# Imagining Transgender

An Ethnography of a Category

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DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS DURHAM AND LONDON 2007

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper ∞
Designed by Katy Clove
Typeset in Sabon by Keystone Typesetting, Inc.
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
appear on the last printed page of this book.



FOR VIANNA-FAYE WILLIAMS,

*in place of the chicken soup I never had*

*the chance to bring you*

# Contents

linguistic structure seems overly complex, I would ask that the reader pay attention to why I might have chosen a particular phrasing. My concern is with the power of categories—their power to enable action in the world, to describe ourselves to ourselves and others, but also their power to restrict possibilities. If the categories we use to talk about our worlds contribute, at least in part, to how we shape our action in the world, then we must think about how they impact on those whose categories might be different from ours.

In the following chapters, I move through many contexts, lives, and spaces. My mapping traverses (and produces) disjunctures and fractured points, but it also draws in moments of humor, love, and remarkable courage mounted in the face of violence, pain, and ostracism. This work is aimed at contributing to the struggle against such culturally institutionalized violence and is written in honor of friends who lost their lives even as I have been engaged in the process of writing. It is the hope that this work will contribute, even in a minimal way, to the lives of my friends, study participants, and colleagues that has made its writing worthwhile.



# 1

# Imagining Transgender

*Since no one had ever seen the diversity of the lesbian, gay, and bi populations, most people assumed that being gay meant being transgendered. We thought so, too.*—LESLIE FEINBERG, *Transgender Warriors*

*Nearly a hundred years since homosexuality was formally defined, news reports and gay and lesbian activists still routinely claim both historical and contemporary transgendered people as lesbian and gay.*—AARON DEVOR AND NICHOLAS MATTE, "One Inc. and Reed Erickson: The Uneasy Collaboration of Gay and Trans Activism"

Leslie Feinberg's *Transgender Warriors* focuses on reclaiming a specifically transgender history and demands attention to a long history of transgender people from antiquity to the present. Simultaneously, ze and Devor and Matte imply that transgender people have, for a long time, been misrecognized—or misclaimed—as homosexual. The reclamation of "transgender warriors," and their distinction from homosexuals, is a central feature of contemporary transgender activism and history making, but by creating a distinct transgender history, transgender-identified writers are not acting without precedent. From the 1970s on, gay and lesbian writers

and scholars have made similar kinds of claims about those they perceived to be their ancestors and who were misrecognized as heterosexual (e.g., Katz 1976), including some who, in Feinberg's and Devor's and Matte's view, are more accurately understood as transgender.

Another approach to history, however, problematizes these kinds of simple reclamations (Altman 1993 [1971], Foucault 1990 [1978], D'Emilio 1983b, 2002, Halperin 1990, Weeks 1981). Most famously, Foucault has argued that "homosexuality" was not even a category of personhood until the mid-nineteenth century. At the root of this social constructionist view of history is the contention that the organization of contemporary gay and lesbian (and by extension, transgender) identity cannot make sense of historical modes of non-normative gendered and sexual identities or of romantic and affective relationships between people of the same sex/gender. From this viewpoint, to imagine historical subjects as "gay," "lesbian," or as "transgender" ignores the radically different understandings of self and the contexts that underpinned the practices and lives of historical subjects. How then is Feinberg able not only to claim specifically *transgender* warriors from antiquity to the present day but also to distinguish them from distinctly *homosexual* forebears? And how are Devor and Matte able to posit a (misrecognized) historical distinction between homosexual and transgender subjectivities? These questions are particularly important in the light of opposing claims of who fits in what category but also because of the apparent merging of these categories in the common contemporary acronym LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender).

In this chapter, I approach history from a social constructionist perspective, but not simply to contest the reclamation of historical figures as homosexual or transgender. Rather, I aim to examine the history of "transgender" and "homosexuality" as *categories*, the history of their relationship, and the theoretical and political implications of seeing them as discrete throughout history. Following Foucault, I take a genealogical approach, one which examines the meanings, values, and investments of naming and labeling. Like Foucault, I am interested in how these categories do not simply *describe* discrete histories but rather are *productive of* the very phenomena they seem to describe. Put another way (in James Ferguson's Foucauldian terms), rather than simply asking " 'What does this concept *mean;* what does it really refer to?' " I want to ask " 'How and to what effect is this concept deployed; what does it *do*?' " (Ferguson 1999: 205, emphasis in original). If, as I noted in the introduction, transgender as a category itself only emerged in a collective, institutionalized way in the early 1990s, what histories, politics, and practices have enabled this kind of historical claim? Moreover, if "homosexuality" is also a relatively new concept, and if it has been used to describe transgender forebears, how do we account for what Feinberg and Devor and Matte see as this conflation? In short, how is it possible to extract certain actors from the categorical embrace of "homosexuality" and into "transgender"? What has this historical reorganization *done*?

A crucial corollary to these questions is: how else could those people described as transgender or homosexual at different historical periods be described? By this I mean, what other forms of social identification—racial, class, national—cross-cut these sexual and gendered categories of being and knowing, and how might those identifications disrupt the easy assertion of homosexual or transgender identification? How does race, class, or geographical location figure into the naming of people as transgender and/or homosexual? These latter questions are engaged in the analysis below, but I take them on most fully in chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Underpinning the historical reclamation of certain homosexual forebears as transgender is a distinction between two other categories: gender and sexuality. To invoke Foucault again, how might the claim that gender and sexuality are distinct be *productive* of that distinction rather than simply a description of the way things are? Such a question is vital to ask if we are to make sense of contemporary, historical, and cross-cultural evidence of (what we call) gender and sexual variance, and the racial and class dynamics that underpin it.

I am working here with an assumption that is central to anthropology: that language shapes how we make sense of our worlds (Whorf 1956 [1939]). In this view, "gender" and "sexuality" are not self-evident experiences or domains outside language. Rather, they are linguistic tools which extract certain information, experiences, and feelings about ourselves and others from the stream of daily life for the purposes of making meaning about, and representing, ourselves and others. But the absorption of certain meanings by these terms is not a natural fact: it is the product of a constant, social reiteration (and contestation) of those meanings in a range of contexts—from the day-to-day assertions of gay, lesbian, and transgender identities and the activist strategies of LGBT movements, to the intellectual labor of scholars.

This chapter is thus a genealogical and critical review of these categories — transgender, homosexuality, gender, and sexuality. First, we must examine the category of transgender itself.

## THE ORIGIN(S) AND MEANING(S) OF TRANSGENDER

Let me start with a somewhat standard account of the history of "transgender" in the United States.

Most authors give credit to the activist Virginia Prince for her coinage of the term "transgenderist" in the United States sometime in the 1970s (e.g., Docter 1988, Frye 2000, G. MacKenzie 1994), though its actual origin in Prince's writing is less than clear and a more complicated history of its origin has been suggested by Robert Hill (2007).[1] Though she more frequently used other terms, Prince is represented as using this concept — or variations of it — to describe those who, like her, lived full time in a gender other than that to which they were ascribed at birth, but without surgical intervention. By doing so, she and others differentiated themselves from transexual men and women on the one hand, and fetishistic cross-dressers on the other, which was (for Prince at least) a moral claim to (implicitly white, middle-class) normality and a rejection of deviant sexuality (Califia 2003 [1997]: 199, Meyerowitz 2002: 181) though others explicitly saw such a "third way" in more politicized terms (Hill 2007; see also Ekins and King 2005, 2006).

With the advent of early 1990s activism and scholarship in the United States, "transgender" gained a new meaning as the "radical edge" (Ekins and King 1999) of gender variance by people such as Holly Boswell (1991) who advocated for a position of crossgender identification which embraced an androgynous style and mode of identification, a position which also drew on more radical 1970s conceptions of gender-variant identity. Unlike Prince's assertions of normality, Boswell challenged the notion of "normal" itself, claiming a space for transgender not simply as a category between "transexual" and "transvestite" but as an alternative to binary gender. Boswell's call resonated with the radical call to embrace (specifically) transexual experience by Sandy Stone in her classic essay "The Empire Strikes Back" (1991), though Stone did not herself use "transgender" as a category (see Stryker 2006).

However, the idea of transgender as a radical alternative or as a "third way" between transexuality and transvestism, both of which had developed unevenly through the previous two decades, was quickly overtaken in the early 1990s by a third usage of transgender as a *collective* (often spoken of as a *spectrum* or *umbrella*), inclusive of all and any gender variance (Bolin 1994, Califia 2003 [1997]). Leslie Feinberg's early call for "transgender liberation" in 1992 is among the first published uses of the collective form of transgender which explicitly politicized transgender identification beyond individual radical acts and called for a social movement organized around its terms. This collective sense is that which most activists and social service providers adopted in the early 1990s.

Contemporary activists, providers, and scholars include different kinds of people in this collective/spectrum/umbrella, and a relatively modest list would include at least some of the following identity categories: transexuals, transvestites, cross-dressers, men or women of transgender or transexual experience, drag queens, drag kings, female or male impersonators, genderqueers, intersexuals, hermaphrodites, fem queens, girls, boys, trannies, feminine gay men, butch lesbians, male-to-female, female-to-male, female embodied masculine persons, and even, simply, men or women. The inclusion of certain kinds of people — and the absence of others — from lists of this sort is, as we will see shortly, a significant feature of definitions of transgender.

"Transgender" in this collective sense, then, arose in the United States in uneven, often contested ways, primarily in white, middle-class activist contexts in New York and California in the 1990s, though it appears to have had earlier manifestations in California in the 1980s, and in independent, if resonant, developments in the UK around the same time.[2] In the context of activism and social service settings, "transgender" was seen as a way of wresting control over the meanings and definitions of gender variance from medical and mental health professionals to replace an assumption of individual pathology with a series of claims about citizenship, self-determination, and freedom from violence and discrimination (see Stryker 1998, 2006). Just as importantly, it was seen as a way of organizing a politics of gender variance that differentiated it from homosexuality.

In the years since then, particularly since the mid-1990s, "transgender" has become ubiquitous in progressive community-based organizations, identity-based political movements, popular media accounts, international human rights discourses, academic debates, anthropological descriptions of gender variance cross-culturally, and, astonishingly, it is even finding its way into the medical establishment, the very institution to which transgender was orig-

inally opposed. Transgender Studies is becoming an acknowledged field of inquiry (see chapter 4), and in popular culture, transgender is being used in TV shows, newspapers, magazines, movies, cartoons, personal ads, and on the World Wide Web. Transgender-identified activists are lobbying federal, state, and local legislators around issues of hate crimes and discrimination, and the right wing has discovered in "transgender" the latest enemy of American Family Values. It has been used on the floor of the U.S. Senate and was already included in the Merriam-Webster dictionary by 1998 (see note 2). Currently in the United States there are several national and dozens of statewide and local organizations which are dedicated to transgender issues. Web sites, newsletters, sections in bookstores, funding proposals, magazines, meetings, conferences, and social services focused on or incorporating transgender issues are springing up all across the United States (and the world) or are using "transgender" as part of organizational schema. This is all the more remarkable as the earliest use of transgender (in its institutionalized, collective sense) in U.S. activism dates back no further than 1991 or 1992, and therefore marks a significant shift in discourses, practices, and personal identities around gender variance in an astonishingly short period of time.

At the same time, "transgender" has already come under critique by many who are seen to fall under its purview in institutional terms. FTMs, transgender-identified butches, and female-bodied masculine people have argued that it is formed implicitly on a male-to-female model that cannot account for the complexity of butch/FTM experience (e.g., Halberstam 1998b, Hale 1998). Some, who adopt a more radical view of gender-variant identification, argue that "transgender" has either become a synonym for "transexual" or renders the specificity of transexual experience invisible (e.g., Valerio n.d.). And a younger generation of self-proclaimed gender-queers explicitly reject "transgender" as an identifier at least in part because of its institutionalization (e.g., Nestle, Howell, and Wilchins 2002, Wilchins 2002). However, despite these and other critiques from among those who are seen to occupy the category, "transgender" has been phenomenally successful in becoming institutionalized in an enormous range of contexts, and attempts to deconstruct the category have themselves been critiqued by activists who see value in institutionalization (Park 2003).

This potted history, though, requires asking four interrelated questions: first, why did the collective sense of "transgender" emerge in the way it did only in the 1990s? Second, what do different people mean by "transgender" and which meanings have gained traction in institutional settings?



Third, given the move to the acronym "LGBT," what is the relationship between transgender and gay and lesbian identities and politics? And finally, what rôle do class, race, and geographical location play in these dynamics? To answer these questions we need to look first at the development of "transgender" in the 1990s:

## THE RISE OF TRANSGENDER-AS-COLLECTIVE IN THE 1990S

Califia (2003 [1997]), Cromwell (1999), and Bolin (1994) all discuss the rise of transgender activism in the 1990s, implicitly pointing to qualitatively new forms of social organizing around gender-variant identities in that period. Meyerowitz (2002: 208ff.) notes, however, that activism by transexuals and transvestites—and other people we might refer to today as transgender—is not new. After Christine Jorgensen's highly publicized sex reassignment surgery in 1952, people who were coming to understand themselves through the new medical category of transexual began organizing themselves through social and activist networks (see also Frye 2000, Members 1998, Silverman and Stryker 2005, Stryker 2006). Transexuality in the United States was both celebrated and contested from the 1950s in popular culture, medical, and scholarly contexts, but claims and counter-claims over this subject position also emerged among those who saw themselves framed by its terms. That is, many of the features associated with contemporary *transgender* activism—the rejection of pathologization, social and political networking, the celebration of the possibilities of shifting genders—were evident in specifically *transexual* activism of earlier decades of the twentieth century.

Yet it is also clear that for various reasons the 1990s saw qualitative and quantitative shifts in these kinds of activism, theory making, and contestations (Broad 2002). Bolin (1994), for example, argues that the closure of university-based gender identity clinics in the early 1980s allowed for the possibility of client-centered, private clinics to offer services, enabling surgeries for people who had been turned down by the more research-oriented university centers. Califia (2003 [1997]: 223ff.) suggests several other specific reasons, including the anger at poor surgical results in university clinics, the growing visibility of people who were unable to "pass" in their chosen gender, and the politicization of transexual women because of their negative experiences with lesbian-feminists. Califia also sees the emergence of FTMs as a strong and vocal group in the 1990s, and the

increasing visibility of FTMs and transmen as another important impetus for the coalescing transgender movement (see also G. Rubin 2002, Broad 2002, Cameron 1996). This activism has further been facilitated by communication technologies such as the Internet and the World Wide Web which radically transformed communicative possibilities from the early 1990s on (see Stryker 2006 for a broader historical contextualization of the emergence of transgender activism and scholarship).

These different factors enabled a groundswell in activism, publications, and a radically different intellectual and political project around gender variance through the category of transgender. At the same time, the "new" transgender politics of the 1990s has also been characterized by debate and contestation over methods, theory, identity, and indeed the very boundaries of the category itself (Broad 2002). These debates, as we will see, are central to the constitution of what "transgender" can mean in different contexts. However, in this early period, the sense that something new had emerged was powerful indeed (Broad 2002: 44ff.). Sandy Stone's essay "The Empire Strikes Back" (1991), the early 1990s battles over the exclusion of transexual women from the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, and the vigils at the trial of Brandon Teena's murderers in Falls City, Nebraska, in 1993 are all early moments in the consolidation of the meanings of transgender in the 1990s, despite differences and contestations about those meanings.

The emergence of transgender must also be seen, however, in the context of broader changes in U.S. American understandings of identity politics, the body, and embodied identities in the late twentieth century. These understandings have, in turn, been shaped by shifts in neoliberal capitalist modes of production and consumption where "difference" can be exploited as a market niche as much as enabling new forms of subjectivity (Chasin 2001, Martin 1994, Sender 2004). "Transgender" has thus entered public discourse in the context of a vast range of concerns and activisms around normative and non-normative embodiment, including the emphasis on exercise and health promotion (Conrad 1994); the representation of both male and female bodies in mass media (Bordo 1999); claims of people with disabilities (Ingstad and Whyte 1995); the increasing popularity of tattooing and other body modifications (DeMello 2000); the demands of intersex activists who reject surgical interventions on infants with anomalous physiognomies (Chase 1998); overweight people who claim fatness as an identity (Goldberg 1999, Kulick and Meneley 2005); the debates over abortion



(Ginsberg 1989); the possibilities enabled by genetic testing (Rapp 1999); and a broad range of grassroots health activism.

These developments must in turn be seen in the light of emerging social movements in the past thirty years in the United States where "identity" has become a primary mode of politics — from grassroots organizations to federal legislation. The civil rights movement, feminism and the women's movement, and the gay and lesbian rights movement have all provided language, precedents, and models for the burgeoning transgender movement. The collectivity of transgender, then, is in some senses no different from the collective identity of other groups who have engaged in such politics. What is different in this case, though, is that transgender has arisen out of a realignment — contested as it may be — of the kinds of individuals who see themselves or are seen as being part of the collectivity, and who were previously accounted for by other terms including "homosexuality," "transexuality," and "transvestism."

I will discuss the broader context of identity politics and the history of transgender activism in chapter 5, but next we must consider the second question I raised above.

## WHAT "TRANSGENDER" CONTAINS

The collective mode of transgender, for all its potential to reshape understandings of gender variance, yet poses several questions. While the conventional definition — an "umbrella" term that includes all people who are in some ways gender-variant — seems self evident, the question remains: what counts as gender-variant and who is included in "transgender"? The answer to this question is not clear and is sometimes contradictory. A few examples of definitions provided by transgender- and non-transgender-identified scholars and activists will demonstrate this point.

Meyerowitz gives one of the broadest definitions of transgender. She writes that transgender is "an umbrella term used for those with various forms and degrees of cross gender practices and identifications. 'Transgendered' includes, among others, some people who identify as 'butch' or masculine lesbians, as 'fairies,' 'queens,' or feminine gay men, and as heterosexual cross-dressers as well as those who identify as transsexual. The categories are not hermetically sealed, and to a certain extent the boundaries are permeable" (2002: 10). Califia (2003 [1997]) makes a similar claim about the collectivity and recency of the category, though his defini-

tion is somewhat hazier. While he notes that transgender is an "umbrella" term, at different points in his book he is ambivalent about what the category includes. So, for example, at some points he argues implicitly that male transvestites are not part of the category transgender ("their [i.e., male transvestites'] cultural history overlaps and is linked with the politics of the transgendered community but is not identical to it" [198]), though in other places he implicitly includes male transvestites within "transgender" (e.g., 256). Bolin (1994), writing earlier in the history of the emergence of this category, provides another criterion for collectivity. She writes: "While there is not universal agreement on the term *transgendered*, there is an emerging generic semantic space that is inclusive of all people who cross-dress" (465, emphasis in original). For Bolin, cross-dressing rather than gender identification seems to be the primary criterion of membership in "transgender."

Finally, Namaste (2000), writing at the decade's end, also focuses on transgender as a collective term. She writes that

> [a] variety of different identities are included within the "transgender" label: cross dressers, or individuals who wear clothes associated with the "opposite" sex, often for erotic gratification; drag queens, or men who usually live and identify as gay men but who perform as female impersonators in gay male bars and leisure spaces; and transsexuals, or individuals who take hormones and who may undergo surgery to align their biological sexes with their genders. (1)

Most of these authors recognize that these definitions are tentative and shifting, precisely because the meanings of the term are still being negotiated. Yet, such definitions and lists abound in spite of the difficulty of pinning down the category. Indeed, earlier in this chapter, I provided my own (qualified) list, even more extensive in its inclusiveness than Meyerowitz's.

Let us examine three broad features of these definitions. First, the minimal definition of "transgender" includes transexuals and (male) transvestites (though Califia is hazy even on this point). However, some definitions also include gay male drag queens (though none of those quoted explicitly include drag kings or male impersonators), and Meyerowitz goes so far as to include feminine gay men and butch lesbians, as does Henry Rubin (2003: 18). This raises a central question: does "transgender" include (some) self-identified male-born gay men and female-born lesbians who themselves do not identify as transgender? As we will see in chapter 2, many gay male drag queens are insistent that they are not part of this category as are many butch lesbians (see G. Rubin 1992, H. Rubin 2003). The second point to note is the implicit absence of FTMs/female-bodied masculine people (or at least the absence of an explicit naming). Definitions like Namaste's which include the unmarked "transexual" and "cross-dresser" alongside gay male drag queens unintentionally reassert the MTF experience.[3]

Third, though, what is most interesting about these definitions is the *way that they can shift within a text, and the resulting flexibility that* transgender has for explaining and describing phenomena, people, and practices across time and space. The flexibility of transgender can result in the listing of people at the edges of the boundaries, like feminine gay men or butch lesbians, while omitting others, whether male transvestites or FTMs. Alternately, it enables one group—frequently transexuals—to stand in for others while giving the impression of collectivity. And very *often it is used to encapsulate a range of historical figures on the basis of* their gender variance. The very flexibility of transgender, its strength as a tool of political organizing, thus makes it possible to use without specifying who is being invoked in particular instances. So Califia can define transgender as an "umbrella term" while at the same time that which he describes is specific to transexual experience. Similarly, Meyerowitz, while she is clear that "transgender" is a historically recent term, sometimes also finds it useful in writing about the collectivity of transexuals, transvestites, butches, queens, and fairies of an earlier point in history (2002: 36, 95).

The capacity to stand in for an unspecified group of people is, indeed, one of the seductive things about "transgender" in trying to describe a wide range of people, both historical and contemporary, Western and non-Western. Even using "transgender" as a descriptor for historical or cross-cultural behaviors or practices rather than identity (as, for example, Cromwell [1999: 17] does) still enables an author to avoid these definitional difficulties. Indeed, that "transgender" can stand both as a description of individual identity and simultaneously as a general term for gendered transgressions of many kinds makes it almost infinitely elastic.

These slippages embody a central tension of the collective mode of "transgender." This is not simply a theoretical point either, since, as I will show in part II, these definitional issues have political effects too. Attention to those places where "transgender" enables a certain haziness is important precisely because the boundaries of the category are inhabited

by not only historical and anthropological subjects (such as those Feinberg or Meyerowitz discuss) but also by many contemporary Western individuals who also contest this boundary through their particular professions of selfhood.

It should be clear that I am moving toward an examination of the boundaries between "homosexuality" and "transgender." But before I do so, I want to propose that another reason transgender emerged in the 1990s is precisely the historically recent redefinition of what "homosexuality" means. The clue here is the inclusion of feminine gay men, butch lesbians, drag kings, and drag queens in some definitions of transgender, but not in others. To develop this argument I must turn next to the category of homosexuality itself.

## HOMOSEXUALITY

A central tenet of contemporary transgender theory, activism, and identification is that transgender identity is distinct — in some accounts, radically so — from homosexuality (some important exceptions are Halberstam [1998b] and Hale [1998]). While this distinction is important to and descriptive of many contemporary transgender, as well as gay and lesbian, people, it is in fact a remarkably recent distinction. As such, it is important to talk about the history of homosexuality as a category in relation to what has come to be understood as transgender (see Halberstam 1998a: 142–43).

Foucault (1990 [1978]), D'Emilio (1983a), Weeks (1981), and others have argued that "homosexuality" only emerged as a possibility for identification (in both senses of that term) in Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Foucault argues that in the context of urbanization, changing forms of state organization, and the reshaping of kin and labor relations, same-sex erotic practices were de-linked from a broader set of non-normative non-procreative practices (broadly understood as "sodomy" and as sinful) and were reorganized into a form of pathological *personhood* that we would today call "homosexuality." In Foucault's oft-quoted words, "The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (1990 [1978]: 43). But, once a species, how was he (or more rarely, she) identified by nineteenth-century scientists, legislators, and others?

First, the implicit pathology of homosexuality was seen to be evident in what contemporary social theorists would deem visibly physical and behavioral markers of non-normative *gender* expression. Late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century sexologists such as Havelock Ellis and Magnus Hirschfeld argued for (primarily male) homosexuality as an intermediate or third sex, evident in the adoption of feminine practices and behaviors to which erotic attraction to other men was intimately bound. While Hirschfeld (1991 [1910]) distinguished between (primarily heterosexual) male transvestism and male homosexuality, his commitment to the third-sex model implicitly drew on the idea of a certain femininity traveling with male homosexuality. In *Die Transvestiten,* Hirschfeld wrote: "One can understand all too well that most of them [his male *transvestite* subjects] wish they had been born female, a wish that is certainly expressed in great measure by [male] homosexuals" (129).[4]

Likewise, Karl Ulrichs, the nineteenth-century German lawyer who is touted as "the first gay activist" (Lombardi-Nash n.d.), saw the male Uranian (his term for those who felt same-sex desire) as having an innate femininity (Ulrichs 1994: 55ff.). The body, for Ulrichs and later sexologists such as Hirschfeld, was the evidence of a spiritual inversion in male Uranians manifested simultaneously in embodied gendered inversion and sexual and romantic desire for people of the same sex. "Ulrichs took it for granted that the male [Uranian] body also showed some feminine qualities; his successor, Magnus Hirschfeld, believed this more firmly" (Hekma 1994: 220). Moreover, "for Ulrichs, the most important sign of gender inversion was sexual preference" (220).

If Ulrichs saw a spiritual etiology to Uranianism, other models located homosexuality more directly in the body itself, drawing on nineteenth- and twentieth-century concerns to define the implicit deficiencies of all bodies which were not white, male, and procreatively inclined. Here, too, the *physical* evidence of "femininity" in male people and "masculinity" in female people was linked to homosexual desire.[5] In the United States, Terry (1995) notes the attempts by the mid-twentieth-century Committee for the Study of Sex Variants (CSSV) to identify visible evidence of homosexuality in the body, manifested (as the researchers believed) in the genitals, skeletal structures, musculature, and voices of their subjects. Kinsey's work in the 1940s temporarily decentered the focus on homosexual bodies by arguing for a model of natural sexual variation. However, the publicity surrounding Christine Jorgensen's SRS just four years after the publication of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Kinsey et al. 1948) reanimated the push for a stable and embodied diagnostics of homosexuality both to

differentiate it from transexuality but also as part of the ongoing work of delineating homosexuality as a dangerous condition (Freedman 1989, Meyerowitz 2002: 172). The search for clearly definable and primarily *visual* evidence of homosexual bodies was certainly complicated by the contradictory and uncertain results of these various researches. But three central themes emerge from this history: first, the ways in which these researches focused on practices that would likely be understood as "gendered" by contemporary theorists; second, the almost exclusive focus on male bodies and/or psyches; and third, the emphasis on the visible. These are all points I will return to.

However, it is also clear that the link between same-sex desire and inverted gender identification was contested from early on by those who were the subjects of such research. Hekma's (1994) analysis of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century sexual rights movements shows that the sex/gender-inverted model of homosexuality did not stand unchallenged, at least among European male homosexuals. In Germany, Ulrichs's model of the trapped female soul and Hirschfeld's championing of the third-sex model of male homosexuality met opposition in the person of Adolf Brand and his organization Die Gemeinschaft der Eigenen (The Community of Self-Owners), which "defended a virile, pederastic form of homosexuality, which was far removed from Hirschfeld's third gender and sexual intermediaries. The split between the two movements concerned for the most part the different contents and meanings given to homosexuality" (1994: 228–29). Well-known, self-identified homosexual men of the period such as André Gide also spoke out for a " 'movement for masculine culture' " (228), rejecting the characterization of homosexuality as a form of gendered inversion and claiming that homosexuality was morally and physically normal (Rosario 1996: 41). Likewise Chauncey (1994) describes how some early-twentieth-century U.S. homosexual subjectivities were formed in opposition to medical and popular discourses linking (male) homosexuality to (feminine) gender. He notes how "fairies" were spurned by mainly white, middle-class homosexual men who were developing gender-normative understanding of their same-sex desire (see also D'Emilio 1983b).

Thus, by the mid-twentieth century, various kinds of self-named fairies, queens, butches, femmes, homosexuals, transvestites, and latterly, transsexuals were coming to understand themselves through scientific and judicial categories but were also generating distinctions for and among themselves: "People who decades earlier might have been grouped together as 'inverts' were now sorting themselves out" (Meyerowitz 2002: 184) in what amounted to a "taxonomic revolution" (169; see also Newton 1979 [1972]: 51–52, Weeks 1985: 61–95). In the United States, many now-gay-and-lesbian-identified people (mostly white and middle class), insisted on gender-normative presentation as the hallmark of homosexual identification and rejected other sexual/gender subcultures as "deviants." The rejection of gender variance was, moreover, a rejection of class and racial otherness. For example, in the 1950s, the membership of the Mattachine Society (a post–World War II homosexual rights group) put pressure on the society's left-leaning (and in some cases communist-party-member) founders to abandon their radical class politics, while simultaneously rejecting "overtness," "flamboyance," and gender-transgressive models of homosexuality (Duberman 1993). As Gayle Rubin (2002) notes, being "overt" was not only a marker of homosexuality but also of class, since "overt" homosexuality was not compatible with middle-class employment (see also Faderman 1991: 178, Meyerowitz 2002: 178, Newton 1979 [1972]: 7–19, Newton 1993: 275). Gender/sexual non-normative desires and practices among communities of color were doubly complicated by the experience of racism and the facts of segregation (Mumford 1997).

At the same time, though, police, judicial, and legislative restrictions on sexual/gender non-normative practices (including bar raids and imprisonment), as well as informal practices of policing in broader society, contained those differences. By this I mean that while distinctions within sexual/gendered urban subcultures were recognized and internally maintained, opprobrium against any kind of gender/sexual non-normativity prevented a broader social elaboration of those differences. This is apparent in the autobiographical account of Jayne County, a self-identified transsexual woman and musician, writing of Atlanta in the 1960s: "There were certain divisions in the gay world even then, but we didn't have the words for them. Everyone was just gay as far as we were concerned; that was the word we used. . . . It didn't matter whether you were a very straight gay man, or a screaming street queen, or a full-time drag queen, or a transsexual who wanted to have a sex change: you were gay" (1995: 29–30).

These identificatory, class, and racial tensions coalesce in the iconic moment of gay/lesbian (and, as we will see, transgender) history, the Stonewall riots. The story in its broad outline has been told frequently: On the night of June 27, 1969, a routine police raid on the Stonewall Inn, an

unlicensed gay bar in Greenwich Village, New York, turned into a melee and then a riot that resulted in several days of street protests and clashes with police. The riots catalyzed a massive activist reaction and is today usually represented as the originary event of the gay/lesbian (and/or transgender) movement.

However, how it happened — and what happened — is a contested story. For contemporary transgender-identified people, the story goes that it was drag queens and butches of color who led the resistance against the police and that it was in fact (also) the beginning of a transgender rights movement (e.g., Feinberg 1996: 97–99, Frye 2000: 457, Wilchins 1997: 70). On the other hand, some contemporary gay male writers contest the idea that any drag queens, transvestites, or butches were significant actors (e.g., Marcus 1999). Duberman's (1993) social history of the pre- and post-Stonewall era claims that Stonewall habitués were a complex mix of people, and that the stories of that night point to several different protagonists as the spark that lit the fuse. He argues that the Stonewall Inn was not generally welcoming to drag queens or even effeminate gay men who wore androgynous clothing, and that women — butch or femme — were rarely to be found there (see also Bravmann 1995). These debates, moreover, are structured by claims about race and class, a point I return to below.

Duberman and others note that despite its iconic status, Stonewall was not the origin of gay and lesbian (or, we might add, transgender) resistance to agents of the state (see also D'Emilio 2002: 146ff., Rechy 2000, Silverman and Stryker 2006).[6] Yet Stonewall brought to a head tensions between East Coast postwar accommodationist homophile leaders and a more radical group of youthful activists who were inspired by the Black Panthers, the civil rights and anti–Vietnam War movements, and early second-wave feminism. For activists in organizations like the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) which emerged in the post-Stonewall era, the radical politics of social transformation were evinced by and consciously claimed through the adoption of unisex hair and clothing styles, a challenge to gender norms as much as to broader political institutions. " 'Many of us in GLF,' one publication proclaimed, 'are traitors to our sex, and to this sexist society. We reject 'manhood,' 'masculinity,' and all that' " (quoted in Meyerowitz 2002: 235; see also Brake 1976 for a Brititsh perspective on these politics). At the same time, drag queens and what we may call today transgender people did not have an uncomplicated relationship with GLF or other new organizations on either the East or West Coast. Thus, in the



period immediately following Stonewall, the adoption of non-normative gendered clothing and identities by radical gay male activists further muddied the identificatory possibilities of the moment.

Current debates over who started the riots at Stonewall, then, are complicated by the ways in which the social actors of the time understood themselves in relationship to the historically available ways of identifying and the politics of gender and sexual transgression in the opening days of the 1970s. Eric Marcus (1999), in his refutation of the "seven feet tall (in platform shoes)," Stonewall-led-by-drag-queens version of events, claims that it was a diverse group of "fluffy sweater boys, dykes, sissies, college students, boys in chinos and penny loafers" who led the charge against the police. Yet the point he misses is that for contemporary transgender activists, the (implicitly white) sissies, fluffy sweater boys, and (at least some of) the dykes are interpretable through the category of transgender as much as the self-identified drag/transgender (Latina and African American) actors like Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson who claimed to have been at Stonewall and who have asserted the centrality of transgender-identified people in the events. Likewise, for early 1970s radical gay and lesbian activists, the "sorting out" of differences within the gender/sexual subcultures of the urban United States was, if for a brief time, roiled by the assertion of a conscious politics of transgressive gender by some of their number. In short, it makes equal sense to view Stonewall as a central moment in both what we understand as a gay and lesbian movement on the one hand, and a transgender movement on the other, if only because those distinctions were not operative in 1969 as they are today. Moreover, these debates over Stonewall speak to the racial and class politics of these various historiographies. Marcus's gay "boys in chinos and penny loafers" assert not only a non-transgender but an implicitly white history to Stonewall, just as Rivera's and Johnson's claims put poor people of color at its center.

In order to fully understand these processes, we must look next at a different genealogy of "homosexuality."

## PARSING WOMEN

The history related above is virtually entirely told in terms of the experiences of male-bodied people. The experience of female-bodied people who transgressed gender/sexual norms converges with this account in many

points. For example, Terry's (1995) discussion of the CSSV studies into homosexual bodies in the mid-twentieth century cited above shows how both male- and female-bodied "deviants" became the object of scientific investigation. Meyerowitz (2002), Duberman (1993), Newton (1993), and others detail the social and activist connections between male- and female-bodied people in the gender/sexual subcultures of the twentieth-century urban United States. And, as with Chauncey's account of primarily male gender/sexual subcultures, Kennedy and Davis (1993) and Faderman (1991) argue that class and race became central to the different kinds of identificatory possibilities for female-bodied people. Social history (Faderman 1991, Kennedy and Davis 1993, Meyerowitz 2002), sociological accounts (H. Rubin 2003), and fiction (Feinberg 1993) all indicate that the distinctions between gender-normative same-sex desiring female-bodied people (whom we might gloss as lesbians) and gender-transgressive female-bodied people (or "passing women" and butches) developed across the span of the twentieth century. As with feminine identities and gender-inflected sexual relationships among male-bodied people, the solidification of butch/femme roles and communities in urban settings in the post–World War II period was marked as primarily a working-class form of identification. Likewise, as with the male homophile movement, mid-twentieth-century white, middle-class lesbian activists in the lesbian rights group the Daughters of Bilitis stressed the importance of gender-normative, respectable presentation for its members. For example, in the 1950s, the Daughters of Bilitis had already decried butch styles among lesbians, seeing them as "the worst publicity we can get" (quoted in Faderman 1991: 180), an explicit appeal by its white, middle-class leadership and members for gender-appropriate behavior. And finally, as with the emergence of transexual women, the possibilities (however restricted) for SRS and hormonal reassignment of female bodies in the postwar period heightened the stakes in both activism and personal identification (H. Rubin 2003).

The crucial point, though, is that the history of non-normative gender/sexual identities and practices for female-bodied people cannot be separated from the history of women's struggles for full citizenship in the United States in the twentieth century. While male-bodied people who adopted feminine practices/identities or who desired other men were contravening one set of norms, the desire of a female-bodied person for another female-bodied person, and/or their adoption of masculine behaviors, occupations, and so forth was simultaneously refracted through claims about women's status (and vice versa). This context set the stage for both the negotiation of identificatory possibilities in the 1970s and also for the movement of debates about the meanings and politics of lesbianism into the women's movement.



The Lavender Menace zap at the Second Congress to Unite Women in 1970 changed both the relationship between lesbianism and the women's movement as well as the politics of identification within lesbian, butch/femme, and female-bodied gender-variant communities. The zap, led by Rita Mae Brown and the Radicalesbians, was one of the many moments when lesbians attempted to confront the implicitly heterosexist bias of the women's movement, but, like Stonewall (less than a year before), it has achieved iconic status as a turning point. The response of the Congress was to pass lesbian-inclusive resolutions, making lesbianism part of (or even central to) the women's movement, but also bringing to a head debates about the status of "male-identified" female-bodied people. The resulting embrace of lesbianism as central to the women's movement resulted in the de facto figure of the (non-role-playing, woman-born-woman) politicized lesbian-feminist as the most valid form of lesbian identification in the 1970s. Lesbian-feminism both embraced an essentialist claim for the category of "woman" and simultaneously asserted lesbianism as "elective," a "conscious political choice to leave heterosexuality and embrace lesbianism" (Faderman 1991: 207). Henry Rubin argues that it was this event, rather than Stonewall, that is understood as the beginning of a specifically lesbian feminist movement, clearly distinguished from the politics of sexual liberationist gay and lesbian activism (2003: 67).

This shift within the women's movement had several radical consequences. First, lesbianism came to be framed institutionally within feminism as primarily a political (rather than only or necessarily erotic) identification. Indeed, in the rejection of association with gay male activists and of the "old gay" forms of working-class lesbian identification, lesbian-feminism was organized around a rejection of "homosexuality" as a framing category for their experiences (Seidman 1993: 112). While not all lesbian-identified women subscribed to these politics or forms of identification, as Faderman and Duberman make clear, lesbian-feminism had a profound effect on public discourses and personal identification.

Moreover, the new lesbian-feminism, while far more radical than the "old gay" politics of homophile organizations, carried with it the earlier

distaste of masculine identification and practices in female-bodied people. In this context, then, "gender" came to index both gendered inequalities in the distribution of power, *and* the radical discrepancy between (naturalized) masculine and feminine identification. The butch, her femme girlfriend, and FTMs became representative of the "false consciousness" produced by patriarchal systems of oppression, adherents to the "old gay" way of life. Once again, these issues shaped and were shaped by other kinds of social differences, for where the newly politicized lesbian-feminists were primarily white and middle class, the butch/femme subculture they condemned was essentially a feature of bar culture whose members were primarily working class (H. Rubin 2003).

## INSCRIBING HOMOSEXUALITY AND GENDER VARIANCE

The radical moment of 1969–70 is also evident in the nascent gay liberation and lesbian-feminist press of the time, and both provide insight into the politics, claims, and orderings of identities that pertained in the immediate post-Stonewall era.[7] For example, in the summer 1972 issue of *Fag Rag*, an anonymous author wrote the following under the heading "Transvestites":

> We transvestites have to take care of ourselves because, as past history shows, no other homosexual is going to do it. . . . Most gays either hate us, are scared of us or, at the very most, see us as entertaining or amusing. They should be proud that we are members of the gay community. Looking back on the events of the last two years, it was half-sisters and upfront faggots who started the Stonewall riots which heralded the birth of the gay liberation movement. It wasn't the butch numbers but the screaming queens. . . . "Revolutionary" gay men mock transvestites. Their rhetoric tells men to wear a dress to smash manhood—"Be a fiery femme." You can't make yourself into something which you are not. This mockery oppresses us. They can flaunt revolutionary drag for theatrical effect and wear their "man" drag to be safe. (Anonymous 1972c: 4)

In the same issue, an advertisement for gay pride week of 1972 includes a listing for a film called "*I WANT WHAT I WANT a film about the changes of a transsexual.*"[8] The description underneath reads: "TRANSVESTITES AND TRANSSEXUALS getting together to talk about our uniquely beautiful life and the problems we face. Other gay people interested will be getting together at the same time to talk about our relationships, gender roles, etc." (Anonymous 1972b, emphasis in original).

Evident in these two brief examples are some of the primary tensions—political and categorical—that underpinned the early gay liberation movement. First, it is clear that there were already clearly developed lines between "transvestites," "transexuals," and "other gay people." In the first quote there is also a further complication of the idea of "drag," with the anonymous author deriding radical gay activists who played with gender roles by "be[ing] a fiery femme," implying that cross-dressing by gay men for political purposes was at best mockery.

Yet, at the same time, it is also clear from the above that "transvestites" and "transexuals" were seen as part of a "gay community" both by themselves and by others. This is most clearly spelled out at the level of ontological unity in "sexual orientation" in a manifesto published in the *Gay Liberator* in October 1972. In calling for "Full Civil Rights for Gays!" the (once again anonymous) author writes: "Gay people must be included in civil rights guarantees. There must be no discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment, housing, or any other area. 'Sexual orientation' includes male and female homosexuality, transsexuality and transvestism, etc." (Anonymous 1972a).

Yet once again, resistance to these claims is also evident from other media at the time. In the pages of *The Advocate*, letters to the editor expressed explicit claims over what "gay" should contain as a category, an issue that also drew on class and racial anxieties. For example, Donald Currante, who identifies himself as a "senior Gay—conservative and well connected socially and actively in the straight and gay world," complains that his gay identity is "prejudiced by screaming exhibitionists who usually have nothing to lose by their tantrums" and attributes to "flouncing, screaming 'fags'" the endangerment of civil rights gains by the gay community. "It is time," Currante claims, "we drew a line just what [*sic*] is embraced in the Gay Lib Movement—what it supports and what it doesn't. You can't make a blanket coverage of every type of homosexual. The movement will dissolve into weakness unless it takes a definite stand and let it be known whom it includes and ex-es" (1973: 36, 40). It is not clear whether Currante is referring to what contemporary readers might distinguish as transgender people and "overt" effeminate gay men, but he identifies precisely the categorical concerns over (class and racially in-

flected) gender non-normative behavior in the gay liberation movement. His reference to "whom it includes and ex-es" points to the active processes of differentiation that were underway even as these differences were still subsumed by "gay."

These concerns were further elaborated, in different ways, by lesbian-feminists who were invested in claiming a unity to womanhood based on biological sex at birth and by a politicized lesbian identification. In 1973 the *Gay Liberator* printed a debate over the denunciation of drag queens, transvestites, and transexuals by a spokeswoman for Lesbian Feminist Liberation at the 1973 Stonewall commemoration march. A letter writer, Jeff, demanded to know where the *Liberator* stood on this issue, and in reply the editors claimed that while drag could be mocking and offensive, they saw no necessary relationship between male drag or MTF transexuality and ridicule of women (Editors 1973). These debates played out in different ways in the specifically lesbian media of the time, as Henry Rubin (2003: 75–84) notes in his analysis of articles and letters in *The Ladder* and *The Tide*. The debates over butch/femme relationships and roles were also about who should be included in and excluded from the category of lesbian. These debates became especially heated as more FTMs explicitly identified as men in the early 1970s. Rubin cites a letter written in *The Ladder* by Karl Ericsen, a transexual man who attempted to distinguish between FTMs and butches. Rubin notes that "Ericsen's 'The Transsexual Experience' represents a transition from a single deviant identity, the invert, to multiple deviant subjects, now determined by either sexual or sex/gender inversion. . . . By the 1970s, FTMs had become much more clearly distinct from lesbians" (85).

These accounts are compelling because they point to the opposing agendas, positions, and identifications of the people engaged in them: clear boundaries are hard to define. The editors of the *Gay Liberator* in their response to Jeff's letter, and the lesbian feminists who decried drag and transexuality, both claimed a feminist perspective; likewise, writers in these publications made claims about inclusions and exclusions of various orders. Moreover, the categories that are used in these accounts—*transvestite*, *transexual*, *gay*, FTM, *lesbian*, *butch*, *femme*, "flouncing, screaming 'fags' "—speak to the complex ways in which, while differences were recognized and policed, at the same time this was a debate over whether or not this variety could be encapsulated by "gay" or "lesbian." Even as heterosexual cross-dressers and transexuals were distancing themselves



from homosexuality, as Meyerowitz (2002) shows, transexuals, transvestites, drag queens, effeminate gay men, butches, and others who were marked by "flamboyance" or " blatantness" were trying to assert their place within gay and lesbian activism, politics, and social life.

## ACCOUNTING FOR GENDER VARIANCE

How then do we account for male-bodied feminine people and female-bodied masculine people in the pre-Stonewall era who may be identified at a historical remove as either homosexual or transgender in the contemporary United States?

For some contemporary gay male scholars, historical male-bodied feminine people are seen as having been forced into feminine roles and dress because of public opprobrium and expectations about the feminine nature of homosexual men. Hekma, for example, speculates that "perhaps sodomites adopted feminine styles, habits and clothes as an expression of their deep desires, but it is more likely that it was either a pose to attract the sexual attention of men from outside the subculture or a mimicry of male-female relations" (1994: 236). This analysis is shared by Cole, who argues, in his history of gay male dress, that homosexual men wore certain clothing primarily to attract male sexual partners. In considering the cross-dressing of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, he argues, "it is important to view effeminacy as often a symbol of availability rather than of the object of desire" (2000: 20). Like Hekma, Cole sees cross-dressing, feminine behavior, and feminine style among male-bodied people as purely situational, and, above all, to signal sexual availability rather than an index of an internal feminine gender identity.

Hekma and Cole are arguing, therefore, that same-sex activity between two male-bodied people that involved cross-dressing or feminine expression was somehow false, a function of circumstance in historical and social contexts where homosexual men could not easily find gender-normative partners who would desire them as men. Ken Plummer implies the same thing when he writes of Ulrichs's third-sex model of homosexuality that it "embraced the *mistaken* idea of a third sex with a woman's mind in a man's body, and vice versa—an idea which *misleadingly* pervades much contemporary sexology" (1992: 5, my emphasis). In a more overtly political mode, Andrew Sullivan (1995) also characterizes the gender variance associated with homosexuality as a product of homophobia, and an un-

natural state for gay men. In all these accounts—historical, sociological, and polemic—gay male effeminacy is thus an unnatural product of inequality, homophobia, and oppression (see Phelan 2001: 121ff.).[9]

There is also a convergence between representations of male-bodied people and female-bodied people who engaged in cross-gender practices and behaviors in the early- and mid-twentieth century. As with the characterization of femininity in male-bodied people by some contemporary gay male scholars as merely strategic, the characterization of the "false consciousness" of butches and FTMs in lesbian-feminism implicitly marks these subjectivities as unnatural products of social and hegemonic forces. In historical scholarship too, butches and "passing women" tend to be seen as having engaged in masculine behaviors in order to achieve independence and/or to develop forms of erotic relationships with other female-bodied people (Kennedy and Davis 1993: 3–4; see Califia 2003 [1997]: 150). In other words, underpinning these different accounts is an assumption that the gender-normativity of male homosexuality and the woman-identified-woman of lesbian-feminism are natural. At the same time, the gender variance of historical butches, queens, transexuals, and transvestites is understood variously as the product of circumstance, oppression, or false consciousness.

Thus, by the mid-1970s the "sorting out" of gendered and sexual identities —though for different reasons and with different outcomes—had produced a field in which gender transgressions were increasingly seen as being outside the bounds of what "gay" or "lesbian" could mean. Likewise, the development of transexual identities and others that resonated with these under the rubrics of "drag" or "transvestism" provided a nascent space for the negotiation of categorical orderings, which was reformulated through the possibilities of "transgender" in the 1990s.

Before I continue with this analysis, I want to summarize three themes in the above accounts. The first is to note that there has been an inordinate amount of work done to distinguish gender-normative homosexuality from transgressively gendered identities and practices. I am interested in the political implications of and theoretical possibilities generated by these kinds of claims. To argue that the feminine practices of male-bodied people were simply oriented toward sexual liaisons dismisses the possibility that



(at least) some may have had more at stake than simply attracting sexual partners. Likewise, for female-bodied people, it is not enough to assume that passing as men was simply for safety or employment opportunities.

The second theme lies in the different ways in which historical male- and female-bodied people who contravened gendered norms are drawn on by contemporary gay men and lesbians (and, more specifically, scholars). Both gay men and lesbians are arguing for a rereading of historical subjects who crossed gender lines to a lesser or greater degree and both see the (gendered) historical antecedents of homosexuality as mistaken, as "false consciousness," or as a hard choice in an unjust world. But while (some) lesbians are interested in reclaiming as butch lesbian icons people like Allen/Lucille Hart or Billy Tipton (female-born people who lived social and personal lives as men), most contemporary gay men appear to be on the whole adamant in their rejection of the historical fairies and queens as models of contemporary gay male homosexuality. Simultaneously, the absorption of all these figures into a transgender history represents both a counterclaim and a reordering of these histories (see chapter 4).

The third theme lies in the mutually constitutive role of class, race, and gender variance in these histories. The tensions between gender-normative homosexual desire and public gender variance is apparent as early as the late nineteenth century, and they were carried over into the earliest homosexual rights movements in debates about strategy, civil rights, and what kinds of gendered/sexual expressions were valid. However, "overtness," "flamboyance," and "male-identification" also indexed a complex condensation of and tensions over racial identification, street life, public sexuality, and implicit antagonism to white, middle-class norms. In the period after the Stonewall riots of 1969 and the Lavender Menace zap at the Second Congress to Unite Women in 1970, these tensions became even more apparent.

## THE PLACE OF THE VISIBLE

"By the mid-1970s, like the revolutionary movements on which it modeled itself, the political wing of the gay and lesbian movement was following a far more moderate course, for legal and political legitimacy," argues Urvashi Vaid (1995: 55; see D'Emilio 2002: 83). Vaid further notes, "The major difference between lesbians and gay men in the 1970s was the creation by women of an autonomous lesbian-feminist culture, and the in-

stitutionalization, primarily by men, of mainstream gay politics" (64). Levine (1998) points out that for gay men this moderate course was predicated on a rejection of femininity: "Activists rejected the belief that gay men were womanly, claiming that to believe so was a symptom of internalized homophobia. . . . Gay men were simply men who loved men" (57; see also Seidman 1993). Indeed, in a 1978 article in *Christopher Street,* Seymour Kleinberg could ask "Where Have All the Sissies Gone?"

While these politics fell out in different ways in "mainstream gay politics" and in "lesbian-feminist culture," in both cases, the rejection of racially- and class-marked drag, "flamboyance," or "male identification" was a central feature of their institutionalization as movements. These divergent historical developments came together at certain moments, such as the attempt by lesbian-feminists to prevent Sylvia Rivera from speaking at the 1973 Stonewall commemoration (Duberman 1993: 236).[10] Lesbian-feminists objected to Rivera — a Puerto Rican street queen — as "parodying women," but simultaneously, the reassertion of "normality" and "respectability" in mainstream gay and lesbian activism already made Sylvia Rivera undesirable as the public face of homosexuality. Nowhere was the claim on normality more evident than in the then-current attempt to remove homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* or DSM (Bayer 1987).

The removal of homosexuality from the DSM was a central goal of early gay liberation activists and is central to the consolidation of contemporary meanings of homosexuality and transgender. The DSM, originally published in 1952, is the central diagnostic and nosological tool of psychiatry and had included homosexuality as a category of mental disorder from its first edition. To post-Stonewall activists, the pathologization of homosexuality was anathema and was seen as central to the broader homophobic structures they aimed to overturn. Gay and lesbian activists adopted a combination of tactics from the radical moment of 1969, disrupting meetings of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), picketing events, and engaging in other protests (Bayer 1987: 388). But at the same time, activists implicitly engaged earlier accommodationist homophile arguments that homosexual desire was simply a natural variation and not pathological, backgrounding the more radical "genderfuck" politics of other gay activism with its roots in the anti-racist, anti-war, and feminist movements.

However, these events coincided with major transformations within psychiatry. First, there was growing dissent from psychiatrists who opposed the pathologization of homosexuality. More importantly, however, within the profession an emphasis on a research-oriented approach and stable diagnostic criteria was being asserted over the psychosocial, clinically based model which had dominated psychiatry in the United States since the end of World War II (Wilson 1993). These transformations were being played out in the development of the third edition of the DSM (or DSM-III) led by Robert Spitzer and the APA's Committee on Nomenclature (APA 1980). Mitchell Wilson argues that DSM-III marked a radical change not only by transforming psychiatric diagnosis but also by asserting "a model of psychopathology that stressed what was *publicly visible* over what was privately inferred" (408, emphasis in original). Wilson's analysis resonates with the arguments made by activists but also with earlier sexological and medical investigations into homosexuality which sought to find visible signs of "inversion." This shift was significant to gay activists since Spitzer and other committee members were persuaded that homosexuality had no stable, visible diagnostic signs. That is, by insisting on "normality" and rejecting visible gender variance, gay activists argued that homosexuals displayed no *publicly visible* evidence of their homosexuality, which was essentially the *private* exercise of sexuality and which was itself neither caused by nor resulted in mental anguish. In short, this was effectively a claim to invisibility — a dense condensation of gendered, sexual, racial, and class normality.

By the end of 1972, the Committee moved to delete homosexuality from the DSM, leading to a contentious debate within psychiatry that continues to the present day (Bayer 1987; see Bieber 1987, Feder 1997, Sedgwick 1993). By the time DSM-III was published in 1980, however, a new diagnostic category had been developed — Gender Identity Disorder (GID). GID created a diagnostic place for people who had not previously been explicitly recognized as such in the pages of DSM, transexuals and others who engaged in *visibly* gender-variant behaviors and who had previously been understood at least partially through the categories of either homosexuality or transvestism. Thus, even as early 1970s sexual/gender subcultures were engaged in naming each other and themselves, developments in psychiatry consolidated a distinction between gender (the realm where transexuals were seen to be "dysphoric") and sexuality (disorders of which affected homosexuals, and others with "paraphilias" such as heterosexual male transvestites). When, in 1973, gay activists succeeded in getting homosexuality removed from the DSM, it was partly through rhetorical appeal to this very distinction, and simulta-

neously through a denial of the radical possibilities of post-Stonewall gay liberation (see Mass 1990: 213–22).[11]

Another strand in these interwoven histories of visibility lies in developments within feminism in the 1970s and 1980s. The ability of lesbian-feminist claims to define lesbianism — and lesbian sexuality — in the 1970s was never completely hegemonic, but it was a powerful force nonetheless. If gay male activists argued that homosexual desire was a purely natural (and private) variation of sexual nature, then lesbian-feminists argued (from a different perspective) that neither erotic desire nor masculine identification were necessarily defining features of lesbianism. Moreover, with the increasing backlash against feminism as "selfish," and as the resurgent U.S. political right framed abortion in the post–*Roe v. Wade* era as "murder," a range of feminists "thought that rhetoric about privacy and women's health was more respectable and less risky than the language of women's sexual freedom" (Vance 1992: xviii). Vance argues, moreover, that as the anti-pornography movement came to shape much of the debates within feminism in the mid- to late 1970s, the backgrounding of sexuality as the defining feature of lesbian identity in lesbian-feminism was transformed into a demonization of sexuality itself in the feminist sexuality debates of the 1980s (see also Butler 1994). These "sex wars" fractured the feminist movement and led, as Vance (1990) notes, to the hijacking of anti-pornography feminism by social conservatives in their attempts to restrict pornography and other forms of public sexual expression (see also Duggan and Hunter 1995).

My concern with these interwoven histories is to isolate the arguments about *visibility* and how they map onto arguments about the public and the private. As gay male activists argued for the private nature of homosexual activity, so lesbian-feminists and anti-pornography feminists claimed that public representations of women in pornography, or visible signs of gender variance (butch/femme styles, transexuality), negatively impacted the lives of women. Thus by the mid-1970s that which was *visible* among gender/sexual subcultures became newly engaged as the focus of activists, arms of the state, and psychiatry. If the mid-twentieth-century CSSV study attempted to codify the visible signs of homosexuality in the body (Terry 1995), from the 1970s on, different parties — with different motivations — attempted to define homosexuality *against* that which was visible; and in particular evidence of racialized and class-inflected gender-variant behavior and visibly public sexuality.



Given that the bulk of my argument above has invoked the categories "gender" and "sexuality" it is now time to address them directly.

## GENDER AND SEXUALITY

To reiterate: the primary categories I've discussed above — "transgender" and "homosexuality" — are only available in their contemporary meanings *as* discrete categories because of a central distinction that developed in the United States in the twentieth century between gender and sexuality (or, remember, "gender" and "sexuality"). The distinctions between biological sex, social gender, and sexual desire were elaborated first by early-twentieth-century European sexologists. This move was precisely to enable them to distinguish between the experiences of people who visibly transgressed conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity in clothing, occupation, or manner (the contemporary realm of "gender"), and those who, despite being content to be social men and women in concordance with their birth ascription, were erotically drawn to people of the same general embodiment ("sexuality"). I employ these roundabout ways of describing what came to be understood as "transvestism" and "homosexuality" in early sexology precisely to point to the work that these researchers had to do in order to separate out these phenomena. Hirschfeld, Ellis, and others did not have this language, for, indeed, the distinction was emerging from their work. In my own account of early sexology earlier in this chapter, the distinction I make between "gender expression" and "erotic attraction" is a contemporary distinction. At the same time, what we now understand as "gender," "sex," and "sexuality" were complexly interwoven in their accounts; for these writers understood homosexuality and transvestism to be properties of the sexed body itself.

As Meyerowitz (2002) details, this distinction was elaborated by mid-twentieth-century psychiatrists and medical practitioners with the advent of transexuality and the possibilities of SRS, for transexuality produced a field in which sexed bodies had to be understood as distinct from social gender role and identity. More work had to be done, however, to distinguish gender from erotic desire/sexuality. While Magnus Hirschfeld had moved toward this distinction in his 1910 *Die Transvestiten*, the separation of gender and sexuality at an epistemological level was only fully elaborated within the medical field by Robert Stoller in the late 1960s, just prior to the Stonewall riots (Stoller 1968). In the early days of transexual

medical specialties, many, including the psychiatrist Richard Green, a central figure in these debates, were concerned that the desire for SRS merely masked a repressed homosexual (and thus "sexual") desire (Meyerowitz 2002: 126). The work of Stoller, Green, and others thus enabled the difference between gender and sexuality (and thus transsexuality and homosexuality) to be elaborated and institutionalized in medical terms.[12]

The logics of this distinction played out in complex ways. Male-bodied people who clamored for SRS in the period after Christine Jorgensen's surgery in 1952 learned very quickly that doctors expected them to reject homosexual desire and to be horrified by the idea of homosexual sex prior to surgery. To admit to homosexual desire or activity was tantamount to admitting one was not "really" transsexual because it indicated an interest in deriving erotic satisfaction from (male) genitals which, in the medical model of transsexuality, were supposed to be abhorrent to the transsexual patient. In other words, the emerging practices around MTF transsexuality themselves framed the *absence* of sexual desire (of any kind) as both a symptom of transsexuality and a requirement for SRS (Meyerowitz 2002: 159, Califia 2003 [1997]: 58). Not surprisingly, doctors found themselves presented with a range of patients who professed just such an asexuality and a rejection of homosexual identification.[13] These developments in transsexual medicine, in turn, were also central to the dynamics which led to the deletion of homosexuality from and the inclusion of GID in the DSM and to the "sorting out" of identities within gender/sexual subcultures.

This is not only a story of medical and sexological innovations, however. If the distinction between biological sex and social gender (famously proposed by Beauvoir 1989 [1952]) was a central claim of second-wave feminism, then the distinction between gender and sexuality has roots in the feminism of the 1970s as well. Stoller's differentiation of gender and sexuality was drawn on by early second-wave feminists (Jolly and Manderson 1997: 2), though this was not the only or even primary route through which this distinction was developed within feminism. In particular, Gayle Rubin's "Thinking Sex" (1984) stands as an iconic and influential chapter in proposing gender and sexuality/erotics as distinct arenas of social experience that deserved attention as separate, if related, phenomena. Rubin's article, appearing in the context of feminist debates over the place of butch/femme roles, S/M practices, pornography, and the status of sexual desire itself, thus resonated with earlier sexological and medical moves to separate out gender and sexuality as different, if related, aspects of human experience. In many contemporary feminist accounts, then, gender is also understood as connected to, but not the same as, sexuality.

At the same time, "gender" and "sexuality" operate differently in this tradition than they do in psychiatry, sexology, and the critical fields of sexuality and queer theory which have emerged more recently. If feminist and sexological traditions share an understanding of "gender" as "social," and of "gender" as something distinct from "sexuality," the emphasis has also been different. First, the tradition of sex research has not historically adopted the central feminist argument that those gendered as feminine/women bear the negative weight of gendered systems of power, access, and privilege. Indeed, Meyerowitz (2002: 125) argues that "gender" in medical and sexological accounts of transsexuality in the 1960s was implicitly tied to a reassertion of traditional gender roles, just as feminists were arguing against precisely these norms. Second, and crucially, "gender" and "sexuality" are more complexly understood against one another within feminist accounts because of the recognition of the importance of sexuality, reproductive rights, and women's sexual agency to the gendered experience of being a woman (Scott 1986: 1057, Vance 1991: 876).

Part of my goal in this book is thus to argue that the "gender" that underpins "transgender" and marks it as distinct from the "sexuality" of mainstream gay and lesbian politics is one rooted in a sexological rather than feminist tradition (see Hausman 2001). This is absolutely *not* to suggest that "transgender" is "anti-feminist," an issue I take up later in this book. But the crucial point is that while in feminism the sexual and the gendered have been (and continue to be) interrogated in terms of one another as systemic and related to inequalities borne by women and female-bodied people, the distinction between "transgender" and "homosexuality" in LGBT activism (and some scholarship) draws its primary meaning from historical discourses which gloss over the different experiences of male- and female-bodied people and which see gender and sexuality in terms of individual and internal identity. This latter understanding of "gender" and "sexuality" thus posits "gender" as just another kind of social difference, one that is structurally equivalent to but ontologically distinct from "sexuality." This observation is also the beginning of an argument in this book as to why MTF and FTM transgender-identified people are differently located vis-à-vis the category of transgender.

Judith Butler makes precisely this point in her essay "Against Proper Objects" (1994) where she analyzes the claim that the "proper object" of lesbian and gay studies is "sexuality" while feminism should be the privileged site for the study of "gender," a claim which rests on a series of methodological sleights of hand. First, it reduces feminism to the study of "gender"; second, it equates "gender" purely with differences between men and women, thereby reducing "gender" to biological sex; and third, it results in a reduction of "sexuality" to "homosexuality." Butler notes that Rubin's "Thinking Sex" was central here. Rubin's intervention in "Thinking Sex" has often been read precisely as a call for the radical separation of gender and sexuality (e.g., Phelan 2001: 131). But, as Butler notes, Rubin's argument in the context of the feminist sexuality debates was not for the establishment of gay/lesbian studies as a field "but for an analysis that might account for the regulation of a wide range of sexual minorities" (8).[14]

Rod Ferguson extends Butler's point, arguing that "sexuality" as a category of knowing is also "constitutive of and constituted by racialized gender and class formations" (2005: 88). As the related histories above indicate, the gendering of sexuality and the sexualization of the gendered is also riven with class and racial origins, dynamics, and processes so that the very constitution of gender or sexuality as objects — proper or not — cannot be dislocated from the broader contexts of daily and institutionalized power in which they come to cohere. That is to say, the competing stories about Stonewall, the claiming of people as transgender or homosexual, and the deletion of homosexuality from the DSM can also be — and must be — seen as implicated in histories of race and class as they are in those of gender and sexuality.

The essential point, then, is that "transgender" has emerged — both as a movement and as an identity category — primarily from within a framework established by a racialized and class-inflected gay and lesbian — and latterly, queer — activism and scholarship. The result is that the distinction between gender and sexuality upon which the transgender/homosexuality divide is based is conceptualized as ontological and cannot account for the complex movements between and reshapings of those analytic and lived domains — "gender" and "sexuality" — which have been the focus of so much feminist theorizing and activism. Moreover, as Ferguson insists, this distinction cannot easily account for how "gender" and "sexuality" take shape in particular racialized and class forms.



Despite these critical (if different) understandings, the assumption that sexed bodies, social gender, and sexual acts/desire *are* intimately connected has remained powerful in U.S. American popular culture and in some (and somewhat questionable) scientific thought (Bailey 2003; see also note 12 to this chapter). In this view, homosexual desire is *necessarily* gender-variant/deviant because sexual desire and sexual acts are, in Western societies (and most others), central features of what it means to be a man or a woman. Likewise, a man or woman who cross-dresses or takes on the roles and behaviors ascribed to another sex/gender is seen to be — or at least suspected to be — homosexual. In such a view, sex/gender/sexuality are interchangeable insofar as sexed body, social gender, and sexual desire are inextricable; and any deviation from this norm is understood as sinful or as a manifestation of mental illness.

These arguments can be — and often are — contested by arguing that this is a *conflation* of different aspects of human lives — gender and sexuality — that do not, ontologically, impact on one another. This, indeed, is at the heart of Feinberg's and Devor's and Matte's claims in this chapter's epigraphs and is frequently and explicitly made in the literature (e.g., Faderman 1991: 45, Cromwell 1999: 46). But *both* of these positions — sexuality and gender as distinct or as part of the same package — rely on the idea that there are domains called "sexuality" and "gender" that have both experiential and ontological status and which can act or not act upon the other. That is, neither of them is "true" insofar as no categorical system fully explains the ways in which those lived experiences we name through "gender" and "sexuality" are lived on a day-to-day basis by particular social actors in particular social contexts (see Gagné and Tewksbury 2002).

Thus, the very idea that gender and sexuality either can be "conflated" or should be seen as "intersecting" relies on a slippage between analytic categories and situated, contextual experience. Claims of conflation rely on an assumption that those things we call sexuality and gender have always been *experienced* as distinct and privilege contemporary theoretical framings as the truth of that experience. Moreover, the argument over the conflation of gender and sexuality obscures other social experiences that we name as class, race, culture, nationality, and so on as equally and vitally constitutive of the lives of those historical subjects whose identities

are debated. Thus, the reading back of "conflations" into the historical record is a modernist progress narrative in which contemporary theoretical (and then, implicitly, identitarian) models are taken as the truth of historical and non-Western subjects. Simultaneously, while the separation of gender and sexuality makes sense of many contemporary people's senses of self, there are also contemporary gendered/sexual subjects whose senses of self are not accounted for by this distinction.

I am not proposing a return to a system where self-identified gay men and lesbians are seen as "gender inverts," where transexual- or transgender-identified people are simply dismissed as homosexuals who are too homophobic to accept their homosexuality, or where lesbian sexual practices are policed for their patriarchal content. Clearly, the recognition that "gender" encompasses far more than sexual desire, and, concomitantly, that "sexuality" and sexual desire do not always align in conventional ways with gender identity, is a vital one. But (and this is a big but), the bald assertion of the ontological separateness of gender and sexuality ignores the complexity of lived experience, the historical constructedness of the categories themselves, the racial and class locations of different experiences and theorizations of gender and sexuality, feminist understandings of gender and sexuality as systemic and power-laden, and transforms an analytic distinction into a naturalized, transhistorical, transcultural fact. I am interested in the collective mode of transgender because it is increasingly constitutive of the newly institutionalized uses of gender and sexuality as ontologically separate forms of social difference uninflected by race and class; and, concomitantly, I argue that it has become so rapidly and broadly salient because it both depends on and elaborates this emerging cultural model of gender and sexuality.

## INSTITUTIONALIZING PRIVACY

Some readers may argue that the above account denies the complication of "gender" and "sexuality" in scholarship, activism, and even in daily lived experience. Certainly, the histories I have mapped above have not focused on the critique of accommodationist gay and lesbian politics (e.g., Berlant and Warner 1998, Duggan 2003, Joseph 2002b, Seidman 1993, Warner 1999), calls for social constructionist accounts which query the categorical solidity of analytic terms (e.g., Freedman and D'Emilio 1990, Jolly and Manderson 1997, Sinfield 2004, Wieringa and Blackwood 1999), or feminists who contest a simple reduction of "gender" to an essentialized sexual difference model (e.g., Butler 1994, B. Martin 1994). But these histories point to the fact that, for all these counterdiscourses, public understandings of gender and sexuality (as well as homosexuality, transgender, and feminism) have become institutionalized through a vast set of contexts—from public policy to media representations, and from psychiatry to grassroots activism.

One of the primary sites of such institutionalization has resulted from mainstream gay and lesbian activist claims that homosexual people are essentially the same as heterosexual Americans but for the one fact of privately experienced and conducted sexual desire and practice. Certainly, such an idea is not uniformly accepted, but this line of argumentation has an increasingly powerful rhetorical and explanatory force in U.S. culture. Indeed, in the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Lawrence v. Texas* in 2003, the majority of the justices concurred with Justice Kennedy, who invoked the right to privacy in finding the Texas sodomy law (and by extension, all sodomy laws) unconstitutional. This ruling, however, further reinstantiates the understanding of homosexuality as a *private* concern. As other scholars have argued, the privileges of heterosexuality extend far beyond the boundaries of the bedroom, where gay/lesbian people are expected to conduct themselves as implicitly "straight" members of society (e.g., Knopp 1992).[15]

These concerns about privacy and appropriateness are evident in many contexts. While gay and lesbian organizations celebrate the "diversity" of gay and lesbian communities, it is also clear that the representation of the sober, respectable homosexual is at the forefront of contemporary mainstream gay and lesbian organizations in ways not dissimilar to the claims of the homophile movement of the 1950s and 1960s.[16] As I have argued above, though, "sameness" also operates along multiple axes because other elements of social difference—named through categories such as class, race, and culture—are made invisible through the privatization of gay identity. Indeed, current concerns around gay and lesbian marriage, spousal benefits, and so on, are deeply middle-class concerns and, while important, the focus on such issues has drowned out the insistence by other activists that gay and lesbian organizations also consider issues of poverty, welfare reform, and racism which also have had significant im-

pact on gay- and lesbian-identified people (Jacobs 2004). As we will see in chapter 5, discourses about privacy resonate with a broader assertion of the role of privacy and privatization in U.S. and global neoliberal political, economic, and social orders since the 1970s. Most significantly, the "sameness" argument is intimately bound to repudiating the historical association of homosexuality with publicity, overtness, and gender variance.

I would argue, then, that "transgender," while it has been generated by individuals who so identify, *is also an effect of the historical development of privatized homosexual identity* for it is no longer the case, as Jayne County writes it used to be, that "everyone [is] just gay." Thus, to summarize the logic, "transgender" by its categorical implication of visible gender variance, and its association of "overtness" and the street, confers stability on the gender of (especially white and middle-class) gay men and lesbians. By stressing the otherness of "transgender," its difference as a separate "community" and "identity" from those of "gay/lesbian/homosexual" people, the similarity of the latter to heteronormative models of personhood and citizenship is recognized and demanded. The construction of gender as a public concern, and that of sexuality in the realm of the private, places "transgender" as a category of difference and "gay" as the category of similarity and sameness. I argue, then, that "transgender" has become useful to accommodationist gay and lesbian groups (apart from its usefulness to transgender-identified people) precisely because it has been able to absorb the gender transgression which has doggedly been associated with modern (and especially male) homosexual identities for more than a hundred years.

These effects are not a conscious part of the diverse and liberatory politics framed by transgender. However, my point is that, whatever the political views of particular social actors, the institutionalization of these understandings reproduces these histories or, at the very least, the ontologies of difference that underpin them. To remind the reader, my concern is more than critical or historical. Rather it is political—for again I want to draw attention to those whose understandings of self may fall out of this system, and in turn, what this can tell us about a broader conceptualization of gender and sexuality.

In the end, Feinberg's archaeology of "transgender warriors" with which I started this chapter both opens up a history and closes down another one. In the chapters that follow, I will look at people who have become—in the terms of activists, sociologists, social service providers, public health officials, and journalists—transgender. I will ask what it means to these people—and to us as scholars and activists—that they have been incorporated into this history, and I will look at how my own research, even as it opens up the questions I have asked above, is drawn back into this same dynamic.