

Southerned: Queer marginality in two souths

by

JESSICA A. SCOTT

SCTJES003

SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

PhD in Gender Studies

Faculty of Humanities

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Date of submission: 13 February 2018

Supervisor: A/Professor Jane Bennett

Name, Department and University: School for African & Gender Studies,
Anthropology & Linguistics
University of Cape Town

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

CONTENTS

Declaration.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Two souths.....	1
A question of rights.....	5
A note on language.....	9
Conclusion: Structure of the dissertation.....	12

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

Introduction.....	14
Across borders: Where is queer?.....	15
The spatial and temporal dynamics of queer marginality.....	18
Material and epistemological implications of geographic marginalisation.....	28
Contested (metronorms).....	31
Context as epistemology.....	38
Conclusion.....	48

CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

Introduction.....	50
Theoretical interests as entry point to methodology.....	52
Positionality as an account of one's self.....	54
On wildness: Multi-sitedness in this project.....	60
Methods: Driving south and showing up.....	64
Methods: Analysis.....	77
Critical perspectives and ethical research.....	81
Conclusion.....	84

CHAPTER FOUR: Hegemonic discourses of rights and the spatial politics of sexuality

Introduction.....	86
'This isn't about marriage. This is just about acceptability'.....	88
On the map: 'On paper this country could not get better'.....	95
Off the map: Deserts of nothingness and violence at a distance.....	99
The authority to speak: 'This isn't possible everywhere'.....	109
What's possible: Narratives of not wanting to fund and marriage (Oh, fuck).....	115
Conclusion.....	119

CHAPTER FIVE: Metronormativity as a single ‘type’ of LGBT(I) advocacy

Introduction.....	121
Part I: Marriage as metronorm: marriage equality is a big deal	
No Gay Marriage License: ‘Nobody is gay married’.....	123
After marriage: ‘You may experience some discrimination’.....	128
What marriage does: ‘It opens doors’.....	130
Part II: The ‘single type’ as erasure: ‘What you see is what you get!’	
Racisms: ‘It’s all white!’/‘Who didn’t take time to think?’.....	139
Trans erasure: ‘Do you know what I mean?’.....	145
Conclusion.....	151

CHAPTER SIX: ‘A rich and impoverished land’: Queer organising in ‘two souths’

Introduction.....	153
Home is where your politics are: ‘In addition to loving it, it’s also just home’..	155
‘Patient with a crisis’: Destructive urgencies and persistent commitments.....	164
Getting there: ‘You can’t get there by Delta Airlines’.....	167
Being there: ‘Where I live and where I want to be’.....	174
Conclusion.....	180

CHAPTER SEVEN: Analytic Conclusion

Introduction.....	182
Recapitulations.....	183
Limitations.....	185
On whiteness, positionality and what cannot be known.....	186
On discourse and rage.....	192
Gestures toward possibilities: Working off the map.....	196
Conclusion.....	200

Works Cited.....	206
Appendix A.....	212
Appendix B.....	214
Appendix C.....	215
Appendix D.....	218

DECLARATION

I, Jessica A. Scott, hereby declare that the work on which this dissertation/thesis is based is my original work (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree in this or any other university.

I empower the university to reproduce for the purpose of research either the whole or any portion of the contents in any manner whatsoever.

Signature:

Signed by candidate

Date: 13 February 2018

Acknowledgements

The time, energy and investment that resulted in the writing of this document would not have been possible without a community of people who have put up with, loved, encouraged, reassured, comforted, despaired and laughed with me during the past several years. Every person listed here has had conversations with me that have helped me think more clearly, deeply and meaningfully about this work. This is a community to whom I am deeply indebted. With deepest gratitude to those who have been with me along the way:

Jane Bennett, my supervisor, for transforming how it is possible for me to think, for showing me a way of being in the world that feels possible, for bringing me Blur, for seeing the connections, for making this research possible;

Liesl, for friendship that crosses oceans, for always knowing how to make things happen and get things done, for always letting me come along;

Funeka, for asking me to volunteer with Free Gender. For hours of conversation, for teaching me ekohlo and ekunene, for road trips, for late-night airport runs, for letting me win at pool, for time spent thinking and writing together, for laughter and shared politics, for your uncompromising commitment to home;

Ntando, for welcoming me into your home, for chakalaka, for feeding me like family;

Ivy, for your openness, for your earnestness, for your graciousness, for your integrity, for the way you allow people to find and live their best selves, for the march. For teaching my students more about community organising in an hour and a half than I can teach them in a year;

Misha, for your enormous heart, for your sass, for your wit, for your ability to change a tire;

Free Gender, for giving me a new name;

Gender Benders, for making me family;

Zethu, for your writing, for the clarity of your thinking, for modelling activism and scholarship, teaching *as* activism, for modelling teaching and activism as one of the deepest kinds of love. For coming to West Virginia and getting undergraduates excited about decolonisation;

Sibusiso, for the hours on Skype trying to teach me isiXhosa, so that I can understand better;

Austin, for traveling a path of research so ethical, committed and clear that a warm welcome met me when I followed your footsteps;

My mother, my first teacher, my first model of resilience, for always being there no matter what. For teaching me to read, which has my whole life been one of my greatest loves;

Anna and Rosemarie, for their constant and contagious support and encouragement;

Luca, Amilya, Aria and Jade, the brightest stars in my universe;

Kaya, who came to bless us but could not stay;

GNO, for helping me claim what I know;

Brett, the very best bae, for endless diversions of xc skiing, tattoos, late-night/early morning texts from another continent, for transcribing under duress, for always knowing, for finding sassy bobcat;

Debra, for hiking, for conversations about teaching and scholarship, for solidarity, for your incandescent mind;

Boyd, whose generous support allowed me time to think and write, for giving me the ability to both stay in West Virginia and complete a PhD;

Alice, my confidant, for all the lunches and for caring so very much;

Katy, for mobilising our community; Danielle and Evid, for your commitment to cultivating a community of thinkers and writers in Appalachia, for thinking through so many things with me;

WVWC Gender Studies students, for whom I have written this document, who have been with me on this research journey from the beginning, who help me think better: for your patience in sharing my attention with this research, for liberating me from my fear;

Melody Meadows, my wife, for choosing me, trusting me, and loving me. For sharing this – our one and only life – with me. This journey has been full of multiple kinds of impossibilities. Thank you for embracing them all;

Most of all, the organisers, activists, directors, and founders whose work is represented here, who work against tremendous odds toward a vision of liberation for lgbtiq people in every part of the world, for taking the time to talk to me about the work that you do every day.

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Two souths

In my office at West Virginia Wesleyan College hangs a framed poster from the 2009 Out in Africa film festival in Cape Town, South Africa, which I attended while living there. One day, a colleague who is otherwise well-meaning in attempts to be ‘politically correct’, entered my office to deliver some piece of information on the way to a meeting, turned to exit, saw the poster, turned back, and said ‘Out in Africa: that’s a dangerous thing to be!’ This colleague did not wait for my response. The remark had not been a question.

When the *Daily Show* asked which state would be the last to legalise same-sex marriage in the United States, they set up a competition between Alabama and Mississippi (The Daily Show, 2013). The segment proceeds with ramped up testimony from public officials in the two states, each proudly claiming that the policy in their state is worse for human rights. The host of the segment then interviews an ‘expert’ about which state is statistically most likely to win the (dis)honour of being the last state to legalise same-sex marriage in the United States. When the investigator in this segment finds out that the so-called expert has never been to either state, they abruptly leave the interview to stage a social experiment in Mississippi and Alabama. The goal is to measure which state is more homophobic in order to determine which state will win ‘last state to legalise same-sex marriage’. A series of encounters ensues, during which no one responds negatively to the performatively ‘redneck’ white gay couple – not at the carnival, not on the street, not in the Waffle House where the couple enacts a very public engagement ceremony to applause from the other Waffle House customers. This is, of course, a surprise to everyone involved.

These two snapshots epitomise my interest in thinking across, or perhaps more compellingly – ‘without’ – as Chandra Mohanty (2003) argues – borders. Similar discursive mechanisms allow the spatial politics of sexuality to position some locations as incompatible with queer life. The American South and South Africa are the ones I describe throughout this

dissertation as ‘out-of-the-way places’, borrowing from Tsing’s (1993) work with this framework for understanding geographic marginalisation. The idea of ‘out-of-the-way places’ is a flexible concept because ‘out-of-the-way’ does not necessarily mean rural any more than it means ‘developing’, but it can be understood as a marginalized space in relation to the nation in which it is situated or the globe through which its meanings are circulated, without having to fit into dichotomous positionings of rural/urban or global north/global south. Resources for facilitating queer life, on the other hand, are concentrated in metropolitan centres, locations that do not bear the stigma of a peculiar hostility to queer existence (Gray, 2009). Because the American South and South Africa are both ‘southern’ in relation to the hegemonies shaping the political and material terrain they occupy, I imagine, theorise and describe them in this dissertation as ‘southerned’.

I began this research because I know what it is like to have my back against the wall between the complicated home that I love and normative discourses that say I must abandon or revile it in order to deserve human rights that have otherwise been advertised as ‘universal’. For those of us in this position, fending off the negativity directed at our spaces, while simultaneously working to fix what is broken within them, is an unrelenting marriage of the most demanding kind. This discursive choreography is not only exhausting, but its very performance masks the ways in which power relations are constantly shaping norms and experiences. Writing about the ‘two distinct, yet interlinked’ discourses that ‘dominate discussions of queer African sexualities’, Ekine maps exactly what I mean here in relation to the tensions between hegemonic discourses about queerness in ‘out-of-the-way places’ and hegemonic discourses about ‘out-of-the-way places’ positioned within a metronormative gaze that situates them ‘as [sites] of obsessive homophobia’:

Two distinct, yet interlinked, narratives dominate discussions of queer African sexualities: one claims that queer sexualities are ‘un-African’ and the other treats Africa as a site of obsessive homophobia. The first stems from a mix of religious fundamentalisms . . . and a culturally essentialist position which pathologises and denies the existence of queerness on the continent. These fundamentalists argue that queer sexualities threaten African social and cultural norms and claim that pro-queer initiatives in Africa by Western countries and NGOs are imperialist. The second narrative on ‘African homophobia’ is rooted in colonial discourses of deviant and

peculiar African sexuality and in a contemporary neoliberal, global 'LGBT' agenda which seeks to universalise white Euro-American sexual norms and gender expressions (Ekine, 2013: 78).

I introduce these discourses with this excerpt from the *Queer African Reader* because both the US South and the African continent, on which South Africa is located, are understood as 'sites of obsessive homophobia'. This project is a south-south dialogue that pushes the conventions of multi-sited ethnography: the research crosses borders between countries and continents. The south-south relationship in this project is between a south that is situated geographically in the global North and a discursive 'north' (in terms of its policy landscape) situated geographically in the global South. If we think beyond national borders, it is possible to see 'souths' in the North and 'norths' in the South, a reality that renders such concepts unstable. This kind of thinking is discursively inconvenient to projects of global capital that are premised on power imbalances between the 'developed' and 'developing' world, but it is necessary for doing the work that our current political moment demands. Haraway (2016) calls this work 'staying with the trouble'; Tsing (2015) calls this work 'living in the ruins.' Both see the epistemological work of thinking across borders as crucial to understanding and surviving the world that global capital has structured along lines of increasing structural violence, wealth inequality and environmental degradation (Chomsky, 2016; Klein, 2017).

The spatial politics that govern queer existence and structure the funding and implementation of queer work matter. How areas of the globe are represented in national and global imaginaries requires exploration. Because the connection of concepts of 'rights' to ideas about 'space' has a history, I want to draw on one of the most notorious spatial divisions in United States history to demonstrate how such a connection between space and politics can work. The divide between the 'North' and the 'South' in the United States is one division driving this current research. This divide is also well known as the impetus for the Civil War in the 19th century in the United States. That war was over the institution of slavery. The spatial politics surrounding this war suggest that the North was *the* site of

abolitionist politics, while the South clung to the institution of slavery, ultimately driving the country to the brink of separation. However, the North had an investment in the institution of slavery so deep that abolitionist politics could certainly not be a taken-for-granted political stance either by individuals or by the region as a whole (Farrow et al., 2005). Not only did the North not have a total moral investment in ending slavery, northern states, and especially metropolitan centres in those northern states, had a deep financial investment in its continuation. As Farrow et al. (2005: 2) note: ‘the nation’s financial and manufacturing centers, New York and Massachusetts, spun gold from the slave fields of the South.’

In their text, *Complicity*, Farrow, Lang, and Frank tell the story of the role of the states in the United States that comprise ‘the North’ of that country in maintaining and benefitting from slavery. While the northern states are often credited with a ‘liberal’ and abolitionist reputation, the historical reality is that the foundation of both the northern and southern economy was the cotton industry. The North’s domination of the US economy was extended through control of ports and many other facets of the trade in cotton:

Northerners’ influence and control infused nearly every phase of the trade. Most ships that carried the cotton from plantation to port to market were built in the North, and they were usually owned by Northerners. Their captains and crews were often New Englanders. Northern companies sold the insurance to protect a farmer’s crop and all of his property, including his slaves. And hundreds of Northern textile mills clothed those slaves (Farrow, Lang and Frank, 2005: 14).

This history matters because much like the metropole is able to claim its own fidelity to human rights norms, while continuing to dominate many non-metropolitan locations through resource extraction and labour exploitation, the North now claims and is credited with a morally righteous stance in relation to the abolition of slavery, while it was as deeply mired in the institution of slavery as the South. The story of the North and the South in relation to slavery are not two divergent tales. There is not one story of a pure, abolitionist North and another story of a corrupt, profit-at-any-cost South. There is one story of a North and a South both complicit in and reliant upon the institution of slavery to generate capital at the expense of human flourishing and life for those upon whose backs the wealth of the

United States was generated. There is one world economy in which both of these geographical sites are imbricated. As patterns of trade and technology increasingly obscure the sites and sources of labour from which much contemporary capital is generated (Klein, 2017), it becomes increasingly impossible to suggest that any geographical site is outside of a responsibility for the well-being of other geographical sites. I discuss this example here in the Introduction to this document to be clear that I am working throughout with the assumption that spatial politics are not neutral. There is often an ideological, political and material investment in how geographic spaces are represented. Positioning northern states as the site of liberal abolitionism obscures their role in profiting from and desiring the continuation of the institution of slavery.

Both colonialism and slavery have been justified by ‘civilising’ and ‘saviour’ narratives. The adherence of the human rights narrative to the historical trajectory of these atrocities is too uncanny not to be critically examined for the moments of complicity between the (uneven) accumulation of capital and the moral postures of some nations in relation to human rights. As the metropole advances narratives of some versions of ‘rights’ at the expense of other versions of ‘rights’, the interests of global capital are revealed. In this dissertation, I argue that these interests can be confronted most effectively (perhaps most honestly) from the specific locations of ‘out-of-the-way places’, which are most likely to face the consequences of resource extraction and depleted infrastructure.

A question of rights

When I began the research that is the focus of this dissertation, I was living in a United States where Barack Obama had been president for over five years. It was a country where rights for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people had been expanded through multiple Supreme Court decisions and executive orders issued during Obama’s two terms as president. The law in the United States had begun to reflect the values that Americans have

claimed around the world in public displays and other meetings with states where the criminalisation of same-sex sexuality introduced by colonial powers persists.

Several months after the conclusion of my fieldwork, Donald Trump was elected president of the United States. The election of Donald Trump to the United States presidency has thrown a grenade into the narrative of progress that the United States has told to and about itself, and that it has used to insist on 'spreading democracy' through war and other forms of political and economic domination (Eisenstein, 2004; Puar, 2007; Chomsky, 2016). Each day, with the suggestion of dismantling more legal protections, it becomes clearer how vulnerable a reliance upon the legal protections and policy reforms, such as those advocated by national and international LGBT(I) (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) rights organisations, makes us, without a shift in the cultural landscapes within which queer lives actually unfold.

The failure of the law to change lived realities is one that queer bodies in South Africa already intimately know. Though South Africa has some of the most progressive legislation in relation to same-sex sexuality in the world, violence against queer bodies continues (Mkhize et al., 2010; Matebeni, 2012). Gay and lesbian South Africans can get married, but depending on where they live, they may feel unsafe to the extent that for some black lesbians, a relationship to potential and actual violence characterises their sense of 'being lesbian in South Africa' (Matebeni, 2012: 9). Zethu Matebeni describes the contradiction within which black lesbians in South Africa are caught as 'a constant challenge and negotiation between realising one's full identities and withstanding the risk of being violated or criminalised' (Matebeni, 2012: 9). Recounting an experience attending a lesbian-focused conference in another African country where same-sex sexuality is criminalised, Matebeni (2012: 9) writes that the experiences articulated by lesbians in South Africa were 'shocking and unimaginable' to participants from other countries, even some countries where same-sex sexuality is criminalised. Participants from Mozambique (where the conference was being

hosted) ‘had never heard of violence towards lesbian and gay people or criminalisation of same-sex acts, although the latter were still in their Statutes’ (Matebeni, 2012: 9).

The reality of a country with full legal protections for LGBTI people being a site of intense violence for some members of that population, while another country can criminalise same-sex sexuality and be described as ‘safe’ for its LGBTI population speaks to the unpredictability of the state in securing the safety and well-being of vulnerable and marginalised populations. While Spivak maintains that the state ‘should be the instrument of redistribution’ (Butler & Spivak, 2007: 98), multiple critiques of the non-profit industrial complex have demonstrated that non-profitisation of formerly public services has resulted in a whittling away of the concept of public goods:

In any case, the 1990s were marked by the extension of privatization and by government withdrawal from social programs, so that schools were increasingly subsidized by Coca-Cola, prisons built and run by private industry, and so on. Mechanisms that encourage the support of nonprofits through acts of private consumption help to obscure these changes as well as to mitigate them financially (Chasin, 2000: 199).

Naomi Klein chronicles how well-funded non-profit organisations become complicit in the very injustices they purport to want to address. Because the ‘economic interests behind our soaring emissions’ are sustained by a pervasive corporate logic, an environmental movement Klein calls ‘big green’ is not ‘actually fighting those interests – they have merged with them’ (Klein, 2014: 195). This merging comes in the form of a complex network of investments in and donations from companies in the fossil fuel industry, simultaneous with the promotion of policies that facilitate the continued existence of fossil fuel companies rather than policies that would require more robust regulatory mechanisms and transitions away from fossil fuel extraction and toward renewable and sustainable forms of energy development (Klein, 2014). Not only is this convergence of ‘big green’ and the fossil fuel industry a devastating one in its failure to meaningfully address climate change, the parts of the world that pay the highest price for energy production driven by the extraction of fossil fuels are ‘out-of-the-way places’ (Tsing, 1993) that have already been treated historically as ‘sacrifice zones’ (Klein,

2014: 310). Klein's claim is that ultimately it can only be a globalised network of localised efforts that will be able to confront climate change and stop the exploitation of land inherent in extractive industries.

Similarly, Chasin has mapped the ways in which well-funded LGBT(I) rights organisations become complicit in the further marginalisation of the already most marginalised lgbtiq people. The existence of large, well-resourced LGBT(I) rights organisations concentrates resources and political power in major metropolitan areas. The trends that Klein identified in the previous paragraph related to corporate logic, or what Chasin (2000: 195) calls the 'politically troubling intersection of movement and market', are prevalent in LGBT(I) rights work as well. Chasin notes that since many organisations began accepting donations from corporate donors or sponsors, some of the 'strings attached' even to accepting such donations has to do with calibrating organisations to the 'market-based politics' (2000: 214) from which such dollars can be secured. One of the questions raised by Chasin but central to this research is the effect that the structures that sustain LGBT(I) rights work have on attempts to sustain and strengthen local networks of grassroots organising and advocacy work. Chasin (2000: 199), asking 'which groups do not benefit', notes several instances where funders or donors are less likely to 'invest' in or fund local organisations. In some ways, it seems that it could be argued that 'out-of-the-way places' (Tsing, 1993) pay a disproportionate cost for the existence of large, well-resourced and highly visible organisations in metropolitan centres, which may or may not invest back into parts of the world they mine for resources in the form of support or the stories of trauma they need to continue to justify their work.

Another effect of the concentration of resources to work on issues of LGBT(I) rights in major metropolitan areas is the effect that this has on 'audiences' for messages about queer existence/inclusion/liberation in 'out-of-the-way places' (Tsing, 1993). Shannon Bell (2016), writing again about environmental justice, demonstrates the ways in which movements that have gained visibility through celebrity participation and support from large organisations

‘elsewhere’ (in metropolitan centres) can easily be assigned ‘outsider’ status, even when the initial actions and continued leadership for resistance to the fossil fuel industry are locally based. The perception of ‘outside’ influence becomes a deterrent to support of any issue. This is true for LGBT(I) rights issues as well: Mary Gray (2009) has written about the ways in which queer youth in rural Kentucky have to ‘manage’ the pressure that a metronormatively structured ‘gay identity’ puts on them to become recognizably ‘gay’ and the conflicts with their status as ‘familiar locals’ that emerges from this pressure. If being ‘gay’ means being something that is only found elsewhere – in cities – how is it possible to be ‘gay’ at home?

This research, then, poses for itself two overarching questions. Firstly, I seek out the prevalence and power of LGBT(I) rights discourses in ‘out-of-the-way places’, and research activists’ reflections on strategisation both within and beyond these discourses. Secondly, I ask how these discourses of strategisation reveal geographies of queer work which challenge notions of borders defined by the nation. Raising questions about the discursive productions of geographic locations is not meant and should not function to minimise the violence that can be found in any location. The theoretical work that interests me here shares with those who work in the areas of human rights the cessation of all forms of violence so that human flourishing can be cultivated in every location.

A note on language

In this dissertation, I will use several terms referring to queer populations and the work of advocacy claiming to represent them in specific ways. I want to be clear about how I am doing that. One important way of ‘staying with the trouble’ (Haraway, 2016) of theorising disparate contexts together is to recognise the way that norms around terminology operate differently. Most generally, institutionalised advocacy organisations in the United States use the acronym LGBT, though there are sometimes variations, such as LGBTQ or LGBTQ+. In South Africa, as is true across the continent, the dominant acronym used to describe the

work of advocacy is LGBTI, which is ‘more inclusive’ than the dominant acronym employed in the US context (Ekine, 2013: 88). Intersex individuals face a distinct set of challenges related to gender norms that are not encompassed in the acronym LGBT. For American organisations to use the acronym LGBT, it seems that either they consider these distinct issues that are nevertheless directly related to how gender acts coercively on bodies through institutions such as hospitals and medical research to exist outside of LGBT issues, or they have not ‘heard of intersex people and their rights in this struggle’ (Ekine, 2013: 88). Either way, it is African movements for gender and sexual diversity that employ the more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between social constructions of gender and the body through their inclusion of the ‘I’ in the ‘LGBTI’ acronym.

To keep this distinction in mind in an attempt to be mindful of context, even as qualitative materials from both contexts are theorised as a body, I refer to institutionalised advocacy efforts in the American South, the United States, and in an international context launched from the global North, with the acronym ‘LGBT’. I will refer to institutionalised advocacy efforts in South Africa and on the African continent with the acronym ‘LGBTI’. When referring to institutionalised advocacy efforts in the two contexts together, I will modify the acronym to ‘LGBT(I)’, so that the South African context is not subsumed within the hegemony of the less inclusive acronym ‘LGBT’, erasing the very real ways in which the acronym in use by African movements around gender and sexual diversity has normalised a more expansive constellation of queer existence than the North American acronym, whether or not there is substantive work happening in relation to intersex issues at all organisations that claim to work on LGBTI rights or not. It can and should be argued that the ‘T’ and the ‘I’ and the ‘B’ occupy a more liminal space in terms of the priorities set by organisations claiming to work as ‘LGBTI’ organisations, in the same way that the ‘T’ and the ‘B’ are not prioritised in the work of self-identified ‘LGBT’ organisations in the US. Such an elaboration is mostly beyond the scope of this project. However, I will acknowledge the gap between the acronyms claimed by organisations (LGBT or LGBTI) and the more circumscribed

programming and advocacy work that they often advance by referring to such organisations as ‘self-identified LGBT(I)’ advocacy or rights organisations.

I will employ the term queer in two ways. Queer will either indicate a subversive political position – a ‘politics’ – or it will serve as a descriptive term that does not seek to distinguish between the L, G, B, T, or I, but at the same time acknowledge the existence of people who claim an identity that is subversive in relation to dominant norms of gender and sexuality or people who are generally treated by law and policy as outside of the boundaries of heteronormativity. I write awkwardly in relation to this descriptive designation of queer partly because the legacy of colonial laws does not distinguish between what is understood as a subversion of gender and what is seen as a subversion of sexuality. Instead these laws can be invoked to punish same-sex sexuality or gender non-conformity without distinction, even as it is always imperative to recognise the subtleties of how people claim their identities and live their existences. Throughout the dissertation, I will use the singular ‘they’ to refer to authors and research participants in an effort to work against the way that the structure of the English language erases gender variance through its binary gender third person singular pronouns. Additionally, this refusal to gender participants provides another layer of anonymity over their responses. I understand that there can be debate about using gender neutral pronouns to refer to people who describe themselves with gendered pronouns. However, I am also cognisant of the assumptions at work in gendering individuals who, as many of the authors whose work I draw from, are unknown by me personally. My attempt to work with language in a way that seeks to de-emphasize binary gender conventions is an attempt to honour the work of participants whose work confronts a binary gender system as one source of the violence they face.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is comprised of seven chapters. The second chapter reviews the literature that provides theoretical context for the research I've carried out here. This review of literature theorises the relationships between space, time and 'rights' most frequently mobilised by a metronormative spatial politics of sexuality. The literature review in the second chapter also considers several ethnographic projects in order to explore the relationship between metronormative projects and projects situated in 'out-of-the-way places' that provide a critical lens through which to view the complexity of diverse locations as they come into contact with hegemonic discourses of LGBT(I) rights. The third chapter is a chapter that articulates the methodological frame informing my approach to this project. In it, I discuss my positionality as a catalyst for this research, elaborate on the relationship between the two different spaces considered together in this dissertation, detail the methods I used to collect and analyse the data presented in the analysis and consider some ethical concerns with which I grappled as I designed and carried out this project as research.

The analysis, which is comprised of three chapters, is structured so that it moves from a consideration of hegemonic discourses of LGBT(I) rights as those discourses presented themselves through the data gathered for this project to a place that considers carefully what it means to work and live queerly in 'out-of-the-way places', which have been identified by the literature as unrecognisable as sites of queer life. The movement through these three chapters travels from the discursive place of 'universal rights' through fissures, contestations and tensions around the meaning of the very rights set up to measure queer habitability to a place where those fissures, contestations and tensions are navigated as a part of what it means to be locatable in one's context. Some of those contestations are related to erasures at the intersections of sexuality, gender identity, race, class and geography. The two intersections I work with in the analysis are those stemming from the dominance of whiteness in LGBT(I) rights work, creating erasures of queer people of colour but also impoverishing the possibility of a robust racial justice analysis in queer organising work and

the cisnormativity of much LGBT(I) rights work that imperils the prioritisation of the needs of transgender, intersex and gender non-conforming populations. These fissures then lead to the necessity of an analysis that not only takes into account specific needs of each letter of the LGBT(I) acronym, but the specificities of 'home' in which queer people live their lives. The third and final analytical chapter is deeply rooted in the contexts under consideration in this document. That chapter (chapter six) speaks to what it means to live and work queerly in a 'home' that does not register in the hegemonic metronormative discourse of rights.

The concluding chapter (chapter seven) then re-tells the story presented in the analytical chapters and presents some reflection on the research process that resulted in this dissertation. I'm particularly interested in the concluding chapter in questions of uncertainties, limitations on what it is possible to know, barriers around my own positionality, but also, ways of working queerly that point to a future where illegible contexts that have been written off the map are actually places where the gestures toward living queerly reside, if only they are not further marginalised through the dominance of the metronormative lens.

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter is organised in sections to review critical literature in debates on questions of space, diversity, queer activism and the discourses through which notions of progress and marginalisation are circulated. The first section establishes a frame where connecting geographically disparate spaces analytically opens up possibilities for thinking through continued disparities in resources that work against the freedom, safety and well-being of some, even as they secure the freedom, safety and well-being of others. Here I review the work of theorists who have begun to theorize relationships between disparate global spaces that are separated by physical and ideological borders. This literature is the entry point to the theoretical framework guiding my own analysis of two global locations that are geographically far from one another, but still situated within global political and economic dynamics shaped by discourses of rights. The section then moves on to theory that explores the temporal dynamics that are mapped onto different spaces through the spatial politics of sexuality. Finally, the section reviewing theoretical perspectives outlines some of the material implications justified and sustained by discursive formations which organise geographic relationships to rights through a temporal framework.

The following subsections map the discursive implications of spatial politics as they are elaborated through ethnographic work. ‘Contested Metronorms’ examines ethnographies that carry metronormative assumptions in their frameworks and positions those in relation to ethnographies critical of such assumptions. This is followed by ‘Context as Epistemology’, where I review several ethnographies that rely on ways of knowing inseparable from their contexts. This section also offers an overview of other empirical approaches to treating specific contexts as sites of generating epistemology that is otherwise obscured by the dominance of the metronormative.

The theorists whose work I draw from in the following literature review have a deep interest in the spatial politics of sexuality. They query whether bodily autonomy and something that looks like freedom can be achieved through the mobilisation of a discourse of ‘rights’ imagined as applied to an individual but universal subject. If histories of colonisation and contemporary formations of globalisation create geographic disparities in power and wealth and barriers in access to safety, well-being and freedom, these theorists argue that imagination itself demands re-creation in order to respond to those who defy the rubric of any ‘universal’.

Across borders: Where is queer?

Seeking connections between geographical spaces as dissimilar as the United States South and South Africa demands strong theoretical support. I begin this overview of literature by offering some theoretical gestures toward the importance of making links between contextually grounded analyses of differently-located spaces (Haraway, 1991; Aboul-Ela, 2007; Tsing, 2015), especially in the face of a globalisation that sustains a ‘radically uneven distribution of material wealth’, the result of which is that ‘political and economic divisions’ are ‘profoundly spatial’ (Aboul-Ela, 2007: 1). I use Tsing’s (1993) conceptual framework of ‘out-of-the-way places’ to trace the contours of marginalisation in LGBT(I) rights work that occurs outside of the metropole, where funding and decision-making structures are disproportionately located. A former director of a US-based transnational LGBT(I) rights organisation locates that metropole (of LGBT(I) rights) in New York City:

You just can’t do this work in the U.S. and not have a very strong base, if not your base, in New York. Because that’s where everyone comes in and out of, it’s the UN, it’s the missions, it’s the U.S. It’s everything (Thorseon, 2014: 44).

If New York City is ‘everything’, everywhere else is not ‘everything’, locating those places that are elsewhere at a distance, somewhere else. Tsing (1993: ix) is specific about what constitutes an ‘out-of-the-way place’ in their work with the Meratus Dayak. They use it to

refer to communities viewed as *so far out of the way* that there are debates about whether they have been in contact with an ‘outside’ world, making them ‘completely separate from the imagined “us” of modernity or else they weren’t interesting enough to talk about.’

Because Tsing’s (1993: xi) interest is in geographic marginality as a way of thinking through ‘distinctive and unequal subject positions within common fields of power and knowledge’, ‘out-of-the-way places’ as a concept is full of versatile potential:

Local places are known and defined in relation to other places. Marginality is not just geographical distancing, but also political, economic and cultural distancing. The importance of the concept of marginality is its imagined centre, which, by definition, can be anywhere. An ‘out-of-the-way place’, then, is also a relational concept that requires an examination of what and where the centre is. Equally important, this examination includes attention to the dynamics of local historical and cultural understandings. To engage with these insights requires working with complex constellations of culture and power at various scales of analysis (Underhill-Sem, 2003: 44).

As a conceptual frame, ‘out-of-the-way places’ does not adhere to the binary of urban and rural. It is possible for a place to be both urban and ‘out of the way’ or for urban locations to contain ‘out-of-the-way places’ within them or at their peri-urban peripheries. In writing about the term metropolitan in relation to a global gay subjectivity, Sinfield (2000) outlines three criteria that contribute to a definition of ‘metropolitan’ that are useful in examining the construction of marginality in geographically disparate locations. The metropolitan is comprised of ‘global centres of capital’; spaces where ‘global interaction has produced local versions of the metropolis in large cities all over the world’; and ‘subordinated groups living at or near the centres of capital, and specifically non-white minorities, may be in some aspects non-metropolitan’ (Sinfield, 2000: 21). Though these metropolitan centres exist around the globe, ‘America supplies the ideology for the metropolitan gay model’ (Sinfield, 2000: 26). Though the ‘metropolitan gay model’ (Sinfield, 2000: 32) has been constructed as the dominant model of egalitarian and liberated queer subjectivity, it is one among many possibilities for structuring queer life.

However, as Mary Gray observes, '[t]he contemporary story of gay identity formation in the United States is that it started in (and could not have happened without) a city' (Gray, 2009: 6). In order to address the marginality of non-metropolitan locations within queer theory, Spurlin (2006: 133-134) speaks to 'the gaps or absences in dominant queer theoretical productions, insofar as these discourses are overinscribed by western, metropolitan understandings of "queer."' As Halberstam (2005: 35) has noted, 'most theories of homosexuality within the twentieth century assume that gay culture is rooted in cities, that it has a special relationship to urban life, and that . . . erotic dissidents require urban space because in rural settings queers are easily identified and punished.' The result is a metronormativity 'that imagines the metropolis as the only sustainable space for queers' (Herring, 2010: 14) and gay migration as a 'one-way trip to sexual freedom, to communal visibility, and to a gay village . . . whose streets are paved with rainbow pride' (Herring, 2010: 15). Similarly, the title of Weston's (1995) 'Get thee to a Big City', which examines rural queer subjectivity *through* the migration of rural gays and lesbians to urban destinations, articulates the prevalence of the conflation of urban and queer in queer theory.

In making the argument that 'the discourse of sexuality in the modern United States is a profoundly spatial one' (Johnson, 2013: 13), Johnson argues that 'whatever happens in cities seems to register as being meaningful on both a personal and social level,' a presumption about the importance of life in cities that results in the increased importance of the metropolitan in narrating its own version of what matters, historically and discursively speaking. Though Johnson attributes this elision of metropolitan and social significance to 'scale', the metronormativity inherent in such moves means that 'it is comparatively easy to leap from extreme specificity to broad generality without even necessarily noticing that one is doing so. For example, one riot becomes the geographical epicenter of a movement' (Johnson, 2013: 12). Because the metropolitan has the power to define what a proper queer citizen is (Puar, 2007), it remains 'unmarked' (Haraway, 1991), projecting an outward gaze onto the out-of-the-way places against which it has constructed itself as 'modern'.

The spatial and temporal dynamics of queer marginality

Aboul-Ela argues that there is a temporal dynamic to the conceptualisation of space and the consolidation of power. Halberstam (2005) and Butler (2009), too, take up the relationship between the temporal and the spatial in separate theoretical projects. Halberstam's (2005) theorization of queer temporality describes discursive formations surrounding urban/rural binaries that position the queer subjects inhabiting these respective geographical spaces in relations of not only geographical distance but also temporal distance from one another. Butler (2009) examines the discursive cultural space occupied by Islam in European productions of 'modernity'. Though these respective projects are focused on different contexts, Halberstam (2005) and Butler (2009) illustrate the ways in which discourses of modernity map temporal notions of the 'premodern' onto rural American spaces/Islamic cultural spaces by defining modernity against discursive constructions of 'the premodern'. Considering such projects together demonstrates how disparate spaces can cohere in the face of homogenising discourses of 'modernity'.

Connections between 'culture', 'place', and 'progress' have a history. Tsing writes about place in conceptions of modernity, demonstrating the ways that 'an urban imagination . . . systematically has denied the possibilities of difference *within* the modern world and thus looked to relatively isolated people to represent its only adversary, its dying Other' (Tsing, 1993: xi). The reality, though, far from the discursive formation produced by this anthropological tradition, is that the geographically isolated groups with which Tsing spent time and about which they write:

. . . share with anyone who might read this book a world of expanding capitalisms, ever militarizing nation-states, and contested cultural politics. They also speak from perspectives that are distinctive from those of urban Indonesians, or non-Indonesians, but these are distinctions forged in dialogue, not in archaic isolation (Tsing, 1993: xi).

Tsing (1993: 89) argues the consequences of homogenising traditions that view differently situated geographic areas as 'independent cultural units' come from 'models of culture that

stress coherence of internal political dynamics,' which 'make it difficult to talk about diversity, opposition and change.' Viewing differently situated geographically marginalised locations as 'independent cultural units' means erasing ways 'of understanding the divergent cultural commitments of subordinate peripheral groups' (Tsing, 1993: 89).

Homogenising discursive constructions of sites outside of the metropole carry consequences for those inhabiting and working queerly in non-metropolitan spaces. In developing a framework called 'gay international', Massad (2002: 374) articulates these consequences as 'incitement to discourse.' This 'incitement to discourse' is a result of the reification of colonial categories, such as homosexuality, '[used] as the organizing principle' for interpreting queer life, even as people living queerly in a place outside of the 'gay international's' moorings in the 'mythological West' have and have had diverse, historically and contextually rooted understandings of gender and sexuality (Massad, 2002: 370). These expansive understandings of same-sex sexual practices and diverse expressions of gender were often institutionalised in their contexts (Ekine & Abbas: 2013). Colonial erasure of queer existence was enacted through penal codes that criminalised any form of sexual and gender expression that did not adhere to and advance reproductive sexual norms institutionalised through the Christian religious doctrine enshrined in the colonial state (Ekine, 2013). One way that neo-colonial erasure of diverse ways of living queerly occurs is through the institutionalisation of colonial categories of sexuality and gender within the operation of the 'gay international', which '[heterosexualizes] a world that is being forced to be fixed by a Western binary' when 'most non-Western civilizations . . . have not subscribed historically to these categories' (Massad, 2002: 383).

'Incitement to discourse' then, does not require the evocation of positive discourse from sites outside of the metropole. In fact, reliance on 'negativity toward the mission of the Gay International' is used to sort geographies into one of two types of places:

The fact that the incited discourse is characterized by negativity toward the mission of the Gay International is immaterial. By inciting discourse on homosexual and gay and lesbian rights and identities, the very ontology of gayness is instituted in a

discourse that could have only two reactions to the claims of universal gayness: support them or oppose them without ever questioning their epistemological underpinnings . . . The Gay International's fight is therefore not an epistemological one but rather a simple political struggle where the world is divided between the supporters and opponents of gay rights (Massad, 2002: 374).

It is on this terrain that LGBT(I) rights work occurs. In their ethnographic study of ILGHRC, Ryan Thoreson (2014) describes the tensions that arise between the individual (and often more critical) perspectives of staff members and more hegemonic institutional policies and mandates. The organisation's central purpose is to 'enshrine the view that LGBT people have human rights worth protecting and promoting' (Thoreson, 2014: 183). This work, though, is conducted by individuals, termed 'brokers' by Thoreson, whose work is a 'contingent outcome of ongoing and highly particular choices about constituencies, priorities, and tactics' (Thoreson, 2014: 61). Thoreson describes several brokers who possessed keen critiques of the human rights framework, but who felt that work in the sector was valuable enough to justify pursuing it in spite of those critiques. For this reason, Thoreson sees what Massad refers to as the 'gay international' as a much more textured and variegated undertaking, full of contradiction and compromise in pursuit of the common interest of LGBT rights.

The consequences of the use of norms with colonial histories in the pursuit of 'rights' for lgbtiq people in 'peripheralised' (Aboul-Ela, 2007) geographies, though, are not negligible. As Massad (2002: 375) notes, '[t]he Gay International has succeeded in inciting discourse by attracting antigay Islamist and nationalist reactions to its efforts', which narrows the possibilities for living queerly, especially in places whose histories are shaped by their emergence from official colonial rule. Lorway (2015: 8) picks up this discussion in relation to the African continent, based on ethnographic work conducted in Namibia. Lorway writes both about statements made by prominent political leaders and governing party spokespeople and the ways in which international journalists characterise those statements to conclude that the 'pervasive problem of homophobia outside the West has supplied international human rights organizations such as the International Lesbian and Gay

Association (ILGA), the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch with a global measuring stick for ranking and classifying nations on a scale of rationality' (Lorway, 2015: 8). LGBT(I) rights are central to the calibration of that scale.

While homophobic statements from African leaders are often interpreted as driven by an irrational homophobia, Lorway (2015: 21) maps the strategic shape that they take in mobilising a nationalism to counter imperial relations of power that have continued beyond the period of formal colonial rule. According to Lorway (2015: 21), such statements also serve to 'mask' the role of political leaders and their parties 'in widening disparities of wealth accumulation' in contemporary African contexts. In this way, 'damning and damaging remarks' are not driven by 'a thoughtless, culturally circumscribed irrationality,' but are 'an instrumentalization of sexuality' that 'advanced a political rationality that was highly effective' in Namibia's political context (2015: 21).

Ndashe (2013: 155) writes about the political function of obsession with African homophobia in 'the West' by thinking through the 'single story' of 'Africa' as homophobic, rather than a story about 'the opportunities and challenges of building and sustaining relationships with other movements, local, regional and international.' This single story is mobilised to undermine the work of local activists and movements in confronting the homophobia activists do not deny exists at the same time that it colonises the space for better resourced outside organisations to justify their mandate:

The single story is indeed a dangerous story that makes it easier to impose ready-made solutions in the sea of 'nothingness'; it makes it easier to undermine local processes because 'they are not happening'; and it makes it easier to co-opt individuals and call them local movements in order to gain a foothold in a country. This gives non-African voices the cover to pursue their own agendas and reinforces homophobic elements within society when they argue that homosexuality is part of a Western agenda. Even with the best intentions, foreign interventions often misunderstand local dynamics and politics and can do much more harm than good. More fundamentally, the attempted foreign leadership of the movement's struggle in Africa subordinates the interests of local community to those of external actors, reinforcing entrenched racial divides within the global movement and drowning progressive voices and positive developments (Ndashe, 2013: 156).

Ultimately, the work of transnational organisations interested in LGBT(I) rights has been 'built on the premise of saving Africans from Africa' (Ndashe, 2013: 90). Mapping (and challenging) the discursive formations (Foucault, 1972) of marginality in LGBT(I) rights work and queer theory becomes a project to restore the complex subjectivity of those inhabiting these spaces and has the potential to 'decolonize' and rethink 'center-periphery' relationships in the knowledge produced through queer theoretical frameworks (Spurlin, 2006). Halberstam (2005) has done some work in this direction by attempting to unsettle the discursive hegemony that maps time onto space. In order to problematise the conflation of urban and queer, Halberstam (2005) first maps the form that such constructions take, by examining the assumptions around false consciousness that accompany the equation of 'the physical journey from small town to big city with the psychological journey from closet case to out and proud' (Halberstam, 2005: 37).

It is the conflation of the spatial and the temporal that allows this rhetorical move to work:

the metronormative narrative maps a story of migration onto the coming-out narrative. While the story of coming out tends to function as a temporal trajectory within which a period of disclosure follows a long period of repression, the metronormative story of migration from 'country' to 'town' is a spatial narrative within which the subject moves to a place of tolerance after enduring life in a place of suspicion, persecution, and secrecy (Halberstam, 2005: 37).

Similarly, in a global context, Butler (2009) critiques the complicity of neoliberal discourses of gay rights in constructions of modernity deployed against racialized populations, particularly in immigration practices designed to close European borders to Muslim immigrants from specific parts of the world, especially the Middle East and North Africa. Massad, Halberstam and Butler, then, provide ways of thinking about the relationship between temporality and geography in the construction of modernity that contribute a strong theoretical framework to understanding the discursive formations of the metropolitan and queer subjectivity outside of the metropole. If modernity has a

geographical location, then those outside of the metropole (queer or not) are constructed as premodern (Massad, 2002; Halberstam, 2005; Butler, 2009).

Herring (2010: 15) refers to the resulting representational frame of (premodern) non-metropolitan geographies as ‘hinterlands best viewed from the window seat of your plane.’ Herring employs a framework of critical rusticity to confront the conflation of queer and urban within the work of much of the queer theory produced in the United States since the 1980s. They open their text with an introduction subtitled ‘I Hate New York’, and indicate that they are frustrated with ‘the city’s awesome capacity to imagine itself as the be-all and the end-all of modern queer life’ (Herring, 2010: 1). However, what animates the text is the frustration Herring feels at the ease with which queer and urban are conflated: ‘What I really hate is the casualness with which this move is dispatched, the taken-for-granted assumption that you want to be on that tiny island [Manhattan] . . . and be there soon. That you want to get there someday, somehow, and *get out* of this godforsaken town’ (Herring, 2010: 1). The desirability with which the metropolitan as a location for queer life is framed is supported by representations of rural locations as uninhabitable for queer life. The way that ‘rurality’ is ‘depicted’ in relation to ‘LGBT identities’ complicates the challenges that queer youth living in rural areas navigate, including space, isolation, community, and the expectation that they ‘come out’ to be legibly queer:

Arguably, media’s social force seems heightened (sometimes hyped?) in rural places not because of a complete absence of LGBT-identifying or queer-desiring individuals with whom rural youth might identify, but because of the way rurality itself is depicted as antithetical to LGBT identities. Mass media consistently narrate rural LGBT identities as out of place, necessarily estranged from authentic (urban) queerness. These images teach rural youth to look anywhere but homeward for LGBT identities (Gray, 2009: 12).

Herring (2010: 14) characterizes the ‘urban/rural’ binary as ‘not a “real” binary; it is rather a locational rubric that supports and sustains the conventional depiction of queer life as urban.’ As a counterpoint to a view of out-of-the-way places as colonised by a ‘modernity’ projected from metropolitan centres, Reid questions the flexibility of concepts of modernity

in geographically marginalised locations. In their ethnography of gay hairstylists and activists in rural South Africa, they demonstrate links between gay identities, fashion and modernity, suggesting that the association between ‘gay’ and ‘fashion’ creates the link with modernity because ‘hair comes to embody social and political change, a form of identification as Africans’ and that queer bodies then negotiate their contexts in ways that generate mechanisms to produce ‘public gay space’, where ‘gays are also seen to embody modernity in the form of the ideals contained in the Constitution and the values of constitutional democracy’ (Reid, 2013: 41).

The complexity of such negotiations with context cannot be reduced to the homogeneities structured by a debate that dichotomises the global and local, only considering ‘a proliferation of “Western” concepts of sexual identity in the rest of the world’ in distinct opposition to ‘local forms of sexual self-understanding’ (Reid, 2013: 43). In this debate, both binary poles are reified, leaving no room for the flexibility and creativity Reid describes in the negotiations of queer life in an ‘out-of-the-way place’ that is situated in a globalised world:

Thus, forms of self-identification that draw on national and transnational (global) discourses of gay and lesbian identity are increasingly evoked. Gay activism is also an avant-garde practice in this context – a form of self-styling and presentation of a particular ‘modern gay identity’ that is also necessary in establishing important networks and even in securing resources. Both are aspects of modernity as imagined in local worlds (Reid, 2013: 41).

Reid’s (2013: 42) approach demonstrates the ways that ‘small-town gays’ position themselves at the interstices of local and globalised meanings of modernity, negotiating their contexts through ‘modes of self-styling and performance’ that ‘are ways of conceiving and performing the self as “modern”, with the incumbent advantages and disadvantages – the positive and negative associations with fashion and the ambivalent place that homosexuality occupies.’ Much research about sexualities located in ‘out-of-the-way places’ in the global South has been preoccupied with the question of whether globally dominant iterations of ‘gay’ or local and particularised versions of queerness are most prevalent (Reid, 2013). Such

investigations miss the point (Bennett, 2014), preventing faithful accounts of the operations of power driving the question. Writing about the legalisation of same-sex marriage in South Africa through the passage of the Civil Union Act in 2006, Bennett is clear that the only way to understand that legislative change and responses to it is through attention to a ‘country-specific set of contestations’ (Bennett, 2015: S56). ‘Country-specific’ concerns are the more primary and urgent questions identified by Bennett (2015: S54-S55) wherein ‘equality for women, redistribution of power based in the privilege of race/class, and the meaning of the link between “the family” and “the nation” are in constant contestation.’

‘Country-specific’ concerns become obscured in a story about same-sex marriage framed as a universal right, when the idea of gay rights continues to be associated with an American impulse to discipline the rest of the world into its own image with the missionary zeal observed by Massad (2002). Adam (2003) argues that, in reality, the United States experienced ‘lag’ in securing relationship recognition for lgbtiq people. Yet, at the same time, ‘a notion like “lag” is ‘so often applied to societies outside the United States by measuring them against an American standard’ (Adam, 2003: 275). The historical and contextual unevenness here – the global model of metropolitan gay being an American one (Sinfield, 2000), while same-sex sexuality remained criminalised and relationship recognition was resisted for so much longer in the United States than in other countries in the global North (Adam, 2003) demonstrates the necessity of considering each context in relation to its ‘country-specific’ (Bennett, 2014) political terrain. Such contradictions also demonstrate how unreliable hegemonic narratives derived from spatial politics are in understanding the specificities of context.

However, the idea that marriage matters in a particular way has become a very compelling narrative (Adam, 2003; Scott, 2014). Though ‘marriage has long been implicated in a politics of exclusion’ (Adam, 2003: 274), same-sex marriage can be difficult to criticize because to be critical of marriage, especially in the context of conversations about same-sex marriage, is to take a contentious position:

Even relatively popular feminist critiques of the institution of marriage could not trump the new call for ‘marriage equality’ – meaning access for same-sex couples to the fundamentally unequal institution designed to privilege certain family formations for the purpose of state control (Spade, 2011: 66).

While it clearly is an issue of discrimination any time that a particular group is excluded from some practice on the basis of a characteristic that they share, marriage matters in this narrative in a very particular way:

The framing of marriage as the most essential legal need of queer people, and as the method through which queer people can obtain key benefits in many realms, ignores how race, class, ability, indigeneity, and immigration status determine access to those benefits and reduces the gay rights agenda to a project of restoring race, class, ability, and immigration status privilege to the most privileged gays and lesbians (Spade, 2011: 62).

The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) places same-sex marriage at the top of their list of legal recognitions that can be granted to lgbtiq people in their global map of LGBT(I) rights around the world (ILGA, 2017). Though the form of the map has changed over time, ‘evolving’ from ‘a single overview map’ to ‘a unique set of maps’, the maps are designed around a ‘ranking’ of policy that moves from ‘criminalisation’ to ‘recognition’ (ILGA, 2017). Marriage (‘recognition’), in this map, is positioned opposite death (as the most extreme punitive measure for same-sex sexuality), meaning that marriage is an indication of the highest recognition of human dignity possible in ILGA’s prioritisation of formal legal rights. I have written elsewhere (Scott, 2013) about the implications of such a ranking, arguing that it obscures the ways in which marriage does not protect lgbtiq people from violence, and wondering how productive such a ranking can ultimately be.

Until the Supreme Court decision that resulted in the legalisation of same-sex marriage in the United States in June of 2015, gains for lgbtiq people in the United States at the national and state levels had been limited. Energy and funds invested in marriage equality work had seen limited success over several decades. Polikoff (2008) argues that the focus on same-sex marriage as a policy goal limited more expansive work in family law that would not only have

benefitted a greater number of people in diverse family formations, but would also have moved toward ending the privileged status of marriage as the exclusive relationship through which it is possible to form legal kinship ties. Butler (2004: 106) argues that a focus on marriage as a goal for lgbtiq people results in a narrowing of the 'sexual field' in its emphasis on respectability and narrow definitions of kinship. Polikoff (2008) argues that family law was moving more in the direction of a plurality of kinship arrangements not defined (and limited) by marriage until the LGBT rights policy agenda became fixed on marriage.

The implications of this choice by national LGBT rights organisations were not spatially neutral. As explored by D'Emilio (2010), the marriage equality 'wins' in a few states where same-sex couples already had some access to partnership recognition came at the expense of queer folks in the rest of the country, where anti-same-sex marriage initiatives had become even more deeply entrenched, making it difficult to advance any other kind of 'positive' legislation in relation to LGBT rights. D'Emilio calls the campaign for same-sex marriage in the United States 'an unmitigated disaster' because it 'created a vast body of *new* anti-gay law' (D'Emilio, 2010: 37).

Not only must a discussion of moments such as the adoption of the Civil Union Act of 2006 be accounted for in relation to the histories in which they are inextricably located and *locatable*, viewing such moments in 'peripheralised' geographies as purely the result of influences from more powerful 'elsewheres', such as the global North or metropolitan centres, obscures the ways in which even colonising discourses and languages are acted upon and transformed by their arrival in the margins. Workshops in 'small-town South Africa', for instance, circulate terminologies about 'lgbtiq' from the global North, but cannot be understood outside of their specific and locatable context:

Thus in the workshops, the terms are imbued with new local meanings. They are translated in a local context and rendered intelligible to the workshop participants. So it is not the participants who are transformed into modern sexual subjects, it is the terms themselves that are imbued with new meanings (Reid, 2013: 192).

Theorists such as Reid argue that spending time in ‘out-of-the-way places’ reveals what the metronormative narrative of the city as the only site of queer life obscures. The review I offer here suggests that the ways in which hegemonic discourses travel in ‘out-of-the-way places’ trouble the temporal binary of ‘modern’ and ‘premodern’ mapped onto ‘metropolitan’ and ‘out-of-the-way places’. Queer subjects in marginalised spaces translate and make use of such discourses in ways that are not reducible to understandings of ‘out-of-the-way places’ as spaces that are shaped only by discourses from beyond or by distinct local meanings, isolated from the rest of the world in which they are situated. This contestation between the ‘local’ and the ‘global’ will receive much more attention in the consideration of ethnographies later in this literature review, but first it is necessary to consider the theorization of the material effects justified and sustained by discourses that map the temporal onto the geographical, placing marginalised geographies even further ‘out of the way’ from the metropolitan centres their resources are often mined to sustain.

Material and epistemological implications of geographic marginalisation

General knowledge about marginalised geographies relies upon particular ideas about these geographies and the people inhabiting them to advance colonising projects (Said, 1978; Mutua, 2002; Keefe, 2009). There are many similarities in the ways that marginality in diverse geographical locations has been treated. Yet, fidelity to context requires an exploration of the very significant ways in which their treatment in the historical and contemporary globalised imagination has differed.

Global South spaces are inhabited largely with indigenous populations. However, those who consider themselves and are considered Appalachian, for instance, by others, are largely not indigenous to the area that constitutes this part of rural America. Whether directly involved in the eviction of indigenous peoples from the land or occupying the territory after the forced removal of the peoples who originally inhabited it, rural white Americans are implicated in the colonial processes that resulted in their occupancy of the land they inhabit,

regardless of the further economic and cultural colonization that occurred after their occupancy (Alexander, 2010). Even socioeconomically marginalized white people were part of this history: 'Whiteness was established as the status that bestowed the power to own slaves and profit from their labor and be eligible to own property forcibly taken from indigenous people' (Spade, 2011: 115).

The pervasive whiteness in rural America means that rural American locations must be 'thought about through the racial project of whiteness and the historical construction of working-class "whiteness" as a place of both privilege and oppression' which means that 'we must avoid either romanticizing rural lives or demonizing them: rural queers in particular may participate in certain orders of bigotry (like racism or political conservatism) while being victimized and punished by others (like homophobia and sexism)' (Halberstam, 2005: 39). White populations outside of the metropole become 'not quite white' through a process of racialisation directed at rural white populations living in poverty (Wray, 2006). As Wray notes, rural America 'conjures images of poor, ignorant, racist whites: trailer parks and wife beaters, too many kids and not enough government cheese. It's hard to care about such people. It's even harder to take them seriously' (Wray, 2006: x). Places where it is difficult 'to care' about people become sacrifice zones (Klein, 2014).

Mutua (2002) suggests that there are ways in which the project of establishing a set of norms termed universal human rights, but informed by the discursive formation of rights situated very specifically in the context of liberal democracy, is an extension of the colonial project, the newest permutation of imperialism, wherein the global North can continue the exploitation begun during the period of formal colonisation under the guise of a new humanitarian project. Rural American spaces are exemplificative of such marginalisations within the United States in ways that subaltern spaces exemplify such marginalisation in a global context (Halberstam, 2005). The *underdevelopment* of colonised land (in both contexts) occurred through the same process that allowed the 'development' of the colonial powers:

Resource extraction helped to fuel urbanization and industrialization on the East Coast, especially the Northeastern United States. Meanwhile, the inevitable rising taxes in the mountains and the need for money in an increasingly market-driven rather than subsistence-based economy forced farmers to sell out or take on wage labor jobs to supplement household incomes. The nature of the industries that took root in the region did not require a sophisticated labor force, and management actually benefited from the perpetuation of a mono-economy forcing workers to accept undesirable and dangerous jobs for low pay (Keefe, 2009: 4).

This trajectory 'of modernization and industrialization in Appalachia did not result in a rising standard of living but instead produced one of the highest rates of poverty in the country' (Keefe, 2009: 139). By characterizing the human rights corpus as a 'testament to the conceptual, cultural, economic, military and philosophical domination of the European West over non-European peoples and traditions' (Mutua, 2002: 154), Mutua reveals the political nature of the project of human rights in the age of neoliberalism.

Because neoliberal forces of globalisation exert themselves across the world in ways that produce different devastations, anti-capitalist and feminist thinkers (Haraway, 1991; Mohanty, 2003; Klein, 2014; Haraway, 2016; Tsing, 2015) argue that carefully contextualised and localised work can and should be used to cultivate resistance across borders. Such a project requires fidelity to specific locations but can strengthen resistance to the globalising forces of contemporary mechanisms of capitalism. The epistemological goal is to build an 'earth-wide network of connections, including the ability partially to translate knowledges among very different – and power-differentiated – communities' (Haraway, 1991: 187). Carefully contextualised work can elucidate both the devastations of capitalism and the kinds of interconnected knowledges and politics necessary to survive in 'capitalist ruins' (Tsing, 2015).

In fact, sometimes it is through looking to 'capitalist ruins' that it is possible to see the collaborative strategies that will be necessary to survive in those ruins. Tsing (2015) found such an example in the matsutake mushroom. They trace the mushroom's shifting meaning between multiple contexts. Sometimes it exists as a commodity with a material value; sometimes it exists as a material object with symbolic currency as precious gift or symbol of

freedom or resistance. Tsing is interested, though, in the conditions necessary for the mushroom to survive and flourish. This is a precious commodity (in some contexts) that requires devastation to thrive and that sustains its existence symbiotically with other organisms that themselves find ways to survive in ruins (Tsing, 2015).

For Naomi Klein, it is only through resistance in localised refusals to succumb to globalised instruments of power exercised by corporations and states that will confront a problem ‘without borders’ (Mohanty, 2003: 2) such as climate change. Klein (2014) shows not only how small-scale ecologies can be healed to improve the health of the larger world, but also that the only thing that has been successful in stopping what they call ‘extreme’ resource extraction, has been individuals and communities coming together to put their bodies on the line by standing in the path of extractivist projects that jeopardise the health and well-being of the communities that are in the path of those projects.

Contested (metro)norms

The previous sections dealt with material and epistemological questions raised by theorists interested in spatial politics. In this subsection and the one that follows, I survey literature that demonstrates how (primarily) ethnographic research frames studies of lgbtiq activism and existence in ‘out-of-the-way places’ (Tsing, 1993). In a study of what the author calls ‘gay Cape Town’, Oswin attempts to determine whether there is a globalised gay identity projected from the global North or a distinctly ‘African’ mode of expressing queer existence. The observation with which Oswin (2005: 578) concludes this examination of ‘gay Cape Town’ is that there is neither ‘an imposing western queerness or a resistant African culture’ in ‘gay Cape Town’, a conclusion they can only make for two reasons. The first of these reasons is that they write about such discursive formations as if locating them would require them to be static and pure of each other’s influence. The second reason is that the places they looked for ‘African resistance’ are all dominated by legacies of whiteness, which renders

‘African resistance’ unlikely, at the very least. ‘Gay Cape Town’ is itself something that exists in the imaginary of whiteness only (Matebeni, 2016).

An argument that ‘the local’ as positioned in a globalised world is full of hybridities, shaped by contestations between internal and external power dynamics and characterised by their own political, economic, and historical realities (Oswin, 2005), should be the *entry point* for inquiry, not a conclusion. To view what from the margins looks like common sense as an analytical accomplishment tells the reader something about the lens through which the space is being viewed.

As Tsing (1993: xi) maintains, out-of-the-way-places are ‘distinctive and unequal subject positions within common fields of power and knowledge.’ To suggest that it is possible for either a totalising global hegemony to displace local people’s agency *or* to suggest that a ‘pure’ local essence can exist untouched by global influence disregards the ‘common fields of power and knowledge’ in which all locations are situated. Oswin (2005: 579) acknowledges the ‘naivety’ of their ethnographic inquiry, which, nonetheless begins with the question of ‘imposing Western queerness’ versus ‘resistant African culture’ and ends with the conclusion that neither of those categories exists in any kind of ideologically and politically pure form. Even in admitting their naivety, however, they discount the capacity of locally mobilised work to confront what is most dangerous to local queer existence with locally grounded and generated solutions:

I thus find the tendency within this small literature on African gay rights struggles to not just ‘bracket western taint’ but to imply that any trace of ‘westernness’ should be exorcised altogether in favour of distinctly ‘African’ expressions of homosexuality. Such a move does not merely take the ‘un-African’ argument seriously, it allows it to dictate the terms of scholarly response. Where homophobic governments argue that homosexuality is a western import tout court, activist and scholarly detractors respond that while some ‘western’ expressions of homosexuality are indeed alien to African cultures, there are authentic, indigenous ‘African’ homosexualities; and that these require nurturing and preservation. My deductive search for the resilience of such distinct African homosexualities and faith in their progressive mitigation of an imposed western queerness fell directly into this trap. My ethnographic experience inductively exposed such naivety (Oswin, 2005: 579).

Oswin (2005: 580) then suggests that though ‘the study of different expressions of queer politics and cultures’ does matter, ‘it runs the risk of romanticizing local heterogeneity and overstating its political efficacy.’ Oswin’s study is a clear example of how authors who are not deeply familiar with a context can misrepresent the shape of that space. Rather than flattening ‘out-of-the-way places’ as ‘romanticised’, Reid spends time in ‘small-town’ South Africa. While they disclose their own naivety on the very first page (not as a compelling analytical insight worthy of concluding the text) – they had ‘expected to find gay people living in secrecy and fear and dreaming of migrating to the cities’ (Reid, 2013: 1) – their own sense of what Oswin calls ‘political efficacy’ develops in conjunction with the community in which they are situated over the course of the text. While Oswin (2005: 579) objects (above) to allowing the homophobic argument that homosexuality is unAfrican to ‘dictate the terms of . . . response’ and neglects any consideration of the ‘political efficacy’ of ‘western’ attempts to confront homophobia, Reid contextualises both the legacy of meanings of same-sex sexuality forged in ‘western’ contexts and the way that ‘small-town gays’ negotiate their own contexts. Reid queries the implications of a homophobia that frames subversive performances of gender as deviance. Such a homophobia ultimately produces ‘western’ connotations of same-sex sexuality with ‘gender normativity’:

. . . ‘gay’ has come to imply gender normativity, which had its early roots as a reaction against popular perceptions (and psycho-medical discourse) that tended to cast homosexuality and effeminacy as synonymous. [Valentine] also identifies an emphasis on ‘sexuality’, rather than gender, as a central tenet of the gay and lesbian political movement in the United States (and elsewhere in the Western world). This is the basis for legal and social equality – in which sameness is stressed, both in terms of gender normativity in same-sex relationships and in relation to heterosexual counterparts, where the only substantive difference is seen to exist in the realm of object choice (Reid, 2013: 37).

By turning the gaze back onto the ‘West’ from which it is usually launched, very specific origins of models of thinking about gender and sexuality that are globally dominant through the power of policy, media, funding and research become visible. Reid (2013) demonstrates the ways that mobilising around sexual orientation has taken specific forms that result in ‘gay’ being synonymous with gender normativity, but it is also true that the way that

sexuality and gender expression has been pathologised, written into law, viewed and ‘treated’ cannot be unraveled from the colonial history that resulted in anti-sodomy laws exported from coloniser to colonised. The ‘homosexual’ as a particularly modern metropolitan subject was produced in the discursive formations of 19th century British colonial medical, scientific and legal categories regulating gender and sexuality in conjunction with urban migrations that are both temporal and geographical/spatial/cultural (Weston, 1995; Sinfield, 1999; Massad, 2002; Halberstam, 2005). Oyewumi (1997) refers to the binary gender categories through which colonialism unfolded as ‘bio-logic.’ While same-sex loving people were not a construction of colonial knowledge, the ‘homosexual’, as a category of person with particular characteristics identified and pathologised by colonial knowledge, was (Massad, 2002). To neglect the meaning of this history and the way it informs contemporary global realities is to neglect the ‘fields of power and knowledge’ (Tsing, 1993: xi) within which all contemporary geographies are situated.

A conversation around ‘political efficacy’ (Oswin, 2005: 597), then, is open to serious debate, since a range of respectabilities have been won through appeals to ‘sameness’ (or gender normativity), but these ‘prizes’ (Steyn & Van Zyl, 2009), such as recognition of same-sex relationships, entry into mainstream visibility, corporate and state or municipality sponsorship of mainstream metropolitan Pride festivals and some political currency have come at an enormous ‘price’ (Chasin, 2000; Steyn & Van Zyl, 2009), costs that are paid by those who are already the most vulnerable to multiple kinds of violence from racisms, classisms, transphobias and other antagonisms that cannot be so readily named.

The application of metronormative frameworks to understand a range of geographic spaces denies the complexity of the interaction between space and sexuality. In a study of organising work in Namibia and South Africa, Currier uses ‘visibility’ and ‘invisibility’ as the frame through which they interpret the meaning of advocacy work in two southern African contexts. While Currier (2012: 6) asserts that ‘[v]isibility confers intelligibility to individuals and objects in Western systems of thought’, they do not account for what ‘visibility’ might

mean in philosophical and epistemological traditions subsumed by ‘Western systems of thought’, even though their research is located in a space peripheralised by ‘Western systems of thought.’ They cite theoretical voices in the global North who are critical of ‘visibility’ because of its potential to be an ‘end point’ for LGBT(I) advocacy work, and they are very clear about what they mean by ‘(in)visibility’, but they do not consider the limitations that may be inherent in the very terms set by ‘visibility’ and ‘invisibility’ as a conceptual frame when applied to peripheralised geographies. Currier views choices that activists make around their engagement with a range of issues as an embrace or a refusal of ‘visibility’, which flattens the complex strategic choices that activists make. Actions are then sorted as advancing ‘visibility’ or choosing ‘invisibility’, which allows for only a limited reading of the agency, coercion, pressure, strategy, politics, and negotiation that activists manage on a daily basis. This act of reading spaces at the margins through colonising intellectual traditions is not uncharacteristic of scholarship about ‘out-of-the-way places’:

Whereas in the economic model, the colony is seen as a space for the mining of raw materials that are refined, manufactured, infused with surplus value, and then distributed in the metropolis, comparative literary studies in the United States often takes primary texts – novels, poems, plays, and films – from the Global South and then processes them via Western theoretical models, especially continental theory, albeit oftentimes elaborated in the form of its Anglo-American offshoots (Aboul-Ela, 2007: 11).

To frame a study of organising through the lens of visibility, then, ‘processes’ work located in the global South ‘via Western theoretical models’ (Aboul-Ela, 2007: 11). Gray, working ethnographically in the peripheralised ‘other South’ that is US South, problematises metronormative models of advocacy in the United States because their ‘politics of visibility needs the rural (or some *otherness*, some *place*) languishing in its shadow to sustain its status as an unquestionable achievement rather than a strategy that privileges the view of some by ending the vantage point of others’ (Gray, 2009: 9). As Ekine (2013) and Murungi (2013) demonstrate, there are other ways of conceptualising queer activist and organising presence in locations outside of the metropole. Several authors in Ekine and Abbas’ (2013) collection are explicit about the harmful implications of being *visibly* associated with

Northern LGBT-rights organisations and their internationalising structures through the requirement that they privilege identity-based strategies. These authors argue for strategies that would link them more closely with the work that is happening in their own contexts, or even work that has more relevance in national contexts that would confront homophobias and transphobias or dismantle heteronormativity, but would not create the damaging and counterproductive association with ‘foreign’ domination. An insistence by international funders located in the global North that advocacy work happen within the framework of LGBT(I) rights leaves limited space for activists in ‘out-of-the-way places’ to negotiate their own contexts in ways that may have the most resonance:

Framing the narrative in terms of rights creates tensions with other civil society and social movements. Queer Africans are not just queers, they are people who live their lives in the same ways as everyone else and as such our struggle needs to align itself with other social justice movements such as those of and for rural women, shack dwellers, climate change, land rights and so on (Ekine, 2013: 89).

It would be very difficult to argue that ‘queer Africans’ who have created coalitional networks or embedded themselves within movements addressing a range of social issues, even while refusing to privilege an identity-based rights framework, are not visible. Instead, the model proposed by Ekine (2013) and Murungi (2013) is one that is responsive to context rather than the demands of external actors, such as transnational NGOs and funders based in the metropolitan centres of the global North. Johnson (2013: 7) is also critical of identity-based approaches required for ‘visibility’ in their consideration of rural histories of sexual dissidence in the United States because ‘when identity is invoked as a category of historical analysis, there is always a hazard that the vagueness of that concept will be filled with unspoken assumptions about what it does or does not mean to possess an identity – assumptions that are necessarily conditioned by our own historical circumstances.’

In their ethnography of communities of young queer people in Kentucky, Gray (2009) frames queer visibility not as a strategy of the youth they spend time with, but as a ‘demand’ that emanates from the metropole, shaping both how rural populations view queerness and

how queer youth have to navigate *being* queer in their rural homes. In order to 'lay claim to LGBT identities', young queer people have to 'confront the politics of gay visibility . . . that define and shape the recognition of LGBT-identifying people in popular culture and public life' (Gray, 2009: 3). In this way, Gray demonstrates how young queer people in Kentucky:

create belonging and visibility in communities where they are not only a distinct minority but also popularly represented as out of place. To do so, they must lean on the structures of rural life, particularly the dynamics of class, gender, race, and location. In equal measure, they must also use mainstream and new media representations to piece together what counts as an 'authentic' LGBT identity and integrate these depictions of 'realness' into rural settings. I argue that LGBT-identifying youth and their allies use their status as 'familiar locals' as well as tenuous access to each other, public spaces, and media-circulated representations of LGBT identities to rework the boundaries of public recognition and local belonging. They rally these resources not to combat isolation from their senses of self, but to weather the demands a politics of gay visibility poses outside of cities. Along the way, their experiences attenuate claims that political strategies of gay visibility and recognition have brought us universally to the brink of a 'post-gay' moment (Gray, 2009: 4).

Familiarity, then, with the context in which they live and the people who share that geographical location with them, is a more productive strategic resource in the space than one premised on a queer visibility that would remove them from the fabric of their communities and their homes. This is especially true because the primary difference between the 'country' and the 'city', as identified by Gray, is not the country's refusal to be a home to queer people (any more than the city does), but the lack of queer infrastructure in the country. Whereas it is possible to access community centres, LGBT health services, advocacy organisations and spaces for socialising based on the presumption of a common identity in the comparatively better-resourced city, queer youth in Kentucky often find themselves meeting and socialising in places shared with their broader communities, like churches, coffee shops and WalMarts (Gray, 2009).

Context as epistemology

One central argument of this research is that context matters when negotiating life within one's community, whether that negotiation is political, representational, economic or social. A failure to be accountable to context can result in all kinds of erasures, and, I argue, work *against* instead of *toward* the liberation of marginalised peoples, who should set the terms of that liberation for themselves within their own contexts. Much human rights work, including LGBT(I) rights work, operates through a deployment of the 'universal' in relation to rights (Mutua, 2002; Reid, 2013; Thoreson, 2014; Lorway, 2015). Lorway's ethnographic work with an LGBT(I) rights organisation in Namibia, prompted them to ask:

What are the consequences when international interventions . . . try to save and protect LGBT people from discrimination with programs that treat their sexualities in isolation from the local conditions in which they are embedded? (Lorway, 2015: 4)

The work of this section, then, is to review literature that problematises the assumption of universal rights imagined 'in isolation from the local conditions in which they are embedded' (Lorway, 2015: 4) by paying close attention to the contextual realities of those sites. First, though, Thoreson's ethnography of the International Lesbian and Gay Human Rights Commission (ILGHRC), written about their experience as an intern conducting research provides a glimpse of relationships between organisations advancing a version of LGBT rights that is proudly and unapologetically universal and the specific contexts where their 'transnational' interventions are launched.

The story Thoreson tells serves as an apologetics for a human rights model launched from the metropole into diverse global spaces. Thoreson draws on critical literature to suggest that examining the centre is a crucial way to learn about processes of marginalisation, but in the end, they seem to conclude that ILGHRC deserves to exist because it is doing the best that it can as 'a small NGO with a large mandate but relatively little power' (Thoreson, 2014: 90). Being 'a small NGO with a large mandate but relatively little power' (Thoreson, 2014: 90), however, doesn't prevent ILGHRC from emphasising the importance of its existence. One

director of the organisation, interviewed by Thoreson, speaks about the role that ILHRC played in ‘catalyzing the African LGBT movement’:

I think we played a really important role in catalyzing the African LGBT movement. A lot of the convenings around which people started getting a sense of themselves and their power and their potential, I think, we convened . . . Convenings don’t always have concrete outcomes, but I think they are spaces in which people develop political community, and know each other, and know where to go for help, and develop a sense of what the possibilities are (Thoreson, 2014: 78).

The assertion that ‘a small NGO with a large mandate but relatively little power’ (Thoreson, 2014: 90) situated in New York City could be a central player in ‘catalyzing’ a movement for an entire continent is an extraordinary claim. Such a statement is also highly contested by those who themselves founded organisations, worked in their individual capacities or mobilised their communities in their own countries or by forming cross-continental links with other individuals and groups on the African continent (Ekiné and Abbas, 2013).

The suggestion that ‘convenings don’t always have to have concrete outcomes’ (Thoreson, 2014: 78) is indicative of a double-standard that exists in relation to accountability for ‘a small NGO with a large mandate but relatively little power’ (Thoreson, 2014: 90) and locally based organisations and activists. Though ILGHRC’s ‘convenings don’t always have to have concrete outcomes’ (Thoreson, 2014: 78), when it comes to ‘activists who do not have bank accounts . . . transgender brokers who lacked access to accurate, gender-affirming documentation or activists trying not to draw attention to their ties with Northern LGBT groups’ (Thoreson, 2014: 55), supporting the work becomes ‘untenable’ because of ‘ILGHRC’s professionalization and compliance with U.S. financial regulations’:

ILGHRC’s professionalization and compliance with U.S. financial regulations also made some expenditures untenable. Brokers could disburse money to third parties to support activist work, but receipts were required to account for all money wired abroad. This made it difficult to send money to activists who did not have bank accounts, or to fund urgent needs that could not be documented – for example, informally paying an official to help an activist recover a confiscated passport. MoneyGrams requires that recipients present state-issued identification, which was particularly problematic for transgender brokers who lacked access to accurate,

gender-affirming documentation or activists trying not to draw attention to their ties with Northern LGBT groups (Thorseon, 2014: 55).

Though Thoreson claims to want to know how power operates, by observing a transnational 'LGBT rights' organisation based in New York, they take on the assumptions of the logic that drives the organisation's work in order to understand it. The slogan of organisations such as ILGHRC, which claims it advocates for 'the rights of everyone, everywhere' (Thoreson, 2014), provides some suggestion of how 'debates' around issues of rights are framed through the lens of universality. Thoreson (2014) outlines two positions in 'divisive debates about gender, sexuality, and law', which they characterize as 'proponents' and 'opponents':

In divisive debates about gender, sexuality, and law, proponents and opponents of LGBT human rights have vested interests in reifying claims in particular ways. Proponents frame LGBT rights as straightforward issues of dignity and fairness, insisting universal human rights must be extended to and enjoyed by all. Opponents construct these rights – and, typically, LGBT populations – as foreign, contrary to local morality and custom, and inexorably shaped by global power disparities. In highly politicized environments, there has been precious little space to acknowledge the nuances and partial truths of these positions (Thoreson, 2014: 211).

To many involved in 'divisive debates about gender, sexuality, and law', there are only 'proponents and opponents of LGBT human rights' (Thoreson, 2014: 211). However, to thinkers like Massad (2002), layers of complexity are obscured by a simplistic dichotomising of perspectives into 'proponents and opponents of LGBT human rights' (Thoreson, 2014: 211). The tendency of the 'human rights framework . . . to transform widespread exclusion and mistreatment into discrete problems with identifiable culprits and technical solutions' (Thoreson, 2014: 6), leads Massad to think about how people who live in a particular context are affected by what they call 'vilification campaign[s]' (Massad, 2002: 384) launched by the 'Gay International' that result in an intensification of the association between 'gay' and 'foreign' Thoreson also identified as part of the worldview of 'opponents of LGBT human rights' (Thoreson, 2014: 211). Writing about a very highly publicised case in which gay men

were arrested in Egypt, Massad demonstrates a complex dynamic of power playing out between the 'Gay International' and 'the press and conservative Islamists' in Egypt:

Indeed, the vilification campaign against these men intensified precisely as a result of the actions of the Gay International and the Western politicians whose support it solicited. During the hearings, the prosecution frequently referenced the Gay International's campaign, pledged to defend the 'manhood' of Egypt against attempts to 'violate' it, and wondered what would become of a nation who sits by idly as its 'men become like its women' through 'deviance.' The press and conservative Islamists have begun to call for explicit laws criminalizing same-sex practice. The Gay International and its activities are largely responsible for the intensity of this repressive campaign. Despite the overwhelming evidence that gayness, as a choice, is proving to bring about more repression, not 'liberation,' and less sexual freedom rather than more for Arab men practicing same-sex contact, the Gay International is undeterred in its missionary campaign (Massad, 2002: 384).

Viewing the place itself and the people who live there as the source of 'opponents to LGBT human rights' fails to examine the origins of an element of the opposition Thoreson names as central to that opposition: its foreign-ness. There can be no 'political efficacy' (Oswin, 2005: 580) without addressing the charge of foreign-ness, explicitly or through strategies grounded in 'familiarity' (Gray, 2009: 4) with local communities. Further, though, Massad names 'the vilification campaign[s]' that surround highly publicised episodes of criminalised same-sex sexuality, the 'Gay International' and 'the Western politicians whose support it solicited' as complicit in producing 'less sexual freedom rather than more' (Massad, 2002: 384).

Ekine and Abbas identify another specific case in which the response of 'international media and international advocacy groups' to a 'Malawian transgender woman . . . and her male partner . . . put on trial for the crime of gross indecency and unnatural acts', was 'a frenzy of activity reporting on the violation of "gay rights" in Africa' (Ekine and Abbas, 2013: 1). The result of this 'frenzy' was 'the obliteration of non-conforming gender identities, trans lives and beings in the insistence on referring to Tiwonge as gay even though she stated that she identified as a woman' (Ekine and Abbas, 2013: 1). Ekine and Abbas catalogue a set of negative consequences from the way this incident was handled internationally, driven by 'international lesbian and gay advocates and organisations – flying into the country with little or no contextual understanding to frame the issues but with a firm conviction that they

were saving the persecuted victims of Africa's brutal barbarianism by (merely) consulting with "local groups" and reprimanding African leaders for their failure to embrace liberal ideology' (Ekine and Abbas, 2013: 2).

In another context, Reid discusses the way that 'gays' in 'small-town South Africa' mobilise femininity to 'be accepted into society and integrated into local communities as women' (Reid, 2013: 111). This embodiment of femininity interacts with localised gender norms and understandings of sexuality:

By respecting gender norms, effeminate gays become the social equivalent of women who can enjoy solidarity and a degree of protection, but at the same time also experience the vulnerability of women. Their feminine self-presentation and their social designation as women enable their boyfriends to have sexual relations with them as straight men (Reid, 2013: 27).

The point here is not to suggest that the 'gays' in 'small town South Africa' are living a more authentic version of sexual and gender identity than a metronormative model of sexual and gender identity. The point, instead, is that dynamics of gender and sexuality that do not conform to the 'universal' model structured by LGBT(I) rights may open possibilities for negotiating one's existence in one's context that are otherwise foreclosed by the universal model, especially when it is interpreted as 'foreign'.

On the other hand, one does not have to look to the so-called 'West' to find another iteration of same-sex desire. In Reid's (2013) ethnography, different ways of understanding what it is 'to be a real gay' collide between dominant understandings of 'gay' in the metropolitan Johannesburg and dominant understandings of 'gay' in Ermelo, the small town in which most of Reid's examination of 'small-town South Africa' takes place. Reid suggests that 'gays' in 'small town South Africa' organise their sexual relationships around gender difference, whereas gay men from Johannesburg understand sexuality in relation to 'sexual object choice', understood as a 'Western' model of same-sex desire.

The hierarchy between 'Western' models of same-sex sexuality and localised expressions of same-sex sexuality does a lot of damage because a model of sexuality that has its origins in

specific pathologised and criminalised histories cannot be applied universally without erasures. Reiterating Massad's point above, Ekine and Abbas (2013: 2) write about 'the LGBTI movement in Malawi, whose voices couldn't rise above the cacophony of interests speaking for, about and against them but whose communities were driven deeper underground in fear.' In writing about negotiating their contexts as feminine 'gays', Reid (2013) also identifies an element of identity that goes unaddressed by the 'sexual object choice' model of sexuality projected as the top of the hierarchy by the 'gay international': when 'gays' in 'small town South Africa' live a feminine gender identity, they embody the same kinds of vulnerabilities experienced by cisgender heterosexual women in patriarchal societies. A focus on universal rights of lgbtiq people that does not embody a critique of patriarchy and other dominant structures of power organising the societies in which lgbtiq people live risks compounding the vulnerability that queer bodies face.

To demonstrate how this compounded vulnerability plays out in practice, Lorway describes 'self-empowerment' workshops hosted by the organisation with which they spent time in Namibia. The focus of these workshops was often learning about terminology for sexual orientation and gender identity generated in the global North and encouraging attendees to situate themselves within those meanings, 'where precise sexual identities were made to fit discrete categories' (Lorway, 2015: 76). Lorway found that while more 'open' displays of 'gender dissidence heightened erotic tensions between young feminine males and local straight men . . . sexual violence usually accompanied these erotic tensions' (Lorway, 2015: 92), a subject that was not addressed through workshops that 'treat . . . sexualities in isolation from the local conditions in which they are embedded' (Lorway, 2015: 4). As a consequence, '[m]ost feminine male youths became acutely aware of how to identify "antigay discrimination"', but 'when it came to their intimate sexual relationships, these youths were unable to explain, challenge, or politicize the recurring forms of sexual violence they encountered' (Lorway, 2015: 92). Lorway's examination of participants' 'idioms of desire' led them to question how 'LGBT rights interventions' disconnected from the contexts in which

lgbtiq people's experiences are embedded 'led them along a path toward their own self-exploitation':

Here I am referring to the following ironic life trajectories of the Rainbow Youth: the pursuit of females to become 'like men' in order to escape sexual violence that leads to the intensification of their oppression at the hands of men: the longings for 'real men' by young feminine males who yearn for love, intimacy, and social acceptance that ends in their severe physical and sexual abuse; and the fetishization of foreign and local gay elites by impoverished young males in search of greater social mobility and erotic freedom that results in the loss of their bargaining power during negotiations for safer sex (Lorway, 2015: 13).

Further, when young people discussed economic realities that increased their vulnerability for contracting HIV/AIDS or experiencing multiple kinds of violence that could not be explained through the frame of 'antigay discrimination', 'there was just no "space" for it to fit within LGBT rights discourses of autonomy and empowerment' (Lorway, 2015: 77). It is clear that those who are already most vulnerable to violence and exploitation pay the cost for such failures of universal LGBT(I) rights logics partly because 'an identity politics that privileges notions of autonomy and self-determination elides the exigencies of poverty' (Lorway, 2015: 47). Massad is clear about this, too, in their indictment of the 'Gay International':

It is not the Gay International or its upper-class supporters in the Arab diaspora who will be persecuted but rather the poor and nonurban men who practice same-sex contact and who do not identify as homosexual or gay. The so-called passive homosexual whom the Gay International wants to defend against social denigration will find himself in a double bind: first, his sexual desires will be unfulfilled because he will no longer have access to his previously available sexual object choice (i.e., exclusively active partners, as in the interim they will have become heterosexual); and second, he will fall victim to legal and police persecution as well as heightened social denigration as his sexual practice becomes a topic of public discourse that transforms it from a practice into an identity (Massad, 2002: 385).

While both Lorway and Reid identify ways in which embodying femininity can lead to increased financial and social capital for gay men either through increased opportunity in specific professions (hairstyling, in Reid's study) or through association with organisations tied to funding opportunities, 'for many of the masculine females' in Lorway's study,

‘prospects of employment vanish, access to social status diminishes, and family relations become disrupted’ (Lorway, 2015: 81). Though many of the young lesbians with whom Lorway spoke had experienced ‘unsafe sex with men’ due to a ‘weighty sense of responsibility to their family’ either financially or through ‘the sense of an obligation to have children . . . the fact that many Namibian lesbians were mothers lay silent in political discussion forums’ (Lorway, 2015: 82) focusing on LGBT(I) rights and issues. The realities, then, for these lesbian women, cannot be extricated from the lives of other women living in their communities, and it is careful attention to contextual experiences of poverty, vulnerability, and gender inequality that would gesture toward a liberatory politics that takes their specific needs as whole people, lesbian women who are often mothers and sometimes engaged in sexual experiences with men for various reasons, seriously.

Dearham (2013: 193) writes about the ‘professionalisation and institutionalisation of NGOs’ resulting in those organisations generating ‘programming [that] did not address [the] reality and challenges’ of ‘low-income’ women, whose ‘increased dependence on family for survival’ often meant living with family or very close to neighbours. These living conditions meant that their ‘behaviour was easily policed’ in ‘the form of verbal harassment, physical violence, and rape’ (Dearham, 2013: 193). These realities affect not only queer women’s mobility in their own communities, but also their ability and interest in participating in the activities of increasingly ‘professionalised’ and ‘institutionalised’ organisations, which can be out of touch with the needs and vulnerabilities of some of their constituents:

It can be difficult for these women to participate in NGO-style workshops and other activities for several reasons. Such activities, which are frequently conducted in English, may be inaccessible for those with little formal education; for women who are living with or married to men, the need to attend a meeting can be difficult to justify; and meetings and other activities are often held downtown or in middle-class neighbourhoods, which can be difficult for lower-income women to access because of travel time (as low-income neighbourhoods and informal settlements are mainly located on the outskirts of Nairobi) (Dearham, 2013: 195).

Dearham (2013: 194) is clear that in ‘professionalising’ and ‘institutionalising’ NGO practices, there are many ways in which the contexts of socioeconomic marginalisation in

which some women live do not register as LGBTI issues, which further perpetuates their vulnerability, as suggested by Lorway above. In South Africa, Mkhize et al (2010: 15) demonstrate the ways in which erasures of class differences among lgbtiq people intersect with histories of racial exclusions, which are implicated in ‘the ongoing life of apartheid cultures, despite the formal dismantling of apartheid legislation’, and that shape access to resources, including the availability of public queer space:

While it would be both absurd and counterfactual to suggest that lesbians racialised as white, for example, do not experience homophobia, gender-based violence or hate speech, it is simultaneously true that dominant cultures of ‘safe space’ for lesbian women tend to exclude all but well-resourced women, the majority of whom are white. Thus, clubs and bars in the ‘Pink District’ of Cape Town are frequented mostly by white people . . . White lesbians – as a group (not as individuals) – tend to feel ‘safer’ in their sexual orientation than lesbians of any other racial categorization in South Africa (Mkhize et al., 2010: 15).

Lives inflected by multiple, layered historical and contemporary marginalisations are not lives that can be captured adequately in a model of the universality of rights that erases the specificity of those marginalisations or that characterises marginality as dictated solely by homophobia or transphobia. Similarly, ‘solutions’ to the problems that lgbtiq people face will not be effective if they are aimed solely at the level of knowing the ‘self’, empowering the ‘self’ and identifying the ‘self’ through ‘workshops on sexual and gender identity, self-esteem, body image, and safer sex’ (Lorway, 2015: 8). Murungi demonstrates the practical implications of the existence of a hierarchy of sexual identity that requires clear, unproblematised and public association with LGBT identity labels in a consideration of what working on issues of sexual and gender diversity relevant to the African continent as part of the African diaspora means. Murungi identifies the importance of activists being able to self-identify, rather than having to claim a letter of the LGBT acronym by considering *both* the risk activists take on in doing this work in contexts where same-sex sexuality is criminalised *and* the politics of the foreign-ness which are ascribed to these letters in many African contexts:

If we are to destigmatize the defence of human rights for LGBTI Africans, we must first recognise that any African who does so publicly is immediately marked as a homosexual and directly subjected to social stigmatization. This is certainly true for Africans in Africa, but also for those of us in the diaspora. My three-year tenure as Africa/Middle East/Caribbean regional specialist at the ILGHRC made me the only 'Kenyan lesbian' easily associated with lesbian and gay rights via Internet searches, which contributed significantly to my duress at the time. This is clearly not helpful in sustaining an effective sexuality-related human rights movement. Ensuring African autonomy in self-identification is therefore critical to this work, and requires the broad implementation of standards for security and the protection of confidentiality (Murungi, 2013: 239).

Murungi (2013: 240) sees opportunities aligning with other movements that have more resonance within African contexts for doing the work of de-stigmatising and working toward de-criminalising same-sex sexuality, such as '[w]omen's work for gender justice' which 'is a fine African tradition.' Gray is also interested in the ways that 'familiarity' (Gray, 2009: 4) with local contexts and not claims to 'universal' notions of LGBT(I) rights shapes possibilities for queer people living in rural Kentucky, a place rooted in the American South and studied by Gray because of its near-iconic status as the kind of place where it would be difficult for queer life to thrive.

Often, the very dynamics that allow people to negotiate some mobility in their contexts are viewed as false consciousness, regressive, or even worse, inauthentic expressions of who they would *really* be if they were only liberated like the 'properly' queer neoliberal subject of rights (Gray, 2009; Lorway, 2015). In reality, though, queer existences are 'nested within a broader social world' (Reid, 2013: 69), and cannot be extricated from that world. No one knows that world and can navigate its context better than those who live in it, which is why Murungi is clear that '[p]eople-centred human rights advocacy work that protects freedom of expression should permit and encourage practitioners to frame and promote their work as they see fit' (Murungi, 2013: 239). This is work that should be centred and not marginalised. This is the work that employs context as its epistemology.

Conclusion

As suggested in the literature reviewed in this chapter, context is critical to knowing in a way that takes a range of marginalities seriously. Theorists whose interest is in the spatial politics of sexuality are interested in what those politics do. Even if they do not consider the spatial politics of sexuality something that emerges by design, they are certainly interested in what the implications of the representations of space that emerge from such politics are. This chapter has engaged with a wide range of feminist, queer, anti-racist and postcolonial theoretical perspectives that have a lot to say about space. Some theorists are interested in how diverse spaces can be thought about together in ways that tell us something important about historical and contemporary marginalisations. Other theorists are interested in the implications of the relationships between temporal and spatial politics as those politics converge to tell a story about sexuality and which spaces queer bodies are supposed to be able to inhabit. Finally, some theorists are interested in the material implications that are bolstered by representations of space that place those spaces on a temporal continuum where they have ‘not yet reached’ the modernity that is a defining temporal feature of the metropole.

This chapter also has an interest, though, in ethnographic work that considers ‘out-of-the-way places’ through epistemological frames about queer life generated in the metropole. Part of this interest is to demonstrate the ways that such epistemological frames, which also shape the work of participants in my study, exist in the literature and are perpetuated in scholarship. Part of this interest in ethnographic work is an interest in positioning these metronormatively framed studies in relation to carefully contextualised work that bases itself in and takes seriously the contexts of ‘out-of-the-way places’. There is a powerful critique of the hegemonic discourses of the metronorm in work that takes its epistemological authority from the context in which it is embedded.

A dialogue between authors of multiple ethnographic studies demonstrates in the scholarship the kinds of tensions that exist in studying queer existence and queer advocacy

and activism in ‘out-of-the-way places’. Ethnographic work in which context is epistemology demands further engagement from researchers, activists and thinkers committed to the specificities of multiple contexts. Though my own impulse to study the questions I raise in my own research is one that emerged from my own positionality, the demand to *know through context* is a call to which my study was designed to respond. Through designing and implementing qualitative research in the ‘two souths’ I have identified as the context of my research, this research takes seriously two things. As suggested in the literature, the circulation of hegemonic discourses of LGBT(I) rights may act in ways that shape the terrain negotiated by activists and organisers in those contexts. At the same time, organisers and activists theorise their own contexts in ways that reveal the limitations of thinking about the world through a lens of universal rights that sees only ‘supporters’ and ‘opponents’ of LGBT(I) rights, ways which cause the boundaries generated by hegemonic versions of the spatial politics of sexuality to collapse.

With those two things in mind, I employ the conceptual frame of ‘out-of-the-way places’ to refer to both the American South and South Africa as places that are outside of New York, and in that way outside of the metropole of LGBT(I) rights work and, therefore, discursively distanced from the ‘everything’ that the metropole is supposed to mean to queer populations. The legal, economic, and discursive landscapes of these geographical areas is full of variation and unevenness. These spaces are characterised by contradiction – the American South marginalised within the borders of the culturally, politically, economically dominant imperial United States, while South Africa advances its own narrative of cultural, political and economic exceptionalism on a continent that has itself been colonised to the extent that it is talked about as one homogenous strife-filled land mass (Wainaina, 2006). I argue that ‘out-of-the-way places’ is a conceptual frame that can hold those contradictions. The next chapter is an explanation of the methodological approach central to the design and implementation of this dissertation project.

CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter is the story of how I gathered the data I analyse in the following three analytical chapters and in the conclusion of this dissertation. I begin by contextualising the theoretical interests linked to my positionality as a person situated between two spaces: the space of my home in the US state of West Virginia and the space of South Africa where I am a graduate of and current PhD researcher at the University of Cape Town. Choreographing this research project between two spaces that are very far removed from one another has been full of methodological challenges. These challenges include logistics, language barriers for me as the researcher, interpreting contextual specificities, the ethics of conducting research, building trust with participants and collecting multiple forms of speech to then analyse with intellectual integrity.

My methodological choices draw from multiple methods of conducting qualitative work. The design itself is multi-sited in that it is located in different geographies far removed from one another. The time that I spent with different groups of activists was work done ethnographically, which included different forms of participation, emotion, and the work of continuous and attuned re-grounding of myself in unfamiliar contexts, alongside the more predictable work of listening and interviewing. The public talks I collected, within different contexts but united by a speaker's interest in public advocacy around LGBT(I) rights and movement-building, allowed me to map the 'discursive formations' (Foucault, 1972) present in the contexts I travelled. The interviews that I conducted with those doing work in these spaces allowed me to deepen my understanding of those same contexts, in addition to understanding how the work is shaped by the public discourses that outline the parameters within which such work is done.

Work on critical ethnography (Thomas, 1994; Madison, 2012), multi-sited research design (Marcus, 1995; Gray, 2009), discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992; Wetherell and Potter,

1993; Potter, 1996), feminist thinking about epistemology and methodology (Rose, 1997; Mohanty, 2003; Naples, 2003; Swarr and Nagar, 2010) have all influenced my thinking about research design. These voices have also been critical in helping me develop an approach to research that takes seriously the limitations of the researcher as ‘knower’ and ‘producer of knowledge’ outside of the researcher’s embeddedness in a series of relationships with a wide range of interlocutors and variously situated knowers who are not credited with the work produced by the researcher. Haraway’s (1991) theorisation of ‘situated knowledges’ grounds the research I present here. ‘Situated knowledges’ acknowledge the location from which they are generated and do not make claims that are grander than what it is possible for the researcher to see. Because I am interested in how different locations get caught in global processes of marginalisation, it was imperative for me to refuse to focus on only one site. At the same time, I acknowledge that other limitations or methodological pitfalls emerge through researching disparate geographical locations as sites that cohere in the face of such global processes.

I begin this chapter with a consideration of my own positionality as the impetus for the project I designed, implemented and am writing about now in a section called ‘Theoretical interests as entry point to methodology’. I continue with further consideration of positionality in relation to the project currently under discussion in a section called ‘Positionality as an account of one’s self’. I then take up Thomas’ (1993) conceptualisation of epistemological and methodological ‘wildness’ as a framework for the multi-sited design of this project in a section called ‘On wildness: Multi-sitedness in this project’. Two sections then deal with the methods I used to collect and analyse the material here. The first of these sections describes the process through which I collected these materials: the wild multi-sitedness of this project. That section is called ‘Methods: Driving south and showing up’. The second section describes my process of analysis and is called ‘Methods: Analysis’. The final section before the conclusion of the chapter is called ‘Critical perspectives and ethical research’. This section deals with the connection between research that situates itself politically in relation to established ways of knowing and the ethical considerations that

drive such an approach. This section is also an opportunity to discuss some of the ethical challenges I had to wrestle with in designing and implementing this research.

Theoretical interests as entry point to methodology

While I developed my theoretical interests in the discussion of literature in the previous chapter, there is also a story of theoretical interests that emerge from my own positionality, especially in relation to previous study. I begin with a theoretical interest that emerges from my own positionality because as Naples (2003: 15) suggests, ‘the stories we tell about our epistemological journeys are always *interested* stories and form a significant dimension of . . . the “politics of method.”’ After my experience of researching marriage among lesbian women in South Africa, while completing my Masters degree at the University of Cape Town, I began to listen much more critically to the rhetoric of same-sex marriage advocacy work in the United States and, to my astonishment, discovered that (apart from the mention of one man, one woman in the anti-same-sex marriage campaign language) it was largely indistinguishable from the rhetoric used by those advocating against the legalization of same-sex marriage (Scott, 2014). I have not been surprised as more and more conservative legislators continue to express their support for same-sex marriage in the United States because, as conservatives themselves explain, marriage is ultimately a *conservative* issue. Both the same-sex marriage campaigners and the anti-same-sex marriage campaigners communicate the same message: marriage matters!

My discomfort with ‘marriage heavy’ activism has only intensified with time. In the fall of 2011, which was a year after returning to the United States from my studies in South Africa, and the beginning of my second year of teaching at West Virginia Wesleyan College, I represented a local organisation at a regional meeting of LGBT rights organisations in the American South. What I discovered there was a shared frustration with relationships between local organisations and national ones. National organisations with sizeable budgets

of donor moneys were described as shaping the course of activism not only on a national level, but on a regional and local one, as well. Some participants shared stories of their own local initiatives being undermined by national organizations. This not only stymied the efforts of local and state level organizations, but it shaped the way that *all* Americans, including those in the regions in which these organisers were doing their contextually specific work, saw, understood, and interacted with issues of LGBT rights. LGBT rights work became associated with New York City and Washington, D.C., in the mind of many, if not most Americans, which is a detrimental association in rural America (Bell, 2016). And yet, here were queer people doing queer work in the American South.

According to the frustrations shared at this meeting, dynamics of national and urban queer visibility shaped the way that organisers' own constituents saw their own contexts and directed their support of lgbtiq issues. Those with deeper pockets became more likely to donate money to national organizations, which would put their money 'to work' far from their own contexts. Frustrations expressed by organisers from the American South were frustrations similar to those I heard expressed from organisers on the African continent, during time I spent in South Africa, Kenya, and Uganda in 2009-2010, interacting with those doing work in multiple different areas of the continent. These frustrations were about the power that transnational LGBT(I) rights organisations had to direct and shape the work through decisions that lgbtiq people on the African continent then had to live with. My involvement in such conversations was peripheral, as I was not central to any organising efforts during my time in those countries, where I existed as an observer and friend to people who themselves were involved in the work of organising and advocacy. I was there to learn as best I could.

These interactions created provocative linkages between two spaces, prompting me to investigate where and how 'out-of-the-way places' (Tsing, 1993) cohere theoretically in the literature, despite profound differences in their histories, demographics, locations and ways of understanding and/or representing themselves. For me, this became *the* question and it

was worth addressing substantial methodological barriers to follow this question where it might lead.

Study of these issues through academic work with theories of postcoloniality and interpersonal encounters with activists with a sophisticated understanding of transnational currents of power (having had to negotiate them throughout their careers) positioned me better to understand and interpret the workings of LGBT rights activism in my own context. Part of what took me to South Africa in the first place was a desire to ‘read’ the world from outside of the United States, so the introduction to a lens that would allow me to read my own context more astutely also instigated the project under discussion now – a reading of transnational processes of globalisation across borders. This kind of project demands a critical approach. As Thomas (1993: 2-3) describes, the critical approach ‘deepens and sharpens ethical commitments by forcing us to develop and act upon value commitments in the context of political agendas. Critical ethnographers describe, analyse, and open to scrutiny otherwise hidden agendas, power centres, and assumptions that inhibit, repress, and constrain.’ In order to tease out those power dynamics and be accountable to the situated nature of knowledge-production, an account of my own position as researcher in relation to the research is an ethical necessity.

Positionality as an account of one’s self

Haraway (1991) recognizes the need to develop situated knowledges, and Rose (1997: 308) rearticulates Haraway’s insistence that ‘situatedness is not given; it must be developed, its technologies revised and invented.’ One of the central tenets of reflexivity, which is the suggestion that the researcher can and should fully know their own position in relation to the research, presumes, according to Rose (1997), that the researcher knows things that are ultimately *unknowable*. Rose cautions against an approach to positionality that risks rehearsing the same obfuscations produced by the universal assumptions informing the work

critiqued most heavily by advocates of reflexivity as a feminist research practice. Rose (1997: 311) suggests that the ‘impossibility of such a quest to know fully both self and context’ risks reproducing the problematics of traditional disciplinary inquiries that seek to apply themselves universally by failing to account for their ‘situatedness’. Mattingly and Falconer-Al-Hindi suggest that positionality requires the researcher to ‘make one’s position vis a vis research *known* rather than invisible, and to *limit* one’s conclusions rather than making grand claims about their universal applicability’ (Mattingly and Falconer-al-Hindi, 1995: 428-429).

The use of the term ‘I’ and an exploration of the ‘self’ within the project of producing knowledge is not uncontested (Rose, 1997). However, when Haraway (1991) theorised the concept of a feminist objectivity in the sciences, they stated that, ‘positioning is . . . the key practice grounding knowledge’ and incisively critiqued the ‘god-trick’ of an ‘irresponsible’ (191) and invisible ‘gaze from nowhere’ (188). If, as Haraway (1991: 196) suggests, ‘rational knowledge is a process of ongoing critical interpretation among “fields” of interpreters and decoders’, the presence and position of the self must be situated in relation to the other elements that become collective producers of knowledge through their interaction in the process of research (Rose, 1997).

Radcliffe’s point (quoted in Rose, 1997: 307) that ‘in producing representations of (Third World) women, we are inextricably bound up with questions of authority, communication and representations, and the positions generated by such questions are inherently political’ is well taken. However, when the assumption is that power dynamics will take a binary form before the research has been conducted based on differential access to a range of things, including education, resources and other privileges, other dynamics within the relationship between researcher and researched are obscured. For me, this meant that in the process of conducting research in South Africa, I found that my privileged (global) status as a US citizen (which does come with material benefits, a few of which are related to the mobility of not having to apply for a visa to travel to many places outside of the borders that circumscribe

my citizenship, flying under the radar of suspicion in relation to regimes of ‘security’ and having access to a car) was not an adequate description of my positionality within the research ‘field’.

In South Africa, I often faced constraints when I was unable to communicate in South African languages, moved around awkwardly and with uncertainty in spaces participants themselves negotiated comfortably and competently, found myself a subject of relentless teasing that was often incomprehensible to me and failed to understand many of the nuances of communication in a context much different from my own. I name these things not in order to suggest that participants have more power than researchers or to suggest that issues of power, authority and privilege should not be critically examined in the process of feminist and queer research, but to suggest that it is possible for the researcher to find herself (frequently!) in positions where she holds very little (if any) authority and power, and that, as Rose suggests, the dynamics in relationships between researcher and researched are multiple and varied.

The complexities of relationships between interviewers and interviewees are present throughout the research process. Interviewees themselves are engaged in constructing the narrative that ‘gets told’, including how much and which parts of the story to tell before the analysis is even conducted. Even the power of determining the meaning of the research is not fully the researcher’s (Rose, 1997). Rose discusses the role that participants, audiences, and other readers of the research play in determining the meaning ascribed to the research and suggests that any research that is disseminated in the forms of reports, publications, or dissertations travels through a range of interpretive fields that are ultimately beyond the researcher’s authority. Rose suggests that ‘betweenness’ can be ‘between the “field” and the “not-field”, between theory and practice, but also between researcher and researched’ (Rose, 1997: 313).

Rose (1997) advocates for knowledges that admit their partiality because they situate their own existence as one way of knowing among many (Rose, 1997). How to produce such

situated knowledge is not uncontested (Rose, 1997). While reflexivity and positionality of the researcher have been established as central tenets of feminist research (Haraway, 1991; Rose, 1997; Bennett and Pereira, 2013), there is important debate about how to successfully ‘situate’ knowledge generated through feminist research practices. Rose (1997) suggests that the ‘uncertainties’ and failures that result from the inability of the researcher to fully *know* not only make productive spaces within which to work analytically, but that the explorations of tensions in these spaces brings research processes more closely in line with Haraway’s call to produce situated knowledges in the pursuit of feminist objectivity.

This debate has developed with even greater complexity in spaces where historical and political marginality have resulted in the underrepresentation or erasure of contextual specificities (Bennett and Pereira, 2013). Bennett and Pereira (2013) take up these questions in their volume about feminist methodologies on the African continent within an academic space largely dominated by voices, perspectives, and theories situated in the global north. In addition to the ‘betweenness’ suggested by Rose, the methodological concept of being ‘jacketed’ by one’s position in relation to research is a methodological tool that unsettles the privileged/disadvantaged binary mapped onto the relationship between researcher and researched because:

a woman [is] ‘jacketed’ by tributes to her respectability, but ‘jacketed’, too, by constraints as she work[s] through and with the implications of that position . . . Our ‘jackets’ could also affect our intellectual and imaginative selves, organise our bodies and minds in ways which sat awkwardly with our own aspirations and dreams, and present us to the world in ways which could damage any communication with those we most wanted to hear. The work of exploring these research methodologies valuable to understanding the politics of gender and sexualities became, in part, the work of negotiating the ‘jackets’ of convention, the surveillance of moralities, categorization and fear (Bennett and Pereira, 2013: 3).

This concept of ‘jacketed’ researchers was developed as a metaphor in response to the experiences of Mohlakoana, also published in Bennett and Pereira’s volume. They spoke about the jacket they received from their church as a symbol of status within their community (Bennett and Pereira, 2013). It was bestowed with a recognition of their

'goodness' as a woman of faith who had contributed greatly to their community, and is a visible sign of their own respectability (Bennett and Pereira, 2013). However, in their research, the 'jacket' also represented a very clear relationship, one they felt damaged their own listening, between them and the teenage mothers they researched (Bennett and Pereira, 2013). While the jacket does not apply to me in the way that it applied to Mohlakoana, the metaphor of being 'jacketed' with particular privileges and limitations is a very useful intellectual and methodological tool with which to engage in a process of research that takes the demands of producing 'situated' knowledges seriously.

Bennett connects the metaphor of the jacket to the continued challenge of 'being seen as a "woman"' and 'designing, living and reflecting upon qualitative research processes' (Bennett, 2013: 186) through the negotiation of such jackets. They reflect that 'those who have taken up the challenge of being "jacketed women" in their work encounter unexpected ethical dilemmas, attacks against their status as scholars or their commitment as feminists, as well as the inevitabilities of imprecise angers and unrepresentable pleasure' (Bennett, 2013: 187). For me, these challenges had to do with my own whiteness, my location in the academy, harmful historical legacies of research, the residues of which are palpable in the saturated-with-researchers South African context, and the limitations imposed by my own uncertainties.

I am, however, accustomed to feeling 'out of place'. As a queer feminist Appalachian scholar, I occupy a liminal space that often results in uncomfortable negotiations with my surroundings. My scholarship often affords me the opportunity to travel to conferences in the areas of Gender Studies or feminist and queer epistemology. There, I am among others working on issues of gender and sexuality, but I often find that the specificity of my own context is underrepresented.

However, I am among a minority in my state due to my possession of advanced higher education degrees. Living as a politically active queer feminist in rural spaces poses its own challenges, too. As a consequence, I have been unable to feel comfortably 'at home' either

politically or personally in the metronormative spaces of conferences or the rural surroundings of my own community. I am troubled by the norms that operate in both metropolitan centres and a home that since November of 2016 has become christened 'Trump country'. This discomfort has provided me with another sense of 'betweenness' (Rose, 1997) that I find useful in terms of analysing the 'discursive formations' (Foucault, 1972) shaping the marginality of multiple spaces within queer epistemology and activism.

While Haraway (1991: 191) suggests that one of the most powerful views is that 'from the peripheries and the depths' because 'the subjugated have a decent chance to be on to the god-trick and all its dazzling illuminations', I have found that the 'betweenness' (Rose, 1997: 313) of existing in these multiple and varied spaces, between rural and metropolitan, between global north and global south, between privileged and marginalised has sharpened my ability to contribute, through research, to the formation of critical knowledges. I have directly experienced the set of assumptions attached to the place from which I come, but it has taken listening to the experiences of and reading scholarship produced by people of colour in my own country and those in other subaltern locations to provide me with a broader context through which to understand how those assumptions attach themselves to bodies and spaces. Though the particular meanings attached to bodies and their effects vary, the mechanisms through which these meanings are attached are very similar (Hill Collins, 2009; Scott, 2017).

On wildness: Multi-sitedness in this project

In their exploration of what makes critical research *critical*, Thomas (1993) advocates for 'wildness' in research because to domesticate knowledge means to submit it to normative regimes that deny knowledge-production its transformative potential. The wildness, or the response 'to a call to reject inhibitions imposed by assumed meanings and to cultivate in their place the fiercely passionate and undomesticated side of our scholarly nature that

challenges preconceived ideas' (Thomas, 1993: 7), of this study is most easily identifiable in its design. The linking of two far flung contexts as similarly situated in complex global dynamics involves invoking multi-sited methods, but pushes 'beyond' (Thomas, 1993: 8) even multi-sitedness as multiple locations within a geographically bounded site (Marcus, 1995), such as one state (Gray, 2009) or one country (Tsing, 1993), aligning more closely with Tsing's 2015 study.

The conceptual design of this dissertation demands ethical considerations that are mindful of historical, geographical, and social politics specific to the areas in which the research is conducted. Haraway's observation that the god-trick has been implicated in the 'subjugat[ion] [of] other knowledges and their producers' (Rose, 1997: 307), means that it is necessary to be mindful of the power dynamics embedded in each context, at the same time that the research seeks to understand new possibilities for contributing to what Haraway (1991: 187) calls 'an earth-wide network of connections, including the ability partially to translate knowledges among very different – and power-differentiated – communities.' This project, which examines particular processes in disparate spaces is not a comparative study. Rather, this research attempts to illustrate that global currents shaping such power dynamics exist, in order to push against the dichotomy of north/south, west/east, and industrialized/developing, while paying particular attention to the specificities of each context under consideration.

This research is an attempt to construct knowledge about specific geographic and discursive locations through an examination of two spaces that are exemplificative of the process of discursive marginalization within hegemonic discourses of LGBT(I) rights. Haraway's (1991: 187) observation that 'the need [for] the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made . . . in order to live in meanings and bodies that have a chance for a future,' demonstrates the necessity of analysing the processes at work in discursive marginalisation of queer experiences, lives, and bodies outside of the metropole

(and marginalized spaces within it) in order to realise a more just future for varied queer bodies and lives in multiple locations.

The ethics of transnational research have rightly been queried and scrutinized (Swarr & Nagar, 2010; Mohanty, 2003). To do transnational work means to be, 'at best a guest who might reciprocate appropriately, and at worst another in a long line of colonizers, always taking land and giving advice for the best reasons' (Haraway, 2016: 82). It is also Haraway (1991), however, who theorises the value of developing connections across multiple differently situated locations in not only producing 'situated knowledges', but in working toward a world that can resist and survive the dehumanising legacies of colonialisms and the onslaughts and aftermaths of exploitative and destructive economic systems. Building those connections requires cultivating curiosity and resilience through seeing linkages between spaces where those linkages seem unlikely and would not be easily made through the gaze of normative lenses. To build these connections in a way that fosters resilience rather than contributing to the destabilising effects of globalisation by producing narratives that place 'out-of-the-way places' even further out of the way, requires a deep attention to multiple contexts.

The reality of theorising someone else's 'home' as 'home' also requires taking on board the reality that it is never possible to know 'home' the way that people who inhabit it as home know it. The expert is not an expert when she is not at home. This awareness contributes to an epistemologically robust positionality where the limitations of 'knowing' are keenly felt by the 'knower' because the researcher is dislocated as the authority on context. Rose (1997) explores this when discussing a joke told by a participant that they did not fully understand. Potential meanings of this joke haunted Rose and constantly reminded them of the limitations of what it is possible to know, even/especially about the researcher's own position in relation to research. Not knowing that there are things we do not know is not only an epistemological arrogance, it can have disastrous effects. 'Well-intentioned but often

ignorant' experts can contribute to the undermining of local autonomy, rather than contributing to the resilience that a network of situated connections could build:

She wrote vividly about local people's accurate assessment of the effects of generations of visiting experts, while the experts and visiting research scientists often knew little or nothing about the terrible history of land seizures, colonial and postcolonial search-and-destroy operations, rapacious extraction schemes, and the impact on villagers of the failed projects of usually well-intentioned but often ignorant foreign scientists and both local and foreign NGOs (Haraway, 2016: 82).

If 'feminism loves another science' (Haraway, 1991: 195), that science would be comprised of the kinds of epistemological projects that Tsing's 2015 exploration of the matsutake mushroom embodies. Tsing traces the mushroom as it moves through multiple locally situated hands, globally interconnected economies and sometimes symbiotic/sometimes independent systems of meaning-making. Tsing's body of work demonstrates the importance of studying the local as a site of complexity and contradiction at the same time that they provide a caution against studying the local in isolation. Imagining the local in isolation obscures the larger spatial politics in which the local is caught up. Tsing argues that knowledge production has 'defin[ed] itself as a science that can travel anywhere' at the same time that it has 'constituted its objects – "cultures" – as essentially immobile' (Tsing, 1993: 123). The consequence of this relationship is:

The anthropologist travels; the culture is found in a set place. This distinction has arisen in anthropological writing, together with a stylistic opposition between well-travelled 'theories' with general applicability and the data for those theories – local 'cases,' which, themselves are interesting only at home (Tsing, 1993: 123).

While I emphasise the importance of the local in this project, the local does not exist in a vacuum nor does it live outside of the forces of globalisation that act for good or ill on environments, economies, governments and possibilities for human survival and mobility. Studying the local in isolation reproduces its existence as 'cases' and 'examples', rather than as origins of knowledge that have the capacity to articulate meaning. Without acknowledging the capacity of the local to theorise itself and the world, as well as the relationship between the two, well-travelled sciences will continue to have the authority to generalise the local out

of its specific existence. Such generalisation frames the local as an ‘elsewhere’ that continues to justify the generalisations of ‘science that can travel anywhere’ (Tsing 1993: 123) and metronormative knowledge production. The stakes of this empirical contest are not negligible:

As developed within this framework, *culture* emerges from stably localized communities. A number of anthropologists have shown how this notion of culture has been placed in opposition to *history*. The more culture is attributed to a place, the less its history has been recognized, and vice versa (Tsing, 1993: 123).

A loss of history positions ‘out-of-the-way places’ precariously, as the literature reviewed in the previous chapter suggested. In order to address this dynamic between place, temporality and knowledge production, Tsing (1993: 124) advocates ‘breaking down the categorical distinction between mobile theories and fixed cases.’ The wild multi-sited-ness of this project is an attempt to do that. I’ve relied on my own positionality, intuition, and curious listening to voices of multiple and differently situated activists mapping how discourse and material power act together to constrain and open opportunities for them in various ways. I see this as a refusal to lock either of the two locations that form the heart of my interest into a temporal or representational place of stasis because that would allow them to be dissected as ‘cases’ or examples.

Instead, I see a theoretical frame that emerges from these two places as something that has the capacity to theorise part of the relationship that exists between regimes of globalisation and rights. These types of connections are important to understanding global networks of power:

This mode of constructing multi-sited research is thus especially potent for suturing locations of cultural production that had not been obviously connected and, consequently, for creating empirically argued new envisionings of social landscapes (Marcus, 1995: 109).

In this research, two (and many more within those two) geographic locations containing many differences are situated together in relation to a hegemonic transnational discourse of

LGBT(I) rights that justifies their marginalisation. The final section of this chapter will consider further ethical considerations of the research presented here, but the way in which these two spaces are considered together is the concern that preoccupies this research design.

Methods: Driving south and showing up

I gathered the discourses I analyse here by showing up. I showed up everywhere I could think to show up. In this way, I was faithful to what Marcus identifies as a central tenet of multi-sited research methodologies:

Strategies of quite literally following connections, associations, and putative relationships are thus at the very heart of designing multi-sited ethnographic research (Marcus, 1995: 97).

During the course of collecting data, I attended conferences, workshops, queer and trans camps, strategy sessions, fundraisers, pride marches, public talks and presentations in various settings. I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with those working in as many LGBT(I) rights and grassroots organising contexts as I could access in the American South and South Africa. Together, there are 58 events (detailed in Appendix C and Appendix D) and 31 interviews (detailed in Appendix A and Appendix B) with founders, directors, staff, organisers and activists involved in LGBT(I) rights and organising work positioned in grassroots, state, regional and national organisations. In the US South, I drove a total of 23,683 kilometres (14,716 miles) usually over weekends and school recesses to attend events and cultivate contacts. I was asked to serve on the board of directors of a nascent organisation. I sat on the board until the organisation itself ceased to exist less than a year later. Some part of my volunteer work in South Africa involved driving a prominent activist where that person needed to go. As part of my involvement in 'the field', I've written reports,

edited pamphlets, drafted statements, written letters to the editor, washed dishes and walked 87 kilometres (54 miles) in a commemorative march for racial justice.

I began showing up in the US South in August of 2014. I attended events and conducted interviews in that region from August of 2014 to July of 2015. The period during which I conducted my fieldwork in the US was almost twice as long as the period of time I spent in South Africa because I was working full time during the entirety of my field work in the US South, while my field work in South Africa took place during a concentrated 7-month period, during which I took a semester-long leave of absence from my current teaching position. I was aware of the state equality organisations before beginning this research because of the board position I held at my own state equality organisation, Fairness WV. I was aware of several South African LGBTI organisations from living in Cape Town, from conducting Masters research in South Africa and from my friendships with some South African activists. To learn about events that would be taking place in the South in relation to LGBTQ issues, I subscribed to the e-mail lists of all of the organisations that I could find based in the US South. I liked the Facebook pages of organisations that I could find in the US South.

At one point, I heard a story on public radio about a newly formed organisation in my own state of West Virginia. I knew one of the people involved through our mutual involvement with Fairness WV, so I contacted them and asked if I could spend some time with the organisation for my research. The organisation was a nascent one and it didn't survive beyond the year that I was doing my research, but for a few months, I was on the board of the organisation and I drove over two hours (one direction) once a month for their meetings. Through this experience I became acquainted with a dynamic young person who works in their context to make the world better for lgbtiq people, with a special focus on lgbtiq youth.

Some events I planned to attend I was already aware of because they were annual events, and I had attended those events with students on a regular basis. These were events like the Appalachian Queer Film Festival and Fairness WV's annual conference and gala, held in October and November, respectively. In July of 2014, I began sending e-mails and making

phone calls to individuals I thought would be able to connect me to lgbtiq organising and advocacy work in the US South. I began with two contacts that allowed me to set up a week-long visit to North Carolina. I learned a very important lesson during that visit. I did conduct three interviews, attend a Queer BBQ, participate in a Pride and visit a queer historical museum exhibit that week, but the advocacy organisation with which I did not have a personal connection and with whom I had only corresponded by sending an e-mail to someone listed on their website cancelled my visit to their offices.

After that week, I made sure that whenever I scheduled an interview with someone who had no knowledge of me in advance, I planned it around an event that was already happening, hosted by an organisation in the area. I did this because each trip outside of events in West Virginia involved a minimum of six hours of driving (one way), and many destinations required longer travel. There were many cancelled interviews and meetings during the course of the year I was conducting field work in the US South, but when participants had some personal knowledge of me in advance of an interview or when I had been introduced to participants by a colleague they trusted, the interview was usually rescheduled.

The two individuals I contacted in advance of my trip to North Carolina helped me set up the meetings and interviews for that week. In 2013, while attending a conference at the University of North Carolina, Asheville, I met the first of these people, whose primary work is around the intersection of same-sex desire and faith. I had invited them to speak on campus later that year, and they did. Because they had worked for Southerners on New Ground, a regional queer organisation that is focused on intersectional work in the South, I contacted them and asked if they might be able to connect me to some other folks who were doing southern queer work, especially southern rural queer work. They knew of several individuals. They connected me to a few organisers via e-mail. One person responded and invited me to a 'queer BBQ' at their home, which served as a home for this individual's own family, a temporary home for queer youth who experience a range of difficulties at their own

homes and a meeting place for queer folks in the area who wanted to socialise and, in some cases, organise. The evening was raucous and unlike most other interviews I conducted in that I was interviewing two of the members of this group, but there were several others in the room with various interests in the topic. The evening was a very lively reunion of some folks who hadn't seen each other in a long time, some folks who were just meeting for the first time and others who passed through as the evening progressed.

The other person I contacted before traveling to North Carolina was also very helpful in suggesting and connecting me to others with whom I could speak. They connected me to a former Executive Director of North Carolina Equality who currently directs regional work happening in the South. I interviewed both of these individuals during this trip. During many weekends between August of 2014 and August of 2015, I was driving to events in another state. I would find out about these events through the e-mail lists I joined or on Facebook pages that I followed. As I learned of events, I attended them. I drove great distances (flying only once – to Baton Rouge, Louisiana) to attend conferences, keynotes, Pride events, queer camps, advocacy trainings, film screenings, community gatherings and every type of event I could find.

Showing up at these events often resulted in meeting the individuals involved in planning or organising the events. Meeting organisers in person often allowed me to schedule an interview with those individuals. These interviews were either done later over Skype or phone or in person during another trip. Balancing the twelve to twenty hours of driving I did most weekends with a full-time teaching job was very difficult in terms of logistics and in terms of cultivating the kinds of relationships that I would have liked to have been able to form with individuals and organisations during my field work in the US South. During the course of this travel to 'the field', I attended events and/or interviewed individuals doing activist and/or advocacy work in seven states: West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Louisiana. I contacted individuals in Kentucky, Tennessee and Mississippi, but was not able to make connections in those states during the course of

my fieldwork. Some states, such as Virginia, I only visited once. Some states, like South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia, I visited repeatedly.

At the same time that I was driving South, a campaign to introduce a non-discrimination ordinance that added 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity' to the city's employment policy, began in my own town. A first-year student of mine learned during a conference I hosted on campus that it was legal to discriminate against LGBT individuals in our state. Finding this information unacceptable, they leveraged their contacts with several members of the Elkins City Council to propose a change in policy that would address this issue. This change did not occur as quickly or as easily as they thought that it might due to some very vocal opposition by a few members of the council, one of whom in particular tried to sabotage the effort at every stage. What began as a quietly proposed change in policy became a months-long campaign to get the city's residents and business owners to support a non-discrimination resolution. In March of 2015, the city council adopted the resolution, after an extensive campaign to raise public awareness and support around this issue.

Watching this campaign unfold in my own home town, while I was traveling so many kilometres to events in other states was a surreal experience in many ways, but it also provided me with some key insights in my own research because of the rural setting where we live. Rural spaces were some of the most difficult spaces to access, and I had not anticipated my own home town becoming the site of an extended campaign around LGBT inclusion/non-discrimination.

In November of 2014, when I was unable to secure permission to attend a meeting hosted by Southerners on New Ground called Out South, I worried that I was not connecting to a wide enough range of organisations. I sent a message to the Gender Benders (an organisation I discovered through an internet search) over Facebook messenger. I did not expect much to amount from this message because of my experience of needing a personal contact within an organisation and the general difficulty I had had accessing some directors of organisations or securing permission to attend events such as Out South. However, I

received a warm message back inviting me to attend any meetings/events that the organisation was having, in addition to some information about upcoming events. The person with whom I was corresponding communicated that the organisation had had a very positive experience with a researcher who had been working with them over a period of time, and because of that, they welcomed more opportunities to collaborate with researchers.

I drove seven hours to attend a regular Sunday evening meeting of the Gender Benders in Greenville, South Carolina. I stayed overnight and interviewed one of their co-founders the following day. This interview took place on the property where the co-founder lives. During the interview, another member of the group and the co-founder were busy screen-printing shirts for a regional organisation with which they work very closely. I was not able to contribute meaningfully to the work that the Gender Benders do by volunteering my time or skills, but I did become a part of the organisation, moving from 'honorary' Gender Bender, as I attended several of their meetings and events to *being* a Gender Bender, as I participated with a small contingency of Gender Benders in the commemoration of the march from Selma to Montgomery in March of 2015 to mark the adoption of the Voting Rights Act fifty years earlier.

We walked 54 miles, learning about the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement in our country together. I have attended Camp Gender Bender three times and have learned there just how crucial the space that is created to affirm transgender individuals, their partners and friends is to the survival and well-being of those who attend. My connection to the Gender Benders helped me to access other organisations with which the Gender Benders work collaboratively and opened other opportunities during the rest of my field work in the United States that might not have been available otherwise.

In January of 2016, I arrived in South Africa to begin the portion of my 'field work' that was to take place there. I took a leave of absence from my post in the US and spent January through June in South Africa. I was based in Cape Town, housed very generously by my supervisor, which allowed me to rent a car, while I was there. One of my closest friends, the

founder and former director of a prominent and well-funded advocacy organisation, was also in the process of conducting research, and we decided that one of the things we would do together was schedule trips to different organisations where they could ‘pitch’ their research, and if directors or other staff were amenable, I could interview them about their work. As they reached out to their colleagues about their own research, they introduced me to several of them via e-mail, as well. We travelled together twice to possible sites for research – once to Johannesburg and once to East London. Travelling together in this way, I was able to access and connect with several directors of organisations I would otherwise probably not have been able to access. We didn’t spend all of our time with the same organisations. Still, there were and are ways that travelling together allowed me to access organisations and individuals I don’t believe I would have been able to access otherwise.

One event I attended early on in my time in South Africa was a series of talks that were part of the summer school sessions at the University of Cape Town. These talks were focused on global formations of LGBTI rights and were delivered by a prominent white gay man who has garnered recognition in South Africa and internationally for his work as a journalist and writer. This allowed me to capture some of the discourse that is so prominent in global understandings of LGBT(I) rights, discourse that was thought about critically by participants in my study, but taken for granted by this speaker. Another of the early events I attended, after my arrival in South Africa, was a planning meeting for the Alternative and Inclusive Pride event. My friend had been participating to some extent in these activities and asked one of the coordinators of these meetings, if I could join them. The coordinator mentioned that other researchers had been involved in Alternative and Inclusive Pride events the previous year and that as long as I contributed in some way, I was welcome to attend. I continued to participate in Alternative and Inclusive Pride activities, which connected me to Free Gender, the organisation with which I ultimately spent a great deal of time as a volunteer.

While my dissertation is certainly not an ethnography of Free Gender, I did interview the founder of the organisation for my dissertation, and the time I spent with Free Gender shaped the way I saw and interpreted the context not only of Cape Town, but of relationships between LGBTI rights and advocacy organisations as those relationships unfolded around me. My work with Free Gender was not primarily for research. Rather, it was to embed myself in a marginalised South African context in a way that allowed me to be useful and to offer some contribution of my own resources toward the work of liberating queer people in ‘out-of-the-way places’. I was not interested in mining the membership of the group for their stories, nor would that be, for me, an ethical way to conduct research, having just met the members of the organisation on my arrival in Cape Town in January of 2016.

Still, serving as a volunteer with Free Gender opened up meetings and events that I would most likely have been unable to access on my own as a researcher. It was not always possible to make a clear distinction between my presence in the organisation as a ‘volunteer’ and my presence in the organisation as a ‘researcher’, except that the organisation and its members were not themselves the subject of my research. Gaining the trust of the founder of this organisation was something I had to earn. The first time I met them was after I had attended a planning meeting for the Alternative and Inclusive Pride Network. We learned that there would be a planning meeting to finalise the details for the action at Cape Town Pride in Wetlands Park in Khayelitsha where Free Gender often meets. The morning portion of the meeting was still happening when we arrived at the park. When the portion of the meeting that was relevant for planning the actions at Cape Town Pride began, the founder of Free Gender spoke in English for a few minutes. They explained some of the possibilities for actions at Pride and talked us through what the possible responses to or risks of those actions might be. They then began speaking in isiXhosa, saying they wanted to ‘Xhosa-ise this thing as quickly as possible’, which I also quickly learned is the way they prefer to operate, especially in their organising work.

I was eager to be involved in any and all public events that might be happening, and I understood that there were several that would be hosted by Free Gender as part of the Alternative and Inclusive Pride events. I talked with the founder after this meeting to ask if I could attend the event they were hosting that week – a community discussion about the Civil Union Act. I asked if I could record the event. I offered to take notes to make myself useful. With a totally straight face, they told me they would appreciate me taking notes. I laugh, now, at my naivete, and others, too, have laughed at me and in admiration of the founder's handling of a hopeful but probably helpless-seeming (white, American, non-Xhosa-speaking, etc.) researcher eager to participate in events in Khayelitsha. They told me the venue for the event. I managed to find the Nonceba Family Center with the help of GPS and several pedestrians I asked for directions along the way, after driving in circles in Khayelitsha, missing the street each time.

At the end of the event, I had two hours of recorded material – *all* in isiXhosa. Because there was a lot of (English) legal jargon involved and because my Masters research had been focused around the Civil Union Act, I was able to understand a shocking (to me) amount of what had been discussed, but there was no way I would have been able to turn that recording into notes or minutes or a transcript in either isiXhosa *or* in English. After the event, the founder asked if I could come to their house with other members of the organisation so that they could put the recording I had made onto their own computer. That day, they gave me a tour of the organisation's offices, a visiting *sangoma* (traditional healer) from the community told me that I would now be called Nosipho and that I should never answer to 'Jessica' again and the founder said that it would be nice if I could come back to volunteer.

Over the course of the following few weeks, they asked me for the notes from the event at the Nonceba Family Centre. I had naively believed that I would be exempt from providing notes, since I did not have the facility to generate notes on my own. However, I said that I would try to work with one of the members of Free Gender to create a translation, and I did that. It took us several hours of listening to the recording, the Free Gender member saying in

English what had been said in isiXhosa, while I typed the translated talk sentence by sentence. This is how my relationship with the founder of Free Gender began. Throughout the rest of my time in South Africa during 2016, there wasn't one week when I didn't see them. Most weeks, I spent several days a week with them, driving them to meetings, taking them where they needed to go. Most of those days we spent time talking about politics – South African politics, international politics, US politics, LGBTIQ politics, redistributive politics – and de-briefing about meetings and events we had attended. This day-to-day volunteer work with Free Gender meant that I was immersed in the politics of LGBTI rights work in South Africa from a very specific vantage point. I became aware of events, campaigns and activities happening in Cape Town and nationally. I attended many events in my role as a volunteer with Free Gender. Some of these events were events I know that I would not have known about or been able to access outside of my role as a volunteer with Free Gender. My conversations with the founder of this organisation helped me to interpret the dynamics surrounding much of the work I encountered.

Once I identified organisations in the American South and South Africa, I established contacts within those organisations willing to participate in my study. I did this primarily by attending events and introducing myself to individuals representing their organisations at those events. I also made some inquiries and contacts via e-mail, but face to face contact was most effective in both contexts. After finding participants, I conducted qualitative, semi-structured interviews with them. I posed a set of questions designed to help me understand how the activists themselves experience the work that they do in their particular geographic region, which was sometimes as specific as a 'township', municipality, county or state or as general as a region or a more generalised 'out-of-the-way place' (rather than specific geographic location), such as 'rural America'.

Because participants were situated in vastly different roles at a wide range of organisations, the specific questions I asked were often adapted for each individual participant, though they were derived from a similar set of questions. Thomas (1993)

emphasises the importance of flexibility both in designing questions and in prompting or following up during the process of listening to participants' responses to questions. My questions were designed with an interest in how participants position themselves and their geographic and political locations for a number of audiences, how they perceive others' perceptions of them and the space they (and their organisations) represent, and how they represent their work in order to engage with funders. These thematic areas provided me with the discursive material to situate participants' responses within their respective historical, social, and political contexts. As Thomas (1993: 62) notes, critical approaches to research mean 'shifting from discrete instances of phenomena to their broader social context' and require situating the local within the global dynamics of power in which the world is enmeshed.

The range of material I collected by 'showing up' was vast and varied. I decided to attend public talks and events because I wanted to focus on the ways in which public discourse travels. I am interested in the operations of 'discursive formations' (Foucault, 1972), where meaning is rehearsed and conveyed. I also wanted to talk to individuals working in these areas because I felt that their understanding of language, power, urgency and relationships between a range of actors, such as activists, clients, donors and others they encounter in their work plays an important interpretive role. The work that organisers and activists, founders and directors do is shaped by the 'discursive formations' (Foucault, 1972) that structure hegemonic conceptions of LGBT(I) rights. This means that speaking to activists directly provides some insights into how they navigate the constraints and opportunities structured by hegemonic discourses of LGBT(I) rights that the literature identifies as originating in the metropole. Advocates and activists do not do this work without an awareness of the larger political context in which their work is based. They make strategic decisions about advocacy and activism and can live an embrace and a critique of human rights discourses simultaneously. The individuals I interviewed occupied different positions within the organisations where they worked. Many were founders and directors; others were responsible for specific roles within their organisations, such as outreach or media relations.

Listening to public talks was a very different kind of 'showing up' than participating in interviews with differently located activists and organisers. Listening to public talks means being part of an audience that is being addressed, whereas interviews are spaces that are shaped by the presence of both the interviewer and the interviewee. It was crucial to me that I collect both of these types of discourse to be able to conduct an analysis that takes account of 'discursive formations' disseminated in public to audiences that are sometimes pre-determined by organisations, but that are more often open to any 'public' that chooses to attend. Such presentations are likely to be attended by an audience that shares a geographic space with the organisation hosting the talk, but that may not otherwise be part of a predictable constituency. An event such as a film screening advertised as part of a series of events for Black gay men is a notable exception, as its audience has been determined (or at least suggested) in advance. An event such as a gala dinner may draw from another audience that is less explicit (in the organisation's invitation), but that nevertheless narrows the possible audience from any person who is interested to those people who can pay over \$100 per plate. A keynote address at a conference is another example of a kind of event designed for a particular kind of audience: an audience interested in the topic of the conference.

Naples (2003) provides an important theoretical orientation for my insistence on collecting both of these different types of discourse. In a discussion of 'discursive frames', Naples distinguishes between a 'discursive field' that shapes discourse in relation to a particular topic and frames that are employed consciously by those with an interest in speaking on the issue or topic. The shape of public discourse and the way it is packaged through 'discursive frames' limits 'what can be discussed or heard in a political context' because 'the conscious use of certain discursive frames is a process bounded by the discursive field itself' (Naples, 2003: 9). Public talks and presentations provide a clear sense of the discursive field within which the work of activists to whom I spoke is positioned, even when such discursive activity is produced or invoked by the organisations with whom I spoke or as a result of events hosted by them. Interviews and conversations with activists and organisers provide important insight into interpreting the discursive field within which their

work is positioned. The speech of activists and organisers also (at times) departs in important ways from publicly invoked ‘discursive frames’ to become marked by contradictions, uncertainties, possibilities and gestures in the direction of other ways of knowing, being and/or doing. For me, it was important to consider these two types of discourse together, as each of them seemed to be missing something without the context of the other.

Methods: Analysis

Overall, the various forms of discourse I gathered and analysed through this project serve as a body of work that speaks to the construction of the marginality of ‘out-of-the-way places’ in the imaginary of metronormative LGBT(I) rights organising. Part of the imperative to understand the ways in which marginality is constructed is articulated by Fairclough: ‘There are no social events or practices without representations, construals, conceptualizations or theories of these events and practices . . . the way people see and represent and interpret and conceptualize them is a part of these realities’ (Fairclough, 2012: 9). Methodologically, I want to take from Fairclough’s model the acknowledgment that discursive formations can contribute to the maintenance of social injustices and an awareness that sustaining the material manifestations of injustice requires an ideological or discursive underpinning. To conduct research with this awareness in mind means to be committed to the production of knowledge that contributes to the formation of a more just world, which Fairclough identifies as central to critical discourse analysis. From Wetherell and Potter (1992: 105), I make use of the model outlined in their study of the ideological function of racist discourse, wherein ‘a range of accounts and versions of events are used to make sense of other accounts and versions in order to develop an argument and to make a case about some body of material.’ Both of these approaches call for the use of a diverse collection of materials, which exist as ‘discourse’. Therefore, the interview material is situated in my analysis with a range of other materials, including public talks, conference presentations and the critical

theoretical perspectives already generated in relation to the metronormativity of queer theory and LGBT(I) rights discourse.

After transcribing recorded material, I manually coded it in Microsoft Excel sheets according to themes that emerged from the data itself. Because of the complexity of different 'types' of data from (at least) two different contexts, I gathered and coded the materials in four different spreadsheets: one for public presentations in South Africa, one for public presentations in the US South, one for interviews in South Africa and one for interviews in the US South. The following number of codes emerged in each sheet: 88 in US South Interviews; 82 in US South Public Presentations; 158 in SA Interviews; 158 in SA Public Presentations. Here, I paid particular attention to the similarities that emerged in codes across the different worksheets. In the analysis, I refer to the participants using pseudonyms. A complete list of interviews and pseudonyms is documented in Appendix A (US South) and Appendix B (South Africa). In the analysis, excerpts from public talks and other events are cited by numbers, which were assigned matching a chronological listing of events I attended, documented in Appendix C (US South) and Appendix D (South Africa).

I then engaged in a process of coding the material thematically as described by Wetherell and Potter (1992). This coding did not involve counting the number of times individual words appeared. Instead, I used 'an approach that addresses the use of interpretative repertoires [discourses] in context, the way concepts . . . are mobilized, paying close attention to their specific construction, to their placement in a sequence of discourse, and to their rhetorical organization' (Wetherell & Potter, 1992: 93). In analysing the material, I made use of a combination of approaches, one of which was Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis, which 'contributes to critical social analysis a particular focus on discourse and on relations between discourse and other social elements' (Fairclough, 2012: 9). Critical discourse analysis concerns itself with the interaction between the semiotic and the material. Further, critical discourse analysis is concerned with social problems that have

been enacted or furthered through ‘discursive formations’ (Foucault, 1972) invested in the maintenance and perpetuation of social inequalities.

Wetherell and Potter (1992) advocate against the separation of empirical and theoretical knowledge. Similarly, Obasogie (2014) argues for the rigorous combination of empirical and critical knowledges within the area of Critical Race Studies. Critical Race Studies is a disciplinary perspective Obasogie (2014) views as dominated with critical theory at the same time that they describe much empirical work on race and racism as bereft of the critical lens that makes Critical Race Studies such a powerful body of work in confronting racism. In this way, I see my research contributing to a critical body of queer theory by combining the techniques of empirical and critical approaches. I understand queer theory to be dominated by works of critical theory, the contours of which can be ‘filled in’ by empirical studies with critical perspectives (Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

After coding the data based on themes that emerged out of the transcripts, I then returned to my original research questions about how spatial politics organise perceptions and realities of LGBT(I) rights in ‘out-of-the-way places’ in order to see how constellations of themes based on words and phrases in the texts might coalesce thematically in relation to my theoretical areas of interest. Guiding this analytical inquiry was my continued reading of literature that has formed the theoretical framework for this project throughout. Thomas (1993: 43) refers to this process as ‘defamiliarization’, through which the researcher takes existing discursive material and, through interpretation, ‘translate[s] it into something new.’

I was overwhelmed by the amount of material I collected in the course of pursuing what I hoped would be a representative sample of discursive material from the regions in which I worked. It was impossible to write about all of the data I collected within the parameters of this document, so I focused on the theoretical framework established by the literature to guide my approach in incorporating and analysing the material. I think of what emerges as a mosaic or a crazy quilt, both of which are endogenous art forms in the places from which the analysis in this document emerges. Mosaics adorn many public parks and township

households in South Africa. In visiting Meadowlands, Soweto, for the first time in 2010, I was in awe of the beautiful patios in which shards of glass and pottery were repurposed into an artistic expression by the residents who lived there. I was visiting someone in their home in order to interview them for my Masters project. I later walked through some of the surrounding streets of Meadowlands and found that most homes were adorned with such mosaics on patios, walls and walkways. When I visited Wetlands Park in Khayelitsha for the first time in 2016, I saw the elaborate mosaics adorning the low walls inside the park and the entryways. At the same time, mosaic is also something that is marketed as high-end art work for purchase outside of the contexts in which it seems most 'at home.'

In Appalachia, we have our own heritage of pieces of functional goods repurposed as art. Grandmothers, aunts, mothers and others who quilt, piece together bits of clothing that have outgrown their usefulness as clothing to patch together quilts that help keep bodies warm on cold nights. In Alice Walker's (1973) short story, 'Everyday Use', there is tension around the metropolitan politics that recolonise the story's rural characters. Walker expertly demonstrates how both or either of these art forms could become commodified – assigned a high commercial value in a place where they are detached from their 'everyday use[fulness]', while the distant 'home' where they are put to 'everyday use' remains framed as a backward and inconvenient thought, except as a place from which to mine such newly 'discovered' chic rustic decorative goods. The quilt and other goods are valued in the southern rural home for their functionality in relation to both subsistence and the familial ties they represent there. The quilt and other goods are valued in the city, from which a prodigal daughter has returned for a brief visit, for their rustic charm and commercial value.

Through this story of contested family heirlooms, but especially the story of the quilt, Walker shows how 'out-of-the-way places' fall outside of the consciousness of a metronormative politics. The prodigal daughter has returned with a newly awakened political consciousness, but her own colonisation of her sister and her home through the metronormative gaze does not register in the political consciousness she acquired in the city.

To gain a critical race consciousness (which Walker's representation even treats, in this story, as a fashionable trapping), the daughter has had to renounce a critical consciousness about what 'home' might mean when home is a place you have to leave behind to become legible in metronormative discourses.

I read this story as a gesture toward the necessity of critical consciousness that is multiple and able to hold contradictions. Walker's portrayal of the prodigal daughter and her Black panther boyfriend is both playful and incisive, but the message about the quilt, 'home', and the status of 'out-of-the-way places' in the city's gaze is clear. Because the story is told from the mother's perspective (who politely tries to pronounce the boyfriend's name, but finds both him and her daughter strange in their estrangement from 'home'), Walker turns the city's gaze back on itself. The playfulness with which the mother treats the difficult-to-pronounce-name and the other strange things she encounters about her daughter are transformed into a garish materialism by the time the mother intervenes in the prodigal daughter's scavenging.

In the same way that no two mosaics would be alike and no two crazy quilts ever turn out the same, another researcher may have taken the same bits of discourse (of tile, of glass, of fabric) that I've collected and created a different quilt or mosaic, but these pieces fit together to tell a story about queer life outside of the metropole, queer life at the margins. Had I not come from Appalachia, I might have asked different questions of the data. Many Americans might come to South Africa and never ask about the relationship between the two spaces because we are taught to see the United States as the place in the world where other people want to be. We are taught that the world is disciplined by our gaze. However, it was in South Africa that I learned to ask the critical questions I pose here. In this way, for me, these spaces are inseparable influences on my 'world sense' (Oyewumi, 1997: 3) and my approach to making meaning.

In the way that the fragments that make up mosaics and crazy quilts had their own lives before they were organised by the artist's hand into the shape of a mosaic or quilt, the

discourse I've collected here had its own life before it became part of this analysis. The picture I present here is not the one and only story of LGBT(I) rights in 'out-of-the-way places' or anywhere else. Unresolved tensions in these 'two souths' being considered together animate this document, but these tensions are a reminder that all knowledge is partial. Like feminist epistemology (Haraway, 1991), mosaics and crazy quilts do not attempt to hide their partiality. Instead, their beauty and voice are a product of their brokenness and the evidence that they lived another life before their current incarnation. My own analysis of the material I gathered includes both critical reading of participants' reflections as 'content' alongside sustained engagement with analysis which highlights the coherence of particular discourses across a varied collection of material.

Critical perspectives and ethical research

As a person who has agonised over whether or not it is possible to 'conduct research' in a way that is ethical, I need to raise questions about *how* it is possible to design, implement and write an ethical research project in this chapter. If it is possible to do these things, that possibility lies in the potential Naples (2003: 11) identifies as 'engagement with others in struggle [that] can provide a strong basis for understanding the personal, political, and collective possibilities for progressive social action.' Naples queries 'how certain cultural representations in ethnographic accounts contribute to colonialist practices and further marginalize the lives of third world and other nonwhite peoples, even as they are brought to the center of analysis' (Naples, 2003: 5). Naples (2003: 23) also cautions that without critical perspectives cognisant of the colonising possibilities of research, 'research operates to reinsert power relations, rather than challenge them.' Both Madison (2012) and Thomas (1993) identify the primary responsibility that researchers have when engaged in 'critical' projects as that of clarifying and articulating a vision of the world as it 'could be', if the world was more just, and contributing, through research, to such a vision.

For me, one of the most pressing ethical concerns had to do with who to interview for this project. As Naples (2003: 13) writes, feminist methods should be preoccupied with ‘efforts to conduct research that minimizes exploitation of research subjects.’ Initially, I thought that the question of how to conduct research ethically had a great deal to do with questions of exploitation (Naples, 2003), a concern I thought would be easily answered by designing research that did not mine vulnerable populations for narratives of trauma. Because violence is one of the most immediate problems in the world, it *does* seem important to approach it through research, activism and any other mechanism available to attempt to change conditions for the better. However, I am mindful of Beam’s (2014) instructive recounting of turning researchers away from an organisation that provided direct services to vulnerable queer youth, regardless of the questions driving the researchers’ work. I do not want to be a researcher who mines sites of trauma for data to study, especially when I am not a part of the group whose trauma is under consideration and/or investigation.

So, I decided to interview queer organisers involved in the work of LGBT(I) advocacy and/or queer grassroots organising. I imagined myself attending events and interviewing activists about their work, activities that seemed to me to be unobtrusive and that did not take attention or (much) labour away from the work activists are engaged in every day. My naivete in failing to anticipate the kind of ‘trauma’ that can live in doing this work chastens me now. One of the lessons that I take away from my attempt to conduct research that was ‘ethical’ simply by adjusting the parameters of the sample is that simply ticking methodological boxes does not result in sound, ethical or analytically astute research (Thomas, 1993).

Not only do the politics around metronormativity in queer activism often result in frustration in relation to issues of representation, funding, and other elements constrained by metronormative hegemonies, these frustrations permeate the lives of those doing the work, resulting in burnout, stress, trauma and loss. As I discovered through the process of doing this research, organising around LGBT(I) rights, especially at the grassroots level,

requires enormous investment of 'self' at every layer. Founders of organisations large and small discussed depending on the kindness and generosity of their partners as they poured enormous personal investments of time, their own incomes (when they had it) and emotional energy into their work. Participants discussed illness that resulted from stress, the loss of people close to them related to their work and sometimes even the knowledge that their work is keeping the members of their communities alive when they can.

There is also (sometimes) fierce competition for access to resources and recognition, which has the potential to leave organisers and activists feeling alienated from those who should be members of the same 'community' working on LGBT(I) rights. I have no interest in detailing any conflicts or grievances that came up over the course of my research, but I bring this potential for conflict up here because it takes a toll on individuals doing this work and on their relationships with others working toward LGBT(I) rights or queer liberation. This is a toll that frequently goes unaccounted for.

A similar question of ethics that I would like to address here is tied both to one of the primary marginalising forces in the spatial politics of LGBT(I) rights work and to the question of exploitation I raised briefly above. As one of my interviewees reminded me, gently, but when I looked back through the transcripts, explicitly, we are all implicated in systems of domination and caught up in relations of power that precede our arrival in them. Our responsibility is to determine how to be least complicit in these dynamics with the tools that are available to us in those moments. The way I have navigated this project has been my attempt to do that. The participant, however, was speaking directly to questions of funding attached to research.

I have been too overwhelmed by the teaching obligations at my small, underfunded, liberal arts institution to apply for funding of any kind. I have considered it, but when I look at a grant application with its specific language, its infinitely narrow parameters and its requirements to match that funding with other resources (meaning more applications), I feel up against enormous impossibilities. So, whether I would be funded for my research is

another question entirely. In this way, I am not complicit in a cycle of funding that allows researchers to travel and observe others, drawing conclusions about the lives of ‘others’ based on whatever literature informs the researcher’s perspective. I am, however, employed full-time at an institution that has been very supportive of my work, so my implication in these questions is one of a class privilege that gives me the mobility to travel (for research and leisure) in a way that many of those who participated in my study may not be able to do outside of the demands that are placed upon them to travel as representatives of their organisations.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the epistemological and methodological practices that have guided my process of conducting research. I’ve explained my own positionality as an impetus for designing and carrying out this research project. I’ve also situated myself as someone whose discomfort in any one of the spaces to which I am supposed to belong (my rural home, my professional life, my belonging in queer community) allows me to cultivate an analytical lens that values ‘in-between-ness’ (Rose, 1997). I’ve articulated how it is that the two spaces under consideration in this dissertation will be considered together in the analysis. This analysis is not an analysis that is comparative. Instead, the two spaces are considered together, as if located in and locatable through similar ‘discursive field[s]’ (Naples, 2003). That same ‘discursive field’ is a globalised hegemonic discourse of ‘rights’ in which both locations are situated. As I discussed in the previous chapter, locating the spaces together does not at all mean that the only way it is possible to understand them is as if they are ‘products’ of a global gay discourse nor as if they are distinct and isolated entities. Instead, these spaces are richly textured. Parts of that texture are global dynamics and parts of that texture are local ones, but these things cannot be parsed apart as if they bear no relation to one another.

The next three chapters are comprised of a thematic analysis of the data I collected during my work in 'the field'. Chapter four examines the discursive and material effects of hegemonic discourses of LGBT(I) rights on work being done in the 'out-of-the-way places' where I collected discourse. Chapter five examines fissures in the hegemonic discourse of the 'universal' in relation to LGBT(I) rights. Chapter six considers the ways in which queer work happens in 'out-of-the-way places'. While 'the ways in which queer work happens' is certainly a part of all three of these chapters, Chapter six considers this work on its own terms, without the focus on hegemonic discourses that are an analytical focus of Chapters four and five. The analytical work of the following three chapters is then reflected upon in a final conclusion that considers in greater depth some of the methodological challenges outlined in this chapter, especially in relation to uncertainties and questions about what it is not possible to know.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Hegemonic discourses of rights and the spatial politics of sexuality

Introduction

Spatial politics govern how we think about gender and sexuality. Spatial politics also govern how people who are thinking about gender and sexuality are themselves thought about, depending on where in the world they are located (Johnson, 2013). As literature I reviewed in Chapter two demonstrates, different geographical sites become marginalised within discursive productions of space as ‘progressive’ (cosmopolitan) or ‘conservative’ (provincial) through discourses about LGBT(I) rights that originate in the metropole and travel through networks of activists and advocates, institutions that cultivate and circulate human rights norms, politicians, journalists and lgbtiq populations themselves. If, as literature critical of human rights argues (Massad, 2002; Mutua, 2002), a regime of normative human rights functions as a mechanism of coercion in the age of neoliberalism, the effects of that coercion play themselves out in the spatial politics that arrange thinking about gender and sexuality in our contemporary moment.

Also, as reviewed in Chapter two, one of the most powerful discourses around rights related to lgbtiq people is that of same-sex marriage, which is often seen as the measure of how far a country has embraced LGBT(I) rights. As a policy, same-sex marriage is positioned opposite death as a potential punitive response to same-sex sexuality (Scott, 2013), suggesting that marriage as policy contains some life-giving potential for lgbtiq people. The reality for lgbtiq people, as described by activists differently located in places with a wide range of policy formations in relation to same-sex sexuality, is much different. Lgbtiq people’s safety, mobility, inclusion in our communities and access to a range of services cannot be predicted by whether our local or national government has adopted a same-sex relationship recognition policy (Mkhize et al., 2010).

This chapter examines the discursive formations of space as one of two things in the imaginary of LGBT(I) rights measures: space is either habitable for or even facilitating queer expressions of life or dangerous and inhospitable for queer bodies. Explicitly articulated sets of values or implicitly communicated norms about what constitutes a range of things, from safety to acceptance, seen as important for queer habitability, designate a place as ‘on’ or ‘off’ the map. Same-sex marriage has had a dominant role in such characterisations of habitability. This chapter works with the material I collected during the course of my field work in South Africa and the US South to map the discursive terrain of LGBT(I) rights in those places.

The first section, ‘This isn’t about marriage. This is just about acceptability’ highlights and analyses the claim that ‘[acceptance] is a lower bar than marriage’ which in turn raises questions for participants about the terms upon which policy as a rubric for the possibility of queer life has been established. The second section ‘Getting on the map: On paper this country could not be more perfect’ examines material which explores the ways positive policy establishing LGBT(I) rights translates into a celebratory sense that something has been achieved to make queer life more liveable, thereby positioning such contexts ‘on the map’ of LGBT(I) rights in the world.

These first two sections are drawn mostly from material gathered in the South African context. Not only does South Africa’s legal landscape position it ‘on the map’, according to the rubric of rights available through the law, South Africa’s positive relationship to LGBT(I) rights precedes that of the US, thus offering a deeper context for discourses attuned to the conflation of LGBT(I) rights with same-sex marriage. One of the interesting things about these sections is that though the material was collected in South Africa, there are many references to US gay cultural productions – from television shows to foreign policy objectives – that are then exported to other parts of the world. Later sections, where material from the US South is integrated into analysis of South African material, illustrate the similarities between South African activists’ representations and those in US Southern contexts where

access to same-sex marriage was still legally contested during the time period when I was gathering this material.

The remaining three sections are comprised of material from both South Africa and the US South. ‘Off the map: Deserts of nothingness and violence at a distance’ examines material about the ways in which ‘out-of-the-way places’ are positioned off the map of legibility of sites of queer existence. ‘The authority to speak: “This isn’t possible everywhere’ explores material that shows how knowledge of the map of queer habitability is leveraged to demonstrate a speaker’s authority to speak. ‘What’s possible: Narratives of not wanting to fund and marriage (Oh, fuck)’ examines the ways in which marriage as a prioritisation for LGBT(I) rights work shapes what kinds of advocacy and organising efforts are or have been possible, especially in ‘out-of-the-way places’. The chapter primarily relies on interview material, but draws from public presentations, as well, in order to present an analysis that speaks to the discursive function of hegemonic discourses of LGBT(I) rights in the spatial politics of sexuality.

‘This isn’t about marriage. This is just about acceptability.’

A ‘global conversation about LGBT rights’, as two public presentations, one in the US South and one in South Africa claimed to explain to their audience, positions some countries as advancing those rights and other countries as obstructing those rights as the only relationship it is possible to have to progress and modernity. Some places become legible through a performative embrace of LGBT(I) rights or enshrining LGBT(I) rights in the law, while other locations are written off of the map. This process of becoming legible or not, however, does not only unfold at the level of nations. It can happen to entire continents. It can happen to regions within a nation. It can happen to places characterized by an ideological reputation that becomes conflated with a geographical location, such as the ‘Bible Belt’ in the United States. It can happen to places that only exist because of architectures that

remain as contemporary manifestations of colonial pasts, such as ‘townships’. Ideas about the (im)possibility of queer life adhere themselves to geographies through the notion of universal rights as boundaries demarcating such (im)possibilities.

I open my analysis here with a reading of a public lecture at a large and well-known university in South Africa. The premise of this lecture was that there is a ‘new’ global conversation happening about sexuality and gender identity. The lecture was part of a summer school series, and was given by a well-known South African writer and journalist. In arguing that a new global conversation was animating LGBT(I) epistemology and activism, the speaker drew widely on US references, taking as given that ‘getting married’, ‘going to town’, glamorous transitions and corporate endorsements of ‘gay’ are inherent and unproblematic signs of a move toward liberation for lgbtiq people. The result of such discourses about LGBT(I) rights is that ‘progress’ takes on very specific spatial associations:

On the one hand, you’ve got . . . the cosmopolitan intellectual who is embracing an inevitable process of globalization. On the other hand, you’ve got . . . a fearful provincial who’s trying to protect his children from the consequences of this process because he thinks they are bad. (36)

For this speaker, the ‘cosmopolitan intellectual’ is someone who ‘embrac[es] an inevitable process of globalization’, while those who try ‘to protect’ their contexts ‘from the consequences of this process’ are ‘fearful provincial[s]’. This is a formulation in which the only result of globalisation is increased exposure to *Will and Grace*, *Modern Family*, and *Time* magazine covers. Other consequences of globalisation, such as exacerbated wealth disparities and increasingly militarised borders, disappear from view. The first reference the speaker makes to LGBTI rights within the context of ‘a quite extraordinary global conversation’ is same-sex marriage. Same-sex marriage is established as the top of a hierarchy of ‘rights.’ The speaker later describes a ‘really interesting piece of research done by the Pew Research Center’ that correlates greater acceptance of ‘homosexuality’ with ‘secular and affluent societies’:

Now, note this isn't about marriage. This is just about acceptability which is a lower bar than marriage. (36)

However, when the speaker discusses violence, the violence that queer bodies experience is attributed to lower levels of acceptance of same-sex sexuality and gender non-conformity, not the absence of access to same-sex marriage. The logic, though, of 'acceptance' as 'a lower bar than marriage' was not isolated to this speaker. Many participants described South Africa as a place where same-sex marriage is available by law *and* a country where violence against lgbtiq people is an ongoing and urgent problem. One panel discussion I attended as part of a schedule of alternative Pride events in Cape Town took place on another university campus and was designed to raise questions about what the most relevant issues for lgbtiq people were in that moment. The facilitator briefly contextualised LGBT(I) advocacy work in the country by saying:

So, for a long time South Africa has been mobilising alongside many other parts of the world for same-sex marriage to become legalised and that was the end all and be all of the struggle for the entire lgbtiq community - transgender people . . . were thrown in there just in passing. Almost being lumped together – that the one struggle has now been - the sexual orientation struggle, it's about being in same-sex relationship. [44]

In the context of interviews, too, participants spoke to 'one advocacy agenda' that resulted in 'same-sex marriage', and other 'amazing legislation' and 'brilliant policies', which position South Africa as a 'land of milk and honey.'

I think a country like ours, you know, we thought, okay something that brings out one advocacy agenda, same-sex marriage, you understand, and I think we really did become so relaxed because we're thinking you've got the laws. [Pete]

Because of this history of advocacy work, David concluded, 'on paper this country could not get better.' At the same time, participants spoke to places where same-sex marriage legislation is not important to constituents or is not on an advocacy agenda because 'what people are asking for are very very basic rights that everyone should be entitled to.' Speaking

specifically to the SADC (Southern African Development Community) region, David demonstrates a logic wherein acceptance 'is a lower bar than marriage.'

So, the rights that people are asking for throughout SADC is not same-sex marriage. It's not even civil unions or anything of the sort. It's about please give us access to the rights that we're entitled to as human beings. And so, that's where the conversation is in our region. In South Africa, depending on where you are, the conversations differ because some people are saying I have the right to get married to my spouse, to my partner, to my, whatever - we get it. But for most people the conversation is still I should be free from violence, I should be safe in my own home, I should be able to go to the clinic when I am beaten up. [David]

People are 'not even' 'asking' for 'civil unions or anything of the sort' because their conversations are about violence, safety and accessing services at places such as clinics. Here, being 'free from violence', being 'safe in [one's] own home' and being able to 'go to the clinic when I am beaten up' are 'not same-sex marriage' because they are 'not even civil unions'. Instead, David communicates that such 'rights' are much more basic and fundamental, as 'rights that we're entitled to as human beings.' However, David goes on to indicate that lgbtiq people do not have an expectation of safety, freedom from violence and access to services either, even though they do have access to a law that governs same-sex marriages. Similarly, though speaking to a rural context in South Africa where same-sex marriage is in fact legal and accessible through the law, Andile, suggests that marriage is something more than 'so many problems we are facing right now':

So, with that, it's not a big issue at least here. We don't talk of things like, not that we don't want to talk about them but it's just - there are so many problems we are facing right now to be dwelling on pretty things like marriage. [Andile]

Through a logic of universal rights, where acceptance is a 'lower bar than marriage', marriage can be understood (and resisted) as a 'pretty [thing]'. It is important to ask how marriage could be a higher bar than acceptance, if it is possible to have the legal recognition of marriage but also be subject to violence that is a result of not being accepted. It is also important to ask how marriage can be such a high bar when acceptance seems so hard to

ensure or even secure. Many speakers identified the answer to this question by speaking to the gap between policy and implementation of policy:

It's still like although our constitution allow us that ok being gay is acceptable in the constitution and the same-sex whatever, but the problem is – in terms of implementation - it's still a problem because if right now you go to the police station, we are experiencing stigma and discrimination, go to the clinic, you're experiencing stigma and discrimination, schools – kids, the learners are still bullied at the school. The people who are working in those industries are still having attitude because of using this – using the term that our tradition and culture does not allow us, you know? [Xolani]

One of the things that becomes most evident in a discussion of marriage in South Africa is the way that 'rights' which are theoretically available to all are available differently 'depending on where . . . you're located':

So, depending on where in South Africa, where you're located, what community you're from, where you live, those conversations are incredibly different. And that is part of the complication of South Africa and countries to be very honest like Botswana and Namibia where you have an extremely wealthy middle class. Depending on where you are in those countries, the law and how you access your rights are just very different from other people. So, we have to deal with those differences and those nuances within the community. [David]

'Where you're located' has to do with complex histories of colonialism, geographies of racism, and class-based exclusions. 'Where you're located' also has an enormous amount to do with how you can access what's been promised to you through a constitution or a specific law like the Civil Union Act (2006). An activist at a public presentation that was part of the Alternative and Inclusive Pride programme in Cape Town, South Africa, spoke to the way that some relationships are recognised and celebrated through the Civil Union Act and other relationships are not legible, even though their existence has a long history:

We have the Civil Union Bill, we can adopt and we can even through insemination . . . But we cannot leave this conversation only at that. We have to think across accessibility, privilege – all of those things. So, who can really get those things that's promised to us? Long before . . . all of those things, how often did it happen that your lesbian couples in rural areas and townships by default by their families have to raise the children of the sisters. So, they long had already this kind of like complex different kind of family house hold settings. But it was never acknowledged - they never got support either from subsidies and the government . . . but now finally that

in the suburbs and we can get married and we have a wedding cake and throw it even at each other . . . it's so luscious. There is so much . . . we don't look at but who had it and who is anyway never gonna have it. Because we tick off the things . . . what's the next thing? Every lesbian couple want to adopt a child or two and the same for gay couples. [44]

Here, same-sex marriage through the Civil Union Act is 'luscious' and almost too much with its wedding cake that gets 'throw[n] . . . at each other' and flowers that get 'throw[n] . . . away', but 'complex different kind of family household settings' have both long existed and not been on the map of 'support either from subsidies and the government.' A coalition of organisations is building a campaign initiated by the organisation Free Gender, to address these disparities in the application of the Civil Union Act through a campaign called 'Troubling the Civil Union Act' [40].

When the law was written, it allowed exemptions for government employees at the Office of Home Affairs to refuse to perform same-sex marriages, if they objected to marriage between same-sex couples. The result has been a gap between the promise of the law and the structure of the law. When discrimination is a part of the structure of the law, the discrimination disproportionately affects those who already experience inequalities in service delivery and who are also likely to have fewer resources to facilitate their mobility to an office where someone is available to perform their marriage ceremony. 'Troubling the Civil Union Act' [40] recognises this dynamic and aims to address these disparities in service delivery as part of the larger effort to remove homophobia from the locations where black lesbians are most likely to live.

However, even for those who can access it, some wonder whether it is worth accessing marriage available through the state when their families might not 'even accept it', which suggests that marriage is not a lower bar than acceptance for some lgbtiq people. As I discovered through my Masters research, and as participants in this research, such as Kian, indicated, marriage can be guaranteed through the law, but acceptance is something that is negotiated within families and communities. If families and communities are potential sites

of violence for lgbtiq people, acceptance in those contexts is critical to the safety and security of lgbtiq people in a way that marriage may not be. Kian spoke about the ambivalence many members of their organisation felt about marriage itself because it seemed tangential to their more immediate and more important concerns about families and communities.

I think at the time when we spoke about marriage a lot and we got the sense that most gay people were – either because they felt that there was a lot that they had to go through in order to get married, and would the families even accept it even though they're struggling with accepting them in their identity – is that even possible? . . . A lot of people still felt that homosexuality somehow is still a sin, but that God would forgive them for that, and so, why should I still go and get married? And then there were just a few who felt like, agh, I'm already in a relationship and we've been together for five years, so it's almost like a marriage – why should I still go through all the drama? [Kian]

Marriage is something that most of the constituents of Kian's organisation 'may not believe in', and yet, their engagement as a religious community has involved expanding the parameters of what marriage can be within the imaginary of their community. These struggles with relationships, sexuality, family, and religious beliefs show the complexity of navigating homophobia. Marriage here is not a 'higher bar' than something called acceptance. Instead, legal marriage as a 'right' in this discussion is peripheral to questions about how marriage can possibly matter before families would 'even accept it.' 'Acceptance' here is not a lower 'bar' than marriage. Marriage is legally available, but in some ways, it is undesirable, if it means having to 'go through all the drama.'

The tensions between what is legally available and what is rarely possible to guarantee for queer life in any context are striking. Hegemonic discourses of LGBT(I) rights, which often reduce their interest to a scenario wherein 'the more gay and lesbian rights are affirmed in some parts of the world, the more they are being denied elsewhere' [36], do not account for the tensions and layers of complexity outside of a polarised account of rights. The material here shows how a formulation of 'cosmopolitan intellectual[s]' and 'fearful provincial[s]' reproduces consequences for those queer bodies who share the geographical space of the 'fearful provincial'. These bodies are wrapped up in fierce contestations over their existence

at the margins of both heteronormative cis-centric existence *and* the globalized gay cultural productions that are often indicative of the achievement of LGBT(I) rights.

On the map: ‘On paper this country could not get better’

When I attended a mass same-sex wedding in Knysna, a small town along South Africa’s scenic ‘garden route’ on the south-eastern edge of the country, to commemorate the ten years since the Civil Union Act (2006) was written into law, a prominent public official in Knysna was ecstatic with what the occasion meant for Knysna and South Africa. They began their remarks by observing that this was not only the first mass same-sex wedding in South Africa, but it was also the first same-sex wedding in all of the African continent. Since same-sex sexuality is criminalised on much of the African continent and same-sex marriage is only available as a legal possibility in South Africa, this is unsurprising as an observation. Yet, such a statement takes on exaggerated significance as it is employed to create a celebratory atmosphere around ‘the successes we have achieved in overcoming the struggles to create a truly equal society and a nation free from discrimination’ (53). For this public official in Knysna, the mass same-sex wedding puts Knysna ‘on the map’.

I need to thank . . . the organisers of the . . . festival for always putting Knysna on the map. As you may recall, we were the proud host of Mr. Gay World. That happened last year, and this year, we’re having this great and auspicious occasion once again. I don’t know what’s in store for next year, but let’s see what’s going to happen . . . [This event] is a great milestone for LGBT rights and indicative of the successes we have achieved in overcoming the struggles to create a truly equal society and a nation free from discrimination. Allow me, however, to lament the sad truth that these rights are still not afforded in many African nations. I find it a sad state of affairs that there are still those in power who think they can dictate who are allowed to be loved or not. [53]

For this public official, Mr. Gay World was an event that ‘put Knysna on the map’; the first mass same-sex marriage again ‘put Knysna on the map’; they were sure that another ‘great and auspicious occasion’ would be part of the festival in 2017 that would again ‘put Knysna on the map’. These remarks were a celebration of progress in the spirit of those characterised

as ‘cosmopolitan intellectuals’ in the previous section. The event itself ‘is a great milestone for LGBT rights’, an indication of ‘a truly equal society and a nation free from discrimination’. Though not a single activist I interviewed offered an assessment in accordance with the statement that South Africa is ‘a nation free from discrimination’, this discursive formation can permeate a person’s sense of what ‘a truly equal society’ is. Pete described traveling to Russia at a time when an anti-homosexuality law was being discussed and ‘approved’ in that country. Pete discusses being from a country like South Africa (described above as a ‘truly equal society’; a ‘nation free from discrimination’) meaning that you feel that ‘you should be safe everywhere you are’, so that ‘hostile environments’ come as a surprise for which you may be unprepared.

So, as I arrive it was the day they approved the law. As I land I received the text and I’m like thinking do I hop back on the plane or do I just do what I have to do here? So, I did what I had to do there but I mean the point is that you know, you end up being in hostile environments and also maybe unconsciously you know because of where you come from, you’re thinking you know, you should be safe everywhere you are . . . but then I think because the moment you also leave your country you’re also talking now of universal human rights, which should also be observed. [Pete]

Similarly, activists working on a wide range of issues in South Africa, from hate crimes and violence against lgbtiq people, issues of transgender health and inclusion in policy decision-making to access to service delivery for lgbtiq people spoke to the way that South Africa being ‘on the map’ of progressive LGBT(I) rights legislation had serious consequences for funding LGBTI rights work. South Africa was sometimes characterised as an ‘anomaly’ because of its ‘brilliant policies, amazing bylaws’ that coexist with violence against lgbtiq people. The participants with whose material I work spoke about the way that the legislative achievements for LGBTI rights in South Africa translate into the assumption on the part of funders that money should be spent elsewhere, particularly in countries where work can be done to improve the law.

Asa, who works on transgender health issues for rural South African populations, described the impression of South Africa as that of a ‘land of milk and honey’. Though

‘anybody . . . who has ever been to South Africa will know that is not the reality’, Asa spoke of an impression on the part of ‘donors’ that funding should be directed elsewhere. Because of the way that countries are positioned ‘on the map’ based on their legislative terrain, South Africa may not register as a country that warrants an investment of funding. According to most participants, funding rubrics often value concrete and measurable changes, such as changes to the law, over changes in contexts or communities that cannot be so clearly (and easily) evaluated. This sense that work that is funded should be measurable, came up in several interviews in both South Africa and the US South. However, only South Africa ever appeared ‘on the map’ because of its progressive legislation for LGBT(I) rights. The US South, as discussed in the next section, has never registered as a site of progressive legislation understood to have the capacity to facilitate the possibility of queer life.

David, who is located in the regional offices of a global funder, described the implications of funding measures designed to change the law rather than transform lived realities in this way:

while it is brilliant for South Africa to have all these laws in place, that’s of course also the gun that really shoots you in the foot and disables you from getting change that affects the lives on the ground. [David]

They described the kind of work that needs to be done in South Africa, which is work that is not targeted at changes in the law:

South Africa of course is the great anomaly . . . on the continent because we have amazing legislation. We have brilliant policies, amazing bylaws. On paper this country could not get better. That is the harsh reality. The reality on the ground of course is a very different one. South Africa has more lesbians killed than all the other Southern African countries combined. South Africa still outnumbers it quite significantly. And so, this is where the brilliant legal framework and the lived experience of people just do not match up. And many donors do not want to work in South Africa. Even with the [foundation where I work] there's a bit of discomfort because you know South Africa has the law and it has - the truth is, the law is there but you need to look at who can access the law. And so, I do think that a lot of work needs to be done in South Africa to try and get the reality to sort of at some point catch up with what the legal framework does provide. [David]

Both South Africa's legislative terrain and funders' prioritisation of law as an area of work that requires funding combine to disadvantage organising efforts that are not directed at producing legal change. This positions South Africa as a place that activists argue both requires a lot of work 'to try and get the reality to sort of at some point catch up with what the legal framework does provide' and a place where 'funding is a challenge'. In the perception of Janet, Uganda and Zimbabwe are examples of 'flash points' for funding because they are understood to have (legal and political) climates that are hostile to LGBTIQ people. They are legislatively, politically, and in media representations so far off the map that they are the 'different places' that 'become important to funders' whereas South Africa is on the map because the constitution is 'so progressive' and 'we have all these rights':

But funding generally is a challenge because funders focus on other areas of the region, Uganda is a flash point, Zimbabwe will be a flash point, you know, different places and different issues become important to funders and South Africa in many ways gets viewed as a country with a constitution that's so progressive where we have all these rights, where we have recourse. [Janet]

The idea of having 'all these rights' is important to funders, but there are others to whom it matters. These others, because of their prominence as world leaders or disseminators of globalised cultural productions, are also arbiters of which locations are 'on' and 'off' the map. The same speaker who claimed that acceptance was a 'lower bar than marriage' was also interested in the circulation of the ideals of LGBT(I) rights through language about those rights. While that speaker said, in the same venue as above, that 'ideas of gay love, of gay families' are 'not just in the United States', they also identify the United States as the source of such ideas, which are then projected in the form of television programmes and foreign policy objectives. The speaker comments that gay cultural productions can be seen not just in America, but in 'Nigeria or Nairobi' and that world leaders such as Barack Obama and David Cameron now are engaged in 'something that the gay activists do':

I mean these shows are seen all over the world because of satellite TV. You can be sitting in Nigeria or Nairobi, and you can be watching *Modern Family* and *Will & Grace* . . . This was the . . . Doodle . . . that Google put on its homepage on the day of the Sochi Olympics basically saying fuck you to Russia. Saying we believe in the

set of values, a set of rights and it's a real problem if you don't. That's interesting in this world that it's actually multinational corporations as well as other actors who in the United States like human rights activists who are putting these messages into the global arena. The other thing that's happening at the moment is that human rights advocacy has become a foreign policy objective. So, it's not just something that the gay activists do. Something that Barack Obama does . . . Something that David Cameron does. [36]

Though 'you can be sitting in Nigeria or Nairobi and . . . watching Modern Family and Will & Grace', those who 'believe in [a] set of values' that have 'become a foreign policy objective' are situated in a very specific place. They are 'multinational corporations as well as other actors . . . in the United States like human rights activists'. They are Barack Obama and David Cameron. They put 'these messages into the global arena. When these parties 'say fuck you to Russia', it becomes 'a real problem if you don't.' In this way, then, getting 'on the map' has everything to do with geopolitical relations of power that have the capacity to move 'out-of-the-way places' even further off of the map, if they don't acquiesce to the 'foreign policy objective' as that objective is defined by 'multinational corporations as well as other actors . . . in the United States'. One of the primary questions that I think it is necessary to ask from a critical location 'off the map' is which comes first: the 'foreign policy objective' of erasing state sovereignty and solidifying power in formations of neoliberalism or 'the set of values' that is also a 'set of rights'? Given that the latter is often a tool for accomplishing the former, I don't believe that the answer to this question is as clear as those who 'say fuck you to Russia' suggest it is. The material from participants in contemporary South Africa suggests that their activism battles constantly within the discourse of being 'on the map' and living off of it.

Off the map: Deserts of nothingness and violence at a distance

While places that are 'on the map' subscribe to 'a set of values' that are also 'a set of rights', places that are 'off the map' become illegible when viewed through the lens of a

‘policy objective’ that puts regions ‘on the map’. During an interview in their office in the US South, George’s description of what makes queer life possible has spatial associations:

Everybody deserves to live in a state that has the same protections that people enjoy in New York, in Illinois, in California. [George]

In this formula, New York, Illinois, and California share some quality that is not shared in other places. While ‘everybody deserves to live in a state’ with ‘the same protections’ people have ‘in New York, in Illinois, in California’, not everybody does live in such a place. By measures of LGBT equality, some people live in places that are not like New York, Illinois, and California. People in those places are living without protections. Life for queer people outside of these places must be worse than life for people inside of them because they don’t have ‘the same protections’ people are able to ‘enjoy’ in places with those protections. The terms for what a place is like coalesce around assertions of rights and ‘protections’ that ‘everybody deserves’ to ‘enjoy’ but that ‘everybody’ does not ‘enjoy’ because some ‘everybodies’ live outside of places that have the ‘protections’ of New York and California. In this case, a place is either like New York, Illinois, or California, or it’s not.

The discursive investment in policy and law as a rubric for rights takes different shapes as it is launched transnationally. One of the strongest shapes it takes is in distinguishing some spaces as like ‘New York . . . California’ and other spaces as unlike ‘New York . . . California’. Spaces where lgbtiq people ‘enjoy’ non-discrimination policy and same-sex marriage, for example, are conflated with progressive values, while those that do not are interpreted as ‘off the map’. The speaker above does not live in a place that is ‘like’ New York or California. What happens, though, when a speaker carries assumptions with them informed only by places ‘like’ New York or California about what it means to be ‘enlightened’ and ‘progressive’ in relation to LGBT(I) rights and what it means to codify those values?

To be written ‘off the map’ is to be visible only as a ‘vast desert of nothingness’ in relation to the ‘set of rights’ that could put you on the map as a place ‘like New York . . . California’. To be written ‘off the map’ is to be characterised as a geographic space full of danger and

threats of violence, a place where it is only possible to live in fear. To be written ‘off the map’ is also to be understood as impervious to progress.

In the same interview, George described the process of that entire region being written off the map through an interaction with a national LGBT rights organisation that was promoting a mapping project they had done to ‘draw attention to the states’ in the form of ‘all different types of legal recognition’. George was approached by the organisation to feature this map on their organisation’s website. George refused. The description of the encounter illuminates how assumptions about place and what ‘counts’ as progress, get mapped:

They’re a national organization. Their research really has to do a lot with effective messaging, doing research on legislation. Several years ago, they started a new project. Again, their goal was to draw attention to the states, to the state-based work, trying to focus some of the attention, less attention on what happens in DC . . . So, they release these series of maps that looked at all different types of legal recognition, and because they only looked at something that had passed on the state-wide level, we ended up with this vast desert of nothingness in the south.

They asked us if we would put the map on our website and I said, no. They said why? We don’t understand. We put a lot of time and efforts into these maps. These maps are designed to help you and I said they don’t because what it does is it reinforces this self-fulfilling prophesy that change cannot happen here in the south and in fact change happens here all the time. Some of it is taking different shapes. [George]

The national organisation described here wanted to represent LGBT rights-related policies as the result of state-based advocacy work at the state level. Because their attempt to make such work visible relied on mapping state-level policy, it resulted in ‘a vast desert of nothingness in the South’, which was an erasure of the work that ‘happens . . . all the time’ and ‘takes different shapes’ by the organisation who refused to put the map on their website. Another participant elaborated on the ‘different shapes’ such work might take:

[This state equality organisation] has gone district by district and now has a majority of the students in the state protected with enumerated policies – that’s a huge win that affects the lives of a lot of students. But is not something that anyone really notices when they’re looking at kind of the bigger picture of the state. [Jack]

The kind of work described above is not legible in the map of state-wide policy change because it was achieved not through law at the state level but through a different strategy

rooted in going ‘district by district’ to ensure that ‘a majority of the students in the state’ are ‘protected with enumerated policies’. This work is work that takes place ‘off the map’.

Historically, the American South has not been a place where progressive organisations see ‘winning’ as a possibility. This is informed by and informs the discursive position of the South as an ‘out-of-the-way place.’ One organiser who has done intersectional work in the South for decades was clear that these attitudes were not specific to the dynamics between national and local LGBT rights organisations, but were instead about the way the South is understood to fit into the rest of the country.

[T]he first time I ran into that was when I moved here in ’82 and we were having some major elections only to find out groups like the National Organization for Women, ‘there’s not one need to put anything in the south. Nothing’s going to happen there.’ I mean, you have groups like NOW . . . saying that. That would give you a clue of just the attitude. It’s almost like, well . . . The south is what it is - it’s always been very conservative. It’s what it is. But to be totally written off like that, ‘well nothing’s going to happen. We’re not going to put a dime into North Carolina.’ That was coming from the women’s groups, other groups. And with the queer movement, I mean, this recent thing about the south being all of a sudden rediscovered, or discovered - I feel like we’re a bunch of - let me just get this out - like that thing around Amendment One, we’re just a bunch of dumb shits that don’t know what to do. That was the most offensive thing, and it was just amazing, well, we don’t know nothing. You know? [Cynthia]

The South is an impossible context that is ‘totally written off’ as a space for progressive organising or policy work from the perspective of national organisations when it is not being suddenly ‘rediscovered’. Even if ‘the south is what it is’, Cynthia expresses frustration that national organisations decided ‘nothing’s going to happen there’. Cynthia reads the ‘vast desert of nothingness’ differently than organisations who think ‘there’s not one need to put anything in the south’. Living in the South taught Cynthia and other organisers that ‘the south is what it is – it’s always been very conservative’, but it also taught them, like the organisation above who ‘went district by district’, different ways of engaging with transformation that do not rely on strategies originating in the metropole.

The erasures recounted by the participants above take other forms, as well. George speaks to the reality that stories that should have national significance get very little coverage when

they are positive stories based in the South. They also speak to the effect of neglecting such stories because national media believe ‘that can’t possibly be true’:

Certainly, up until very recently so much of the stories that when national media would want to do a story on the south, it was basically this theme of how could you possibly live in the south, because life has to be just awful for you . . . I think this is really telling that when [one of our legislators] was elected as the first out black lesbian in any state legislature in the country, why wasn’t that a cover of the *Advocate*? It was a little blurb and it was a little blurb about hey, Victory Fund does it again. There was another organization, there were the people that recruited her, the people that helped to recruit her campaign, they ran her campaign, the transgender people, the African American people, the people from her neighbourhood, and her personality and her skills . . . I mean that’s how she won. Why wasn’t that more of a national story? I think that it’s because people are like well . . . that can’t be possibly be true . . . No, that can’t possibly be true . . . I think also that there is still this ongoing, perception that is harder and slower here for queer folks . . . It’s usually a perception that it’s either not much going on or that it’s super scary or super slow. [George]

That sense of things being ‘super scary or super slow’ for queer folks in the South means that ‘the first black lesbian in any state legislature in the country’ does not end up on the ‘cover of *The Advocate*’. The ‘little blurb’ that tells the story of her victory credits a national fund sponsoring lgbtiq political candidates, the Victory Fund, rather than the specific local efforts that resulted in her election. How stories like these are told perpetuate the ‘sense of danger’ in the South outlined by Stacey below. Speaking to a new interest on the part of funders and national organisations in what is happening in the South, Stacey suggests a range of ways in which national organisations and funders engage and are engaged in the space of LGBT(I) rights work in the South. One of those ways is through a sense of opportunity because ‘there’s sort of a romanticised sense of the danger there’. Stacey also speaks to the ways that this perception of violence functions both as an opportunity for would-be interventionists at the same time that it is used to suggest that locally based activists should not be doing this work:

I think the misconception that if you do this work, especially in smaller towns or rural communities, you’ll get shot. Or harassed . . . there is I think a myth that if you’re out in small town Mississippi, you know, you make yourself vulnerable to immediate violence. There’s that. [Stacey]

The suggestion that it is too dangerous in the South to do the kind of work that Stacey's organisation does on a daily basis has material implications. National organisations have used the reputation for danger in the South as a way to raise money, take it elsewhere and suggest that it is better for the work to be done far away. Cynthia speaks to how this extractivist model works:

In fact, the reason why the Equality Federation had to start their own because all the money was going out of the state. These dinners don't leave money in the state. Every penny goes up to DC, and I know how it works 'cause I worked there for three and a half years. Now, the rationale is this: if we do a dinner in your state, we'll bring in some high-profile, wonderful, you know, well known - every penny we take out of your state, we'll put it back because we'll have the influence on Washington that has federal policy. No. No! [Cynthia]

Resources removed from the South also make it difficult to do work that needs funding to continue. The extractivist pattern of fundraising on the part of national organisations keeps the South off of the map of positive legislation in relation to LGBT rights. The lack of positive legislation at the state level, translating into the 'desert of nothingness' in the example above, also contributes to other impressions about the capacity of people who are doing the work in the off-the-map region of the United States that is the American South:

And, at the same time, I think there can be a temptation to think like, you know, the folks on the ground must not know what they're doing because like, you know, because it's still – we still don't have the policy wins that we want and whatever else. [Jack]

In South Africa, a place with a policy landscape similar to New York or California in the way George (above) described, three things often happened: one is the pervasive sense that the gap between policy and lived realities is a very large one; the second is that some places within South Africa are more dangerous (further off the map) than others; and the third is that South Africa is often situated in relation to other countries, especially on the African continent, where the speaker often presumes that the reality is much worse than it is in South Africa, primarily on the basis of the law and policy in relation to LGBT(I) rights.

The difference between law and policy and lived realities can be described the way the speaker below, who is the founder and director of an organization, did in an interview:

Yes, there is cause for celebration because we've achieved a lot, but how do you still deal with lesbians being raped in the townships on a daily basis. [Kian]

In their acknowledgement of a gap between 'cause for celebration' and the reality of violence against queer bodies, Kian places such violence at a distance. The violence named here is very specific – 'lesbians being raped' – and it happens in a very particular place – 'in the townships' – with unrelenting frequency – 'on a daily basis'. 'Lesbians being raped in the township on a daily basis' are positioned discursively 'off the map' – far from the 'cause for celebration'.

Another speaker also performed a discursive move that demonstrated *how* disparities between legal protections and violence are distributed. The 'I' in the excerpt is the same internationally known white gay journalist speaking about LGBT(I) rights issues to a summer school audience at a large and well-known South African university above. Marriage ('cause for celebration') is something that white gay men like the speaker do. Experiencing 'a lot of violence' is something that 'lesbians in townships do.' While the speaker is primarily interested in the idea that some states support LGBT(I) rights and other states are antagonistic toward them, what the speaker does here is perform one of the deepest fissures in South African society, that at the intersection of race and class:

I am a gay man and I'm married. According to the law, at least, transgender people can have free gender reaffirming surgery. So, we're kind of up there. But in terms of attitudes, the attitudes are still as you can see . . . very homophobic. As a result of this disjuncture, there is a lot of violence that people experience particularly if they're gender non-conforming, if they are women who don't dress and act the way women are expected to dress and act. Or . . . if they look like men but they don't dress and act the way men are expected to act. So, you will always be reading about murders of lesbians in townships. [36]

This excerpt begins with 'a gay man' who is married and ends with murdered 'lesbians in townships'. South Africa, then, is a place where (white) gay men (like the speaker) are

married and (black) 'lesbians in townships' (unlike the speaker) are murdered. On the one hand, the speaker suggests that gender non-conformity is the target for 'very homophobic attitudes'. On the other hand, the speaker locates this violence very specifically in 'townships'. Because 'you will always be reading about murders of lesbians in townships', 'townships' are not only the source of 'very homophobic attitudes' in South Africa, they are also places where these attitudes don't change. Townships are far off the map of queer legibility in a country that is indisputably on the map based on its protective legislation for LGBTI rights. 'Lesbians in townships' can also get married (like the speaker) in South Africa, but 'you will always be reading about' their murders.

Because violence is situated at a distance from the dominant formations of metronormative organizing, which tend to be located in city centres, imagining interventions for places within South Africa that have been positioned as 'off the map', is to envision *going somewhere*. Often, when described to me by participants, those places were rural. Two participants situated in Cape Town spoke to interventions that they imagined in rural areas and these interventions were premised on the perception that rural areas are areas where there is 'really, really stigma':

Not only in Cape Town, but we want to go abroad to other provinces where - because now when we come from Eastern Cape rural communities where there is really, really stigma, even when you are a gay person and a traditional healer, we cannot go to other traditional healers. They start talking about you . . . and now there is a stigma that we are experiencing. Now we need to change that mindset. [Xolani]

Not only is there 'really really stigma' in rural areas, there is 'little entertainment . . . actually none.' Rural areas are places where city-based activists ('we') 'need to change that mindset'. The urgency driving this work should be taken seriously, even as language about the context reveals something of how 'out-of-the-way places' are positioned 'off the map'. The speaker below was speaking about a context where several hate crimes had taken place over a period of a few years. The most recent hate crime involved the murder of the person

whose case the speaker's organisation was following. Part of the work of the organisation was to follow the court case closely to hold the court accountable in its work:

So, I thought in an area like that where there is little entertainment, there is actually none, where the culture really is sitting in yards drinking: what about doing something that could provide entertainment but also convey a message? [Janet]

What this speaker found when they spent time in this town was surprising to them. During the court case the speaker was following, older boys placed all of the blame for the violence onto a younger boy with a mental disability. The participant described a complicated web of relationships with community members and families, and continued to communicate a sense of dismay that though they were there to observe and advocate on behalf of the victim's family, they were also caught up in a relationship with the family of the accused because of the accused's clear vulnerability in relation to the other more powerful boys who had committed the crime.

Despite the complexities Janet encountered upon actually spending time and building relationships in an 'out-of-the-way place', discursive framings of 'lesbians in townships' and rural areas where 'there is little entertainment . . . where the culture really is sitting in yards drinking', place the violence experienced in 'townships' and rural areas at a distance from the speakers themselves. These places need 'entertainment', but also need 'a message', and this message is presumably one that city-based organisations can bring to rural communities. In these excerpts, 'out-of-the-way places' are conceptualised in terms of what they 'have' ('really really stigma') or what they lack ('there is actually none') rather than on a universalised sense of what lgbtiq people need, which means it is a perception of the space – as 'off the map' 'deserts of nothingness' or violence – that dominates the imagination of organisers who more generally tend to discuss lgbtiq people as a group who share similar needs and challenges.

In the interview material I gathered, other African countries were positioned similarly to the way that these speakers position African populations *within* South Africa – at the

margins of geographies legible through the lens of LGBT(I) rights discourse. This was primarily done through a reference to the state of the law in those countries in addition to a conflation between ‘criminalisation’ and a ‘hostile environment’:

The law does differ from space to space, like for instance, you know, there are extreme limitations with other countries. If you say Zimbabwe then I think it’s a very classic example because there’s still criminalization of homosexuality and I think it’s also a very hostile environment to work with or in as compared to South Africa where I think our constitution makes it easier for the right of association freedoms and so forth. [Pete]

This perception of legal and social hostility is further concretised by the narratives of refugees who seek asylum in South Africa on the grounds of persecution on the basis of gender and sexual variance. Not only are their countries of origin ‘hostile’ places for queer existence, those hostilities follow them from home to South Africa. This explanation makes the difficulties that asylum-seekers face in South Africa more about ‘stigma and discrimination in their community’ than about a cumbersome asylum process that makes survival for refugees independent of communities from their home countries an incredible challenge:

They said different things because some of them – they came because of stigma and discrimination in their community and they feel unsafe and secure being lgbti and then they run away because they don’t want to be known because if they are known in their communities, they can be killed. They can be arrested. Some of them they have been arrested and they run away to South Africa because they think that is a safe way to come . . . it’s still difficult in Africa . . . because if they know that they are gay, they will be killed by society. And maybe they will be treated differently to the community. They’re being judged and they feel unsafe . . . They shared with me it’s very difficult for them to come out in their communities and then you have to hide yourself until you come to the safe space where you can like not be known. It’s very difficult even then. [Xolani]

The combination of hostile legal policies and what are understood as hostile attitudes results in the perception of a ‘really . . . crazy . . . a crazier world there outside’, a world that is too far off the map to be considered anything other than inhospitable, dangerous, and uninhabitable for queer life. It is very important to recognise and hold the trauma in these stories, but taking these narratives seriously does not preclude thinking critically about the

role that such stories (especially when they are the *only* stories of a place) play in constructing South Africa as exceptional on the continent. On the one hand, South Africa is seen as different from other African countries because of the laws that exist to protect lgbtiq people from discrimination and persecution. On the other hand, being ‘treated differently to the community’, ‘being judged’ and feeling ‘unsafe’ are narratives and experiences that are not exclusive to environments where same-sex sexuality and gender diversity are criminalised.

In the spatial politics of representations of queer life and LGBT(I) rights, the US South, African communities within South Africa, and African countries outside of South Africa are written off the map. The implication of these spatial politics of representation shore up specific formations of queer life and LGBT(I) rights that are synonymous with the metropole and its imagination of what it means to live queerly, even though it cannot and *does not* have a monopoly on actual queer existence in the world. To write some places off of the map means writing other places onto it.

The authority to speak: ‘This isn’t possible everywhere’

The use of the law as an international measure of ‘progress’ has positioned both the American South and South Africa very uncomfortably. South Africa has the kind of legal protections for lgbtiq people that register favourably in barometers of LGBTI equality. However, the levels of violence against queer bodies in South Africa is a clear indictment of strategies that rely on the law to accomplish safety and bodily integrity for queer populations. In interviews, participants responded with the assumption that no matter how bad the context felt for doing this work in South Africa, the law ensured that it was better to be doing LGBTI rights work and maybe even better to *be* lgbtiq in South Africa. My interest is not in the accuracy of this assumption as much as it is in how it functions discursively:

Like if you can't do like the queerest thing here then don't even think of planning it in Kenya or somewhere else . . . Despite there being extensive backlash, the backlash of violence, the backlash of hate crimes. [Garth]

South Africa is characterised here by both legal protections and potential for backlash. Potential for backlash in Kenya means 'don't even think of planning it', but because of legal protections in South Africa, it is possible to plan events and actions 'despite there being extensive backlash'. However, the law is not always reliable because of the unevenness of its implementation:

In South Africa, at least I know when somebody violates me on the street based on my gender identity - I might not - but at least theoretically I have a legal remedy. Right? In practice I might not. [Asa]

Asa locates the law in the realm of the theoretical. The potential for someone to '[violate them] on the street' is not theoretical. Asa says, 'when somebody violates me on the street based on my gender identity', not, 'if somebody violates [me]'. The 'legal remedy' is qualified before Asa even articulates it. 'I might not', Asa says, even though they are supposed to 'have a legal remedy'. They qualify it a second time by saying, 'in practice, I might not', after they have characterised the legal remedy as available 'theoretically' because of the protections against discrimination the law is supposed to afford lgbgiq people in South Africa. Garth identifies the work it takes to invoke the theoretical remedies described by Asa:

Even sometimes when the law is not perfect, it's still existing. Like the challenges around the gender marker, we can all complain etcetera, but there is a law and it does work and it takes time and requires extensive advocacy but it works and where it doesn't work we can act on it and make it work. So, I think that's the difference to a country that, like Uganda where they just changed the birth registrations act to say that if you change your gender or your name it's completely illegal. You would be considered a noncitizen. So, where both are not even possible. So, I think there is, we are realizing or at least I'm teaching the team to realize that if you can't do it here in Africa then you can't do it anywhere. [Garth]

Because there 'is a law' which 'does work' but 'takes time and requires extensive advocacy', South Africa provides is a space of more possibility than 'anywhere' else 'in Africa'. Sometimes there are difficulties with the law. As Asa suggested, the law can exist

‘theoretically’ as a remedy, but Garth says that even ‘where it doesn’t work we can act on it and make it work’. Similarly, David discusses ‘coming out’ as a tool that advocacy organisations can utilize. However, coming out ‘isn’t possible everywhere’:

But I do think that local communities or local LGBTI people coming out has been one of the most powerful tools. This isn’t possible everywhere because if you come out in some countries, you are either going to be arrested by the police or worse by the community because the community you are then going to face mob justice. [David]

David spoke about ‘coming out’ as not being ‘possible everywhere because if you come out in some countries’, there will be negative ramifications. South Africa was not identified as a country where coming out wasn’t possible, though South Africa was identified by the same speaker as a place where ‘more lesbians [are] killed than all the other Southern African countries combined’ and by other speakers as a place where there would be ‘extensive backlash . . . of violence’ and ‘of hate crimes’. That ‘coming out’ is considered possible in contexts with legal protections even though it could be met with similarly negative results whether or not there are legal protections places enormous confidence in the law.

Knowledge of a map of good and bad places for queer bodies, as defined by legislation and an assumption of corresponding attitudes was not confined to queer activists working in South Africa. Access to the map shapes discussions around potential changes in the law and in relation to the work in the US South. An awareness of spatial politics permeated not only interviews but public presentations, too. The excerpt below is from a keynote talk presented in one southern state by an activist from another southern state, neither of which is West Virginia:

Fine, we had a marriage amendment happen in North Cackalacky, I’m not going to deny - it happened in 2012 way later than everybody else’s in the south except West Virginia . . . because they never had to vote on one. Woo West Virginia. Progressive. Progressive as hell. I like that joke. [22]

‘West Virginia . . . Progressive as hell’ does not work as a ‘joke’ without access to a map of states that are understood as ‘red’ or ‘blue’, correlating with their reputation of political

conservatism or progressivism. ‘The south’ is a place where ‘everybody else’ had a ‘marriage amendment’ outlawing same-sex marriage. The suggestion is that West Virginia would have had a marriage amendment, too, if they ‘had to vote on one’ because West Virginia as progressive is a ‘joke’. In an interview, another organiser described the formation of their organisation. The organisation hosted a meeting to launch a resistance to the same marriage amendment mentioned in the previous quote. I asked Ethel about the protestors who had gathered outside of one of their meetings. Location, political orientation, and possibilities for queer life were conflated in the response of protestors to their organising:

I think her sign said this ain’t Asheville and [my friend] . . . said, what does it mean or something. She said Asheville is the gathering of gays. That’s how she put it. [Ethel]

When I asked Ethel how their own rural area was perceived by others, they replied:

I don’t know. I mean people just think it’s way out there, if they know where it is. So, he must have called them. They came and the men wanted to interview me and while he was doing that [my friend] was madly editing his video so he can get it to him and they showed that part of it on the news. So, it really got a really wide viewing and then folks in [our county] some of them were like, ‘Oh you made us look really bad.’ [My friend’s] like, ‘I didn’t put the words in your mouth.’ [Ethel]

Knowledge of the map is not only appealed to in establishing credibility to advocate in support of LGBT(I) rights. In order to speak in support of or in opposition to LGBT(I) rights or issues, speakers position themselves in relation to and demonstrate an awareness of the ‘map’. In the excerpts above, not only did the protestors, who are also neighbours of the organisers, reference Asheville as ‘the gathering of the gays’ – putting it on the map of ‘good’ places for queer life, they were aware that when their remarks were captured on camera, they ‘looked really bad’ to an audience who saw the clips when they were circulated more broadly. There is a clear awareness in this excerpt of a discursive contest with consequences that resonate beyond the speaker’s own location. On the one hand, the protestors articulated a desire to distinguish their county as a place that is not a ‘gathering of the gays’ but on the other hand, they did not want to ‘look really bad’ to an audience outside of their county.

At the same time, the nuances of these spatial politics can collapse under state or regional homogenizations. The participant quoted below moved from a northern state to the place characterised above as ‘the gathering of the gays’. The reputation of Asheville as ‘the gathering of the gays’ had not reached the northern state where Manuel was living because they were warned by those in Detroit that if they moved to Asheville, they should ‘be careful down there’ because ‘they are going to kill you.’

So, when I left my church in Detroit to come and move to Asheville just for my job at [a regional LGBT rights organisation], that Sunday, I preached my last Sunday in Detroit, and I’m in the line where everyone is leaving and they are like, great message, blah, blah. And I’m not kidding, probably 10 of the old ladies said, ‘You better be careful down there. They are going to kill you.’ [Manuel]

The church Manuel was leaving had a history of participating in mass actions during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and, according to Manuel, some of the people who travelled from the church to participate in actions, such as the march from Selma to Montgomery, were killed. Clearly the South remained a terrifying place in their minds. Part of that terror articulates itself in response to a perceived intolerance and deadly hostility to queer bodies and LGBT rights work: ‘they are going to kill you.’

At other times, associations between spatial politics and LGBT rights are employed strategically. At one city council meeting where a non-discrimination resolution was under consideration, a council member from a neighbouring county spoke to the process of adopting a similar ordinance in their city council proceedings. The council member described the uncontroversial nature of adopting the resolution:

Now we bring a lot of things to city council and about everything we brought the city council was divisive . . . When we brought this ordinance, it named the city first of all, a place they would not have discrimination based on sexual orientation and then encouraging other businesses to do the same. There was no debate. There was no debate. It was unlike anything we brought to . . . city council because almost anything people were forming their opinions about was delayed for meetings and meetings. There were a couple of questions initially like, ‘Are you talking about marriage . . . or something and we would go no, this is just someone’s basic right to work and live somewhere and to have the same

inalienable rights that every other human being deserves.’ Not much ever passes unanimously among the [speaker’s] City Council. [23]

Not only was the measure uncontroversial, the council member then strategically appeals to the ‘map’ to position their town in relation to the town they are addressing, suggesting that it is a surprise that their own town made this move first.

[My town] isn’t always first to things. Okay? As I consider [your town] I would have assumed that a progressive and positive and creative and unified community like [yours] would have gotten to this before us. As I stand here tonight, I consider [your town] and consider the resolutions that you are talking about this evening, I would strongly encourage you to take this up because I hope among your debate that there is no debate. [23]

The council member positions the two communities not only in relation to each other, but in relation to the map of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ places for queer life by identifying positive qualities that are often used to characterise a place as ‘good’ for LGBT rights. So, the speaker’s town, which ‘isn’t always first to things’ is positioned as a place that would be ‘behind’ the town they are addressing because it should have ‘gotten to this before’ the speaker’s own town. By positioning the two spaces in relation to the ‘map’ and suggesting that the town being addressed has something to learn from a town that ‘isn’t always first to things’, the speaker uses the ‘map’ to suggest that the kind of space the town should wish to be is linked to its decision about this resolution. When the resolution is characterised as uncontroversial in a town that ‘isn’t always first to things,’ the town heatedly debating the resolution risks falling behind discursively as a place that is behind a town not ‘always first to things.’

These excerpts are all from speakers who appeal to the ‘map’ of good and bad places to locate themselves in a narrative not only about LGBT(I) rights, but also the spatial politics of sexuality. Though these speakers are differently located in a variety of places, their credibility is constructed through access to and negotiation of the discursive ‘map’ of good and bad places for lgbtiq life. Regardless of the diversity of their actual contexts, their discourses centralise the capacity to name themselves, in relation to the map.

What's possible: Narratives of not wanting to fund and marriage (Oh, fuck)

Being written on or off the map has serious implications for the advocacy work and activism that can happen in different geographic locations. Because there is already less access to resources and a generally less accommodating legal terrain, these implications may be more restrictive in 'out-of-the-way places'. Marriage has already been identified in this chapter and in the review of literature in Chapter two as a metronormative ideal for LGBT(I) rights. Therefore, it is worth considering how enshrining marriage as a right by which contexts can be measured as subscribing to a particular 'set of values' articulated through 'a set of rights' manifests itself in the 'two souths' under consideration in this project.

As several participants identified above, marriage was not a major concern in their context. During the course of my field work, I saw very different ways of engaging with marriage. In the final section of this chapter, I want to consider the implications of the interests that emerge around marriage. Often, an opposition to same-sex marriage resides in bodies that are making laws. According to one director of a state advocacy organisation, before marriage was a focus of LGBT rights advocacy in the US, it was a preoccupation of legislators interested in prohibiting it:

Eight years before the first marriages ever took place 30 states had passed laws outlawing it. [George]

In the account above, 'laws outlawing' same-sex marriages happened 'before the first marriages ever took place.' In some ways, these laws set the terms on which advocacy battles for LGBT rights in the United States could happen. Similarly, a participant within a foundation that has a regional view of the southern African context characterised the origins of anti-same-sex marriage laws as coming 'from everyone else':

. . . the odd thing is that if you go back in Uganda, in Nigeria, in Kenya where the law was proposed, in the DRC where they're now proposing similar legislation, the odd thing is if you look at all the conversations that have ever been had, there was never a same-sex marriage conversation. The same-sex conversation came nine out of ten

times from everyone else and especially from religious leaders. So, when it was not an issue pushed by local activists why is it such a huge issue for other people? [David]

Regardless of the source of the interest in same-sex marriage, once it grasps the imagination of those opposed to it and those advancing it as a goal, it shapes the terrain upon which the work of advocating for lgbtiq people can move. One participant, who had been director of a state advocacy organisation in the US South when Massachusetts became the first US state to legalise same-sex marriage, spoke in an interview about the effect that early legislative successes in relation to same-sex marriage outside of the US South had on the efforts of their state advocacy organisation in the US South:

At first - I was actually at the first meeting that the federation had of just the southern states the day that the Goodrich decision came down in Massachusetts and there was this sort of simultaneous feeling of yay! And oh, fuck. Like, this is really gonna be tough and you know, I think in some ways it made it much harder to move forward on other things. Like we were working on state employment non-discrimination . . . don't know if we could've gotten it done or not, but once marriage hit as an issue, like, all other issues were off the table. It was like – can we stop the constitutional amendment? That is the only thing that we could take up for several years. [Jack]

This participant expressed a sense of restrictions on the possibilities for the shape advocacy work could take because 'once marriage hit as an issue . . . all other issues were off the table.' Interest in marriage is expressed by this participant as being shared between those who opposed the legalisation of same-sex marriage and those advocating for it in such a way that LGBT organisations took marriage on as a priority even though it was not the only issue affecting lgbtiq people. One director of a state organisation demonstrated how this works by saying:

While we don't have a vibrant marriage campaign, sometimes you take what you can get from the funders. [George]

The terms may have been set by those who opposed same-sex marriage in bodies that make the law, but the participant below describes the way that marriage 'really captured the

imagination of our community and the larger community in a way that . . . has made it hard to bring up' other issues that face lgbtiq people more broadly:

So, you know, a lot of energy there and you know, marriage, I think, really captured the imagination of our community and the larger community in a way that, you know, has made it hard to bring up – hey! We can still be fired. Hey! Kids are getting beat up in schools every day. And that's not a criticism of the push for marriage, but it's been certainly a side effect - is like it's hard to get attention for the other stuff. [Jack]

When 'it's hard to get attention for the other stuff', concerns like 'kids getting beat up in schools', freedom from violence, safety, and access are outside of 'the only thing we could take up for several years.' While 'kids getting beaten up in schools' here is a separate issue from marriage, some of those advocating for marriage equality tie the importance of their work to 'gay kids'. Even though 'kids getting beat up in schools' experience their own forms of discrimination and violence, these advocates suggested that same-sex marriage improves the quality of the lives of 'gay kids'. Discursively, what happens here is an appeal to the universality of an issue that affects a very specific demographic. Same-sex marriage specifically affects gay, lesbian, and some transgender couples who want to get married. And, yet, sometimes same-sex marriage is framed as something that was 'an amazing thing' that same-sex marriage advocates have accomplished for youth. In one public meeting, a representative from a national LGBT rights organisation spoke about the accomplishment of laws that were quickly changing before the nationwide legalisation of same-sex marriage in June of 2015:

We have done an amazing thing, as well, in terms of our youth, that gay kids now can know that they get the white picket fence, that they can marry and have children and live a life. [7b]

Considering the achievement of marriage equality 'an amazing thing' because 'gay kids now can know that they get the white picket fence' frames an issue specific to adults who want to marry as an issue with relevance to 'gay kids', when 'gay kids' may be 'getting beat up in schools'. Though the language of marriage equality, when invoked by those advocating for it, suggests that it is at the top of a hierarchy of LGBT(I) rights – a higher bar than

‘acceptance’ – participants in the previous sections demonstrate the range of issues faced by differently located lgbtiq people that are not reducible to the solution of marriage: ‘the rights that we’re entitled to as human beings . . . I should be free from violence, I should be safe in my own home, I should be able to go to the clinic when I am beaten up.’

Before the Civil Union Act (2006) had passed in South Africa, a consensus had been reached by a coalition of LGBTI rights organisations that the primary advocacy strategy for that coalition would be to pursue the issue of same-sex marriage legislation. When it came time to make that decision, the director of an organisation whose focus was on advocacy for the ‘T’ in LGBTI, challenged the assumption that same-sex marriage legislation was what all LGBTI rights organisations should be prioritising at the expense of other issues. This participant demonstrates that it is not only spatial politics that render some lgbtiq people and their contexts illegible. The constituents represented by this participant are ‘off the map’ of the agenda of self-described LGBTI rights organisations when those organisations are structured around a very specific issue that primarily concerns the L and the G of the acronym:

The decision then was like, well what is national strategies and obviously at that time, the organisations decided civil marriage is now the thing, so, the main advocacy focus that will happen collaboratively is gonna be civil union or same-sex marriage for that matter. So, at one stage there was the whole meeting and workshop about that . . . It was a dialogue for a long time - maybe for one or two hours facilitation or whatever, and then when we had to kind of like decide: do we give it a go ahead, and which organizations are in and which not and whatever. Again yeah . . . So I thought like, ok, let me test your knowledge, you all say you know exactly what transgender is about. I mean, so . . . when it comes to my turn to say, I said . . . I’m not so sure if we will support it and everyone, you could literally see, dropped their pens or whatever, looked up from whatever they were doing or writing. And I said, well, because half of my constituency are heterosexual and might not be interested in same-sex marriages. So, I don’t know if I have a mandate yet. I mean obviously human rights-wise or whatever. I said that. You could literally see that they didn’t consider that as an option. So, obviously I said well, I’ll have to get back to you. [Liza]

Liza didn’t feel that their organisation would agree that pursuing same-sex relationship recognition was the best use of their resources and time. At the very least, Liza didn’t feel that the objective of marriage as a right could be taken for granted as the most desirable

achievement for their transgender constituents. Here, a universal version of ‘rights’ where ‘marriage’ is at the top of the ‘LGBT(I) rights’ scale works for the organisations deciding that ‘marriage is now the thing’, but that decision communicated an ignorance about the part of the acronym that may or may not be directly impacted by same-sex relationship recognition. When the organiser decided to test the group to see if they really understood ‘exactly what transgender is about’, their reaction indicated that ‘they didn’t consider’ an organisation with lgbtiq constituents not prioritizing the same-sex relationship recognition ‘as an option’.

Again, though the speakers in this section are located in a variety of different settings, there is a discursive coherence in their narratives around the power of same-sex marriage (in different legal and political contexts) as a focus for advocacy and activism to create the terms on which speakers negotiate and renegotiate their own work as activists and organisers.

Conclusion

Hegemonic discourses of LGBT(I) rights cohere in the material here from both locations in a way that signals the production of a spatial politics of sexuality. The singular strategy to win same-sex marriage, especially, produces an uneven terrain where some places are cast ‘off the map’. A spatial politics that envisions ‘cosmopolitan intellectuals’ who embrace and champion LGBT(I) rights in geographic and temporal opposition to ‘fearful provincials’ who resent and sabotage LGBT(I) rights is used to structure norms about what queer life should be and where it can exist. The presence of hegemonic discourses of ‘rights’ that govern spatial politics in relation to lgbtiq people was ubiquitous across the material I gathered during the course of my research. Strategies used to negotiate it varied from context to context and participant to participant, but the power of these discourses was dramatic.

Hegemonic discourses of rights that imagine the subject of rights to be a universal one whose needs are the same regardless of geographical and social location have consequences for those who are doing the work of LGBT(I) rights in specific locations. Specific locations

have histories, economies, cultural narratives and politics of their own. The role of hegemonic discourses of rights in shaping the map of queer habitability and existence reveals something important: This singular or 'universal' programme of 'LGBT(I) rights' obscures contestations not only over space but over queerness itself, as the next chapter will suggest.

CHAPTER FIVE: Metronormativity as a single ‘type’ of LGBT(I) advocacy

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I suggested that hegemonic discourses of rights shape the terrain on which LGBT(I) rights work is done. That terrain is characterised as habitable or inhospitable for queer life using a rubric calibrated with marriage as one of the highest standards for that habitability, even though, as many participants indicated, something called ‘acceptance’ can be much more complicated to navigate. In this chapter, I suggest that these hegemonic discourses of rights are exemplificative of a metronormative dominance of LGBT(I) rights. If, as suggested by a previous director of ILGHRC (International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission), New York is ‘the U.S.’ and New York is ‘everything’ for an organisation trying to do ‘this work’, New York is the source of a particular and dominant ‘type’ of LGBT(I) rights advocacy framework. Bérubé (2010: 111) describes how this singular ‘type’ of LGBT(I) rights work persists as pervasively white and structured around particular norms of gender when they write about ‘what keeps gay white and what kind of white it stays.’ Bérubé identifies several strategies of LGBT advocacy that result in ‘gay staying white’, but ultimately concludes that gay stays white ‘without saying’. In other words, the whiteness of gay advocacy efforts is embedded in the structures of those advocacy efforts (Bérubé, 2010). Chasin (2000) explores funding structures of LGBT(I) rights organisations and concludes the same.

Johnson, on the other hand, is interested in the way that nonmetropolitan locations can sustain many different types of queerness. This might sound counter-intuitive because of the perception of demographic homogeneity in rural areas, but because of the range of personalities that have to coexist in proximity to one another in less populated rural areas, Johnson argues that there has to be some space to accommodate eccentricity and ‘difference’. The metropole, perhaps because of the way that capitalism is central to its structure, can arguably only support or sustain a single ‘type’. A reading of rural spaces that

does not rely on the city for its lens might look something like this: ‘the city tends to develop a single type; others can’t get on . . . The result is that queer and freaky types are found in the country’ (Anderson, 1906, quoted by Johnson, 2013: 111). I would like to extend Johnson’s (2013) and Anderson’s (1906, quoted in Johnson, 2013) suggestion of a single ‘type’ beyond the lives of individuals and individuals’ experiences of the city to the life that LGBT(I) rights takes, both in its metronormative origins and as it travels outward to ‘out-of-the-way places’.

In this chapter, I am concerned with deepening the fourth chapter’s analysis of the ways in which metronormative assumptions about the prioritization of same-sex marriage travel, and in taking up Bérubé’s theorisation of the alliance between these assumptions and whiteness. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first is focused on a specific discourse shaped by the single ‘type’ of metronormative LGBT(I) rights work, about legal relationship recognition as the primary indicator of ‘a set of values’ articulated in the previous chapter – the kind of ‘progressive’ values that put a place ‘on the map’. Because marriage permeated the landscape I travelled in 2015 (due to the sense of its imminent inevitability in the US rather than its having been law for ten years, as was the case in South Africa), this first half of the chapter draws explicitly from materials I collected in the US South. The sub-sections of the first part of this chapter, ‘Marriage as metronorm: Marriage equality is a big deal’ explore three different discursive themes that emerged from the material. ‘No Gay Marriage License: “Nobody is gay married”’ analyses narratives of marriage as a right that is contained by specific parameters about how it should and should not be talked about and lived. ‘After marriage: “You may experience some discrimination”’ analyses the ways in which even after the marriage equality decisions, other forms of discrimination were explained through opposition to same-sex marriage. ‘What marriage does: “It opens doors”’ analyses material that asserts claims about the larger meaning that marriage has in hegemonic metronormative discourses of rights. The final section in this first half of the chapter (‘What marriage does’) draws from South African conversations about marriage because that section considers how marriage advocacy and ‘getting married’ in contexts outside of the one from

which metronormative rhetoric is launched work in relation to the discursive construction of marriage as a right.

The second part of the chapter deals with exclusions articulated by participants that illuminate the whiteness and the cis-normativity in the single ‘type’ of LGBT(I) rights work that originates in metropolitan centres. Chapter six in its entirety will be devoted to the erasure of contextual specificities particular to spatial politics within the single ‘type’ of metronormative LGBT(I) rights, but the erasures of identities that may be found within or without the space of the city demand their own consideration. The second part, ‘The Single “Type” as Erasure: “What you see is what you get!”’ contains subsections titled: ‘Racisms: “It’s all white!”/“Who didn’t take the time to think?”’ and ‘Trans Erasures: “Do you know what I mean?”’. Together, these two sections explore participants’ discourses as they move from the space of hegemonic discourses of LGBT(I) rights articulated in the analysis in Chapter four through a discussion of marriage and erasures of differently located queer identities to the space of Chapter six, where the focus will be on what it means to work toward a kind of queer liberation from outside the metropole.

Part I: Marriage as metronorm: ‘Marriage equality is a big deal’

No Gay marriage license: ‘Nobody is gay married’

For self-defined LGBT rights organisations in the US, 2015 was a celebratory year. The momentum around marriage equality was pervasive, described this way by the director of a state LGBT rights organisation based in the US South, during a public presentation at an annual conference:

The biggest development of all happen just a month ago: marriage equality. With over 1100 protections and responsibilities conferred on married couples by the federal government, including access to health care, parenting and immigration rights, social security, veterans’ survival benefits and transfer of property, marriage equality is a big deal. [7a]

The speaker makes it clear that ‘marriage equality is a big deal’ because of the ‘protections and responsibilities conferred on married couples by the federal government.’ One state official in another public platform at an event to support an employment non-discrimination effort organised by a state equality organisation, spoke to the way that marriage equality allowed same-sex couples ‘to do what everyone else can do.’

our own Attorney General . . . withdrew his appeal . . . his opposition to that state challenge to the federal court of [the judge], permitting those in WV to do what everyone else can do – that’s to marry whoever you love. [19]

Because ‘those [presumably gay people] in West Virginia’ can now ‘do what everyone else can do’, there is no longer a ‘gay exception’ to being able to ‘marry whoever you love.’ In this way, marriage equality made ‘gay people’ just like ‘everyone else’ because they can ‘do what everyone else can do – that’s to marry whoever you love.’ One representative of a national organisation was adamant that same-sex marriage is not a ‘different’ kind of marriage, but the same marriage extended to heterosexuals. In another public presentation, at the conference hosted by a state equality organisation quoted above, a representative of a national organisation spoke about their work in winning the court case that resulted in the marriage decision praised by the previous two speakers. In addition to outlining the work of the organisation, the speaker was also interested in emphasising the importance of marriage as an institution for lgbtiq people:

So, the other side is saying that they are redefining marriage. We are not redefining marriage. The answer to that is that marriage is the freedom to choose the person you love. You get to pick who you marry . . . There is no gay exception to that. So, there is no redefining of marriage. It’s an expansion or an evolution of marriage, but the essential core is love and commitment and family. It is the ability to protect the person and create a legal relationship with the person that you love and protect your children and be able to - all of the protections that are built into marriage. [7b]

While this speaker identifies the importance of creating ‘a legal relationship with the person that you love’ they emphasise the importance of ‘love and commitment and family.’ The speaker defines marriage as ‘the freedom to choose the person you love’ and is clear that there is ‘no gay exception’ to that freedom. While ‘hospital visitation, social security benefits,

and all that stuff' are the actual things that legal marriage does, the speakers in this section suggest that these are not the reasons people actually get married. A heteronormative understanding of marriage, central to a single 'type' of LGBT rights, is consolidated through a story in which 'I met somebody. I fell in love. I wanted to start a family.' Another representative of a national organisation specifically focused on marriage as a 'right' spoke similarly at a public event in another southern state:

When you ask anybody in America why they got married - ask them that sometime. They are going to say, 'I met somebody, I fell in love. I wanted to start a family.' Hospital visitation, access to a pension, social security benefits, all that stuff was never even considered. So, one of the things we know that's important is to spark those conversations with people. I think the reason we've come so far in the United States is that we've given people the opportunity to reflect on why they themselves have gotten married . . . The number one value that we know Americans and people in Alabama want to pass on to the next generation is treating others the way you'd want to be treated. [29]

There are 'no gay marriages' if a conversation about marriage causes heterosexual people 'to reflect on why they themselves have gotten married' and those reasons are the same as the reasons same-sex couples marry. The suggestion that marriage 'goes beyond' the 1,100 federal protections afforded that relationship places the importance of marriage in the realm of the symbolic. At the same time, the '1,100 federal protections' can only be secured through a legal arrangement. The same speaker who resisted the idea that same-sex marriage is a 'redefinition' of marriage above describes the symbolic power of marriage as something that can only be achieved through a relationship that is not qualified by 'gay' or 'same-sex':

So, in terms of vocabulary, don't have a gay marriage. I mean there is not going to be gay marriage licenses. Nobody is actually gay married . . . You know gay people are getting married, but there is no such thing as same-sex marriages or same-sex weddings. There are marriages and weddings between couples of the same sex. That is really difficult, we sort of lost that semantic battle. We tried, we kept correcting like news reporters when they would say gay marriage. We'd say, 'No. Marriage for gay people.' Yeah, gay marriage. It's easier, it is smaller, it's a better sound bite . . . I think it is important to continue to talk about marriage. [7b]

Defining marriage the same way it is defined by heterosexual people is what is important in this single 'type' of advocacy work: 'people are getting married, but there is no such thing

as same-sex marriages or same-sex weddings so that we don't have one language' because not having 'one language' is 'impractical and it's going to harm people in the long run.' This harm comes from 'not having one language' being 'not equal'. Beyond these questions of equality, this speaker frames marriage as the ultimate indication that LGBT rights organisations 'have changed the national dialogue in just a few decades':

It is an amazing time, it's time to appreciate where we are, and where we've come, what has happened, breathe it in, celebrate, pat each other on the back, recognize this is a big deal and it is here now. Beyond marriage equality here in West Virginia what we've also done . . . everyone in this room, all of our allies, all of our friends . . . What we have done is nothing short of amazing. We have changed the national dialogue in just a few decades from conversations about whether we have a right to do things that other people thought were disgusting. We were . . . called sex perverts. There was a lot of conversation around what we do and how uncomfortable it made people. We didn't have the right to even do that, and now what are we talking about? Family, love, commitment, protecting each other. We have moved the dialogue so far in such a very short time and really, we should be amazed at the work we've done and the accomplishment that we have. I say all that and I'm also going to talk about the fact that this is absolutely not over and that there is a lot of work left to be done. [7b]

Though the speaker continues by discussing different incidents of discrimination that could await newly married gay or lesbian individuals *on the basis of their marriage* (a phenomenon on which I elaborate below), the speaker insists on a version of 'rights' in which marriage is a 'higher bar' than acceptance (or even non-discrimination), a relationship between marriage and acceptance resembling the one I mapped in the previous chapter. In this formulation, '[f]amily, love, commitment, protecting each other' are remedies for 'perversion'. The conversation used to be about 'whether we have a right to do things that other people thought were disgusting' and 'how uncomfortable it made people'. Though it is not quite clear how the issue of 'what we do and how uncomfortable it made people' was resolved, this speaker characterises 'what we are talking about' now as having 'moved the dialogue so far in such a very short time'. Similarly, the following speaker suggests that 'win[ning] on marriage' means 'knocking down a lot of stereotypes' and 'chang[ing] the narrative about what it means to be LGBT':

So, can you just talk about that kind of idea of, if we can win on marriage, we are really knocking down a lot of stereotypes. We've really changed the narrative about what it means to be LGBT. [7b]

Marriage, which was characterised above as 'the freedom to choose who you love', has the capacity to change a story of 'sex perverts' who do 'things that other people thought were disgusting' to a story about 'family, love, commitment, protecting each other.' Still, perversion is not so easily forgotten, and the story about 'family, love, commitment, protecting each other' is a 'responsibility' that requires being 'a little unequal for a minute.' To overcome being called 'sex perverts', the following speaker suggests that marriages between same-sex couples should 'rise to the occasion' and 'be examples.'

It's a time to celebrate, it's a time to reflect on our progress, it's a time to continue to tell our truths and to understand this moment in history and maybe . . . and this kind of goes against these sort of ACLU principles . . . but we may need to be a little unequal for a minute. In the sense that maybe we can be sort of better at marriage. It should be that we are equal, we have equal opportunity to be, as they say, miserable in marriage: to get divorced after 14 minutes, to get married in Vegas and wake up the next morning wondering who you just married. You have that right – equality, yeah, I'm for it. Maybe just for a minute we could take this responsibility that we've been given and really reflect on it and really rise to the occasion, and be examples. Not just for the rest of the country but for each other and amongst ourselves. [7b]

So, while marriage is framed in these conversations as being something that same-sex couples and opposite-sex couples do for the same reason ('I met somebody. I fell in love. I wanted to start a family.'), and while there is 'no such thing as a gay marriage', making sure that the conversation about same-sex couples is about 'family, love, commitment, protecting each other' and not about 'things that other people thought were disgusting', means being 'sort of better at marriage' and being 'a little unequal for a minute.' There is 'no gay exception' to being able to choose the person you love, but this speaker suggests that there is a 'responsibility that we've been given' to 'rise to the occasion and be examples.' Being examples means being 'sort of better at marriage.'

After Marriage: ‘You may experience some discrimination’

Despite the clear discourses on the power of access to same-sex marriage to transform notions of ‘sex perversion’ into notions of new credibility, there was a lot of conversation in 2015 about the work ‘left’ to be done ‘after marriage’. Marriage equality was often discussed as the end of discrimination in campaigns to advocate for it. However, in the wake of marriage equality, in the contexts where I travelled, discussions of discrimination frequently referred back to marriage as a source of that discrimination. Suggestions of ‘instances of intentional refusal of service by public employees’, ‘some safety concerns’, ‘a resurgence of sort of curriculum where there are books that are deleted from school libraries because they mention same-sex marriage’, and getting ‘married . . . on Saturday . . . evicted on Sunday and fired on Monday’ were all framed as possible effects of getting married. The director of one state equality organisation described discrimination in the age of ‘marriage equality’ in the following terms:

That means employers could use their right to religious freedom as a cloak to deny health insurance to legally married same-sex spouses. It means LGBT people could be denied services from any private business simply because of who they are. [7a]

Here, discrimination because of ‘who they are’ is no longer based on being ‘sex perverts’, but ‘legally married same-sex spouses.’ The queer individual becomes subsumed under the couple. Does being ‘legally married’ make same-sex couples visible in a way that as (presumably gender-conforming) individuals, they were not before? During a public advocacy training, the director of a different state equality organisation (where same-sex marriage had not yet become a legal option) discussed potential discrimination against individuals in their place(s) of employment in this way:

So, a good example of this might be . . . someone loses their job because they got married and they have a wedding photo sitting on their desk. You tell people the story and they will say, okay, what was in that wedding photo? Was it an inappropriate wedding photo? Because after all it’s a gay marriage. [20]

One suggestion is that we are still ‘sex perverts’ after all. If it is possible to imagine there is something ‘inappropriate’ in ‘a wedding photo sitting on their desk’, even as ‘legally married couples’, there is still a suggestion of the ‘sex pervert’ feared and loathed before marriage became queerly available. Talking about ‘marriage’ and ‘family’ and ‘commitment’ might be an antidote to ‘sex perversion’ on one level, but legally, marriage is not an antidote to discrimination on the grounds of ‘sexual orientation’ and/or ‘gender identity’. The same representative from the national organisation [7b] cited extensively above, is an attorney who worked closely on a same-sex marriage case decided in one of the circuit courts in 2014. Speaking in the anticipatory moment preceding the Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage in the entire United States in June of 2015, they had a caution for the audience at the state equality organisation’s conference:

I don’t want to over sell that we have some backlash coming at us because this is an amazing moment. Here is what we think that you can expect and this is based on some other states and some shenanigans that we have seen. Expect some discrimination; expect some pushback. There are no anti-discrimination laws that protect you based on sexual orientation or gender identity at the federal level. Businesses and employers are free to discriminate for any reason and that’s just true unless there is a law that says that they can’t. So, you may experience some discrimination. Folks may feel emboldened to say that you aren’t welcome here. Unless there is an anti-discrimination law they are free to do so to a certain extent.
[7b]

Though the attorney described this moment as ‘amazing’, the tone of their talk wavered between celebratory and cautionary. This excerpt begins with ‘an amazing moment’ during which the speaker does not want to ‘oversell that we have some backlash coming at us’, and ends with a list of ways that LGBT people can continue to be discriminated against legally because there are ‘no anti-discrimination laws that protect you based on sexual orientation or gender identity.’ These forms of discrimination are not new, and queer people have been facing these kinds of ‘discrimination’, ‘pushback’, ‘backlash’ and violence long before marriage equality legislation was imminent. However, the speaker frames these issues in relation to marriage. The suggestion is that the ‘discrimination’, ‘pushback’, and ‘backlash’ are a result of marriage equality. The distinction that the attorney then proceeds to identify

between the kinds of discrimination you ‘may experience’ now is the kind that is unprotected and the kind that could be addressed. There is no protection for discrimination ‘based on sexual orientation or gender identity’ at the federal level. There are, however, laws that can protect same-sex marriages because those relationships would now be included under ‘familial status.’

It also includes familial status. So, to the extent that folks are discriminated against based on their marriage we have an argument that that’s a violation of the state law. Of course, we have some cities with anti-discrimination policies. If you are discriminated against in Charleston, Huntington, and Morgantown you have some recourse. [7b]

Because anti-discrimination law ‘includes familial status’ but not ‘sexual orientation’ and ‘gender identity’, ‘marriage’ and ‘family’ do become an antidote to ‘sex perversion.’ If you are discriminated against because you get married, there is ‘an argument that that’s a violation of state law.’ However, there are no laws protecting people based on ‘sexual orientation and gender identity.’ In these discussions of what to expect after ‘marriage equality’ decisions in the courts, employment discrimination is instead wrapped up in the marriage narrative as a kind of backlash against individual weddings. Marriage, here, was not only presented as the perennial goal of LGBT organizing in the United States, but as the mechanism through which employment discrimination will be addressed. The unanswered question is where this will leave those who do not marry under the new law, but who may have already experienced or be experiencing employment (or other kinds of) discrimination.

What Marriage Does: ‘It opens doors’

For those invested in marriage equality as a step in an incremental approach to securing LGBT rights, marriage is a solution to many gay problems because ‘when you say this is my husband, this is my wife, it opens doors.’ Representatives of national organisations express an unrelenting focus on ‘the dignity of marriage’ where marriage should mean the same for

everyone. For those in local and regional organisations, the language around marriage and family registered complexities in relation to context that did not show up in the presentations of representatives of national organisations. The following two excerpts seem representative to me of the ways that national organisations ‘talk’ about marriage:

If there weren't the portability problem we still have a vocabulary problem that we have to get past. Family's family. People understand family. We start calling civil unions - they gave you some rights and protections but it does not give you the status of marriage and dignity of marriage. [7b]

For this speaker, ‘the status of marriage’ and the ‘dignity of marriage’ allow people to ‘understand family.’ The ‘status of marriage’ and the ‘dignity of marriage’ also can delimit who it is possible to be. A representative of another national organisation whose sole purpose is to advance marriage equality, and who spoke about the organisation ceasing to exist after marriage equality was available nation-wide, spoke to the way that marriage is wrapped up with their capacity to imagine a future as a gay man:

I think, in 2004, when I was a senior in college, I came out of the closet and one of the things I left, tucked far up in the closet of the very top shelf was the dream that one day I would get to marry the person I love - when I met somebody and I fell in love - that I would get to do the same thing that I saw my sister do, that I saw my brother do, that I saw my grandparents have, that I saw my mom have 3 times. I honestly remember trading the idea that I would be able to get married one day or try to live a more authentic self. I thankfully did meet somebody and fell in love and in December of 2013 got to marry the person who I want to commit the rest of my life to and build a family. So, it goes beyond the 1,100 federal rights and benefits. [29]

This speaker connects ‘the idea that I would be able to get married one day’ to being ‘a more authentic self.’ For organisations not preoccupied with same-sex marriage advocacy work, though, it is not only recognition of the wide range of issues faced by queer populations, such as freedom from violence, safety, and the ability to go to the clinic that create tensions in advocacy work around ‘gay rights’, but also a sense of what is possible in one’s context.

Sometimes the decision is between working on marriage or working on issues where it is possible to gain traction politically through coalition work that might not be available in

building same-sex marriage campaigns. In the US South, the understanding between national organisations and state-based organisations was that ‘marriage equality’ was an issue that would be ‘handled on a national level’ and should not be discussed at the state level. Organisations in southern states with marriage bans¹ had to strategize in relation to a marriage ban that made organising around marriage nearly impossible. As described by the following participant, a director at a state advocacy organisation in a southern state, during an interview, some organisations decided to use their resources in building other coalitions and doing other work:

We did end up in a position, where we felt it was going to be handled on a national level - on a federal level - and we would just have to bide our time. In fact, when I specifically started here . . . the strategy that the board and some of our political consultants had developed before I was hired really looked at let’s not talk about marriage at all because it’s a turnoff to even some of the Democrats and the communities of colour and the faith communities and the rural communities that we want to support us on our legislative gains. So, I would lead a lot of conversations with [this organization] is not actually talking about marriage these days, and you don’t have to support marriage to work with us on some of these other issues like HIV, access to medications, Safe Schools, workplace non-discrimination . . . those issues that we can all agree are important. Let’s put relationship recognition - we didn’t even talk about marriage - let’s just put that over to the side and not talk about it. [George]

In a context where advocating around the legalisation of same-sex marriage is not possible, not ‘talk[ing] about marriage’ can lead to productive coalitions with other progressive organisations that work on issues relevant to lgbtiq people ‘like HIV, access to medications, Safe Schools, workplace non-discrimination’. However, building these types of coalitions and not working on marriage meant remaining a ‘desert of nothingness’ on maps designed by national LGBT advocacy organisations in the US.

¹ For a map indicating which states banned same-sex marriage in their constitutions, see the Pew Forum’s 2015 interactive map of same-sex marriage legislation in the United States. Until 2012, North Carolina and West Virginia were the only southern states without constitutional bans on same-sex marriage. In 2012, North Carolina voters voted for Amendment 1, a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage and the subject of many conversations in the material I gathered in North Carolina. The map can be accessed here: <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/06/26/same-sex-marriage-state-by-state/>

Organisations like the one above and the ones in the examples that follow are all focused on making life better for lgbtiq people in the places they ‘call home’, a commitment they take very seriously. Like the organisation above, these organisations work not to win marriage, but to make their communities places that can really be home to queer people. Once marriage became ‘the issue’, it became a tool for organisations to use or refuse. When marriage does not exhaust one’s possibilities and patience, it is sometimes identified by participants as a tool for more productive work. The philosophy articulated by one southern US regional organisation about the reason they joined a coalition to fight an anti-same-sex marriage amendment in North Carolina (Amendment 1) demonstrates these dynamics. They are not primarily (or even peripherally) ‘interested’ in same-sex marriage as an advocacy issue because their work deals more with issues they identify as being at ‘the intersection between life and death’, but they did join the coalition, and marriage has influenced some of their materials, such as a video they produced called ‘Marry the Movement’. They spoke to these decisions at a regional conference about queer issues in the South:

[W]e as [an organisation] do not typically work on issues around marriage equality. That’s been not something that we’ve done throughout the region – we are the largest LGBTQ grassroots organization in the South. We were based in Durham, born there 20 years ago . . . But we have a long history of doing work at the intersections, at the margins, looking at issues like economic equality, looking at issues of violence, looking at the ways that the state criminalises and separates us from our families through immigration and deportation regimes, looking at the ways that our criminal justice system, in fact not just separates us from family members, but just swallows some of us. And so, we talk about our work as about the intersection between life and death, not necessarily working on quality of life issues. [25]

Family, in this formulation, has a meaning that cannot be reduced to the ‘status of marriage and dignity of marriage’, but there are also suggestions here of ways in which ‘marriage’ does not ‘go beyond the 1,100 federal rights and benefits’. Regimes of racialisation, ‘issues like economic equality’, ‘issues of violence’, ‘looking at the ways that the state criminalises and separates us from our families through immigration and deportation regimes’, the ways that our criminal justice system . . . just swallows some of us’ are not things that can be solved through the ‘dignity of marriage’ and are not mitigated by the ‘1,100

federal rights and benefits.’ However, the context created by the ‘Amendment 1 legislation’ meant that this organisation’s membership ‘didn’t want to sit . . . amidst this hateful climate that had taken over our community’:

So, when the Amendment 1 legislation was introduced in the state of North Carolina, which by the way, I just wanna say this: there was already no way for gay people to get married. So, this was a little bit different than in other states and because we have such deep roots here in North Carolina and in Durham in particular, we heard from our membership that we didn’t want to sit . . . amidst this hateful climate that had taken over our community at that time and we decided to pour some resources – some time - from across the region into fighting against Amendment 1. [25]

Another regional organisation in the South *has* focused on marriage, even when building coalitions with smaller grassroots organisations in order to try to build infrastructure for organising around LGBT issues in the South. In an interview, their director described a strategic focus on marriage that is not based solely on the ideas of ‘the status of marriage and the dignity of marriage’, but that draws on long local histories of civil rights activism to challenge discriminatory law where it is possible to ‘provoke the enforcement of a discriminatory . . . law’ in order to avoid organising from ‘a posture of reactivity’:

We thought there was a human urgency to it and we thought that – strategically, we knew that you could directly provoke - you could do direct actions that would directly provoke the enforcement of a discriminatory marriage law. So often in our movement we are reacting to someone getting fired, to a hate crime, to something terrible that’s happened, and it’s very hard to organize in a sustained way from a posture of reactivity because you’re waiting for the next event. You’re not controlling that, so we were looking for - in the South – part of our planning stage and our development stage was an assessment . . . to say, ok, we face discrimination in every sphere of life, but that doesn’t - discrimination is rooted in different things and manifests differently. [Stacey]

The reaction from others who said the organisation ‘would be putting community members at such high risk’ carries assumptions not only of what the South is like, but also what LGBT advocacy work is like. These assumptions are structured by whiteness. This participant points out that in the history of the South, there is a history of putting one’s body and life at risk in order to ‘provoke the enforcement of discriminatory . . . law[s]’ and that people ‘were ready to take that risk’:

And what we were looking for was a strategic opportunity where we could systematically provoke the enforcement of a discriminatory law. And demonstrate and dramatize what that meant in real people's lives. And how people – the other thing people said to us was that we were - that if we moved forward with the . . . campaign strategy, you know, then we would be putting community members at such high risk because of the exposure and visibility or that - and you know, our response to that was you know there's a long legacy in our country of people sort of voluntarily [inaudible] risk to confront discrimination and we thought there were people across the South who were ready to take that risk, so you know, going through a risk assessment process before they took part in the action, but basically it was . . . our analysis was that there was a strong reason strategically to try to highlight what these laws actually look like in enforcement and that that would become a platform for telling stories of real families living in small towns and communities and also become a platform for ultimately challenging those laws in court. [Stacey]

Meeting resistance about their strategy communicates that LGBT activism is not expected to take the same kinds of risk that is part of 'a long legacy . . . of people voluntarily' facing 'risk to confront discrimination.' 'Highlight[ing] what these laws actually look like in enforcement' is different as motivation for marriage work from 'the dream that one day I would get to marry the person I love'. What goes 'beyond the 1,100 federal rights and benefits' here is the 'dramatization' of 'the enforcement of a discriminatory law . . . in real life.' Other things that go 'beyond the 1,100 rights and benefits' have less to do with 'the status and dignity of marriage' than they do with changing the terrain where people live in communities, not as individuals with dreams of one day getting married. This was characterised very clearly by transgender and gender non-conforming activists who participated in the campaign described by the director of the regional organisation above.

When discussing the visibility that the campaign created for their organisation, this participant also discussed the opportunity that being a part of the campaign opened up in conversations with reporters and community members:

It's couples who are denied the right to marry, and then even just the impact that we've had through that on our media. By the time we were done with it, they were asking us what pronouns we preferred. I've never heard a reporter do that. [Max]

Being involved in the campaign was a way to engage with reporters who began 'asking . . . what pronouns we preferred' when the organiser had 'never heard a reporter do that.' This

organiser pushes the boundaries around how marriage work is defined and thought about in relation to being a transgender advocacy organisation. While many self-defined LGBT organisations do not suggest that marriage equality will affect transgender people in any way, this organiser has connected with the work happening regionally in order to both challenge the ‘enforcement of a discriminatory law’, and change the conversation about gender. Speaking about their participation in this campaign, Max notes the ways in which discriminatory marriage laws can affect transgender people:

I really believe in the work that they are doing, but also these issues are intersectional. Anybody who says that marriage is not a trans issue is not looking at it through any of the experience that I have working on the ground with trans folks for 3 years. Like, yes, we are affected by that . . . You know, being able to offer your partner health insurance like especially when you’re talking about a community that has such a hard time socio-economically and, you know, are really depleted for resources. There’s a lot of legal rights and protections there that a lot of our members are able to benefit from now and some folks don’t want to change their gender markers either . . . to say that your gender should not play a role in your marriage certificate, very much falls hand-in-hand with our work and talking about gender and that it’s not a binary system, and why should it matter what your gender marker is if I’m allowed to get married or not. [Max]

The founder of this grassroots organisation demonstrates the way that already socioeconomically marginalised communities can access some level of protection, even if and when they ‘are really depleted for resources’ through an expansion of what legally available marriage is. When this participant says that ‘anybody who says that marriage is not a trans issue is not looking at it through any of the experience that I have working on the ground with trans folks for 3 years’, they lay claim to a knowledge of their context that cannot be claimed from the metronormative centres that produce bodies of queer thought. This participant was speaking in a context where marriage was not a legal reality *yet*. Below, two directors of organisations in South Africa talk about the way that marriage was experienced or thought about by their constituents. Marriage is not spoken about here as being about ‘dignity’ or a universal or ‘shared gayness’. Instead, marriage becomes a tool for negotiating other kinds of belongings – within family groupings or religious communities.

Same-sex marriage had been a legal reality in South Africa for ten years (since 2006) when I was there interviewing people for this project, spending time with organisations and taking an interest in how LGBTI rights were being mobilised within the context. This is very different from the 2014-2015 time period in the US, when same-sex marriage was about to become a legal reality. Most of the talk in the US South that I collected had to do with 'when' and 'if'. These were celebrations tempered with uncertainty. The Supreme Court had not yet ruled.

In the South African context, I asked several participants about what marriage meant for their constituents. One participant spoke to the way that marriage is embedded in how it is possible to be recognised in customary gendered relationships:

From a trans context, I know we've had trans women who were married before but for them it was more important to be married in the customary marriage than having a civil union and making it legal because ultimately for them it's about being accepted at that level, not necessarily by the law and benefits, and medical aid and all that. For them it is important to be recognized - and remember, in the Xhosa culture, you only become a woman through marriage. You will always be a girl and you will not have access to certain spaces. If you become a woman through marriage, you have access to certain spaces and recognition of being in other women's spaces such as cooking at traditional events. That's a huge honour and transwomen use that as gender affirmation - that I'm accepted in this village. So, for them the civil union is not even an issue. [Asa]

For this type of recognition, 'customary marriage' is more important 'than having a civil union and making it legal because ultimately it's about being accepted at that level.' What Asa describes is similar to what Kian described in Chapter four about constituents who were more interested in negotiating belonging in their families and religious communities than the benefits offered through legal marriage. This is another way that the availability of legal marriage does not guarantee acceptance. Similarly, Kian speaks here about why they chose to be involved in the advocacy around the Civil Union Act ten years before. This was less because same-sex marriage was important to their constituency than it was because of the kind of opportunity it presented to engage their religious community whose leadership had submitted an opposing opinion to parliament.

I think it was very important because we needed to – well, one of the reasons why it was important was because at the same time we made a submission to parliament, our submission was opposed by the Muslim Judicial Council and so . . . almost winning that battle in court – I mean in parliament – with them was a major victory for us. And then subsequently the bill was passed . . . For our members, most of them may not believe in marriage, but the fact that the privilege is there also for queer Muslims was a great achievement . . . And I think subsequent to that, if you look at the kind of marriages that we conduct mostly in our organisation are interfaith marriages, quite strangely, where the orthodox Muslim community will allow a Muslim man to marry a woman from another faith, but not the other way around. But we're saying that's patriarchal bull, you know, it's just that. And so, why shouldn't it be the other way around, also. So, we get a lot of those marriages happening. [Kian]

Rather than 'opening doors' for individual couples or providing protections for individual families, here involvement in the political struggle over the Civil Union Act (2006) was 'very important' even when most members of the organisation 'may not believe in marriage' or even pursue it themselves. The importance of making a submission and 'winning that battle in court' is a struggle over the political terrain of Islam, a 'home' to which both the conservative Muslim Judicial Council and the LGBT(I) advocacy organisation referenced here lay claim. The terms of the religion that are being negotiated here are not only about 'a set of values' that include same-sex marriage, but also confronting things like 'patriarchal bull'.

There is also a bigger negotiation around the meaning of marriage within the context of what Kian describes. It is the queer constituents who aren't convinced of the value of marriage, while it is interfaith heterosexual couples who seek access to marriage that is not determined by the 'patriarchal bull' that would otherwise not allow them to marry. What disappears from the single 'type' of advocacy that frames marriage as a universal and desirable measure is the larger contest over what marriage means in specific contexts (Bennett, 2014). The circulation of same-sex marriage as the measure of LGBT(I) rights does permit opportunities for queer activism in these contexts, but it simultaneously continues to locate that activism in conversations dominated by metropolitan voices.

Part II: The ‘single type’ as erasure: ‘What you see is what you get!’

Racisms: ‘It’s all white!’/‘Who didn’t take the time to think?’

Hegemonic discourses of rights are premised on the assumption that lgbtiq people share something essential which can structure organising and advocacy. Acknowledging that each letter in the acronym has its own specific needs already complicates the suggestion of such a projection of universal identities with universal needs. When geographical context and intersecting oppressions are accounted for, this universalism does not hold. However, the dominance of the idea of a universal or ‘shared gayness’ (Vaid, 1995; Ekine, 2013) exerts a normative pressure that risks erasing crucial marginalisations among queer communities that are complicit in the violences perpetuated against lgbtiq people who are most vulnerable.

At the level of policy, which is central to dominant approaches to advocacy work in both the US and South African contexts, different legal decisions can impact marginalised communities differently. In the same Supreme Court session (2013) that dismantled the Defense of Marriage Act (1996), a major victory for LGBT advocacy organisations in the United States, the court also dismantled the Voting Rights Act² (1965), a major setback for organisations working on racial justice work, especially at the intersection of racial justice and issues of voter suppression.

These decisions have major implications for the communities they affect, but they also have implications in shaping how power is structured. In an interview, a prominent activist associated with a regional southern organisation focused on the intersection of lgbtiq and racial justice work discusses the way that such decisions effectively function to drive an

² The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was meant to address racially specific issues of voter suppression, especially in southern states. The VRA outlawed the use of literacy tests, meant to disenfranchise African American voters. It also required that any changes in voting laws had to be approved at the federal level prior to their implementation (United States Department of Justice, 2017). Provisions at the heart of the Voting Rights Act were ‘invalidated’ by the Supreme Court in 2013 (Liptak, 2013).

already existing ('right back where we started again') wedge between white lgbtiq people and people of colour in the US:

...what they've taken away in the Supreme Court decision when they gave us marriage equality and DOMA . . . they gutted the 1965 Civil Rights Act, which would be the anniversary next year. It's going to be a huge year. So, you think about that . . . so why did the queers get it, but the black folk didn't? That's the narrative that's out there . . . And we're right back where we started again . . . right back. And marriage . . . every time you hear marriage . . . every time I turn that TV set on . . . it's all white. All white! . . . And no one took the time to think there might be a couple of colour here you might want to put them in front of - It's all white . . . so that's the other part. What you see is what you get. [Cynthia]

The question of 'no one [taking] the time to think' about the images representing LGBT advocacy work and lgbtiq people can be answered, through participants' reflections, by making connections between who serves in leadership roles and who it is who would have to take the time to think. The whiteness that structures LGBT advocacy work structures the norms through which that work is enacted. For instance, Hal spoke in an interview to the 'lack of responsive national voices on issues attacking black gay men that was also led by black gay men.' Hal's organisation was generated in response to this reality.

Hal also identifies ways in which structures that do not have a 'vision' informed by racial justice translate into 'a tremendous amount of failure of LGBT institutions' because of the way that this affects how 'policy priorities are established', including perpetuating problematic 'narratives' like the one that 'the black community is so homophobic.' That narrative undermines queer people of colour's capacity to organise their own communities because it compounds issues of homophobia and transphobia through racism at the same time that access to the resources necessary to build infrastructures of resilience are seriously constrained for queer people of colour through the normative whiteness structured by metronormative LGBT rights work:

There's also been a tremendous amount of failure of LGBT institutions, representative of, for example, executive leadership, representative of, for example, the way that policy priorities are established, representative of the experiences that black queer and trans folks have navigating white LGBT, mostly the mainstream LGBT - let me not say white because there are also LGBT organizations that have

Black folks in leadership, but . . . racial justice has to be at the centre of that, particularly in our commitment to ending violence against black people, even as the LGBT issue. For us it's not that we have all the answers, but we have means to force them to kind of get us to think about what are you as an organization, what do you, what do you as an institution what are you as the movement going to do about this, if members of our community are being murdered. [Hal]

Hal said, 'it's fine and good to put out statements in solidarity', but that they 'also want to see more tangible commitment.' Drawing attention to institutionalised racism at the level of executive leadership and decision-making allows this organisation to move beyond an analysis of racism that only considers the most 'overt visible form' of racism to understand the implications of LGBT organisations that do not centre racial justice in their work.

When whiteness structures the access it is possible to have to institutions which 'are still sustainable', and can document and retain institutional memory of 'culture', 'norms' and 'wisdom', white queer individuals and groups get 'a source of resilience' affirming their existence and working against their erasure. Though queer and trans people of colour have done enormous work to confront and combat homophobia, transphobia and violence against queer and trans people of colour, a constrained ability to garner funding and assert their historical and contemporary existence against the erasures of institutional memory is structured by whiteness:

You know even though black gay men, even though we were able to establish some groups and just some community building in the world making amongst ourselves, we didn't have access to the kind of resources that make that kind of institutional sustainability possible. Even if you look at the when resources were available for black gay men to start building programmes and start building institutions and start creating space where they can reach out and educate each other, like those are really important questions . . . Again, still when we have new resources to do the kind of community building, I think it's amazing that even with whatever resources that we had, we still did a lot. We accomplished a lot, but imagine if we had had much more. I think we'd have had far more sustainable institutions. [Hal]

Hal notes the limitation of funding and other kinds of material support for black gay men, their 'groups' and their 'programmes.' These limitations coincided with 'the impact of HIV' on queer communities, which continues to disproportionately affect queer men of colour.

HIV is a particular type of erasure. The reality that ‘the resources available didn’t match the impact of HIV’ on the communities referenced by this participant also suggests that resources available at that time had to be invested in mitigating the devastating effects of HIV and could not be spared for projects like ‘community building’ that would have resulted in ‘far more sustainable institutions.’

Another participant speaks to the necessity of preserving the kinds of knowledge around ‘culture’, ‘norms’ and ‘wisdom’ identified by Hal, in relation to histories that would otherwise be lost in the South. Victor, who is involved in projects to preserve Southern queer history speaks about these elements of ‘sustainable institutions’ as ‘the preservation of’ a specific kind of ‘queer history’. Their emphasis on ‘preservation’ of knowledge underlines the importance of the ability (through access to funding and other material or non-material resources) to establish and maintain ‘sustainable institutions.’

I see the preservation of Southern queer history as truthfully, I mean I hate to be hyperbolic when I’m from the South, but it’s an absolute and total necessity to the survival of our community. If we don’t have our history, we’re going to fall apart.
[Victor]

The emphasis on confronting erasure through ‘preservation’ of ‘queer history’ as an act of ‘survival’ demonstrates the implications of a queer organising and advocacy infrastructure that is structured by whiteness. Though white gay men face homophobia, their access to the kind of ‘institutions that were sustainable’ through greater access to funding and their immunity from racism meant that there ‘were places that held their culture’, which ‘had implications for the ability to be resilient and the ability to survive.’ These participants’ emphasis on the link between historical knowledge and a kind of resilience show how racism functions to obstruct both the ability of black gay men to create these institutions for themselves and their ability to be incorporated into the ‘sustainable institutions’ of white gay men. The dominance of white gay men as directors and leaders of LGBT organisations is pervasive in perspectives from the margins because of the way that white men’s mobility differs from other queer and trans people’s:

It wasn't that long ago that black gay men had to provide three IDs just to access the gay bars, right? So, I'm not interested in the narrative that the black community is so homophobic . . . certainly that's the narrative . . . and I'm also not willing to let the white LGBT institutions, organizations or spaces off the hook for their racism. [Hal]

LGBT organising that is un-informed by a racial justice approach has serious structural and material implications. At one presentation during a regional conference in the US South, an organiser spoke about the way that inclusion of racial justice issues or expansion of the work of LGBT advocacy organisations to encompass a racial justice lens elicits responses from predominantly white constituents asking 'how is that an LGBTQ issue?'

So, a lot of people are like, how is that an LGBTQ issue? Usually the people that are asking that look a lot more like me than [my colleague], right? So, what we also know is that people – that LGBTQ people and people of colour are overrepresented in every element, every stage, every piece of the criminal justice system. Right? So, we're taking on the courts, friends. And that we know, and I know as a white person that if young black children are safe, white children are gonna be safe, immigrant children are gonna be safe and so that's what we're looking at in Atlanta. [25]

A perspective from the margins makes it clear that 'if young Black children are safe, white children are gonna be safe, immigrant children are gonna be safe' and is able to connect the work of dismantling mass incarceration to the work of lgbtiq liberation. The whiteness that structures metronormative LGBT rights work has serious implications for who is able to build institutions that have 'implications for the ability to be resilient and the ability to survive.' A vision that not only 'includes' racial justice, but centres racial justice work and perspectives, including the organising of queer and trans people of colour is, here, the only way to address systemic and historic infrastructures of racism that continue to undermine the 'life chances' (Spade, 2011) of queer and trans people of colour.

Though South Africa is geographically far removed from the American South, histories of racial segregation that manifest as contemporary practices of racial exclusion are shared between these two contexts. Liza spoke about their experience of being a token on the planning committee of an organisation that has received a lot of attention for its exclusionary white leadership:

Like literally, you could even see among those white boys, they can tick off, ok we have a black, we have a woman. Sharp. We can go on with the meeting. So, I were a token woman on the planning committee and I was even one year – my last year of my involvement, I was even on the board . . . their core structure. And yeah you literally are silenced on meetings and it was really – also, I was not so learned on these things, not so politicised and also naïve . . . so then when I dropped out of that whole planning situation, so we always tried to have a staff member of [our organisation] going there, but I mean it's really also hectic because the meetings are always in the city. [Liza]

The feeling of being a token on the committee is not accidental. The meaning of the meetings 'always' taking place 'in the city' is that meetings 'in the city' limit who can participate. The history of the legal and physical architecture which shaped the city's infrastructure means that those who live in closest proximity to the meetings or are most likely to have access to safe and reliable transportation, especially during evening hours, are those who most closely resemble the 'white boys' described as the leadership of this organisation by Liza. Struggles around funding and acquiring resources have implications especially for 'black-led organisations', as identified in an interview with a founder of another organisation:

This is the nature of what is happening with the NGO world. In the NGO world you see struggles of black-led organizations. They are all - most of them - falling apart, one, but we are also seeing struggles of black-led organizations underfunded . . . extremely under-funded and where you see white-led organizations with multimillion bank accounts, with luxurious projects and they are also not invited in communities which is completely different work and is also problematic. So, more and more you really do learn what is happening and I think for me it was to then say, one, we need transformation and where does transformation start? [Pete]

Some participants tried to engage in the work of transformation, working with organisations long after their problematic leadership structures, programmatic work and practices had been identified. For some organisations, continuing to engage with problematic structures is one way of hoping for a lifeline when they face the struggles identified by Pete in the previous quote. When one organiser attempted to engage with the problematic organisation described by Liza above, they met resistance to their proposal on the basis that something called 'Black Pride' would 'exclude people':

So, me and [another member] we went there to the meeting and then we pushed that it have to be called the Black Pride. And they were like, no, this is going to exclude people and we were like, if it's going to exclude people, that's ok and then we are not going to participate, but the problem to them, it was not going to be effective if [our organisation] is not part of that. [Kayla]

While the leadership of an annual event for LGBTI people 'in the city' can be all white and claim that it is not 'going to exclude people', the suggestion of a 'Black Pride' event was met with objections from the 'white-led' organisation that it would 'exclude people'. However, this founder recognised that even when access to funds is largely controlled by white-dominated organisations, the involvement of 'black-led organisations' in events that are framed as events that benefit communities, lends credibility and relevance to events that are otherwise 'not going to be effective' if 'black-led organisations' are 'not part of that'. In this way, 'black-led organisations' are framed as having a constituency that needs to be served by advocacy efforts and community interventions, but not as having leadership that should be managing 'multimillion bank accounts', 'luxurious projects' or even determining the name of an event that is specifically designed to take place in predominantly black communities 'push[ing] for it to be called the Black Pride'.

Trans Erasure: 'Do you know what I mean?'

Though 'transgender' is the 'T' in the LGBTI acronym, it is clear from my conversations with activists and organisers in addition to presentations by self-identified LGBT(I) organisations themselves that there are not only differing understandings of the 'T', but that the T is 'different'. While groups focused more on the L and G push for education about issues of sexual orientation, participants to whom I listened were unanimous that the majority of these groups are slow to educate themselves about transgender issues, opting for simplicity rather than complexity. This is reflected at every level, from programming, to advocacy priorities, to leadership structures. One founder of a trans-focused advocacy

organisation in South Africa spoke to this dynamic in an interview when describing interacting with feminist and lesbian organisations that struggled with being ‘kind of ignorant of trans issues, trans phobic’:

Then the other thing with the [community] groups . . . Because a lot of them come from the [feminist organisations] which is great. They have a very strong and good feminist understanding and strong lesbian leadership, but indirectly have like, been kind of ignorant of trans issues, trans phobic. [Garth]

When organisations are ‘ignorant of trans issues’, the gaps in programming for lgbtiq people affect the T in ways that make it difficult to sustain the claim of LGBTI advocacy work. Another founder of an organisation described the implication of self-described LGBT organisations that provide ‘practically no programming for the trans folks’. This participant continued to talk about the implications of this lack of ‘programming for trans folks’, which go beyond the theoretical in their impact on how trans people’s health needs are addressed, affecting both their quality of life and their ability to live.

Most often, organizations that are LGBT-focused are not – there is practically no programming for the trans folks . . . Trans women are lumped into the MSM response in the HIV context. So, whichever way you look . . . we are just slotted wherever it is comfortable . . . International aid, policy makers, UN agencies. For example, UNAIDS is very supportive of MSM and MSM advocacy and MSM issues. It doesn’t have a position on trans. The South African Aids council, the national Aids council - it has a strategy for MSM, it has a strategy for sex workers and I think it’s about to embark on a strategy for people who inject drugs. It doesn’t have a strategy on trans. [Asa]

As with exclusions around race in LGBTI advocacy and organising work, exclusionary behaviour on the part of self-identified LGBTI organisations has led transgender individuals to found their own organisations and work on the needs most critical to their own communities and constituencies. Asa spoke to the lack of representation of ‘trans women within . . . important spaces’, which led them to form an organisation that exists to centre the voices, experiences and representation of trans women in ‘important spaces’:

One thing that we noticed as we started organizing was that there is a lack of voices of trans women within and I’m going to say important spaces . . . Because wherever you went, it was most of the spaces at that point was very trans exclusionary . . . Trans women are pushed out of feminist spaces because women don’t see the issues as

women's issues. Trans women are pushed out of sex worker spaces because their issues are not as prominent or they are not mobilized enough around their own identities. [Asa]

This 'lack of voices of trans women' led to the priority of Asa's organisation being to insert transgender women's leadership into every space they could envision: appearances on local radio stations to international United Nations committee platforms. Listening to those who are in leadership roles in self-identified LGBTI organisations is one way to understand how they themselves envision their work for and with transgender people.

Issues of trans exclusion within self-described LGBT(I) advocacy work were not limited to the South African context. Several interactions with leaders of self-described LGBT organisations in the American South speak to the reality that a critical perspective on gender is not cultivated in organisations who have not taken 'the time to think' about how gender structures the marginalisation of queer and trans people. One participant spoke about the way that transgender identities need to be packaged in language that makes sense to people who 'have no context for' understanding transgender people and issues that they might face.

One simple example is around talking about transgender issues. You know, like within our community people understand rejecting a gender binary and like trans people would use language like you know, I was assigned female at birth. Lay people, out in the world, who have never thought about trans issues like have no context for that. So, you know, we're finding that saying things like I was born a boy but always knew I was a girl and eventually took hormones or whatever to live who I knew I was is effective. It's not exactly how trans people might most want to tell their own story with you know – little – it's not so far off, but little adjustments to that language – like that feels inauthentic to some folks and that's a really hard thing to navigate . . . how do you meet someone where they are and like be true to yourself in some ways. [Jack]

Jack speaks to the consequences of messaging that is 'not exactly how trans people might most want to tell their own story'. They suggest that messaging with 'little adjustments to that language' that 'is effective' to an audience with 'no context for that' is more important than 'how trans people might most want to tell their own story.' While Jack speaks about meeting people 'where they are' and at the same time being 'true to yourself', within the

context of self-identified LGBT advocacy organisations, the decision about what is ‘effective’ messaging is made by a leadership comprised primarily of cisgender people. Another leader in a self-identified LGBT advocacy organisation, during a public presentation at a conference organised by the speaker’s organisation, spoke to the role that transgender people might play within this organisation once the organisation implemented its plan of ‘reaching out to and organising a transgender community’:

...reaching out to and organizing a transgender community is a high priority for [our organisation] in the next year. By next month we’ll be organizing a state-wide transgender working group. The working group will advise [our organisation] on a regular basis by conference calls and meetings and educate the public on transgender justice issues . . . This particular education effort is of critical importance . . . I have received troubling advice on numerous occasions from both members of the gay community as well as some of our state allies to not put members of the transgender community out in front of our efforts to educate the public and lobby the legislature. These people have cautioned me that this hurts our cause and my response is that we need to fight, we need to fight that fear by educating and exposing these issues even to our own community. Even before we talk about this to the outside public because after all we tend to dislike or fear what we don’t know or are unfamiliar with. [7a]

While this speaker refers to ‘reaching out to and organising a transgender community’ as a ‘high priority’ for their organisation, it is clear that these transgender individuals who are experts in their own experience, will be volunteering their time for the organisation in order to ‘advise’ the organisation ‘on a regular basis by conference calls and meetings and educate the public on transgender issues’, work that the organisation itself by virtue of being a self-described LGBT advocacy organisation, should presumably already be doing. The plan unveiled at this public briefing was not a plan to encourage transgender leadership or hire transgender staff to direct programmatic efforts for trans populations, but an assumption that what the transgender population in this state needed was an organisation ‘reaching out to and organising a transgender community’. Not only is this an underwhelming plan for any transgender people who might be in the audience, it is presented as if it is a commitment that goes beyond the standard work of the organisation.

This individual has ‘received troubling advice’ from multiple sources, including within their own constituency ‘to not put members of the transgender community in front of our

efforts to educate the public and lobby the legislature.’ While this particular information is presented as if it is not the opinion of the speaker, the warning that ‘putting members of the transgender community in front of our efforts’ could ‘[hurt] our cause’ is communicated in the room through this presentation, qualifying the value of transgender people participating in the organisation’s work and suggesting that the organisation might be better able to do its work without taking on the risk of ‘[putting] members of the transgender community in front’ of their work.

Even within the hegemonic work of marriage legislation, the cisgender leadership of many LGBT advocacy organisations doesn’t seem to consider the impact that such legislation has on transgender individuals, but implications for transgender people in relation to marriage law become apparent when the issue is viewed through the lens of gender and not sexual orientation. The following participant speaks about their work in conjunction with a larger regional organisation on marriage equality. Though this organiser’s organisation is trans-specific in its focus, Max participated in marriage equality work. Max described (above) the material benefits that transgender people (especially who do not wish to or cannot change their gender markers) could potentially access from marriage, asking ‘why should it matter what your gender marker is if I’m allowed to get married or not?’ Here, Max discusses the way that transgender advocacy work can be an opportunity to communicate about issues that are more relevant to trans communities than ‘same-sex couples’:

So, we kind of see that through that lens and also like having a chance to . . . change some of the language . . . when people talk about marriage they say same-sex couples. Well that’s not always true. It’s couples who are denied the right to marry, and then even just the impact that we’ve had through that on our media. By the time we were done with it, they were asking us what pronouns we preferred. I’ve never heard a reporter do that. [Max]

Max’s organisation’s involvement in the campaign was not only about marriage legislation. Their participation was part of a relationship they were building with a larger regional organisation interested in supporting their work. It also allowed them to be visible in media and provided a platform to talk about who transgender people are in a way that

ended with media ‘asking us what pronouns we preferred.’ To emphasize the importance of this, Max added, ‘I’ve never heard a reporter to do that.’ The involvement of this trans-specific organisation in marriage legislation work provided a lens that had the capacity to centre trans experiences and expand notions of gender within marriage by pushing against ‘a binary system.’ However, Max also identifies an incident that is indicative of all of the tensions discussed in this section around leadership of organisations, policy priorities, how identities get taken up in advocacy work and who gets to interpret them. This account involves first a substantial success and then a significant erasure.

...we’ve been working with one of our kids . . . they are about to graduate high school, and their high school is trying to make them wear female gender graduation gowns. So, we helped them overturn that. I wrote some letters of support . . . but we won and not only is [the student] going to be able to wear the gown that they want but the school is doing away with the gendered gowns all together . . . so that was huge but [the state organisation] helped with that in that they made a phone call and they have access to lawyers and we don’t. But then they sent their own e-blast about how they . . . how they made it happen but, in the e-blast, [the student] was mis-gendered the whole thing, they’ve said that this person is a trans man and used masculine pronouns. [The person] is gender variant and prefers like gender neutral pronouns . . . So, it’s just another . . . our state group is not okay with saying this kid is gender queer and using gender neutral pronouns or they are so ill-educated that they don’t know that there is a difference and that’s a problem. So, they kind of came in at the end but that’s fine and . . . It’s that they are mis-gendering [the person graduating] in this e-blast bragging about what they’ve done to have their gender identity celebrated. Do you know what I mean? [Max]

This example speaks to the way that better resourced organisations with the kind of institutional infrastructure identified in the previous subsection above can erase the differences between queer and trans people and colonise the stories of individuals, ‘mis-gendering’ at the same time that they were ‘bragging about what they’ve done to have their gender identity celebrated’, for the purpose of the bigger organisation’s own sustainability. The organisation ‘came in at the end’ and ‘sent their own e-blast about how they made it happen’ even though their involvement in achieving something ‘that was huge’ through the abolition of a gendered tradition was secondary to a group whose focus is on dismantling the way the gender binary polices opportunities, access and lives but is also so under-resourced

that they had to make up their own letterhead to even be able to send a letter to the high school on the student's behalf in the first place.

Conclusion

Failures to organise and advocate from a posture that takes seriously the specificities experienced by queer and trans people, rather than assuming universal (Vaid, 1995) or 'shared gayness' (Ekine, 2013: 85) have life and death implications for lgbtiq people who exist at the intersection of multiple marginalisations. Some of these implications are connected to the type of resilience that can be built by institutionalising memory and collective experience. Some of these implications are specific to the experiences of violence that go unaddressed when issues that affect lbtqi people are not understood as LGBT(I) rights issues. Some of these implications have to do with how health care is distributed or not based on whether a person shows up in the 'plans' of official bodies addressing critical health care concerns. As Matebeni (2012: 7) writes, in relation to exclusions in some dominant versions of feminism, work that 'excluded a range of experiences . . . would not win', where 'winning' means addressing the effects of multiple intersecting marginalisations.

Participants' material drawn upon in this chapter gives deep texture to the fact that the exclusion of marginalised identities from metronormative models of advocacy themselves structured by whiteness and cisnormativity has meant that queer people of colour and transgender people have had to, by necessity, create their own organisations. The reality is that now self-identified LGBT(I) organisations also compete for funding by attempting to do programming, for instance, that is relevant to transgender constituents, while trans-led and queer people of colour-led organisations continue to be underfunded and exist at the margins, especially if their work is critical of dominant structures and priorities in 'LGBT rights' work (Chasin, 2000). The multiple erasures contained in the single 'type' of advocacy structured by the metropole is understood best in places and by people that are positioned at

a discursive (and often geographical) distance, by the hegemonic narratives around queer habitability projected from the metropole, so the proliferation of organisations that are embedded in, accountable to, and fluent in their own contexts is a critical way to do what one participant described as 'building power' for communities at the margins. However, continued marginality, whether their spaces are written 'off the map' and neglected or written 'off the map' and colonised by zealous interest in 'new frontiers', warrants a call for redistribution of the resources, power, and tools with which sustainable transformation can be built.

As this chapter has demonstrated, a universal metronormative model of rights is inadequate to address the needs of all queer people. The instability of hegemonic discourses about what constitutes the conditions for living queerly is revealed by the fractures that break up the dominance of appeals to the universal, especially through campaigns such as the campaign for legal recognition of same-sex marriage. The next chapter focuses much more closely on the specific contours outlining the experience of struggling for queer liberation in the 'two souths' on the terms of those 'two souths'. Whereas in both Chapter four and this chapter the focus is on how metronormative work can be understood through the constraints it places on organising in the 'two souths', the focus in the following chapter (Chapter six) is on what it means to live and work queerly, as an activist, in these 'two souths'. In this way, the following chapter details what it means to be 'southerned'.

CHAPTER SIX: 'A very rich and impoverished land': Queer organising in 'two souths'

Introduction

Chapters four and five argued that metronormativity is a colonising force in LGBT(I) advocacy work. Hegemonic discourses that frame geographic space as habitable or dangerous for queer existence exert themselves through dominant engagements with advocacy work that privileges law and policy. As explored in Chapter four, perceptions of the habitability of queer life are calibrated by a discursive rubric for what counts as the achievement of LGBT(I) rights. LGBT(I) advocacy and organising in places considered both 'on' and 'off' the map of queer habitability, however, reveal the tensions in what it means to do work that centres queer lives.

Discursively speaking, a place is habitable or antagonistic to queer life because of the racialisation, class status, religious affiliation or other marker of difference that, to the metronormative gaze, signals the refusal of 'modern' secular 'tolerance' by its residents (Butler, 2009). As Sokari Ekine writes, about the African continent's discursive location in international LGBT 'rights' discourse, the implication is that international organisations position their work as 'saving Africans from Africa' (Ekine, 2013: 90). I argue that the metropole wears this posture whether the particular non-metropolitan place in question is inhabited by rural white populations, communities of colour in urban centres in America, or black Africans in townships in South Africa.

Everywhere I have gone in this process of gathering materials to analyse here, I have found that there is always somewhere that is further 'off the map', and the place that is further away is where things are framed discursively as always worse for queer life. These 'further away' places are simultaneously those places most economically disadvantaged and embedded in the most challenging ways within the legacies and contemporary shapes of colonialisms and racisms. As suggested in Chapter four, 'out-of-the-way places' seem

necessary in constructing the hegemonic narrative about what LGBT(I) rights are. In this chapter, I extend the argument I developed in the previous chapter to demonstrate that the fractures in the universal logic of ‘rights’ can be most clearly seen from the perspectives informed by differences, particularly of race and gender identity, within queer ‘communities’. Here, that argument is focused on the spatial politics structured by hegemonic discourses of LGBT(I) rights through a reading of participants’ reflections on the local dynamics that complicate the hegemonic narrative.

This chapter is comprised of four sections and a conclusion. The first section, ‘Home is where your politics are: “In addition to loving it, it’s also just home”’ analyses the ways participants speak about the ‘two souths’ represented here. Challenges and opportunities, both areas I asked participants to speak about, are embraced in the material as part of what makes home ‘home’. The second section, “‘Patient with a crisis’: Destructive urgencies and persistent commitments’, explores participants’ perceptions of interventions in the ‘two souths’ as having a misplaced urgency that does not have the staying power to live in and struggle with the ongoing and systemic issues that organisers in ‘out-of-the-way places’ strategize to address. The third section, ‘Getting there: “You can’t get [there] by Delta Airlines’ analyses the ways that participants speak to issues of accessibility that are part of the terrain of organising and advocacy work in the ‘two souths’ represented here. The section is also interested in how such issues of accessibility shape challenges and opportunities for doing the work of organising and advocacy in ‘out-of-the-way places’. The final section before the conclusion, ‘Being there: “Where I live and where I want to be”’ speaks to the specificities of home – language, place, and other elements that are flattened in characterisations of ‘out-of-the-way places’ which only view these locations through their distance from the metropole. The concluding section reflects on the implications of this chapter in relation to the concluding chapter (Chapter seven), which is the next and final chapter of this dissertation.

Home is where your politics are: ‘In addition to loving it, it’s also just home.’

The subject of universal rights is constructed and imagined as an individual (Mutua, 2002). For lgbtiq people, this subject has emerged as someone with an ‘identity’ shared with others through ‘coming out’, a story that can mean leaving one’s home behind in order to find ‘community’ among others who share that identity (Johnson, 2013). Others who share that identity are often presumed to be in a city. ‘Home’, in this narrative, is a closet, that must be left behind for the subject of universal rights to emerge (Halberstam, 2005). Narratives that emerge from ‘out-of-the-way places’ in ‘two souths’ beyond the metropole, though, can involve relationships not only with a community of similarly-identified lgbtiq people, but deep commitments to families and communities of origin. Heather, who has interviewed and documented the lives of rural queer people across the United States, speaks matter-of-factly of motivations that are involved in staying put when all the messages queer people might receive make leaving seem like the better option:

I think people have strong reasons for wanting to stay a lot of times, or they just never thought of leaving . . . why would you? They’re like - this is home. I think people know that there are all sorts of opportunities they could be having in cities that they don’t have in the place that they are staying, but maybe they don’t want those opportunities, or they don’t want them as much as they wanna be in the place they love. You know what I mean? [Heather]

Lgbtiq people located in ‘out-of-the-way places’ suggest that their embeddedness in their local communities is inseparable from their liberation. In other words, their queer existence cannot be treated in isolation from their existence as members of their families and their communities. While the subject of LGBT(I) rights discourse is expected to experience persecution or pride or violence or affirmation *as* a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex person *because* they are a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex person, the reality is that individuals are rarely so one-dimensional. Sometimes other relationships, connections or identities within the space of ‘home’ take precedence. Heather speaks to how this could work for queer people living in rural areas in the US:

But like in rural areas, a lot of people I have interviewed are like yeah, I am gay but like I am also, I work at the chemical plant and work at this and I work at that. You know, I am a farmer, I am a whatever, like I am a Presbyterian, I am whatever, I am a Kentuckian. Like just, I think . . . there are other things that people want to talk a lot more than their queerness. Everyone I've interviewed, they were like, yeah, I came out, it was fine, whatever, it was hard, like, it is fine, I have a partner, I am fine and look at my horses, you know. [Heather]

In this way, the requirement that lgbtiq people claim 'rights' through one element of their identity – the element often most important to national and international advocacy organisations, state governments and other institutions identified by Massad (2002) as part of the 'gay international' – is actually a reduction of who people are, a simplification of their complexity in order to become legible as the 'universal' subject of LGBT(I) rights.

Alternatively, an expansion or a full accounting of their complexity would reveal that lives as members of families and communities are also inseparable from the histories in which the conditions of their geographies have been shaped. Often, these are histories of exploitation, struggles over land and resources and state-enforced racial divisions that continue to have a social and political life of their own, long after formalised policies of racial segregation have been legally dismantled. Jeanne spoke to this during an interview in which I asked them about the regional organisation that they co-founded, one that focuses on intersectional organising in the US South. The organisation itself is firmly rooted in the South, and Jeanne is embedded in the rural community they call home:

You know, you can't live in the South without knowing the raging battles that we have had over land and resources and human rights . . . We have a very rich and impoverished land. [Jeanne]

Conditions of geographical marginality go beyond the feeling of isolation so often identified as the most pervasive element of queer existence in 'out-of-the-way places' that it has become a taken-for-granted trope of queer knowledge. Instead, queer populations are embedded in the same conditions of marginality that characterise their home for everyone living there. Questions of access to a range of material needs (such as water, land, economic stability, educational opportunities) can make life precarious, or at least constrained, for

everyone inhabiting peripheralized geographies, ‘regardless of who [they] are’, but also, as the following speaker at a regional LGBT-focused conference in the American South describes, specific to who they are:

Whether you’re a white cis male or you’re a black trans woman or a black non-binary person like me, poverty is why we’re oppressed. We’re poorer than hetero-cis people. And in the south, we’re poorer than everybody else. We have to fight economic violence. That’s part of our work as LGBTQ people. That’s why I felt we needed living wages as one of the things we’re fighting for. [25]

Because the lives of lgbtiq people cannot be separated from ‘those struggles’ faced by members of their broader communities, whatever is happening in the broader community is ‘also affecting’ lgbtiq people ‘regardless’ of their identities. This was true in both ‘souths’. In a public space in a South African township where we talked about community in an interview, Kayla described why it is important to do work that connects queer experiences and realities with the broader conditions affecting life in their home:

So that was really, really crucial for me to work with civil society and also people to know that some of the things that’s affecting them – those are the things that’s also affecting me. I mean, if there’s no water in the community, it’s also affecting me, regardless of who I am. That was crucial for me that we have to take all those struggles seriously. [Kayla]

Commitments to home are complicated, though, and come not only from a sense that ‘home’ is shared with community and family members who are not lgbtiq-identified, but a keen awareness that sharing home is what can intensify violence for lgbtiq people who live there:

And also, looking at the issue of hate crimes and homophobia – it’s not done by gay and lesbian people. It’s done by other people. Those people that we are keeping them away from us. So, for me, it was very important – in the struggle of dealing with homophobia and hate crime, to include the people that are against lgbti people in order that they have to understand gay and lesbian people are just people. They are human people. The only difference is how we feel – is our feelings to other people. [Kayla]

The association of queer existence with ‘town’ (or ‘the city’) and other places beyond town that are not ‘home’ complicates lgbtiq people’s relationships *with* ‘home’ for many reasons, one of which is that ‘keeping’ people who are antagonistic toward queer existence ‘away’ from events that should make the world a better place for queer life to flourish means that the space is still shared without the antagonism being addressed. Working with some of those involved in the planning of Khumbulani Pride, a Pride situated in different Cape Town townships in order to bring awareness to violence against lgbtiq people and black lesbians especially, highlighted for me a vision of Pride that was meant to ‘move’ over time from being an event for lgbtiq people themselves, who felt that they exist in isolation, outward to their communities. Pride could then happen in and for communities so that lgbtiq people could ‘be exposed’ or ‘visible in our communities’. This visibility (or ‘familiarity’ in the way Gray (2009) might imagine it) is important not only in designated metropolitan areas where metronormative iterations of queer visibility are considered acceptable or even, to some extent, desirable, such as mainstream Pride events, but in the places where families and neighbours also live:

It’s important we have Khumbulani Pride because Cape Town Pride is not inclusive in terms of involving the communities because everything is happening in town. What about our communities? People’s families, you know? We need to be exposed or to be visible in our communities, you know, not only in town because now they will see like this is a white thing, not for everybody, but for gay people, you know. Because they are saying that this is a western thing. It’s not African. It’s because everything is happening in town. Why not do things in the community where there are people and people they can just learn something – different things, from lgbti people. [Xolani]

Within the racialised architecture of apartheid that resulted in ‘town’ being dominated by white people, the association of Pride and lgbtiq people more generally with ‘town’ conveys the message to ‘people’s families’ that Pride events are ‘a white thing, not for everybody, but for gay people’. The conflation of ‘gay’ and ‘white’ plays into the already intractable narrative that ‘this is a Western thing. It’s not African.’ Xolani is clear that the source of these messages is the location of such events ‘in town.’ If communities are engaged from within,

people ‘can just learn something – different things – from lgbti people’ and will more likely also learn that lgbtiq people are already their community members, families and friends.

Similarly, organisations not being embedded within communities creates barriers to accessing them. Nathi, founder of an organisation in South Africa, spoke about the need to build a new organisation from the experience of being located in an organisation inaccessible to rural people far from the city, black people who weren’t represented there and the tendency of the work to happen in English:

And, you know, I felt like, yeah, this is something that, you know, the province that I come from needs, it needs the organization like this. You know, it was so difficult for people to connect and identify with [the organisation I was working with] by that time. First of all, it was impossible for them to get to the organization itself physically. It was also difficult . . . to relate to the organization because, sometimes most of the work that I was carrying out was done in English, and the issue of language was a barrier. And again, there was an issue of, you know, I wouldn’t say it’s a power dynamic, but I would say it’s more a racial issue. The face of the organization by that time it was led by mostly white - you know, people who were in power within the organization were mostly white and I was almost the only person who was within the organization and Black, and I thought, maybe let me form something that will make people relate more. [Nathi]

One possibility for addressing issues that make organisations ‘difficult for people to connect and identify with’ is to form new organisations that are specific to the needs of lgbtiq people *and* that emerge from the needs of the context in which their potential constituents are located. Not only should queer work be embedded in local communities to make a difference in those communities, some participants identified ways that queer work is already situated in other ‘progressive’ work. For Jeanne, queer work that happens in rural American spaces, particularly in the American South, is often embedded in other work, rather than in formalised LGBT rights organisations:

And I would say that in some ways probably the majority of queer work that is being done in the south is being done by people who are not in queer organizations. Now people might debate that. But we have so many folks and progressive organizations who do queer work in the reproductive justice and domestic violence, you know, across the board. I think you particularly find . . . rural queers . . . doing the work from wherever they stand. [Jeanne]

Situating queer perspectives in a range of ‘progressive organisations’ allows for the cultivation of coalitional possibilities. In their discussion of coalitional work between immigration and LGBT rights organisations, Chavez (2013) discusses how fraught coalition work is, especially when there are issues that impact communities differently and the advocacy priorities for different groups attempting to forge coalitions may conflict with one another. Such coalitions, though, foster an indispensable resilience in the face of conservative political interests that have multiple targets for their oppression. In moving to a southern state that had a reputation for being more progressive than the state from which Victor moved, Victor described, in an interview, both the necessity of coalitional work in more politically conservative spaces and the way that coalitional work felt ‘much tighter’ and ‘more connected’ than a space where each organisation works on its own set of issues:

When I came to [the city where I live now] the biggest change for me was that oh no this group does that, and this group does that. In Alabama you called up Equality Alabama or the LGBT groups from the different colleges. Oh yeah, we were working on women discrimination, and trans inclusion and like a host of things because that’s what you did. Like if you went in and got the entrance into the president’s office or whatever, you went in with a full spectrum approach because you didn’t know when it was going to happen again. Because of that I felt like the communities that I came from in Alabama were much tighter, like I felt more connected. [Victor]

Organisations that form around common concerns within peripheralized contexts can be critical in building what Jeanne described as a ‘political home’. HIV/AIDS work, expansion of health care, access to employment and other resources in addition to a range of other issues for people in ‘out-of-the-way places’ are important not only for queer people but for all of the people who live there. These may be the points of intervention that matter most for people living in ‘out-of-the-way places’, but they are not the type of advocacy work that will result in a place registering as ‘on the map’ of LGBT rights. In a keynote address at a conference on southern queer resilience, hosted by queer youth on a college campus in the American South, called ‘Bold not Broken’, the keynote speaker spoke about the work achieved by coalitions in one southern state ‘with North in the name’ that changed the political landscape of what was possible both locally and nationally:

I want to talk about the other elephant in the room, who in the hell does she think she is coming in to Louisiana? She is from North Cackalacky. What in the hell do they know about Louisiana? That is accurate, no southern state is the same, can I get an Amen? [22]

In an address that wove together shared southern realities with an acknowledgement of contextual specificities, this speaker told the story of their own role in a campaign to confront an anti-same-sex marriage amendment (Amendment 1) in their state legislature. This campaign was one of many designed to attempt to defeat the constitutional ban on same-sex marriage. The campaigns did not succeed in defeating the amendment and more devastating political losses followed that one in this ‘southern state with North in the name’, but the keynote speaker chronicles the way that the issue of the same-sex marriage ban became embedded in coalitional work around progressive issues that was already happening in the state:

When the LGBT movement in North Carolina called Reverend Barber, he came. He was busy, there is a lot of poverty in our state, there is a lot of racial injustice in our state. The NAACP have a lot of fish to fry in North Carolina. They are a lot of busy people - he came, he stood up against the amendment, his church said . . . ‘this is not what we asked for’ and Reverend Barber came again and again and again. As did many African American pastors, so any myth that existed out in California - the 2 biggest counties that voted for the amendment were whitey white white, like crayon okay? We killed that, we destroyed it. If I’m proud of anything in North Carolina, we said . . . ‘Black people and LGBT people do not hate each other myth makers, they do not.’ [Meredith]

The speaker showed a map of how the political landscape of the state shifted as a result of coalitional organising relationships and one-on-one conversations with the people who live there. Maps detailing the result of the votes contained several narratives that confronted mainstream media and political stories often used to divide marginalised groups. While a narrative persisted in the talk that the ‘real divide’ was ‘rural vs. urban’, the speaker also showed that there was a positive correlation between counties where the grassroots campaign and the coalition of progressive local organisations invested their energy. Cynthia confirms this correlation when commenting on the way that black voters are often portrayed

in media representations and homophobic propaganda dealing with issues of LGBT rights in the United States:

What was amazing is that every single predominantly black electoral district in the state of North Carolina voted against it. That was the win! Huge! Huge! And because the media wanted to - this basic black vs. gay . . . they couldn't do it because the numbers weren't there. [Cynthia]

Because Reverend Barber, a prominent leader within the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) who had built a robust coalition around progressive issues in their state decided to support 'marriage equality' by confronting Amendment 1, the NAACP at the national level also changed its position on 'marriage equality', resulting in one of the most predominant national racial justice organisations adopting 'marriage equality' as part of their policy platform. More than one participant suggested that this change in the NAACP position gave President Obama the political space to change his own position on 'marriage equality', which he did very soon after the vote that resulted in the anti-same-sex marriage amendment becoming part of the constitution in this state.

The better funded campaign against Amendment 1, however, run by an 'outsider' from the North was identified universally by organisers in this state as a disaster that did damage (beyond the adoption of the ban) by using language that the organisers indicated would not resonate in the state they worked in every day. In several spaces I found myself in in this state, the aftermath of this campaign held a lot of trauma and fostered distrust between organisations, after it was so badly handled. Two organisers in one of the first gatherings I attended during the course of my research, spoke to the dynamics of community trauma that were a result of what the organiser refers to as 'scorched earth syndrome':

Human Rights Campaign funnelled money into 'the state', developed this whole . . . coalition to protect [the state's] families or something. I forget the name now, and I was with [a regional organisation], so they got all these partner organizations that that funnel monies or the funders channel the funds into the campaign – not the community, but the campaign. So that when the campaign is over, you know -

The money is gone, too. The people are gone, too.

The money is gone, too. And they've gone to the next state. I understand that, but what that leaves is what's called the scorched earth syndrome, you know? So, not only – one of the challenges they're having . . . now is we don't wanna participate in another campaign because we know the day after the vote, y'all and your money is leaving our community. Y'all don't care about us. You want our votes, and we're sick of being used to accomplish your agendas. You know? That really is the attitude among a lot of the people. I'm directly connected with . . . [someone who] is working that county and her challenge now is these people don't wanna move because they've got that scorched earth syndrome going on with them. So, definitely there is that perception. Rural organizing is not just about getting people to the polls as much as it is about building relationship, building family. [Damien]

Even with the failure of the best funded and most mainstream campaign, at least one rural organiser felt that the fight against a conservative political element that was 'meant to destroy us' resulted not only in increased resilience but in connections that challenged the isolation that often characterises descriptions of queer rural life:

I actually have a different perspective. Pre-Amendment 1 fight, I understood the distance and the disconnect of rural communities, but during [the] fight, something happened. We connected. You know? And we started getting a sense of a hope that we did not have before that said, I may not be able to get to [this other small town] . . . I may not be able to get to [another small town], but I know they're there. You know what I'm saying? Before I didn't know they were there. One of the groups that I think about . . . I mean, organized on the campus of a fundamentalist Baptist college. But they organized around Amendment 1. When I found out they were there, I was like: what? I grew up in [that town]! This close to my people. You know? And never knew. Well, here we are post-Amendment 1 and [that town] just celebrated its first Pride this year. June 2014. Ok, it was a big dinner, but it was Pride. [Kathy]

Another participant chimes in by saying, 'and it made the news,' a statement with which the speaker agrees before continuing.

According to many of the participants drawn upon in this section, it was southern organising that impacted national perspectives, position and policy in relation to same-sex marriage. Two things happened at once in this scenario. One state – the last of two remaining states in the southern region not to have a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage – adopted a regressive constitutional ban. At the same time, politics at the national level changed as a result of the coalitional organising efforts on the ground in that state. A failure – interpreted without a doubt as 'backward' movement in the already 'backward'

South – at one level, shifted dynamics at the national level in a way that would be interpreted as ‘progressive’ movement forward in a nation that, as Johnson (2013) suggests, often likes to tell its story as a steady march of ‘progress’ toward egalitarianism and inclusion. In this way, the South pays a discursive cost for its contribution to the political shift of the entire nation.

‘Patient with a crisis’: Destructive urgencies and persistent commitments

One of the ways in which metronormative practices are most apparent is the urgency that is characteristic of and wrapped up in an approach described by Massad (2002) as ‘missionary’. One participant spoke both to how urgency operates in ‘functionalising’ colonising relationships between researchers and activists in one place who ‘arrive’ in another place ‘with a great sense of urgency because culturally that’s how they are supposed to legitimize their functionality.’ Looking out from the metropole in the direction of ‘out-of-the-way’ places, ‘the more urgent you appear, the more functional you are.’ Looking back to the metropole, one participant tells another story:

In fact, that interpretation here is the opposite. It just means that you’ve never been patient with a crisis that we’ve been dealing with for beyond our life, before our birth. So, I think there is sometimes those clashes, I mean sometimes I just delete request because this is not going to work. Purely from the point of view that there is still this notion that people want to come and do something. So, they want to come and report on or they want to come and do something about something. And I just think, don’t you have problems in your own country? . . . But I think the idea of like trying to understand the space here and to respect that space has been very difficult for organizations here because sometimes we have to push back and push back very hard to ask people to back off. [Garth]

Urgency in the ‘interpretation here’ belies an inability or unwillingness to recognise and commit to confronting historical injustices that have staying power. When Haraway (2016) writes about ‘staying with the trouble’, they are imagining it as something that will sustain cross-species survival in devastated futures. In queer activist work at the geographical periphery, being ‘patient with a crisis that we’ve been dealing with for beyond our life, before

our birth', is something that communicates not only an awareness that 'crises' are not new, but also a recognition that because violence is ongoing, work against violence requires sustained commitment. This is the kind of sustained commitment that cannot afford a fizzle following the initial urgency.

The view from the periphery foregrounds the persistence (or in Stoler's (2016) terms, 'durability') of crises. This sense of urgency also has implications for how issues affecting lgbtiq people are represented, and because of the spatial politics of sexuality, stories about violence against lgbtiq people also tell a story about the communities in which lgbtiq people live, if those places are outside of the metropole:

Because in most cases the person you're reporting about is deceased. So, you have to kind of find ways around that narrative that speaks to, I guess the dignity of that person. What are those kind of issues, versus a media story that says someone's head was cut off and their genitals were - you know? So, to really extract a sensationalism and to really . . . focus on the assertion that this person lived a life that was out. Lived a life that was not a secretive life at all and to connect that to like family, community and context in a sense. [Garth]

Dehumanising narratives driven by a tone of urgency, create not only a spectacle of a person's death, refusing the person their 'dignity', such narratives also create a spectacle out of the person's 'family, community and context.' Though hate crimes target individuals, the effects of a hate crime are not isolated to the individuals who experience them. The impact of violence encompasses the individual *and* the relationships within which that individual is embedded. Work on hate crimes at the level of policy may not reflect those relationships and a law does not provide the support required to sustain families and communities through the trauma of a hate crime and the process of following it in the courts that is often required in order to pursue some measure of justice:

These crimes don't only impact on the person that they happen to. They impact on the family, they impact on the LGBT community in that area, and the community at large. It's long work, it's tiring work, its emotionally draining work, it's expensive work. Although hate crimes, there are funders out there that fund hate crimes, they're predominately funding the high-level stuff . . . It's not easy to go through the justice system, it's a lengthy process. It's a process that can be extremely intimidating and it's one where you are having, if you've survived it and not been murdered, you are

facing your perpetrator and in our courts your perpetrator is just right on top of you.
[Janet]

If only 'high-level stuff' gets supported with funding, the 'lengthy process' of supporting a survivor, family and community through extensive interactions with the courts is neglected and can become untenable for those who may already have less access to resources and who may be traumatized by violence or loss. If advocacy remains at the level of policy, the beneficiary of whom is imagined as the individual subject of universal rights, it may not 'filter down to the police officer behind the desk and the state prosecutor in the court that this is something to be taken seriously.' In fact, when advocacy around policy is prioritised over every other kind of organising possibility, access to that law and policy, in addition to access to a range of other things, such as services that anyone may need, but that may require additional consideration for queer and trans people, is neglected. This true in South Africa, as suggested above, and in the US South, as detailed below:

So that's a very – that's a way you can kind of track things structurally. If you don't live in a town – if you don't have money, right? And you don't live in a town where there's – you don't live in a city where there's a clear, well-established gay lawyer who all the families go to for adoptions and you couldn't even afford to hire them if you did live near them, but when you live in a small town where there's no lawyer who has a clear practice area around that, but the lawyers who would be very happy to do that, don't have access to education about how to do it, it compounds itself very quickly. So that's one of the things that we've seen and that we're trying to respond to in as many ways we can. [Stacey]

'Responding' to Stacey means working on questions of access. Access can mean many things. It could mean access to 'a town', access to money, access to a 'well-established gay lawyer', but it could also mean 'access to education' for people who want to provide a service inclusive of queer and trans people without the 'education about how to do it'. In a public presentation, the keynote speaker from the 'Bold not Broken' conference cited above suggested that strategies for organising in hostile political climates is something important that Americans outside of the South could learn from what southern organising has been doing for generations.

We are going to need a blueprint for rural organizing. Okay, where do we do that best? Here we are, we are going to need a blue print for organising in faith communities. Where are we at? (Answer: The South.) So, I'd argue that no one from New York City or Los Angeles needs to parachute in and help us. We do not need to be saved. They need to be here taking notes. Can I get an Amen? Here is what I want to say, you are bold, you are not broken. We are the blueprint, okay? . . . I could be wrong, but it seems to me in the South and nationally, we are the blueprint. Iowa is gonna to need to know how to dodge a bottle and talk to some people of faith in rural communities. Montana is going to need to know. California is going to need to know. There are rural places in New York, right? . . . and the reality is we are going to have to teach people right now. We are at a pivotal time where marriage is going to send people one way or the other. [22]

The speaker had been talking about the kind of work that had not been done before the legislative shift around same-sex marriage occurred, and that was the work of talking to people about the meaning of family and diverse expressions of gender and sexuality in order to change the communities in which lgbtiq people live. Relying too heavily on court decisions means that there is a lot of what participants often referred to as 'cultural work' left to do after those court decisions. For this speaker, the American South is the place that other regions and metropolitan areas should look to moving forward. This is because the American South is where conversations with neighbours, experience with a legacy of Civil Rights struggles that meant putting bodies on the line ('stepping in front of bottles', in their example) and familiarity with deep religiosity instead of a reliance on the secularism that often dominates demands for universal 'rights' have characterised what it means to struggle toward myriad kinds of freedoms. The South is a region of the United States that knows how to 'be patient with a crisis' because its terrain has been riven with crisis in a way that shaped the history of the entire country.

Getting there: 'You can't get [there] by Delta Airlines, you know?'

The geography of 'out-of-the-way places' can be a source of challenges even for organisations based in the same region or state. It can also be a challenge in peri-urban environments that are just outside of major metropolitan areas, but where public

transportation can be unreliable or unsafe for lgbtiq people trying to do organising work. Working with an organisation based in a township outside of Cape Town, we attended many evening meetings. Without access to the car I was driving, we would not have attended those meetings. However, according to participants, evening meetings persist as a norm in the sector. This suggests that the risk that black lesbians face using public transport (and the general inaccessibility of other kinds of private transport) in the evenings and after dark does not always register in the scheduling considerations of many 'town'-based organisations.

Other activists spoke to issues of accessibility that arise when meetings are held in the evenings in town. For Liza, the logistical challenge of being able to get to town safely and reliably affected the dynamics of those involved in planning committees for events, such as Cape Town Pride, which were theoretically meant to represent and incorporate all lgbtiq people in Cape Town:

We always tried to have a staff member of [our organisation] going there, but I mean it's really also hectic because the meetings are always in the city. [Liza]

Narratives about the accessibility of Pride were often connected to the unreliability of transportation to and from the event. The question of transportation and its link to the accessibility of events and meetings where decisions were taken for an entire sector or an entire movement community could not be untangled from the demographic makeup of those making influential decisions and those who registered as constituents:

So, we also got talking to other organisations and the issue of accessibility came up. How accessible is pride to people in the Cape Flats, for example? And people coming from sub-economic areas. It's still predominantly white. [Kian]

For some organisations in rural areas in South Africa, questions about safety and accessibility were about a specific site of transportation. The elaboration of the taxi rank as a site of violence for queer, trans, and gender non-conforming people by some participants located in an advocacy organisation in the predominantly rural South African province of the Eastern Cape, helps to contextualise concerns about the relationship between transportation

and accessibility outlined by participants located in Cape Town in the excerpts above. The decision of this organisation in the Eastern Cape to focus an intervention on taxi ranks is rooted in the violence of masculinity that structures relationships between transportation and access:

One problematic space that we really have in [our province] is the taxi rank. The taxi rank has always been predominantly about men, masculinity, and heterosexuality. In my life living in [this province] . . . Up to this year of my life I've never once heard of a gay man who is driving a taxi. I've seen women, 2 women on this very, this popular taxi route here. I've seen 2 women and I would be very interested to hear how they engage. I would be very interested, but the people who suffer violence at the taxi ranks are sex workers: those are women issues. The lesbians who are gender non-conforming: those are women issues, the transwomen. So, in a sense we are all at risk for violence. [Asa]

If the taxi is simultaneously one of the most common modes of transportation and a site of violent gender policing, the mobility of a range of different women and gender non-conforming people is seriously curtailed when they must rely on it. If the space also allows for a public policing where onlookers sometimes participate in the violence, rather than diffuse it, it becomes a site of terror for those who rely on it for transportation, which means that their access to a range of things is limited by alienation from transportation or violence for insisting on moving freely in public space as others (men) do. In an interview, Brenda speaks to the shape that this violence can take:

Because last year we did receive the case where the trans woman was on the way to the clinic to access the ARV treatment. She was verbally and physically attacked by the taxi driver and she couldn't go to the clinic because of that.

Then the taxi driver clapped her and then everyone, like the other taxi driver, they were like shouting. Hey, like, you are not a woman you are a man, you need to man up and stop wearing high heels and all that. [Brenda]

Violence and the threat of violence has the potential to disrupt access to services and other resources, as in this example of an HIV positive trans woman being attacked while trying to access ARV treatment. And yet, in the rural province where the participants quoted above live and work, there are constant demands for education, information and other resources from a range of interested parties seeking the organisation's expertise. Brenda spoke to this

when they described the challenge of *getting to* places in order to conduct workshops and trainings or to do interviews for local radio stations in isiXhosa:

Also, I have – like, for instance, I get so many invitations like today if I get . . . invitations. Most of the time I just get the invitation from the rural areas and also to the community radio while I’m travelling to the rural areas. [Brenda]

In a sense, then, resources in the form of organisations, need to be mobile when they are rooted in rural areas. There may be significant space between where the resource is located and those who are sending ‘so many invitations’. If you want to be a resource that responds to ‘so many invitations’, you need to be able to travel. For organisations based in the American South, geographical challenges largely prevalent in conversations around work in rural areas often result in decisions about how to allocate resources that can either result in a sense of ‘out-of-the-way places’ being even further out of the way or in an effort to facilitate engaging contexts where transport and accessibility are significant challenges. Jeanne speaks to some of the possibilities that one regional organisation based in the American South was trying to imagine for engaging with rural communities.

Well, we've put an emphasis in the last couple of years for developing a program . . . to reach more deeply into rural communities and we have a lot of obstacles around people’s transportation and you know, how do you manage that, what is it that makes us a significant size of a group that makes it worth all the resources that go to travel, and put them together to be there and that kind of thing. So, we are trying to do some through technology and some through having organising schools in rural communities, you know, developing along that way and seeing that people who get sent on their way to taking on issues . . . support them afterwards. [Jeanne]

For rural residents themselves, geography can present a challenge to accessing political ‘movements’ they might wish to be a part of, but at the same time, geography can also be a ‘[point] of entry’ for people to be able to cultivate a political language from which they may otherwise be alienated by their location in ‘out-of-the-way places.’ Metronormative expectations around language in relation to queer politics may not be familiar in ‘out-of-the-way places’. Sometimes this is because other issues shared with a broader community may

have more immediacy. In this way, it is not only that ‘those are the things . . . affecting’ lgbtiq people as inhabitants of their communities, but also that connection to the contextual issues facing queer Appalachians, southerners or township-dwellers *as* Appalachians, southerners or township-dwellers provide an entry point for developing a vocabulary to connect to queer politics, as well.

One example of a political entry point is a regionally focused organisation created by and for the young people of that region, which is often ‘the first place we’ve ever found where like all of the parts of ourselves can be present in the same space, because a lot of times in queer spaces, they are not rural, they are not Appalachian, at least.’ ‘Out-of-the-way places’ can be places where queerness is not celebrated, but metronormative versions of queerness as definitive can make geographically peripheralized queer people feel equally out of place. This feeling of being out of place is true both in their own homes and in metropolitan spaces where the logic of universal rights says that they should feel most at home.

As Gray (2009) observes, expectations of metronormative concepts, such as visibility, place demands on queer populations in ‘out-of-the-way places’ that require negotiation, in addition to homophobias or other challenges in their own contexts. Peripheralised geographies raise questions around access to queer ‘political, like movement . . . spaces’ that ‘can be really intimidating for people who haven’t had access to that kind of space before.’ Heather’s involvement in the organisation we were discussing has taught them that ‘young people from this region . . . are never going to be able to feel comfortable in that, unless they have been exposed to it over and over. Most young people from Appalachia never get a chance to be exposed to that.’ Heather explains how this works within an organisation that is not explicitly focused on lgbtiq issues, but that has a significant membership of lgbtiq youth within the group:

It is an easier place for people to get started in that within their region with people who are also talking about like the specifics of this place, and the language of this place, and the history of exploitation, and extraction of this place culturally, natural resource-wise, young-people-living-wise, right, like all types of extraction that have happened. Like what our ideas are for like an economic transition for this region. We

obviously needed to go to a different, like there needs to be a different future. Like coal is not going to last, fracking is a nightmare. So, if all of the young people with ideas and energy leave - like we get what we have got, which is like ghost towns, prescription drug abuse like crazy, a lot of despair, a lot of hopelessness, like all the things that are here. [Heather]

This organisation has its origins in young people who felt discounted in their own region and came together to address the organic concerns they were facing in their contexts. The organisation is not exclusively or explicitly queer-focused, but out of the shared politics articulated by Heather above, also emerged a commitment to queer politics, cultivated by the group's many queer members. Organisations that do not emerge as part of a specific community with concerns that are deeply rooted in that community's context often face challenges in how to allocate the resources to which they do have access. These decisions can be made on the basis of individuals within an organisation (Thoreson, 2011) but also reflect the values that organisations and funding bodies attach to particular kinds of work and how it is imagined that that kind of work can (or cannot) be done in specific contexts.

The following two participants spoke about their organisations' approaches to working in 'out-of-the-way places'. Both participants are interested in the question of resources and aware that the choices around the priorities they assign to those resources allows them to do some work while it may hinder work in other areas. There is a difference in how they value 'rural' or 'small-town' or 'out-of-the-way places' in their decisions around how resources are allocated. There is also a difference in where they themselves are located. The first speaker is situated in the regional office of a national organisation, while the second speaker is situated in a regional organisation focused on the South. Jerome explains why they do not usually spend the resources to be visible at small-town prides:

. . . it's really hard because of the scope – the geographic scope of my work – to stay plugged into rural areas especially because the resources it takes to do work there. For example, Georgia actually has about, God I think they are up to like 18 prides. I mean a lot of small towns have prides these days, but for me to spend staff time and resources, you know hotels, gas, food and then the actual like schlepping stuff and speaking at a Pride – at a bunch of smaller prides when those same folks are probably going to come to Atlanta pride. It's just not the best use of our resources and money. [Jerome]

While Jerome does not feel that the visibility of their organisation at 18 small-town prides is worth 'staff time and resources', they don't consider those from small towns who won't come to the Pride in the capital city of the state where they are based and those who live in rural areas beyond the state where they are based but are also represented by this national organisation. For Stacey, the question of how to use resources is answered by looking for places where other organisations are not already engaged in a lot of work or where services are not being provided by the presence of other organisations:

So we're working on a scale where we can connect with people and that works – we don't do much - we learned very quickly that doing work in metro areas just wasn't a fit for us for a range of reasons, mostly because there were so many services there already and so many organizations, but that doing – connecting with community members and small teams of folks who were ready to go, you know, along the Gulf Coast in Mississippi or in Upstate South Carolina was actually a very sweet spot of a fit, so we've found a particular approach to doing regional work and that's evolved, kind of repeatedly going to some of the same communities again and again. So, you know, we go back to Mississippi again and again and again and it really deepens our work there. The flip side of that is that that's resources that we're not bringing into work in new communities. [Stacey]

Jerome and Stacey speak to the value of doing work in rural areas for larger-scale organisations in very different ways. While Jerome doesn't see value in being present 'at a bunch of smaller prides' because the people there will probably also attend the metropolitan Pride in the state's capital, Stacey recognises that 'there are so many services' in metropolitan areas that the resources spent there might be a duplication of the work of 'so many organisations' also based in metropolitan areas. Jerome frames the national organisation as a resource that exists as a point of contact, while Stacey prioritises supporting smaller organisations in order to 'deepen' their organisation's work in 'out-of-the-way places.' This is not a relationship premised on establishing their own projects in geographically peripheralized areas. Instead, Stacey envisions providing resources to support work that is already happening, but that is likely underfunded and in need of resources. This is a critical role for regional and national organisations to play.

Being there: ‘Where I live and where I want to be’

While participants located in regional or national organisations discuss their decision-making processes about whether and how resources should be used in ‘out-of-the-way places’, those located in ‘out-of-the-way places’ discuss resources in terms of their scarcity. There is no shortage of ways to use resources that are rarely readily available in peripheralized geographies. Heather identifies the challenge of being located in an ‘out-of-the-way place’ where ‘there is never a resource’ without the kind of context-specific support that Stacey (above) is attempting to build. When national and regional organisations are primarily ‘based in cities’, ‘there is never a training that’s specific to . . . how to do this work here, whether it’s about supporting queer, whether it’s being like a white anti-racist ally’:

So after I started [my organisation] I went to Creating Change when I was in Houston, and I mean it was like nothing was applicable to here, you know what I mean? Like - I went to trainings on how to support queer youth in the public schools. All of that stuff - like even the trainings that we have around like queer things, like how to work with queer youth or whatever are so focused on urban settings. Like in rural settings in public schools, youth aren’t out a lot of times, right? So, how do you support queer youth when they don’t feel safe coming out? . . . Some of that has come since founding [my organisation] but I think just that a lot of different spaces feel kind of frustrating, that this doesn’t relate to where I live, and where I want to be. [Heather]

Though Heather knows that ‘there are people who are doing it . . . people who’ve been doing it’, attending events hosted by national and regional organisations, hoping for resources that they never find, leaves Heather with the question: ‘How the hell do you do it in rural conservative Appalachia?’ This question, of how to work in ‘out-of-the-way places’ without the types of resources available in metropolitan centres is one that organisations based both in and outside of ‘out-of-the-way places’ grappled with with varying results.

Often, people who work as activists in ‘out-of-the-way places’ themselves have multiple considerations to negotiate in terms of resources because there can be so few, but their decisions rarely have to do with how to allocate the resources that they have and if a group is of a ‘significant’ enough size to make it ‘worth all the resources’, as these decisions are

sometimes discussed by representatives of regional and national organisations. One of the first groups I visited was in a rural area of North Carolina. When I asked to connect with them, they invited me for a queer BBQ³. Nowhere near the 30 members of the group that sometimes join them for these BBQs was there, but I was greeted at the home that served as the centre of this group by people who were clearly ‘family’ to one another.

The house itself served as accommodation for queer youth who did not have housing, even though it was shared already by a family. We talked late into the evening of things that were and were not related to my research. A few members of the group talked about the way that their expansion of kinship consisting of queer and trans people who were ‘chosen’ family confronts the sense of isolation that sometimes characterises rural queer life. The only discussion of resources was their general scarcity. There was never a sense that resources that became available would not be used because the group was too small or the question was of subsistence and not organising. The vision described by the person who seemed to be very much at the centre of this network of queer kinship was of grant funding that would provide housing to homeless queer and trans youth and a community centre for queer and trans people who don’t have other spaces to socialise:

My wife and I have 5 children and all of our older kids have – I don’t know – antennae, if you will, and watch for and look for other gay kids or kids with gay parents so that they can kind of acclimate here in the rural South. Especially - it’s been my experience that I felt like I was the only gay person around and we hear that story over and over again with the other youth and young adults that come into our group and into our circle of friends, so they’re always scouting and looking and listening to stories and they’re very much allies to the lgbt community. So, we started just opening our homes to folks that wanted to kind of be part of, you know, a bigger community to know that they’re not the only gay kid or gay man or gay woman in this rural space and that’s where we started and we’ve just gone from there. Our circle probably includes - what - 30 that identify as lgbt and at least 30 more that are allies thereof. [Kathy]

³ A BBQ is a social event organised around food. Barbecued meats are often served at BBQ gatherings. This grassroots organisation often came together over BBQs for their meetings, which they called ‘queer BBQ’ when they invited me. A definition of BBQ/barbecue can be found at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/barbecue>

Many organisers located in 'out-of-the-way places' described sustaining queer communities or beginning their own organisations with their own funding when they had it, driven by their conviction that organising could not be neglected in their communities, even at the expense of various strains on their own personal relationships and at significant financial cost to themselves personally, when they had the resources:

You see . . . when we started the organisation . . . it never came to our mind that we have to have money for the organisation to survive. The only one thing that was on our mind was to organise ourselves and to show . . . our visibility in our communities. That was the first thing and the second thing was also to say – killing of lesbians is not ok. And then, all of that will end . . . being ourselves, being part of participating effectively in our society as – openly as gay people. And, also, to - I mean to be just ourselves. That was the main thing. So, for us, when you look at that, it didn't need funding. You see. It just need ourselves to do that. And then again, I think, as we do our work and then we are funded. Oh, ok, sometimes we have to go to . . . a court in [another area that would require transport]. And again, it didn't bother us because we know people, they see what we are doing. So, you just write a letter saying that or you make a call, for example, [to individuals who support us] say hey, guys we are going to court tomorrow and we don't have transport money to go to court, so we need to go to court. And then they just do that. And then we come back. And then we don't need anyone to give us funding money to go there. And if we say when we go we'll be there for the whole day and, also, we'll need food . . . we approach someone else, and say we are also going to need food. And then they give us money for food. And that's all. The following day, nobody is going to harass us while we are busy doing that. [Kayla]

Kayla describes the work that is necessary in their community as being self-evident. It should not have required funding to 'organise themselves' by '[being] themselves'. Even then, just organising themselves 'to say' that 'the killing of lesbians is not ok' did require some material support in order to get them where they needed to go and in order to sustain them even minimally (with food) while they were there. Even without salaries or admin costs or other kinds of institutionalised organisational costs, 'getting there' required assistance from somewhere. Kayla also recognises, though, that seeking formal funding places constraints on the organisation that would 'require them to respond to a funder' instead of doing the work that they 'have to do.' Remaining independent of funders would allow them to say that 'if we say this week we are going to do this, nobody is going to change that.'

Kayla's organisation found a way to sustain themselves by cultivating and relying on an

economy of 'friendships' with people who could 'see what we were doing' and would offer the kind of support that resulted in 'nobody . . . harass[ing] us while we are busy doing that.'

When participants at larger organisations not embedded in local communities did note 'successes' in their work, it was often because they had taken context seriously in a way that allowed them to engage with a range of actors within the spaces where they were working rather than seeming to 'come in' and 'go out, with no follow up.' For example, one participant spoke about a community-based intervention in an area where there had been a hate crime. The strategies that Andile spoke about employing were strategies that relied on knowing how power operates in the community, operating in a way that allowed relationships with that power structure to facilitate possibilities of activist engagement (through familiarity) and then engaging community members in a way that emphasised their roles *as* community members in order to have a conversation that resulted in incorporating a marginalised member of the community into the fabric of the community:

[The area was previously rural, but now it's becoming a township . . . but they still have their chiefs and they still do things traditionally. So, we decided since there was a lesbian-identifying lady . . . where she was victimised and I think her ex-partner was killed because she was a lesbian and raped and killed. So, my director . . . gave us a task: what can we do [there] for us to change the mindset of the guys there? So, we told her, let's have a soccer tournament since it was 2010, so soccer was very vibrant. So, we said we're gonna have our soccer tournament with the opening game . . . So, yes, we got a group of guys, they brought in their kids. We said, this should be a group of guys, the soccer players, but it should be their kids coming to play, so they could teach their kids about LGBTI. We got a few drag performers, to come to the township, but for us to do that, we first had to engage with the chiefs. So, we came in that way and we workshopped the chiefs. We got them into a tavern, like a bar, which is in the township . . . sat them down, bought them beers, sat them down and we talked about these things, and things changed. Things changed, and mostly we managed . . . and she lives very happy in the same township and so, it's things like that where we changed the people who have the power over people first and talking their language . . . we have to talk to people in their language and in their level. So, yeah, that's the challenge we've been having especially at [funders]. [Funders] think that mostly in our developed country, everybody knows English. Yes, the people in the room might all know English but they might not want to be engaged with you in English because firstly, you come in as a gay man. Secondly, you're coming in with something which they think it's foreign, and then you're going to be talking it in English. [Andile]

Not only is the language of funders laden with foreign-ness, it is also difficult to imagine a line in a funding organisation in New York City being approved as ‘beer for chiefs’. However, Andile is clear in this example about what facilitated the ‘success’ of this event and allowed a woman who had been ‘victimised’ to continue to ‘live very happy in the same township’ where the ‘mindset of the guys there’ had ‘changed.’ The ‘foreign-ness’ of the language of LGBT(I) rights can be a foreign one in an ‘out-of-the-way place’ where people have not had access to its use before, as Heather identified, but it can also cause miscommunications when its meanings are not established before conversations about those rights are facilitated:

And so, our language is important, the language of LGBTI is an imported language. If you go into communities and you talk about lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender and intersex people, often they have absolutely no idea what you're talking about but they know they don't want it. And so, my experience recently in Malawi with a group of religious leaders was, you know we talked for an hour about LGBTI people, how we should respect them, the Bible, all of it. All of it. And one of religious leaders stood up and said you know what . . . one day when we encounter these LGBTI people we will treat them well. So, I then realized that I was talking to them about LGBTI and they were envisaging something really foreign. So, I had to go down to the activists who - none of them were out. So, we had to call a pause to the session, take the activists to a very safe space and say, I know you have discomfort with it, but what in the local languages are the words to describe lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender, okay.

So, most of them I can't pronounce, but it doesn't matter - we'll write them down. I take the flip chart back into the room and I say, I really apologize, I got it all wrong, I just assumed that we all understood the same thing. But the people that I'm talking about aren't aliens from another world. They're actually right here. They're in your community. I'm sure they're in your community. They're part of your congregation. And often we refer to them as - and I just go through this whole list. And you could see the lights coming on because - oh, that is what you are talking about. Why didn't you say that to begin with? I said, because these words are so negative. They're so loaded, and the religious leaders agreed. It's true. These are very negative words. There are very few of them that are neutral in our language, and so, and so then the connection was made. [David]

In David's example, the foreign-ness of the language of LGBTI rights compounds the foreign-ness of lgbtiq people. Though sexual and gender non-conformity pre-exists colonialism, the foreign-ness of the ‘the language of LGBTI is an imported language’, which undermines the relationship of familiarity that may otherwise exist with lgbtiq family members, neighbours and friends. Participants speaking of this argue that the damage of this

label of foreign-ness cannot be underestimated in contexts where the primary objection to sexual and gender non-conformity is in fact its perceived ‘foreign-ness.’

When David insists on bringing the negative and contested terminology for sexual and gender non-conformity into the space, the conversation shifts from one that is vague and full of tolerance that may as well have been about ‘aliens from another world’ on the part of the religious leaders to a conversation that directly addresses ‘negative’ and ‘loaded’ terminology in the religious leaders’ own language. The familiarity with this terminology allows the conversation to move more meaningfully into a terrain where ‘they’re actually right here’; ‘they’re in your community’; and ‘they’re a part of your congregation.’ Instead of having a conversation exclusively in English (perhaps with limited efficacy), engaging local and contextually specific terminology for sexual and gender non-conformity moved the workshop into a meaningful engagement that went beyond the vague and ‘foreign’ character of the conversation that was introduced by the ‘imported language’ of LGBTI rights.

Andile, too, spoke to concerns about the efficacy of trainings that aren’t conducted in the ‘vernacular’ of their context. Discussing a training they were involved in designing, Andile raises the following question about the assumption of English as a universal language for LGBT(I) rights, funders, organisations and constituents:

It’s basically designed for the middle-class person that understands a few things and who is going to school, but me - I had to bring it down, I had to unpack it . . . Also, I - as an activist, when we’re doing a curriculum for [this training] because I always had to question them. There is no vernacular in all of this . . . We really have to start thinking about how we use things. I guess in that way I think I was a pain when it came to doing [the training we were designing] and making my input . . . But I guess its issues that we don’t talk about and with [the training], we have people from different countries.

I’m not saying other countries have been submissive to English, but we find my Zimbabwean counterparts are fine with just using English. So, they said no, we are happy with using English. Vernacular would give a problem, but with me, it’s different. In the context of the Eastern Cape, there are proud people, all the people – the Xhosa people, the Zulu people are very proud, and should you come with English, you are no more gonna be talked about, whatever you are going to be saying is not going to be taken into heart. They are not even going to think about what you are saying. It’s finished. [Andile]

Andile presents a complex set of dynamics wherein people ‘are not even going to think about what you are saying’ partly because of the foreign-ness attached to the subject *and* the language and partly because you cannot ‘be taken into heart’ if your ‘being there’ means speaking a funder’s foreign language, giving a workshop and then moving on. Andile does take into account the accessibility of English for people in rural areas in many different African countries, though they continued with an example where they were giving a workshop and an elderly woman in a rural location corrected their spelling of a complicated English word they weren’t even sure the audience would know. An issue that goes beyond whether or not audiences *can* speak English in these settings, where presumably conversations about desire, intimacy, sexuality and other internal complexities are under discussion, is whether they *want* to speak about these things in English.

What Andile speaks to here is a much more nuanced relationship between place, familiarity, autonomy and relationships between queer and foreign that cannot be reduced to the hegemonic narrative about the intolerance of a location ‘off the map’ of LGBT(I) rights. Part of ‘being there’ is recognising the colonising contours of which funders’ hegemonic English is a part and taking that seriously in designing materials and engaging with communities, if you are interested in those communities ‘thinking about what you are saying’.

Conclusion

The politics of home, ‘being patient with a crisis’, the challenge of getting there and the fidelity in being there all say something about the complexity of ‘out-of-the-way places’ as ‘home’ for lgbtiq people. Not only is it not always possible to predict which places will be conducive to living queerly and which places will prove inhospitable to queer life, Gray (2009) has demonstrated that there are factors beyond the inhabitants of a space that shape how queer life can be lived and expressed in peripheralized geographies. Gray (2009) notes

that one of the few differences between rural and urban locations is the infrastructure that exists to support queer life. This is important because the presence or absence of infrastructure to support queer existence correlates closely with other historical and contemporary extractive and colonial processes of resource distribution.

The most resources are available for sustaining queer existence where the most resources are available otherwise. Metropolitan centres are the places where the most resources exist for queer people (in the form of community centres, cultural centres, bars, clubs, shopping centres, advocacy organisations and health care resources, for example). Metropolitan centres are where wealth and infrastructure are also concentrated (Gray, 2009). Metropolitan centres are also where the rubrics for what 'counts' as LGBT(I) rights work are generated. Funding is allocated from these centres according to what the norms established there say warrants funding. Power functions in complex ways to shape queer existence in 'out-of-the-way places'. Not only are there relationships to local homophobias, local scarcities of resources and local elites with the power to shape policy and access to a range of different things, queer bodies in 'out-of-the-way places' also must contend with the demands that metronormative versions of 'queer' place upon them in their homes far from the city centre.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Analytic Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter will begin with a recapitulation of the analysis I developed in the preceding three chapters, especially in relation to questions raised within Chapter two as part of my literature review. Read together, the preceding three analytical chapters make several claims, based on complex and diverse material gathered in different contexts, about the ways that ‘universal’ notions of queer subjects, imagined through a metronormative lens of rights, are limited in what they can say about queer existence in diverse spaces. Spatial politics intersect with deep fissures around race, class and gender to compound the exclusions and erasures already faced by multiply marginalised queer subjects. Because hegemonic discourses of LGBT(I) rights imagine the subjects of those rights as individuals whose needs are imagined through a ‘shared gayness’ (Ekine, 2013: 85), these discourses obscure the very real ways that queer subjects are differently situated.

This concluding chapter is also a space where I consider the limitations of my study. I acknowledge that there are important differences between the spaces considered together here that may be obscured or minimised when they are analysed together. That acknowledgment is a call for further work that takes seriously local specificities in relation to global economic structures and political narratives. Other areas for reflection in this conclusion are the uncertainties that I have encountered and embraced as a part of the research process. These uncertainties come together around whiteness (my own) and the frustration (what I refer to as ‘rage’ later in this chapter) that was part of what fuelled my interest in this project. I explore some limitations of whiteness in the section called ‘On whiteness, positionality and what cannot be known’. I explore the multiple and sometimes confusing political uses to which discourse is put, especially in relation to feelings of ‘rage’ and exclusion that shape relationships to space in ‘out-of-the-way places’ in a section called ‘On discourse and rage.’

Finally, this conclusion is a place to look closely at the glimpses of transformation offered by those who are living and working queerly in ‘out-of-the-way places’. I offer some few of those glimpses in a very abbreviated way in a section called ‘Gestures toward possibilities: Working ‘off the map’ before concluding the dissertation with a final concluding section that explores the meaning of home for queer and trans folks in ‘out-of-the-way places’ in relation to histories of exploitation and extraction.

Recapitulations

Chapter four considered ways in which rights have been framed as ideal goals for advocacy efforts. Based on what has then been characterised as a rubric or measure for LGBT(I) rights (Massad, 2002; Lorway, 2015), spatial politics designate some spaces as ‘on’ or ‘off’ of a map that is shaped by the achievement of legal accomplishments such as same-sex marriage, non-discrimination and other policy formations. The material I analysed here suggests that these spatial politics shape what it is possible to do in places written off the map because they become characterised as inhospitable to queer life. In Chapter four, I traced the outlines of that characterisation in order to demonstrate how it positions the space(s) within which lgbtqi activists in the ‘two souths’ represented here do their work. There is ample theoretical engagement with the question of how ‘out-of-the-way places’ are marginalised through discourses that position them as inhospitable to queer life (Massad, 2002; Halberstam, 2005; Gray, 2009; Herring, 2010; Johnson, 2013).

The material in this study confirms that hegemonic discourses travel through expectations expressed in public discourse in a way that shapes the terrain on which work that values queer and trans lives can unfold. Though policy goals have been framed as ideal achievements for spaces in which it is possible to live queerly, there is a gap between living queer life without the fear or threat of violence and the goals of policy. When law and policy are positioned and pursued as the ideal accomplishments of LGBT(I) rights advocacy, the cessation of violence against queer bodies is not guaranteed. In fact, it often persists,

providing a clear view of the inadequacy of policy and law based on a 'rights' model to transform the daily conditions in which queer people live (Lorway, 2015).

Chapter five considers rights a form of metronormativity, and examines the erasures within queer communities as a production of a single 'type' of activism generated in the metropole. In my field work, this single 'type' of activism often took the form of advocacy in relation to same-sex marriage. The chapter considers access to marriage a metronorm in order to tease out, through participants' reflections, the dynamics established by such a norm. The more interesting dynamics, for this dissertation, are the ones in 'out-of-the-way places' where marriage (still the metronorm with which one must engage) is put to work for goals that do not necessarily have marriage as a legal achievement as their most highly prioritised result. While the dominance of whiteness and cisnormativity in LGBT(I) rights work is well-documented (Vaid, 1995; Chasin, 2000; Bérubé, 2010; Spade, 2011), many participants spoke to the persistent forms those erasures take. Therefore, I examine these erasures as a product of the dominant shape taken by the metronormative framework of LGBT(I) rights. The second half of Chapter five examines the shape that these exclusions and erasures take in the 'two souths' represented here and how multiply marginalised subjects and organisations respond.

Chapter six deepens the analysis of Chapters four and five by exploring what it means to live and organise queerly in homes that are 'out-of-the-way places'. As Gray (2009), Reid (2013) and Lorway (2015) note, such living and working is much more deeply textured than a narrative of hospitable and inhospitable, 'cosmopolitan' and 'provincial', 'modern' and 'backward' or any other binary-driven spatial politics will allow. The depth of the challenges faced by those working with an interest in sustaining queer life in 'out-of-the-way places' is not eclipsed by their love of and commitment to spaces that have often been left behind or fetishized by national and transnational LGBT(I) rights organisations. These challenges, commitments and even some of the ways locations can exist as models for transformative work were the subjects of Chapter six. A few final reflections on the spatial politics within

which some of these organisations undertake their work will also be included as gestures toward transformative possibilities later in this chapter.

Limitations

Hegemonic discourses of rights that produce notions of erasure were prevalent across the data, which says something about how spatial politics shape the space in which work that values queer life in ‘out-of-the-way places’ unfolds. However, there are also many things that considering two distinct locations obscures about each of those spaces. Imagining ‘out-of-the-way places’ as disparate geographical spaces that cohere because of a global political and economic behemoth of neoliberalism and ‘rights’ means obscuring the deep differences that emerge from their contextual specificities. This discussion is not meant to be a definitive catalogue of obscured differences, but a gesture toward other deeper differences that are beyond the scope of this discussion, yet might serve as limitations to this study.

One surface example of a difference that gets obscured here is that of the definition of ‘regional’ in each place. Many of the places I inhabited while doing this work in the US South do not correlate directly with the areas I inhabited in South Africa. Many of the organizations I spent time with in South Africa are very different in their regional reach than the organisations I spent time with in the US. In fact, even the very term ‘regional’ signifies a different scope in the two locations. In the US South, an organisation that is ‘regional’ in its scope deals with the region within the US that is characterised as ‘the South’. While there are variations in which states this designation includes, the region itself is contained within the national boundaries of the United States. In South Africa, asking organisations about their ‘regional work’ generally means asking about their engagements with other African countries. Regional work typically happens in the Southern African region or might involve work with organisations in Southern and East African states, but generally this work happens outside of the national boundaries of South Africa.

The material I collected here is heterogenous. What holds these responses together, I argue, is not simply that the speakers were all speaking to their work in relation to some formation of LGBT(I) rights, and that their activist selves were primed throughout the course of our conversations, but also the framework of my own interest in the implications of discourse on LGBT(I) rights for activism in contexts with which I was deeply familiar. This allowed the contours shaped by a global hegemony of 'rights' within the political and economic terrain of neoliberalism to come into a sharp focus, while the differences between these contexts were often in the background. While this is a challenge I grappled with throughout the process of research, the shape the coherence of 'out-of-the-way places' takes requires explication. I argue that in order to map the globalising contours of hegemonic discourses of rights and the economic order of neoliberalism that position both the American South and South Africa outside of the metropole, it is necessary to map the places where they cohere, rather than to work comparatively. However, it is also necessary to be clear that this results in only a partial consideration of their differences. Therefore, I want to both acknowledge the difference of these contexts and mark the way that concentrating on the ways they cohere risks minimising those differences.

On whiteness, positionality and what cannot be known

Another of the challenges I faced during the course of conducting this research was around my own positionality, especially in relation to whiteness, a relation that was fluid as I moved through a wide range of spaces and conversations. As I began my field work in the American South, I was energised by the idea of a politics of 'familiarity' (Gray, 2009). Gray wrote about this in their ethnography of LGBT organizing in Kentucky, and I work with some instances in which 'familiarity' is put to work in the 'two souths' in Chapter six. The use of familiarity with one's context as a way to navigate queer living and activism was a thing that made sense to me from my own experience of rural living. It still makes sense to me, but I

approach it much more cautiously now, after being a part of work that takes place at the intersection of racial justice and queer and trans activism.

Actions in my own state like the campaign for the city council non-discrimination resolution and the campaigns against some proposed anti-LGBT state level policy changes relied on making ourselves known to those around us as lgbtiq people and allies. These campaigns involved talking with neighbours and families, some of whom represent us in our city and state governing bodies, and I felt that in a way, these aligned with what Gray described as a politics of ‘familiarity’ relied upon by lgbtiq people in rural areas. They also align well with what I heard some southern activists talk about as living “authentically”. I have mixed feelings about living authentically because on the one hand, it is a challenge, and on the other hand it is a platitude. It can be easy for those of us who have class privilege, access to respectability in our communities, and who conform to gender norms to ‘live authentically’. So, the meaning of the phrase changes depending upon who is invoking it. What are the implications of the whiteness of people who might use this phrase? What are the implications of my own whiteness in the work I’ve been doing? In some ways, these questions to me seem part of what Rose (1997) describes as un-knowable about research.

Perhaps a politics of familiarity is not intersectional enough. Gray writes about Kentucky as a place where there has been significant disenfranchisement of African American people, but does that in such a way that seems to then presume that rural Kentucky is entirely white. Gray doesn’t spend much time considering how racial difference shapes a politics of familiarity, and this might be because their participants are mostly white. However, they seem to take for granted that participants *would* be mostly white. I wonder how the continued structural segregation of the United States combined with the reality that many rural counties are overwhelmingly white affects the practice of a politics of familiarity. If the counties are so white, the governance of those counties is also likely to be white. If the towns are segregated (the way that the rest of the US is), the shape ‘familiarity’ takes is likely to be racially specific.

What organisations focused on an intersection of racial justice and LGBT ‘rights’ have taught me is that sometimes ‘familiarity’ and ‘respectability’ can become conflated. So, I want to continue to use a politics of familiarity as a lens through which to look at community work (especially in rural areas), but I want to be cognisant of the ways in which the politics of familiarity is shaped by chasms of difference that influence access to the institutions to which campaigns and movements often appeal in order to change law, policy, etc. and how those differences in access to power can then replicate themselves in the work.

I have seen actions during the course of my research that do not rely on a politics of familiarity. Instead, they are actions meant to disrupt the smooth operations of neoliberalism. I was uncomfortable with some of these in the beginning. One moment stands out to me as transformative in the process driven by my desire to *get* comfortable with these kinds of actions. Standing in the kitchen, chopping garlic, I listened to a presentation at the SONG (Southerners on New Ground) Gaycation, where I was part of a ‘prep’ crew for dinner that night. As I worked in the kitchen, I learned about using our bodies for the work in a way that was different from what we had done celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act (1965) in Selma (where we had traced the footsteps of original marchers, but where we were commemorating⁴ an historical event – not making demands or staging disruptions).

While I have worked since I was a child (first in my father’s construction company, then as an organist at various churches, before finally working as a college professor), I have never worked in a commercial kitchen. As I thought about the conversation about organising that I could hear from the kitchen and the Not One More campaign event I had attended with SONG in November of 2014, I thought about the types of work that are available to people who come to the United States to live and work but who do not have documents recognised

⁴ This commemoration was not without irony, since the Supreme Court had dismantled key parts of the Voting Rights Act (1965) during one of their 2013 sessions, as I noted in Chapter five.

by the US government. While there is no depth to such an observation – it is quite superficial – feeling that reality viscerally is another thing.

The work that is available to undocumented immigrants in the US is very hard on one's body the way that standing in that kitchen for hours in the Georgia heat, prepping food and washing dishes was for those of us who volunteered for kitchen shifts. These short volunteer shifts were a reminder of the work that goes into preparing food. No one was there to prepare food for us. We did that work in a way that reminded me what it means for the body to labour in the service of sustaining a community, but also that reminded me of the physical wear and tear on the body in the way that the economy and the state require undocumented immigrants to work. As events go, there was no wedding cake; there was no champagne, as there had been at several of the celebratory gala events hosted by state equality organisations after various marriage decisions that I had attended over the course of collecting materials between 2014 and 2015. There was no pretence that the already 'most' secure queer lives were the ones we were interested in organising for, a reminder that there is no champagne for the most vulnerable, but there might be amazing southern food prepared through queer networks of kinship.

The kinds of action we heard about while doing our work in the kitchen were disruptive actions. Disruptions, such as blocking traffic, disrupting brunch at a restaurant, staging a demonstration during a public hearing, are actions that are meant to put a halt to business as usual when business as usual means that some bodies are valued over other bodies. My relationship with those methods of activism has had to evolve, and I feel that my understanding of what it would take to transform the world we live in to a more just world is stronger for being challenged around these types of interventions, but still I get stuck. I want to know where that original discomfort came from.

At first, I felt that the source of the discomfort was whiteness (and it may be). Because of the near homogenous whiteness of the community in which I live, I wondered if politics of familiarity might work for white LGBT folks, but might not work in struggles for racial

justice. But then I had to ask myself – work to do what? Surely the transformative needs of lgbtiq folks that move beyond marriage and non-discrimination policies are also less-than-palatable to those in the city halls and capitol hills and the parliaments of the world. Then I wondered if my comfort with a politics of familiarity had to do with my gender-conforming presentation and identity. Neither of these are motivated by respectability – but even if these expressions of identity are not informed by a desire for respectability, they certainly advance a kind of respectability *in my context*.

Or, maybe what a politics of familiarity does is allow rural queer people to *live* in our communities. Maybe ‘familiarity’ has less to do with activism changing policy or doing the work of liberation. Maybe, if there is less violence against queer people in rural areas, the politics of familiarity is why. Or, as Dorothy Allison (1995), Eli Clare (1999) and Brandon Teena’s story (Halberstam, 2005) might suggest, the politics of familiarity determine the *shape* that violence against us in these areas take. We are not left for dead by hate-crime-ing strangers, we are violated intimately and left to live within the (sometimes suffocatingly) close spaces of our communities by those who are closest to us: our families, our friends, our lovers.

In South Africa, it was possible for me to see a politics of familiarity play out that did not rely on whiteness to work. This is partly because mobilisation within communities meant that black lgbtiq community members were often putting familiarity to work in their own communities, rather than appealing to a white power structure. At the same time, I did not find the reticence in South Africa around disruptive forms of activism that I sometimes encountered in rural areas in the US. I would guess that this is because of the rich history in South Africa of public demonstrations around a range of issues. Such disruptions are, by the very nature of their challenges pre-1994 to apartheid and thereafter to the deep and resistant legacies of apartheid, disruptions of whiteness as racialised access to power.

Lopez (2005) notes that the interlock between colonialism and historical practices of ‘whiteness’ has sometimes led to under-exploration of ‘whiteness’ in post-colonial contexts.

A contemporary South African context has, however, catapulted examinations of ‘whiteness’ to the fore (Steyn, 2001). So, although, I even participated in at least one of these disruptive actions – a disruption of the Cape Town Pride march, I cannot be in South Africa, without being cognisant of and uncomfortable with my own whiteness. As noted by Steyn and Foster (2008), the negotiation of and whiteness in the country’s context is a persistent preoccupation of national media, political debate and myriad activisms.

This sense of my own whiteness is heightened for me because I live so much of my life in an area that is dominated by whiteness to the extent (95% according to US Census Data) that it is often easy to forget my own whiteness at home. In South Africa, whiteness locked me into a specific relationship to the space. As a white American, I was always already caught up in a narrative that preceded my arrival in South Africa – a narrative about tourists, a narrative about researchers, a narrative about researchers as tourists – that meant I had to earn any trust that I might eventually get. South Africa is a space that is wary of researchers in a way I did not encounter in the US because the country is saturated with researchers – looking for participants, gathering data and drawing conclusions (Bourke et al., 2009). I encountered many other researchers through my research, through my volunteer work and in other spaces I travelled. Sometimes I encountered researchers at events that I was attending as a researcher.

These researchers (and me, too) are part of a politics, an economy and a terrain that has been shaped by what it means to be a site ‘mined’ for data. My whiteness was a constant reminder of that to me (and maybe to others, as well). When whiteness in America provides one with endless permission for individuality (attributed to its simultaneous hypervisibility and invisibility in American culture by Redding, 2010), meaning one is rarely judged in advance or seen as representative of a particular group unless they announce their membership in such a group, this is a disconcerting experience. That discomfort around being a researcher, being white and being in South Africa (when I am there) is not resolved for me because it requires me to think about what it means to be a white American

researcher in South Africa. That discomfort demands of me a fidelity to the space that endless permission for individuality might distort. These dynamics mean that relationships I formed in South Africa needed to have enough depth to withstand the tensions around historical and contemporary problems with research, critiqued so energetically by Bourke et al. (2009).

Our relationships with one another are messy wherever we live. The fault lines around who constitutes 'community' are under continual renegotiation. There certainly are patterns of relationship building/movement formation/'knowing one another' that are specific to urban or rural settings, but is the assumption of a politics of familiarity and living authentically as a solution to homophobia too simplistic? I think for me, the allure of the politics of familiarity was the idea that being connected to people in a community is what gets things done. But who are the people on city council and in state government? And who are the people who know them? Are there aspects of class, race, and gender normativity that get erased in a suggestion that a politics of familiarity 'gets things done' in rural spaces (or elsewhere)?

On discourse and rage

Discourse is a double-edged sword. As Thomas (1993: 20) argues, 'ideas possess a dual-edged capacity to both control and liberate.' This project has its origins in a place of rage. However, during the course of my research, I learned something very specific about how discourse operates while considering my own rage in relation to rage I heard expressed from very different, but sometimes similarly (geographically) located, sources. In the spring and summer of 2015, enormous public controversy erupted in the United States over the meaning of the Confederate flag. This contestation over the flag simmers beneath the surface of public political discourse in the United States, 'as familiar as grits and sweet tea' (Henderson, 2015), in the South.

There had been a mass shooting at a historically Black church in Charleston, South Carolina. A young white man who had become radicalised as a white supremacist sat with the church community during their Bible study and then opened fire on the group of nine who were there, killing them all. He was then brought Burger King to eat before he was taken to jail (Dunn et al., 2015). In the chilling photos of the shooter that circulated widely after the arrest, the Confederate flag figured as prominently as an accomplice would (Robles, 2015). The flag is a clear symbol of white supremacy, and yet, it was flying on the grounds of many southern institutions at the time of this debate. It is claimed as a symbol of regional 'heritage' by some southerners. Debates erupted around the display of the flag, especially on public grounds. Some state houses removed the flag from their buildings (Nelson, 2015). Barbara Kingsolver, one of the clearest voices in Southern fiction writing, demanded that it was (past) time to find another expression for what it means to be Southern (Kingsolver, 2015).

In the debate about the flag that erupted after this incident, I was forced to re-think, or at the very least, grow uncomfortable with, my rage. I had been angry that entire regions of the United States were discounted as terrifying or impossible as locations for queer populations to exist and thrive. I had been angry that conversations about the queer and the rural already took place within the purviews of this assumption of hostility as an organising frame. I had been angry that resources and infrastructure were withheld from us and our organising needs, causing the narrative about the impossibility of queer rural life to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. I had been angry that the story of queer migration is a complicated one but had been collapsed into a story about how impossible queer life is in rural America, meaning that if you are queer, 'it gets better' when you move to a city. I had been angry as I observed the coercive use of something described as LGBT rights within our foreign policy discourses directed at other countries, primarily ones on the African continent. I had been angry because our own history around how we treat queer people in America was used as a gold standard, as it was exported as part of a foreign policy agenda around tolerance and liberalism that also shores up American imperialism. I had been angry that symbolic and (even) legal rights were prioritized above the redistribution of wealth or other gestures that,

according to Dean Spade (2011), would improve the 'life chances' for the most vulnerable of queer populations among us.

I had been thinking of the metronormative 'North' (NYC always makes a good repository for such frustrations, partly because of its cultural and financial dominance, partly because of its metropolitan status) and national LGBT rights organizations, such as the Human Rights Campaign, as colonising forces. I still think this, of course, but there was a moment when people who were aligned in very different ways from me, politically, were saying the things that I'd been saying: framing the 'North' as colonising, telling Northerners to stop telling them what to do, telling 'elitist' Northerners that they didn't understand the southern context. These voices were angry, full of rage – rage that sounded very similar to mine. I am opposed to flying the Confederate flag. However, I realised that in framing the metronormative 'North' as colonising and in Confederate enthusiasts framing the 'North' as colonising, there is a line as thin as a razor's edge between the political purpose for which such discourses are put to work. We were saying the same things, but we did not mean the same things.

Working as a researcher from the global North in the global South also means occupying an uncomfortable discursive space. Though pursuing a question that meant following spatial resonances across borders is a compelling one for me, awareness of the colonial legacies that a trajectory from North to South echoes means that uncertainty accompanied me throughout the journey of field work. There is by now a rich repertoire of analyses which illuminate and critique such trajectories (Mohanty, 1995; Mohanty, 2003; Swarr and Nagar, 2010; Okech, 2013). My desire is to *write against* such legacies, through the reframing of 'the Southern' which has energised this research. The desire to write against colonial legacies is always tempered for me by the question of whether I should even be in South Africa as a researcher at all. The rage I wrote about above was the source of my desire to understand how 'out-of-the-way places' are discursively and materially 'southerened', and yet, when I arrived in South Africa, I arrived in a southern space as a northern body.

I reconcile this question by remembering that part of what keeps spaces outside of the metropole subordinate to metronormative logics is their treatment as 'isolated' subjects of study, places to be 'mined' for examples (Sinfield, 2000). This treatment obscures the disciplining role of the metronormative gaze. I also remember that when I originally travelled to South Africa, I travelled there to learn. As I explained in my Masters dissertation, I had lived in a US dominated by the imperialist rhetoric of George W. Bush for many of my formative years, and my desire to travel to South Africa was the result of a desire to 'see' the world from outside of the locus of modern imperialism that is the United States. This is a deep political commitment that cannot be captured in 'research' as a description of what I have been doing enrolled at a South African university for the past several years and what I do as a visitor in that country. However, the depth of that political commitment does not exempt me from the narrative of 'entitlement and obligation to intervene' (Heron, 2007: 37) in which research launched from the global North is wrapped up.

It is important to note here that aligning myself with the 'colonising North' discourse also risks implicating myself with all of the problematic elements of a southern isolationism that is rooted in place, but is antithetical to the anti-racist commitments of an intersectional ethic through, for example, the most visible sign, claiming the Confederate flag as 'heritage'. Similarly, framing the global North as a contemporary colonising force through the vehicle of 'gay rights' risks aligning one's self with homophobic discursive positions of African leaders who don't want to be dictated to by outsiders, but who also claim that same-sex sexuality is 'unAfrican'. There is a level of complexity in this attention to context that is just missing from the hegemonic discourses about either place, and especially the hegemonic discourse of what constitutes 'good for queer life' or 'bad for queer life' along narrow lines of policy, rhetoric, and geography. The reality of colonising forces from the North does not erase the necessity of transformative work in places that are home for those of us in the South, but I contend that it does make that work harder to do. It is also in the interest of a colonising North for southern spaces to remain sites of 'trouble'. It is this reality that steadies my thinking and reassures

me that the risk of engaging discourses around the spatial politics of sexuality and rights is a risk worth taking. In fact, for me, taking that risk is the only intellectually honest option.

Gestures toward possibilities: ‘Working off the map’

While there are many examples from the time I spent with organisers in so many different contexts that gesture toward possibilities beyond what hegemonic discourses of rights condition us to imagine, I want to discuss one example from each ‘south’ that, to me, demonstrates how deeply embedded the work of expanding possibilities is in the context of the locations in which it is rooted. In one example, in the US South, the dominance of whiteness in the geographic context and in the structure of hegemonic discourses, is a barrier which activists must negotiate. In the South African context, a language outside of the hegemonic discourses of rights provides an opportunity or resource for doing community work, even as it means that funders are without a mechanism for translation in understanding the work. On the one hand, the work resists colonisation. On the other hand, it remains largely unfunded.

These examples demonstrate the work that it takes to dismantle the ‘shared (white) gayness’ structuring LGBT(I) advocacy work. These are clear examples of ‘staying with the trouble’ (Haraway, 2016) which demonstrate that centring ‘difference’ is possible but requires serious work. ‘Staying with the trouble’ is uncomfortable, messy, necessary and transformative. ‘Staying with the trouble’ may be one of the only ways to confront whiteness and to ward off colonisation of the work. Below is a reflection about two organisations’ work of ‘staying with the trouble’ in two different ways. I observed a grassroots trans-focused organisation in the US South putting in the work that it takes to address issues with intentional and consistent interventions. Similarly, I spent a lot of time with Free Gender and I reflect here on how they use language in their work in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, South

Africa. The gestures I sketch here are based on my own ethnographic observations drawn from time spent with each organisation.

The organisation in the US South began as a few people meeting socially and wanting to create the space for other transgender and gender non-conforming people to do the same. The group very quickly grew into a membership of several hundred people, participating in a hybrid model of online and in-person community. This group considers themselves a family, and they work very hard to create the kind of support that is not always available to transgender people in their families of origin. This is the kind of support that can serve as a lifeline for members in the group. In developing a leadership structure, the founders and members deeply invested in the group's existence grappled over and over again with what it means for an organisation to evolve on its own, in the political context of the rural South.

On the one hand, the capacity of white people (in the South) to wear, display and otherwise affiliate with the Confederate flag is an enormous barrier to inculcating values of racial justice in a space that is not led, facilitated by, and or majority populated by people of colour. On the other hand, the potential for the flag to be an issue marks a visible point of intervention that is not always available in Northern spaces where defensive whiteness can claim that its defensiveness is not racially motivated (Bérubé, 2010). The flag, its attendant politics and the likelihood of some white person showing up with it on an article of clothing manifests itself as a potential point of intervention for white-led organisations who value incorporating racial justice work in their organising and advocacy.

The reality of the leadership of this organisation having a very clear commitment to racial justice at the same time that their members would sometimes show up with Confederate flag accessories speaks to the shape that any group can take, if it is dominated by white members, forms organically and the trouble of whiteness is not engaged meaningfully. The tensions here were enough to collapse the group or cause it to coalesce around the idea that the flag can stay in the space, but that 'personal politics' around the flag and around state violence against people of colour should stay home. Such an idea would have enormous potential to

alienate potential members of colour. 'Shared gayness', or in this case, 'shared trans-ness', is not enough to create an ethic of organising that does not succumb to exclusionary and normative whiteness. Without a consciousness around these issues, the group could become and exist as an exclusively white organisation, without ever intending to be. It takes intentional leadership to struggle a meaningful engagement with racial justice into place when both the structure of the United States and the structure of LGBT(I) rights discourses have been dominated by whiteness. It was a struggle that bewildered this organisation early on in the context of heated debates about police violence, the meaning of the Confederate flag and a desire to be accountable to racial justice, while being a white-led organisation. However, it is a struggle they have embraced and wrestled with through growth, commitment and time. Rather than acquiescing to the defensiveness or obviousness of whiteness described by Bérubé (2010) about groups that 'just happen' to be white, this organisation struggled an ethic of racial justice into their organisation. While racial justice is not at the centre of the group's work, they refused to let lgbtiq 'stay white' through the 'not saying' that Bérubé (2010) says characterises many mainstream, white-dominated LGBT(I) rights advocacy attempts.

While the inertia of whiteness can work against the organic formation of organisations with an intersectional focus, sometimes the structures that organisations commit to in their formation are transformative in and of themselves. When Free Gender operates in Khayelitsha, they operate in isiXhosa. This has several functions, and it has meant several things for me in my work with them. I rarely fully understand what is going on, which is important in constantly foregrounding the 'situated' nature of knowledge and knowledge-production (Haraway, 1991), especially in reminding me of the edge of the limitations of what I can know myself, let alone what my research can claim. More importantly, this allows Free Gender to interact with the communities in which they are located in a way that indigenises queer issues for those communities. The primary objection to same-sex sexuality on the African continent is that it is 'unAfrican.' Scholarly and historical work on persistent histories of same-sex sexuality has not been able to unseat the accusation of 'unAfrican-ness'

launched at same-sex sexuality and sometimes gender non-conformity. I've argued in this dissertation that the result of work that is done 'in town' and takes place in English is that it further entrenches the conflation of whiteness and foreign-ness with same-sex sexuality.

Unapologetic work that happens in an African language, a language that community members experience all facets of their lives thinking, feeling and speaking, fosters familiarity between that experience of language and deep conversations around same-sex sexuality and gender non-conformity. The importance of this cannot be underestimated. Zooming out, this use of isiXhosa to organise in Khayelitsha is a way of 'staying with the trouble' (Haraway, 2016) that resists the colonisation of their work by the metronormative structure of global LGBT(I) advocacy work. In the excerpt below, I chronicle a little of the evolution of my thinking about the issue of language in Free Gender's work before engaging in a discussion of how their use of isiXhosa and their refusal to seek formalised funding resist colonisation of their work.

Going to Khayelitsha on a daily basis has shown me the politics of language more clearly than I could ever understand by asking questions about language. IsiXhosa is the language that Free Gender speaks. It wouldn't make sense to use any other language. So, it's not 'powerful' to use isiXhosa. It's not exceptional to use isiXhosa. There was never any question of operating in English because isiXhosa is the language spoken in Khayelitsha.

When [an organisation located 'in town'] goes into [a township space], the language they use to run a discussion is English. When we go to a meeting in town, the language that's used is English. This is often also done for practical purposes. There is usually (though not always) a mixed group, meaning that English is the *most* common language among them. However, this does not erase the power dynamics in the space. And it also locks in the reality that while everyone speaks English and many speak Afrikaans, few speak isiXhosa and almost no white people speak isiXhosa. The people who have access to the resources speak English and English is spoken in the spaces where resources are decided upon.

The more obvious way that Free Gender resists colonisation of their work is through their rejection of formal relationships with funders. The importance of this has been articulated clearly to me over and over again. If your organisation is supported by a funder, you 'do the work of the funder.' This is a resistance that is difficult to sustain, however, especially in communities where conditions of poverty, lack of access to safe and reliable transportation

and barriers to a range of services, make organising without a salary untenable, which is one of the reasons a shift away from hegemonic whiteness and gender normativity in LGBT(I) advocacy work will require a redistribution of resources and power. However, the link between resources and language is not so easily disrupted. Funding bodies require extensive reporting that must be done in English; work that is funded is often carried out in European languages; and work that is accessible to funders is work that funders can easily understand. Because of the location of funders and the hegemonies of global funding structures, work that is valued (and funded) is very rarely work that happens in indigenous African languages.

Free Gender is actively courted by many funding bodies. They have refused most of those offers of funding. This strategy protects the organisation's autonomy and integrity and positions it well to resist colonisation by funders. At the same time, this is a posture that puts enormous strain on the sustainability of the organisation. Refusing formal relationships with funders means that the work members do for the organisation is in addition to work that they do to ensure their own survival. I have seen the hours and hours of labour that goes into sustaining an organisation and trying to forge a movement for social justice for lgbtiq people in this funder-driven, 'mainstreamed' (Vaid, 1995; Chasin, 2000) world. There is no way that this work should remain unremunerated in 'out-of-the-way places' and yet, Chasin (2000) has demonstrated how dominant strategies relied upon in order to pursue funding and the professionalization of movement spaces have had serious consequences for the direction in which LGBT(I) rights work has been able to develop.

Conclusion

'Out-of-the-way places' (Tsing, 1993) are often characterised as sacrifice zones – 'hinterlands, wastelands, nowheres' (Klein, 2014: 311) containing 'whole subsets of humanity categorized as less than fully human' (Klein, 2014: 310). While 'out-of-the-way places' are rich in resources, for which they are plundered by the metropole, they are often also

materially ‘poor places . . . places where residents lacked political power, usually having to do with some combination of race, language, and class’ (Klein, 2014: 310). These are places where colonisation has mapped contemporary terrains that are traceable historically. These relationships to colonisation *endure* through contemporary forms of political and economic power (Stoler, 2016). In dominant formations of LGBT(I) (and other forms of) rights, ‘out-of-the-way places’ are characterised as sacrifice zones. These are places where no one wants to go (Herring, 2010). What doesn’t show up in characterisations of ‘out-of-the-way places’ as sacrifice zones is the way that these places are *home* to the people who live there.

In order to make that home a habitable one – it is critical to change more than laws and even mindsets. It is critical to change the conditions through which homes have been made into sacrifice zones. In this spirit, this document is a call for redistribution – of resources and power – to grassroots efforts to rebuild the homes that have become sacrifice zones.

Failure to recognise the historical and political relations of power between the metropole and ‘out-of-the-way places’ results in projects that may be descriptively accurate, but that neglect the spatial politics of sexuality beyond what can be explained through a metronormative discursive position. Tucker’s observations, for example, that white gay men, as a group, remain unpoliticised, that coloured⁵ men, as a group, created a kind of visibility for themselves in conjunction with apartheid regulations and through cross-dressing and that the raced and classed position of Black African gay men’s lives mean that they face a set of distinct and compounded issues in multiple city spaces (both in their own communities and in the ‘gay village’) are an accurate enough mapping of the racialized legacies of apartheid they read through participants’ responses in their study. However, the gaze of the text centres whiteness and positions the author and the reader in the centre of the city

⁵ Apartheid-era racial designation for those with a ‘mixed’ racial background. This term is still used in South Africa, both as an identity term and as a demographic term for the purposes of census data, though its use is not un-contested.

looking out, surveying the apartheid-designed landscape and taking its designations for granted.

The structure of Tucker's text reifies assumptions about African responses to same-sex sexuality that could be worked with or understood differently, if marginality was the gaze through which Tucker read queerness in Cape Town. Had Tucker moved from margin to centre, the complexity of queer African lives might have been a starting point for understanding 'queer' in Cape Town and in South Africa. These complexities demand an intersectional analysis that cannot be separated from the way that the apartheid infrastructure of the city shapes queer people's access to housing, transportation, employment, sanitation, water and economic security, all of which shape their proximity to violence, a violence that is held at bay in Green Point by the infrastructure that supports queer life there and the privilege of expendable suburban wealth that can purchase safe transportation and housing at most hours of the day and night.

Instead, Tucker begins their examination at the centre of the city, which is also the centre of whiteness, power and capital in Cape Town. Their view of Black African same-sex sexuality, then, is at the periphery of queer South African experiences. Similarly, by positioning Khayelitsha (for instance) at the periphery of the geographical boundaries of the study, life for queer people there is the worst, not by virtue of the indignities of apartheid-structured life that has never been redressed, but (according to the rubric of places written onto and off of the map) because (always already homophobic) Africans live there. A view from the centre also misses the way that queer existence in Khayelitsha (for example) is embedded in negotiations with family and community. Queer individuals do not exist outside of these relationships in their communities, but negotiate them instead through a 'politics of familiarity' (Gray, 2009).

From the periphery of Khayelitsha, the Green Point suburb, with its gay bars, clubs and restaurants, appears as a closet, whose doors open or close more or less easily depending on one's race and access to capital. This is an idea I was first introduced by Thiyane Duda at

‘Queering Africa III: Queering Cape Town’, a symposium curated by Zethu Matebeni, and it is a way of seeing the part of Cape Town reputed to be most ‘gay friendly’ that turns the metronormative narrative on its head. A closet is not generally a ‘gay friendly’ place to be. Instead, it contains queer desire and restricts its expression to a small, isolated and hidden space. Queer existence in Green Point is not negotiated with broader community or kinship networks, but is in fact, its own area of the city, cordoned off by the limits of its imagined boundaries.

In the anthology, *Boldly Queer*, Fubara-Manuel (2015) provides the reader with one interviewee’s interpretation of the ILGA map that is coded from red to green. ‘Red’ countries are countries where same-sex sexuality is criminalised to the extent that death is a potential punishment. Green are countries where same-sex marriage is a legal possibility. This is the highest ‘positive’ legal recognition on the scale. The interviewee in this case is more interested in what *cannot* be seen by the map’s colour scheme. Their *specific* experience as a queer African immigrant does not align with the assumptions that are more easily categorized through reliance on the law as an indicator of ‘climate’. The map, as a measure of their safety, is unreliable. Similarly, the law, as a rubric for the safety of queer life, is unreliable (Spade, 2011).

Binyavanga Wainaina also speaks about this in the anthology *Boldly Queer* (Mwachiro, 2015). Wainaina sometimes refers to themselves as a ‘public homosexual’ because their coming out was documented so publicly in letters to their late parents, published in *The Guardian* (Wainaina, 2014), *Granta* (Wainaina, 2017), chronicled in a TedTalk (Wainaina, 2015) and documented in interviews elsewhere. When colleagues in Nigeria and Uganda invited Wainaina for speaking engagements and readings at their universities, Wainaina was concerned, but their colleagues insisted. When Wainaina attended the events, however, the venues were full, and audiences were excited to receive them. They realized that there was work that had gone into making the spaces safe and welcoming for them as a guest and that it was the people on the ground who had done that work. Wainaina’s experience as a ‘public

homosexual' with a warm welcome in countries where same-sex sexuality is criminalised, the two years that I've spent with organisers in 'two souths' and the yearning for home experienced by those of us living in and those of us exiled from our lives in 'out-of-the-way places' are evidence that it is possible to struggle the 'welcome' that Wainaina experienced into existence.

It is not possible, however, to do this through metronormative practices and policies that continue to colonise and disenfranchise 'out-of-the-way places', places whose value is measured only with the rubric of legislation, policy and 'rights'. It is not possible to do this, in other words, through the institutions that currently dominate funding and execution of LGBT(I) 'rights' work. It will only be possible through a massive redistribution of resources and power to the underfunded, sometimes-erased, rarely-supported-sustainably work that is happening in 'out-of-the-way places', work that is currently driven by the love, dedication, heart, souls and lives of the people who live there.

Though hegemonic discourses of 'good' and 'bad' places to be queer attempt to structure the world so that some places are 'on' the map of queer habitability and some places are 'off' that same map, 'out-of-the-way places' do not cohere to this dichotomized cartography. Their realities are much more complex. If the story of what places 'are' in relation to lgbtiq existences and possibilities is always told from the metropole, the dynamic process of carving out space for existence and the multiple possibilities for building communities will never even register in the narrative of what is legibly queer. Not only is David Kato's 'they will say we were not here' (Zouhali-Worrall & Wright, 2012) true of lgbtiq people in 'out-of-the-way places', it is true of all of us with radical politics and a radical commitment to our otherwise reviled homes.

'Out-of-the-way places' have been historically robbed of their richness because of the hunger of the metropole for fuel, building materials and things that sparkle (like diamonds, gold, and coal). Queer and trans people have not been exempted from the deprivation that ensues from such colonising plunder (Gray, 2009). It is material, symbolic and discursive

imbalances of power between the metropole and 'out-of-the-way places' that perpetuate a relationship that allows the colonisation of 'out-of-the-way places' through regimes of 'rights'. 'Out-of-the-way places' in this dissertation imagine and work toward a world in which our autonomy, knowledge and lives are more valuable than the coal, oil, gas, lumber, diamonds and gold that have been extracted from beneath our feet and sold back to us at a price we cannot afford.

Works Cited

- Aboul-Ela, H. 2007. *Other South: Faulkner, coloniality, and the Mariategui tradition*. Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Adam, B. 2003. The Defense of Marriage Act and American Exceptionalism: The 'gay marriage' panic in the United States. *Journal of the History of Sexuality*. 12 (2): 259-276.
- Alexander, M. 2010. *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.
- Allison, D. 1995. *Two or three things I know for sure*. New York: Plume.
- Beam, M. 2014. Compassion, community, capital, and crisis: Neoliberalism and the non-profitization of queer social movements. PhD dissertation. University of Minnesota.
- Bell, S. 2016. *Fighting King Coal: The challenges to micromobilization in Central Appalachia*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Bennett, J. & Prereira, C. 2013. *Jacketed women: Qualitative research methodologies on sexualities and gender in Africa*. Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Bennett, J. 2015. 'Solemnis(ing) beginnings': theories of same-sex marriage in the USA and South Africa. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*. 17 (sup1): 47-60.
- Berube, A. 2010. How gay stays white and what kind of white it stays. In *Privilege: A Reader*. M. Kimmel & A. Ferber, eds. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. 272-328. Originally in *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*. 2001. B. Rassmussen, E. Klinenberg, I. Nexica, & M. Wray, Eds. Durham: Duke University Press. 234-265.
- Blessol, G. 2013. LGBTI-Queer struggles like other struggles in Africa. In *Queer African Reader*. S. Ekine & H. Abbas, Eds. Nairobi: Pambazuka. 220-228.
- Bourke, L., Butcher, S., Chisonga, N., Jumani, C., Davies, F. & Thorn, J. 2009. Fieldwork stories: Negotiating positionality, power and purpose. *Feminist Africa*. 13: 95-105.
- Butler, J. 2004. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. 2009. *Frames of war: When is life grievable?* New York: Verso.
- Butler, J. & Spivak, G. 2007. *Who sings the nation-state?* New York: Seagull Books.
- Chasin, A. 2000. *Selling out: The gay & lesbian movement goes to market*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Chavez, K. 2013. *Queer migration politics: Activist rhetoric and coalitional possibilities*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Chomsky, N. 2016. *Who rules the world?* New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Clare, E. 1999. *Exile & pride: Disability, queerness and liberation*. Reprint, Cambridge: South End Press, 2009.
- Currier, A. 2012. *Out in Africa: LGBT organizing in Namibia and South Africa*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- The Daily Show. 2013. *Last Gay Standing* (Video clip). 29 October. Available: <http://www.cc.com/video-clips/oe9257/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-last-gay-standing> [2018, January 23]
- Dearham, K. 2013. NGOs and queer women's activism in Nairobi. In *Queer African Reader*. S. Ekine & H. Abbas, Eds. Nairobi: Pambazuka.
- Dunn, A., Washburn, M. & Gordon, M. 2015. Shelby police chief describes arrest of Charleston shooting suspect. *Charlotte Observer*. 24 June. Available: <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/article24952345.html> [2018, February 2]
- D'Emilio, J. 2010. The marriage fight is setting us back. In *Against equality: Queer critiques of gay marriage*. R. Conrad, Ed. Lewiston, ME: Against Equality Publishing Collective. 37-42.
- Eisenstein, Z. 2004. *Against empire: Feminisms, racisms, and the West*. New York: Zed Books.
- Ekine, S. & Abbas, H, Eds. 2013. *Queer African Reader*. Nairobi: Pambazuka.
- Ekine, S. 2013. Contesting narratives of queer Africa. In *Queer African Reader*. S. Ekine and H. Abbas, Eds. Nairobi: Pambazuka. 78-91.
- Fairclough, N. 1992. *Discourse and social change*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Fairclough, N. 2012. Critical discourse analysis. In *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis*. J. Gee & M. Handford, Eds. New York: Routledge. 9-20.
- Farrow, A., Lang, J. & Frank, J. 2006. *Complicity: How the North promoted, prolonged, and profited from slavery*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Foucault, M. 1972. *The archaeology of knowledge*. Reprint, New York: Vintage, 2010.
- Fubara-Manuel, I. 2015. At home but homeless: Queer African migrants critically reflect on 'home'. In *Boldly queer: African perspectives on same-sex sexuality and gender diversity*.
- T. Sandfort, F. Simenel, K. Mwachiro & V. Reddy, Eds. Nairobi: Hivos. 25-32. Available: https://eastafrica.hivos.org/sites/default/files/1_boldly_queer_cover.pdf [2015, 31 December]
- Gray, M. 2009. *Out in the country: Youth, media, and queer visibility in rural America*. New York: New York University Press.
- Halberstam, J. 2005. *In a queer time and place: Transgender bodies, subcultural lives*. New York: New York University Press.
- Halberstam, J. 2011. *The queer art of failure*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Haraway, D. 1991. *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature*. London: Free Association Books.
- Haraway, D. 2016. *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Henderson, N. 2015. Inside the battle over the Confederate flag. *CNN Politics*. 24 June. Available: <https://www.cnn.com/2015/06/21/politics/south-carolina-confederate-flag-debate/index.html> [2018, January 23]

- Heron, B. 2007. *Desire for development: Whiteness, gender, and the helping imperative*. Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Herring, S. 2010. *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism*. New York: New York University Press.
- Hill Collins, P. 2009. *Another kind of public education: race, schools, the media, and democratic possibilities*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association. 2017. *Sexual Orientation Laws in the World – Overview*. Available: <http://ilga.org/maps-sexual-orientation-laws> [2013, January 27]
- Johnson, C. 2013. *Just queer folks: Gender and sexuality in rural America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Keefe, S., Ed. 2009. *Participatory Development in Appalachia*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press.
- Kingsolver, B. 2015. A view from the south: let the Confederate flag go. *The Guardian*. 3 July. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jul/03/south-flag-confederate-pride-hatred-racists> [2018, February 2]
- Klein, N. 2014. *This changes everything: Capitalism vs the climate*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Klein, N. 2017. *No is not enough: Resisting Trump's shock politics and building the world we need*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- Liptak, A. 2013. Supreme Court Invalidates Key Part of Voting Rights Act. *The New York Times*. 25 June. Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/26/us/supreme-court-ruling.html> [Accessed: 2018, February 6]
- Lopez, A., Ed. 2005. *Postcolonial whiteness: A critical reader on race and empire*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Lorway, R. 2015. *Namibia's Rainbow Project: Gay rights in an African nation*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Madison, S. 2012. *Critical ethnography: Method, ethics, and performance*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Marcus, G. 1995. Ethnography of/in the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 24: 95-117.
- Massad, J. 2002. Re-orienting desire: The gay international and the Arab world. *Public Culture*. 14 (2): 361-385.
- Matebeni, Z. 2012. *Black lesbian sexualities and identity in South Africa: an ethnography of black lesbian urban life*. Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Matebeni, Z, Ed. 2016. *Queer in Africa III: Queering Cape Town*. Cape Town: Heinrich Boll Stiftung.
- Mattingly, D. & Falconer Al Hindi, K. 1995. Should Women Count? A Context for the Debate. *Professional Geographer*. 47 (4): 427-435.
- Mkhize, N., Bennett, J., Reddy, V. & Moletsane, R. 2010. *The country we want to live in: Hate crimes and homophobia in the lives of black lesbian South Africans*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

- Mohanty, C. 2003. *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Mohanty, S. 1995. Epilogue. Colonial legacies, multicultural futures: Relativism, objectivity, and the challenge of otherness. *PMLA*. 110 (1): 108-118.
- Murungi, K. 2013. Small axe at the crossroads: a reflection on African sexualities and human rights – life story. In *Queer African Reader*. S. Ekine and H. Abbas, Eds. Nairobi: Pambazuka. 229-243
- Mutua, M. 2002. *Human rights: A political and cultural critique*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Muthien, B. 2013. Queering borders: an Afrikan activist perspective. In *Queer African Reader*. S. Ekine & H. Abbas, Eds. Nairobi: Pambazuka. 211-219.
- Mwachiro, K. 2015. A lost chapter found: Interview with Binyavanga Wainaina. In *Boldly queer: African perspectives on same-sex sexuality and gender diversity*. T. Sandfort, F. Simenel, K. Mwachiro & V. Reddy, Eds. Nairobi: Hivos. 97-102. Available: https://eastafrica.hivos.org/sites/default/files/1_boldly_queer_cover.pdf [2015, 31 December]
- Nagar, R. 2002. Footloose researchers, traveling theories and the politics of transnational feminist praxis. *Gender Place and Culture*. 9 (2): 179-186.
- Naples, N. 2003. *Feminism and method: Ethnography, discourse analysis, and activist research*, New York: Routledge.
- Ndashe, S. 2013. The single story of ‘African homophobia’ is dangerous for LGBTI activism. In *Queer African Reader*. S. Ekine & H. Abbas, Eds. Nairobi: Pambazuka. 155-164.
- Nelson, L. 2015. Confederate flags are coming down: Here’s the latest by state. *Vox*. 24 June. Available: <https://www.vox.com/2015/6/24/8840207/confederate-flag-ban-history-latest-mississippi-south-carolina> [2018, February 2]
- Obasogie, O. 2014. *Blinded by sight: Seeing race through the eyes of the blind*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Okech, A. 2013. Researching discourses on widow inheritance: Feminist questions about ‘talk’ as methodology. In *Jacketed women: Qualitative research methodologies on sexualities and gender in Africa*. J. Bennett & C Pereira, Eds. Cape Town: UCT Press. 95-114.
- Oswin, N. 2005. Researching ‘gay Cape Town’, finding value-added queerness. *Social & Cultural Geography*. 6 (4): 567-588.
- Oyewumi, O. 1997. *The invention of women: Making an African sense of Western gender discourses*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Phillips, R., Watt, D. & Shuttleton, D., Eds. 2000. *De-centring Sexualities: Politics and representations beyond the metropolis*. New York: Routledge.
- Polikoff, N. 2008. *Beyond (straight and gay) marriage: Valuing all families under the law*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Potter, J. 1996. *Representing reality: Discourse, rhetoric and social construction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Puar, J. 2007. *Terrorist assemblages: Homonationalism in queer times*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Redding, M. 2010. Invisibility/hypervisibility: The paradox of normative whiteness. In *Privilege: A reader*. M. Kimmel & A. Ferber, eds. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. 155-168.
- Reid, G. 2013. *How to be a real gay: Gay identities in small-town South Africa*. Scottsville, South Africa: University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Press.
- Robles, F. 2015. Dylann Roof photos and a manifesto are posted on website. *The New York Times*. 20 June. Available: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/21/us/dylann-storm-roof-photos-website-charleston-church-shooting.html> [2018, February 2]
- Rose, G. 1997. Situating knowledges: positionality, reflexivities and other tactics. *Progress in Human Geography*. 21 (3): 305-320.
- Said, E. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Scott, J. 2013. The Distance between death and marriage: Citizenship, violence and same-sex marriage in South Africa. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 15 (4): 534-552.
- Scott, J. 2014. 'Nowhere does it say that in the Bible': Tensions between legal and symbolic meanings of marriage for lesbian women in South Africa. *Sexuality and Theology* 20 (1): 56-69.
- Scott, J. 2017. Hillbilly horror and the new racism: Rural and racial politics in *Orange is the New Black*. *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 23 (2): 221-238.
- Sinfield, A. 2000. The production of gay and the return of power. In *De-centring sexualities: Politics and representations beyond the metropolis*. Phillips, R., Watt, D. & Shuttleton, D., Eds. New York: Routledge. 21-36.
- Spade, D. 2011. *Normal life: Administrative violence, critical trans politics, and the limits of law*. Brooklyn: South End Press.
- Spurlin, W. 2006. *Imperialism within the margins: Queer representations and the politics of culture in Southern Africa*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Steyn, M. 2001. *Whiteness just isn't what it used to be: White identity in a changing South Africa*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Steyn, M. & Foster, D. 2008. Repertoires for talking white: Resistant whiteness in post-apartheid South Africa. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 31 (1): 25-51.
- Steyn, M. & Van Zyl, M. 2009. *The prize and the price: Shaping sexualities in South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Stoler, L. 2016. *Duress: Imperial durabilities in our times*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Swarr, A. & Nagar, R., Eds. 2010. *Critical transnational feminist praxis*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Thomas, J. 1993. *Doing Critical Ethnography*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Thoreson, R. 2014. *Transnational LGBT activism: Working for sexual rights worldwide*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Tsing, A. 1993. *In the realm of the diamond queen: Marginality in an out-of-the-way place*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Tsing, A. 2015. *The Mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Tucker, A. 2009. *Queer visibilities: Space, identity and interaction in Cape Town*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Underhill-Sem, Y. 2003. 'Tragedies' in out-of-the-way places. Oceanic interpretations of another scale. In *Feminist futures: Re-imagining women, culture and development*. K. Bhavnani, J. Foran & P. Kurian, Eds. New York: Zed Books. 43-54.
- United States Department of Justice. 2017. History of Federal Voting Rights Laws: The Voting Rights Act of 1965. Available: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/history-federal-voting-rights-laws> [Accessed: 2018, February 6]
- US Census Bureau. nd. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000 Census 2000 Summary File 1. Available: <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk> [2018, February 2]
- Vaid, U. 1995. *Virtual equality: The mainstreaming of gay & lesbian liberation*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Wainaina, B. 2006. How to write about Africa. *Granta*. 19 January. Available: <https://granta.com/how-to-write-about-africa/> [2017, August 12]
- Wainaina, B. 2014. I am a homosexual, mum. *The Guardian*. 21 January. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/21/i-am-a-homosexual-mum-binyavanga-wainaina-memoir> [2017, August 12]
- Wainaina, B. 2017. Since everything was suddening into a hurricane. *Granta*. 13 February. Available: <https://granta.com/since-everything-suddening-hurricane/> [2017, August 12]
- Wainaina, B. 2015. Conversations with Baba. [Video file] Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5uAoBu9Epg> [2017, August 12]
- Walker, A. 1973. *In Love & Trouble*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Weston, K. 1995. Get thee to a big city: Sexual imaginary and the great gay migration. *GLQ*. 2 (3): 253-277.
- Wetherell, M. & Potter, J. 1993. *Mapping the language of racism: Discourse and the legitimation of exploitation*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Zouhali-Worrall, M. & Wright, K. 2012. They will say we are not here. *The New York Times Op-Docs*. 26 January. Available: <https://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/100000001307281/they-will-say-we-are-not-here.html> [2018, February 2]

Appendix A: US South

Pseudonym of participant	Date of interview	Location of interview	Organisation type	Organisation focus	Participant position in organisation
Damien and Kathy	13/08/2014	North Carolina	Community-based, grassroots organisation	Rural organisers	Rural organisers
Florence	14/08/2014	North Carolina	State equality organisation	LGBT equality	Director
Jack	14/08/2014	North Carolina	National organisation	LGBT equality	Regional coordinator
Jeanne	07/10/2014	Phone (spoke to me from Tennessee)	Regional organisation (US South)	Intersectional queer liberation	Co-founder
Max	15/12/2014	South Carolina	Grassroots organisation	Transgender advocacy	Co-founder
Cynthia	19/12/2014	Phone (spoke to me from North Carolina)	Regional organisation (US South)	Intersectional queer liberation	Co-founder
Hal	29/12/2014	Phone (Spoke to me from Georgia)	National Organisation with regional focus (US South)	Building power for black gay men	Founder
Victor	23/01/2015	North Carolina	University	Safe spaces for queer youth	Archivist and organiser
Stacey	30/01/2015	Phone (Spoke to me from North Carolina)	Regional organisation (US South)	LGBT equality	Founder
George	30/01/2015	Georgia	State Equality Organisation	LGBT equality	Director
Jerome	13/02/2015	Phone (Spoke to me from Georgia)	National Organisation (Southern US regional offices)	LGBT equality	Outreach
Meredith	14/03/2015	Louisiana	State equality organisation	LGBT equality	Media coordination
Heather	07/03/2015	West Virginia	Story collection and archiving	Documenting rural queer life	Founder
Leslie	13/05/2015	Phone (spoke to me from Washington, D.C.)	Government department	Focus on cultivating relationships with LGBTQ farmers	Program coordinator
Cameron	14/06/2015	Interviewed while driving from Georgia to Virginia	Regional organisation (Appalachian region)	Focus on rural queer youth	Steering committee
Manuel	17/06/2015	Phone (spoke to me from North Carolina)	Regional organisation (US South)	LGBT equality	Outreach

Pseudonym of Participant	Date of Interview	Location of interview	Organisation type	Organisation focus	Participant position in organisation
Frank	24/06/2015	Skype (spoke to me from West Virginia)	Film festival	Queer film festival	Co-founder
Ethel	27/06/2015	North Carolina	Community-based organisation	Rural community building	Co-founder

Appendix B: South Africa

David	09/02/2016	Johannesburg, SA	Global funder (Regional offices)	LGBT equality	Regional Director
Garth	09/02/2016	Johannesburg	National Organisation	Transgender advocacy	Founder
Nathi	10/02/2016	Johannesburg	National organisation	Transgender advocacy	Founder
Asa	29/01/2016	Eastern Cape	National organisation	Transgender advocacy focused on transgender women	Founder
Andile	01/02/2016	Eastern Cape	National organisation	LGBTI Equality	Outreach Coordinator
Brenda	03/02/2016	Eastern Cape	National organisation	Transgender advocacy focused on transgender women	Outreach Coordinator
Liza	28/03/2016	Cape Town	National organisation	Transgender advocacy	Founder
Pete	31/03/2016	Cape Town	National organisation	LGBTI Advocacy	Founder
Janet	16/04/2016	Cape Town	National organisation	LGBTI Advocacy	Outreach
Kayla	16/04/2016	Cape Town	Grassroots organisation	Black lesbian advocacy	Founder
Xolani	16/04/2016	Cape Town	National organisation	LGBTI Advocacy	Outreach
Kian	26/04/2016	Cape Town	National organisation	LGBTI Advocacy with focus on Islam	Founder
Alice	30/05/2016	Cape Town	Funder	Social issues	Program director (LGBTIQ focus)

Appendix C: US South

Event	Date of Event	Location of Event	Organisation	Type of Event	Citation
<i>The Campaign</i>	27/06/2014	Morgantown, West Virginia	Appalachian Queer Film Festival	Film screening	1
Queer BBQ	13/08/2014	Liberty, North Carolina	Rural Organisers	Social gathering	2
Charlotte Pride	17/08/2014	Charlotte, North Carolina	Multiple Organisations	Pride	3
Transgender Information and Empowerment Summit (TIES)	04/10/2014	Richmond, Virginia	Virginia Equality	Transgender focused conference	4
Carolina Conference on Queer Youth	17/10/2014	Charlotte, North Carolina	Multiple Organisations	Conference	5
Appalachian Queer Film Festival	23-26/10/2014	Lewisburg, West Virginia	Appalachian Queer Film Festival	Film festival	6
Bring it Home Conference: Executive Director Update	15/11/2014	Charleston, West Virginia	Fairness WV	Annual conference	7a
Bring it Home Conference: Keynote	15/11/2014	Charleston, West Virginia	Fairness WV	State Equality Organisation	7b
'LGBT people and the new Cold War over human rights'	18/11/2014	Buckhannon, West Virginia	Buzzfeed International LGBT Correspondent	WVWC Honors Athenaeum: Campus talk	8
The Blueprint Dialogue: Celebrating ourselves and building community	19/11/2014	Atlanta, Georgia	The Counter Narrative Project	Panel discussion of black gay men	9
Transgender Day of Remembrance	20/11/2014	Atlanta, Georgia	Georgia Equality	Commemoration of the loss of transgender lives	10
Chant Down the Walls	21/11/2014	Atlanta, Georgia	Southerners on New Ground	Not 1 More campaign action	11
Transgender day of Resilience	21/11/2014	Atlanta, Georgia	Lambda Legal	Celebration of transgender resilience	12
Gala Dinner	22/11/2014	Greensboro, North Carolina	North Carolina Equality	Annual fundraising dinner	13
Gender Benders meeting	14/12/2014	Greenville, South Carolina	Gender Benders	Regular membership meeting	14

Event	Date of event	Location of event	Organisation	Type of Event	Citation
WVGLCC Meeting	16/12/2014	Beckley, West Virginia	WVGLCC	Regular meeting	15
New Thanksmas	03/01/2015	Greenville, South Carolina	Gender Benders	Holiday celebration	16
We are one community gathering	12/01/2015	Hillsboro, West Virginia	Country Queers	Community dinner to express solidarity against racist incident	17
WVGLCC Meeting	13/01/2015	Beckley, West Virginia	WVGLCC	Board meeting	18
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Lobby Activities	19/01/2015	Charleston, West Virginia	Fairness WV	State Equality Organisation	19
Citizen Advocacy Training	24/01/2015	Atlanta, Georgia	Georgia Equality	State Equality Organisation	20
Southerners on New Ground General Meeting	29/01/2015	Atlanta, Georgia	Southerners on New Ground	General meeting	21
Bold not Broken: Queer Resilience in the South	14/03/2015	Baton Rouge, Louisiana	Louisiana LGBTQ organisations	Louisiana Queer Conference	22
City Council Meeting	19/03/2015	Elkins, West Virginia	Fairness Elkins	City Council	23
March from Selma to Montgomery	21/03/2015	Selma, Alabama	Gender Benders	Commemorative march to mark the 50 th anniversary of the march from Selma to Montgomery	24
LGBT in the South Conference	18/04/2015	Asheville, North Carolina	Hosted by the Campaign for Southern Equality	Regional LGBT Equality Organisation	25
Trans Lives Matter	21/05/2015	Birmingham, Alabama	Community organisations	Community workshop	26
Say Her Name	22/05/2015	New Orleans, Louisiana	Breakout! Youth	Play	27
USDA LGBT Summit	26/05/2015	Atlanta, Georgia	United States Department of Agriculture, Local LGBT organisations	Conference	28
Mobile Marriage Town Hall	27/05/2015	Mobile, Alabama	Campaign for Southern Equality	Panel discussion about marriage equality	29

Event	Date of event	Location of event	Organisation	Type of event	Citation
Decision Day Rally	26/06/2015	Asheville, North Carolina	Campaign for Southern Equality	Rally to celebrate marriage equality decision at Supreme Court	30
Southern Fried Queer Pride	27/06/2015	Atlanta, Georgia	Southern Fried Queer Pride	Alternative Pride	31
<i>Pride</i>	27/06/2015	Bakersville, North Carolina	Mitchell County GSA	Film screening	32
Gaycation	11-14/06/2015	Savannah, Georgia	Southerners on New Ground	Annual camp	33
Chant Down the Walls	20/06/2015	Gadsden, Alabama	Southerners on New Ground	Protest against Etowah detention centre	34

Appendix D: South Africa

Event	Date of event	Location of event	Organisation	Type of event	Citation
AIP (Alternative and Inclusive Pride) planning meeting	21/01/2016	Cape Town, South Africa	Alternative and Inclusive Pride members	Planning meeting	35
Global Sexuality Summer School Session	25-27/01/2016	Cape Town	Journalist covering LGBTI rights	Summer school session	36
Free Gender Planning meeting for Pride event	29/01/2016	Khayelitsha	Free Gender	Planning meeting for Pride event	37
Queer City Tour	30/01/2016	Cape Town	Alternative and Inclusive Pride members	Tour	38
Troubling the Civil Union Act Event	02/02/2016	Khayelitsha	Free Gender	Community meeting	39
Strategy Meeting for Troubling the Civil Union Act Campaign	05/02/2016	Cape Town	Free Gender	Strategy meeting	40
AIP (Alternative and Inclusive Pride) final planning meeting	18/02/2016	Cape Town	Alternative and Inclusive Pride members	Planning meeting	41
<i>God Hates Uganda</i>	19/02/2016	Cape Town	Triangle Project	Film screening	42
Media training	20/02/2016	Khayelitsha	Free Gender	Media training	43
AIP: 'What are the most important issues facing LGBTIQ people today?'	22/02/2016	Bellville	Gender Equality Unit (University of the Western Cape)	Panel discussion	44
AIP: 'The churches and same-sex relationships: will they ever come around?'	23/02/2016	Cape Town, South Africa	Alternative and Inclusive Pride	Panel discussion	45

Event	Date of event	Location of event	Organisation	Type of event	Citation
AIP: 'Kinky politics, <i>EXIT Newspaper</i> and a <i>moffie</i> called Simon: Re-reading African queer visibility through representations of Simon Nkoli	25/02/2016	HUMA: University of Cape Town	Alternative and Inclusive Pride	Seminar	46
Trans Collective Meeting	??/??/????	University of Cape Town	Alternative and Inclusive Pride	Workshop	47
Cape Town Pride disruption	27/02/2016	Cape Town	Alternative and Inclusive Pride	Pride disruption	48
Lovedale College HIV Testing	02/03/2016	Eastern Cape	SHE	HIV testing	49
Support Group Meeting	03/03/2016	Mdantsane	SHE	Trans community support group	50
Centring Human Rights: A Queer Discourse	18/03/2016	Stellenbosch	Free Gender	Panel discussion	51
Annual general meeting	30/03/2016	Cape Town	Hate Crimes Working Group	Annual general meeting	52
Mass Same-Sex Wedding	29/04/2016	Knysna	Pink Loerie Mardi Gras and Arts Festival	Pride events	53
<i>Call Me Kuchu</i>	12/05/2016	Elsie's River	Triangle Project	Film screening	54
Khumbulani Pride Launch	14/05/2016	Langa	Free Gender	Open mic: Khumbulani Pride event	55
IDAHOT Dialogue with Political Parties	05/17/2016	Langa	Free Gender	Panel discussion: Khumbulani Pride event	56
Traditional Healers Forum	20/05/2016	Langa	Traditional Healers	Khumbulani Pride event	57
Khumbulani Pride March	21/05/2016	Langa	Free Gender	Pride event	58