

The Relevance of Race for the Study of Sexuality

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If the rise of interest in work that traverses the boundaries of race and sexuality is any indication – an interest noted through publications, conferences, and conversations within interdisciplinary venues, it would seem that the argument that race and sexuality are mutually constitutive is quickly becoming an axiom, passing into the realm of established and self-evident truths. But assumptions of transparency notwithstanding, an axiom has layers that need to be reckoned with. Indeed, we may place the analysis of racialized sexualities under the umbrella of intersectional inquiries – under yet another rubric that many would consign to the grave of the axiomatic. But intersectionality is for many of us an ongoing mode of interrogation, ongoing because the social formations that it interprets constantly assume new types of imbrications. Consequently, intersectional critique requires patient and careful interrogation, the steady accumulation of historical knowledge, and the purposeful reformulation of theoretical structures. In addition, it means that we must engage sexuality as having multiple domains for its production, constituting several objectives in terms of power, enjoying numerous occasions for its incitement, and revealing various periodizations by which to analyze it.¹

Historically, intersectional analyses have been used to critique the ideologies of discreteness that have characterized various social processes and movements. For instance, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw captures this aspect of intersectional work in her article “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color.” In this article, Crenshaw addresses two forms of intersectionality – structural intersectionality and political intersectionality. Structural intersectionality denotes the imbricated nature of structural formations around race, gender, and class. Applying a theorization of structural inequality to domestic violence among women of color, Crenshaw demonstrates how it is impossible to address the physical abuse of women of color while assuming that structural racism, patriarchy, and economic disfranchisement are separate domains. In such a way, “structural inequality” becomes a way of theorizing the material specificity of women of color’s experiences with abuse. As Crenshaw states, “I discuss structural intersectionality, the ways in which the location of women of color at the intersection of race and gender makes our actual experience of domestic violence, rape, and remedial reform qualitatively different from that of white women.”² We can say that structural intersectionality

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retheorizes social reproduction away from homogeneous and monolithic conceptions of material structures. Such conceptions disable critical understandings of material inequalities, understandings that are crucial to apprehending how certain subjects suffer social debilities across multiple areas. Structural intersectionality, therefore, does not seek to offer “woman of color” as a category of identitarian distinction but instead attempts to theorize how forms of disfranchisement achieve themselves through intersections and overlaps.

While Crenshaw uses structural intersectionality to theorize the braided nature of social reproduction, political intersectionality theorizes how liberal and radical formations obscure those processes. As she states, political intersectionality critically engages “how feminist and anti-racist politics have both, paradoxically often helped to marginalize the issue of violence against women of color.”³ (352). Feminist and anti-racist political formations have typically been constituted through discrete ideologies. Observing this fact, Crenshaw writes, “[t]he need to split one’s political energies between two sometimes-opposing groups is a dimension of intersectional disempowerment which men of color and white women seldom confront. Indeed, their specific *raced* and *gendered* experiences although intersectional, often define as well as confine the interests of the group.”⁴ Political intersectionality, hence, identifies those critical formations that would obscure broader intersectional processes as well as how their own formations arise out of those processes. Plainly stated, political intersectionality theorizes what ideological conditions are necessary for the reproduction of structural intersectionality and its intersecting disfranchisements. In this way, structural intersectionality and political intersectionality cohere with what Louis Althusser refers to as “descriptive theory.” For Althusser, descriptive theory is “the irreversible beginning of the theory; but . . . the ‘descriptive’ form in which the theory is presented requires, precisely as an effect of this ‘contradiction’, development of the theory which goes beyond the form of ‘description.’”⁵ Political intersectionality and structural intersectionality thus represent the initial phase of a theoretical effort that moves beyond pure description only after outlining the elements of a social formation.

Women of color theorizations of intersectionality have advanced crucial understandings of sexuality and have critically reassessed the oppositional formations that have deployed it. Several scholars working on intersectional critiques of race have pointed to the ways in which such studies have reformulated received paradigms and frameworks for analyzing sexuality. For instance, in *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces*, Juana María Rodríguez reads such texts as José Esteban Muñoz’s *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* and José Quiroga’s *Tropics of Desire: Interventions from Queer Latin America* as examples of the epistemologically disruptive intentions of “queer Latino Studies.” As she states, “Whether in single-author texts or edited volumes on queer Latino sexuality and identity, traditional disciplinary boundaries became inadequate containers for subjects whose lives and utterances traverse the categories meant to contain them.”⁶ Rodríguez cites the particular configurations of racial, gender, and sexual differences that make up queer Latino sexualities as arrangements that exceed received analytics. Similarly, in *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity*, Sharon Holland reminds us that

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Black lesbian subjects and their women-of-color allies have always haunted feminism's attempt to articulate itself, putting themselves in the position of challenging the racial inclusiveness of feminist theory and practice and at the same time pushing a developing lesbian/gay studies to describe the face of its constituency.⁷

As Holland suggests, black lesbian and women of color intellectuals have never been simple corporeal conglomerations but have always been critical constituencies that have motivated certain epistemic transformations. Eithne Lubhéid also makes this point in her introduction to the volume *Queer Migrations: Sexuality, US Citizenship, and Border Crossing*, writing, "Scholarship by feminists of color and queers of color emphasizes that interconnections among sexuality, race, class, gender, nation and imperialism transform each category, necessitating new modes of theoretical engagement."⁸ Likewise, Siobhan Somerville argues in *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture*, "the importance of understanding the intersectionality of race and gender has opened up space in turn to ask how sexuality might also intersect with multiple categories of identification and difference."⁹ As the intersectional analysis of race transformed conceptions of gender, we should thus ask ourselves what that analysis yields for the study of sexuality.

The Worldliness of New Queer Critiques

In their introduction to "*What's Queer about Queer Studies*," a special issue of *Social Text*, queer scholars David Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz argue for a renewed queer studies that "insists on a broadened consideration of the late-twentieth-century global crises that have configured historical relations among political economies, the geopolitics of war and terror, and national manifestations of sexual, racial and gendered hierarchies."¹⁰ In doing so, the editors of this special issue point to what we might consider a hegemonic struggle within queer studies – that is, the articulation of a queer studies that has "rarely addressed such broad social concerns" and a renewed queer studies made of diverse work that advances theorizations of queer critique as engaged in racial and class analyses of national and international significance. This new work represents a renewed queer studies that observes social formations for the purpose of staking positions. As Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz argue, "In recent years, scholars in the field have produced a significant body of work on theories of race, on problems of transnationalism, on conflicts between global capital and labor, on issues of diaspora and immigration, and on questions of citizenship, national belonging, and necropolitics."¹¹ Because so much of the work that addresses the processes outlined above does so as an interrogation of racial discourses and projects, in this essay, I place this diverse work under the umbrella of the study of racialized sexuality. By taking up questions of social formation, this renewed queer studies intersects with earlier theorizations of cultural studies. For instance, in his article, "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies," Stuart Hall attempts to promote what is for him a necessary feature of cultural studies. He writes,

Not that there's one politics already inscribed in it. But there is something at stake in cultural studies, in a way that I think, and hope is not exactly true of many other very

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important intellectual and critical practices. Here one registers the tension between a refusal to close the field, to police it and, at the same time, a determination to stake out some positions within it and argue for them . . . That is to say, I don't understand a practice which aims to make a difference in the world, which doesn't have some points of difference or distinction which it has to stake out, which really matter.¹²

In many ways, we can say that a similar negotiation characterizes and must continue to define the work on racialized sexualities and the historical contexts that give rise to them. Moreover, the work resists closure in its analysis of various racialized sexual formations. Simultaneously, such work declares its own political stakes through interrogations of the circuits of power out of which those formations arise and against which they struggle. Indeed, the delineation of political stakes is as wide-ranging as the racialized sexualities held under analysis. Here we may count critiques that theorize diaspora's alliances with nationalism, postcoloniality's collusion with neocolonial economic and political investments, liberal democracy's management of queer of color subjects, homonormativity's racial itinerary, and epistemology's production of simultaneous colonial and racial discourses.

The study of race would thus seem to be a way of rebelling against notions of queer life and sociality as homogeneous and therefore untroubled by historical differences and specificities.¹³ In fact, as certain versions of queer studies have eschewed analyses of race, nation, diaspora, empire, and transnationality, those versions have deployed notions of queerness that fail to challenge the notion of homogeneous empty time. In a discussion of how this concept distorts our appreciation of modernity in the post-colonial world, Partha Chatterjee argues,

Empty homogeneous time is the utopian time of capital. It linearly connects past, present, and future, creating the possibility for all of those historicist imaginings of identity, nationhood, progress, and so on that [Benedict] Anderson, along with many others have made familiar to us. But empty homogenous time is not located anywhere in real space – it is utopian. The real space of modern life consists of heterotopia . . . Time here is heterogeneous, unevenly dense.¹⁴

As homogeneous empty time understands universality and homogeneity as the standard of modernization, this notion of time can only encounter difference and heterogeneity as the horizon of the premodern. In relation to homogenous empty time as a mode of interpreting capital, Chatterjee states, "When it encounters an impediment, it thinks it has encountered another time – something out of pre-capital, something that belongs to the pre-modern."¹⁵ The concept of "homogeneous empty time," which originates in the work of Walter Benjamin, has enabled critiques of developmental narratives about post-colonial societies, narratives that help to constitute epistemologies that presume the standardization of Western social formations. While the critique of homogeneous empty time has different motivations and applications for the study of sexuality, it might still be a way of intervening into the racial unconscious of much of queer scholarship.¹⁶

As it relates to queer social formations, homogeneous empty time has led to developmental understandings of queerness that render Western queer identities and practices into the ideal types of modern homosexuality. In *Global Divas: Filipino Gay*

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Men in the Diaspora, Martin Manalansan discusses the ways in which Filipino gay men “are not typical gay men who move from tradition to modernity; rather they rewrite the static motions of tradition as modern or as strategies with which to negotiate American culture. Immigration, therefore, does not always end in an assimilative process but rather in contestation and reformation of identities.”¹⁷

Here, Manalansan implies that Filipino gay men violate notions of immigration that cast it as a linear and developmental process. As queer studies attains to a new worldliness, motivated in large part by intersectional engagements with racial formations, that worldliness is marked by a critique of and departure from historicist discourses of homogeneity, linearity, and progress. Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd argue this about historicism: “Liberalism and Western Marxism, along with other emancipatory discourses of modernity, share a foundation in what Walter Benjamin refers to as ‘historicism,’ that is, the conception of history as the narrative of the development of modern subjects and cultures . . . Both superordinate one particular understanding of what constitutes the ‘political’ over all other forms of opposition or sociality; in consequence, those other forms are relegated to marginality or temporal anteriority.”¹⁸ Intersectional work on sexuality that critically departs from historicism reveals that uneven densities at the levels of class, race, ethnicity, culture, and gender characterize the time and space of modern queer life.

As historicist discourses read non-Western and racially minoritized formations as premodern and engage with them accordingly, we may think of homogeneous empty time as a regulatory discourse as well that helps to constitute the problematic of power/knowledge. We might read Michel Foucault’s theorization of sexuality as his own challenge to what Marxism understood as “the political.” In the interview entitled “Truth and Power,” Foucault addresses Marxism’s suppression of other forms of sociality and thereby engages Marxism’s historicist features. He states,

What rather threw me at the time was the fact that the question I was posing totally failed to interest those to whom I addressed. They regarded it as a problem that was politically unimportant and epistemologically vulgar . . . Medicine and psychiatry didn’t seem to them to be very noble or serious matters, nor to stand on the same level as the great forms of classical rationalism . . . [Post-Stalinist] Stalinism by excluding from Marxist discourse everything that wasn’t a frightened repetition of the already said, would not permit the broaching of uncharted domains.¹⁹

As Foucault’s remarks suggest, the problematic of power/knowledge arises out of a kind of politics and epistemology of dismissal, a politics and epistemology that determines what is intellectually and politically viable for critical inquiry and agency. As Marxism dismissed medicine and psychiatry, so it dismissed what would eventually become the study of power/knowledge. Here Foucault points to the fact that the study of power/knowledge, which also includes the study of sexuality, arose out of the great evasions of Marxism. But we can also say that as queer studies excluded the study of race from its critical endeavor, it – like Marxism – helped to evolve its own system of power/knowledge, one that prevented queer studies from recognizing that the “real space of modern queer life and analysis is heterotopic” and not containable within one geopolitical or disciplinary terrain.

Methodological and Theoretical Revisions

As the study of sexuality as a racial formation necessitates investigations of the dense and heterogeneous formations that make up sexuality, this particular engagement with sexuality retheorizes the problematic of power/knowledge and sexuality's commencement from it. Such analyses have permitted understandings of the multiple configurations of power/knowledge. Indeed, such work has demonstrated how the problematic of power/knowledge organizes sexualized racial projects in various national, local, and global contexts. Most significantly, this work has been a way for scholars to use the study of race's imbrications with sexuality as a way to address the great evasions, silences, and distortions of nationalist formations. In doing so, this work has shown the various ways in which nationalist discourses commit themselves to notions of homogeneous time that obscure the very sexual formations that constitute the communities that forms of nationalism claim.

If work that apprehends sexuality as a racial formation revises the problematic of power/knowledge, then we may say that this work revises that text that spelled out that problematic in relation to sexuality. That text is, of course, Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*. That volume probably more than any other laid the foundation for what we recognize as the study of sexuality *and* the retheorization of power as a productive rather than negative operation. We might think of such work as revising many aspects of Foucault's text, but I'd like to focus specifically on just a few chapters from that work. In doing so, I hope to suggest the ways in which work on the simultaneity of race and sexuality demands that we reconsider the relationship between sexuality and epistemology, sexuality and power – especially as power is manifested in state and economic practices – as well as the historiography of sexuality.

Domain and the Diversification of Instrumentalities

In the chapter entitled “Domain,” Foucault argues, “Sexuality is not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of maneuvers and capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin, for the most varied strategies.”²⁰ If Foucault cites sexuality as one scene within the broad enactments of power, in this spirit, we might think of emergent work on the intersections of race and sexuality as extending and revising Foucault's citation. In this regard, such work reposes the question of sexuality's instrumentality by asking how sexuality becomes instrumental for racial projects and formations. One demonstration of the broad maneuverability of sexuality might be seen in Licia Fiol-Matta's *A Queer Mother for the Nation: The State and Gabriela Mistral*. In this text – ostensibly about Chile's 1945 nobel laureate – Fiol-Matta analyzes how Mistral's sexual and racial identities – that is, her profile as masculine and unmarried white Latin woman – were used in the Chilean state's efforts to secure heteronormative citizenship through an investment in whiteness. As Fiol-Matta writes,

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In a state project that Mistral helped articulate, reproduction meant not only maximizing women's bodies to produce fit laborers and to manage productive, patriarchal, heterosexual families but also establishing and enforcing the parameters of who belonged, racially speaking, in the nation.²¹

Mistral facilitated this alliance between heterosexual reproductivity and racial regulation. In Mistral was the childless woman who forsook reproduction to become mother of the nation, a symbol that could be used in the state's effort to regulate a racially mixed population made up of gringos, indigenous peoples and black Latin Americans. In Fiol-Matta's words, "Mistral 'queered' the nation, to be sure, yet this queer advanced not only heteronormativity but also the unspoken Latin Americanist racial project."²²

Inasmuch as the book is about a queer figure who facilitated the sexual and racial project of a state, we might think of *A Queer Mother for the Nation* as providing a prehistory of homonormativity, a prehistory that marks homonormativity not only as a sexual formation but a racial formation as well.²³ Homonormativity, in this instance, can be understood as the process by which queerness is put in the service of a hegemonic rationality that conveniently regards queerness as a satellite for citizen ideals and as a lever for the state's regulation of racial difference.

Fiol-Matta's critique of the ways in which minoritized white subjects are seduced and manipulated by various forms of rationality has its prologue in women of color feminist critiques of Western feminism. For instance, in "The Theoretical Subject(s) of This Bridge Called My Back and Anglo-American Feminism," Norma Alarcón discusses the ways in which white feminist subjects donned the trappings of the rational individual, a maneuver that ended in the polemicization and exclusion of "the native female' or 'women of color' . . . from the discourse of feminist theory." Ironically, white feminism's adoption of the rational subject was a means of contracting with white patriarchy. As Alarcón states

The most popular subject of Anglo-American feminism is an autonomous, self-making, self-determining subject who first proceeds according to the logic of identification with regard to the subject of man, a notion usually viewed as the purview of man, but now claimed for women.²⁴

We might think of Mistral as a narrative about how the rational citizen-subject is claimed not only by a female subject but a queer one as well. Claiming rationality, moreover, reveals itself as a racial project. We might extend Alarcón's insights and the groundwork laid by *A Queer Mother for the Nation* by insisting that the study of racialized sexuality be an analysis of how queer differences can be used to promote a logic of identification that is consonant with rather than disruptive of citizenship and Western rationality. In our analysis of the intersections of race and sexuality and how those intersections promote often tenuous but still hegemonic queer studies, the "autonomous, self-making, and self-determining subject" of that version of queer studies becomes the object of interrogation.

If sexuality is constituted out of the nexus of power and knowledge – as Foucault has argued – and if that nexus implicates certain epistemological procedures – psychoanalysis for Foucault – Fiol-Matta's text demonstrates the ways in which literature

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was maneuvered for the specific racial and sexual projects of the Chilean government. In other words, the literary figure known as Mistral could testify to the benevolence of the Chilean government toward a multi-racial population. That figure could also swear to the heteronormative aims of that state as Chile symbolized its benevolence toward those multi-racial communities through the symbol of a Nobel laureate who mothered them with her literature and as a teacher to the indigenous who uplifted them with her tutelage. In sum, *A Queer Mother for the Nation* cites literature not only as an aesthetic technology but also as a part of the state's effort to conjoin racial and sexual projects in an effort to advance state power. In this way, the study of race becomes a way of cataloging the multiple epistemological domains out of which sexuality arises. This study also bears witness to the fact that sexuality can have no simple origins.

Periodization and the Multiplication of Chronologies

A Queer Mother for the Nation asks us to reconsider the periodization and the location of homonormative social formations and the epistemological motivations for racialized sexual projects. In doing so, the text uses the study of race's intersection with sexuality to provoke historiographic reconsiderations. We can think of *The History of Sexuality* as inaugurating the study of sexuality as a historiographic venture bent on identifying hegemonic periodizations of sexuality and then reperiodizing sexuality to promote new theorizations of power. The hegemonic theorization of sexuality that Foucault's text sought to displace was what Foucault termed "the repressive hypothesis." That hypothesis posited a negative conception of sexuality emerging in the seventeenth century, one purportedly "characterized by the advent of the great prohibitions, the exclusive promotion of adult marital sexuality, the imperatives of decency, the obligatory containment of the body, the reduction to silence and mandatory reticences of language."²⁵ According to that hypothesis, sexuality takes a different turn in the twentieth century. In this period,

the mechanisms of repression were seen as beginning to loosen the grip; one passed from insistent sexual taboos to a relative tolerance with regard to pre-nuptial or extra-marital relations; the disqualification of "perverts" diminished, their condemnation by the law was in part eliminated; a good many of the taboos that weighed on the sexuality of children were lifted.²⁶

Foucault displaces this narrative of sexuality's original repression and its eventual liberation by asking us to reconsider this periodization by considering a chronology composed of "multiple datings . . . [that] will not coincide with the repressive cycle."²⁷ Foucault thus gives the history of sexuality a different chronology – one marked in terms of the penitential practices, confession, methods of ascetism, and spiritual exercise that constituted the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. At the end of the eighteenth century, the technologies of sexuality went through another mutation, one in which sexuality became a primarily secular matter of the state and of economy, medicine, and pedagogy. At the turn of the nineteenth century, sexuality

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went through another mutation in which “the technology of sexuality was ordered in relation to the medical institution, the exigency of normality . . . and the problem of life and illness. The flesh was brought down to the level of the organism” (117). For Foucault the study of sexuality is constituted as an observation of the historical mutations of technologies of sex. In this spirit, we might say that critical interrogations of race and sexuality compel us to observe how race effects various mutations in technologies of sex. In doing so, such work promotes different chronologies and locations for the histories of sexuality and thus disrupts impulses to read sexuality as a homogeneous formation.

One such example of this promotion of other chronologies and locations comes from the large and pioneering body of work offered by feminist and post-colonial theorist, M. Jacqui Alexander. For instance, in “Not Just Any Body Can Be a Citizen,” Alexander attempts to read the criminalization of queer, specifically lesbian, sex by post-colonial states in the British West Indies as an inheritance from the moral discourses of British colonization in the Caribbean.²⁸ She then annexes the contemporary criminalization of queer sex to neo-imperial economic processes in those states, writing,

[The nationalist state legislates] against certain sexualities while [it relies] upon women’s sexualized bodies and a political economy of desire in private capital accumulation. Tourism is the arena in which the moves to privatize the economy through foreign investment, imperial constructions of masculinity and femininity and state constructions of sexualized women all intersect.²⁹

Alexander historicizes the emergence of discourses of sexuality within the periods of slavery, colonization, and postcoloniality within the Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago. In the period of slavery and colonization, sexuality is the effect of colonial bureaucracy and stereotype. In the period after colonization, sexuality becomes the fixture of the legal sphere, in as much as queer sex is criminalized. In the same context, sexuality becomes the object of the economic sphere, in as much as heterosex is stroked, advertised, and exchanged through tourism. As with Fiol-Matta, we can see in Alexander’s work how the study of race applied to sexuality names the multiple periods and national locations that account for the diversity of sexuality, rendering sexuality into a category characterized by spatial and temporal heterogeneity. We can see the ways in which Alexander’s argument about sexuality and neocolonialism within the Caribbean extends Foucault’s arguments about periodization if we think of Alexander’s differentiation between sexuality under colonial bureaucracy and slave regimes and sexuality under neoimperial dictates and governance. “Not Just Any(Body) Can Be a Citizen” can be read as an observation of the historical mutations within technologies of sexuality, mutations caused by the imperatives of colonialism and slavery and then by the legal and economic maneuvers that characterize neo-imperialism within the Caribbean. Alexander’s article, thus, offers chronologies and locations that exceed the chronologies and locations that have come to characterize the study of sexuality. Indeed, work like Alexander’s reveals that after the study of race, sexuality has to be regarded as a category admitting vast temporal and geopolitical diversity. The admission of this vast temporal and geopolitical diversity is far from a simple demographic matter. Indeed, this diversity has broad epistemological

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repercussions as it explodes the presumed linguistic, national, ethnic, gender and racial homogeneity of the category “sexuality.”

In the context of immigration to the United States, as Chandan Reddy argues in “Asian Diasporas, Neoliberalism and Family: Reviewing the Case for Homosexual Asylum in the Context of ‘Family Rights,’” the legal sphere seemingly extends rights and privileges to South Asian queer immigrants as it narrates their homosexual difference through asylum laws. In such contexts, the law ostensibly extends protections to racialized queer immigrants that they did not enjoy in their countries of origin. Hence, the law promotes an ideology of the benevolent US state that guards the cultural and sexual differences of its queer immigrants. But as Reddy demonstrates, we must understand asylum laws for homosexuality within the context of the Family Reunification Act of 1986. That act bases the recruitment of non-citizen labor on family re-unification, making queer immigrants dependent on family ties and dictates. As Reddy states,

For immigrants recruited through family reunification, patriarchal and heterosexual mandates have often become pre-requisites to gaining family or welfare support. With the effective dismantling of welfare benefits of non-citizen racialized workers, workers brought in through family reunification have increasingly been forced to be dependent on family ties for access to room and board, employment, and other services, such as (what amounts to) workplace injury insurance, healthcare, child care, etc. In other words, federal immigration policies such as Family Reunification extend and institute heteronormative community structures as a requirement for accessing welfare provisions for new immigrants by attaching those provisions to the family unit.³⁰

While Alexander addresses state formations that pathologize queerness and Reddy addresses legal discourses that purportedly esteem homosexuality, Reddy’s argument about asylum law’s enforcement of heteronormativity builds on Alexander’s inscription of the law as the realm that consecrates heterosexuality and alienates queer postcolonial subjects and practices in the process. For Reddy the passage of the Family Reunification Act provides a profound mutation to the technology of sex as that technology applies to racialized queer immigrants to the United States.

In *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*, Gayatri Gopinath’s understanding of “queer diasporic archive” converges with Reddy’s understanding of the legal sphere as an “archive of racialized sexuality.” Discussing the archival possibilities of queer diaspora, Gopinath writes,

The queer diasporic archive is one that runs against the grain of conventional diasporic or nationalist archives, in that it documents how diasporic and nationalist subjectivities are produced through the deliberate forgetting and violent expulsion, subordination, and criminalization of particular bodies, practices, and identities. This archive is the storing house for those “clandestine countermemories” . . . through which sexually and racially marginalized communities reimagine their relation to the past and the present.³¹

While the legal sphere, according to Reddy, registers the regulatory practices by which queer diasporic racial formations are pressed into the universal claims of the law, the queer diasporic archive, for Gopinath, might be understood as a counterpoint

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to the regulatory imperatives of the legal archive. In addition, we might think of Gopinath's theorizations of the queer diasporic archive as a redeployment of political intersectionality, inasmuch as that archive exposes how diasporic nationalism commits itself to discrete ideologies that end up in the disciplining of queer diasporic subjects. Alexander, Reddy, and Gopinath together illustrate the explosive heterogeneities that constitute national and diasporic terrains, thus theorizing the anti-racist study of sexuality as that enterprise that broadens our conceptions of technologies of sex and race.

Method and the Heterogeneity of Repression

For Foucault, a notion of history as composed of mutations warranted an understanding of power as heterogeneous. Foucault's revision of power as heterogeneous necessarily displaced a negative conception of power embodied in the repressive hypothesis. This displacement was necessary since the repressive hypothesis posited power as single-minded and uniform.

By power, I do not mean . . . a mode of subjugation, which, in contrast to violence, has the *form of the rule* . . . The analysis, made in terms of power, must not assume that the sovereignty of the state, the form of the law or the *over-all unity* of a domination are given at the outset.³²

We might think of the repressive hypothesis as overdetermining our understandings of sexuality and power, suggesting that sexuality is pressed down by a uniform and homogenizing power. In contrast, Foucault proposed a notion of sexuality in which sex was the effect of multiple and heterogeneous forms of power. The chapter entitled "Method" takes up the relationship between repressiveness and productivity this way:

Hence the objective is to analyze a certain form of knowledge regarding sex, not in terms of repression or law, but in terms of power . . . It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as a multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization.³³

Foucault also argues, "Indeed, it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together. And for this very reason, we must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable."³⁴ Repression is understood as the homogeneous and uniform tactic of structural entities like state and capital, a notion bound to ideas of state sovereignty, law, domination and its presumed unity. In contrast, to the homogeneity and unity presumed by the tactics of the state, law, and domination, Foucault offered a notion of power that emphasized the multiplicity and heterogeneity of tactics. Foucault parlayed this conception of power as heterogeneous and diverse into his considerations of sexuality.

The notion of power and sexuality as heterogeneous also led Foucault to disable another component of the repressive hypothesis – that is, the notion of power as hierarchical. He writes, "[p]ower is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared,

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something that one holds onto or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations.”³⁵ Here Foucault contrasts the limitless quality of power to an acquisitive notion of power, implying that an acquisitive and hierarchical notion of power is antithetical to power as heterogeneous. In this formulation, a hierarchical notion of power can be placed under the repressive hypothesis as this notion suggests the uniformity and homogeneity of tactics. Thus, Foucault’s notion of power – leaning as it does on the heterogeneity of points – has to alienate the question of repression and hierarchy – leaning as it often does on the singularity of tactics and procedures. Put simply, the appreciation and theorization of heterogeneity in Foucault nullified inquiries around inequality. The study of racialized sexual formations means that we have to negotiate with these conflicting genealogies of the notion of power – one genealogy that presumes an economic model that tends to assume homogeneity and standardization and another genealogy of power that in an effort to eschew homogeneity often frustrates inquiries around hierarchy and inequality.

Work by authors interested in the intersections of race and sexuality often becomes an occasion to parlay reflections about racialized sexuality into alternative considerations of power. This work oftentimes reveals that the productivity and the repressiveness of power are both sites of heterogeneous tactics. More to the point, these considerations hold onto the idea of power’s productivity and its manifestation in innumerable points but refuses to advance this argument while eschewing conceptions of power as hierarchical. The work on racialized sexuality – presuming diverse instrumentalities and multiple chronologies – refuses to do so as it directs attention toward the innumerable points of repression.

The study of racialized sexuality compels us to observe both the repressive and productive natures of sexuality, understanding that both those natures presuppose heterogeneous and mobile tactics. The study of racialized sexualities, therefore, necessitates that we find ways to engage both aspects of power, not privileging one over the other. For instance in a discussion about the figure of the Chinese prostitute and the Chinese bachelor in nineteenth-century San Francisco, historian Nayan Shah argues in *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown*,

In the prevailing nineteenth-century ideology, respectable domesticity enabled the proper moral and biological cultivation of citizen-subjects necessary for American public life to flourish. The formation of respectable domesticity connected practices of individual health and sexuality to collective social well-being. Modern, healthy society was conceptualized as a series of heterosexual married couples and their children, who, as middle-class families, perpetuated the race and enriched the nation . . . Nineteenth-century white politicians and social critics characterized Chinatown as an immoral bachelor society of dissolute men who frequented opium dens, gambling houses, and brothels . . . [The] few Chinese women who had immigrated were considered to be prostitutes. Together their lives were considered contrary to respectable domesticity and capable of undermining American morality and family life.³⁶

Shah’s text demonstrates the productive nature and heterogeneous locales of power as public health discourses produced knowledge about Chinese immigrants through the figures of the Chinese prostitute and the Chinese bachelor. At the same time,

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the production of those discourses was indelibly linked to the racial hierarchies of local government, hierarchies that worked to suppress a racialized immigrant population within a US city. For instance, Shah writes of the harassment campaigns that were directed at Chinese prostitutes, considered one of the most visible personae of Chinese moral and sexual degeneracy: “In the mid-nineteenth century, police harassment decisively reshaped the urban geography and the social lives of women who were presumed to solicit sex. From 1854 to 1865 the San Francisco police conducted aggressive campaigns to drive ‘crib prostitutes’ away from the high-traffic thoroughfares of Jackson and Dupont Streets.”³⁷ Through the maneuvers of local medicine in the deployment of racialized, gendered, sexualized and classed discourses upon Chinese immigrants to the US, we can see how those discourses produced unprecedented forms of racial knowledge about Chinese sexuality. We might also understand the harassment campaigns as racial projects intending wholly new and historically specific forms of repression. As the case of Chinese racialization and sexualization through discourses and technologies of health illustrates, power was flexible *and* hierarchical, productive *and* prohibitive. As with Fiol-Matta, Alexander, Reddy and Gopinath’s work, *Contagious Divides* illustrates the multiple alliances of racialized and classed power that sexuality enables. The study of race’s application to sexuality represents the critical inventory of the possible and manifold configurations of power/knowledge. Broadly considered, work on racialized sexuality finds ways to engage heterogeneity without abandoning the question of inequality.

I have tried in the preceding pages to cite the study of race as an epistemological intervention into the study of sexuality – that is, as something more than a lever for pluralistic and multiculturalist articulations of queer studies. In doing so, I have attempted to point to the epistemological pressures that the question of race places upon the critique of sexuality. I have not evoked authors that simultaneously engage race and sexuality to constitute any vanguard. Nor have I focused so much attention on Foucault to reinforce a personality cult. I have done so in appreciation of this observation: historically, the intersectional study of race has countered the presumed universality, benevolence, and innocence of categories like “woman,” “gender,” and “sexuality” with something that presumptions of this sort could only meet with contempt, dismissal, patronage, or impatience: rumination.

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Notes

- 1 I thank Juana María Rodríguez for asking me to tease out in more detail my interpretation of the genealogy of intersectionality.
- 2 Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, eds. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas (New York: The New Press, 1995): 358.

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- 3 Ibid., 352.
- 4 Ibid., 360.
- 5 Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971): 138.
- 6 Juana María Rodríguez, *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces* (New York: New York University Press, 2003): 30. See also José Esteban Muñoz's *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1999) and José Quiroga's *Tropics of Desire: Interventions from Queer Latin America* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).
- 7 Sharon P. Holland, *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000): 145–6.
- 8 Eithne Lubhéid, "Introduction: Queering Migration and Citizenship," in *Queer Migrations: Sexuality, US Citizenship, and Border Crossings*, eds. Eithne Lubhéid and Lionel Cantú (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2005): xxiv.
- 9 Siobhan B. Somerville, *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000): 5.
- 10 David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, "Introduction," *What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?* in *Social Text* 84–5, 23.3–4 (Fall/Winter 2005): 1.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies," in Stuart Hall: *Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996): 263–4.
- 13 I thank Carlos DeCena for asking me to be more explicit about the limitations of hegemonic versions of queer studies.
- 14 Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004): 6–7.
- 15 Ibid., 6–7.
- 16 I thank Ryan Fong for pushing me to clarify this critique.
- 17 Martin F. Manalansan IV, *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003): 14.
- 18 Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, "Introduction" in *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, eds. Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997): 3.
- 19 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980): 109–10.
- 20 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990): 103.
- 21 Licia Fiol-Matta, *A Queer Mother for the Nation: The State and Gabriela Mistral* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002): 4.
- 22 Ibid., 36.
- 23 I thank Salvadore Vidal-Ortiz for prompting this observation.
- 24 Norma Alarcón, "The Theoretical Subject(s) of This Bridge Called My Back and Anglo-American Feminism," in *Making Face, Making Soul = Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color*, ed., Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 1990): 357.
- 25 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 115.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 For a discussion of the relationship between theorizations of morality and Foucault's deployment of sexuality, see my article "The Stratifications of Normativity," <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue10/ferguson.htm>

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- 29 M. Jacqui Alexander, "Not Just Any Body Can Be a Citizen," *Feminist Review* 48 (Fall 1994): 5–23, at p. 19.
- 30 Chandan Reddy, "Asian Diasporas, Neoliberalism, and Family: Reviewing the Case for Homosexuality Asylum in the Context of Family," *Social Text* 84–5, 23.3–4 (Fall/Winter 2005): 101–19, at p. 110.
- 31 Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005): 21.
- 32 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 92.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid., 100.
- 35 Ibid., 94.
- 36 Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2001): 77.
- 37 Ibid., 81.