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History, Identity, and Locality: Non-Binary Sexualities through Lexington's Lens

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Abstract: This article explores the ways that sexuality has been constructed in Lexington, Kentucky, focusing on the time period between the 1960s and today. Though sexuality is often understood as a hegemonic binary of homosexual and heterosexual in the United States, non-binary sexualities have seemingly become more visible in popular culture over the last two decades. Yet political and religious based news stories continue to pit “gay versus straight,” as if there are only two identity options. This article queries: in the midst of competing models of sexual identity, what discourses did individuals in Lexington draw on to articulate the sexually possible? Through 17 months of participant observation, 80 interviews, and archival research, it was discovered that non-binary sexualities have been covertly visible in Lexington since the 1970s, and overtly visible since the 1990s. However, this visibility has always been overlaid with a competing construction of sexuality as a duality of gay and straight. Thus, though non-binary sexualities and notions of sexual fluidity have gained visibility in Lexington, the sexual binary remains prominent in conversations, organizations, and publications.

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INTRODUCTION

From 2008 to 2010 I conducted ethnographic research in Lexington, Kentucky, focusing on how Lexingtonians conceptualized sexual identities such as bisexual, pansexual, and queer. Though sexuality is often understood as a hegemonic binary of homosexual and heterosexual in the United States, non-binary sexualities have seemingly become more visible in popular culture over the last two decades. Several prime-time television shows have included bisexual characters (such as House M.D. and Grey's Anatomy), while the initialism "GLBT" has replaced "gay and lesbian" in many organization names. Yet political and religious based news stories continue to pit "gay versus straight," as if there are only two identity options. This disparate representation led me to formulate my overarching research question: In the midst of competing models of sexual identity, what discourses did individuals in Lexington draw on to articulate the sexually possible?

Schemas of sexuality are located in the nexus of subjectivities and structures, and created from an interface of transnational, national, and local discourses. Yet, all of these layers of potential meaning are not weighted equally. In Lexington, transnational understandings of sexuality were rarely mentioned, while national discourses of science, religion and the media were cornerstones of sexual understanding (Callis, *forthcoming*). Because of the long history and relative visibility of the GLBT community in Lexington, local discourse also played an important role in the way that individuals of all orientations conceptualized sexual identity. This paper will focus specifically on this local discourse, paying particular attention to how sexualities other than gay and straight have been articulated.

In order to illuminate the local discourse on sexuality, I spent 17 months in Lexington. During this time, I interviewed 80 individuals, engaged in archival research, and conducted participant observation. From this research, I found that non-binary sexualities have been covertly visible in Lexington since the 1970s, and overtly visible since the 1990s. However, this visibility has always been overlaid with a competing construction of sexuality as a duality of gay and straight. Thus, though non-binary sexualities and notions of sexual fluidity have gained visibility in Lexington, the sexual binary remains prominent in conversations, organizations, and publications.

This article will explore the ways that sexuality has been constructed in Lexington, focusing on the time period between the 1960s and today. When looking at the past, I focus on three areas: examples from Lexington's queer history, legal shifts in the area, and archival representations of sexuality. When discussing current articulations of sexuality, I focus on existing locations, as well as information gathered in interviews. Throughout each section, I highlight the ways that sexuality has been portrayed, examining both binary and non-binary constructions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This work draws on queer, anthropological, and social constructionist theories of sexuality, as well as specific understandings of hegemony and discourse. According to a social constructionist point of view, sexuality is something that is created and understood through culture, rather than a biological essence. Feminist anthropologists have been drawing on social constructionism to understand sex, gender and sexuality since the 1970s (see Rubin, 1975; Ortner & Whitehead, 1981; Ross &

Rapp, 1981). For these authors, while sexuality was not completely divorced from biology, any embodied aspect of it was always interpreted through the lens of culture. Queer theorists, writing a decade or more later, posited much the same thing. They believed that sexuality was best understood not as innate types, but as a system of cultural categories created through webs of power and discourse (Seidman, 1994; Steinman, 2001; Henderson, 2003). Thus, both queer theorists and feminist anthropologists believed that our current construction (homosexual versus heterosexual) was only one possible system of classification, salient only in this particular time period.

Queer theorists believe that this current system of sexual classification can be traced to the medicalization of sexuality. During the late 1800s sexuality moved from a series of actions understood through religion to a system of identities created by the scientific community (Foucault, 1978). While multiple identities (or types of person) were produced during this time period, it was the homosexual that became most important for sexual classification purposes. By the mid 20th century, this category (and its supposed opposite, the heterosexual) had become the normative way to identify sexuality in the United States (Halperin, 1990, Chauncey, 1994).

Central to my understanding of sexual identity and the sexual binary is the notion of discourse. Discourse, as explained by Foucault (1978), is everything communicated on a particular subject (such as sexuality) by an institution (such as religion or the media). This knowledge is consumed by individuals who then interpret, re-interpret, act upon, and/or ignore it. And, as institutions often produce multiple messages when it comes to topics such as sexuality, discourse becomes a web of

competing notions or “truths,” as messages overlap, conflict, and change as they are consumed and re-articulated. Further, not all areas of discourse are created equally, as some hold more power and/or cultural salience than others.

The power relationship between discourses can be understood in part through hegemony, a term denoting the dominant ideologies or discourses of a culture, as well as the practices and lived experiences of individuals within that culture (Williams 1977, p. 110). Williams notes that while hegemony is “always dominant, it is never either total or exclusive” (p.113). Along with the hegemonic ideology there are also residual and emergent ideologies. He described hegemonic ideology as “a lived system of meanings and values [that] constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute” (Williams, 1977, p. 110). In contrast, a residual ideology is one that was hegemonic in the past and still retains importance in the present, while an emergent system is one in which “new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationships” were created (Williams, 1977, p. 123).

This work will look at how sexuality has been portrayed and interpreted through local discourse. Here, I am most interested in how publications, historic GLBT lore, and Lexington law have been produced and then consumed, forming one aspect of how individuals understand the sexually possible. This coincides with my interest in the sexual binary, and whether or not it remains the hegemonic schema of sexuality in Lexington. While sexuality was understood as innately either homosexual or heterosexual by the 1950s (Lancaster, 2003), by the 1980s self-identified bisexuals began to fight for recognition and visibility (Hemmings, 1997b; Anderlini-D’Onofrio,

2003). Thus, almost as soon as the binary was in place, it faced competition from a non-binary contingent.

METHODS

This paper is based upon 17 months of participant observation carried out in Lexington, Kentucky. During this period I spent time at local GLBT organizations, locations, and events. I also visited churches, bars, and volunteered at the University of Kentucky's sexuality resource center. In each setting, I assessed how sexuality was expressed. I looked for evidence of, for instance, whether the word "bisexual" had been incorporated into the titles of various lesbian and gay organizations. I also established whether or not individuals with non-gay/non-straight identities were portrayed in a positive or negative light during meetings and events (if they were represented at all). I also conducted archival research during this time, investigating the last 40 years of publications from the local newspaper (*The Lexington Herald-Leader*), the University of Kentucky's news publication (*The Kentucky Kernel*), and a local GLBT publication (*The GLSO News*). This research allowed me to examine the ways that sexuality was represented, and the discourses used to discuss sexual identity.

The cornerstone of this research was 80 semi-structured interviews with individuals who identified their sexualities in a myriad of ways. Flyers in coffee shops, bars, and bookstores, along with blurbs sent out over listservs, helped identify participants. These individuals identified in such ways as gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, trisexual, and heteroflexible. Some participants did not identify their sexualities in any particular way, while others used multiple identity labels. In order to be

interviewed, participants had to be open to talking about sexual identity, over the age of 18, and living in Lexington.

Of the individuals who were interviewed for this study, four identified as African American, one as Native American, three as Hispanic, and the rest as Caucasian. Ages ranged from 18 to 63, with the average age being 30 years old. The sexual identities of participants can broadly be grouped into three categories. Twenty-eight individuals identified as straight or heterosexual, 15 as gay or lesbian, and the other 37 as non-binary. Thirty-four individuals identified their gender as female, 30 identified as male, four identified as trans, and 12 identified their gender in some other way (gender queer, leaning-towards-male, etc). At the completion of my fieldwork, all interviews were transcribed, and then interviews, archival data, and field notes were coded and recoded according to prevalent themes.

OVERVIEW OF LEXINGTON

Lexington is a city whose population both welcomes and refuses to accept non-straight individuals. It has a pride center, over twenty queer organizations, three GLBT oriented religious groups, and four gay bars. One of those bars has been active since 1962 (Jones, 2001, p.12) and one of the organizations dates back to 1977 (Lexington Gay Services Organization, INC. Newsletter 1977). It was voted one of the *Advocates* top 10 cities for GLBT persons in 2007, due to its progressive politics and vivid queer nightlife (Caldwell 2007). In 1999 the local government passed Ordinance 201-99, known as the Fairness Ordinance, which prohibits discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity (Lexington-Fayette Urban County Human Rights Commission). Currently

three of Lexington's top employers offer domestic partner benefits (Lexmark, University of Kentucky, and Toyota). The representative for the Lexington-based 13th district of the state senate from 1996 to 2008 was Ernesto Scorsone, an openly gay man. In November of 2010 Jim Gray was voted in as Lexington's first openly gay mayor. This has led the city to be viewed by many GLBT individuals as a queer haven, or even as "the Emerald City" for gays (Callis 2004:59).

However, Lexington is also the founding city for CrossOver Ministries, a well-known ex-gay group, and is the home of two fundamentalist mega-churches, both of which have large and active "sexual integrity" programs that teach followers how to be correctly sexual in the eyes of God. In 2010 a national meeting of PFOX, Parents and Friends of Ex-gays and Gays, and Help 4 Families was held outside of Lexington. This meeting claimed to help individuals gain a "deeper understanding of Gender Identity Disorder in a Christ centered gathering [and] learn about the roots (sic) issues that may cause a conflict with God's design for sexuality and gender" (Help 4 Families, 2010). And, as of 2004, the defense of marriage amendment, Kentucky Constitutional Amendment 1, defines legal marriage as that between one man and one woman. Thus, Lexington is a nexus of powerful competing constructs of sexuality; non-straight sexualities are seen as both viable and curable, both acceptable and abominable. Because I focus on the ways that individuals conceptualize sexuality in light of emerging and contradictory discourses of sexual identity, Lexington is a highly appropriate location.

Founded in 1775, Lexington currently has over 295,000 people living within the city limits and more than 400,000 people living within its metropolitan area (U.S. Census, 2010). It is located in the center of

Kentucky's Bluegrass Region, and is the second largest city in Kentucky (the first being Louisville). In 1974 the government of Lexington merged with that of the surrounding county, creating the current Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government. Lexington's population is 76 percent white/Caucasian, 15 percent black/African American and 7 percent Hispanic/Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). This differs slightly from Kentucky's overall population, which is 88 percent white, 8 percent black and 3 percent Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Lexington ranks 10th in the United States for "highest concentration of college degrees" with 40 percent of the population holding at least a bachelor's degree (Christie 2006). Lexington was also ranked the 15th most literate city in the United States (Central Connecticut State University, 2009).

LEXINGTON THEN

To understand how sexuality is currently viewed within and through Lexington, it is important to have a basic understanding of the area's history as it pertains to sexual identity. In trying to grasp how Lexington's history has impacted current local discourse, I focus on the history of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) individuals, organizations and events for two reasons. One, sexual identity has often been understood as unmarked, unstated heterosexuality versus the marked, stated everything else. Therefore, when sexuality is articulated in the news, or in local organizations, it is often connected with the marked GLBT sexualities. Second, non-binary sexualities have long been lumped in with the "gay and lesbian" community, and so the history of bisexual or pansexual Lexington is in many ways the same as, or a related offshoot of, gay and lesbian history.

In analyzing past roots of Lexington's current local discourse of sexuality, I looked at three main areas. First, I explored three prominent bits of history that often arose in the telling of Lexington's queer past. Second, I looked at the legal battles surrounding sexuality in Lexington. Third, I analyzed prevalent publications in Lexington, noting how portrayals of sexuality have shifted over the years.

Lexington's Queer History

Although examples of queer history are numerous, I focus on three historic people and places, which I chose for their prominence in written and oral accounts of Lexington's past. The first is the story of an individual: Sweet Evening Breeze. According to the headline of an article published in the *Lexington Herald-Leader* in 1995, "'Breeze' Swept City into Early Tolerance." Sweet Evening Breeze (or simply Sweets), the alter ego of James Herndon, was an African American man who openly wore women's clothing and was a regular at the local gay bars. A respected nurse at Good Samaritan Hospital for more than 40 years, Sweets could often be found from the 1950s through the 1970s "promenading down Main Street in a sea-green evening gown" (Edwards, 1995) or strolling downtown in "a Chinese Red smock, black opera pumps, a Louise-Brooks styled wig, an umbrella and white gloves" (GLSO News, 1997). Sweets (who was always gendered male in written accounts) died in 1983, and is recalled fondly as "one of the best-known Lexington town characters of the 20th century" (Edwards, 1999).

The second instance of note for queer Lexington is the history of what is now The Bar Complex, known simply as The Bar to locals. In 1963 the predecessor to The Bar, The Gilded Cage, opened up in a prominent location on Main Street, and was

Lexington's first queer-identified bar owned by a gay couple (Lee, 1984a; Jones 2001). Through the next ten years the place changed its name several times, which led locals to refer to it as "the bar," rather than trying to remember its current name. From the 1970s until today The Bar Complex has been a multi-storied gay bar, complete with disco dance floor and drag shows (Jones 2001:103). Its location on Main Street ensures its visibility, and its large size and continued existence has made it a mainstay in the Lexington gay community for four decades. In my MA research, which focused on constructions of community by GLBT individuals, The Bar loomed large as a central, if not *the* central, site of queer community in Lexington (Callis, 2004, p.56).

The third instance that is central to the history of queer Lexington is the creation of what is currently called the GLSO, or the Gay and Lesbian Services Organization. Originally called the Gay Services Organization (GSO), this group became a legally recognized corporation as of 1977. Their first newsletter, published in August, 1977, stated that the GSO's aim was to establish themselves "as a viable and credible organization within both the gay and straight communities" (Lexington Gay Services Organization, 1977, p. 1). The GSO has been active ever since 1977, with the only major change being its name – it became the GLSO in 1986, adding "lesbian" to the group title.

The GLSO has produced monthly publications since the 70s, first titled the *Gayzette*, then the *GSO Newsletter*, and finally the *GLSO News*. This newsletter was the first local source to report on a "new disease which may affect gay men" in 1982, as well as the formation of AVOL, the AIDS Volunteers of Lexington, in 1988. It was this publication that urged the police to

investigate the gay-related stabbings that occurred in the Bluegrass between 1979 and 1983 (Elston, 1983) and that called WLEX-TV to task for maligning the gay community in its series on "Cruisin' the Wall" in 1983 (GSO Newsletter 1983c). Perhaps most importantly, the GLSO's publication allowed space for an alternative discourse of sexuality. As one author stated, "If I relied solely on the basis of the news as presented by the *Herald-Leader*, I would certainly believe the large majority of the gay community in Lexington to be homosexual prostitutes, killers, and the like" (GSO Newsletter, 1981).

How were non-binary sexualities represented by/in these three historic examples? As stated, Sweet Evening Breeze blurred lines of gender and sexuality. He often wore articles of female clothing and was rumored (incorrectly) to be intersexed (Jones, 2001). He was an important figure at bars that were understood to be gay male spaces. However, Jones notes that Sweets had a "complex sexuality," that more closely resembled George Chauncey's fairy identity (1994) than a homosexual one (Jones 2001, p. 109). Thus, Sweets was a relatively visible example of non-gay/non-straight sexuality from the 1950s through the 1970s - an African American cross-dressing individual who had relatively open sexual contact with other men.

Unlike Sweet Evening Breeze, who blatantly represented non-binary sexuality, The Bar Complex is difficult to discuss in terms of specific sexual identity. An archival search shows that since the 1980s The Bar has hosted events both for gay males and for the larger GLBT community. It is primarily understood by GLBT individuals to be a gay male location, but women and straight couples utilize the space regularly. In my 2004 thesis research The Bar was a central location of queer Lexington individuals of

multiple orientations - lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. Outside of the GLBT community The Bar is currently known as a "gay bar," with gay encapsulating all non-straight identities. So while The Bar is a space that individuals with non-binary sexual identities frequent, it is not a space that specifically advertises this, or that has brought these non-binary identities visibility.

The GLSO is an example of a group which has only slowly started to open its doors to non-binary sexualities. Originally entitled in such a way as to only include gay men (GSO) the group has since included "lesbian" into its title. However, bisexual, transgender and/or queer have not been added to this title. Further, based on my reading of the GLSO News, bisexuality was not written about until the 1990s, except for one early article which discussed the Kinsey Scale (Marlon 1982). However, by 1992 the GLSO referred to the gay and lesbian community primarily as the "LesBiGay" community, and events and organizations often included bisexuality in their names. This changed to "GLBT" by the late 1990s. Therefore the history of the GLSO has been the history of a gradual increase in non-binary visibility.

Lexington Legality

The legal landscape for GLBT individuals in Lexington has been an ever-shifting terrain. Kentucky's statute against sodomy was put on the books in 1798 and revised in 1974 (Painter 2001). The original law is interesting because a) it did not criminalize female homosexuality and b) it did not criminalize oral sex between men, as demonstrated in the 1909 Poindexter case (Commonwealth v. Poindexter, 1909). After the 1974 revision female homosexuality was criminalized, while anal or oral sex between individuals of the opposite sex was legalized

(Painter 2001). Though the bulk of the sodomy law was overturned in the 1990s, there is still a group of “sodomy laws,” which criminalizes sexual acts involving minors or force (Tolliver & Grelen, 1992).

Lexington police used Kentucky sodomy laws as their reason to conduct sting operations in local bars and bathrooms from the 1950s until the 1990s (Jones, 2001). These stings were well known and publicized in the area, as evidenced by the 1989 *Herald-Leader* article titled “18 arrested in parks in homosexual acts,” which graced the front page of the local news section. This particular article, discussing a sting operation in a local park restroom, cited park employees’ fears of “contracting AIDS or something because the guys do so much stuff in the restroom” as a reason why the arrests were just (Gregory, 1989). In the same year the GSO published an article titled “Lexington’s Annual Roundup,” which postulates that “incidents of violent crime in Lexington must decrease each summer, because that’s the time of year when the police force sends undercover agents into the public parks” (GLSO, 1989). The article mentioned several parks where readers had reported instances of “police entrapment” (GLSO, 1989).

In the 1960s various states began to repeal their sodomy laws, but this progress was halted by the AIDS epidemic and the political turn towards the religious right in the 1980s. It was in this political climate that Jeffrey Wasson was arrested in 1986 behind The Bar for “solicitation of sodomy,” after being approached by an undercover police officer (Jones, 2001). He decided to fight his arrest, and enlisted the help of Ernesto Scorsone, an attorney and state representative from Fayette County. Scorsone felt that “because Kentucky’s sodomy law singled out homosexuals while ignoring heterosexuals, it was

unconstitutional” (Tolliver, 1986). After a six year battle Kentucky’s sodomy law was struck down by the state Supreme Court, in a 4-3 decision, citing privacy rights as the primary reason for the decision (Kentucky v. Wasson, 1992; Tolliver & Grelen, 1992). This decision was front-page news in both the *Herald-Leader* and *GLSO News*, with the *Herald-Leader* giving prominent space to dissenting points of view, such as the Southland pastor who felt that “the decision marked one of the saddest days in America” (Tolliver & Grelen, 1992).

A second watershed moment in GLBT politics happened in 1999 with the passing of the Fairness Ordinance. A similar ordinance passed earlier that year in Louisville, leading Lexington officials to pass their own in July of 1999. This ordinance prohibits discrimination based on sexual identity or gender identity in housing, employment and public accommodations (Lexington-Fayette Urban County Human Rights Commission). Then, in 2003, Lexington Mayor Teresa Isaac approved benefits for domestic partners, continuing the trend towards state and local acceptance of non-straight sexualities (Yuen, 2003). This trend was ended in 2004 with passing of a state constitutional amendment banning gay and lesbian marriage, which passed with an almost 75 percent approval rating (Vos, 2004).

Instead of defining sexuality by self-identity, the original sodomy laws in Kentucky defined sexuality by sex acts. Because of this, individuals of all sexual identities who participated in same-sex intercourse were grouped together. In his dissenting opinion during the 1992 decision (Kentucky v. Wasson), Justice Wintersheimer said that the “sodomy statute clearly punishes conduct and not a class of people ... the statute applies to any person regardless of sexual orientation” (Lexington

Herald-Leader, 1992a). However, the majority of the local coverage on this trial involved discussion of “homosexuals” and/or “gays and lesbians,” such as when Judge Tackett stated that the “law denied gays equal protection” under the law (Tolliver Grelen, 1992). Therefore, while this law was not written in the language of the sexual binary, it was often talked about as such.

Unlike the sodomy law, the fairness ordinance specifically mentions non-binary sexual identities in the form of bisexuality. The ordinance states that a “person is protected based upon his/her actual or imputed heterosexuality, homosexuality, or bisexuality” (Lexington-Fayette Urban County Human Rights Commission). The specific inclusion of bisexuality in this law, passed seven years after the sodomy law was overturned, shows the increasing visibility of non-binary sexuality in Lexington.

Lexington Archival Analysis

Based on my analysis of how local publications portray sexuality and sexual identity categories, I found that the binary of heterosexual/homosexual has been pervasive in both publications and organizations for the past several decades ago. The vast majority of local articles published in the 1970s and 1980s only referenced homosexuality or heterosexuality, with almost no mention of bisexuality until the 1990s. Other non-binary sexual identities (such as queer and pansexual) were not mentioned in any of these three papers at all until the 1990s. Further, articles during this period often explicitly divided people into two groups, based on hetero- and homosexuality. For example, in 1973, an article in the *Kentucky Kernel* informed the student population about the newly printed *Gay Times*, which was a small student-

published newspaper. The *Gay Times* spokesperson claimed that this paper was “aimed primarily at the Lexington gay community, but we hope straight people will read it, too” (Carr, 1973). A 1983 article reprinted in the GSO Newsletter discussed scientific studies aimed at discovering the “psychological difference between homosexuals and heterosexuals” (Seligmann & Gosnell, 1981). The *Lexington Herald-Leader* likewise represented sexuality as a binary during this time period. For example, in a 1984 article on AIDS, the author discusses the need to educate “both gay people and heterosexuals” on the disease, so as not to increase homophobia (Tolliver, 1984).

By the 1990s, the *GLSO News* began to move away from discussing sexuality as a binary of straight versus gay. Instead, sexuality was increasingly referred to as a trinary of straight, gay, and bisexual. For example, by 1992 articles began to discuss the “Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Pride Committee,” where before this same group was called the “Gay and Lesbian Pride Committee.” This same year also marked the introduction of the term “lesbigay” as a way of referring to the entire community. In the article “A Word on Words,” the authors discuss how the GLSO’s “inclusionary policies and space limitations conflict when almost every other sentence has phrases like ‘gay, lesbian and bisexual’ in it” (Smith & Jones, 1992). This led to an explanation of lesbigay: “It’s short. It’s inclusive. It means: Lesbian (les) + bisexual (bi) + gay male (gay) = lesbigay” (Ibid). In 1995 the issue was once again brought up, in an article titled “You May Ask.” The author states:

We've heard it remarked, “What is this 'lesbigay' thing, anyway? It looks so silly...” We use this abbreviation to save space and sanity. In our community, it's hard to be all-

inclusive, since we are so diverse. We'd love to have something else to use, but haven't been able to think of anything better. If you have any ideas, let us know (GLSO News, 1995).

The usage of lesbigay continued into the second half of the 1990s, along with longhand references to the "lesbian, gay and bisexual community."

Though local publications from before the early 1990s tended to characterize sexuality as a binary, a small number of articles bucked this trend, often directly citing the research of Alfred Kinsey. In 1982 an article in the *GSO Newsletter* referred to the Kinsey Scale, and stated that while "moral crusaders" were after Kinsey 6's, that they would be after the other numbers soon enough (Austin, 1982). A 1989 article in the *Lexington Herald Leader*, which focused on AIDS, said that an issue with determining "the number of homosexual men in society is defining precisely what a gay man is. There are many more men who have had a single homosexual encounter than there are men who are habitually and preferentially homosexual" (Lexington Herald-Leader 1989). The article then discusses Kinsey's solution to this problem, mentioning the Kinsey scale and some of the statistics from Kinsey's work.

Though *GLSO News* articles switched to portraying sexuality as non-binary, the Herald-Leader continued to discuss it as a binary into the 21st century. In 2005, an article on sexual identity and the "odors that drive a person's sexual response" stated that "homosexual men differ from heterosexual men in the way they respond to such smells" (Talan, 2005). And in 2006, an article discussing a biologically-based study of lesbians reported that "lesbians' brains react differently to sex hormones than those of heterosexual women" (Schmid, 2006). Rather, lesbian brains reacted "somewhat,

though not completely, like those of heterosexual men" (Schmid, 2006). Neither of these articles mentions that it is possible to be any sexuality other than straight or gay/lesbian.

Thus, the same trends found in Lexington's queer history were also present in Lexington's archival record. While sexuality has been primarily understood as a binary, historic and archival examples of non-binary sexualities have co-existed with this hegemonic construction. And, as with Lexington organizations and ordinances, non-binary sexualities have been increasingly visible since the 1990s. However, this visibility does not seem to mark an overall shift in the understanding of the sexually possible. Rather, sexuality is talked about as both binary and non-binary in local publications, with both models holding cultural salience.

LEXINGTON NOW

The previous sections have looked into the history that makes up Lexington's local discourse of sexuality. Through legal battles, newspaper articles, famous characters and prominent organizations, Lexingtonians have been made aware of sexualities outside of heterosexual. Further, through the bifocal representations of sexuality in each of these areas, Lexingtonians have experienced a sexual schema that both touts the sexual binary and allows room for non-binary identities and behaviors. How has this representation of sexuality carried forward into Lexington today?

The following section will look at two current aspects of Lexington's sexual landscape. First, I will discuss two of Lexington's GLBT locations: the city's Pride Center and the University of Kentucky's OUTsource. I will then analyze data from the interviews I conducted between 2008 and 2010, noting how

Lexingtonians articulated sexuality. In both locations and conversations, I found that sexuality was again represented bifocally, with non-binary and binary schemas existing simultaneously.

Lexington Locations

When looking for specific locations of queer community in Lexington, The Bar emerged through interviews and participant observation as a central location. As of 2011, a typical Friday or Saturday night would find hundreds of individuals packed into drag shows and onto the dance floor. Fundraisers for local GLBT groups were held at The Bar Complex regularly, and most were well attended.

Outside of The Bar, Lexingtonians mentioned several other locations as part of the “queer landscape” in Lexington. Crossings and Mia’s were two bars often mentioned, while the Unitarian Universalist Church was brought up several times as a welcoming religious space. Out of the spaces that were mentioned, I will focus on two: the Lexington Pride Center and the University of Kentucky’s OUTsource. These were chosen because of my familiarity each, as well as the frequency that they were mentioned in interviews. For both, I analyzed how sexuality was produced/consumed, paying particular attention to non-binary sexualities.

The Pride Center was located a few miles from downtown Lexington, fairly close to the University of Kentucky’s campus. Several Lexington organizations began fundraising in 1995 for a Pride Center, which was originally conceived as a downtown space. Due to the prohibitive cost, volunteers began to look into spaces outside of downtown, and two years later the Pride Center opened in its current location. Shortly after opening the Pride Center became the sole responsibility of the GLSO,

and remains under their jurisdiction today (GLSO News, 1995-1997). As of 2011 seven groups met regularly at the Pride Center: TransKentucky, Lexington’s Gay Straight Alliance, the Imperial Court, Lexington Insight, a GLBT discussion group, the Lexington chapter of P-FLAG, and a weekly Bible Study.

Perhaps because of its location, which is removed from the bars, bookstores, and downtown organizations, the Pride Center is not central to most individuals’ mappings of queer Lexington. When interviewing in 2009, I found that the majority of GLBT participants had not visited the Pride Center more than once. Both individuals I interviewed who had been active at one time on the Pride Center board characterized it as a primarily older, white institution that was somewhat “old fashioned” and “set in its ways.”

In 2007, the University of Kentucky opened the OUTsource, advertised as a “resource center for UK’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning and Ally students, staff and faculty” (Lyons, 2007). UK does not pay for OUTsource staff, so it is run by student volunteers, meaning that its hours fluctuate depending on student availability (and punctuality). When I started volunteering at OUTsource during the spring semester of 2009, it was not a high-traffic room. Despite its visibility, there were rarely more than three or four students utilizing the space. However, in the fall of 2009 the OUTsource director started working more directly with UK’s Gay Straight Alliance, which revitalized both. By 2010 it was a regular occurrence to see the OUTsource filled to capacity, and there were often students sitting on the floor due to lack of chair/couch space.

According to participants, these two spaces differ in their approach to sexuality. As mentioned before, the Pride Center was

seen as somewhat old fashioned, and one participant told me that it was run by “goldstar lesbians” who did not accept bisexuals or lesbians who had sexual relations with men. Further, the Pride Center is marketed as a “gay and lesbian” center, and run by the Gay and Lesbian Services Organization. In contrast, the OUTsource currently touts itself as a Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Trans/Queer/Questioning/Intersex/Ally center (as intersex was added to their moniker between 2007 and 2010). It held a panel on pansexuality in 2008, and sponsored Robin Ochs to speak about bisexuality in 2010. The director of OUTsource told me that bisexuals were often not as accepted in the space as they could be. However, non-binary sexualities are more visible and more accepted in this newer space, which was opened ten years after the Pride Center, and which has a younger board of directors.

Lexington Articulations

Along with how sexuality was represented in Lexington locations, I also wanted to ascertain how the schema of sexual identity was talked about in both interviews and in the field. I was interested to see if it was generally portrayed as a strict binary of hetero- and homosexual, or if it was more often depicted as a continuum or some other model. For example, were participants more likely to talk about same-sex versus straight (a binary construction) or did they reference the GLBTQQA community (a more fluid construction)?

I found that there were five main ways that the overall structure of the sexually possible was discussed. Sexuality was presented as a binary of gay/straight, a trinary or ternary or gay/straight/bisexual, a quartet of gay/straight/bisexual/transgender, a larger group of distinct identities (such as GLBTQQA) or as a continuum. While

some individuals only utilized one of these constructions when referring to sexuality, the majority of participants would switch back and forth between them with no warning or explanation. In this way sexuality could be both binary and trinary at once, or both fluid and a quartet of named identities.

Within my research interviews, participants expressed a general consensus that sexuality was viewed as a binary of heterosexual and homosexual by Lexingtonians, although only a minority of participants claimed to view sexuality in this way themselves. Jenn, who identified as a lesbian married to a man, told me that most people in Lexington viewed sexuality as a duality of “straight and abnormal” where abnormal could be equated to homosexuality because the general public could not fathom identities like bisexuality. Privately-bisexual Amber and straight-identified Sophie both also discussed how sexuality tended to be viewed as black or white, gay or straight, rather than as fluid. Amy, who identified her sexuality as straight, felt that both democratic and republican candidates only recognized heterosexuality and homosexuality, with no discussion on non-binary identities.

The idea that “other people” or “most people” view sexuality as a binary also came up repeatedly when discussing bisexuality and the ways that bisexuals were viewed in Lexington. Many people felt that it was this binary construction that created the stigma surrounding bisexual identity. Lola, who identified as mostly straight, said that bisexuals were pushed by society to “choose sides, either/or.” Jason, who identified as either gay or queer, told me that most of his friends thought that “you’re either gay or straight,” with no room for any other sexualities. Lesbian-identified Julian and straight-identified Tommy both said that in

Lexington “you’re straight or you’re gay,” leaving bisexuals to be seen as either confused or lying.

In interviews, the second most popular way sexuality was represented, after the sexual binary, was as a trinity of straight/gay/bi. When asked what sexualities the general public was aware of, more than fifty percent of participants mentioned gay, straight and bisexual as the three sexualities that were recognized. For example, Scout, who identified as queer, said most people probably knew about “gay, lesbian and bisexual. Maybe not even bisexual. If they’re really out of touch, just gay.”

Sexuality was also occasionally discussed as a quartet, due to the fact that the initialism GLBT or LGBT was ever-present in Lexington, from organization names to panel topics to publications. Pamphlets within the OUTsource referred to non-straight individuals as a group as GLBT. For example, the pamphlet “Coming Out, a Process of Choice,” described coming out as “the process of accepting and/or letting others know that you are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (GLBT)” (Coming Out 2009).

Several participants used this initialism during their interviews. Scout told me about a dorm at the University of Kentucky “affectionately called ‘queenland’ because of all the GLBT people.” Trans-identified Samantha told me that Lexington was one of the “top five cities for acceptance of, not just transgender but the whole GLBT community.” Kathy, a lesbian married to a man, switched back and forth between talking about the GLBT community and the “alphabet community” during her interview.

A handful of participants used an initialism to talk about non-straight individuals that included more than gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender. Rosario

(queer), Maria (bisexual) and Sophie (straight) all referred to these people as the “GLBTQ community,” while Lucy (no label) mentioned the “GLBTQQA community and Liz (lesbian) referred to the “GLBTQQA community.” Of note is that Liz and Lucy were both active in OUTsource, which had GLBTQQA painted across its back wall. In a book on OUTsource’s main table, someone had written the question “what identities belonged to the alphabet community?” Other students had written in dozens of answers, including transsexual, asexual, intersexual, just sexual, heteroflexible, omnisexual, pansexual, kinky, autosexual, radical faerie, and no label. The other place a “more than four” initialism was found in the field was in a pamphlet for Lexington Fairness, which claimed that they had been the leaders “of advocacy and education for LGBTQQA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and allies) people in the region for sixteen years” (Lexington Fairness).

However, this “more than four” initialism often caused problems, as not everyone knew what all of these initials stood for. While working in OUTsource, I was constantly asked what the letters stood for, and then grilled on whether or not “questioning” could be considered an identity, and over whether being intersexed should be considered a type of sexual identity, or if it was something completely different. Three participants mentioned that in an attempt to be inclusive, OUTsource had actually hindered people’s understanding of sexual diversity by using such an unwieldy initialism.

Sexuality was also often discussed as a continuum during my interviews. John, who identified as straight at the time of his interview, told me that sexuality was best understood as a spectrum or scale, where

sexual identity was just an attempt at “applying a label to whichever spot on that spectrum” a person fell. Jenn said that, because she was a math person, she felt that there were “infinitely many” sexualities, and that they fell on a continuum. She expressed doubt that anyone could be totally gay or straight, and thought there was always a decimal point involved. Casey, who identified as straight, felt that all of the variation possible on a continuum explained why not everyone had a label for their sexuality – she felt there were more identities possible than there were labels. Nine other individuals used the term “continuum” to discuss sexuality. Amber (privately bisexual) and MW (gay) both felt that people had “a tendency towards one part of the continuum” which meant that their sexuality stayed somewhat consistent throughout their lifetime. Other individuals, like Matsu (mostly heterosexual), said that people could move up and down the entire continuum during their lives. Scott Red (heterosexual) used the phrase “sliding scale” to describe sexuality, and Heidi (mostly heterosexual/bisexual) drew a graph of her sexuality, where “bisexual is somewhere in the middle” and she was “on the heterosexual side of bisexual.” She also thought the sexuality continuum included asexuality to hypersexuality.

It was interesting to note that sexuality might be discussed as binary and non-binary simultaneously. Straight-identified Tommy felt that people in the United States were aware of bisexuality, and maybe even transgendered people, but that they were “lumped in with gay.” Donnie, who identified as straight, also told me that “for most people, bisexuality is lumped into homosexuality.” This allowed people to continue to see sexuality as a binary even while recognizing sexualities outside of gay/straight. Madison, who identified as

straight, felt that this trend could be seen in her church’s approach to sexuality. She felt that because “bisexuality encompass[ed] doing a homosexual act,” it was read by the church as homosexual, and judged accordingly. Other individuals also told me that their church considered bisexuality a type of homosexuality, which merges the trinity into a binary. Further, female bisexuality is often assumed to equate to heterosexuality, while male bisexuality is assumed to equate to homosexuality (see Callis, 2013). This viewpoint once again expands sexuality away from a binary before collapsing it again.

The merging of a binary model with more fluid models can also be seen with non-binary labels outside of bisexuality. Queer-identified Scout and Rosario both said that the label queer was oftentimes just assumed to mean gay or lesbian, and that most straight individuals did not view it as a distinct identity. Fruit told me that her identity of pansexual was understood to be gay by many people she talked to. Several other individuals with non-binary sexualities told me that regardless of what their identity was, they were read as either straight or gay based on their current partner. Therefore, while sexual variety was in some ways visible, and non-binary sexualities were increasingly discussed, they were often reduced to a binary of gay versus straight.

CONCLUSION

The local discourse in Lexington is steeped in a lengthy history of queer organizations, events, and people, which stretches back through the 1960s. This history provides the foundation for current organizations, as well as current articulations of sexuality. Since the 1960s non-binary sexualities in Lexington have been partially visible, as seen through stories of Sweet Evening Breeze. This visibility

increased in the 1990s, when the GLSO began writing about bisexuality, a bisexual organization was formed, and the local community began to use the word “lesbigay” to describe itself. Currently the majority of queer organizations and events in the area include bisexuality in their title or mission statement.

However, this visibility of non-binary sexualities within the local discourse of Lexington has not led to an overall shift in how sexuality is understood. In the *Herald-Leader*, sexuality is still most often portrayed as an option of straight versus gay. The majority of participants in this research mentioned the sexual binary before any other model, and also assured me that “other people” viewed sexuality as a binary. The very name of both “Gay Straight Alliances,” (at the Pride Center and at the University of Kentucky) harks back to this binary view.

If a hegemonic system is one that provides a definitive reality that most people cannot see beyond (Williams 1977) then the system of gay/straight was not hegemonic for the individuals who participated in this study. All of them were aware of sexualities outside of the binary, and most of them were at least comfortable labeling people as bisexual. However, while people were able to see beyond the sexual binary, most participants used binary labels as the starting point in conversations about sexuality, which they then often build upon or off of. Further, the binary was still an important aspect in local publications, often providing a starting point in understanding the sexually possible. Perhaps the sexual binary is becoming less hegemonic, or more residual. However, while the sexual binary seems to be less hegemonic that it was thirty years ago, it has not lost its place of dominance in Lexington.

Though this article focuses on one specific location within the United States,

these shifts in sexual understandings are happening on a national level as well. As the sexual binary begins to shift, non-binary sexualities have emerged from the cracks, forming a sexual borderland between heterosexuality and homosexuality. As non-binary identities have become more prevalent in discourse the borderland has grown, providing an alternative way of viewing sexuality. This sexual borderland and non-binary sexualities can be read as a new sexual ideology, which is shifting the sexual binary from within.

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