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Heretical Queers: Gay Participation in Anti-Gay Institutions

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

by

Natasha Radojcic

June 2015

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Heretical Queers: Gay Participation in Anti-Gay Institutions

by

Natasha Radojcic

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Sociology
University of California, Riverside, June 2015
Dr. Katja Guenther, Chairperson

This dissertation examines gay participation in anti-gay institutions, notably the Roman Catholic Church and the Republican Party. Using a comparative ethnographic approach, I explore Dignity, a group for gay Roman Catholics, and the Log Cabin Republicans, a group for gay Republicans in order to understand how members cope with marginalization they encounter in both the Church/Republican Party and the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) Community. I demonstrate that participants in these groups are simultaneously members of dominant and subordinate populations that draw on their racial, gender, and class based privilege to deal with the marginalization they experience. Accordingly, this dissertation shows how systems of inequality are replicated within the LGBT Community and within the Roman Catholic Church and the Republican Party.

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Chapter One: Gay Participation in Anti-Gay Institutions

Introduction

Why would members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) community attempt to work within and be part of institutions that appear firmly committed to curtailing their rights? Both the Roman Catholic Church and the Republican Party share long histories of supporting anti-gay policies and beliefs, and continue to oppose equal rights for members of the LGBT community, making it difficult for some to understand the reasons LGBT people continue to participate in these anti-gay institutions. This research seeks to resolve this puzzle by examining the experiences of LGBT people who participate in organizations that are pushing for the acceptance of sexual minorities in the Catholic Church and the Republican Party.

Hipsher (2007) conceptualizes *heretical social movements* as social movement organizations that identify with a certain community, yet assume a position that is contrary to the community's presumed interests. I argue that members of Dignity, an organization for LGBT Roman Catholics, and members of the Log Cabin Republicans, an organization for gay and lesbian Republicans, can be considered *heretical queers*: on one hand, they identify with the LGBT identity community, while on the other hand, they assume a position that is contrary to the LGBT community's presumed goals by being involved in institutions that openly oppose LGBT equality.¹²

¹ I use the term "queer" somewhat ironically. Queer identity initially emerged out of the radical politics of early AIDS awareness groups. "Queer" has since also been associated with a body of scholarly work, queer theory, that criticizes identity politics and categorization. Queer theory involves non-assimilationist tactics and focuses on an emergent political organization. LGBT participants in Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are, like other queer-identified

Drawing on ethnographic data collected through three years of fieldwork within these two organizations, I focus on two research questions. First, I examine the ways in which participants in heretical social movement organizations perceive their relationships with the social movements with which they are outwardly aligned. I consider how members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans see their roles and identities vis-a-vis the LGBT Rights Movement and examine if and how these relationships have changed over time as the LGBT Movement has adopted a mainstreaming strategy by emphasizing similarities with mainstream populations. Second, I investigate how members of a heretical social movement organization handle marginalization from the identity communities to which they belong. Specifically, I analyze the experiences of members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans to understand how they cope with exclusion they face from the LGBT community and from the Roman Catholic Church and Republican Party, respectively. As detailed throughout this dissertation, I demonstrate that these heretical queers (mostly white, middle class, gay men) are simultaneously members of dominant and subordinate groups that draw on their racial, gender, and class-based power to deal with the marginalization they experience as sexual minorities in both the Church and Party, as well as the LGBT community.

activists, outside of the mainstream of the LGBT Rights Movement, but they also advocate for the mainstreaming of LGBT identities, contra queer politics.

² Both of these groups are considered heretical by the rest of the LGBT Rights Movement (an albeit diverse group with varying perspectives) as is articulated by publications geared at the LGBT community (such as *The Advocate*), the mainstream media, and large organizations purporting to represent gay interests (such as the Human Rights Campaign or the LA Gay and Lesbian Center).

Through shedding light on heretical queers, this dissertation demonstrates that members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans frame themselves as gay rights activists, therefore creating a positive identity for themselves. At the same, members cope with dual exclusion from both the LGBT community and the institutions they seek to be a part of. I argue that heretical queers deal with marginalization they face within the LGBT community by using management techniques used by similarly stigmatized groups, thereby emphasizing the role of institutional affiliation in moderating the impact of other inequalities. Yet heretical queers also face homophobia within the Catholic Church and Republican Party. I argue that members of these two organizations also employ a number of coping mechanisms to deal with this inequality, but in the process of doing so reinforce hegemonic notions of masculinity. Lastly, this dissertation demonstrates the ways in which heretical queers hint at the LGBT Rights Movement's next steps.

Background and Significance

The LGBT Movement has gained significant public attention over the past forty years as participants fought against the widespread social, political, and legal marginalization of sexual minorities in the United States. The movement has addressed a range of issues, including discrimination in housing, employment, family formation, and culture. Because of its challenges to dominant conceptualizations of gender and sexuality, the movement has attracted a good deal of scholarly attention (Taylor and Whittier 1992, Bernstein 1997, Bernstein 2003, Fetner 2008, Ghaziani 2008, Gould 2009, Nardi 1998,

VanDyke and Cress 2006, Ward 2004, Ward 2008, Gamson 1998). Extant research on the LGBT Movement illuminates that the movement has employed a number of strategies to ensure its success (Bernstein 1997, Fetner 2008, Ghaziani 2008), ranging from celebrating its difference from (Gould 2009, Van Dyke and Cress 2006) to emphasizing its similarity to the mainstream population (Ghaziani 2011, Bernstein 1997).

The movement has historically fostered LGB collective identity in an effort to instill pride among members of the community, with transgender issues incorporated into the agenda of the movement more recently. Yet LGBT people who align themselves with certain social, religious, and/or political values and institutions have been marginalized within the LGBT community. This is especially true in light of the fact that the LGBT Rights Movement was largely born out of the liberal movement, with both liberals and leftists playing a significant role in early movement organizing (Fetner 2008). A common way of viewing heretical queers is as irrational actors, since participating in institutions like the Catholic Church and the Republican Party will do little to increase their social status or ensure equal rights. However, heretical queers are not alone in their seeming “irrational” choice to support institutions that will disadvantage their social or political positions. For example, scholars have been quick to point out the paradox in gay participation in traditionally hegemonic institutions, such as college fraternities (Yeung and Stompler 2000). Also, women active in antifeminist (Marshall 1985, 1986) and conservative movements (Klatch 1987, 2001) are similarly engaged in movement activism that seems to go against their own interests.

While scholars acknowledge the seeming irrationality of supporting movements that decrease one's access to power, they also highlight how actors are, in fact, making rational decisions. For example, in her work on women's roles in anti-suffrage movements, Marshall (1986) finds that participants were working to protect their roles as homemakers, as the suffrage movement was seen as a threat to the cultural and class prestige associated with homemaking. Women's participation was a rational choice strategically made to protect social and class interests. Just as women participating in the anti-suffrage movement were initially dismissed as making "irrational" decisions, heretical queers also have strategic and well-founded reasons for supporting institutions that act against their interests as queers. For example, I find that these heretical queers justify their continued participation in the church and party by framing their work in terms of promoting gay rights, as many of Dignity and Log Cabin Republicans' members view themselves as activists.

Furthermore, this project begins to fill in a gap in existing scholarship on similar heretical groups, which does not yet connect individual cases to one another or make broader claims about heretical groups in general. While scholars describe specific groups' abilities to assert group boundaries (Hipsher 2007), their relationship to the women's movement and feminist ideology (Klatch 2001, 1988), and strategies for mobilization (Marshall 1986, 1985), they do not consider the reasons other similar heretical groups support institutions that are not in their apparent interest. We are still in need of a sociological explanation for the reasons that compel members to participate in institutions that are contrary to their apparent interests. Therefore, this research helps to

build sociological knowledge about heretical individuals and groups, while also illuminating the social worlds of an understudied and poorly understood segment of the LGBT community.

Moreover, attention to heretical queers illuminates how social movement participants negotiate multiple identities that are associated with multiple, sometimes conflicting, grievances and goals. While grievances are necessary for social movement development and participation, heretical queers negotiate grievances that have competing resolutions and reconcile conflicting aspects of their identity when establishing a collective identity. Presumably members of both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans struggle with competing grievances, as the Catholic Church and the Republican Party have very different goals and issues than the LGBT Rights Movement. Similarly, I demonstrate that members of both groups struggle with reconciling their identity as sexual minorities with their identity as Roman Catholics or Republicans.

Not only are Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans representative of the LGBT Rights Movement's mainstreaming strategy, but these groups also speak to the diversity within the movement, a key factor highlighted by scholarship on inequality within the LGBT community. Scholars have begun to explore how the LGBT Movement replicates inequality by ignoring the experiences and perspectives of both lesbians and people of color (Ghaziani 2008, Ward 2008, Teunis 2007, Gamson 1998). In an effort to promote LGBT similarity with the mainstream population, movement leaders highlight the voices of white, educated, liberal, and financially secure men, while overlooking those that do not adhere to these hegemonic criteria (Ghaziani 20008, Ward 2008, Teunis 2007). For

example, Gamson (1998) demonstrates that white, upper class gays and lesbians are strategically portrayed as representing all sexual minorities, thereby silencing individuals who do not possess these characteristics. Bernstein (1997) and Ward (2008) further reveal how organizational and political contexts influence the strategic use of various identities and the inclusion/exclusion of particular types of bodies and voices.

Scholarship on the racial, gender, and class inequity within the LGBT community highlights the need for adopting an intersectional approach to studying heretical queers as many individuals that do not possess hegemonic characteristics have historically been silenced. While exposing the racial and gendered inequality that occurs within the LGBT community, feminist and queer approaches emphasize the ways in which race, class, gender, and sexuality create both opportunities and oppressions that individuals struggle against (Choo and Ferree 2010, Baca Zinn & Dill 1996, Anderson 2005, Espiritu 2001, Kennelly 1999). For instance, while white women struggle against inequality established by male dominance, they also benefit from racial inequality. In this well-entrenched ranking of power, middle class, heterosexual, white men reside at the top with the most power (hegemonic masculinity) and members of the working/lower class, sexual minorities, people of color and women are subordinated with less power. Similarly, queer scholarship emphasizes the hierarchies that exist among sexual minorities, and sexuality creates both opportunities and oppressions (Connell 1992, Gamson 1998, Rosen 2002, Ward 2004, Ward 2008). Therefore, several areas of scholarship, including feminist and race-critical perspectives on social inequalities, as well as sociological

theorizing and research on social movements, inform the framework for the this dissertation on heretical queers.

In sum, this research makes the multiple contributions to sociological research: 1) providing sociological identification of, and explanation for, the reasons that compel members to participate in trying to change institutions that act against their interests and denigrate their identities; 2) exploring the ways social movement actors negotiate competing grievances and identities; 3) highlighting the role of an understudied group of sexual minorities, heretical queers; 4) exploring the ways in which systems of oppression affect heretical queers and their decisions to participate in anti-gay institutions.

Research Methods and Design: Case Selection

To understand how heretical queers cope with marginalization and interpret their relationship to the LGBT Rights Movement, I use a comparative research design involving participant observation and interviews. I investigate and compare two LGBT organizations and their members using ethnographic research methods. I selected two organizations that are involved in asserting gay rights in notably anti-gay institutions, and whose members presumably experience marginalization both within those institutions *and* within the broader LGBT community. Although the two organizations have some notable differences, they are both arenas within which LGBT people struggle for recognition from hostile institutions.

It is important to note that both the Roman Catholic Church and the Republican Party are representative of institutions that embrace homophobic policies and rhetoric.

They both view homosexuality as a chosen “lifestyle” and stand against same-sex marriage and same-sex couples adopting children. While the Roman Catholic Church’s official position, as articulated through the Vatican, suggests that sexual minorities are acting in sin and will eventually be punished when they are sent to hell, the Republican Party embraces traditional “family values” and holds that sexual minorities jeopardize American cultural values. The Catholic Church is a substantially older and larger institution than the Republic Party, and bases its response to homosexuality in religious texts and beliefs. The Republican Party, when compared with the Catholic Church, is a younger organization that is only national (rather than global) in scope and thus smaller. Its beliefs are primarily grounded in political ideologies, although religious beliefs are also important in the Republican Party (Diamond 1989).

In spite of these differences, the Catholic Church and the Republican Party, as well as the LGBT rights organizations seeking inclusion within them, share many similarities. The Catholic Church and the Republican Party are slow to respond to demands for equality by LGBT people and organizations (Diamond 1989). Both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are nationwide organizations with chapters throughout the United States. As grassroots organizations, both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans have formal mission statements and are overseen by a board of directors. The majority of both organizations’ membership base is comprised of highly educated, white men, although both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans’ marketing materials (such as their websites) picture both men and women members and supporters. The overwhelmingly white, male makeup of both organizations demonstrates that class, race

and gender play a significant, through unrecognized, role in each group. The role of class, racial and gender privilege is even more significant in light of both the Catholic Church and the Republican Party's historic legacy of maintaining white, male dominance.

Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans offer fruitful ground for research, as both groups speak to the diversity of perspectives within the LGBT community and the ways that individuals and organizations manage potential contradictions. Dignity's members believe that they have the right to practice Catholicism while also being open about their sexuality. Accordingly, the group strives for a more inclusive Roman Catholic Church that allows its members the opportunity to reconcile their sexuality and their spirituality, while also rejecting aspects of the church's dominant ideology regarding both gender and sexuality. Simultaneously, they assert their right to participate in the LGBT community as Roman Catholics.

Similarly, the Log Cabin Republicans support Republican notions of limited government, and work to shift the party's views on gay rights. Just as the members of Dignity strive for a more inclusive Catholic Church, Log Cabin Republicans work for a gay friendly Republican party that allows them the opportunity to embrace conservative political doctrine. This is true in spite of the party's recent history of anti-gay ideology and legislation.

As I detail in subsequent chapters, I find that while some members of both organizations largely support the institutions they are working to be a part of, others perceive minor aspects of the institutions to be problematic. For example, while

members of Dignity support the Catholic Church and traditional Roman Catholic beliefs regarding the significance of Eucharistic mass, they disagree with the Church hierarchy and its stance on same-sex marriage, homosexuality, and women's right to serve as priests. Similarly, while members of the Log Cabin Republicans support the Republican Party and its fiscal policies, they disagree with its stance on LGBT rights.

Extant research on both organizations highlights the extreme anti-gay sentiment that members experience in the Catholic Church and Republican Party, as well as some of the reasons members provide for participating. Loseke and Cavendish (2001), for example, considered how members of Dignity merge two very separate aspects of their identity, their spirituality and their sexuality, into one distinct gay Catholic identity, or what Loseke and Cavendish term "the dignified self." Similarly, Rogers and Lott (1997) demonstrate how the class, age, and gender of members of the Log Cabin Republicans impact their choice to support the Republican Party. They also illuminate the limitations of identity politics, as many Log Cabin Republican members frown on popular gay subculture. While Loseke and Cavendish and Rogers and Lott highlight the unique plight of LGBT members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans, they do not connect either organization to a wider heretical identity or address the reasons participants continue to support anti-gay institutions. In contrast, I explore the ways in which Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are linked to a wider heretical identity and the reasons individuals choose to support institutions that are not fully aligned with every aspect of their identity, namely sexuality.

Dignity

Dignity was first established in 1969 in San Diego, California, out of a small, informal support group for gay and lesbian Catholics, and has since grown into an international organization that “works to affirm LGBT Catholics by integrating their spirituality and their sexuality” (“Dignity”). In addition to the mass and religious services provided by each regional chapter, Dignity also offers annual conventions providing members with an opportunity to participate in workshops and social activities, a website with resources for the gay or lesbian Catholic, monthly newsletters, and merchandise and apparel for Dignity’s members and supporters.

Many suggest that the Catholic Church is in the midst of a transition, as it grows increasingly multi-ethnic, with rising numbers of Latino participants, (Foley 2007) and experiences demographic shifts among clergy and Church leaders (Schoenherr, Young and Vilarino 1988); these changes are especially evident when considering the Vatican’s recent investigation into the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), an organization that represents most of the country’s nuns, that the Vatican charged as encouraging “radical feminist themes incompatible with the Catholic faith.” However, despite these changes, research conducted by the Pew Research Center (2008) suggests that American Catholics remain overwhelmingly white women who are as educated and wealthy as the general public (Peyrot and Sweeney 2000). Dignity’s membership reflects these trends to a degree, as the majority of its members are white, college educated, and middle class, although women remain in the minority. It is difficult to determine if Dignity is representative of the rest of the gay, Catholic community due to the fact that

little is known about them and how they compare to heterosexual Catholic populations. It is also important to note the link between Catholicism and voting trends: research suggests that Roman Catholic voters tend to support Democratic candidates and policies, despite a recent growing number of Catholic Republicans (Balswick 1970, Alford 1963, Ebersole 1960). However, these voting trends are also closely tied to race, as the Pew Research Center finds that Latino Catholics have historically favored democratic candidates, while white Catholics are slightly more likely to vote in favor of Republicans (Bickel 2012). Similarly, white men are much more likely to vote Republican than either women or people of color, something that was made clear in the 2012 presidential election ("A Closer Look at the Parties in 2012"). I find that Dignity's members tend to have Democratic leanings, although specific data was not collected on members' party identification.

Dignity's members are seeking inclusion in the Roman Catholic Church, an important factor in light of the fact that Catholics are expressly forbidden from engaging in same-sex relations based on Catholic biblical interpretation. As articulated by Catholic leadership, including popes, cardinals and other Vatican officials, much of the Church's negative views on homosexuality is based on the idea that sex is to be used for procreation and any sex (heterosexual included) that occurs outside the purpose of procreation is a sin. Thus, the Church has also historically stood against contraception, sex outside of marriage, and masturbation. Church leaders believe that individuals engaging in any of these activities are acting in sin, and therefore should not receive Holy Communion, a key ritual in the Catholic faith. This leaves gays and lesbians who refuse

to ask for forgiveness for the sin of same-sex relations, without the benefit of Holy Communion. These anti-gay teachings of the Church are compounded by the fact that open gays and lesbians are barred from holding leadership positions and that the Church has historically vocally opposed same sex marriage and same sex couples adopting children.

Log Cabin Republicans

The Log Cabin Republicans began in the late 1970s in response to the backlash against the growing gay and lesbian movement. According to its mission statement, the organization strives to “build a stronger, more inclusive Republican Party by promoting the core values of limited government, individual liberty, personal responsibility, free markets and a strong national defense while advocating for the freedom and equality of gay and lesbian Americans” (“Log Cabin Republicans”). Headquartered in Washington DC, the Log Cabin Republicans host an annual dinner, regular receptions, and events in conjunction with the National Republican Party. Local chapters offer members both the opportunity to meet and discuss politics, as well as the opportunity to meet local Republican candidates during election years. Chapters range in both size and make-up, but most provide members with an outlet for both political involvement and socialization.

The Log Cabin Republicans seek recognition as sexual minorities within a political organization that has stood against women’s reproductive rights, women’s equal rights, affirmative action, immigration reform, and marriage and employment rights for sexual minorities (Diamond 1989, Reese 2005, Lakoff 1995, Himmelstein and McRae

1984, Fetner 2008, Brooks and Manza 2004, Edsall and Edsall 1991). The Republican Party and the Conservative Movement's foothold in American society lie in their ability to appeal to Americans' racist, sexist, classist, and homophobic ideologies, as well a number of socio-historical factors (Reese 2005, Lakoff 1995, Edsall and Edsall 1991). These ideologies hold true today as was evidenced in 2012 voting trends as white men overwhelmingly voted in favor of Republican candidates, to a much higher degree than either women or people of color ("A Closer Look at the Parties in 2012"). In an effort to capture votes among whites, particularly in the South, conservative leaders increasingly embraced a rhetoric that portrayed dominant groups (married couples, middle class whites, employed taxpayers, etc.) as having a moral authority; these dominant groups were portrayed as morally superior to welfare recipients (disproportionately single mothers and racial minorities). This rhetoric helped to build support for their anti-tax policies and appealed to broadly held values, such as the work ethic, the marriage ethic, individualism, and self-reliance (Reese 2005, Lakoff 1995). Furthermore, conservatives relied on racially charged rhetoric and took a strong stand against busing programs to forcibly integrate schools and affirmative action programs, while also embracing "tough on crime" policies that targeted poor people of color.

At the same time, growing race-based nativist sentiment in the 1990's targeted non-white immigrants who were portrayed as taking jobs and using up a shrinking supply of valuable resources. In response to shifts in family form, conservatives mobilized fears about the declining institution of the traditional, heterosexual family in order to garner support among the Christian Right, while conservative religious groups mobilized voters

in favor of Republican candidates and policies. The simultaneous decline of progressive movements such as the feminist, civil rights, and labor movements created an “ideological vacuum” (Reese 2005), in which the Conservative Movement faced little ideological opposition and grew increasingly popular among white American men. Scapegoating immigrants, racial minorities, welfare mothers, and feminists appealed to white men, many of whom were facing layoffs and declining real wages as the economy was de-industrializing and restructuring, trends that were exacerbated in the recent economic downturn. Furthermore, conservative anti-tax sentiment was appealing to working and middle class Americans that were shouldering an increased share of the tax burden after a series of corporate tax cuts, thereby increasing conservative popularity among working and middle class, white Americans. These trends held true in the 2012 election, as researchers concluded that Republican voters were “overwhelmingly” comprised of white men.

Lakoff (1995) accounts for the male dominated nature of the Conservative movement, which has significantly influenced the Republican Party, with his “strict father” model, and attributes widespread Conservative success to shared notions of the ideal family. In this metaphor of the nation as a family, the ideal conservative family consists of a father who is responsible for safeguarding his family’s best moral interests through setting and enforcing moral boundaries via “tough love,” and a mother and children who obey his direction. This model accounts for Conservative favor of limited government and opposition to gun control, as it is the “strict father’s” responsibility to care for and protect his family, and just as guns are seen as necessary for protection,

government intrusion is seen as meddlesome and unnecessary. Lakoff (1995) suggests that the “strict father” model offers explanation for Conservative’s anti-feminist, anti-abortion, and anti-homosexual positions. The “strict father” is responsible for decision making, while the subordinated wife/mother is responsible for raising the children and running the home according to his wishes—clearly this approach runs counter to both feminist demands for equality and for reproductive choice, and LGBT demands for same-sex marriage rights. Accordingly, the “strict father” model explains the Conservative Movement’s male dominated nature, as well as its historic opposition to both of these progressive movements.

Clearly, the Republican Party’s history of embracing classist, sexist, racist, and homophobic policies highlights the unique paradox of Log Cabin Republicans. The group is overwhelmingly comprised of middle class, white men, who on one hand, stand to benefit from Republican fiscal and social policies. On the other hand, as sexual minorities, members of the Log Cabin Republicans also stand to become targets of conservative anti-gay policies. My research suggests that many members of the Log Cabin Republicans support the Party’s stance on both affirmative action and immigration, highlighting both the significance of race, as these policies serve to maintain the white status-quo, and the ways in which the Republican Party appeals to popular racist ideology. Simultaneously, they challenge the Party’s views of sexual minorities as dangerous or threatening to the existing social order, while also demonstrating their gendered privilege by remaining ambivalent on “women’s issues” such as reproductive rights.

Research Methods and Design: Fieldwork Strategy

Using Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans as the primary cases for analyses, I explore issues of organizational culture, diversity, and strategy, all of which involve gender, race, sexuality, and the assertion of rights. Due to geographic and budgetary constraints, my data collection focused on the Los Angeles chapters of these organizations. Both groups have multiple chapters in the Southern California region, including the City of Los Angeles. My two primary research sites were Dignity Los Angeles and the Log Cabin Republicans LA (LCR-LA).

A comparative analysis allowed me to examine the similar and different ways that members of LCR-LA and Dignity manage stigmatization in both the LGBT community and in the anti-gay institutions they are working to change. Furthermore, this comparative approach allowed me to identify how specific organizational culture, diversity, and strategy impacts members. My research suggests that while there are many similarities between the two groups, there are also notable differences. For example, while both groups are comprised of educated, white men, Dignity's members are significantly older, with most being highly educated former professionals, and most having been actively participating in Dignity for longer, giving the group more of a "family" feel, as members have known each other and their partners for decades. On the other hand, LCR-LA members are a much younger demographic, with a membership base comprised of highly educated, professional men, several of whom work as attorneys and have run for public office in the past. Beyond providing more data for persuasive

and reliable conclusions, a comparative approach was necessary for exploring these types of similarities and differences between the groups that a single case study might have overlooked.

That the bulk of this research took place in Los Angeles may influence my findings. I strategically selected the Los Angeles area as I currently live in the community, am quite familiar with the city, and have a large social network that helped me gain entrée into key groups of people affiliated with Dignity and LCR-LA. The City of West Hollywood, adjacent to Los Angeles, is home to an active gay and lesbian community that is highly visible and helps define the character of the city; for example, the City of West Hollywood's historic seal depicts rainbow colors in a display of LGBT support. While anti-gay sentiment certainly exists there, the City of Los Angeles itself is also largely seen as gay-friendly. Accordingly, heretical queers, such as the members of Dignity and the LCR-LA, may face less anti-gay hostility in Los Angeles than they would in other parts of the country. However, because Los Angeles is home to a well-organized and well-defined gay and lesbian community, heretical queers may also face more stigmatization from other gays and lesbians. Field observations when Dignity and LCR-LA engaged in public outreach provided me with excellent opportunities to observe how both Dignity and LCR-LA are received by the broader LGBT community, and in turn how the organizations' members approach other LGBT community members.

I utilized participant observation, content analysis of organizational documents, and interviews throughout the research process which began in April 2012 and ended in April 2015. Qualitative research yields thick and rich detail, thereby allowing researchers

the opportunity to understand the subjects' perspectives, while also capturing important nuances. Adopting a comparative ethnographic approach to studying Dignity and LCR-LA allowed me to best understand the unique and complex positions of LGBT Catholics and LGBT Republicans and the opportunities and oppressions that they face.

Scholarly research on inequality within the LGBT community addresses the role of race-, gender-, and class-based power dynamics and the ways in which white, male, middle class gay men possess the greatest degree of power. Therefore, I utilized an intersectional approach, as the theory and method of intersectionality have long been recognized as powerful tools for identifying the ways in which experiences with inequality vary based on individual characteristics. Each characteristic is seen as equally and simultaneously impacting oppression in a “feedback loop” (Choo and Ferree 2010, Baca Zinn & Dill 1996). I paid particularly close attention to the ways in which racial, gender, and class privilege affect the members of Dignity and LCR-LA by utilizing Matsuada's (1996) concept of “asking the other question” in order to understand the interconnection of oppression. For example, when Matsuada encounters racism, she asks “Where is the sexism in this racism?” or “Where is the classism in this racism?” Accordingly, when witnessing an example of heterosexism, I may ask myself the “other” questions about the roles of racism or classism in order to interrogate the interconnection between all forms of oppression. For example, while members of both groups may face marginalization based on their sexual identities, as whites, they benefit from racial inequity; therefore, “asking the other question” about the racism within heterosexism allows me to better understand the ways in which oppressions interconnect.

This intersectional approach is key as the majority of members from both groups are middle class, white men, suggesting a racial, gender, and class-based dynamic. As detailed in chapters three and four, I demonstrate that members of both groups are simultaneously members of dominant and subordinate groups. On one hand, these heretical queers are members of a subordinate group as gays and lesbians and they also face stigmatization within the LGBT community based on their institutional affiliation. Yet on the other hand, group members also simultaneously members of a dominant group in that they have created spaces that are largely hostile to women, transgender people, and gender non-conformists. Thus, participants in Dignity Los Angeles and LCR-LA simultaneously marginalize others and are marginalized, demonstrating the ways in which forces of oppression intersect.

Observation, Content Analysis, and Interviews

The early stages of my research, which I began in Los Angeles in April 2012, centered on participant observation as I established a rapport with members of both Dignity Los Angeles and LCR-LA. This first phase of research enabled me to establish relationships with the subjects of my research and to learn more about the groups, the ways in which members interact, and the organization's stance on LGBT politics. This period also offered the perfect opportunity to begin documenting demographic information about LCR-LA and Dignity's Los Angeles members (age, racial background, gender, occupation, etc.).

Both organizations met regularly, with Dignity offering weekly mass each Sunday at Dignity's Los Angeles headquarters, and the LCR-LA meeting monthly in the private spaces of various restaurants and bars around Los Angeles. In addition to regular meetings, both organizations offered the opportunity to participate in other social activities; for example, the LCR-LA actively supports other LGBT charities in the Los Angeles area and LCR-LA members routinely attend fundraisers and galas as a group activity. Similarly, Dignity offers monthly movie nights, Bible studies, potlucks and outings to local concerts. As part of my research, I attended Dignity's weekly mass and LCR-LA's monthly meetings, as well as other select social activities. Members of both organizations view one another as close, personal friends, and routinely socialize with one another outside of official Dignity and LCR-LA meetings and events; I would also occasionally participate in these informal get-togethers. I recorded field notes during and immediately after both LCR-LA and Dignity events. These field notes reflect the two research questions that guided my observation, as I paid particular attention to how members understand marginalization and perceive their relationship with the LGBT Rights Movement.

My focus on heretical queers' relationship with the LGBT Rights Movement and the Catholic Church/Republican Party also informed the content analysis portion of my research as I analyzed and reviewed archival materials produced by the Log Cabin Republicans and Dignity's Los Angeles chapters and the national headquarters. These materials include the organization's regular newsletters, correspondence with members and prospective members, and their websites. These are important sources of information

as they are the organization's primary mechanism for communicating with the public, potential new members, existing members, and the rest of the LGBT community.

Furthermore, both organizations catalog press releases, which are key to understanding the groups' reactions to specific events. Presumably both Dignity LA and the LCR-LA would not bother drafting a press release unless they consider a specific topic or event significant enough to merit a formal response; accordingly, press releases also allow me to research the types of events or situations that the organizations define as noteworthy and significant to their respective missions. I reviewed these materials, paying particular attention to how organizations describe marginalization and the LGBT Rights Movement.

I began interviewing the members of the LCR-LA and Dignity's Los Angeles chapter beginning in January 2013, and used these interviews as opportunities to clarify and expand on themes that emerged through my ethnographic research, as well as a tool to give voice to heretical queers. By the time I began interviewing, I had established closer relationships with both Dignity and LCR-LA's members in the hope that the interviewees would feel more comfortable discussing the reasons they choose to participate in the group. Furthermore, interviews allowed me the opportunity to ask directed questions relating to participants' feelings regarding marginalization, the coping mechanisms they may have developed, and how they related to the LGBT Rights Movement. I recorded and transcribed all interviews for coding, during which time I paid particularly close attention to language that relates to the two research questions at hand.

I interviewed 15 members from each organization, and all interviews were tape recorded (except for one interview during which the respondent asked not to be recorded)

and later transcribed and coded for relevant themes. These 30 interviews supplement the extensive ethnographic and content analysis portion of this research project.

Triangulating ethnographic, archival, and interview data increases reliability, and also presented opportunities to analyze patterns and inconsistencies between the three data sources.

Challenges in the Field

I entered the field as an outsider, as I had little in common with members of both groups. As a woman, I remain in the minority since both Dignity and the LCR-LA are comprised almost exclusively of men. Qualitative researchers debate the need for being an insider in the field, as some suggest insider status offers a more intimate experience with group members and therefore richer data, while other researchers maintain the utility of outsider status as offering greater objectivity (Dwyer and Buckle 2009). While I became close with many of the group members I met in the field, I remained an outsider based on my gender, sexual identity, and political and religious affiliation. While Dignity's core membership base is made up of men, approximately once a month, two or three other women supporters attend services. On these rare occasions that women participated, Dignity's male members typically encouraged me to introduce myself and say hello in order to demonstrate that the group is indeed welcoming to women. Members indicated that it was important for guests to see that the group was not exclusively male, and they hoped that my presence would help set guests at ease.

Similarly, LCR-LA is also almost exclusively male, with the exception of one female member. However, unlike Dignity, where members went out of their way to make new members, especially women, feel welcome, members of LCR-LA never appeared to take much interest in their solitary female member, Christine (pseudonym). For example, I would frequently see her at meetings standing by herself and on the occasions when Christine was chatting with her fellow members, others seemed eager to exit the conversation. However, it is important to note that my experience was quite different from Christine's, as LCR-LA members always seemed eager to talk and intrigued about my research. I became close friends with several members throughout the course of my research, leaving me to hope that the way that Christine was treated was atypical of the way women members were welcomed. However, just as the members of Dignity encouraged me to introduce myself to women new to the group, members of LCR-LA typically went out of their way to introduce me to women visitors, leaving me to believe that my gender significantly impacted my experience within the group. For example, when leaving LCR-LA's summer pool party, an alcohol-fueled afternoon held in one member's extravagant Hollywood Hills backyard, members playfully shouted at me from the pool to show my breasts—an interaction that made my outsider and subordinated status clear.

Not only was I an outsider based on my gender, but also I was an outsider based on my sexual identity. Both groups are comprised exclusively of sexual minorities, while I identify as heterosexual. While both Dignity and LCR-LA are open to "straight allies" (i.e. heterosexuals who support gay rights), I did not meet any members of either group

that did not identify as LGBT. While few members of either group directly inquired about my sexual identity, I can only assume that most people assumed that I was lesbian or bisexual. During one Dignity event, I was casually chatting with several members about my plans for the weekend, and mentioned an upcoming date. When I referred to my date as “he,” I could see the surprise on members’ faces, and I remember thinking that I inadvertently “outed” myself as heterosexual.

Furthermore, I was also an outsider based on the fact that I am not Catholic or a supporter of the Republican Party. Interestingly, I found this factor to be far more significant than either of the aforementioned. Due to the fact that I am not Catholic and have never been baptized, the Catholic Church does not allow me to receive communion. While this did not have a significant impact on my research, it did set me apart from others, as group members lined up single file to receive communion each week during Dignity’s services (during this time I would remain seated in my pew). Similarly, there were certain Catholic traditions, responsorial, and songs that, as a non-Catholic, I was unfamiliar with. This unfamiliarity left me feeling somewhat uncomfortable for my first few months in the field, as I was constantly afraid that I would unknowingly do something incorrect or inappropriate.

Similarly, I was an outsider at LCR-LA meetings due to the fact that I do not consider myself to be politically conservative or a supporter of the Republican Party. While I do follow politics and was therefore able to participate in conversation with members, I found myself frequently “biting my tongue” as LCR-LA members made disparaging remarks about both liberal ideals and democratic politicians. Only two

members of the group ever directly asked me about my voting record or political party affiliation, to which I indicated that I make my political decisions on an “issue by issue basis,” which is true (although it just so happens that on most issues I find myself supporting Democratic candidates and the ideology of the Democratic Party).

Clearly, I was an outsider among members of both Dignity and LCR-LA, in terms of my gender, sexual identity, and political/religious affiliation making entrée into the groups a lengthy process. However, it is important to note that I also had several characteristics in common with group members. As earlier mentioned, both groups were overwhelmingly white, so I shared a common racial identity with most members. Also, most participants in Dignity and LCR-LA are highly educated and middle class—something that I also had in common with members. Making conversation during social events was easy when discussing things like travel plans, leisure activities, and childhood or college stories. Clearly many of these experiences are shaped highly by class, and the fact that I grew up in an upwardly mobile, middle class family gave me something in common with Dignity and LCR-LA participants, as we shared similar backgrounds and experiences. Thus, while I faced on-going challenges in the field based on my outsider status in some regards, I was also an insider in other regards.

My friendships with group members posed another challenge, as I established genuine friendships with many participants that extended beyond the scope of this research. I was at times unclear about the distinction between my social life and my dissertation. For example, there were several members of LCR-LA that I met during group meetings, and would spend time with socially, but I was uncertain if I should

consider conversations that we had outside of LCR-LA meetings as data. I ultimately decided not to use any “off the record” conversations that occurred outside of organized meetings and social events as data, unless I specifically asked permission. Despite the fact that I was an outsider in many regards at both Dignity and LCR-LA meetings, I was lucky to have found two groups of people that were largely welcoming and friendly to me and my research.

Heretical Queers, Dignity, and the Log Cabin Republicans

This research illuminates how heretical queers perceive their relationship to the LGBT Rights Movement and negotiate marginalization from both the anti-gay institutions that they support and other members of the LGBT community. I utilize ethnographic, archival, and interview data in order to understand both how and why heretical queers continue to support anti-gay organizations. By utilizing an intersectional perspective, the research illuminates the complex social structures impacting their decisions to do so.

This dissertation seeks to inform the reader about the unique social location occupied by the heretical queers supporting Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans. Chapter two introduces gay Catholics and gay Republicans and analyzes how and why they participate in the Catholic Church and the Republican Party. I find that group members seek to maintain both their identity as gay men and their identity as Catholic or Republicans. Part of the way group members are able to justify their continued

participation in these anti-gay institutions is by adopting the identity of equal rights activists, as they argue they are working to make these institutions more gay friendly.

Chapter three analyzes heretical queers' relationship with the rest of the LGBT community. I find that members of both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans remain unsupported by, and on the periphery of, the LGBT community. Affiliation with the anti-gay Church and Republican Party leads to a stigmatized status in the context of the gay community, as these heretical queers employ coping mechanisms used by other stigmatized groups. This highlights that institutional affiliation may moderate the effects of intersecting systems of inequality or privilege.

Chapter four examines how the members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans cope with the homophobia they encounter within the Catholic Church and the Republican Party. I find that group members overlook or minimize inequality, while also distancing themselves from the rest of the LGBT community, specifically lesbians, transgender people, and gender non-conformists. While this strategy may allow heretical queers to curry favor with Church or Party leadership, it also results in an organizational culture that is hostile to women, gay men that are perceived as feminine, and trans gender people. Moreover, it means that both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are actually calling for very little change within the Catholic Church and Republican Party because members adhere to the heteronormative status quo.

Chapter five explains what heretical queers mean for the LGBT Rights Movement. With the movement having won some major successes in recent years and trans rights activists representing a growing and vocal segment within the movement, I

suggest that the movement is shifting priorities from same sex marriage rights to equality for trans people. I argue that the LGBT Rights Movement will need to incorporate both trans politics and the more conservatively leaning groups like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans.

The present dissertation contributes to sociological understandings of collective identity, grievances, movement strategy, and the negotiation of social inequalities within movements. My work illuminates the diversity of experiences and perspectives within the gay and lesbian community and the LGBT Rights Movement, and is the first to focus on heretical queers. While scholars are researching how race, class, and gender intersect with sexual identity, there remains little understanding of how affiliation with anti-gay institutions shapes the LGBT experience, or how participation in heretical institutions interacts with structured social inequalities. Thus, scholars can only speculate about how heretical queers engage in resistance work against marginalization.

Furthermore, this dissertation highlights the significance of identity politics and the ways in which social movements silence portions of their constituency in the process of establishing common goals. While these common goals presumably reflect the thoughts and feelings of the majority of the movement's constituency, another segment of members who may not fully agree with the movement's goals and methods are overlooked. Although scholars agree that social movements can reproduce systems of inequality, there is little agreement on *how* this inequality is reproduced and its impact on the marginalized members of the social movement. This dissertation provides

information that will allow scholars to answer these questions while also understanding the changing impact of the LGBT Rights Movement.

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Chapter Two: Heretical Queer Identity

One of the reasons that heretical groups like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are so intriguing is because they appear to be working against their own interests. In my conversations with people about my research, people appear confused about why members of the LGBT community would choose to support institutions like the Roman Catholic Church or the Republican Party, especially in light of both institutions' poor track record in terms of gay rights. I am asked why LGBT people don't just join another church, or another political party. "Who *are* these people?" is a typical (and incredulous) response to my research. People seem to have a difficult time understanding who the members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are and their motivations for continuing to support the Catholic Church and Republican Party, especially in light of the fact that gay-friendly alternatives are readily available in the form of other Christian denominations (such as Episcopalian Churches for example, which members of Dignity often jokingly referred to as "Catholic light") and the Democratic Party.

In this chapter, I seek to detail information about the members of these two groups and to explain why their gay identities do not keep them from seeking inclusion in the Catholic Church and the Republican Party. I find that members of both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans feel as though their sexuality and their religious and political commitments are complimentary, in part because they view themselves as gay rights activists, working for change within the Church and Republican Party and beyond. After

describing the membership of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans, I analyze identity issues among participants in these organizations. Members are adamant about maintaining both their sexual identities and their identities as Catholics or Republicans; in other words, supporters of both organizations are not interested in being forced back into the closet or abandoning the Church or Political Party that they love.

Who Are Members of Dignity?

The members of Dignity's Los Angeles Chapter (Dignity LA) are a unique group. At its heyday in the 1980's and 90's, the organization was home to hundreds of gay Catholics, but the group has decreased in size over the past thirty years, as members moved away from the Los Angeles area, left the Church, or passed away.³ Most of Dignity LA's members have been actively participating in the group since the 1980's, and, like a family, they are not afraid to squabble or swap embarrassing stories. The intimate group now only consists of roughly 15 dedicated participants who regularly attended services and events.

Interestingly, these 15 participants are fairly homogeneous in make-up. All identify as gay men, and while several of the regular presiders are lesbians, the group remains exclusively male. Also, the group members are similar in age, with most members being well over the age of 65, and all but 2 being retired. Prior to retirement, all members worked in professional or semi-professional settings, with most having

³ The AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s hit Dignity LA especially hard, as members recount dozens of former participants that passed away due to AIDS related complications. Each year during a special service, Dignity's members remember their deceased friends by reciting the names of former members who died of AIDS. It is truly a sad occasion as 75-150 names are recited.

attended some sort of college. Accordingly, members remain overwhelmingly middle class, with many participants owning their homes and many spending their time traveling or supporting local arts based organizations, such as the opera, the philharmonic, museums, etc. Furthermore, several members shared that they lent money to the organization when it was in the process of purchasing and renovating its current building. Clearly, while most of Dignity LA's members remain on a fixed income as retirees, they also have the freedom and financial resources necessary to enjoy their retirement and participate in a number of recreational activities.

The group is also racially homogenous, with most members identifying as white. While the bulk of Dignity LA's supporters are white, several members, and most visitors, are Latino. This is not surprising in light of Southern California's significant Latino population, many of whom identify as Roman Catholic. Occasionally, the group incorporates Latino culture into its weekly services with songs or readings in Spanish. They also celebrate Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) each year, as the altar is decorated with traditional flowers and tapestries for the Mexican holiday and members are asked to bring photos of deceased loved ones in order to mark the occasion. However, despite this sporadic attention to Latino culture, the group fails to attract any new long term members of color, as the group did not increase in size during the 3 years that I spent with them.

All of Dignity LA's members are "out" gay men that are quite open about their identity as sexual minorities. Roughly half of the group are in long term relationships with partners that they have been with for decades (many of them met at Dignity), while

the other half remain single. Couples regularly hold hands or are physically affectionate during services, and some receive communion while standing hand-in-hand. While everyone is open about their identity as gay men, many participants share that they did not come out until well into their adult lives, much later than the average of 16 nowadays (Goodman 2013). This could be in part explained by the fact that sexual minorities have only recently experienced less stigmatization; in earlier eras, sexual minorities were highly stigmatized, vulnerable to violence and social exclusion (Hirshman 2012). It is understandable that some sexual minorities, including the members of Dignity, were reluctant to come out until after LGBT identity became less stigmatized. Some members suggested that when they younger, gay people were more likely to remain closeted, “unlike nowadays, when it is not as big of a deal.”

At the same time, Dignity LA’s members are also devout and life-long Catholics, regularly attending Dignity’s services and are open about their Catholic identity and spiritual beliefs. Every member was raised as Roman Catholic, with most attending religious schools for elementary school or college. At least two of the regular participants used to be altar boys as children, and three are former or retired priests, suggesting that a subset of Dignity LA’s membership have formal religious training, some of it extensive. At least four of the regular participants also attend services or are involved with other churches as well, suggesting that they attend religious services multiple times per week. Clearly, Dignity LA’s members are not about to give up their spiritual identity or sexual identity any time soon.

Who Are Members of the Log Cabin Republicans?

While the Log Cabin Republican's Los Angeles chapter (LCR-LA) has some striking similarities with Dignity LA, it also has some notable differences. Unlike Dignity LA which remains a small and tightly knit group of friends, LCR-LA boasts a slightly larger, and growing, membership. Also unlike Dignity LA, LCR-LA appears to have a contingent of younger and more enthusiastic members who seem eager to increase membership and spread the word about Log Cabin's mission. LCR-LA's meetings are held in the private spaces of various bars and restaurants of West Hollywood, and while members are friendly with one another, the meetings lack the casual intimacy that Dignity LA's services and events have to offer.

However, LCR-LA, like Dignity LA, is fairly homogenous in makeup. Apart from the one regular female member or the occasional female visitor, the group remains exclusively male, and all members identify as gay. Similarly, the group is overwhelming white, aside from three regular attendees (one who is Asian and two who are Latino). There seem to be two different kind of LCR-LA participants: the older ones (65 years and older) who have participated in the group for decades, and the younger ones (between 30 and 40 years old) who have just recently joined within the past several years and are working feverishly to ensure that the group is seen as fun, dynamic, and vibrant.

LCR-LA members are also solidly middle to upper class, with several having considerable wealth. Members all work in a professional capacity and attended some sort of college, with many having attended professional or post graduate school. Members regularly share stories of extravagant vacations or hobbies. For example, one participant

shared that he had just returned from a month holiday in Australia and New Zealand. Similarly, another member told me of a vacation he took in Ireland, specifically to visit an area with many whiskey distilleries; during the vacation he had several casks of whiskey shipped to his home in Los Angeles, adding to his sizable collection of spirits. Clearly, these pastimes require both wealth and leisure time, something that working class people would be much less likely to have. Similarly, members have access to considerable political power, as three participants have unsuccessfully run for local office—financing their own campaigns—and several work as political fundraisers or for local politicians. Many have also volunteered for or donated to particular candidates whose campaigns they found particularly important or worthwhile.

Like the members of Dignity LA, LCR-LA's participants are open and proud of their gay identities. While few of them are married or in long term relationships, many are vocal about their dating and romantic lives. They share stories of meeting men online or in the bars of West Hollywood (a community that for several decades has had a high proportion of gay—and mostly white—residents) and openly discuss the men that they find physically attractive. Interestingly, LCR-LA's members, even the younger ones, also appear to have “come out” later than average, well into their adult lives. One member was quoted as saying “A lot of us knew we were Republican before we knew we were gay, so [the Republican Party] is home for us” (Mehta 2015).

LCR-LA's participants are also open and proud of their Republican values. While group members vary in terms of their conservative beliefs (some suggest that they are only fiscally conservative, while others also support a more socially conservative

agenda), all are vocal about their support for the Republican Party and its platform. Interestingly, some members appear just as passionate about their identity as Republicans as they do about their identity as gay men; one participant started crying when discussing his conservative identity during an interview, as he described how proud he was to be photographed with a Republican politician during one particular gay pride parade (the photograph was later published by a newspaper much to his delight). Similarly, most members identify as life-long conservatives, as many share that they were raised in conservative households, by parents that also voted Republican. Klatch (1999) finds that most active conservatives from the 1960's were raised by conservative parents, suggesting that the members of LCR-LA are not too different from other Republicans. For example, one member shared that his mother used to take him in a stroller when she went canvassing for Republican candidates. Just as Dignity LA's members are avowedly both Catholic and gay, LCR-LA's appear to hold firm to both their conservative values and their gay identities and both were raised to have these beliefs by parents who shared them.

Conflicting Identities?

Many people assume that based on the anti-gay nature of both the Roman Catholic Church and the Republican Party, gay participants in these institutions would feel some type of internal conflict. People faced with conflicting identities could cope with the dilemma by simply choosing one identity over another; for example, members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans could forego their sexuality, in which case they

engage in heterosexual behaviors, engage in clandestine sexual activity, or remain celibate. On the other hand, members could choose to sever their ties with the Catholic Church and Republican Party, and opt to join another religion or support another political party. But the members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are interested in maintaining both their sexual identity and their religious or political commitments, and therefore must reconcile seemingly competing aspects of their identity.

Identity—or the ways in which individuals categorize or conceptualize the roles they occupy and the meanings and expectations associated with that role—is a major area of research both in sociology broadly and in the sociology of social movements specifically (Bernstein 1997, Bayard de Volo 2006, Melucci 1995, Polletta and Jasper 2001, Taylor and Whittier 1992).

Social psychologists have a long history of seeking to understand identity. While widely held understandings of identity have changed over the years, social psychologists agree that identity remains a core aspect of how we navigate the social world. Stets and Burke (2014) suggest that individuals have a hierarchy of identities, with higher ranking identities deemed more important by the individual and therefore more likely to be enacted. Individuals work to avoid conflicts between identities by changing meanings and understandings of identities (Stets and Burke 2014, Lizardo and Collette 2013). For example, a gay Roman Catholic may adopt a different understanding of Catholicism in order to allow both his sexual identity and his spiritual identity to co-exist. Similarly, Brekhus (2003) explores how gay men juggle potentially conflicting identities in his analysis of gay men living in suburbia. He identifies three different identity management

strategies, each of which involves gay men enacting their gay identity differently. The first group enact their gay identity in high intensity and with long duration, as they actively embrace their gay identity and openly participate in gay culture. The second group enacts their gay identity less frequently, but in high intensity, as they only actively participate in gay culture periodically. The third group enacts their gay identity with low intensity, as they do not privilege their gay identity over their other identities and will frequently hide (or at least not publicize) their sexuality. Both Brekhus' (2003) research and this study of LGBT Catholics and LGBT Republicans fills a much needed void, as scholars are calling for increased attention to stigmatized, negative or non-normative identities (Stets and Burke 2014).

Identity is constructed through many pathways, one of which is the process of identity consolidation (Snow 2001, Snow and McAdam 2001, Stoecker 1995, Gordon 1974). Identity consolidation refers to the process through which groups adopt an identity that represents the combination of two seemingly incompatible pre-existing identities. For example, in his analysis of the "Jesus People," Gordon (1974) looked at how members reconciled different aspects of their identity, like religious identity, along with their identity as a young adult or a drug user. While scholarly interest in identity consolidation highlights its significance in social movement organizing, the paucity of empirical research suggests a gap in the literature, and a need for understanding how actors go about consolidating conflicting identities.

Beyond the individual, identity also has important implications for group processes, and has been a topic of particular interest among researchers of social

movements. Some social movement theorists suggest that the identity effects of participation in a movement are one of the most important end results of a social movement (Whittier 1995, Hasso 2001). As the individual members begin to identify themselves as members and part of the collective, the group establishes a collective identity that links the individual members to one another and to the ideals of the group; members begin to share common thoughts, definitions, and identities.

Through my research, I discover that members of both Dignity-LA and the Log Cabin Republicans make it clear that they are not interested in foregoing either their sexual identities or their religious/political identities. In fact, they even assert that their identity as gay men and their support for the Roman Catholic Church or the Republican Party are not mutually exclusive. Members are proud and vocal about their sexuality and are adamant about their identity as gay men. For example, one LCR-LA member suggested that people assume that the Log Cabin Republicans are “repressed” or “closeted,” and emphasize that is definitely not the case, as he considers himself to be “out and proud.” Similarly, a member of Dignity shares:

God wants us to respect our own individuality...we should not hide or be ashamed of what we are. Denying [our sexual identity] is like slapping God in the face and saying that I am not proud of how you made me. God’s love is unconditional and He accepts us regardless.

This member not only emphasizes the conflict between his sexual identity and his Catholicism but also he believes that God intended for him to be gay and wants him to be

proud of his sexuality. He clearly has no interest in hiding either aspect of his identity, and is adamant in his belief that he remain “proud” of his identity as a gay man.

Another member of Dignity notes: “So as I get older you think ‘Well, look, am I going to be miserable and deny it or am I going to accept myself and hope that everyone else will?’ I accept me just as I am.” These members are vocal and adamant about openly accepting and maintaining both of their identities, and share that they have no plans to leave either aspect of their identity by the wayside.

Furthermore, members of both organizations are also vocal about their religious or political identity, and suggest that they see no reason to leave the church or political party that they love. For example, one Dignity member indicates that he will not join another church, as the Eucharistic ceremony is very important to him:

The ceremony, the Eucharist, the faith, is very important if you believe in Jesus...Some people have gone to other church groups before. I have. I’ve gone to a gay Jewish group once or twice, but I didn’t get a lot out of it. The Catholic Eucharist is missing.

This member identifies strongly with his Catholic identity and finds the services held at other non-Catholic churches to be unfulfilling. Thus, changing his religious practices would not be an option he would consider again. Other members also shared accounts of looking toward various Christian denominations, namely Episcopalian or Presbyterian Churches, in their search for a gay friendly environment. However, like the respondent, all agree that without the Catholic Eucharist, they remained unfulfilled.

Similarly, a member of LCR-LA describes his discomfort at the idea of supporting other non-Republican political parties:

I once changed my party affiliation to libertarian because I felt that libertarianism followed my view points. But I found out very quickly that it was very limited for me. The Republican Party most resembles the things that I believe in and is viable on a national and state wide scale.

Just as the members of Dignity are reluctant to join another church, this member feels limited and unfulfilled by other political parties. Participants in both organizations make it clear that they have no desire to leave either the Roman Catholic Church or the Republican Party; joining another church or supporting another political party is simply not an option for them.

It is important to note that much of the reason that members of both organizations are able to maintain both their sexual identities and their religious or political identities is that they do *not* see them as conflicting. While members of both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are open and proud of both aspects of their identity, they also emphasize that neither one defines them completely, in part because gayness is not necessarily their most salient identity. One LCR-LA member shares that, “When I look in the mirror, I don’t look at myself as I’m a *gay* man. I look at myself as an entrepreneur or a conservative.” Another member notes:

If being gay is the only issue that defines you--and maybe for some people it is-- but for me and a lot of other gay people, being gay is one part of who we are. Like being gay is a part of me, but it’s not the only part of me.

These members suggest that part of the reason members are able to maintain both identities is that they do not see them as in conflict: one aspect of their identity is not more important than the other, and their sexuality and their spiritual or political beliefs are not mutually exclusive. These gay men suggest that while they are open and proud of their sexual identity, they also view it as only one aspect of their identity, and therefore no more or less significant than their spiritual or political identities.

As detailed in chapter four, many members of both Dignity LA and LCR-LA are able to view their sexuality and their religious or political views as complimentary because they overlook or minimize the anti-gay aspects of the Church or Republican Party. Participants often fail to see or experience the anti-gay sentiments of either institution and report feeling fully included by both the Catholic Church and the Republican Party. Similarly, others minimize the anti-gay aspects of these institutions by viewing these as a minor and insignificant part of the institution as a whole. For example, many members of Dignity suggest that a few members of the Church leadership are to blame for instituting anti-gay policies, but feel the Catholic Church in general remains a welcoming place for all. By minimizing the anti-gay aspects of the Church and the Republican Party, supporters are able to fully participate with no feelings of conflict.

Activists, Rights, and the “Right” Kind of Gay

Not only do members of both organizations suggest that the various aspects of their identity are complimentary, but they also suggest that their participation in these anti-gay institutions is a matter of equality. There are three primary reasons that

members cite as a reason for continued participation in Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans: 1) Members view themselves as activists, an affirmative identity that may increase motivation to continue to participate; 2) Members view their continued participation as a matter of equal rights; and 3) Members suggest that they resent the fact that they are expected to conform to gay stereotypes, acting and thinking like other gay men in the community. I argue that these three reasons help motivate members to continue participating and help counter any potential conflict between their sexuality and their religious or political commitments.

Heretical Queers as Activists

Members of both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans view themselves as activists, working to further gay rights. They frame their participation in anti-gay institutions as activism in two ways: by working to create change from within the institution, and by using the institution as a mechanism to further gay rights. Many people consider activism as a positive and admirable endeavor, and it is no surprise that heretical queers frame themselves as activists as it is an affirmative identity.

By viewing themselves as activists or agents of change, pushing the Church and Republican Party to re-think its stance on gay participants, members view themselves as gay rights activists. Members of both organizations are not interested in fundamentally changing either institution; for example, the members of Dignity are not hoping to overthrow the Vatican and change how the Eucharist is delivered. Rather, they view themselves as gay activists, working to slowly change the ways the Catholic Church and

Republican Party view sexuality and members of the gay community, even as they struggle with the aspects of the Church that are problematic.

Members of both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans frequently discuss their efforts as watchdogs who “create change from within,” by working to address the anti-gay aspects of the Catholic Church and Republican Party. For example, one member of Dignity LA shares:

The church obviously is a mess and people ask why I don't leave, and the answer is that I love the church, and I'm [unwilling to listen to] any advice [to the contrary]. I know what I believe and they're gonna have to take me out [of the church] with a steam shovel because somebody has to stay in and say 'This is crap.'

This Dignity member thus sees his participation in the Catholic Church as a form of resistance, and he places value on staying in the Church and critiquing it.

Similarly, many members of LCR-LA spoke about helping to make the Republican Party more gay friendly from within the party. One respondent shares: “Well, Republican legislators are not going to sit down with gay Democrats and talk about how they should improve and what to vote on...and if Democrats think that's the case, they are delusional! The only way you can have real impact with Republicans is to be a Republican yourself.” Another respondent suggests, “The real work to be done, the hard work, is to go into the lion's den, the Republican Party, and really push for the change from within.” These respondents emphasize the idea that they are working to incite change from within the Party, and as gay Republicans, their unique vantage point

allows them to relate to fellow Republicans in a way that other liberal gay activists cannot. That is, they believe the Republican Party can be changed in its views on LGBT people, and that change is most likely to come from within. In this regard, their continued participation in conservative politics also allows them to push for equal rights in Republican circles.

Similarly, some heretical queers suggest that they participate in anti-gay institutions in order to further gay rights in other ways. For example, many members of the Log Cabin Republicans indicate that if gay voters participated in both parties, Democrats and Republicans would prioritize gay rights in an effort to attract support and votes. One member of LCR-LA notes: “More will be done for our community in terms of equality and representation if both parties believe our vote is up for grabs... The LGBT community should truly have a choice. My hope is that regardless of your political identification, we can all agree that our community is better served when both political parties are working to serve us” (Craffey, 2014: “Why LGBT and GOP Are Better Together”). This member suggests that supporting the Republican Party and participating in conservative politics is an important step in working for gay rights beyond just the Republican Party, as it will create change overall once gay votes are seen as valuable. In this sense, he frames himself and other gay Republicans as activists, taking a political stand and participating in conservative politics in order to further gay rights.

As several members of Dignity and LCR-LA are women, it is important to recognize the impact of gender on activist identity. Interestingly, most of the women participants volunteered that they identify as feminists, and that their work in the Church

and Republican Party is an important step in furthering women's rights. None of the men included in this study discussed women's rights or identified as feminists. However, when referencing their "feminist" work, women would often cite examples that run counter to the core ideas of feminism. For example, one member of LCR-LA who identified herself as a feminist, once emphasized that it was a man's responsibility to care for and protect women—a concept that many feminists would disagree with on the basis that it perpetuates a traditional gender dichotomy as well as the idea that women require protection. Despite the fact that these women possess a different understanding of feminism than most, they not only consider themselves feminists, but also view their participation in Dignity and LCR-LA as furthering gender equality, thereby strengthening their activist identity.

It's My Right

While many members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans minimize the anti-gay aspects of the Church and Republican Party by attributing it to a few "bad apples" who engage in discrimination, they also acknowledge the need to address and eliminate the anti-gay policies within both institutions. Furthermore, members describe their continued participation in the Roman Catholic Church or Republican Party as a matter of equal rights, and in this regard also view themselves as activists. Many members suggest that they have the right to participate in any church or political party of their choosing, regardless of its stance on homosexuality, and are outraged at the suggestion that they leave based on their sexual identity. For example, when asked about

leaving the Roman Catholic Church, one member of Dignity responds: “Why would I want to go? Why would I want to leave a church that I was raised in? I have just as much of a right to be here as anyone else.” Similarly, another member asserts, “You can kick the Catholic out of the church but you can’t kick the church out of the Catholic. I’m just not going.” Both members balk at the suggestion of leaving the Catholic faith and are vocal in asserting their right to stay, regardless of the Church’s stance on sexuality.

The idea of rights was also heavily emphasized during LCR-LA meetings, as members repeatedly stated that they have the right to participate in any political party they choose. Members angrily recount stories of being told that they really should be supporting Democrats, along with other sexual minorities, in light of the party’s track record in favor of gay rights. Members emphatically explain that in some ways, Democrats and Democratic politicians have not been furthering equality for sexual minorities; after all, LCR-LA members are quick to remind me the ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ policy that prevented gays and lesbians from openly serving in the military was put into place by President Clinton. More importantly, gay Republicans should not have to choose between their sexual identity and their political identity. Rather, it is their right to participate in whichever political party they want to, as members resent the suggestion that they base their political affiliation on their sexual identity.

Countering Gay Stereotypes

Some heretical queers suggest that they continue to participate in anti-gay institutions in order to counter widely held stereotypes about gays. This tendency was

more pronounced among members in LCR-LA than among members of Dignity. These members suggest that it is important to show the inaccuracy and absurdity of gay stereotypes by emphasizing diversity within the gay community. For example, members of LCR-LA are quick to assert that gay stereotypes do not apply to them, and that many gay men mistakenly believe that they must adhere to stereotypical ways of thinking and voting. One member shares:

I don't identify with all the stereotypes. I don't look and act like [effeminate] gay people do on television, so [for a long time I felt] like that meant I'm not gay. I definitely don't vote Democrat. It used to be if you were gay you were kind of a unique outsider and you were a rebel. But then at some point being gay meant that you dress the same [as other gay men], you go to the same clubs [as other gay men], you vote the same, you almost become like these mind-numbed robots and you have to go do all these things to be a good gay. I think if you're always being told that you're in this box if you're gay, you have to act and be this certain way. I know a lot of other people who would vote Republican if it weren't for [the Party's] stance on marriage because they agree [with Republicans] on every other issue, whether it's national security, the size of government, unions, everything....It's important that we're involved in both parties.

This respondent thus views stereotypes about gay men as including suppositions about their political orientation. "Good" gays are left-leaning Democrats, and he positions himself as someone who is rebelling against the expectations of the gay community (and presumably similar stereotypes perpetuated by straights) by embracing

the Republican Party. In fact, he questions the logic of other gay men who place the goal of gay rights above other political priorities, like national security, when making decisions about voting and party support.

Many respondents resented the idea that they are expected to conform to a gay stereotype and share similar political views with other members of the gay community. Not only do the members of LCR-LA not share similar political beliefs with the majority of the gay community, but also they suggest that it is their duty to vote in a way that creates change in the Republican Party, thereby furthering gay rights. Many members feel as though other gay men vote Democratic because they feel pressure based on the party's stance on gay rights and because they "buy into" stereotypical ways of thinking ("you have to act and be this certain way"). However, this respondent, like many other members of LCR-LA, indicates that it is his right (and obligation) to vote differently than the rest of the gay community. These members thus see themselves as activists who are both fighting gay stereotypes and seeking to create change within the Republican Party. Fighting stereotypes is also a type of diversity claims as these heretical queers are arguing that they also bring diversity to the LGBT community through their political involvement in a political party that has minority status within the LGBT community.

Conclusion

The heretical queers in both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are clear in their assertion that that they are not interested in forgoing either their sexuality or their religious or political ties. Members from both groups share that there is nothing about

their sexual identity that precludes them from also being active supporters of the Catholic Church or the Republican Party. Moreover, members suggest that they do not view either element of their identity as incompatible. This could be, in part, because they have framed their participation in the anti-gay Church and Republican Party as activism, thereby adopting the identities of activists, an affirmative identity that appears to enable reconciliation of what might be otherwise contradictory or competing identities and interests. By framing themselves as gay rights activists, heretical queers have not only countered any potential conflict between their identities but also have a motivation for continued participation. With many members suggesting that their sexuality and their religious or political affiliation give them a unique perspective that makes them well suited for creating change within the Church and Republican Party, members have found a way to address potential identity conflict. In effect, this activist identity acts as an intermediary between their identity as gay men and their identity as Catholics or Republicans, moderating potential conflict that may arise between these two identities.

It is also important to note that both organizations run parallel to the Roman Catholic Church and the Republican Party, with the Log Cabin Republicans achieving substantial success in recent years. Not only has the group recently gained formal recognition from the state Republican Party in California, but also the Party seems likely to re-visit various gay rights issues, including marriage, adoption, and immigration rights for same sex couples. In this regard, it makes sense that group members view themselves as activists, as these recent successes reinforce this activist identity by providing evidence for their claims of effecting change within the party.

On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church remains stalwart in its treatment of sexual minorities and refuses to formally acknowledge or interact with representatives of Dignity. Many of Dignity's members concede that it is unlikely that significant change will happen within the Church during their lifetimes, yet their continued "activism" and participation in Dignity suggests another motivation may be at play. I believe that an answer to this may lie in religious doctrine and Catholic focus on martyrdom and suffering. In some ways, members' continued maltreatment by church officials and their ongoing unsuccessful attempts to change the Catholic Church mirrors the martyrdom and suffering of biblical figures. With many members suggesting that their work is paving the way for future LGBT Catholics, they believe that like biblical martyrs, their activism will not be recognized as valuable during their lifetimes, but may have a profound impact on future generations.

In this sense, heretical queers have created a new identity for themselves as activists, thus feeling good about their continued participation in the group and avoiding any conflict between their identities. Social psychologists find that people seek to avoid conflict between identities by changing the meanings and understandings behind them (Stets and Burke 2014, Lizardo and Collette 2013). This trend holds true for heretical queers, as members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans frame their participation in the Catholic Church and Republican Party as gay rights activism, thus avoiding conflict or negative feelings associated with supporting anti-gay institutions.

Similarly, heretical queers engage in identity consolidation in the sense that their activist identity combines aspects of their sexuality with aspects of their religious or

political beliefs. Members remain open about both their sexual identity and their Catholic or Republican identity, as they frame themselves as working for equality within these anti-gay institutions. Furthermore, they suggest that they could not be pushing for change within these institutions, if they were not members themselves. As gay rights activists, they have consolidated both aspects of their identity into a new activist identity.

At the beginning of this chapter, I described how some people cannot understand how heretical queers continue to support the anti-gay Roman Catholic Church and Republican Party. As shown throughout this chapter, members of both Dignity and LCR-LA suggest that they can and do continue to support the Church and Republican Party because they are activists, uniquely qualified to be creating change within these specific institutions. They view themselves as working for equality and believe it is their right to participate in whichever church or political party they choose. Many suggest that as activists, part of their work entails combatting monolithic stereotypical views of gay men, by demonstrating that in fact, gay men can be both proud of their sexuality and their commitment to the Roman Catholic Church or Republican Party.

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Chapter Three: Coping With Stigma in the LGBT Community

As discussed in chapter two, members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans view themselves as gay activists, working to create equality within the Catholic Church and the Republican Party by emphasizing their similarities with other Catholics and Republicans, while also promoting equality for sexual minorities within these institutions. Despite both groups' efforts to address the anti-gay aspects of the Roman Catholic Church and Republican Party and to create change, members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans report that they remain unsupported and disenfranchised from the rest of the LGBT community. In fact, they see themselves as a stigmatized minority within the gay community, eager to be included, yet relegated to the outskirts.

This chapter examines heretical queers' position and experiences within the LGBT community.⁴ Heretical queers remain on the periphery of the LGBT Rights Movement, where they are generally isolated and unsupported by the rest of the LGBT community,⁵ with many heretical queers employing stigma management techniques used by similarly stigmatized groups. In this chapter, I analyze the ways in which members of these groups understand and make sense of their marginalized status.

While scholars highlight the racial, gender, and class based inequality within the LGBT community (Ward 2004, 2008, Teunis 2007, Gluckman and Reed 1997, Gamson

⁴ I use the term LGBT Movement, LGBT Rights Movement, and LGBT community interchangeably, as the community and the movement are so deeply intertwined that it is difficult to separate them out. Obviously not all LGBT people are active in the movement or formal LGBT organizations, but they may be aligned with the movement's goals and therefore affect and are affected by the LGBT Rights Movement.

⁵ Both of these groups are almost exclusively comprised of gay men, so I use the term "gay" when discussing the groups and "LGBT" when discussing the larger LGBT Rights Movement and its politics.

1998), groups like Dignity and Log Cabin Republicans are overwhelmingly comprised of white, middle class, men, thereby suggesting that factors other than structural inequalities contribute to their unpopularity as members of the group have access to racial, class, and gender based power. I suggest that members' affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church and the Republican Party significantly impacts their interaction with other members of the LGBT community. Institutional affiliation is implicated in inequalities between dominant and subordinate groups, and can moderate the effects of intersecting systems of inequality and privilege.

While the heretical queers supporting Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans have a lot in common with the residents of Los Angeles' LGBT Community, West Hollywood, in terms of race, gender, income, and educational attainment, they differ in other significant arenas. Namely, heretical queers are very different than other residents of West Hollywood in terms of religion and politics. The City of West Hollywood suggests that roughly half of its residents identify as religious, and of those 36% are Catholic. Similarly, the overwhelming majority of West Hollywood's residents are Democrat (<http://www.weho.org/business/facts-figures/demographics>), which is not surprising in light of the LGBT Rights Movement historic close ties with both liberals and leftists.

In this chapter, I first review the literature relating to stigma, how individuals have coped with a potentially stigmatized identity, and the ways scholars have historically addressed the stigma of LGBT identity. Then I describe the ways in which members of both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans perceive themselves as

disenfranchised and unsupported by the rest of the LGBT community, and the strategies they employ to cope with their perceived stigmatization. Participants in Dignity and LCR-LA manage stigma by selectively disclosing their membership, with some people “passing” as non-members by avoiding the subject of religion or politics when talking with outsiders.

Stigma and the LGBT Rights Movement

Non-heterosexual identity is stigmatized in the contemporary United States, as it represents an attribute that others view as undesirable based on social expectations and often serves as the basis for social rejection (Han 2009, Lewis et al 2003, Lingardi, Baiocco, and Nardelli 2012, Poon and Ho 2008, Kanuha 1999, Yip 1999, Goffman 1963). Goffman (1963) identifies three different types of stigma: physical deformities, blemishes of individual character based on deviant behavior, and tribal stigma. I suggest that LGBT Republicans and LGBT Catholics present an especially interesting case for analysis as members of both organizations struggle with blemishes of individual character, in the sense that that in a heteronormative society, their gay identity is seen as a negative “mark” on their character. Similarly, within the LGBT community, their participation in an anti-gay institution is also seen as a negative and undesirable trait. In this regard, LGBT Republicans and LGBT Catholics can be seen as having a “double” stigma based on their deviant behavior, while also having certain privileges based on their participation in a conventional church and political party. However, heretical queers are not alone in their controversial affiliation, as one can assume that Republicans of

color, especially black Americans and other LGBT people of color face similar challenges (Alimahomed 2010, Hall 2007).

Goffman's groundbreaking work on stigma set the direction for scholarship on stigma, with researchers exploring everything from topless dancing (Thompson et al 2003, 2011) to activists in the White Power Movement (Simi and Futrell 2009). Academics have recently called for a more nuanced definition of stigma due to the wide variety of ways in which it is conceptualized and a poor understanding of the privileges some stigmatized people may receive (Link and Phelan 2001, Rivera 2008, Saxena 2013). In response to the variety of different definitions of stigma, Link and Phelan (2001) establish a typology that not only incorporates the role of power, but also conceptualizes stigma as the result of 5 interrelated components including: labeling some differences as highly significant, stereotyping, separating those labeled as undesirable from the rest of the population, discriminating against those labeled as undesirable, and accessing power. This typology allows scholars to conceptualize stigma as occurring on a continuum, as opposed to overly simplified "either/or" frameworks in which stigma is seen as either a significant factor or completely non-existent.

Both Goffman's (1963) and Link and Phelan's (2001) conceptualizations of stigma maintain that a "spoiled identity" is something that most people try to avoid. Stigmatized people develop coping mechanisms in order to avoid embarrassment, social sanction, or potentially negative social interactions with "normals," or those lacking who lack the stigma. These coping mechanisms allow stigmatized individuals to avoid,

manage, or confront their “spoiled identities,” and therefore allow people to mitigate the negativity associated with their stigma.

One strategy for managing stigma is stigma consciousness. Stigma consciousness occurs when stigmatized individuals become aware of the negative stereotypes associated with their identity and work to distance themselves from these stereotypes (Pinel 1999). A second management strategy is stigma transference (Nack 2000), or when stigmatized individuals deflect their stigma by blaming others. A third management strategy is defensive othering (Schwalbe et al 2000, Pyke and Dang 2003) which occurs when stigmatized individuals legitimate negative stereotypes by distancing themselves from stigmatized others, typically in situations of extreme social oppression. A fourth strategy is stigma disidentifier, which occurs when a stigmatized individual works to distinguish him/herself from negative stereotypes.

Another way of coping with or managing a stigma is to hide it altogether, commonly referred to as passing (Stein 2009, Hathaway 2004, MacRae 1999, Nack 2000, Siegal 1998, Weitz 1990). Passing allows stigmatized individuals to be perceived of as “normal” (Saxena 2013). For example, Simi and Futrell (2009) discuss how activists in the White Power Movement hide their beliefs from family and friends in order to avoid sanction. Similarly, MacRae (1999) explores how people with Alzheimer’s disease work with family members in order to hide the disease from others, in an effort to pass as healthy and “normal.” The notion of passing is one that has historically been readily applied to sexual minorities, as unlike other stigmatized identities, such as those based on race or physical disability, it is something that cannot be determined by appearances

alone; therefore, sexual minorities can presumably hide their stigmatized identities by “passing” as heterosexuals. For example, Kanuha (1999) highlights the ways in which gay men and lesbians “pass” as heterosexual as a form of coping with stigma in a highly homophobic society.

A similar way of managing stigma is selective disclosure (Thompson et al 2011, May 2000, Simi and Futrell 2009), as stigmatized individuals will carefully choose who to tell about their stigmatization, in order to avoid sanction. For example, Seigel et al (1998) finds that people with HIV/AIDS selectively decide who to tell about their disease, choosing to disclose to individuals that will be supportive and are “wise” about the inaccuracies of common misconceptions about HIV/AIDS. In this regard, stigmatized individuals selectively determine who to tell about their stigma and who not to tell, thereby lessening the chance of encountering a negative interaction.

Symbolic interactionism is helpful for our understanding of stigma, as inequality plays out at both the micro and macro levels (Anderson and Snow 1987, Storrs 1999, Wood and Ward 2010, Snow and Anderson 1993). Micro level interactions have a substantial impact on stigmatized people, as inequality plays out regularly in their day to day lives, leaving many to develop coping mechanisms specifically for dealing with this micro level inequality (Storrs 1999). Thus, focusing on micro level interactions, and the daily experiences members of the LGBT community have with each other and with outsiders can yield important and highly relevant information about inequality that sexual minorities face.

Double Minorities

Members of both Dignity LA and LCR-LA find themselves in the position of being marginalized in the Catholic Church and Republican Party, respectively, as well as within the LGBT community, leaving some members to joke about being “double minorities.” Three interrelated indicators I observed provide evidence of Dignity LA’s and LCR-LA’s disenfranchised status within the LGBT community of Los Angeles: 1) limited interest among members of the LGBT community, thereby resulting in a small pool of members and supporters of Dignity LA and LCR-LA; 2) limited participation in the annual Gay Pride Parade and Festival; and 3) the interpersonal experiences members report having with others in the LGBT community.

Challenges in Recruitment

Both Dignity LA and LCR-LA struggle with dwindling numbers of supporters and members, and while they both espouse an “open door” policy that allows anyone to attend group meetings and functions, the two groups failed to attract many new members during the three year research period. Members of both groups are vocal about the need for more new members and supporters in order to ensure the longevity of the organizations, but struggle to attract new participants.

This trend was most noticeable in Dignity LA, as the group’s decreasing size came to be seen as highly problematic by members. The group only has 15 of what I consider to be “core members,” the individuals who would attend most services, functions, and meetings. However, in light of the fact that the group is also rapidly aging

(with most members being between 65-80), there was increasing concern that the organization would fall apart once core members pass away or become too old to participate. Attracting new members was seen as crucially important, and Dignity LA's participants were eager to attract more gay Catholics to participate, as members discussed the topic frequently, even seeking guidance from Dignity's national headquarters. Visitors were always eagerly greeted, as the core members clamored to introduce themselves and make visitors feel welcome. New attendees were also invited to attend the social hour held at the end of each service. However, despite their efforts, Dignity LA rarely had visitors or new members attend their services or events. During the three years that I spent with the group, there were less than seven visitors and of those, none ever officially joined Dignity LA or came again.

While the Catholic Church, more so than other religious institutions, has experienced a drop in attendance over the past several decades, Dignity LA's lack of LGBT attendees is especially noteworthy in comparison to other LGBT religious groups in the area. For example, the Los Angeles chapter of the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), an LGBT friendly Christian Church with a long tradition of supporting gay rights, boasts hundreds of both gay and straight parishioners, multiple weekly services, and regular receptions for newcomers. Similarly, Dignity's members suggest that other LGBT Churches in the area are much more successful at attracting new members, highlighting the lack of support Dignity LA receives from the local LGBT community.

When asked about Dignity LA's interaction with the gay community, one member lamented:

Well, it gets really tricky because we have so much in common: we're gay and lesbian... and yet we're in different camps... It creates tension because we feel like we're not in the same place despite having so much in common... I don't want to seem like we want to go to their (LGBT) groups to recruit them, nor do we want to avoid them and not have outreach to them, too... It creates another level of tension about who we are.

This respondent suggests that a "tension" exists between Dignity and the rest of the LGBT community: On one hand members of Dignity are eager to reach out to other gay and lesbian Catholics as potential new participants. On the other hand, they don't wish to come across as too aggressive in their outreach, especially because Dignity's members were not necessarily interested in converting people to Catholicism. Rather, they simply hoped to include more gay and lesbian Catholics in their services and activities.

LCR-LA experiences the same tension, as was made evident in 2014 when one member of the LCR-LA wrote an op-ed piece for *The Advocate*, an LGBT interest magazine that focuses on gay news, LGBT rights, politics, and entertainment (Craffey 2014). The short piece spoke about the Log Cabin Republicans in an attempt to educate readers about the importance of gay participation in the Republican Party and to reach out to potential new members and supporters. However, the article seemed to have the opposite effect as it elicited a strong, negative reaction from readers. One reader responded:

Oh you mean the very same people that determined we were abominations? Those people? You are naive if you think the GOP is going to be in our favor any time soon. The Log Cabin Republicans want their gay rights, but they also want to be what the Right stands for today and to me that means selfishness. Not sure when gay republicans are going to realize the GOP uses them while at the same time works to set you back decades. NO THANKS...I don't trust the Log Cabin Republicans. (“Why LGBT and the GOP Are Better Together, Reader Comments”)

Similarly, another reader writes: “Fuck you and the lies from your disgusting organization. I would rather be celibate then touch a delusional gay Republican!” (“Why LGBT and the GOP Are Better Together, Reader Comments”). Clearly, many members of the gay community not only are uninterested in supporting the Log Cabin Republicans but also stand in vocal opposition of the organization and what it represents. Citing the Republican Party’s poor track record in terms of gay rights, many readers were candid in their feelings about the Log Cabin Republicans, highlighting the challenges LCR-LA face in recruiting new members.

While the members of LCR-LA struggle to attract new members, the issue was less pressing than for the members of Dignity LA, perhaps due to the fact that the group was larger and with a slightly younger membership base. Still, members of LCR-LA also voiced the need for new members, and worked to make visitors feel welcome at monthly meetings and events. However, just as Dignity saw limited numbers of new attendees, LCR-LA also rarely attracted newcomers. During my time in the field, there were fewer

than 12 visitors attending LCR-LA's monthly meetings and events, and of those only two joined the group.

Both Dignity LA and LCR-LA, while eager to enlist new members, are unable to do so. This is one piece of evidence of the lack of the support of the rest of the LGBT community offers to these heretical queers. Not only do visitors and potential new members rarely attend both groups' meetings and services, but also of those new attendees, few ever formally join the organization. Both Dignity LA and LCR-LA remain unpopular organizations among the LGBT community in Los Angeles, as is made clear by their inability to attract potential new members or enlist community support.

Celebrating LGBT Identity

A group's inability to attract new members alone is insufficient evidence that they are unpopular, since a number of factors can contribute to low recruitment. However, recruitment issues are not the only issues facing Dignity and LCR-LA. Members of both organizations also report feeling unwelcome at major LGBT events.

The gay community of West Hollywood is one of the largest in the country and the annual Gay Pride Parade and Festival is a widely publicized celebration bringing together thousands of spectators from the Los Angeles region and beyond. Every year representatives from hundreds of LGBT organizations march in the parade, waving at spectators from floats and streamer-covered cars and dancing in the street with supporters. The parade culminates in a block party located in the heart of West Hollywood, where vendors and organizations distribute material and information to

passersby, and attendees wander between the booths, beer gardens, and stages, all while being entertained by musicians and djs.

Organizations have the option of participating in the parade, the block party, or both, and while there are fees associated with all levels of participation,⁶ hundreds of LGBT friendly organizations in the Los Angeles area participate. Participants include LGBT religious groups (such as Metropolitan Community Church), LGBT political organizations (such as the Stonewall Democratic Club), local gay and lesbian bars, support and community groups (such as PFLAG or the Pop Luck Club), and countless other organizations dedicated to furthering rights for sexual minorities.

While hundreds of other LGBT friendly groups participate in the Gay Pride Parade and Festival, Dignity LA and LCR-LA have limited participation in Gay Pride events, despite their interest in fully taking part in the festivities. Although their reasons for not taking part in the festivities differ, both groups suggest that they are not welcome. LCR-LA does not participate in the Pride Parade because they fear a negative reaction from the crowd. One member explains that “To be really honest, one of the reasons why we don’t do the parade is because... you don’t have control over that. I mean I don’t want to get booed and get thrown shit at us.” When asked if those things had happened in the past, this member of LCR-LA indicated that indeed it had. The topic of the group’s limited participation at the Pride Parade was referenced on multiple occasions in their regular meetings during which time members noted their unpopularity within the LGBT Community.

⁶ Organizations are charged a fee in order to participate in the parade and the block party. Similarly, individuals are also charged a fee in order to enter the block party.

While LCR-LA does not participate in the Pride Parade, they do have a booth in the block party in order to reach out to potential new members. LCR-LA members go to great lengths devising ways to attract positive attention to their booth and encourage passersby to stop and learn more. One year the group had a photo booth where couples could use an array of props and pose for novelty “wedding photos” designed to raise awareness about same sex marriage legislation and the inequality gay and lesbian couples face. This booth was met with significant positive reaction, and while members of LCR-LA saw the day as a success, it is important to note that members still have no plans of participating in the parade due to their negative past experiences.

Unlike LCR-LA, which participates in only the block party and not the parade, Dignity LA historically participated in only the parade and not the block party. Members suggest that the block party is a drain on their limited resources, as they lack the manpower necessary to staff the booth for the entire weekend. On what was to be their last time participating in the Pride Parade, less than 10 members of Dignity reluctantly agreed to participate and spent the day waving to the crowds of people from inside a vintage convertible car, as the car followed behind a long line of floats and several marching bands. However, it’s important to note that in comparison with other LGBT religious groups marching in the parade, such as the Metropolitan Community Church, Dignity appeared significantly lack luster in terms of participants. For example, individuals from the Metropolitan Community Church had dozens of diverse supporters, dressed in giant angel wings to show their support for the organization.

During my second year of research, the members of Dignity decided that participating in the Pride parade did not yield enough interest from the community in terms of attracting new members, as the group participates largely in hopes of increasing its membership base. The group determined that rather than participate in the annual Pride Parade, resources were better spent taking out an ad in a local publication geared for members of the LGBT community. Despite the fact that Dignity had been a long time participant in the annual Pride Parade, members determined that moving forward the group should no longer take part in either the parade or the festival.

Despite their work advancing LGBT rights, LCR-LA and Dignity LA operated on the fringes of the Los Angeles Pride Parade and Festival, as members of both organizations didn't fully participate in all of the festivities. While members of LCR-LA didn't participate in the Parade for fear of a negative reaction from the crowd, members of Dignity LA felt as though the event was a drain on the organization's already limited resources and yielded little in the way of new supporters.

Interpersonal Interactions

In addition to problems recruiting new members and feelings of exclusion within the LGBT community, members of both Dignity LA and LCR-LA also perceive themselves as highly stigmatized within the LGBT community. Although the members of LCR-LA are more vocal about their disenfranchised status, members of both groups suggest that they are discriminated against because of their identities as Catholics or Republicans.

Members of LCR-LA openly discuss their unpopularity within the LGBT community both with other members during meetings and events, and with me during interviews. Members of the group are very vocal about the discrimination they face within the LGBT community and share stories of uncomfortable interactions and dates gone awry once potential partners learn of their conservative identity. One member shares:

But you know there is the rank and file, or the individuals who don't understand how you can be gay and Republican. It's just massive disdain and eye rolling. It's just insane...I can give you an example, I remember talking to this guy at the gym. We got to be friendly and he found out I was a Republican and, I mean, he was openly hostile.

This respondent suggests that members of the LGBT Community “don't understand” how he can simultaneously be a gay man and have conservative values, and that his participation in LCR-LA incites negativity among potential friends and partners within the LGBT community. Just as Goffman (1963) highlights how stigmatized individuals face social sanction and negative social interactions based on their “spoiled identities,” this Log Cabin Republican demonstrates how his conservative identity elicits sanctions in the form of hostility, disdain, and eye rolling.

This respondent is not alone in his negative experiences, as during one LCR-LA meeting members discussed the negative reactions they received after disclosing their Republican identities. These stories ranged from verbal assaults, such as name calling, to physical assaults, such as having drinks thrown at them while at gay bars and clubs.

Most members can cite very specific instances of times when they felt unwelcome within the LGBT community because of their conservative values.

For example, one member describes speaking at a public forum on issues within the gay community, and the negative reaction he received from the crowd:

[One audience member] came at me on this forum and was basically calling me a jackass, an asshole...and all these horrible things... And you know, [I explained that LCR-LA] supports equality and we support gay marriage, he came instantly right back at me and...just calling me names and being awful and disgusting, [saying] ‘I can’t believe you consider yourself to be a gay person, a Republican’, just unleashing all of this hate... And I don’t appreciate it. I’m all open for good discussion and debate and everything else, but this person is actually bullying me.

This respondent suggests that despite the fact that the forum was a formal, moderated affair, he was allowed to be “bullied” and verbally abused because of his Republican affiliation. Not only did the moderator do little to quiet the angry crowd, but audience members felt free to verbally attack him and his political choices. Similarly, another respondent suggests, “People are antagonistic and hateful toward you at just the mention of the word [Log Cabin Republican]. Even at City Hall.” He notes that even in formal political or corporate environments, he is greeted with “antagonistic” and “hateful” remarks. Another respondent sums it up: “Honestly I felt less accepted by gay people as a Republican than (I do) by straight Republicans.”

While members of Dignity LA also maintain that they are a disenfranchised minority within the context of the gay community, they attribute their marginalized status

to hostility towards the Roman Catholic Church and ageism within the LGBT Community, as most members of the group are senior citizens. To a degree, LGBT hostility directed to the Catholic Church is unsurprising based on the Church's highly publicized involvement in the passage of Proposition 8, an amendment to the California Constitution that banned gay marriage, and its problematic record around HIV/AIDS, as the Church stands against the use of condoms, knowing that their use may stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. While members of Dignity rarely mention these specific factors, they remain important when understanding the lack of enthusiasm members may face in the gay community. While Dignity's members experience little in the way of support from the LGBT community in terms of new members, funds, or publicity, participants suggest that their unpopularity is due, in part, to ageism, and in part to the Catholic Church's maltreatment of gay parishioners. Moreover, unlike Dignity LA's current members who came into adulthood in an era that was not friendly to gays, thereby forcing members to remain closeted while practicing Catholicism, younger generations of out gay men simply do not feel like they fit into the Catholic Church. For example, one member shares:

I have to say, because I'm older now and I don't fit in with the young crowd, I don't really go to the Gay Pride Parade anymore. I don't go to the fair, I don't go to West Hollywood...because in the gay community, unfortunately, young is "in" all the time and when you get old, you're kind of cast out...So you don't go to these places anymore because, you know, you're not...Well, you can go there, but you're not really wanted... Younger people are not really interested in religion...Well, because most of the gay people who are Catholic or who were

Catholic have...hatred towards the Church...and so they don't feel welcome, you know. So a lot of people think that Dignity is affiliated with the Catholic Church, but we're not.

This respondent suggests that he does not feel particularly welcome or included within the LGBT Community; however, unlike the members of LCR-LA, he attributes this exclusion to both his age and his affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church. However, while this member describes the ageism he perceives within the LGBT Community, he also connects his disenfranchised status to the notion that "younger people are not really interested in religion," thereby conflating ageism and a lack of interest in Catholicism. Furthermore, he also seems fully aware of the group's unpopularity based on his belief that many LGBT Catholics "hate" the Catholic Church.

However, not all of Dignity's members attribute their unpopularity to their age. One respondent who was significantly younger than the rest suggests, "There's a certain marginalization that [members of Dignity] experience by the...larger LBGT crowd" based on their Catholicism. He indicated that he had multiple romantic relationships that didn't last because his partners didn't understand or "respect" his Catholic faith.

Of the men I've dated, [my Catholicism] has just been a deal breaker for a couple men out there. They got to the point of like not respecting me because of my affiliation with the Catholic Church.

Much like the members of LCR-LA, this particular respondent strictly attributed his marginalized status to his participation in the group and his beliefs.

Clearly, members of both Dignity LA and LCR-LA perceive themselves as disenfranchised within the LGBT Community and not fully welcome based on their affiliation with the Catholic Church and Republican Party, respectively. Unlike the members of LCR-LA who directly attribute their maltreatment to their conservative ideology, most (although not all) members of Dignity attribute their unpopularity to their age, as Dignity's members tend to be much older than the supporters of LCR-LA. However, by ascribing their marginalized status to their older age, they also conflate ageism within the LGBT Community with a lack of interest in Catholicism.

Stigma Management

The small number of supporters, limited participation in Pride, and interpersonal experiences provide evidence that Dignity LA and LCR LA remain on the periphery of the gay community. Members of both organizations perceive themselves as highly stigmatized based on their affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church and the Republican Party. Like other stigmatized individuals, members of both groups employ techniques for managing their stigma, including "passing" as non-group members, and selectively disclosing their participation.

Passing can take place through omission (Kanuha 1999), as some potentially stigmatized individuals manage their identity stigma by simply dodging questions about the subject or not bringing it up. For example, when members of Dignity are asked how they explain to non-members that they are both gay and Catholic, several indicated that they "don't even bother." They believe that trying to dispel potential confusion about

their identity as gay Roman Catholics has the possibility of resulting in awkward or unpleasant conversations in which they are compelled to debate religious doctrine or justify their religious beliefs. In short, they find it easier to simply avoid the topic altogether, thereby passing as non-members through omission.

Members of LCR-LA are extremely vocal about their perceived stigmatization within the LGBT community, as the topic is routinely discussed privately in the safety of monthly meetings and among like-minded audience members. Like the members of Dignity LA, LCR-LA participants only selectively disclose their affiliation with the Republican Party or Log Cabin Republicans. When employing this technique, members selectively decide who to tell and not tell about their participation in the group in order to avoid conflict or otherwise negative social interactions, especially in gay settings.

I don't bring my conservative values up. If asked, I'll say what I believe, but I don't bring it up. Because I know it's a hot button issue and people will unfriend you [on Facebook]...I'm in the closet a little bit. It's like a bad word. You can't say Republican. People really look at you funny... During the [2012 presidential] election there were several times on Facebook where I would finally speak up about something, like on a comment or a posting of mine or something. I mean, people would blow up against me on my comments. 'I can't believe you're a Republican, you're such a traitor, like how could you be a gay person and be a Republican,' that sort of thing.

This respondent notes that his Republican identity is so unpopular among members of the LGBT Community that he is reluctant to openly discuss his political beliefs or his

affiliation with LCR-LA, as he is frequently met with “funny” looks or attacks on Facebook.

Many LCR-LA members, like this respondent, suggest that they are “in the closet” about their Republican identity or affiliation with LCR-LA, referring to the metaphorical “closet” that gay men and lesbians are confined to prior to being open about their identity as sexual minorities. For example, one member of LCR-LA shares, “I mean it’s like a second closet... I don’t necessarily volunteer that I’m Republican anytime I’m engaged in a social situation... In fact, I usually just keep my mouth shut.” Similarly, another member suggests, “In this gay town, all the people that I know are anti-conservative, anti-republican. So that’s something that as a gay person I sort of keep in the closet.” Members are quite candid about the fact that they keep their Republican ideals and affiliation in the closet when dealing with other sexual minorities.

According to one respondent, the notion of “closeted” gay Republicans resonated with so many members that the group distributed stickers showing a picture of a red elephant peeking around the corner of a closet door, with the slogan “Open Your Second Closet Door and Come out as a Gay Republican.” Interestingly, this suggests that the group wants its members to become more visible, yet members resist that in order to avoid sanction by other LGBT people. Social psychologists have long used the “closet” metaphor when describing the concealment strategies, like passing, that stigmatized people use to avoid negative reactions (Schneider and Conrad 1980), and while this metaphor was originally used to describe sexual identity, scholars have also used it when discussing other stigmatized identities. Ironically, although publically open about their

sexual identities, multiple interviewees referred to themselves as being “closeted” Republicans in the sense that they are reluctant to publicize their conservative identity for fear of negative reactions or reprisal from the other members of the gay community.

While members of LCR-LA openly use the “closet” metaphor when discussing their stigmatized identity among gays, members of Dignity are far more reluctant to think about their spirituality in such terms. When asked about keeping his Catholic identity “in the closet,” one respondent replied horrified, “Oh God, no. No. No.” This is an interesting distinction between the two groups, as members of Dignity suggest that they don’t necessarily bring up their stigmatized Catholic identities (omission), but will not necessarily conceal their Catholicism either. Perhaps members of Dignity are less inclined to directly lie about their faith because Catholic tradition has valorized those who publicized their spiritual beliefs despite persecution. For example, religious martyrs historically faced severe persecution based on their refusal to lie about their Christian faith, and are celebrated for their religious devotion. Similarly, religious doctrine shames the individuals who lie about their beliefs. “The Denial of Peter” tells the tale of the apostle Peter, famously denying affiliation with Jesus before the crucifixion. Perhaps Dignity’s members are less apt to directly conceal their religious beliefs because of biblical stories such as these.

Another important distinction between the two groups lies in the ways they “discredit the discreditors,” a term coined by Siegel et al (1998) to describe the ways in which stigmatized respondents worked to discredit their critics, thereby challenging the legitimacy of the stigma. Unlike Dignity’s members, participants in LCR-LA are quick

to “discredit the discreditors” within the gay community. For example, when discussing their stigmatization in the LGBT community, members of the group suggest that many other gays and lesbians hold similar conservative values, but have been “brainwashed” into thinking that they are in fact Democrats. One member shares,

It’s hard these days because I think that a lot of gays immediately identify themselves and [feel the] need to be Democrats because of [the issue of gay marriage], you know. But let’s keep in mind the Democrats just changed their natural platform to be accepting of gay marriage...Gays have always [been] isolated and told they are different or special or anything else, so I think it’s rooted in the fact they want to be individuals, and the Republican philosophies at the end of the day are much more in tuned with that, than the Democratic philosophies are.

This respondent indicates that Republican values and philosophies are actually more “in tune with” widely held experiences within the LGBT community. He also suggests that if the LGBT voting public was more politically aware, they would see that Republicanism resonates with both individualism and LGBT rights. He highlights the fact that the Democratic Party only recently endorsed same sex marriage, thereby emphasizing the notion that the Democrats are not nearly as supportive of gay rights as many believe, and that Democratic proponents are being unwittingly tricked into supporting a party that is not as pro-gay as it makes itself out to be. By discrediting his opponents as unwitting dupes that are politically unaware, this respondent also challenges the legitimacy of his stigma by implying that criticisms against him are without merit.

Similarly, another LCR-LA member discredits his critics as uneducated and unsophisticated:

I think a lot of liberal Democrats who were first involved [in the LGBT Rights Movement]...had a bumper sticker mentality. Basically, they could quote back what they've seen in a bumper sticker. The latest slogan was, 'How can you be a gay Republican, that's an oxymoron.' ...They felt that if you're gay you should be, you know, be Democrat.

By dismissing his opponents as having a "bumper sticker mentality" and unaware of the complexity of political issues, this respondent also undermines the legitimacy of his stigmatized identity. If his critics cannot grasp the complexity of political issues, how valid can their criticisms be?

Conclusion

Heretical queers, like those belonging to Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans, have largely been overlooked by scholars examining the gay community. While researchers have explored the ways in which gay stereotypes fail to include large subsets of the community, including people of color and women, they have not yet considered the ways in which these stereotypes overlook heretical queers, including LGBT Catholics and Republicans. Clearly, popular gay stereotypes fail to accurately capture the complexity of LGBT identity, or the identity politics at work, as members of Dignity and Log Cabin struggle to fight simultaneously for gay rights and acceptance as Catholics and Republicans within the LGBT Community.

Members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are relegated to the periphery of the gay community and feel forced back “into the closet” as their religious and political views are seen as highly unpopular. Not only do both groups struggle to gain new members and supporters, but they also report instances of interpersonal conflict with other gays and lesbians, as they are labeled as “traitors” and “self-hating.” Furthermore, members of both groups have established management strategies in order to cope with perceived stigmatization, namely concealment strategies and selective disclosure, in order to avoid negative reaction, especially from other members of the LGBT Community.

Interestingly, while members of both groups are very vocal about their poor treatment in the LGBT Community, they are less vocal about their poor treatment within the anti-gay institutions they are supporting. While most agree that the Catholic Church and Republican Party share an undoubtedly anti-gay track record, many members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans tend to minimize any inequality they may experience in this regard, which I will discuss further in chapter four. Instead, members are more likely to emphasize the positive aspects of these institutions or highlight the ways in which other large institutions (like the Democratic Party) also discriminate against sexual minorities.

It is worth noting that most members of both Dignity LA and LCR-LA are highly privileged. As educated, middle class, white men, members of these groups represent some of the most privileged and powerful groups within society. This is especially true for members of LCR-LA, who also have access to considerable political power, as many members socialize with Republican politicians and political financiers, with several

individuals have unsuccessfully run for local office themselves. Despite this access to power, members of both groups suggest that they are marginalized within the LGBT community and routinely employ identity management strategies commonly used by stigmatized populations to cope with their “spoiled identities.” Clearly, this contradicts Link and Phelan’s (2001) conceptualization of stigma, which highlights the significance of power and how political, economic, or cultural power plays a key role in ensuring that stigmatized groups remain disenfranchised and “marked” as undesirable. Members of both Dignity LA and LCR-LA perceive themselves to be highly stigmatized within the LGBT Community, and in many ways are, despite their social privilege and access to political and economic power. Accordingly, when conceptualizing stigma, examples like Dignity LA and LCR-LA demonstrate the need for thinking in continuous terms; while LGBT Catholics and LGBT Republicans may indeed experience stigmatization, it may not be as extreme as the stigmatization that other less powerful groups experience, or as linked to material resources.

Similarly, Link and Phelan’s (2001) conceptualization assumes that social hierarchy is shared by society, as they argue that power plays an important role in stigma. However, this research looks at nested hierarchies of social status, demonstrating the complexity of access to power and hierarchy. Groups like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans have full access to power and prestige in some social contexts, but not others, emphasizing the “muddy” nature of hierarchy.

These heretical queers also highlight the utility of assuming an intersectional approach to research, especially in regard to stigmatized groups with seemingly

contradictory identities. The supporters of Dignity and Log Cabin Republicans can largely be seen as members of dominant groups in terms of race, gender, and class. Yet, in terms of sexual identity and institutional affiliation, they are members of subordinate groups. To further complicate the picture, Dignity and Log Cabin Republicans' participants are simultaneously seeking the approval of other subordinated sexual minorities and other (presumably dominant) members of the Catholic Church and Republican Party. In this sense, group members experience stigmatization within a marginalized community, which largely lacks power in wider society.

Institutional affiliation emerges as important in understanding the experiences of member of Dignity and LCR-LA. Theorizing and research on intersectionality have traditionally considered the ways in which structures of race, class, gender, and sexual identity simultaneously create both opportunities and oppressions, and how these factors become more or less salient according to social setting. Members of both Dignity LA and LCR-LA experience stigmatization based largely on their affiliation with the Catholic Church and Republican Party, suggesting that institutional affiliation may moderate the effects of intersecting systems of inequality or privilege. That is, while their status as white men affords them privilege and structural advantages, their status as Catholics and Republicans within the LGBT community results in their social ostracization there. Thus, this research demonstrates how institutional affiliation can moderate the effects of race, class, gender, and sexuality, highlighting the ways in which scholars may need to think about affiliation impacts inequality and privilege.

Also, the members of both groups suggest that the types of inequality they experience varies from context to context, as they are marginalized differently in various social settings. Specifically, members of Dignity and Log Cabin Republicans are marginalized based on their institutional affiliation within the LGBT community, but are marginalized in other contexts (including the Church and Republican Party) based on their sexual identity, as I discuss further in chapter four. In other words, members' institutional affiliation becomes more salient—and more problematic— depending on their social context. Therefore, when examining similarly stigmatized groups, it is crucial for scholars to consider the social context in which inequality occurs to get a complete picture of the way oppression operates. This also highlights the complex, temporal and insidious nature of inequality, as without extensive, long term ethnographic research to examine the ways in which inequality operates within a variety of different contexts and settings, scholars may only get a small glimpse into inequality that subordinate groups face.

The significance of institutional affiliation and ideological beliefs also plays a role in social mobility. Interestingly, members of Dignity and Log Cabin Republicans appear especially bothered by the lack of support they receive from the rest of the LGBT Community; this desire for belonging is notable in light of their presumably very different ideologies and perspectives on both religion and politics relative to other LGBT people, especially in Los Angeles. Members of the two groups are unable to move smoothly into and out of the LGBT Community not because of a lack of desire, but because of their affiliations with the Catholic Church and Republican Party. In this

regard, members' institutional affiliation hampers their full participation in the LGBT Community, forcing them to remain on the periphery. This suggests that institutional affiliation can limit social mobility, especially for stigmatized groups working to overcome a "spoiled" identity.

Moreover the experiences of Dignity and Log Cabin Republicans members demonstrate both the superficiality of community and the challenges associated with community building. Members of these two groups identify as sexual minorities and seek to fully participate in the LGBT Community. Yet their marginal status in the LGBT Community raises the question of how encompassing a community can truly be if it fails to fully represent the interests of all interested participants. It stands to reason that LGBT activists⁷ wish to support institutions that are supportive of gay rights, making their stance against Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans understandable. Clearly, LGBT activists are left with a difficult decision: 1) fully support LGBT organizations like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans because of their advocacy for equal rights, albeit in anti-gay institutions, or 2) do not support organizations like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans based on their affiliation with anti-gay institutions, despite the fact that their members are working towards gay inclusion. This dilemma points to both identity politics within the LGBT Community and the potentially arbitrary nature of a designated community or label for sexual minorities. Clearly there are significant challenges associated with mobilizing a group of individuals that may not have as much in common beyond their sexuality. Further, the lack of support for Dignity and LCR-LA clearly

⁷ When using the term "LGBT Activists," I referring to people active in both the LGBT Rights Movement and in LGBT politics.

establishes that even as the LGBT rights movement has sought inclusion in other historically exclusionary institutions, most notably the armed forces and state-sanctioned marriage, it is not invested in promoting LGBT rights within the Catholic Church or the Republican Party. These institutions, and the LGBT people who are part of them, are at the margins of the LGBT rights movement, even though members of Dignity and LCR-LA occupy positions of privilege in other key respects.

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Chapter Four: Coping With Homophobia in the Catholic Church and Republican Party

The Roman Catholic Church and the Republican Party both represent historically anti-gay institutions, as both organizations share long legacies of discriminating against sexual minorities and espousing anti-gay policies and beliefs. Despite this history of homophobia, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Roman Catholics and Republicans continue to support these institutions. This raises the question of how sexual minorities make sense of the seeming contradiction between their gay identities and their religious and political beliefs respectively.

In light of the Catholic Church's and Republican Party's well documented histories of homophobia and marginalizing sexual minorities, one might assume that LGBT constituents would report strong feelings of exclusion and inequality within both institutions. Even if LGBT supporters hoped to create change from within by pushing for change inside these institutions through continued participation, one would anticipate respondents, when prompted, would acknowledge the anti-gay aspects of the Church and the Republican Party as being significant and problematic. However, this research shows otherwise: members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans minimize their experiences with discrimination within the Catholic Church and Republican Party, while also rationalizing their continued participation. They simultaneously distance themselves from other subordinated groups, specifically members of the LGBT community that are perceived to be gender non-normative, by viewing them as distinct and separate "others."

I suggest that these heretical queers seek to create social distance between themselves and other subordinated groups in an attempt to curry favor with mainstream Catholics and Republicans.

In order to fully understand how members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans make sense of the inequality they experience within the Roman Catholic Church and Republican Party, it is important to note that members of both groups are simultaneously members of dominant and subordinate groups. On one hand, members of both organizations are sexual minorities, and as such they experience discrimination and inequality based on a heteronormative status quo (Han 2009, Lewis et al 2003, Lingiardi, Baiocco, and Nardelli 2012, Poon and Ho 2008, Kanuha 1999, Yip 1999). On the other hand, members of both groups are overwhelmingly middle class, white men, and accordingly have access to significant class, racial, and gender privilege (as discussed in chapter one). The picture is further complicated when one considers the fact that members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are marginalized within the Church and Republican Party because of their identity as sexual minorities, and within the LGBT community because of their affiliation with the Catholic Church and Republican Party (as discussed in chapter three). In other words, different aspects of their identity become more or less salient according to the situation and setting.

In this chapter, I explore the inequality LGBT Catholics and Republicans face within the Roman Catholic Church and the Republican Party, and the ways in which members perpetuate inequality by marginalizing others. I suggest that members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans employ five key coping

mechanisms to grapple with inequality and homophobia within these notably anti-gay institutions, thereby motivating them to continue participating, despite their marginalized status as sexual minorities. Members of both Log Cabin Republicans and Dignity 1) overlook the inequality they face in the Catholic Church and Republican Party, 2) minimize instances of homophobia within these anti-gay institutions, 3) rationalize their continued participation, 4) conform to institutional norms, and 5) work to distinguish themselves from gay stereotypes by adhering to heteronormative standards of masculinity and denigrating lesbians, transgendered people, and gay men who they perceive to be more feminine than themselves. It is important to note that by buying into popular and widely held ideas that gay men are more feminine than heterosexual men, respondents were also (perhaps inadvertently) legitimizing stereotypical ideas of both sexual minorities and gendered behavior.

Analysis of these patterns contributes to a rich literature on the replication of inequality, in particular how institutions continue to replicate and perpetuate inequality. I suggest that one way marginalized people may cope with their subordinated status is to minimize inequality and adhere to mainstream notions of “normal.” However, by doing so, they also fail to incite significant institutional change. After reviewing their experiences of inequality within the Catholic Church and the Republican Party, I turn to an analysis of the coping strategies members of Dignity and LCR-LA use to manage these experiences.

Inequality in the Roman Catholic Church and Republican Party

Institutions can be used to maintain boundaries between stratified groups (Schwalbe et al 2000). As discussed in chapter one, the Roman Catholic Church and the Republican Party share long anti-gay histories, and have maintained a distinction and separation between heterosexual and homosexual people by marginalizing gay participants. Both institutions view homosexuality as a chosen “lifestyle” and stand against same-sex marriage and same-sex couples adopting children. While the Roman Catholic Church’s official position, as articulated through the Vatican, suggests that sexual minorities are acting in sin and will eventually be punished when they are sent to hell (Yip 1999), large swaths of the Republican Party embrace traditional “family values” that hold that sexual minorities jeopardize American cultural values centered on heterosexual parents with children. For example, the 2012 Republican Party Platform, which purportedly reflects the majority of the Party’s views, supported keeping gays and lesbians out of the military while urging the maintenance of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and endorsed states’ rights to outlaw same sex marriage.

Members of Dignity and LCR-LA suggest that supporting the Catholic Church and Republican Party is a matter of rights. As discussed in chapter two, they view themselves as having the right to participate in these institutions and as working to change the institution from the inside in order to transform the Roman Catholic Church and Republican Party into more gay-friendly institutions. Members suggest that they should not have to choose between their sexual

identity and their religion or political party, and are offended at the thought of having to leave a church or political organization simply because they identify as gay. In fact, members of both organizations are adamant in their beliefs that they can remain both proud gay men and loyal Catholics or Republicans.

This is true in spite of extant research on both organizations that reveals the extreme anti-gay sentiment that members experience in the Catholic Church and Republican Party (Reese 2005, Lakoff 1995, Edsall and Edsall 1991). Prior research suggests that these negative experiences can be overcome or overlooked. Loseke and Cavendish (2001), for example, show how members of Dignity merge two very separate aspects of their identity, their spirituality and their sexuality, into one distinct gay Catholic identity, or what Loseke and Cavendish term “the dignified self.” Similarly, Rogers and Lott (1997) demonstrate how members of the Log Cabin Republicans’ class, age, and gender impact their choice to support the Republican Party. White, gay men were the most likely to participate and draw on their racial and gender privilege in doing so.

While Loseke and Cavendish and Rogers and Lott highlight the unique plight of LGBT members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans, they do not explore the specific mechanisms that group members employ to rationalize their continued participation in notably anti-gay institutions and how this may inadvertently replicate inequality. To address these gaps in our current understanding, this chapter explores how members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans cope with inequality and

homophobia within the Catholic Church and Republican Party and, in doing so, replicate systems of inequality.

Replicating Inequality

Scholars have long been intrigued by the specific mechanisms that allow inequality to persist and reproduce despite continued efforts to address social stratification. In their seminal work on the reproduction of inequality, Schwalbe et al (2000) identify a number of generic mechanisms that result in dominant groups maintaining their power over subordinates. These mechanisms chiefly include *oppressive othering*, in which one dominant group is conceptualized as morally superior to other subordinate groups, and *doing identity work* in which dominant groups create and cultivate an image of power and prestige.

Most centrally, *defensive othering* occurs when subordinates suggest that negative labels apply to other members of their subordinated group, but not necessarily to themselves (Schwalbe 2000). However, by engaging in defensive othering, subordinates also reinforce the power of negative labels, thereby legitimating these stereotypical ways of thinking (Pyke and Dang 2003, Ezzell 2009, Snow and Anderson 1987, Lee 1986). A range of subordinated groups engage in defensive othering: ethnic Asians coping with racial inequality and negative stereotypes about Asian immigrants (Pyke and Dang 2003), female rugby players struggling against stereotypes about both women and female

athletes (Ezzell 2009), and women dealing with sexist notions about female promiscuity (Lee 1986, Stomblor 1994).

Ezzell (2009) expands on the idea of defensive othering with two subcategories: *identifying with dominants* and *normative identification*. Ezzell (2009) notes that subordinates *identify with dominants* by identifying with dominant values, norms, and expectations. Similarly, subordinates engage in *normative identification* by adhering to dominant ideas about subordinate groups. He finds that when female rugby players encountered sexist and homophobic stereotypes about female athletes, they identified with dominants and dominant ideals of gender performance, for example by using their status as athletes to position themselves above other “weak” women.

It is important to note, however, that defensive othering can be seen as a coping mechanism for dealing with extreme inequality. Pyke and Dang (2003) emphasize defensive othering is an “adaptive response” and should not be confused with blaming the victims for their subordinated status. Accordingly, when the gay and lesbian supporters of the Roman Catholic Church and Republican Party denigrate other members of the LGBT community that are perceived as non-normative, it is important to keep in mind that engaging in defensive othering is an “adaptive response” to homophobia they encounter in these institutions and beyond.

Moreover, the LGBT Rights Movement has consistently been seen as replicating racial, gender, and class inequality by prioritizing the needs of white, gay men over the needs of both women and people of color (Ward 2004, 2008, Roth 1998, Teunis 2007). By allocating the bulk of resources to programs that largely serve men, “ghettoizing”

programs or organizations that serve women, or shutting women out of leadership positions within LGBT organizations, the LGBT Rights Movement is often seen as failing to address the needs lesbians and women of color. In this particular context, the LGBT Rights Movement, like many other social movements, replicates inequality found in wider society.

Coping With Homophobia

Heretical queers deal with inequality and homophobia within the Roman Catholic Church and Republican Party by utilizing five key coping mechanisms. The first mechanism includes overlooking instances of homophobia altogether, as some members suggest that they feel fully welcome and their sexuality remains a non-issue. Secondly, members minimize instances of homophobia by conceding that some small degree of anti-gay sentiment may exist, yet emphasize that it is not a significant problem. Thirdly, members rationalize both their continued participation and instances of homophobia by focusing on aspects that they like within the institutions that are unrelated to the poor treatment of sexual minorities. A fourth mechanism that members employ is conforming to institutional norms by not discussing sexuality or directly confronting institutional leadership about homophobic policies. In this way members are able to protect themselves from confrontation and hurt by not acting “too” gay or overtly “rocking the boat” through challenges to heteronormative institutional norms. Lastly, these heretical queers engage in defensive othering by denigrating people and behavior deemed non-normative, as members of both groups seek to distance themselves from other gay men

they perceive as too feminine, lesbians, and transgendered people and thus reinforce dominant norms of masculinity.

Mechanism One: Overlooking Homophobia

Some members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans suggest that they have never experienced any marginalization within the Church or Republican Party, despite both institutions' homophobic track records. Members living in Los Angeles are not alone in this, as the author of a 2012 New York Times article asked gay Republicans "if (they) felt welcome at the (Republican National) convention and within the G.O.P.;" the author was surprised when multiple respondents emphatically exclaimed that they "absolutely" felt fully included in the Party (Lapidos, 2012). While the members of Dignity LA and LCR-LA share these sentiments, they also recognize that they are accepted into the Catholic Church and Republican Party largely because they adhere to hegemonic notions of masculinity and heteronormativity. In this regard, members are accepted by these notable anti-gay institutions, as they do not "rock the boat" by publically questioning institutional anti-gay policies or publicizing their own sexual identities.

One member of Dignity shared that he has not experienced any discrimination within the Catholic Church, yet he admits that his experiences would be quite different if he publically challenged the Church's anti-gay teachings:

If I was really strong and said [during a Church service] that I don't believe in the sexuality that you teach, things would be different. I read this story about a young

man that shouted ‘Marriage Equality!’ [in the middle of Mass]. And he stood up and had a sign and this was in a small town in Wisconsin and he stood up to the Church. I suppose if I did what he did they’d say that I can’t have communion. [I do not experience] that type of overt discrimination.

On one hand, this respondent suggests that he doesn’t experience any sort of discrimination, yet on the other hand he also notes that this could be due to the fact that he never “rocked the boat” by directly or publically confronting Church leaders about their teaching regarding homosexuality. He notes that, like any other member of the Catholic Church, he is able to attend any Catholic service and receive communion, so long as he doesn’t publicize his sexual identity or challenge Church leaders about their anti-gay policies.

Another respondent shares similar feelings about the Roman Catholic Church as he also suggests that he has not faced much in the way of overt discrimination:

Have I ever not been welcomed? No. Have I heard priests preach negatively about homosexuality? Yes. Has anyone that I know have been kicked out of the church? No, other than priests who are advocating for us and who have sent letters around their various parishes [reminding parishioners] that [the Church] is not doing anything with or for gays

Interestingly, this respondent is reluctant to identify homophobia within the Church, and like other members, is keenly aware that he is welcome as long as he does not publically challenge the Church’s anti-gay policies.

Similarly, another respondent reports experiences of inclusion within the Republican Party, but notes that even after “coming out” as a gay man, he has never made his sexual identity “an issue” by publically confronting or challenging fellow Republicans about the party’s anti-gay beliefs:

You know, I was in the closet until I was 40, so I didn’t feel marginalized by the [Republican] Party because they never recognized me as being anything other...than a good Christian boy...I don’t know that I ever felt marginalized...[My sexual identity] was a non-issue because, you know, I didn’t bring it to anyone’s attention. I guess that I could have rolled in and made it an issue.

This respondent provides two reasons for why he never experienced exclusion among fellow Republicans. First, he lived as a heterosexual man for the majority of his life, and therefore was unlikely to encounter any inequality based on his sexual identity. This is not uncommon, as many members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans shared that they “came out,” or publically acknowledged their gay identity, well into adulthood. Second, even after he began identifying as a gay man, he didn’t “bring it to anyone’s attention” or “make it an issue.” Just as the previous respondent doesn’t directly challenge Church leaders about their anti-gay policies or raise the issue of sexuality, this member of Log Cabin Republicans also does not broach the topic of sexuality and therefore doesn’t experience any marginalization based on his sexual identity.

Another LCR-LA member similarly notes that she also feels welcome within the Republican Party, but admits that much of her experience in conservative politics took place before she publically “came out” as a sexual minority:

I’m not involved in the Republican ranks like I was, but I felt very fine as a woman when I was part of the Republican Party in the 80’s. I wasn’t lesbian or bi-sexual then, I had a traditional identity. But I could assert myself, do my work, I had a great position, they gave me a ladder of authority. I didn’t have any resistance to that. I mean I had those issues [relating to difficult colleagues], but I knew how to handle them.

This respondent suggests that she truly enjoyed her time working for the Republican Party and that she excelled in the workplace, yet concedes that she was living as a heterosexual woman (“traditional identity”) at the time. She also dismisses any resistance that she may have encountered from her colleagues (“those issues”) because she was able to deal with them without any significant ramifications.

Members of both organizations suggest that while they are open about their sexual identity as gay men, they may not openly question the institutions’ homophobic stance. Thus, it is not surprising that some members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans suggest that they are fully welcomed in the Church and Republican Party and report low levels of exclusion or discrimination. Not only are members working hard to not “make their sexuality an issue,” thereby adhering to heteronormative notions of respectability, their reluctance to directly push the subject of sexuality in the Church and Republican

Party also means that these institutions have little incentive to drastically change their existing homophobic policies.

Mechanism Two: Minimizing Inequality in the Church and Republican Party

Other members of Dimity and the Log Cabin Republicans suggest that inequality persists in both the Catholic Church and the Republican Party, and that as gay men, they have been marginalized based on their sexual identity. However, they attribute these feelings of marginalization to one small aspect of the institution as a whole, indicating that they continue to participate despite what they maintain are minor anti-gay aspects of the Catholic Church and Republican Party. These members suggest that they don't wish to dismiss the Church and Republican Party altogether because of one small aspect with which they disagree. For example, the members of Dignity indicate that they while they don't agree with the Church hierarchy (comprised of the pope, cardinals, etc.), they continue to identify as Catholic and adhere to the Church's general principles, beliefs, and tenets. Similarly, the members of Log Cabin Republicans suggest that while they disagree with the Party's stance against same sex marriage and gay men and women serving in the military, they emphatically support the other aspects of the Republican platform including fiscal conservatism and a strong national defense.

One member of the Log Cabin Republicans addresses the aspects of the platform that he disagrees with:

The anti-gay policies from one year and, yeah, it's the (Republican Party) platform, and there are certain things I disagree with the platform. I agree with

80% of it and I don't agree with 20% of it. Is the 20% enough for me to go out and say screw this, I'm going to become an independent or join the Democratic Party? No.

While this respondent acknowledges that he “disagrees with” certain aspects of the Republican Party (in reference to its anti-gay policies, including its stance against same sex marriage and gay men and lesbians serving in the military), he also considers these policies to be a minor (“20%”) aspect of Republican politics. Accordingly, he chooses to continue supporting a party despite the aspects of it that he disagrees with.

Similarly, a member of Dignity simultaneously emphasizes both his continued Catholic faith and his discontent with church leadership: “It's such a shame that the church puts such strict rules on sexuality, and such horrible attacks on homosexuals.”

Yet several minutes later, he indicates:

You know, when I walk into a house of God, a Catholic Church, I feel comfortable. I feel comfortable being in that space, you know, seeing the altar. But again, the Church leadership are the people in power. And they fail to understand [their gay parishioners].

Just as some members of Log Cabin Republican continue to support the Republican Party by overlooking its anti-gay policies and focusing on the aspects they do agree with, this member of Dignity shares how significant the church remains, and how comfortable and familiar it is to him, despite church leaders' “attacks” on sexual minorities. While he disagrees with the leadership, their anti-gay policies are not significant enough for him to sever his ties with the church altogether.

Similarly another respondent indicates that he continues to “feel welcome” because he “blows off” those in charge within the church: “I feel welcome. I blow them off, the (Roman Catholic Church) hierarchy. They’re a bunch of old men that are set in their ways and have no regard for women, gay men, whatever.” By describing the church leaders as “a bunch of old men that are set in their ways,” this respondent dismisses them as an insignificant part of the church that doesn’t impact his decision to continue practicing Catholicism. Moreover, he sees the church as much more than just the current leadership.

Mechanism Three: Rationalization

Many heretical queers found ways of rationalizing their support of these anti-gay institutions, namely by focusing on issues that had nothing to do with gay rights or the poor treatment of sexual minorities. When pressed about the specific policies implemented by the Roman Catholic Church and the Republican Party that they find objectionable, some respondents change the topic or focus on policies that they approve of and that do not relate to either institutions’ anti-gay history (for example, many members of the log Cabin Republicans celebrate the party’s fiscal policies, while refusing to focus on its stance on LGBT rights). Heretical queers are not alone in this; research shows that voters will frequently prioritize some factors over others when choosing who to support in an election (Bartels 2006, Frank 2004). Many voters will attach more weight to economic issues, for example, when voting, whereas other voters may choose to prioritize social issues.

What stands out about the members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans is that when discussing their support of the Church or Republican Party, they choose to prioritize issues that are completely unrelated to the institution's stance on gay rights. Additionally, by focusing on issues they do not like that have nothing to do with gay rights, such as the church's dress code or treatment of the poor, members are able to rationalize their continued support and participation. For example, one respondent shares:

It wasn't so much the homosexuality and the church being anti-gay as it was all the things that I remembered as a child and all the things I saw [while living] in Italy and the stuff that the hierarchy did. I remember as a little kid, it makes me so mad...my mother one time went to mass and did not have her hat on and you know, the priest made a comment about that. It was just the most ridiculous thing! When I was in Naples, all the priests were living better than all the people because the people were poor, really poor.

This respondent primarily objects to the way the Church treated his mother and the poor, specifically citing these factors as more significant and objectionable than "the church being anti-gay."

Similarly, some members of Log Cabin Republicans also take exception to aspects of the Republican Party that do not relate to gay rights. When asked if he felt welcomed by the Republican Party, one respondent explained "Um, probably not, I suppose that generally I like their policies, but...I don't know, I don't want to keep talking about gay rights." This respondent, like others, were reluctant to

discuss the anti-gay aspects of the Republican Party, and did not want to feel obligated to continually discuss gay rights. He then continued on to describe the Republican policies that he took exception to:

Candidates kind of adhere to a very specific platform. I think that they have to be very rigid and they can't ever raise taxes at all regardless of circumstances or fiscal issues, like healthcare.

This respondent recognizes the anti-gay aspects of the Republican Party, but like the members of Dignity, specifically cites other (financial) policies that he takes objection to. However, by minimizing the homophobic aspects of the Church and the Republican Party, members also ensure that both institutions maintain a status quo. Neither institution is likely to change its anti-gay policies or rhetoric when members and supporters fail to directly address the subject with leadership.

This tendency to rationalize homophobia in the Republican Party was especially evident in March, 2015, when the Log Cabin Republicans were formally recognized by the California Republican Party. The announcement was monumental as it was the first instance of a gay group being officially sanctioned by a state Republican Party, and was a goal that the members of the Log Cabin Republicans had worked towards for almost forty years by regularly lobbying the Republican Party and publically making a case for their recognition. The president of the California Log Cabin Republicans was quoted as saying, "The left will not be able to say to us anymore, 'The Republican Party doesn't want you'" (Mehta 2015). This quote is telling as this particular member fails to recognize that for almost forty years the Republican Party did *not* want them. This

member, like many others, seemingly overlooks and rationalizes the homophobia within the Republican Party, and instead uses this victory as an opportunity to emphasize the “inclusive nature” of the California Republican Party, albeit failing to recognize that the Republican Party is only likely to include gay people when pressured to do so, and that California is the only state whose state party recognizes the Log Cabin Republicans.

Inclusion of gays into conservative political organizations is indeed unusual. The American Conservative Union refused to allow the Log Cabin Republicans the right to fully participate in the Conservative Political Action Conference. Gay Republicans took an apologetic stance when the Executive Director of the organization released the following statement in a press release sent out to members:

The American Conservative Union has the right to invite or not invite whoever they want to the Conservative Political Action Conference, but they should be honest about the reasons why...I will be attending CPAC, as will hundreds of other Log Cabin Republicans members and supporters. Make no mistake: LCR is actively being prohibited from sponsoring CPAC....The only conclusion that can be made is that the organizers of CPAC do not feel gay people can be conservative—a position opposed by the thousands of Millennial CPAC attendees. (The Log Cabin Republicans)

Interestingly, this statement begins by defending the American Conservative Union (“they have the right to invite whoever they like”), and while it suggests that it is unfair that members of Log Cabin Republicans are prohibited from fully participating in the conference, it fails to address the core issue—members of the Log Cabin Republicans are unwelcome because they are gay. At no point does this statement address the homophobia in the Republican Party or the American Conservative Union. In fact, the quote suggests that gay Republicans are prohibited from participating because the American Conservative Union does not think that they are conservative enough. The statement demonstrates how many members of both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans simply overlook heterosexism by rationalizing the anti-gay and homophobic aspects of the Church and Republican Party.

Mechanism Four: Conforming To Institutional Norms

Another way heretical queers respond and adapt to the discrimination they face within the Church and Republican Party is to conform to the institutional norms of these organizations, even if doing so means adhering to a heteronormative status quo. Many members avoid raising the issue of sexuality and also they denigrate those who do. When asked if there are any aspects of the Republican Party’s platform that may make him feel not welcome, one respondent claims, “Not for me. And that’s not the type of person that I am either. I don’t go into something feeling like I have something to prove or something.” By suggesting that individuals who confront Party officials about their anti-gay platform “have something to prove,” this respondent implies that those

individuals are causing unnecessary problems. Furthermore, by distinguishing himself as unlike the individuals that “have something to prove,” he implies that pushing for institutional change is an undesirable and negative trait.

Other members use similar tactics to distinguish themselves from people that they perceive as causing unnecessary problems for the institutions in which they participate and from which they seek recognition. One respondent described working for a “very conservative” Republican official that many assumed would be anti-gay based on his politics, yet this member of Log Cabin Republicans suggests that he experienced quite the opposite:

I worked for some very conservative chairman and I came out...it was never an issue. I mean, quite literally, I came out while I was working for the Republican Party.

On the one hand, this member of Log Cabin Republicans indicates that he was fully embraced after coming out as a gay man while working for an especially conservative politician. Yet on the other hand, he also suggests that he was admonished after publically raising the issue of his sexuality:

When you first kind of come out, you have to do this ‘gayest human possible’ phase...so I had the fucking [rainbow] flag and I literally had go-go dance music, I was working in the Ronald Reagan Republican Headquarters for the California Republican Party and I had half naked men on my wall in my office. I had my dance music going and my little rainbow flags and shit and literally HR had to come and say, ‘We are fine with you being gay, but stay in the office [and be

professional]. You need to bring it down a few notches...we are here, we love you, but you need to bring this down a few notches.

This respondent's experience highlights the complex relationship members of Log Cabin Republicans have with the Republican Party, a relationship that is fraught with contradictions. Despite being reprimanded after publically raising the issue of his sexuality, this respondent still perceives his experience working for this particular conservative politician as highly positive. This individual did publicize his sexual identity and was reprimanded for doing so when representatives from the Human Resources Department told him to "bring it down a few notches." Yet he perceives the individuals he encountered as very supportive of his identity as a gay man, as he saw them as being "there for (him)" and "lov(ing)" him. Although he made no overt challenge to Republican Party doctrine, his expression of identity and allegiance with gay culture resulted in a reprimand, suggesting the Party is not entirely open to the presence of gay employees. This respondent further relies on stereotypes of gay men to describe his "coming out" as gay, while also seeming to denigrate popular gay subculture. He notes that after identifying as gay, he adorned his workspace with symbols historically associated with the Gay Rights Movement, including a gay pride flag. However, his pejorative language ("fucking flag," "rainbow flags and shit," etc.) suggest that he now views these symbols as silly and unnecessary. Furthermore, he notes that after identifying as gay, he had pictures of "half naked men on (the) wall in (his) office," which also speaks to a widely held stereotype of gay men as overly focused on sex.

Many of the members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans suggested that despite the anti-gay nature of the institutions they were working to be a part of, they felt fully accepted by both the institution and its representatives. However, many members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans acknowledge that much of the reason that they did not experience or perceive any marginalization was due to the fact that they conformed to the institutional norms, as they didn't publicize their sexual identity or publically question the institution's anti-gay policies. They were therefore able to escape any hostility directed towards them based on their identity as sexual minorities. Furthermore, these interviews also demonstrate how respondents conformed to norms by dismissing others who did raise the issue of sexual identity and confronted institutional leaders about anti-gay policies, while also distancing themselves from popular gay subculture.

Mechanism Five: Defensive Othering

LGBT Catholics and LGBT Republicans specifically engage in defensive othering, a management strategy which occurs when stigmatized individuals legitimate negative stereotypes by distancing themselves from stigmatized others, typically in situations of extreme social oppression (Schwalbe et al 2000, Pyke and Dang 2003). While this coping strategy has been observed among racial and ethnic groups (Pyke and Dang 2003, Semons 1991) and among women (Padavic 1991, Ezzell 2009), it has not yet been fully explored among sexual minorities,

leaving scholars with little insight into the ways in which gays and lesbians make sense of the inequality and homophobia they may experience in the institutions they support.

Members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans often look past the homophobia in both the Church and the Republican Party. Further, they often denigrate other sexual minorities, thereby distancing themselves from the LGBT Community and gay stereotypes. In particular, members of both organizations denigrated lesbians and individuals seen as not adhering to traditional gender norms, such as transgender people. By distancing themselves from other subordinated groups, members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans position themselves as respectable and do not risk “rocking the boat” with institutional leaders.

Many members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans emphasize that they do not identify with gay stereotypes, especially those that characterize gay men as effeminate, promiscuous, or highly sexually active. One respondent notes, “I don’t identify with all the stereotypes. I don’t look and act like [effeminate] gay people do on television.” He suggests that he is not like other stereotypical gay men, yet by relying on these stereotypes of gay men as effeminate, he also legitimizes the notion that gay men are somehow less masculine than straight men by accepting it to be true.

Members of both groups routinely shied away from sexual minorities deemed as non-normative, especially gay men who they perceived as effeminate. One Dignity member described his initial disgust when first meeting the group by noting, “There were all of these fairies.” A “fairy” is a pejorative term for a gay man who acts feminine, a type of person with whom this respondent clearly did not want to be affiliated. Similarly,

another respondent recalled his apprehension about attending his first Dignity meeting: “I thought that it was going to be some sort of freak show or something.” He continues on to suggest that he was pleasantly surprised to learn that Dignity was comprised of “pretty nice, normal people.”

One member of the Log Cabin Republican shared a similar sentiment when attending his first meeting:

All the people who were there were old creepers, for lack of a better term. And having been only out for a couple years at that point, I kind of [assumed] because it is a gay group, it is going to be young and fun. It’s going to be college Republicans, but gay! And it was not. It was completely not that.

Like the other respondents, this member of Log Cabin Republicans distanced himself from other members of the gay community, specifically older gay men that he perceived as sexually lascivious. In fact, he was so disgusted by the “old creepers,” that initially refused to join the Log Cabin Republicans (he was later convinced by one of the other “normal” members). The respondent candidly discusses his disgust with this segment of the community, and by dismissing them as “creepers,” he also suggests that they were preying on other, presumably younger, gay men for sexual gratification. While the way gay men engage with hegemonic masculinity is highly complex (Connell 1992), all of these respondents highlight how members seek to distance themselves from other sexual minorities that do not adhere to traditional gender norms (“fairies”) or appear as out of

the mainstream (“freaks” or “old creepers”), and instead work to appear as “nice, normal people.”

Many members of both groups painted the rest of the gay community in a negative light, emphasizing that they were different. For example, one member of the Log Cabin Republicans, matter-of-factly noted, “Gay people tend to be more sexually lascivious, and it’s a fact. You know, it’s not the most conducive lifestyle to creating healthy families. And those are true things.” In this clear example of defensive othering, the respondent buys into the widely held misconception that gay men are too sexually active and therefore unable to be good parents. Not only does the respondent continue on to emphasize that he is not like other “sexually lascivious” gay men, but he also legitimizes this value laden misconception by stating it as a “fact.” Statements like these demonstrate the ways in which members of both organizations distance themselves from gay stereotypes, yet at the same time legitimize these stereotypes by assuming them to be true.

Members’ disdain for effeminate gay men was made obvious when pop star Justin Bieber was spotted in the same bar in which a Log Cabin Republican meeting was underway. The meeting was held in a private area of a popular bar and members were surprised when the pop star walked in and sat down (presumably he was there to have a drink and was unaware that the Log Cabin Republican meeting was being held). Several members of the group were interviewed by the media after the meeting, with one member being quoted as saying: “I went back and looked around the corner and I saw the group and, literally, I didn't see Justin Bieber, I just saw a bunch of girls...I got a closer look

and said, ‘Oh, yeah, that’s the Biebs, for sure.’ But he looked like a butcher version of [pop star] Miley Cyrus” (MailOnline, Simon Tomlinson 2015). Interestingly this quote highlights both the significance of masculinity and the ways in which men who are perceived as feminine are denigrated by group members. By denigrating the pop star as “just a bunch of girls” and a “butcher version of Miley Cyrus,” the LCR-LA member not only reinforced patriarchal notions of the superiority of masculinity but also legitimated existing notions of gender, specifically the idea that men should behave and appear masculine, and women should behave and appear feminine. While, some members suggested that the quote was not reflective of the image Log Cabin Republicans wish to publically portray, most conceded that members privately shared similar thoughts.

Members of the Log Cabin Republicans also work to distance themselves from subordinated others, specifically lesbians and women. The group was almost exclusively male apart from myself and one other member. On my second meeting, one member excitedly introduced me to other members with, “This is Natasha and she is NOT a lesbian!” LCR-LA members appeared delighted with my heterosexual identity, and it became a positive “selling point” as I was introduced on multiple occasions as “not a lesbian.” Members made it clear that they liked me, in large part because I did not identify as lesbian. Contrary to my experience, the other lone female member (who identified as bisexual, although was reluctant to label her sexual identity) never appeared to be warmly welcomed.

During meetings, she largely stood alone and members seemed eager to end conversations when she was present.

Dignity's members are also largely male, and one member provides a possible explanation, as he notes that one of the "downsides" of having both men and women participating in the group is the tension created among members:

One of the downside [of having women participants] is that some of our [male] members don't care for them and have a hard time adjusting, so the men won't come around on nights or weekends [when women also attend]. It is not an easy thing to make people accept each other. They don't really have that natural acceptance in them so it is definitely an issue for us. That's not easy to deal with.

This interviewee is very candid about the fact that some male participants want the group to remain exclusively male and actively boycott the events or services that include women. Clearly, women are not fully welcomed into Dignity as some group members do not want them there and even demonstrate their displeasure by boycotting in order to ensure that the group remains a male dominated space.

Yet when asked about the lack of women participants, members of Dignity and Log Cabin Republicans appear confused about the lack of female participation. They suggest that anyone is welcome to join, yet when prompted, concede that they do nothing in the way of outreach to attract either women or lesbians. Clearly, with Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans being almost entirely male, the groups remain male dominated spaces that are not particularly friendly to lesbians or women. More importantly, this allows group members to distance themselves from other subordinated groups,

specifically women and lesbians, who largely appeared unaware of their marginalized status within the group.

The groups also engage in defensive othering by distancing themselves from transgendered people. The relationship between the gay and trans community has historically been seen as contentious, and Dignity and Log Cabin Republican meetings are no different. While both groups addressed gay rights repeatedly (the right to marry, the right to be openly affectionate with a same sex partner, citizenship rights for same sex couples, etc.), they never brought up or discussed issues or injustices that the trans community faces. Furthermore, group members occasionally used derogatory language when discussing transgender individuals. For example, one member of Dignity insensitively referred to a transgender woman as “shim.” This particular member quickly admitted “that was bad of me,” but then went on to justify his insensitivity: “Well, you know, she used to be a man.” Similarly, one interviewee shared:

We try [to be inclusive], but it is very difficult. One of our members was a transgender person and there were several times that people said things that sounded very insensitive, but were not meant that way. There were a few times where she got upset or hurt when she had heard people say [insensitive things]. You just want to have people around you who are going to be extra sensitive about the words they use or phrases.

According to this respondent, trans people have historically been treated poorly by other members of the group. He notes that participants made insensitive and inappropriate

remarks, yet he also emphasizes that the cruel comments “were not meant that way,” thereby justifying the insensitive remarks because they were not intended to offend. However, by doing so, this respondent also dismisses the seriousness of the situation, as the fact remains that the group was hostile to trans people by allowing members to use hurtful or offensive language. Examples like this show how both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are unwelcoming to trans people.

It is little wonder that Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans remain largely homogeneous since members work to distance themselves from other stigmatized sexual minorities, especially those that are perceived as non-normative. By focusing almost exclusively on gay issues and using derogatory language, neither group attracts much diversity. While most members appear oblivious to the ways in which their groups can be seen as hostile to women and other sexual minorities, including lesbians and trans people, they also clearly distinguish themselves from other subordinated groups, thereby ensuring that they remain male dominated spaces of privilege.

Conclusion

Institutions can be slow to change due to internal culture and norms, and that appears to be the case for the Catholic Church and the Republican Party, vis-à-vis the inclusion of LGBT people. However, this research points to some of the factors that may contribute to this persistent institutional inequality specifically, and the replication of inequality generally. By overlooking or minimizing the inequality and injustices within the Catholic Church and Republican Party, members of Dignity and Log Cabin

Republicans also contribute to maintaining a status quo. Both the Catholic Church and the Republican Party have little incentive to change their homophobic policies or beliefs when gay Catholics and Republicans fail to recognize or call attention to the anti-gay aspects of the Church or Party. However, it is important to note that part of the reason members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are able to escape overt homophobia is that they adhere to mainstream notions of respectability and normalcy.

In adhering to these mainstream ideas of respectability, group members have also created spaces that are in many ways hostile to people outside of the white, male, middle class norm. Neither Dignity nor the Log Cabin Republicans are unique in this regard as many organizations can promote a white, male normativity (Ward 2008). When asked about the lack of women participants or people of color, group members seemed surprised that the group failed to attract diversity. Members of both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans explained that “anyone is welcome to join,” yet acknowledge, when pressed, that they do little in the way of reaching out to people of color or women and tend to overlook issues affecting them. Moreover, while some members privately admit to hearing others make disparaging remarks about women and non-whites, they fail to recognize the ways in which their group can be hostile to others. Also, by suggesting that “anyone is welcome to join,” but doing nothing to actively promote inclusivity, members blame women and people of color for not participating, as participants suggest that “they could come if they wanted to.” In this sense these heretical queers, like many other people in positions of gender and racial privilege, seem blind to the ways in which their groups can be hostile to either women or people of color.

At the same time, members of both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans pay little attention to how their groups may alienate people outside of the middle class. Participating in both groups requires both time and money, as members are expected to contribute financially. For example, members of Log Cabin Republicans are required to purchase tickets ranging from \$25-\$50 in order to attend both monthly meetings and social events. While these tickets provide access to the event, a drink, and appetizers, there is little consideration for how the cost of participation may prevent low income people, disproportionately women and racial minorities, from participating. Accordingly, these spaces are, in many ways, closed to individuals that are outside the white, male, middle class group norm.

By creating spaces that are, in many ways, hostile to subordinated groups, heretical queers supporting Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans also replicate social inequality. Firstly, by engaging in defensive othering and distancing themselves from other subordinated groups, including sexual minorities, women, and individuals perceived as non-normative, members of Dignity and Log Cabin Republicans legitimate negative stereotypes. Specifically, they reinforce and reify social beliefs about the undesirability of subordinated groups including lesbians, trans people, and gender non-conforming individuals.

By suggesting that effeminate men are “freaks” or “fairies” and that issues facing the trans community are unimportant, members—perhaps unwittingly—support the idea that these subordinated groups are undesirable, non-normative, and rare. The fact that heretical queers replicate inequality via defensive othering supports the findings of other

researchers exploring inequality (Pyke and Dang 2003, Ezzell 2009, Snow and Anderson 1987, Lee 1986).

Secondly, heretical queers' use of defensive othering also demonstrates the widespread heterosexism within the LGBT Rights Community. The fact that Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are hostile to women, people of color, and trans people is nothing new in the LGBT Community as the LGBT Rights Movement frequently prioritizes the needs of white, gay men (Ward 2004, 2008, Roth 1998, Teunis 2007). However, this research demonstrates the specific mechanisms and attitudes that result in LGBT organizations' continued marginalization of subordinated groups and the ways in which they remain dominated by white, middle class, gay men.

More importantly, this lack of diversity can be seen as a strategic, although unintentional, move to gain entry into the Roman Catholic Church and Republican Party. Both of these institutions have historically been highly racialized and gendered spaces that are hostile to women and others outside of white, middle class standards of normalcy and respectability. Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans seek inclusion into the Church and Republican Party, but are barred based on their sexual identity as gay men. What better way to gain acceptance and inclusion than by adhering to institutionally set standards for normalcy? It stands to reason that Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans would significantly lessen their chances of inclusion if they were comprised of anything other than perfectly "normal," white, middle class, men. In short, Dignity and Log Cabin Republicans' make up remains reflective of the makeup of the

leadership of the Catholic Church and Republican Party. Moreover this strategy has already proved successful within the broader LGBT Rights Movement, and perhaps members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are hoping to emulate their success by adopting a similar strategy.

However, this perhaps strategic lack of diversity among Dignity and Log Cabin Republicans' members also points to the persistence of inequality. By maintaining a membership of exclusively white, gay men, and representing the interests and issues pertinent to them, Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans can be seen as not "rocking the boat." Thus, these groups are not really calling for big changes at all; rather, they are seeking acceptance for a very specific group of people. In this regard, it is no wonder that large institutions such as the Church or Republican Party are so slow to change and continue to perpetuate inequality and homophobia; groups like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans that are working for change are actually calling for very little.

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Chapter Five: Dignity, the Log Cabin Republicans, and the LGBT Rights

Movement

A Turning Point for the LGBT Rights Movement

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights Movement has attracted significant academic attention over the past thirty years, with many scholars suggesting that part of their interest lies in the movement's overwhelming success. Few can argue that the LGBT Rights Movement has not made significant strides within a relatively short amount of time. However, the movement's victories also raise the question of what is next for the LGBT Rights Movement. With the movement having succeeded in many areas, scholars and activists alike are speculating about its next steps. Groups like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans can point us to a possible answer.

The LGBT Rights Movement is simultaneously integrating trans rights as well as pushing into more conservative arenas, such as the Catholic Church and the Republican Party⁸. These two directions represent different ends of a political spectrum within the LGBT Rights Movement, as trans rights activists and conservative organizers have historically been on opposing sides within the movement, each with their own desired outcomes and strategies for success. Citing evidence from both my field work and publications written by and for the LGBT community, I believe that the LGBT Rights Movement will successfully incorporate both trans rights activists and conservatively-leaning heretical queers in the years ahead. In this chapter, I first address the current state

⁸ As discussed in chapter five, the topic of LGBT rights has become an increasing part of the conversation among leadership in the Roman Catholic Church and Republican Party.

of the LGBT Rights Movement, including its victories and its challenges. Next, I discuss the increasing visibility of trans rights and the trans community's contentious relationship with the movement, and what groups like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans mean for the future of this relationship.

The LGBT Rights Movement Today

Social movements are constantly changing, adopting new tactics and strategies, and shifting approaches to creating change (Bernstein 1997, 2003, Fetner 2008, Tarrow 2005). Similarly, the LGBT Rights Movement has undergone significant change since the early movement organizing of the Mattachine Society in the 1950's, developing new approaches and priorities in their fight for equality (Fetner 2008, Hirshman 2012). For example, while early movement organizers developed a political agenda born out of the Communist Party, later LGBT activists organized around the AIDS epidemic during the 1980's and 1990's. Although there were earlier efforts at promoting familial rights for same-sex couples, such as domestic partnerships and the ability to foster or adopt children, it wasn't until the 2000s that activists mobilized around the issue of marriage rights (Ross 2012, Hirshman 2012). The LGBT movement has had a diverse and changing agenda that has adapted to prior victories and setbacks, as well as to shifts the movement itself helped create in American attitudes towards LGBT people and their rights.

The LGBT Rights Movement has also periodically switched tactics in their fight for equality (Hirshman 2012, Ghaziani 2008, 2011, Bernstein 1997, 2003, Cohen 1999).

During the late 1960's and 1970's, LGBT activists worked to emphasize their difference from the mainstream, heterosexual population, celebrating their uniqueness with slogans such as "Out and Proud" and "We're Here, We're Queer, Get Used to It." These messages largely focused on celebrating a unique LGBT identity that was decidedly different than that of the mainstream, something Bernstein (1997) demonstrates in her analysis of the strategic uses of identity in LGBT organizing.

However, the movement moved away from emphasizing difference in the 1990's when it instead began focusing on similarities between LBG people and the heterosexual population (Cohen 1999, Ghaziani 2008, 2011, Gamson 1998). Attention to transgender issues is a more recent development in the movement, and was not part of this shift.

Organizers who once celebrated their unique identities as sexual minorities now adopted an assimilationist approach to activism in which they emphasized similarities to mainstream Americans by suggesting that they were "the ordinary gays next door." Movement organizers worked to ensure that sexual minorities were perceived as just like heterosexuals, with similar interests, experiences, and ambitions. While critics highlighted how this assimilationist approach silenced the voices of many sexual minorities, including people of color, gender non-conformists, and the economically disadvantaged in a bid to appear "normal," this approach also met a great deal of success (Ghaziani 2008, Ward 2008, 2011, Teunis 2007, Gamson 1998, Hemphill 1999, Gluckman and Reed 1997).

However, it is important to note that the movement has not always been a unified force. On the contrary, as activists can quickly recount the discord both in early days of

organizing during the 1950's, and through to today (Hirshman 2012, Robinson 2005). In many ways, this discord and lack of unification is unsurprising in light of the fact that the LGBT community is incredibly diverse, representing people with wide ranging experiences, perspectives and expectations for the movement. For example, the relationship between queers of color and their white counterparts has historically been fraught with contention as white organizers failed to consider either racism within the LGBT community or how race affected experiences with inequality (Hemphill 1999, Teunis 2007, Poon and Ho 2008). Similarly, gay men and lesbians also share a historically contentious relationship. With an increasing focus on women's rights and male privilege through their involvement in the Second Wave feminist movement, many lesbians took exception to the ways in which gender inequality persisted within the LGBT community (Cohen 1999, Ward 2008, 2011). This was exacerbated by unequal responses within the LGBT community to the crises of HIV/AIDS and breast cancer.

Even the label of "LGBT" is contentious, as activists debated on who should be included as part of the identity (Aravosis 2007, Ghaziani 2011). "Gay" was historically used to include all sexual minorities, until lesbians, and later bisexuals, called for greater inclusion in movement terminology. In the late 90's the term "LGBT" was adopted in order to include trans gendered people as well, yet that decision was also fraught with debate as Aravosis (2007) suggests:

A lot of gays have been scratching their heads for 10 years trying to figure out what they have in common with transsexuals, or at the very least why transgendered people qualify as our siblings rather than our cousins. It's a fair

question, but one we know we dare not ask. It is simply not p.c. in the gay community to question how and why the T got added on to the LGB.

Some activists have also expanded the label to include straight allies (LGBT+), queers (LGBTQ), intersex individuals (LGBTQI), and people who are questioning their sexual identity (LGBTQQ). Clearly, activists do not always agree on who should be included under the LGBT umbrella, as organizers frequently disagree on both terminology and the politics of inclusion.

Similarly, movement organizers have not always agreed on the best possible strategies or goals for the LGBT Rights Movement. For example, during the early days of the AIDS epidemic, activists disagreed on the best strategies for creating change, with organizers from some organizations, such as ACT UP, favoring a more radical and “in your face” approach to raising AIDS awareness than others (Hirshman 2012). With activists disagreeing on the best strategy for both finding a cure and increasing public awareness, organizers would be hard pressed to describe the movement as unified, especially in the face of an epidemic. The recent focus on marriage rights has similarly been fraught with discord, although to a much lesser degree, as some suggest that the institution of marriage remains an outdated tool of patriarchy, frequently leaving women at a significant disadvantage (Cohen 1999). Critics indicate that the focus on marriage mainly benefits white, middle class people, but fails to truly address structural inequality, while others concede that marriage equality paves the way for greater political opportunities for the powerless (Bernstein 2015).

However contentious, the campaign for marriage equality is a perfect example of the LGBT Movement's assimilationist strategies, as organizers emphasized the idea that, like their heterosexual counterparts, same sex couples sought marriage as an important institution that would recognize and validate their relationships through the state and signal that same-sex unions can be committed, monogamous relationships. Rather than seek to transform the institution of marriage or reject it altogether, LGBT activists instead campaigned for marriage rights, thereby emphasizing their similarity with "mainstream" heterosexual couples. Marriage equality became a significant priority for the LGBT Rights Movement and straight and gay activists rallied around this cause. One popular image showed a (presumably) heterosexual woman at a rally, holding a sign that read "Gays Have Every Right To Be As Miserable As I Make My Husband." Slogans like this evidence how successful the movement's assimilationist strategy was, as marriage has come to be seen as something both same sex and opposite sex couples wanted and which is a normal part of life.

The subject of same sex marriage is one that the LGBT Rights Movement has brought to the forefront and has largely won. The Supreme Court struck down the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) with its 2013 Windsor decision and 36 states currently allow same sex marriage. These legal victories allowed same sex couples to jointly file federal taxes as well as state taxes in many states, access retirement and health benefits, and file for citizenship. In January, 2015, the Supreme Court announced that it will be making a decision on the issue of marriage equality in the upcoming term, with many activists hoping that the marriage rights will be secured at the federal level. Clearly, the

fight for marriage equality has largely been won, with the LGBT Movement claiming victory.

However, the Movement's success goes beyond the right for same sex couples to marry. In addition to the right to serve in the US Military, many suggest that sexual minorities experience significantly less stigma nowadays (Ross 2012, Graff 2015). Both straight and gay Americans speak out in support of equal rights as sexual minorities enjoy increased visibility and the public's attention. For example, a Gallup public opinion poll taken in May 2014 asked respondents, "Do you think that gay and lesbian relations between consenting adults should or should not be legal?" As offensive as the question is, 66% of American respondents felt as though same sex relations should be legal—a dramatic increase from the 32% that felt similarly in 1986 ("Gallup Historical Trends: Gay and Lesbian Rights"). Ross (2012) suggests that in many ways, sexual minorities experience much less stigma than in the past and notes that "in the straight world, the mortal fear of being mistaken as gay is weakening" (Ross, 2012, page 50). Both heterosexual and LGBT Americans have rallied behind the movement and equality for sexual minorities.

While the LGBT Rights Movement has made some significant strides, it is important to keep in mind that sexual minorities still face inequality, suggesting that in many ways the movement's work is far from done. For example, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) has never been passed, leaving members of the LGBT community vulnerable to discrimination based on their status as sexual minorities. Also recently passed anti-gay laws in Indiana and Arkansas allow businesses to cite religious

objections to refuse to serve gay people, thereby suggesting that many Americans feel that individuals should have the right to discriminate (clearly both the Roman Catholic Church and the Republican Party continue to implement their anti-gay policies and beliefs). Similarly, while public opinion polls show that increasing numbers of Americans favor LGBT rights, including the right to marry, 33% still believe that same sex relations should be made illegal and 42% are not in favor of same sex marriage, thus supporting the 13 states that do not allow same sex marriage (“Gallup Historical Trends: Gay and Lesbian Rights”).

Barton (2012) demonstrates how entire swathes of the United States lag far behind others in terms of LGBT acceptance, with small southern towns remaining particularly homophobic. Accordingly, many sexual minorities remain at high risk of hate crimes, something that holds especially true for transgender people. Statistics suggest that sexual minorities are victimized more than any racial, ethnic or religious minority group (“Southern Poverty Law Center”). The experience of being gay is also markedly different across classes, races, and geographies, with members of the LGBT community often facing profound discrimination in some contexts, such as the rural south, much more so than in others.

In this regard, many of the movement’s victories have had little to no impact on many subsets of the LGBT community, as the right to marry and to serve in the military only affect a portion of sexual minorities, namely those who wish to marry or serve and have the means by which to do so. In short, while the LGBT Rights Movement has made

some significant headway in the fight for equality, there is much more that remains to be done.

Despite on-going challenges, many members of the LGBT community are left suggesting that the LGBT Rights Movement is at a cross roads, with some indicating that the Movement has won its major battles and is drawing to a close. In a piece on the Movement's next steps, Isaacs (2014) posits: "As we rack up marriage win after marriage win, I have lost count of the number of times I've been asked by well-meaning acquaintances, 'Isn't it almost over? Isn't it just a matter of time?' I understand why some might feel that the LGBT movement is nearing its finish line."

Many members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans share this sentiment, as one member of Dignity notes:

Now it's not really about rights anymore, so now we have the chance to get married and I think we achieved everything. So right now there's no liberation fight that was going on like when [my partner] and I first got together back in the 70's.

Similarly, Graff (2013) raises some key questions about the LGBT Movement's next steps in light of its recent success. He asks "So then what? Should the coalition of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people—the LGBT movement, for short—declare victory and disband? Once we can marry the person whom we love, are we done agitating for political change under the rainbow flag?" This question of "So then what?" is being considered by activists, academics, and public figures alike. What is next for the

LGBT Rights Movement now that it has won the fight for marriage equality, in addition to other civil liberties?

Members of the LGBT community have been debating this very question, with many speculating about the movement's next steps. For example, Curry (2013) notes the LGBT Movement's success with the campaign for marriage equality, and calls for a return to focusing on HIV/AIDS in light of increasing numbers of infections within the gay community. Similarly, Banks (2013) also recognizes the LGBT Movement's overall success, yet emphasizes the need for focusing on gay rights internationally:

[The right to marry] is an enormous victory for LGBT people resulting in a seismic shift in public opinion in a relatively short period of time. The Supreme Court's decisions on the Defense of Marriage Act and [California] Proposition 8 are proof of that. But right now there are also millions of people being touched by one of the most quiet-kept human rights crises in the world — the denial of the most essential freedoms to people whose sexual orientation or gender identity do not conform to cultural norms or political whims. LGBT people are being arrested, tortured and murdered throughout the world.

In this debate about the LGBT Rights Movement's next steps, many are predicting that trans rights and issues relating to gender non-conformity will take center stage. This sentiment is reflected in the gay community's magazines and publications, as multiple authors have called for an increased focus on issues relating to the trans community, including social expectations of gender conformity. Juro (2014) notes:

Same-sex marriage is no longer the headline news story it once was, Laverne Cox is on the cover of *Time*, Janet Mock is a best-selling author, and trans journalists are writing for *The Advocate* and a variety of publications in commercial media. The country has changed and become far more trans-inclusive and supportive than it used to be.

Similarly, Isaacs (2014) notes the widespread success of the movement's campaign for marriage equality and suggests that the Movement focus on issues of equality for all, especially trans people:

Marriage means a lot, but our movement is not finished. It's time for us to go back to the roots of our movement toward our goal of lived equality. Marriage equality will not keep LGBT young people in their homes and loved by their families. It will not keep them in school and out of the criminal justice system. It will not ensure transgender people access to accurate identity documents or critical healthcare services.

Graff (2014) also predicts that the movement will tackle issues pertaining to gender non-conformity now that it has successfully won the battle for same sex marriage. Many sexual minorities seem to agree that it is time for the movement to change directions and focus on equality for trans gendered people, as *The Advocate* and other publications geared toward the LGBT community are filled with articles and opinion pieces calling for an end to the social and legal discrimination that trans people face.

Mainstreaming the Trans Movement

The trans community has gained increased attention from beyond the LGBT community as issues of gender non-conformity have received significant attention from the mainstream media in recent years. Storylines featuring transgender people are all too popular on both network and cable television, with shows such as “Orange Is The New Black” and “Transparent” popularizing transgender characters. When “Transparent,” a television comedy about a family’s journey with one parent’s gender transition, received a major award at the 2015 Golden Globes, both producers and cast members recognized the trans community in their speeches, touching on the issues and injustices gender non-conformists face. Similarly, weekly police dramas such as “CSI” and “SVU” routinely tackle storylines about trans peoples’ susceptibility to violent attacks, typically centering on a trans person as a victim of a violent crime or other injustice.

The media focus on issues affecting the trans gender community is not restricted to television programs geared only towards adults. In January, 2015, producers from the popular family drama “Glee” announced that they planned to introduce a transgender character with a story line that included the school’s football coach coming out as a transman (Brydum 2015). Similarly Chaz Bono, whose gender transition was the subject of much media attention and a documentary, was featured on the ABC’s family friendly, “Dancing with the Stars” in 2011, making him the first transgender person to be featured on television in a role not focused on gender. Former Olympic winner and national hero Bruce Jenner’s recent televised interview about his struggles as a trans person earned the highest ratings of any non-sports event in over a decade. Thus, in many regards, the

mainstream media attention on the trans community suggests that the time is right for the movement to gain momentum and incite significant change around transgender rights and gender conformity.

This is especially noteworthy in light of the tenuous and well documented tension between the gay and trans communities, as highlighted by both academics and activists (Ward 2008, 2004). The tension between the two communities was exemplified in 2007, when a prominent gay rights activist, John Aravosis, raised the question of why transgender people and lesbians and gays are lumped together in the same category: “What do I as a gay man have in common with a man who wants to cut off his penis, surgically construct a vagina, and become a woman?” (“How Did the T Get in LGBT?”). While fellow activists and trans advocates were swift to respond, part of the reason behind Aravosis’ statement lay in a recognition that gay rights would be easier won if they did not include trans people.

However, this tension seems to be dissipating, with sexual minorities emphasizing the need for the trans communities to support marriage equality ([Wood 2012](#)). Leaders and activists from both communities appear to be interested in putting differences aside and working together to promote equality. For example, in September, 2014, the President of the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), one of the most visible and mainstream gay rights organizations, publically apologized for failing the trans community in the past and vowed to “make trans issues a priority” (Juro 2014). This public apology was monumental, and prompted greater collaboration between the two

communities as the HRC made it a point to increase trans representation among organizational staff and leadership.

However, it is also important to note that just as the LGBT community remains divided on certain issues, so does the trans community. The trans community includes a diverse group of people with differing thoughts regarding the priorities, goals, and tactics activists should take (Dozier 2005, Gagne 1997, Rosen 2002). Part of this lies in the diversity of opinions about gender, as there tend to be two differing perspectives: some activists and trans people view their sex and gender as misaligned and therefore work to be seen as a member of the opposite sex. However, other gender queer activists suggest that gender is continuous and therefore do not actively identify with one gender or the other. Not surprisingly, members of these two camps often disagree on terminology, labels and identity categories, and the direction activists should take.

What Do Trans Rights Mean for the LGBT Rights Movement?

As the trans community gains increased attention in the mainstream media and among leaders in the LGBT community, the timing seems perfect for the LGBT Rights Movement to tackle trans rights and issues of gender non-conformity. Furthermore, with sexual minorities calling for increased collaboration between the gay and trans communities, and organizers recognizing the need to address the movement's next steps now that same sex marriage has largely been legalized, it stands to reason that the LGBT Rights Movement has its new cause—trans rights.

Shifting priorities from marriage equality to trans rights is an exciting, although potentially risky, move for the LGBT Rights Movement. Much of the movement's success with marriage rights lies in its assimilationist approach to activism; this conservative approach meant that activists began working within mainstream institutions, such as the institution of marriage and existing political institutions, rather than in opposition to them. The Movement's bid for marriage equality is a testament to this, as activists sought inclusion in the institution of marriage. However, the LGBT Rights Movement is now working to apply these same assimilationist strategies to the fight for trans rights by emphasizing trans peoples' similarities with cis gender Americans. With the LGBT Rights Movement growing increasingly more inclusive of trans rights, it stands to reason that it will soon be integrating both conservatively leaning groups that seek to assimilate with mainstream society, like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans, and trans rights groups. While these groups share a historically contentious relationship, incorporating both into one movement may prove to be a difficult, although ultimately inevitable task for LGBT activists.

It is important to recognize the diversity of experiences and perspectives on gender within the trans community. As suggested earlier, trans people and those identifying as gender queer often have tense relations because the groups have very different goals and strategies (Dozier 2005, Gagne 1997, Rosen 2002). Individuals identifying as gender queer can be seen as the more radical of the two groups, with activists seeking to challenge cultural notions of gender in binary terms. Unlike trans people working to transition from one sex/gender to the other and therefore adhering to

traditional notions of gender as either male or female, individuals identifying as gender queer advocate for gender to be seen in continuous terms or doing away with gender altogether, which would require significant institutional change (Roxie 2014). Gender has long been recognized as a macro level institution that has a large effect on our daily lives, affecting how we organize and how we perceive ourselves and others (Deutch 2007, Fenstermaker and West 2002). In this regard, the mainstreaming strategies that trans activists have adopted in recent years, is also a point of controversy among the trans community. Clearly, if the LGBT Rights Movement were to embrace the more radical gender queer agenda, movement organizers would have their work cut out for them, as they would be challenging and dismantling the institution of gender to a much greater degree than if they were only addressing trans rights.

While the dominant part of the LGBT Rights Movement has shied away from radical gender queer agendas in recent years, they have embraced more conservative trans rights. With LGBT activists clamoring for the need to take on this new challenge and the recent visibility of the trans community, it seems as though the LGBT Rights Movement is moving in a slightly new direction, while also relying on old strategies that have proven so successful in the recent past. A key part of the LGBT Rights Movement's strategy for trans rights has included raising awareness in order to show the American public that trans people are human too, deserving of equal rights and protection from the discrimination and hate crimes they have historically been subject to. Thus, part of trans organizing has also included an assimilationist approach, as trans activists emphasize similarity with the mainstream by showing that trans people are not the freaks

that they have historically been portrayed as, but just like everyone else. The recent interview with trans sports star, Bruce Jenner, stands as a testament to this assimilationist approach. Jenner and the interviewer, Diane Sawyer, emphasized his similarity with other Americans, including his desire to be a good parent and his conservative political ideals. Furthermore, Jenner portrayed himself as entirely gender conforming, discussing his desire to be a feminine woman that conforms to traditional feminine displays, including wearing nail polish and make-up. Jenner has no desire to challenge the institution of gender or exist someplace in between male and female, but rather, hopes to transition into an average, American woman. Clearly parts of the LGBT Rights Movement are now relying on the mainstreaming approach that has proven so successful in the past in its fight for trans rights.

However, it is also important to recognize the “messy” nature of the LGBT Rights Movement. As earlier suggested, the LGBT community is highly diverse, representing millions of different kinds of people, with different experiences and expectations for the movement. Accordingly, it is not always easy to definitively say that the entire movement is adopting one strategy over another, especially in light of the fact that it has historically used a variety of different strategies in the fight for equality. So while the mainstreaming efforts may have been the strongest in recent years, it is important to recognize that the movement is in no way monolithic or singular. In this regard, we may also see a continuation of conflict among movement organizers, with more conservative groups, like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans moving in one direction, and trans rights groups moving in another.

Heretical Queers and the LGBT Rights Movement Moving Forward

The experiences of the members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans also support the idea that the LGBT Rights Movement is moving in a slightly new direction by applying old strategies to new goals. I believe that these groups, especially the Log Cabin Republicans, are also slowly embracing trans politics. For example, within hours of Bruce Jenner's interview being aired, the Log Cabin Republicans released a statement, congratulating him on coming out as a trans woman and a conservative Republican:

As the nation's only organization representing LGBT conservatives and straight allies, Log Cabin Republicans congratulates Bruce Jenner in the tremendous courage he demonstrated tonight, being true to himself both in terms of his personal identity as well as his political identity. There is a home for you in Log Cabin Republicans -- as there is for all lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender conservatives and straight allies.

Clearly, the members of the Log Cabin Republicans see the utility and need for publically recognizing Jenner and inviting him to participate in the group, thereby publically embracing trans rights.

While these groups may publically embrace trans politics, what occurs behind closed doors is another story, thus demonstrating tension between the trans community and other conservatively leaning groups, like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans. My research shows that both groups can be seen as not welcoming to trans people at best and hostile to them at worst. After all, conservatively leaning groups embrace the

politics, values, and perspectives of the Roman Catholic Church and Republican Party, suggesting that they would not necessarily embrace the new direction the LGBT Rights Movement is taking. Throughout my time in the field, both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans almost exclusively focused on issues affecting gay men. While issues affecting lesbians and women were occasionally discussed (e.g., the lack of women in church leadership, the Republican stance on reproductive rights, etc.), trans rights and the issues affecting trans people were never mentioned. Even with the trans community's increased visibility in mainstream media, neither group addressed or ever made mention of trans people or the widespread inequality they face in the Catholic Church, the Republican Party, or beyond. This lack of mention was especially interesting as one member of Dignity was a trans woman, and while I cannot say a priori if any members of the Log Cabin Republicans were trans, the lack of focus on the trans community and issues they face was telling.

It is also important to note that Dignity's members were fairly open about their disregard for their fellow transgender member. During my time in the field, I heard Dignity's members use derogatory terms to refer to her gender and routinely described her as "starting drama" or initiating trouble for the rest of the group. On one occasion, a member loudly and rudely complained that he could not sit next to her because her perfume was too overpowering. Behind closed doors, participants suggested that other members did not like having her as part of the group and were deliberately rude to her. Whether due to poor treatment by others or a lack of focus on trans rights, she not

surprisingly eventually left the group in hopes of finding one that included more trans people.

Clearly, while conservatively leaning groups like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans pay lip service to trans politics by publicizing their support for trans rights (as is exemplified in the Log Cabin Republican's statement on Jenner), what happens behind closed doors tells a different story. On the one hand, this hostility towards trans issues is nothing new, as the tension between the trans community and the gay community is well documented. Yet, on the other hand, the pretense at embracing trans politics is new, as members of both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans obviously recognize the need to appear inclusive. The fact that these heretical queers embrace trans politics, even on a superficial level, stands as a testament to the growing emphasis on trans rights within the LGBT Rights Movement.

Conclusion

It is highly likely that groups like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans will grow more accepting of trans rights in the years ahead. After all, they share similar mainstreaming strategies, each emphasizing their commonalities with mainstream America. The members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans emphasize their similarities with other Catholics and Republicans, working to ensure that they are perceived of as no different than any other heterosexual Catholic or Republican supporter. Similarly, at least some trans rights activists also emphasize their commonalities with the general public by demonstrating their similarities with cis gender

men and woman. Moreover, with more internal pressure from other LGB groups and the LGBT Rights Movement, it is likely that the members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans will have no choice other than to embrace trans politics, both publically and behind closed doors. Obviously, many trans activists and groups like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans have similar goals for equality, priorities, and mainstreaming strategies for success; in this sense, it is not be surprising that the LGBT Rights Movement incorporated both these conservative heretical groups and trans politics, despite the fact that they initially appear very different.

While the LGBT Rights Movement's next steps remain under speculation, it does seem clear that the movement is on the cusp of changing direction. Members of the LGBT community, activists, and academics seem to agree that the time is right for the movement to shift focus, especially now that the fight for marriage equality has been won. Moreover, groups like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans suggest that the LGBT Rights Movement is turning in a new direction in which it tackles both trans rights and more mainstream issues such as gay inclusion in churches and conservative politics.

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Chapter Six: The Future of Heretical Queers

I initially selected this dissertation topic because I could not understand what motivated heretical queers to continue supporting institutions with poor track records vis-à-vis gay rights. Prior to my field work with the members of Dignity LA and LCR-LA, I, like many others, did not understand why openly gay men would choose to support the Catholic Church or the Republican Party. Why would people want to be part of an institution that seems to hate them? This initial curiosity and inability to relate piqued my interest.

However, as I spent more time in the field and got to know the members of both groups better, my attitudes toward them changed. While I may have initially struggled to understand their motivations and roles within the LGBT community, perhaps dismissing them as a little misguided, I eventually came to sympathize with the members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans. Participants in both groups struggled to be seen as more than one dimensional stereotypes of gay men, and resented the fact that they were pigeon holed based on their sexual identity. Moreover, in many ways, the Roman Catholic Church and Republican Party are closed to them based on widely held misperceptions of gay men. Many members spoke about the isolation they felt upon realizing that they were not welcome in the LGBT Community based on their religious and political ties, while simultaneously being rejected from the Catholic Church and/or Republican Party based on their sexuality. Furthermore, there remains little room in either the Catholic Church or the Republican Party for LGBT supporters, and while gay rights have

increasingly become part of the debated dialogue among leadership, both institutions have failed to fully embrace LGBT members. Accordingly, as my research drew to a close, I felt sympathetic towards the members of Dignity LA and LCR-LA who did not have an accepted place in the institutions and community in which they have participated and identified.

This dissertation accomplished the following four primary objectives. First, I shed light on the understudied population of heretical queers by exploring who they are and why they continue to participate in anti-gay institutions. Second, I demonstrated how heretical queers are simultaneously members of dominant and subordinate groups who leverage their racial, class, and gender privilege, while also struggling against homophobia within the Catholic Church and Republican Party. Third, I provided insight on how organizations like Dignity and LCR-LA fit into the changing direction of the LGBT Rights Movement. Finally, I offer a template for understanding how and why other types of heretical groups make decisions that are not in their best apparent interests.

Shedding Light on Heretical Queers

The heretical queers involved in Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are an understudied, albeit provocative group. As outlined in chapter two, both groups are highly homogenous, with most members being white, middle or upper class, gay men, demonstrating that many members shared similar backgrounds, life experiences, and perspectives on spirituality and politics.

In chapter two, I argue that many heretical queers do not view themselves as particularly heretical at all, as they do not see their sexuality and their religious or political views as conflicting. One way that members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans ensure that their identities as gay men and their identities as Catholics or Republicans complement one another is to frame their participation in these anti-gay institutions in positive terms as gay rights activists. By framing their participation in the Church and Republican Party as activism, members come to see themselves as gay rights activists, working for equality within these institutions. Furthermore, by viewing their continued participation in the anti-gay Catholic Church and Republican Party as a matter of equal rights, members emphasize that they are working to counter stereotypes of gay men as all acting and thinking alike. Strategies like these help ensure heretical queers' continued participation in institutions that remain largely hostile to sexual minorities, while also helping members view their sexuality and their religious and political views as complimentary.

Also, it appears as though heretical queers are holding onto identities and beliefs forged in childhood, as many members share that they were active supporters of the Catholic Church and Republican Party since children. These long lasting identities perhaps pre-date their sexual identities, thus sticking with them throughout adulthood. However, this long lasting religious or political identity is not unique to heretical queers, as research suggests that people often adhere to the religious or political identities of their parents or families. In this regard, one's religious or political identity may have much more to do with the type of family he or she was raised in than their sexuality.

Privilege and Power among Heretical Queers

Much of my interest in heretical queers lay in the fact that they remain simultaneously shut out of the Church and Republican Party and the LGBT Community, while also having access to racial, gender, and class privilege. Members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans face exclusion within the LGBT community based on their affiliation with the Church and Republican Party, but also face exclusion within these institutions based on their sexuality. Chapters three and four detail how members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans cope with this dual exclusion.

As discussed in chapter three, both organizations are unsupported and on the periphery of the LGBT Community, as members remain subordinate within the LGBT Community based on their affiliation with the anti-gay Church and Republican Party. With members struggling to recruit new participants and experiencing hostility in daily, micro level interactions, it is clear that their institutional affiliation and ideological beliefs have a significant effect on their experiences in the LGBT Community. For example, the members of Dignity LA and LCR-LA adopted management techniques, such as selective disclosure and passing, used by similarly stigmatized groups to negotiate their interactions with other LGBT people. While scholars of intersectionality have historically focused on the ways in which race, class, and gender affect inequality, this research highlights how institutional affiliation and ideological beliefs may also moderate or interact with the effects of intersecting systems of inequality or privilege. In

this sense, institutional affiliation also plays a role in determining the salience of race, class, gender, and sexuality in certain contexts.

In order to appreciate the complexity of heretical queers' location within intersecting systems of inequality, it is important to understand how they both simultaneously were victims and victimizers. Just as members of both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans experienced inequality based on their sexual identity and their institutional affiliation, chapter four demonstrates how they also leveraged their race, class, and gender based privilege to create spaces that are largely hostile to women, people of color, trans people, and gay men who they perceived as feminine. While perhaps an unconscious move on the part of members, the end result is two homogenous groups that are almost exclusively comprised of middle and upper class, white, gay men. Members all paid lip service to the notion that anyone, regardless of their race or gender, is welcome to participate, yet they never actively recruited or reached out to women or people of color. Similarly, members openly joked or made off color remarks about other sexual minorities and women, thereby creating environments that are hostile for many.

Importantly, members also appealed to hegemonic notions of masculinity and mainstream notions of normalcy. By excluding marginalized groups and denigrating people that fall outside of hegemonic ideals, group members of Dignity and LCR-LA strive to appear "normal." I argue that this is an attempt to curry favor with the mainstream, heterosexual members of the Roman Catholic Church and Republican Party, as both Dignity and Log Cabin Republicans maintain that the best strategy for effecting change is to change the "hearts and minds" of everyday Catholics and Republicans.

However by doing so, members of both organizations also replicate inequality by supporting the idea that some types of masculinity are better or more desirable than other subordinate types. Not only do members of both groups imply that more stereotypically masculine traits are more desirable and more attractive than those that are perceived of as effeminate, but also they reinforce the notion that femininity is something to be eschewed at all costs. By accepting these ideas, as opposed to questioning their validity or usefulness, members of both Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans serve to replicate existing inequalities, despite their efforts to make both the Church and the Republican Party more inclusive, thus demonstrating the insidious and long lasting nature of internalized oppression and inequalities.

Heretical Queers and the LGBT Rights Movement

What role with heretical queers like members of Dignity and LCR-LA play in the future of the LGBT Movement? As demonstrated in chapter five, the LGBT Rights Movement is on the brink of significant change. With the fight for marriage equality largely won, scholars and activists are wondering what is next for the Movement. Trans rights have received significant mainstream attention in recent years and with activists calling for the LGBT Rights Movement to tackle issues pertaining to gender, gender non-conformity, and trans rights, it seems clear that the Movement is changing directions, with trans rights as a new priority.

The experiences of the members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans support the idea that the LGBT Rights Movement is in the process of switching

objectives. As argued in chapter five, both groups publically portray themselves as highly inclusive and supportive of trans politics. This was especially evident in May, 2015, when the Log Cabin Republicans released a statement congratulating Olympic hero Bruce Jenner on his transition and welcoming him to join the group. In this sense, both groups seem aware of the need to publically embrace trans politics, as they purportedly welcome everyone and anyone, thus demonstrating the LGBT Rights Movement's new focus on trans rights.

However, despite the seeming inclusive nature of Dignity and Log Cabin Republicans, chapters four and five demonstrate how the reality of what occurs behind closed doors in both groups is quite different. Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans have been less than welcoming to trans people. Neither group addresses or mentions factors pertaining to trans rights, even when discussing issues impacting the LGBT Community. Similarly, members of both organizations were overheard making cruel remarks and jokes about trans people on multiple occasions. When considering the Catholic Church and Republican Party's traditional stance on gender and gender roles, heretical queers' poor treatment of trans people is not entirely surprising. However, the fact that they publically embrace trans politics, even superficially, is surprising and does evidence the LGBT Rights Movement's changing priorities to reflect the increasing emphasis on trans rights. In this regard, the LGBT Rights Movement is shifting priorities from an emphasis on marriage rights for same sex couples, to equal rights for trans people, thus requiring a need to incorporate both trans rights activists and conservatively-leaning heretical queers in the years ahead.

Understanding Heretical Groups

The members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are not the only “heretics,” seemingly acting in opposition to their presumed best interests. Scholars have explored women in notoriously anti-feminist, racist movements, and, to a lesser degree, people of color actively supporting the Republican Party, yet these cases have yet to be theoretically connected or explored in conjunction with one another. These isolated cases beg to be analyzed as a whole in order to identify overarching commonalities that all heretical groups share.

Similarly, Dignity and Log Cabin Republicans are only several examples of heretical groups within the LGBT Community and beyond, but there has been little scholarly attention paid to heretical queers. Scholars have yet to research other similarly marginalized people acting against their presumed best interests by supporting institutions that have historically rejected them (Blee 1996, 1991, Hipsher 2007, Hall 2008). For example, some undocumented immigrants support conservative or Republican ideals, despite the party’s historic hostility to immigration. Also black and native Hawaiian Mormons or Christian Scientists support a religion with a history rooted in racism. Groups like these may have a lot in common with the members of Dignity and Log Cabin Republicans, yet the paucity of research makes it difficult to draw overarching conclusions about all heretical groups. Thus, this research fills a much needed gap in scholarly literature.

This dissertation demonstrates the importance of context when studying heretical groups. Close investigation reveals that heretical queers, like other heretical groups, are benefitting in multiple ways by supporting and participating in these anti-gay institutions. I demonstrate that heretical queers benefit from supporting anti-gay institutions in four ways. First, much of the reason that heretical queers support the Church and Republican Party is that it remains in their best racial, class, and gendered interests. By supporting institutions that maintain their privilege as white, middle/upper class men, these heretical queers ensure their continued dominance over other subordinated groups. For example, by embracing Republican ideals on tax policies that favor middle and upper class Americans, the members of the Log Cabin Republicans ensure their continued power over poor people, even at the detriment to their rights as gay men. Second, many heretical queers suggest that they benefit from the camaraderie that comes from being part of a close knit group. In this sense, even if they are despised by other Catholics and Republicans for being gay, and are looked down on by other members of the LGBT community for supporting an anti-gay institution, they have created a space for themselves in which they enjoy close relationships with their fellow members. In fact, many members cite the close ties they have with one another as the chief reason for their continued group participation. One could assume that these relationships become even closer and more valuable to members in light of the social isolation they face based on their stigmatized heretical identity. Third, heretical queers benefit from the positive identity that they have created from themselves as gay rights activists. In this sense, although they are supporting the anti-gay Catholic Church and Republican Party,

members feel good about themselves while doing so. Fourth, many members suggest that they were raised in Catholic or Republican house holds by parents that held similar religious or political views. Thus, members continue supporting the Catholic Church and Republican Party while also maintaining ties to both their families and their childhood pasts.

Accordingly, when looking at heretical groups, it is crucial for scholars to consider how group members may be benefitting from their “heretical” stance, and therefore must consider the context in which the “heresy” is taking place. Members of any heretical group are benefitting in some (albeit possibly small) way, as they are, in fact, not irrationally supporting a cause that is contrary to their best interests. Rather, further investigation and analysis of the context in which the heretical groups are located show that group participation may actually be a rational and strategic move that benefits members in one or multiple ways. Thus, when examining heretical groups, scholars must look at the big picture in order to get a complete understanding of why members are choosing to participate.

Research Limitations

It is important to note that this research offers only a glimpse at a snap shot in time. I worked with Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans for a three year period, and during this time, members were clear about their marginalized status within the LGBT Community. Ideally, in order to have a complete picture of the relationship between these groups and the LGBT Rights Movement, understanding how that relationship

potentially changed over the years would be key. Was there ever a time in which the members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans were fully included and supported by the rest of the LGBT Community? If so, what changed? This type of long term data would be helpful in understanding the strategy behind LGBT organizing and the next steps the Movement may be taking.

Similarly, while this research presents an in-depth look into the perspectives of Dignity and Log Cabin Republicans' members and supporters, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the wider LGBT Community without including them in the data collection. Accordingly, next steps for expanding this research may include understanding how the rest of the LGBT Community view groups like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans. Heretical queers participating in these groups perceive themselves as highly stigmatized, but understanding how and why this is the case is essential. Does the rest of the LGBT Community really dislike Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans as much as members say they do? And how did other sexual minorities break from their religious or political past? Expanding this research to include an examination of other LGBT groups is key to building a complete understanding of the relationship between the LGBT Rights Movement and these heretical groups, while also understanding how heretical queers compare to other sexual minorities in terms of experiences with crossing over politically or religiously.

The same could be said for the relationship between Dignity and the Roman Catholic Church and the Log Cabin Republicans and the Republican Party. As it stands, this research is limited to the perspectives of the members of Dignity and the Log Cabin

Republicans, yet the perspectives of mainstream, heterosexual Catholics and Republicans are also worthwhile examining. The insights of other Catholics and Republicans on these groups provide insight on the ways in which the Church and Republican Party view their LGBT counterparts, and while this research includes a review of Church/Party documents and official statements, understanding the perspectives of other Catholics and Republicans is crucial. For example, some members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans suggest that they feel fully included in the Church and Republican Party, but this inclusion is difficult to verify without also exploring the ways in which Catholics and Republicans perceive LGBT counterparts.

Heretical Queers Moving Forward

When considering the heretical queers supporting Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans, it is interesting to think about their chances for success at creating change in either organization. While both groups have a lot in common, this is one area in which they differ. The members of Dignity are quite upfront about the idea that they are unlikely to see any significant change within the Catholic Church within their lifetimes. Even with the newest Pope, Pope Francis, being more welcoming of sexual minorities and less vocal about homophobic “family values,” members point out that he has yet to establish any real policies reversing anti-gay teachings or traditions. While members are happy about the direction he is taking, they remain skeptical about Pope Francis’ ability to incite significant long term change. Nonetheless, members feel that it is important for

them to continue having a presence in the Catholic Church and lobbying for equal rights, as future generations of gay Catholics may benefit from change they helped create.

The members of the Log Cabin Republicans are in a slightly different position, as they do believe that the Republican Party is coming to embrace LGBT rights and remain confident that significant change will occur within their lifetimes. With many Americans coming to support equal rights for sexual minorities, some Republicans suggest that it is only a matter of time until the party accepts the fact that gay rights are here to stay, and fully embraces the LGBT community. Many members of the Log Cabin Republicans indicate that they have already seen significant positive change within the party during their lifetimes, and cite the California GOP's formal recognition of their group as evidence. In this sense, the members of the Log Cabin Republicans have been much more successful at inciting change within the institution they seek to be a part of than have the members of Dignity.

Clearly, the LGBT Community has gained significant increased attention in recent years, and with more people "coming out of the closet" and publicizing their sexual identity, it stands to reason that groups like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans will enjoy greater exposure in the years ahead. One dimensional stereotypes of gay men have, in many ways, fallen by the wayside as people learn that the LGBT Community is diverse, representing a variety of different life experiences and perspectives on religion and politics. While this research provides a look into that diversity, I also believe that it offers significant future opportunities for investigation.

Clearly groups like Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans are indicative of some much larger social phenomena: how large scale social movements, such as the LGBT Rights Movement, handle outliers and other heretical groups, how stigmatized people cope with marginalization that they experience on multiple levels, and how groups of people may unintentionally replicate and perpetuate inequality by maintaining a status quo. Heretical queers are indicative of something much more significant than simply inequality and anti-gay sentiment in the Catholic Church and Republican Party. At the onset of my research, I struggled to understand why the members of Dignity and the Log Cabin Republicans would choose to support these anti-gay institutions. But at the end of my time in the field, I began to understand that the question of “why would they do this?” is not the most interesting one to ask; the larger and more important thing to understand is the social mechanisms at play that allow members to participate in the first place. Members participate because they can. As middle class, white men, the members of Dignity and Log Cabin Republicans have access to the Catholic Church and the Republican Party, despite their sexual identity. One wonders if they would have the same reception in both the LGBT Community and in these anti-gay institutions if their groups were comprised of women, or people of color, or members of the working poor. My first instinct says no—clearly a testament to the insidious and persistent nature of social inequality.

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