physical influence of alcohol and marijuana, sends the people into a different sense of time and space.[5] All of these sensory stimulants work to intensify the emotional experience of both the performer and the audience. During the performance people in the audience sing aloud the lyrics to the anthem, particularly when the DJ lowers the volume. The DJ knows exactly when to turn the music down so that the people in the audience can hear themselves singing. During the times when the DJ turns down the music and everyone is singing in unison, audience and performer consciously acknowledge something they attempt to live but cannot do in an authentic or uninterrupted way: to be lesbians.

The opposition between the reality of the material and economic conditions of their lives and the desire for an autonomous and authentic lesbian or gay self sets the stage for understanding the place of the lesbian anthem in this community. Although there are no rules for when it can be performed, it seems to be performed nearly once every weekend. Only women, or those who are willing to perform as women, can perform the anthem. Patterns of gender are usually very rigid, but women can transcend the rules by "flipping," or assuming the dress and style of the opposite gender from one's usual display. Flipping by FBMs is usually acceptable on two occasions: "Turn-About" nights, which are events when studs become fems and fems become studs – and when an FBM wants to perform the lesbian anthem.

In other words, for this community being a lesbian and performing the lesbian anthem are both associated with being a woman, so to perform the anthem one must assume the subject position of a woman. The anthem is about the undesirability of three-way love affairs, with the protagonist a woman who is dissatisfied with being cheated on. As I showed earlier, only "women" are cheated on in this community, so only a woman can speak to this experience. But the undesirability of a three-person love affair goes deeper than institutionalized episodes of cheating. FBMs, who are usually not at the receiving end of infidelity, still must contend with the way their identities are displaced when the fathers of their biological children return either from prison or some other absence.

During the performance of the anthem, I watched as the women, FBMs and FBWs, held their drinks up into the air and raised their heads to belt out the lyrics to the anthem.

1 You said I keep you satisfied here
2 So tell me why you go over there
3 I can't see you when I want to
4 We don't do the things we once used to do
5 The clock on the wall strikes three
6 Ooh, not long you haven't been here with me
7 If it's pleasure that you're seeking
8 Then your secrets, they are keeping us apart

[Chorus]

9 And I don't want to be caught in the middle, baby, of a three-way love affair
10 No darling, uh don't put me in the middle, baby, of a three-way love affair
11 Cause don't you know that three is a crowd [end chorus]
12 You don't know what it's like to be me
13 And you don't know what you're putting me through
14 If I'm unsure of your intentions, it's cause you always failed to mention
15 Where we stand Ooh
16 Does anybody know what went wrong?
17 How did we break up this happy home?
18 Well I've tried so many times,
19 And now it's time to draw the line
20 I think it's over

[Repeat Chorus]

21 Well I've got my pride just like anyone else
22 I give you all of my love and darling you put it on a shelf
23 What more can I say, what more can I do?
24 I give you all of me darling
25 You chose to set you free
26 Promise me baby, baby we can work it out
27 Without a doubt

28 Put your hands in mine
29 We can work this thing out
30 Baby I need you, I want you, I got to have you
31 When I need somebody to talk to, when I need an ear to listen
32 When I need some friend, somebody to help me through the thick and thin
33 When I'm down and low, I need somebody to pick me up
34 When I'm down to the ground, I need someone that'll come around [darling]
35 Yeah, yeah, I love you, I'll want you, I need it, I love you, I love you
36 Yeah, yeah, baby, ah baby, ah baby,
37 Don't you know that three is a crowd?

As the song was performed, the women close their eyes, raise their drinks in the air, and sing the chorus to *Three's a Crowd* so hard that you could see the veins popping out of their necks. This song perfectly captures and highlights the mixed emotions FBWs experience in these relationships, particularly as they endure expression of the FBMs' infidelity. Line 21, which is set off lyrically and rhythmically from the rest of the song, seems to be a sort of statement of personal esteem, as the word "*Well*" at the beginning of the line is sung as if establishing clarity about the worth of one's personhood. "*Well* I've got my pride just like anyone else" makes clear that cheating not only hurts these women emotionally but strikes at their self-esteem. However, even after this declaration, the lyrics offer a plea for the relationship to work out.

26 Promise me baby, baby we can work it out
27 Without a doubt
28 Put your hands in mine
29 We can work this thing out
30 Baby I need you, I want you, I got to have you

In lines 16 thru 20 the protagonist uses the image of a "happy home" which she sees as being broken apart either because of the decision no longer to tolerate infidelity or because of the infidelity itself. The image of a "happy home" is not only broken apart by infidelity but by both FBMs and FBWs living with the constant threat of having to accommodate a man who suddenly returns. How can their homes really ever be at peace or happy? Further, the lyrics emphasize the repetition of infidelity, the woman having to try "so many times." This motif of a "happy home" is pervasive in the songs these women choose to drag perform. For example, in the Shirley Brown song *Woman to Woman* (discussed in the previous section), the protagonist proclaims "I ain't gonna let you break up my happy home." Again the fact that these women know or even suspect that their partners are cheating makes the claim for the actual existence of a "happy home" suspect, but that it is a reoccurring motif suggests that a "happy home" is something they desire or is something they are entitled to.

"Happy homes," family, marriage, and monogamy, albeit with other women, are indeed just some of the "jural norms of society" (Turner 1967) these women desire. For many of these women not only does having a stable relationship constitute "a regular life," but also having a stable place to live and a stable income are part of what make up "a regular life." For these women, because their identities are so fragile and permeable, they dramatize in the public performance of the anthem the things that most people in the dominant culture take for granted and by naming the anthem "lesbian" they make their desire to be lesbians or to achieve monogamy with another woman public.

Like many of the events Turner describes, inherent in this ritual is music, singing, dancing, and the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Both the drag performer and the audience participate in the activities that make up the ritual. Although many of the women who participate in the performance of the anthem do consider themselves drag queens, they do not assume the gendered mannerisms of women, as they are already female bodied women, but there is usually an effort to heighten certain physical characteristics that are associated with femininity or femaleness. Most performers wear wigs or hair extensions, extremely high-heeled shoes, long slits along the side of dresses or skirts that reveal most of their leg or thigh, low cut blouses, fake eyelashes and clothing that accentuates the derrière, as large and shapely derrières are signs of sensuality and femininity in the larger African American culture. For many women, particularly FBWs, it is not the physiological representations that make their performances drag, but it is the lip-synching on a stage in front of an audience that makes it drag and of course the community's acceptance of these performances as drag.

These women, mostly FBWs, were straight or heterosexual when they met their FBM partners and some FBWs, particularly those who perform drag, met their current or first FBM partner at drag shows featuring MBW drag queens in straight bars. Many FBWs who perform drag explained that they "learned" how to perform from a drag queen; this was the case with Kim and Mercedes. Both Kim and Mercedes eventually used drag to bring anything they were going through to the stage and then release it in their performance. Mercedes explained to me, "I perform songs I done been through, is going through, or somebody I know is going through and I will probably go through again . . . I can't perform nothing I ain't been through." Kim echoes these words when she says, "I lose myself into that [the performance]. Through the song, anything I'm going through I could release it on that stage."

Conclusion

Rituals have the power to help us make sense of the contradictions and paradoxes of life. Performances, particularly cultural performances and the ritualistic elements that make them up, are ways to help people process life experiences. For example, a performance, as a communicative act, becomes a necessary way to make sense of living in a country with so much wealth and so much poverty. It should not be surprising to find such performances as the lesbian anthem taking place in communities where everyday experiences are struggles for survival if it is true that "an experience is itself a process which presses out to an 'expression' which completes it . . . A performance, then, is the proper finale of an experience" (Turner 1982:13). Indeed, E. Patrick Johnson comments that "given the historical legacy of slavery, the Diaspora, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement, and the continued struggle for political, social, and economic power and agency today, we cannot ignore how such life experiences inform African American cultural performance" (1995:122). For the African American women who are the focus of this study, it should also not be surprising that their cultural performance is based in music, as New Orleans has a profound musical history. Furthermore, it should also not be surprising that their anthem is not a jazz song, which is the musical form that New Orleans is most noted for, but is instead a rhythm and blues song, as jazz is now considered a "high" art in New Orleans and is no longer readily available or accessible to poor African Americans.

These rituals and cultural performances are necessarily connected to the various injustices that plague these women's lives and the lives of women in general. They are also about more than "queer" subjectivity, but they demand that we ask penetrating questions. Why are male bodied men – children's fathers – caught in the revolving door of the prison industrial complex? Why are female bodied women trapped in various relationships where they are mistreated? Why do female bodied men live with the fear of sexual assault? Why are there members of this community who cannot read and write? To answer any of these questions requires an honest interrogation of the institutions of the political economy in which the Groove and its communities are embedded and the pervasive inequalities central to US society.

Epilogue

Much has changed since I completed the research for this paper. The most notable change of course has been the impact of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath in this community and the city of New Orleans in general. The political and social fall out following Hurricane Katrina shed a national spotlight on the main condition I wrote about in this paper, namely poverty. However, what has been missing from much of this discourse on the "poverty surprise" uncovered in the aftermath of Katrina is the presence and experience of queer people, many of whom are poor. New Orleans, according to some sources, has the largest black/African American queer population in the U.S.A. and since the pre-Katrina population of New

Orleans was predominately black/African American, it only stands to reason that many of the poor people "uncovered" by Katrina were queer or at least not straight (Gates and Ost 2004). Where are the voices of these queer people or any queer people in the discourse on post-Katrina New Orleans?

Although those voices have not been in the mainstream media, the presence of this and many other queer communities are rebounding, reorganizing, and reaffirming their ties to New Orleans. For this community in particular, many spoke with me about their experiences with FEMA as same-sex couples. Some women have told me about posing as "sisters" to avoid discrimination from FEMA to help ensure they would receive relief benefits for themselves and their children, since bureaucratic agencies such as FEMA have no way of acknowledging "alternative" family forms. I have heard stories from primarily female same-sex families about their evacuation journey to places like Texas, where they have been refused help by some churches, which were extremely instrumental immediately following Katrina, once church members or officials found out or figured out they were gay.

However, some of the most compelling stories about survival, creativity, and the effort to rebuild vital networks in the lesbian community came from a conference panel entitled "Queering the Disaster" at the Spring 2007 Society for the Anthropology of North America meeting in which panelists shared their common struggles as queer people in the post-Hurricane Katrina aftermath. Some participants spoke of commuting from places like Atlanta or Houston to hold onto their ties in New Orleans while some spoke of not being able to return to New Orleans, as rental rates are no longer affordable for many of the people who were forced to evacuate. There was a shared consciousness about what it meant to be queer-identified or at least not straight among the participants. For example, they knew that FEMA and other relief agencies such as the Red Cross were primarily concerned with and prioritized the relief needs of heterosexual family units and the panelists spoke of the various ways they negotiated this reality.

Although there are many uncertainties lingering as we all struggle to understand what will happen to New Orleans since Katrina, what is clear is that, as New Orleans recuperates, the voices of New Orleans' queer population will need to be recuperated as well. New Orleans has long had a vibrant queer community, which has been a part of New Orleans music culture and the local drag culture. The few lesbian nightclubs and bars that have reopened since Katrina are evidence of the rich musical drag culture in New Orleans. Many drag shows, particularly in the black/African American community, continue to be places where pain and the processing of this pain take on public expression. It is my contention that continuing to examine the public cultural performances of black/African American queer people will continue to yield rich data about how oppressed people make sense out of social and political contradictions. Given the many contradictions that were "uncovered" by the aftermath of Katrina, the stage will continue to be a place where this community processes these experiences. In the words of one of my pre-Katrina informants, "shows are cheaper than shrinks."

Notes

1. Hoe = Whore.
2. The ethnographic fieldwork on which this paper is based was conducted in New Orleans between 2001 and 2005 with twenty-two working-class and working poor African American gay women and transgendered men, who I will later describe as female bodied women (FBWs) and female bodied men (FBMs). I also conducted formal and informal interviews with eleven transgendered male-bodied women.
3. 93.6% of the people living in the 7th Ward are black or African American, 3% are white, 1.9% Latino/a, with less than 1% of other racial categories (US Census 2000).
4. Angola, Louisiana was named so because most of the slaves who worked this once large plantation were from Angola, Africa.
5. For other examples of how music comes together to engender or enhance sensory experiences see Rouget 1985; Stoller 1989; Graham 1995.

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Part III

Unpacking the Engagements between Sexuality and Broader Ideological Positions

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Chapter 7

Tuskegee on the "Down Low": A Bioculturalist Brings the Past into the Present

Rachel Watkins

Introduction

American physical anthropology has struggled, in earnest, with the issue of relevance to real-world concerns for the past 25 years. The use of research to identify structural inequalities that are veiled by fictions in public and scientific discourse – particularly those related to the health of African Americans – has been of particular concern recently given the wide range of discussions about health disparities among US populations. This is because these fictions are used to interpret the material *effects* of racialization as *evidence* of racial difference. In other words, fictions of innate biological difference are used to justify limiting certain groups' access to resources and power. It is no surprise then that these racialized fictions continue to be reproduced in narratives of black health over time. In addition to presenting the biological effects of these inequalities and fictions, bioanthropologists are becoming increasingly involved in addressing related questions thought to be traditionally located outside of the "biological domain" (Swedlund and Herring 2003). In doing so, biocultural anthropology is continually expanding its research scope into new areas, methodologically and theoretically merging with previously unengaged disciplines.

At the 2005 American Anthropological Association meetings session, R. Brooke Thomas elaborated on this new direction for biocultural anthropology and suggested a number of areas in which biocultural anthropology might be of some use to other subdisciplinary specialties in the future. Queer theory was included among the areas mentioned and illustrated in his cursory diagram. This is likely because exposing veiled structures of inequality involves rendering visible particular conditions through which, among other things, homophobia and heteronormativity gain authority in everyday life. This chapter represents a bioculturalist's attempt to make a contribution to understanding how fluid categories such as race and sexuality gain the appearance of stability and permanence. Fundamentally, this paper addresses how a queer analysis might be useful in addressing questions of race.

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It was argued in the introduction to this volume that at base, such a process must be examined ethnographically ("at the site") to understand it. I want to argue here that lived experience can also be accessed via bioanthropological research that is theoretically informed and can contribute to answering this question as well. Specifically, I will illustrate how historicizing the ways that African American health is discussed in the contemporary US terrain is useful for 1) identifying veiled structures of inequality and disrupting narratives of health associated with historical fictions of innate biological difference; and 2) illustrating how these fictions intersect with fictions of sexual deviance and compulsory heterosexuality.

My discussion draws on the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment [TSE] as a documented experience that provides an historical context for current narratives in which African American health and associated disparities are racialized. Contributing to this volume provides me with an opportunity to reexamine the TSE within a queer framework and discuss its potential for furthering our understanding of the mutual embeddedness of race, gender, and sexuality in narratives of African American health and disease in the 21st century. By queer framework, I mean one that denaturalizes the stability of sexual identity and orientation as well as the separations between race, gender, and sexuality that result from treating these categories as parallel constructions. In so doing, these categories are rendered socially and historically constructed to establish and police the line between the normal and abnormal since the late 19th century. Using a queer framework also means that I reject the notion that the experiment only affected black heterosexual men and women, and that all men involved in the experiment were engaged in heterosexual relationships. I argue that working under these assumptions allows us to see the applicability of the TSE to the contemporary DL[1] phenomenon, and allows us to consider the impact of the TSE on African Americans in terms of imposing a logic of compulsory heterosexuality along with racial fixity and a particular racialized biological experience. In other words, queering opens up possibilities for exploring how sexuality intersects with multiple categories of identification and difference. In turn, it also assists with exploring the powerful effect race has on the construction of gender and sexuality (Hammonds 2004).

This examination is worthwhile because compulsory heterosexuality has drawn much of its ideological power from the ways in which it buttresses and depends on naturalized categories of racial difference. It is not simply parallel to discourses of racial fixity, but integral to its logic (Somerville 2000).[2] Therefore, the formation of whiteness and blackness is a crucial part of the history and representation of sexual formations. With my biocultural focus in mind, I will examine how perceptions of normal sexuality and racial fixity have been implicated in our interpretations of disease and how disrupting naturalized constructions of racial difference involves simultaneously unsettling one's relationship to normative constructions of gender and sexuality. Specifically, I want to explore the effectiveness of using the TSE as a means of historicizing current discourse on the "down low" behavior of African American men.

To provide some background, the US Public Health Service [USPHS] conducted a series of studies to determine the prevalence of syphilis among blacks in the rural South in 1929 and explore possibilities for treatment.[3] Macon County, Alabama was found to have the highest rates of all counties surveyed. The study determined that mass treatment could be successfully implemented among the populations studied (Brandt 1978; Clark 1932). After the economic collapse of 1929, the findings were ignored, however an in-depth study of Macon County, Alabama (in which the town of Tuskegee is located) was initiated three years later. Although previous research demonstrated the success of mass treatment of syphilis among rural Negroes, the conditions in the county were considered a unique opportunity to observe the natural effects of untreated syphilis by USPHS doctors (Jones 1981). In other words, the results of the study were supplanted by prevailing notions of black males' hypersexuality and immorality, which naturally led to a high prevalence of venereal disease in the population. This in turn caused a low birth rate among Negroes that would contribute to their eventual extinction (Hoffman 1896; Holmes 1937). For this reason, socioeconomic factors were generally ignored and it was assumed that medical care could not change what was seen as part of a greater evolutionary scheme. Thus began a 40-year study of the effects of syphilis in Negro males between 1932 and 1972.

The "distinctiveness" of black males' sexual orientation was underscored by their desire for women outside of their race (white women), characterized as "a perversion from which most races were exempt" (Brandt 1978; English 1903). Another fiction that buttressed the experiment was that treating blacks for VD was nearly impossible. Doctors argued that they rarely sought treatment because of the quiescent nature of the disease in its latent stages. When they did seek treatment, it was only at the more painful beginning and end stages of the disease. Therefore, physicians considered the TSE an observation of a "natural" condition among black males (Clark 1932).

Given the range of fictions informing the TSE, it is useful for historicizing current patterns in African Americans' access to and utilization of health care, their distrust and lack of respect for medical authority and associated low participation in clinical trials. I argue that it can also shed light on how characterizing the DL as a racialized black male behavior impacts the way that black men and women are discussed in the context of the HIV crisis and prevention.

Racializing the Black Body: Intersections

The logic followed by TSE physicians and researchers reflects the 19th century practice of using sexuality as a primary means for establishing racial difference and hierarchy between whites and blacks (English 1903; Gilman 1985; Somerville 2000). Human anatomy was treated as a legible text over which fields of science competed for authority as literate readers and interpreters of its meaning

(Somerville 2000:25). Fictions of racial difference revolved around both the typology of sexual organs and sexual behaviors. While black men and women were both marked by these fictions, comparative anatomists located racial difference through the sexual characteristics of the female body (Turnipseed 1877; Gilman 1985). Specifically, Cuvier's early 19th century anatomical study of Sarah Baartman, known as the "Hottentot Venus," initiated the practice of locating the boundaries of race through the bodies of African women (Fausto-Sterling 1995; Flower and Murie 1867; Gilman 1985).[4] In addition to treating enslaved black women as sexual property, they were used for medical experimentation under American slavery (Collins 2005; Kapsalis 1997).[5] The African woman's (and later African American women's) bodies were characterized in terms of excess, especially the sexual organs, which placed her body outside of the boundaries of sexual normalcy (Flower and Murie 1867). Her anatomy explained and was explained by her characteristically unladylike hypersexuality. In many accounts, African women's "exaggeratedly feminine" genitalia were referred to as "appendages," which suggests that racial boundaries were in part delineated by sexual ambiguity.[6]

This underscores my earlier point that issues of race, gender, and sexuality in the TSE and fictions that they justified are not merely parallel constructions or analogous relations. Rather, they are mutually embedded in narratives of African American health and disease (Butler 1993; Somerville 2000). This is why TSE can be a useful contextual reference for current discussions revolving around the health of African Americans that subtly (or not so subtly) employ racializing fictions of sexual difference. Therefore, historicizing intersections of race, gender, and sexuality is a key component of disrupting narratives of racial fixity, normal sexuality and their associated fictions.

The DL

The widespread discussion and panic over men on the DL began in the winter of 2000–2001. At that time, the results of a CDC study of AIDS among black men were released indicating that 1 in 3 young gay black men were HIV positive (CDC 2001). In a concurrent study of roughly 8,700 men, who were HIV positive and who said they were infected through having sex with another man, 25% of black men self-identified as heterosexual, as opposed to only 6% of white males (CDC 2003). The CDC also began to make connections between black men who have sex with men [MSMs] who don't identify as gay and the rising infection rates among black women. A JAMA paper published early in 2001 initiated this reference to young "bisexual" men as a "bridge" for HIV transmission to women (Hader et al. 2001).

In February 2001, J. L. King, a former Columbus, Ohio publishing executive and former man on the DL spoke at the National Conference on African Americans and AIDS:

> I sleep with men, but I am not bisexual, and I certainly am not gay. I am not going to read your brochures, I am not going to get tested. I assure you that none of the brothers on the down low like me are paying the least bit of attention to anything you have to say. (*New York Times* April 3, 2001)

King's words aided a shift in concern for the health of young black men to black women put at risk of infection by these men who "hide their 'bisexuality' " (USA Today 15 March, 2001). Black men were transformed into deceitful predators and black women were their innocent victims. King followed up his inflammatory speech at the National Conference with a book called *On the Down Low*: *A Journey into the Lives of "Straight" Black Men Who Sleep with Men* and promotional tour where he reiterated his warning at bookstores and television shows across the country. Both in his book and in speaking engagements, he asserts that there are signs that a woman can look for to determine if her man is on the DL. King firmly states that the cause for men living on the DL is fear of rejection from one's church community, family and friends. "You can't be black and gay on the South Side of Chicago. You can't be black and gay in Harlem. If you are, then you're looked at like, there's some sissy who's got issues. We've never been taught to accept our sexuality – we hide it because we're afraid of the fallout . . ." (Salon.com August 13, 2004). King says that he wrote the book to warn women about the phenomenon and to make them aware that their partners could be sleeping with men and possibly infecting them with HIV.[7]

While the dust eventually settled after the frenzy J. L. King caused, it kicked up again when Jonathan Plummer, the husband of black popular novelist Terry McMillan, came out summer of 2005. The nasty divorce was publicized widely, as both Plummer and McMillan hit the talk show circuit stating their cases (this case has now calmed down somewhat, as both appeared on *Oprah* together on November 8, 2005). While Plummer claims to not have known that he was gay until four years into their marriage, McMillan accuses him of having manipulated her into marriage to become a US citizen. Moreover, Plummer was characterized by McMillan's publicist as "having lived a dual life that has left her exposed to disease" (*Washington Post* 29 June, 2005). McMillan herself said during her interview with Tavis Smiley, "I don't care about him being gay, but he risked my life. What if I'm sitting here HIV positive. I can't get rid of that."

In both older and more recent articles on the DL, I was quite struck by the similarities in the fictions revolving around men on the DL and the male subjects of the TSE. In the discussion that follows, I present some of these similarities and how they indicate the persistence of narratives of racial fixity, normal sexuality, and their associated fictions across space and time. Fundamentally, this examination shows that discourse around both the DL and TSE revolves around black men's propensity toward unnatural behavior. In the case of the TSE, it is a desire for white women and in the case of the DL, it is other men. However, equally important, these discourses rely upon the image of a pathological black woman to reinforce the notion of general sexual abnormality among blacks, as well as to actualize particular forms of black hypersexuality among men and women.

Exaggerated Statistics

Ways of talking about men on the DL and the subjects of the TSE involved exaggerated statistics regarding infection. In each case, they were and are used to reinforce ideas of racial difference and the idea of black males as vectors for disease. The difference between statistics on white and black populations reinforces the notion of white and black diseases – that syphilis or HIV in whites is a different disease from syphilis or HIV in blacks (Moore 1933). These exaggerated statistics also underscored the "excess" of black sexuality (hypersexuality) highlighted in early comparative anatomical studies. The Negro, doctors explained, possessed an excessive sexual desire, which included a desire for white women and therefore threatened the very foundations of white society. As such, it is a fiction of excess tied to a logic of compulsory heterosexuality as well as racial fixity (Somerville 2000). This narrative removes the possibility of considering sexual liaisons outside of one's race and heterosexual domain normal. In addition, these statistics supported the fiction that black men in a diseased state are in their "natural" state. US Public Health Service physicians at the helm of TSE argued that "lust and immoralities, unstable families, reversion to barbaric tendencies made blacks especially prone to venereal diseases." Some doctors "estimated" that over 50% of blacks over the age of 25 were syphilitic (Harris 1902; McNeil 1915). Statistics of this sort were also useful for demonizing black males as a threat to white women. Physicians often coupled statistics about venereal disease in the Negro with narratives about black men attacking defenseless white women as further evidence of predatory racial instincts (Howard 1903). In actuality, rates of infection were much lower than assumed: roughly 20% of those tested were actually diseased (Brandt 1978). Moreover, men did seek treatment when they presented symptoms. However, the USPHS made sure that men did not receive treatment from other sources that would have compromised their study (and exposed the fact that participants were not receiving treatment at all). Specifically, directors of the study met with black doctors in the area to ask their cooperation in not treating the men. Lists of participants were also supplied to physicians requesting that anyone on the list who contacted them be redirected to the Public Health Service for treatment. The USPHS even gave the Draft Board a list of names to exclude from treatment, and the Board complied (Brandt 1978).

Similarly, men on the DL are characterized as immoral, sexual predators of *black* women. In addition to being characterized as deceptive, they are said to be less likely to share their HIV status with their partners than any other racial group. Again, this demonization of men as predators of women reinforces the fiction of heterosexual normalcy. An erroneous statistic commonly printed in articles on the DL is that one-third of *all* black bisexual men are HIV positive. Another is that black women make up 68% of all new AIDS cases, for which the number one cause is black men on the DL. This statistic reminds us that the disease status of men is not a concern, but their potential to infect others. The immorality of these men makes them undeserving of sympathy as disease sufferers. For the DL is a reflection of an excessive sexuality manifest in the desire to have sex with men rather than (*only*) women. The narrative does not allow for considering sexual liaisons outside of one's race or the heterosexual domain normal.

While the disproportionate effect of HIV on black communities should not be underemphasized or ignored, the logic behind the DL is as suspect as the headlines are dramatic. As with the TSE, while statistics were vigorously quoted, hard data are actually lacking. For instance, there is neither a clear definition of what the DL is nor an accurate national count of how many men are living on the DL.[8] It is important to point out that the often quoted figure of about one third of all black bisexual men having HIV resulted from research done in nightclubs in six major cities. Therefore, all that this statistic indicates is the HIV status of the men in those particular cities in the specific clubs where surveys were taken. Similarly, statistics about black women and HIV transmission are based on data from 29 states. Of the 29 states that provided data, only 10 represented the most populous states in the country.[9] These points make it easier to see that in part, stories about men on the DL are new articulations of the belief that all homosexuals have AIDS. Rendering visible the ways in which these statistics have been manipulated also helps to identify that DL narratives represent an adherence to the general notion of black pathology (*Village Voice* August 11–17, 2004). This is because one will also find statistics such as these in narratives that firmly situate the cause for the DL in the homophobia of black communities. To emphasize this point, these statistics are often accompanied by an individual's personal story of living on the DL for the reader to follow. As with the statistics, these stories are also offered to the reader as data on who a man on the DL *really* is. Like the statistics, they are rife with oversimplifications and overgeneralizations that mask the complex processes at work in constructing the fictions and narratives around what it means to be on the DL. In so doing, these discussions often reinforce notions of sexual fixity based on the particular definition of DL used and how an individual's sexual orientation is discussed. A case in point is a 2005 *San Francisco Chronicle* article entitled "The Double Life: Former Sailor Dated Women, Also Had Sex with Men." Kenneth Williams is noted as proud to call himself a gay black man after years of living on the DL. The writer states that

> It's for this reason that he is willing, unlike many men on the DL, to talk about his experiences. His experience helps show how the black community's hostility toward homosexuality leads African American men like him to deny that they are gay, and to keep their sexual activity with other men secret, using wives and girlfriends as covers. (*San Francisco Chronicle* May 2, 2005)

The implication is that a man on the DL is in essence a closeted gay man. Therefore it is not possible to consider the DL as a sexual identity that lies outside of the limitations of a straight–gay binary. In the very high-profile article written by Benoit Denizet-Lewis (*New York Times* August 3, 2003), an individual by the name of Jigga is highlighted at close of the piece. Shortly before the publication of the article, Jigga told his parents that he was interested in both men and women. Denizet-Lewis writes,

> It takes me a few seconds to process the words . . . In six months of talking to young black gay and DL men, I found that Jigga is one of the few that told his parents, and the only one who reported unconditional acceptance. "I'm blessed, he says . . . Why do you think so many people are on the DL?"

He closes the article by surmising that:

> Jigga is proof that being on the DL isn't necessarily a lifelong identity. He seems considerably more comfortable with his sexuality than he was the first time I met him, and I suspect soon enough, he may be openly gay in all facets of life without losing his much-coveted masculinity.

Again, the implication is that men on the DL are actually gay men who have yet to come out. And the reason they haven't come out is because of the homophobia in the black community. While black men's resistance to openly express same-sex desire can certainly be tied to the homophobia expressed in black communities, it is also important to consider how DL narratives are also informed by the construction of the "naturally heterosexual" male rooted in scientific racism. In addition, other definitions of the DL are not considered. For instance, Frank Leon Roberts (AlterNet July 22, 2003) describes the DL "as a low-key mellow lifestyle that lets [men] admit to same sex desires without necessarily coming out in the traditional sense. Men 'come out' as DL."

The imposed racial and sexual boundaries in both cases suggest that these [DL and TSE] health narratives not only require/d adherence to fictions of racial identity, but also involved the policing of sexual mobility. Fictions of excess are tied to a logic of compulsory heterosexuality as well as racial fixity (Somerville 2000).

The Deviant Black Female as Narrative Lynchpin in Fictions of Racial and Sexual Fixity

In addition to statistical fictions of excess, there are similarities in the attendant fictions of victimization. As stated, white women were solely positioned as victims of diseased black males in the TSE. The bodies of black women were invisible and the impact of TSE on them was a non-issue. In fact, the black female victims of the TSE and their cries of "We're sick too, Nurse Rivers" are rarely discussed outside of black feminist literature (Hammonds 1994; Hine 1994; Jones 1981). Part of the reason for this is that, as stated, black females' bodies provided the basis for the fiction that sexual difference reflected racial difference. Therefore, black women were also marked as sexually deviant. As with males, the notion of the "naturally diseased" state of the black body is rooted in the sense of compete immorality on the part of blacks. As one doctor stated: "Virtue in the Negro is like angels' visits – few and far between . . . I have never examined a virgin Negro over fourteen years of age" (Howard 1903:424).

Granted, black women are solely positioned as victims of men on the DL. However, they are not victims "like" white women. The racially specific marking of black women's bodies prevents this. I want to submit here that victimizing black women primarily serves not to acknowledge the ways in which they are put at risk, but to reinforce notions of racial and sexual difference and racial boundaries in sexual liaisons. At the same time that black women are marked as victims of men on the DL, they are also marked as immoral and diseased.[10] Discourse around women partnered with men on the DL is tinged with blame – *why are they not finding out the status of their men? How could they have sex with them without protection? How can they not know what their men are doing?* Clearly, the stereotype of the irresponsible, unreliable black women archetype follows them into this narrative. Their not knowing is an important aspect of their sexual immorality. They are too careless in their sexual liaisons to inquire about such things. It is further evidence that black women lack the capacity to control their sexual lives. In the past, the visible sign of a lack of discipline and/or immorality among poor black women was pregnancy (Collins 2000, 2005). In the case of the DL phenomenon, we see that black women's irresponsibility and immorality is portrayed in various ways across space and time.

For it is the same message about black women communicated in a different form. It is important to see the range of forms these messages take to identify the ways that these ideologies survive.

As the DL is a label specific to African American males, the specificity of African American female victimhood further reinforces the notion that the DL is a "black thing." This in turn implies a difference in black and white "versions" of a disease, as well as reinforcing the racial boundaries of sexual liaisons. Moreover, that only black females are victims of DL behavior means that other men, black or otherwise, are not. So again we see the intersection of racial fixity and policing sexual mobility.

The TSE and DL show us that public discourse on the sexuality of certain racial and ethnic groups is shaped by historical processes that pathologize them. The first factor relevant to this discussion is the notion of blacks being inherently heterosexual. This is tied to 19th century sexuality discourse that revolved around the characterization of blacks "fucking like animals" and reproducing high numbers of offspring. This is another way in which sexuality played an important role in the justification of blacks being treated and recognized as chattels. Through this characterization of their sexuality, blacks were seen as closest in existence to animals, which gave them a biological nature inherently more sexual than Europeans. As a result, homosexuality was assumed to be impossible within the logic, for same-sex sexual practices do not result in reproduction (Collins 2000; Haraway 1989). blacks were "naturally" heterosexual and therefore blacks who were not could not be considered authentically black (West 1993). Authentic blackness was historically rooted in a promiscuous heterosexuality. This is important in understanding the ways in which the DL represents both a mode of self-identification outside of binary confines and the internalization of historical constructions of black sexuality by European social and medical authorities. On the one hand, the DL represents black males' rejection of a gay culture perceived as white, effeminate and exclusionary and the formation of a separate vocabulary and customs that allow them to self-identify as primarily black, outside of the confines of being gay or bisexual. On the other hand, for men on the DL, that masculinity is inextricably tied to hyper-sexuality makes an openly gay identity impossible (Collins 2005). Black men who rely upon ideas of black sexual prowess to define black masculinity typically need women to actualize it due to historical constraints of the narrative/image. This shows us that the denaturalization of one category is often achieved through the renaturalization of another.

In examining how TSE and DL discourses bear upon black women, we see how discourse on the sexuality of racial minorities submerges sexuality in the process of pathologizing it (Hammonds 2004). Black feminists have written at length about how their sexuality, when viewed from a dominant vantage point, suffers silence, erasure, invisibility (Collins 1998; Hammonds 2004; Higginbotham 1992; Spillers 1989). In the case of the TSE and DL, black women's sexuality is only visible in relation to black men's.[11] Therefore, the logic of compulsory heterosexuality is imposed on black women as well. In sum, this secures the notion of black sexuality as completely heterosexual. Therefore, homosexual activity is, in the context of blackness, abnormal.

This particular situation of black women as voiceless can be attributed primarily to two processes. First, black women's sexuality was historically framed within the context of archetypes such as the Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire, and Welfare Queen.[12] Two of these archetypes hold particular relevance for this discussion. First, the Jezebel image has been used historically to make racism and sexism appear natural. African American women were not, and are not, portrayed as being truthful and are therefore untrustworthy. This was the basis for the commonly held belief that a black woman could not be raped. After all, she welcomes the advances from white males regardless of what she says. Also contributing to the erasure of black women's sexuality is the image of Sapphire. Unlike other images that symbolize African American women, the Sapphire necessitates the presence of an African American male. The African American man and woman are engaged in an ongoing verbal duel. She was created to battle with the corrupt African American male whose "lack of integrity and use of cunning and trickery provides her with an opportunity to emasculate him through the use of verbal put-downs" (Collins 1998, 2000). One need only refer to the many websites and online discussions – not to mention those one hears in public spaces – regarding men on the DL to verify that public communication between African American men and women continues to be limited to such exchanges.[13] It is important to note that on these websites, stories of a woman's experiences discovering her husband or lover is on the DL are shared.

However, this is markedly different from these women having voices as agents of their own sexual health. Therefore, these sites arguably play into the existing dynamic: voices are not heard, but intimate details about life are shared to justify victimization (Hammonds 2004).[14] It is also important to note that this is the female image relied upon to actualize the sexuality and sexual prowess of the male image of the man on the DL. In addition to serving the fiction of obscuring black women's sexuality, the latter image in particular omits possibilities of a range of black female sexualities, as individual sexual experiences are not considered. Black women are caught in the liminal space in which images both limit and justify male predation, and the necessity of the black male being with the black woman. It makes more clear the saying that black women had so much sexual potential that they had none at all (Spillers 1989).

In sum, discourse surrounding the TSE linked black women to immorality and disease through their being obscured as victims. In the case of the DL, black women are marked as diseased and immoral by way of their lack of knowledge about their partner's health status. Both factors are informed by the historical marking of black women's bodies as abnormal and diseased through medical examination and anatomical dissection. This past and contemporary example shows us that the construction of sexualities is in part dependent upon an ever-present pathologized black female sexuality: the black female as the embodiment of sex and the attendant invisibility of black women as the unvoiced, unseen everything that is not white (Hammonds 2004). Furthermore, the reliance upon archetypal categories contributes to the continued pathologizing of black sexuality regardless of orientation.[15]

This characterization of black sexuality is in part the reason why a label such as DL is attributed to black men who engage in secret sexual liaisons with men, while the same behavior in white males is not labeled at all. Also, comparatively, they are not discussed in such negative terms. This is exemplified in a *New York Times* article that ran in September 2005 titled "A Sex Stop on the Way Home" (*New York Times* September 21, 2005). Not only did this article spare its subjects the DL label, the article was sympathetic to the plight of suburban married men who must resort to courting other men in the relative safety of their cars. The issue of secrecy is justified out of "concerns ranging from embarrassment to fears of gay-bashing." Moreover, men's enjoyment of the "risk and recklessness of semi public sex" is attributed to "some of them not getting it at home." Some say, "I'm not even gay, I'm just bored" (*New York Times* September 21, 2005). In contrast to articles focused on the "down low" behavior of black men, this white male-focused discussion is not framed by language connoting predation and deception on the part of these men. Rather than the wives of these men being portrayed as victims, if anything, they are implicitly indicted for driving their husbands there by "not giving them any." In DL discourse, black women are in part portrayed as innocent victims while closeted black gay and bisexual men are portrayed as guilty without anyone attempting to lift their burdens (Boykin 2004b). Similarly, media stories about former New Jersey Governor Jim McGreevey coming out were written in the same tone. While the *Washington Post* and CNN printed stories that reproduce the notion of black men on the DL as pathological predators, stories such as "A Sex Stop on the Way Home" and those printed about Jim McGreevey coming out sympathetically focus on white men's "struggle" with their sexuality (CNN.com August 13, 2004). Arguably, McGreevy was situated as the antithesis of the DL brother: he came forward and confessed his "true" sexual orientation. He "looked deeply into his soul and decided his unique truth in the world" (CNN.com August 13, 2004).[16]

It is also important to note that McGreevey's wife was shown in a very specific light that can be easily juxtaposed with the wives and girlfriends of men on the DL. During his address, McGreevey stated that he was "blessed by virtue of her love and strength and that she had been extraordinary throughout this ordeal." The virtuousness of her position (which involved standing by her man) was echoed in numerous newspaper and magazine articles. This depiction can easily be contrasted with that of women partnered with men on the DL, as discussed above.[17]

Conclusion: Bringing the Past into the Present

It is hoped that this discussion illustrates how a biocultural perspective can facilitate a dual emphasis on the social and biological history of marginalized groups, and how that can contribute to addressing queer theory's tenuous relationship to the particulars of lived experience. Specifically, it is always important to consider the particular ways in which individuals are affected by ideologies of marginalization that hinge upon the projection of stable and permanent identity categories. Health and biological wellbeing are important and useful avenues of investigation in this regard because historically they have been heavily marked by race, which has proven to be a key identity category given the false appearance of stability across space and time. Furthermore, the race concept is an integral part of the interface of marginalized gendered, sexed and sexualized identities. Therefore, health can be a useful contextual frame for examining the lived experience of marginalized groups while further theorizing the fluidity and intersections of sexed, gendered, sexualized and raced identities. Similarly, biocultural researchers should consider utilizing queering to enhance our understanding of biological and cultural intersections. These interrelationships are built upon processes that historically draw upon racial and sexual narratives and fictions discussed in this paper. However, bioanthropology has been reluctant to utilize social theory as an avenue for nuancing our analyses of human biology across space and time, or to illustrate the relevance of our work for developing historical and contemporary analyses of race, sex, class, gender, health, and political economy.

Current biocultural syntheses in physical anthropology involve profiling the environments of social and political inequality in which individuals live, and analyzing how that bears upon human biology. This discussion illustrates the important role discourse plays in constructing environments of inequality, and how historicizing that discourse helps to render visible the ways in which conditions of inequality are produced and reproduced. An important part of this project involved developing an historical context for those conditions to identify the processes that produce and reproduce them. We see that racial thinking rooted in 19th century social and scientific practice has a great bearing on discourse around African American health today as it did in the early 20th century. This includes an inextricable tie to fictions of racial, sexual, and gendered fixity.

The similarities between discourse on black males on the DL and in the TSE do not suggest that one group is "like" (analogous) to the other. Rather, I raised these similarities to illustrate how the TSE can be useful in locating the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality particular to contemporary African American health narratives. Because these identity formations are often treated as analogous relations, this relationship continues to be underexplored. The intersection of race and sexuality are what are at work here and mediate the fictions of racial and sexual fixity of the past being brought into the present. In particular, the TSE in queer context contributes to historicizing current discourse on DL. Specifically, it brings our attention to the ways in which the phenomenon discussed reflects the reproduction of fictions and narratives of racialized sexualities rooted in 19th century racial thinking. Similarly, reexamining TSE in a queer context allows us to see the ways in which discourse emphasized compulsory heterosexuality, and the integral role of that emphasis in the construction of black health over time. Finally, using TSE as an historical frame for the DL helped to uncover legacies of symbolic power operating in ways of talking about sexual and attendant health experiences of African Americans in public discourse (Spillers 1989). This suggests that it is a useful methodology for developing narratives that contest rather than reproduce fictions that define the terrain of racialized black sexuality (Hammonds 2004).

As a self-identified black physical anthropologist, feminist, and ally, I am concerned about the health implications for reproducing these narratives and fictions. In spite of the fact that the term "queer" is used to acknowledge the limitless possibilities of an individual's sexuality in some contexts, I have resisted arguing that being on the DL is a queer existence primarily because same-gender-loving African Americans generally do not identify as queer.[18] This term over shadows, underemphasizes, disregards the ways in which it is tied to fictions of black hypersexuality, masculinity, and sexual prowess. Nonetheless, I have come to appreciate queering as useful for providing instability that interrogates racial, sexual, and gendered fictions simultaneously and how these fictions particularly impact black lives. It also helps to develop reading strategies that allow for marking the distorting effects of abnormalizing black sexuality (Hammonds 2004). This includes the construction of the naturally hyper-heterosexual black body and the notion of whites as the source of homosexuality (Collins 2005), which is both embraced by whites and internalized by African Americans. As a result, a space is created for developing a comprehensive analysis of black sexuality that speaks to the needs of straight and gay black people alike.[19] What is often overlooked is the bearing that these constructions of racialized sexuality and fictions of gendered and sexual fixity have on the development of strategies to address health problems such as adolescent pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and sexual and domestic violence. The biological well-being of our communities is largely contingent upon the development of a liberatory politics that takes into account intersections of racism, heterosexism, and health disparities.

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Notes

1. The "down low" [DL] is a term used for black men who have sex with other men but are often married and do not identify as gay (Boykin 2002, 2004b; CDC 2001, 2003; King 2004).
2. Somerville argues that negotiations of the color line shaped and were shaped by the emergence of notions of sexual identity. Therefore, it is not appropriate to treat late 19th century shifts in cultural understanding and deployment of race and sexuality as separate and unrelated. She goes on to challenge notions of an analogous relationship between race and sexuality (Butler 1993). Rather notions of homosexuality and heterosexuality emerged *through* – not merely parallel to – discourse saturated with assumptions about the racialization of bodies. The fixity of one category should not be assumed to be the end of establishing the complexity of the other. Rather, examining how sexuality intersects with multiple categories of identification and difference is fundamental to this project.
3. This 1929 study was funded by the Julius Rosenwald Fund (Brandt 1978).
4. Between 1814 and 1870, at least seven comparative anatomical descriptions of women labeled as Hottentots or Bushwomen were developed for this purpose. This practice reflected the shaping of European science by 18th and 19th century colonial expansion (Fausto-Sterling 1995). This underscores arguments made by numerous historians of science that scientific practice was shaped by social convention rather than the reverse (such as Gould 1996). Moreover, it illustrates biological difference as the site of racial difference with the sexual difference of women as an important topic of study within this scheme (Collins 2005).
5. For instance, Cuvier's "research" influenced the work of Dr Marion Simms, known as a father of American gynecology, during the mid 19th century.
6. Large female genitalia were marked as "fluttering" between male and female and therefore deviant. Sander Gilman states, "Any attempt to establish that the races were inherently different rested to no little extent on the sexual difference of the black" (1985:112).

7. In his book *Beyond the Down Low*, writer Keith Boykin refutes many of the points made by King (Boykin 2004b). Boykin argues that King's book suffers from overgeneralizations, inconsistencies and distortions. Furthermore, he accuses King of promoting a stereotypical image of black men as "pathological liars, surreptitiously satisfying their primitive sexual cravings by cheating on their wives." Boykin also argues that the media often participate in blaming closeted black men for transmitting HIV to their female partners and are avoiding the opportunity to responsibly discuss the realities of sexuality, gender, race and AIDS. He presents the DL as an example of America's unwillingness to engage in critical discussions about black sexuality rather than a problem of gay and bisexual men living in the shadows.
8. In conducting research for this chapter, the following definitions of being on the DL were repeatedly found in print: living as a closeted gay man, living as a secretly bisexual man, a man who is married or has a girlfriend but also has sex with men, a man who has secret sexual liaisons with men regardless of whether or not he has a wife or girlfriend.
9. States such as New York, Illinois, and Texas are not included in the report. Furthermore, the fact that injection drug use is the second leading cause of HIV transmission for black men and women is often overlooked. Therefore, heterosexual sex with men who are/were injection drug users is an equally likely source of transmission to black women.
10. This is substantiated by the appropriation of DL discourse by white racists to warn whites not to have sex with *all* blacks, not just black men. A case in point is the text on a flier created by a white supremacist group on the University of Cincinnati's campus that characterized black males as sexual predators: "Don't have sex with blacks: Avoid AIDS!" (Boykin 2005).
11. bell hooks addressed this in *Outlaw Culture* in stating that the history of black sexual oppression often gets translated into "it's a dick thing" (1994).
12. Most notably delineated by Collins (1998, 2000).
13. Again, Terry McMillan's words about Jonathan Plummer are a case in point. Also there are a number of self-published books (such as Nubia 2004) and websites dedicated to protecting women from "falling prey" to men on the DL. One website actually has a "DL Gallery" with the following heading:

    > Do you know of brothers on the DL? If so, you can submit his picture and story to be uploaded to our DL Brothers Discovery Page. Click HERE to Submit Pictures of DL Brothers. Browse the Down Low Brothers Photo GALLERY. (http://www.downlowbrothers.com)

14. Often, the authors of the sites include "signs" to look for to determine if your man is on the DL, echoing the "information" in King's book. Several mention the following: spending too much time with male friends, sleepovers at the house of male friends, overaffectionate greetings and traveling, dining, shopping in large male groups. Most notably, Brenda Browder, ex-wife of *On the Down Low* author J. L. King, has a site to promote the book (Browder 2005) and announce her speaking engagements and workshops (http://www.brendabrowder.com).
15. Black women have also appropriated this imposed invisibility as a political strategy for resisting being named or labeled. Historically, black women used this "politics of silence" to create the appearance of disclosure and openness while protecting the sanctity of the inner aspects of their lives (Hine 1989). This is not to say that the

strategy had the same impact or effectiveness. Evelynn Hammonds reminds us that the latter strategy can hardly be considered a choice. Moreover, institutional racism, homophobia and other structural inequalities have a great deal more to do with invisibility than personal choice (Hammonds 2004). For instance, Hammonds argues that the Freudian paradigm relegates black women's sexuality to the irreducibly abnormal category in which there are no distinctions between hetero and homosexual.

16. This is not to imply that McGreevey did not incur any backlash for coming out or that his story was not used in the public sphere to reinforce notions of sexual fixity. However, as opposed to the unsympathetic characterization of the marriages of black men who have sex with men, marriages like the McGreeveys' are referred to in some circles as "Brokeback Marriages" (based on the storyline and subject matter of the film *Brokeback Mountain*). In stark contrast to men on the DL being portrayed as deceitful predators, men in "Brokeback Marriages" are described in the following manner: "On the whole these are not marriages of convenience or cynical efforts to create cover. Gay and bisexual men continue to marry for complex reasons, many impelled not only by discrimination, but also by wishful thinking, the layered ambiguities of sexual love and authentic affection" (*New York Times* August 14, 2004).
17. Since this paper was prepared for publication, McGreevey has been cast in a much less sympathetic light because of his ex-wife's tell-all book, titled *Silent Partner*, and statements issued by the man with whom he claims to have had a relationship, Golan Cipel (Cipel claims that he was a victim of McGreevey's sexual harassment and assault). Additionally, Matos McGreevey's utter lack of knowledge of her husband's sexual orientation was briefly questioned in the court of public opinion (most notably in *O Magazine*). While these later developments do not minimize the distinctions between discourses on black and white sexualities outlined in this paper, they do underscore the need for a nuanced examination of how gender, race and sexuality intersect in these cases.
18. For instance, roughly 1% of participants in the Black Pride 2000 survey marked that the term "queer" came closest to describing their sexual orientation (Battle et al. 2002).
19. This involves developing a complex conception of racialized sexualities and identities and considering the existence of black male and female sexualities outside of a normal–abnormal axis paralleling that of whites (Hammonds 2004; JanMohammad 1992). In fact, Evelynn Hammonds suggests that we consider the possibility of black women's sexualities operating within an "entirely different geometry." She cites the depiction of male and female desire "simultaneously, in dynamic relationship, rather than in opposition" found in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* as an example (Hammonds 2004:310).

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Chapter 8

Back and Forth to the Land: Negotiating Rural and Urban Sexuality Among the Radical Faeries

Scott Morgensen

The city is being decentered in the history of sexual minorities in the USA by comparative study of their urban and rural emplacement. A longstanding agreement among scholars that urban conditions produced modern sexual minorities has been complicated by studies of their relation to rurality, in the form of urban emigration, rural sexual minority projects, or rural sexual cultures that appear unexplained by urban histories (Boyd 2003; Chauncey 1994; D'Emilio 1992; Fellows 2001; Howard 1999; Kennedy and Davis 1994; Phillips et al. 2000; Smith and Mancoske 1997). I wish to affirm that scholars of sexuality should examine rural life by offering a cautionary tale, which reminds that both rural and urban represent locations in imaginaries of the modernity of sexual minorities. This essay interprets the historical culture of radical faeries, a gay men's formation that originated in the USA, as indicating how modern sexual minorities arise by deliberating their relation to rural and urban locations. While radical faeries may appear to present a rural formation, my ethnographic research marked how their culture mediates the modernity of urban sexual minorities by imagining and enacting a relationship to rural life. Radical faerie culture frames urban sexual minority cultures as inauthentic within modern fictions of rural authenticity, and produces subjects in transit between traditional and modern sexualities that are coded by location. My reading suggests that the distinctive culture that radical faeries present arises precisely in order to incite and address more general desires for rural authenticity among urban sexual minorities. Ethnography of radical faeries and of the constituencies they touch thus directs queer studies to examine the rural and urban not as stable spatial locations, but as discursive constructs with porous boundaries that sexual minorities negotiate as conditions of their modernity.

Popular representations of radical faeries as gay men who seek rural sexual freedoms belie their urban origins and elaborations. Long before the US writers of *Queer as Folk* sent their characters to a faerie gathering, popular tales suggested that radical faerie communities would be found at encampments in the woods

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(Podeswa 2004). Such stories reflect how rural gatherings have focalized radical faeries ever since their founding in 1979, when a small group of men linked to Los Angeles gay organizing created the first "Spiritual Conference of Radical Faeries" over a long weekend on rented land in the Arizona desert (Hay 1979).[1] Inspired by gay liberation, neopagan, and back-to-the-land movements, the faerie founders argued that locating gay community in rural space would help gay men realize a common sexual and spiritual nature. One founder in particular, Harry Hay, and his interlocutors elaborated this story in tales of the indigenous roots of gay nature, and they invited non-Native gay men like themselves to identify as a "third gender" that they said held special status in indigenous societies throughout the world and all time – what some called "gay shamanism" (Conner 1993; Hay 1996; Roscoe 1995; Rose 1997). A premise of all gatherings was that the assimilation of sexual minorities by an alienating urban culture made rural retreat ideal or necessary for realizing gay nature. Thus, in an era when cities appeared to be centers of sexual liberation, its roots were suggested by radical faeries to predate modern life and to be found most authentically by being recollected at distant rural sites. Yet the meaning of such practices shifts once study attends to their urban roots and purview. Radical faerie culture first arose and was sustained among gay men from cities, who then fostered imaginaries of rural, natural, or indigenous life and sought to materialize them at rural sites.[2] The dispersal of the first gathering's participants generated regional networks in or near the urban centers where most lived. These networks, or "faerie circles," planned future gatherings, and at times acquired rural land as "sanctuaries" that small contingents would maintain for gatherings.[3] Planning gatherings and managing sanctuaries sustained radical faerie culture in cities over the long periods when most lived far in space and time from intermittent gatherings. As a result, a critical mass of practitioners primarily experienced radical faerie community as an urban phenomenon. During five years (1995–1999) of participation in radical faerie networks in the San Francisco region and across the USA, I came to understand how participants' urban lives make sense amid tales of their rural basis. In urban spaces, radical faeries testify that a gay nature realized at rural gatherings – reflecting harmony with nature, collectivism, and pagan spirituality – is endangered by urban life, and they extol their work to sustain its authenticity while living in spaces that can appear to be inimical to it. Radical faerie culture thus is defined by a perpetual deferral of its own successful production of "rural" sexual culture, for most participants and most of the time, in urban spaces. On this basis, I understand radical faerie subjectivity to be defined by desire for a subjective and collective state that is presumed to originate in and remain tied to distant places and times.

The title "back and forth to the land" encapsulates my claim that radical faeries traverse rural and urban belonging as their resolution of a modern sexual subjectivity. The phrase highlights their ties to the history of back-to-the-land movements, in which urban expatriates relocated rurally in order to enact their desire to challenge and alter modern life by renewing tradition. But, more deeply, the phrase suggests that the gay subjectivity radical faeries form exists in a state of perpetual transit, back and forth along the spatial and temporal scales that modern sexualities traverse when recuperating lost origins or recommitting to progress. Although rural travels are crucial to radical faerie culture, my argument suggests that radical faeries form subjectivities that finally require no material movement in order to know their ties to the sexual freedom of life on "the land." While in urban space, gay men and friends can affiliate with radical faerie identity as a means to access all that the rural seems to mean to the work of discovering the truth of modern sexual identity. My essay, however, does not only explain these qualities as distinctive of radical faeries. Ethnographic research taught me that radical faerie culture plays a role in urban sexual minority communities by addressing more general desires for rural, natural, or indigenous sexual truth while letting non-identifying participants ascribe such desires to the fringe appearance of radical faeries. Thus, my essay simultaneously interprets the uniqueness of radical faerie culture and frames it as part of the urban formation of modern sexual minorities in the USA. Specifically, I argue that radical faeries and the sexual minorities who engage them together invoke the pastoralist and primitivist desires of modern sexuality as these articulate urban life in colonial and metropolitan societies. In other writing I interpret the rural material practices of US radical faeries as methods for negotiating their racial and national locations as inheritors of settlement (Morgensen 2008). This essay focuses on how radical faerie imaginaries and practices of rural life produce and are produced by the modernity of urban sexual cultures. My reading offers a form of public anthropology by denaturalizing the discursive conditions of sexual minority formations and historicizing their creative emergence within multiple power relations. If my reading invites radical faeries to reflect on the historical construction of their rural and urban imaginaries, it also marks that their conversations already model and inspire my claims, as they represent key interlocutors in ongoing deliberation of the locations and effects of modern sexual cultures and politics.

Narrating Rural Roots for Sexual Liberation

From their inception, radical faerie gatherings were imagined as spaces that liberated natural gay subjectivity. Mark Thompson recalled the 1979 gathering in this way, as a space that countered masculinism and homophobia by fostering effeminacy and mutual care, in playful and formal rituals celebrating drag, sexuality, pagan spirituality, or emotional communication, such as in the ritual of heart circle. Many participants translated their sense of having realized a new subjectivity by claiming a "faerie name" for use in radical faerie communities or beyond them as well (Thompson 1987).[4] Early narratives describe rural retreat as key to faerie gatherings, in that being transported outside everyday life created mutual reliance for food, shelter, and community, while some commentators recognized pastoral or indigenous qualities in rural space that enhanced their incitement of gay nature. Such narratives echoed popular stories in sexual minority communities, where I regularly heard people presume that in order for me to meet radical faeries I must have entered rural retreat. This story defines the aforementioned episode of *Queer as Folk*, in which Emmett seeks to rejuvenate from a depression by going with his friend Michael to a faerie gathering. After long travels, the friends meet radical faeries on arriving at an isolated, forested dell. There they are met by Periwinkle, the self-titled "Queen Registrar," whose presentation (feather boa-fringed fleece vest against furry beard; an unsarcastic, self-affirming effeminacy) sufficiently contradicts their own everyday gendering to leave them feeling suspicious. Yet on donning their own genderfuck drag, they are won over by a series of meetings that index the storied attractions of faerie culture. First, sex: while strolling they are cruised by two bronzed men, whose hairy chests, trim beards, long brown hair and beaded necklaces project the hippie sensuality of white men-gone-primitive. Next, they find play, when they meet gatherers wearing drag or nothing at all enjoying an outdoor volleyball match, and Michael joins in. Lastly, Emmett discovers the mystical. After taking hallucinogens, he meets in a field an eccentric old man who is creating a ring of sitting-stones. The man grills him about why he came to the gathering if he isn't seeking new insight, and exhorts him to return later to find it. That night Emmett finds the stone ring again, which now hosts a heart circle about a fire. He joins and speaks of how the gathering helped him drop his sadness and love himself, which others affirm. At one point he asks Michael why he doesn't see Harry Hay, whom he thinks he met earlier, only to learn that Hay had passed away years ago. Here, tales of gay shamanism come full circle, as Emmett's trance has linked him to the white gay man who promised that quasi-indigenous rituals would lead gay men to self-realization. Back in Pittsburgh, the episode ends with Emmett's friends noticing his new happiness, even as he encourages them to attend a gathering and discover it too. This acts as a reminder that the catalyst of Emmett's transformation appears to be not here, but far away from the space and time of everyday city life.

Tales of a rural source or destination for gay liberation shaped the form of the first faerie communities, and still were active during my research. Early radical faeries told of returning from gatherings motivated to organize a swift return, so their newfound insights could be replenished at their source. While scores to hundreds of people regularly attended gatherings, most returned to towns where few participants lived. The faerie circles they formed thus lacked the gathering's critical mass, which they addressed by organizing future gatherings and hosting activities to sustain community in the long periods they spent away from them. Some rented wilderness sites or retreat centers once or twice during the year, or more rarely purchased land to form a rural sanctuary. For instance, radical faeries in the USA's west formed the San Francisco-based organization Nomenus, which since 1987 has owned and managed a gathering site near the town of Wolf Creek, Oregon. Yet faerie circles also worked to sustain the ethos of rural gathering in urban sexual minority communities. Those that I met sustained their relatedness so well that, while always desiring to return to rural space, most of them for most of the time created their culture in urban form by trying to echo or renew a freedom that had been catalyzed by rural gathering culture. I now trace how narrating radical faerie culture in both modes – as fostering tangible rural ties, and recollecting them in urban life – makes negotiating rural and urban location into a method for liberating sexual subjectivity.

Managing rural life

When early radical faeries sought rural roots, they were inspired by and at times adopted the sites of rural gay collectives formed in the 1970s. Yet they shifted older modes of relocation to benefit not expatriates but extended networks, whose regular retreat addressed their desire to discover or renew a subjectivity that could return to urban life. The work of Nomenus to foster rural community from an urban base suggests the implications of relocating radical faerie culture, serving distant networks invested land with meaning that matched urban desires more than the vicissitudes of rural life. Radical faeries formed Nomenus in 1984 as a consensus-based organization charged to purchase a rural site for gatherings. Initial efforts sought land in California, but after a 1986 gathering near Wolf Creek at Creekland (the historic site of Magdalen Farm, an early rural gay collective) the land's owner offered to sell, and the next summer the Nomenus Wolf Creek Sanctuary formed with its inaugural "spiritual gathering" (Kindman 1986).[5] During its first decade, Nomenus acted from a San Francisco base to link members in managing the land. A semi-annual Great Circle held in San Francisco or Wolf Creek called members to decide major business. Regional Coordinating Councils met during my research in Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, and California's Russian River area, in addition to a council at Wolf Creek made up of residents under Nomenus' direction. In meetings and reports, including the feature newsletter *Nomenews* and business newsletter *The Raddish*, Nomenus managed the land by coordinating a dispersed, primarily urban membership of some hundreds alongside a small group living on the land to support gatherings.[6] While the residents integrated themselves and the land's management into the region's politics and economy, their work did not make Nomenus a primarily rural organization.

Nomenus' relation to its presence at Wolf Creek was marked by the struggles it faced and resolved while sustaining community on the land. In early 1995, heavy rains swelled Wolf Creek and toppled the land's only access bridge. The symbolism of this barrier to use of the land echoed in fundraising for a new bridge, when Nomenus officers energized members' investments amid somewhat waning enthusiasm for the sanctuary. In *Nomenews* and *The Raddish*, Nomenus officers asserted the sanctuary's value by recalling old struggles over occupation of the land (Gersten 1996; Serinus 1995). Its owner had sold to Nomenus on a condition that the sole tenant would remain. But after the resident resisted efforts to reorganize the land to support gatherings (which would include creating a residential collective), Nomenus in 1990 held what became a contentious Great Circle at which the resident was asked to leave, even as he accused Nomenus of betraying its principles. The first years after the sanctuary formed thus witnessed annual spiritual gatherings cease, partly due to the land being felt by many to be unwelcoming; and in the 1990s, hopes for spiritual gatherings and a residential community were slow to renew. When the bridge fell, things had been looking up: a small community on the land had formed, and the first spiritual gathering in many years was planned for midsummer. Fundraising in 1995 built on this interest by raising much of the money for the bridge, and generating interest in the new gathering, which over one hundred attended (Jerry 1996).[7] Yet later that year, Nomenus had to revisit the question of rural residence after some gatherers voiced a new concern, that disagreements among some of the residents seemed in danger of making the land feel unwelcoming again.

In November 1995, at the Great Circle in San Francisco, Nomenus faced these old and new crises by redefining its relation to rural residence (Nomenus 1995). After discussing recent difficulties on the land, many of which could be traced to interpersonal conflicts, the thirty-odd participants agreed to a policy that clarified their difference from the back-to-the-land projects that once inspired them. Noting that problems arose if rural residents acted from individual agendas when relocating, the new policy framed the residents as bearing a primary duty to a distant community by redefining them as "resident caretakers." Great Circle participants acknowledged that caretaking kept the land prepared to receive the broader membership, including the sustaining of the ideals of faerie community exemplified by rural gatherings, so that members could trust that they would be there whenever visitors arrived. In conversation, some participants reinforced this responsibility of caretakers, such as when one participant noted that "what happens with the residents affects the entire faerie community." Beyond residents' work to maintain land or community for others' future enjoyment, he continued, "It's not physically possible for all of us to live at Wolf Creek, so in a sense the residents are living vicariously for us" (Nomenus 1995:7). This statement acted as a reminder that during periods when most radical faeries live far from rural gathering and long for its liberations, the presence of a collective at the gathering site holds a promise that its culture at least remains alive there. In turn, "living vicariously" suggests how radical faerie subjectivity is experienced as imagining a liberatory rural existence lived by others as if it were one's own. Conflicts among residents thus endanger the foundations of radical faerie culture, by shaking trust that it is practiced at the sanctuary year-round (through which others may identify) and the underlying hope that rural life will lead gay men to tap a common nature and live in harmony. The title "resident caretaker" then suggests that residents retain a power, rare to other radical faeries, by living closer to an ideal life than others feel that they can. If residents were to practice such a life, they in effect could lead the extended community to draw inspiration from them.

Nomenus resolved its difficulties the next year by revitalizing the sanctuary's meaning to its membership. New caretakers arrived at Wolf Creek from the Bay Area and improved communication with the membership while infusing the collective with a desire for spiritual development. Caretakers assumed publication of *The Raddish* and over the course of two years shifted its focus to a feature format that highlighted their testimonials. Their stories invited readers to let their own spiritual journeys be inspired by the collective members, who told how they were investing their insights in the land (ritually blessing the land's spirits; tending memorials to radical faeries who had died from AIDS) so visitors could sense this on arrival. Such shifts suggest that the rural residents in the late 1990s were performing a new and crucial leadership in the growth of Nomenus and the faerie circles it supported. But my intention is to name this as an *effect* of prior struggles that showed the community's center to have been somewhere else first. The collective's efforts also remind that if the culture radical faeries tied to rural life did not arise there naturally, it did renew once people relocated to invest it with recently urban desires, now communicated back to the urban audiences from which they came. Nomenus' occupation of rural land thus reveals how something had to be added to the practice of rural life in order for it to hold the promise through which distant people vicariously lived: an imaginary of ideal gay subjectivity, collectivity, and spirituality, created for those who feel distant from the gay nature that it represents.

Inspiring urban life

Beyond their material ties to rural space, urban radical faeries imagined rural life by fostering culture that tried to echo rural gatherings even as it was produced by and for the everyday lives of urban sexual minorities. I met this effect in the radical faerie networks of large and small cities of the San Francisco Bay Area. Nomenus formally, and many friendship networks informally, linked radical faeries in the greater Bay Area, even as other faerie circles formed in the nearby urban hubs of the Russian River and Santa Cruz regions. My stories of urban radical faerie culture open with the ways that participants interlinked in everyday life. In Bay Area cities, I regularly encountered gay men whom I knew from gatherings or urban circles: in accidental meetings while walking the streets or shopping at a market; on being invited to restaurants by small groups of local friends. Shared identity or experience with radical faerie culture also became a medium for forming friendship networks that offered support in the work of house-holding, employment, and unplanned emergencies. Radical faerie friends and acquaintances often brought one another out to experience urban sexual minority culture; highlights during my time in the area included drag stage productions, new independent films, and once, a traveling presentation of FTM transsexual photography. Each summer in Santa Cruz in the mid-1990s, a fluctuating network of gay men who knew each other from radical faerie contexts joined a weekly gay men's beach volleyball event that was advertised in local LGBT media. In San Francisco's Castro district, a gay man friendly to radical faeries outfitted his house as a space for sex parties, and radical faeries from the region were among the many who signed up to attend or to host events. On my first visit to this space I was struck by being welcomed at the door by two twenty-something men sporting brightly dyed punk haircuts, whom up to that point I had met only at gatherings in Tennessee but who, it turned out, lived nearby. The first floor brought me not to a space for sex play but to well-lit areas for conversation, near the kitchen vegetable-and-dip tray and the patio hot tub, where talkative crowds introduced me to local radical faeries whom I knew or had not yet met. In turn, in cities around the Bay Area, I found radical faeries among invitees to annual garden parties hosted at the homes of well-connected gay men. My first invitations came not from any prior link to their hosts, but by invitation of gay men whom I knew from radical faerie activities. Such invitations became key means through which I met gay men prominent in regional business, electoral politics, and non-profit organizing whom I otherwise might never have known.

Participation by radical faeries in sexual minority communities included taking roles in their organizing and investing them with values from radical faerie culture. In one Bay Area city, I knew three radical faerie health professionals who worked independently for years in the city and county health departments, which offered social services to gay and bisexual men and people living with HIV/AIDS. In distinct ways, each linked his work to programs that fostered affirmation of emotionality and collectivity among gay men, and cultivated gay-centered spirituality, including drop-in groups or seminars that each planned or hosted on the topics of sexuality and HIV/AIDS. One joined regional health professionals and business and education professionals in founding projects supporting queer youth, such as an annual award series for youth activists. In the same city, an architect donated his services to local sexual minority and AIDS organizations, for example, by drafting plans for expanding an HIV testing center. A computing professional took on leadership roles in regional LGBT organizing, including the local community center, and served one year as a marshal of the annual Pride Parade. Among others I could note, these men joined scores of participants in local radical faerie culture who acted within public health, business, non-profit social services, and political organizing to serve regional sexual minority politics. While their actions were not dissimilar from those of their colleagues, theirs translated values that had been fostered in radical faerie culture, of self-love, mutual care, and a proud public visibility of gay men working for personal and social change. Such values ultimately derived from and reflected the politics of gay liberation that also shaped the sexual minority spaces where radical faeries arose. Yet distinctly radical faerie cultural articulations at times emerged, when their support groups, seminars, or media critiqued the normative qualities of urban social life, or promoted ancient or natural spirituality as alternatives. Such claims manifested in the late 1990s when a regional faerie circle received a grant to host a summer camp supporting queer youth. Framed by HIV and suicide prevention models that sought to foster self-esteem for queer youth, the organizers offered radical faerie culture as a way to cultivate a healing queer identity, by living in harmony with nature, practicing emotional communication, and exploring the spiritual roots of being queer. Because the camp required the radical faerie sponsors to gain insurance coverage through their city's LGBT community center, sponsoring this youth camp turned their circle from an ad hoc social network into a 501c3 affiliate organization authorized to provide urban social services. In this and other ways, radical faeries created their culture and community as part of urban sexual minority community organizing, at times as some of its central representatives.

Radical faeries asserted their belonging among sexual minorities and their claim on a distinct culture when they joined practices of cultural citizenship. At times, their participation followed invitations to join an array of cultural diversity that sexual minority organizers wanted to represent. One year at the dinner of the aforementioned youth awards, regional elected officials, social service professionals, and scores of community attendees were welcomed by the invited blessing of a core member of a local faerie circle, who narrated gay men's indigenous spiritual roots in a neopagan blessing that also called all queer people to discover their spiritual nature. Similar messages appeared in radical faeries' participation in Pride Parades. Faerie circles regularly created contingents of costumed revelers who performed varied versions of a gender-blending and sexually-celebratory mélange with pagan or indigenous overtones. Their participation did not differ radically from that of kindred subcultures, if drag queens, sex perverts, or other participants publicized gendered or sexual ambiguity as anti-assimilationist disruptions of normativity among sexual minorities (Boyd 2003; Rupp and Taylor 2003). Yet radical faeries stood out by linking sexual and gendered play to explicitly primitivist spirituality as a method of sexual liberation (Morgensen 2005). In addition to parade participation, radical faeries used after-parade celebrations to build community for themselves and other attendees. In San Francisco, "faerie camp" at the Pride festival grounds was a key means by which local radical faeries spread word of their meetings, including those of Nomenus and the Wolf Creek sanctuary. All such activities promoted radical faeries as part of the diversity of the urban sexual minority communities seeking social recognition.

Such evidence of radical faeries in public life rested on ongoing work by faerie circles to foster more intimate community among gay men and friends. The infrastructure they formed for urban radical faerie community recalled the qualities promised at rural gatherings, such as self-love, friendship, partnership, collectivism, mutual aid, and natural spirituality. Faerie circles thus addressed the desires of participants to stay linked to gathering culture throughout the year. Yet they also became a key way through which others could encounter radical faerie culture, or start to identify with it, in practices that meshed closely with the everyday materiality of urban life.

Faerie circles affirmed friendship, collectivism, and extended community in practices of co-residence. Urban radical faerie renters might form households that also could attach to a radical faerie homeowner who rented to others. Such households became nodes where community could materialize, as readily available or preferred sites for radical faeries to meet. Co-residence also could extend to offering housing to low-income or transient radical faeries who might seek short- or long-term support. I regularly witnessed radical faeries I knew from distant gatherings visit the Bay Area in ones or twos by invitation of or promised reception by local friends. In trips of a few days to weeks, travelers would renew relationships, while some who considered moving to the Bay Area might stay for one or a few months, shuttling among radical faerie households and participating in the regional faerie circles. In such ways, faerie circles acted as nodes in far-flung webs of relationship that were generated by common identity, and that fulfilled a promise at rural gatherings that gay men would be drawn together into caring communion.

Urban faerie circles also fostered community by hosting activities that subtly or directly invoked harmony with nature, or pagan or indigenous spirituality. Radical faeries often assembled in forms common to urban gay men, but with echoes of radical faerie culture that might be known only to those "in the know." I recall one afternoon garden party hosted by a Bay Area radical faerie, stocked with soft drinks, chips, and cookies, and attended by perhaps fifteen of the local faerie circle alongside one or two dozen more from local sexual minority organizing. Guests were invited to play casual croquet on a modest lawn, which was decorated by the huge and fantastical papier-mâché butterflies, blossoms, and banana fronds that had ornamented a recent radical faerie float in the Pride Parade. In turn, on occasion a few participants in a faerie circle might call others to hang out by joining a ritual of their creation that sought to tap gay nature. I recall a dozen or so gathering on warm summer nights to drum and dance about a fire on a nearby secluded beach; or, once, a handful taking a hike to a park where in the woods the two organizers revealed an altar they had fashioned for radical faerie spirits, and led the group in invoking them. A most elaborate effort I witnessed by an urban circle to cultivate spirituality occurred in Santa Cruz in 1999, when Marten, an old friend of some members, sought to reconnect by offering to lead a sweat lodge for gay men. During my five years of research Marten was one of the only Native American-identified gay men I met who participated in radical faerie community. He had lived in the area before returning to his tribe's reservation; yet some local friends said that he had faced homophobia there and now was asking his friends to help renew his sense of self through spiritual leadership. The evening event drew nearly forty people, who drove to the property of a radical faerie in the hills outside town, and afterwards shared a potluck dinner. Conversations after the sweat reflected how this temporary retreat into Native American religious practice bonded many participants. Some noted how it had tapped their sense of gay nature, as when one said he hoped to sustain the practice after Marten's departure, in the form of a "faerie lodge." Here, the ease with which some radical faeries would adapt and reimagine indigenous culture as their own intersected Marten's discrepant offering to them. Marten did not present as a radical faerie, but as a Native American gay man who sought a deeper connection to his own religious practice, including a capacity for leadership that was affirmed by being asked to lead a ritual for his non-Native radical faerie friends. In this way, Marten negotiated radical faeries' interest in his identity and skills towards his own ends, even while this allowed them to move his contributions towards theirs. But I relate their negotiations as a sign of how urban radical faeries sought to realize the gathering's promise to bond all gay men to an original indigeneity, even as doing so absorbed indigenous religions into a universal sexual subjectivity in which their own non-Native locations and investments tended not to be marked or critically investigated.[8]

Among all their cultural activities for investing urban life with personal transformation, radical faeries centrally practiced heart circle, a historically key ritual at rural gatherings. Based on the "council process" that US counterculturists had promoted for decades as a translation of Native American consensus practices, the ritual arranged participants in a circle to pass an object called a talisman, which granted its holder a right to speak while obligating others to listen. The radical faerie founders fashioned heart circle to focus gay men's communication on speech about feelings, by which they asserted loving communion as an expression of gay nature, and linked emotionality to indigeneity in a way that drew gay nature closer to its indigenous roots. Heart circle defined everyday life at rural gatherings I attended: its morning call announced the day's first collective event, and all other activities occurred in relation to it. When radical faeries in the Bay Area told me of their difficulty in sustaining the feeling of rural gathering, I regularly heard the wish that heart circles would occur more often, alongside happy reflections when they resumed. Bay Area faerie circles periodically supported regular heart circles, drawing (in my experience) from as few as three to as many as fifty participants, with most hosting one to two dozen. This compared well to large gatherings, where as few as a dozen to as many as a hundred might join. Heart circle in fact acted like a portable gathering, by using quasi-indigenous practices to free gay nature through emotional communion. Indeed, as a key way through which urban gay men experienced radical faerie culture, heart circle only strengthened its promise to tap gay nature when its urban practice made rural relocation unnecessary for participants to experience this center of radical faerie identity and culture. Over time I found that more than any other factor, the regular practice of heart circle shifted faerie circles from being rather dissociated sets of friends linked occasionally by activities, to becoming cohesive networks whose shared values grounded collective work to influence society.

If heart circle cohered urban radical faerie life, it also let others tap what faerie culture promised without first needing to experience rural gathering. In the Bay Area in the late 1990s, regular heart circles were advertised in regional sexual minority media. In Santa Cruz, a core member of the faerie circle maintained a phone number with messages regarding local radical faerie activities, which was published in local sexual minority print and radio media. Similar media in San Francisco announced activities organized by radical faeries at large or by Nomenus, from heart circles or drumming circles to Nomenus business meetings or casual get-togethers. Scattered as radical faeries were across the Bay Area, such announcements helped keep them informed as the frequency of formal activities rose or fell. Yet they also helped populate activities with interested newcomers. I met many men identified as gay, bisexual, or straight who chose to attend urban heart circles as part of their own work to explore emotional, sexual, or spiritual truth in communion with other men. Some made heart circle a complement to practices that already facilitated their sexual, gendered, or spiritual liberation, such as in local networks of mythopoetic men's movements or Re-Evaluation Counseling (Co-Counseling). The emotionality that heart circle encouraged enabled newcomers to form bonds with old and new participants, which at times gave rise to long-lasting friendships or romantic partnerships. Heart circle also linked newcomers to the local faerie circle's other events, most of which as spontaneous activities were never advertised publicly. In such ways, heart circle offered a new sense of community to visitors, some of whom eventually claimed radical faerie identity. Among those who identified, some expressed an interest to attend rural gatherings, but others were satisfied to make urban circles the center of their radical faerie experience. Thus, while radical faeries cultivated heart circle in order to infuse urban life with the qualities of rural gathering, their very success meant that both they and newcomers could find the heart of radical faerie culture alive and well in the city.

Taken together, the practices of faerie circles affirm that recalling rural gathering culture focalized radical faeries, but the fact that it sustained in urban life alters tales of its rural roots. Despite urban faeries' insistence that rural gatherings were an ideal that their actions only reflected, the culture they produced for most participants was their crucial and continual link to radical faerie community. The work needed to sustain faerie circles meant these networks elaborated radical faerie culture in the city for longer periods and to greater extents than in rural spaces. In the process, radical faeries created culture that was akin to and reflected the urban sexual minority communities in which they arose. Urban radical faeries' public culture became a key means by which both they and their friends tapped the insights and resources of radical faerie identity. Despite claims that the urban practices of radical faeries only echoed a rural origin, they in fact realized the culture their founders promised without requiring rural retreat. If the ethos of rural gathering can arise apart from a materially rural link, then even it appears to be a product of urban life. Thus, I interpret radical faerie rural imaginaries as urban desires, apropos not so much to the rural sites that they invoke as to the urban constituencies from which they arise and to which they are addressed. If arguing that city life interrupts an experience that urban conditions in fact can produce, radical faeries can obscure their urban formation while precisely motivating perpetual return to rural, natural, or indigenous sources in order to realize sexual truth. My argument does not dismiss the investments of radical faeries in rural gatherings, but it does reframe how such gatherings will be understood. Belief that they bear rural roots actually grounds the radical faeries as an *urban* formation, who while imagining rural life and at times taking rural form arise to answer urban subjects' desire to know that their origins may be found in distant places and times.

Modern Sexualities in Transit

Radical faeries are modern sexual minorities who make urban life livable by narrating and enacting subjective movement back and forth to a desired rural authenticity. I now explain this practice by locating it within the theory of the relationality of the urban and rural in modern sexual cultures. Radical faerie culture mobilizes pastoralist and primitivist discourses to create modern sexual subjects, who at once recognize and defer study of their formation by the racial, economic, and national power relations of colonial modernity. My reading intentionally blurs a line between radical faeries as a unique subculture and the broader urban sexual minority formations that produce them. Radical faeries present a window onto the definition of modern sexual minorities by the relational negotiation of rural and urban emplacement. My analysis addresses the stakes of public anthropology by denaturalizing the discourses and power relations that mobilize sexual minorities, and by directing my claims back into dialogue with my research subjects in order to foster public reflection on the power-laden construction of social life.

When radical faeries seek a rural authenticity that modern subjects lack, they articulate genealogies of pastoralist discourse in communalist and natural health and nudist movements that burgeoned in 19th and 20th century Germany, England, and the USA (Gould 1988; Gould 2005; Hau 2003). Like the modern nationalisms that contextualized them, such movements invented tradition in quests to recuperate primal roots in land and culture (Anderson 1991; Hobsbawm 1983). They sought to absorb and transcend modernity's opposites in order to reconcile to the inevitability of progress. In this sense, pastoralist efforts to escape modern life invented the authenticity they desired and produced their own modern subjectivities. Defining rural or natural spaces as primal counterpoints to modernity also tended to mask their social mediation. Raymond Williams argued that a pastoral trope of timeless, idyllic land and culture in 19th century English literature glossed how both country and city underwent reinvention in response to imperial modernity's urbanization and globalization. Williams argued that pastoral tales did not address the inequalities that constituted rural life, including those that formed after urban escapees tried to make the rural match their desires; and all the while, the conditions of urban life remained outside their frame (Williams 1973). Tales of timeless roots thus tended to obscure pastoralists' historical production by the social conditions of modernity.

Pastoral desires among radical faeries also articulate the conditions of metropolitan and settler subjects in a colonial world. Like other metropolitan subjects, radical faeries can invoke primitivism in order to frame indigenous people as survivals of a distant past whose ancient origins may be explored despite, or as part of, a demand that moderns advance (Errington 1998; Fabian 1983; Stoler 1995; Torgovnick 1990). If primitivism inflected modernity in metropolitan societies, it also framed situations of conquest to produce settler subjects on the border between the modern and primitive. Philip Deloria argued that the British and US conquest of American Indians was educative when the latter's primal nature was absorbed and supplanted by settler subjects, who then could possess and impersonate indigeneity when critiquing settler authority or appealing to settler citizenship (Deloria 1998). Deloria reminds that non-Native counterculturists inherit these histories if they try to discard their civilizational status by adopting indigeneity. In this light, recalling Williams's claim – that modern social formations mask a violent authority over what they claim as their root – we see that settler modernity obscures its foundations in conquest by creating subjects who long for the very nature and indigeneity that they think they replace. Radical faeries act in the legacy of settler subjectivity if they let primitivism explain their relationship to conquest, which valorizes the conquered only to make them the interiority of settler subjects, whose racial and national locations remain obscured.

If pastoralism and primitivism are common to modern metropolitan and settler subjects, they also articulate qualities specific to sexual minorities. A close relation of modern sexuality to colonial discourses characterized the growth of sexual sciences, when sexual minorities were framed as degenerations from racial and sexual normality to a primitivity akin to the perversities assigned in ethnology to colonized people. By the early 20th century, white European and US sexual minorities reversed the discourses assigned to them by retaining their proximity to primitive sexuality with a new, positive twist: granting them a right to the qualities of indigenous sexual cultures or, by analogy, to the integrity of racial or national minorities under the law (Morgensen 2005; Oosterhuis 2000; Steakley 1997; Terry 1999). Radical faeries thus inherit and extend a broader history of sexual minorities adapting primitivity in order to assure their place as urban inheritors of metropolitan and settler societies. Yet pastoralist or primitivist desires for sexual nature locate sexual minorities in the very power relations that their quests seem to oppose, if they obscure how urbanization motivates desire for rural idyll, or if they naturalize conquest so that settler subjects can claim indigeneity as theirs to defend.

Against any sense that my reading teaches radical faeries something new, their conversational practices – from heart circle or consensus to collective publications – already foster reflection on their modernist formation and investments. For instance, radical faeries consistently reflect on their urban ties in the reader-written journal *RFD*. The journal's production by rural collectives regularly shifts to guest editing by urban faerie circles. Their issues spotlight their urban culture while forthrightly evaluating the power relations shaping urban life, including as these can be challenged by creatively deploying radical faerie identities and practices.[9] Yet their engagements can stabilize narratives of rural, natural, or indigenous authenticity if they argue that urban ills ultimately are resolved by rural retreat, or by introducing originally rural insights into urban space. Radical faeries also examine their racialization in formal conversations led by faeries of color. A group formed at a 2000 Short Mountain gathering, Faeries of All Colors Together (FACT), has critiqued whiteness as part of making radical faerie culture address the experiences of people of color. At gatherings and ongoing meetings in New York City, FACT has called radical faeries to investigate how their lives and culture are structured by the racial and economic power relations of urban and rural life, with particular focus on how they shape rural–urban relations to block working-class and urban people of color from joining the radical faeries (Cricket 2002; Royale 2001). Yet FACT also promotes multiracial inclusion as a way to resolve racism in radical faerie culture, and thus does not foreground how colonial discourses may make that culture problematic to people of color; all of which grounds its critical conversations in appealing to a common nature touched by pastoralism and primitivism. Urban faerie circles and FACT thus describe some of the possibilities and limits of critique within radical faerie culture today. They show that radical faeries are responding to the pressing racial and economic conditions of urban life and their own communities from a belief that they should not fail to address them. This is but a step away from also historicizing their investments in pastoralism and primitivism, and tracing how those narratives may naturalize the very racial, economic, national, or global power relations that radical faeries otherwise wish to critique.[10]

Yet however much my analysis addresses radical faeries, it describes even more how rural desires shape urban sexual minority formations. Indeed, radical faeries *are* the sexual minorities who benefit by identifying with radical faerie culture, alongside all others who, without identifying, also engage and inform it. My ethnographic cases showed that strongly faerie-identified gay men participated fully in urban sexual minority social life without necessarily naming their radical faerie identity. They also could adapt tales of sexual nature in mundane ways, such as when they sought to assure the existence of broad networks of friends who shared values and mutual aid. In turn, other sexual subjects made engaging radical faerie spaces part of their own identities: when gay, bi, and straight men joined heart circle, whether or not they identified as radical faeries; when sexual minority and other friends enjoyed and drew inspiration from the radical faeries' presence in Pride celebrations; or when queer youth and their adult sponsors embraced faerie camp as a space for queer youth to form their own identities and bonds. Radical faerie culture acts as a porous nexus within urban sexual minority communities that does not require participants to assume, or even fully understand, its theories of sexual nature. Yet it draws broad interest to a general belief that something substantive grounds sexual minority identity and community, and that radical faeries are among its trustworthy arbiters. The appearance that radical faerie culture realizes authentic sexuality – in distant rural spaces, or amid urban life – frames it as a kind of escape from modern inauthenticity that remains available whenever needed by sexual minorities. Indeed, the radical faerie founders argued that their culture should have precisely this educative function: to teach sexual minorities to make a primal sexual nature the ground of their modern sexual cultures and politics. Yet if observers or friends accept this education in how to mediate modern sexuality with rural, natural, or indigenous roots, they bear no responsibility for examining their desires so long as radical faeries seem to be its agents and subjects. Thus, any accountability by radical faeries to my analysis is shared by sexual minority formations, which mediate their modern formation by investing in the pastoralism and primitivism that they assign to radical faerie culture.

Recognizing the inseparability of radical faeries from sexual minority formations calls for theorizing the relationality of the rural and urban in imaginaries of modernity. As modernist terms, both rural and urban mark locations in an array of discourses that create modern subjects and sociality. Neither term describes a stable spatial location that exists outside its relational construction, as the one invokes the other to establish its distinction. Scholars of sexuality can adapt these insights by not presuming to fix urban or rural locations for modern sexualities, and by asking instead how sexualities mediate their modernity by imagining and negotiating forms of urban or rural emplacement. Radical faeries mark a relationality of rural and urban in modern sexualities by showing how rural sexual cultures may form to align with or counter urban desires, even as urban sexual cultures may arise by recalling their contrast to rural difference. Their model teaches scholars who document rural sexual cultures not to reproduce a modernist division of rural tradition from urban progress, but rather to historicize that division and investigate all that it produces. Indeed, we must ask if the very idea of a rural sexual culture, or the desire to find one, has a history that demands investigation.

Conclusion

My argument addresses a public anthropology by denaturalizing the discursive conditions of sexual minority projects so as to recognize their creative emergence within power relations. I understand my analysis to model a crucial form of public engagement that reflects the insights of ethnographic methodology. One strength of ethnography is to investigate received truth by not just describing but precisely interpreting culture. I link this quality to intersectional studies of sexuality, gender, and race that recognize subjects as occupying locations in multiple power relations that must be explained together. Ethnography fosters such insights, contrary to distanced or dismissive critiques, by highlighting the integrity of its subjects' practices and deriving its claims from their insights. I pursued these ends by developing my analysis from close interpretation of the everyday life practices of radical faeries, and by noting how radical faeries also produced or met my claims, even as I encourage them to pursue further reflection contextualized by our long-term relationships that arise from and return to conversation. Thus, my work illustrates a potential for public anthropology to center a denaturalizing analysis of its subjects' historical construction as part of inviting reflexive dialogue as work for social change.

Focusing anthropology on denaturalization frames ethnography as a mode of interpreting what culture does not entirely reveal to itself. Such work evaluates the marked and unmarked in culture, and examines the relation between them as key to explaining how power relations structure culture and its subjects. Power acts as culture by producing subjects in hierarchical relationships, the negotiation of which can inspire cultural change; and such action is enhanced by the action of multiple power relations. Studies of sexuality, gender, and race are well suited to examine power in these terms, as theories of intersectionality and multiple subjectivities direct scholars to interpret subjectivity as a location formed within and negotiating multiple, interlinked yet discrepant relations of power (Alarcón 1990; Cohen 2001; Crenshaw 1997; Eng et al. 2005). Such an account of culture's production as power can lead public anthropology to counter notions of culture and power that currently tend to shape scholarship on social change. Denaturalization questions the notion that public scholarship will support its subjects by echoing their self-representation, because it admits that constituencies exist in more than one relationship to power. When anthropologists of the sexual margins evaluate culture and power, we may tend to direct our analysis at the forces that marginalize our subjects. Yet a public scholar who studies a constituency's marginality risks emphasizing only one of its locations in power relations for an arbitrary (if politically invested) reason, which can obscure both the constituency and the power relations that inform it. Public scholarship that "works with" its subjects will be redefined once we admit a need to study how subjects form in multiple relations to marginality and hegemony. Examining them will enhance public scholarship's ability to foster change. After all, a constituency's liberation may depend on addressing its own multiplicity, in that the freedom of some members will be won at the expense of others' unless "cross-cutting issues" (Cohen 1999) and multiple social locations are examined by them and by allied scholars.

My study pursued such analysis by responding to the ethics of ethnographic research. Critique drawn from ethnography will arise from and reflect long-term relationships with research subjects and recognition of the integrity of their lives. My analysis noted how radical faeries anticipated or engaged my claims, even as it marked limits in that reflection if a desire for sexual nature – by them, or their sexual minority friends – interrupted study of its construction. Parts of my analysis have circulated among radical faeries for years, and I have reiterated them by writing texts alongside this essay for circulation in radical faerie publications. But my essay has moved beyond radical faeries to address the sexual minority communities that contextualize them. I thus presented a public anthropology by showing that reflexive study of a subculture generates crucial insight into broader constituencies with even less evident reflection on its themes. I produced this knowledge for the many publics interlinked by my subjects, among whom I foregrounded radical faeries as key interlocutors, and even leaders in moving my analysis forward.

Explaining the movement of radical faeries "back and forth to the land" finally alters the terms of public scholarship by complicating knowledge of rural and urban sexualities. Anthropologists and other scholars have created public scholarship by critiquing an urban bias in queer studies and forthrightly studying rural sexual cultures. Because this crucial work must continue, I have offered my analysis to pre-empt a problematic direction that it might take. A conviction among public scholars to recover marginal rural cultures or to defend them against urban misinterpretation bears a potential to presume rather than study the historical construction of the rural and urban among modern sexual minorities. I examined a sexual culture whose noted rurality was marked by ethnography to have arisen from desires characteristic more broadly of modern, and urban sexual minorities. Study of radical faeries indicates that the rural sexual cultures scholars encounter may be products of the very urban formations that they wish to avoid. I argued that the rural and urban are relational constructs of the pastoralist and primitivist imaginaries animating modern subjects and social life. This insight also reminds, even more tellingly, that the very commitments by public scholars to discover and defend rural alternatives to urban sexual cultures may express modern desires for sexual authenticity that require critical investigation. Thus, my account directs its denaturalizing analysis both to sexual minority constituencies and to the scholarship that their members create and consume. All are accountable to ever more thorough investigations of the historical production of modern sexual minorities by pastoral and primitivist imaginaries of rural and urban life. Public scholars cannot presume to defend the margins from critique if both marginality and its defense already are located in the relations of power and knowledge that scholars must denaturalize. My account offers an alternative, by foregrounding not a singular scholarly intervention, but a reflexive ethnographic reading of the challenges set by everyday practices that have been around for a long time and are not going away. Entirely apart from my claims, radical faeries and their friends already mark the relational construction of the rural and urban within modern sexual minority formations, in ongoing practices to which a public anthropology must learn to respond.

Notes

1. The four organizers of the first gathering were Harry Hay, his partner John Burnside, Don Kilhefner, and Mitch Walker (Thompson 1987:286).
2. Radical faerie conversations include claims that their history derives from the 1970s elaboration of gay back-to-the-land communes across the USA. Such claims are supported by cultural affinities among their projects, and the eventual absorption of many such communes into the infrastructure of faerie sanctuaries. Scott Herring has explained how such claims elide the distinctive social origins and cultural production of back-to-the-land projects (Herring 2007). This chapter demonstrates how such claims elide the distinctly urban origins and elaborations of radical faerie cultural practices.
3. Rural gatherings emerged as brief, transitory practices, with any single faerie circle tending to organize one or two per year. Gatherings lasted from a long weekend to ten days, and occurred on rural land at rented retreat centers, as well as in state or federal wilderness. While some faerie circles continued to rent land for gatherings, others created and managed sanctuaries where gatherings could be held in perpetuity. By the 1990s regional networks managed rural lands in Oregon, Minnesota, and Vermont, while residential collectives kept lands for gatherings in Tennessee, New Mexico, and New York. Toronto area radical faeries manage rural land in Ontario, and in Australia a group of radical faeries also manage sanctuary land.
4. Radical faeries told stories of rural gathering in many issues of *RFD*, beginning in 1979 with reports from the first one (RFD Collective 1979). Stories of gatherings appear in many texts that narrate faerie histories or that popularize spirituality in which radical faeries have played key roles (Conner 1993; Roscoe 1995; Rose 1997; Thompson 1987).
5. The owner accepted an offer of $50,000, which Nomenus gathered from a pledge of $21,000 by a group of 60 members who helped organize the search (Kindman 1986). Most of the rest was financed by a loan and paid in subsequent years by more donations.
6. Over 200 attended the first Nomenus gatherings at Wolf Creek, and a fluctuating number of some hundreds joined the Nomenus mailing list. Their gatherings also reached hundreds more through the Holy Faerie Database, an independent roll of participants in western USA gatherings prior to the formation of Nomenus. While some radical faeries went to gatherings often, many attended only once or intermittently while

remaining linked to radical faerie networks; and those networks grew in broader sexual minority communities beyond drawing past participants. Thus, the number attending a gathering always reflected only a small portion of the range of people linked to radical faerie communities.

7. The total bridge cost was $26,000, which was partly financed by a bank loan, and ultimately paid by monetary donations, offset by in-kind donations of labor (Cain 1996).
8. The larger project from which this chapter is drawn presents a comparative study of historical desires for indigenous roots among non-Native US sexual minorities, and of the decolonizing responses by Native American two-spirit/LGBTQ activists (Morgensen forthcoming).
9. See, most recently, *RFD* issue 131 entitled "Rad Feys D.C." and guest edited by the Washington, DC faerie circle (RFD 2007).
10. The conversational form of radical faerie practices permits and sustains many strands of critical reflection, including periodic contributions by individual radical faeries critiquing colonial discourse or cultural essentialism. See, for example, Anderson 1996; Weinstein 1995.

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Chapter 9

The Power of Stealth: (In)Visible Sites of Female-to-Male Transsexual Resistance

Elijah Adiv Edelman

> It's weird . . . I guess I came to this realization about a year and a half ago. I was biking, I was on one of my three-day bike rides and I was out in the woods and I had to pee. So, I was like, I'm going to squat behind a bush because there is no one around here to care whether I go into the men's room or if I go into the women's room . . . Like, no one cares if I use the men's room or the women's room. No one cares if I stand or squat to pee. Like, these things are not important. Like, there's no one here to call me sir or to call me ma'am. There's no one here to assume "this" because of something that I just did or something that I'm wearing. Like none of that stuff is here. It's just me and the woods . . . And in that moment it was weird. So I think in that moment I was like, so none of this stuff matters here, so why does it matter when I go back? (Craig[1])

Craig is a 21-year-old female-to-male transman.[2] He is post-transition,[3] "stealth-identifying," and works in food service management. His reflections upon the fragility of the very real power structures imbricating gender decoding are not the removed musings of a social scientist but rather those of a trans person intimately engaged in these systems on a daily basis. For Craig, along with the six other FTMs interviewed in this project, living stealthily, wherein one's trans history is not evident on a day-to-day basis, is a dynamic practice mediated by such things as frustration, fear, anger, ease, and empowerment. In contrast to prevailing academic and sociopolitical discourses, these men are not ashamed of or in denial about their trans histories (Devor 2004; Hansbury 2005:250; Schilt 2006:466). Nor do these men unilaterally agree upon a pathological or biologically essential model of transsexuality and gender.

Public anthropology, as a field anchored in the shift of knowledge production from academics to the communities in question, becomes a critical tool in the destabilization of the tired tropes portraying trans persons. Through a publicly-engaged anthropology, trans lived experience can be lifted above the blanket theorizing of the academy, stressing the complicated messiness of materiality over simplistic reductionism. The positioning of stealth as "categorical denial" is yet another mode of

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gross oversimplification and decontextualization of trans experience that absolutely must be problematized if the academy is to produce anything of real political, social or legal use for trans persons. Rather than mere facile description, I highlight here the mechanisms of power framing stealth practice and document on-the-ground modes of flexibility, resistance and disidentification. That is to say, I use public anthropological perspectives to wrest the legitimacy of knowledge production from the academic and, rather, cast critical attention to trans persons who actively, and creatively, negotiate systems of power in their day-to-day lives. In doing so, those that are typically rendered outside of the bounds of struggle, those that are "stealth," are relocated into the positions of resistance they occupy.

As instantiated in the narratives of the post-transition, female-to-male men interviewed in this project, stealth is a dynamic practice of contextual disclosures and non-disclosures. As such, I consider the structures (such as mediated alienation, safety and comfort) that frame stealth practice as anchoring points for cross-disciplinary academic, social and political mobilization in civil rights acquisition.

Living Stealthily

In fall 2006, I conducted a series of interviews with seven "stealth" identifying female-to-male transmen. The catalyst for these interviews stemmed from the often heated debates taking place in trans and LGB communities over the legitimacy of not "being out" as a transperson, as well as my own personal history with "living stealth." Conversations taking place in these communities echoed the clashes implicit in the rich array of why, and how, persons were living stealth. It is important to note that while all participants regarded transsexuality and stealth in variable ways, the core meaning of stealth remained the same: the non-disclosure of one's trans history. In these cases stealth is not "to allow the narrator to go unnoticed . . . to allow him or her to gain entry, to get by, to pass" but rather addresses a constellation of situations, ranging from the impossibility of disclosure in every social interaction to preventing the loss of a job (Epps 2001:95).

Determining how and when to deploy and break stealth hinges directly on the settings and actors participating in the moment in question. As Craig puts it:

> I guess it depends mostly on the community but first interaction I usually identify as stealth. When they first meet me I'm just "Craig." Y'know, I just introduce myself. I just don't introduce myself as "Hi, I'm Craig the transguy." Like, I usually just introduce myself as "Craig" and people automatically assume I'm a guy. And then if it's the type of interaction where it mostly takes place in a queer setting such as like at the club or something.

Indeed, Craig's thick sideburns and deep voice serve to stabilize the decoding of his imagined embodiment and identity as simply "a guy"; stealth practice here is merely the consequence of the hegemony of assumed "cisgenderism"[4] in the absence of salient gender transgressions (Serano 2007:33). Adam and Ben both agree that they just want to be seen as "normal" and "regular" guys. They indicate that being "identified" as a transman is what relegates them to an "abnormal" position whereas simply "being" a transman does not preclude them from normality. Adam, a verbose and frank interviewee, feared if he told his classmates about his transsexual history they wouldn't know how to interact with him, a sentiment echoed by every participant of this project; nobody wanted to be the transsexual "other."

The Trans Context: Background

Transsexuality can be most broadly defined as not identifying with the gender assigned to one at birth, although precisely who identifies as a "transsexual" is far from easy to define nor is defining oneself as a "transsexual" devoid of sociopolitical implications (Namaste 2000; Stone 2006; Valentine 2007). In relationship to a medico-legal discourse, transsexualism "currently defines an individual's relation to gender assignment- pre-transition/operative, transition/in the process of hormonal and surgical sex-reassignment, and post-transition/operative" (Hird 2002:578, citing Bolin 1988; Prosser 1998). In other words, hormones and surgery are considered implicit elements of transsexual gender transition, in addition to a legal name change. In order to gain access to medical or legal transition resources, a trans person must first prove to a primarily heteronormative medical and legal establishment that one is authentically[5] transsexual. The Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association's (HBIGDA) Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorders operates as the set of guidelines intended to instruct medical professionals on "the psychiatric, psychological, medical, and surgical management of gender identity disorders" (Meyer et al. 2001:1). Subsequently, this document serves to delimit "valid" (e.g., capitally and socially productive) trans bodies and identities from those deemed excessively gender-liminal.

Conceptualizing trans and stealth experience first requires that the power structures that frame lived experience be sincerely addressed. While stealth practice is not necessarily a site of medico-legal regulation, it is important to note that the path to achieving a post-transition status is punctuated with a series of hetero-gender normative hurdles demanding conservative binary gender practice. Let us take note, it is not necessarily trans people that are inherently gender conservative; it is the system that they must navigate that demands a particular kind of gender productivity to attain critical corporeal and legal documents. In its sixth incarnation since 1979, the most recent version of HBIGDA states that "without first meeting these recommended eligibility requirements, the patient and the therapist should not request hormones or surgery . . ." (Meyer et al. 2001:3). These recommended eligibility requirements include a "real-life experience" in which the individual must live as the preferred gender for no less than three months.

A *successful* real-life test is measured through one's ability to function according to the rules and social expectations of their target gender, with the external and situational evaluation of one's presentation functioning through the maintenance of capital, intellectual or cultural capital productivity. While the efficacy of one's gender performance is not necessarily a salient feature of these evaluative loci, the demand for gender authenticity is implicit in the reliance upon the regulatory functions of productivity in gender success.

Subsequently, for the person who identifies as male but has a high pitched voice, a smooth face, large breasts and a stereotypically female name, it can be difficult, if not impossible, to be received and respected as male. A trans person in this position struggles to find or maintain jobs, travel or conduct any activity that requires a particularly gendered form of identification; to do so would first necessitate an explanation of their transsexuality and gendered history. Additionally, because "to meet this criterion, the professional needs to document that the real-life experience has occurred for this duration," the trans person must also be in a position to financially support weekly psychotherapy consistently throughout this time (Meyer et al. 2001:3). With the absence of federal work or housing legal protection, a trans person in the midst of this "real-life experience" may find it financially or socially impossible to continue. The hyper-embodied trans body must engage in a hypernormativity in order to gain access to the limited resources available. Though the HGIBDA do not directly control state and federal legal demands for gender legitimacy, their demands for gender transition, that of a clear engagement with normative gender practices and productivity, buttress their logic. One must undertake the daunting responsibility of changing all identity documents as an element of transition or risk delegitimation and unintelligibility.

Stealth as Shame, Denial or a Stage of Development: The Literature

While a relatively large corpus of transgender-specific research now exists in the social sciences, the unfortunate tendency of these projects conflates both MTF (male-to-female) and FTM experience into one. While both MTFs and FTMs must gain access to and navigate legal and medical systems in order to transition, different sociopolitical systems (e.g., institutionalized sexism, and androcentrism), and ease of post-transition gender experience shape these navigations in radically different ways. In the case of stealth narratives, complicating notions of how the literature discusses stealth in the context of lived experience further elucidates that which may be circumscribed as stealth practice.

Griffin Hansbury proposes a discreet trifecta of possible FTM experience: "woodworkers," "transmen," and "genderqueers" (Hansbury 2005:242). In this paradigm, stealth exists only within the category of the woodworkers, or those that prefer to blend into the "woodwork" of a predominantly cisgendered population.

Hansbury defines these FTMs as older and as viewing their transsexuality with shame or disgust (Hansbury 2005:250). In contrast, both transmen and genderqueers are portrayed as open with their trans histories, with no salient concerns with their transsexual histories. Additionally, Hansbury leaves no room for stealth-identifying men to ever share their transsexual histories or for those that openly share their histories to ever live stealth. In Hansbury's model, stealth is misapprehended as an immobile identity category, rather than presented as an experience common in post-transition experience.

Aaron Devor explores FTM identity through a fourteen-stage model of identity development. This model begins with "Abiding Anxiety," wherein the FTM experiences "a general malaise" with his assigned gender (Devor 2004). As the FTM progresses along these stages, he moves from doubt, to learning about transsexuality, to weakly and then strongly identifying as a transgendered person. Devor's thirteenth and fourteenth stages, "Integration" and "Pride," respectively, are most relevant to the study of stealth experience. According to this model, stealth exists only at the site of "Integration," in which one's primary goal is to live as completely and invisibly male (Devor 2004). In direct contrast, the next and final stage, "Pride," is characterized almost exclusively by an FTM's openness about "their transsexualism and transgenderism," and a marked dedication to "speak up on behalf of transsexed and transgendered people" (Devor 2004). While Devor does make the effort to qualify this model with the warning that not every FTM experiences every stage and that stages can concomitantly exist, his thirteenth and fourteenth stages are antithetical in nature. Devor's model makes it impossible to both live as stealth and be an advocate for trans issues; stealth is rendered as a particular stage in a developmental sequence.

Kristen Schilt argues that post-transition FTMs have an inherent "insider-outsider" perspective of gender inequalities in the workplace. Schilt proposes that this unique position provides post-transition FTMs the perspective of sexism as the once-subjugated to the now-benefactor. Schilt's methodology and research design qualify those that transition on the job and remain with that employer as "out" and those that transition on the job, yet move to another employer, as stealth (Schilt 2006:466). Conceptualizing stealth, or those that identify as "just men," as a lived experience, it is possible that those who remain within the same job may in fact also engage with stealth when meeting, for instance, new clients, customers or other employees, which Schilt fails to note (Schilt 2006:466). Similar to Hansbury and Devor, Schilt positions stealth as an identity limited only to FTMs who do not identify with their transsexual histories, rather than as a dynamic practice.

Stealth Practice

Within the academic literature, stealth is most commonly defined as the non-disclosure of one's trans history or present; certainly, the lived experience of stealth is far from this simplistic. The narratives collected in this project show that stealth is a dynamic and situated practice of ideological negotiation often between two major binary-opposing ideologies: a hetero-gender normative ideology, wherein gender is an immutable biological truth and transsexuality is a pathology, and a gender transgressive ideology, wherein gender is self-determined and the tropes of pathological gender liminality are questioned. While I distinguish between these two ideological positions here, this is not to argue these constitute the *only* ideologies framing stealth experience nor do I seek to position those who practice stealth as adopting entirely one position or another. I deploy these ideologies to heuristically situate these narratives within normative binary discourses and *not* to reify these ideological positions as mutually exclusive or structurally sound. If anything, stealth practice reifies the *slippages* inherent to binary modes of analysis; I seek here to highlight the tension produced by these oppositional discourses that can be, and are, adopted concomitantly.

It should be stressed, stealth is not a gloss for coming out. In many ways stealth practice operates as a direct threat to a western, white and middle-class coming-out discourse privileged by homonormativity; within this discourse, visibility and public acknowledgement of one's sexual subjectivities are central in the quest for civil rights (Duggan 2002:179; Stryker 2008a:148). In the LGBT movement for rights, trans subjectivities are often disregarded, raising larger concerns of whether "trans liberation" can be realized through neoliberal recognition-based politics (Valentine 2007:202). To break stealth, or disclose, one is then revealing the possibility of bodily difference and history. This then shifts the decoding and social situating of one's body from a privileged position of normalcy, of the good citizen, to the subjugated position of transsexual "foreigner" through processes of hyper-embodiment (Grabham 2007:44).

Focusing In: Adam

Upon reading about my request for participants for this project on a local FTM online listserv, Adam contacted me with an interest in involvement. Adam is a post-transition, female-to-male transman living in a large metropolitan city on the eastern coast of the USA. I focus centrally on my interview with Adam in this chapter, whose rich and complicated narrative exemplifies discourses deployed by the other men interviewed for this project.

Adam is a white, 22-year-old student from a small Midwestern town in the USA. He is from a middle to upper middle-class background and, at the time of this interview, was in graduate school in the social sciences. Adam identifies as male or, when asked specifically about his trans identity, as a "man with a medical history." He is on testosterone, has had "top surgery" (removal of breasts and reconstruction of a male chest) and has altered legal identification to indicate both his current name and a male gender marker. Adam identifies as straight, "old-fashioned" and "traditional."

We Know Who We Are: Ideologies at Work in Adam's Narrative

In Adam's narrative, he takes and negotiates between two significant and contrasting ideological positions: what I term a *hetero-gender* normative ideology and a *gender transgressive* ideology.

Hetero-gender normative ideology here indexes a combined sexuality and gender ideological structure of the dominant sexed and gendered classes: heterosexuality and cisgenderism. Heterosexuality, generally viewed as a position in which the gender of one's sexual object choice is in "direct opposition" to the subject, is situated in a binary gender system. While this by no means precludes a transgendered person from identifying as heterosexual, a hetero-gender normative ideology assumes that one can only authentically be the gender one is assigned at birth. The subject is assigned, and thus authentically is, a gender at birth, in accordance with male or female appearing genitalia. Infamous anti-trans polemicist Janice Raymond employs such a position when noting that "we [cisgendered persons] know who we are. We know that we are women who are born with female chromosomes and anatomy, and that whether or not we were socialized to be so-called normal women, patriarchy has treated and will treat us like women. Transsexuals have not had this same history" (Raymond 1979:114). Raymond, by qualifying "normal" women as those "born with female chromosomes and anatomy," reifies power structures maintained by hetero-gender normative ideology. For Raymond, gender is only authentic when it is buttressed upon a biologically-anchored gendered history; transsexuals, by virtue of their gender discordant history, are thus incapable of truly being the gender they identify as.

Gender transgressive ideology here does not reference a particular sexual or gendered category, but rather refers to the notion that gender is not naturally limited to two categories, nor is gender determinable at birth. Rather, I posit gender transgressive ideology as maintaining that gender operates upon a continuum and is self-determined by the gendered subject. This is not to situate gender identity and practice as entirely a choice, but rather to argue that the authenticity of a particular gendered identity does not rely entirely upon the proclamations of others. That said, as the uptake of identity is dialogic, the trans subject who does not have access to transition-related resources may not be accepted as their gender identity. While gender "performability . . . suggests the discursive production of any notion of reality based upon sex," this is not necessarily the position gender transgressive ideology takes (Hird 2002:581). While that which the audience "uptakes" is the performance of gender, this is not to say that what the subject practices are "fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (Butler 1990:136). Simply put, because one identifies as male does not guarantee that he will be perceived accordingly.

The Lived Meanings of Stealth Practice

During the course of our discussion, Adam indicated that, for the first time since his transition, relocating for graduate school allowed him to live "stealthily." When asked explicitly what living stealth meant for him in graduate school, Adam stated that it was:

014 Where people could not have to shift their idea
015 of who I was
016 to a new gender,
017 new person.

Thus, Adam sees stealth as not a denial of truth, but rather the avoidance of unnecessary, and unwelcome, confusion. Adam explains further how stealth practice, in general, often demands a renegotiating of his past. In lines 127 through 131, Adam discusses how his undergraduate college experience must be discursively negotiated through stealth practice:

127 and otherwise I had to, if I wanted to talk about my college.
128 If I ever mention my college roommate.
129 I've mentioned my college roommate
130 a couple of times
131 but without a gender pronoun

As a hetero-gender normative ideology does not typically allow for men to have women as their undergraduate dorm mates, Adam negotiates his history accordingly. Though Adam could conceivably discuss his roommate with male pronouns or shift the living situation to an off-campus apartment, he indicates elsewhere in the interview that he doesn't like "keeping secrets" (line 090). For him, stealth practice is not the creation of false truths; it is the practice of not disclosing a gendered history or bodily difference. Adam's delicate negotiation of the hetero-gender normative ideological position that men do not have women as college roommates should not be mistaken for a complete accommodation to it. Rather, this reflects a concomitant engagement with multiple positionalities, gender transgressive ideology notwithstanding.

The notion of "lying" or "passing," so commonly applied to post-transition trans persons, is of particular concern to Adam.

090 I don't like keeping secrets,
091 part of me that feels like I'm lying
092 even though I'm not.
093 I also hate the term "passing."
094 It's like you're trying to pretend

095 to be something you're not.
096 Sometimes I get that feeling,
097 "oh, I'm passing"
098 and I'm wondering if that,
099 if whenever,
100 I go to the men's room
101 and two other guys
102 in my eleven person class is there,
103 is he going to comment
104 because every single time
105 I go to the stall and sit down?

To lie indicates that one is not telling the truth; the truth here would reflect authenticity. Passing, when constructed as an element of hetero-gender normative ideology, indicates a practice in which one is being perceived as something one is authentically not, or, in Adam's words, "It's like you're trying to pretend to be something you're not" (line 094 and 095). In essence, Adam's resistance to being conceived of as lying or passing buttresses his engagement with a gender transgressive ideological position that gender authenticity is self-determined. Adam sees himself as authentically male and to position him as lying or as trying to pretend would be untrue. Adam is authentically male because gender authenticity is buttressed upon the self rather than corporeality or personal history.

This framing serves to further elucidate how antithetical the notion of passing can be to a trans subject. If Adam enters the bathroom perceived as authentically male, he is not passing; he is simply entering the bathroom. If the manner in which he uses the restroom is called into question – and the authenticity of his gender is equally called into question – he is then forced into the position of passing wherein he is no longer authentically male but rather just "pretending."

The Bathroom: A Site of Conflict

While perhaps sitting occasionally in the restroom is no great offense, continuously failing to use the urinal presents a much deeper issue for Adam. In relationship to stealth practice, engaging in a gender discordant bathroom practice poses the risk of raising concerns of gender authenticity. If stealth is the practice of trans non-disclosure, or of a cisgendered appearance, once the subject engages in gender discordant practice, then stealth practice fails to be effective.

Adam explores his trans history with:

135 And I'd rather . . .
136 I'm one of those people
137 where I seem to be in the minority
138 where I wish I didn't have to do

139 the whole transsexual thing.
140 I wish I was just born
141 a normal guy.

Exploring his desire to have been a "normal guy," Adam indexes a hetero-gender normative ideology that places a gender identity which is congruent with one's assigned gender as normal and all deviations as abnormal. Here, Adam places "normal guy" in clear opposition to "the transsexual," referenced in line 139. This is to say, "normal guy" here refers to the power dichotomy wherein cisgenderism maintains the hegemonic position of privilege. Additionally, "normal guy," in the broader context of transgendered experience, evokes the subjugation of trans people in this power structure. In this instance, saying "normal guy" juxtaposes cisgenderism and normality to transsexuality and abnormality.

Similarly, in discussing why he prefers not to disclose, Adam states that:

154 I wish I didn't have to put up with it.
155 So I don't want to be the transsexual on campus.
156 I just want to be taken,
157 judged as a man and not as,
158 y'know,
159 someone they don't know how to act around.

It is explicit that Adam not only expects that his fellow students will judge him but that he expects that they would not know how to negotiate a trans person. By using the definite article *the*, rather than the indefinite form *a*, Adam qualifies the term "transsexual" indicating a perceived rarity of transsexuality. Though "man," in line 157, references the "normal guy" of line 141, through not qualifying "man" with a trans prefix he is indexing the historically unmarked and privileged category of cisgendered identity.

Stealth as Strategy: Creative Practice as Disidentification

Adam's preference to be seen as a "normal guy," and avoiding being judged as "someone they don't know how to act around" underlies the complex relationship between the hegemonic hetero-gender normative ideology and the transgendered community. As disidentification "constitutes a *working* (transformation-displacement) *of the subject-form* and not just its *abolition*," Adam, in his daily negotiations of stealth and disclosure, is constantly working ideology to his advantage (Pêcheux 1982:159). In other words, Adam is never at once entirely engaging with one ideology or another; rather, he carefully interprets the needs of each situation along with each ideological position.

I began this portion of the interview by asking directly about Adam's experience with stealth:

Elijah: For you,
what does stealth mean
and what did it mean to be stealth in grad school?
Adam: Basically,
it means that I had a completely new environment.

Adam's reference to "environment" situates stealth as a practice; "it" is navigated externally. Stealth is the practice of non-trans disclosure, wherein "breaking stealth" is the act of trans disclosure. This is to say, to live stealthily indicates that one is being actively perceived by others as authentically male in a hetero-gender normative ideological system. In situations in which the subject does not want his authenticity questioned, engaging in stealth is a preventative measure. In cases in which one chooses to *break stealth*, or disclose, the benefits of disclosure are assessed to outweigh any potential negative consequences. When Adam considers when to disclose, he is considering the ramifications of being a known trans person in a particular situation. In a follow-up email, Adam indicates that when he disclosed to the professors during his graduate school admissions process, he stated,

"I was raised female"
I avoid saying,
"I used to be a girl,"
because as far as I'm concerned
that's not true.
From these few people,
the response has been 100%,
and not questioning of my masculinity.

While disclosure could be conceived as in alignment with hetero-gender normative ideology if done with the mindset that disclosure is "telling the truth," the language Adam uses when referencing his history is undoubtedly more in alignment with a gender transgressive ideology. Adam's language reflects a disidentification with the hetero-gender normative hegemony. Through placing himself in the passive position of having been "raised" female, he is further affirming the authenticity of his male identity. He never "used to be a girl" as this would position him as an actual past female subject. His disclosure is not to unveil some hidden truth about his present, but is rather to contextualize his experience as a gendered subject. Adam's disclosure reflects a disidentification with a hetero-gender normative hegemony, rather than a support of it.

Innovation: The Creative Practice of Stealth

Whether it is the hegemony of hetero-gender normativity or the counter-hegemony of gender transgressive ideology Adam is negotiating, he never situates himself as entirely beholden to one or another. With the range of possibilities available to him situated as a trans-as-abnormal or trans-as-normal, Adam is engaging entirely with neither. Breaking stealth is a creative practice in confronting the hegemonic ideology, according to which being a transsexual is a source of shame:

> I'm toying . . .
> there are a few people I did disclose during my interview,
> because I wanted to.
> And I interviewed with three professors at college.
> We had this huge day
> and we interviewed with a bunch of people.
> So,
> I disclosed to the three people,
> the three professors.
> One of whom was the LGBT guy
> in the department and he was,
> wow.
> We just chatted for half an hour
> and he was like,
> "Wow, I'm so impressed.
> You're so brave.
> I think you're amazing.
> As far as I'm concerned you're in."
> And he ended up choosing me;
> choosing to be my advisor.

In this particular situation, Adam recognizes that his audience is familiar and responsive to non-hegemonic gender identities and thus may react favorably to his disclosure. Tapping into his prospective professor's adoption of a gender transgressive ideology, informed in part through multiculturalist discourses, disclosure here yields a markedly positive, yet tokenizing, response. In this particular disclosure, Adam relies upon the professor's perception of trans-as-exotic when breaking stealth, by which Adam is perceived as brave simply by virtue of stating that he was "raised as a girl." It is fair to assume that this professor was not impressed that an individual could be raised female but rather that this masculine person had been raised as such. The professor's assertion that Adam is "brave" indexes his own perceptions of trans-as-other, which is then used to stage his assurance that Adam will be accepted into the graduate program. This interaction highlights the occasional, yet rare, cultural capital that being trans affords through the exotifying technologies of multiculturalism. While Adam did indicate that this professor was aware of his scholastic background, to situate "as far as I'm concerned you're in" directly following an evaluation of Adam's gendered history is no coincidence; the professor is granting Adam access into the academy based upon his transsexual subjectivity.

The creative practice of stealth goes beyond a situated disidentification with hegemony but rather can effect and shape the very power structure it operates within.

Raymond Williams states that "When it comes to struggle – the active struggle for new consciousness through new relationships . . . it can take many forms. It can be the long and difficult remaking of an inherited (determined) practical consciousness" and in this case, this would be the gendered system wherein cisgendered identity is in the dominant hegemonic position (Williams 1977:212). Through disclosure, the effect of an increased awareness of gender authentic transsexual subjects pushes the boundaries of a hegemony that refuses to view the gender of a transsexual subject as authentic gender.

Within this particular narrative, Adam is reflecting upon the very power structures that can grant him access to educational mobility. In a follow-up e-mail correspondence,[6] Adam explains his disclosure during his graduate school interviews:

> I also informed them that I was telling them, not because I wanted to be an out transgender student, but because . . . they would want to know at the admissions interview anything major that might affect the incoming class and the student's life (and thus his/her ability to participate in the program) . . . I also wanted to let them know so that they would not feel hood-winked, and so that I could start my graduate career with the trust of my professors and let them know that I trusted them.

Adam does not want to be known as a trans student but rather is recognizing that not disclosing may result in his professors' feeling tricked, "hood-winked" into believing the authenticity of his gender. While Adam does indicate in the interview, in lines 091 and 092, that he does not feel as though he is lying if he does not disclose, he is recognizing here that a hetero-gender normative power structure would interpret his stealth as dishonesty.

Engaging in Stealth Practice Publicly

Public anthropology's concern with the sites of production of knowledge is of fundamental concern in the research of stealth practice and trans subjectivities more broadly (Lamphere 2004:433). As opposed to conceptualizing stealth as a static category of identity, the narratives included here reveal that economies of stealth and disclosure are deployed to maintain physical and emotional safety, get or keep a job, and avoid alienation. Though many of the participants in this particular project are in positions of relative safety and stability now, this hinges entirely on their ability to manage a transsexual history and present that is pathologized in most medical, political and social milieux. As illustrated in Adam's narrative, trans experiences with stealth, and otherwise, should be conceptualized as dynamic and situated within a vast web of intersecting ideological positions and subjectivities; ultimately, both the trans community and the emerging field of trans research are better served through such a framing.

I would like to close with addressing Leap and Lewin's critical question in the introduction to this volume: the "real-world applications" of our research, contextualized within the destabilization of static stealth. While this chapter only hints at the complexity of lived experience, it nonetheless attempts to elucidate some ways in which trans people must navigate systems of power, whether to gain access to work, health care, or, in Adam's case, institutions of privilege. Situating stealth as a practice that navigates economies of power builds upon the recent shift in focus of trans-specific scholarship from description to critically interrogating the role of citizenship (Aizura 2006), neoliberalism and productivity (Irving 2008; Spade and Manazala 2008), and racism and classism (Namaste 2000:266; Park 2002; Valentine 2007) in the conditions of trans experience. As their work shows us, the multiple ways in which the nation-state, capital and neoliberalism have become rearticulated and enmeshed in social and political struggle demand that theory and ethnography position struggles against racism, classism, ablism and transphobia as central to trans lived experience. Moreover, in doing so, we can consider how the work of activists and community members mobilizing around immigrant rights, anti-racism, and anti-poverty are struggling against the very regulatory structures that render stealth practice productive. This serves to remind narrowly focused activism and academia that though many of the fundamental concerns of marginalized persons are elements of multiple technologies of violence (such as homelessness, physical and emotional abuses, joblessness, and so forth) they stem from the same ideologies produced by the nation-state. Susan Stryker reminds us that the technologies regulating "gender-appropriate state-issued identification documents that allow trans people to work, cross borders, and access social services without exposing themselves to potential discrimination" constitute a ground for shared struggle with multiple movements, such as immigrant rights, that transcend prototypical LGBT-organizing (Stryker 2007:149). Remaining attendant to this, it is paramount that a publically engaged queer anthropology move toward critiquing how discrimination in prisons, housing, employment, health and education, as well as the structural violences of transphobia, racism, classism, and homophobia, are all implicated in structures regulating not only trans persons and stealth practices, but all bodies subject to regulatory technologies. Moreover, it should be remembered that it is not through pedantic theorizing that change is actualized; rather, it is through collaboration with on-the-ground modes of resistance, even those practiced "stealthily," that provide the foundation for social, political and intellectual revolutions.

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Notes

1. All names used for participants in this chapter are pseudonyms.
2. Though throughout this chapter I use terms such as "FTM," "transman" and "transsexual" to index the same positionality, this is not to indicate that all participants identified primarily with each term. While I do not seek to elide political economic differences, I switch between these three terms as all participants variably identified as such at some point during their interview. It should be stressed that several of the participants interviewed in this project identified primarily as "male" or "just a guy" and one participant as "genderqueer." I use "trans" as a broad signifier for gender-liminal bodies, identities and practices that come to be regulated under the same ideologies.
3. "Post-transition" in this chapter references a period following any medical, legal, or social shifts in gender identity, presentation, or embodiment.
4. "Cisgenderism" refers to a gender identity that is in alignment with gender/sex assigned at birth. Though I deploy "cisgender" here as a referent to a non-transgender/non-transsexual category, Julia Serano situates "cisgender" with "non-transgender" and "cissexual" with "non-transsexual" (Serano 2007:33).
5. As the "concern with the authenticity of transsexualism reflects upon the possibility of changing sex . . . society relies on sex as a stable and unchangeable indicator of sexual difference, upon which hierarchies of power then produce divisions of labour," it is incumbent upon the trans person to prove themselves worthy of such a shift in power (Hird 2002:581).
6. This portion of text is extracted from an e-mail response to my request for information about the language of his disclosure in his interactions during graduate school interviews.

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Chapter 10

Rumsfeld!: Consensual BDSM and "Sadomasochistic" Torture at Abu Ghraib

Margot Weiss

> *Lynndie England . . . [is] not just the face of Torturegate; she's the dominatrix of the American dream.* (Goldstein 2004)

My copy of the monthly newsletter of a San Francisco-based SM[1] organization included a scene report, a written description of a consensual BDSM play scene. The scene took place at a San Francisco dungeon in late March 2004. It was an interrogation scene, involving a Colonel, a Captain, a General, and a spy. The spy was hooded, duct-taped to a chair, and slapped in the face. As she resisted, the spy was threatened with physical and sexual violence, stripped naked, cut with glass shards, vaginally penetrated with a condom-sheathed hammer handle, force-fed water, shocked with a cattle prod, and anally penetrated with a flashlight. The scene ended when the spy screamed out her safeword, the word that ends the scene: "Fucking Rumsfeld!"

This scene took place two months before *Sixty Minutes II* broadcast the photographs of torture at the Abu Ghraib prison, and Seymour Hersh broke the story of military abuse in the May 10, 2004 *New Yorker* (2004a). Nonetheless, the parallels between consensual kink practices and the torture of detained Iraqis are striking. The photographs from the Abu Ghraib prison seem – to many media commentators – to mimic sadomasochistic sex and porn conventions, just as the "Rumsfeld" interrogation scene mimes military interrogation techniques to stage "authentic" or "realistic" torture scenes.

This essay explores the uncomfortable similarities between these two performative events. Guided by Jon McKenzie's (2001) theorization of "performative efficacy,"[2] I juxtapose SM sexual practices within the USA with photographs from Abu Ghraib in order to shed light on the ways that play at torture draws on the reality of military interrogation, while the photographs, as the performative real of torture, draw on a fantasy of sexual play. This offers a way to explore the relationships between minoritarian sexual practices, sexualized power and imperial "perversion" without

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collapsing the connection between these scenes to original and copy. My reading of these scenes both enters into and attempts to reconfigure an evaluative bifurcation of performative power, where some performances transgress or subvert and others consolidate or reproduce social norms. Instead, placing these two "scenes" and their sociopolitical contexts side-by-side, I argue that *both* the SM interrogation scene *and* the Abu Ghraib photographs rely on feedback loops between the "real" (the social) and the "scene" (the performance). However, SM practice aspires to more than just play; effective SM sutures performance to the social in ways that feel deeply real for practitioners. The photographic representation in Abu Ghraib, on the other hand, effectively transforms a political real – torture – into a safe, sexual fantasy. In this way, rather than a "disturbing parallel," the relationship between these two performative events is more properly chiasmic: SM can push through "just play"/fantasy to make an intervention into the social world, while the Abu Ghraib photographs close off a social or political response to torture by instead adhering attention to a surface spectacle of individual pathology.

"Sadomasochistic" Torture

In the last weeks of May and early June of 2004, SM practitioners on the e-mail list SM-ACT, a national list for BDSM activists and community leaders, engaged in an ongoing discussion about the Abu Ghraib photographs and "sadomasochistic torture." They were both offended and anxious about the way mainstream and alternative media continuously linked SM to the Iraq torture practices and photos. For example, the *San Francisco Bay View* billed Lynndie England the "cigarette smoking, dominatrix prison guard and poster child for everything gone wrong for U.S. Armed Forces during the occupation of Iraq" (Damu 2004). After members of Congress viewed an additional 1,800 photographs unreleased to the public, the *Los Angeles Times* reported Representative Barney Frank's comment: "It had nothing to do with trying to break them . . . It was sadomasochistic sexual degradation" (Serrano and McDonnell 2004). In an essay in the *Guardian UK*, Joanna Bourke wrote "the pictures of American soldiers humiliating Iraqi detainees are reminiscent of sadomasochistic porn" (2004). And even more explicitly, the front page of the May 23, 2004 issue of the *New York Daily News* featured a story on *consensual* BDSM called "Sexual Side of G.I. Abuse." The story began "some of the acts shown in the now-infamous prison videos are activities that real women and men can engage in voluntarily, and for pleasure," and continued by exploring some of the myths, practices and histories of consensual BDSM communities (Kuriansky 2004).

The Concerned Women of America, Family Research Council, Jerry Falwell and the Heritage Foundation all linked America's "obsession" with porn (especially gay porn) with the torture photographs. As Robert Knight, the director of the conservative Culture and Family Institute, wrote:

> Where did those soldiers get the idea to engage in sadomasochistic activity and to videotape it in voyeuristic fashion? Easy. It's found on thousands of Internet porn sites and in the pages of "gay" publications, where S&M events are advertised alongside ads for Subarus, liquor and drugs to treat HIV and hepatitis. (2004; see also Rich 2004)

Advancing the anti-pornography feminist version of this argument, Susan Brison, in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, wrote:

> The similarities between American-style torture and hard core porn are difficult not to notice . . . why should it be cause for international alarm when sexually degrading, dehumanizing things are done to Iraqi prisoners (and photographed) when doing the same things to women around the world (and photographing them) for a multibillion-dollar pornography industry is considered entertainment – the sort of all-American fun enjoyed by U.S. troops and available to anyone with access to the Internet? (2004)

This slippage from human rights violations to hard core pornography, from torture to sadomasochism and from prisoner abuse to gay SM events prompted the majority of participants on SM-ACT to argue that there is something called SM or BDSM which is fundamentally different from torture.

And of course, BDSM is not *the same thing* as torture. Contrary to public fantasies and made-for-TV movies, BDSM is not a dark underground luring in unsuspecting victims, but rather a subculture with its own rules of participation. Contemporary SM follows the motto "Safe, Sane and Consensual," and most practitioners attempt to embody this motto in their play, their community, and their relationships.[3] The people I worked with in the San Francisco Bay Area had made substantial efforts to find this community. They attended classes and workshops, joined organizations and devoted a large portion of their leisure time and disposable income to SM. Further, most of the time, SM scenes feature rules for play, safewords to halt the action, and even "dungeon monitors," trained practitioners who monitor safety and make sure that players follow house rules (including safer sex rules) at semipublic play spaces. Indeed, the description of that "Rumsfeld" scene emphasized that it had been supervised by dungeon monitors, preceded by five hours of detailed negotiation and discussion and that the scene itself was considered edge play, a level of intensity reserved for experienced players.

Torture, on the other hand, following Elaine Scarry's classic definition, has a tripartite structure: 1) the infliction of intense pain, 2) the objectification of that pain, and 3) the translation of that objectification into power (1985:51). Scarry differentiates torture from other forms of pain, such as therapeutic pain, based on duration (torture lasts longer), control (the person being tortured cannot choose to enter or exit the pain) and purpose (torture is "brutal senselessness," whereas other forms of pain can be reparative, or otherwise productive) (34–35). Unlike torture, consensual BDSM is of limited duration, bracketed, controlled, chosen and consensual.

Further, while in torture, pain is radically anti-social, pain in the context of the BDSM scene is relational: pain marks a social exchange between practitioners. For example, Lady Hilary, a lesbian, femme top[4] in a Master/slave relationship, told me:

> One of the things that's most important for me in a bottom is they have to want it. I have to know beyond a shadow of a doubt you want to go there, that you want to be in your pain. I have to know that emotionally and intellectually. I have to know it in all parts of who I am if you want to travel that road with me.

This is in part because SM is an *exchange* rather than a unidirectional application of pain. As Hailstorm, a heterosexual top, explained:

> When I hit somebody I feel it . . . if I'm feeling their pain, if I'm up there with them, then I can do a better job at what I'm doing. I don't believe in standing back and whaling on somebody. I'm always up there and I'm always touching, I'm always comforting them, just reassuring them [so that] they know I'm there, that I'm not abandoning them and that I'm going through this with them.

Similarly, Francesca, a bisexual bottom, told me "when I am asking for pain . . . I'm working with my partner." "It's not a matter of him asking me to do it for him . . . it's like wanting to plow through something . . . together." Pain here is a mechanism of trust, sociality and relationality within the context of the BDSM scene. In this exchange, pain can be transformed to power, to pleasure or to other socially productive relations, unlike torture, which, as Scarry theorizes, is destructive of the social world.

Still, what do we make of the uncomfortable similarities between BDSM play and prison torture? The easy slippage from guard to dominatrix, from torture and interrogation to sadomasochistic sex play? These crossings point to an uncanny resemblance between the photographs and SM scenes: similar body technologies (hooding, bondage, sexual humiliation, emotional manipulation) and similarly careful staging (the arranged bodies, the props, the audience). There is also a historical convergence; as Anne McClintock notes, the first BDSM subcultures emerged in Europe at the end of the 18th century, at precisely the same time as what she terms "modern, industrial imperialism" (1995:142).

It is politically appealing, although ultimately dishonest, to argue that these scenes are unrelated, that they exist outside or can be fully bracketed from real torture, military interrogation, or imperialism. BDSM is erotic because it moves between a practitioner's interior, relational and social experience of power, playing on "loaded" roles or settings to craft "hot" (in the sense of erotically powerful) scenes. In this way, just as Master/slave play or a fund-raising "slave auction"[5] are not *the same as* American slavery, neither are they *unrelated to* this context. These forms of power exchange derive their intensity and erotic charge from replaying real, sociohistorical structures of exploitation and power inequity.

Many SM play scenes rely on the social imaginary and iconography of torture: the "dungeon" space, the toys and tools, military costumes, imperial fantasies. Indeed, practices focused on the breasts and genitals (e.g., binding, stretching, cutting, piercing, compressing) are called both play *and* torture: tit torture, nipple play, genitorture, CBT (cock and ball torture), genital play. Play themes like interrogation, military, torture, terror/fear, rape, or abduction are common topics for SM classes and workshops. These scenes are a form of mimetic resignification (Butler 1993); they draw on, in order to reconfigure, forms of state power available as historical or cultural signage. These signs are flexible, mediated, both public and personal; antique torture devices on display at the museum, war movies, personal, or familial military experiences and photojournalist war coverage are all potential resources for creating an "interrogation scene." Working with cultural archetypes (e.g., dashing military men), real-life events (e.g., war) and personal/familial relations (e.g., authority or discipline), these scenes stage military, imperial, or colonial relations of power in performative ways. At the same time, by dramatizing, exaggerating, and re-animating the sexual within these contexts, the scenes do it differently. It is to one such staging, a "family resemblance," that I turn next.

BDSM: The Interrogation Scene

The "Rumsfeld" scene I read about in that newsletter was the "demo" portion of a class on "Interrogation Scenes" taught by Domina, a bisexual dominant.[6] In the Bay Area, SM organizations, groups and stores offer myriad classes and workshops on SM techniques, skills, roles, and relationships; practitioners can choose from, on average, five to eight classes each week. Most classes follow a basic structure: safety and introductory material, more detailed information, a demo, and audience Q&A. They are held after work during the week or on weekends at local dungeons, stores, and spaces rented by organizations. The classes cost up to $25 a person, and typically run about two hours. At most of the classes I attended, there were between eight and twenty-five people present, most often in work or casual clothes.

In September 2002, I attended a similar class on interrogation play at QSM, a classroom space and mail order business in San Francisco. The description of the class, circulated via e-mail, began with this teaser. "Do you enjoy having your bottom 'fight back' during play? Do interrogation scenes in war movies turn you on? Ever want to do it instead of just view it?" It continued:

> Domina will explain what to do and what to avoid. Learn how to safely use a knife in a resistance scene. Find out how to signal a need without breaking role. See the ways you can make a scene like this believable. At the end of the class, Domina will do a short interrogation session with a favorite bottom to demonstrate how to incorporate all the elements into one scene.

In attendance were four women and four men, all white and all (except me) between 45 and 55 years old. The men wore jeans and T-shirts, and three had long ponytails; the women wore jeans, sweaters, and polar fleece vests.

The class began when QSM's owner rang a small metal bell, calling us to attention. She announced that we should browse the books, films, and magazines for sale during the break, especially those related to the evening's topic: interrogation scenes. Many of the books were small, vanity press pamphlets, printed on cheap paper. To everyone's laughter, she also advertised a porn video called "Osama Ass-a-Hola," a film made by two New York professional dominants who "torture" what appeared to be a white guy with a strapped-on fake beard.

As is typical in BDSM classes and workshops in the Bay Area, the class began with a lecture. Domina, wearing a California Department of Corrections shirt and jeans, began by talking about "consensual non-consent" play: play with forcing themes.[7] Domina suggested prisoner of war, alien abduction, rape, the Spanish Inquisition, and the Salem witch trials as potential themes for such play, urging us to use a real-life context or historical event to create more exciting and believable scenes. She explained that both setting and costuming choices are critical to the scene, remarking that Nazi uniforms, for example, are "not P.C., but they are powerful."

For interrogation, she told us, one can find a lot of very useful material on the internet: Amnesty International's documents, an Israeli interrogation site, and what she said was the treasure-trove of technique: the declassified 1963 CIA manual known as KUBARK. Domina waved a print-out of KUBARK at us while giving advice from its pages: the best way to stage an arrest, detain your victim, different kinds of sensory stimulation deprivation, how to make realistic threats, and how to create conditions of heightened suggestibility. "If you are going to abduct somebody, take them in the middle of the night so that they are totally disoriented," she told us, abbreviating a KUBARK technique.[8]

It was 2002 and I had not yet heard of the manual. I was skeptical about this whole scene, that the document was real, that it was not just SM fantasy. Now, of course, I know much more about KUBARK: that many believe it is the basis for the psychological "no-touch" torture techniques (stress positions, sexual humiliation, hooding, sleep deprivation, fear) disseminated throughout Latin America, and in use at Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib (see Blanton and Kornbluh 2004; Cohn, Thompson, and Matthews 1997; McLeod 2004). And today, one can download not only KUBARK, but also the witness testimony from prisoners at Abu Ghraib, the Taguba and Fay Reports, Red Cross, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International reports, and much more.

As Domina talked, Larry and Denise jumped up from the first row of folding audience chairs and ran onto the stage where Domina stood; it was a surprise demo. Larry and Domina subdued Denise and tied her to the floor, cutting off her clothes. Naked, Denise struggled as Domina held a knife at her throat, and then, a gun. Domina told Larry to watch Denise, but not to touch her. For the rest of the class, Larry, transformed into a slow, Southern "bubba," sat by Denise, leering with slack jaw, wet lips, and droopy eyes. Periodically he reached over, grabbing Denise's nipples as she tried to kick him away.

With this scenario playing out behind her, Domina continued the class, turning at intervals to tell Larry to "stop fucking with her." Domina began to describe various torture techniques: water torture, breath play, electricity, making someone stand still without moving. "Threatening rape or body cavity searches is good," she said, as is anything that dehumanizes the bottom: give them a number (instead of a name), deny them bathroom privileges or toilet paper, deprive them of sleep, keep the room cold, don't feed them or feed them tasteless or disgusting food, like boiled white bread.

Domina also gave us a few tips on how to maintain the fantasy of interrogation while "checking in" on the bottom. Staying in character as mean cop, for example, Domina might hold Denise's feet apart, a humiliating display for Denise, but one that would also allow Domina to check the temperature of Denise's feet to make sure the rope around her ankles was not cutting off her circulation. She also told us we should have a pre-arranged signal with the bottom for something dangerous. Before she put a real knife up to Denise's throat, for example, Domina grabbed her neck, their signal that the knife blade was sharp and that Denise should not move too much or struggle too hard.

In addition to tips and techniques, Domina stressed the psychological safety concerns this type of play involves, including the need for detailed negotiation. Almost all BDSM scenes involve negotiation of some sort, either highly formalized checklist negotiation or more informal verbal negotiation. In negotiation, each partner indicates (in highly specific detail) acts, emotional needs, physical limitations, and any other circumstances, context or background potentially useful (e.g., "I don't like canes," "I need lengthy post-scene aftercare," "I have a bad knee"). During negotiation, a player should divulge any emotional, physical, or sexual information that may be important, such as how one's carpal tunnel might impact bondage, or how the word "slut" is hot, but "whore" is not. Players should also explain the kinds of SM play they particularly like. Finally, each practitioner should describe his/her limits; the most common limit is "dead people, kids and shit," although there are many other personal limits. Interrogation scenes, because of consensual non-consent, require more prolonged, careful, and detailed negotiations. But for all scenes, negotiation insures informed consent throughout the play; it also makes sure that each player's desires and fantasies will be responded to in the course of the scene.

These tactics allow for the management of real risk within the scene without breaking the fantasy. Using realism – real contexts, histories, emotions, and relationships – the scene becomes believable for both participants and audience. Insofar as the scene is believable, it works. For me, the demo was effective: it played on and with my *Deliverance*-style fears of southern men and drawling authority.[9] It made me angry; I wanted to stand up and yell at Larry to get off Denise, to stop touching her, to leave her alone. I believed that Larry was this kind of dangerous man, and I should note that I had met him before this scene, as he is (in her non-scene, vanilla life) Domina's husband. Yet the playing effectively conditioned real, although sometimes contradictory, bodily, emotional, and relational responses: fear, hatred, rage, arousal, trust, and betrayal. In this scene, the elaborate care taken to assure consent makes the scene work, putting into place complex loops between the real and fantasy, social reality and performance, and making the performance more "realistic" and thus effective – satisfying and involving for players and their various audiences.

When they are effective, these performances re-animate sexuality in the service of new social relations. Through such mechanisms as discomfort, rearticulation and dramatization, these scenes can make a performative intervention into the social world. This is why SM is a cultural performance. Anthropologist Milton Singer used the phrase "cultural performance" in the 1950s to describe a performance (a drama, ritual, or dance) that is marked off from the social field and that communicates and builds social meanings with the audience (cited in Turner 1986:22–23). As it has been developed by Victor Turner and others, "cultural performance" has expanded to include a broad range of events from more formal dramas to everyday gestures that are "set-apart" in imaginative and spatial, not only temporal, terms. In his recent analysis of performance in contemporary Venezuela, David Guss argues that cultural performances have four key elements: 1) they are framed and set off from everyday life, 2) they are reflexive, 3) they are discursive, dialogical or polyphonic, full of competing claims and debates, and 4) they produce new meanings and relations; they are culturally productive, a site of cultural action (2000: 8–12).

Like all cultural performances, then, SM is an engagement with social norms that, when effective, can communicate and consolidate those norms (as in a classic rite of passage) *and* serve as critique, evaluation or rejection of the ways that social power and categories work in the everyday. But always, cultural performances are, as Turner argues, active agents of change, not simple reflections of existent cultural meanings. In this way, SM practices are not an imitation of reality, nor do social structures completely constrain the effects of a performance. Rather, it is through cultural performance that subjects become aware of, grapple with and (potentially) transform the social world (1986; see also Guss 2000:9). Performances like the interrogation scene can pressure, reorganize, or disrupt the ways that practitioners and audiences understand the world and the ways that they situate themselves in it, in physical, relational, and political ways. Thus, the performative efficacy of SM scenes does not lie in a guarantee of transgression. Rather, the effectiveness of a scene lies in allowing practitioners to work these complex relations between reality and performance. In an effective scene, this work also enables practitioners to produce, not merely mimic, social relations, and to reconnect the bracketed, limited space of "the scene" with the social.

How, then, do we read the political potential, the effects, of interrogation or torture play? By re-staging military techniques, or performing violent intimacies between guard and prisoner, cop and victim, these scenes might be parodic; they might undermine the remote power of authority through creative re-enactment. They might be a re-deployment, so that our everyday lack of power over the war, over state power, over intimate violence like rape, incest or racism might be re-imagined on our own terms. They might make a mockery of imperial power, re-costuming, or dragging it; they might give the lie to such power (and here I am thinking of "Osama Ass-a-Hola" and the humor-as-politics of a scene in which "Rumsfeld" means stop).[10] They might reproduce a structure of feeling, an attachment to authority, that can be harnessed by the state to ensure our compliance. I do not want to close down the complexity of such scenes, and I am not suggesting that SM play is always, or necessarily, politically interventionist. However, SM play, by dramatizing power in often spectacular ways, provides one access point into the production of social relations for participants and audience alike. The power dynamics of SM play can disrupt what Bryant Alexander calls the "protective veneer of the performative" by dramatizing the social and historical conditions of power (Alexander 2004; see also Butler 2004; MacKendrick 1999). In this way, SM play is effectively real-ized through this loop – threading the scene back and through the social – in a way that moves players and audiences into but also beyond mere fantasy.

Abu Ghraib: Torture and Imperial Perversion

Both BDSM play and the photographs of torture in Abu Ghraib spectacularize power inequality; they both render relations of domination in dramatic, staged, and framed ways. Yet, just as "performance" has both normative and counter-normative effects, spectacle too contains multiple potentials. If, in BDSM, an effective performance focuses attention in a way that forces interpersonal involvement, spectacle can also conceal relations of power, especially in an image-centered commodity culture (for the paradigmatic argument on spectacle as commodity fetish, see Debord 1995, also Baudrillard 1994). In contrast to the BDSM scene, the effectiveness of the images from Abu Ghraib rely on this sort of spectacularization, obscuring the geo-political reality of US military-imperialism by adhering audience attention to the surface screen of the photographs.

What is interesting here is that this effect relies on the pathologization of sadomasochism. And, while many media commentators have noted the sadomasochistic content of these practices and their representation, little scholarly attention has focused on this dynamic.[11] This dual situation can be seen clearly in the case of Lynndie England. The now notorious photograph of England holding a leash attached to a naked Iraqi detainee reminded many of a "dominatrix" pose. In the *Sunday Telegram*, Dianne Williamson called England a "deranged dominatrix" (2004); the *Toronto Star* used "diminutive dominatrix" ("Sex, Sexism Drive Prison Coverage" 2004). Though diminutive, England is no dominatrix; describing her in this way facilitates a disavowal of institutionalized torture by framing the abuse as England's personal psychosexual predilection, even as England (and thus this slippery mechanism) became *the* circulated and recirculated image of the scandal in Abu Ghraib.[12] This commentary borrows from the icon of The Dominatrix (a figure usually encased in skin-tight black leather or latex, not military fatigues) to pathologize this small-town girl, offering us the story of a sick, sadistic woman and obscuring a larger, institutional context of power.[13]

Susan Sontag, in her *New York Times Magazine* article on the photographs, writes "the pictures seem part of a larger confluence of torture and pornography: a young woman leading a naked man around on a leash is classic dominatrix imagery" (2004:27). Echoing anti-porn commentary, she continues "and you wonder how much of the sexual tortures inflicted on the inmates of Abu Ghraib was inspired by the vast repertory of pornographic imagery available on the internet" (2004:27). Perhaps, as SM has become more mainstream, and pornography more visible, these images (if not the practices or the community of practitioners) are available for recirculation in the world inside the prison. But what bears reminding here, as many others have pointed out, is that the torture techniques depicted in the photographs ("water boarding," "stress positions," sensory and sleep deprivations, even sexual humiliation) have been a part of the repertoire of torture and terror for a very long time (see Scarry 1985), and in use by the US for at least the last 50 years (in Vietnam and in homeland prisons, taught by the School of the Americas, and in CIA training manuals like KUBARK).

So why do these commentators slide from torture to sadism, to porn, to dominatrix? In part, it is because of muddled clinical, psychological and popular understandings of sadomasochism. "Sadism" and "masochism" were coined in 1886; "sadomasochism" described a sexual perversion where one receives sexual pleasure through the infliction or reception of pain or cruelty. But for contemporary theorists, "sadomasochism" is not always about the unification of sexual pleasure and pain, but rather about broad social relations of power (e.g., Chancer 1992). Yet, even as "sadomasochism" has broadened, at least in non-sexological or psychoanalytic fields, it has dragged along with it a trace of its history. Sadism and masochism, after all, describe sexual perversions. In the most recent DSM-IV-TR (the latest edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*), "Sexual Sadism" and "Sexual Masochism" remain perversions (American Psychiatric Association 2000).[14]

Understanding sadomasochism as perversion, pathology or damage bleeds into popular understandings of BDSM practices and communities, even as the terms "SM" and "BDSM" are understood by practitioners to distance consensual SM from pathological sadism or masochism. For example, in interviews I conducted with twelve non-practitioners, most agreed that the basic definition of BDSM was some variant on "pleasure in pain." Inna described SM as "sexual pleasure from inflicting pain or receiving pain from each other . . . people getting off by doing weird stuff to each other . . . rough, rough sex." Dan told me SM is "weird sexual acts . . . pretty extreme and weird. People hurting each other, more physical acts, painful acts."[15] And so even as theorists use these terms to describe non-sexual or non-perverse, even hegemonic, relationships, "sadomasochism" continues to connote something weird, dangerous and at least semi-pathological.

The slippage between dominatrix and military guard, and the way that both figures can stand for the abstract term "sadomasochism," shows us that "sadomasochism" is generalized to a wide range of dynamics and relationships about power, violence and sexuality. Because of this, calling the practices depicted in these photographs "sadism" instead of "torture" does something *political*: it draws attention to the shocking mix of violence and sex in these pictures, rather than the shocking abuse of power and dehumanization. This shift depoliticizes the imperial violence depicted in the photographs by transferring our discomfort or disgust with torture onto the "sadomasochistic" practices of US soldiers. And so, even as England became the poster girl for the "prisoner sexual abuse scandal" in Abu Ghraib, the interpretive frame in place focused our gaze on individual pathology, not on US military-imperial techniques.

A similar mechanism is at work in General Schlesinger's report. The report, widely understood to provide support for the investigation of higher-ups in the scandal, is haunted by the framing of the torture as personal pathology. The opening sentences of the report read: "the events of October through December 2003 on the night shift of Tier 1 at Abu Ghraib prison were acts of brutality and purposeless sadism . . . The pictured abuses . . . represent deviant behavior and a failure of military leadership and discipline" (2004:5, see also 43). Even as Schlesinger places responsibility on the chain of command, the environment and the reclassification of interrogation techniques, he also writes:

> The aberrant behavior on the night shift in Cell Block 1 at Abu Ghraib . . . have a unique nature fostered by the predilections of the noncommissioned officers in charge. Had these noncommissioned offers behaved more like those on the day shift, these acts . . . would not have taken place. (Schlesinger et al. 2004:13, see also 29)

"Deviant" "predilections" and "*purposeless* sadism," these repetitions throughout the document refigure "torture" as sadistic, personal pathology, decontextualized and atomized: "some individuals seized the opportunity provided by this environment to give vent to latent sadistic urges" (2004:29).[16]

These dynamics of pathologization and spectacularization have effects both inside and outside the prison. The torture itself, whose function was surely not "information,"[17] was a crucial component of what Jasbir Puar calls the "proliferating modalities of force" in the Iraq campaign (2005:13). And, as Scarry points out, torture has long had a sexual component; the goal is to turn the prisoner's body against itself, transforming basic bodily needs (like food or sleep) and "special wants like sexuality" into "ongoing sources of outrage and repulsion" (1985:48). This general objective was combined with the no-touch shaming, humiliation, shock, fear, and dehumanizing tactics advocated in the KUBARK manual. The "script" at Abu Ghraib, then, brought together widely used stressful conditions (noise, food and sleep deprivation, and stress positions) with sexual humiliation, rape, and violation (forced masturbation, nakedness, homosexual acts, human pyramids).

In this sense, the scenes from Abu Ghraib are part of a long and sordid history of sexualizing imperialism. Empires have long made use of sexuality – its control and its production – to impose order and knowledge on colonized subjects, bodies and lands (see McClintock 1995; Stoler 1995, 2002). The production of the Spanish, British, Portuguese, French, Dutch, German, Japanese, and American empires, as Cynthia Enloe notes, depended on "yoking racism to feminization . . . hold[ing] up their own women as models of civilization and purity, while at the same time demoting the men of the conquered territories as either hyper-masculinized savages or feminized Others" (2007:37) . In this reading, the torture in Abu Ghraib is, as she puts it, "a not-so-up-dated version of earlier imperial practices" (37; c.f. Morris 2007).

Thus, inside the Abu Ghraib prison, by all accounts a place of fear and anxiety,[18] the escalating sexualized violence can be read as a means of imperial control: the spectacularization of US power. The scene at Abu Ghraib is part of what Allen Feldman terms an emerging "visual securocratic" form of warfare, staged "political theater" (2004:344). Inside the intimate space of the prison, a scene itself bracketed from the everyday world, the guards' life back home, the space of the nation and, indeed, international pacts and agreements, the photographs are, as Hazel Carby argues, "material evidence of power," the "performance of conquest" (Carby 2004). The photographs reveal an allegorical sense of mastery and control over the individual bodies of naked Iraqis. But more than this: the photographs "were made to show destroyed bodies, desocialized, de-Islamicized, and de-masculinized . . . now ruined bodies converted, owned, penetrated and occupied by American captors and cameras" (Feldman 2004:345). Communicating power and warning against its transgression, the photographs are direct communication with the US military-imperial structure, a feedback mechanism within the prison. The "pyramid photograph," as General Fay's report tells us, was a screen saver in the military intelligence office of the prison. The very publicness of the torture and abuse, that it was staged in front of guards, other prisoners and captured in photographs and video, was a crucial part of its efficacy (Danner 2004). Read in this way, the photographs' performative efficacy inside the prison – the torture *and* its representation – is organizational: the terrifyingly creative labor of the US war machine.

It is outside the prison that the photographs show us the effects of the pathologization of sadomasochism. For surely, even as the viscerality fades with time, the photographs' circulation and reproduction was arousing; the images elicited shock, outrage. For some, this galvanized demand for intervention in the war because a "line was crossed." This argument had political effects, yet perversely, the "line crossed," as Puar notes, is one of deviant sexuality, not death or violence, or, for my purposes here, torture (2005:13). And, while Puar and others are surely right to draw our attention to the ways gender/feminization and sex/homosexualization work together to secure empires on the backs of racialized Others, I want to focus here on the ways seeing sadomasochism in the photographs depoliticizes the imperial violence depicted, and transfers disgust onto the "sadomasochistic" practices of individual US soldiers.[19]

In a context where viewers have very little information about Iraq, the war or international politics, these photographs carry extraordinary weight. Henry Giroux begins his essay on pedagogy and Abu Ghraib by listing three images from this most recent war: toppling the statue of Saddam Hussein, Bush landing on the air force carrier and the infamous England shot. He makes the point that "the media has consistently refused, for example, to comment critically on the ways in which the USA, in its flaunting of the Geneva Accords regarding torture, was breaking international law" as it has "put into place forms of jingoism, patriotic correctness, narrow-minded chauvinism and a celebration of militarization that renders dissent as treason, and places the tortures at Abu Ghraib outside of the discourses of ethics, compassion, human rights and social justice" (2004:15)·. Although there have been a few who have attempted to refocus attention on torture, like Jesse Jackson, who pointed out that "England didn't bring a leash to Iraq" (2004), the spectacularization of these images had diversionary effects.

It is the photographs' reception as sadomasochistic perversion that simultaneously produces patriotic Americans and screens off torture as a technique of imperial power. As Mark Danner writes, in a *New York Review of Books* essay, the "aberrant, outlandish character of what the photographs show – the nudity, the sadism, the pornographic imagery – seems to support" Bush's statement that the behaviors do not represent America (2004). On May 24, 2004, on a visit to the Army War College, President Bush dismissed the prison scandal as "disgraceful conduct by a few American troops who dishonored our country and disregarded our values" (2004). The argument that the photographs are the rogue, late-night actions of a few "bad apples" is more than the disavowal of the president and his staff; it is also a way of pressing the pathologization of sadomasochism into imperial service, and using this taint to shield the workings of power. As Danner argues:

> Behind the exotic brutality so painstakingly recorded in Abu Ghraib . . . lies a simple truth, well known but not yet publicly admitted in Washington: that since the attacks of September 11, 2001, officials of the United States, at various locations around the world . . . have been torturing prisoners . . . the bizarre epics of abuse coming out of Abu Ghraib begin to come into focus, slowly resolving from what seems a senseless litany of sadism and brutality to a series of actions that, however abhorrent, conceal within them a certain recognizable logic. (2004)

Rather than the sadistic actions of a few bad apples, the torture was part of a much larger course of action carried out around the world as part of a US military and political strategy. Yet, focusing attention on the particular bodies of the perverse guards instead of a larger US military and political strategy was effective on multiple levels. Indeed, in the aftermath of the scandal, while nine of the reservists who served at Abu Ghraib were convicted at court-martial or pleaded guilty to abuse charges (eight have been sentenced to jail time),[20] only one officer, Janis Karpinski, has been punished (she was demoted from Brigadier General to Colonel). The chain of command – then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, former CIA Director

George Tenet, Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez (the top US commander in Iraq) and Major General Geoffrey Miller (commander at Guantánamo Bay) – were not investigated.[21]

Further, mobilizing this perverse nationalistic "sadomasochism" performatively produces an American public that is unified and good and decent, as Alphonso Lingis puts it, against the "visual fascination" or "voluptuous anxiety" aroused by the photographs (2006:85).[22] This is fascination in Baudrillard's sense: a state of "narcoticized" spectatorship, where being mesmerized by the visible surface dissolves meaning into sheer spectacle (1994). Through this mechanism, torture, dehumanization, and imperialism are transmuted into the "sadomasochistic" practices of US soldiers, closing down a social or political response.[23] This mechanism allows the spectator to remain insulated from these photographs, safely distant through our disembodied viewing, denied an access point, a means of intervention. And, although this is the risk of all photographic representations, the photographs from Abu Ghraib dehumanize; they make a performance (already mediated by photographic representation) fantastical, moving torture from a space of the real (or the prison) to the space of fantasy (or sadism). The US audience of these photographs from Abu Ghraib is enabled, through these pathways, to think about the scandal (and its larger geo-political context) in terms of a particular, pathological relationship between sex and violence called "sadomasochism" and not "torture." The "sex," blurred out anuses, naked bodies, thumbs-up signs – an overwhelming, sensationalistic and outrageous surface – leaves only the echo or shadow of what it displaces.

"It's not a pretty picture," then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld commented in his remarks to a Senate committee shortly after the photographs were released (Rumsfeld 2004). The acts depicted, Rumsfeld goes on to say, are "acts that can only be described as blatantly sadistic, cruel and inhuman"; they are "fundamentally un-American." Contesting these statements, to document the American-ness, the context of a much larger US war strategy, the non-exceptionalism of sexualized forms of torture, is not enough. Rather we should recall that the problem, here, is the very effectiveness of the framing and staging of these photographs as sadomasochism.

BDSM and Torture: Performative Efficacy

How, finally, do we make sense of the relationship between consensual SM and photographic representations of torture?[24] I'll tell one more story. In late December 2002, several newspapers breathlessly revealed that Jack McGeorge, one of the UN arms inspectors deployed to Iraq to find weapons of mass destruction, had "founded, and has been an officer in, several sadomasochistic sex groups" including Black Rose, the political lobby group the NCSF, and the national Leather Leadership Conference (Grimaldi 2002). McGeorge became the butt of jokes on late-night talk shows, in cartoons featuring him in a leather harness and in news articles with such clever pun-titles as "A Taste of the Whip for Saddam" (Lauerman

2002) and "The UN's Foray into Saddamasochism" (Steyn 2002). This humor, as it were, points to a fundamental concern: that there is no difference between Saddam Hussein and the UN, between torture and BDSM. For example, in *Slate*, Timothy Noah asks, "adults should be allowed to engage in whatever sexual activities they desire, provided all parties consent . . . but what about when the desired sexual activity *is* torture?" (2002). He goes on to question the fuzziness of distinctions between SM and torture and how the distinction might be drawn. In response, like the activists on SM-ACT when the Abu Ghraib story broke, liberal "defenders" of BDSM argued that consensual SM is not real, that it is a theater or performance of suffering or that because SM is consented to, it is fundamentally different from torture. For example, David Steinberg, in a supportive column on McGeorge that takes Noah's "disturbing parallels" to task, argues "enjoying pain is not the same as getting beaten up on the street" and "consensuality is the defining difference between empowerment and abuse" (2003). This seems a rather defensive move, driven, as it is, by the need to draw a boundary around defensible SM as a practice unrelated to "getting beaten up on the street" or the torture practiced by various states, an argument that bolsters the pathologization of some forms of sadomasochism (state-sponsored, perhaps) even as it claims SM as normative, indeed, as no longer sadomasochistic.[25]

These insights allow us to refigure the relationship between SM and torture, moving beyond the liberal claim that the difference is that there is no consent to torture, and full consent in SM. Rather, we see in the photographs more than the yielding anuses of Iraqi bodies, the feminization and homosexualization of Arab Others. We see the performative abjection of those Iraqis made to "perform their own [sexual] deviance" (Mirzoeff 2006:26). This command performance, perversely, produces consent retro-citationally; as Morris argues, "the detainee's submission to the torturer's very command is made to appear as the source of the detainee's own enjoyment, and . . . the generalized deprivation of all individuals is represented as an expression of their consent" (2007:112). Here, if the Abu Ghraib photographs transform torture into consented-to, because always already, sexual/racialized deviancy, how do we read consent within the SM scene? Not as the pure inverse; SM both reveals and rejects the autonomous subject that grounds liberal claims to consent. In part, this is because SM is simultaneously obedient to, by drawing on, and subversive of, by exaggerating and performing, conventions of power. As Deleuze argues, "we all know ways of twisting the law by excess of zeal. By scrupulously applying the law we are able to demonstrate its absurdity and provoke the very disorder that it is intended to prevent or conjure" (1991:88). But beyond this performative mirroring of state (and other forms of) power, SM also "plays social power backward, visibly and outrageously staging hierarchy, difference and power, the irrational, ecstasy, or alienation of the body . . . S/M thus reveals the imperial logic of individualism and refuses it as fate" (McClintock 1995:143). It does so by necessitating liberal consent as the entry point into what is, in the end, a far more socially complex relationality between the bodies exposed and rendered vulnerable in play.

For these reasons, we must try to understand the interrogation scene and the photographs of torture as neither parallel nor oppositional, not a case of original and copy. I am inclined, rather, to suggest that SM and torture are more usefully read in terms of their specific performative effects, the interplay between a staged scene and its effect on the audience. And here, we see a chiasmic relationship between socialized power in SM and sexualized power in imperialism. In her reading of the torture in Abu Ghraib, Rosalind Morris argues that the sexualization of the techniques produces dehumanization – a non-relation, a social unmaking – that is grounded in the racialization of religious otherness. This echo of Scarry (although, for Morris, "non-relation" is Lacanian) opens up one way to differentiate torture from SM: effective SM produces social relations; effective torture destroys them. SM works when it connects the scene to the social real, when, even in the safe space of a classroom demo, even for me, the anthropologist in the room, the "just for play" becomes, instead, real, and the audience must risk identification with the bodies at play. Effective SM scenes can open up or expose the practitioner and the audience to different modalities of feeling, being, touching and knowing. In contrast, the Abu Ghraib photographs work when they disconnect the scene from the political real. Reading Lynndie England as a sadistic dominatrix forecloses identification and relationality: she becomes sick, and we (the audience) are shocked by what human beings – other human beings – can do. This distancing from England's particular body is, crucially, a distancing from the USA as body politic, and an effective veiling of the military-imperial scene in Iraq.

We can contrast these two scenes in terms of their modes of operation, as well as their social, performative and ideological contexts. But the interrogation scene, with "Rumsfeld" as safeword, reminds us that the efficacy of SM scenes is dependent on violent referents, unstable relations, and social audiences, just as the spectacle-performance of the photographs as and of torture shows us new, disturbing forms of organizational efficiency and representational efficacy. We should not, then, valorize minoritarian performances in terms of transgression, imagining a split between those performances that cohere social power and those that uproot it. Rather, both scenes, through repetition, encode, or coalesce bodies both individual and social; both are performances that produce and respond to power organized around effective performance. What remains, then, is to try and parse the complex circuits sexuality travels as it connects private selves and social power via the already mobile and diffused discourses of perversity, pathology and sadomasochism.

And here, as the war grinds on, it is a painful irony that, unlike in SM, we cannot halt this particular circuit by simply cursing Rumsfeld.

Notes

1. I use the acronyms "SM" (sadomasochism) and "BDSM" (bondage and discipline, domination/submission, and sadomasochism) interchangeably to denote a diverse community that includes consensual bondage, power exchange, pain/sensation play, role-playing and fetish.

2. For McKenzie, "performance" (cultural performances like SM, technological performance like high-performance computing and organizational performance like "total quality management") has replaced Foucauldian "discipline" as the contemporary regime of power/knowledge. McKenzie's "Age of Performance" draws attention to the *efficiency* or functionality of what have become increasingly flexible economies, subjects and circuits.
3. This essay is based on 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork (2001–2003) with the semipublic, pansexual, adult BDSM community in the San Francisco Bay Area, and 61 semiformal interviews with these practitioners.
4. "Top" refers to the person on the giving end of any form of BDSM; "bottom" describes the receiver.
5. These are examples of common, racialized SM play I explore in detail elsewhere (Weiss 2005).
6. "Dominant" refers to the top in an explicitly power-based relationship; "submissive" is the corresponding word for the bottom.
7. Consensual non-consent can also refer to play where, after extensive negotiation and planning, partners suspend a safeword for a specified time period.
8. The text reads: "to ensure that the manner of arrest achieves. . . . the maximum amount of mental discomfort . . . arrest him at a moment when he least expects it and when his mental and physical resistance is at its lowest. The ideal time at which to arrest a person is in the early hours of the morning" (CIA 1963: Section IX, C:85).
9. I am struck here by the strong class component to this scene, and its resonance with the Abu Ghraib army reservists. As Giroux notes, the reservists in the prison were subject to an "implied accusation that their working-class and rural backgrounds produced the propensity for sexual deviancy and cruelty in the grand style of the film *Deliverance*" (2004:10). Giroux is commenting on references to England as a "trailer-park torturer" (Toronts Star 2005) and the guards as "recycled hillbillies" (Hersh 2004b). Similarly, in this demo, Larry took on, at least for me, the classed markings of small-town deviance. In fact, it was this rural, blundering power that I found so threatening.
10. I read the "joke" of Rumsfeld, here, as both a gesture to the real of [this is needed here] imperialist power from which SM draws much of its symbolism and a mockery of that power. Co-opting the extraordinary power of the name while subverting its claims to rule ("Rumsfeld" is exchangeable with words like "red" and "pineapple"), Rumsfeld-as-safeword is a form of political critique where one can get off on and enact power at the same time.
11. Recent scholarship on Abu Ghraib has focused on the ways gender, (homo)sexuality, and racialization Othered the detainees in the prison (e.g., Richter-Montpetit 2007, Sjoberg 2007), yet the lack of critical attention to the specific modality of sadomasochism renders this picture incomplete. Indeed, in a thoughtful analysis of the relationships between torture as "gay sex," the Arab/Muslim Other and the US homefront, Jasbir Puar claims that the "sexual perversions associated with S/M" are "something not mentioned at all in the popular press" (2005:23). This comment highlights the lacuna within which this essay is situated.
12. Here I am concerned with the reception of this photograph of England, not the details of her particular case. For details on her case, plea and retrial, see CBS/AP (2004);

Washington Post (2004); Polk (2005); and Reuters (2005). England was, in the end, sentenced to three years in prison for her role in the scandal.

13. Compare England, for example, to Jessica Lynch, another rural, working-class girl who joined the military for economic opportunities. In their media coverage, these figures occupied opposite ends of a gender scale; Lynch was fragile, wounded, feminine, and saved, whereas England was tough, violent, masculine and perpetrator (see Kumar 2004 for a comparison of them in terms of US imperialism). See also Laura Sjoberg for an analysis of Lynch's (white) hyper-visibility in relation to the invisibility of two (racially) Other(ed) women in Lynch's company: Shoshana Johnson, an African American soldier injured in battle and taken to an Iraqi military prison, and Lori Piestewa, a Native American woman who was killed in the battle (2007:85–87).
14. There has been some BDSM activism to remove sadism and masochism from the DSM (see Moser and Kleinplatz n.d.). The latest edition is something of a victory: in the previous edition, simply having SM fantasies was grounds for diagnosis. In the current edition, one must both have these fantasies *and* have the fantasies cause "clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning" for diagnosis (American Psychiatric Association 2000).
15. For more on the pathologization of BDSM in popular media representations, see Weiss (2006).
16. At the press conference for the release of the report, Schlesinger commented, "it was kind of 'Animal House' on the night shift" (CNN 2004). This reference parallels some of the commentary that the torture was for the "amusement," "entertainment," and "fun" of the guards (e.g., Higham and Stephens 2004). An article in *Newsweek* suggests that "the Abu Ghraib torturers were just having a good, if sadistic, time" (Scelfo and Nordland 2004:41); the reporters also describe the prison scene as a "party" (42). Rosalind Morris argues that it was the satisfaction and enjoyment we could read in the photographs (the thumbs up, the smiles), rather than the torture itself, that made the photographs disturbing (2007:103). For Morris, the torturer's enjoyment is based on a reconfiguration of the tortured as satisfied and consenting (2007:123–130). I take up this formulation of consent below; here I want to note only that media commentary describing the torture as "fun" also shows the trivialization of sex: an inability to see the relations produced or destroyed by sexuality as both deadly serious and deeply embedded in modalities of power.
17. Leaving aside the (non)effectiveness of torture in the production of "reliable" information, reports note that the Abu Ghraib detainees were, for the most part, of no intelligence value (85–90% according to the Fay Report; 70–90% were "mistakenly" arrested according to the Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross) and further, the majority of the abuses (two-thirds, according to the Independent Panel to Review DoD Detention Operations) were not part of interrogation procedures (cited in Morris 2007:127).
18. For example, the Schlesinger report notes that the ratio of military police to detainees was 1 to 75 at one point; the prison was in an active combat zone; Abu Ghraib was "seriously overcrowded, under-resourced and under continual [mortar] attack" and the military reservists were seriously under-trained (2004:10–12).
19. Although I am bracketing a more sustained discussion of gender, race and class as they intersect in the prison and the photographs' reception, my reading of the photographs as imperial sadomasochism must be read in concert with work on Lynndie England's

body and gender, readings that range from England as racial/gendered inversion (e.g., Feldman 2004), to the sign of the "death" of cultural feminism (e.g., Ehrenreich 2004), to the terrible consequence of women in the military (Chavez 2004).

20. Megan Ambuhl is the only guard who was not sentenced to prison; she was discharged.
21. Human Rights Watch (with the ACLU) has called for a special prosecutor to investigate Rumsfeld, Tenet, Sanchez and Miller, since "the two people who can trigger investigations and prosecutions for the alleged war crimes and acts of torture . . . have been deeply involved in the policies leading to these alleged crimes, if not in the crimes themselves" (Human Rights Watch 2005:83; see also 2004).
22. As others have shown, the production and refiguring of a split between what Brian Keith Axel terms "national-normative" and "antinational" sexuality (2002:420) draws on gender, class, race and multiple modes of deviant sexualities. My analysis here is focused on sadomasochism as an under-examined national/non-normative deployment. For an analysis of what is, in some ways, the other side of this scandal, see Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai's reading of the construction of the "Monster-Terrorist" figure (e.g., bin Laden) as a damaged, deviant and pathological personality type (2002:123; see also Puar 2005:27).
23. This displacement of horror from the actual torture to its representation – via fascination – is not confined to these photographs. For example, in 2004 the *Boston Globe* ran a story on photographs depicting American soldiers raping Iraqi women, allegedly to be used to threaten or humiliate Iraqi detainees. The pictures were fake; they had come from two internet porn sites (*Sex in War*, a Hungarian site, and *Iraqi Babes*, an American site). However, the coverage provoked outrage about the pictures (WorldNet Daily, a conservative news service, dismissed the story as "disseminated by anti-American" or "Arab propaganda"; Gossett 2004a, 2004b), but very little outrage about actual practices of rape in the military or the Abu Ghraib prison in particular (Boston Herald 2004).
24. In examining this relationship, I am resisting a diachronic reading in favor of a synchronic reading. In part, this is because I do not see a mutual, temporal, or stable relationship between BDSM and torture at Abu Ghraib. I am reminded here of Elizabeth Freeman's critique of the temporality of Judith Butler's understanding of performativity. Freeman notes that Butler describes two forms of repetition: 1) repetition with a difference, or re-iteration, which is progressive (both politically and in temporal terms) and transformative and 2) repetition that is "merely citational," a backward-looking performance that consolidates norms as originals (Freeman 2000:728). While it is possible to read the events at Abu Ghraib as citational and SM play as reiterative, Freeman is critical of this binary reading in her analysis of time and temporal drag, a critique I am extending here.
25. This argument can be mapped on to Deleuze's differentiation of masochism and sadism. Deleuze argues that Sacher-Masoch's masochism and de Sade's sadism are entirely different mechanisms: sadism is institutional, quantitatively repetitive, demonstrative, and hostile to aestheticism, whereas masochism is contractual, qualitatively suspended, imaginative and aesthetic (1991:134). In this analysis, contemporary, consensual BDSM would be a form of masochism, while the detainee torture would be sadism. While I find this line of argument interesting, I am not convinced that breaking these forms apart in this way is a particularly useful path out of the discursive problems generated by "sadomasochism."

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Chapter 11

Professional Baseball, Urban Restructuring, and (Changing) Gay Geographies in Washington, DC

William L. Leap

A central feature of the DC city government's agenda for citywide economic renewal has been the construction of a baseball stadium. The area chosen for this stadium, a neighborhood west of the Navy Yard facility in Southeast DC, contained public housing units, some privately owned residences, several small businesses, as well as a cluster of gay-oriented show bars, discos, and sex clubs. Surprisingly, while the stadium project prompted outcries from housing rights advocates, local residents and some business owners, neither DC's gay activists nor its gay residential mainstream opposed the eradication of this segment of DC's commercial gay terrain or joined other voices in objecting to the displacement of the neighborhood's businesses and residents. Apparently, even though the area has long been a popular gay recreational space, this was not a space that gay men wanted to defend, but an area where loss could unfold without consequence.

This chapter uses a close reading of DC-area gay men's descriptions of this area and of their experiences at its venues to consider why there was so little gay objection to this component of urban restructuring in Washington, DC. While considering the meanings that different gay men assign to the neighborhood, the discussion situates these meanings within broader notions of (homo)sexual subjectivity and citizenship, urban gay commercial practices, and policies of urban restructuring in the late modern metropolis worldwide.[1] In effect, this chapter explores how the discursive construction of a moral geography (Modan 2007:90) strengthens connections between (homo)sexual privilege and the goals of urban planning, at the expense of urban residents whose lives are disrupted by restructuring agendas. In this disclosure of gay men's complicity in the validation of urban white authority, the interests of lesbian/gay anthropology and public anthropology become deeply entwined.

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Background: Washington, DC is a Very Gay City

Washington, DC is a **very** gay city. Of course, DC is much more than that. As the nation's capital city, it is the homebase for key segments of the federal bureaucracy and the network of non-governmental agencies connected to it. The city's monuments, office buildings, museums, and massive landmarks speak to the strength, stability and endurance of US state power, and also attract more than 25 million visitors per year into the DC area.[2] The federal and tourist presence aside, there is also everyday life "inside the monument." Some 555,000 people – 265,700 males (47.8%) and 289,300 females (52.6%) – call DC home, according to 2005 Census estimates. Of this number, 57% are African American, 31% are white, non-Hispanic, and 8.6% are of Hispanic/Latino origin (US Census Bureau: 2007). The Human Rights Campaign estimates that lesbians and gay men constitute 6% of the residents of the DC metropolitan area, with gay men constituting roughly 3.2% of the District area's residents (reported in Seigle 2001:C4). Also referencing data from the 2000 Census, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force reports that there are 2,693 gay and 985 lesbian same-sex households in the District of Columbia (Bradford, Barrett and Honnold 2002:52–53). In effect, the DC area has one of the highest concentration of same-sex identified men and women in the USA, and of same-sex identified households (Cohen 2001; Gates and Ost 2003:219).

Certain areas of Washington, DC have been closely associated with urban gay life since the beginning of the 20th century, e.g., Lafayette Park (in the 1920s–1950s), 14th Street and New York Avenue (during World War II), Georgetown (1960s–early 1970s), Capitol Hill and Southwest DC (1970s), Dupont Circle (since 1980s), and the area adjacent to Logan Circle (since the 1990s). Moreover, as Gates and Ost (2003:218) have shown through a close reading of US Census statistics, concentrations of same-sex identified male unmarried partners are also found in upper Northwest DC, in areas adjacent to Rock Creek Park, and along the 16th Street corridor, NW, as well as along East Capital Street, and along a segment of close-in Southeast (Gates and Ost 2003:218). Interestingly, US Census data do not indicate the presence of same-sex identified male unmarried partners elsewhere in Northeast DC or in portions of Southeast DC across the Anacostia River. This does not mean that there are no same-sex identified individuals or couples in these areas of the city, however. Instead, as Bolton (a 27-year-old, DC-born, white-collar African American gay-identified man, and a resident of one of these neighborhoods) explained to me in one of our first conversations in 1997, it means that same-sex identified persons living in these areas are expected to control their visibility and that their neighbors will reward them for being "good citizens" when they do.

> Bolton: To me, . . . it seems that with a lot of black gay residents, they tend to be just kind of mixed in with other working-class families in uh row houses in certain parts of the city. Their identities are kept kind of concealed. There's, they seem to get along

> kinda well but as far as their openness and their outness, not really. And people tend to respect them for not revealing "quote unquote" their business.

So I took that to mean that:

> Bill: . . . you might be unlikely to see a rainbow flag flying in front of a house on 13th Street that belonged to a black gay person or couple?

Bolton agreed:

> **Bolton:** Yes, definitely, you wouldn't, you wouldn't see that. You do have a lot of gay white individuals and couples that now live in black areas of the city. Especially Capitol Hill and 13th Street and so on and so forth. Yeah, I would definitely assume it was a white resident.

Mapping Gay City

These intersections of sexuality, race, and place to which Bolton refers indicate the paradoxical, contested terrain that is "the city" in the late modern, neoliberal moment. Indeed, while "community" or "nation" may have served such functions in the past, "the city" has now become the primary context through which people express their loyalty to "the state," gain access to the benefits and services afforded under state protection, and otherwise express or lay claim to the status of "citizen" as a political, rather than merely a cultural status (Beaureguard and Bounds 2000; Ong 2003:1–21).

Urban citizenship poses particular challenges to refugees and others who come from minority language, cultural and/or racial/ethnic backgrounds. And it can be equally challenging for those who enter the neoliberal dialogue already assigned a "spoiled identity" because of their non-normative sexual preferences and seemingly perverse erotic practices. For example, while the urban environment provides gay people with a range of opportunities that are not available to them in other locations, the city's explicitly gay venues only take root in certain locations, and usually are shaped in terms of strict expectations of consumption. In this way, the opportunities made available in the urban gay terrain also place great demands on same-sex identified men and women who have limited income or are otherwise at a distance from gay normative affluence.[3]

In recent work, I have been exploring how gay men respond to these contradictory demands of urban gay geography in the DC area.[4] When I began this work in 1995, I knew that references to the "gay ghetto" and the "urban (gay) village" found throughout the academic and commercial discussions of urban gay geography often framed descriptions of DC's gay terrain. Consistently, Dupont Circle was considered to be "the ghetto . . . [*t*]*he center of the gay experience*" in the nation's capitol", to cite the phrasing in *Betty & Pansy's Severe Queer Review of Washington DC* (1993:3).[5]

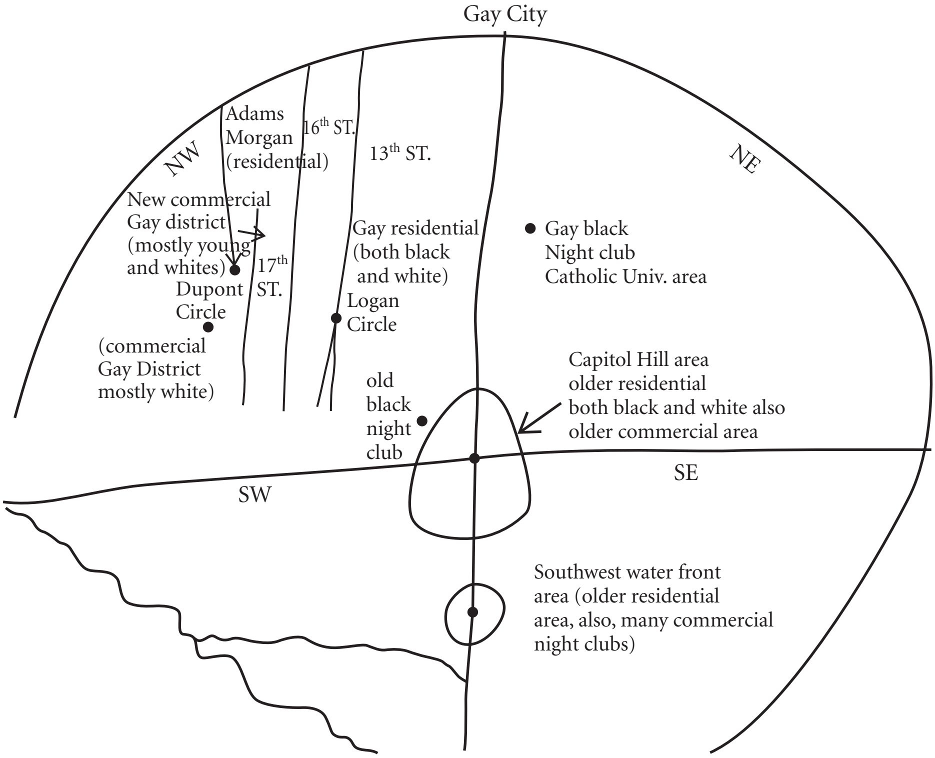

Figure 1a. Bolton Vance's map

Yet such centralized depictions did not accurately describe the texture of local gay geography as I knew it, as a long-time gay resident, or as other gay men described it when I began asking them to tell me stories about DC-related gay sites and experiences that they had had there.[6]

When I asked DC-area gay men to "draw a map of Washington, DC as a gay city," their maps were rarely limited to the Dupont Circle area. Instead, as the pair of maps for Figure 1 suggests, the men sketched out a terrain that extended broadly across the District of Columbia. In some instances, the maps included sites in suburban Maryland and Virginia, as well. The maps positioned individual sites at a distance from each other as often as they displayed sites in terms of neighborhood clusters. The maps indicated familiar DC landmarks but usually altered their locations, giving the map a fictional quality, which offset its claims to present a factual spatial display. Finally, the maps described primarily commercial venues, which meant that gay locations with private-sector or deeply personal associations appeared infrequently, if at all. In fact, while "where I go to play" was frequently indicated on these maps, "where I live" and "where I work" were uniformly excluded.

By way of example, let's look briefly at the map of DC as a gay city drawn by Robbie Gray (Figure 2). Robbie is a Euro-American gay-identified man, and was

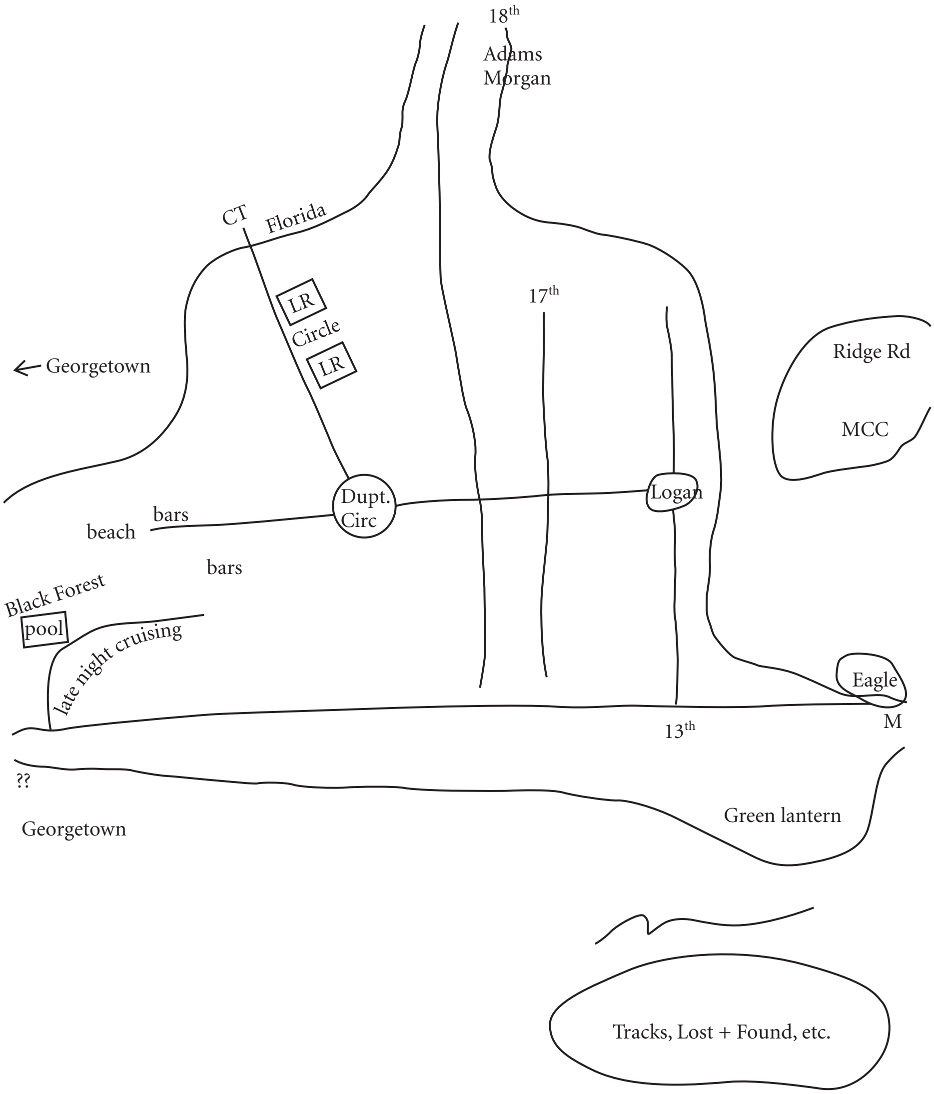

Figure 1b. Lawrence Goode's map

28 years old at the time that I interviewed him (summer 1996). In many ways, Robbie's map is a product of his own experiences in the city. But his framing of those experiences reflects an understanding of local gay geography that is not unique to Robbie's experience, alone. And I focus on those points of shared understanding in the following paragraphs.[7]

Robbie was born in rural Ohio. He left home before completing high school to join the US Marine Corps, and after basic training and several years of overseas duty, he was assigned to a military post in the DC suburbs. While living on the post, he began to explore what he jokingly terms his "previously suppressed"

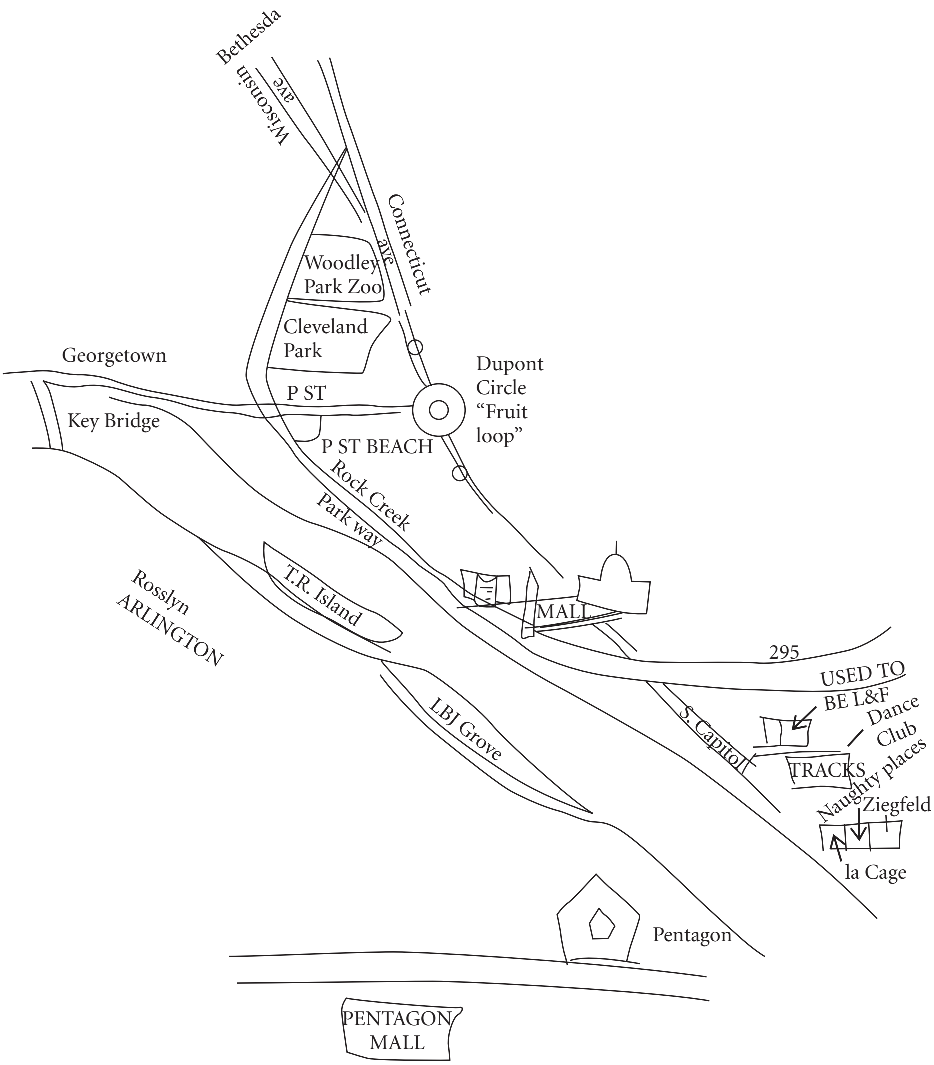

Figure 2. Robbie Gray's map

male-centered sexuality. At the end of his second tour of duty, he secured an honorable discharge from the Corps. After returning to civilian life, he became the office manager for a chemical supply company. His friendship network expanded, and within a year, he settled into a committed relationship with another former member of the US military. Robbie and I had met prior to our interview, but our conversations had always been casual and had not led us to discuss the topics related to this project. So most of what Robbie told me during our interview was material I was hearing for the first time. And given how frequently Robbie asked my opinion about the topics we were discussing, I sensed that he wanted to hear my thoughts on these topics, as well. What resulted was a lengthy conversation (more than three hours of tape-recorded material – most project interviews ran for 60–90 minutes) and a highly productive exchange.

Robbie followed neither the format of the conventional commercially prepared maps of the Washington, DC area (like those available through automobile clubs or for sale at travel book stores) or the format of the gay-oriented commercially prepared maps (like the Fun Map or the displays in local gay newspapers), when constructing his gay city map. While he included some of the points of reference that regularly dominate conventional maps of the DC area, the Federal Mall and other features of the City Center do not "capture the gaze" in Robbie's display. Instead, his map foregrounds the sweeping arc of the Potomac River, which is paralleled by the inscription of a sweeping arc of a roadway that does not exist in real life, but extends on Robbie's map uninterrupted from Bethesda, Maryland, across Northwest Washington, DC, through Dupont Circle, across the Federal Mall, into Southeast DC and (importantly) into the Navy Yard. He identifies a series of sites along this arc, but he leaves sites in the remainder of the city without reference. Thus, in Robbie's display, much of the city's terrain that is identified in commercial maps is submerged beneath an **empty white space**.

One of the ways in which Robbie's gay city map **reconfigures** the conventional mapping of DC geography is through this blanket deletion of sites. Other elements that help achieve this reconfigured display include **decentralization**, **spatial separation**, and **distance**. For example, very differently from the image of "gay ghetto" or "gayborhood," Robbie's map does not have a central location. Identified sites are positioned in relation to an extended spatial arc, but positioned individually, and with the exception of those in the Navy Yard, sites are not identified in terms of shared neighborhood location. Remembering that the arc extends from Bethesda, Maryland to the Navy Yard in Southeast DC, the distance subsumed in this display is considerable, and travel to, from and between these sites requires extensive movement across urban terrain. Yet Robbie's map **takes such movement for granted**, and so did his description of the mapped terrain, He shifted the focus of discussion quickly from one site to another, and one area of the city to another, without acknowledging issues of distance, availability of transportation services, or any related logistics, e.g.:

> ROBBIE: I just hit the highlights of the mall, the Tracks area, uh, Dupont Circle. If I had more time, I kinda mapped out some of the places in Dupont Circle, some of the icons of our culture, some of the different clubs. The important spots in Woodley Park, Cleveland Park, where a lot of my gay friends live. I could also put Shaw down there, and Capitol Hill, and Rosslyn where I am[8] which also has a tremendous gay community. Put down Alexandria, Alexandria down there as well. Put down LBJ Grove because that's something exciting there, uh, so that's pretty much it.

As his wording shows, what unites the sites displayed on Robbie's map is not their spatial location (as in the commercially prepared maps) or their shared function (as in the gay tourist publications) but the fact that Robbie was personally familiar with all of them: **He** had discovered their gay resources, **he** has reasons to visit each of them, and **he has** regularly moved between them and this, for him, creates a sense of a coherent gay terrain.

Robbie expressed this **personal engagement** with local gay geography repeatedly when he talked about specific sites identified on his map. Robbie marked *places in Dupont Circle* because he considers them to be *some of the icons of* **our** *culture.* He included *Woodley Park, and Cleveland Park,* because *that is where a lot of* [**his**] *gay friends live*. He indicated the location of the Federal Mall, adjacent to the US Capitol and the federal monuments, because he *had a couple of really nice dates walking around the mall.* He [*p*]*ut down Alexandria, Alexandria down there as well* because . . . *I know a* ***lot*** [emphasized] *of lesbian friends who live in Old Town* [the historic district of Alexandria]. *A lot of gay friends. I probably know forty people who live there.* He included the P Street Beach, LBJ Grove, Pentagon, and Pentagon Mall, all of which were outdoor cruising areas that he frequented before he settled down with his boyfriend; these had been sites of gay experience at an earlier time, and were part of a remembered gay terrain.

Finally, he identified a cluster of named locations in Navy Yard – "*used to be L&F,*" *Tracks, La Cage, Ziegfelds*, and a group of sites identified with the cover-term *naughty places.* As Robbie explained, his evaluative label *naughty* showed a certain **dissatisfaction** with the individual sites and, also, with the neighborhood in which they are located.

> Bill: The naughty places, what are they?
>
> Robbie: Oh, there is a supposed health spa down there, like Glorious or something. And there's this "adult arcade" place, and there is also some bathhouse or something, Washington Club or something.
>
> Bill: This is not an area that you are familiar with.
>
> Robbie: I know La Cage pretty well, but I don't know the others.
>
> Bill: And Tracks, you know?
>
> Robbie: Not so much anymore. I don't go down to any of that area much, crime's just too bad. Last time I went there with my friend, every window was busted out of his car when we came out.
>
> Bill: Really!
>
> Robbie: Every car down the whole lot. The police station is right there. All the way around the block, so at least about twenty cars, the windows had been busted out. Nobody seemed to know anything or say anything.

Other DC-area gay men interviewed for this project made similar comments about gay sites in the Navy Yard, and about the Navy Yard area itself, as we will see.

Ironically, Robbie also said he felt **disconnection** from the gay venues found in Dupont Circle area, although here, these feelings respond not to crime, vandalism and urban decay, but to the somewhat superficial quality of gay life that he associates with that neighborhood and its venues, the presence of the many *icons of our culture* (a remark from earlier in the interview) notwithstanding.

> Robbie: A lot of the gay community is very negative and destructive, you know this "I have to be pretty" and "I have to go out" and "I have to be . . . Mr A crowd", all these different things that I don't connect with. . . . The only reason I go down there is to go into a club. Or maybe going to Dupont Italian Kitchen or to a restaurant. I don't feel any connection at all with Dupont. So I just go there to use the services just like I would in Bethesda or some other place.

I asked Robbie whether his friends have similar feelings about the Dupont Circle area.

> Robbie: My close friends are not downtown at Dupont any more, because they went there while they were coming out and experienced that, and then they moved on. They don't, and that's why I don't go there much any more.

Urban Gay Geography, Citizenship, and *the Play of Figuration*

Far from offering two-dimension representations of a static urban gay terrain, respondents' maps of DC gay geography suggest an understanding of urban gay experience that is framed in terms of an ongoing engagement with the urban context. As Robbie's map suggests, respondents express this reframing by reconfiguring the city's official terrain in their displays, by taking movement for granted, by framing their maps primarily in terms of personal knowledge rather than outside sources, and also by tempering their descriptions with feelings of dissatisfaction and disconnection.

The imaging of urban gay terrain that emerges under such circumstances is similar to what Frederic Jameson once termed "the play of figuration," that particularly late modern construction under whose terms certain "fundamental realities are ultimately unrepresentable . . . [and] can never emerge into the process of perception," yet can still "find figures through which to express [themselves] in distorted and symbolic ways" (2000:279). Indeed, as I will argue below, the map-drawing task and the follow-up discussion provided respondents with opportunities to explore the ideologies that shaped their understandings of place, as DC residents, as persons from different race and class backgrounds, and as same-sex identified men. But more than that, the respondents' participation in these tasks also opened a space from which they could *talk back to* those ideologies and their authority, as well as talk about them. That is, and as Robbie's comments have already suggested, instead of describing their maps impassively, the respondents' remarks are filled with personal narratives (and with stories about experiences of others) that are rich in reflective and evaluative statements. In some ways, these statements establish the outlines of the moral geography, in Modan's sense of this term (2007:90), showing where and how speakers see themselves fitting into the urban terrain under discussion. But even then, and emphasizing Modan's point about the scope of evaluative messages conveyed through these moral statements, these remarks are not solely biographical. They also speak to the broader "connections between the physical space of the city and the possibility of lesbian and gay empowerment" (Kenny 2001:12) – even if they do not always depict the workings of power in progressive and liberatory terms.

Home Plate in the Orgy Room

My studies of DC-area gay geography began to move in an entirely unexpected direction in 2004 because of a series of events stemming from an unlikely source: the return of professional major league baseball to the DC area. DC had a baseball team, the Washington Senators, years ago, but the city lost the franchise to Minneapolis-St. Paul in 1960 (the team was traded to Montreal in 1969). After more than forty years of waiting, major league baseball returned to the city in spring 2005, when the new team (the Washington Nationals) played their first home game in RFK (Robert F. Kennedy) Stadium.

According to the agreement authorizing the transfer of the baseball team's franchise, the DC City government[9] was obligated to provide the team with an entirely new, state-of-the-art baseball stadium, to be financed through some combination of public and private revenue. In some ways, the terms of this agreement are unremarkable. Since the 1980s, city governments have regularly become involved in urban restructuring projects in which distinctions between "public" and "private" space and "public" and "private" financing are erased (Zuckin 1993:50–51, 254) so that commercial and entertainment activities can become "complementary and mutually supportive of land uses" (Hannigan 1998:63). Indeed, "the completion of a high rise *or a sports stadium* can serve as a bookmark in the ongoing story of city-making" (Valle and Torres 2000:101, my emphasis) when city governments decide to narrate the story in these terms.

At the same time, City government's support for the stadium project has to be examined within historical context as well as in broader socio-economic terms. Similar to conditions in Los Angeles and other cities worldwide, Washington, DC experienced severe economic decline in the 1980s and early 1990s, due to shifts in the world's financial markets, rising levels of regional unemployment, and the shrinking vitality of the regional industrial sector (primarily, micro-technology firms in the Virginia suburbs). The changes in the area's economic conditions heightened difficulties already created by DC government's inept management of public services and social programs. In response, the US Congress created a Control Board in spring 1995 to manage city affairs until DC City government could propose and implement a plan guaranteed to restore efficiency and competence in government.

Anthony Williams was a key figure in the emerging plan. Williams had been the Chief Financial Officer of the Control Board, and was elected to the position of DC Mayor in 1998 largely on the basis of his success as the Control Board's CFO. Williams ran on a platform of urban renewal, promising to revitalize the economy of the city's long-neglected downtown area through construction of new, upscale housing units and new business initiatives, using local national and international financing to accomplish these goals, as projects required. He also proposed redevelopment projects for the Southwest DC Waterfront (the area in Southwest DC where the Anacostia River joins the Potomac River) and for the area adjacent to the Navy Yard (the US Navy's ship-building facility) and adjacent areas along the Anacostia River in nearby Southeast DC.

A new baseball stadium was not originally included in this plan, but the stadium project was added as soon as the City had the chance to bring professional baseball back to the DC area. After rejecting alternative sites in other areas of the city, DC City government proposed to build an entirely new stadium complex in the Navy Yard area of close-in Southeast DC. At that time, in addition to the US Navy's ship-building facility (the "Navy Yard") at M and 8th Streets, SE, the area contained several blocks of public housing, some privately-owned housing units, several taxicab dispatch and service offices and other business offices, an asphalt company and gravel plant, a Metro Bus repair yard, many empty warehouses, as well as a selection of the city's well-known, gay dance clubs, show bars and sex clubs.

The gay entertainment zone adjacent to the Navy Yard facility has been part of DC's gay geography since the mid 1960s, but the area began to flourish in the years after Stonewall, as gay men took advantage of the forms of gay recreation now available there: disco music, dancing, good food, entertainment, socializing, anonymous sex, all housed in locations shielded from the outsiders' gaze, from gay-bashers, and from police harassment. No other part of the city had so much to offer gay men, or so it appeared at that time.[10]

By 1985, disco fever had been replaced by techno- and house music genres, and new dance clubs like Tracks (opened in 1984) took advantage of the new styles. Show bars continued to flourish, with the addition of Wet and Edge, which offered a range of on-stage entertainment for men and for women as of 1986. Navy Yard sites continued to draw crowds throughout the 1990s, even as the 17th Street corridor NW and the Logan Circle area (11th and P Streets NW) also became popular locations for evening entertainment. Navy Yard gay venues provided on-street parking, offered earthier, and more sexually explicit forms of entertainment, and were not as pretentious as the clubs in Northwest. And, in spite of the initial misunderstandings in the 1970s, Navy Yard sites were now attracting a diverse clientele – members of the military, blue-collar workers, farm boys from rural Maryland, residents of the city and the suburbs, of older and younger ages and of white, black, Hispanic and Asian backgrounds. This was a very different "scene" from the preppy, dress-for-success customer base that was beginning to shape the new gay entertainment zone in the upscale Logan Circle area in Northwest DC.

The plans for restructuring the Navy Yard area cast their shadow over the area's gay terrain as early as 1999. Tracks closed that year so that a multistoried office building could be built on the site, one of several such structures that accompanied the construction of the Southeast Federal Center and its intended stimulation of economic renewal in the Navy Yard neighborhood.[11] As that large office complex came to completion, plans for the stadium project began to be finalized, and those plans assumed that all structures currently located within the proposed construction zone would be eliminated; indeed, one of the proposals for stadium design placed home plate in the area then occupied by the orgy room of the gay bathhouse on O Street, SE. City government began taking the necessary steps to "clear" the construction zone as early as 2001. One by one, residents living inside the construction zone were evicted, and businesses located inside the zone shut down – the area's gay venues included.

Navy Yard may be a Gay Space, but not a Space Worth Fighting For

The closing of the Navy Yard's gay venues generated widespread expressions of regret from DC-area gay men located across the social, racial, and economic spectrum.[12] But these remarks remained almost entirely within the realms of personal discourse: Gay men's voices did not claim a visible place in the larger efforts to protest the stadium project. The Coalition to Stop Stadium Construction, a grassroots-based multi-interest group, did not include the effects of stadium construction on the area's gay venues in its protest agenda, and gay voices did not join the coalition and demand that its spokespersons address gay concerns. Even though stadium construction required the closing of most of the Navy Yard's other businesses as well as the displacement of more than 2,000 people who considered the neighborhood home (more than 1,800 of whom were residents of a low-income, subsidized housing project north of M Street, SE) there was no evidenced coalition of gay interests with those of the area's low-income residents. The Gay Activist Alliance (DC's oldest gay rights group) tried to initiate public discussion on this issue, but no other local activist group joined them. The one public meeting that GAA organized, which was combined with a complimentary dinner and a drag show at one of the Navy Yard's show bars, was attended by fewer than 100 people, most of whom were employees of the gay venues endangered by the stadium project, and many of whom were reportedly not gay-identified themselves. Finally, some DC City Council members suggested that the Council might suspend the DC licensing laws that restrict the location of businesses engaged in "adult entertainment" so that the Navy Yard's gay businesses could move to other city neighborhoods; but the City Council never acted on that proposal, and DC gay residents never challenged Council members to justify their refusal to act.

Even within the realm of personal discourse, the stadium project and its effects on the Navy Yard's gay entertainment district did not become a "hot button" topic, even when individuals deliberately invited reflections on the issue and its consequences. I used my own social networks to help gauge this condition, asking friends to ask friends what people were saying about the stadium project. I received reports of lukewarm reactions from all parties. Individuals reportedly remembered certain events at certain sites, or bemoaned the fact that good times had come to an end, but they quickly moved on to other topics, keeping the Navy Yard within the terrain of memory. During spring and summer, 2005, I tried repeatedly to start discussions on this topic in a DC-area gay online chat room. My efforts yielded little commentary on stadium construction or Navy Yard geography. Instead, the online conversation quickly morphed into a light-hearted exchange of messages about baseball, baseball players, tight pants, jock straps, plastic crotch protectors, and steroids.

Overall, the Navy Yard was an important space in DC-area gay geography, but not a space that DC gay men seemed willing to fight for.

Now why was that? In a city where protest and civil disobedience are deeply engrained in public history, and where lesbian/gay activism has regularly spoken out against the unsavory policies of local and national governments[13] I would have expected to see gay men and their allies doing more to oppose the eradication of such a significant component of local gay geography, and I would have expected to see more evidence of alliance-building between gay activists and other interest groups in support of this cause. So what conditions intervened to distract, pre-empt, and discourage DC-area gay men from pursuing such responses?

The immediate answer to these questions can be found in gay men's almost categorical endorsement of the ideology of urban restructuring. The key points in that ideology include:

- urban growth is good,
- economically depressed urban areas like that adjacent to the Navy Yard facility should be reshaped to accommodate business ventures that generate new opportunities for employment, new sources of consumer income, and new tax revenues, and
- the immediate consequences and inconveniences of neighborhood disruption are inconsequential when compared to the broader social benefits that are gained by restructuring.

But if an ideology of urban restructuring is at work in this case, how did it take hold among DC-area gay men and what made this position so appealing? To answer this question, we must remember that gay men's understandings of the Navy Yard's gay geography are not independent constructions, but are connected to what they understand about DC gay geography and about how that geography is nested within the geography of Washington, DC as a whole.

We were introduced to these connections above, when Robbie included the *naughty places* in his listing of gay sites in the Navy Yard, when he explained that he no longer frequents these sites because *crime's just too bad*. The seriousness of the problem is compounded by the fact that *[t]he police station is right there,* yet *. . . [n]obody seemed to know anything or say anything.* Read in isolation, Robbie is constructing the Navy Yard as a site of urban decay that cries out for some form of outside intervention, uplift and remedy. Unfortunately, Robbie's remarks cannot be read in isolation. Other men interviewed for this project offered similar assessments of the Navy Yard area and, frequently the gay terrain located there. These references are always framed as statements of disconnection, which is what makes them curious: Why would respondents talk in such detached and negative ways about sites which, at the same time, have been such important locations in their urban gay careers?

The answer to this question requires a brief rethinking of the relationship between gay city maps and ideologies of place. As the discussion of Robbie's map suggested, gay city maps display some of the common sense assumptions – or ideologies, in Althusser's classic definition – that structure (or interpellate) gay men's understanding of who they are, as subjects, in DC urban geography. Under Althusser's definition, ideology provides individuals a "'representation' of the[ir] imaginary relationship . . . to their real conditions of existence" (1971:162) and thereby provides the state with an apparatus for achieving regulation and control of its subjects by means of persuasion rather than repression. Yet it would be incorrect to assume that ideology is entirely a matter of "false consciousness" and mindless compliance with state power. Althusser is careful to note that the hailed subject is more than a passive participant in the working of interpellation.[14] Rather:

> It is indeed a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so . . .) obviousness which we cannot fail to recognize and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying, "'that's obvious,' 'that's right,' 'that's true'." (Althusser 1971:172)

Extending this argument, the "play of figuration" through which respondents shaped their selective representation/erasure of Navy Yard geography can be connected to this work of recognition to which Althusser refers, and needs to be analyzed in ideological terms. That ideology is connected to the broader agendas of state power needs to be remembered in the analysis, especially (as is the case here) when ideologies are expressed in the context of urban restructuring.

As of summer 2005, before stadium construction began, there were few major business concerns in the Navy Yard. But there were a large number of warehouses, some used for storage, others vacant, as well as small-scale, space-efficient businesses in several categories. Intermixed among the warehouses and business sites were clusters of single-family row-houses. Some of these are still resident-occupied, others have been converted into business sites; many are now unoccupied, awaiting demolition in the wake of the stadium project and associated construction. The public housing facility north of M Street and east of New Jersey Avenue is the largest single residential aggregate; at one time, this complex housed as many as 4,000 low-income persons. And even after its high rise structures were torn down, and the construction of the Southeast Federal Center (across M Street from the housing facility) encouraged rumors that the remainder of the facility would be demolished, 1,800 residents continued to live in the low-rise units adjacent to New Jersey Avenue. Their status in relation to the stadium project was still under negotiation in May 2008.

Overall, US Census statistics describe the Navy Yard as a low-income residential area with 54% of the households falling below the federal poverty line, and reporting an unemployment rate that is nearly three times that elsewhere in the city, along with other indicators of low social status.[15]

As we have seen, respondents do not reference these features of the social landscape in the depictions of the Navy Yard area on their gay city maps. But they do reference these features in their verbal comments about the area's social landscape and in the stories that they tell about their visits to this area of the city.

Typical in that regard was the framing of the Navy Yard that grew out of Robbie's reference to some of the gay venues as *naughty place*s, as discussed above. Bolton Vance describes the social landscape in similar terms, painting a picture of desolation, invoking themes of disconnection, while omitting explicit references to responsible parties and to the residents of the neighborhood, as well.

> Bolton: There's a seediness about [the area]. It's in a very isolated, industrialized part of the city, that you know it is almost like you are going out of your way to go there, and to me that is just reminiscent of an older time for the gay experience.
>
> Bill: Am I hearing a little unease on your part vis-à-vis that, that part of town? Doesn't sound like this is your favorite place to go.
>
> Bolton: No, there is something, there is something about the. . . . It is so disconnected with uh the rest of the city. It's almost like a bottom of the barrel aspect of the city. So there is that. I don't like that, I don't like to have to go to the most run-down, isolated uh decadent part of the city to explore my sexuality.

Implications: Why there was no Gay Objection to the Stadium Project

Importantly, gay men are not the only people in the DC area who describe the Navy Yard area in these terms. Other members of the area's queer communities and heterosexuals who visit the Navy Yard area's gay clubs (and the other dance clubs that opened in that area and have now closed because of stadium construction) use similar phrasings when asked about the area. Media sources, as well, use similar references when discussing the location of the stadium project, and so do the public documents when presenting cost estimates associated with project implementation – including the land acquisition cost studies, which generated the cost estimates for purchasing the properties required for stadium construction. In all of these instances, what is being described is an area of the city where economic opportunity is no longer evidenced, where signs of isolation, decline and decay have come to dominate the landscape, and where "bottom of the barrel" experiences (to borrow Bolton's phrasing) have become everyday occurrences, rather than the exceptions. Such a terrain cries out for intervention, for remediation, for restructuring – and that is exactly what initiatives like the new baseball stadium project are intended to accomplish.

I can argue that the creation of a DC-based gay geography draws heavily on the work of disidentification (Muñoz 1999:1–34; Pêcheux 1982), as seen in the reconfiguration of the arrangements of sites in the sense detailed in conventional sources, the addition of imaginary features to the local gay terrain, the emphasis on movement and other first-person experiences to ensure that gay terrain has personalized meaning, as well as the references to disconnection, which constantly pull the subject away from the gay geography with whose construction he is so actively engaged. Ironically, while the work of disidentification yields understandings of urban gay space that conflict with conventional depictions of DC geography, these understandings also coincide with arguments that target the Navy Yard area as a site for urban restructuring. Thus gay men who talk about the Navy Yard in these terms are aligning themselves with the stance of the "good gay citizen" as that has been defined repeatedly in the DC context: they pursue sexual interests actively and quietly, but do not allow sexuality to undermine their engagement with the broader public good.

The meaning of "good gay citizenship" that emerges with this endorsement of urban renewal has additional consequences, given that the ideological basis for the argument – the disidentification with conventional descriptions of DC geography – has led to the erasure of references to the Navy Yard's non-gay commercial and residential presence. This characterization of the Navy Yard leads the "good gay citizen" to ignore the displacement of approximately 2,000 people, almost all of whom are African Americans of low-income backgrounds with limited residential options. The absence of comment lends additional authority to the opposition of blackness and poverty with gayness, whiteness, and affluence that has surfaced repeatedly in this discussion. But if the respondents believe that the neighborhood is filled with "poverty, crime, and urban decay," and that the stadium project promises to correct those conditions, opposition to construction is contrary to "common sense." As a result, the gap between racialized and sexualized actors is widened, and the common cause which could extend across divisions of race and sexuality becomes even more difficult to recognize. To state the point more directly: since the displaced persons are closely identified with African American backgrounds, gayness becomes more closely identified with whiteness.

A Paradox: Why Gay Men would Advocate the Eradication of their Own Gay Entertainment Zone

Surprisingly, a tacit endorsement of the stadium project also endorses the eradication of Navy Yard gay sites. This seems a curious stance for DC-area gay men to adopt, given the area's roots in DC gay culture, the continuing popularity of the sites, and the favorable memories which these sites still inspire. But here again, a broader perspective on these issues is required. Changes in DC gay geography since the mid 1990s, also connected to the urban restructuring in other areas of the city, have allowed new areas of gay experience to emerge: There is a gay sex club north of K Street, NW (to say nothing of the steam rooms and saunas in health clubs across the city) and bars with active backrooms in other locations downtown. Some gay clubs host drag shows as weekend events. There are gay and gay-friendly dance clubs featuring a variety of musical styles all over Northwest. There are bookstores and gay novelty shops on Connecticut Avenue and in Georgetown and other upscale neighborhoods. Truly, as Bolton worded it, *I don't . . . have to go to the most run-down, isolated uh decadent part of the city to explore my sexuality.* The Navy Yard was a popular gay resource for many DC-area gay men, but many of those who frequented those venues have other options, and if they must adapt to new venues, they will.[16]

My Final Thoughts

The gay silence on baseball stadium construction has to do with a particular understanding of the Navy Yard neighborhood, whose articulation in maps and verbal description is consistent with the complex interplay of disidentification and other recognitions that regulate the gay subject's sense of place within DC gay geography, and with the logic of urban restructuring embodied in SEFEC and in the baseball stadium projects. Even with evidenced disidentifications, endorsement of the stadium project and its consequences is predetermined by the interpellations that constitute the "placed" gay subject in these instances. Everything that the stadium project promises to bring to the Navy Yard area, gay men's depiction of the Navy Yard has already recommended.

The common ground here – readings of the Navy Yard area in terms of poverty, crime and urban decay – appeal to racist and class-biased assumptions about inner-city experience which are also central to the ideology of urban restructuring, but whose deep embedding in gay men's accounts of urban gay experience is not always acknowledged. Particularly important is the fact that gay men of color as well as white gay men articulated almost identical evaluations of the Navy Yard area's gay terrain. The gay complicity in the displacement of 2,000 DC residents is disturbing. It is, however, also consistent with the assumptions of the "good gay citizen" that I have addressed elsewhere in this paper. So I am left facing questions that are filled with classic Althusserian frustration: Under what conditions will DC-area gay men begin to speak outside of these seemingly pre-determined ideologies of urban gay space? And which DC-area gay men will assume responsibility for this task?

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Notes

1. Following Althusser (1971, esp. 170–177), Gramsci (1971) and Pêcheux (1982), I will define ideology as a socially privileged form of "common sense," and assume (borrowing from Woolard 2000:27) that linguistic studies of "the microculture of communicative action" offer useful insights into the "political economic considerations of power and social inequality" relevant to the lives of particular subjects at particular sites.
2. Statistic obtained at: http://youronlineguide.blogspot.com/2008/04/most-visited-places-in-world-2007.html (accessed on August 20, 2007).
3. Sources exploring how these contradictions inform gay men's experiences include: Bech (1997), Duggan (2002), Houlbrook (2005), Howard (1999), Kenny (2001), Leap (2005), Parker (1999), and Provencher (2007).
4. Comparable lines of inquiry in the city centre and townships in metropolitan Cape Town, South Africa are reviewed in Leap (2004, 2005) and other writing.
5. Similarly, the DC-area gay newspapers foreground sites in the Dupont Circle area when they map the locations of gay venues in their bar guides; gay "fun maps" and other materials prepared for gay tourists also emphasize Dupont Circle locations, often constructing the design of the map so that the Dupont Circle area "captures the gaze" before attention is directed to venues located in other areas of the city.
6. As of December 2005, I collected interviews from approximately 100 gay-identified men for this project, taking some care to ensure that the respondent pool is proportionally stratified by age, race/ethnic background, length of residence in the DC area, indicators of economic status, and particulars of homosexual self-identification.
7. I began formal interviewing for this project in summer of 1995, and as of spring 2003 I had interviewed more than 100 same-sex identified men of white, African American and Hispanic backgrounds, The map-drawing task was the starting point for all of the

formal interviews. That is, after explaining project interests, I asked the respondent to "draw a map of DC as a gay city," and then used the features included in the map to focus discussion during the remainder of the interview conversation. I also invited the respondent to make any changes in the map that particular points addressed in the conversation might make necessary. Frequently, what began as discussions of identified sites shifted into more broadly focused reflections on DC-area gay life that were not tied to the map or the identified sites.

8. Robbie's phrasing suggests that he and his partner live in Rosslyn; I knew this from a previous conversation. Robbie did not explicitly indicate "where I live" at any point in this interview.
9. DC City government is a term of convenience in this discussion. City endorsement is required under the franchise agreement, but city authorities have not united around the project by any means. The DC Mayor's office has been its primary advocate, along with affiliated agencies within the Executive Branch of City government. Some members of the DC City Council have endorsed this effort; the then-Chair of the City Council (Linda Cropp) and other council members were less supportive, if not openly critical. Cropp offered her own proposals for stadium finance, then reached agreement with the Mayor on a public-private financing plan. Stadium politics and related redevelopment issues were prominent in the city-wide elections in fall 2006. Cropp ran for mayor and was defeated by former Council member, Adrian Fenty, who had been more antagonistic toward City involvement in stadium construction.
10. Black as well as white gay DC shared this utopian vision of the Navy Yard's gay venues, at least initially. However, some sites welcomed persons of color, while other sites admitted them only when evidence of affluence trumped evidence of race.
11. The site of the Southeast Federal Center was the largest piece of unoccupied land inside the District of Columbia. Initially, the City's Planning Office assumed that the SFC would be sufficient to revitalize the Navy Yard neighborhood. This means that the baseball stadium's presence in the Navy Yard was intended to address purposes other than neighborhood renewal. I return to this issue in the conclusion of this chapter.
12. The impact on DC lesbian experience was also considerable, since some of the gay venues regularly scheduled time for women-only events. Carnes (2008) examines these issues from the point of view of DC-area, African American women-identified women's experiences.
13. Note, for example, the prominent place that Martin Duberman gives to DC-based activism in his discussion of events leading up to the events at Stonewall (Duberman, 1993) and likewise, the visible lesbian/gay contingent (sponsored by the National Lesbian and Gay Task Force) participating in the April 10, 2006 National Day of Action for Immigrant Justice.
14. This point in Althusser's argument is frequently misunderstood or misinterpreted. See, for example, Eagleton (1991:142–146).
15. My interviewing confirms that some Navy Yard residents were also able to find employment at the Navy Yard's gay businesses, at least one of which (Tracks) consciously sought to seek employees from the neighborhood; after Tracks closed (1999), no other gay business extended employment options to neighborhood residents. Neighborhood activists report that very few of these employees have been able to find comparable work in the stadium facility or in associated businesses that are now opening nearby, despite "official" campaigns encouraging businesses to hire locally.

16. As noted in footnote 15, employees of these venues have not been able to find work elsewhere, and for them, the closing of the clubs is more serious. Equally serious are the restrictions on opportunities that closure imposes on blue-collar black and white gay residents of the southern Maryland suburbs, who were attracted to the Navy Yard's show bars and to the uncomplicated, anonymous sexual activities in the adjacent sex clubs. The importance which these men assign to the Navy Yard's gay venues is not articulated by other DC-area gay men – or recognized by the public opposition to the stadium project. But these are not DC residents (or DC voters) and even if they voiced their concerns in public settings (and it is not clear that many did), their statements are unlikely to have much influence over DC City government.

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Part IV

International and Local Formations of Same-Sex and Transgender Identities

Out in Public: Reinventing Lesbian/Gay Anthropology in a Globalizing World Edited by Ellen Lewin and William L. Leap
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Chapter 12

Public Sex: The Geography of Female Homoeroticism and the (In)Visibility of Female Sexualities

Megan Sinnott

Academic discourses are paradigmatic in the same way popular narratives are; the more frequently a statement is made the more it appears to be true. For example, the idea that societies evolve towards a state of increasing freedom and betterment has the same intuitive appeal and familiarity as the idea that women's status has steadily improved throughout the course of history. Of course, feminist and post-modernist scholars have steadily challenged the presumed truth values of these claims, and while arguably a full paradigmatic shift has not yet occurred, these hegemonic claims are open to scrutiny and reflection. This essay is an effort to challenge one such paradigmatic claim made within the fields of sexuality studies – the claim that male forms of same-sex sexuality and transgenderism are more prolific, significant, and obvious than female forms cross-culturally. The claim that female same-sex cultural practices and transgenderism are rarely found lesser versions of male sexuality is so widespread in the literature on sexuality (both historical and cross-cultural studies) that it typically needs only be briefly referred to in texts on the subject in order to confirm and reproduce the presumed truthfulness of the narrative.

The assumption that women's same-sex sexuality/transgenderism is rare has been critiqued within feminist and queer anthropology for decades, most consistently by Evelyn Blackwood (e.g., Blackwood 1986, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2007; Blackwood and Wieringa 1999a, 1999b, 2007). Evelyn Blackwood traced the development of the study of same-sex sexuality within academia and identified the dismissal of female modes of same-sex sexuality that have characterized much of the literature:

> The vast majority of evidence reported pertained to male homosexuality; very little data was included on lesbian practices. Some of the first American researchers who surveyed cross-cultural data on homosexuality argued that lesbianism was cross-culturally less well developed, less common, and less visible than men's homosexuality . . . That view set the tone for the formative years in anthropology of "homosexuality" that began to take shape in the 1970's following the rise of the gay rights movement. (Blackwood, 2002:77)

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The inability of various researchers to recognize female forms of same-sex sexuality is related to the lack of gender analysis often found in studies of male same-sex sexuality. Ellen Lewin (2002) identified this trend in studies that fail to adequately explain male same-sex sexuality or transgenderism and meaning systems within a larger gender context: "Gender enters into the discussion insofar as male-male erotic connections disrupt conventional expectations for masculinity but not with respect to the concerns with hierarchy and status that are at the heart of feminist understandings of gender" (2002:113). Gender, as a hierarchical system that defines and structures relationships between men and women as these categories are culturally defined, must be a central component of an analysis of sexual identities, categories, and practices.

This chapter seeks to explore the role space plays, in cultural and historical context, in the production of the sexual formations that are the topic of LGBT/queer studies. Indeed, this is precisely the goal of many studies in anthropological and social geography, including feminist and LGBT/queer studies analyses of space, which have identified the ways that spatial categories structure the cultural performance of gender and sexuality (e.g., Blunt and Rose 1994; Duncan 1996; Johnson 2006; Knopp 1995; Kramer 1995; Leap 1999; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003; Manalansan 2005; Rendell 1998; Rose 1993; Weston 1998). This paper will build on these insights by arguing that the paradigm that declares women absent from engagement in same-sex sexual culture is the result of a geographic schema operating within the literature on homoeroticism/same-sex sexuality/transgenderism (hereafter just "same-sex sexuality"). This paradigm depends upon a linkage between same-sex sexuality and spaces that are coded as masculine and public within the texts themselves.

As Susan Gal argues (2002), there is no inherent or stable meaning of the dualism of public/private, and these terms gain their significance only in particular iterations in which a space is labeled public in contrast to another space. For example public/private can reference the following dualisms: street/house, sidewalk/front porch, front porch/interior house, living room/bedroom, such that no individual space has any inherent quality of being public or private. Of course, these dualisms are culturally specific and in any given cultural context they would reference different spatial patterns, or different concepts and terms would operate to identify categories of space, such as the concept of inside/outside (Bao 2005). The concept of "public" has acquired a particular ideological function within literature on same-sex sexuality such that it references a place of potentiality and liberation that often maps onto spaces culturally recognized as male spheres within the western framework of these texts. This association between men, public spaces, and homoeroticism may also be found in local ideological formations in various cultural contexts under study, but this cannot be assumed beforehand, and this linkage must be acknowledged as ideological rather than a description of "fact." In this chapter, I will explore the ways narratives and concepts of space function in a particular setting, Bangkok, Thailand, to inform, structure and define male and female same-sex sexual patterns and cultural practices. This focus on a specific cultural setting will illustrate the ways some spaces, typically coded as "private" within both a Thai and Euro/US/

Anglo framework, are in fact productive sites for female same-sex sexuality in the Thai context.

I will focus on the gendering of spaces within two Bangkok-based activist organizations, Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand, an LGBT rights organization, and Anjaree, also an LGBT rights organization but one that has lesbian feminist roots. The spaces used by activists and their organizations reproduce the more general gendered patterns of spatial use in the Thai context, and so this essay will move between the dominant gender social patterns within the Thai context and instances of activism based on same-sex sexuality and/or transgenderism.

The data I draw on is primarily based on my research on female same-sex sexuality in Thailand over the course of almost a decade, and therefore I have more extensive interviews with women than men on the topics of space and sexuality. My information on male spaces is based on a series of interviews I conducted in 2005 with men who work with LGBT rights, my knowledge of hegemonic gender practices in general in Thailand, and the secondary literature on gender and sexuality in Thailand. Therefore, this chapter will not contrast men's and women's experiences equally – I leave it to the researchers who have worked more extensively with men to fully flesh out the nuances of men's spatial practices within gay/transgender contexts. Here I seek instead to focus on the specific patterns of women engaged in same-sex sexuality regarding the use of space in the formation of identity, sexual relationships, and community. The reason for this focus is to challenge the overly-determined association between same-sex sexuality and the problematic discursive construction of public space.

I use the term "LGBT" for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender" when speaking of the diverse cultural categories and identities for same-sex sexuality in the Thai context. However, the term LGBT does not map onto local identities and cultural categories particularly well. For example, a person who is interested in same-sex sexuality is frequently understood in the Thai context to be necessarily transgendered and vice versa. Therefore "homosexuality" (*rak-ruam pheet*) is often understood to be another way of referring to a person who is transgendered. Same-sex sexuality is often understood as a relationship between a masculine and feminine partner, even if they share a sexed body; thus a masculine female would be paired with a "woman" (*phu-ying*). This is the dominant way that same-sex sexuality is understood by many people engaged in same-sex relationships, as well as by society at large. There have been disruptions to this framework with new types of identities such as "gay" for gender-normative men interested in other gender-normative men. However, these disruptions have not altered the overall system of understanding same-sex sexuality as a pairing between masculine and feminine partners. Indeed, my use of the term "same-sex sexuality" privileges a largely western notion of "sexual orientation" and the sameness of the sexed body which does not capture the Thai emphasis on gender pairing. These distinctions will be clarified through the following discussion, but it should be understood that the term "LGBT" is more useful in speaking to the prevalent literature reviewed in this paper than it is an accurate description of local identity categories.

The Promise of the Gay Public Space

The almost mystical role that "public" (and urban) space plays in the narrative of queer and gay stories of self and community is exemplified by the lyrical description of public space in the essay "Queer Space" by Jean-Ulrick Désert:

> Our cities and landscapes double as queer spaces . . . The most active doubling of space is in the public sphere. The squares, the streets, the civic centers, the malls, the highways are the place of fortuitous encounters and juxtapositions. It is the place in which our sensibilities are tested, it is the place of "show." The public space is the place of romance, seen as landscape, alleys, and cafés . . . This fluid and wholly unstructured space allows, in its publicity, a variety of readings, re-readings, and misreadings, given the observer's individual propensities toward power, mystery, and how these desires fold into the passive space of Eros. (1997:22)

In contrast, "private" spaces, often figured as domestic or household spaces, hold a much more ambivalent role in the narrative of same-sex sexuality identity formation, and community within the literature. In the literature these domestic/household spaces are figured as sites of unknowable female sexuality or female oppression that forecloses female homoeroticism. For example, Bret Hinsch (1990), in his study of references to male same-sex sexuality in historical Chinese texts, states:

> Unfortunately, references to lesbianism in traditional sources are rare. Partly this lack was due to the relative absence of personal freedom accorded women. Bound to their husbands economically and often forced into seclusion in the home, many women were denied the opportunities to form close bonds with women outside their household. Moreover, the relationships that did form would usually escape notice by men uninterested in women's affairs. (1990:174)

Hinsch acknowledges the lack of textual evidence for female same-sex sexuality is a result of the gendered politics of text production in this cultural context. Understanding female same-sex sexuality must account for both the gendering of spatial practices and the need for alternative sources of evidence, such as women's narratives, fiction, and memoir, for example.[1] However, oppression of women which limits their access to public space is given as the reason for the relative lack of female same-sex sexual experience in Chinese history. I argue that the conclusion that female same-sex sexuality does not exist is more likely the result of masculinist or "western" discursive patterns that impose the linkage between "public" spaces, cultural norms regarding men's use of space, and the "liberating" practice of same-sex sexuality.

This paradigm depends upon an implicit assumption that links same-sex sexuality to a progressive notion of liberation. In other words, the ability to engage in homoeroticism is typically portrayed in popular and academic literature as an index of liberation and sexual freedom that stems from a basic level of social mobility defined by westernized male social norms. The standard explanation for the absence of women in spaces coded as conducive towards homoeroticism or same-sex sexuality is the oppression of women that limits their mobility in public space. This claim that female homoeroticism cannot be found in the urban, public zones that have been important sites of gay male sexual culture because of the social oppression of women reasserts the problematic dichotomy of sexual liberation and oppression so successfully critiqued by Michel Foucault (1978). The systematic difficulty in locating female forms of same-sex sexuality and transgenderism requires analytical reflection that extends beyond the recognition that women are oppressed.

There is a possibility that emphasis on the specificity of gender in the use of space will unintentionally reinforce both stereotypical assumptions about men and women and problematic binaries, such as domestic/public (see Gal 2002). In their volume on queer space, Ingram et al. (1997:10) warn of the troubling stereotypic dichotomy that persists in this literature that men have sex in space while women use space for communities. Historical and cultural specificity in terms of gender is needed, not reduction of complex social processes into simplistic binaries (see Rothenberg 1995:167). These binaries need to be explored in terms of how they become reified through social processes such that the spaces that are socially prescribed for men become universal norms for homoerotic expression and the spaces that women occupy are erased from view. The narrative of sexual history will be radically transformed by the disruption of the expectation that sexual liberation is brought about by participation in a putatively non-gendered urban public sphere. The *narrative* distinction of public and private, as it has emerged in the liberal enlightenment context, has functioned to structure a gendered hierarchy in which women's mobility has been circumscribed and women's experiences have been rendered in discourse as apolitical and individualistic. To gain a new perspective on the cross-cultural systems of female same-sex sexuality it is necessary to disentangle academic narratives critiqued above from the ethnographic contexts in which these conceptual distinctions between public and private may have important ramifications, for both local discursive patterns and lived spatial practices.

Gendered Space and Mobility in Thailand

Bangkok, like other urban areas in Thailand, has numerous female homosocial spaces spread throughout the city, such as factories, markets and malls, and dormitories (for factory workers, students, and urban workers in general). For women to live with other women is the norm for many Thais. Women living alone are perceived as unusual and even pathetic. Girls often invite schoolmates to their homes to stay for periods of time, a practice that is seen as part of the normal tradition of hospitality for visitors and female companionship. Since for Thais it is common for daughters to stay with their parents for long periods or their entire adult life, possibly bringing a husband to the wife's parents' household compound, girls often maintain strong ties to their families.

Traditional village structure throughout much of Thailand is based on matrifocal principles, with kin networks largely organized around women – women often live for significant periods of time with their female relatives; the incorporation of other women into these networks is often possible. Women and men spend much of their social and economic activity in segregated same-sex environments. Many Thais send their children to same-sex schools, and children from rural areas often stay in same-sex dormitories when attending school in provincial centers. The numerous factories that have opened around the country, and particularly in Bangkok, often have residential facilities for their workers, the vast majority of whom are women. Schoolmates, coworkers and friends often share a small room in a dormitory, huddled together for companionship at night. In my research, I found that these dormitory spaces were one of the most productive sites for networks of same-sex relationships.

Female same-sex relationships and transgender identities are widely found within these female homosocial spaces. The commonplace occurrences of female intimacies, which are not infrequently sexual, are woven into the daily life experiences, often occurring without comment, concern or explicit rendering into discourse. When such romantic/erotic relationships are articulated, they are framed as a gendered pairing between masculine-identified women, called "tom," derived from the English word "tomboy," and their feminine romantic/sexual partners, called "dee," the last syllable of the English word "lady." Unlike the butch-femme bars of mid 20th century America, or contemporary lesbian and gay bars in the USA, Thai toms and dees have not developed spaces separate from spaces used by women in general. In the past few years new possibilities for tom-dee community formation and socialization have occurred. Large internet-based tom-dee groups have formed, such as the internet club Lesla, with monthly parties in swank Bangkok clubs rented for the night (see Sinnott 2004 for discussion of Lesla).

The social spaces provided by Lesla contrast with the more typical pattern in which public spaces that are used for meeting romantic and sexual partners involve commercial sex. These commercial sex establishments have largely not been a part of the tom-dee social scene. Bars and clubs that are used for finding either heterosexual partners or gay male partners are often commercial sex establishments or have a strong sex worker presence. For example, while female sex workers may be tom or dee in terms of their personal sexuality and romantic relationships, patronizing commercial sex establishments is not a widespread pattern for other toms or dees. A few toms I interviewed in the course of my research did report going to these establishments, and even purchasing the service of a sex worker. However, these experiences were almost always described as disappointing and rarely if ever repeated. This association of public space and commercial sex has led many women who are not sex workers to avoid these spaces. The public events sponsored by Lesla have broken this pattern to a degree by providing a commercial space exclusively for toms and dees to meet friends and lovers, with only a minimal presence of sex workers. However, I was struck by the negative attitudes of some of the women I interviewed towards the Lesla events and how their reactions reinforced the problematic status of public/commercial spaces for female social practices. For example, Lee, a nurse in her thirties who identified as a dee and lived in Nakorn Pathom, a small city outside of Bangkok, said she attended one of the parties held in a Bangkok disco. Lesla rented out the space for the evening and approximately 500 people attended. Lee explained, "I didn't like it because there was only drinking and arguing. There were people dancing in a way I didn't like. They acted in a disgusting way, but they were having so much fun . . . I didn't like it because I think that going out doesn't mean you have to get drunk or act like that." Lee reacted negatively to what she perceived as an overly sexualized atmosphere. Another nurse in her thirties from the Bangkok suburbs, Mu, was involved with a tom and had led a fairly sedate life. She owned her own home, supported herself through her work, and had a small circle of friends with whom she socialized. Mu explained, "I don't like to get together with people [in large groups] because I feel being together the two of us [her tom lover] is comfortable. Lots of people will mean lots of problems." Mu said she had no particular desire to seek out spaces specifically for toms and dees.

The large Lesla-type parties in Bangkok are clearly popular with many Bangkok-based women who enjoy the nightlife atmosphere combined with an exclusively tom-dee clientele. The number of party-goers testifies to their popularity among some Bangkok-based women – 400 to 800 women attend any given event. However, these spaces co-exist with the more pervasive and longstanding gendered practices of smaller, more intimate groupings and residential patterns. Thai women typically use what Ara Wilson (2004) has called "generic spaces" – spaces that are not explicitly coded as sexual meeting places or recreational zones for same-sex couples. For example, the female sex workers in Wilson's study tended to socialize in small groups of friends in local establishments, even though through their work escorting male clients throughout the city they had learned of many nightlife locations and establishments (2004). Wilson also identified spaces such as shopping centers as key locations for tom-dee socialization and the production of tom identity. Owning or working in the small shops that cluster the vast shopping districts of Bangkok was attractive to toms because they did not need to dress or act according to feminized standards prevalent in corporate and government employment. These spaces were embedded in female networks of ownership, employment, and daily activities and were thus consistent with hegemonic spatialization for women (see Wilson 2004). Meeting and romancing other women did not necessitate breaking free from a "restrictive" feminized space.

Even the large Lesla events are structured around types of intimacy constructed through the website and the group membership. Many of the Lesla party-goers have developed close relationships with others in the group and meet outside of these events, often in the home of the group's founder. Rather than being an impersonal commercial establishment, the parties are designed for the membership of Lesla (although any woman can attend). In the events I attended, when a woman would show up alone rather than in the company of a group of friends, the organizers would take it upon themselves to introduce her to others, escort her around the club, and try to integrate her into a group. In spite of their size, these parties were based on networks of personal relationships. In contrast, there are many permanent establishments that cater to gay/transgender men, and several urban districts and side-streets in Bangkok's booming nightlife zones are organized primarily as male same-sex meeting places and commercial establishments. While it is probable that these establishments are also frequented by groups of friends and have loyal patrons, the extent of the number of places and their relative permanence establishes them more fully within the commercial nightlife scene in Bangkok. The practices of frequenting nightlife establishments for the purpose of seeking sexual encounters or more general socializing is consistent with Thai gender norms for men in general. I now turn to a closer look at how LGBT organizations function within these gendered spaces and practices in Bangkok.

Anjaree and Rainbow Sky

Ironically, considering the supposed invisibility of lesbians in Thailand, the only organization that consistently fought public battles over LGBT rights issues since the 1980s was Anjaree, a lesbian feminist organization, whose founders were part of the feminist NGO scene of the 1980s. For example, Anjaree has sponsored academic talks on non-homophobic approaches to the study of same-sex sexuality and submitted letters of protest to the government during a contentious ban on LGBT students from state-run teachers' colleges in 1996–1997. The organizers and founders of Anjaree have experience working with international organizations. Some have studied abroad and comfortably communicate within the transnational narratives of LGBT rights.[2] Anjaree is a small NGO, founded in 1986, funded through small grants provided by international aid organizations, and is usually staffed by just one person. The organization's office has been housed in a series of small dormitory rooms, inhabiting zones that have been particularly productive for female same-sex relationships in Thailand.

Anjaree's activities typically consist of a monthly meeting in which members gather either at the office or at a person's home to discuss a selected topic. The topic is usually informed by the feminist politics of the organization. Topics of meetings that I attended included discussion of what it meant to be tom and dee, and sexual roles, for example. However, the general atmosphere of the meeting was social, friendly, and largely focused on getting to know each other. Formal topics of discussion would easily dissolve into a general chat session. One of the organizers explained that although they had a political focus for the organization, they recognized that providing a social space for women to meet lovers and friends was also important.

One of the most significant changes in activism regarding same-sex sexuality is the emergence of an explicit gay rights organization – Rainbow Sky – founded in

2001. Rainbow Sky, relatively high profile and well funded by AIDS education money, occupies a large portion of a floor of an office building in the main red-light and commercial district in Bangkok – the Patpong district off Silom Road. The office is composed of several meeting rooms, a sitting area, a library and computer resource area. The office is staffed by young men wearing purple polo shirts, also ironically reproducing both the geographic space and the types of barhosts that staff the clubs, bars, and restaurants in the street below. Viroj Tangvanich, one of the leading gay-rights activists in Thailand, is one of the founders and the public face of this organization.

Viroj explained to me in an interview in the summer of 2005 that he was troubled by what he perceived as the over-commercialization and sexualized basis of male gay culture in Bangkok. Viroj positioned Rainbow Sky as offering an intellectual and socially responsible alternative to the sensuality of the commercial gay scene. Viroj linked the sensuality that was problematic for him as a product of the types of spaces which Thai gay men frequented:

> Viroj: [referring to the emergence of gay bars twenty years ago] . . . that kind of place is . . . it's not a good place. It is an inauspicious place (*satharn-thii akho-jorn*). It is a place for the release of sexual feelings, your repressed sexual feelings, especially those things that are products of karma. You don't use your intellect to overcome karma. There is no creative or intellectually enlightening conversation. It is only about promiscuous sex (*mua-sex*). Even now, it is still like this in saunas and places like that.

The need for the Rainbow Sky location, according to Viroj, was directly related to what he understood were the types of activities that characterized the male gay/transgender experience in Bangkok. The site of Rainbow Sky was a direct critique of normative male socializing and spatial use that Viroj found problematic. Thus Rainbow's activism cannot be understood as a gender-neutral program for rights or equality; it is directly positioned as a critique and remedy for particular male spatial and social practices within Bangkok.

In Viroj's critique of sexualized gay culture, space was both a metaphor for sexuality and also a literalization of a moral order. Rainbow Sky's offices literally hover above the sexualized street of Patpong. It is embedded in the urban, commercialized space that caters to and constructs men's sexuality in Bangkok. Rainbow Sky is also a metaphorical rejection of the bodily pleasures that this street space represents, consistent with Buddhist notions of renunciation. Rainbow Sky is visible to both local and transnational audiences because it draws on the spectacle of transgendered males, called "kathoey." There is a strong tradition of kathoey performance in popular culture in Thailand. According to Viroj, who also identified as a kathoey, being kathoey is one of the reasons that a space like Rainbow Sky should exist. Viroj explained that this intellectual, non-sexual space is necessary to resolve the karma (as in bad karma) that leads one to be born kathoey, meaning of an intermediate gender.[3] Rainbow Sky also embodied transnational discourses of gay rights and is linked to the commercialized urban gay culture that it critiques. It was an overly determined site of recognition by both local and transnational audiences as gay space – it is a recognizable site of LGBT activism according to the dominant paradigms operating in the literature on LGBT studies.

Rainbow Sky, officially positioned as an inclusive group for all LGBT people (who would most likely self-identify as tom-dee, gay, kathoey), also included activist projects specifically for women. I attended one meeting of women to organize activist projects in July 2005. The meeting was ostensibly to set up a program to train counselors to address the issues of "women who love women" (*ying-rak-ying*). This phrase is popular amongst Thai activists, particularly those from Anjaree, as it downplays the gender pairing of tom-dee that is often understood to be problematic for feminist politics. However, the women present were clearly identified as toms and dees. One woman, a self-identified dee, when asked what she liked about the recent "gender camp" – a beach retreat in which the concept of "gender" was introduced and discussed – answered emphatically, with fist shooting up, "Lots of toms!"

Between 15 and 20 women packed into a small corner office and sat on the floor around several low tables. Similar to any casual social event, many of the women had brought snacks. They knew each other and enjoyed chatting and laughing so much that the organizer had difficulty focusing the group on the specific tasks of the project. Noting the congested space, the organizer suggested using a larger, more formal meeting room with a large conference table that Rainbow Sky used for the men's meeting sessions. The women rejected the proposal saying they preferred the crowded seating on cushions. It was clear that the space ostensibly provided for organizing activist projects was converted to a space with which the women were comfortable, just as Anjaree and its activist-oriented meetings served the valuable purpose of providing a social space for women to meet and socialize. To understand the development and trajectory of sexual identities and communities of women in Thailand one has to look at spaces other than the formal activist, LGBT types of spaces. These activist spaces conform to the gendered social spaces in which men and women are comfortable interacting. The activities within the spaces also mirror or reproduce gendered patterns of interaction, often in spite of the earnest efforts of social activists to introduce patterns and activities that conform to transnational models of "activist work" and to challenge social patterns presumed problematic, such as the heavy emphasis on gendered pairing within tom and dee communities.

In contrast to the space occupied by Rainbow Sky, Anjaree has since its inception been discreetly housed in the very spaces that are most hospitable to female homoeroticism in Thailand – the dormitory. The Anjaree office has blended in with the neighboring domiciles, known only to those who have learned of it through the networks of friends that compose the group itself. It was usually staffed by one person, sometimes a volunteer, often in residential parts of the city (the office space has moved around the city, but always occupying a small, non-descript dormitory setting). Anjaree's location and the spaces used for the organization have largely been modeled on their constituents' discomfort with explicit references to sexuality that are typically present in the urban commercial scene that is largely structured around red-light districts.

Both Rainbow Sky and Anjaree ironically reproduce the gendered spaces that reflect the gendering of their constituency. Rainbow Sky is a glitzy, attention-grabbing, well-staffed office with well-known public figures like Viroj, who plans to run for the senate, serving as a public face. Anjaree has been an organization that was known primarily through personal connections, recently defunct and restarted, that is embedded in private spaces, serving networks of women as a social gathering site.

This chapter began with a critique of the almost fetishistic attachment the city and public space have for narratives of gay liberation. I have tried to show how this narrative practice within the scholarship of LGBT studies results in an erasure of sexual forms that do not conform to these expectations concerning spatial practice. These narratives valorize spatial practices that are more representative of westernized ideological assumptions about the linkages between male social practices, public space, and homoeroticism. I have shown that women's spatial practices in Thailand have led women engaged in same-sex sexuality, like female sexualities in many cultural and historical settings, to be rendered invisible within this literature and narrative practice. However, this argument is not to naturalize or essentialize difference between men and women *or* types of spaces. The gendering of spaces cannot be assumed beforehand and must be understood as an extension of the larger gender and sexual norms that structure societies. Also, the narratives of normative behavior cannot be confused with the actual spatial practices that men and women engage in. Women have clearly sought access to kinds of public spaces that have often been reserved for men in different cultural contexts. Space is a contested terrain and the strategic moves to gain access to space or deny others access is part of the social drama that the study of space uncovers. In the final section, I will briefly suggest the possibility of rupture between the aspirations of social actors and the normative structure that circumscribes their choices. Specifically, the normative pattern I have described in which women have largely used domiciles, or home spaces such as dormitories, as sites for the production of female same-sex experiences and identities is not an uncontested aspect of their spatial use.

Among the women in Thailand I interviewed, I often heard both toms and dees say that they would like public spaces where they could "be themselves." Somcay, a dee in her late forties, is a professional woman, member of Anjaree, and a long-time resident of Bangkok. In an interview in July 2005 she spoke about the closure of a bar, Utopia, which was established in 1994 by John Goss, an American self-identified gay man, and his business partners. Goss explained to me that he wanted to provide a space for both gays and lesbians in Bangkok to meet and socialize outside of the typical commercial sex spaces found in Bangkok and throughout Thailand. Specifically, he wanted a type of commercial space catering to both men and women (or a general LGBT constituency) that was not structured by commercial sex work. Friday night was set aside for women but after a few months attendance steadily dwindled to only a handful of women on any given Friday night. Goss explained after several years he had to first end women's night and later close down the establishment because of low attendance of both men and women. When I visited the bar later it had become a typical "boy-bar" – a club where men could come and select a young man, pay an "off" fee to the bar, and leave with the man to have sex. For Somcay, the loss of Utopia, and another small club run by toms, was bitter. "I still think about Utopia, and I think about the other tom pub that closed down. I felt bitter then and felt what a waste. And I thought it was strange that nobody talked about it. I think, 'Why can't we have our own place?' Why don't we have that? We don't even have a restaurant. I want a world where I can be myself." I said that Goss had explained to me that Utopia closed because not enough people went, especially women. Somcay confessed that she had only rarely gone to Utopia – only "four times a year." She explained, "I'm not a nightlife person. I'm too old already, but if I was going to go out, I would think of Utopia. Every time I went out, it was to Utopia because I felt it was my own world. I could be myself." Somcay regretted the loss of a type of intimate space where she could be herself. However, the commercial nightlife format of the space had only a limited appeal, as she admitted only infrequently attending the club. Somcay had identified a paradox in which the existing patterned spatial use was limiting for women (and men who had few options other than the commercial spaces for which Goss was attempting to provide an alternative); yet she and the other women upon whom the success of Utopia depended could not or did not break out of the pattern that had long sustained female same-sex intimacy in Thailand. The spaces that have emerged to date are the domestic/residential spaces that have long served as productive sites for female same-sex intimacy and the recently emergent internet-club parties of Lesla, based on networks of personal connections and friendships.

Conclusion

The purpose of this essay is to provide an intervention regarding the prevalent assumptions of the presumed rarity or invisibility of female same-sex eroticism cross-culturally and to provide some directions for a more critical understanding of the specificity of social spaces and articulations of male and female same-sex eroticism and sexual culture. The gendering of spaces is an extension of larger hegemonic systems in which men and women have differential access to spaces and have formed different patterns, traditions, and expectations for particular spaces. These spatial patterns are clearly not equitable, static, or "natural" – it is the contested and emerging nature of these spaces *and* their specific gendered uses that need to be the focus of same-sex sexuality/transgender studies. The teleological narrative in which urban/public space is coded as the site of liberation and sexual fulfillment needs to be replaced with a more critical approach towards the gendered specificities of culturally structured spatial use.

Dominant narratives of homoeroticism trace a movement away from spaces coded within Euro/western/American discourse as "domestic" or "private," yet these spaces may be of central importance for female same-sex experiences, relationships, and cultural practices in any given cultural setting.

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Notes

1. For a brief sample of the possibilities for finding references to female same-sex sexuality in fiction and memoir, see Ali (2004), Min (1994), Gopinath (1998), and Hakakian (2005). These texts provide narratives, respectively, of a woman's same-sex sexual experience in the context of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, an analysis of an Urdu short story written by a Muslim woman on same-sex sexuality within the home, a novel on same-sex sexuality within the cultural context of a Muslim Indian household, and a memoir of a Jewish woman growing up in revolutionary Iran who had same-sex sexual experiences. These sources illuminate ways in which women's same-sex sexuality is experienced and represented in a variety of cultural settings that do not conform to historical textual traditions that have been the source of information on male same-sex sexuality.
2. For example, see an interview with one of the founders of Anjaree, Anjana Suvarnananda, published in the International Gay and Lesbian Rights Commission website (Poore 2007).
3. The distinctions between "kathoey" and "gay" as either a social category or a personal identification are complex and beyond the scope of this paper. For more information, see Jackson (1997).

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Chapter 13

Neither in the Closet nor on the Balcony: Private Lives and Public Activism in Nicaragua

Florence E. Babb

Snapshots from Managua, Nicaragua

2000: I return to Nicaragua after being away for two years to find the capital city transformed with a new city center boasting hotels, shopping malls and multiplex cinemas. The movie *Boys Don't Cry* is playing and its story of sexual transgression in the US Midwest is meeting a favorable response, at least among those I talk to in the progressive community. Rita, a long-time AIDS activist and self-proclaimed "dyke," tells me she wishes all the legislators in the country would see it and expand their notion of citizen rights to include sexual minorities.

2002: "I'm neither in the closet nor on the balcony," is the way that Carlos, a Nicaraguan in his early thirties, describes himself to me during Gay Pride week in June. We are sitting with a couple of other men in the local gay bar they run, waiting for a panel discussion to begin on HIV and safer sex practices. While Carlos is quite comfortable with his sexuality as a gay man and has a middle-class awareness of the globalized identity that "gay" confers, like many others in Managua's LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) population he does not feel a need to proclaim his identity loudly.

2003: At a weekly Sunday service of the gay Metropolitan Church in Managua, the young pastor named Alberto speaks of "God's love for everyone, rich and poor, gay, straight, lesbian and bisexual." The dozen assembled men – including several I know as renowned drag queens, here wearing street clothes – and a couple of women pass a candle from one person to the next, saying, "God loves you as you are." They take communion and Alberto gives thanks to the *Jornada*, in reference to Gay Pride week, for allowing the LGBT community to speak out about human rights. They conclude their mass with guitar music and flirtatious dancing on the patio.

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Figure 3. Young Nicaraguans in Managua on the 25th anniversary of the victory of the Sandinista revolution, July 19, 2004 (photo credit: Florence E. Babb)

Coming-out in Nicaragua

The Sunday mass of the Metropolitan Church, mentioned above, is held in the working class barrio where I stay when I am in Managua. There, at Casa Ave María, I am hosted by Grant Gallup, a gay, retired Episcopal priest who left Chicago in the late 1980s to make his home in (then) revolutionary Nicaragua. My research in Nicaragua began in 1989 and I worked there in earnest from the early 1990s onward, meeting Grant in 1993 and making his guest quarters my home during frequent visits over the next decade.[1] Although my initial project centered on urban working women's experience in the rapidly changing political economy, I became interested in the emergent autonomous social movements of the 1990s, including the gay and lesbian movement.

I was drawn to this movement because it resonated so closely with my own experience during that time. In an article published in *Cultural Anthropology* on local and transnational aspects of gay and lesbian politics and culture in Nicaragua, I wrote the following in a somewhat confessional endnote:

> My desire to play a part in the telling of this story is no doubt motivated by several associations it has with my own personal narrative. I made my first trip to Nicaragua in 1989, when the revolutionary government was facing grave problems that it was

> unable to resolve before the national elections the following year. At that time, I had filed for divorce and was anxiously awaiting the outcome of a custody decision. I began a long-term research project that included two trips with my young son. I traced the effects of the sharp political-economic transition introduced by neoliberal governments on low-income women and men in the capital city of Managua. While my main focus was on gender and the local economy, I became increasingly interested in the emerging feminist and lesbian and gay movements that were coming to have a more independent and public presence in the country, especially in Managua. These movements were significant and striking in their own right, but I was particularly drawn to them as a long-time feminist then reexamining my own sexual identity. As it happened, Nicaragua's public coming-out and my own coincided closely and played out on the same terrain. (Babb 2003:321)

In *Out in Theory*, the second anthology in the Lewin and Leap (2002) series on lesbian and gay anthropology, Gayle Rubin wisely cautions us not to impose an original tale on the place where we carry out research. She writes, "It is common to mistake the place where we first encounter a theoretical revelation as its original manifestation and to confuse one's own intellectual biography with some more public sequence of events" (Rubin 2002:54). While this essay begins with a somewhat more autobiographical approach than I generally take in my research and writing, I seek to avoid the conceit of over-identification with my material. Indeed, I am frequently impressed by how differently Nicaraguan lesbians and gay men interpret even those aspects of culture and politics that have circulated transnationally, and I remain mindful of these differences – something that is central to what I take up in this essay.

In my experience, lesbian and gay activists in Nicaragua have often embraced "coming-out" and "becoming visible" in public as a strategy for gaining cultural and political space, yet do so in ways that may be unfamiliar to many of us in the United States. To understand this phenomenon, we may benefit from José Quiroga's (2000) insight into masking and un-masking south of the border in "queer Latino America," where silences may often be strategic.[2] Arnoldo Cruz-Malavé and Martin Manalansan (2002:9) have similarly enabled us to perceive "alternative genealogies of modernity and of its relationship to the emergence of queer subjectivities and activism."

I want to suggest that as anthropologists who identify as gay and lesbian activist-researchers in diverse parts of the world, we need to recognize the myriad ways that local activists and communities see fit to address their publics. Moreover, we must not assume that individuals and groups that are not forthrightly "out" are at some earlier "evolutionary" stage of social and political development, and rather we must take it as problematic to discover just what practices and meanings have local currency and why this is so. Only then will it be possible to serve as allies and advocates, as our engaged research finds points of articulation with local cultures.

In what follows, I am as interested in considering Nicaraguan politics and practices in reaching out to a wider public as I am in examining ways that as anthropologists we may support efforts to extend rights to lesbians and gay men in the places where we work. Indeed, I am convinced that in order to become allies of Nicaraguan lesbians and gay men we must first expand our historical understanding of the situation in this small Central American nation that in recent decades has undergone a transformation that captured world attention. Today, Nicaragua rarely makes international headlines, but a quieter revolution may be under way in the country as the public is drawn for the first time into discussion of the cultural politics of gay and lesbian identity and citizenship rights. The Nicaraguan case has implications for the ways we understand activism elsewhere as well.

June 2003, a Few Days after the Sunday Mass of the Metropolitan Church

> When I give a talk during Gay Pride week based on my research on lesbian and gay politics and culture in Nicaragua, some of the same individuals in my opening snapshots are present. Carlos is there, as is Alberto, and Grant. Several feminist researchers I know from Canada, the Netherlands, as well as Nicaragua, are also there. The audience includes women and men who work in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as Xochiquetzal, which offers services relating to health, sexuality and AIDS. I have been coached a few days before, so that the organizers will know what message I plan to deliver and so that I will be prepared to handle questions from the press. The venue is Puntos de Encuentro (Gathering Points), Nicaragua's largest feminist NGO, and I am addressing the small community of activists and their allies. I present my work in well-rehearsed Spanish and hope that my suggestion that Nicaraguan lesbians and gay men have incorporated significant aspects of transnational activism will not be misunderstood or heavily critiqued. After I finish, however, I realize that this aspect of my talk has gone down easily and is not questioned by members of the audience, some of whom may regard it as a badge of honor that they bear recognizable traces of global gay politics and identity. Instead, a lively conversation ensues about whether there is something that can be called a "movement" in the country; the most eloquent speaker maintains that, contrary to what others might say, the presence of so many at this event is evidence of a "community" and a "movement." Later, a reporter approaches me to ask whether I would say that it is "normal" to be homosexual and whether human rights should extend to the homosexual population. I don my anthropological hat for the occasion and assure the well-meaning man that homosexuals are normal and deserving of full rights to social inclusion.

By presenting these "snapshots" I mean to convey a few of the many private and public responses to an increasingly vocal and visible gay and lesbian presence that I have encountered in Nicaragua since my first trip there in 1989. As a foreign researcher and observer of the public emergence of an LGBT community and social movement since the revolutionary Sandinista government lost the 1990 elections, I had expected to find some resistance to my participation in the charged discussion. What I have found, to my surprise, is a passion for debating the local, national and transnational aspects of gay culture and politics in the country with as broad and international a group as possible.

Gay Culture's Past

To understand the current postrevolutionary context, we need to look back at the changes that have occurred over the last 25 years. Even earlier, during the four decades of the Somoza dictatorship, there is evidence of gay culture in Managua, as certain clubs and other venues were known to have attracted a gay male clientele. The Somoza family itself, despite its notoriously cruel treatment of non-elites who were either invisible to the government or viewed as the opposition, introduced certain advances for women and tolerated gay lifestyles. Middle-class feminism emerged during the period and while lesbian and gay organizing appeared later, there was a degree of social acceptance of sexual difference. Common knowledge that a member of the Somoza family was gay may partially account for the level of tolerance during this period.[3]

Social unrest based on deep and long-standing inequalities in the country culminated in an insurrectionary movement that finally unseated the Somoza government. The revolutionary Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) government (1979–1990) provided an opportunity for disenfranchised women and men to become players in the social drama transforming much of the country in the 1980s. Along with agrarian, health, education and legal reform, gender equality became part of the national agenda. The new constitution of 1987 included women's rights under the rubric of protecting the family as the basic unit of society. While women had been almost a third of the combatants in the revolution, they played a smaller yet significant part in the Sandinista government. Several women, including a well-known lesbian, were selected to head ministries.[4]

The inclusive vision of the Sandinistas did not extend, however, to a non-heteronormative conception of the Nicaraguan family and society. When lesbians and gay men began organizing in the second half of the 1980s, the Sandinistas were not prepared to extend their revolutionary vision to this new constituency by supporting their call for social recognition and civil rights. As in other socialist-oriented societies like Cuba,[5] homosexuality was regarded as part of the "decadent" bourgeois past, and it met with a chilly response from party militants, despite the fact that well-regarded Sandinistas were among those quietly meeting together in Managua. Although same-sex relations, particularly among men, were well known in urban Nicaragua, in 1987, FSLN security agents called in and detained a number of gay men and lesbians whose more political sexual identification was viewed as a deviation.

If the silencing of the nascent gay movement in Nicaragua was effective, it was short-lived. A year later, in 1988, AIDS activism brought together Nicaraguans and their internationalist supporters, who pressed for and obtained government support for popular-based health education. This marked the first open action, or "coming-out," of lesbians and gay men, and it was successful. The San Francisco Health Colloquium had come to Managua and addressed the issue of AIDS and, with their collaboration, gay activists received support from the Ministry of Health to launch the Popular AIDS Education Collective (CEPSIDA) as a grassroots initiative.[6] At the time, AIDS had barely made an appearance in the country and Nicaraguans were proactive in distributing information as well as condoms to students, sex workers, and men in cruising areas of the city.

Then, in 1989, some 50 Nicaraguan gay rights activists and their international supporters marched openly to the Plaza de la Revolución during the tenth anniversary celebration of the Sandinista victory. They wore black T-shirts with hand-painted pink triangles, symbolic of gay pride internationally, capturing national and international attention.[7] Although the FSLN had initially clamped down on gay organizing, this public appearance of activists, who were both Sandinista and gay, signaled a more open and outspoken movement along with a more tolerant public reception. As it happened, this collective "coming-out" was just a couple of weeks before my first trip to Nicaragua, and by the time I began traveling regularly to Nicaragua, I discovered subtle signs of gay political and social activity in Managua.

Post-Sandinista Activism

The Sandinista electoral loss in 1990 signaled a weary voting population that desired peacetime relations and an end to the US economic embargo. The entry of a centrist government eager to reclaim US support and the consequent neoliberal climate favored the return of some Nicaraguans who had left the country during the years of revolutionary government. Among these were a number of gay "Miami boys" who established businesses that included gay-friendly bars and cultural venues. At the same time, Nicaraguan and internationalist activists began forming lesbian and gay groups and establishing NGOs to meet needs the state was no longer willing or able to address. Whereas the Sandinista Ministry of Health had begun promoting AIDS education, such proactive services became the province of NGOs in the subsequent decade. Centers operated by lesbian and gay activists, often feminist in orientation, provided not only health and social services, but also a base for a gay community to form.

Not coincidentally, the NGOs were catalyzing agents for the first Gay Pride celebrations in the country. The year 1991 marked the separation of many feminists from the Nicaraguan Women's Association (AMNLAE) and also the first public Gay Pride event. On June 30 of that year, several hundred people, both gay and straight, gathered at a popular cultural center for a celebration of the "International Day of Lesbian and Gay Pride." A film showing of the gay-themed *Torch Song Trilogy* was followed by a panel discussion of homosexuality and human rights. The audience responded with passionate testimonies of experiences in family and society, endorsing a call for greater acceptance and understanding. In the years since then, Gay Pride has received more attention, with weeks of activities for its commemoration.

Lesbian and gay activism was galvanized the following year by the reactivation of a draconian sodomy law. The government of Violeta Barrios de Chamorro set out to regulate sexual behavior, sanctioning as "natural" and legal only those sexual practices related to procreation. The law criminalized sexual activity "between persons of the same sex" conducted in a "scandalous way." More than 25 groups joined together to launch the "Campaign for a Sexuality Free of Prejudice," which has continued to the present day. Despite years of protest, the law remains on the books and, although it is rarely enforced, many believe that the law fuels continuing intolerance.[8]

Throughout the 1990s, gay activism continued to find expression in small groups of individuals and in NGOs, health clinics and cultural venues. The Central American University offered its first course in sexuality studies, and gay bars and clubs offered space for same-sex individuals to socialize. The NGO Xochiquetzal, established in 1993, began publishing the magazine *Fuera del Closet* (*Out of the Closet*), which offers a mix of poetry, art and informative articles by local authors and artists, or can be downloaded from international sources on the Internet. Women were often the ones putting a public face on lesbian and gay issues, notably when Mary Bolt González wrote the first book on gay identity in Nicaragua, *Sencillamente Diferentes* (*Simply Different*), published in 1996, focusing on lesbian self-esteem.

Lesbians are prominent in the organized activity of the fledgling movement, but they are far less in evidence in the social spaces that are by and large available to gay men in the larger society. This is not surprising given the continued separation of genders in *la casa* and *la calle* (home and street). The neoliberal turn has presented new opportunities for men, particularly those of the middle class, who have the economic means to enjoy gay bars and social life. Women, in contrast, are scarce until Gay Pride brings together more diverse crowds for a host of events ranging from academic panels to readings of erotic poetry. Annual gatherings such as a contest to select the Goddess Xochiquetzal are intended to help democratize the social space, but a majority who compete are men in drag. The 2003 competition saw the first woman contestant enter and win. Lesbians are often the self-appointed judges in the competitions, which gives them more power to determine the events' outcomes.

The former pastor of the Metropolitan Church, Armando, related to me places where gay men regularly meet in Managua, including bars, movie theaters, house parties and even the Metrocentro Mall, which he called "Metro Gay." In contrast, he said lesbians have few places to meet and socialize, and he described their parties as *fiestas de traje* (potluck dinners). Lesbians themselves frequently cite their family responsibilities, including care of children, and lack of financial resources to enter what they perceive as male spaces. A number of those lesbians working in NGOs have very full professional lives and close circles of friendship, but little available time to spare. As a result, there is occasional tension between gay men and lesbians over the women's perceived dominance in NGOs and men's perceived advantages as consumers under new market conditions of globalization. In some cases, the lesbians I spoke to asserted their hard-earned professional identities and had little patience for gay men who claimed that the women held more power.

The transnationalization of lesbian and gay politics and culture is on display in Nicaragua. The adoption of the Gay Pride annual celebration on or around June 28 in honor of the 1969 Stonewall rebellion in New York City as practiced in the USA, and other countries is one sign of global connection. Other material, ideological and linguistic markers also suggests Nicaraguans' desire to affiliate with the international gay movement. Pink triangles, red ribbons, rainbows and the acronym LGBT – or LGBTT, which not only recognizes lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered individuals, but also transvestites – are all in evidence. The tropes of the "closet" and "coming-out" are widespread now, as many lesbians and gay men seek greater public visibility. Also common is more open discussion of AIDS and human rights as Nicaraguans participate actively in the global discourse surrounding these issues.

In contrast to the past, when sexual relations between male partners were often described as "active" (penetrative) and "passive" (penetrated), with the latter category stigmatized, the terms "gay" and "lesbian" are now heard more frequently and in a more positive light. On the cultural front, the popular television program, *Sexto Sentido* (*Sixth Sense*), has brought sympathetic gay characters to viewers throughout the country. In these ways, lesbian and gay issues have received growing public attention in recent years. Although not always favorable, this attention contributes to an increasing awareness of sexual diversity among the broader Nicaraguan population.

Viewed internationally, gay and lesbian movements today, like women's movements a decade or two ago, reveal how far some nations are willing to go in accommodating cultural difference and extending citizenship rights to all. In Nicaragua, the mass women's movement produced a feminist leadership that became instrumental in charting the direction of lesbian and gay culture and politics. This has been one of the most striking aspects of the nascent movement – the degree to which women have assumed prominent roles through participation in NGOs and social activism. Indeed, to understand contemporary sexual politics in the country it is crucial to consider women's stake in the course of local and national change. Moreover, the association of Nicaraguan gay politics with transnational currents is most clearly apparent through the involvement of women, as well as men, in a host of projects across Central America and beyond.

During Gay Pride week in 2002, the lesbian-feminist leadership of Xochiquetzal called together 13 lesbians and 13 gay men for a day long meeting held in a lesbian-owned bar. They formed a Managua "cell" in the hope of inspiring more cells to organize around the country, which might eventually coalesce into a national movement. Among the advances were agreements to endorse lesbian and gay rights, to support others to "come-out" and to move cautiously toward forming alliances internationally. While the initiative to build a national lesbian and gay movement has yet to bear fruit, the event stimulated a good deal of productive discussion. The participants took the collective thinking of the group back to their various individual organizations and put it to practical use in diverse projects, working with youth and those who are HIV positive, for example.

At present, members of lesbian and gay groups and NGOs often find that more is gained by creating and claiming ties with international counterparts and movements than by remaining focused at local or national levels. In the face of continued homophobia and internal political differences, identification and solidarity with international groups may be desirable. Furthermore, most organizations depend on international financial support, often from Europe, and funding agencies expect to find programs and services that mirror the activities of their own countries' gay rights movements. As a result, competition over scarce funding is often fierce between feminist and gay organizations. Arguably, the competition for resources among NGOs and other groups substantially impedes the formation of stronger ties of solidarity at the national level. Even those who are the beneficiaries of such international support are often harsh critics of the consequences of the state relinquishing responsibility for many social projects now taken on by NGOs. As Nicaraguan feminist and left intellectual Sofia Montenegro put it, "NGOs are cheap for the state and good for capitalism, but the social movements have become NGO-ized."[9]

While globalization presents opportunities for individuals and social movements to expand sexual expression and sexual rights, the neoliberal form it has taken in Nicaragua has benefited some far more than others as sexual subjects and citizens – particularly men and cultural elites. Women and members of the popular classes in general have experienced diminished possibilities and greater hardship in the post-Sandinista years, even if they have also found new ways of organizing collectively.

The mass mobilization of the population brought about by the Nicaraguan Revolution provided an opportunity for young women and men to explore and redefine their sexuality. During their years in power, the Sandinistas began to provide a space for more open discussion of gender and sexual relations and of personal life and politics, though they were ambivalent about the new desires expressed as a result of those spaces. In the post-Sandinista neoliberal era, the FSLN leadership has faced its own crisis, signaling that there is much left unresolved in Nicaragua's *machista* political culture.[10] Thus it is all the more remarkable that lesbians and gay men in this small Central American nation have been at the forefront in charting a politics of sexuality in Latin America.

Lesbian and Gay Activism Reconsidered

Now, having said all that, why would I hesitate to conclude that Nicaraguans are on the way toward embracing the global gay culture and politics we know in the USA? Why not expect that the conventions of "coming-out" publicly and acquiring growing visibility will be in the common interest of lesbians and gay men in that country? And why question that an engaged anthropological stance requires direct participation in this interface with the public? Insofar as these questions guide our discussion in this volume, I will consider them here.

Anthropologists addressing gender and sexuality in Nicaragua have been few in number.[11] Until recently, Roger Lancaster's (1988, 1992, 1997) work offered the only sustained examination of same-sex relations in the country. He presented an ethnographic analysis of men's sexual activity in which the "passive" partner or *cochón* was stigmatized and the "active" partner might be regarded as heterosexual or "normal" so long as he had relations with women as well as men. Lancaster argued against the use of western notions of gay sexuality to describe the Nicaraguan case, where he found little evidence of a political identity or gay sensibility. Those of us working on sexuality in Nicaragua since that time have acknowledged our intellectual debt to Lancaster, even as we find that the cultural and political landscape has changed considerably since the 1980s and early 1990s when he conducted research there. I often find myself checking my observations of transnational gay cultural influence in Nicaragua against his earlier admonitions to beware of employing western categories of analysis when considering same-sex practices in the country.

Since the time of Lancaster's pioneering work, a couple more of us have undertaken research on non-heteronormative sexualities in Nicaragua. As I noted before, my own work on lesbian and gay sexual politics sprang from a longer-term project on gender and political economy since 1990 (Babb 2001, 2003, 2004). Alyssa Cymene Howe's (2003) work has focused attention on the cultural politics of gay and lesbian identity and activism, with special interest in the media and its influence in Nicaragua. There is much common ground in our view that the activists we have come to know engage in, but are not ruled by, the international discourses of sexual politics and human rights. Our articles appeared almost simultaneously in 2003, both concerned to sort through issues of local and global identity and politics. Whereas my work argues for greater recognition of the influence of women's participation and of transnational currents, Howe's emphasizes that global concepts are strategically deployed in the Nicaraguan quest for tolerance of sexual diversity. Certainly, the terrain has shifted from the time when Lancaster argued against the imposition of western models, yet Howe (2003:241) echoes his words from the vantage point of the last decade when she writes: "I want to warn against adopting a universal queer subject as an a priori model for the framing of non-heterosexual practices, political or 'private.'" That is something that we might all agree on.

There are limits to the strategy of coming-out in Nicaragua, as a few examples will illustrate. The popular TV series *Sexto Sentido*, produced by the feminist NGO Puntos de Encuentro, introduced the character Pablo, who gradually came out as gay. For the creators of the series, it was considered essential to have his character break stereotyped conventions of gay men, just as it was regarded as essential that he come out to family and friends. Interestingly, then, the man who plays Pablo, Ivo Rosales – a psychologist working with youth at Puntos – strategically refuses to disclose his sexual identity to fans and others who ask whether or not he is gay in real life. In a conversation I had with Ivo at Puntos, he told me that people often assume that he is gay, then consider that maybe he is not, then he is, then not, and so on. He judges that once people think they know for sure, he will be viewed in only one way, and he seeks to avoid that. A young Nicaraguan woman who was working with me challenged Ivo by saying that if he is straight he should say so as an ally, as she prefers to do. However, his position appears to be equally tenable, particularly given the costly social stakes and his high national profile. Interestingly, he has shown himself willing to pass for gay as often as straight (personal conversation 6/27/03).

To offer another example, we may turn to the growing number of radio call-in programs addressing questions of sexuality, such as one produced by the NGO Xochiquetzal. Although callers are eager to talk on a range of sensitive issues, they generally do not reveal their identities. The desire to remain anonymous is often related to a fear of coming-out to family, friends, and co-workers, and that fear is backed by the continued illegality of homosexuality under the terms of Law 204. The law, long regarded as the most repressive sodomy law in the hemisphere, was rarely enforced, but was used to support a climate of social intolerance for gay men and lesbians. It is no wonder if many choose not to come out and instead practice self-censorship in public.

One case in which the law was enforced involved a young butch lesbian by the name of Aura Rosa Pavón, whose rural community conspired against her for living an open life and for desiring a relationship with a younger woman who had been promised in marriage to a much older man. Pavón was tried in 2000 under charges of sodomy and spent several months in prison; soon after her release she was murdered by the enraged male lover. Although some called it a crime of passion, it was widely regarded as a hate crime and hailed as an example of homophobia's power to threaten lives of lesbians and gay men. Activists pointed the finger at Law 204 and the state as culpable for denying rights to Pavón and inciting violence against her.

Given the continued legal threat and heterosexism directed toward lesbians and gay men in Nicaragua, it is no wonder if many choose not to come out publicly. Even among activists working in NGOs on issues of AIDS, sexuality, and self-esteem, many prefer to emphasize their public, professional identities over private, sexual identities. Although their sexual orientation may be well known, there is a sort of "don't ask, don't tell" attitude taken to protect individuals from possible consequences. Nevertheless, in some cases, rather than concealing their identities, Nicaraguan lesbians and gay men may simply be exercising their right to privacy. For example, Carlos, who told me he is "neither in the closet nor on the balcony," comes from a middle-class family that supports his sexual orientation – which has tended toward bisexuality. He operated a neighborhood gay bar and organized a huge "urban party" at the end of Gay Pride week in 2003. Clearly, he is comfortable with who he is, and he is among the small handful of Nicaraguans I might characterize as having a cosmopolitan "queer" sensibility. Perhaps it is for this reason rather than any worry about self-disclosure, that he prefers to come out selectively, depending on the social context.

In order to get further clarity on the place of "coming-out" in the Nicaraguan setting, I set up an appointment with Hazel Fonseca during a recent trip to the country. Fonseca heads Xochiquetzal, which she co-founded over a decade ago, and she is no doubt the most visible spokesperson for LGBT activism in Managua and nationally. Meeting with her at the NGO's busy office in a working class neighborhood is no small feat, as she keeps a very tight schedule. As in past meetings with her, during this one I aim for efficiency and go straight to the point, letting her know that I am interested in her take on coming-out as a strategy in Nicaragua, linking this to the Gay Pride events that had taken place just before my arrival. Also as in the past, I find that Hazel's responses are somewhat abbreviated, forming sound bites that I might use in quoting her on subjects she has addressed many times before. It is difficult to get her to reflect more deeply on the subtleties of coming-out, or not coming-out, in Nicaragua.

What does come across in our conversation is the broad way in which she and Xochiquetzal conceive of bringing sexuality out of the closet in the country. When I ask her directly about the NGO's publication *Fuera del closet* and the invocation of the trope of coming-out of the closet, she answers by stating that the title refers in the most general way to bringing all issues around sexual identity into public discourse. That is, the NGO is concerned with sexual health and well-being regardless of one's sexual identity, and invites everyone to become better informed and make use of their services as well as to read their magazine. Very well, I think to myself, she's giving me the party line, but aren't they really most interested in serving the LGBT population and urging that community to come out of the closet? When I ask if the coming-out strategy is appropriate to the Nicaraguan reality, in which families may be more tolerant when "private" matters are not made public (particularly for women, who are expected to conform to Catholic ideals of heterosexual motherhood), she goes on to say that the decision to come out is really an individual one and they do not promote a single strategy. As she put it, they "respect the personal process of each individual." I press on, asking whether Nicaraguan society is ready to accept sexual difference in a more public way, going beyond the "blind eye" attitude of the past. She again avers that living an openly gay life is not for everyone, emphasizing the pluralist politics espoused by the NGO.

Indeed, while Hazel Fonseca concedes that lesbian and gay activists in Nicaragua want to give a public face (*tener rostro*) to LGBT identities, their political orientation is a distinctly broad one that seeks to discuss all manner of formerly private issues, ranging from sexual violence to sexual pleasure, from living with AIDS to social activism. Among their current projects, and the one that she is the most animated discussing, is working to confront the sexual exploitation of minors engaged in sex work in frontier zones and in sex tourism. For Hazel – and this also comes across in the pages of *Fuera del Closet* – it is as important to bring the commercialization of sex to public attention as it is to widen the social space in which lesbians and gay men may live freer lives. Put simply, the NGO supports society's "tolerance toward sexual options," with the freedom and responsibility that entails. I came away from our conversation reminded once again of the far-reaching (perhaps even revolutionary) approach of lesbian and gay activists in Nicaragua, where what may appear to be some "hedging" on the question of coming-out as a strategy may actually stem from a more ambitious project of addressing diverse and urgent concerns across a broad spectrum. (Interview 7/23/04)

Conclusion

How then can internationalists, including anthropologists, become allies of lesbians and gay men who are challenging the state to recognize the sexual citizenship of all Nicaraguans? We can participate along with them, through NGOs, social organizations, and research teams to construct more complete histories, ethnographies and personal testimonies. We can also speak out as "experts" when our Nicaraguan colleagues find it useful for us to do so. While I do not generally seek to make "truth claims" in my professional work, there are times when it is simply necessary to assert that, yes, it is normal to be homosexual and society needs to respect that. To offer more contingent views of socially constructed identities may be a disservice when the media and policy-makers are in attendance and when a broad-based public is looking to outsiders for guidance. When a reporter asked me for my "expert opinion" following my presentation a year ago, I offered him one. When a right-wing politician in the audience revealed doubts about lesbian and gay rights, yet was later eager to clarify that he had expressed his personal views but would publicly support citizenship rights for all regardless of sexual orientation, I endorsed his commitment to social inclusion.

Was I complicit in strategic essentialism when I spoke with a journalist and politician about universal rights and what is sexually "normal"? Perhaps so, but like the Nicaraguans I have learned so much from, I will consider time, place, and political consequences when I address a wider public. As I am writing on the eve of my departure for yet another foray into Nicaragua, I look forward to following the next installment in the ongoing story of sexual identities and communities in the country. If the nation's past history is any indication, the movement forward may be gradual, but it may well lead in new and innovative directions. To borrow the words of Carlos, quoted earlier, Nicaraguan gay men and lesbians may be charting an alternative sociality, that is neither in the closet nor on the balcony, challenging the more narrowly conceived western progress narrative of coming-out.

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Notes

1. Since the time when this essay was written, I have made two more trips to Nicaragua. Following the 2006 elections, Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega was reelected to the presidency, but his more conservative turn meant that there was no significant impact on the politics of inclusion in the country; feminists and gay and lesbian activists are still struggling for sexual and reproductive rights.
2. In Quiroga's excellent discussion of the way that silences may figure differently and strategically across gay cultures, he writes that he is "less interested in the subject who proclaims his or her own sexuality than the melancholic subject who refuses the confession, the subject who chooses to mask it, while at the same time showing us the mask" (2000:19).
3. For pioneering work on gender and sexuality in the pre-Sandinista period, see González (2000, 2001).
4. For discussions of women in the Sandinista revolution, see Babb 2001a, Brenes et al. 1991, Chinchilla 1994, Collinson 1990, Molyneux 1986, Randall 1992, 1994.
5. In the case of Cuba, the repression was stronger. See Lumsden 1996.
6. At that time, Dora María Téllez was Minister of Health and was known to be sympathetic to lesbian and gay issues.
7. Internationalist Lucinda Broadbent took photographs of the march that circulated internationally. She also produced the video "Sex and the Sandinistas" (1991) which includes interviews with several key activists of the period leading into the 1990s.
8. By 2008, a change in the penal code eliminated the anti-gay sodomy law (but notably kept in place criminalization of all abortion, even in cases of rape and incest).
9. Long associated with Sandinista politics, Montenegro is now recognized as an independent intellectual and founding member of the National Feminist Committee. She writes on a number of subjects including culture and sexuality in Nicaragua (Montenegro 2000).
10. In 1998, former Sandinista president Daniel Ortega was charged with long-term sexual abuse of his adoptive step-daughter Zoilamérica Narváez. This has had the effect of bringing questions of domestic violence and sexual abuse into wider public discussion.
11. A study by Dutch anthropology student Marike van Gijsel (2003) examines lesbian lives and efforts to claim more space, with attention to coming-out. Scholars and activists from other disciplines have also contributed importantly to the discussion. It bears mentioning the early work of Adam (1989), and that of Nicaraguan writers Blandón (2001) and Bolt González (1996). Those writing specifically on lesbians in Nicaragua include Ferguson (1991), Randall (1993, 1994), Thayer (1997).

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Chapter 14

Life Lube: Discursive Spheres of Sexuality, Science, and AIDS

Harris Solomon

At the Toronto AIDS conference in August 2006, Jim Pickett, Chair of the International Rectal Microbicides Working Group, posted the following on a blog for AIDS activists at the conference: "New prevention technologies have stolen the show here. But when we hear about microbicides, male circumcision, or oral prevention – GAY MEN and MALES WHO HAVE SEX WITH MALES (MSM) are not mentioned at the higher levels. We are quite absent from those discussions – those words which get picked up and carried by media around the world, those conversations that influence policy at every level, those buzz words that tell the public what is important" (Pickett 2006).

Not long after, Dr. Sujata Rao, the head of India's National AIDS Control Organization, was speaking as an honored guest at a meeting in Delhi on male-male sex and AIDS in Asia entitled "Risks and Responsibilities." Alongside talk of "innovation" in prevention technologies (including microbicides), Rao highlighted an issue that has recently gained more emphasis in discourses about AIDS in India: male-male sex can be construed as illegal. The Indian Penal Code Section 377 prohibits "carnal intercourse against the order of nature," and its interpretation upholds the illegality of sodomy, an act punishable by imprisonment up to ten years (Gay Bombay 2008). This law, often invoked to criminalize sex between men, is "quite an anachronism," said Rao. "With this law, MSMs are scared to come out in the open and we can't work with them" (Naz Foundation International 2006).

These protests differ in objective, but align in their expression of a desire for voice and visibility of a group defined (at least in part) by sexuality. These moments also begin to reveal some dimensions through which the development of new prevention technologies for HIV channel sentiments about gender and sexuality; indeed, it might be said that sentiments about sexuality are co-produced in HIV prevention science.[1,2] Alongside so-called "low-tech" prevention measures such as education and condom distribution, HIV prevention science and the notions of sexuality it appeals to deserve closer anthropological attention in a time of technological

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aspirations to curb the AIDS epidemic. In this chapter, I use the example of a microbicide (whose workings I will detail below) to describe how advocacy for a new HIV prevention technology links the gendered and the sexual to the scientific. Anthropological inquiry can reveal the "credibility struggles" that AIDS social movements undertake over what is believable among claims-makers to science, gender, and sexuality (Epstein 1996:3). This approach offers insight into the interdiscursive boundaries where sexuality becomes enmeshed within scientific knowledge-making, the discourses surrounding its publicity, and an epidemic's terrain of risk and benefit.

Indeed, boundaries are where lesbian/gay anthropology might best be deployed to trace such truth claims (see Gieryn 1999). Such intersecting moments indicate where engaged lesbian/gay anthropology can reveal the aspirations and anxieties attached to life-saving technologies. This paper outlines some of these intersections, and draws theoretically on discursive analyses of health (e.g., Leap 1990, 1996), and especially Charles Briggs's notion of "communicability" (Briggs 2005); analyses of sexuality, AIDS, and activism (e.g., Boellstorff 2005; Epstein 1996; Martin 1994; Patton 1991; Rubin 1992; Treichler 1999) and critical feminist studies of science, gender and sexuality (e.g., Fausto-Sterling 2000; Haraway 1988; Harding 1991; Rapp 2000).

I connect the contributions of this scholarship to expressions of sexuality in HIV prevention technology development from several vantage points. First, I consider a discourse-centered approach to "engaged" ethnography in the linked realms of science, gender, sexuality, and advocacy. I sketch the theoretical and methodological threads of this approach by drawing upon ideas about discourses, publics, and the categories of gender and sexuality.

Second, I provide a beginning example to this approach by describing one specific prevention technology – microbicides – and its relevance to the HIV epidemic globally and in India, the current site of my research on the politics of epidemics. India, with one of the highest numbers of HIV-positive individuals in the world, is a key staging ground for clinical trials for new HIV prevention technologies, and their attendant politics. Microbicides have a vast potential for addressing the epidemic, in India and elsewhere, and activist debates around microbicides offer a rich corpus for discourse analysis.[3] My goal is not to question the need and effectiveness of the crucial advocacy efforts around life-saving technologies, nor to explore the contested forms of inclusion that these technologies incite (see Nguyen 2005). Rather, I aim to raise analytical attention to circuits of productive discourses about gender, sexuality, science, and AIDS.

One matter to address at the outset is the definition of "public" as raised throughout the paper. Do microbicides advocates and scientists constitute separate publics? A variegated, but connected one? Is this the same public addressed by engaged lesbian/gay ethnography that is "out in public"? These questions add to other chicken-and-egg puzzles raised in the introduction and chapters of this volume, including: does one need to be gay or lesbian to practice lesbian and gay anthropology? What about other sexual identities? In parallel, who constitutes the "the public" for this sort of ethnography?

To put definitions aside for the moment, if only because of their elusive nature when attempting to organize a motley conceptual lineup, a different starting point might be to ask whose interests engaged lesbian/gay anthropology could serve. Merrill Singer, in writing about critical medical anthropology "beyond the ivory tower," differentiates between two modes of engagement, arguing ". . . though it has been possible to develop a critical anthropology *of* health, there may well be insurmountable political barriers to the creation of a critical anthropology *in* health" (1995:82, italics in original). Lesbian/gay anthropology has made significant contributions to the anthropology of gender and sexuality, as described in this volume's introduction. Given that its ethnographic accounts often emerge from *within* political participatory observation and activism, what are its possibilities for engagement when the politics at hand are those roused by bioscience?

Communicability, Advocacy, and Sexuality

As anthropologists are "speaking out" in public, on "the front lines" (González 2004; MacClancy 2002), it remains sensible to examine in depth their incitements to speak up. In other words, we might dwell a moment on language as an analytic and representational channel for public engagement, and see language not only as a privileged object of study, but also as a lens for thinking about social life itself.

Susan Gal (2005) unravels the "interdiscursivity" that produces sameness and difference between ideas of public and private in language; she notes that, "Different linguistic ideologies pick out as public or private different aspects of the many indexical signs that appear in real-time interaction" (24). These aspects may be spatial (as Gal describes is the case for public/private differentiation in the USA.) or based on interpersonal relations (as shown in an example of discursive interactions in Eastern Europe). Regardless of the nature of differentiation, Gal emphasizes that in anthropological scholarship that makes use of public/private distinctions – as publicly-engaged gay/lesbian anthropology would be inclined to do – "the interdiscursive linkage of those terms with our own sociocultural theories involves the very processes we study" (34).

For processes of bioscience, several works have analyzed the intersections of language, discourse, and HIV/AIDS (e.g., Leap 1990, 1991, 1996; Patton 1992; Solomon 2002), with some focused explicitly on South Asia (e.g., Pigg 2001, 2005). Methodologically, Leap calls for analyses both of the *text focus* of AIDS-related discourses as well as the *speaker-text relationship*, whereby the former includes "themes whose presence gives continuity to the text's reference and lends coherence to the message which it details" and the latter encompasses how a speaker "may occupy one (or more) of several statuses in relationship to the events/issues being explored in text-content" (1991:276).

Gender and sexuality are key focal points for this reflexive approach and others that take discourse analysis as a starting point for understanding AIDS, yet the relationship between sexuality and language in these analyses remains a point of concern. As Don Kulick explains in his review of scholarship on gay and lesbian language, ". . . it is important not to confuse symbolic resources that anyone can appropriate to invoke stereotypical images of homosexuality with actual language practices, much less the identities of individual gays and lesbians" (2000:257). Instead of essentializing identities and practices through the use of specific discursive productions, a more attuned methodology would point out moments where "publics" become constituted through discussions of sexuality, overtly or implied.

These discussions might be glossed as "discourses," referring to both their character as written or spoken commentary, and/or to the relations of power they create or sustain. Dialogues such as those around microbicides development can also be understood to be what Charles Briggs calls "spheres of communicability" (2005:270). Briggs argues that notions of race and health are built into the processes of communication itself, and that communication or discursive exchange is a productive process that does not lie outside of power-laden affairs such as discrimination and violence. This brings notions of structural violence to bear alongside Gal's reminder that anthropological inquiry and communicative processes more generally are tangled interdiscursively in the very instances they seek to appraise. Briggs focuses his analysis largely on race and health disparities; we might also extend his approach to the differential visibility of claims to sexuality that play out in microbicides development.

To do so by incorporating activism, I turn to Sally Engle Merry's (2005) analysis of this concern over differential authoritative power in the context of her work on human rights advocacy. Merry examines three dimensions of ethnographic research at the boundaries between activism and social research, based on her research at United Nations gatherings on the concern of violence against women. In what follows, I touch on these elements to help organize and connect discourses of science, sexuality, and HIV to the public health advocacy that largely animates these discourses.

The first dimension of Merry's framework entails the spatial-ideological boundaries of sites of activism and scholarship, whereby some places are marked for the practice of activism while others are for researchers (Merry also explains that these two seemingly disparate spheres often overlap). However, as previously mentioned, a challenge to delineating boundaries between activists, researchers, and the public good is the very definition of "public" (see Fraser 1992; Warner 2002). Microbicides advocacy is not a uniform platform, nor are its strategy and ethics identical to advocacy for other HIV prevention technologies (such as the HIV vaccine).

To sort out such differences in a different vein, consider Warner's notion of a "counterpublic," which "maintains at some level, conscious or not, an awareness of its subordinate status" to dominant publics (2002:86). One sort of counterpublic he describes is a queer counterpublic, in which:

> No one is in the closet: the presumptive heterosexuality that constitutes the closet for individuals in ordinary speech is suspended. But this circulatory space, freed from heteronormative speech protocols, is itself marked by that very suspension: speech that addresses any participant as queer will circulate up to a point, at which it is certain to meet intense resistance. It might therefore circulate in special, protected venues, in limited publications. (2002:86–87)

The positions of subordinate and dominant may be largely fixed (e.g., queers will remain the counterpublic in many settings), but also may be tenuous in other circumstances. To assess this flexibility in the case of microbicides, discourse analysis proves a useful tool for understanding the relative positions of power and communicability between actors who circulate varying sensibilities about sexuality.

Charles Briggs (2003) builds on Warner's idea of publics, through a discursive analysis of how public health accounts are used to locate, interpellate, and represent specific populations in the context of a cholera outbreak in Venezuela. Public health officials, and the journalists who pick up and transmit (altered) public health messages, came to define four discrete publics: barrio residents, street vendors, *indígenas* and what Briggs terms "sanitary citizens" of the middle class. Although these groups were defined as social categories prior to epidemiological reports on cholera infection; Briggs points out the powerful and definitional role of circulating public discourses in sorting out and stratifying individuals into these groups. The methodology Briggs employs directs attention to how participants in discourse production – whether members of a public or counterpublic – "can either privilege the intertextual *links* between successive contexts, the degree to which the content is deemed to remain stable as it circulates, or the intertextual *gaps*, the differences that are seen as having emerged as information is recontextualized" (2003:293, italics in original).

Attention to links and gaps is another useful perspective on discursive analysis of HIV and sexuality (see Leap 1991). In the case of microbicides advocacy, intertextuality takes several forms: one is the alternation between texts and contexts of science (clinical trial reports, mechanisms of action for HIV infection, modes of operation for microbicides) and the texts and contexts of activism (email listservs, Congressional lobbying for microbicides development, advocacy toolkits). Another form is the dialectical relationship between vaginal microbicides and rectal microbicides, and the constellation of gender and sexuality politics mapped on to each respective technology, as I describe below. The social scientist's analysis of microbicides advocacy creates another layer of interdiscursivity, one that may alternate between positions of the academic as advocate versus analyst, as explained by Merry's premise of boundaries. With attention to these intersections, lesbian/gay anthropology can examine where sexuality surfaces in the intertextuality of public practices such as advocacy. Some contexts are clearer than others, such as the contentious debate in the US and in other settings over gay "unions" and marriage. Other contexts may appear less overtly "sexual," and science often falls under this rubric due to its first-glance assurance of objectivity and facticity.[4]

A second aspect of the ethnography of activism described by Merry is the dimension of conceptual categories, and how both activists and researchers represent these categories in their work. This is certainly germane for gender and sexuality, categories that have been questioned extensively as such, and as they relate to HIV/AIDS (see Vance 1991). Commenting on inquiry into "the categories," David Valentine cautions against allowing distinctions between gender and sexuality to "override understandings of self." To claim that they are deeply intertwined is, according to Valentine, "to make a modernist claim to progress and to the discovery of truth of the separateness of 'Gender' and 'Sexuality'" (2004:218). As Valentine asserts, "The question 'What is the relationship between gender and sexuality?' is therefore, for me, ultimately ethnographic and historical rather than purely theoretical, because this relationship is itself possible only in historical and cultural contexts where 'gender' and 'sexuality' have come to be – and are able to be – conceptualized as distinct arenas of human experience" (2004:219). For lesbian/gay anthropology that engages sexuality in arenas of science – itself a domain built upon claims to progress and discovery – this reminder is timely.

The final dimension of ethnography of advocacy that Merry describes is what she terms "slippage" across the boundary between the role of activist and scholar, given that the two roles cannot be completely separated. For anthropologists working with community action groups or NGOs, for example, the line between fieldwork and advocacy can run quite thin. The case of microbicides development and advocacy illustrates well the levels of scale involved in such engaged ethnography.

Life Lube

Microbicides are a range of products like gels or creams that can prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) when applied topically to the vagina or rectum. Microbicides are not yet commercially available, but are in various stages of clinical trials in several countries, including India. Most microbicides under study are intended for vaginal use, although a few compounds are being tested for rectal use specifically. However, it is clear to scientists and advocates that when vaginal microbicides do make it to market, they will certainly be used for anal sex, given the high frequency of penetrative anal sex between men and women and between men themselves worldwide.

The active compounds in a microbicide vary by product: some actually kill the HIV virus in situ, while others may block HIV entry into cells, and still others may interfere with HIV replication inside the cell (Feuer 2006; Global Campaign for Microbicides 2006; McGowan 2006). Typically, microbicides – like many other clinical products – undergo several stages of clinical trials, following rigorous lab safety and efficacy tests to determine if the active agent in the microbicide is effective against HIV.[5]

Microbicides (along with other prevention technologies) have immense potential in India, where UNAIDS estimates that approximately 5,700,000 people are currently living with HIV. The adult prevalence rate in India hovers around 0.8%, yet this and other national-level figures distract attention from the diversity of regional epidemics in the Indian subcontinent. For example, the states of Manipur and Nagaland in the country's northeastern region are marked as being major sites of infection through injecting drug use, with prevalence among users of 56% in 2003. By contrast, states in the South, such as Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh are marked as "sexualized" epidemics (UNAIDS 2007). The sex in "sexualized" includes sex between men and women, as well as sex between men, although the figures for the latter are "difficult to enumerate" (UNAIDS 2007). India's cartography of sex and infection, with numerous sub-epidemics and risk groups, complicates an "Indian" valence of HIV prevention or treatment. The concept of "India" or "Indian AIDS" can thus be more easily inserted into public health and international development discourse circuits. Like many politicized aggregate forms, Indian statistics on HIV allow for what Pigg and Adams call "a technical language of health, [that] while seeming to be solely about the well-being of bodies, emerges as a substitute for politics" (2005:15). This is significant in that "the data" often serve as a point of intersection for the concerns of activists, scientists, and public health officials.

The vaginal microbicide advocacy campaign in India (and elsewhere) unfolds chiefly through a politics of women's empowerment, especially in the face of AIDS, whereby HIV infection from a male partner is the assumed means of transmission. Epidemiology certainly supports these claims, and vaginal microbicide advocates link infection rates, death rates, and first-person accounts for aspirations for protection from HIV infection. According to advocates, this strategy "gives women power over AIDS," puts prevention "in Women's Hands," and "protects the needs and interests of users, especially women" (Global Campaign for Microbicides 2008). These forms of framing HIV prevention build upon substantive public health and social science research that explains lucidly the biological and social circumstances that place women at a higher risk than men of HIV infection (see Farmer 1999).

How does this rhetoric of "feminization" of the epidemic circulate? Consider, for example, a press release from the International Partnership for Microbicides (IPM) that describes how the pharmaceutical giants Merck and Bristol-Myers Squibb have made intellectual property license arrangements with IPM for potential microbicides candidates.

New York – In a first-of-its-kind joint announcement, two of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies, Merck & Co., Inc. and Bristol-Myers Squibb have each announced today that they have signed separate license agreements with the International Partnership for Microbicides (IPM) to develop new antiretroviral compounds as potential microbicides to protect women from HIV. Under the two separate agreements, Merck and Bristol-Myers Squibb will each grant the non-profit group a royalty-free license to develop, manufacture and distribute their compounds for use as microbicides in resource-poor countries.

"Merck is proud to contribute the results of our research and development to this worldwide effort to protect women," said Dr. Adel Mahmoud, Chief Medical Advisor for Vaccines and Infectious Diseases at Merck. "This agreement builds on Merck's longstanding work in HIV/AIDS, both through our research and development of new anti-HIV drugs and candidate vaccines, and through public-private partnerships such as our program with the government of Botswana and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation." "We take our responsibility as a corporate citizen seriously," said John L. McGoldrick, Executive Vice President of Bristol-Myers Squibb. "This agreement and other Bristol-Myers Squibb programs, such as our Secure the Future program that is dedicated to helping women and children impacted by AIDS in Africa, demonstrate our company's commitment to help people in developing countries effectively respond to HIV/AIDS." (International Partnership for Microbicides 2005).

Here, the face of AIDS is one of a woman or a child in Africa. From the pharmaceutical company perspective, investment in microbicides can be a means to "protect women" and to signal "corporate responsibility." Morality surrounding the corporate enterprise and morality associated with HIV/AIDS find their way into the communications of scientific advancement, and mark a place where gender substitutes for sexuality in communicating about AIDS. Quantitative epidemiology becomes less necessary in this discursive circulation of innovation and humanitarianism among a constituted public. The *logos* of epidemiology, the way of knowing disease prevalence, becomes premised on distribution of discourses about illness rather than illness statistics themselves. Vulnerability and femininity are the prevailing tropes that guide this move.

Vaginal microbicides have, until recently, been the most-discussed type of microbicide. However, in the last several years a strong coalition of activists has joined the microbicide effort, to call for more rigorous development of rectal microbicides. These advocates make clear that rectal microbicides are needed not only by men who have sex with men, but by women as well. As Jim Pickett, the Chair of the International Rectal Microbicides Working Group, explained to me in a telephone interview:

> As we know, there is tons of stigma around anal sex. And it makes people really uncomfortable. And in terms of talking about it in the broader microbicide movement, there sometimes is an idea that if we talk about anal sex it automatically has to be in opposition to vaginal sex, to vaginal microbicides, which is false. Many women who will be using vaginal microbicides will also have a need for rectal microbicides. Anal sex is a human behavior: women engage in anal sex, heterosexual men engage in anal sex, and all types of identities, whether that is gay, men who have sex with men, males who have sex with males, or bisexual males – around the world, not just in the West – engage in anal sex. But in a field where there's limited dollars and momentum in one part of the field, you bring up another issue and it makes people scared.
>
> And we know that there's a lot of women having anal sex. Way more than gay men, or men who are having sex with men. Way more in terms of numbers, maybe not in frequency, but there's a lot going on. And we have studies that show that these women

> tend to be vulnerable women . . . they have partners who are perhaps injection drug users, or they live in high-prevalence communities . . . they have other vulnerabilities. When a vaginal microbicide becomes available, we all pretty much know that within ten minutes of it being on the shelf it will be up someone's butt. And it will likely be up a woman's butt, because more women will be buying vaginal microbicides than perhaps gay men. Even if the product is marked for vaginal use only, [rectal use of a vaginal microbicide] might be making women even more vulnerable. (Pickett 2007)

As Pickett suggests, the back-and-forth over "vaginal microbicides for women" and "rectal microbicides for men" is a concern parlayed between advocates, scientists, and potential users due to political sensitivities surrounding anal sex. Of additional concern are the limited funding opportunities for product development, many which are under the auspices of US government agencies (see Epstein [2006] regarding the politics of publicly funded sexuality research). Pickett's descriptions also complicate a notion that rectal microbicides are simply about homosexuality.

Debate over microbicides seems at times to allude to competing claims over an ideal public of beneficiaries, which is shakily divided into women, "men who have sex with men" and "men." Below are excerpts from an email exchange between two contributors to a microbicides advocacy listserve, who debate a comment stating that the Toronto AIDS conference in 2006 represented a "paradigm shift of bold proportions" in its attention to microbicides:

> Our messages need to communicate clearly that microbicides will not be a magic bullet. The idea of a technological panacea is seductive and one we must discourage. Microbicides are a technology that cannot possibly make an impact without a simultaneous investment in access and women's empowerment. . . . We need to firmly establish a realistic picture of microbicides as one tool that can help stem the increase of HIV incidence among women; but only if we, collectively, work to assure social environments in which women can access and use them. This means working to empower women in their intimate relationships, addressing violence against women and expanding their opportunities. It also means working with men.

Another contributor responded:

> Thanks for this. I must take issue on one point, though, whilst microbicides have been developed in response to the need for women to being able to protect themselves from HIV and other infection, we are now developing microbicides that will enable men to protect themselves, so I think this message should have contained some reference to the fact that microbicides are also being developed to help protect men (through anal sex, and as partners of women). I understand the importance to focus on vaginal microbicides at this stage in their development, and their need, but I think our messaging MUST be inclusive, and this can be done without taking the focus away from women and the products, access, services and rights they need! It is hard enough getting people involved in rectal microbicide advocacy, but when high-level messages (such as those below, and most of those regarding microbicides at the AIDS 2006 conference and elsewhere) make no reference to the fact that microbicides are

> being developed for both women and men, it will make our job even hard [sic] to get organisations working with and for men to advocate both for vaginal and rectal microbicides, and makes supporting the development of rectal microbicides harder, I think.

These communications illustrate some of the claims of knowledge about a technology made through advocacy, such as the question over beneficiaries and empowerment. Such discussions also emphasize the politics of gender and sexuality that imbue advocacy for HIV prevention methods. This can be further illustrated by considering the specific case of the leading NGOs advocating rectal microbicides in India, Naz Foundation International (NFI).

Naz Foundation International focuses on HIV prevention among males who have sex with males in South Asia, particularly in India. I first came across their work several years back in Delhi, while I myself was working in HIV and reproductive health policy, focused on issues of microbicide research and development. Years of correspondence and friendship with NFI's staff earned me a short-lived spot on their Board of Trustees, which made me even more reflective about "engaged" work during that brief time. NFI's involvement in rectal microbicides highlights the organization's broader operational framework, called the *kothi* framework. Briefly, *kothis* are "feminized" males who operate in a "gendered identity framework of male-to-male sex," says Shivananda Khan, NFI's founder.[6]

According to Khan, the term MSM (NFI prefers to define this as "males who have sex with males") is only partially useful:

> There needs to be a clear recognition that MSM can sometimes support advocacy work as a short-hand term, but can also create even more difficulties. With regard to rectal microbicide development the term MSM could be redundant, since we are discussing a sexual practice which can take place between males as well as between males and females. For example, in some recent studies NFI has done in India, a significant number of married self-identified MSM also have anal sex with their wives! In South Asian countries, the boundaries between MSM and transgender are blurred and porous. (Shivananda Khan, personal communication 10 January 2007)

MSM in India thus are described not only in terms of sexuality, but also in terms of gender. The *kothi* role is one of being penetrated; his penetrator is his *panthi*, or "real man," drawn primarily from the general male population. Penetration is a central organizing axis of these gendered identities. Lawrence Cohen (2005) pays close attention to these relational categories, and questions whether the *kothi* is a local figure and group identity, as many (including NFI staff) assert, or if it is the result of NFI's AIDS prevention interventions themselves. Paul Boyce (2007) similarly explains how HIV discourses become integral to the making of *kothi* identities. From this perspective, the *kothi* framework that figures prominently in NFI's engagement with microbicides advocacy has its own interdiscursive force, and NFI parses the feminization themes raised in vaginal microbicide advocacy with their own account of "feminized" males. NFI's efforts to engage microbicides through the *kothi* model must demand attention to the interdiscursive contexts – linguistic, ideological, and practical – of international AIDS research and programs, where AIDS is increasingly glossed as feminine.

The effort to present men as "feminized" thus may not be terribly difficult for NFI, but doing so may contribute to surfacing only one sort of man in the cosmopolitanism surrounding AIDS.[7] It also keeps MSM identity politics closely bound to gender and sexuality, perhaps giving fewer opportunities to discuss other forms of identity-making such as those concerning shame and respect (Reddy 2005). Moreover, as advocacy for microbicides is a global effort, NFI's approach must be in conversation (at least partially) with public health and US gay male frameworks for rectal microbicides anchored more in ideas of sexuality than in masculinity. This offers little visibility to "straight" men, by virtue of its solid homo/hetero sexual epistemology. Most importantly, though, male-male sex in India is still considered illegal, thus illustrating why a conference on HIV prevention in Delhi opens with talk of sodomy law repeal, over anything else. As Shivananda Khan explains,

> There is still a great deal of denial, invisibility, shame and stigma attached to anal sex behaviours. Anal sex between men and women is not readily recognized, along with the actual level of anal sex behaviours between males. Further, in South Asian cultures (and of course in the West and elsewhere), anal sex is highly gendered, whereby feminised identities surround the receptive role. Along with this is the illegality of supposed "acts against the order of nature" under the Section 377 of the Bangladesh, Indian and Pakistan Penal Codes. Thus promoting rectal microbicides (or even developing such) can be defined as promoting illegal behaviour, which is also a crime of "abetting." Rectal microbicide development will need to be linked with human rights along with health rights, and the decriminalisation of anal sex between consenting adults. (Khan 2007)

Taking together both rectal and vaginal microbicide discourses, a key figure seems missing in the discursive circulation of aspirations for microbicides. This figure is the infector – the *panthi* for the *kothi*, and the male partner for the at-risk woman. In many cases in India, given the high estimates of male-male sex, he is the same man. If this is the case, then why is there little discussion of efforts to involve him in HIV prevention? The straight man, the manly man, remains at large. The relative silence around men seems to continue public health's deflection of political and economic determinants of health risk, such as sodomy laws and the social disparities that help determine who may transgress them without harassment or violence.

However, not all advocates would agree that the heterosexual man is the missing figure. For some, discursive gaps represent deletions of the Euro-American homosexual. Consider this editorial about the 2006 International AIDS Conference in Toronto in the newspaper *Bay Windows*:

> I applaud the human rights framework that many at IAC (International AIDS Conference) are using to address HIV/AIDS, because it underscored what many

> of us have known for quite some time, namely that HIV/AIDS is far more than a public health challenge; it's an "existential perfect storm" in which all the aspects of what it means to be human find themselves testing our mettle and exposing whether we truly value the worth and dignity of all human beings. Regrettably, many at IAC seemed unable to see that the role of homophobia and (hetero)sexism is profoundly implicated in terms like MSM and the breathtaking inability of some to speak openly and honestly about gay and bisexual men's sexualities. The result: a recloseting. (Perkins 2006)

This position evokes several contemporary anthropological claims about representation: first that humanitarianism and human rights discourses can become problematic in the effacing of difference that universality entails. Second, and more particular to lesbian/gay anthropology, here the term "MSM" is described to be inherently homophobic and heterosexist – an undermining patois of public health bureaucracy. Inasmuch as global inclusivity of various forms of male-male sex is the goal for microbicide advocacy, some spheres of communicability may become public more easily than others.

Conclusion

These collective discourses, all part of the circulation of microbicide development, make claims to gender and sexuality politics through bioscience. The varied groups whose interests the discourses represent may succeed in mobilizing funds, moving clinical trials forward, and contributing to development "results," but pools of knowledge become obscured in the wake of their efforts. Of course, the urgency of the situation, the materiality of suffering from HIV and AIDS, necessitates that the end-product gains center stage. Nonetheless, scholarly analyses of the biosocial communities forged around HIV prevention technologies necessitate a picking-apart of how some persons, claims, and moral aspirations receive the spotlight over their alternatives. A discursive approach to this challenge is one intervention point for publicly engaged lesbian/gay anthropology. Ethnographers can serve a public good in pinpointing differential visibility as it becomes enacted through discourse. This isn't a new development, of course; what is increasingly compelling in the case of HIV, however, is not merely how definitions of "the categories" of gender and sexuality are made, but how humanitarian organizations traverse the globe and selectively circulate these categories. Ethnography itself is linked to this enterprise, as well. It is then a return to the moments of intersection between advocacy and ethnography that can most clearly point to the helpful elements of categorical definition, and to those less so.

I have attempted to introduce one analytic approach to advocacy-ethnography intersections that parses the divergent appeals to sexuality and science in advocacy work. This approach deems sexual identities as conceptually crucial, but not at the expense of other axes of difference at play in HIV prevention technology advocacy's productive discussions. In addition, such ethnography attempts to address other discourses that advocacy and activism around HIV uphold, such as talk of international human rights (Merry 2005; Redfield 2005). "Vulnerability" is the key trope that accounts for difference in these interchanges; its sociocultural and political dimensions could be better explored to establish anthropological conversations that respect the efforts of a dedicated, astute, insightful, and effective network of microbicide supporters.

Despite and in part because of the multivocal participation in microbicide advocacy across geographic bounds, notions of difference (such as gender, class or race) can become substantially blurred, with sexual identity politics standing in as the primary issue of concern. Bringing "subaltern" subjectivities to light has been a key contribution of lesbian/gay anthropology. Part of this effort has involved departing for moments from analyses of sexual cultural difference, and resting on other key areas of discrimination. Pointing out meaningful strata of difference is a useful direction for anthropology of HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs, and doing so may evince more telling aspects of fear, pleasure and desire (see Kulick 2000). Additionally, this engaged ethnography can "shift the focus away from epistemological or cultural difference to think about how the political-economic parameters that shape how particular accounts get placed within – or excluded from – the circulation of public discourse" (Briggs 2004:167). Such a focus on "discursive economies," as Briggs terms them, prompts reflection upon the challenges of AIDS and the sentiments attached to bioscience. Ethnographic research methods and ethnographic writing are key inroads into this process.

As I've described, simultaneous moments of conceptual blending and fragmenting inflect the discursive economy created around microbicides and HIV prevention technology development more broadly. These moves also extend into further stages of the product development process. The concerns raised here can be applied to situations that will arise as microbicides trot towards the clinical trial finish line, when product marketing remains the unanswered question. Price aside, one can imagine that the ideas upon which microbicide development has been premised will be channeled into public discourses advertising an actual product. In this case, though, what's sexy may just not be purely sexual.

Resources

More information about microbicides, including how to become involved in advocacy efforts, can be found at:

The Global Campaign for Microbicides: www.global-campaign.org
The International Rectal Microbicide Working Group: www.irmwg.org
The Alliance for Microbicide Development: www.microbicide.org
The International Partnership for Microbicides: www.ipm-microbicides.org

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Notes

1. Jasanoff (2004:2) defines co-production as "shorthand for the proposition that the ways in which we know and represent the world (both nature and society) are inseparable from the ways in which we choose to live in it."
2. For the purposes of this paper I distinguish HIV prevention science (which is largely devoted to the development of microbicides and vaccines) from HIV treatment science, which is focused on the development of pharmaceuticals to treat already-infected individuals. However, the division between the two is not neat: scientists work across treatment and prevention arenas, and advocates rally around both sorts of products. Moreover, the products themselves can intertwine, as some microbicide candidates (a prevention technology) are formulations whose active compound is an antiretroviral drug (a treatment technology). This alludes to the means by which HIV treatment pharmaceuticals are being formulated for use as microbicides that offer "pre-exposure prophylaxis."
3. On the methodology of discourse analysis, see, for example, Fairclough (1995) and Schiffrin, Tannen, and Hamilton (2003).
4. Scholars of science studies and other strands of critical theory have carefully picked apart such an assumption (see Haraway 1988; Harding 1991; Fausto-Sterling 2000; Latour 1987).
5. These trials can last for several years and enrol thousands of volunteers in their later stages. Clinical trials for HIV prevention technologies also can be quite tenuous. If Data Safety Monitoring Boards decide that the microbicide candidate under testing may not offer any benefit for HIV prevention compared to a placebo, or in rare cases, may increase the overall study population's risk of acquiring HIV, then the trials may be discontinued, as was the case with a recent set of trials in Africa and India (see Altman 2007).
6. NFI is by no means the only group in India or elsewhere or engaged with the *kothi* framework; it is merely the first place that I encountered it. See Boyce (2007), Cohen (2005) and Reddy (2005) for in-depth analyses of the deployment of *kothi* and *panthi* identities, particularly as they relate to HIV interventions.
7. See Cohen (2005) for a detailed account of the making of public knowledge about male sexuality in India and his notion of "AIDS cosmopolitanism."

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Chapter 15

Man Marries Man in Nigeria?

Rudolf P. Gaudio

On the fourth day of Zul-Hajji in the year 1414 (equivalent to May 13, 1994 CE), a front-page headline in *Al-Mizan*, a Hausa-language weekly published by the Muslim Brothers, proclaimed: "Man marries man in Kano" [*Namiji ya auri namiji a Kano*]. Presented as the findings of an undercover reporter, the article alleged that a same-sex wedding party had recently taken place at a hotel in Northern Nigeria's largest city.[1] "Let us continue intimating the enlightenment and development of the Europeans," it began, sarcastically implying that the "wedding" was a sign of decadence imported from the West (Albakri 1994). In the style of an exposé, the article then listed the names of participants as these appeared on the invitation card: musicians, organizers, and the patrons who had helped fund the party. Also exposed was the host, identified as "the one[2] taken in marriage" [*wanda aka aura*], that is, the "male bride,"[2] though the name that was given, Madhuri Mairawa, was clearly a feminine nickname inspired by Madhuri Dixit, an Indian actress who had starred in numerous Bollywood films.[3]

In keeping with the political ideology of the Muslim Brothers [*'Yan'uwa Musulmi*], the article's primary target was the Nigerian state, whose local representatives were accused of facilitating the event. "Something many people do not know," it contended, "is that . . . a group of Muslims [i.e., affiliates of the Muslim Brothers] attempted to prevent the wedding from taking place. But alas, on that day the police were sent to shield the deviants." The article similarly alleged that a group of Muslim students were rebuffed when they tried to get CTV Kano, the state television station, to publicize the event. As evidence of the state's involvement, the *Al-Mizan* reporter claimed to have spotted at the event numerous "fancy cars" and "large gowns" (formal men's wear), an implicit reference to the stereotype of corrupt "big men," politicians, and businessmen who use their wealth and political influence to patronize female prostitutes [*karuwai*] and feminine men known as *'yan daudu* (singular: *ɗan daudu*).

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English-speaking scholars and journalists often translate *ɗan daudu* as "transvestite" or "homosexual," or "pimp." The translations are misleading, yet they do convey a sense of the stigma ʻyan daudu endure because of the ways they are thought to transgress Hausa Muslim norms of gender, sexuality, and work. ʻYan daudu are most visible in marketplaces and motor-parks (transportation depots), where they perform the "women's work" of cooking and serving food to male customers. In these settings some ʻyan daudu talk and move in stylized ways that are perceived to be "womanlike"; more rarely, a ɗan daudu might don a woman's waist-wrapper or head-tie on top of his masculine attire.[4] Other ʻyan daudu can be found at "women's houses" [*gidajen mata*] where they and "independent women" [*mata masu zaman kansu*], as women presumed to be "prostitutes" generally prefer to be called, entertain male visitors with food, board games, conversation, and sometimes sex (Pittin 2002). Although disparaged as "prostitution" [*karuwanci*], the social relationships formed in this context are typically characterized by reciprocal gift exchanges (not just money) and are expressed through the intimate language of kinship: like independent women, younger and older ʻyan daudu call one another "daughter" [*ʻya*] and "mother" [*uwa*], and refer to their conventionally masculine suitors as "boyfriend" [*saurayi*] or "husband" [*miji*]. The men typically identify themselves, discreetly, as *masu harka* ["people who do the deed]", while ʻyan daudu describe them as "civilians" [*fararen-hula*] or simply as "men." The "feminine" work of serving food and entertaining men helps many ʻyan daudu fulfill their social obligations as men, supporting heterosexual families (most ʻyan daudu marry women and father children), younger ʻyan daudu, and other kinfolk.

Popular stereotypes paint ʻyan daudu as selfish, greedy, and shameless in their rejection of normative cultural values. Reinforcing this stereotype, the *Al-Mizan* article quoted one of the party's alleged organizers: "Oh, this isn't the first time, we've done this a lot, it's just that people didn't know. This time we felt we ought to make it plain. And this time the groom has offered three suitcases with wheels, with all sorts of bridal gifts inside." The "groom" [*ango*] in this case would be a conventionally masculine ʻman who seeks men' [*namiji mai neman maza*] whom ʻyan daudu would describe as a "civilian." His offering of bridal gifts in the supposed context of a same-sex wedding was presumably cited as an example of the deterioration of Hausa Muslim cultural norms. The article's final line drove home this connection between homosexuality and civilizational decline: "Muslim community: where are we headed?"

News of the article spread quickly through Kano's networks of ʻyan daudu and "civilians," as did copies of the newspaper itself. Having lived in Kano for over a year, I had attended the party in question and took part in a number of conversations in which people read and commented on the article. Unsurprisingly, it incited both fear and outrage, especially among those who had attended the party. "It's a lie!" many exclaimed in response to the headline, noting that the invitation card described the event as a "Sister Wedding Ceremony," that is, a party honoring the host's sister, who had recently gotten married. The fact that the newspaper published the participants' names was especially offensive and led many readers to condemn the article as "slander" [*sharri*]. Some worried that the Muslim Brothers might send more "spies" [*masu leƙen asiri*, literally "those who peek at secrets"] to other parties. This fear was especially acute among "civilians" known as "shirted 'yan daudu" [*'yan daudun riga*] – men who talk and act "like women" in private, while maintaining a masculine occupation and appearance in public. Such men are said to treat *daudu*, the practice of men acting "like women," like a shirt that can be put on or taken off at will. Although it was common for many "civilians," especially "shirted" ones, to stay away from 'yan daudu's parties, some did go from time to time despite the risk this posed to their reputations. These partygoers often took simple precautions like avoiding parties that took place near their relatives' homes or staying away from the videographers hired to film the event. The *Al-Mizan* exposé made these men afraid that such precautions might not be enough to avoid a scandal or potential arrest.

Though seemingly intended to incite public outrage, the *Al-Mizan* article had few practical consequences. No protests were mounted, no parties were shut down, and the police were no more abusive than they had ever been. Since the people whose names had been exposed were already known to be 'yan daudu or independent women, they were accustomed to living with a certain degree of stigma. The one person accused explicitly of homosexuality, the host known as Madhuri Mairawa, reportedly kept a low profile for a while, but he did not face additional punishments. An important reason for this, I was told, was that, unlike most 'yan daudu, Madhuri Mairawa still lived with his father, who was said to be unusually tolerant of his son's gender nonconformity.

Thirteen years later, similar accusations had more serious ramifications. In April 2007 the southern Nigerian newspaper *This Day* reported that state-sponsored Shari'a-enforcement squads known as *hisbas* destroyed a theater in Kano where a "polygamous lesbian wedding" had allegedly taken place. The host of the celebration, one Aunty Maiduguri, and her four "brides" were reported to be in hiding. (The English-sounding name Aunty Maiduguri was presumably a nickname, Maiduguri being the largest city in northeastern Nigeria.) The story was quickly picked up by the Western news media and disseminated over the Internet by gay-rights organizations and bloggers. With a grainy image of her face circling the globe (supposedly from the poster commemorating her "wedding"), Aunty Maiduguri was on her way to becoming an African Muslim lesbian icon whose brave attempt to assert her rights was being crushed by Islamist militants. A few days later, she publicly rejected that honor. In an audio interview broadcast on the BBC website, she told a reporter in clear, Nigerian-accented English, "It's a lie, it's unbelievable. I have never in my life seen where a lady can marry four ladies at one time. I have never practised – never heard the word 'lesbian' – truly" (BBC 2007). The story quickly receded from public view. As far as I can tell, no follow-up stories were published on the real nature of the party or the fate of Aunty Maiduguri and her friends.

Another international media frenzy erupted, however, in August 2007, when hisbas in the city of Bauchi (250 km southeast of Kano) arrested 18 men at a hotel party and charged them with being "dressed in female attire" and "organizing a gay wedding." According to a report issued by the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC 2008), the accused men spent 19 days in detention, where they were "beaten, caned, and cursed by their jailors and court officers." Local protesters demanded that the men be prosecuted for sodomy – a crime punishable by death – prompting IGLHRC, a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in New York City, to send its African regional specialists to help in their defense. Like Aunty Maiduguri, the men denied the allegations and insisted they were not homosexuals. In a curious echo of Madhuri Mairawa's invitation card, they claimed to have organized "a combination birthday/graduation party for a local man . . . and the celebration of the marriage of his sister" (IGHLRC 2008). They also objected to being called *'yan daudu*, which the IGLHRC report glossed as "a Hausa term that is often derogatorily used to refer to any male who publicly exhibits gender non-conforming behavior." The sodomy charge was dismissed due to lack of evidence and the men were released on bail, though other charges, including "vagabondage" and "membership in an unlawful society," were still pending as of February 2008.

In their coverage of the so-called "Bauchi 18" (including an interview I agreed to do on the BBC radio program, Focus on Africa), Western news media and international gay-rights organizations emphasized the plight of homosexuals in Nigeria: homosexuality is outlawed under both Shari'a and federal law, and the national legislature had recently debated a bill known as the "Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act," which would have banned not just weddings, but all gay organizing as well as public displays of same-sex affection. (Despite support from President Obasanjo and many Christian and Muslim legislators, the bill was never brought before the full assembly for a vote.) What the international media did not discuss – though I did try to emphasize it in my radio interview – were the historical factors that led to this state of affairs. Without such a discussion, Western audiences might be inclined to believe hostility towards homosexuality was an intrinsic part of (Northern) Nigerian culture. Yet the different fates of Madhuri Mairawa and the Bauchi 18 suggest that Northern Nigerians' sexual attitudes have shifted in recent years, and cannot be attributed simply to their Islamic faith or to a timeless Hausa, Nigerian, or African "culture."

What happened between 1994 and 2007 that made homosexuality, and the specific issue of same-sex weddings, the object of such intense public debate? The most obvious historical development was the rise of Islamist politics in Northern Nigeria following the sudden death in 1998 of the country's military dictator, Sani Abacha, and the election of Olusegun Obasanjo as the country's first civilian president since 1983. Like most of Nigeria's previous heads of state, Abacha was a Hausa-speaking Muslim, while Obasanjo was a Yoruba Christian. Less than five months after President Obasanjo's inauguration in May 1999, the Northern state of Zamfara adopted Shari'a, the Islamic legal code, and within a year and a half, 11 other Northern states, including Kano and Bauchi, had followed suit. Although a number of political leaders and commentators insisted that the adoption of Shari'a violated constitutional provisions against the establishment of a state religion, the

Obasanjo administration did not formally challenge it. The federal government thus averted a political crisis that some feared could escalate into civil war.

The adoption of Shari'a gave certain groups the power, by means of the hisbas, to enforce their interpretation of Islamic law. The Muslim Brothers, formally known as the Islamic Movement, were not one of these groups, for while they believe in the primacy of Shari'a, they view the Federal Republic of Nigeria as an illegitimate creation of the Christian European colonizers.[5] Other groups, such as the Izala,[6] take a more practical stance and have endeavored to work within the system gradually to spread their reformist ideas. The Muslim Brothers are further marginalized because, whereas the Muslim population of Nigeria (and West Africa) is almost entirely Sunni, they are widely believed to be Shi'ites. Their leader, Malam Ibrahim al-Zakzaky, makes frequent trips to the Islamic Republic of Iran and has well-known ties with its ruling clerics. Al-Zakzaky and his followers neither acknowledge nor reject the Shi'ite label, preferring to describe themselves simply as "Muslims."[7] Their newspaper, *Al-Mizan*, is admired for its trenchant criticism of government leaders' corruption, but its polemical tone makes many reluctant to take its news reports at face value. A front-page story about an alleged same-sex "wedding" could easily have been dismissed as yet another frivolous provocation.

In 1994 the Muslim Brothers had neither the popular support nor the access to state power that would have allowed them to follow through on their accusations against Madhuri Mairawa and his friends. By 2007, however, Islamist principles had been embraced by the Northern states (but not by the federal government) with the apparent approval of most of their constituents. But the adoption of Shari'a by itself does not explain why the issue of same-sex weddings became so important. Hausa-speaking Muslims have been observing Shari'a for centuries without devoting much energy to policing what Islamic jurists call *liwāṭ*, or "sodomy" [Hausa: *luwadi*]. The recent prominence of this issue is particularly mysterious given the virtually total absence of openly gay communities in Northern Nigeria and the weak presence of gay-rights organizations anywhere in the country. A number of Nigerian NGOs address the problems faced by sexual minorities, usually in relation to public health issues, but they have generally done so discreetly. Nigerian supporters of gay rights became more vocal *after* the government started focusing on the issue, not before. In formulating their anti-homosexual agendas, therefore, Northern Nigeria's Islamists and the nation's federal officials must have taken their inspiration from elsewhere.

Lost and Found in Translation: *Masu Harka* and *Homos*

In the 13 years prior to the alleged same-sex weddings in Bauchi and Kano, gay rights also emerged as a controversial issue in other parts of Africa. In 1994 a newly liberated South Africa became the first nation in the world to enshrine gay rights in its constitution. Shortly thereafter the rulers of other African states, primarily in

Eastern and Southern Africa, made public proclamations condemning homosexuality as "un-African" and reviling homosexuals, sometimes in violent terms. President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya, for example, asserted that "words like lesbianism and homosexuality do not exist in African languages," while President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe compared homosexuals to pigs and dogs (Dunton and Palmberg 1996:24). In his analysis of these statements, Neville Hoad (2007) suggests that for leaders of the so-called Frontline states that had supported the anti-apartheid struggle, the rise of a rich, powerful, black-ruled South Africa (still largely dominated by white capital) threatened their influence in the region and weakened their authority within their respective countries. According to Hoad, South Africa's embrace of gay rights gave these rulers a rhetorical weapon which they used to define themselves as "authentically African" versus their racially hybrid neighbor to the south.

Meanwhile, in Egypt new telecommunications technologies were contributing to the emergence of urban gay subcultures that became the target of public condemnation by Muslim leaders, especially those with Islamist sympathies. Ever mindful of the challenge Islamist groups posed to their leadership, Egypt's secular authorities in the early 2000s staged a series of police raids on homosexual establishments in which scores of men were arrested and jailed. Joseph Massad (2007) describes how the Islamist discourses that helped trigger these raids drew on the human-rights rhetoric of the so-called "Gay International," a term he coined to refer to the loose alliance of gay-rights organizations such as IGLHRC and ILGA (the International Lesbian and Gay Association) and their supposed allies in academia, journalism, and commerce. Building on the work of Edward Said, Massad contends that the "Gay International" relies on Orientalist representations of the Arab world's exotically "repressive" attitudes towards sex in order to justify the global pursuit of sexual "liberation." This "liberation" is in fact a new form of Western imperial domination, for it imposes notions of sexual identity and human rights that do not conform to the cultural realities of the people and places the "Gay International" insists on "liberating." In so doing, Massad argues, it "produces homosexuals, as well as gays and lesbians, where they do not exist, and represses same-sex desires and practices that refuse to be assimilated into its sexual epistemology" (Massad 2007:163).

According to Massad, in postcolonial contexts characterized by widespread poverty and extreme inequalities of wealth and power, the imperialistic activities of the "Gay International" generate popular resentment and end up "inciting" the very homophobic violence that it claims to be fighting against. In Egypt this is evident in the discourses of Islamist ideologues who have made the identification and punishment of homosexuals a cornerstone of their political project. Although the Islamists' stated goal is the restoration of an Islamic state along the lines of the earliest Muslim community, their obsession with sexuality is a contemporary innovation that draws on both liberal and conservative movements in the West. Thus, the Islamist movement has adopted the basic premise of modern psychology that sexual practices can be categorized as either "hetero" or "homo," as well as the gay-liberationist idea that social identities can and should be based on these categories. At the same time, the Islamists mimic Christian conservatives when they use these same categories to vilify homosexuals and exclude them from the Egyptian body politic.

If some Egyptian men have embraced a "gay" identity, Massad characterizes them as cosmopolitan elites whose desires and practices have little in common with those of ordinary folk. As evidence, he cites the fact that the homosexual establishments raided by the Egyptian police catered to the middle and upper classes, and that many of the men who were arrested had participated in online chat-rooms (Massad 2007:265). He also describes how some gay-rights activists in the Arab diaspora supposedly tailored their rhetoric to satisfy the expectations of Western donors and funding agencies. Hoad describes a similar dynamic in Southern Africa, where the availability of funds from the global North spawned a number of gay-rights NGOs, the membership of which was suspiciously low. The passion of Massad's critique comes from his conviction that, when Islamist agitation leads Arab governments to scapegoat homosexuals, "It is not the Gay International or its upper-class supporters in the Arab diaspora who will be persecuted but rather the poor and nonurban men who practice same-sex contact and who do not *necessarily* identify as homosexual or gay" (Massad 2007:189, his emphasis).[8] In a parallel argument, Hoad notes that the "unwitting conspiracy between homophobic regimes and local and international [gay-rights] activists" (Hoad 2007:83) in Southern Africa results in the "foreclosing [of] the diversity of desires, practices, and possibly identities and communities on the ground" (Hoad 2007:84).

Who are these "poor and nonurban men?" These desires, practices, identities, and communities "on the ground?" The ethnographic details implicit in Hoad's and Massad's claims are only hinted at. In part this is because, as literary critics, they concentrate on published texts rather than other, less easily accessible discourses. But they also have principled suspicions about anthropological research on Arabs', Muslims' and Africans' sexuality, which can be and has been deployed in ways that do not serve, and might even harm, the people it claims to represent. Nevertheless, their arguments offer an invitation for ethnographic research that documents how the "incitement to discourse about sexual identities and practices" (Massad 2007:417) has transpired at particular places and times.

"Incitement to discourse" is a phrase coined by Michel Foucault (1990) to describe the obsession with sexuality that emerged in middle-class European society in the nineteenth century and has characterized Western popular culture ever since. According to Foucault, the modern sciences of biology, psychology, sociology, and anthropology sought to understand and control "deviant" sexual behavior by documenting it in painstaking, often titillating, detail. This gave rise to notions of sexual identity that most Westerners today take for granted, including the idea that "homosexuals" and "heterosexuals" are distinct types of persons. In colonial settings the scientific obsession with sexuality produced graphic descriptions of the bodies and intimate practices of "natives," who became the objects of white Europeans' curiosity, revulsion and desire (Bleys 1996; McClintock 1995; Malinowski

1929; Mead 1923; Stoler 1995). As Said and others have detailed, the same racial voyeurism was evident in fiction, travel writing, and other literary genres (Bhabha 1994; Said 1979), and it lives on in such contexts as sex tourism and "exotic" pornography, as well as *National Geographic* (Lutz and Collins 1993) and even, one might argue, ethnographic projects like mine.

The experiences of Aunty Maiduguri and the Bauchi 18 lend qualified support to Hoad's and Massad's arguments. None of the targeted individuals self-identified as gay or lesbian (at least not publicly), yet local Islamists and international gay-rights organizations colluded (temporarily) to label them as such. Even after they were released from police custody, this "unwitting conspiracy" had produced a social environment in which it would be difficult if not impossible for them to engage in any same-sex social or erotic practices they might desire. With its opening remark about "imitating" Europeans, *Al-Mizan*'s "outing" of Madhuri Mairawa seems like an even clearer example of the "incitement to discourse." Responding to this incitement, the indignant cries of "Slander!" and "It's a lie!" could be read as an example of "same-sex desires and practices that refuse to be assimilated" into Western/Islamist sexual categories. Similar "refusals" could also be attributed, albeit speculatively, to the public denials of the Bauchi 18 as well as that of Aunty Maiduguri. These "refusals" appear less straightforward, however, when we consider: that many of the men who cried "Slander!" privately self-identified not only as *masu harka* but also as *homos*; that the Bauchi 18 (whose reason for throwing a party was surprisingly similar to Madhuri Mairawa's) may well have been hoping to engage in a bit of gender or sexual nonconformity; and that Aunty Maiduguri's fluent command of English makes it hard to believe that she "never heard the word 'lesbian.'"

Regardless of its truth or falsity, Aunty Maiduguri's claim highlights the questions of language raised by these controversies. One set of questions concerns the problems of categorization and translation. Simply put, international gay-rights activists presume that sexual categories like "gay" and "straight" can be translated with relative ease from one linguistic/cultural setting to another, while extreme cultural nationalists like Kenya's former President Moi reject the universal translatability of sexual categories. Both discourses have roots in European colonialism. Almost a century before President Moi, for example, Sir Richard Burton declared that "the negro race is mostly untainted by sodomy and tribadism" (quoted in Murray and Roscoe 1998:xii). At other times, European colonialists enacted labor, educational, and housing policies that presumed (and imposed) the translatability in African settings of European notions of gender and sexuality, such as the cultural ideal of the male breadwinner and female home-maker (Hansen 1992; Ferguson 1999; White 1990).

Inspired by Foucault and Said as well as feminist and queer theorists, Hoad and Massad emphasize the ways in which categorization and translation can be used as tools of domination and "discursive violence." Their cautions are important, but it is also important to acknowledge that categorizing and translating are inherent features of human language and social interaction, performed by powerful and powerless alike. Accordingly, while it has become *de rigueur* for social theorists to describe categorization as a process that excludes and translation as a practice whereby meaning is lost, it is also important to ask: what is *gained* by these processes, and by whom? In considering these questions my aim is not simply to pass judgment about whether a particular gender or sexual category (or even the meta-categories of "gender" and "sexuality") can or cannot be translated across linguistic and cultural lines. Rather, I seek to understand the use (or avoidance) of such categories as rhetorical acts that take place for different reasons and with varying effects – including the drawing and blurring of cultural boundaries themselves. What is at stake, for example, in using an English word like *lesbian* or *homosexual* to label African individuals, communities, and their social practices? Conversely, what is at stake in denying the validity of such labels?

Though it has become commonplace among anthropologists of sexuality to refrain from using terms from a colonial language (English, French, Dutch, etc.) to describe the identities and practices of people who speak other (usually non-European) languages, scholars have paid little attention to translation that operates in the other direction. The Hausa-language newspaper *Kakaki*, for example, had no trouble reporting on President Clinton's ill-fated proposal in 1993 to permit gay men and lesbians to serve openly in the US armed forces, though the term the newspaper used for "gay men," *'yan luɗu* [literally, "sons of Lot"] conveys a negative moral judgment akin to English "sodomites." *'Yan maɗigo*, the term used for "lesbians," has more neutral connotations. Such translations occur in day-to-day conversations as well. In talking with Hausa friends I frequently found myself using terms like *harka* and *ɗan daudu* to describe gay life in the USA. I also heard such terms applied to me.

One day in 1993, I went with my friend Mai Kwabo, a married man who self-identified as both *mai harka* and *homo*, to a bar in Kano that was known, by those who should know, as a meeting place for masu harka. A short while after we sat down and ordered our beers, we were joined by Alhaji Hamza, a well-dressed man whom I had never met, though he and Mai Kwabo clearly knew each other. After the requisite series of greetings, Mai Kwabo asked his friend: "How are the merchandises?" [*Yaya hajoji*?]. *Haja* ["merchandise"] is an in-group code term, a grammatically feminine noun that refers to the lower-status (younger, poorer, feminized) partner in a typical homosexual relationship. In addition to revealing Alhaji Hamza's homosexuality, therefore, Mai Kwabo's question indexed his friend's presumptive status as older, wealthier, and "masculine" vis-à-vis his sexual partners.

Alhaji Hamza was momentarily speechless. His eyes grew wide as he glanced nervously in my direction. Sensing his friend's discomfort, Mai Kwabo sought to reassure him. "Don't worry, he does it," he said, meaning that I too was "one who does the deed" [*mai harka*].

Alhaji Hamza responded to this information with apparent amazement and disbelief. Looking at me, he asked, "Huh? Is it true?"

"It's true," I replied.

My straightforward affirmation seemed only to heighten Alhaji Hamza's incredulity. "White men do it too?!" he exclaimed. [*Turawa ma suna yi?!*]

Alhaji Hamza's surprise was not unique; the disclosure of my homosexuality in groups of masu harka frequently elicited comments like his. Yet such comments almost always met with patronizing rebukes from other, seemingly more cosmopolitan masu harka, along the lines of, "Come on, fool, of course they do it; everyone does it." At the same time, relatively few of the 'yan daudu and masu harka I met had much if any awareness of Western gay life, and many reacted to the idea of gay political rights as ridiculous and absurd.

A notion of homosexuality and gender nonconformity as frivolous forms of play was evident in some of the alternative terms for 'yan daudu in the in-group code known as the "harka dialect" [*yaren harka*]. A number of these terms were borrowed from English, such as *anti* ["aunty"], *mandiya* (possibly from the British pronunciation of "m'dear"), and my favorite: *ji-sebin* ["G-7"], a term used by English-speaking political pundits to refer to the "Group of 7," the richest and most powerful nations on earth. 'Yan daudu's use of this term to refer to themselves – *Ji-sebin ce sosai!* [She's a real G-7!] – indexes a novel and playful engagement with the global political economy that is not directly related to international debates over sexual rights or to the global circulation of "Gay English" (Leap 1996; Leap and Boellstorf 2004).

Another example of playful engagement with globalization is the use of *indiya* ["India"] as another synonym for *ɗan daudu*. Among the 'yan daudu I knew, the actresses in Hindi-language Bollywood films (such as Madhuri Dixit) were camp icons of glamour and style, or what my friends called *indiyanci* ["Indianness"].[9]

Zakaria, known to some of his friends as Fatima, was an unmarried civil servant in his mid-twenties. Though "shirted," he had an unusual number of friends who ran restaurants in marketplaces or entertained men at women's houses. (Some of my other "shirted" friends were afraid to venture near such locations.) When I asked Zakaria how he knew so many overt 'yan daudu, he told me he had spent a lot of time with 'yan daudu when he was in his teens, and had seriously considered going into daudu himself. If his parents had not been able to send him to high school, he said, he would certainly have become a ɗan daudu. The lure of daudu had been strong. He had a vivacious personality and a wicked sense of humor that seemed wasted in his government office, but he was grateful for the steady, if modest salary and enjoyed an active social life.

One day Zakaria took me and a friend, Aliyu, to visit another friend of theirs named Mato. All of us self-identified as "shirted" 'yan daudu, though we more frequently used the in-group term *ashoshi* (singular: *ashi*, possibly from Yoruba *ashawo* ["prostitute"]). At some point in the conversation Mato mentioned that he had just purchased a cassette tape of Indian film music [*waƙar Indiya*]. As he listed the song titles in Hindi, Zakaria and Aliyu nodded in recognition. One title, which I heard as *Mé Larké Hu*, got them particularly excited.

"Put it on!" Zakaria shouted. "I want to dance!"

Without a word he and Aliyu jumped up and went to draw the curtains while Mato placed the tape in his boom-box. As Mato fast-forwarded the tape to the appropriate song, Zakaria struck the pose of what I took to be a classical Indian dancer: palms together, arms over head, right leg on the floor, left leg jutting out to the side, knees and ankles flexed. He smiled and glanced flirtatiously at each of us, as if to tell us we were in for a big treat.

As the music played, Zakaria flitted and jumped around the room, gracefully flexing his wrists, fingers and elbows in sync with the rhythm while mouthing the Hindi lyrics.

"*Shegiya*, Fatima!" Aliyu cried, using the Hausa word for "female bastard" with a tone of affection that translated in this case as something like "you silly bitch!"

" '*Yar iska!*" Mato chimed. The epithet literally means "daughter of the wind" or "daughter of the spirit," but its practical meaning in this case was "naughty girl."

To our naughty delight, Zakaria continued dancing, smiling and lip-synching till the music ended. As he stood trying to catch his breath, I asked him if he really understood the song's words. I assumed he did not, and had simply memorized the syllables.

"Of course I do!" he replied. "*Mé larké hu*. It means, 'I'm a girl' [*Ni yarinya ce*]." Admitting that he didn't know *all* the words, he went on to translate a few other short lines from Hindi into Hausa.

Later on, I asked a Hindi-speaking friend of mine, an Indian expatriate who'd lived in Kano for many years, if *Mé larké hu* was an actual Hindi expression. He didn't understand my pronunciation, so I repeated myself and explained, "It supposedly means, 'I'm a girl'."

My friend smiled with recognition. "*Mẽhn ladki hũ*", he corrected me. "That's right: 'I'm a woman, I'm a girl'. That's what it means." He was amused to hear how I'd learned the expression, and said my description of Zakaria's performance reminded him of the *hijras* back in India. As far as I know, Zakaria had never heard of *hijras*.

Gay-rights Talk in National, Regional, and Global Perspective

Massad and Hoad link recent debates about gay rights in Africa and the Arab world to the liberalization of international trade and finance, otherwise known as neoliberal globalization, that has taken place in the decades since most African and Arab nations won their independence. While the legal principle of "human rights" was ostensibly developed to protect the freedom, dignity, and lives of human beings, neoliberal policies award rights to corporations and have thus contributed, according to many economists, to increasing disparities between classes, nations, and regions across the globe. It is these inequalities that have led many people in the global South to suspect that "rights" talk is another strategy for rich folk in the global North to enhance their power.

These suspicions erupted in the worldwide Anglican Community when liberal bishops, most of them from the USA and the UK, submitted a proposal in the late 1990s to allow individual dioceses to ordain gay and lesbian bishops and to recognize same-sex marriages. With the exception of six South Africans, most of the African bishops sided with conservatives from the global North in opposing the measure, claiming that the issue of gay rights distracted the Church's attention from other, more pressing issues such as poverty and globalization. They also criticized their liberal Western colleagues for attempting to impose "modern," secular notions of morality on "traditional" Christian and African cultures. The African bishops thus took a classic anticolonial argument and merged it with a discourse – the defense of the heterosexual Christian family – that had its roots in colonialism. Hoad describes this homophobic reconstruction of African tradition as "phantasmatic" and "historical amnesia" because it ignored the Church's history of repressing Africans' "traditional," non-Christian kinship and sexual practices (Hoad 2007:66). That legacy of colonial domination was also ignored by the liberal bishops, whom Hoad accuses of "inciting" the African bishops' anti-gay activism: "Had that first [pro-gay] resolution not been put forward, no such condemnatory resolutions would have been passed" (Hoad 2007:67).

As the controversy persisted into the next decade, it resonated loudly in Nigeria, home to the largest Anglican province in the world. Archbishop Peter Akinola became a leading spokesman for the antigay position, which he frequently framed in cultural terms. In a speech to a gathering of African bishops, he complained about the liberal sexual values that prevailed at many seminaries in the global North: "You now have on campus men and men cohabiting, which is against the African way of life." Akinola's comments were echoed by President Obasanjo, an evangelical Christian who addressed the bishops to commend "your principled stand against the totally unacceptable tendency towards same-sex marriage and homosexual practice. Such a tendency is clearly un-Biblical, unnatural and definitely un-African" (BBC 2004).

Like Presidents Moi and Mugabe, who used homophobic rhetoric to rally the masses within their respective nations, the assertions by Archbishop Akinola and President Obasanjo were directed primarily at their fellow Nigerians. In an interview with historian Philip Jenkins published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, the Archbishop explained that his vocal opposition to homosexuality was motivated not by anticolonial fervor or a desire to turn the worldwide Church's attention to his congregants' material suffering, but by the competitive threat of Islam. "Across the continent," Jenkins wrote, "Muslims have tried to make converts by arguing that the Christian West is decadent and sexually irresponsible" (Jenkins 2003). If Akinola and his Church were perceived to be condoning homosexuality, he risked losing his flock to other Christian churches or, even worse, to Islam (BBC 2004). Far from renouncing the legacy of colonialism, Akinola and other Nigerian Christians view the acceptance of homosexuality by liberal Western churches as a betrayal of the values taught by the missionaries (Washington Post 2005). This sense of betrayal is heightened by Nigerian Christians' sensitivity to accusations from cultural nationalists, including practitioners of indigenous religions, that they have forsaken authentically African traditions in order to "imitate" the West (Arumu).

Islamic reformists use a version of this discourse that paints virtually any (Nigerian) Christian or secularist, or any Muslim who deviates from the "true" Islamic path, as an "imitator" of the West. This version does not involve appeals to authentic African traditions, however, for from an orthodox Islamic perspective such traditions, like the Hausa practice of spirit-possession known as *Bori*, are typically seen as "pagan."[10] Indeed, most Hausa Muslims respect "traditional customs" [*al'adun gargajiya*] only insofar as these do not conflict with Islam. When asked to comment on the Anglican debate over same-sex marriage, for example, Hakeem Baba-Ahmed, the head of Northern Nigeria's Shari'a council, declared simply that condoning homosexuality "will lead to a further erosion of our accepted principles of morality" (Toronto Star 2004). In so doing, he expressed solidarity with his (homophobic) Christian counterparts without replicating their appeal to "the African way of life."

Appeals to cultural (as opposed to religious) tradition are especially problematic for Northern nationalists in the context of debates about gay rights, for among Southern Nigerians it is widely rumored that homosexuality is widespread in the North. As early as 1965, a character in Wole Soyinka's novel *The Interpreters* referred to Northern Nigerian "Emirs and their little boys" (cited in Hoad 2007:33). More recently, Festus Eriye, a Yoruba journalist writing for a South African newspaper, asserted that "homosexuality thrives" in Northern Nigeria, and that "it is a common practice among some in the elite classes to make use of the services of male homosexual prostitutes know as 'Dan Daudu' in the Hausa language" (Eriye 2003). Nigerian and African gay-rights activists have appropriated this stereotype as evidence for the existence of homosexuality in "traditional" African cultures. In an interview with a Radio Netherlands reporter (Beauchemin 2002), the president of Alliance Rights, a gay-rights organization based in Ibadan, in southwestern Nigeria, was quoted as saying, "Looking at [the subject of homosexuality] from cultures in Africa, like in the northern part of Nigeria. We find out that there are people they call *ɗan daudus*. *Ɗan daudu* is a typical Hausa term. It has been existing even before the advent of the Europeans. It means 'men who are wives of men'." Such reports are circulated widely on the Internet thanks to organizations like Behind the Mask, which publishes an African gay-rights website (www.mask.org.za) from its headquarters in Johannesburg, and GlobalGayz.com, whose owner is based in California and Massachusetts.

Reporters for the Lagos-based newspaper *The News* offered an alternative historical interpretation, claiming that although Kano's "notoriety for homosexuality is legendary," they contended, "[g]ay culture was never a tradition in Kano or any part of Nigeria. The belief was that it was introduced into Northern Nigeria by two influences, beginning from the Arabs, who brought Islam and then the British who colonised the country" (Sulaiman and Adebayo 2002). While this attempt to paint all of Nigeria's regions as "traditionally" free of homosexuality may seem desirable from the standpoint of national unity, it relies on a narrative of Northern culture as sexually "tainted" by contact with Arabs. Such narratives do circulate informally among some Hausa Muslims, but they coexist with a more powerful narrative that views Hausa society as enriched by its historical contacts with Arab-Islamic civilization (Gaudio 2001).

In light of these statements, it seems likely that the hisbas' efforts to prosecute Aunty Maiduguri and the Bauchi 18 – and popular support for these efforts – were incited not by an intrinsic cultural or religious hostility towards homosexuality *per se*, nor by the efforts of gay-rights activists in Northern Nigeria, but by a nationalistic desire to defend the region's image against negative sexual stereotypes. (By the same token, the Muslim Brothers' failure to inflame popular sentiments against the alleged same-sex "wedding" in 1994 may have been due in part to their anti-nationalist ideology.) Despite their shared antipathy towards homosexuality, Islamic Northern Nigerian nationalists and the nation's southern and Christian leaders seem locked in a competitive cycle of sexual innuendo, as each camp struggles to live down the other's implicit accusations of sexual deviance by stepping up its own antigay rhetoric.

In critiquing these representations of Hausa Muslim sexual culture, it is not enough to point out the linguistic errors in translating the word *ɗan daudu* or the lack of historical and ethnographic evidence for Northern Nigerians' alleged homosexual practices. The textual medium and genre must also be taken into account. In particular, it is significant that most of the statements cited above were published in journalistic venues. News articles are a discourse genre that demands a particular linguistic register (in this case, some form of standard English) and a particular rhetorical style (ostensibly factual, direct, and sincere). In this regard, journalistic discourse is similar to the genre of academic writing. By comparison, a fiction writer like Soyinka has more freedom to vary the registers and styles he deploys in his texts. The relative freedom of fiction makes it possible to re-imagine gender, desire, work, faith, and other dimensions of human experience in ways that nonfiction does not. It is these imaginative possibilities that inspire Hoad and Massad to pay extensive attention to fiction writing, especially novels, in their work.[11]

The playful everyday discourses of 'yan daudu and other masu harka offer a similarly rich set of imaginative possibilities, frustrating the efforts of journalists, scholars, theologians, and lawyers who would try to fix their meanings. The *Al-Mizan* story about the alleged same-sex "wedding," for example, failed to appreciate the campy humor inherent in the name Madhuri Mairawa, which everyone at the party (and presumably many of the newspaper's readers) recognized was not the host's "real" name. Yet the party-goers did not all share the same sense of the name's affective and moral significance. This lack of consensus became poignantly apparent a few months after the party when Madhuri Mairawa died in an automobile accident. I heard the news at a friend's home where a group of "civilians" and "shirted" 'yan daudu were trading accounts of the tragedy and wistfully reminiscing about their friend. In the course of narrating one amusing story, a shirted ɗan daudu referred to Madhuri as "she." He was immediately interrupted by a "civilian" who chastised him for using the feminine pronoun now that Madhuri was dead. (The "civilian" did not object to the name Madhuri.) The narrator insisted that he meant no disrespect, that Madhuri had been his *ƙawa* ["platonic girlfriend"], and that the feminine pronoun was consistent with the way the two of them had always talked with each other (at least in private). The other shirted 'yan daudu supported this explanation and stressed the love [*soyayya*] that is shared between "girlfriends" [*ƙawaye*]. The "civilian" got quiet, but looked unconvinced.

The *Al-Mizan* reporter also seems to have interpreted the organizer's bragging about "bridal gifts" too literally. Based on my experience at that party and others like it, any talk of a "groom" and "bridal gifts" was almost certainly tongue-in-cheek. Although some participants may well have described their intimate same-sex relationships as "marriage," no one, as far as I know, seriously considered them to be morally equivalent to a "real" heterosexual marriage. Yet the similarities and differences – social, economic, moral, affective, sexual – between a metaphorical "marriage" between two men and a "real" one between a man and a woman cannot be enumerated with any kind of precision. This indeterminacy was apparently lost on the *Al-Mizan* reporter, as was the possibility that the party organizer may simply have been fooling with him. A similar misapprehension may have occurred when Islamist hisbas and international gay-rights organizations colluded in defining the parties of Aunty Maiduguri and the Bauchi 18 as "same-sex weddings." In all cases the rhetorical norms of journalism, law enforcement, and political advocacy came into conflict with those of what I might call the "playful talk" of Hausa *homos*. In the case of the Bauchi 18, the representatives of ILGHRC seem to have realized the incongruity between their discourse and that of the accused men, and attempted to adjust their own discourse accordingly. Whether their efforts will ultimately help or hurt the men's case remains to be seen.

The notion of a Hausa Muslim gay political movement akin to the queer Muslim movements that have emerged in North America and Great Britain in recent years – and that, as Massad notes, have been enthusiastically supported by organizations like IGLHRC – seems unlikely in the near future. Ideologies of language are central to this disparity. Whereas politicized queer Muslims publicly proclaim that there is no contradiction between being gay and being a good Muslim,[12] 'yan daudu and other masu harka generally do see such a contradiction; they just hope that their "shame" [*kunya*] and their faith [*imani*] will attract God's ultimate mercy and forgiveness. This emphasis on "shame" – keeping inappropriate feelings and unpleasant truths out of sight and out of earshot – has long been accepted, in Hausaland and other Islamic societies, as a basic requirement of cultural citizenship. Yet "the will not to know," as Steven Murray (1998) calls it, is being increasingly challenged by the ideological commitment to rhetorical explicitness – to naming, defining, describing, and evaluating – that characterizes modern Islamist and secular political movements alike. As the global competition between and within these movements intensifies, 'yan daudu and others like them, whose gender and sexual performances have been calibrated to balance "shame" and "play," may find themselves further excluded from participation in Northern Nigerian public life.

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Notes

1. I use "Northern Nigeria" to refer to the 12 Nigerian states that have Muslim majorities and adopted Shari'a (Islamic law) in 1999–2001. Hausa is the most widely spoken language in this region and in the neighboring states of what is known as Nigeria's 'Middle Belt'. Native speakers of Hausa are overwhelmingly Muslim and number at least 25 million in Nigeria alone, while millions of other Hausa Muslims live in the neighboring Republic of Niger and in Ghana, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and other countries. A roughly similar number of speakers – Muslims and Christians – use Hausa as a second language. Southern Nigeria is predominantly Christian, with large populations of Muslims and practitioners of indigenous religions; Yoruba and Igbo are the most widely spoken languages. In addition, Nigeria is home to hundreds of other languages, ranging in size from several thousand to several million speakers.
2. I translate the phrase *wanda aka aura* as "male bride" by analogy with the more usual expression *wadda aka aura* ["the 'one' taken in marriage"]. The groom would be described as "the one^{m} who took her in marriage" or "the one^{m} who married her" [*wanda ya aure ta*], ^{m} meaning masculine grammatical gender.
3. Madhuri Mairawa ["Madhuri the dancer"] is a pseudonym; the actual name that appeared on the invitation card and in the *Al-Mizan* article was that of a different Indian film actress. With the exception of public figures like President Obasanjo, all personal names in this chapter are pseudonyms.
4. Historical accounts suggest that yan daudu were seen wearing women's clothing more regularly until the early 1980s, but by the time I started my fieldwork in the early 1990s, this was not the case. See, e.g., Aken'ova 2002; Besmer 1983; Smith 1981.
5. Despite the similar nomenclature, Nigeria's "Muslim Brothers" are not formally linked with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or other countries; see Kane 2003, Umar 1993.
6. Izala is short for *Jama^{c}atul izālat al-bid^{c}a wa iqāmat al-sunnah* [Arabic: "Society for the removal of innovation and the reinstatement of tradition"]; see Kane 2003.
7. See the Islamic Movement's website: www.islamicmovement.org.
8. The word *necessarily* was added to a previous version of this chapter and acknowledges that some "poor and nonurban men" in Egypt *might* identify as homosexual or gay (cf. Massad 2002:363).
9. For ethnographic accounts of the appropriation of global iconographies of glamour by feminine men in postcolonial settings, see Besnier 2005, Johnson 1997, Manalansan 2003. For an ethnographic account of the circulation of Indian films in Nigeria, see Larkin 2008.

10. The idea that Bori is authentically African is widespread among Hausa Muslims and certain Western scholars (such as Miles 2003), but is contradicted by research that shows the extent to which contemporary Bori has embraced Islamic, Western, and other African elements (Greenberg 1947; O'Brien 2000).
11. Another scholar who has used literary analysis to shed critical light on the ways sexuality is being reimagined in postcolonial African and Arab settings is Jarrod Hayes (2000), whose work focuses on sexuality and nationalism in French-language novels from the Maghreb.
12. See, e.g., the website of Al-Fatiha, a queer Muslim organization in the USA: www.al-fatiha.org.

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Part V

Sexuality and Neoliberal Citizenship

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Chapter 16

LGBT Rights in the European Union: a Queer Affair?

Mark Graham

The project of European integration held under the auspices of the European Union (EU) is a fascinating one for anthropologists involving as it does efforts to create common symbols and a sense of belonging, the identification and promotion of cultural traditions, the spread of "authentic" European values and ideals, transnational processes of cultural exchange, the diffusion of laws, policies, and ideas throughout the Union, a highly reflexive process of identity creation vis-à-vis the surrounding world, models of the person present in debates surrounding European citizenship, and competing visions of what a European modernity is and ought to be. Each and every one of these topics is of considerable relevance when examining the position of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) citizens in the EU.

This chapter focuses on how the rights of LGBT citizens have become part of the process of European integration, and, in particular, how LGBT sexuality is intertwined with the evolving content of what it means to be a citizen of the EU. Sexuality, because it is such a dense transfer point (Foucault 1978) for the control of bodies, biological and social reproduction, morality, ethics, and identities provides us with a powerful, if underused, lens through which to view the process of integration (cf. Borneman and Fowler 1997:506). LGBT issues, in particular, highlight some of the central dilemmas and contradictions facing the Union.

The EU is confronted with the difficult task of navigating waters still largely controlled by nation-states, while attempting to create and promulgate a post-national vision for the continent. European sexuality has hitherto been the sexualities of Europe's nation-states and as such is a default heterosexuality. The status of the EU, I argue, as reliant on Member States and yet to some extent opposed to them, places it in a position similar to that of marginalized sexualities within a heteronormative regime, both dependent on but also continually destabilizing the dominant majority category. In short, the EU is somewhat "queer." Indeed, the thematic content of criticisms leveled against the EU is often couched in terms strikingly similar to homophobic denunciations of Europe's LGBT citizens, a point to which I shall return

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later. LGBT rights and equality have been understood as part of a European project that is rational, enlightened, and modernizing in character. However, there are several currents of sexual modernity flowing throughout the Union, and not all flow in the same direction. As I shall show, the model of progress which has informed LGBT politics in the Union does not go unchallenged.

Legalities

As of August 1, 2003, with the enforcement of a new penal code in Armenia, the last law in any country of Europe outlawing sexual relationships between consenting adults of the same sex was eliminated. (Armenia is not geographically European, but is a member of the European Council.) According to the International Lesbian and Gay Association-Europe (ILGA-Europe), this is the first time in 1,500 years that no part of Europe threatens criminal prosecution of same-sex sexuality. Under Article 13 of the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam, the EU is empowered to combat discrimination on a number of grounds, including sexual orientation. Article 21 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights also prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Both of these Articles must be adopted by Member States, while several Council Directives also provide protection.[1] Other developments, apart from protective legislation, include registered partnerships and the legalization of gay marriages in a growing number of Member States, recent hate crime legislation in France, and criticisms by the European Parliament of the Vatican's attempts to block equal rights for Europe's LGBT citizens. On the surface, considerable progress toward equality for LGBT citizens appears to have been made. The issues surrounding LGBT rights are, however, much more complex than legal protections and rights alone. Indeed, they lead us to the very heart of the project of European integration.

The European Project

The EU is an array of organizations and institutions, including a forum for political negotiation and decision-making, a judiciary, a generator of social, political and cultural changes, and a provider of funds and resources. Apart from its own organizations, it is also served by a plethora of non-governmental organizations and groupings within civil societies. As part of its mission to create a *European* Union, it is also an identity-making machine that aspires to implant "Europeanness" among EU citizens (Shore 2000; Theiler 2005). To do this, it needs to navigate the many national, regional, and local cultural traditions present within the Union. The task it faces is enormous as it attempts to influence a population of over 490 million people living in 27 countries.

One area where the EU faces special challenges is in combating prejudice and discrimination. Much prejudice involves suspicion or outright rejection of persons, things and ideas that are deemed to be counter to "local" traditions and believed to originate in an outside. In anthropology, the focus on the incorporation of external cultural, social and material forms is most closely associated with diffusionism. Nowadays, of course, diffusionism is usually considered to be a quaint but discredited Victorian peculiarity (see Langham 1981:118–199; Stocking 1996; Wissler 1927). The scholarly tradition it represents, which dates from the 19th and early 20th centuries, is ritually slaughtered in introductory courses. It is not my intention to resurrect diffusionism here. Its interest lies not in the accuracy of its wilder conjectures, the mistakes of which have long been recognized, but in the way it examined the spread of cultures and, in particular, its focus on the direction of cultural diffusion, the ideas of cultural cores, peripheries, and cultural areas, and the consequences of cultural spread, borrowing, and integration. Especially interesting are some of diffusionism's more "political" and moral assumptions, such as its pessimistic assessment of human creativity, and the equally pessimistic view that the diffusion of cultural traits leads to their degeneration. Although often seen as opposed to evolutionary explanations of human social and cultural development (think of the work of Boas, for example), some strands of diffusionist thinking were combined with evolutionist assumptions about the direction of development driven by advanced cultural cores. Many of these themes and concerns emerge, and strikingly so, when one examines the EU's position on the spread of legislation, policy, and values, and opposition to them in certain parts of Europe.

I shall return to the above themes later. First, however, I shall look at how EU diffusionism works in practice, for we are perfectly justified in calling the EU a gigantic exercise in the diffusion of cultural and social (including legal, political, and economic) forms, or what earlier diffusionists often called traits. In the EU, integrating the 27 Member States, each with its own internally contested and contradictory convictions about the correct way of doing things, into the Union involves a great deal of cultural dissemination, reception, and adaptation of ideas, practices, guidelines, policies, and laws that originate outside the polities of the Member States themselves. Whether or not the language of diffusionism is employed, it is a process of diffusionism that is at work in building the Union and nowhere more so than in combating different forms of discrimination.

Creating the European

In the corridors of Brussels, the realization has been around for some time that a purely economic union does not automatically command the allegiance of European citizens. In order to promote and encourage identification with the European project, several symbolic and practical initiatives have been taken, including a standardized passport, a flag, an anthem (Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*), European elections, the European Monetary Union (EMU), and a common currency, the Euro. To what extent the EU needs to homogenize the cultures of Member States by means of its own *mythomoteur* (Smith 1986) in order to guarantee its legitimacy is an open question. Some commentators claim to discern a degree of homogenisation already at work in the Union in areas that include citizenship, multiculturalism, immigration policy, and also gay marriage (Kurzer 2001).

For its part, the European Commission seems to believe that the Union will only build and enjoy lasting legitimacy if it develops into an overarching, pan-European, community, and instills a sense of a European "we" among its citizens. At the policy level, the EU already possesses a number of mechanisms designed to dismantle internal divisions, and promote integration. First, there is the *acquis communautaire*. The *acquis* comprises the rights, duties and obligations derived from EU treaties, laws, and court rulings. All states that join the EU must adopt it. At present, there are 80,000 pages of legislation. Second, there is the principle of *subsidiarity* which specifies that decisions should be taken at the level of government closest to the citizen as possible. For some policy areas, this means that the EU itself legislates if "the objective of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the member states" and can "by reason of its scale or effects be better achieved by the Community" (Bomberg and Stubb 2003:9). Third, there is the practice of consulting with "epistemic communities" (networks of specialists in specific policy domains), and the "open method of co-ordination." The latter involves comparing national policies and the dissemination of "best practices" in areas like employment. A fourth policy device, known as "soft convergence," seeks to influence national policies so that they gradually come to resemble each other through, for example, the use of scoreboards in which national performance is ranked and compared and under-achievers are shamed. The EU has, then, a battery of measures at its disposal with which to aid the diffusion of what it agrees is best for Europe as a whole.[2]

At the same time, legitimacy almost certainly requires "top-down" initiatives that encourage "bottom-up" processes of communicative action and dialogue, which, together, contribute to the creation of a European subjectivity (Shore 2000:29–30). Just how profound and inclusive this subjectivity would need to be no one can say with any real authority. What is agreed is that the creation of a European subjectivity must proceed alongside the removal of the most flagrant discrimination and inequalities based on wealth, nationality, ethnicity and "race," gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and age.

Rights and Protections

The EU has invested a great deal of time and money in combating discrimination as part of its work to remove the obstacles to social inclusion in the Union (European Commission 2004). The increased attention given to discrimination during the last 15 years reflects an important shift in the way the EU conceives of its citizens and their rights. Initially, it was the rights of workers that dominated the Union's policy making, but this broadened in the 1980s to include the rights of citizens beyond their status as employees in a single, or Common Market. This culminated in the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, Article 21 of the European Charter and the Directives mentioned earlier.

There seems to have been some urgency in having the various rights included in the Treaty. The inclusion of race, ethnicity, and religion and belief partly reflected concerns about racism and xenophobia in the then soon-to-be Member States of Eastern Europe. Disability, age, and sexual orientation were included in 2000 in the interest of modernizing the Union and its relationship to its citizens by including a new generation of social and civil rights (Mabbett 2005). One reason for this was the conviction, expressed to me by some of the legal experts who had worked on the Directive, that it would prove very difficult and time-consuming to introduce them after the accession of ten new Member States in 2004, especially in the area of sexual orientation. This opinion is stated explicitly in the Commission's Green Paper on equality and non-discrimination: "The transposition of anti-discrimination provisions on sexual orientation has proved controversial in several of the new Member States" (European Commision 2004:14).

Even though the four basic freedoms of the Union – in the movement of capital, goods, services, and labor – are essentially *economic* freedoms, they have nonetheless proven to be useful in struggles for LGBT social and civil citizenship rights.[3] Freedom of movement has been a major issue in campaigns for LGBT rights. This is not surprising as access to and freedom from harassment in the public sphere, whether national or international, has long been a major goal of LGBT campaigning. ILGA-Europe, for example, makes an explicitly spatial argument when it points out that discrimination impedes the free movement of gays and lesbians, restricts business competition, and squanders resources. Perfect market competition, the Common Market ideal, demands an unrestricted flow of people. ILGA-Europe also argues that narrow definitions of the family hamper the mobility of LGBT and other Europeans who depart from a nuclear family norm, as well as denying their co-dependents equal rights in the receiving country (ILGA-Europe 2003). Making LGBT rights a question of mobility also paves the way for "larger" questions of discrimination in the workplace (also an obstacle to free movement), and in the provision of goods and services, as well as highlighting the need for anti-discrimination legislation and attitude changes.

One obvious reason why they are needed is, of course, that LGBT Europeans are not constantly on the move or in transit; they are as more or less sedentary as all other Europeans and it is when the LGBT citizen stands still to be counted as, for example, a policewoman, a member of the armed forces, a teacher, or a caregiver to the elderly, that the problems start. It is when she becomes stationary, and must adopt a role, establish relations, get a job, use local services, or express an opinion that she must negotiate local particularities and prejudices. I return to some of the implications of this for LGBT persons and citizenship later. First, we need to know something of the philosophy that underlies the Union's various initiatives in the field of promoting diversity and anti-discrimination.

Social Catholicism

A major influence on the EU's social policy has been Social Catholicism, a doctrine which emerged in the late 19th century but which has ancient roots that lead back through Vatican social doctrine, via Thomas Aquinas to Aristotle. Social Catholicism has worked toward a "common good" that fosters social consensus. It encourages a moral discourse intended to facilitate individual autonomy and ties of social interdependence between groups in society (Holmes 2000:47). For Social Catholicism, the role of the state is to help "man" to live in society. The principle of subsidiarity (derived from the Latin for aid or help, *subsidium*) plays a central role. Help is given to promote the autonomy of social groupings, thereby also maintaining diversity. Restraint is needed in order to avoid unnecessary intervention by the authorities. As I explained earlier, in EU policy making subsidiarity refers to the (somewhat vague) principle that decisions should be made by the layer of government closest to the citizen. In the EU, this touches directly on how and when the Union ought to intervene and legislate. In practice, the EU has legislated in policy areas where Member States are unable or unwilling to take common measures. This has included anti-discrimination legislation designed for the common good, and not least in the area of LGBT sexuality.

There is an obvious tension within Social Catholicism between the wish to sustain social diversity and the aim to create solidarity: The greater the degree of diversity, the less likely, perhaps, the chance of consensus. Yet it is precisely the clash of viewpoints in a context of clear opinions and openness to the views of others that solidarity is expected to be forged (Fogarty 1957:42) as a bi-product of dialogue and debate. Moreover, for Social Catholicism, solidarity implies mutual respect, not merely a negative tolerance of others. These are all ideas similar to those that inform two of the Commission's most important initiatives against discrimination, the Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination and the EQUAL projects. Here I want to look very briefly at one of each.

Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination

The Programme was initiated by the European Council in November 2000. It is funded by the EU and designed to promote measures to prevent and combat discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation. The Action Programme aims to support organizations that take part in the prevention of discrimination and enable them to compare and contrast their different approaches with experiences gained in other parts of the Union.

The TRIANGLE partnership comprised partners from Germany, Austria, Italy, the Netherlands and France. TRIANGLE (Transfer of Information against the Discrimination of Gays and Lesbians in Europe) addressed discrimination based on sexual orientation in schools and particularly discrimination motivated by religious beliefs, primarily Christian and Islamic. A booklet intended for those counseling teachers and pupils was the main practical result of the partnership. The Netherlands was the coordinating partner and the main initiator of the project. The aim, as the Dutch saw it, was to create an emotional space for diversity and respect for differences in schools. This immediately brought them into conflict with the French for whom anything suggestive of "multiculturalism" is in conflict with official French policy which denies the relevance of ethnic cultural differences in France as far as this is practically possible (see Silverman 1992). The Dutch organizations wanted a clear statement in the booklet that some migrants have cultural traditions that are more homophobic than those of the host countries. The French feared that this was racism. Eventually, a compromise was reached in which the Dutch line was accepted in order to avoid a bland final report, but on condition that any racist implications were carefully avoided. The Austrians objected to "too much" attention to the situation of gay and lesbian teachers and pupils, which led to some information about gay culture, same-sex relationships, and heterosexism being removed from the final report. In their turn, the Italians were not too interested in practicalities, but were armed with a sophisticated theoretical apparatus and wanted more theoretical discussion of homophobia, heterosexism, and discrimination. The final document, according to the Dutch coordinator, was a "European product with a strong Dutch content."

EQUAL

EQUAL projects are funded by the European Social Fund. These test new ways of tackling discrimination and inequality experienced by those in work and those looking for a job. The key principals of EQUAL are transnational co-operation, innovation, empowerment, a partnership approach, dissemination of best practices, and mainstreaming to ensure that EQUAL informs policies and practice. The activities are structured on the four pillars of the European Employment Strategy: Employability, Entrepreneurship, Adaptability, and Equal Opportunities for women and men. The EU's contribution amounted to 2,847 million euro for the period 2000–2006, a sum matched by national funding.

The Swedish project "Norm-Giving Diversity" tackled homophobia in the armed forces, the police, and the Church of Sweden. These are three "sensitive" areas when it comes to sexuality. The police, the church, and the military are all custodians of morals, arbiters of right and wrong, responsible for security, and also powerful national symbols. They are institutions that are normative, hence the name of the project *norm-giving* diversity. Both the armed forces and the police in Sweden have a "macho" reputation which is unfriendly to women and gay men and are not known for their enthusiastic support of ethnic minority representation. Yet even here the EQUAL partners were received politely and enthusiastically by top-level officers. The Supreme Commander of the Swedish armed forces publicly stated his support for the EQUAL project, and vowed that the military would do what it could to prevent homophobic discrimination. The Church is a slightly different case. Homosexuality still causes problems for the Church of Sweden. There are priests who cannot condone or entertain the thought of homosexual clergy and are adamantly opposed to allowing same-sex couples to receive a religious blessing in churches. The Archbishop of Stockholm did, however, express her support for "loving homosexual couples" and within the project itself there were no conflicts. The result was that consensus reigned and there was no serious debate or exchange of ideas.

Cores and Peripheries

A quick glance at the partners in these initiatives reveals the dominance of Northern and North Western Europe – Scandinavia, the Netherlands, the UK, and Germany – something which is true of the other projects that looked at LGBT matters. The Community Action Programme and EQUAL appear, perhaps inadvertently, to have established a hierarchy in which certain Member States set the agenda on LGBT issues. Certainly, such a mission resonates well with Dutch and Scandinavian attitudes to their role in the world post 1945 (Hekma 2002; Kurzer 2001). The Dutch, for example, were very active in putting pressure on Romania to abolish its homophobic legislation as a condition of its membership. This led to howls of protest about the Union's line on LGBT rights, including slogans like "Romania wants to join the European Union, not Sodom" (Stychin 2002).

At a conference held in Stockholm in September 2003, which examined the EQUAL projects involving gays and lesbians at work, the Vice Chairman for the Swedish Ombudsman against Discrimination on the Grounds of Sexual Orientation (HOMO) virtually invited the representatives from other European countries – the Netherlands, the UK, Finland, and Germany – to join Sweden. She gave the impression that Sweden had pretty much dealt with all the problems and it was simply a matter of everyone else catching up. Not surprisingly, representatives from the Netherlands, which has long been at the forefront of campaigning for LGBT rights in Europe and has nothing to learn from Sweden, were unimpressed by her display of national superiority. At the same conference, the President of Sweden's Trade Union Confederation (LO), Wanja Lundby-Wedin, praised the Swedish unions for their campaigning, even crediting them with getting Sweden's registered partnership legislation passed. But for present purposes the following statement is the clearest indication of how she saw Sweden's role:

> It [is] essential to have sexual orientation mentioned as a reason for discrimination in the European Convention. On behalf of the trade union movement, I promise to

> pursue this issue to the European Trade Union Confederation. What we have managed to do in Sweden, we shall manage to do also in Europe. Discrimination of homosexuals, lesbians and bisexuals must cease.

Yet Sweden does not yet have marriage for LGBT citizens, only registered partnership, unlike the Netherlands and Belgium. Until recently, it had laws which forbade unmarried women from receiving artificial insemination, a piece of legislation intended to prevent lesbians using the fertility services of the health care system. There has also been an increase in the number of violent hate crimes against Sweden's LGBT population in recent years and two very high profile cases of hate speech against the country's homosexuals (Graham, forthcoming). Little wonder, then, that delegates from the Netherlands were unimpressed by Lundby-Wedin's missionary rhetoric.

Diffusionism

The implications of this missionary position are reminiscent of diffusionist ideas espoused in the 1890s by Friedrich Ratzel who (along with many later diffusionists) regarded humankind as essentially lacking in inventiveness (Barnard 2000:49–50). The result was an extreme but "pure" form of diffusionism: All great things originate in one place and then spread. It is an attractive viewpoint for those who are convinced that they already are the best, which is to say a great many cultural traditions, and probably all in respect to at least some part of their own perceived heritage. Member States like Sweden and the Netherlands are well known for their support of LGBT rights and do see themselves as more advanced. Others, like Greece, Poland, and until the electoral victory of New Labour in 1997, the UK, are not. The fact that the EU has shown itself to be more LGBT friendly in its policy making and legal decisions than many of its component parts, the Member States, is partly due to the work of countries like the Netherlands. It is also due to the EU's self-image as enlightened, rational and just compared with other parts of the world.

The conviction that Europe leads and ought to lead the way is evident in the following claims made in the Commission's Green Paper on non-discrimination: "The principle of Equal Treatment and non-discrimination are at the heart of the European Social Model. They represent a cornerstone of the fundamental rights and values that underpin today's European Union" (European Commission 2004:2). When comparing the Union with the rest of the world, the Commission claims: "when it comes to legislation in this area [against all forms of discrimination], the European Union has one of the most advanced legal frameworks to be found anywhere in the world" (European Commission 2004:6). A perhaps unintended consequence of these claims is the creation of a moral outside that is inferior to and lags behind the EU in matters of (among other things) LGBT equality. Such claims, in themselves, contribute actively to delimiting the Union as a distinct entity containing its own advanced morality and values. EU sexual morality is therefore no mere "local" product or even solely a Brussels invention; it involves comparisons with the rest of the world, and the constitution of a EU itself. Sexuality has become an ethnic boundary marker on a huge scale.

European LGBT rights also have an instrumental dimension within the Union itself. They can, for example, be used as a stick with which to chastise the "backward" new Member States, while, at least implicitly, asserting the enlightened moral superiority of older Member States. In short, they are employed in a game of one-upmanship. The new Member States – Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia – which all acceded in May 2004, and Bulgaria and Romania which joined in 2007 were obliged to accept the *acquis* and bring their legislation into line with the Union's anti-discrimination Directives as a condition of their membership. Prior to their accession, their position on protecting lesbians, gays, and bisexuals was ranked with the help of a "Euro Gay Scoreboard" kept up to date by ILGA-Europe. The Scoreboard employs eight criteria: penal code provisions against sexual relations between consenting adults, the age of consent, general discrimination in public and private spheres of life, anti-discrimination legislation, freedom of association, the right to registered partnership/marriage, adoption by same-sex couples, and asylum laws. As noted earlier, the use of scoreboards is a favorite EU device as part of its soft convergence method. Low scorers are exposed and shamed in the hope that they will better themselves. The shame of being exposed to group censure is intended to pave the way for cultural and social convergence through the adoption of EU standards, which, in turn, will encourage emotional convergence around the rightness of the moral dimension in EU legislation, in this case, approval for equal rights for LGBT citizens and the disappearance of discrimination in all Member States. It is worth noting that some older Member States, such as Portugal, Greece, and Austria, actually had inferior laws compared to the new members before the new anti-discrimination Directives came into force.

Although often depicted as in conflict with the Member States, the position of the EU in relation to them is highly ambiguous. We can see this clearly in the Union's cultural policy. The Treaty on Union, Article 128, explicitly addresses European Cultural diversity and unity: "The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the member states, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore" (quoted in Holmes 2000:32). The wording echoes central tenets of Social Catholicism, but Article 128 is nothing if not opaque. On the one hand, it must enable the cultures of Member States to "flower," presumably by allowing them to follow their own particular cultural logic. This suggests a form of organic growth governed by the particular *Geist* of the people. On the other hand, it must identify and bring to the fore the "common cultural heritage" of Europe. How that is to be identified is not clear. The two principles enjoy a tense co-existence and especially when it comes to sexuality. Allowing Member States to pursue their own paths seems likely to guarantee homophobia in some states and greater liberal reform in others. At the least, the result would be the cementing of existing differences, and quite probably a significant divergence of Member State legislation within the EU. Such a divergence runs counter to the EU's general aim to integrate the Union. Bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore has hitherto meant that the EU has decided on its content somewhat arbitrarily. Given that the EU intervened to impose a common set of anti-discrimination laws on all Member States, by implication it would appear that the values of sexual tolerance expressed in the Directives are not integral to most Member States, with the partial exceptions of the recent history of the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries. These values cannot therefore be a part of a common European cultural heritage. In fact, if we adopt a longer historical perspective, a strong case can be made for the claim that homophobia, rather than tolerance (not to mention genuine respect), is the dominant part of European heritage in the area of same-sex sexuality.[4]

Sexual Modernities

As Cris Shore (2000:56) points out, the preferred history of Europe espoused by the Commission and other major institutions of the EU is an evolutionist tale of progressive enlightenment (lapses such as slavery, colonialism, World War II, and the Holocaust notwithstanding). Yet the EU does not believe in automatic evolutionary progress when it comes to the particularities of integration. Policy instruments such as soft convergence clearly indicate this. However, it is the principle of subsidiarity that speaks most clearly against the belief in an inevitable evolutionary progression. Subsidiarity is needed when some Member States lag behind in policy development. When their own national evolution cannot be relied upon to proceed in the desired direction, outside forces – EU legislation – must intervene. This is certainly true of anti-discrimination legislation in the case of LGBT rights.

The diffusionist model which best approximates to this version of the European project is that propounded by Carl Wissler. Wissler (1927) argued that cultural traits spread from the center to the periphery of a cultural area. His contribution was to add an evolutionary (in the sense of chronological) dimension to diffusionism. Traits in the periphery are older, those at the center more recent. Evolution takes place at the center of a given culture area, and diffusion is from the center to the periphery. The idea has very different implications depending on one's "position" in relation to the flow of traits. Receivers of the culture (the importers) are per definition backward in some respect, and belong to a different historical period. The opposition to LGBT rights by Poland's recently defeated Kaczynski government was "proof" for some that the country lagged behind the prevailing tide of change in the Union.

While this chronology might appeal to those who believe in the inevitability of progress, it rests, nonetheless, on a simplified version of modernity. Anthropologists, in particular, have pointed out that modernity comes in many forms, and that even the temporal range of what we understand as "modern" is greater and more variable than is often supposed (see, for example, Knauft 2002). How sexuality is dealt with in modern societies like the Philippines, for example, need not follow the same trajectory as in many Euro-American societies (Manalansan 2003). In the case of the LGBT population in Europe, there are clear evolutionary assumptions behind how same-sex sexuality is understood and described as an historical progression from mediaeval "sodomite," to modern "homosexual," to late-modern "gay," and, finally perhaps, to post-modern "queer." Other countries are expected to progress through the same stages (Hayes 2000; Hoad 2000).

However, a secular modernizing impetus is not the only one in Europe and evolutionary development conveyed by the diffusion of culture from "advanced" cores to "backward" peripheries is not the only form of diffusion at work. There is another equally modern sexual morality present, one just as eager to spread its message throughout Europe, even if it is opposed to the kind of secular modernity that has hitherto dominated the Union.

Catholic Sexual Modernity

In the autumn of 2004, Italian Rocco Buttiglione found himself at the center of a constitutional crisis when the European Parliament's Civil Liberties Committee rejected his candidacy for the position of Justice Commissioner of the EU. The reasons for his rejection were comments he made at the Committee hearings on October 21, 2004. Asked about his views on matters for which he would have responsibility, he replied that homosexuality was a "sin." On the subject of the family, he stated that: "The family exists in order to allow women to have children and to have the protection of a male who takes care of her." The Committee also questioned him about his views on asylum-seekers and his support for the setting up of refugee camps in North Africa to prevent asylum-seekers from ever reaching European shores.

At the hearing, Buttiglione attempted to deflect criticism of his candidacy by stating that: "I may think that homosexuality is a sin, [but] this has no effect on politics, unless I say that homosexuality is a crime." He went on: "The state has no right to stick its nose into these things and nobody can be discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation . . . this stands in the European Charter of Human Rights, this stands in the Constitution and I have pledged to defend this constitution." His words rung hollow, however, when his track record on LGBT rights was examined. For example, he opposed granting same-sex couples benefits similar to those of heterosexual couples, and he submitted an amendment to the European Charter of Fundamental Rights calling for the exclusion of sexual orientation from protection against discrimination. He is also connected to the ultra-conservative Catholic organisation *Opus Dei*, a pressure group that operates from the Vatican. His claim that he would defend LGBT rights and that his personal views would not influence his actions did not convince many Members of the European Parliament

(MEPs). ILGA-Europe quoted Marco Cappoto MEP of the Italian Radical Party as saying "He is not the commissioner for Italy he is the commissioner for the Vatican," and Bernard Poignant, President of the French Socialist MEPs: "When I listened to him, I told myself that John Paul II had indeed succeeded in sending a commissioner to Brussels!"[5]

The Commission President, José Manuel Barroso, faced the alternative of pressing ahead and risking rejection of the Commission as a whole, or of removing Buttiglione's candidacy. After attempts at compromise failed, there was no alternative but for Buttiglione to stand down, which he duly did. In an interview with *The Times* after his withdrawal, Buttiglione claimed that he was "the victim of a new form of creeping totalitarianism, which forbids the asking of certain questions. Anyone who doesn't accept it is excommunicated." He ended his interview by quoting Sir Thomas More, who fell into disfavor with Henry VIII over England's break with Rome and lost his head: "Man cannot be separated from God, nor can the affairs of state be separated from morality."[6] Buttiglione clearly *does* see a strong link between religious belief and the "affairs of state" in spite of his protestations to the contrary when struggling to retain his candidacy.

In part, the furore surrounding Buttiglione and the attention it brought to bear on Vatican-inspired efforts to determine EU legislation has revealed the Catholic Church to be engaged in a rearguard action. Catholic country after Catholic country has defied Rome and followed the Netherlands in introducing gender-neutral marriage, such as in the case of Belgium, or same-sex partnership legislation, as in the case of Spain. Other countries are in the pipeline. In December 2004, France made homophobic speech and publications an offence. The penalty is a fine, or up to one year in prison. The Catholic Church opposed the legislation as it could be used against priests who denounce homosexuality.

There is another dimension to the actions of the Catholic Church. Perhaps better than many MEPs and Eurocrats it recognizes the need for a vision of what the EU is about beyond economic co-operation and free markets. There is a perceived vacuum of symbols and values at the heart of the EU. If the EU does not command much moral support or inspire fervor, then perhaps it is time to generate some. That the Catholic Church sees the opportunity is not perhaps surprising. Europe was once known as Christendom, and Christendom is probably the closest Europe has ever come to ideological unity. Christian MEPs and lobbyists, including the Vatican, tried, but failed, to get references to Christian values and Europe's Christian heritage written into the European constitution. This is not a short-term aim. When addressing the American Enterprise Institute in Washington after he had lost his candidacy, the time frame in which Buttiglione himself operates became clear. He claimed that: "In Europe, it is fashionable to be anti-Christian." Courting his American audience, he alluded to the role of "values" in the re-election of George W. Bush in the following statements: "The Europeans, all of a sudden, had to discover that America is religious, that ethical issues are relevant to politics." "Now America, the most advanced country in the world, shows us that religion may be and indeed is a fundamental element of a free society and of a modern economy."

"Because America is *modernity* [. . .] what takes place in America today will take place in Europe in 10, 15 or 20 years" (emphasis added).[7]

For a former potential EU Commissioner to claim that America is modernity, the most advanced country in the world, and a glimpse of the moral future of Europe is likely to surprise, and perhaps even shock, opinion in Brussels. What it illustrates, nonetheless, is Buttiglione's belief in the likelihood and even inevitability of a Christian moral resurgence, and the emergence of more theocratic politics. The Buttiglione case also illustrates how battles around sexual morality are part of broader struggles over the character of the EU, its basic values, and the kind of heritage it wants to emphasize – rational enlightenment or pre-enlightenment faith and piety. It further illustrates how sexuality can be a weapon with which to break free from the influence of the Catholic Church (as in Spain), or attempt to consolidate and extend its influence as has happened in Italy.

Questions of sexual morality also illustrate quite strikingly the different developmental time frames that are present in the EU, including faith in a teleological progression towards sexual liberalisation, and, alternatively, faith in a renewed Christian moralism which is extremely conservative in the areas of sexuality (and gender) when compared to the dominant thrust of the Union's reforms. Nor is the latter a strictly "European" moral modernity. In Poland, for example, groups from the religious right in the USA have been active in working against LGBT rights. Ironically, their morality has not been castigated by the Catholic Church or the government for being a foreign influence in the same way as the morals of the EU (Binnie 2005). What the Buttiglione and Polish cases provide us with are examples of a counterflow opposed to the main direction of EU social reforms and legal protections.

Cultural Degeneration

Far from being merely a description of the direction of cultural borrowings, diffusionism also contained moral and moralizing assessments of the consequences of cultural flows. One of the clearest examples of this was the claim that cultural diffusion inevitably leads to a loss of cultural vitality. In its more extreme manifestations, such as the heliocentrist position propounded during the early 1900s in Britain by William Perry and Grafton Elliot Smith, among others, diffusion was believed to lead to degeneration (Barnard 2000:53). Theirs was a pessimistic model of what, strictly speaking, is more a theory of devolution than diffusion. Perhaps the simplest form of the degenerative doctrine is that the introduction of foreign cultural elements automatically denudes local culture and along with it the strength of local morality. This is the version espoused most vocally in recent years by politicians in Poland. In its accession negotiations, the Polish government demanded assurances that "no European Union treaties or annexes to those treaties would hamper the Polish government in regulating moral issues." This last-minute request by the Polish government was a response to pressure from the Roman Catholic Church. It would have excluded Poland's LGBT community from the protections enshrined in Union laws. No such assurances were made as it would have allowed Poland to flout the *acquis*, but it did allow the Polish government to assert itself, to extol "Polish" contra "European" morality, and to placate the Catholic Church.[8]

Degeneration can also mean a loss of cultural specificity. Scholars of globalization have put forward, but also criticized, simplistic, and in essence diffusionist, models in which cultural centers expand and erase local cultural diversity leading inexorably to the "McDonaldization" of the world (e.g., Ritzer 1993).[9] Supporters of LGBT equal rights and protections have created the rather abstract and culturally non-specific discursive figure of the mobile LGBT citizen and generalized it to the whole of the Union. A positive appraisal of this abstract citizen is that it does not foreclose on possibilities to fill the discursive space it opens up with a multitude of queer Europeans. It represents an almost blank slate on which can be written local versions of LGBT sexuality which are not continually obliged to define themselves against the discriminatory laws of national sexual regimes thanks to the basic legal rights and protections won for them with the help of their featureless proxy. At the same time, this abstract disembedded figure is not without problems. The disembedded LGBT citizen in the form of the free-floating bearer of largely economic rights devoid of any obvious cultural anchorage conforms to a message about homosexuality that is as pervasive as it is pernicious. The homophobic armory includes accusations of treachery, conspiracy, lack of commitment, no investment in the future (in the assumed absence of children), and also of being "foreign." The Polish case is but one instance of the frequent accusation that homosexual influences always come from outside one's own group. This is as true of some of the new Member States as it is of former colonies like the Trobriands (Malinowski 1960), Martinique (Fanon 1986), and South Africa (Holmes 1995) where homosexuality has often been denounced as a colonial import and imposition (Graham 1998:115–117). Behind ideas of authenticity and cultural vigor it is possible to discern assumptions about the necessity of culture being rooted in a particular place if it is to be authentic.

The Queer Union

How do these criticisms of LGBT citizens compare with criticisms directed at the EU? Its authenticity is open to question given that it does not spring from a national tradition. It is frequently accused of being conspiratorial and in league with international capitalism. It is known to exert influence, but its ways are opaque and inscrutable, and its detractors usually portray whatever influence it does exert as pernicious. In addition, the EU is most certainly foreign, which means that it is loyal to itself but to no other. Opposition to the EU is, then, often couched in terms strikingly similar to denunciations of Europe's LGBT citizens and the two are sometimes denounced together as in the Romanian protestations. However, there is another similarity, the legibility and intelligibility of sexuality and the legibility and intelligibility of the EU. I have in mind here one of the aims of queer theory, namely, to reveal and explain the processes whereby certain categories of people are constructed as aberrations within the dominant discursive regimes of gender and sexuality.

Rather than see homosexuality as the "problem," queer theory – under the influence of Foucault among others – examined how it was constructed as an unthinkable, unintelligible phenomenon in contradistinction to the legibility and obviousness of heterosexuality. As "illegibles," homosexuals are therefore ineligible for the understanding and empathy accorded "normal people." They are queer – strange, odd, troubling, disconcerting – as in the commonest senses of the word. According to heteronormative logic homosexuality ought to be an impossibility. Yet it exists, and, as successive moral panics testify, is seen as something that spreads and grows and appears to have no difficulty recruiting new members.

The EU is an outrage to the doctrine of nationalist ideologies. It is an unintelligible surrender of sovereignty according to national politicians (and in some states a majority of the population). It is often accused of being a meaningless and illegible bureaucratic colossus with incomprehensible rules on the obligatory size of strawberries and the official curvature of cucumbers. It is distant from the lives of "ordinary" Europeans, and is unaccountable according to the norms of democratic representation. Within the dominant concepts and categories used in political and democratic discourses the EU is an affront to "normal" politics (Bomberg and Stubb 2003:3–8). It ought not to be possible. Yet it exists, and it spreads and grows and appears to have no difficulty recruiting new members.

These similarities between how LGBT sexuality and the EU are framed raise the intriguing, and also very large, question of whether in some respects the EU is a "queer" enterprise. Accusations that gays have taken over Europe are a very literal example of the conviction that this is indeed the case.[10] But there are other, less literal, and more interesting dimensions to the question than the implausible claim that Brussels is an LGBT stronghold.

Queer activists targeted minoritarian discourses as potentially lethal if the minority was considered to be expendable and if the majority was lulled into a false sense of security as in the case of HIV/AIDS. This placed many, often young, queer activists on a collision course with the gay community of older, richer men and women, who, in the eyes of the young radicals, were set in their ways and incapable of realising what they needed to do to survive. (Does this not read like an allegory of the young EU's relationship to the old Member States, which, set in their antiquated, national mentalities, are unable to abandon their obsolete categories and work for a reinvigorated Europe that is competitive and viable?) Gay, at least in Euro-American societies, has come to denote a population defined in terms of a self-proclaimed sexual identity that coincides with a specific form of sexuality and is associated with distinctive cultural markers, rather like an ethnic group (cf. Epstein 1987). For queer activists, gay meant being in collusion with, rather than helping to destabilize, the categorical distinction between a heterosexual majority and a homosexual minority.

If we only look at the EU's work in the area of LGBT equality, do we find much to suggest a "queer" approach? The 1997 Amsterdam Treaty recognizes rights that are based on *group* membership and shared *collective* identities. The lobbying activities of NGOs like ILGA-Europe, national LGBT organizations like Stonewall in the UK, the COC in the Netherlands, RFSL in Sweden, and European organizations like the Intergroup on Gay and Lesbian Rights in the European Parliament all favor the representations of a clearly defined sexual constituency. The 1993 report, *Homosexuality: A European Community Issue*, which was prepared for the European Commission by ILGA-Europe, claims that "there are a number of *universal constants* which have always been part of the human condition. One is that people who are different inspire fear which often leads to prejudice; another is that a *proportion* of the human race is homosexual" (ILGA-Europe 1993, emphasis added). Here we see a clear – and also historically and culturally universal – heterosexual-homosexual dichotomy and a minority seeking the same rights as a majority. At this level of policy, the minoritarian discourse, in which acts and identities coalesce around the gender of sexual preference, appears to dominate the agenda.

Yet, at the same time, the ideas behind the Community Action Programme and the EQUAL are strongly reminiscent of queer coalition politics. Both stress networking, multiple interests, coalition building, and dialogue. Rather than necessarily implying neatly circumscribed groups with watertight identities, the projects ought to favour strategic and temporary alliances based on similarities rather than essences. They are also, dare we say it, promiscuous in the way they advocate connections and to some degree "clandestine" in their advocacy of networks that are not routed through national governments, but are intended to connect up with European civil society. In these kinds of alliance, no single hegemonic definition of identity ought to be able to dominate and determine the agenda, and exchange of experiences, understandings, and perspectives ought to inform both the project's mode of operation and goals. All of this adds up to a policy process that is more uncertain, unpredictable, and unstable than traditional top-down forms of governance.

Compromise, rather than hegemonic imposition of opinion or the exit of parties, seems to be the rule, at least in the partnerships where the differences between the parties are significant but not unbridgeable. The TRIANGLE program, for example, did reveal some very different national positions on sexual prudery with the Austrians very uneasy about details of gay and lesbian lifestyles and the Dutch in favor of more of them, but it did reach a compromise.[11] Where there are no significant differences, as in the Swedish EQUAL project, a high degree of consensus appears to have been the rule. Yet, while consensus certainly conforms to the Swedish political tradition, it is arguable whether it lives up to the expectations surrounding the partnership strategy with its roots in the dialogic model of Social Catholicism. A pooling of like-mindedness is not the main goal. If anything, the EQUAL experience seems to have confirmed the opinion of those like the Swedish

Trade Union Confederation President that Sweden is the best in the field of LGBT equality and rights.

The EU thus combines, on the one hand, a majoritarian-minoritarian approach to sexual categories that, as critics point out, risks essentializing heterosexual and homosexual identities in the very way that has attracted queer critiques, and, on the other hand, a distinctly queer approach to mobilizing civil-society actors against discrimination. Its position is nothing if not contradictory. This contradiction is a familiar one from identity politics. To make progress old categories, actors, and constituencies must be dismantled and new ones constructed. However, they must not be so robust that they become inert and heavy shackles. Yet they must be strong enough to act as political platforms on which to organize and make demands. As the EU goes about challenging (however cautiously) national ways of doing politics, it too dissolves categories, actors and constituencies and tries to replace them with new ones of its own design. Yet it too needs relatively stable groupings to work with, to whom it can listen, and on whose behalf it can legislate and furnish with resources. The contradictions and tensions between the demands of dissolution and construction are probably inevitable.

Post-national Sexuality?

Much of what I have written about here deals directly or indirectly with the close ties between sexuality and nation-states (Mosse 1985), and often how nation-states see themselves as thoroughly heterosexual.[12] Thus, whatever challenges the integrity of nation-states is also likely to challenge some part of the nation's sexual self-image. Hence the frequent accusations of sexual irregularities aimed at foreigners, and the fears that their perversions will seep into and undermine the social and political fabric of the national community. The EU does not fit within a national framework. More than this, it actually challenges the authority of nation-states and therefore leaves itself open to sexual accusations and understandings. These can take the form of explicit sexual aspersions, such as Brussels is controlled by gays, or that there is "too much sex in Europe," to quote the Swedish MEP, Olle Schmidt.[13] It may also manifest itself in the general thematic content of accusations that resembles those used against marginal sexualities. I have shown this when comparing the accusations levelled at the EU with those directed at LGBT Europeans.

I noted earlier the importance of space for LGBT politics and we have repeatedly seen the use of spatial arguments and metaphors applied to LGBT rights in the EU and to the place of sexuality in the Union. The EU itself provides a non-national space for European citizens, and therefore by implication, I would argue, a site for a non-national sexuality. It may seem like an obvious point but sexuality always takes place in place. The EU actively encourages what I want to call "shadow spaces" (cf. Wolch 1989). These are spaces of citizenship made possible by EU funding where a range of civil society actors, including local grassroots and community organizations, educators, and NGOs, as well as companies, trade unions, and academics can meet and operate. Such spaces are not easily located within the dominant spatial categories of local, regional, national, or transnational. They are interstitial spaces, which, intuitively, seem suited to interstitial identities.

Queer sexualities are similarly marginal, falling somewhere between the firm categories of heterosexual and homosexual, gay and straight, but also, it should be pointed out, between national and non-national. A post-national LGBT identity ought to be accorded the title queer, because at the present juncture it is illegible within the dominant regimes of sexuality that are so closely implicated and informed by national understandings. Hitherto, there has not been a non-national LGBT identity. There may be French queers, but there are no Queer french.

It is scarcely surprising that we see the creation of the (thus far) abstract LGBT citizen in the interstitial space created by EU politics and European NGOs like ILGA-Europe. I have already mentioned that this remains a rather empty figure awaiting a stronger cultural content, one that perhaps inevitably will draw on national meanings at the same time as something more European is created. However, "Euroqueer" is not going to be European in any obvious sense because, despite all its efforts to encourage a European way of doing things, one of the more outrageous aspects of the EU is that it has still not produced a clear and coherent definition of what European (and certainly not "European sexuality") actually is (see Borneman and Fowler 1997:505).

From a queer perspective, this openness seems appealing, but interstitial spaces, margins, peripheries, and in-betweens are not only the sites of progressive politics; they can be and are the sites of frustration, failure, and crucibles for countertendencies and counterflows of conservative and reactionary movements, and identities, not only progressive ones. I suggested earlier that the EU might be queer in spite of itself. I would like to repeat that claim again. There is a logic to what the EU is doing, which, when applied to sexuality, points in some very queer directions. However, I doubt whether most MEPs or Eurocrats recognise it, and if they did the present reading of it might alarm many. It is a logic that is as promising and risky as the EU project itself.

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Notes

1. These include the Council Directive establishing a general framework for equal treatment on the basis of religion, belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation in employment (2000/78/EC), and the Community Action Programme against Discrimination (2000/750/EC). In addition, a ruling from the European Court of Justice found that discrimination against transgendered persons at the workplace is gender discrimination, and therefore illegal under the Union's Equal Treatment Directive.

2. "It" here refers to the Commission, the Council of Ministers, and the European Parliament. These three institutions do not always agree with each other or internally over what is best for the EU. Member States and are often out of step with the Commission, and the European Parliament often does not see eye-to-eye with either the Commission or the Member State governments represented in the Council of Ministers.
3. The heterosexist biases of citizenship manifest themselves in the lack of civil and social rights afforded LGBT citizens. In this respect they depart from the chronological sequence in which citizenship rights were supposed to have been granted – political, civil and social – according to T. H. Marshall's classic model (Marshall 1992). LGBT citizens are still waiting for many of the civil and social rights granted to heterosexuals decades ago.
4. The tension between national and supranational approaches to the European project finds parallels in the work of Franz Boas. As Stocking points out, Boas held two contradictory ideas on the development of culture: "On the one hand, culture was simply an accidental accretion of individual elements, on the other, culture – despite Boas' renunciation of organic growth – was at the same time an integrated spiritual totality that somehow conditioned the form of its elements" (Stocking 2001:32). Stocking is referring to works Boas wrote between 1891 and 1898. Over a century later the EU is faced with a similar contradiction between the apparently secure traditions of old Member States and the need to amalgamate foreign "traits" disseminated by the EU, which, in some usually unspecified manner, must be transposed by Member States (i.e., made part of their "spiritual totalities"), where presumably they risk being transformed beyond recognition. If not fully integrated by the national *Geist*, they remain little more than the "accidental accretions of individual elements" enjoying little support and with little practical import.
5. ILGA October 27, 2004. Dossier on Rocco Buttiglione. http://www.ilga.org/news_results.asp?LanguageID=1&FileCategoryID=1&FileID=361&ZoneID=4
6. *Times Online* November 7, 2004. www.timesonline.co.uk
7. *The Washington Times*, "Buttiglione cites 'anti-Christian' fad," December 12, 2004. www.washingtontimes.com
8. For the general situation in Poland as regards the Catholic Church and sexual morality, see Ramet 2006.
9. For an example of this in LGBT scholarship see Altman (2001).
10. The accusation was made by the Italian minister, 77-year-old Mirko Tremalgia in the wake of Buttiglione's rejection as Commissioner. "Poor Europe, the arse bandits are in a majority", were his exact words.
11. Some projects have failed in important respects, reflecting perhaps the innovative but risky and unpredictable way in which they were designed.
12. This is very apparent in the debates surrounding gay marriage, see Graham 2004.
13. "Det är för mycket sex i Europa." *Dagens Nyheter*, 3 April, 2004.

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Chapter 17

Turning the Lion City Pink? Interrogating Singapore's Gay Civil Servant Statement

Chris Tan

Introduction

On July 4, 2003, Singapore's former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong dropped a bombshell of an announcement in the main local English newspaper *The Straits Times*. He declared, "In the past, if we know you're gay, we would not employ you. But we just changed this quietly." Now, the government will employ gay Singaporeans in "certain positions," even sensitive ones, provided that these civil servants openly declare their sexual orientation (*The Straits Times* 2003a). Expecting much indignant resistance from the conservative quarters, he attempted to placate angry Singaporeans by resorting to essentialist notions of sexuality: "We are born this way and they [gay people] are born that way, but they are like you and me." He hoped that "in time, the population will understand that some people are born that way."

The reactions to this controversial statement varied. One very irate reader made it clear in the same newspaper exactly which straight and narrow path he traversed: "I am a heterosexual man, married to a heterosexual woman and we have four heterosexual children." In his world, "God loves both the heterosexual and the gay, but He hates the sin of immorality." This reader then warned of how "the Government [had] shown quite clearly by its actions that it [had] lost its moral authority" and that "history has shown time and again that great empires fell because of failing human values and shaky moral principles." (*The Straits Times* 2003d) Others gave more moderate comments. A pastor admitted that although "[he] also used to believe that homosexual acts are always wrong," "[he had] come to see [gay people] as normal human beings even though their sexual orientation is different from [his]." (*The Straits Times* 2003e)

Given its contentious nature, Goh's gay civil servant statement immediately became the focus of the media's attention. It was a warm tropical evening on July 30, 2003. I was staying with my parents in their modest two-bedroom apartment in Kampong Bahru, a public housing estate just outside of Chinatown. In a

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land-scarce country where most people live in public apartment blocks that often tower 20 storeys or higher, the pre-WWII three-storey dwarf that houses my parents' apartment on its third floor presented something of an oddity. On most evenings, I avoided watching prime-time public television in Singapore because I disliked the local programs that dominated this time slot. Tonight was different. The difference was not with Dad who was finishing on the dishes, or with Mum who was doing the laundry, or even with the noisy children downstairs who were going home after spending the afternoon with their nanny. Rather, I had found out from the local gay news lists that MediaWorks TV would be airing on its Mandarin-language Channel U an episode of *OK, No Problem* that focused on Goh's gay civil servant statement. Wary that my parents would figure out my homosexuality from my interest in the program when I had yet to come out to them, I gingerly turned on the TV.

An hour-long, two-segmented local current affairs program, *OK*, *No Problem* differed from other similar programs in terms of its presentation. Its first segment featured a 30-minute sitcom scripted to prime the audience at home to the actual discussion in the second. Here, instead of inviting panelists to the studio, *OK*'s producers elicited responses directly from the common people by setting up the studio at one of the many food courts that dot Singapore's urban landscape. The show's hostess Quan Yifeng began by interviewing food court patrons for their thoughts about the place of gay Singaporeans in the nation. Among many of the stereotypical responses, one man pathologized homosexuality and said that gay people should seek psychological or hormonal treatment. When asked what he thought gay men looked like, another patron remarked they were effeminate and wore earrings and tight T-shirts. He later corrected himself by saying that some gay men were also very "man" (i.e., masculine). Quan then proceeded with a game. She led three men out and asked the food court patrons to vote for the one they thought was gay. Of the three choices, the first was Malay and he wore a short-sleeved shirt. The second, a tall and muscular Chinese, wore two earrings and a tight T-shirt. The last one was also Chinese, but smaller in build, fair and looked soft. He also wore a tight T-shirt. In the end, the Malay man garnered the most votes. In a brilliant twist, however, Quan revealed that in reality *none* of the three were gay. In fact, two of them even had their girlfriend and wife at hand to prove their heterosexuality.

The highlight of the episode featured a live interview with a gay man named Anthony. Quan had Anthony literally come out of a closet that was previously set up at the site. In the emotionally charged interview that followed, Anthony revealed how he knew he differed from the other boys since his childhood. However, he only realized for the first time that he was not the only gay man on earth when he visited a gay bar overseas. Anthony struggled with his sexuality but finally decided to come out because he could no longer live his life according to other people's expectations. His loving parents accepted him but he added that many others were not so lucky. Some were driven from their homes while others committed suicide in despair. Barely able to hold back his tears, Anthony urged his fellow Singaporeans to accept gay people and allow them the space and dignity to live in the country. Anthony's interview moved everybody. At one time, Quan too had to fight back her tears as she struggled to maintain her professional decorum. The show ended with the camera panning a teary and solemnly contemplative audience (*Lian He Wan Bao* 2003).

To those more experienced in queer politics elsewhere, the public attention given to Goh's gay civil servant statement seemed misplaced. Although Singapore's authoritarian state did affirm homosexuality for the first time through the statement, Goh was merely offering employment to openly gay men and women within the civil service. He did not legalize same-sex marriages as legislators in Toronto did earlier that summer. Neither did he follow the US Supreme Court's lead and strike down Singapore's anti-sodomy laws (*The Straits Times* 2003c). In any event, the civil service has always included gay Singaporeans in its ranks because it does not actively screen out gay-identified applicants (closeted or otherwise) in its recruitment process. Hence, Goh's welcoming gesture could only result in a gay-friendlier working environment within the civil service. Why then the controversy? More importantly, I question the motivation behind the government's sudden move to embrace its gay citizens despite the criminalized nature of same-sex acts. Gay Singaporeans must now offer something that the government deemed crucial enough to risk political backlash, but was the government sincere about its proposal? Has it done anything more since Goh's statement to make gay Singaporeans feel more welcomed?

The answers to both questions, I argue, are "no." In critiquing Goh's gay civil servant statement, I will not be examining the lack of a concrete Muslim response to it. Inquiry along this line of questioning would not only include research into local Islamic interpretations of homosexuality, but also issues of modernity and racial relationships in Singapore. Since I cannot do justice to such inquiries within the confines of this essay, I will set them aside until such a time when I can do so more adequately. Instead, I will critique Goh's statement in two ways. First, I examine the legal bases for discrimination against gay Singaporeans and how the government used these laws to harass its gay citizens prior to Goh's statement. In discussing the government's persistence in keeping its anti-sodomy laws despite other advanced economies having already decriminalized homosexuality, I argue that the government uses homosexuality as a discursive resource to differentiate "wholesome" and "pure" Singapore from the "decadent" and "corrupt" West to ward off the perceived negative impact of modernity.

Second, I argue that despite the initial jubilations among gay Singaporeans that the state has finally affirmed their presence, we should see Goh's statement not as a gesture that advances equal rights but as a self-serving stratagem aimed at furthering the political dominance of his People's Action Party (PAP). In the past decades, the PAP has become aware of the potential negative impact Singapore's decreasing birthrates will have on the country's future economic performance. By subscribing to Florida's (2002) theory that correlates tolerance of sexual diversity with urban affluence, the PAP aspires to attract more foreign professional labor and capital to Singapore to bolster the country's economy. This will in turn secure the citizens' electoral support despite the government's continuing neglect of conventional human rights. Using data gathered from 16 predominantly gay and lesbian informants interviewed during fieldwork conducted in the summer of 2004, I reveal Goh's statement as an empty marketing ploy in so far as the government has yet to enact the necessary legislative changes to make the civil service a truly gay-friendly environment. This renders any semblance of the government advancing equal rights for gay Singaporeans more as a necessary evil that the PAP has decided to endure.

The Legal Bases for Homophobic Discrimination in Singapore

"Singapore," Leong (1997:142) writes, "appears to be the last frontier in the Asian region for positive gay and lesbian developments." Although repression and sexual perversion are foregrounded in orientalist discourses (Screech 2000), Leong's assertion is not entirely ungrounded. When other advanced economies such as Australia and Hong Kong have ceased to criminalize homosexuality, Singapore continues to do so through the antiquated laws it retains from the time the British administered it as a colonial factory. As I am writing this essay, the Singaporean government has proposed a series of legal reforms that include decriminalizing "unnatural" sex for heterosexual couples but not gay ones (*The Straits Times* 2006). As the government has not finalized these changes, the anti-sodomy Sections 377 and 377A of Singapore's Penal Code (*Singapore Statutes Online*) still state:

> Section 377 (Unnatural Offences): Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animals, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 10 years, and shall also be liable to fine.
>
> Explanation: Penetration is sufficient to constitute the carnal intercourse necessary to the offence described in this section.
>
> Section 377A (Outrages on Decency): Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or abets the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 2 years.

Although the government seldom evokes Sections 377 and 377A nowadays, the statutes do cover a broad range of acts that persecutors can construe as "unnatural offences." Such acts include, but are not limited to, rape, consensual fellatio and anal sex. In *Kunagasuntharam vs. PP 1992 1 SLR:81-6*, the judge sentenced the accused to 14 years and 24 strokes of the cane for rape, six years for fellatio and another eight years for anal intercourse. In the 1995 case of *PP vs. Victor Rajoo 1995 3 SLR:417-32*, the judge acquitted the accused from charges of abduction, rape, theft and robbery. The judge ruled that the woman had probably consented to sexual intercourse on the basis of her weak and inconsistent testimony. In the end, he sentenced Rajoo to six months in jail and S$2,000 in fines only for having oral sex. Clearly, consent was not an element of the oral sex conviction. This ruling has two implications. It suggests that the government can charge a person for fellatio even if heterosexual adults perform it with consent in private. It also implies that all non-vaginal sex is "unnatural" and punishable under Section 377 (Leong 1997).

These implications raised a variety of other issues (*The Straits Times* 1995a and 1995b). Firstly, oral sex is a common enough sexual practice that a high proportion of married couples would have been guilty of it under Section 377. Even if they have not tried it, what if oral sex becomes an issue in marital disputes and divorce proceedings? Furthermore, if the Chinese traditionally embedded fellatio in their culture as "playing the flute," why should the government consider it an "unnatural" crime? Indeed, the continual criminalization of fellatio demonstrates that Section 377 is itself unnatural, imposed from another cultural tradition and anachronistic in the contemporary setting (Leong 1997). The issue of fellatio was resolved partially when a defense lawyer asked the judge to rule in the interests of the public on the legality of oral sex between two heterosexual parties (*The Straits Times* 1995c). Justice Lai Kew Chai admitted that the act remains permissible as long as it leads to vaginal sex.

While Section 377 targets both heterosexual and homosexual couples, Section 377a applies specifically to men. Like "unnatural offences," "gross indecency" remains equally undefined. However, court cases resulting from police sting operations in the late 1980s and early 1990s included oral sex between men, mutual masturbation and touching the genitals of another male. During the operations, the police sent very young male constables in revealing shorts and tank tops to loiter around parks, public bathrooms, and shopping malls. Making eye contact to signal interest and striking conversations with cruising gay men, these *agents provocateurs* arrested their unsuspecting victims the moment they were touched on the buttocks or genitals on charges of the use of criminal force to outrage one's modesty. If the cruising gay man refrained from touching the decoy despite the provocation, the police might invoke Section 19 (soliciting in a public place) of the Miscellaneous Offences (Public Order and Nuisance) Act. This Section covers both prostitution, where money is involved in the transaction, and soliciting "for any other immoral purpose," where a proposition for sex is made without monetary transaction. This offence carries a fine of up to S$1,000, (doubled on a subsequent conviction) and includes a jail term of no more than six months. If the cruising gay man used a symbolic gesture like stroking his crotch to signal sexual interests with the decoy, he could be tried under Section 294A of the Penal Code, a statute that includes the commission of any obscene act in any public place to the annoyance of others. The punishment here is a maximum of three months jail time, a fine, or both (Leong 1997).

The police carried out their worst sting operation in March 1992 by deploying ten constables at the popular cruising grounds at the East Coast Parkway beach. The March 9 and 10 editions of the local tabloid *The New Paper* reported eight arrests and published face-snapshots of four of those arrested. These reports clearly indicated that a symbiotic relationship existed between the news media and the police. Given that the reports included pictures taken at the scene of the raid, Leong (1995) speculates that journalists from the tabloids had orchestrated the media event. Acting as what Becker (1963:147) calls "moral entrepreneurs," or people who define rules of behavior, these journalists alerted the police to the "scene of the crime." Obliged to respond to the "complaint," the police conducted a raid. As such, the journalists could be present to report and photograph the "ambush." In the end, the consequences of the raid went far beyond the S$1,000 fine that was slapped on each of the eight arrested men. One of the four men whose incriminating picture *The New Paper* published felt so ashamed that he committed suicide.

The actual number of arrests the police made over the years remains unclear. From 1974 to 1986, the government published an annual *Statistical Report on Crime in Singapore*. Now, the Criminal Intelligence Unit of the Criminal Investigation Department only grants access to these figures on very special grounds, and even then, with the added proviso that the reader cannot publish these figures (Leong 1997). Between 1990 and 1994, however, the newspapers reported 67 convictions of homosexuals stemming from police undercover activities. The punishment ranged from fines between S$200 to S$1,000 to caning (see *The Straits Times* 1993). Very likely, these 67 cases composed only a minute fraction of the total convicted because reporting depends on such exigencies as whether or not there was more interesting news on a particular day. The majority of those arrested also pleaded guilty to avoid the shaming glare of the media inherent in all public trials and appeals (Leong 1997).

Sections 377 and 377A also enable the government to close down gay bars and dance clubs. In the panic that followed the first reported case of HIV infection in 1985, the government attempted to control homosexuality in the misguided belief that AIDS struck gay men exclusively and that the control would halt the spread of the disease. The government closed a number of gay nightclubs for no apparent reason. For example, it revoked the liquor license for *Niche* in 1989 in reaction to the first reported AIDS-related death in Singapore (Heng 2001). The government also declined to renew the lease of a gay disco called *Shadows* in 1992 even though *Shadows* reigned as the most popular gay disco at the time. Leong (1995) attributes the disco's closure to Stan Sesser's article in *New Yorker* earlier that year. Sesser (1992) had alluded to *Shadows* when he argued that some free-spirited undercurrents flowed in Singapore in spite of the government's strict control there.

The police entrapment operations and raids ceased in 1994. In April that year, the Chief Justice heard the appeal that Tan Boon Hock made. Tan was previously sentenced to four months in jail and three strokes of the cane because the police caught him in a raid five months earlier at the popular cruising grounds at Tanjong Rhu. The Chief Justice ruled that the police could not charge Tan for outraging the modesty of another when they expected their undercover constable to be touched in the first place. The Chief Justice allowed Tan's appeal and reduced the sentence to a fine of S$2,000. He also noted that Tan had pleaded guilty and only appealed against the sentence. This suggests that if Tan had contested the charge in the first instance, he would have been acquitted.

For years, gay Singaporeans were further assured that the government would not actively persecute them. During a live interview on CNN between Riz Khan and the elderly statesman Lee Kuan Yew on 11 Dec 1998, a Singaporean called in and asked what future Singapore will offer its gay citizens when the country does not acknowledge their presence. Lee answered:

> Well, it's not a matter which I can decide or any government can decide. It's a question of what the society considers acceptable. And as you know, Singaporeans are by and large a very conservative, orthodox society, a very, I would say completely differently from, say, the U.S.A. and I don't think an aggressive gay rights movement would help. But what we are doing as a government is to leave people to live their own lives so long as they don't impinge on other people. I mean, we don't harass anybody (*The Straits Times* 1998).

Although Lee falsified the claims that the government never harassed its gay citizens, his promise to let gay Singaporeans be, as long as they police themselves, heralded what has now been almost a decade of minimal persecution. Indeed, Singapore now boasts a thriving, if clandestine, cluster of gay and lesbian businesses in its Chinatown that includes four of the six bathhouses in Singapore, restaurants, bars, karaoke lounges, nightclubs, hair salons, and clothing and accessory stores. The country also hosted the highly popular *Nation* circuit party from 2001 until still-unverified government allegations that the party posed a public health threat as an HIV vector forced the party organizers to relocate the revelry to Phuket, Thailand in 2005.

The fact that the courts have never convicted lesbians stands out in Singapore's legal system. Section 377A applies only to men, and the courts have only punished men for same-sex acts. This does not affirm the legality of lesbianism. In principal, certain lesbian acts are punishable under Section 20 of the Miscellaneous Offences (Public Order and Nuisance) Act, a statute that refers to "riotous, disorderly or indecent behavior" in a public setting. The punishment here is a fine not exceeding S$1,000 or imprisonment not exceeding one year (*Singapore Statutes Online*). In 1993, for example, *The New Paper* reported two girls kissing and fondling each other in a public swimming pool. Since the tabloid did not identify the girls, the police did not take any action. In reality however, the impact of the legal omission of lesbianism goes beyond court cases. Leong (1995:14) writes:

> The legal omission of lesbianism amounts to the symbolic annihilation of lesbians: officially, lesbians do not exist in Singapore. Silence, or the absence of discourse on lesbianism is no better than the legal oppression of male homosexuality: it is representative in itself by way of denying the existence of another form of human sexuality, thought and behavior.

Homophobia in Traditional Media

Other than giving the police the legal authority to harass gay Singaporeans, Sections 377 and 377A also cause such traditional media as television and the newspapers to censor any gay-affirmative programming. The Media Development Authority (MDA) administers a series of guidelines for traditional media. The MDA's Free-to-Air and Cable TV Program Codes stipulate that any television programming must commensurate with such national objectives as the observation of societal and moral standards as well as the promotion of positive family values (*MDA Free-to-Air Television Programme Code* and *Subscription Television Programme Code*). The Codes go further to list homosexuality alongside incest, pedophilia and participation in the occult as dramatic themes that program producers must not justify, promote or glorify. By grouping homosexuality together with such behavior as devil-worship, the MDA generates a collocation effect (Firth 1957) to further strengthen the government's discourse of homosexuality as a social ill.

The MDA misleads with its use of "guidelines" to describe its codes. By definition, guidelines are suggestive but are not legally binding. Yet depending on the severity of the violation, any breach of the MDA's codes can attract fines ranging from S$1,000 to S$50,000. For example, MediaWorks TV aired an in-depth interview with Anne Heche on March 16, 2003 that featured a significant discussion of the actress's life with Ellen DeGeneres. MDA subsequently found MediaWorks guilty of "[glamorizing] the lesbian relationship between Anne and Ellen and [portraying] them as role models." It slapped the company with a hefty S$15,000 fine, even though the interview centered on Heche's life and was hardly pornographic. Hence, the MDA guidelines are effectively rules that prevent the media from portraying homosexuality in a positive light. In a press release about the MediaWorks fine, MDA stated that "while information, themes or subplots on homosexuality or lesbianism may be explored, the Code disallows content that promotes, justifies and glamorizes such alternative lifestyles." (*Mediaworks Fined for Breach of Programme Code*) Interestingly, the MDA did not chastise MediaWorks for airing the episode of *OK, No Problem* described above. I can only surmise that the government held back the punishment because it had wanted to make the issue of employing gay civil servants more palatable to a homophobic public.

Cultural Boundaries

Singapore's penchant for using high-handed methods to silence its unruly gay citizens has contributed to the country's global infamy as a draconian state. As a country whose economy depends significantly on international trade – Singapore imports most of what it consumes and exports almost all of what it produces – such disrepute must surely hurt its economic growth. Why then does Singapore persist in maintaining its anti-sodomy laws when it claims that it no longer persecutes gay Singaporeans with them? I argue that the government retains these antiquated statutes to use them as resources to draw cultural boundaries that delineate a "pure" and "wholesome" Singapore from the "immoral" and "decadent" West. Although he originally focused on consumption in Singapore in general with his critique, Chua (2003) provides particularly cogent comments about this attempt at cultural demarcation. He argues that despite its 40 years of unbroken draconian rule, Singapore's dominant People's Action Party (PAP) remains in power because it has secured and maintained massive improvements in material life for Singaporeans. However, the PAP also fears that the country's dependence on international trade has exposed the citizens to what Chua (2003:6) calls "westoxification." Particularly, the PAP directs its anti-Western sentiments towards such American mass entertainment products as films and music. Unlike Japanese products that lack what Iwabuchi (2004:57) calls "cultural odor" because their consumers associate them with technical sophistication and high quality (du Gay et al. 1997) as "Japanese consumer goods do not seek to sell on the back of a Japanese way of life," (Featherstone 1995: 9) American films and music reek of Americanness. American films and music tend to celebrate liberalism and individualism by normalizing promiscuity in sex and drugs and by turning criminals into folk heroes, so such American products pose an ideological challenge to the semi-democratic polity that the PAP has created.

Here, the Singaporean government clearly associates industrialization with modernization and westernization. However, the three processes are not necessarily coterminous. First, such countries as Japan and South Korea have also achieved modernity despite their geographical locations outside of Euro-America. Second, as paradoxical as it sounds, industrialization can be antithetical to modernity. In her case study of Javanese batik cloth merchants, Brenner (1998) argues that the merchants monopolized the production of the hand-made and much-prized batik to accumulate sufficient wealth to emulate the lifestyles of their Dutch colonial masters. However, industrialization and the subsequent introduction of mass-produced, if sub-standard, batik undercut the merchants' economic advantage and resulted in the decline of the merchant community. Despite the above evidence, the Singaporean government continues to treat the country's exposure to American cultural influences as a negative consequence of modernization. To stave off America's ideological challenges, the Singaporean government adopted a two-pronged strategy. Spatially, the government began preserving the various ethnic enclaves in Singapore in the late 1980s to physically remind Singaporeans of their cultural heritages (Kong and Yeoh 2003). Ideologically, Singapore also became a particularly vocal proponent of the so-called "Asian values" debate in the 1990s. At that time, Lee Kuan Yew drew upon that strand in Confucianist thought that privileges the heteronormative family over the individual and the government as the basis for Asian societies. In this genetically, philosophically and culturally heterosexist configuration, Lee cast the government as both the organ of the family as well as the protectorate of its values (Offord 2003).

As protectorate of family values, the Singaporean government actively encourages its citizens to marry and reproduce as an autocratic patriarch would his descendents (Heng and Devan 1992). Indeed, Leong (1995:17) remarks that "[t]he state is so omnipresent that even the private areas of family and sexuality cannot escape its clutches. The paternalism of the authoritarian state is evident in the way state elites see themselves as responsible for the marriage and reproduction of the population." As such, homosexuality must pose a particularly dangerous threat because it promises to liberate sexuality from service to the government's hetero-patriarchy. Indeed, the government ignores the rich same-sex histories embedded in the cultures of the Chinese, Malays, and Indians that form the three major ethnic groups in Singapore (Boellstorff 2005; Hinsch 1990; Vanita 2002) and treats homosexuality with pornography as "immoral" American cultural imports alongside liberalism. At the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the then-Minster of Foreign Affairs Wong Kan Seng (1995:244) stated that "Singaporeans . . . do not agree . . . that pornography is an acceptable manifestation of free expression or that homosexual relationships are just a matter of lifestyle choice. Most of us will agree that the right to marry is confined to those of the opposite gender." By retaining the anti-sodomy laws despite Lee's promise that the government will refrain from using them, the government uses them as symbolic resources to draw imaginary cultural boundaries between a "moral" Singapore and the "immoral" West, and reassures conservative Singaporeans of the government's role as the nation's moral guardian.

"It's not About Gay Rights – It's Survival," Or, "It's One Big *Wayang* Show!"

The Singaporean government's use of homosexuality to further its own goals went beyond the demarcation of the Singaporean Self and the Western Other. Shortly after Goh announced his plans to recruit openly gay civil servants, *The Straits Times* (2003b) published an editorial piece to rationalize Goh's gesture as a national economic strategy. Entitled "It's not about gay rights – it's survival," the article focuses on Florida's (2002) "gay index" that correlates the tolerance of sexual diversity in certain American cities with the wealth of those cities:

> The idea is simple: Tolerance creates an open, diverse society that welcomes everybody, whether mavericks or buttoned-down conservatives. This milieu attracts the kind of innovative, creative talent critical to economic growth . . . Professor Florida singles out gay-friendliness as an indicator of tolerance. "To some extent, homosexuality represents the last frontier of diversity in our society and, thus, a place that welcomes the gay community welcomes all kinds of people." Just as industries should have low entry barriers to allow new companies to enter and compete, so cities should have low entry barriers to people, so newcomers of all stripes are accepted quickly

> into social and economic arrangements. "Openness to the gay community is a good indicator of the low entry barriers to human capital that are so important to spurring creativity and generating high-tech growth."

In other words, Florida treats his "gay index" as a proxy for cultural and lifestyle diversity and cosmopolitanism at large. The higher a city climbs on the index, the more tolerant of diversity and cosmopolitanism it is, and the higher its quality of life becomes.

Goh must be fully aware of the political backlash that his statement might unleash on his political party, but the *Straits Times* article indicates that the PAP now perceives its gay citizens as offering an economic edge to the country when it previously did not. This leads me to ask why the government chose to reverse its homophobic stance only in 2003 when it could have done so earlier. The reversal, I argue, has to do with Singapore's failing economy in the recent years. Singapore, Simon Elegant writes in his article in *Time Asia* entitled "The Lion in Winter," has been "[stumbling] in and out of recessions since the Asian financial crisis of 1997." As a result of such international events beyond the PAP's control as the burst of the dot.com bubble, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and most recently, the SARS outbreak, Singapore suffered a record 4.4% unemployment rate in 2002. Elegant writes:

> [Former] Prime Minister Goh and other leaders are adamant that Singapore can avoid that fate. "We can't be hanging on the manufacturing sector [if] the semiskilled jobs can be done better in China and elsewhere," Goh says. "So we have got to move up the value chain into higher-skilled jobs." Goh and his colleagues say that the city-state can be remade from the top down by steering the economy away from its dependence on multinationals and into niche areas that the country is uniquely suited to exploit: financial services like banking and insurance, for example, or specialized and high-tech areas like medical care and biotechnology. The trick will be to foster creativity, entrepreneurship and the ability to take risks in a business culture long accustomed to following orders.

In a country that George (2000) has likened to an "Air-conditioned Nation" because technocrats have designed its environment for the comfort of its inhabitants, Singaporeans suffer from a reluctance to take risks. The Singaporean government has instituted educational programs to instill creativity and entrepreneurship back into its citizens, for example, by incorporating independent research projects into high school curricula. Assuming that creativity can be taught, these schemes remain long-term in their scope. In the meantime, Singaporeans stubbornly resist the government's calls for early marriage and increased fecundity and threaten to short-circuit the government's plans by jeopardizing the manpower that is Singapore's only resource. In 2003, the declining birthrates hit an all-time low of 1.7% (*Statistics Singapore*). After seeing no apparent end to the economic gloom in sight, some Singaporeans compounded Singapore's population woes further by agitating for migration to greener pastures elsewhere. Former PM Goh deemed this so serious a problem that he resorted to reverse psychology to goad potential "quitters" into staying during his 2002 National Day Rally speech.

Encouraging more foreign professionals (known locally as "foreign talent") to settle in Singapore presents one solution to all of the above problems, in the short term at least. In "The Lion in Winter," Elegant (2003) notes:

> Once notoriously picky about whom it allowed into the country to live and work, Singapore has opened the floodgates in recent years through its 'foreign-talent' program. Some 70,000 foreign professionals now reside in the city-state, and foreign-born residents make up one-quarter to one-third of the population, a demographic unmatched anywhere except in a few rich Gulf emirates.

Thus far, these foreign professionals have helped arrest an otherwise shrinking population. From 1990 to 2000, Singapore's total population grew by 2.8% largely because of the strong 9.3% increase in the number of new residents (*Singapore Statistics*). If the government wants to realize its plans of increasing the population from its current 4.1 million to 5.5 million over the 50 years (*Concept Plan 2001*), it must attract even more foreigners than it does now to settle in Singapore.

If Singapore suffers from international disrepute as a notoriously puritan country, why should foreign talents settle there instead of other less draconian regional cities like Hong Kong? In this light, I see Goh's offer to hire openly gay civil servants as the PAP's attempt to ameliorate the country's tarnished reputation. In the article "It's not about gay rights – it's survival" (*The Straits Times* 2003b), the reporter writes: "Tolerance, unlike technology or even talent, cannot be centrally planned or attracted with tax-incentives. It has to be practiced not by economic planners, but by all and sundry. It requires changing not the hardware but the software of mindsets." Certainly, the PAP expects neither Singapore to become gay friendly overnight nor would-be migrants to uproot themselves before considering many other factors such as the cost of living and political stability. However, the political party does hope that a gay-tolerant culture will take root within the public sector. This will in turn encourage private companies and eventually the rest of Singapore to follow suit. Attracted by a stable but fun working environment, the influx of foreign talents will bolster Singapore's economy and convince Singaporeans to continue supporting the PAP in the elections. The enhanced quality of life in turn entices more international capital and professional labor. Proclaiming that "where gays go, geeks follow," Bill Bishop (2000) writes that "gay men and lesbians are the canaries in the new-economy coal mine – if gay people can survive in a place, then so will high-tech workers, the people with the ideas that are now making economies grow."

Goh's statement has convinced some international media to reconsider Singapore. While the international gay travel guide *Spartacus* used to describe Singapore as a homophobic country, it writes of the country in its 2006 edition as one that welcomes gay tourists because it now keenly desires to "[shed] its conservative image and embrac[e] diversity." However, has the government convinced Singaporeans (especially the gay and lesbian ones) that Goh's statement will result in a gay-friendlier Singapore? Highly suspicious of the government's motives, I interviewed 16 predominantly gay and lesbian Singaporeans during the summer of 2004 to ascertain if other gay Singaporeans felt the same as I do. Of the ten men and six women in this informant pool, three self-identified as straight. Despite their sexual differences from the rest of my informants, I deliberately interviewed these three to sample how the heterosexual majority would consider this issue that would eventually affect their livelihoods. Of the 16 informants, seven (including two straight-identified ones) worked as civil servants in various government ministries and statutory boards. They were all employed before Goh made his statement. The others held jobs ranging from university student to sports masseur to IT administrator to gay bathhouse operator. The age of my informants ranged widely from 19 to 50. A number of my informants are publicly known gay-rights activists who gave me permission to refer to them in this essay with their real names. In fact, Eileena insisted that I use her real name because doing otherwise suggests that she is ashamed of her sexuality and has something to hide. As such, I use a mixture of both pseudonyms and real names in this essay.

I conducted the interviews at a number of different sites. These included cafés, a gay bar in Chinatown on quiet weekday nights, and the Pelangi Pride Center, a gay and lesbian resource and community center that the local HIV/AIDS awareness agency Action for Aids used to house in one of its offices in the South Asian ethnic enclave called Little India. Singapore lists English, Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil as its official languages. However, I conducted the interviews in Singlish, the local English-based creole that the majority of Singaporeans speak and increasingly acquire as their first language despite the government's efforts to eradicate it (Rubdy 2001). Syntactically, Singlish resembles such southern Sinitic languages as Cantonese and Hokkien. Cantonese and Hokkien, along with English and Malay, also contribute to a large portion of the Singlish lexicon. *Ngeow* (/ŋiau/), literally meaning "cat" in Hokkien, refers in Singlish to someone who is overly meticulous and/or fault-finding. *Ulu*, on the other hand, is borrowed from Malay to denote the remoteness of a place. More significantly, such discourse particles as *leh*, *lah*, and *lor* characterize Singlish. Mostly borrowed from southern varieties of Chinese, these particles occur generally at the end of sentences where they modify the meaning and/or the tone of the sentence but not its grammaticality. The ubiquitous *lah*, for example, simultaneously asserts a position and entices solidarity by softening the harsh tones of an imperative. *Lor*, on the other hand, marks a casual, sometimes jocular, assertion. It also carries a sense of resignation about events beyond one's control. Although my informants understand Standard English perfectly because that language is the main medium of instruction in all levels of formal education, I conversed with them in Singlish because the sense of informality that the creole carries aids in the establishment of rapport so necessary for any successful fieldwork projects (Ho and Platt 1993; Lim 2004; see also *The Coxford Singlish Dictionary* for a more humorous treatment of the Singlish vocabulary).

Many of the gay Singaporeans I interviewed saw Goh's statement as the government's affirmation of their presence and a step towards equal rights. Eileena, for example, pointed out that Goh "gave gay people a face . . . suddenly gay people exist in the country when we never existed before." As an activist from the local gay rights advocacy group *People Like Us* (PLU), Eileena also thought that the statement was "a good thing for us, as a group of activists from *plu*. That was like a springboard for us to jump from, to bring it further." Kelvin, another *plu* activist, agreed as he acknowledged that *plu* can only push for more equal rights when the government signals its permission to do so. Unruly activists risk arrest as troublemakers not to be publicly associated with. Indeed, Goh's statement emboldened *plu* to resubmit its application to register formally as a society when the Registrar of Societies rejected its first application in 1996 without giving any reasons. According to the correspondences published on the *plu* website, the Registrar rejected this second application after deeming *plu* a group "used for unlawful purposes or for purposes prejudicial to public peace, welfare or good order in Singapore" and "contrary to the national interests."

Other evidence, when considered in tandem with *plu*'s second rejection, suggests strongly that the gay civil servant statement was little more than what Singaporeans would call a "*wayang* show." Originally meaning "performance" in Malay (as in *wayang cina*, or Chinese opera), "wayang" is now incorporated into Singlish to denote something that has more bells and whistles than actual substance. First of all, the fact that no restrictions barred gay Singaporeans from the civil service prior to Goh's statement effectively curtailed any real impact the statement might have. Although Goh gave the impression that the civil service only hires heterosexual applicants, the civil service in reality does not actively screen out gay Singaporeans because it does not question an applicant's sexual orientation in its recruitment procedures. Of the seven civil servants in my informant pool, all five of the gay ones were employed before 2003. Some of these five had even attained positions of some sensitivity, including Calvin whom the army discharged honorably as a staff sergeant. Although Calvin had outed himself willingly to anybody who asked, he claimed that his homosexuality had neither attracted harassment from his colleagues and superior officers nor hindered his ability to command respect from his subordinates. In fact, none of the gay civil servants felt that their sexuality made them particular targets of discrimination at work. Although homosexuality certainly does not provide any guarantee against dismissal, Zach, a civil servant who works at a social services statutory board, felt that that being gay would at best constitute only *one* reason for dismissal among other conventional ones such as incompetence and corruption. In and of itself, homosexuality would not be the only justification for dismissal.

Some of my informants also commented that the government faces many practical problems of implementation that it must solve before the statement can be fully tenable. Legislatively, gay Singaporeans remain lawbreakers because of Sections 377 and 377A. For the government to realize its promise and employ openly gay citizens, it will have to knowingly retain the services of criminals. As he pointed out this irony, Dennis, a computer software programmer, quipped:

> You really have to have civil servants who are virgins working for the government . . . The law says that gay sex, or rather anal sex, oral sex, and any insertion of any funny items in any orifices of your body, are all against the law . . . So obviously since you can't have criminals in the government, they [i.e., the openly gay civil servants] have to be virgins.

Practically, the government also has not fully thought through how to implement Goh's offer of employment. Russell, a senior administrator at one of Singapore's institutions of higher learning, used the diplomatic corps as an example. He pointed out that although the corps has clearly spelled out rules for the rights and benefits bestowed on the spouse and children of an envoy deployed overseas, the corps assumes that said diplomat and his/her spouse are heterosexual. No such rules exist for homosexual envoys and their partners. Neither has the corps revised existing rules to accommodate gay diplomats despite Goh's statement.

That the government has so far refrained from affirming Goh's offer of employment suggests strongly that it lacks the will to carry through with it. I had started my fieldwork calling the statement a "policy," but Eileena corrected me of my mistake:

> No *lor*, because it's not a policy *lor* . . . They [i.e., the government] ask people to come out. There's no back-up plan as in, you know, you don't have regulations to prevent people from being discriminated [against]. How do you expect people to come out? You expect people to come out and lose their jobs? That's not a policy. You need to have all these things set up to assure people that it's OK to come out. Then it's a policy. Have it written down, yeah? To do that, they have to get rid of the bloody Penal Code. [laughs]

Indeed, the government did not remark upon the first anniversary of the gay civil servant statement. What appeared in the news instead was an exposé from the tabloid *Lian He Wan Bao* (2004). Starting from 9 July, 2004, the tabloid ran a series called "The Glass Circle" (from *bo li* "glass," a Mandarin euphemism for "male homosexual") of five very unflattering daily reports about what really went on in certain saunas with all-male clientele. While better informed Singaporeans can easily brush aside the *Wan Bao* as a sensationalist rag from the alleged ghost sightings it publishes as headline news, the tabloid's readership hails mainly from among the conservative middle-aged. Disparaging exposés such as the *Wan Bao*'s only reinforce the negative stereotypes their readers already have of homosexuality and make them even more opposed to future moves to advance equal rights.

The above comments index the suspicions that gay Singaporeans felt towards Goh's gay civil servant statement, but what did the straight Singaporeans think about it? Would the statement make Singapore a more attractive country so that Singaporeans agitating for migration to escape Singapore's then-declining economy would choose to stay instead? Of my three straight-identified informants, civil servant Jamilah thought that unless the statement affected them adversely in a direct manner, most heterosexual Singaporeans would put their economic well-being before ideology and implicitly accept the government's plans:

> This is not a policy of acceptance, of open arms, kind of "we welcome you, homosexuality is now legal." It's not that, you know. It's more, like I said, "an economic rationale, and I think Singaporeans are smart enough to draw the line between something very driven by economic consideration as opposed to a real societal change."

Ben, another of my straight informants who taught at one of Singapore's universities, went as far as to assert that he would rather have an ordinary gay Singaporean than an inept government scholar as a civil servant: "Better a gay civil servant who knows what he's doing than a *tsao sikolar* [Singlish for 'smelly scholar'] who doesn't." Despite the adamant opposition to Goh's statement that some Singaporeans who advocate "traditional values" put up, clearly not all straight Singaporeans share this sentiment about having gay Singaporeans as civil servants.

Goh's proclamation should not be mistaken as a discourse of tolerance. Rather, as Jamilah suggests above, economic rationale grounds the offer of employment because the offer aims primarily to make Singapore appear respectable to attract foreign talents. Florida's (2002) "gay index" that forms the basis of Goh's offer also indexes respectability. In a footnote on the census data on which he formulates his theory, Florida acknowledges that the data includes only gay people in same-sex partnerships. By not including single gay men or lesbians, the levels of arrests for public sex or the number of tea rooms or backrooms, the "gay index" presents a statement of the "appropriate" form of queer lifestyle. This queer lifestyle, rooted in gentrified neighborhoods, takes the Mardi Gras festival as the only acceptable queer public presence because it has been transformed from a political protest into a celebration of "difference" staged for tourists (Bell and Binnie 2004). As Rushbrook (2002:195) writes, "gay urban spectacles attract tourists and investment; sexually deviant, dangerous rather than risqué, landscapes do not." Although the Singaporean government will most likely continue to disallow such public displays of gay pride as the Mardi Gras festival for the foreseeable future, Goh's offer remains predicated upon respectability by aiming to tame the dangerous elements of "deviant" homosexuality through the rubric of the civil service.

Furthermore, when *The Straits Times* made public the government's intention to hire openly gay civil servants, it did so four days after Goh broke the news to the internationally-read magazine *Times Asia*. Given that Vivian Balakrishnan, the government official in charge of the Remaking Singapore Committee, had also spoken in the *Time Asia* article "The Lion in Winter" that "Singapore will do 'whatever it takes' to attract talent," I interpret Goh's gesture as the government treating sexual diversity as a necessary evil because of its unwillingness to turn away any foreign talent who happens to be gay. Indeed, *The Straits Times* editorial piece discussed above ends by reminding Singaporeans that they should set aside their objections and accept the government's proposal because of the proposal's economic benefits: "Remember, this is not about gay rights. This is about economic competitiveness." As such, Goh's statement appears more as a self-serving statement designed to perpetuate the PAP's political dominance rather than a genuine concern for Singapore's gay citizens.

Conclusion

The statement of 4 July, 2003 marked a watershed event in gay Singaporean history. On that day, former PM Goh Chok Tong announced that his government would reverse its previous stance of not hiring openly gay Singaporeans as civil servants. For an event so seemingly inconsequential compared to other more gay-affirming events occurring in Toronto and Texas that same summer, the resulting public furor was considerable but not entirely unexpected. While many advanced economies elsewhere have decriminalized homosexuality, Singapore still retains the archaic anti-sodomy laws that it inherited from the time it was a British colony. Heng (2001:90–92) provides a good summary of the legal situation concerning homosexuality in Singapore:

> Where legality is concerned, Singapore has very punitive laws against the homosexual act inherited from the British colonial government. This is written in Sections 377 and 377A of the Penal Code. The first of these imposes a penalty of up to life imprisonment for "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" which technically covers any act of sodomy or oral sex between gay or straight couples. Section 337A is more specific and prohibits "any male . . . in public or private" from engaging in "any acts of gross indecency with another male person and imposes a maximum sentence of up to two years imprisonment. Although life imprisonment has not been meted out to anybody convicted of homosexual acts and criminal prosecution has always targeted sex in public places and not in private, the laws are still psychologically intimidating. They expose gay people to police harassment for doing no more than drinking or dancing in a bar or sitting in the park. Defining homosexuality as a crime also makes it easier for the authority to close down gay places at their whim because the proprietors of these places would not dare to demand an explanation or challenge the action in court. The closing of *Niche* in 1989 was one such example. The laws make for a chicken-and-egg problem. In order to work towards decriminalization, the gay community has to get organized but organizing to defend a "criminal act" in turn makes gay people and their supporters cagey.

In other words, the government used the anti-sodomy laws in the past to harass and intimidate its gay citizens. Despite Sections 377 and 377A, the government needed to make its gay civil servant statement palatable to a largely homophobic populace. The government's relaxed stance towards homosexuality enabled the press and television media to temporarily follow suit. Channel U, for example, dealt with the gay civil servant issue directly by challenging many common misconceptions about homosexuality through an unprecedented live interview with a gay man in its *OK, No Problem* current affairs program.

Goh's gay civil servant statement appeared initially to affirm the presence of gay people in Singapore. Certainly, many gay Singaporeans including gay rights activists interpreted the statement as a move towards the establishment of equal rights in the country. However, evidence strongly suggests that the government does not intend the statement to do this. First, the Registrar of Societies rejected an application by the gay rights activist group *People Like Us* to register itself, deeming the group "contrary to national interests." Second, the civil service never actively screens out gay applicants in its recruitment process, so gay Singaporeans had already been working as civil servants long before Goh's statement. This effectively curtailed any real impact the statement might have had. Lastly, the statement remains untenable because the government has yet to surmount the practical problems facing the statement's implementation. The government has yet to even pass the gay civil servant statement into official law or policy, so it has neither spelled out changes in intra-ministerial practices to accommodate the needs of those civil servants who do openly declare their homosexuality, nor removed Sections 377 and 377A from the Penal Code to reassure those closeted civil servants who want to come out. Indeed, one lesbian Singaporean I interviewed went as far as to question the substance of the statement by calling it a "*wayang* show."

Instead of a discourse of tolerance for sexual diversity, Goh's statement should be read as a national economic stratagem to make Singapore appear more cosmopolitan and attractive to foreign capital and professional labor. A newspaper editorial article published shortly after Goh made his statement revealed the basis of the statement in Florida's (2002) "gay index" that correlates the size of gay communities in certain American cities with the wealth of those cities. Florida argues that tolerance of sexual diversity indicates tolerance for idiosyncratic behavior that often accompanies the creativity so needed for economic growth. Florida's formulation remains problematic because of its basis in the respectability of gay coupledom and not such elements of gay culture as tea rooms and public sex that mainstream society deems dangerous and undesirable. Nevertheless, by attempting to persuade its gay civil servants to come out, the Singaporean government hopes that a gay-tolerant culture will take root in the civil service to encourage the private sector and the rest of Singapore to follow suit. If successful, the statement will generate an influx of foreign professional labor that will check the economic problems created by Singapore's shrinking population. This would keep the economy buoyant and maintains the electoral support that Singaporeans give to the governing People's Action Party.

The gay civil servant statement, however, will most likely fail to attract the foreign capital and professional labor that the Singaporean government desires. Aside from its theoretical and practical weaknesses as both a discourse of tolerance for sexual diversity and a national economic strategy, the statement falls short in comparison to what other cities have done to incorporate their queer elements into their urban development plans. Singapore's gay civil servant statement exists only as a discourse, but cities elsewhere such as Manchester and Seattle with aspirations to become "world cities" like New York and Tokyo have gay quarters that they promote aggressively as tourist attractions. While critics have objected to this manner of incorporation because it threatens to commodify queer sites of protest and resistance for the voyeuristic gaze of the tourist (Binnie and Skeggs 2004; Rushbrook 2002), these gay quarters provide tangible proof of their cities' tolerance for sexual diversity that Singapore's gay civil servant statement cannot. As such, Singapore must rethink its strategies and come up with better ideas to maintain its economic lead.

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Chapter 18

The Marriage between Kinship and Sexuality in New Mexico's Domestic Partnership Debate

Lavinia M. Nicolae

On February 20, 2004 New Mexico made its national mark on same-sex marriage when Victoria Dunlap, the Sandoval County clerk, following in the footsteps of San Francisco Mayor, Gavin Newsom, issued marriage licenses to gay and lesbian couples.[1] Forced to take action, the New Mexico Attorney General, Patricia Madrid, sent an advisory letter to all local officials stating, "No county clerk should issue a marriage license to same-sex couples because those licenses would be invalid under current law."[2] However, current law is being debated in New Mexico, for while it implies that marriage is between a man and a woman, it is not spelled out clearly enough to be legally clear. In the meantime, 64 same-sex couples known as "The Sandoval Sixty-Four," are in possession of marriage licenses, the status of which remains in legal limbo.

In this whirlwind of events, Equality New Mexico (EQNM), the state-wide LGBT education and advocacy organization, made domestic partner rights the primary goal of the LGBT movement in the state of New Mexico.[3] This action also incited politically and religiously conservative opponents to same-sex unions and launched civil rights and moral debates that have dominated the New Mexico legislative sessions from 2005 to 2008.

Drawing on Bill Leap and Ellen Lewin's discussion in the introduction of this volume of Habermas' notion of public sphere formation, I argue that New Mexico's domestic partnership legislation is a vehicle that enables private individuals (same-sex families), to come together to form a public, and address matters of general interest: how to legally and socially conceptualize the same-sex family. In order to make sense of the types of ideological structures and strategies that shape domestic partnership in New Mexico, I draw on developing ideas within public anthropology. Particularly, I use testimonies to address how same-sex families and activism around domestic partnership, to borrow from Leap and Lewin, "expose the particular conditions through which homophobia and heteronormativity gain authority in everyday life" (2009:3). These testimonies, I believe, demonstrate a

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willingness to "talk back" to the authority, mainly through the demand for inclusion into social and legal systems, which regulate the family. This demand for inclusion, in many ways, exposes existing homophobic state policies, and questions ideologies that regulate relationships. Nonetheless, I also maintain that how these testimonies are framed and guided by local and national organizations and activists is also important in determining the subversive nature of "talking back," and the effects a guided discourse may have on the representation of same-sex families, and their inclusion into state policies.

In this chapter, I present key images forwarded by both proponents and opponents of the domestic partnership bill about sexuality, about who constitutes as family, and about how rights should be distributed based on that constitution. The testimonies utilized in this chapter are selected from transcriptions of hearings I recorded throughout the 2005, 2007, and 2008 legislative sessions. I believe these testimonies serve as tools for examining how different kinship tropes are created, validated, or rejected by the state, and reveal how boundaries of the political and social economies are policed. In this examination, I suggest that certain themes took precedence in the testimonies of both proponents and opponents of the domestic partnership bill that played off each side's construction of family and rights. I also propose that the rhetoric of the proponents of the domestic partnership bill evolved as each legislative session demonstrated a willingness on the part of the pro-domestic partnership leadership to shape testimonies in order to speak to rising concerns from legislators and the opposition. Moreover, I maintain that while proponents' arguments were shifting, the opposition's messages remained constant and unchanging throughout each session.

In 2004, at the beginning of the same-sex marriage debate in New Mexico, gay, lesbian, and transgender community members felt excited and optimistic about the opportunity for their families to be recognized. The Sandoval Sixty-Four along with unwed same-sex couples and supportive community members attended various forums and spoke publicly about their families. They made connections of "sameness" with heterosexual families by invoking "tradition," social respectability, obligation and responsibility to provide for partners and kids. People highlighted ideas about joint home ownership and inheritance as forms of providing for families, as well as representations of belonging to society, and of practicing citizenship. Therefore, it began to seem natural for LGBT families to think about marriage as the legal route to recognition.

It was not long, however, before activists, lawyers, and supportive legislators became convinced that marriage was unattainable at this time, concluding that rural parts of New Mexico were just too conservative to accept such a radical move. Therefore, they proposed focusing on legal arrangements with fewer rights that they perceived would not be as socially threatening – i.e., "civil unions." This new idea split the seemingly unified LGBT community as some were willing to accept the state recognition and benefits civil unions afforded. They believed that with time and future advocacy they could work their way towards marriage. Others saw civil unions as an extension of the Jim Crow philosophy of "separate but equal" institutions.

These individuals argued that civil unions maintain lesbian and gay couples and families as second-class citizens. Transgender participants also emphasized that civil unions focused on gay and lesbian relationships only, and completely ignored transgendered families who do not fall within categories of lesbian or gay. Spending the better part of 2004 strategizing with gay and lesbian and transgender interested communities and with national organizations and legislators behind closed doors, the leaders in this movement eventually conceived domestic partnership. A domestic partnership bill promised to be more inclusive than a civil union bill because it did not focus only on same-sex relationships, but included opposite-sex couples. Domestic partnership was not rigidly gendered, which seemed to make space for transgender community members within the discussion of the diversity of New Mexico families that deserved state protections. Not focusing only on gays and lesbians, domestic partnership also conferred a sense of sameness among straight and same-sex families, which made this legal route more acceptable.

2005

During the 2005 legislative session, lawyers, organizational leaders and same-sex families argued that Domestic Partnership is pro-civil rights and equal rights, pro-family, and pro-business, bringing New Mexico a step closer to leveling the playing field for all citizens. The expert witness for the bill, family law attorney Lyn Perl, framed that argument:

> The New Mexico Partner Rights and Responsibilities Act is intended to provide all couples regardless of their gender or sexual orientation the opportunity to obtain [essential] rights, protection and benefits and to assume corresponding responsibilities, obligations, and duties to further the state interest in promoting stable and lasting family relationships [and] protecting New Mexicans from the legal and social consequences of abandonment, separation, the death of loved ones and other life crises.[4]

Anticipating the opposition's argument about marriage as a sacred union between a man and a woman, Perl made a clear distinction between domestic partnership and marriage. She highlighted the inherent inequality of domestic partnership, letting legislators know such an institution did not create true equality while at the same time pointing out how laws governing marriage create a different kind of social subject than domestic partnership, and privilege some families over others:

> Let us clarify today what we *are* and what we *are not* talking about. We *are not* talking about *marriage*. Marriage conveys over 1400 state and federal rights for those who are allowed to marry. Marriages are automatically recognized in all fifty states. Married people may make unlimited transfers in gifts to each other without paying taxes . . . Married U.S. citizens can sponsor their spouse or other family members

> for immigration. We are *not* talking about any of these things today . . . Currently, same-sex couples are excluded from these basic protections. This is not marriage, but right now these couples are not even second-class citizens. Our families are torn apart both emotionally and legally without the benefit of any laws. . . . *With* this legislation, at least within the boundaries of *our* state, discrimination and hardship will be reduced.[5]

Reiterating some of Lyn Perl's points, a gay man told the story of losing his partner of 35 years and the process he underwent to inherit the home they built together.

> The truth is no amount of money would bring back my partner. That truth remains the same for both married couples and same-sex partnerships. What is not an equal playing field is the discrimination of same-sex couples when it comes to unfair taxes and penalties at the time of death because we are not recognized as legitimate families. Same-sex couples can be in relationships that can be just as committed, just as long, just as caring as heterosexual couples. Same-sex couples, many times, are just as involved in church and civic affairs as their straight counterparts. We buy property, pay taxes, and own businesses . . . I'm not necessarily advocating marriage. That is as much a religious issue as a government issue. But governments can recognize and provide for domestic partnerships for same-sex couples so that we are able to have legal rights that are now only provided to married heterosexual couples.[6]

This man also made a distinction between marriage and domestic partnership. His testimony spoke to the social stigma suffered by gays and lesbians that is institutionalized in the legal prohibitions faced by same-sex couples and families, identifying the law and the state as vehicles for creating change. It is the state – in this case represented by legislators who are supposed to reflect the needs and desires of their constituents, and thus, the general population – that has the responsibility and presumably the social and cultural power to change beliefs about homosexuality and heterosexuality.

In regards to the creation of social and legal subjects, Holston and Appadurai write "since the eighteenth century, one of the defining marks of modernity has been the use of two linked concepts of association – citizenship and nationality – to establish the meaning of full membership in society" (1999:1). What it means to be a member of society is understood in terms of what it means to be a rights-bearing citizen (1999:2). Ruth Lister refers to this as the idea of "lived citizenship," which encompasses "the meaning that citizenship actually has in people's lives and the ways in which people's social and cultural backgrounds and material circumstances affect their lives as citizens" (2003:3). In the case of New Mexico, Perl highlighted the way marriage laws create membership in society by enshrining heterosexuality as a prerequisite to membership in the state model of kinship. Therefore, families who fall outside the heterosexual model of the family are punished and disadvantaged. Going even further, she called same-sex couples less than second-class citizens who are helpless in the face of legal adversity. She thus painted a picture of the same-sex family as a struggling "American family" in need of protection from the state. Her underlying message seemed to be that the protections mandated by domestic partnerships would in turn lead to recognition of same-sex families, and by extension social validation of homosexuality. In other words, legal change will lead to social and cultural change, for as she stated, the protections gained from domestic partnership would reduce discrimination and hardship for same-sex individuals and families in the state of New Mexico.

Bernstein has written that "family law defines individuals in relation to one another, and in order to subsume gays and lesbians into family law, the state has to recognize the sexually and emotionally intimate relationship constructed by lesbians and gay men as valid" (2001:432). However, she questions whether legal recognition of same-sex families necessarily leads to ideological changes about sexuality and family within the state or in wider cultural understandings. This is a compelling question, for it leads to a necessary examination of the position sexuality assumes within the arguments framed by both proponents and opponents of same-sex unions. For example, during the 2005 New Mexico legislature, homosexuality occupied a central role in proponents' testimonies. Though, heterosexuality was also present and importantly positioned in relation to the homosexual family. Proponents put forward a "we are like you" message which, I suggest, consequently relieved the state from having to validate homosexuality in order to recognize same-sex families. Using this message of sameness, proponents also tried to convince both hostile and sympathetic legislators that homosexuality would not pose a threat to heterosexuality and that gay families would not disrupt the heteronormative system of marriage or the body of family law that supports that system. Making a distinction between marriage and domestic partnership became important in calming legislators' hostilities and fears. While in one way proponents showed that family is a performative relation, a "constructed quality of human interaction or an active process, rather than a thing-like object" (Weeks et al. 2001:37), they also argued that same-sex couples should be included in the socially and legally established normative family model. They did this by privileging a particular representation of same-sex families, which the public has come to understand as the "gay family," and which was represented primarily as Anglo, middle- to upper-middle class, two-parent lesbian or gay families from the Albuquerque and Santa Fe areas. In this way, proponents, both consciously and unconsciously, set up domestic partnership as a "site for the production of normative citizenship" (Brandzel 2005:177). By privileging certain "gay families" in the fight for domestic partnership, proponents of the bill also supported existing categories of normalcy, and began a process of extracting sexuality from their rhetoric, replacing it with messages about the needs of the family and the protection of citizens.

In 2005, opponents to domestic partnership, the majority of whom were Baptist and Catholic clergy, centered their arguments on ideas about nature, sacred and profane acts, and the role the state should play vis-à-vis marriage and religion. Their dominant argument was that domestic partnership is anti-Catholic and generally, anti-religion. One clergyman stated:

> We believe God established [marriage] and gave it to us as a great gift for the continuation of the human race . . . I noticed that a lot of these words, intimate, union, those kinds of things have been hijacked . . . [Marriage is] regulated by civil laws and church laws but it [does] not originate from either the church or the state, but from God. Therefore, neither church nor state can alter the basic meaning and structure of marriage.[7]

Since these opponents conceived of marriage as a gift from God to heterosexuals, they labeled same-sex unions as profoundly unnatural. In the opposition's reasoning, the government is a representative of God and therefore has a responsibility to maintain social harmony and order by following "natural law" in order to uphold heterosexual respectability. The possibility of diverse forms of families became a source of anxiety for the opposition whose reaction, as that of their 1980s New Right predecessors, was to impose a narrowly defined and policed family form (Weeks 1985:43). That form, to draw from Weeks, carefully demarcated men and women, adults and children, and regulated sexual relations and sexual knowledge (Weeks 1985:43).

Kinship, anthropologists such as John Borneman remind us, is "likely to be near the forefront of the collective imaginary wherever the collective imaginary is also national, and all the more so when it is actively nationalist" (in Faubion 2001:9). Kinship also helps to articulate a national body and operates as a "matrix" for national inclusion and exclusion, as it permeates all legal domains that support, protect, or forbid specific categories of kin (husband/wife, parent/child) (Borneman 2001:31). The domain of kinship, Rayna Rapp has also argued, "overlaps with other arenas – such as the workplace, the schools, and the fashion industry – in which the cultural meanings of men and women, children, and adults are spelled out" (Rapp 1987:124). The politics of kinship can therefore serve as a perfect site in which state organizations institutionalize rules for "normal" sexuality, acceptable family forms, childcare, marriage and divorce (Gal and Kligman 2000:4). Drawing further connections between kinship and citizenship, Phyllis Chock writes that the category "citizen" in US political and legal practice entails a subject who is an income producer, head of a nuclear family, and rational and orderly – qualities that Williams (1996), Bederman (1995), and Gal and Kligman (2000) illustrate have historically been associated with men. In contrast, a non-citizen implies a subject that is dependent, irrational, unproductive and unpaid – qualities associated with children and women (Chock 1996:1). This understanding of family and citizenship as specifically heterosexual and masculine framed the logic presented by opponents to domestic partnership, making it difficult, if not impossible to envision gays and lesbians as being able to constitute family units, since reproduction was the only way by which opponents envisioned families could be created.

In seeking to establish this framework for kinship, the opposition also claimed certain words and language to exclusively represent heterosexuality and heterosexual experiences. Clergy claimed that homosexuals "hijacked" special heterosexual descriptors such as "union" and "intimate," while Senator Lidio Rainaldi stated that including the word “intimate” in the description of domestic partnership was equivalent to condoning criminal behavior. The definition of domestic partner in the 2005 bill read as follows: “domestic partner means an adult who has chosen to share in another adult’s life in an *intimate* and committed relationship of mutual caring and who has established a domestic partnership” [emphasis added]. Senator Rainaldi had a nearly visceral response to this definition:

> Senator, we are legislating criminality. This is totally immoral. Unless you have a different interpretation of intimate than I have. That you can express from two gay people [how] they can become intimate, I don’t know if this body wants to listen to that.[8]

For Senator Rainaldi, intimacy could only be linked to sexual activity, a reading that during 2007 emerged as central to Republican attempts to alter and kill the domestic partnership bill.

2006–2007

The better part of 2006 was spent mobilizing LGBT communities in favor of domestic partnership, which proved to be a critical move on the part of EQNM leadership, for in 2007 LGBT community members and straight supporters outnumbered the opposition by two to one.[9] With close to three years of strategizing and organizing support from within LGBT and straight ally communities, getting national LGBT organizations and foundations’ attention, and identifying supportive and swayable legislators, EQNM entered the legislature with a significant arsenal at its disposal. The sense of impending victory was amplified by Governor Richardson’s public support for domestic partnership. Having received strong support from LGBT communities in his reelection in 2006, and a sizeable endorsement from the Human Rights Campaign, Governor Richardson saw the New Mexico and national LGBT communities as a source of support in his run for the White House. However, offended by his campaign focus, Republican legislators complained that Governor Richardson was pushing his campaign agenda onto the legislature. Further motivated by their dissatisfaction with the Governor, when the domestic partnership bill reached the Senate floor, Republicans put a call on the Senate,[10] and introduced and passed a substitute bill in which the words “domestic partner” were replaced with “contract household,” making the bill applicable to blood relations only. The substitute bill was sent back to the House for concurrence, where at 3:30am on the last day of the session, it was re-amended to read as the original bill and, thereafter, sent back to the Senate for final passage. However, Senate Republicans spent the morning filibustering other bills, which left the re-amended domestic partnership bill sitting on the agenda unheard as the clock struck noon and the session came to a close.

2007

During the 2007 session, proponents of domestic partnership retained and emphasized a message of sameness, arguing that same-sex families utilize the same set of values that opposite-sex couples rely on for loving and raising children. EQNM leadership and the sponsor of the bill also argued that domestic partnership would benefit everyone – including heterosexuals – especially elderly widowed heterosexuals who, if they re-marry, can stand to lose important benefits from previous marriages, such as social security and health insurance. Thus, in 2007, the leadership made a gradual shift in the public introduction and discussion of the bill from an issue that primarily would affect same-sex families to a heterosexual benefit, as the sponsor of the bill and the expert witness steered conversation away from the sanctity of marriage, and therefore sexuality, to tangible legal protections. This shift did not eliminate same-sex families, but it tried to create the image of the family as asexual and genderless. The discourse evoked a disembodied citizen that sent the message that domestic partnership is not about sex or sexuality, but about rights.

Lister has written that "in both liberal and republican traditions the citizen is represented by the abstract, disembodied, individual" (Lister 2003:71). The experiences and history of women and homosexuals in relation to the law and policymaking (see Burrows 2002; Chambers 2002; D'Emilio & Freedman 1988; Eskridge 2002; Herrell 1994; Hull 2006; Kaplan 1997; Polikoff 2003; Rimmerman 2002; Weeks 1985; Wolfson 2004) illustrate how the citizen, as disembodied, serves to hide the "essentially male [and heterosexual] characteristics of the individual *qua* citizen" (Lister 2003:71; see also Bell and Binnie 2000; Butler 1998; Chock 1996; Cooper 1994; Gal and Kligman 2000; Williams 1996). Due to the history of equating homosexuality with sexual indulgence, moral perversion, and abnormality, scholars have argued that gay men and lesbians are excluded from this model of citizenship (Bederman 1995; Chauncey 1994; D'Emilio and Freedman 1988; Foucault 1978). In light of the purported relationship between homosexuality and moral perversion, it was easy for the opposition to argue that lesbian and gay friendly policies infringe on their personal belief systems, and stand to defile marriage and the family. This link also induced panic in proponents who felt it necessary to once again address the fear of "spillage" of homosexuality into the heterosexual way of life by distancing sexuality from the family.

In the process of disconnecting the "homo" from the "sexual," I suggest that proponents of domestic partnership reembodied same-sex families as acceptable citizens not very different from their heterosexual counterparts. The effort was to create an image of a good, productive citizen who firmly believes in the sanctity of marriage and the greatness of tradition that constitutes the state of New Mexico and the nation. As productive citizens, gays and lesbians were asking to be allowed full access to the state's political economy, so that they might become recognizable. Take for example the repeated testimony of one woman.

> For 25 years I've worked as hard as my colleagues, and so it is unfair that my family is not afforded the same benefits that the families of my colleagues are. I'm not asking for anything more or anything less. I am asking to be treated fairly and I'm asking that my children and my partner receive the benefits that other people do.[11]

This type of discourse forged a relationship between same-sex and opposite-sex families that orbited around ideas of equality and the needs of citizens and families. Nonetheless, the relationship continued to be strained because sexuality could not be completely eliminated from the image presented. Republican legislators such as Senator Komadina continued to sexualize domestic partnership, which he declared amounted to a "gay bill." He stated:

> I guess one of the problems is that we are conveniently told that this [legislation] refers to two adults who are living together. But then that's not what it does. And the people who have testified are not just two adults living together. I mean if you have two cranky old men who were fishing buddies whose wives both died, who live together to save money . . . this would not apply to them . . .
>
> Well, I'm really confused now, cuz I'm told this doesn't apply to gay and lesbian relationships. It has nothing to do with that at all. It has to do with allowing people who support each other and live together for whatever reason, and again, those people are not intimate, and they are not committed. So, this really is a gay rights bill.[12]

In response, the sponsor of the bill, Representative Stewart, stated:

> This does cover same-sex adult partnerships. We never said it didn't. But, what we are seeing, and we've seen this through the governor's executive order (of 20,318 state employees, 1077 selected domestic partner coverage). Of that, 1077 couples 935 were in heterosexual relationships. So, it looks to us that that's who this bill benefits the most. But, we've never said it's only for heterosexual couples. And it's not, it's for domestic partners.[13]

However, Senator Komadina did correctly point out that testimonies about access to state benefits and support were made primarily by gays and lesbians, who emphasized the lengths to which they went to protect their families. The association proponents made between straight and gay families, opponents such as Komadina found offensive, and responded by launching an attack on the bill's language, particularly the use of key words such as *intimate* and *committed*. Religious opponents and Republican legislators feared that the inclusion of the word *intimate* in the bill would be interpreted not only as validation of gay and lesbian emotional relationships, but also as validation of homosexuality itself. These legislators believed proponents of domestic partnership were trying to conceal their agenda by ignoring the homosexual component in the bill, and therefore, emphasized their discourse on re-gendering and re-sexualizing the same-sex family. They did this by correlating homosexuality with immorality, treating domestic partnership as a threat to marriage, and claiming and reserving terms such as *intimate* and *committed* for relationships formed through sexual unions which could only be recognized if they were heterosexual. In an impassioned oratory on the House floor, a Republican representative claimed marriage is a tradition and a moral law that belongs to heterosexuals. She stated,

> We're trying to shift the state's moral direction through *legislation*. Marriage is a natural, moral law, which is *binding*. Wake up New Mexico, our *traditions* are being *hijacked*.[14]

Another member of the opposition who served as an expert witness went so far as to say, "there are tens of thousands of us out there who would like the opportunity to speak on this issue." The implication of this claim was that putting the issue to a popular vote would lead to the defeat of the domestic partner bill.

Once again, marriage and morality were intertwined, transformed into an institution prescribed by laws of nature and God. Moreover, the discourse claimed that the power of these natural laws would be confirmed if the definition of marriage were put to a popular vote. To change the understanding of marriage and open these sacred doors to a group that continues to engage in "profane" sexual practices would be to go against the very laws of nature. Thus, the opposition made a distinction between those who protected nature by means of upholding marriage as a heterosexual union ("us"), and those who sought to destroy nature by changing marriage, and by extension destroy the foundations of society ("them").

The statement that New Mexico's traditions were being hijacked further reflected the distinction between an "us" and a "them." It signaled that the "hijackers" did not have access to traditions associated with heterosexuality and society, and by extension could not be considered true citizens. Homosexuals in this rhetoric remained outsiders, interlopers in society who were threatening to contaminate the heterosexual purity of marriage, making heterosexuality unsafe as long as it occupied the same space as homosexuality (Cooper in Lister 2003:74; Hull 2006:208).

Intent on further distinguishing between heterosexual citizens and homosexual aliens, a few staunch Republican legislators also called in reinforcements from the Alliance for Marriage in West Virginia, who sent their representative Bob Adams to speak in favor of legally defining marriage as a heterosexual union. Adams more clearly delineated what legislators meant when they made general statements about protecting the sanctity of marriage. He declared:

> We are talking about this issue today not because *we* brought it up, but because it was forced upon *us*, forced upon the nation as a whole by radical activists who have tried to force their agenda through the courts . . . Americans want their laws to send a positive message to children about their future and about marriage. We believe that it's just common sense that marriage is between a man and a woman. Now if I can be clear about one thing, let me be clear about this. Gays and lesbians have a right to live as they choose. But they do not have the right to redefine marriage for all of America.[15]

Even more clearly than the representative who feared heterosexual traditions were being hijacked, Adams distinguished between "us" and "them," locating heterosexuals as victims and homosexuals as aggressors who wielded a foreign agenda that they forced on the nation. That further framed the nation as distinctly heterosexual, which became more evident in the statement that "Americans" want their laws to send a positive message about the future of children and marriage. As aggressors, gays and lesbians did not send positive messages, but instead threatened the "American way of life." In an ironic twist, Adams also distinguished a potentially "good" homosexual from a "bad" homosexual represented by the "radical activist." The "good" homosexual was the one that lived as he/she chose, but who did so quietly, on the periphery, maintaining his/her sexuality within closed doors, away from the heterosexual gaze. This homosexual did not demand anything from society, and seemed to recognize that he/she did not have the right to make demands, or, for that matter, to participate in the changing of social institutions. Thus, feeling the pressure from Republican attacks and fearful of losing potential Democratic support by turning the bill into a "gay bill," the pro-domestic partnership leadership decided to strike the words *intimate* and *committed* from the bill.

2008

After the 2007 session, EQNM brought on board several gay and lesbian lawyers who worked on "cleaning up" the language of the bill in order to minimize potential backlash in 2008. The results of the changes to the bill stirred internal conflicts, and lead to some significant repercussions for the efficacy of the bill itself.[16] In 2008, the domestic partnership leadership refined, eliminated, and resurrected particular themes from the preceding years.

Fairness, *love*, and *caring* became main themes that replaced the catchwords *rights, equality, and intimacy* which, by this point, proponents considered to be too vague and loaded to contribute effectively to the debate. *Sexuality* also made somewhat of a comeback in proponents' testimonies, though it remained secondary to ideas of protection and citizenship, and to emotional intimacy that was highlighted by testimonies about love, fairness, and the ability to care for partners and kids. In introducing the bill in the Senate Public Affairs committee, Representative Stewart stated:

> Domestic partnership means a legal relationship and it is *not* marriage . . . This is a bill about fairness and justice. I really think that it's about taking care of each other, being able to take care of children. Being able to make these very hard end of life decisions and anyone would recognize that who you love should not be dictated by a government.[17]

Similarly, a minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church declared:

> My tradition is to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of *every* person. And this includes the responsibility of honoring the families that New Mexicans are creating in love . . . For me the common ground for domestic partnership has to do with fairness . . . Common ground has to do with honoring the commitment that New Mexicans are making in creating these families. This fairness . . . this common ground is beyond being Republican or being Democrat, beyond being religious left or religious right, it's beyond being straight or being gay.[18]

While the word *intimate* had been treated as vague and co-opted language in the preceding years, *love* and *fairness*, proponents believed, were universal and could not be as easily claimed as distinctly heterosexual. The choice of these words might, then, humanize same-sex partners and legitimate same-sex families. Proponents claimed that the exclusion of same-sex and unmarried partners from the rights, benefits, and recognition of the state showed that the government tried to regulate appropriate love and to punish one group of people over another. One family's heartbreaking experience and loss was critical to this illustration. The death of her partner Dee led Andrea and their son Michael to the legislature in hopes that their tragedy could be transformed into victory for other families.[19] After several attacks on her testimony by the opposition who insisted that her experience had nothing to do with the laws of New Mexico or the USA, Andrea presented this tearful testimony to the Senate Judiciary committee.

> I heard a lot of the opposition here today say this bill is about marriage. This bill is not about marriage. This bill is about being able to take care of our loved ones. My partner, and I . . . we've been together for 13 years. We had all of the paperwork . . . available to protect our rights. We had the wills, the power of attorneys. We did everything that we believed we *could* do. On December 22nd [Dee] died of a heart attack while we were on vacation in Mexico. I was contacted by the American embassy through the consulate agent, and within a few hours of Dee's passing I was informed that the American embassy needed contact with Dee's next of kin in order to have her repatriated back to the United States. Under the law as it stood on December 22nd Dee's next of kin was our 19-year-old son. I did not want to have to call him and tell him over the phone that his mother had passed away. The American consulate informed me that it was imperative that I get a hold of him as soon as possible, because otherwise Dee would automatically be cremated in Mexico. I had Michael's father . . . notify [him] of his mother's passing . . . [and] inform Michael that he needed to call the American Consulate agent in Mexico as next of kin and notify them of what his wishes were. He told the agent whatever Andrea said is what I want. But unfortunately, it didn't end there. I returned to New Mexico on December 23rd arriving late at night. And on Christmas Eve, Michael, 19, had to go find a notary public in order to sign paperwork that I'd been instructed to . . . get to him to [sign] and fax back to the American Consulate's agent. So, on Christmas Eve upon hearing of his mother's death, instead of being home with his family, he had to go out and take care of something that *I* could have taken care of in Mexico had this bill been passed. Next of kin is determined under state law and that's all the American Consulate needed, for us to give them a next of kin in order for them to repatriate Dee. Had this bill been in place,

> I could have identified myself as a citizen of the state of New Mexico, that I was next of kin to Dee. I could have signed that paperwork that night and come home to New Mexico feeling assured that Dee would be returned to the state where she was born without an extra burden being placed on a 19-year-old.[20] [original emphasis]

For proponents of domestic partnership this family's tragic experience linked the notion of universal *love* and *caring* to legal protections. *Love*, as projected through Andrea's pain and loss, trumped sexuality and shaped the very foundation of the family. But the deployment of *love* in Andrea's testimony also re-sexualized the same-sex family and specifically re-introduced homosexuality as a central component to domestic partnership and the underlying discussion of citizenship. Andrea claimed that the state of New Mexico should have protected her family by recognizing her relationship with Dee, for only through that recognition would Andrea have been able to exercise her rights as a US citizen in Mexico. Ironically, the placement of this story in a foreign country furthered an image of gays and lesbians as aliens. In Andrea's case, she was treated as a foreigner by the US government and was required, in essence, to obtain sponsorship from her son in order to make claim to her partner. Andrea's experience thus serves as an example for Lister's argument that homosexuals' claims to citizenship are insecure because they do not fit the norms upon which citizenship is constructed (2003:74).

By 2008, the opponents had also become more organized, polished, and strategic in their efforts to stop the passage of domestic partnership. At the same time, some Democratic legislators rescinded their support and Republicans placed pressure on one another to vote the party line. Thus, the growing strength of the opposition resulted in loss of legislative votes, which lead to the demise of the domestic partnership bill in 2008. Republican legislators at the front of the battle brought in their key witness at a more crucial point in the life of the bill – during the Senate Judiciary committee hearing. The witness, Brad Miller, from Focus on the Family in Colorado, expressed all of the ideas the opposition had been attempting to put forth since 2005. In a fifteen minute reading from a paper drafted by Focus on the Family, Miller maintained that domestic partnership legislation trampled on religious freedom, undermined marriage, and was traveling too fast without consideration for the consequences on children, businesses, and the economy.

> Marriage primarily exists for the sexual union between a man and a woman and results in children . . . Marriage is not created by government, *but* it is traditionally recognized by government, *because* it provides something the government desperately needs and cannot produce for itself: upstanding citizens who will contribute to the strength of this state and the country . . . There is no guarantee that [domestic partnership legislation] will satisfy homosexuals seeking legal recognition for their relationships. In fact, we have every reason to believe it will not be enough. Activists in New Jersey and Vermont currently have declared . . . civil unions to be insufficient and gay marriage is being pursued vigorously in those states. [Domestic partnership] may seem like a minor tweak to state policy. In the interest of equality, it is ultimately a radical redefinition of vital family policy. And while the bill says, domestic partnership shall

> not be construed as marriage, please tell me what is created when every right of marriage is given but under a different name?[21]

Once again, gays and lesbians were eliminated from a national discourse, for they could not produce viable citizens ("upstanding citizens"), since reproduction was unimaginable outside a heterosexual union. Miller situated his testimony in a biological configuration of the family in which clearly demarcated males and females enter into a union resulting in children to whom they can both make a biogenetic claim. The result is the acceptable nuclear, heteronormative, middle class and arguably white family (Schneider 1980; Strathern 1992a, 1992b, Weston 2001). Additionally, he presented the heterosexual model of marriage as at once the strength of American civilization and as a fragile construction in need of protection. This very fragility again envisioned heterosexuals as innocent bystanders under assault from homosexual predators whose main interest was to invade the sacred heterosexual spaces of marriage and the family.

Conclusion

Despite the repeated failure of the bill, EQNM activists and same-sex families garnered significant public and legislative support between 2005 and 2008. Their partial success, I claim, had to do with their willingness to adapt their rhetoric to dominant concepts of kinship and citizenship, and the creation of a public sphere imbued with specific images of "the gay family." This public sphere, I argue, developed out of an unanticipated struggle as LGBT activists and same-sex families were thrown into a battle that was not of their choosing. Jürgen Habermas conceptualized the public sphere as a space of political participation, debate, and opinion formation (Fraser 1989:123), in which citizens come together to deal with matters of general interest. Within Habermas' public sphere, citizens are able to unite freely, and express their opinions "without being subject to coercion" (Habermas 1989:231). Here, I propose a slightly different public sphere, one that is aligned more with Nancy Fraser's argument that the symbolic and material reproduction activities are themselves gendered. This public sphere constituting same-sex families operates within and through coercive[22] forces that come from outside – from the state power – and from within – from the gay and lesbian leadership's depiction of the ideal same-sex family. It follows then that state power is part of this public sphere as it was used to simultaneously justify closing and opening doors to gay and lesbian members of society. Coercion comes from within the public sphere insofar as the pro-domestic partnership's leadership attempted to legitimate same-sex families by framing them as representative of the uniqueness of New Mexico, while also drawing larger connections of class struggle with LGBT same-sex family public spheres throughout the nation. Therefore, operating within the idea that "part of what law does is to name people, things and relationships, and in so naming, invest them with a heightened visibility and reality" (Hull 2006:198), pro-domestic partnership leadership and many same-sex families perceived the law of the state as a "unique cultural resource" that could render them "socially normal and culturally equal to heterosexual married people" (Hull 2006:3). While the leadership argued that domestic partnership is not equivalent to marriage, they did view the state as the architect of law and the key arbitrator in the process of cultural change. They therefore tried to help legislators render same-sex families "normal" by addressing fears of homosexual contamination, attempting to obscure sexuality, and underscoring sameness through ideas about love, fairness, and equality. In this way, the strategies implemented tried to serve the needs of same-sex families and couples whose interest was to carve a niche for themselves within the dominant ideological systems of the family and citizenship, and thereby gain the legal entitlements that would protect their children and partners.

Nancy Fraser, while agreeing with Habermas that the "citizen is centrally a participant in political debate and public opinion formation" (Fraser 1989:126), and that citizenship is dependent "on the capacities for consent and speech" (1989:126), maintains that these capacities are connected with masculinity and in various ways "are denied to women and deemed at odds with femininity" (1989:126). Consent, she argues, is not something readily available to women, making their participation in the debate among citizens, tenuous. Thus, she envisions women in the welfare state as "split subjects" having to juggle the often contradictory roles of "childrearer and worker, client [of social welfare] and citizen" (1989:134).

Similarly, I assert that lesbians and gays can also be viewed as "split subjects" who have to juggle and negotiate their roles as family members, parents, workers, and citizens in everyday interactions. This "split subjectivity" is itself a result of gays and lesbians' inability to "participate on par with [heterosexual citizens] in dialogue" (Fraser 1989:126), which makes their roles as citizens insecure. That is, the model of the family presented by the opposition throughout the years, and ultimately upheld by the legislature, was a fixed construct that brought nature and God into the same space and created a symbiotic relationship between these two forces that, in turn, circumscribed the roles of men and women, roles of kin, and ultimately roles of citizens. The opposition presented what Fraser calls a "soldiering aspect of citizenship" in which the citizen is "the defender of the polity and protector of those – women, children, elderly – who allegedly cannot protect themselves" (1989:126). Therefore, within this model of citizenship and family, there was little room for gays and lesbians to enter political debate and public opinion formation on the family.

Nevertheless, Habermas also argued that in the welfare state "it is the social organizations that act in relation to the state in the political public sphere, whether through the mediation of political parties or directly, in interplay with public administration" (Habermas 1989:235–236). As a way to counteract this heteronormative model of citizenship and family, EQNM and national organizations took the lead in the formation of the public sphere of same-sex families by imagining and disseminating the image of an unthreatening, we are like you, "gay family." These representatives acted as a middleman in the negotiation with the state administration of legislators – both publically and behind closed doors – attempting to determine the political and economic value of same-sex families, and therefore, their roles as citizens. In part, by highlighting normalcy and sameness, proponents, through this public sphere, asserted the authority to reprimand the state for turning its back on its citizens and its families. However, having to prove one's normalcy through images of sameness with heterosexuals also illustrated the "split subjectivity" of gays and lesbians. Moreover, this particular construction of the same-sex family public sphere excluded different LGBT subjects that do not fit neatly into "the gay family" model or the categories gay and lesbian. For example, the domestic partnership journey started out with the promise of including transgender families in the discussion, and a number of transgender individuals were consistently present at hearings. Yet, the public presentation was dominated by gay and lesbian identified couples whose presentations did not challenge gender norms as transgender and/or transsexual individuals might. Transgender families thus stood outside proponents' strategies and therefore, outside, or at the very most, on the margins of the same-sex family public sphere.

Perhaps this is where the public anthropologist can meaningfully intervene by pointing out some of the implications of the images created through this public sphere and the strategies utilized in negotiating a place for same-sex families within the ideological and material structures of citizenship and the family. Althusser's observation about people having consciousness of their practice of ideological recognition, but that having *consciousness* is different from having *knowledge* of the mechanism of that recognition, is particularly helpful, for it frames these points and raises some necessary questions (2001:117). Althusser argued that we build this *knowledge* of the mechanism of ideological recognition by "speaking in ideology, and from within ideology" (2001:117), and while in that process "we have to outline a discourse which tries to break with ideology" (2001:117). Therefore, considering how and whether the positioning of same-sex families within the heterosexual model of the family is actually breaking heteronormative ideological and material structures of the family, and ultimately citizenship, is one way to reach that *knowledge* of recognition. Ultimately, if we are to believe what some scholars and gay and lesbian activists have argued, that same-sex marriage can end discrimination and transform the social field of sexuality by changing people's legal status and relations to one another (Hunter 1991; Stoddard 1992; Wolfson 2004), we should consider how such a transformation is possible when in places like New Mexico, proponents of domestic partnership desexualize and degender gays and lesbians in the process of affirming them as real families.

Notes

1. Sandoval County is located approximately 20 miles north of Albuquerque and encompasses the towns of Rio Rancho, Bernalillo, Placitas, and Corrales.

2. BBC News August 16, 2007 online article URL: http//news.bbc.co,uk/2/hi/Americas/3516551.stm
3. In 2004 Equality New Mexico was the Coalition for Equality, a 501c3 education-based organization which in 2005 merged with Basic Rights New Mexico a 501c4 political advocacy organization.
4. Author's transcription from March 4, 2005 Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing.
5. Author's transcription from March 4, 2005 Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing.
6. Author's transcription from March 4, 2005 Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing.
7. Author's transcription from March 4, 2005 Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing.
8. Author's transcription from March 4, 2005 Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing.
9. Equality New Mexico spent most of the year engaging in community events: Gay Pride celebrations in different parts of the state; a Voter ID campaign and signing of legislative cards; town hall meetings where strategies were discussed; and legislative trainings where LGBT community members and allies were taught how the legislature works.
10. A call on the Senate or on the House means that all Senators or House Representatives must be present to vote on a bill, and no action is taken until all seats are filled.
11. Author's transcription from February 15, 2007 House Consumer and Public Affairs Committee hearing.
12. Author's transcription from March 9, 2007 Senate Public Affairs and Consumer Committee hearing.
13. Author's transcription from March 9, 2007 Senate Public Affairs and Consumer Committee hearing.
14. Author's transcription from March 21, 2007 House Floor debate.
15. Author's transcription from February 1, 2007, House Consumer and Public Affairs Committee hearing.
16. These internal disputes, I address in my dissertation.
17. Author's transcription from January 29, 2008, Senate Public Affairs and Consumer Committee hearing.
18. Author's transcription from February 9, 2008, Senate Judiciary Committee hearing.
19. At the request of Andrea, who wants her story to be heard and to lead to further discussions, and to eventual changes in state policies, I use her and her family members' real names.
20. Author's transcription from February 9, 2008, Senate Judiciary Committee hearing.
21. Author's transcription from February 1, 2008, Senate Judiciary Committee hearing.
22. I use coercion here to mean both force and influence. Organizations, for example, while working on behalf of families, impose a vision of family on LGBT communities by using their knowledge of the political and legal ideological structures, thereby claiming greater knowledge of the workings of the state structures.

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Index

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