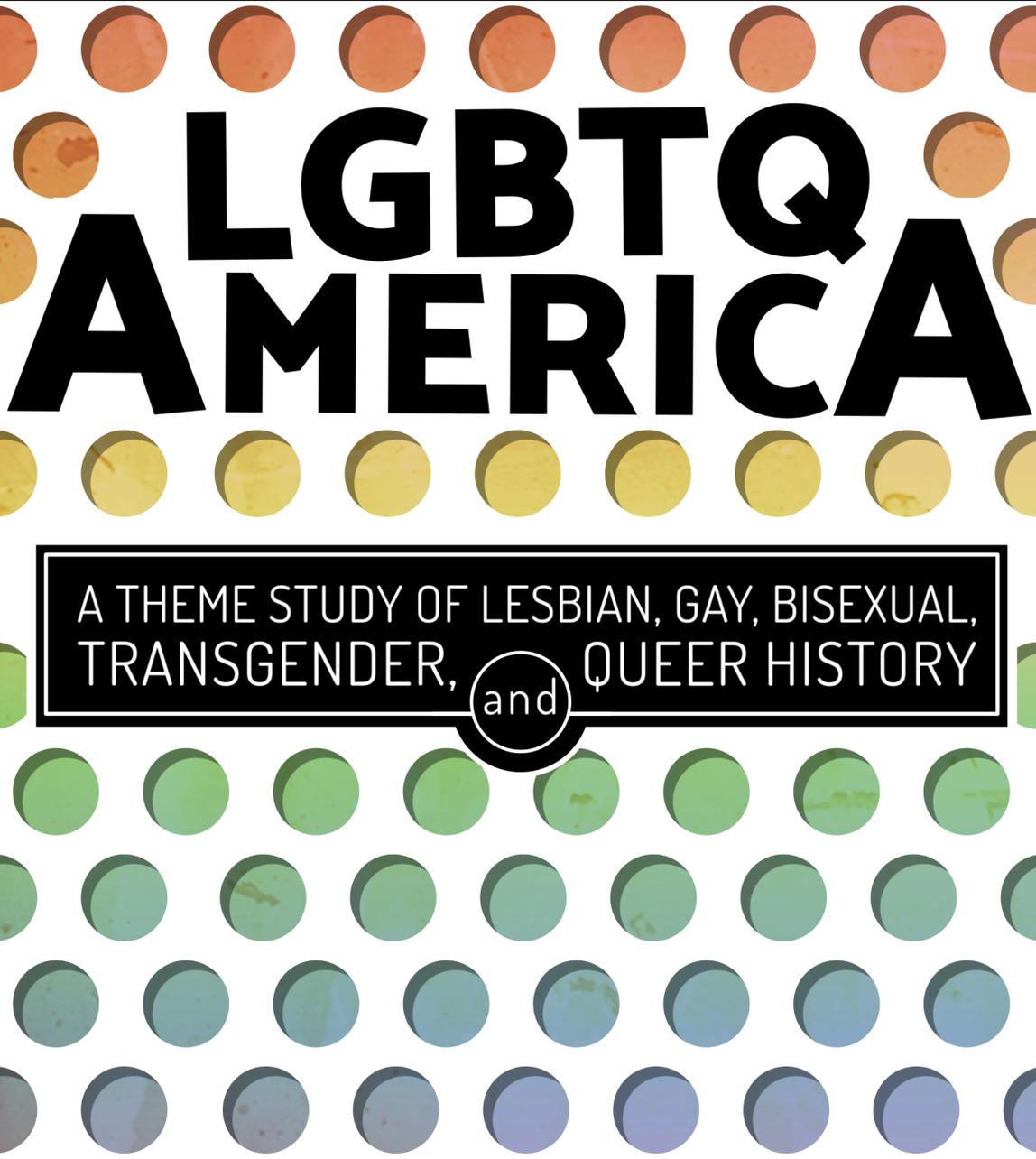


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LGBTQ AMERICA

A THEME STUDY OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL,
TRANSGENDER, and QUEER HISTORY

Edited by Megan E. Springate



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INCLUSIVE STORIES



Although scholars of LGBTQ history have generally been inclusive of women, the working classes, and gender-nonconforming people, the narrative that is found in mainstream media and that many people think of when they think of LGBTQ history is overwhelmingly white, middle-class, male, and has been focused on urban communities. While these are important histories, they do not present a full picture of LGBTQ history. To include other communities, we asked the authors to look beyond the more well-known stories. Inclusion within each chapter, however, isn't enough to describe the geographic, economic, legal, and other cultural factors that shaped these diverse histories. Therefore, we commissioned chapters providing broad historical contexts for two spirit, transgender, Latino/a, African American Pacific Islander, and bisexual communities. These chapters, read in concert with the chapter on intersectionality, serve as examples of rich, multi-faceted narrative within a fuller history of the United States.

07 A NOTE ABOUT INTERSECTIONALITY

Megan E. Springate

There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we do not live single-issue lives. –Audre Lorde¹

Intersectionality is the recognition that categories of difference (sometimes also referred to as axes of identity) including—but not limited to—race, ethnicity, gender, religion/creed, generation, geographic location, sexuality, age, ability/disability, and class intersect to shape the experiences of individuals; that identity is multidimensional. These identities are not mutually exclusive but interdependent.² LGBTQ is not a single community with a single history; indeed, each group represented by these letters (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) is made up of multiple communities.³ The axes of gender, generation, geographic location, ethnicity, and other factors play an important role in the history of

¹ Audre Lorde, “Learning from the 60s,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays & Speeches by Audre Lorde* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 2007), 138.

² Lisa Bowleg, “When Black + Lesbian + Woman ≠ Black Lesbian Woman: The Methodological Challenges to Qualitative and Quantitative Intersectionality Research,” *Sex Roles* 59 (2008): 312-325.

³ Judith M. Bennett, “‘Lesbian-Like’ and the Social History of Lesbianisms,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9 (2000): 1-24; Trina Grillo, “Anti-Essentialism and Intersectionality: Tools to Dismantle the Master’s House,” *Berkeley Women’s Law Journal* 10 (1995): 16-30.

LGBTQ America, shaping the various histories of LGBTQ communities across the nation and the places associated with them. For example, the experiences of rural LGBTQ individuals are different from those in urban areas; those of white, gay Latinos different from those of gay AfroLatino men; middle-class African American lesbians' lives differ from those of working-class African American lesbians and middle-class white lesbians.

The idea of intersectionality is not new; in her 1851 speech now known as "Ain't I A Woman," Sojourner Truth spoke about the intersections of being a woman, being black, and having been enslaved.⁴ In the 1960s and 1970s, black and Chicana women articulated the intersectionality of their lives, forming black feminist and Chicana feminist movements as their experiences as women of color were ignored, belittled, and/or erased by the largely white, middle-class women's movement that treated race and gender as mutually exclusive categories. In their lived experience, oppression as people of color, as women, and as women of color could not be untangled.⁵ The term intersectionality was first used in print by Kimberlé Crenshaw in a law journal describing the problematic effects of a single-axis approach to antidiscrimination law, feminist theory, and antiracist politics.⁶ Since then, intersectionality has become an important concept across many disciplines, including history, art and architectural history, anthropology, geography, sociology, psychology, and law.⁷

⁴ Truth spoke at the Women's Convention at the Old Stone Church, corner of North High and Perkins Streets, Akron, Ohio on May 29, 1851. Various versions of the speech exist, including several published from memory by Frances Dana Barker Gage, which include the phrase "Ain't I A Woman." The earliest published version, recalled by Marius Robinson, does not include this phrase. See Corona Brazina, *Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a woman?" Speech: A Primary Source Investigation* (New York: RosenCentral Primary Source, 2005); Kay Siebler, "Teaching the Politics of Sojourner Truth's 'Ain't I a Woman?'" *Pedagogy* 10, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 511-533.

⁵ Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016), 63-87. See, for example, Alma M. Garcia, "The Development of Chicana Feminist Discourse, 1870-1980," *Gender and Society* 3, no. 2 (1989): 217-238; Alma M. Garcia, *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement," Circuitous.org website, <http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html>.

⁶ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 139-167.

⁷ See, for example, Bowleg, "When Black + Lesbian + Woman ≠ Black Lesbian Woman;" Grillo, "Anti-Essentialism and Intersectionality;" Mike C. Parent, Cirleen DeBlaree, and Bonnie Moradi, "Approaches to Research on Intersectionality: Perspectives on Gender, LGBT, and Racial/Ethnic Identities," *Sex Roles* 68 (2013): 639-645; Gill Valentine, "Theorizing and Researching

An understanding of intersectionality is important for place-based research and historic preservation because these axes of difference can affect the physical places associated with communities; they also affect the relationships that various individuals and communities have with places. People who own instead of rent their homes and commercial buildings are more likely to be able to stay in their neighborhoods as housing prices increase—a result, for example, of gentrification. Using an intersectional approach that takes into account income disparities based on race and sexual orientation, it becomes clear that lesbians and transgender individuals, especially those of color, who tend to have lower incomes than others, and therefore cannot afford to own their own homes, are forced out of neighborhoods more rapidly than middle-class gay white males, who tend to have more income that can be invested in purchasing buildings. Similarly, because lesbians (as women) have tended to have less disposable income than gay men, there have tended to be fewer lesbian clubs and bars. Instead, white women and women of color, as well as people of color, tended to meet and socialize in private spaces.⁸

The meanings of places also differ across the various LGBTQ communities. For example, the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, founded in 1976 as a women-only space has been an important event in the history of women's land, women's music, and community-based organization. However, the festival has also had a history of excluding transgender women.⁹ This resulted in the founding in 1991 of Camp Trans, a protest encampment by transgender women and their allies just outside the festival grounds. The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival means very different things to these different communities: some experience the

Intersectionality: A Challenge for Feminist Geography," *The Professional Geographer* 59, no. 1 (2007): 10-21; and Leah R. Warner and Stephanie A. Shields, "The Intersections of Sexuality, Gender, and Race: Identity Research at the Crossroads," *Sex Roles* 68 (2013): 803-810.

⁸ See, for example, Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993). For examples of how ethnicity and sexual and gender identity intersect, see González and Hernández, Harris, Hutchins, Roscoe, Stryker, and Sueyoshi (this volume).

⁹ See Stryker and Schweighofer (this volume).

place as one of inclusion and visibility, while others feel oppressed and excluded.¹⁰

Intersectionality has been presented as a means to avoid causing epistemic violence (excluding people from how we understand and know the world) to individuals and communities by silencing their voices or rendering their experiences invisible.¹¹ The temptation to ignore those alternative voices in LGBTQ history is great: “Given the new opportunities available to *some* gays and lesbians, the temptation to forget—to forget the outrages and humiliations of gay and lesbian history and to ignore the ongoing suffering of those not borne up by the rising tide of gay normalization—is stronger than ever.”¹² Those excluded from the normalized, mainstream gay rights movement and therefore its history—to varying degrees—include those living on low incomes, people with disabilities, people of color, the elderly, women, transgender people, drag queens, bisexuals, those living in rural areas, and those whose sexual practices fall outside the realm of the socially acceptable, described by Gayle Rubin as the “charmed circle.”¹³ Especially alienated are those whose identities encompass more than one of these axes of exclusion.¹⁴

¹⁰ Compare, for example, *Voices from the Land*, <http://www.michfestmatters.com>; Cristan Williams, “Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival,” *TransAdvocate*, 2013, http://transadvocate.com/michigan-womyns-music-festival_n_8943.htm.

¹¹ See, for example, Sabrina Alimahomed, “Thinking Outside the Rainbow: Women of Color Redefining Queer Politics and Identity,” *Social Identities* 16, no. 2 (2010): 151-168; Amy L. Brandzel, “Haunted by Citizenship: Whitenormative Citizen-Subjects and the Uses of History in Women’s Studies,” *Feminist Studies* 37, no. 3 (2011): 503-533.

¹² Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), xiv; see also Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

¹³ Gayle S. Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality,” in *Culture, Society and Sexuality: A Reader*, 2nd ed., eds. Richard Parker and Peter Aggleton (New York: Routledge, 1984), 143-178.

¹⁴ See, for example, Alimahomed, *Thinking Outside the Rainbow*; Lou Chibbaro, Jr., “Special Report: Poverty in the LGBT Community,” *Washington Blade*, February 12, 2014, <http://www.washingtonblade.com/2014/02/12/special-report-poverty-lgbt-community>; Eli Clare, *Exile & Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999); Petra L. Doan, “The Tyranny of Gendered Spaces – Reflections from Beyond the Gender Dichotomy,” *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 17, no. 5 (2010): 635-654; Heron Greenesmith, “Drawing Bisexuality Back into the Picture: How Bisexuality Fits into LGBT Legal Strategy Ten Years After Bisexual Erasure,” *Cardozo Journal of Law & Gender* 17, no. 65 (2010): 65-80; Daniel Hirsch, “R-Rated and Ephemeral: Spinning LGBT History,” *MissionLocal*, July 18, 2014, <http://missionlocal.org/2014/07/r-rated-and-ephemeral-spinning-lgbt-history>; E. Patrick Johnson, “Gays and Gospel: A Queer History of Sacred Music,” in *Out in Chicago: LGBT History at the*

Cynthia Levine-Rasky argues that a full understanding of these as axes of exclusion and oppression also requires that researchers pay attention to the intersectionality of whiteness and middle-class identity (and, by extension, other identities that are privileged in our society).¹⁵ An intersectional reevaluation of the experiences of those groups that have been comparatively well-represented (including gay, white, urban men) will also result in a more nuanced and accurate understanding of LGBTQ history and its role in American society.

An intersectional approach to history provides a much more complete and nuanced understanding of our past; one that includes the experiences and voices of those who are often silenced in dominant narratives that focus primarily on the actions of those with privilege, including white, middle- and upper-class, heterosexual, men. One instance where an intersectional approach to history that included previously excluded axes of ethnicity and the working classes provided a more complete history is in the study of women's rights. The dominant narrative of women's rights recognizes three "waves": the First Wave is described

Crossroads, eds. Jill Austin and Jennifer Brier (Chicago: Chicago History Museum, 2011), 109-126; Emily Kazyak, "Midwest or Lesbian? Gender, Rurality, and Sexuality," *Gender & Society* 26, no. 6 (2012): 825-848; Love, *Feeling Backward*; Jeff Maskovsky, "Do We All 'Reek of the Commodity'? Consumption and the Erasure of Poverty in Lesbian and Gay Studies," in *Out in Theory: The Emergence of Lesbian and Gay Anthropology*, eds. Ellen Lewin and William L. Leap (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 264-286; Doug Meyer, "An Intersectional Analysis of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) People's Evaluations of Anti-Queer Violence," *Gender & Society* 26, no. 6 (2012): 849-873; Mignon R. Moore, *Invisible Families: Gay Identities, Relationships, and Motherhood among Black Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Mignon R. Moore, "Intersectionality and the Study of Black, Sexual Minority Women," *Gender & Society* 26, no. 1 (2012): 33-39; Rubin, *Thinking Sex*; Gayle S. Rubin, *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Stephanie A. Shields, "Gender: An Intersectionality Perspective," *Sex Roles* 59 (2008): 301-311; Megan Sinnott, "Public Sex: The Geography of Female Homoeroticism and the (In)Visibility of Female Sexualities," in *Out in Public: Reinventing Lesbian/Gay Anthropology in a Globalizing World*, eds. Ellen Lewin and William L. Leap (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 225-239; Urvashi Vaid, *Irresistible Revolution: Confronting Race, Class and the Assumptions of LGBT Politics* (New York: Magnus Books, 2012); and Kathi Wolfe, "Special Report In Their Own Words: Elders Facing Poverty, Ageism," *Washington Blade*, March 27, 2014, <http://www.washingtonblade.com/2014/03/27/special-report-words-elders-facing-poverty-ageism>. See also González and Hernández, Harris, Hutchins, Roscoe, Stryker, and Sueyoshi (this volume).

¹⁵ Cynthia Levine-Rasky, "Intersectionality Theory Applied to Whiteness and Middle-Classness," *Social Identities* 17, no. 2 (2011): 239-253.



Figure 1: Wesleyan Chapel, 126 Fall Street, Seneca Falls, New York, site of the First Women's Rights Convention in the United States, 1848. The Chapel was listed on the NRHP on August 29, 1980. It is part of Women's Rights National Historical Park, established December 28, 1980. Photo by the author, 2011.

as spanning the years between 1848 (the First Convention for Women's Rights at Seneca Falls, New York) and 1920 (passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, granting women the right to vote); the Second Wave that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as women worked towards ending gender discrimination in arenas including employment, medical care, and financial equity; and the Third Wave that began in the 1990s, which involved a more active and mainstream approach to intersectionality in the women's movement (Figure 1). This narrative of feminist waves is based predominantly on the experiences of white, middle-class women in advocating for women's rights and in reaping the benefits of their activism. For example, though women were granted the right to vote in 1920, Jim Crow laws in the southern states kept African American women (and men) from the voting booths until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Many Native Americans of all genders were likewise denied voting rights until the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924.

Recent scholarship that takes an intersectional approach to feminism recognizes that the women's movement did not vanish during the years following the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.¹⁷ Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*, is based on her observations of and experiences as a white, middle-class suburban housewife, but does not mention her experiences as a journalist for leftist and labor union publications.¹⁸ While her work is often credited with sparking the Second Wave of feminism such analysis ignores the experiences and gains of African American women and wage-earning women (and their white, middle-class allies) who had not stopped working towards feminist goals after suffrage.¹⁹ After 1920, women who had been



Figure 2: Anna Howard Shaw-Lucy Anthony House, Moylan, Pennsylvania. Photo by Smallbones, 2011.¹⁶

¹⁶ License: Public Domain. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Anna_Howard_Shaw_House.JPG

¹⁷ See, for example, Nancy A. Hewitt, introduction to *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 2-14; Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Becky Thompson, "Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism," in Hewitt, *No Permanent Waves*, 39-60.

¹⁸ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963); Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of The Feminine Mystique: The American Left, the Cold War and Modern Feminism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000).

¹⁹ See, for example, Nancy Felice Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement: Women and the United Auto Workers, 1935-1975* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense & a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves 1894-1994* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999); and Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

focusing their efforts on suffrage shifted their focus to labor and social welfare legislation, with some women choosing to work within the political party system or within the government itself, and others working in private organizations or with labor organizers. Women who had been working within the labor and racial justice movements prior to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment continued their work. It was this work, which culminated in the creation in 1961 of the President's Commission on the Status of Women and its 1963 report, *American Women: Report of the*



Figure 3: Juniper Ledge, the home that Carrie Chapman Catt shared with her partner, Mary Garret "Mollie" Hay from 1919 to 1928, Briarcliff Manor, New York. Photo by Arnold Feist, 2003.²¹

President's Commission on the Status of Women, as well as the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that laid the groundwork for the founding of the National Organization of Women (NOW) in 1966.²⁰ NOW (which included Betty Friedan among its founding members) was the

organization that spearheaded the women's rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s. This intersectional analysis, which includes working women and labor organizers as well as women working for racial justice, puts lie to the idea of a Second Wave of feminism that is discontinuous from the reform movements of the early twentieth century and which has its roots in white, middle-class experience.

²⁰ Dorothy Sue Cobble, "Labor Feminists and President Kennedy's Commission on Women," in Hewitt, *No Permanent Waves*, 144-167.

²¹ License: CC BY-SA 3.0. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:JuniperLedgeExt1.JPG>. Juniper Ledge was added to the NRHP on May 4, 2006.

Missing from the above intersectional analysis, however, is a consideration of LGBTQ contributions. This is a reflection of how often the roles of LGBTQ individuals in the history of America have been excluded. This results in an incomplete and oversimplified picture of our nation's history. More recent scholarship has directly addressed the role of LGBTQ individuals and organizations like Anna Howard Shaw, Carrie Chapman Catt, couples Esther Lape and Elizabeth Read, and Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman in the women's movement; Frances Kellor and Bayard Rustin in social reform movements; the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union, Howard Wallace and the Lesbian/Gay Labor Alliance, Emily Blackwell and other workers and union organizers in labor history (Figures 2 to 4).²²

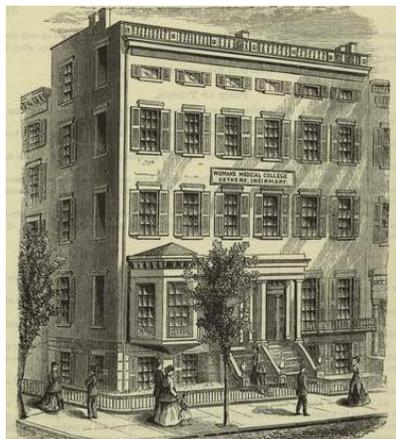


Figure 4: Women's Medical College of the New York Infirmity, Second Avenue, New York City. Engraved by William Roberts, from Common Council, Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York (New York: The Council, 1840-1870). Art and Picture Collection, The New York Public Library (b17095009).

²² See, for example, Lillian Faderman, *To Believe in Women: What Lesbians Have Done for America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999); Miriam Frank, *Out in the Union: A Labor History of Queer America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014); and Wendell Ricketts, *Blue, Too: More Writing by (for or about) Working-Class Queers* (FourCats Press, 2014); Allan Bérubé, "Queer Work and Labor History," in *My Desire for History*, eds. John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 259-269; Bérubé, "No Race-Baiting, Red-Baiting, or Queer-Baiting! The Marine Cooks and Stewards Union from the Depression to the Cold War," in *My Desire for History*, 294-320; Kitty Krupat and Patrick McCreery, *Out At Work: Building a Gay-Labor Alliance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001). Anna Howard Shaw and her partner, Lucy Anthony (niece of Susan B. Anthony) lived together in Moylan, Pennsylvania; Carrie Chapman Catt and her partner Mary Hay lived at Juniper Ledge, Briarcliff Manor, New York during Catt's most influential years, 1919-1928. Juniper Ledge was added to the NRHP on May 4, 2006; Esther Lape and Elizabeth Read shared an apartment on East 11th Street, New York City, New York in a building they owned. They rented an apartment in the building to Eleanor Roosevelt. The pair also had a summer home called Salt Meadow, where they entertained Eleanor Roosevelt, at 733 Old Clinton Road, Westbrook, Connecticut (donated to the US Fish and Wildlife Service on July 20, 1972 forming the core of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge); Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook lived at an apartment on West 12th Street, New York City, New York; Frances Kellor lived with her partner Mary Dreier near the Museum of Modern Art, New York City, New York; Bayard Rustin's apartment in New York City was added to the NRHP on March 8, 2016. Dr. Emily Blackwell was the third woman to earn a medical degree in the United States; in 1857, she cofounded the New York Infirmity for Indigent Women and Children at East 7th Street near Tompkins Square Park (an expansion of the New York Dispensary for Poor Women and Children founded by her sister, Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, in 1853). When it opened in 1868, Emily was on the faculty of the Woman's Medical College of the New York Infirmity founded by her sister at 126

Working with Intersectionality

Intersectional analysis that takes several axes of identity into consideration can be challenging to implement. Several authors have presented different ways of working with intersectionality. One method is the inclusion of multiple narratives in interpretation. These serve both to oppose dominant narratives and hegemonic power and as a way to enrich our understanding of the past by including multiple experiences and voices. Elsa Barkley Brown describes the Creole phenomenon of “gumbo ya-ya,” where everyone talks at once, telling their stories in connection and in dialogue with one another, as a nonlinear approach to intersectionality and multivocality.²³ Applying a multivocal approach to understanding the past brings its own set of challenges, including the problem of unaccountable narratives. Philosopher Alison Wylie advocates “integrity in scholarship” to correct for any cacophony of competing narratives. This integrity includes being fair to the evidence and a methodological multivocality that incorporates multiple sources of information in support of interpretations.²⁴ These many voices may come from written documents, oral histories, and autoethnography, among others.²⁵ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak talks about the use of strategic essentialism, in which groups choose to foreground particular identities—a strategy which can also be used in analysis.²⁶ Other authors, like Chela Sandoval and Emma Pérez, write about working intersectionally.²⁷ In writing LGBTQ history, some of these multiple sources of information may

Second Avenue, New York City, New York. Emily became the director of the college when Elizabeth moved to England. From 1883, Dr. Emily Blackwell lived with her partner Dr. Elizabeth Cushier.

²³ Elsa Barkley Brown, “‘What Has Happened Here’: The Politics of Difference in Women’s History and Feminist Politics,” *Feminist Studies* 18, no. 2 (1992): 295-312.

²⁴ Alison Wylie, “The Integrity of Narratives: Deliberative Practice, Pluralism, and Multivocality,” in *Evaluating Multiple Narratives: Beyond Nationalist, Colonialist, Imperialist Archaeologies*, eds. Junko Habu, Clare Fawcett, and John M. Matsunaga (New York: Springer, 2008), 201-212.

²⁵ Nan Alamilla Boyd and Horacio Roque Ramirez, eds., *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Doan, *The Tyranny of Gendered Spaces*.

²⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography,” in *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, eds. Donna Landry and Gerald M. MacLean (New York: Routledge, 1996), 216.

²⁷ Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1999); Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

include rumor and willful silences about members of communities where being out was too much of a risk:²⁸

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 when we adhere to ill-suited and unbending standards of historical methodology.²⁹

Intersectionality in LGBTQ contexts plays out along lines of sexuality, race or ethnicity, religion, gender, class, age, sexual practice, and geography to name a few. Below, I provide several examples of how these identities intersect with each other. While not exhaustive, they give a sense of the importance and impact of intersectional analysis.

Intersectional Analysis

Historian Judith Bennett demonstrates that the sexual identity of “lesbian” (and by analogy other sexual identities) is unstable and unfixed by describing the many different types of lesbian, including butch (more masculine in appearance and behavior), femme (more feminine in appearance and behavior), vanilla (not sexually radical), sexually radical (i.e., kinky or polyamorous), of different ages, and different ethnicities.³⁰ “If lesbian is not a stable entity now,” she writes, there is “no reason to think it was stable in the past.”³¹ She also notes that the connection of sexuality to the act of having sex is problematic. We recognize that someone may identify as straight, gay, or bisexual without having had sex, or during periods of their lives where they are not sexually active. But what about studying people in the past, whose sexual activity remains uncertain?

²⁸ Johnson, *Gays and Gospel*, 116.

²⁹ John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 5.

³⁰ Bennett, “Lesbian-Like,” 10-11.

³¹ Bennett, “Lesbian-Like,” 13.

Bennett proposed the concept of “lesbian-like” for studying women in the past whose lives might have particularly offered opportunities for same-sex love; who resisted norms of feminine behavior based on heterosexual marriage; and who lived in circumstances that allowed them to nurture and support other women.³² Other researchers identify people as queer based on speculation, hearsay, and willful silences without hard evidence that they were sexually active with others of the same sex, arguing in part that rumor carries meaning and that regardless of their sexual behaviors they led queer, nonnormative lives.³³

Butch and femme gender expressions (where one partner is more masculine and the other more feminine in appearance and behavior) among queer women have traditionally been associated with the working classes.³⁴ Despite this traditional association, a recent study suggests that the meaning of masculine gender presentation varies by location. In urban areas, female masculinity is often associated with lesbian identity, while in rural areas it is acceptable for women, regardless of their sexuality, to have a more masculine gender presentation.³⁵ The presence of LGBTQ people in rural areas is often overlooked, with much of the history focused on “the well-rehearsed triumvirate of ...queer mythology: New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.”³⁶ Regardless of gender presentation or location, “Lesbians, suffering from the dual disqualification of being gay and female, have been repeatedly dispossessed of their history.”³⁷

³² Bennett, “Lesbian-Like,” 9-10, 14; see also Judith M. Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2006).

³³ Victoria Bissell Brown, “Queer or Not: What Jane Addams Teaches Us about Not Knowing,” in Austin and Brier, *Out in Chicago*, 63-76; Howard, *Men Like That*; Johnson, “Gays and Gospel.”

³⁴ Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*; Esther Newton, “Beyond Freud, Ken, and Barbie,” in *Margaret Mead Made Me Gay: Personal Essays, Public Ideas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 189-194, reprint of “Closing the Gender Gap,” originally published in 1986 in *The Women’s Review of Books*; Esther Newton, “My Butch Career,” in *Margaret Mead Made Me Gay*, 195-212 (originally read at the David R. Kessler Lecture, December 6, 1996, at the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York).

³⁵ Kazyak, *Midwest or Lesbian?*

³⁶ Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes, Lourdes Torres, and Ramon H. Rivera-Servera, “Toward an Archive of Latina/o Queer Chicago: Arts, Politics, and Social Performance,” in Austin and Brier, *Out in Chicago*, 127.

³⁷ Gayle Rubin 1976 quoted in Elizabeth L. Kennedy, “‘These Natives Can Speak for Themselves’: The Development of Gay and Lesbian Studies in Anthropology,” in Lewin and Leap, *Out in Theory: The Emergence of Lesbian and Gay Anthropology*, 95.

Additional “disqualifications” like being a person of color or disabled, exacerbate the impacts.

Queer theorists like Judith Jack Halberstam, Judith Butler, and Gayle Rubin provide frameworks for understanding both how sexuality and gender interact to create multiple spectrums of identity and the possibility of (and ways of naming) more genders than male, female, and other.³⁸ Recent work by authors including Freeman and Halberstam describes how queer is more than just an expression of gender/sexual identity, arguing that the queer subculture works within ideas of space and time that are independent of those that structure the normative heterosexual lifestyle.³⁹ These shape how LGBTQ people experience and interact with space, place, and history.⁴⁰



Figure 5: Miss Gay Latina, Gay Pride Parade, Seattle, Washington. Photo by sea turtle, 2012.⁴¹

Often marginalized from the mainstream narratives, LGBTQ people of color are often confronted by a “politics of respectability” and describe feeling pressure to hide their sexuality or gender identity (or other identities) in order to appear respectable

³⁸ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1989); and Gayle Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex,” in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).

³⁹ Freeman, *Time Binds*; and Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

⁴⁰ See, for example, Doan, *The Tyranny of Gendered Spaces* for a discussion of how being transgender shapes her experience of places, public and private.

⁴¹ License: CC BY-NC-ND 2.0. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sea-turtle/7539841034>

within their ethnic community and to be respectable representatives of their ethnic community to the dominant (white) culture.⁴² This politics of respectability is not limited to expressions of sexuality or gender, but influences many aspects of their lives. Evelyn Higginbotham describes it within the context of African American experience, but other people of color, including Latino/as also describe the effects of respectability politics (Figure 5).⁴³ LGBTQ people also feel pressure, both from within their communities and from without, to be respectable as a means of advancing acceptance and gay rights. Straight, white, middle-class people, by contrast, generally do not have to contend with accusations or feelings of disappointing their communities because heterosexual, middle-class, white privilege means that any violation of social norms is an individual act, and not representative of racial identity.⁴⁴ Black Lives Matter (BLM) was founded by three queer women of color in response to violence targeted against African Americans. Intersectional by design, BLM pushes against violence (physical, epistemic, and/or by exclusion) directed towards all black people, including those who are LGBTQ. This has brought into sharp relief many of the divisions that persist among and between LGBTQ communities. In 2015, in response to an unprecedented murder rate of transgender people, particularly transgender women of color, BLM and Trans Lives Matter worked together, insisting that #BlackTransLivesMatter (Figure 6).⁴⁵

⁴² Alimahomed, *Thinking Outside the Rainbow*; Meyer, *An Intersectional Analysis*, 861; and Moore, *Intersectionality and the Study of Black, Sexual Minority Women*.

⁴³ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); see also González and Hernández (this volume) and Meyer, *An Intersectional Analysis*, 853.

⁴⁴ Grillo, *Anti-Essentialism and Intersectionality*; Meyer, *An Intersectional Analysis*, 853; and Moore, *Intersectionality and the Study of Black, Sexual Minority Women*, 37.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Janaya Khan, "Exclusive: Black Lives Matter Toronto Co-Founder Responds to Pride Action Criticism," *Now*, July 6, 2016, <https://nowtoronto.com/news/pride-2016/exclusive-black-lives-matter-pride-action-criticism/>; INPAQ, "Queerness – On The Frontlines of #BlackLivesMatter (MSNBC)," *The LGBT Update*, February 23, 2015, <http://www.thelgbtupdate.com/queerness-on-the-frontlines-of-blacklivesmatter-msnbc>; Esperanza Garcia and Ty Brooks, "Op-ed: Why Black Lives Should Matter to All LGBT People," *Advocate*, February 2, 2015, <http://www.advocate.com/commentary/2015/02/02/op-ed-why-black-lives-should-matter-all-lgbt-people>; Cleis Abeni, "Trans Lives Matters and Black Lives Matters Join Forces for Justice," *Advocate*, September 10, 2015, <http://www.advocate.com/2015/9/10/trans-lives-matters-and-black-lives-matters-join-forces-justice>.



Figure 6: A Black Trans Lives Matter rally in Atlanta, Georgia. Photo by Hotlanta Voyeur, 2015.⁴⁶

Within the Latino/a community, expressions of gender (masculinity and femininity) have been shaped historically by unique traditions, religious influences, and laws. Gender norms emphasize *macho* masculinity for men and *Marianismo* femininity for women, serving as the basis for heterosexuality and the family as the central social structure. *Macho* is an expression of Latino heterosexual masculinity: an often exaggerated sense of masculine pride associated with strength, sexual potency and prowess, and ideals of chivalry. In traditional Latino/a thinking, most gay men are considered insufficiently *macho*. In contrast, *Marianismo* is characterized by women who are modest, virtuous, and sexually abstinent until heterosexual marriage, after which they are faithful and subordinate to their husbands. The *mojer passiva* or *la mujer abnegada* sacrifices her own individualism for the benefit of her (heterosexual) family.⁴⁷ Individuals who express their gender and sexuality outside these cultural gender roles risk censure and ostracism from their family, which is central to Latino/a

⁴⁶ License: CC BY 2.0. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/hotlantavoyeur/21196097702>

⁴⁷ See González and Hernández (this volume).

experience. For Latina lesbians, this meant they were often single parents, unpartnered, or disowned by their families of origin.⁴⁸

In much of the mainstream LGBTQ history, Latino/as have been found largely at the margins or invisible. In part, this has been because many chose to remain closeted and to protect their status in their families and communities; others stayed away from the predominantly white, mainstream gay rights movement because they felt marginalized or felt the weight of widespread anti-Latino/a sentiment.⁴⁹ Latino/as are becoming increasingly visible both because homosexuality is slowly becoming more acceptable in their communities and because Latino/as are becoming more politically active.⁵⁰

One place where the emphasis on respectability for African Americans plays out is in the experiences of middle-class black lesbians and of queer gospel singers. Researchers describe black lesbians navigating their identities in such a way that they retain racial group commitments to be seen to be “people of good character” while simultaneously being autonomous sexual selves.⁵¹ Gospel singers within the black church likewise navigated their identities to be both godly (of good character) and to express their sexuality.

Contemporary gospel music had its beginnings in Chicago in the 1920s, blurring the lines between secular rhythms and sacred texts. With this melding of forms, “gospel provided a space for those who were not necessarily accepted around the ‘welcome table’—namely sexual and gender nonconformists—to participate in the musical form’s continued growth and innovation.”⁵² In a culture of silence around sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular within the black churches, and

⁴⁸ González and Hernández (this volume).

⁴⁹ Almilahomed, *Thinking Outside the Rainbow*; González and Hernández (this volume).

⁵⁰ González and Hernández (this volume); Uriel Quesada, Letitia Gomez, and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, *Queer Brown Voices: Personal Narratives of Latina/o LGBT Activism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015).

⁵¹ Moore, *Intersectionality and the Study of Black, Sexual Minority Women*, 37.

⁵² Johnson, *Gays and Gospel*, 110.

where homosexuality was seen to violate the “God-given order of things” many queers remained closeted or neither confirmed nor denied their sexuality. This secrecy was crucial; without it, one could lose both their livelihood and their acceptance in their “first family,” the church, which was their community before they came to understand their sexuality.⁵³ Church choirs, argues Johnson, served as “nurturing sites” for the creative expression of effeminate boys who otherwise may have been ostracized. “Church sissies” and “church butches” found each other in church choirs, and it was not uncommon for queer singers and musicians to use conventions, including the National Baptist Convention, as opportunities to socialize with each other.⁵⁴ While homosexuality was considered an abomination and preached against from the pulpit, parishioners often looked the other way for talented artists. There seemed to be no such opprobrium regarding gender nonconformity: “How else could one explain the number of flamboyant singers such as Little Richard, who grew up and returned to the church, whose sexuality seems to have never been an issue?”⁵⁵

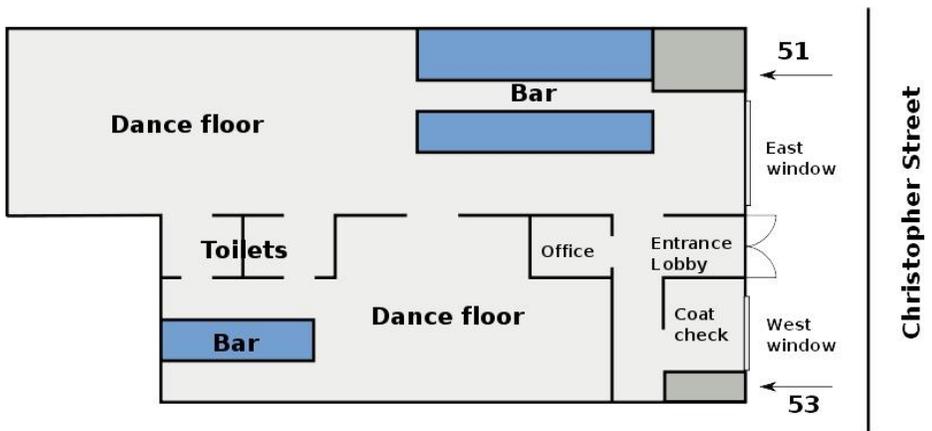


Figure 7: Layout of the Stonewall Inn in 1969. Modified by ecelan from an image in David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 2004).⁵⁶

⁵³ Johnson, *Gays and Gospel*.

⁵⁴ Johnson, *Gays and Gospel*.

⁵⁵ Johnson, *Gays and Gospel*, 117.

⁵⁶ License: CC BY-SA 3.0.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Layout_of_the_Stonewall_Inn_1969-en.svg

What are the implications in an intersectional approach to LGBTQ history and heritage, particularly in the context of the National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks programs? By recognizing that there are many LGBTQ communities and histories formed around and influenced by various aspects of identity, we can ensure that the richness of these multiple voices—including ones often silenced or marginalized—can be represented. An intersectional approach also allows the recognition and evaluation of historic properties in context.⁵⁷ For example, the interior of bars and clubs have often been remodeled extensively over time and may no longer retain their historic integrity (Figure 7).⁵⁸ This is, however, the nature of clubs, which often changed hands or were renovated to try to appeal to a different clientele in order to stay in business (either a different segment of the LGBTQ communities or to a more heterosexual audience). Integrity, then, may be evaluated differently for an LGBTQ bar than for a residence. Recognizing that lesbians historically have had fewer bars and clubs for socializing encourages us to look elsewhere for women’s social spaces. Intersectionality also allows us to broaden our thinking about what the division of social space along axes including binary gender (male-female), ethnicity, and sexuality (gay-straight) means and has meant for those whose identities include being trans and/or bisexual and/or of a particular ethnicity (white, African American, Latino/a, Asian American, American Indian, etc.) and to consider these effects in our analysis. As well as providing a more nuanced and complete approach to documenting LGBTQ sites, an intersectional approach also connects LGBTQ history to broader patterns in American history, including Civil Rights, women’s history, and labor history, just to name a few.

⁵⁷ For a discussion of this in the context of African American sites, see Kerri S. Barile, “Race, the National Register, and Cultural Resource Management: Creating an Historic Context for Postbellum Sites,” *Historical Archaeology* 38, no. 1 (2004): 90-100.

⁵⁸ Seven aspects are considered when evaluating integrity in the context of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and National Historic Landmark (NHL) programs. These seven aspects are: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The evaluation of integrity is always a variable process, and guidance provided by the National Park Service for their NRHP and NHL programs is always applied on a case-by-case basis. See Springate and de la Vega (this volume).