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Sites of Sociality:

Performances of Dyke Identifications Through Social Networking

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Theater and Performance Studies

by

Sheila Anne Malone

2015

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Sites of Sociality:

Performances of Dyke Identifications Through Social Networking

By

Sheila Anne Malone

Doctor of Philosophy in Theater and Performance Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Sue-Ellen Case, Chair

This dissertation analyses the dyke body as a site of social networking. I use the term social network to refer to both virtual and real spaces. I do not employ social network as always meaning community; social network refers to affiliations, communal and the collective as well as connections made across and through media. The term dyke is used to push against the notion of queer and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender politics. The purpose of theorizing dyke as opposed to lesbian or queer has to do with an historic investment in the singularity of dyke and the territory of dyke as other, resistant, and not feminine.

This project draws from multiple theoretical lenses including performance studies, visual culture, sociality, ethnographic research, and archival research in order to place a study of a subculture of dyke into a discourse on performance, sexuality and networks. By looking across a multifarious archive of subcultural artifacts, the dyke body emerges as integral to LGBT politics and to the dissemination of the culture of the dyke locally and globally. Comic books, photography, video art, performance art, theater, legal proceedings, brand identity and the web have certainly been the objects of extensive studies, but collectively relating and reading these objects through the theory of social networking introduces a different concept of dyke – a connected, hyper/crosstextual, crossvisual, transindividual body.

Collectivizing and group formation have been central to LGBT social and political protest in the U.S. This project aims to identify and register some of the alternate ways that dyke bodies have organized underneath and outside of typical LGBT frameworks. This dissertation specifically focuses on the group San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®, however, it also examines other forms of dyke connections in an effort to consider counter-strategies to collectivizing. *Sites of Sociality: Performances of Dyke Identifications Through Social Networking* looks at familiar and lesser-known cultural production of dyke and lesbian-focused artists as both an epistemological shift in thinking about agential power outside of normative bodies and a tracing of where that power might reside inside and outside of community.

This dissertation of Sheila Anne Malone is approved.

Anurima Banerji

Sean Metzger

Sue-Ellen Case, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In order to pursue a PhD in Theater and Performance Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles many things had to fall into place. I would like to not only acknowledge the many people who helped make this happen, but also the many people who inspired me to go back to school and re-engage with critical theory, performance studies, gender studies, feminism, queer theory, art criticism, visual culture, and social theory. I'm sure I am leaving some theories out as I have been fortunate to study with some amazing professors, experts in their fields, mentors, and significant scholars. Not only has the intellectual community around me supported me over the past four years, but my personal connections, my community of family, friends, and collaborators have also contributed to this project in ways they may never know. Since my dissertation is interested in concepts of community, connections and networks, it is only fitting that I acknowledge the many networks of support that have been instrumental in my achievements at UCLA.

I'd like to thank the many people from Old Orchard School who supported me in taking a leap of faith; thank you to Bonnie Weston, Jenny Crotty, Sharon Lum, Sabine, Schmuck, Jo Kearley, Kala Patel, Margaret Washington, Krista Perlik, Melissa Greene, Ellen Robinson, Brian Ho, Russell Powell, and Lucy Watson. To the students and the parents of students in the Old Orchard School community, I thank you for believing in me and all the social media support along the way. I thank those people in San José, my community of artists, and other intellectuals: Wesley Billingslea, Alex Dominguez, Rho

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grateful for her mentoring.

None of this (leaving my post at Old Orchard) would have been possible without the support of my friends and family. The connections of theatre friends, family, and colleagues is in part why I look at performance, write about performance, and make work under the performance studies umbrella. Thank you Blue Barn Theatre: Amy Matthews, Rachel Combs, Susan Clement, Mary Theresa Green, Hughston Walkinshaw, Kevin Lawler, Nils Haaland, John St. Angelo, Susan Schonlau, Matt Martin, Cindy and Kenny Marsten, Marty Magnuson, and my Rose Theater family: Roberta Wilhelm, Karen Abbott, Stephanie Anderson, Kevin Ehrhart, Kevin Barrett, James Larson, Sherri Gerdes, Lisa Winton. My most recent theatre family at El Camino College has also allowed me to work and play; thank you to the faculty, staff, and students – Bill Georges, Connie Fitzsimons, Ron Scarlata, Nancy Adler, Jerry Prell, Bryan Bates, Brent Crayon, Katie Villanueva, Daniel Fernandez, Liv Scott, Kim Wilkinson, Dan Volonte, Andy Wolski.

In addition to my outside teaching, I have been supported by a wonderful copy editor, friend, and former theatre colleague, Kristina Harwood, whose patience and speed for editing came at the right time – before the deadline. I'd like to thank the artists whose work inspired me to theorize across media: Kaucyila Brooke for inviting me to her studio and taking the time to answer my many technical and artistic questions, Mary Coble who worked with me through email discussing her tattoo performances, and Liz Rosenfeld whose work continues to engage critically with issues of gender, queerness, and the body. To the staff and archivists at GLBT Historical Society, thank you for collecting, archiving, and giving access to our past, to the hearts of the LGBT community. I want to

thank the many researchers at the ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the USC Libraries who helped me search through multiple publications, connecting me to documents in a matter of minutes as opposed to months.

Of course, a huge thank you goes to my close friend and art collaborator who has supported me through the ups and downs of the intensity of writing – Sora Kimberlain. I'd also like to thank my motorcycle community – both academic and non-academic – all of whom have been instrumental in my research, thank you Mark Austin, Christian Pierce, Suzanne Ferriss, Steven Alford, Alex Ilyasova, Coach Ramey, and Randy Hineline. Even though my parents would not allow me to get a motorcycle when I was sixteen, I forgave them, and acknowledge that without the love and friendship of my parents this dissertation endeavor would not have been possible as they were my first theatre co-collaborators, my first employers in the theatre, and my first instructors in the theatre. Thank you Rick and Diane Malone for being the artists that you are and for sharing your talent and expertise; I love you. A special thank you to my sister who has always been there for me in so many ways, from giving me a place to live when I conducted research in San Francisco, to being a creative inspiration along the way; Erin Malone you are a great sister, smart, creative, and I thank you for all your support. My gratitude also extends to my partner René Sarver's family: Bette Oberheim and Dave Oberheim who in opening up their home to us created a support system in Southern California making our move possible. Finally, I would like to thank my partner, René Sarver, who has supported me in every possible way and more. She has helped me laugh when appropriate, cry when I needed to, and put the nose to the grindstone when my

attention wandered. Her unwavering belief in my ability to accomplish this degree has

touched me and made me grateful for having her in my life. René shows me daily how to

balance work, love, and life.

I know I've left out people who have been instrumental in the making, shaping

and finishing of this dissertation. Please forgive me for any exclusions. This work will

continue and I will hopefully write more "thank yous."

VITA

EDUCATION

San Jose State University

MFA in Digital Media Arts (CADRE Laboratory for New Media) 2002

Virginia Tech University

B.A. Theatre Arts minor French 1990

FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS, GRANTS, AND HONORS

2015 Gilbert Cates Scholarship/Fellowship, UCLA

2013/2014 James Pendleton Foundation Prize, UCLA

2011/2012 & 2014/2015 Cota-Robles Fellowship/UCLA

2013 Technology, Knowledge and Society Conference Graduate Scholar Award

2012 Tobin Foundation Theatre Arts Grant

2007 Anderson Ranch Arts Center Artist Award

2004 Fleishhacker Foundation nominee

2002 GenArtSF New Fangle artist

2002 San Jose State University Art and Design Scholarship

CONFERENCES

Cultural Studies Association Conference 2015

Presentation of paper: Performance Working Group: "Big Data, Little Data"

TransAtlantic Connections 2015

Presentation of paper: "Women, Wheels and Walls: Defying the Gravity of Gender Roles"

American Society for Theatre Research 2014

Presentation of paper: "The Disbelief of Noise: Moving Lights and Other Disruptive Objects"

International Journal of Motorcycle Studies Conference 2014

Presentation of paper: "Wrapping The Veil: Friction, Fashion, and Motorcycles in Hassan Hajjaj's 'Kesh Angels'"

Cultural Studies Association Conference 2014

Presentation of paper: Performance Working Group: "Vibration: Objects Performing

Violence, Queerness and Transcendence"

UCLA Symposia: Prop Q Roundtable: Queer Theory

Presentation of research: Performing Dykeness: Registering the Trademark Dykes on Bikes®

Comic-Con San Diego 2013

Presentation of paper: "Performing A New Feminism Performing A New Feminism Through Super-heroine Identification"

Thinking Gender Annual Graduate Student Conference 2013 (UCLA)

Presentation of paper "Androgynous Punk as Postfeminist Signifying Strategy of Transgression within Subcultures"

Technology, Knowledge and Society Conference 2013

Presentation of paper "Occupying The Night Sky and Performing The Bat-Signal: YouTube and Its Reiteration of Activist Spectacle"

International Journal of Motorcycle Studies Conference 2013

Presentation of paper " Batwoman and Batgirl Ride Badass Bikes Across An American Landscape"

Popular/American Culture Association Conference 2011

Presentation of paper "Tranny Iron: Male Femininity and Female Masculinity in San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®"

International Journal of Motorcycle Studies Conference 2010

Panel member: Dykes on Bikes®: The Trademark & Presentation of film: *SF Dykes on Bikes®*

PUBLICATIONS

Los Angeles, CA Vancouver, B.C. Canada Colorado Springs, CO

San Antonio, TX Colorado Springs, CO

"Vibration:Objects Performing Violence, Queerness and Transcendence," Intersection of Performance and Cultural Studies. Spec. issue of *Lateral: The Journal of the Cultural Studies Association. Edited volume,* forthcoming.

"Androgynous Punk: Aesthetic As Gender De[con]struction in the Trilogy Film Series The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo and the Anime Series Kino's Journey," Feminist Movements Across the Board: A Critical Analysis. Spec. issue of *Contention: The Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Protest*. Dec. 2014. Peer-reviewed.

"Objects Vibrating Disobedience" in the *International Journal For Motorcycle Studies,* Volume 9, Issue 2: Fall 2013. "The New Performer: Data as Performer and Performance"

in *Switch,* Cadre's On-line Journal for New Media, Winter
2000.

"The New Performer," in *Rhizome a new media journal: rhizome.org*, Spring 2000.

"The New Performer," in *The new Axis Reader,* V5n3, 2000, *Ctrl+Shift Art - Ctrl+Shift Gender*, June 2000.

REVIEWS

"From Truman Capote to Laurie Anderson: Mapplethorpe's Portraits at the San Jose Museum of Art," in *artshift*, online publication, June 2011.

"The Sound of His/Her Memory" in *(detail),* A Journal of Art Criticism, V7n1, Summer 2000.

EDITORIAL WORK

Reviews Editor, *International Journal For Motorcycle Studies,* http://ijms.nova.edu , Fall 2014, Spring 2015 Managing Editor, *Switch*, Cadre's On-line Journal for New Media: http://switch.sjsu.edu, 1999-2001

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Los Angeles, CA 2012-2014

Teaching Associate: Theater 10: Introduction to Theater (online course) Teaching Assistant : Theater 13: Play Reading and Analysis Teaching Assistant : Theater 110: History of American Musical Theatre Teaching Assistant: Theater 101 B & C: History of Theatre Series, II & III Teaching Assistant: Theater 120B: Acting in Film

El Camino College, Torrance, CA 2013-2015

Adjunct Faculty: Courses taught: Computer Applications for Lighting Design and Entertainment Industry, Introduction to Technical Theater, Advanced Technical Theater, Faculty Technical Director for Spring Musicals: *Grease, Cabaret*

San Jose State University San Jose, CA 2002-2008

Adjunct Faculty Lecturer: Courses taught: Intro Digital Media, Digital Photography/Video/Sound, Intro to Computers in Art

San Francisco State University San Francisco, CA 2004-2008

Visiting Assistant Professor/Artist: Courses taught: Digital Video/Interactive Images/Performance, Conceptual Strategies I

SERVICE

Panelist UCLA Art History Undergraduate Student Association 2013

Level Ground Film Festival Fundraiser: Video Projections 2013

Volunteer Script Supervisor, Outset: Outfest's GLBT Youth Film Project 2013

Curatorial Committee for the city of San Jose & the San Jose Int. Airport's Art and Technology Program 2009-2011

Member of the Board of Directors SF Dykes on Bikes® Emeritus, SF Dykes on Bikes® awarded for 10 years of service 2001-2011

Member of the Advisory Board Femina Potens Gallery 2006-2008

Member of the Airport Art Program Oversight Committee for the city of San Jose & the San Jose Int. Airport's Art and Technology Program 2005-2009

President of the Board of Directors, Works Gallery/San Jose Gallery 2002-2004

DIRECTING (select productions)

Earthy: An Exosexual Bootcamp (Associate Director) San Francisco Queer Arts Festival 2013

Blue Barn Theatre (Omaha, NE): *Murder in The Heartland: An Original play about Brandon Teena* by Karen Abbott, *What The Mirror Gave Me: An Original play about Frida Kahlo* by Angela Lee, *Mona Rogers In Person: A One Woman Show* by Philip-Dimitri Galas, *Bondage* by David Henry Hwang, *Adulto Orgasmo Escapes from The Zoo* by Franca Rame and Dario Fo, *1000 Airplanes On The Roof* by Philip Glass and David Henry Hwang

Omaha Theatre Company for Young People: *Ariadne* by R. Murray Schafer , *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* by Karen Abbott

The Gaslighter Theatre (Campbell, CA): *Romeo, You Idiot*

Old Orchard School (Campbell, CA): *The Jungal Book* by Edward Mast *Charlotte's Web* Adapted by Joseph Robinette *Island of The Blue Dolphins:* Adapted by Sheila Malone *Zink: The Myth, The Legend, The Zebra* by Cherie Bennett *Dandelion* by The Paper Bag Players

FILM SCREENINGS

Annie Sprinkle's Amazing World of Orgasm:

Co-Director/Editor 2006-2014 Multiple venues around the world

2005 Vancouver Gay and Lesbian Film Festival 2005 London International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival 2004 San Francisco Gay, Lesbian, International Film Festival 2004 Los Angeles OutFest

2004 Philadelphia Gay, Lesbian, International Film Festival 2004 Mix Brasil Sao Paolo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 2004 Taiwan Women Make Waves Video/Film Festival 2004 Montreal Nouveau Cinema Festival

2004 Glasgow GlasGay Festival

SF Dykes on Bikes: A Documentary: 2004-2010

Producer/Director/Editor

INQUIRY: Queer Arts Festival at NYU Sydney, Australia Mardi Gras Film Festival San Francisco Gay, Lesbian, International Film Festival

LIGHTING DESIGN (selected productions)
 El Camino College Center For The Arts 2014

An Evening of Dance with choreographers Liz Adamis and John Pennington

San Francisco Queer Arts Festival 2013

Earthy: Ecosexual Bootcamp

The Classic Theatre of San Antonio 2012

The Firebugs

Jewish Community Center Theatre Silicon Valley 2011

Annie

The Church Theatre 2007

Southern Baptist Sissies

Somarts 2002-2003

DadaFest San Francisco

FireLight Players 2001

Wit

C5 Corporation Lighting Design for Digital Secrets Conference Performance 2000

Nebraska Shakespeare Festival 1999

Macbeth & Two Gentlemen of Verona

SET DESIGN (selected productions)

The Classic Theatre of San Antonio 2012

The Firebugs

Omaha Theater Company For Young People 1995-1999

Nelson Mandela Talking Eggs, touring show Black and Blue an original musical about Fats Waller

Blue Barn Theatre (Omaha, NE) 1990-1998

What The Mirror Gave Me: An Original Play About Frida Kahlo Murder in The Heartland : An Original Play about Brandon Teena

TECHNICAL DIRECTION (selected productions)

2014 El Camino College Faculty Technical Director

2009, 2011 Jewish Community Center Theatre Silicon Valley Technical Director

PROJECTION DESIGN (selected productions)

The Laramie Project El Camino College Theatre Department 2015

LA PRIDE Art & Culture Video Walls 2014

LA PRIDE Install/WeHo Art Installation and Projections 2013

FashionArt Santa Cruz 2008-2011

Exposed (National Queer Arts Festival) CounterPulse 2006

New Media Night: Works/San Jose Gallery 2003

Introduction: Social Networks, Tracing Dyke, and Creating Community

Networks of connections are part of the way we, LGBT people, create the social, that is, our professional connections create networks of interactions, our personal networks are made up of our friends, family, neighbors, and our networks of affiliations across other types of associations (political, cultural, interest-based) all reveal how we belong to various communities, how we are excluded from certain circles, and how we create points of contact in order to build social meaning, social purpose and even change. Tracing our connections can highlight the normative and nonnormative ways that groups form, sustain themselves, and even disappear. This project is about tracing connections across unlikely fields of inquiry – across lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, straight alliances – across bodies alive, dead, forgotten, remembered, sexualized, gendered, raced, and classed, across geographical places, across virtual spheres, and inside and outside of political spaces such as the lesbian bar of which its political and social importance has been the subject of academic and artistic study. This project focuses on the dyke body as opposed to the lesbian, or gay, or queer, or bisexual, or transgender, or straight body in an effort to mark the performative and performance of "dyke" as something specific – as in the moment that the group San Francisco Women's Motorcycle Contingent legally claims the name Dykes on Bikes®, or a specific object like a *Dykes To Watch Out For* comics art book by Alison Bechdel in which "dyke" contains multiple narratives of lesbian and queer. The term "dyke" challenges other terms like feminine, masculine, lesbian, and queer and it encompasses all of these identifications. I introduce the dyke body as a site

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of social networking, a site where traces of the social are found, and as a site where other bodies

are brought together through affiliations, inclusions, exclusions, and containment. The body is

also theorized as a site of juridical performances or utterances of brand identification.

Throughout this project, I highlight and focus on how the dyke body functions as an aggregate of

the social and sexual realm. In addition to the dyke body, the objects: the motorcycle, the bar

(location and material building), the comic book, the costume, the clothing are incorporated into

the sign of a dyke network.[1] Through the archive of objects, bodies, and events, dyke is

theorized as a site of plurality against singularity. This project focuses on how the body is a

location of distributed personhood; the implications of this flow through a network of virtual and

real connections. Identifying the hierarchies embedded in these networks I reveal the weaknesses

and the strengths across the varied platforms in order to gain an alternative perspective on

"dyke" and to archive "dyke" into a lesbian cultural project. What I hope to do in this

dissertation is provide an alternative archive of both lesbian bodies in the production of particular

spaces related to LGBT politics found through an analysis and unearthing of group formations

from the 1970s on in the U.S. – specifically the San Francisco Dykes On Bikes®, and provide an

alternative historiography of collective structures represented and fostered through multiple

media that incorporate the dyke body as sight and site of a political project of remembering,

sustaining, and projecting the image of dykeness. Dyke as a moniker has remained outside of

"LGBT" political and even social correctness with its etymological trace connecting to

derogatory usages.[2] However, its historical reference in relationship to the women riding

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[1]   I am referring to Jane Bennet's "thing-power" theory put forth in her book *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* and Bruno Latour's concept of the actant within Actor-Network-Theory or ANT. The motorcycle (a thing) is inseparable from the Dyke Body in the figurings of Dykes on Bikes®.

[2]   Craig Richardson, "microLECTURE: Dykes, Bikes & the Tenancy of Masculinity by Alex Ilyasova," *Radio Colorado College*, accessed May 26, 2015, http://radiocoloradocollege.org/2012/06/microlecture-dykes-bikes-the-tenancy-of-masculinity/.

motorcycles in the San Francisco Gay Day Parades of the 1970s anchors "dyke" as disruptive and nonconforming as well as a term reabsorbed by the subculture itself and used to express other forms of lesbian that the term lesbian occludes. How dyke operates as a device to connect other bodies and objects into specific kinds of networks is central to my project.

Why Network Theory

In our ever-increasingly networked lives, the idea that social connections can reveal hidden and overt power exchanges, cultural artifacts, historiographic information, and lost knowledge moves social network theory from the realm of the sociologist to the historian, to the cultural theorist, and to the archivist. If we want to understand why and how collective structures engage in the larger body politic then it is also necessary to think about the ways that bodies connect and create social networks. The power of networks exists both in their expanse and in how far-reaching they are, and also in their density at more local levels of analysis. So, while one might have a large number of connections across multiple networks, the power of the hub or the clustered node is where I believe action happens and thus purposefully focus each of the following chapters on particular lesbian nodes of connections – past and present. I draw from multiple social network theorists: Mark Granovetter whose research in the 1970s as well as more contemporary research in the '90s has established ways to visualize human associations and connections, Bruno Latour whose Actor Network Theory (ANT) establishes alternative ways to trace the social through actants, objects, and the Other, Albert-László Barabási's network theory as applied to online social connections, and Zizi Papacharissi's theory of the "networked self" in the age of digital culture, social networking sites (SNS) and media convergence. I draw from

media and performance theorists in order to situate the dyke body within performative networks and within networks of performance. The distinction between performative networks and networks of performance relies on the term dyke. Dyke as an utterance like in the San Francisco Dykes On Bikes® Trademark Suit is employed as a performative, it does something – which in this case is a legal claim, marking and trademarking a name.[3] Dyke as a performance reflects the multiple chapters of Dykes on Bikes® around the world who lead off Pride Parades in a spectatorial performance. Within the following chapters, I theorize how the performative of dyke and the performances of dyke are networked across bodies, sites, and objects.

Throughout this project, I am interested in how the structures of organizing networks – specific to lesbian subcultural practice imbricate a collective of bodies and objects. I argue that the lesbian body is a site of social networking (and not just a nodal connection in a social network). As a result, the application of social network theory as developed by Mark Granovetter and the technological developments in networked culture reveals the powerful and new ways individuals and groups can "interact" globally online – which means that social networks are changing with the logic of software, the logic of capitalism, and the power of group action and knowledge. As scientist Albert-László Barabási writes, these bodies as social networking sites actually establish social societies or affiliated groups of people who are connected and defined through networks.[4] Yet the nature of this networking body has been altered radically through the advent of computer data visualization, online social networking systems, and computational software. Our understanding of networking collapses and crosses biological phenomena, technological industries, and social software in such a way that the body cannot be understood as

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[3]   John Langshaw Austin, James Opie Urmson, and Marina Sbisà, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1975).
[4]   Albert-László Barabási, "Introduction and Keynote to A Networked Self." A Networked Self: Identity, Community and Culture on Social Network Sites, ed. Zizi Papacharissi (New York: Routledge, 2011), 1-14.

separate or apart from this conjuncture.[5] The particulars may vary but the architecture of the body as a site of social networking reiterates across disciplines and substrates – from real to virtual and virtual to real; networks are made up of individual nodes connected through linking behavior, intersecting, collecting, and clustering in hubs. At a tangible and concrete level a network can be seen as something as simple as a system of highways. This system connects larger hubs to each other through the linking of nodes. What happens when the body links these systems through a network of connections but also within a network of othered bodies is the subject of my inquiry. Social networks reveal how the body is both a site of performance and an enactment of performance. It is through these performances that identifications are composed, edited, re-composed through the reiteration and the continuous recycling and reassembling of connections of the social. How lesbians create alternative social spaces in real life and online and the performance of connections (affiliations, proliferation of brand identity, networked politics) map a complex picture of both the creation of lesbian social formation in the latter part of the 20th century and the early part of the 21st century.

Performative Networks: San Francisco Dykes On Bikes®

Chapter 1 – "Performing Dykeness: Registering the Trademark Dykes on Bikes®" – is both a historiographic framing of the organization known as the San Francisco Dykes On Bikes® and an investigation of how the 2002-2008 U.S. Trademark Suit in which the organization applied, reapplied, and finally was awarded the right to trademark its name performs both a solidification and fixing of the individual identification of "dykes on bikes" – i.e. "what a dyke is", and the cohering of a "stable" group identification that is both policed and structured around

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[5]   Ibid.

legal definitions, policies, and behaviors (see figure 0.3). Using Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory (ANT) as a lens to investigate how the group's performance of the social is composed of actors, agents, and actants including courtroom documents, individual testimonies, archival photographs, and objects like the motorcycle, this chapter theorizes sites of social networking as configured by the individuals who testified in the Trademark Suit, the individual members of San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®, and the photographic image of individual participants in the parade contingent known as "Dykes On Bikes®". In addition to my investigation of the performative role of the individual in the group, I look at how the larger collective or the group participates in performing "dyke" and its formations over decades of San Francisco Dykes On Bikes® leading the Pride Parade. I draw from José Muñoz's theory of disidentification as a framework to understand and critique how the testimonies and the Trademark Suit's legal expression of the term "dyke" as something fixable or stable actually forecloses diverse expressions of "dyke", lesbian, and queer. The historiographic or genealogical account of the group San Francisco Dykes On Bikes® uncovers the asymmetrical power relationships between the Gay Day Parade and participating (party crashing) dykes on bikes. Thus, tracing the formations and interventions made by the group over its forty years of leading the Pride Parade in San Francisco also exposes other elements of the social and political milieu of the local LGBT community. I look at the ways that the dyke body serves as a node connecting larger networks of motorcycle clubs. Both the individual in the network and the network itself performs specific coded behavior in an attempt to solidify the group or club's "brand identity." How networks are defined through affiliation and preference conceptualizations impacts the readability and visibility of the bodies in these networks – visual descriptive branded club affiliations identify groups like the Women's Motorcycle Association or smaller hubs such as Sisters of Scota,

Women on Wheels, or Dykes on Bikes®. I argue that the body is a site of queerness where social networks coagulate, disburse and reassemble, performing identifications with "dyke," "lesbian," "radical," and "feminist" through reiterative notions of performance, staging public spectacle, and juridical performative utterances that define or try to define what "dyke" is. This chapter unravels the ways that these identifications float and fracture through variations in temporality and changing relationships to its membership and circulation of the image of itself. I trace the formation of the group and some of its individual membership as indicative of its social relationship to the San Francisco LGBT community, and eventually to a larger community as a result of trademarking the name. I draw from Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory (ANT) as a way to consider other elements besides human agency in the production and performance of networks. The image of the "R" in a circle performs a brand identification and it connects multiple chapters of "official" Dykes On Bikes® around the world. ANT theory suggests that the social is found through traces left by both actors and through actants or objects that have a catalytic relationship to other elements inside the network. I trace some of these actors and actants through images and textual residue: archival photographs and legal testimony.

Also in Chapter 1, I look at the collective structure(s) of the group San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®, how they have organized through the years in real life (IRL). Whereas in Chapter 4, I approach and investigate the ways that online organizing has affected the group. In Chapter I lay the foundation for my argument that both individuals and the group participate in performing a network's identification (affiliation) and in delineating a network's boundaries which both protects the network and keeps the network from growing – two forces that actually work against each other in terms of sustainability of membership. Incorporated into the analysis of the network of San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® is a discussion of ownership of image or "brand" of

San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®. The political, economic, and social impact of the group unfolds through both the legal case, and a process of tracing key moments of the group in relationship to the San Francisco Pride Parade, other LGBT Pride Parades, and other bodies.

At the center of Chapter 1 is the relationship of image and text in creating the culture of Dykes On Bikes®. My research at the GLBT Historical Society's archive and the ONE archives at the USC libraries in part was a search for the history of a community, finding mythic and ordinary images of Dykes On Bikes® (see figures 0.1 & 0.2). I trace how print material circulated as an integral object in the network and shaped the formations of Dykes On Bikes® within lesbian and gay culture. The visibility and the visuality of Dykes On Bikes® as well as the invisibility of lesbians in larger gay culture sets the stage for my historiographic project that is invested in the archive of bodies, objects, space, and the social. Through the tracings of these social collections, I deconstruct how individuals and objects perform the political work of the group. Included in my analysis of lesbian culture is the tracing of the motorcycle and its signification in relationship to "dyke". The Chapter ends with the convergence of image and text as key structures that support and threaten the sustainability of lesbian communities through the performance of codes of dykeness and through the performances that challenge what any one dyke on a bike actually looks like or is.

A Network of Artists and Characters – Dykes, Lesbian Superheroes, and Lesbians of Color

In Chapter 2, I look at how a comic book can function as a social making device – bringing bodies together. I focus on the object itself as well as the narratives and artwork inside the comic book. I uncover how the recurring image, and the redrawing of the dyke body operate

as performative gestures – referring to a sort of performative utterance of visual language and the gestural action required to draw a figure on the page. The drawing also renders lesbian social networks. I argue that the object – the comic book – connects bodies together into a collection of active readers and viewers, into a collection of artists engaging with the performative across and through image-making, and the object challenges where lesbian culture is seen (the visibility through its circulation). Drawing from comics art scholar Hilary Chute's innovative analysis of the performative nature of both the visual and textual modes of comics art, I look at mainstream and subcultural representations of lesbian social connections in the comics art work of Alison Bechdel, Jennifer Camper, and DC Comics character Batwoman. For many lesbians in the 1990s, Alison Bechdel's series of comic strips *Dykes To Watch Out For* offered a visual and textual mirror or account of social connections and community. Even though the strip is "fictional," Bechdel captured political, popular, and significant cultural moments of the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s within the frames of her comics art. Critiquing neoliberalism, the culture wars, technology, and conservative back-lashes, Bechdel's comics perform an important role in configuring the body of the lesbian and her connections to other lesbians – even in a two-dimensional space. Alison Bechdel's fictional network of dykes created (drawn) in the series *Dykes To Watch Out For* reveals larger social networking concepts where bodies cluster around a single entity, creating various strengths of ties. In the frames, figurative fellowships of lesbians live, work, and associate in a small Midwestern city. The community of close knit lesbians illustrate how strong ties result from a small dense hub. The narrative and characters while depicted as a fictional community, serve to stand in for real bodies. *Dykes To Watch Out For* connect real readers, the artist, and the characters across the object itself – the comic book. Chapter 2, foregrounds Bechdel's strip as a site of social networks, both through the narrative

(characters) and through the objectness of the strip. The strip was released in collections titled *Dykes To Watch Out For* (1986), *More Dykes To Watch Out For* (1988), *Dykes To Watch Out For Added Attraction! Serial Monogamy* (1992), *Spawn of Dykes To Watch Out For* (1993), and *Unnatural Dykes To Watch Out For* (1995). In *Dykes To Watch Out For,* Alison Bechdel creates a network of characters who revolve around a main character. This main character is the hub or cluster within the larger social network. The character is drawn over and over again on multiple pages – threading and connecting narratives, storylines, plots, other characters, and readers together.

Chapter 2 includes looking at comics art where the dyke body reconfigures multiple connections of the lesbian imaginary. In contrast to subcultural production, I turn toward mainstream comics and the social, political work that the character (Batwoman) undertakes over decades and through "rebooting". The icon of Batwoman reveals the fluid and reconstituted realm of comics art distributed across time (decades) and drawn or interpreted by multiple generations of artists. Batwoman is as an example of how text and image perform/reperform both heteronormative representations and non-normative representations of women. This chapter is interested in how an image's reiteration, reboot, and redrawing frames the political and social contrasts between a 1950s introduction of the "original" heterosexual Batwoman and the 2006 "rebooted" lesbian body. Moving from heteronormative sidekick to lesbian heroine, *Batwoman* conjures new readership and representation of the "other" in mainstream media and comics art fan culture. I compare the ways that Batwoman moves from "beard" to out lesbian, illustrating the way that popular culture can reflect political norms and challenge the status quo.

In contrast to a mainstream, highly circulated comics book like *Batwoman,* I move my

study to the work of underground lesbian comics artist Jennifer Camper. Camper's comix and edited volumes offer visual and textual spaces for the subaltern. Camper's queer women of color characters challenge representations of othered bodies, and muslim bodies in a post 9/11 context (see figure 0.4). Camper brings together other artists in a collaborative jam that visually, textually, and performatively tie the artists together into a network of shared expressions, and shared narrative. The comics art book is a platform for counter and queer voices in underground spaces as represented in Camper's comix. I also look at the phenomenon of underground comix in terms of small-run press publishing and circulation. Camper's edited volumes offer the visual representations of the network of underground artists through the art "jam" in *Juicy Mother: Celebration*. The jam brings together multiple LGBT artists into a collaborative network of storytelling and image construction. Each artist contributes to the larger structure, relating individual contributions to the group formation. *Dykes To Watch Out For, Batwoman,* and *Juicy Mother* situate the dyke body in different circulations of print culture and popular culture; they each mark unique networks of fan culture as well as addressing visibility and performance of lesbian identifications in the circulation of comics in the U.S.

The Ever-disappearing Archive: The Lesbian Bar, The Lesbian Body, The Lesbian Musical

In Chapter 3, I focus on space, memory, and networks. In particular, I address the relationship of the lesbian body to the particular social space of the lesbian bar. Through a familiar lament, "what happened to the lesbian bar?" I explore how memory and the body reperform networks of connections in lost and disappeared spaces. Absent and invisible bodies are envisioned and imagined through ephemeral artifacts and performative strategies. Framing

my argument about imagined networks, I look to Rebecca Schneider's theory of the photographic remain and Pierre Nora's articulation of "places of memory" versus "environments of memory." By investigating visibility and invisibility, I try to situate lesbian bodies and public spaces into an analysis of community and memory.

Similar to Chapter 2, I theorize the relationship of image and text in producing the lesbian body. The combination of text and image – become a "verbal icon" or a as W.J.T. Mitchell writes, "a visible code."[6] The visible codes and references to lost visible codes are what artists Kaucyila Brooke and Mary Coble explore in their art work. I suggest that disorientation to forgotten spaces and bodies not only queers the memory but unearths lost lesbian archives. If the lesbian bar is no longer there (in a particular location, as it has closed and since become a different business), the sheer act of photographing the loss and the absence, by Brooke, names the space as a queer space.[7] Ann Cvetkovich argues that lesbian and gay as well as activist histories are often left out of archives and that they have "ephemeral, unorthodox, and frequently suppressed archives... ."[8] As such, Brooke's and Coble's work engages with this phenomenon of the "suppressed archive." In Mary Coble's work, *Note To Self*, the act of tattooing names of individuals who have died as a result of hate crimes on her body without ink interrogates how the body remembers and who is remembered. The lost "othered" bodies are named for a moment on the surface of Coble's body, only to disappear as the wounds (tattooed areas) heal. So, while Coble doesn't deal directly with a space or place where bodies connect (like in Kaucyila Brooke's photographs) Coble's durational performance articulates the relationship of the body as a site, and temporary archive, where other bodies are remembered. Liz Rosenfeld's performance *The*

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[6]   W. J. Thomas Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), 27.
[7]   Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Duke University Press, 2006).
[8]   Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 166.

Backroom challenges how memory, spaces, and bodies interconnect within networks. Rosenfeld performs two memories separated by time and space through a blind-folded narration, weaving each memory of a backroom together into a larger narrative about her own body's orientation to hidden spaces. *The Backroom* conjures visual and aural images of queer and other nonnormative bodies (the fat body, the trans body, the dyke body) into the imagination of the audience. Drawing from Pierre Nora's theory of cultural and historical memory in relationship to place, I argue that disappeared spaces leave traces of the social through memory and the artifacts created by artists. The imagination of the audience or the viewer activates the shared or collective memory, sustaining and archiving spaces and bodies in an alternative form. Lost spaces invigorate the nostalgia of the 1990s lesbian bar – a central location in the Dyke Musical Drama: *Lesbian Love Octagon* by Kimberlea Kressal and Will Larche. Mapping the space of the bar, mapping bodies, and mapping scenes suggests that if space or bodies can me mapped, there is a possibility of recuperation, a recuperation of cultural significance in and of lesbian communities. In her essay "Making Butch" which chronologically follows her formidable and influential essay "Toward A Butch-Femme Aesthetic" scholar Sue-Ellen Case argues, "that the lesbian bar supported a social life that encouraged women to collapse their aspirations and dreams into a mythic landscape...."[9] What the bar did offer most lesbians in the U.S. was a space of connection, a space that challenged the heteronormative conditions in which one was surrounded in work and home life.[10]

Chapter 3 brings together visual art, performance art, and the theatrical into conversation about community and disappearance. The lesbian body is situated into a discussion of how social connections are made, sustained, and remembered in networks of visual and textual testimonies,

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[9]   Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminist and Queer Performance: Critical Strategies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 21.
[10]   Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

performances, and even blood. Through a visual and textual analysis of the artwork of photographer Kaucyila Brooke, performance artist Mary Coble, and Video and Performance Artist Liz Rosenfeld, the complex relationship between bodies, space, and time reveals that the lesbian body in its representation and performative acts bridges a past, present, and future lesbian network. Mary Coble's "tattoo performances" and "blood prints" overtly illustrate how a single body can connect other bodies – even lost bodies into networked relationships. This relationship between the body and its memory of the mark is part a durational performance where iconographic and semiotic instances or recognition connect the performer to past performances of violence and part performative – the words are momentary performatives. When a name is tattooed on the body, the body and bearer of the name are now connected through a somatic and semiotic meaning. I consider how the body as its own "memory" space can bring together other bodies that no longer exist in real life.

Archiving the lesbian bar as a central social connection through photography and testimony is only one strategy. The Lesbian Bar serves as a background for the characters in the Dyke Musical Drama: *Lesbian Love Octagon.* I trace the ways that this particular musical theatre construction relies on sites of connections to drive characters forward in the narrative. Geographic locations intersect at street corners and through the dyke body. Seeking to relate temporal relationships of space and memory to the formation of social networks which are represented across figurative spaces, I argue that the body reperforms the network through a shared or social remembrance – through the environment of the memory. Urban spaces as hubs of lesbian networking (the lesbian bar) shift and cluster according to economic and social dynamics of given historic and cultural periods resulting in the disappearance and the erasure of the physical evidence of subcultural production or lesbian pasts. But the streets, buildings, and

rooms associated with lesbian bars function as networked spaces in the works of art that I examine even when the spaces have disappeared. These erased and lost spaces intersect through temporal regions; they locate queer bodies, sexuality, and practices within a geographic political framework and a historiographic archive of the lesbian body.

The Networked Body: Dykes Online

Chapter 4 traces the development of online communities from Howard Rheingold's account of the Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link (the WELL) in his important and influential book *Virtual Communities: Homesteading in the Electronic Frontier* to leading subcultural users within the LGBT community on platforms like PlanetOut, AOL, and AfterEllen. I extend the investigation to larger social networking sites, specifically, MeetUp in which niche groups like the San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® carve out "virtual" spaces to connect and organize. In order to trace the genealogy of online community formation and organization within the lesbian community, I foreground online community networking with a historiography of the political and social convergence of LGBT IRL networks which emerged out of Gay Rights and the Gay Liberation Front. Drawing from the social network theory of Bruno Latour or what is otherwise known as Actor-Network-Theory as well at Matt Granovetter's theory of the Strength of Weak Ties, I argue that networks form not just through like-mindedness and affiliations but through influential actants, objects, and disidentifications, IRL and online. This final chapter attempts to engage in both a discussion and a critique of community.[11] For lesbians, the visibility and viability of community has been tied to both the position of lesbians within LGBT politics,

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[11]   Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (U of Minnesota Press, 2002).

within public space, and the accessibility of an archive. As Ann Cvetkovich argues in *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures,* lesbian culture is frequently invisible and forgotten or left out of the archive. Cvetkovich writes, "[F]orged around sexuality and intimacy, and hence forms of privacy and invisibility that are both chosen and enforced, gay and lesbian cultures often leave ephemeral and unusual traces."[12] This dissertation is both a tracing of unusual lesbian cultural ephemera and an investigation of the social found in the connections of individuals and groups or networks of lesbian communities.

Chapter 4 takes on a genealogy of the formation of virtual identities, showing how textual and iconographic imagery of representation created and circulated through computer mediated technology (CMT) or networked communication are tied to performances of the self, and performances of the corporate body. The user's body is secondary in terms of its influence on the avatar's "readable" identity. Sue-Ellen Case argues in *Performing Science and The Virtual* that a user's avatar is more closely connected to her or his bank account or economic profile than to her or his social and psychological identity.[13] Case writes, "[A]vatars are not perceived as masks for users' performances, but as lures to entice people to remain online in the space of e-commerce."[14] Case points out that while there are online "free" sites, "the major environment of the web is permeated by corporate advertising and ownership."[15] Drawing from Naomi Klein's conceptualization of brand canopies in her book *No Logo*, Case writes, "Cyberspace, or the World Wide Web, shares in the creation of brand canopy, or a topography of 'experiential communication' of corporate logos and products."[16] Today, of course, the Internet and most

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[12] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 8.
[13] Sue-Ellen Case, *Performing Science and the Virtual* (New York; London: Routledge, 2007), 200-201.
[14] Ibid., 200.
[15] Ibid., 203.
[16] Ibid., 202.

social networking sites are streams of advertising and "corporate logos." Jaron Lanier remarks in

You Are Not A Gadget that "at the end of the rainbow of open culture lies an eternal spring of

advertisements."[17] Our virtual experience is exactly this a "topography ...of products" pulling us

closer to each other through market forces and consumer preferences.[18] In the early days of the

Internet, it was like the lesbian bar – a space where individuals sought "connection" and

"community".

In Chapter 4, I articulate the development of community online organizing in relationship

to the technology itself in order to look at current trends in social networking. Early internet

connections existed in text form through Bulletin Board systems and eventually with the advent

of html and more graphical and "hyper" content which allowed users to connect with images as

well as text. I suggest that with the most recent trends in Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 technology –

social media and social networking sites have the power to create more vast and far-reaching

connections. For San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® connections to local networks mean it (the

group) uses Web 3.0 interfaces like Meetup to harness the power of database driven queries with

social media and real world or physical "meetups".

The American West and Its Promise Land of a Lesbian Utopia or Becoming a Dyke on a Bike

My own experience as an organizing member and board of directors of San Francisco

Dykes On Bikes® led me to this project – a project of archiving and remembering lesbian bodies

and connections in community (see figures 0.5, 0.6, & 0.7). After all, I joined Dykes On Bikes®

to belong, to feel like a part of a community of women bikers, and to a community committed to

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[17]   Jaron Lanier, *You Are Not a Gadget* (Random House LLC, 2010), 82.
[18]   Case, *Performing Science and the Virtual,* 202.

visibility. Anyone can "belong" to Dykes on Bikes® as a member if they ride in the Motorcycle Contingent, but not anyone can be a board of directors. The following account of how San Francisco Dykes On Bikes® organizes itself in physical space on the day of the parade serves as an illustration of the many contested positions of belonging. Through exclusionary and affiliative classifications, Dykes On Bikes® holds itself together as a group, keeping out infiltrators while trying to hold onto its boundaries. By registering, paying membership dues – in the form of a registration fee – and showing up to ride in the parade (as this counts as a general membership meeting of all members), the rider becomes a club member for the year. Boundaries of membership are quickly marked visually as clubs – groups of riders, and individual riders are classified into preset positions in the parade. The "Harley" contingent is probably the most contested category along with male-identified riders. The "Harley" brand affiliation is controversial in that each year the Harley owners want to ride all together even though they don't necessarily know each other. Each year the organizing members – now designated as the board of directors – declare the Harleys a part of Independents. Independents simply refer to a woman-identified motorcyclist who does not belong to a club. So, for several years this battle of the Harleys to locate themselves uniquely and separately from the main contingent ensued. The organization of the Women's Motorcycle Contingent of the San Francisco Pride Parade reveals a layering effect in how a sub-community organizes inside a larger community. For the crowd, the distinctions between one faction and another appear as visual and textual signs – club names written on flags tied to the backs of motorcycles or club affiliations on patches (colors) worn on the backs of the motorcyclists. Other than these overt visual signifiers or "visual codes", a crowd member/parade viewer probably could not designate the "parts" from the whole in any specific (club-affiliated) way. The whole (entire) contingent is a community, an assemblage, for the

fifteen minutes it takes to roll from Steuart Street to McAllister Street. Riding down Market Street in the contingent, individuals appear more connected to the larger whole. Road Captains assure the the flow of the whole group. The duties of a "Road Captain" are to organize her "section" of the contingent, to facilitate a simultaneous and smooth start off (kickstands up) and to keep the lines of motorcycles moving in spaced formation. Specific clubs like SF FireWomen and Women on Wheels or Scooter Girls are responsible for providing their own Road Captains who ride alongside the rows of their respective club. San Francisco Dykes On Bikes® recruits volunteers and its board members to ride as Road Captains for the larger sections of Independent and Harleys. The Road Captain dodges street car tracks, sewer drainage grates, and various parade officials. The roar of four hundred and seventy-five motorcycles – the excitement of the crowd – feed the contingent – an assemblage – a massive spectacular and ocular performance. The traces of San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® encircle the globe like a fisherman's deep sea net – caught in the organized weave of the rope, traces found in the connections of one node to another, and to another through each nodes's proximity and distribution. The network itself is strong through its vastness and ability to reorganize itself using the tools of Internet communication technologies (ICT) and physical connections in real life. In 2016 the San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® will celebrate forty years of leading the Pride Parade. Even though the bodies (bikers) change from year to year, the lived experience for veteran participants as well as newly out lesbians, and newly licensed motorcyclists, propels this particular community into the future.

Obviously the future is shaped by our understanding and deployment of the past, and it (the future) is also informed by the consideration of current configurations of the dyke body, the network of dykes (San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®), and the production of space when the dyke

body (Bodies) performs its various identifications. Somewhere at the intersections of the theories of the network, theories of "dyke" and theories of performance, there exists a way to consider the importance of physical and imagined connections for and to othered bodies. Dyke exists not just in the intersections but in the interstices of LGBT. And for this reason, my aim is to look at these overlaps and gaps in the archive of bodies who produce images of dyke. This dissertation research and writing considers and offers the archiving, the performing of dyke so that it might prove to be "a shared experience of the social."[19] The traces left behind by individuals and groups may not be in plain sight, but they are nonetheless important in the study of LGBT communities, politics, and culture.

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[19] Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures,* 286.

Figure 0.1: Robert Pruzan, *Gay Day Parade,* 1977, still photograph. Courtesy of the GLBT Historical Society.

Figure 0.2: Robert Pruzan, *Gay Day Parade,* 1984. Courtesy of the GLBT Historical Society.

Figure 0.3: Sandy Caughlin, *San Francisco Dykes On Bikes®
logo redesign with "R"*, 2008. Courtesy of San Francisco Dykes
on Bikes®.

Figure 0.4: Jennifer Camper, *Ramadan*, comix art, 2005, screenshot.

Figure 0.5: Sheila Malone, *Kawasaki 440Z - Self-Portrait in Chrome Fender*, still photograph, 1995.

Figure 0.6: Sheila Malone, *San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® Women's Motorcycle Contingent Pride Parade*, digital photograph, 2004.

The San Francisco Dykes on Bikes Organizing Members 2006:
from left to right: back row: Lori, Soni, Kate, Anthony, Kimber,
Calli, Eleanor; middle row: Vick, Ali, Jake; front row: Sheila, Rose,
Zack, Ren (not pictured: Rae, Kelly, Robin, Mandie).

Figure 0.7: Sheila Malone, *Dykes on Bikes® Organizing Members,* digital photograph, 2006.

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Chapter I: Performing Dykeness: Registering the Trademark Dykes on Bikes®

This chapter undertakes a study of the ways that the term dyke performs as a social

marker of individual bodies and larger collectives. Dyke bodies perform the social through

associations, identifications, disidentifications, queernesses and alternative meanings within

lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and queer communities and across larger collectives.

Drawing from network theory of the social, specifically, Bruno Latour's social theory known as

Actor Network Theory (ANT) and identifications or what José Muñoz describes as

disidentifications with previously established definitions of "dyke," I argue that the dyke body

performs multiple understandings of lesbian at an individual or nodal level(s) as well as at larger

meta or group membership(s). In this chapter I will investigate how the 2002-2008 trademark

suit in which San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® won the right to register its name complicates how

"dyke" is understood, represented, performed, and reiterated across social networks. The

trademark suit highlights the ways that speech acts perform individual and group notions of

"dyke" and the consequences of ownership of a brand identity. Issues of appropriation, freedom

of expression, and the legal recognition of the term dyke as an important facet of LGBT politics

and history are some of the concerns I will address in this investigation. By looking at both

performing "real" and represented bodies as well as performing virtual bodies, "dyke" challenges

the actual social boundaries, juridical boundaries and behavioral boundaries of the LGBT

communities.

Dyke as a term performs the social through a network of objects, bodies and textual

meaning. According to Bruno Latour in his book *Reassembling The Social: An Introduction to

Actor Network Theory*, the social isn't the glue that sticks the social together, it is what gets glued

together.[1] So, in other words the social happens when objects, actors and actants come together through all sorts of connections, through the assembling. The social is not the connection per se but the process and the associations formed through connections. The social is understood, then, through a network made up of more than human agency. The network is the concept of these social connections and community.[2] The social happens through assembling in real time and space as well as in virtual time and space. Social networking has become synonymous with online experience via social software such as Facebook, Myspace, Tumblr, Twitter and others. Social networking includes real bodies, virtual bodies, real objects, and representations of objects. How the individual, the group, and objects assemble to perform identifications of "dyke" is in part contingent on the subcultural production and interpretive positions. Through network associations and affiliations, the definition of dyke travels and mutates across all of these sites, never settling on one location or one identification. Complications in the understanding of the term "dyke" arise as various groups define their social boundaries via exclusionary and inclusionary means. As performance theorist José Muñoz argues in his book *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, "Disidentification is meant to be descriptive of the survival strategies of the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship."[3] Disidentifying is in its own way a process of exclusionary performance. So, for the Dyke-identified, the process of disidentifying with strict codes of gender and even politically correct normative LGBT codes of "assimilation" is a social process or what Muñoz refers to as "interfac[ing] with different subcultural fields to activate ...

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[1]   Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (OUP Oxford, 2007), 5.
[2]   Ibid., 131.
[3]   José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (U of Minnesota Press, 1999), 4.

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senses of self."[4] Dyke as a term, while initially used against members of lesbian subculture, generates multiple expressions and connections within queer undercurrents.

The institutional and structural pressures of trademarking, naming, representing and even performing "dyke" try to flatten and preserve a singularity of meaning. However, the dynamics and properties of networks themselves promote and facilitate mutation, repetition and differences of performing bodies which makeup part of the social. Zizi Papacharissi writes about performing the social across networks, " The emerging sociability moves beyond community, recognizes identity as performance, and defines as culture a converged set of practices that are social, political, economic, personal, and work-related, as long as they contain a semiology that affords connection."[5] The network allows individuals to cross boundaries of communities, thus reperforming an identity across each site. In the trademark suit, expert testimony serves to perform aspects of what "dyke" is, and each of these testimonies brings a separate network into view. These sites, then create resistant structures through their connection to each other and through the individual bodies making up larger group affiliations. Dyke becomes both a collectivizing process and an individual resistance to any static identification. Through network theory and ANT (Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory) understanding and tracing connections of the social through human and non-human agencies, ANT provides a viewpoint that reveals not just what a dyke identification is but, how "dyke" formulates a group through its mutations, coagulations and dispersions. Through the lens of ANT theory and examining the connections of identifications, disidentifications, and the solidifying nature of "branding," I trace the unusual and hidden connections between non-human agency and human agency in the production of subcultural practices or how the dyke body and the collectivizing of dykes on bikes implicates

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[4]   Ibid., 5.
[5]   Zizi Papacharissi, "Conclusion: A Networked Self," in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community and Culture on Social Network Sites*, ed. Zizi Papacharissi (New York: Routledge, 2011), 317.

the way capitalism performs within the social and how representations of dyke privilege the

embodied human as the center of production while occluding the impact and importance of non-

human objects in the production of the social and thus in how "dyke" disidentifies with

normative or dominant LGBT culture.

The social network of Dykes on Bikes® reveals a history of dyke as an outcast of the

LGBT community and the network reveals recent attempts in the codification and

institutionalizing of dyke as a fixed component of the network. However, Bruno Latour writes,

"network is an expression to check how much energy, movement, and specificity our own

reports are able to capture. Network is a concept, not a thing out there."[6] In other words, in any

network, human agency is influenced, shaped and impacted by non-human agencies of objects

and material properties, so that the way images, information and the objects themselves circulate

affect when, how and why dyke means certain things at certain historical moments in specific

subcultures across networks. Latour argues that "you can provide an actor-network account of

topics which have in no way the shape of a network – a symphony, a piece of legislation, a rock

from the moon, an engraving."[7] Tracing the human and non-human assemblage provides and

elicits a new understanding of how the social is formed. For the San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®

the process of trademarking from 2002-2008 formulates new expressions, representations and

cohesions of dyke as a social identification associated specifically with motorcycles and with

San Francisco as a location and a brand identity. I use the term Dykes on Bikes® to refer to the

group in San Francisco who lead the Pride Parade each year and who own the trademark. I use

the term dykes on bikes to refer to other groups around the world who participate in pride

parades and celebrations but who are not necessarily an official chapter of the motorcycle club

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[6]   Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory,* 131.
[7]   Ibid.

San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®. Through the court case's media circulation and through the expert testimony, dyke as an identification mutates and coheres larger associations and meanings to an initial concept of the group Dykes on Bikes®.

The Network of Dykes on Bikes®

Using the very simplistic definition of social as in "shared or friendly relationships" or even just the concept of connections of dykes through bikes (motorcycles), Dykes on Bikes® as a social organization formed via a process of disidentification and performative means.[8] As early as 1974, dykes on bikes infiltrated what was then called the San Francisco Gay Day Parade. Through the disidentification with gay men, women took to the streets on their motorcycles in order to disrupt a male-centered and gay-centered march. This performative political action visually interrupted the walking contingents, suturing the image of the dyke on a bike within a network of other dykes. The Gay Day Parade had been enacted via a post-Stonewall uprising and post 1960s civil rights mindset. According to Robert O. Self in his book *All In The Family:The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s*, "[i]n July 1970 marches commemorating the first anniversary of Stonewall filled streets of New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco, and 'gay pride' (known then as gay freedom day and other names) was born."[9] Eleven years later, in 1981, The San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade changed its name to include women, adopting the name "The International Lesbian and Gay Freedom Day."[10] Then in 1987

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8   "Social, Adj. and N.," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed August 8, 2014,
    http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/183739.
9   Robert O. Self. *All In The Family:The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s.* Hill and Wang
    Press, New York, 2012. 223.
10 This is noted on the official website of SF Pride Parade, accessed July 27th, 2014,
    http://www.sfpride.org/heritage/1981.html.

the event changed its name to "The San Francisco Lesbian and Gay Freedom Day."[11] And in

2000, the event was officially renamed to "The San Francisco Lesbian Gay Bisexual

Transgender Pride Celebration & Parade."[12] Moving from exclusionary boundaries to

inclusionary membership, the Gay Freedom Day event evolved socially and culturally to include

a panorama of identifications. Through the history of this event Dykes on Bikes® has also

evolved or imprinted its image and membership on a viewing public. What began as

disidentificatory and political activism shifted to identificatory performances of dykeness or style

of the dyke on a bike as celebratory and invested in visibility, visuality and membership in the

group or network. Visual Studies scholar Nicole R. Fleetwood defines visibility as "the state of

being able to be seen" and visuality as the "mediation of the field of vision and the production of

visual objects/beings."[13] Through its almost forty year history, San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®

has produced visual objects and beings constituting the visuality of dyke. The Pride Parade

functions as a site of this visual production and affords members of the group San Francisco

Dykes on Bikes® visibility. So, the visual image of any dyke on a bike becomes a significant

visual icon of gay pride, lesbian visibility and otherness, assembling an image of the sociality of

Dykes on Bikes® worldwide. In an attempt to be inclusive the Gay Day Parade metamorphosed

through various identifications, eventually landing on Pride as an all inclusive term. "Dyke"

splits apart the homo-normativising of "LGBT".

Through the repeated and circulated images of San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® leading

the San Francisco Pride Parade, the iconography of the dyke on a bike fixes itself into the

subcultural fabric of the San Francisco Bay area LGBT community but also into the larger

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[11]   Ibid.
[12]   Ibid.
[13]   Nicole R. Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), 16.

popular culture disseminated through the news media. Drawing from scholar Leigh Raiford's theory of hypericonization and art historian Martha Rosler's theory of documentary photography, Nicole Fleetwood argues that an icon achieves hypericonization when the icon suggests a level of familiarity and "its specificity is now an abstraction that can circulate throughout public culture, carrying both the weight of historic narrative and a decontextualized vague strain of its pastness."[14] An image of the San Francisco Pride Parade lead off contingent which depicts the San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® might include in its background the site of the parade – San Francisco – but it occludes the struggle for visibility women incurred in the early years of the parade as well as the years of controversy over the identification with the term dyke. The icon of the San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® or dykes on bikes from other Pride Parades around the world in major cities illustrates for the viewer of an image of Dykes on Bikes® an urban context of Pride Parades in general, and the expectation of such an image to stand in for LGBT urban experiences as if they are all tied together. The image's "hypericonicity" supersedes a historiography of LGBT politics specific to San Francisco as the image stands in for Dykes on Bikes® in New York City, in Chicago, in Seattle, in Los Angeles. No longer specific to one locale or origin, the image of Dykes on Bikes® is a hypericon in the sense that it is associated with Pride Parades around the world; Dykes on Bikes® – the parade contingent – is an expected performance, and subsequently, documentary images of Dykes on Bikes® stand in for the event of Pride, its history as an LGBT movement and the network of Dykes on Bikes® around the world.

With this largeness and non-specificity of location, Dykes on Bikes® struggles to maintain its historic narrative. As part of the organization's (San Francisco's Dykes on Bikes®)

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[14]   Ibid., 37.

attempt to claim its past, specify its narrative and maintain local visibility, Dykes on Bikes®

applied to trademark its name in 2002. Through an official gathering of testimonial evidence for

both the trademark suit and a comprehensive exhibition at the San Francisco GLBT Historical

Society, San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® projected itself as a cultural phenomenon, worthy of

archiving. The trademark suit forced the group to "document" key moments in its formation and

its operation. The documents included photographs from members and from the archive

collections at the GLBT Historical Society. Other artifacts put forth as representative of the

group's purpose and status included t-shirts, banners, stickers, party announcements, newspaper

articles, and business documents. Personal testimonies in written form and recorded also brought

together the extensive reach the image of the San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® has had on parade-

goers, media audience, past members, and scholars of lesbian culture. Between the trademark

case and the extensive media coverage across the U.S. Dykes on Bikes® attempted to plant the

icon squarely in San Francisco. The trademark application became a six year process of

establishing what a dyke is, the social significance of Dykes in Bikes, and the way the term dyke

is a reference to belonging to a larger community or social network. The trademark in effect

establishes a set narrative and distinguishes the mark from other trademarks. The trademark is

both a fixing agent and an unfixing agent as it fixes an idea or recognizable uniqueness to the

producer (setting the product apart from other products) and it unfixes the entity or producer

from a generic or ubiquitously shared understanding of itself.[15]

The local, specific and interested network of San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® was

pinpointed through legal documents filed by the law offices of San Francisco-based lawyer

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[15]   The United States Patent and Trademark Office's official website's frequently asked questions page defines a
trademark as "a word, phrase, symbol or design, or a combination thereof, that identifies and distinguishes the
source of the goods of one party from those of others," accessed July 26, 2014,
http://www.uspto.gov/faq/trademarks.jsp#_Toc275426672.

Brooke Oliver on behalf of San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® (SFDOB) from 2002 to 2007, thus solidifying the brand identity of Dykes on Bikes® through the explanation of the word and name "dyke." Within the expert witness testimony dyke identifications performed both individual and the collective affiliations and associations: from the performances of women on motorcycles at SF Pride Parade (The Women's Motorcycle Contingent referred to by the media as Dykes on Bikes®), to an image in a magazine, or the text on the patch of a motorcycle group. All of these instances mentioned and catalogues in the legal argument of what Dykes on Bikes® is revealed an attempt to situate "dyke" within a larger LGBT culture while maintaining a specificity in location when "bikes" is added to "dykes". Branding an image or phrase infers that the branding entity is involved in commerce or some sort of capitalist system, or as Naomi Klein explicates in her book *No Logo* (2009) branding frames the concept that the brand image performs as an embodied entity, a lifestyle, not just as a textual logo, via the circulation of a visual and monetary economy of bodies.[16]

Branding Dyke

> The brand builders conquered and a new consensus was born: the products that will flourish in the future will be the ones presented not as "commodities" but as concepts: the brand as experience, as lifestyle
> > – Naomi Klein , *No Logo*, 2009

Images and text are at the center of brand recognition, brand identity and the consumption of products. In *No Logo*, Naomi Klein traces the history of the shift from marketing products (the actual thing sold) to marketing ideas (through images and textuality). Klein argues that our brand culture is a result of three decades (1970s-1990s) of deregulation and privatization policies

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[16]   Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (Macmillan, 2009), 21.

under Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and other world leaders.[17] Klein writes, "Manufacturing products may require drills, furnaces, hammers and the like, but creating a brand calls for a completely different set of tools and material. It requires an endless parade of brand extensions, continuously renewed imagery for marketing and most of all, fresh new spaces to disseminate the brand's idea of "itself."[18] Dykes on Bikes® extends itself through the process of sponsoring and recognizing official chapters all over the world. With a built in mechanism for yearly renewal, images of Dykes on Bikes® from these world-wide chapters at Pride Parades help circulate and propagate the brand. As Susan Sontag notes in her classic book *On Photography* first published in 1973, "[a] capitalist society requires a culture based on images. It needs to furnish vast amounts of entertainment in order to stimulate buying and anesthetize the injuries of class, race, and sex."[19] Image production, circulation, and consumption are central to the ever-expanding global markets of corporate interests/images and also to any entity desiring recognition or visibility through brand recognition and trademark registering. Dykes on Bikes® relies on brand recognition in order to claim a right to the name. Through the process of owning a cultural image, an icon, the motorcycle group creates distinct commercial boundaries that have legal and possibly monetary repercussions for non-recognized chapters or groups using the name who do not act or represent "dykes on bikes" in an approved way.

The process of trademarking the phrase "Dykes on Bikes®" was contingent on the national if not global circulation of images of dykes on bikes. The eventual and inevitable process of protecting and sustaining the trademark is contingent on the policing of the global circulation of the phrase "Dykes on Bikes®." Image and text or the image of the dyke and the actual word are entangled in the legal, social, and political project of lesbian visibility. The legal

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., 5.
[19] Susan Sontag, "The Image-World," in *On Photography* (Macmillan, 1977), 157.

proceedings of the trademark case revealed that "dyke" has circulated for many years across media. Dyke isn't just a term associated with an antiquated derogatory declaration against a "masculine" lesbian. Dyke – especially when associated with bikes- becomes a less rigid identification or fluid identification that resists binaries, where queer, lesbian, butch and femme merge, interweave and complicate each other. Amelia Jones writes in *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts*, "Issues of identification, how we identify and make meaning, are still, ...central to every level of political, social, and cultural life at least in Western areas...."[20] These identifications for Dykes on Bikes® are important and are performative and action based. Through riding the motorcycle at a GLBT Pride Parade, the dyke acts up, acts out and performs the "style" of Dykes on Bikes®. The body, the bike, and the name are coterminous in performing the identification known as Dykes on Bikes®. This is achieved both in the aesthetics and visuals of the performance. As a result of the plurality of Dykes on Bikes® as a recognized group, individuality works against the trademark cohesion. Yet the performative nature of Dykes on Bikes® is reliant on the performing body and would not effectively produce the recognizable image of Dykes on Bikes® without the individual, a dyke on a bike. So, the performativity of Dykes on Bikes® is a collective structure- an assemblage of individuals, objects, representations and the performance(s) of the individual.

Performing "Dyke"

Performativity of Dykes on Bikes® is a physical phenomenon, a linguistic phenomenon, and a virtual phenomenon. The origin of the word dyke has been traced by various scholars,

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[20]   Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (Routledge, 2013), 219.

activists and queer theorists since the 1960s. As the term has mutated, it has attached itself to various performed identifications and reattached itself to a multitude of lesbian representations, sexual acts, deviant behavior, and of course to women who ride motorcycles. In the 1979 essay, "In America They Call Us Dykes: notes on the etymology and usage of 'dyke'," author and etymologist JR Roberts traces the historical and linguistic usage of the term dyke in the U.S. and Great Britain in the twentieth century. Roberts indicates that while dyke as a term used pre-liberation (before the Gay Liberation Movement) typically referred to a masculine-looking, dressing and acting lesbian, the term circulated in African-American communities as well as prisons and referred to women who performed oral sex on men.[21] During the Gay Liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, dyke was used by lesbians who identified as butch as well as femme. The term inverted in its usage in the sense that it no longer was "negatively and violently hurled at [lesbians] for more than a half a century."[22] For many years "dyke" was imagined or used to describe a lesbian as "masculine" or unfeminine. But this trend has changed in the past ten years. As noted by online columnist/blogger Cara Giaimo in her recent article on *Autostraddle* entitled "More Than Words: Dyke Pt. 1 — Baby Dykes."[23] Giaimo writes, "Dyke is going through a familiar reclamation process, motoring alongside queer— it was just a word, and then it was a slur, and then it was a term of proud and specific identification." The inconclusive origin of the term dyke reinforces the multiple tracings and cross cultural references found in U.S and British history. According to Roberts who bases her study on an earlier study of the term from 1968, dyke was used in African-American culture mid-twentieth century to describe a mannish lesbian. Powers also writes that dyke or dike was used even earlier in the U.S in late 19th

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[21] J.R. Roberts, "In America They Call Us Dykes: Notes on the Etymology and Usage of 'Dyke,'" *Sinister Wisdom*, no. 9 (1979): 3–11.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Cara Giaimo, "More Than Words: Dyke Pt. 1 — Baby Dykes," *Autostraddle*, accessed May 01, 2015, http://www.autostraddle.com/more-than-words-dyke-pt-1-baby-dykes-174871/.

century Victorian culture to describe "a man in full dress, or merely the set of male clothing itself."[24] Thus dyke is used to describe both the body of a man, and the costume or fashion of dressing like a man, as well as looking like a man. The implication of "drag" or "cross-dressing" in addition to the relationship of gender to a visibility of dressing and fashion grounds the term "dyke" in the performative, that is, the act of dressing in clothing that specifically "codes" as male is attached to the use of the term "dyke."

Inside and Outside of the Term Dyke

Included in *The American thesaurus of slang: a complete reference book of colloquial speech* as early as 1943 "dyke" was defined as a "Masculine woman, dike, dyke."[25] By 1965 dyke referred directly to sexual orientation.[26] In the second issue of *Gay,* a bi-weekly newspaper that began publishing in New York City at the end of 1969, the word "dyke" peppers the pages of humorous and serious articles about gay and lesbian lifestyles.[27] On page sixteen, the column titled "Camping With Aunti Butch" features an illustration (comic strip style) of four women in a mock line dance pose, with arms around each other's waists and knees pulled up in unison a la Ziegfield follies, three of the women are dressed similarly in dresses or jumpers and high heels; while one woman (unlike the others) wears pants, t-shirt and a baseball cap with the insignia of the New York Yankees. This woman, the one with the ball cap – is pictured as the butch – "Aunti Butch." In the text that follows the illustration, the columnist hurls puns disguised within

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[24] Roberts, 4.
[25] "Dike | Dyke, n.3," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed May 01, 2015, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/52709.
[26] Lester V Berrey and Melvin Van den Bark, *The American Thesaurus of Slang: A Complete Reference Book of Colloquial Speech* (New York: Crowell, 1967).
[27] *Gay* (New York: Four Swords, Inc, 1969).

a parody of a socialite exposé – who's who and who's doin' what and to whom. As a post-Thanksgiving issue, the column discusses holiday get togethers in the "upper echelons of Gay Society." "Among the grousing and giggling over Oyster a la Dyke (Flo Gentry sat through luncheon with her finger up an oyster's asshole, wearing of course, pearls) were "Doc" and Francine, "Moose" and Antoinette, "Speed" and Esmerelda – last namers utterly unnecessary."[28] Each pair or couple of lesbians is named with a butch and femme moniker– coupled as a unit and occupying a specific "butch-femme aesthetic," as Sue-Ellen Case argues in her influential essay "Towards A Butch-Femme Aesthetic," the position of the butch and the femme is a "coupled." one; it is not split as two separate entities, instead, as Case argues "The butch-femme as subject is reminiscent of Monique Wittig's "j/e," or coupled self. [29] Illustrations in Aunti Butch confirm an anti-essentialist position whereby lesbian is not the counter to gay – instead it is a complex array of positions. Dyke is used in multiple places (usually referencing a meal served) throughout the column. Each usage is light-hearted and fun, not disparaging but referencing slang within a subculture and within a social group. Other slang terms used in this same send-up include "Wet Set Lezzes," "femme de la femme" and "Muff Divers." Dyke articulates a visuality and a connection to others within the circle or family of other lesbians.

Words describing lesbians circulated in popular culture in the late 1960s and 1970s as gay visibility and gay politics in the U.S. emerged in various publications of the political left. Text and image powerfully proffered alternative views and spaces where queer voices could be heard, such as in *Gay* – a newspaper which functioned as both "entertaining and informative."[30] *Gay* was a product of Gay Liberation Front politics- sprung from the doorsteps of the Stonewall

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[28] "Camping Out With Aunti Butch," in *Gay* (Four Swords, Inc, 1969), 16.
[29] Sue-Ellen Case, "Towards a Butch-Femme Aesthetic," *Discourse* 11, no. 1 (October 1, 1988): 55–73, doi:10.2307/41389108.
[30] *Gay* (New York: Four Swords, Inc, 1969).

Riots.[31] *Gay* offered images of queer lives, political commentary and sensational adult content.

Several columns addressed lesbian culture, specifically the aforementioned "Camping Out With

Aunti Butch"- which was both a satirical and social column. Another column by Washington

D.C. lesbian writer Lily Hansen offered personal experiences in the everyday life of a lesbian –

from hanging out in gay bars to going to hear local music, Hansen was an early

founder/contributor to the publication *The Washington Blade* (The Gay Blade).[32] With Hansen's

contributions to *Gay* as a bi-weekly and eventually a weekly newspaper, image and text

functioned as a constant dialectic. Words and images of dyke and lesbian offered reflection and

access to a subculture. W.J.T. Mitchell writes "[t]he dialectic of word and image seems to be a

constant in the fabric of signs that a culture weaves around itself."[33] Gay and lesbian newsletters

and magazines of the late 1960s and early 1970s set the foundation for popular images of "dyke"

and "lesbian."

    While *Gay* mostly featured images of men: beefcake/pinup photographs, seductive and

sexual cartoon and illustrations, "artistic" photographic images of female nudes, cartoons and

other illustrations of women were included in most issues. A two page spread featured "Dyke

Fashions (June 1974)" (see figure 1.3). Part humor and part homage to "lesbian visibility" at the

"gay march" and in gay and lesbian bars around town, "Dyke Fashions" positioned the dyke as

encompassing an integral role all around town (New York City). With each figure's illustration,

the text describes the outfit, but also indicates where the fashion-toting dyke was "sighted." The

description also included an accolade mixed in with humorous commentary on the particular

wardrobe. "Bertha Fuchs" is described and illustrated as a leather wearing, whip holding, and

general "bad-ass" girl seen nightly in the Village. The dyke is represented both through the the

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[31]   Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (Macmillan, 2012).

[32]   Lily Hansen, "Gay Girls With Gay Blades" in *Gay*, December 31, 1969

[33]   W. J. Thomas Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), 43.

illustration and the textual description of the outfit. Both modes of representation offer an insight

into how "dyke" was culturally considered and represented in the immediate years following

Stonewall.

These connections between the dress and the performative body, in relationship to the

term dyke presents style and subcultural visual codes of dykeness. These codes create a network

or a system of connections as Monica L. Miller describes as "a self-conscious style on a

performative body functions as a semiotic system of signs and referents... the dandy allure

[emanates] from the fact that the figure is both constructed and performative–a dandy is a kind of

embodied, animated sign system that deconstructs given and normative categories of identity."[34]

Like the dandy, the dyke (on a bike) performs queerness and lesbian as well as "dykeness"

through a styling that is indicated by clothing and objects: jeans, leather motorcycle boots,

leather motorcycle jacket, chain wallet, and the motorcycle. All these clothing items and the

object- the motorcycle- are part of what Miller describes as "the embodied and animate" sign

system – the objects, the wearing of the objects and the performing bodies do the work of

deconstructing masculinity, femininity and heteronomativity. An entire contingent, then, of

dykes on bikes creates a formidable and collective visual code of "dykeness." The motorcycle is

front and center literally at the head of the parade but also in the performative network of the

subculture of San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®. Like clothing, the motorcycle is linked to the

body; it requires the body to complete its functionality and so, is connected physically and

iconically to Dykes on Bikes® (not just in San Francisco). The motorcycle signifies a larger

culture of masculinity as it is an object used by more men than women. As of 2009 the

Motorcycle Industry Council estimated that 1 in 10 riders in the U.S. are women – a statistic that

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[34] Monica L Miller, *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 10.

is probably more difficult to track globally as motorcycles and scooters are used as cheap transportation and not sought after as leisure, status or identificatory objects.[35] Still, the implication of the Motorcycle Industry Council's findings reveal the motorcycle as an object that is more associated with men than women by a large margin, at least in the Unites States where most of the chapters of Dykes on Bikes® exist.[36]

The motorcycle and clothing when associated with the dyke body signify Dykes on Bikes®. However, the motorcycle, as an actant, in the social network of Dykes on Bikes® performs both a political act and the social affiliative act. The lining up of motorcycles and bodies at the start of the Pride Parade is a performance and is performative in the sense that the objects/beings of the social assemblage perform as signs; they are referents of coming out, visibility, and "dyke." In *Epistemology of The Closet* Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick notes that "a T-shirt that ACT UP sells in New York bearing the text, 'I am out, therefore I am,' is meant to do for the wearer, not the constative work of reporting that s/he *is* out, but the performative work of coming out in the first place."[37] So, clothing linked to the body becomes a speech act via the textual content printed on the surface of the T-shirt, but also via the embodied practice—the wearing of the T-shirt is as much a part of the performative as the text is. Other "signs" worn by dyke bodies in the Pride Parade and specifically in the Women's Motorcycle Contingent also known as Dykes On Bikes® constitute speech acts. The "costume" of the biker is a part of the performance of "coming out." The wearing of specific clothing on specific bodies in a specific arena constitutes a speech act and is performative.

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[35] Leanne Italie, "Women And Motorcycles: Ridership Is On The Rise," *The Huffington Post*, accessed July 25, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/03/women-and-motorcycles-ridership-on-rise_n_1646795.html.

[36] Dykes on Bikes® does have a global presence, however it is mostly associated with Anglo-American cities or Eurocentric countries: Great Britain, Iceland, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain and other countries that have established Pride Parades.

[37] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Introduction: Axiomatic," in *Epistemology of the Closet* (University of California Press, 2008), 3-4.

The visual and performative image of Dykes on Bikes® as a group of "self-fashioning"

and "defiant" members of the LGBT community harness the power of demonstration.[38] The

concept of performativity through style reveals that the body and clothing form a symbiotic

relationship in the production and deconstruction of identities.[39] This coupled with leading the

parade creates a spectacle that emphasizes gender non-conformity. Arguing that dressing and

style can destabilize normative concepts of masculinity and heterosexuality, Miller writes,

"dressing up and acting up are similar, sometimes equivalent acts."[40] For Dykes on Bikes®,

dressing the part, riding the bike, and leading the parade is "acting up" and performing against

normative concepts of femininity, heteronormativity and even masculinity. With Dykes on

Bikes®, the identification is overtly visually and politically tied to the group or plurality of dyke

bodies on bikes. The performance of dykeness happens through the network of associations- the

clubs- the independent bikers who are grouped together, and the parade formation- two lines of

bikes, side by side rolling down Market Street.[41] Each dyke performs an individual style inside a

larger context of the contingent. Identification occurs on multiple social and cultural levels in the

live event of the parade but also across media – through the televised broadcast of the parade, the

press photography and images which subsequently have been deposited in archives to more

recent phenomenon which involves the circulation of images across digital and print media after

the live parade has ended. Publishing, reposting, and sharing extends the captured images of

Dykes on Bikes® into and across electronic social networks.

New media complicates the stableness that images might have in the print world. This

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[38]   Monica L Miller, *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 184.
[39]   Ibid., 11.
[40]   Ibid.
[41]   The San Francisco Pride Parade – the home of the mothership Dykes on Bikes®- moved to Market Street from the Castro in 1976- which is the year that Dykes on Bikes® attributes as their founding- through the phrase "since 1976."

unfixedness via the digital- read-write-copy-paste-paradigm threatens a mediatized circulating

binaries of identification… such as what is feminine or what is masculine, what is queer, what is

straight. The brand identity of Dykes on Bikes® is compiled from images of the San Francisco

Pride Parade as well as the styling and fashion of club members who wear the club patch as an

identifier. The brand is specific to the group in San Francisco, as indicated in the trademark suit,

however, the circulation of images with affiliative descriptors threatens the locative and visual

brand identity of Dykes on Bikes®. If any image of dykes on bikes from any parade is posted

and travels across networks with identifying keywords, metatags and descriptions, then there is

no singular source or defining articulation of Dykes on Bikes®. Thus, Dykes on Bikes® as a

motorcycle club is no longer location specific. The description of the organization San

Francisco's Dykes on Bikes® as posted on the social networking website *Meetup* defines Dykes

on Bikes® as a symbol associated with an originality. The site reads, "The Original San

Francisco Dykes on Bikes® Women's Motorcycle Contingent is an organization committed to

creating a local, national and international community of women motorcyclists and friends of

women motorcyclists. Come out and support the forefront contingent of the annual San

Francisco Pride Parade who is in the hearts of millions of people all over the world as an

inspirational symbol of queer pride and lesbian power."[42] "Original" is placed in front of location

– San Francisco – and like a brand that competes with other products the word "original"

stabilizes the identity of Dykes on Bikes®. In this same description Dykes on Bikes® is referred

to as "an inspirational symbol of queer pride and lesbian power." This symbol has a location and

a derivation. What complicates the stability of Dykes on Bikes® as a brand identity is how it gets

taken up by other groups of women riders all over the world- officially and unofficially.

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[42]   San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® Meetup Site Page, accessed April 14, 2014, http://www.meetup.com/San-Francisco-Dykes-on-Bikes-WMC/events/176864362/?a=me1_grp&rv=me1.

Sights of Dykes on Bikes® are typically associated with performativity of the visual, that is the physical embodiment of the dyke in clothing on a real object – a motorcycle – and in a real geographic location such as San Francisco (Market Street, or the Castro or Dolores Park) demonstrating in a parade and march. Sites of Dykes on Bikes® are associated with real locations and with virtual spaces where connections are made across networks via the Internet and social software, via information and communication technologies (ICT). In Amelia Jones's *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts*, Jones recognizes the impact social media and social networking sites have had in rethinking strategies of identification. Jones writes:

> Younger generations no longer tolerate or even register the invocation of simplistic binary structures to fix identity in terms of categories. This generational shift is most evident both in terms of changed articulations of subjectivity in relation to new technologies of social networking, and the completely transformed demographics of urban centers around the world.[43]

Jones sees Social Networking Sites (SNS) as sites of slipperiness and authorial flux.[44] The Internet is a space of undoing binaries and culpable in the perpetuation of capitalism—the image commodity, which, as Jones notes, "reduce[s] objects as well as subjects to sellable things."[45] Images which circulate via the web occupy a contradictory potentiality: they hold the possibility of communicating alternative narratives, symbologies and meaning, but they also perpetuate the commodification of the image itself. Similar to print media such as newspapers and magazines, and televisual commercials, the Internet is full of images that sell products, lifestyles and [brand] identities. The Internet's access and reach crosses geographic and cultural boundaries, making it

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[43] Amelia Jones, *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (Routledge, 2013), 7.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid., 21.

possible for a single user to occupy multiple spaces simultaneously. Identity is an ever-changing category, affiliation, iteration and performance. Jones traces the shifts in thinking about singular "identity" to "identification" to "multiple-identities" as both a technological shift and demographical shift in urban and rural areas around the world.[46] As a counter argument to the Internet as a utopic space that breaks down binaries and liberates the Other, Lisa Nakamura in her book *Digitizing Race:Visual Cultures of the Internet*, theorizes that the Internet actually perpetuates white/male/U.S. dominant identifications that shape how we – the users – interact online as digital objects and/or digital subjects.[47] For Nakamura, the Internet replicates power relationships of the material world within the digital. If this is true, then the Internet forfends expressions of the Other as nonconformist. Nakamura does contend that the Internet is "networked in ways that produce a particular set of racial formations."[48] I would extend Nakamuras's argument to include a particular set of gendered, classed, and orientation formations. In the time since Nakamura published Digitizing Race (2008) social networking has transformed small and large scale political action.[49] With this advance in large scale networking, production and consumption of representations are even more diversified and far-reaching.

The digital life of Dykes on Bikes® crosses geographical and even identificatory categories of sexuality and gender. Through websites, social sites and image sharing sites, myriad images of individuals and groups are collected, posted and shared every year. A general image search of Dykes on Bikes® yields images from New York City, San Francisco, Chicago, Denver, Washington, D.C., Ferndale, Michigan, Sydney, Australia. As both Jones and

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[46] Ibid., 10.
[47] Lisa Nakamura, *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).
[48] Ibid., 202.
[49] Cathy J. Cohen and Joseph Kahne, *Participatory Politics: New Media and Youth Political Action* (MacArthur Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics, 2012), http://ypp.dmlcentral.net/sites/default/files/publications/Participatory_Politics_Report.pdf.

Nakamura suggest, the Internet and social media reveal a shift in identity politics[50] through the instability of identifications expressed and performed by users of social networks. Most social networks incorporate advertising with user generated content, compressing and blurring the lines between consumer and producer. While advertising dominates much of the imagery circulating online, just try to watch a YouTube video without first watching a paid advertisement, the proliferation of user generated content directly contradicts the homogenous representation of advertising imagery. The power of social networks manifests through the collective structure and the linking of individual nodes. The network itself forms the net or adhesive base on which or across which images can circulate, recirculate and collect. Dykes on Bikes® functions as a social network in physical and virtual terms. Its images of itself move across media networks and solidifies its brand identity while also destabilizing a set identification. Identification(s) occur through performativity via visual style, animating objects- the motorcycles and through the verbal and textual mark – Dykes on Bikes® which isn't just announced across broadcasting images is written on the patches of members, and tagged on images circulating over virtual networks comprising the Internet.

While J.L. Austin's concept of performativity is limited to a linguistic or language-based phenomenon where certain conditions of felicity and completion must occur, other theorists have argued that performativity can and does occur through incomplete or failed utterances, and through textual representation on a body. [51] The club affiliation worn by motorcyclists in a parade constitutes the performative. The text on the patch identifies the individual as a member of the larger group and it delineates the affiliation. So, the objects, body and the text or language on display performs identifications. The performative takes place as Dykes on Bikes® takes the

[50]   Nakamura, *Digitizing Race,* 35.
[51]   John Langshaw Austin, James Opie Urmson, and Marina Sbisà, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1975).

stage at the front of the parade. Donning leather jackets, vests, pants, biker club affiliative patches that read "Dykes on Bikes®," "Soul Sisters," "Sisters of Scota," and "Women on Wheels" the contingent starts the Pride Parade off. For the fifteen or twenty minutes that groups of women and others ride motorcycles down San Francisco's Market Street, the social connections are performed as an assemblage of bodies and bikes. Even individuals and groups who are not "dykes" are read as dyke as their performative utterance happens through the action or act of riding in the parade. The issue of being read as dyke is a particular of both visual code and participatory performance. Distinctions might be made by a viewer who "sees" and interprets a participant as riding "with" Dykes on Bikes® as opposed to riding as a dyke on a bike. This distinction isn't easily demonstrated as riders blend into the collective where gender is presented as a spectrum.

The "performative act" happens at most Pride Parades around the world and is repeated each year. The text of banners, patches and various signage work in conjunction with the laboring bodies to produce new configurations and repeated configurations of lesbian and dyke. What this performance does on many levels is perform or interpret gender, sexuality and even race as women of color perform their dykeness and transgender women perform their dykeness through demonstration.[52] Eve Sedgwick identifies acts of protest as performative. In "Queer Performativity: Henry James's The Art Of The Novel," Sedgwick probes "the question of performativity to prove useful in some way for understanding the obliquities among meaning, being, and doing, not only around drag performance and (its derivative?) gendered self-representation, but equally for such complex speech acts as coming out, for work around AIDS and other grave identity-implicating illnesses, and for the self-labelled, transversely but urgently

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[52]   For several years the first appearances of dykes on bikes at the front of the Gay Parade in San Francisco were physical protests against the male-centered name and spectacle of the Gay Parade. Women rode their motorcycles as a visual and aural act of disruption to the exclusionary nature of the "march."

representational placarded body of demonstration."[53] Part political protest or visual

demonstration, and part exhibitionist performance, Dykes on Bikes® (the motorcycle contingent)

has inserted itself into pride celebrations and motorcycle culture. The word "dyke" on the back

of riders performs a coming out and a destabilization of the categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual,

and transgender. Miller reminds us that performances which rely on visibility and even

representation hold a potential for creating "new vocabularies" and "extended language with

which to speak about themselves. Having these performances, one has new possibilities; without

them, one recycles the same old terms."[54] Dykes on Bikes® as a parade contingent functions

across modes of performativity: visual representation, demonstration and coming out.

Representation and the visual are significant tactics in the performativity of race, gender and

class. The visual icon of Dykes on Bikes® at the front of parades and the textual label on the

clothing of Dykes on Bikes® work together to form dyke as performative and the making of the

social as performative.

In addition to the individual performance of the wearer of the Dykes on Bikes® text or

the rider of the motorcycle, the group as a whole performs as a social entity. Through the

recurring performance of the Women's Motorcycle Contingent San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®

maintains and sustains its social cohesion. In his essay "Images of Social Life" Christoph Wulf

argues that not only are images of social life body-based, they are performative.[55] Wulf writes,

"[i]n order for communities to be able to constitute and sustain themselves as social units, their

members require memories that they can share with each other. Such memories develop in the

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[53] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Queer Performativity: Henry James's The Art of the Novel," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 1 (November 1, 1993): 1–16, doi:10.1215/10642684-1-1-1.

[54] Miller, *Slaves to Fashion,* 19.

[55] Christoph Wulf, "Images of Social Life," in *Dynamics and Performativity of Imagination: The Image between the Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Bernd Huppauf and Christoph Wulf (Routledge, 2013), 166.

rituals that are recalled by their participants as social actions that forge links between them."[56]

For Wulf the memories serve to create images of the rituals in the participants' imagination.

These images or memories fuel the performances and reperformances of ritual and enactments.[57]

Wulf defines ritual performances and enactments as "liturgies, ceremonies, celebrations,

conventions and ritualisations."[58] The body is the site of the ritual or original performance,

however the mental images produced through the performance of the ritual reperforms the social

through memory. Wulf explains that memories of the ritual and of the social can also reside in

other mediums, such as photography, film, and digital images.[59] Images perform memories and

create memories even outside of specific communities. The viewer can "identify" with a

depiction that is either fictitious or even produced in a different time period, but through the

process of identification and transference, the performative image produces meaning outside of

its initial experience. Images of Dykes on Bikes® which get picked up by the AP wire or posted

across the Internet produce a larger community of dykes on bikes, whether the image is from San

Francisco, New York City or Sydney, Australia, the images produce a concept of a social group

and connect social memories into a network under the umbrella of Dykes on Bikes® and Gay

Pride.

     As an integral social phenomenon of Gay Pride Parade the image of Dykes on Bikes®

leading the way has been embossed if not engrained in the collective memory and understanding

of the Gay Liberation Movement in the United States. So powerful an image, so cohesive as a

brand identity, Dykes on Bikes® leads and is expected to lead LGBT Pride Parades all over the

world. The icon of queer women, lesbians, leather dykes on motorcycles performing a

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[56]   Ibid.
[57]   Ibid., 167.
[58]   Ibid., 169.
[59]   Ibid., 170.

celebration of "pride" also performs a political act of coming out, a political act of demonstrating visibility, and a political act of disruption. Disruption is achieved through the motorcycle itself. As the motorcycle stands in for the popular cultural sign of "rebel" or "outlaw" or even "deviant."[60] Groups of women collect in assemblages organized through club or patch affiliation. Not all clubs are patch wearing.[61] For those who are patch wearers, they receive an opportunity to ride closer to the front of the parade.

The significance of the patch is far-reaching as it determines not only brand identity for a motorcycle group but its subcultural standing within its own subculture and outside the subculture or how the larger culture perceives and defines it. Dick Hebdige in *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* borrows from eminent cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall's theories of social relations, Hebdige writes "a credible image of social cohesion can only be maintained through the appropriation and redefinition of cultures of resistance...."[62] So, for the motorcycle club or patch holding club, its own meaning comes from its affiliation and cohesion, its resistance to the normative structure of the larger social network and the larger social network's definition of normative and resistant. Thus, we have motorcycle clubs as signifying outlaw, renegade, and disruptive. For Dykes on Bikes®, its subcultural status functions through style and performance at Pride Parades. On one hand Dykes on Bikes® is a part of a "motorcycle-riding-patch-wearing" image – which is also associated with infamous one percenter groups like Hell's Angels and The Mongols. Patch wearing invokes both a semiotic meaning of belonging to a subculture and a performative act of resistance through riding in a subcultural group with other patch wearers. On the other hand Dykes on Bikes® performs its image within the subculture of LGBT marches,

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[60]   Steven E. Alford and Suzanne Ferriss, *Motorcycle* (Reaktion Books, 2007), 112.
[61]   Patch wearing/affiliation is a motorcycle club legitimation within its own subculture- membership in a club as well as local is designated by wearing the club "colors" or patch on the back of a jacket.
[62]   Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (Routledge, 2012), 85-86.

parades and festivals. The subcultural image of Dykes on Bikes® and the performance of

dykeness is the subject of a seven year legal battle. To trademark the phrase Dykes on Bikes®

proved to be a process of disassociation with one percenters or the outlaw image and an

association with Pride Parades. Dyke had to be associated with the subculture of lesbians in the

U.S. in order to prove a thirty year history of the term "dyke" being used by the subculture itself

as identification with community.

Imaging a Dyke on a Bike

Iconic images function on particular social-collective levels as well as on the individual

level. Dykes became more visible, especially on bikes at the front of parades, the image of Dykes

on Bikes® formed a social space in people's memories and across documentation of gay rights.

Visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff writes that visuality "incorporates its embodied

dimension at an individual and collective level, together with visuality as cultural and political

representation."[63] Identification with a particular time period, social movement, identity, idea

and memory can all be elicited by a photograph that captures cultural iconic political moments.

For Dykes on Bikes®, the icon of women-scantily clad in tank tops, harnesses, no shirts atop of

iron horses, moving down an urban center throughway in parade formation, conjures a social

memory of particular historical proportion. In one image gay pride, lesbian visibility and the Gay

Freedom Movement is captured.

The image of Dykes on Bikes® circulates as part of a social memory and as part of a

conjuring of gay pride across media outlets every year. The media has been covering the

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[63] Nicholas Mirzoeff, "On Visuality," *Journal of Visual Culture* 5, no. 1 (April 1, 2006): 66,
doi:10.1177/1470412906062285.

institution of pride parades since those first Gay Day Marches. When Dykes on Bikes® became a "normal vision" as a component of gay parades, the image of dykes on bikes became a stand-in for ideas of liberation, queerness, lesbianness and politics of uprise. Nicholas Mirzoeff argues in his essay "On Visuality" that the subject of a photograph is both a "visual subject, a person who is both the agent of sight (regardless of biological ability to see) and the object of discourses of visuality."[64] Thus, the dyke on the bike is both a sight and a site of discourse. Circulating an image of Dykes on Bikes®, the AP wire story about the 2006 Dykes on Bikes® Trademark suit was paired with various images of "dykes on bikes." The Washington Blade used an image labeled San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®, yet there were no distinguishing features in the photograph to locate it as San Francisco. Newspapers and magazines that picked up the story used an image of dykes on bikes – but not of the particular group known as The San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®. The image coupled with text proved that any image of dykes/lesbians riding in a parade was a stand in for the mother ship in San Francisco.

Once a part of performing disorganized and rebellious rambunctious acts of protest, Dykes on Bikes® has become solidified as an image of Pride and lesbian culture – partially due to the mechanism or process of iconography itself. The photographs of Dykes on Bikes® which run in newspapers, magazines and online media function as double images. According to W.J.T. Mitchell a double image is something that is both a concrete vehicle in a metaphoric treatment of abstractions and is itself a graphic image or is a producer of images.[65] Mitchell is referring specifically to an apparatus like the camera obscura. Extending this idea to Dykes on Bikes® as an apparatus that is both the concrete vehicle – the actual women and motorcycles – both of which must be present at the beginning of the parade and ride the parade route to constitute the

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[64] Mirzoeff, "On Visuality," 54.
[65] Ibid.

apparatus known as Dykes on Bikes® and as a producer of images. Dykes on Bikes® through its performance as a group in a specific social space, produces social and queer images which are iconic, indelible and in a sense read across geographic, political and national boundaries as "gay pride."

San Francisco's Dykes on Bikes® claims to be the first "Dykes on Bikes®" contingent, or at least claims to be named the group legally known as Dykes on Bikes®. Despite this legal claim and juridical affirmation, the icon and textual expression of Dykes on Bikes® circulates around the globe: Iceland, Portugal, Australia, South Africa, Canada, New Zealand – and wherever pride parades organize. Dykes on Bikes®, officially and unofficially as a motorcycle contingent, visualized as lesbian bodies on motorized two wheels forms a part of queer visual culture that is both resistant to commodification and acquiesces to the commodification of itself through images and the trademarking of its name.[66] As indicated in the letter to the editor of T*he Advocate* by Vick Germany, the president of San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®, Women's Motorcycle Contingent, picturing the "right" dykes is very much a political, legal and consumerist endeavor.

Some of the first images of Dykes on Bikes® (or a dyke on a bike) in the Gay Pride Parade in San Francisco can be found in the San Francisco GLBT Historical Society's Crawford Wayne Barton Collection. Crawford Barton was a well-known San Francisco photographer who documented gay culture and The Castro Street subculture of the 1970s. These early photographs feature women on motorcycles in the Gay Pride Parade in 1973 (three years after the first Gay Pride Parade in San Francisco, five years before the Parade as an organization received any city funding, eight years before the Parade changed its name from Gay only to include lesbian and

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[66]   Ibid., 66.

twenty-two years before the Parade would acknowledge bisexuals and transgender people).[67]

One of Crawford's 1973 photographs depicts a shirtless woman leaning back on her motorcycle gripping the handlebars, extending her arms and careening her head and neck backwards in a lean against her female passenger, shirtless – her suspenders (see figure 1.1) which hold her jeans up adhere to the contours of her body – ever-so-slightly covering her bare breasts. Other dykes on bikes surround this central figure. The background reveals crowds of onlookers beside and behind parked cars. This early image captured by Crawford – in black and white- solidifies a persistent, repeated signifier of the dyke body (captured with machine-the motorcycle), the body exposed, performing a blatant exhibitionist pose for the camera and the crowd. W. J. T. Mitchell argues in *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* that "the photograph occupies the same position in the world of material signs that the 'impression' does in the world of mental signs or 'ideas' in empirical epistemology."[68] In other words, the early images captured of dykes on bikes in the archive establish who Dykes on Bikes® is and where the organization started as a social group. Every year the Pride Parade in San Francisco hosts a sort of preshow festivity as dykes on bikes line up in formation, readying the icon of the dyke on a bike to be produced and consumed. It is a photo opportunity for amateur and professional photographers alike: butch, femme, betch, fetch, identifications of dyke and otherness in visual, visible, audible intersectionality – where crowds swarm the guard rails to glimpse the outrageous and the ordinary together as one contingent. It is through these fan-generated and press circulated images that Dykes on Bikes® signifies both an historical trajectory of the collective known as Dykes on Bikes ® and an individual identification of "dyke". The icon of the dyke on a bike depicts a narrative of movement, coalition and affiliation.

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[67]   "SF Pride | History & Photos," *San Francisco Pride*, accessed July 25, 2014, http://sfpride.org/heritage/.
[68]   W. J. Thomas Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), 60.

Working as a photojournalist, Robert M. Pruzan also photographed San Francisco's gay culture in the 1970s and '80s. His photographs were published in local newspapers like the *San Francisco Examiner*, subcultural publications like *Drummer* and *Manifest Reader* which were leather magazines for gay men and national platforms like *Sports Illustrated*. Included in his collection of photographs are a range of images in black and white as well as color of Dykes on Bikes® from 1977-1991. Not only do Pruzan's photographs depict over a decade of women leading the Gay Pride Parade in San Francisco, his photographs reveal the popularity and excitement connected with seeing Dykes on Bikes® ride through the Castro (1977) and down Market Street (1978-on). Figure 1.4 is a black and white photograph of a leather femme on her motorcycle alone. Her leather hat, leather bodice, leather pants, leather gloves, and leather high-heeled boots in combination with the motorcycle forges a powerful and sexualized image of a dominant femme as a dyke on a bike. The depth of field is shallow, allowing the background to fall out of focus, with the figure in the foreground commanding the viewer's complete attention. With her head turned and her eyes diverted, the dyke on the bike looks away from the camera, unaware of the lens and its aim. Unlike some of Pruzan's and Crawford's and Marie Ueda's pre-parade lineup images which capture the collective and connection of dykes as a social group, this particular image of Pruzan's focuses on the individuality of the dyke. The subject's body functions separately from the assemblage of other dykes; in this particular moment, through the photographer's framing, the decisive moment and choice of foreground/background relationship sets the individual apart from the group.

The parade configuration of Dykes on Bikes® creates a large social group also known as The Women's Motorcycle Contingent. Within the contingent are subgroups or clubs. Some of the clubs include: Women on Wheels, Sisters of Scota, Devil Dolls, Posse, Muses, Wolf Pack,

WomenMoto, Mahogany Riders and Soul Fire. Each club is made up of individual "bikers" and "riders" who exhibit an individual version of a dyke on a bike but within the confines of each particular club. Riders who do not belong to a club typically ride in the section known as Independent. Riders who do not identify as dyke, lesbian, gay, or do not ride with a club can join the section known as Kindred Spirits. Kindred Spirits was created as an official recognition and support of Dykes on Bikes. It opens a space for alternative genders, subjectivities, and orientations that might not identify with Dykes on Bikes®. The entire contingent (The Women's Motorcycle Contingent) rolls down Market Street as an assemblage of clubs, independents and empathetic entities all contributing to a collective action of visual display and visibility of Dykes on Bikes®.

What started as a small political protest has turned into a global identification or network of dykes on bikes. Documentation from the early days of the parade reveals the contingent as consisting of only several dozen riders. By the late 1990s, these numbers rose to almost 500 riders registering to ride in the parade as a part of the Women's Motorcycle Contingent. With such a large group of motorcyclists Dykes on Bikes® (in San Francisco) has become one of the mainstays of the Parade. In the era of the Internet and social media, images of Dykes on Bikes® proliferate web galleries, image sharing sites, online newspapers and fan pages. As Henry Jenkins remarks in "The Cultural Logic Of Media Convergence," this convergence of media, delivery mechanism, and consumer platform is a "brokering between commercial media and collective intelligence."[69] The images of dykes on bikes which are transmitted across the AP wire, broadcast on television news stations, featured in local newspapers and shared on photo web gallery sites create a collective picture or representation of Dykes on Bikes®. The method

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[69] Henry Jenkins, "The Cultural Logic of Media Convergence," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 7, no. 1 (March 1, 2004): 33–43, doi:10.1177/1367877904040603.

of producing and consuming images has vastly changed in this "convergent media era." New social representations and global images of Dykes on Bikes® potentially disturb the stable image of Dykes on Bikes® which was grounded in print media and archival holdings based in San Francisco.

In San Francisco, underground and mainstream newspapers carried and contributed to the social fabric of gay protests, Gay Liberation Front marches and Gay Freedom Parades. For photojournalist Marie Ueda, San Francisco was a buffet of marches, protests, organizing and public mournings in the 1970s and 1980s. Ueda captured on film the energy of the times. As a freelance photographer, Ueda witnessed the dynamic currents shaped by the election of Harvey Milk and the aftermath of Milk's assassination. Ueda's collection includes images of Milk as the Grand Marshall of the 1978 San Francisco Gay Day Parade and public mourning and protest after Milk's assasination. Much of the Ueda collection celebrates the events and the personalities who performed as part of San Francisco's Gay Day Parade. From 1977 to the early 1990s, Ueda documented the visual impact of the San Francisco Gay Day Parade including photographing Dykes on Bikes®. Ueda photographed from the vantage point of inside the contingent as opposed to a position from the viewpoint of the crowd of spectators, thus, she captured a dynamic of riding in the parade.

Similar to Crawford Barton's 1973 photograph (see figure 1.1) and Robert Pruzan's 1984 image of the leather femme on her motorcycle (see figure 1.4), Marie Ueda's photograph of two women on a bike reveals how Dykes on Bikes® is situated as an icon of the LGBT movement in San Francisco (see figure 1.2). In a photograph marked "Gay Pride Parade 81 – Lesbians," two women sit on a motorcycle with a line of other women on motorcycles behind them. A crowd of onlookers on the left side of the photograph press against each other. They lean into the frame to

capture their own photographs of the event. The figure in the foreground who sits and operates the motorcycle is clothed in a leather studded harness. She has no shirt and her bare breasts are as much a part of the performance of dyke as what she does wear – a studded belt, bracelets and leather gloves. Sitting behind her is another woman who dawns a leather vest; she wraps her arm gently around the waist of the woman in front of her, holding on and connected to each other on the bike. (see figure 1.2) The two figures communicate a connection inside a larger captured moment. Both women make up the unit on one bike amongst a larger collective of other bikes within a larger spectacle of the parade. The whole of Dykes on Bikes® is composed of multiple layers of bikes with dykes – clubs and independents – all participating in creating the visual image of dyke.

Other collections such as Crawford Barton's and Robert Pruzan's hold images of dykes on bikes as early as 1973.[70] With newspaper and television coverage, "Dykes on Bikes®" has become a broadcaster's and reporter's favorite phrase to describe the group of women who ride at the front of Pride parades. Image and word work together as entangled actors in the same collective.[71] If, for Sociologist Bruno Latour a collective is made up of humans and objects of the material world and the collective is also "figured" through the language of representative leaders and through the visual figuration of the group, then the image of Dykes on Bikes® is as important as the name being trademarked. The image and the name work together to produce the mental image and the memory of Dykes on Bikes®.

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[70] Barton Crawford was a documentary photographer who lived in San Francisco and captured the Gay Liberation movement, and the Lesbian and Gay culture of San Francisco in the 1970s and 1980s.

[71] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (OUP Oxford, 2007).

Protecting Dykes on Bikes®

In 2001, a woman in Wisconsin, Toby Sigle, who had an affiliation with Dykes on

Bikes® in Madison, began proceedings to trademark the phrase "Dykes on Bikes®."[72] Her

intent was to license the name to organizations and to clothing merchandising companies in order

to make a profit. When the Women's Motorcycle Contingent in San Francisco (also known as

Dykes on Bikes® – SFWMCDOB) found out about Sigle's plan, the organization

(SFWMCDOB) immediately contacted a lawyer. What seemed like a simple case of proving that

Sigle had no "rights" to the name or "rights" to trademark the phrase, as SFWMCDOB proved it

had a longer history of being referred to as Dykes on Bikes®, turned into an extensive legal

battle that would end up before the U.S. Supreme Court. SFWMCDOB applied for the

trademark. In order to successfully claim the trademark, to register the mark, which would allow

the San Francisco based motorcycle club to own the identity of "Dykes on Bikes®" as a social

club, the identity and real body of the dyke had to be proved and performed as a subcultural

phenomenon and a lived experience.[73]

Branding infers a stabilization of image and a containment of an idea as well as a

repeatable and iterative performance of the brand. Because of its global circulation and

corporate marketing power a brand like Nike easily attaches words (Just Do It) to an image

(swoosh) creating a dominant brand essence. For Dykes on Bikes® the concept of "brand

essence" became the center or heart of the Dykes on Bikes® trademark suit. Brand as identity

and as something ethereal, or as a way of life or feeling is central to how a brand is disseminated

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[72] Soni Wolf, "Threat To Name - Wisconsin Woman Tries to Register," June 3, 2013; email correspondence.
[73] The U.S. Patent & Trademark Office rejected San Francisco Dykes on Bike's original application to register the name Dykes on Bikes®; the examining attorney rejected the application on the grounds that the name "Dyke" was disparaging to lesbians.

and consumed. Naomi Klein writes "[m]anufacturing products may require drills, furnaces, hammers and the like, but creating a brand calls for a completely different set of tools and materials. It requires an endless parade of brand extensions, continuously renewed imagery for marketing and, most of all, fresh new spaces to disseminate the brand's idea of itself."[74] In the case of Dykes on Bikes® brand essence as identity and feeling was performed in the testimonies of expert witnesses. These witnesses included eight professors from prominent women's studies, gender studies, and English departments around the United States. Also included were the testimonies of eight activist leaders of organizations like The Equality Federation and the Kentucky Fairness Alliance, and National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR). Other experts on the subcultural use of the term "dyke" included testimony of a clinical psychologist, lesbian activists and authors Karla Jay, Judy Grahn, and cartoonist Alison Bechdel, the creator of the famous comic strip *Dykes To Watch Out For*. Witnesses other than "dykes" included Jesse Sheidlower the editor of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), legal assistants, as well as a linguist. All of these testimonies were taken as evidence to appeal the denial by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office of the application by San Francisco's Dykes on Bikes®. The trademark office's leading objection to the application was specific to the definition of the word "dyke." The examining attorney (from the U.S. Patent & Trademark office) referred to the definition found in an online version of Webster's dictionary in which it states that the word "dyke" is disparaging to lesbians, scandalous and vulgar. [75] The experts in English and Women's Studies countered this notion by deconstructing language – the word dyke as disparaging, and its slang use) as a way to refute the examining attorney's interpretation of the word "dyke." The legal document appealing the decision stands as both an utterance and a site where experts collectively

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[74] Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (Macmillan, 2009), 5.
[75] Sharon Meier, Trademark Denial of Application by SFDOB to register the mark Dykes on Bikes® (U.S. Patent & Trademark Office 2004).

perform the notion of "dyke" through legal language. In addition to performing dyke

linguistically, evidence offered up by San Francisco Dykes on Bikes'® legal team included

visual artifacts, film narratives, storytelling, and the performing of an inferred brand image of

what was originally an embodied "dyke."

The OED Entry

Performative language installs identities through collective testimonials and communal

understandings. The word "dyke" and the brand "Dykes on Bikes®" ostensibly perform a

response to being "hailed" by dominant ideologies. Louis Althusser's concept of hailing locates

the installation of the subject as within the parameter of the state's ideology. In one sense, Dykes

on Bikes® can be perceived as instantiated through its definition within the state institutions of

the law. Althusser writes that dominant "ideology hails or interpolates concrete individuals as

concrete subjects, by the [social] functioning of the category of subject."[76] He also adds that this

dominant "ideology has material existence." So, for the dyke-identified, the action of being

hailed by expert witnesses, dictionary definitions, and legal proceedings performs the category of

what constitutes dykeness. The irony of this legal proceeding is in its instantiation of the brand

image of "dyke" is the the turn from a subcultural practice or performed non-normative

identification to a legitimized, mainstream codifiable, commodifiable product – "the dyke."

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[76] Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

The narrative is a powerful machine for "branding" identity, lifestyle and essence. To sell

a product, according to Klein, "[a]dvertising and sponsorship have always been about using

imagery to equate products with positive cultural or social experiences."[77] Taking the work of

one witness from the Dykes on Bikes® trademark suit, whose thirty plus years of drawing and

writing comic strip and cartoon episodes around the subject of dykes, nominated her as an

expert, Alison Bechdel's *Dykes To Watch Out For* is a narrative that sells or brands the image of

the dyke and the body of the dyke. Bechdel testified, "using the word 'Dyke' in the very title of

my work, and thus assuring its frequent appearance in print, felt to me like a kind of linguistic

activism.[78]

Bechdel's drawings represent multifaceted iterations of dykes who are individually

unique, and together manifest as a social group or network of "dykes to watch out for." In the

first episode of *Dykes To Watch Out For* the main character Mo laments on her "single" status

and on what she calls a "celibate" situation.[79] Her friend and roommate Lois listens and asks Mo

why she doesn't "go" for the gal at the co-op, or the gal at karate, or the accountant. In these

opening panels the reader is introduced to the network of lesbian bodies, albeit fiction in a comic

strip; the bodies are located as potential objects of desire within the narrative framework of

Dykes To Watch Out For. As the title suggests, the main character, Mo, is involved in all the

necessary "dyke" activities – karate, participation at the local food co-op, etc. The narrative

reinforces and even performs an ideology of dykeness. Combining image (the drawings) and text

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[77]   Klein, *No Logo*, 29.

[78]   Alison Bechdel, *Declaration of Alison Bechdel Under 37 C.F.R. & 2.20* for the Dykes on Bikes® Trademark
        appeal, April 7, 2005.

[79]   Alison Bechdel, *Dykes To Watch Out For,* Archive Episode #1, http://dykestowatchoutfor.com/dtwof-archive-
            episode-1, accessed May 17, 2013.

(inside speech bubbles, between panels), Bechdel represents the body of the dyke in motion and in language. Text and image perform the social network of dykes specific to a 1980s and 1990s U.S. lesbian context. The strip, while fictitious and humorous, engages with contemporary politics and subcultural practices. As a cartoon, or comics art, Bechdel pushes the boundaries of representations of dyke.

Alison Bechdel's testimony in the Dykes on Bikes® trademark suit captures this relationship of narrative as "lifestyle brand" and the network of "dykes" that circulate in a social system – fiction and real. Bechdel testifies "[m]y goal with my work has been to make lesbian lives more visible and to document the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender ("LGBT") subculture. My cartoons tell the ongoing story of a network of lesbian friends, and through these characters I examine current events and issues of LGBT identity and culture."[80] Bechdel's comic strip reveals the minutiae of everyday life for Mo and her friends and the sociality of the lesbian and dyke world. The characters go to Pride Parades together, they hang out discussing politics, love relationships, the present and the future. Episodes feature Madwimmin Books as a hub of lesbian happenings. Other hubs include apartments, for example, "At Sparrow Stu, Lois and Ginger's Digs." Another space or location reads "... At Midtown Midwifery Services." The network of lesbian locales and lesbian bodies (characters with almost "archetypal" type names) are central to the narrative and the creation of the dyke world (and dyke body). In her legal testimony, Bechdel performs a dyke expertise when she calls upon her experience as the author/creator of *Dykes To Watch Out For*. She materially participates in the creation of the dyke ideology and she overtly and explicitly intervenes into the popular culture landscape by using the word "dyke." In her testimony, Bechdel writes that Dykes on Bikes® "embodied pride,

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[80]   Alison Bechdel, *Declaration of Alison Bechdel Under 37 C.F.R. & 2.20* for the Dykes on Bikes® Trademark appeal.

subverting in a graphic, glorious way traditional notions of how women should behave."[81] For

Bechdel "dyke" hails and performs an affiliation with a prideful group and her testimony helps

situate dyke as something culturally important.

In the expert witness testimony in the trademark suit for Dykes on Bikes® the word

"dyke" was at the center of the controversy. It was "understood" by the examining lawyer of the

U.S. Patent and Trademark Office as connected to a family of other words; the examining lawyer

included a list of vulgar sexual words and a list of related words via a thesaurus. While one list

was generated through a purposeful investigation into a world of "vulgarity," the other list

included words of empowerment and slang identifications like "butch," "homo," and "tribade,"

to name a few.[82] What the examining lawyer did not fully explore or realize is what Sarah

Beckwith calls "the grammatical investigation" of the world of the "dyke." Beckwith's

methodology "reinvests" language with performativity, action, and ultimately the body.

Beckwith argues "each practice, of theater and of ordinary language philosophy, understands

language as an act, as event in the world, and so asks us to extend our conception of the work of

language beyond the work of representation...."[83] The work of language is thus extended across

media and across performances, not just theatre or everyday utterances, but comic books, brand

identities and photographic images. The trademark suit of Dykes on Bikes® brought the term

"dyke" into unlikely places, into the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit,

where lawyers, expert witnesses, and even the appellant perform the world of "dyke."

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[81]   Ibid.
[82]   Sharon Meier, Final Refusal: Trademark Denial of Application by SFDOB to register the mark Dykes on Bikes® (U.S. Patent & Trademark Office June 03, 2005).
[83]   Sarah Beckwith, "Introduction: Promising, Forgiving," in *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012), 8.

Performing Dyke Expertise

Without a single, incontestable historical truth for the origin of the word "dyke,"

expertise in the trademark suit had to conjure social memories of dyke from inside the subculture

and paint powerful, positive and relevant images of the dyke. As previously mentioned, the

Dykes on Bikes® appeal to the U.S. Patent & Trademark office included over twenty-one

"expert" testimonies as to what a "dyke" is or how the word "dyke" should or should not be

defined. The testimonies entangled etymological histories, activist memories and cultural

makings all as performative utterances. According to J.L. Austin "the stating is performing an

act."[84] Thus, sworn testimony becomes the sworn statements or stating. The performative speech

act stages the expertise and it stages what "dyke" is. The opening sentences of each testimony

performed the expertise of the witness. Carolyn Dever stated "I received my PhD in English and

American Language and Literature from Harvard University in 1993." Another testimony started

with "I am an Associate Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies at Rutger's University...."

and another stated "I received my AB with special honors in English Language and Literature

from the University of Chicago in 1989...."[85] The utterances all began with either the position

held or the degree obtained including honors and affiliation. Performing expertise is located in an

academic currency. The expert performs his/her credentials thus performing the knowledge of

"dyke." Unlike Bechdel, the expert academic's knowledge remains in the utterance. Bechdel's

knowledge is transmitted and transported through the narrative, drawings as well as the verbal

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[84] John Langshaw Austin, James Opie Urmson, and Marina Sbisà, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1975), 139.

[85] Declarations of experts for the appeal to the denial of the application to register the mark Dykes on Bikes® by the law offices of Brooke Oliver Law Group, P.C. on behalf of San Francisco Women's Motorcycle Contingent, 2005.

testimony. She is an expert on dyke as she participated in the creation of dyke culture. Her testimony explains what her images "do" and what they mean to a lesbian audience. While performative utterances in Austin's terms are illustrated through an utterance like "I do" as in a marriage vow, the testimony of the expert witnesses function as performative in the sense that the testimony sets up a performance of knowledge, status and relationship between the witness and the juridical apparatus. In other situations, these same words may not perform the same way. But, in the legal document, or the legal world, in the form of being sworn in, each witness performs a situated expertise for the court.

"Dyke" as a performed identity through the juridical statements of the expert witnesses encompasses multiple valences. Through this multiplicity and through the varied expert voices, "dyke" becomes an unfixed identification across locations, time periods and bodies. Arlene Stein, author and Professor of Sociology at Rutgers University states "Although many heterosexuals think of "dyke" as a derogatory term, in the 1970s, the term "dyke" became widely used with lesbian feminist communities as a positive term signifying gay pride and political resistance to the dominant heterosexual culture."[86] The activist Toni Broaddus claims that "[d]yke is a word that is commonly and frequently used by and among lesbians to describe themselves. When used by lesbians, including myself, the word "dyke" is used proudly, fondly, and lovingly."[87] Broaddus's use of dyke is softer and more connected to contemporary culture as she describes other usages of the term "dyke" referencing DykeTV and TechnoDyke.com. Thus, the term dyke moves from historical usage (reference to 2nd wave feminism and gay rights

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[86]   Arlene Stein, *Declaration of Alison Bechdel Under 37 C.F.R. & 2.20* for the Dykes on Bikes® Trademark appeal, March 2, 2005.
[87]   Toni Broaddus, *Declaration of Alison Bechdel Under 37 C.F.R. & 2.20* for the Dykes on Bikes® Trademark appeal, April 19, 2005.

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activism) to a contemporary now that conjures up images of a postmodern body who possesses

technological media savviness within a corporate or business culture (DykeTV and

TechnoDyke.com). The registering of the mark is an effort to fix what Dykes on Bikes® is.

However, through the very testimonial utterances, dyke is mobile and resists commodification.

Resisting the Brand

What's at stake for Dykes on Bikes® isn't just the instability of the dyke body, but the

cohesiveness of the brand image and the longevity of the mark. The mark itself creates a

contradiction of ideology. According to cultural theorist Henry Jenkins, control over territory and

ownership of commodities threatens free knowledge and communal spaces and sites of

knowledge.[88] The social site where dyke bodies congregate is both a real territory and an

imagined or represented space in collective imaginations. The visibility and the performance of

Dykes on Bikes® challenges heteronormative representation. It was, after all, Dykes on Bikes®

who disrupted The Gay Freedom Day, and who continue to threaten the orderly distribution of

bodies at Pride Parades, potentially jumping curbs, popping wheelies, parading without clothing

and even performing sex acts on the street or on motorcycles. After four appeals Dykes on

Bikes® won its trademark suit. The group was granted permission to register the mark – the

mark of the (un/stable) dyke. In the final days of the application an outside party protested and

stopped the completion of the trademark. Despite over twenty-one expert witnesses, one person

was able to halt the momentum of three years- the dyke body- once again was under legal

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[88] Henry Jenkins, "The Cultural Logic of Media Convergence," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 7, no. 1
 (March 1, 2004): 33–43, doi:10.1177/1367877904040603.

scrutiny. The legal battle moved from the offices of the U.S. Patent and Trademark to the U.S. Supreme Court. It seemed that the highest court in the land (of the U.S.) would rule on what a "dyke" is and whether or not Dykes on Bikes® could perform itself through the branding of itself. The Supreme Court's ruling aligned with the corporate brand ideology that fuels the U.S.'s neoliberal logic. Naomi Klein writes "[t]he project of transforming culture into little more than a collection of brand-extensions-in-waiting would not have been possible without the deregulation and privatization policies of the past three decades."[89] Dykes on Bikes® is a brand that signifies a cultural phenomenon, but more importantly, it (now) signifies an embracement of neoliberalism and corporate brand tactics in an attempt to fix "dyke" as a something re/markable and marketable.

As of 2008, the organization known as San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® holds the registration for the phrase "Dykes on Bikes®." As a registrant, the organization must police the use of the phrase "Dykes on Bikes®" within the United States. In fact, this is a responsibility of "ownership." Several attempts to use the phrase have occurred and Dykes on Bikes® responded by writing cease and desist letters, threatening legal action. What was once a social and activist organization has transitioned into a 21st century entity involved in commerce. Brand protection is imperative to the longevity of the trademarked name. So, while the organization (SFDOB) has had multiple names over its thirty-five year history, a single name remains as the officially sanctioned identification.[90] The brand may solidify an idea of "dyke" but it does little to capture the historical and personal genealogy of actual dyke bodies.

Image and brand are coterminous in the responsibilities of the brand holder. As addressed

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[89] Klein, 30.
[90] San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® has been known as The Women's Motorcycle Contingent, Dykes on Bikes® and various combinations of the names. Most recently, the organization uses "San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® Women's Motorcycle Contingent" as its full name.

earlier in this chapter, *The Advocate*, the national gay and lesbian newsmagazine, ran a story with the title "Bikers Fight to Own "Dyke."[91] Above the main story, a photograph of dykes on bikes leading the parade in Long Beach, California occupied half of the slick coated magazine page. The story explicitly reported on the efforts of members of San Francisco's Women's Motorcycle Contingent seeking the trademark of their "self-given moniker – Dykes on Bikes®." In the August 29, 2006 issue, in the section titled "From The Readers," a letter (with *Advocate* added headline: "The Right Dykes") from San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®/Women's Motorcycle Contingent Board President, Vick Germany appeared. In the letter, Germany thanked *The Advocate* for the article which ran two months earlier, but asked if a corrected photo could appear to set the record straight as to which Dykes are "The Dykes on Bikes®." Germany continued in the letter to subtly criticize *The Advocate* for running a photograph of a group who is not affiliated with Dykes on Bikes® (the mother ship in San Francisco). The corrected photograph appeared featuring the 2006 members of San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® who pose in front of the Eagle Tavern in San Francisco's Mission district, donning leather and patch colors.[92] Even though the body of the original article consisted of the trademark suit and associated legal actions taken by Dykes on Bikes® in San Francisco, the visual (photographic) image permeated as a misrepresentation of *the* Dykes on Bikes® who fought for a trademark. The image literally circulated (in the print form of the magazine) as a visible re/mark on the instability of the brand image. In the letter, Germany writes "[n]ow it seems not only do we have to fight for our name but also for the correct identification of the organization and our location."[93] The irony of the misrepresentation is revealed in the size of the photographs. The original story

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[91]   Bob Adams, "Bikers Fight to Own 'dyke,'" *The Advocate*, June 20, 2006.
[92]   Vick Germany, "Letter to the Editor of the Magazine The Advocate: The Right Dykes," *The Advocate*, August 29, 2006.
[93]   Ibid.

featured a half-page color image of bikers at the Long Beach Parade. The letter to the editor featured a "corrected" identification with a 2-1/2 inch by 1-1/2 inch "thumbnail" photograph of the members of San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® (2006). The corporate model of controlling brand image is eclipsed in a simple battle of the image. Dykes on Bikes® occupies a difficult position between resistant politics and neoliberal identification.

Dykes on Bikes® as a Site of Social Networking: Branding The Association

The "R" or the act of registering and enclosing in a circle can be considered a semiotic and figurative way of connecting bodies across the mark or brand image. In Donna Haraway's book *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan®_Meets_OncoMouse,™* Haraway writes "the copyright, patent, and trademark are specific, asymmetrical, congealed processes – which must be constantly revivified in law and and commerce as well as science – that give some agencies and actors statuses in sociotechnical production not allowed to other agencies and actors."[94] In other words, which bodies are granted ownership and which bodies are not via the juridical and scientific processes associated with owning ideas, images, formulas, mutations, etc., impacts who has agency and who does not as well as who has control over information and who does not. Haraway writes that the ® is among other "syntactical" marks as the © and ™ that create "sociotechnical alliances, also called social relationships" which mark bodies with certain benefits and exclude other bodies- costing them access, agency, and life.[95] Dykes on Bikes® is an international organization in which the location San Francisco represents the main hub, the mother ship, the originating chapter. The ® certifies the San Francisco chapter as the "original"

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[94] Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Modest−Witness@Second−Millennium.FemaleMan−Meets−OncoMouse: Feminism and Technoscience* (Psychology Press, 1997), 7.
[95] Ibid.

or origin, thus, precluding other sites from claiming rights. The ® writes a national narrative of the organization by marking an origin. Dykes on Bikes® determines who is allowed to associate and use the name. Other groups may apply for "membership" as a chapter. The application must fulfill certain standards, be voted upon by the mother ship, and once granted "Chapter hood" the new chapter must adhere to a strict set of codes of conduct, codes of operation, and codes of use of the brand name. Dykes on Bikes® performs a governmental and capitalist power over other chapters. When a chapter fails to act as a docile subject, its status is revoked. The brand must be protected.

The denial of San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®'s trademark application by the U.S Patent and Trademark Office was explicated through a preceding case. In addition to citing cases involving scandalous and vulgar intent, the denial confirmed that the word "dyke" or proposed mark may "disparage or bring into contempt or disrepute to the lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities. Consumers reasonably would understand that the term DYKES in the proposed mark refers to the disparaged party."[96] Citing a specific section of trademark law, the examining attorney limited and stabilized the dyke body as something quantifiable, knowable as disparaging.

Trademark Law:

1203.03
Matter which May Disparage, Falsely Suggest a Connection, or Bring into Contempt or Disrepute

Section 2(a) of the Trademark Act, 15 U.S.C. 1052(a), bars the registration on either the Principal or the Supplemental Register of a designation that consists of or comprises matter which, with regard to persons, institutions, beliefs, or national symbols, does any of the following: (1) disparages them, (2) falsely suggests a connection with them, (3) brings them into contempt, or (4) brings them into disrepute.

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[96]   Sharon Meier, Trademark Denial of Application by SFDOB to register the mark Dykes on Bikes® (U.S. Patent & Trademark Office 2004).

On one hand the precedent suggests that language is consistently used, stable and unchanging, something concrete. On the other hand the law seems to suggest that a word or phrase (the trademark) is active, and that it is an actant with agency, causing harm and damage. This notion of the actant (the actant requires the actor to do something) is what makes language performative. The performance of language is not stable or fixed in one place. As Latour argues "[t]he problem with any ostensive definition of the social is that no extra effort seems necessary to maintain the groups in existence,...[t]he great benefit of a performative definition, on the other hand, is just the opposite: it draws attention to the means necessary to ceaselessly upkeep the groups...."[97] The language of the court and the language of the Trademark suit revealed the shaky ground that queer bodies must navigate across; the public spaces and civil systems of the state. Working across the sites of dyke representation and performance, Dykes on Bikes®'s Trademark suit brought legal consequences to performing "Dykes on Bikes®",

Through the controversy over the vulgarity of the word "dyke" the boundaries and the definition of the group was performed by various expert witnesses in an effort to secure a mark that would somehow fix the definition of "dyke." Dykes on Bikes® with an encircled R forms the boundaries of itself through specific group membership, making the process of group formation a legal process. However, the constant movement (through performing) and ephemeral or unstable transmission of images continues to threaten the mark and to threaten the ownership of the name. In the initial application, the spokesperson for Dykes on Bikes® (the lawyer) speaking on behalf of her clients Dykes on Bikes® writes "San Francisco Women's Motorcycle Contingent (Applicant) is applying to register the mark DYKES ON BIKES for "[e]ducation and [e]ntertainment [s]ervices in the nature of organizing, conducting, and promoting parade

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[97]   Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (OUP Oxford, 2007), 35.
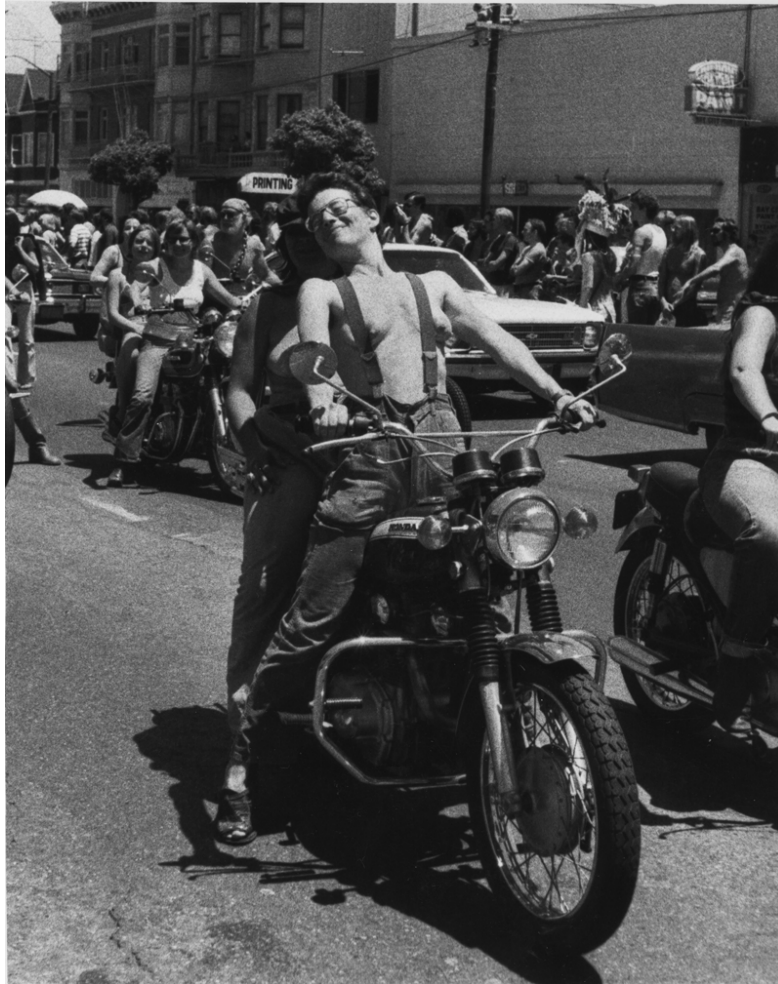
contingents, community festivals, events, street fairs, forums, seminars, parties and rallies to support, organize and motivate women motorcyclists everywhere to so the same."[98] Words like "community festivals" and "parties" and "women motorcyclists everywhere" highlight the contradictory nature of fixing Dykes on Bikes® in one location or for one purpose. Even its mission statement and its legal intention emphasizes the difficulty in defining Dykes on Bikes® as a singular effort or group.

The performance of what Dykes on Bikes® "is" manifests through the delineations of Dykes in Bikes® as a subcultural group (see testimony by Arlene Stein, Professor of Sociology at Rutgers University), a motorcycling group associated with Pride Parades all over the U.S. (See testimony by Deborah Gould , Professor of Sociology University of Pittsburgh), and as a social group. Through literal and figurative performances of the "dyke on a bike" "dyke" is located as a site of social networking – a cluster of definitions, a collective of bodies and bikes, humans and objects performing a social grouping. Dykes on Bikes® as intellectual property marks a desire to stabilize itself as some sort of fixed identity. As a grouping, as a collective and as brand essence the (trade)mark must constantly reformulate, reassemble, and redefine its boundaries as other groups push up against and challenge who and what Dykes on Bikes® is.

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[98]   Brooke Oliver, Reapplication of Trademark, (2003).

Figure 1.1: Barton Crawford, *Gay Pride*, 1973, still photograph. Courtesy of The GLBT Historical Society

Figure 1.2 Maria Ueda, *San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®*, 1981, still photograph.
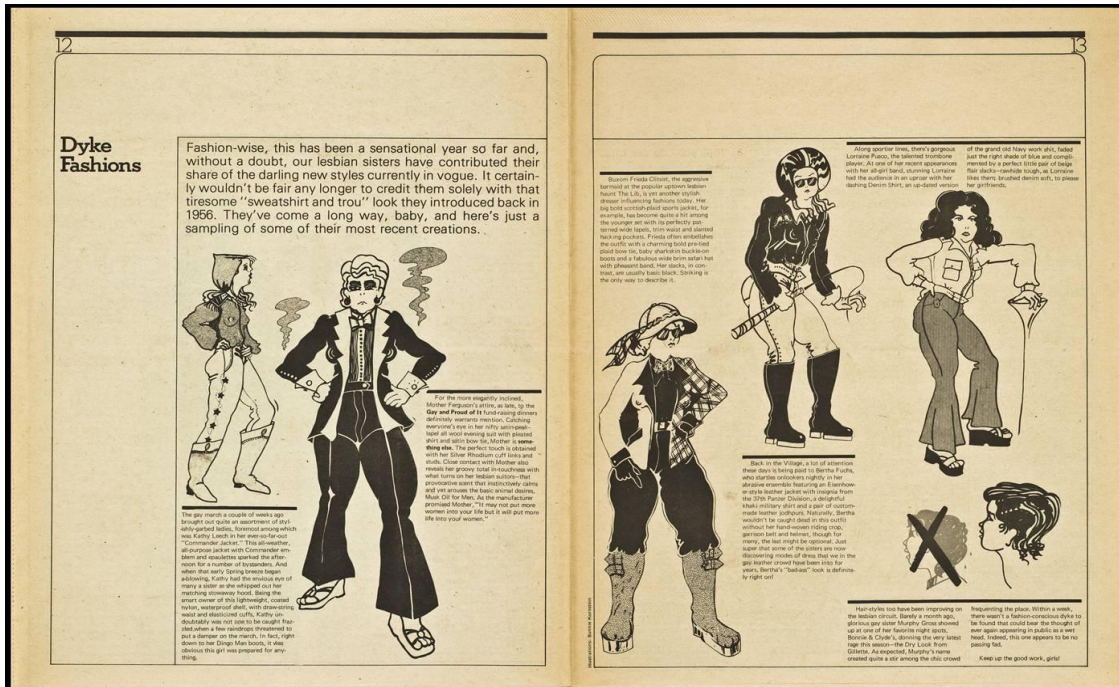Courtesy of The GLBT Historical Society.

Dyke Fashions

Fashion-wise, this has been a sensational year so far and, without a doubt, our lesbian sisters have contributed their share of the darling new styles currently in vogue. It certainly wouldn't be fair any longer to credit them solely with that tiresome ''sweatshirt and trou'' look they introduced back in 1956. They've come a long way, baby, and here's just a sampling of some of their most recent creations.

The gay march a couple of weeks ago brought out quite an assortment of stylishly-garbed ladies, foremost among which was Kathy Leech in her ever-so-far-out ''Commander Jacket.'' This all-weather, all-purpose jacket with Commander emblem and epaulettes sparked the afternoon for a number of bystanders. And when that early Spring breeze began a-blowing, Kathy had the envious eye of many a sister as she whipped out her matching stowaway hood. Being the smart owner of this lightweight, coated nylon, waterproof shell, with draw-string waist and elasticised cuffs, Kathy undoubtedly was not one to be caught frazzled when a few raindrops threatened to put a damper on the march. In fact, right down to her Dingo Man boots, it was obvious this girl was prepared for anything.

For the more elegantly inclined, Mother Ferguson's attire, as late, to the **Gay and Proud of It** fund-raising dinners definitely warrants mention. Catching everyone's eye in her nifty satin-peaked lapel all wool evening suit with pleated shirt and satin bow tie, Mother is **something else.** The perfect touch is obtained with her Silver Rhodium cuff links and studs. Close contact with Mother also reveals her groovy total in-touchness with what turns on her lesbian suitors—that provocative scent that instinctively calms and yet arouses the basic animal desires. Musk Oil for Men. As the manufacturer promised Mother, ''It may not put more women into your life but it will put more life into your women.''

Buxom Frieda Olisist, the aggressive barmaid at the popular uptown lesbian haunt The Lib, is yet another stylish dresser influencing fashions today. Her big bold scottish-plaid sports jacket, for example, has become quite a hit among the younger set with its perfectly patterned wide lapels, trim waist and slanted hacking pockets. Frieda often embellishes the outfit with a charming bold pre-tied plaid bow tie, baby sharkskin buckle-on boots and a fabulous wide brim safari hat with pheasant band. Her slacks, in contrast, are usually basic black. Striking is the only way to describe it.

Along sportier lines, there's gorgeous Lorraine Pusco, the talented trombone player. At one of her recent appearances with her all-girl band, stunning Lorraine had the audience in an uproar with her dashing Denim Shirt, an up-dated version of the grand old Navy work shirt, faded just the right shade of blue and complimented by a perfect little pair of beige flair slacks—rawhide tough, as Lorraine likes them brushed denim soft, to please her girlfriends.

Back in the Village, a lot of attention these days is being paid to Bertha Fuchs, who startles onlookers nightly in her abrasive ensemble featuring an Eisenhower-style leather jacket with insignia from the 37th Panzer Division, a delightful khaki military shirt and a pair of custom-made leather jodhpurs. Naturally, Bertha wouldn't be caught dead in this outfit without her hand-woven riding crop, garrison belt and helmet, though for many, the last might be optional. Just super that some of the sisters are now discovering modes of dress that we in the gay leather crowd have been into for years. Bertha's ''bad-ass'' look is definitely right on!

Hair-styles too have been improving on the lesbian circuit. Barely a month ago, glorious gay sister Murphy Gross showed up at one of her favorite night spots, Bonnie & Clyde's, donning the very latest rage this season—the Dry Look from Gillette. As expected, Murphy's name created quite a stir among the chic crowd frequenting the place. Within a week, there wasn't a fashion-conscious dyke to be found that could bear the thought of ever again appearing in public as a wet head. Indeed, this one appears to be no passing fad.

Keep up the good work, girls!

Figure 1.3: Gay Newspaper Volume 5, Number 113, June 1974

Figure 1.4: Robert Pruzan, *Gay Freedom Day Parade*, 1984, still photograph. Courtesy of The GLBT Historical Society.

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*Chapter II: Inside the Network of Lines: Drawing, Connecting, and Performing the Dyke
    Body – in Comics, Strips, and Graphic Novels*

In 2004 cartoonist Jennifer Camper released an edited volume of comics entitled *Juicy
Mother: Celebration*. The cover of this volume colorfully represents a party or celebration at a
dance club or bar with laser lights spinning, confetti sailing through the air, and women holding
drinks while dancing, embracing, touching one another; the central figure of the cover is a
woman on the shoulders of another woman – the figure on the shoulders of the other woman
sports a bikini with a boa and the woman holding the other woman on her shoulders wears
shorts, a pink tank top, a white sailor hat, and a wallet chain. The scene could be set at a Pride
celebration or a New Year's Eve gala in San Francisco or New York City or really any lesbian
bar with a dance floor. While the image, obviously, represents a party, it also depicts a more
complex connection of bodies – a social network of lesbians, lovers, friends, women of color,
women performing their dykeness, and the power that comics have in connecting lesbian artists
and lesbian fans through the drawing of dyke bodies. The back cover features a smaller panel or
drawing depicting women in a line dancing. Included on the back cover is a list of artist names
included in this volume and a description of the volume. It reads, "Comix for Discerning
Homosexuals, Uppity Ladies, Fierce People of Color and all their friends."[1] Through the drawing
of lesbian bodies configured in comics and the publication and dissemination of these comics,
celebrated artist Alison Bechdel, mainstream writer Greg Rucka with the popular comics artist
JH Williams III (*Batwoman*), and underground artist Jennifer Camper per/form political actions,
personal identifications, and networks of connections revealing the transitory and hybrid nature

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[1]   Jennifer Camper, ed., *Juicy Mother: Celebration*, 1st ed., vol. I, 2 vols. (Soft Skull Press, 2005),
      http://softskull.com/juicy-mother/.

of comics.

Comics, Comix, and Hybridity

Through the assembly of drawing lines and writing text, a network of drawn bodies form

clusters around both the physical object and the reader/viewer's imagination. It is through this

unique "hybrid form" of the medium of comics that the reader/viewer experiences both a textual

meaning and visual language as one, as two, simultaneously. Hybridity, according to scholar

Hilary Chute, refers to comics art's "blurred genres." Made up of images and words, space and

time, hand-made elements – the hand drawn images, coupled with handwritten text, and its mass

production or circulation, comics are a genre that seem similar to other media, yet feature distinct

qualities. Comics are like novels, and they are like film in that they are sequential storytelling.

They are also like illustrations, painting, and photography in that each frame can be examined as

a work of art or an expressive mode of gestural lines, color, form, etc. As such, each frame also

carries with it the weight of signification and connection to the social. W.J.T. Mitchell reminds

us that " 'Word and image,' like the concepts of race, gender, and class in the study of culture,

designates multiple regions of social and semiotic difference that we can live neither with nor

without, but must continually reinvent and renegotiate."[2] So, like other art forms that produce a

text and image relationship, comics reveal a social and cultural significance.[3] While similar to

film, comics require a dynamic relationship between word, image, and temporality of both the

space of the comic and the timing of the eye of the reader/viewer. However, the subcultural

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[2]   W. J. T. Mitchell, "Word and Image," in *Critical Terms for Art History, 2nd Edition*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, Second edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 60.

[3]   Hillary L. Chute, *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics* (Columbia University Press, 2010), 10.

production and the hybrid nature of comics produce a niche space where lesbian and the Other find alternatives to heteronormativity in small and large markets: underground comix, zines, strips, Do-It-Yourself (DIY) printing, limited editions, and syndication in various serial publications. Chute notes that "comix" is a term that emerged in the 1960s and distinguishes itself as adult material.[4] Alison Bechdel, Jennifer Camper, and even the mainstream comic book *Batwoman* are classified as adult material as the artists visually and textually depict the sexual lives of lesbians. Bechdel's work has been described as "sexy, sometimes in an R-rated way — imagine "Doonesbury" with regular references to sex toys...political, in a feisty, lefty, Greenpeace meets PETA meets MoveOn.org kind of way."[5] Camper describes her work as "sexy, streetwise. Working class women. They don't wear Birkenstock, they wear high-heels or boots. They're not academic either. They just go out and fuck."[6] *Batwoman* (Volume 1, Issue 4, December 2011) depicts lesbian love scenes in what has been described as "the sexiest single issue of any comic book ever."[7] With its depiction of "sensual intimacy" between the characters, Maggie and Kate, *Batwoman* challenges mainstream comic arts representation that typically uses "voyeuristic titillation."[8] While these artists' work address "adult" themed issues, they juxtapose image, text, and space unique to their intended publication space. Alison Bechdel draws from traditional comic strip sequencing and framing to present an alternative community of lesbians. Greg Rucka and JH Williams III create intensely lined and colored narratives in unusual framing devices and sequencing – requiring the viewer to uncover the narrative. Jennifer Camper's less-polished, irreverent juxtaposition of image and text forces the reader/viewer to enter her politics

[4]   Ibid.
[5]   Dwight Garner, "The Days of Their Lives: Lesbians Star in Funny Pages," *The New York Times*, December 3, 2008, sec. Books, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/03/books/03garner.html.
[6]   Roz Warren, ed., *Dyke Strippers: Lesbian Cartoonists from A to Z*, 1st edition (Pittsburgh, PA: Cleis Pr, 1995).
[7]   Heather Hogan, "'Batwoman #4' Is the Sexiest Single Issue of Any Comic Book Ever," *AfterEllen*, December 14, 2011, http://www.afterellen.com/more/94662-batwoman-4-is-the-sexiest-single-issue-of-any-comic-book-ever.
[8]   Ibid.

and positionality within a subculture. Hybridity, then, is not a fixed, formal element, nor specific to the content of narratives found in comics; instead, hybridity is a result of image and text, working together, author/artist and reader/viewer in a unique relationship, and the performance between all of these dialectics.

Comic books or comix (comics) are performative objects and contain residues of performative processes. In this chapter I will look at how the object (a comic book or strip) itself performs political acts, creates social networks, and connects readers across multiple subcultural networks. Through the artists' processes of drawing lines and writing text, the readers interpretation and interaction with the images and text, and the circulating of these images/stories across publishing media like newspapers, printed books, and the internet, comics create performative relationships. The objectness of the comic book exists as an active component in a network that traces and connects bodies. Greg Rucka, JH Williams III, and W. Haden Blackman's *Batwoman* is a mainstream comic book published and distributed by DC Comics. Alison Bechdel's *Dykes To Watch Out For* is a serial comic strip which appeared in various syndicated publications across the U.S. from 1983 to 2008.[9] Jennifer Camper's work is the most "underground" of the three works as it appears in self-published and small scale presses as well as limited runs. Through the examination of the layering, overlapping, and intersections of these artists as well as how the work is distributed and consumed, I hope to shed some light on how the landscape of a mass media like comics performs a hybrid, rich, and culturally complex notion of dykeness when read across and through each other.

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[9]   Alison Bechdel, "Dykestowatchoutfor.com » About," accessed April 25, 2015, http://dykestowatchoutfor.com/about.

Foregrounding a Background

Comics art in the U.S. is a mass media and a subcultural phenomenon. Lesbian and feminist comics are situated across both of these production trajectories and are more recently recognized as having developed out of the underground Comix movement in San Francisco and the Riot Grrrl zine movement of the 1980s and 1990s.[10] Despite "Comix" recent development, the genre has a complex genealogy in an array of visual storytelling: from Mexicah codex to Egyptian hieroglyphs to 18th century graphic work by William Hogarth.[11] What Scott McCleod argues in his book *Understanding Comics* is that sequential art has its origins in multiple avenues and that modern comic books do not have one origin.[12] A historiographic undertaking of lesbian comics reveals that there is no origin point or one artist responsible for a genre of lesbian lines. Instead, a critical mass of sorts, surrounding the women's liberation movement, the civil rights era, and motivations to disseminate ideas, destabilize representations of heteronormative characters, and create underground narratives or "other voices," that brought women artists and lesbian artists together in the 1970s.[13] Trinia Robbins writes extensively on the genealogy of women cartoonists in the 20th century in the book *Pretty in Ink*. Robbins, a comics artist and historian, offers the most complete archive of North American women comics artists in one volume.[14] Other anthologies that have traced lesbian and queer comics include *Dyke Strippers* edited by Roz Warren (1995) and *Juicy Mother Vol. 1, Vol 2* edited by Jennifer Camper (2005, 2007). These particular collections have brought more visibility to women and lesbian artist

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[10] Trina Robbins, *From Girls to Grrrlz: A History of [Venus, Symbol for Female] Comics from Teens to Zines* (Chronicle Books, 1999), 89.
[11] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (HarperCollins, 1994), 10.
[12] Ibid., 15.
[13] Robbins, *From Girls to Grrrlz,* 79-109.
[14] Trina Robbins, *Pretty in Ink: North American Women Cartoonists, 1896-2013* (Fantagraphics Books, 2013).

working in the comics art genre. In this chapter, I argue that both visibility and performance of

lesbian narratives is affective and effective across multiple production modes and that comics

created through mainstream publication and by male artists as well as comics created in more

"underground" methods by lesbian artists carve out particular spaces of alternative representation

and create networks of connections that cross gender and orientation boundaries. In other words,

comics like *Batwoman* are being read and circulated within niche communities even though it is

produced in mainstream media, and work by Bechdel and Camper are gaining larger audiences

through connections across subcultural groups.

Performing Words and Images

The performative nature of comics happens across social, visual, and textual definitions

of what is performative. The performative utterance or speech acts as introduced by J.L. Austin

and further theorized by scholars including Eve Sedgewick, John McKenzie, and others

established a realm of textual and linguistic performance where juridical, political, and citational

actions are theorized through a performance lens.[15] On the other end of the spectrum is the

investment in live bodily practices or the embodied ritual of which performance studies and

performance theory has thoroughly theorized the vast expressions of performance in cultural,

religious, and popular contexts.[16] The turn toward objects and new materiality further

complicates if not extending what is performative and what performs. In *Vibrant Matter: A*

Political Ecology of Things, Jane Bennett argues that "there is also public value in following the

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[15] See J.L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1975), and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Introduction: Axiomatic," in *Epistemology of the Closet* (University of California Press, 2008), 1–63., and John McKenzie's *Perform Or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (Psychology Press, 2001).
[16] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2013), 3.

scent of a nonhuman, thingly power, the material agency of natural bodies and technological artifacts."[17] So, to argue that objects perform meaning and specifically, comic books perform identifications – producing affective responses as performative objects isn't so much a stretch of theoretical reasonings as an unfolding of the layers of performative networks as well as an application of the ideas found in new materiality – thing-power and object-oriented networks.[18] The investment in this sort of analysis or application of theory can be productive in looking at how comic books function as a site of performing bodies and ultimately as sites of social networking. Bennett argues that in addition to objects possessing agency, objects also form networks, assemblages, and collectives through nonhuman associations.[19]

The Objectness of Comics

The comic book occupies both a subcultural and mainstream position or niche as an object of desire, being collected, traded, and valued for its date of printing, condition and rarity or number of issues produced in an original run. The comic book's commodification is wrapped up in its value as a collectable and in its representation of the other.[20] In addition to its objectness or materiality the comic produces nonmaterial significance. It produces spatial meaning and affective responses for and in its readers. As Hilary Chute argues in *Graphic Women*, "The medium of comics can perform the enabling political and aesthetic work of bearing witness powerfully because of its rich narrative texture."[21] The comic book is a space that encapsulates

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17   Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), xiii.
18   See Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (October 1, 2001): 1–22, doi:10.2307/1344258.
19   Bennett, 2.
20   Ian Gordon, "Culture of Consumption: Commodification through Superman: Return to Krypton," in *Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories and Methods*, ed. Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith (A&C Black, 2009), 158-159.
21   Hillary L. Chute, *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics* (Columbia University Press, 2010), 4.

binaries, breaks binaries, and offers the reader, the fan, the collector, and the consumer an escape

to alternate universes – fantasies of alternate hegemonies, alternate expressions of identifications,

sexualities, and personhood, creating networks of affiliation via the production and consumption

of the comic book.[22] In his book *Reassembling The Social,* Bruno Latour argues that objects

have been relegated to either an understanding via material/economic analysis- as in a Marxist

analysis of the production of an object – an object's production value and/or its use value, or in

other words, its commodification or a symbolic analysis in which sociologists or other critical

thinkers attribute the power of an object to its symbolic value and meaning within a culture or

cultural production. Latour argues that objects actually have both a material agency, symbolic

agency and a social role within his "Actor Network Theory."[23] Latour writes, "Groups are made,

agencies are explored, and objects play a role."[24] By collapsing the boundaries between

materialism and the symbolic and affording objects agency of some sort, objects contribute and

shape the social across group formation, group affiliations, and individual roles within groups.

As Latour argues against the use of the term "power," agency and actant are useful and even

more productive in working through how an object functions as part of a larger network – its

role, its connection to other actants and actors. Thus, the comic book is both a spatial object that

represents normative and non-normative persons and it produces spaces in real time where non-

normative and normative associations are formed between the object, the author (writer and

illustrator) and the reader. The comic book is an active object inside a larger social network of

dyke connections.

The comic book as a "site" is an object where multiple bodies and representations of

bodies intersect. While the framing of "Actor-Network-Theory" might be a relatively new frame

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[22] Justin Hall, *No Straight Lines: Four Decades of Queer Comics* (Fantagraphics Books, 2013).
[23] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (OUP Oxford, 2007), 85-86.
[24] Ibid., 87.

within the discourse of New Materialism, things or objects have been at the center of disruptive artistic practices of the 20th century. Artists such as the Dadaist Marcel Duchamp, or Fluxist artists Joseph Beuys and Yoko Ono used objects to perform more than "representation" or what Jane Bennett in her book *Vibrant Matter: a political ecology of things* calls "thing-power."[25] Bennett writes that "what looks like a performative contradiction may well dissipate if one considers revisions in operative notions of matter, life, self, self-interest, will and agency."[26] In other words, Bennett, like the Dadaists and the Fluxists who turned toward the "found object" is interested in how objects perform across structures of power with a desire to turn away from the seemingly preoccupation (especially in performance studies) with agential power of the human subject. Within a Bennettian or Latourian logic, objects can displace the human (author) or create conduits for authorship, agency, and even perform identifications.

As a 2-dimensional medium the comic strip, the comic book, or comics as artwork appear to be static, engineered objects, flat and embedded on a page, springing from the creative mind of the "cartoonist" or "author." Both McCloud and Chute define sequential art as anything but static or fixed in its 2-dimensional representation.[27] While the comic strip functions as an object, it is also an interactive time-based narrative dependent on the craft and intentions of the artist *and* on the experience and interaction the reader/viewer has with the object- specifically the frames or panels of the comic. The way the reader engages with panels isn't always the intended way, direction or flow that the artist(s) has laid out. The Western convention of reading from left to right is easily overturned or ignored as a reader explores flowing lines, jolting rectangles, and broken sentences. Unlike a "straight" book where the reader's cognition or understanding

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[25] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 20.
[26] Ibid., ix.
[27] Hillary L. Chute, *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics* (Columbia University Press, 2010).

accumulates from sentence to sentence, being guided by organization of sentences and punctuation, the reader of comics might reread a panel in two separate orders or patterns to figure out the narrative's structure. Or, the reader might spend more time on complex juxtapositions of image and text in order to decode the relationship. Similar to a "straight" book there are conventions in how text and images are positioned or what type of shapes enclose particular content. For example, a thought bubble is represented by a more bubble-like oval with smaller bubbles flowing from the character whose thoughts are placed in text form. A speech bubble is represented by a similar oval shape but has a pointed end of the bubble stretching toward the character of figure that is speaking. In between panels, text can appear that narrates or foregrounds the upcoming frames. These conventions help the reader flow through pages of the comic and suture the words together into the image/text narrative. The ways that images function in comics can be more complex than text simply because the ways that panels interlock and flow are not always a left to right convention or a top to bottom process. While many comics do follow a linear left to right, top to bottom methodology or sequential expectation, artists like JH Williams III in the new *Batwoman* series draw panel shapes into complicated negative/positive relationships where inside and outside information flow back and forth performing a hyper narrative, a performance that uses the reader as an equal participant (see figure 2.7). Scott McCloud in the comprehensive book *Understanding Comics* writes, "Modern Comic Book Artists should take note of the possibilities of such whole page compositions and how few artists have made good use of them...."[28] Style can be attributed to an individual artist, but it is also style that connotes or communicates certain unconventional representations in the comics world. JH Williams III (and team) have won numerous awards for their work on *Batwoman* since the title's

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[28] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (HarperCollins, 1994), 12.

introduction in 2009.[29] The new *Batwoman* features intimate images of Batwoman's romance with Maggie Sawyer- from ballroom dancing at the Policeman's Ball where two women in tuxedos dance together to multiple page spreads of sex scenes. Through the use of inset panels, full page spreads and full bleed artwork, Williams's artwork and Greg Rucka's (later-Haden Blackman) words explode off the page with vibrant color, emanata (marks that express emotions and motion), and other performative gestures captured in lines and spatial relationships. The two-dimensional space of comics performs expressions of emotion, movement, and gesture of the characters and the artist simultaneously, but it is the reader's interaction and direction that completes the performance.

As an object, the comic book is what its name suggests – an object of paper, printed, bound, sold, or traded. The contents of this print material straddle the world of images, the world of words, and the world of circulation.[30] The comic book circulates in popular media as well as underground subcultural outlets. As such, it is an important actant in the production of alternative representation, specifically of dyke bodies. In "Drawing the Archive in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*" Ann Cvetkovich describes comics as an "insurgent genre" that "provide[s] a queer perspective that is missing from public discourse...."[31] Cvetkovich identifies comics and graphic novels as "hybrid or mixed-media genre."[32] Hillary Chute argues that comics's hybridity is both in its form as it "constructs a narrative that moves forward in time through both words and images" and in what Chute terms its "cross-discursivity."[33] For Chute, "cross-discursivity" refers to how the medium encompasses both visual and textual narrative in such a way that they are

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[29] "J.H. Williams, III," *DC Comics*, accessed December 17, 2014, http://www.dccomics.com/talent/jh-williams-iii.
[30] DC Comics, Marvel and other comics producers now publish and distribute comics online, however, it has not replaced the circulation of the printed comic book.
[31] Ann Cvetkovich, "Drawing the Archive in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*," *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2008): 111–28, doi:10.1353/wsq.0.0037.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Hillary L. Chute, *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics* (Columbia University Press, 2010), 6-10.

interdependent. Visual and textual information, in comics, work together, not as synthesized components but as inter-related, informing each other, comprising significant political, social, and personal expressions. Through "blurring genres" and capitalizing on the hybridity of comics, the artists JH Williams III, Alison Bechdel, and Jennifer Camper are able to challenge normative representations of female bodies. Dwight Garner concurs as he revels in Bechdel's strip, "There are a lot of naked cartoon women here — gloriously naked cartoon women: fat, thin, young, old, black, white. They are real women, many with ample armpit hair and zits on their shoulders. These lesbians aren't Bambi, Betty or Veronica."[34]

Performing Political Action In and With Comics

The power of comics art to incite violence, solidarity, and resistance is part of a complex relationship between the individual artist, author, and first amendment rights or concepts of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Censorship and destruction of comics are results of incongruities between individual voices and collective voices. According to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (CBLDF), "Censorship arising from moral panic is a constant presence in the history of comics. From the 1930s to the modern day, the comics medium has been stigmatized as low-value speech."[35] But even among cartoonists there is disagreement about where the line of satire and critique ends and "hate-speech" begins.[36] On January 11, 2015 twelve people were killed when two "French Muslim alienated youth" attacked the offices of the

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[34] Dwight Garner, "The Days of Their Lives: Lesbians Star in Funny Pages," *The New York Times*, December 3, 2008, sec. Books, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/03/books/03garner.html.
[35] "History of Comics Censorship, Part 1 | Comic Book Legal Defense Fund," accessed April 15, 2015, http://cbldf.org/resources/history-of-comics-censorship/history-of-comics-censorship-part-1/.
[36] Garry Trudeau, "The Abuse of Satire," *The Atlantic*, April 11, 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/04/the-abuse-of-satire/390312/.

satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo;* the victims included editors, cartoonists, and two police officers. The media blitz and coverage ignited worldwide social media responses with images and text of the phrase "Je Suis Charlie." An outpouring of support and sympathy for the victims and the support of an "ideology of freedom of speech" resulted in candlelight vigils, marches, demonstrations, and debate. "Je Suis Charlie" has become a global rallying cry for freedom of expression."[37] French historian and scholar, Pierra Nora called the response a "collective catharsis." As reported in the "Libération," Nora commented, "there has been a sort of individual rallying, as if suddenly the collective was awakened in the individual. One has been able to identify: 'Je Suis Charlie.'"[38] Garry Trudeau, the well-known and celebrated creator of the comic strip *Doonsbury* responded in an article published in *The Atlantic.* He writes, "By punching downward, by attacking a powerless, disenfranchised minority with crude, vulgar drawings closer to graffiti than cartoons, *Charlie* wandered into the realm of hate speech, which in France is only illegal if it directly incites violence."[39]

"Je Suis Charlie" is just the latest controversy where image and text are buttressed against the social and political conflicts of minoratarian representation, mainstream conformity, and dissemination of propoganda. Comics have been used as objects to coalesce movements, or to defy authority, and to promote nationalist rhetoric: defending democracy against Nazi fascism (as in the beginnings of the character and title *Wonder Woman* by DC Comics) or a how to guide to enact non-violent demonstrations (as in the 1957 comic *Martin Luther King and The Montgomery Story* published by The Fellowship of the Reconciliation), or challenging the

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[37] Scott Sayare, "What Je Suis Charlie Has Become," *The Atlantic*, January 30, 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/01/je-suis-charlie-france-patriotism/384990/.
[38] Catherine Calvet and Cécile Daumas, "Pierre Nora : «La Manifestation Du 11 Janvier Est Le Type Même de L'événement Monstre» - Libération," *Libération*, January 20, 2015, http://www.liberation.fr/politiques/2015/01/20/la-manifestation-du-11-janvier-est-le-type-meme-de-l-evenement-monstre_1184922.
[39] Trudeau.

representation of heteronormative relationships through the visual and textual depiction of a community of lesbians in the 1980s and the 1990s U.S. era of "Don't Ask Don't Tell" (as in Alison Bechdel's *Dykes To Watch Out For*). The understated power of comics is a result of comics's low-art, low-speech, low-culture status. Comics can perform the political work of marginalized groups through its particular graphic and narrative content, circulation, and collective memory. Drawing from Owen Whooley's work, James Braxton Peterson, in his essay "Graphic Black Nationalism:Visualizing Political Narratives in the Graphic Novel," argues that graphic narratives conduct "political work through narrative on both individual and collective levels."[40] It is precisely through this notion of both the individual artist or cartoonist, the individual protagonist, and the individual reader that an exchange or performance of ideology happens. Through mass circulation and the realm of publication, a comic book is affective politically on an individual level and on a collective level. When a multitude of readers/viewers access the same messages, solidarity as well as collective knowledge accumulates. A collective intelligence emerges through the dissemination and consumption of comic books and comics art. Pierre Levy's theory of collective intelligence reveals how "shared" information on a large-scale wide network mobilizes bodies through the power of the network. He writes:

> What is collective intelligence? It is a form of universally distributed intelligence, constantly enhanced, coordinated in real time, and resulting in the effective mobilization of skills…. New communications systems should provide members of a community with the means to coordinate their interactions within the same virtual universe of knowledge. This is not simply a matter of modeling the conventional physical environment, but of enabling members of delocalized communities to interact within a mobile landscape of signification…. The ideal of collective intelligence implies the technical, economic, legal, and human enhancement of a universally distributed intelligence that will unleash a positive dynamic of recognition and skills mobilization.[41]

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[40] James Braxton Peterson, in *The Rise and Reason of Comics and Graphic Literature: Critical Essays on the Form*, ed. Joyce Goggin and Dan Hassler-Forest (McFarland, 2010), 202–21.
[41] Pierre Levy, *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*, trans. Robert Bononno, 1st

Through collectively mobilizing meaning, comics art challenges both mass media

representations and minoritarian voices as the line between free speech, freedom of the press,

hate speech, and even "pornography" constantly shifts as the collective expands, reconfigures,

and reforms across transnational boundaries.

Comics art's political effectiveness and expression of alternative points of view are in part

why as a medium it has been censored, feared, and banned in the U.S. The 1930s, 1940s, and the

1950s revealed massive "moral panic" where comics were burned, censored, and relegated to

"low" culture.[42] In 1954, Frederic Wertham published the book titled *Seduction of The Innocent*

in which Wertham argued that comic books were the leading cause for juvenile delinquency.

Wertham testified in front of the U.S. Senate, putting comics "on trial by the United States

government in 1954 by the Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile

Delinquency."[43] Batwoman (as Batman's beard) appeared as a direct result of Wertham's claims

and the public's perception of the power of comic books to corrupt heteronormative values and

promote homosexuality. Codes of publishing and content were established as early as 1948,

modeled after the Hollywood Production Code.[44] "The Comics Code Authority was

administrated by the Comic Magazine Association of America from 1954 through 2011."[45] The

Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (CBLDF) was formed in 1986 to protect the "First

Amendment right to read, create, publish, sell, and distribute comics and graphic novels." The

struggle against censorship in production and consumption continues today as the CBLDF

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edition (New York: Plenum Trade, 1997), 13-14.

[42] "History of Comics Censorship, Part 1 | Comic Book Legal Defense Fund," accessed April 17, 2015, http://cbldf.org/resources/history-of-comics-censorship/history-of-comics-censorship-part-1/.

[43] Ibid.

[44] "The ACMP Publishers Code | Comic Book Legal Defense Fund," accessed April 12, 2015, http://cbldf.org/the-acmp-code/.

[45] "History of Comics Censorship, Part 1 | Comic Book Legal Defense Fund," accessed April 17, 2015, http://cbldf.org/resources/history-of-comics-censorship/history-of-comics-censorship-part-1/.

defends readers, collectors, and artists. Comics have performed important political work in challenging restrictions of freedom of speech and they challenge how we use images and text as political performance.

Reperforming Social Codes and Recoding The Social in Mainstream Comics: Batman's Beard

Comics art performs social, cultural, and political work through its unique hybrid form-- through the construction of narratives, and the rendering of characters with overt political content or motivations. Characters, such as Batwoman (1956), in her initial introduction reinforced mainstream politics and invisibility, whereas the lesbian protagonist, Mo, in Alison Bechdels' *Dykes To Watch Out For*, forged new ground by creating visibility through iconographic representation of lesbian subcultures not portrayed in mainstream media in the 1980s and 1990s. The genre of comics can be considered a mass communication and in popular culture crosses media through commercialization, adaptation, rebooting storylines, and fan culture. The rebooting or redrawing of a character across multiple artists allows for the reflection of cultural paradigms or political moments in history. Mainstream comics art in the U.S. has a long history of characters being redrawn or rebooted in order to revitalize a storyline, or to introduce the character to a new audience. Characters, thus perform an archeological role when the reader encounters a character within each narrative. Batman, Superman, and Wonder Woman have all had multiple iterations, storylines, and artistic renderings over decades. Sometimes a character is created to perform a political agenda of the artist or creator. Batwoman was created to perform the codes of heterosexuality in order to muffle homophobic alarmists in the U.S. in the 1950s. Unlike Wonder Woman who was created as a heroine with subjectivity and with agency,

Batwoman was created to indicate political and personal attributes of another character, specifically, Batman. Within the patriarchal and heteronormative frames of the comic book *Batman* from 1956 onward, the character of Batwoman subtly pecked away at the establishment of these gender and orientation codes.

Initially introduced in 1956, Batwoman as an iconic figure has appeared and disappeared over the last fifty years. The character challenged the professional position of Batman. In so doing, she ushered in a possibility for feminist representation in the popular form of comic books. The initial intention of DC Comics at the time, summer of 1956, was to eliminate any possibility of controversy over Batman and Robin's sexuality. As a result of Wertham's book *Seduction of The Innocent* the characters Batman and Robin came under scrutiny for homosexual overtones that contributed to the delinquency of minors. Homosexuality was negatively painted as the backdrop of the familiar Dynamic Duos landscape. Wertham claimed that "The Batman type of story may stimulate children to homosexual fantasies, of the nature of which they may be unconscious." Wertham writes, "Only someone ignorant of the fundamentals of psychiatry and of the psychopathology of sex can fail to realize a subtle atmosphere of homoeroticism which pervades the adventures of the mature 'Batman' and his young friend Robin."[46] Wertham argues that comic books and specifically *Batman* was a homosexual fantasy (see figures 2.1 and 2.2). DC comics, out of fear, created the character Batwoman to signify a heterosexual Batman. Batwoman was created to be Batman's beard and her multiple appearances in *Batman* narratives from 1956 to 1989 suggest a "proper" possible love interest for Batman.[47] After "guest appearances" and occasional successes as a crime fighter, Batwoman faded into the background of Gotham city, foregrounded by the stories and characters of male subjects, even if they

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[46] Fredric Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent (*Rhinehart and Co., 1954), 189-190.
[47] Travis Langley, *Batman and Psychology: A Dark and Stormy Knight* (John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 209.

appeared homoerotic. In 2006, this all changed for Batwoman; she was "rebooted" or resurrected from the lost and dead character bin of DC Comics as an out lesbian.

As a signifier of heterosexuality in the initial renderings of the character, Batwoman framed some of the debates starting to surface in a post-war U.S. Women's ability to ride motorcycles, perform daredevil feats, and fight for the nation fed the tension in early encounters of Batwoman and Batman. The Batwoman's first challenge to Batman came in issue number 233 in 1956 entitled, "The Batwoman" by Bob Kane (see figure 2.3). It opens with the Bat-Signal sweeping the night sky. Bruce Wayne and Dick Grayson, Batman and Robin respectively, comment that the signal is sweeping toward the new airport. They quickly change into their Batman and Robin caped crusader outfits and jump into the Bat-Mobile. The narration in the following frame reads, "But another champion of the law is already there!" Batman says, "Wait! Whoever you are – You can't crusade against crime! The law of Gotham City says that nobody can wear a Batman costume." Batwoman responds, "You're wrong, Batman. The law says 'No man can wear it!' I'm a woman!" Batwoman jumps on her motorcycle and speeds away. The issue's narrative proceeds with Batwoman saving Batman and Robin from a gun-toting diamond thief. Batwoman uses her makeup mirror to deflect a searchlight beam into the thief's eyes, impairing the thief long enough so that Batman and Robin can apprehend him. Batwoman's ambivalent relationship with Batman as a love interest and as a feminine powerless subject within the narrative contributes to a subtle erosion of definitive gender roles – a reflection or foreshadowing of political shifts on the horizon in the U.S.

Kathy Kane made several appearances each year from 1956 through 1979, when she was eventually "killed" off – a typical end for a character that challenged the physical and intellectual abilities of men. Gail Simone, who wrote *Birds of Prey* and currently writes several other

narratives for DC Comics including *The New Batgirl*, created a website titled "WIR." The acronym stands for "Women In Refrigerators." On this website she and other contributors list every female character in mainstream comic books in the U.S. who have been abused, maimed, raped, killed, or are victims of violence. The list includes the name of the character and the method of death or maiming. It is a comprehensive and somewhat telling list of how over the top the depiction of violence against women in comics is graphically depicted. The website features responses and comments from some of the creators of mainstream comics, including one of the editors of DC comics, Joan Hilty. In her comment, Hilty reveals that some violence is magnified by the illustrators' imaginations, and that a storyline written by a woman but illustrated by a man may end up depicting a more horrific scene than what the writer originally intended.[48] WIR is both a call to consciousness-raising within the comics industry and a critique of violence against women that is sensationalized by the industry. Batwoman's appearance on a motorcycle was a significant foreshadowing of the challenges hero/ine characters would face over the next forty years in mainstream comics. In a WIR style ending, Batwoman ended her career as she was overcome with melancholy and "killed" herself by riding the Wall of Death on her motorcycle (see figure 2.5). The character was "rebooted" in 2006, though this new Batwoman puts a twist on her relationship with Batman as she is an out lesbian who is no longer interested in marrying Batman.

This new Batwoman reintroduced by DC Comics in 2006 challenges mainstream representation of heroines as heteronormative. Batwoman is an out lesbian who because of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is forced from her career in the military to one of "covert/underground" crime-fighting. She cannot deny her homosexuality and is discharged from

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[48]   Joan Hilty, Response to Gail Simone, "Women In Refrigerators," March 1999, http://lby3.com/wir/index.html.

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West Point. She leaves the military school and pursues a life of vigilante crime fighting in Gotham City. The new *Batwoman* garnered much praise and accolades from fans and reviewers for its alternative character depiction and for its tremendous aesthetic appeal. "Rucka and Williams have crafted a comic that presses beyond this economy and creates a symphony on page. Even the first page works as a warning, a tuning up."[49] Even this new cutting edge version of Batwoman cannot escape some of the pressures of normative gender roles. In the opening panels of *Batwoman:Elegy* by Greg Rucka and JH Williams III, in the shadows lurks a Batman figure who tells Batwoman that this one[criminal] is hers and that she should fix her hair. Batman remarks, "Do something about your hair. One pull, the fight's over for you." Batwoman responds, "I'll take it under advisement." A constant recycling of gendered rhetoric, even the 2006 comic book structures gender in a way that is reminiscent of the 1950s rendition of Batwoman and the 1960s Batgirl where clothing and female accoutrements are hindrances or hidden gadgets to fight crime. The 1954 Batwoman character carried a special crime fighting purse that held a "powerful" powder puff that could blind her foes. Her bracelets became handcuffs (see figure 2.4). These feminized tropes of crime fighting not only made the characters more palatable they created "appropriately female" super-heroines who would be seen not as challenging Batman and Robin's masculinity but would be read as "feminine" or *not* Amazonian (like Wonder Woman). The new Batwoman of 2006 is up to the challenge of debunking gendered tropes; she is trained in Juitsu (like the first Batgirl of 1967) and is a high-performing cadet at West Point, marking her physical strength and mental capacity to fight crime, an overt connection to a "militarization" of the character. The new Batwoman performs the political work of confronting readers/viewers expectations of Batwoman as a heteronormative character and

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[49] Kevin Thurman, "The Twice-Named: Batwoman and the Use of Space," *Sequart Organization*, accessed December 1, 2014, http://sequart.org/magazine/5184/the-twice-named-batwoman-and-the-use-of-space/.

storyline.

Through a hybrid manifestation of image and text, as well as the recirculation or rebooting of a familiar character – Batwoman, the image sequences in the *New Batwoman* perform social memories for readers/viewers, triggered by the rendered bodies of Batwoman and her "date" as they dance together at the Policeman's Ball. By creating visual and textual moments of lesbian desire, closeness, and bodily contact, the object itself – the comic book – collaborates to labor in a queer performativity of the text where Batwoman's identification is tied to the reader's connection to the images. As a work of fiction, the images circulate across readership with no pre-fabricated communal social tie between them. In the essay "Images of Social Life" by scholar Christoph Wulf, Wulf argues that not only are images of social life body-based, they are performative.[50] Wulf writes, "[I]n order for communities to be able to constitute and sustain themselves as social units, their members require memories that they can share with each other. Such memories develop in the rituals that are recalled by their participants as social actions that forge links between them." In the book, *Batwoman: Elegy*, the image of Batwoman is drawn and redrawn to reveal multiple expressions of an embodiment of queer, lesbian, and dyke. A particular sequence of frames which activate a social memory and ritualization appears midway. The character Kate Kane, or the Batwoman, is attending the Gotham City Policeman's Charity Ball. Kate arrives in a well-tailored tuxedo. The clothes in combination with her body perform "dykeness." The text in the speech bubbles marks the book as "lesbian" and performs the social as a process of creating the memory through the shared social activity/ritual of a dance or ball. Kate dances with another woman, Maggie Sawyer—an out lesbian cop who has other storylines of her own in the DC Comics world (see figure 2.6). The two page spread of panels with two

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[50]   Christoph Wulf, "Images of Social Life" in D*ynamics and Performativity of Imagination:The Image between the Visible and the Invisible,* ed. Bernd Huppauf and Christoph Wulf (London: Routledge, 2009), 166.

women in tuxedos dancing together at the Policeman's Ball functions as a performative image, referring to the rituals of prom nights, debutante balls (the irony of coming out), and other social dances. Inside the speech bubbles the two women comment on the other guests who are staring at them in disapproval. While the characters are both "out," the social enactment functions as a visual coming out and as protest to normative gender roles.

The representation of "lesbian" is a visual and textual thread throughout the new *Batwoman*. When the character Batwoman meets Maggie Sawyer at the Policeman's Ball, the possibility of female bodies in proximity to each other as sexualized bodies desiring each other is perhaps what theorist Teresa de Lauretis calls a "reconceptualization of the subject of the relations of subjectivity to social reality, and a position of resistance and agency that is not outside but rather eccentric to the social cultural apparati of the heterosexual institution." In other words, by dancing as an "out" lesbian, Batwoman displaces heteronormative structures and creates a new imagining of Batwoman. The creator of Batwoman may not have realized the importance of this character in terms of lesbian visibility and queer destabilization of the center, but the images powerfully challenge heteronormativity in mainstream comic books. Greg Rucka argues that Batwoman offers "a damn compelling lead character." The character and storyline was a bit of a risk for the institution of Batman, Rucka remarks in an interview with the Comic Book Resources in 2009, "This is a launch of a new character...forget the whole sexual orientation issue...it's another character wearing the bat." The problem of expectations and acceptance led writer Greg Rucka to think carefully about launching the character in such a way that she would last and not be eclipsed by other characters or story lines. "...she's a lesbian. She's also a redhead. It is an element of her character. It is not her character. If people are going to have problems with it, that's their issue. That's certainly not mine. My job is to write the best

book I can about a character that I think is exceptionally cool." Rucka won a GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) award for writing and depicting a character who is an empowered, gay/queer/lesbian heroine who happens to embody and perform masculine and feminine codes. Batwoman, a super-heroine, emerges out and with a book of her own.

Reading as Performance

The process of reading a comic book or comics art relies on the movement of the reader's eye across the page, decoding image and text, back and forth, working between frames, and connecting frames together. In *Batwoman,* the complex graphics, drawings, shapes, and their relationship to text require the reader to spend time drilling down through the complex layering. The genealogies and rebooting of characters adds to the visual complexity, as the reader resituates both context and narrative of *Batwoman*. Performance happens through the reader's process of scanning images and reading text. The gutter is a thread that pulls the reader through the pages. In another sense, the reader defines the way the gutter performs. The artist uses various visual devices to connect meaning between frames, and the artist may have a set narrative or linearity imagined. However, the narrative isn't defined or complete until the reader scans the images and text and brings them together to create meaning. In their introduction to *The Rise and Reason of Comics and Graphic Literature: Critical Essays on the Form*, Joyce Goggin and Dan Hassler-Forest suggest that the reader does the "work" of suturing the panels together.[51] What happens when the reader's process of suturing is counter to the artist's intention is part of the performative process. The reader enables and facilitates the performance the way

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[51] Joyce Goggin and Dan Hassler-Forest, *The Rise and Reason of Comics and Graphic Literature: Critical Essays on the Form* (McFarland, 2010).

that an actor interprets the lines of the playwright, or the director stages the movement of actors in scenes of a play. The process of reading from left to right (in Western terms) plays a part in how comics flow for the reader, however, the artist doesn't control where a reader lingers, doubles back, or hovers on any one panel. The collaboration in constructing the narrative happens between artist and reader and happens in a particular temporality tied to both the artwork and the reader's performance. Roland Barthes suggests that any narrative requires an "active reader" to determine or present the meaning of the text. Julia Round in her essay "'Be vey, vewy quiet. We're hunting wippers': A Barthesian Analysis of the Construction of Fact and Fiction in Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's *From Hell*" argues that while meaning in comics is limited through textual and image strategies employed by the artist, the reader's role is creative in that the reader brings an "open narrative" to closure or fruition.[52] In other words, the reader is necessary in the completion of the narrative in comics. The interactive relationship between the object (the comic book) and the reader/viewer constructs a performance of interpretation. As a medium that borrows from other genres, comics art is unique in that it cannot simply be classified as visual art, or literature. Comics art combines many visual signifiers found in film such as "camera shots" or "viewpoints" and literary devices found in novels and other fiction writing such as exposition, character development, and plot construction. Unlike literature where the reader is led by sequencing and punctuation, the reader of comics is always potentially involved in the way a comic book is read. The comic book is a transitory script where each reader/viewer enacts the narrative according to his or her bodily experience, timing, and interpretation. Goggin and Hassler-Forest argue that the distinctive formal element of the gutter

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[52] Julia Round, "'Be Vey, Vewy Quiet. We're Hunting Wippers': A Barthesian Analysis of the Construction of Fact and Fiction in Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's From Hell," in *The Rise and Reason of Comics and Graphic Literature: Critical Essays on the Form*, ed. Joyce Goggin and Dan Hassler-Forest (McFarland, 2010), 188–201.

or the space between panels on the comics page is both a theoretical space and a physical space in which "the reader performs the suturing operation that ultimately enables the interpretive act, based on the assumption that the relationship between two consecutive images is not an arbitrary one."[53] The gutter is an objective space that is defined by the placement of the panels, the edges or boundaries marked by the artist, and the gutter is a subjective space where interpretation, suturing, and even performance happens.

Comics provide a blueprint for the reader to unearth the artist's intentional narrative, but the form also enacts the reader as a participant in the process of sequencing and suturing frames. Chute explains that comics art "represents time as space, comics situates the reader in space creating perspectives in and through panels."[54] It is the reader who controls time through the process of "reading and looking."[55] The reader not only reads and looks, but relooks, rereads, and so controls the time or timing of meaning. Unlike other time-based media, comics art depends on the reader to "play out."[56] The narrative is whole only through the work of the reader piecing the narrative together. The reader encounters frames or panels, text inside and outside of various types of bubbles. In addition to encountering the drawn text and panels which "contain" characters, backgrounds, and other information, the reader encounters the negative space or the gutters of the work – the "in-betweenness." Specific to each artist or creator of comics, a reader encounters style, story and publication format, or medium. The form and content and the creative style all influence how the comic is seen and interpreted. It is in this combination of what is drawn and what is seen that the political takes shape, is performed, and challenges mainstream

[53] Joyce Goggin and Dan Hassler-Forest, *The Rise and Reason of Comics and Graphic Literature: Critical Essays on the Form* (McFarland, 2010), 1.
[54] Hillary L. Chute, *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics* (Columbia University Press, 2010), 9.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 8.

comics.

Alison Bechdel – Performing Bodies, Performing Identifications, Circulating Subcultures Across Networks

Alison Bechdel's comic strip *Dykes To Watch Out For* (*DTWOF*) (initially ran as weekly

strips – then, later compiled into book anthologies) reveals the dyke body as a site of

performance and networked connection. The reader performs the work of suturing complex

narratives, subcultural references, and lesbian representations via text, image, and the empty

spaces between frames or the gutters. The gutters of *DTWOF* adhere to the traditional layout of

comic strips found in newspapers. The gutters are minimally spaced between frames. Unlike

Batwoman where the gutters create shapes of batwings and are boldly outlined as if to emphasize

the container of the shape itself, *DTWOF*'s gutters reinforce the "readability" and flow of each

frame. Readers have been performing this work since 1983 when Alison Bechdel launched her

emblematic strip *Dykes To Watch Out For*.[57] The strip was drawn for over twenty years and

featured over five hundred episodes.[58] The formal elements of the comic strip follows more

mainstream cartooning/comics found in newspaper and magazine strips where the emphasis is

placed on seriality, readability, and access. Panels flow from left to right and from top to bottom.

The gutter is minimal, allowing for a maximum number of panels to accumulate in any one strip.

What is evident in Bechdel's use of this form is that the number of panels in a row and the

amount of panels stacked on top of each other emphasize a continuity of storytelling, sequential

development of characters, and their inter-relationships. It is through the formal aspects of the

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[57] Alison Bechdel, "Dykestowatchoutfor.com » Strip Archive," accessed May 01, 2015,
       http://dykestowatchoutfor.com/strip-archive-by-number.
[58] Ibid.

strip that Bechdel approaches lesbian visibility and coming out. By using the simplistic conventions of cartooning and the uncomplicated spacing of small, empty gutters, the readability and the reach of *Dykes To Watch Out For* travels across multiple circulation forums. Thus, Bechdel connects a wide range of bodies across the strip through the shared experience of reading and interpreting the narratives.

 DTWOF creates networks of dyke bodies through two distinct ways – through the syndication and a proliferation of episodes and through the bodies that are created on the page through Bechdel's drawing, redrawing, and representing lesbian lives perform the politics of visibility through the fictitious characters and by the physical action of the artist. The networks formed inside the strip (over the episodes) are marked as an ongoing narrative in which the main character expresses contemporary lesbian politics and culture and encounters other characters in intimate, close, and peripheral contact. Bechdel's series performs an identification with middle-class version of lesbian in the U.S. in the 1980s and 1990s.

 How Bechdel's highly popular strip performs political work is revealed through the literal visibility, readability, and social relationships of the lesbian subjects (characters). The strip captures a group of women closely connected through the "nodal" character of Mo. As if performing a public service announcement on the diverse lives of lesbians, Bechdel captures the woes and wills of lesbian women who march on Washington, learn Karate, run a women's bookstore, drink coffee in the local cafe. Through the development of Mo's story and her connections to other characters in the story *Dykes To Watch Out For*, Bechdel carves out a space for Lesbian representation, a space that Bechdel comments as not existing in popular media when she first began drawing the strip.[59]

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[59]   Katie Brown, "An Interview with Alison Bechdel," in *Dyke Strippers: Lesbian Cartoonists from A to Z*, ed. Roz Warren, 1st edition (Pittsburgh, PA: Cleis Pr, 1995), 20–22.

DTWOF is foregrounded by an array or network of dykes connected through social ties: love relationships, friendships, and activism. The strip is set against the backdrop of the characters' homes as well as the local women's bookstore, cafe, and martial arts studio. Through social ties, Bechdel establishes a community of (fictitious) women who revolve around the strip's heroine Mo. The text performs Bechdel's political concerns and the images support a political commitment to providing representations that reflect a lesbian community and a progressive social position. In episode number 328, "Holiday On Ice" Bechdel critiques holiday consumerism as well as the foreboding threat of internet "superstores" in displacing brick and mortar shops. The critique happens both in the relationship of the panels, moving from Mo's kitchen to the Madwimmin's Bookstore to "Sparrow, Stu, Lois and Ginger's digs" and in the details of textual commentary found in the dialogue, or "printed" on objects used by characters such as magazines, books, etc. (see figure 2.8). Like most of *Dykes To Watch Out For* episodes, "Holiday On Ice" follows Bechdel's traditional layout, reading from left to right, top to bottom, with rectangular frames following each other in a sequential relationship. Bechdel also employs the traditional comics art convention of speech bubbles, narrative boxes or captions, bordered panels and borderless panels, and emanata.[60] Bechdel's narratives move from scene to scene sometimes jumping back and forth the way scenes in a television sitcom or film might move from location to location to reveal simultaneous happenings, or sequential action. Bechdel uses these hybrid formal elements to move the narrative quickly between locales, between characters, and to create senses of simultaneity.

"Holiday On Ice" begins in Mo's kitchen where Mo sits reading a *Martha Stewart Living* magazine. The headline on the front of the magazine reads "Do It Yourself Gifts." Her girlfriend,

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[60] Jessica Abel and Matt Madden, *Drawing Words and Writing Pictures: Making Comics: Manga, Graphic Novels, and Beyond* (Macmillan, 2008), 6-8.

Sydney states, "Mo, I don't have time for this. I have a hundred papers to grade. I'm just gonna buy presents like a normal person." In this opening panel, the relationship between Mo and her girlfriend is established as one of idealogical difference both on the subject of consumerism and also on the subject of monogamy or polyamorous relationships. The scene shifts via a narrative caption which reads, "At Madwimmin Books...." Two panels reveal a woman shopping from a list of books. As Jezanna, the owner of Madwimmin's Bookstore, helps the customer, Jezanna says, "Let me know when you're ready to check out, I'll be working on the window display." The woman replies, "Oh, I won't be buying anything. I just wanted to see the actual books before I ordered them from Medusa.com. Thanks for your help." Jezanna doesn't say anything in response. Instead, Bechdel draws emanata marks to communicate the character's dismay, frustration and shock. The two scenes cleverly juxtapose issues of consumerism, DIY culture and online commerce, political hot buttons in 1999 when this episode premiered. Bechdel, rightly, forecasts the replacement of shopping in real space with internet shopping, a juxtaposition she sets up with references to "buy.com" on the back of the *Martha Stewart Living* magazine and the customer's pronouncement in the Madwimmin's bookstore. This same episode pokes fun at the Y2K scare as Sparrow, Stu, Lois, and Ginger stockpile emergency supplies for the "Y2K meltdown." Through the sense of connecting places, characters, and pulling a through line or idea across each scene, Bechdel creates a visual network of dykes that are connected across the space of the comic as well as across the imagination of readers.

By creating a network of connected women, Bechdel's strip *DTWOF* challenged at the time of its initial circulation the status quo of comics and cartoons in that it depicted a lesbian figure as the subject of its narrative as opposed to the normative comics central character being male and heterosexual. Before Bechdel's success, Wimmen Comix paved the way for

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underground women artists work to be read, while other lesbian comics art remained in the subcultural closet. Bechdel broke through the publication/syndication glass ceiling and by 1995 was carried as a weekly strip in over forty newspapers in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K.[61] Bechdel successfully distributed her network of dykes across an international network of gay and straight publications. Through the use of traditional comics art layout and strategies, Bechdel's *Dykes To Watch Out For* is still "readable" today and accessible, reprinted in an anthology and given a new "boost" of readership through the success and spotlight now shed by her auto-biographical graphic novels *Fun Home* and *Are You My Mother.*[62]

Over five hundred episodes of *Dykes To Watch Out For* have been assembled into a single volume titled *The Essential Dykes to Watch Out For*. On the cover of the anthology, each character's head is cutout and placed in a table (rows and columns) of relationships. Coupled but tagging the next couple in line, the cover reveals the way the characters connect in the matrix or network of individuals found in *Dykes To Watch Out For*. As if illustrating a game of telephone, where one character tells another character something, then turns to the next character and repeats what they heard, and so on- Bechdel's cover depicts a linear network. What is revealed through the actual narratives of the episodes (over 500) is the more complex social network. This network- that Bechdel draws, redraws, and reiterates performs the social through its progressive reconfigurations, its self-referential gesture- that is its reference to the drawings and hand of the artist herself. Drawing (of *Dykes to Watch Out For*) then becomes a performative process and an object that refers to the performative.

The act of drawing has been associated with performative acts and drawings themselves

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[61]   Roz Warren, ed., *Dyke Strippers: Lesbian Cartoonists from A to Z*, 1st edition (Pittsburgh, PA: Cleis Pr, 1995), 9.

[62]   Dwight Garner, "The Days of Their Lives: Lesbians Star in Funny Pages," *The New York Times*, December 3, 2008, sec. Books, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/03/books/03garner.html.

considered as evidence of the physical embodied relationship between drawing and performance. As indicated by the title of the art show "Live/Work: Performance into Drawing" mounted in 2007 at the Museum of Contemporary Art, NY, and according to the former NY MoMA and current Hammer museum curator Connie Butler "the act of drawing has historically been linked with performance, and in some cases can be considered a performative action itself."[63] Comics art incorporates the act of drawing and through its performative nature reveals more than a simple narrative. Gesture, action, and movement of lines mark the artist's substrate as residue of his or her liveness. The gesture refers to the performance of drawing. Bechdel's strips are celebrated for their intricately drawn figures/characters and hand-lettered text. Each episode, while a highly organized story, is also a set of performative moments contained by each frame. The frame is similar to a still frame of film that captures a moment in time through the opening and closing of the shutter. The comic strip frame is a captured drawing, a captured performative moment of the artist. Each frame is juxtaposed against each other and the text – text in speech bubbles, thought bubbles, and introducing frames. The performance of the artist as represented by these individual frame/drawings is extended through the reader's performative actions. While the artist's work is the source material of drawing as performance, the reader plays an important role in another performative aspect of comics. Bechdel's drawing and comics art construction relies on many of the traditional forms found in syndicated strips in Sunday newspaper funny pages. Through the use of tightly drawn characters with an element of iconographic reference to lesbian culture in the U.S. in the 1980s, Bechdel pieces together a narrative that captures a lesbian readership and fan base that is able to help sustain her strip for over twenty years. Sarah E. Chinn describes *DTWOF* as "a fairly reliable barometer of politically conscious, self-

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[63] Connie Butler, "Live/Work: Performance into Drawing," Museum of Modern Art, (n.d.), http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/21.

identified, middle-class lesbian culture."[64] At the time that *DTWOF* circulated in newspapers and magazines, lesbian representation in print media was relegated to underground production, or specifically LGBT- centered publications like *The Advocate*, *Deneuve* (now *Curve* magazine), or niche LGBT programming at film festivals like San Francisco Frameline Film Festival (founded in 1976), and Los Angeles Outfest Film Festival (founded in 1982). Bechdel bridged a gap between the subcultural and the mainstream publishing, circulating images appealing to lesbians in urban, rural, academic, and public spaces. *Dykes To Watch Out For* performs a 1980s and 1990s social and political aesthetic as iconographically drawn into the characters and panels by Bechdel, but read and performed (interpreted) by a network of "reading" bodies connected through the comic strip.

Performing Collectives

Through the process of recognizing and following the spatial relationships drawn on the pages of comic books and strips, the reader is conjoined to the author in a creative venture. The reader is also connected vicariously to other readers through affiliations with the narrative and the characters presented in the comics. Media theorist Henry Jenkins argues in *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers* that fan communities are "self-organizing groups organized around the collective production, debate, and circulation of meanings, interpretations, and fantasies in response to various artifacts of contemporary popular culture."[65] Thus, for readers and collectors of comics, as the reader interprets the narrative there is a potential social connection with other readers which manifests when the narrative or comic is then discussed, debated, shared across fan blogs,

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64   Sarah E. Chinn, "Feeling Her Way: Audre Lord and the Power of Touch," in *Gendering Disability*, ed. Bonnie G. Smith and Beth Hutchison (Rutgers University Press, 2004), 212.
65   Henry Jenkins, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture* (NYU Press, 2006).

or other communications that happen in person, online, etc.

Networks of Dyke Bodies Circulating in the Dark Days of Print Culture

The circulation of comics in mainstream U.S. culture has followed various distribution models of print culture in the 20th century – with direct sales or direct marketing taking precedent. Dyke comics – comics that represent lesbians – have circulated through subcultural networks of alternative press, local women's book stores, and direct sales from the artists themselves. Since the 1970s a counter-corporate model for lesbian comics has remained in the shadows of mainstream comics – the comics found in comics bookstores. It has only been from the efforts of alternative presses to "anthologize" certain artists' work that titles like *Hothead Paisan: Homicidal Lesbian Terrorist* by Diane DiMassa are available to a larger public in mainstream book stores. Through the model of direct-marketing, comics bookstores stock titles that "appeal" to their local customers and reflect the priorities of management and owners. As a result, finding alternative titles not published by DC comics, Marvel comics, and comparable rivals is difficult. Lesbian comics rely on individual investments in small run presses and word of mouth marketing, both of which have been the mainstays of political and cultural underground movements like the Wimmen's Comix publications in the 1970s and riot grrrl zines of the 1990s.[66]

Jennifer Camper, an artist who came out of the 1980s and 1990s DIY "alt" zine culture, has created several edited volumes of comics by lesbian and queer artists published by small presses. Her collections from the 1990s titled *subGURLZ* are out of print with only a few still circulating

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[66] Mark Rogers, "Political Economy: Manipulating Demand and 'The Death of Superman," in *Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories and Methods*, ed. Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith (Routledge, 2012), 145–56.

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and are sometimes available in used form on Amazon Books or Powells' Bookstore websites.

Her latest edited series titled *Juicy Mother* celebrates a range of work from well-known artists to

lesser-known LGBT artists and LGBT artists of color. Camper's work has been censored and

ignored by mainstream publications for a variety of reasons, from overt sexual content to

irreverent sarcasm that critiques U.S. and mainstream culture. As a result of the underground and

alternative nature of her work, Camper publishes her strips and comics art work with the work of

other LGBT artists of color in small run printing by alternative presses or publishing houses that

typically feature alternative and underground work. This DIY aesthetic and business model

allows alternative voices to "circulate" across various networks of fans and consumers. Success

is measured through connectedness and not through mainstream distribution.

Availability doesn't always translate to success or large readership. While DC Comics and

other mainstream comics art companies may have reconfigured their business/distribution model

capitalizing on "niche" markets, smaller run comics and collections of comics in the form of

books, they still struggle in a market where profit margin is narrow, if not absent. Most

independent small press authors do not receive royalties until the cost of production is

recuperated by the press.[67] For an editor and project creator like Camper, the motivation must be

something greater than profit. Soft Skull Press, Camper's Press for *Juicy Mother I: Celebration*,

almost went bankrupt in 2007 as the printing industry in the U.S. collapsed.[68] Other motivations

might have included creating visibility for lesser-known comics artists by including well-known

artists like Alison Bechdel and lesser-known artists like Carrie McNinch who have worked and

struggled on the outskirts of the publishing industry through DIY self-publishing and more

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[67]   Alison Flood, "Stop the Press: Half of Self-Published Authors Earn Less than $500," *The Guardian*, accessed
       December 8, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/may/24/self-published-author-earnings.
[68]   Alex Wiggins, "Phoenix Rising: Indie Publishing in the Aftermath of PGW's Bankruptcy," *Bookslut, a*ccessed
       November 1, 2014, http://www.bookslut.com/features/2007_07_011378.php.

recent affiliations with the small press Pioneers Press. Another motivation might have been to create a sense of connection with alternative, subcultural queer artists. As the Introduction to the Volume states, "Where are the comix for me, a Lebanese American Dyke?...Where are the comix by and about women, people of color and queers? I want an alternative to the alternative, but there are few venues for these stories."[69] Camper's motivation seems to be to create, edit, and publish comics that reflect a network of queer culture that is otherwise an invisible network, namely dyke bodies of color and other manifestations of "Other" collected and assembled on the pages of *Juicy Mother*.

In Jennifer Camper's comix, Camper draws the intersections of identifications in a post 9/11 U.S. context. Lebanese-American artist Jennifer Camper's comix perform both dykeness and arabness. Camper's character Samira in the strip titled "Ramadan" compares coming out and dyke identification with being Arab in America. The comic strip explores the intersectional relationship between gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and nationality. Camper performs an "Arab" voice within a dyke social network and a lesbian voice within an Arab-American network. Through drawing the social relationships within these two specific subcultural networks, Camper challenges the reader's understanding of both categories. The first frame of the story begins with a woman slipping out of bed trying not to wake her partner/lover. The lover wakes up and asks what is going on by addressing the woman who is slipping out of bed as Samira. Samira gently touches the woman and tells her to go back to sleep.... Samira says that she is going to make Suhoor (a pre-dawn breakfast eaten during a fasting period). The other woman asks why she even bothers. In this single panel the reader learns that the character Samira is Muslim, practicing fasting and is a lesbian. The following panels and pages set up Samira's

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[69]   Jennifer Camper, ed., *Juicy Mother: Celebration*, 1st ed., vol. I, 2 vols. (Soft Skull Press, 2005), 7, http://softskull.com/juicy-mother/.

struggle with negotiating two networks of identification through a comical exchange about her

fasting where she tries to communicate her cultural background and reason for fasting to

coworkers and eventually gives up (see figure 0.4). Her identification as a lesbian is equally

challenging as she negotiates the performance of femininity and masculinity within lesbian

circles and Arab-American circles simultaneously. The drawn figure begins to perform in the

reader's imagination and in the narrative a representation of belonging and not belonging.

The comic book volumes *Juicy Mother: Celebration* and *Juicy Mother: How They Met* are

themselves networks of lesbian and queer comics artists that Jennifer Camper has assembled

together. Following her earlier volumes of *subGURLZ* and *Rude Girls and Dangerous Women*

which were published in the 1990s, *Juicy Mother* captures an expansive swath of artists and as a

result is more inclusive and intersectional in its representations of LGBT identifications and

LGBT comics in the U.S. in the new millennium. *Juicy Mother* features well-known as well as

underground artists' work. The volumes perform the work of both individual artists and the

collective group. In one particular comic strip titled "The Party," multiple artists in the volume

"jam" or contribute to the overall narrative by each drawing a section of the strip. The single

narrative is formed and performed through smaller units or parts developed through a

collaboration and exchange between the artists collectively. This loose group performs together

across characters, panels, and the story of a party. Through the mixture of lines and language

"The Party" encapsulates the group into a social network on literal and metaphoric levels of

meaning.

Juicy Mother: Celebration, with the first installment (Number One) published in 2005, by

Soft Skull Press features sixteen LGBT artists. Following the tradition of "artisan" created

comics, the book is black and white with a 4-color cover and is 86 pages.[70] The second installment, *Juicy Mother 2: How They Met No. 2*, was published in 2007 by Manic D. Press and is twice as long at 160 pages. This publication is also in the style of artisan or underground comix in that it is in black and white with a 4-color cover. Soft Skull Press or as the company calls itself "an imprint of counterpoint," originally located in Brooklyn, resides in Berkeley, California. It is a beacon of alternative voices and printed matter. Manic D Press is also an alternative press with a company slogan that reads, "serving all of your eclectic reading & printed matter needs."[71] The small press revolution of the 1980s and 1990s fueled the availability of queer comics and specifically lesbian comics.

This motivation to connect "other" artists through the pages of a comix collection focuses attention to the object itself and its materiality. The book is a site of connections, or in network terms it is a node where members of the network assemble. Camper has not only created the object that serves as a node that reflects herself back to herself, but she's created a network of artists, narratives, and images inside the book that collectively function as a site of the alternative. As previously mentioned the cover sets the tone of a site where bodies congregate. The back cover zooms in on the "celebration" with bodies continuing to dance across the panel. In addition to the images of intermingling bodies, the list of artists makeup two columns underneath this backcover panel. Underneath the names is the adage "Comix for Discerning Homosexuals, Uppity Ladies, Fierce People of Color and all their friends." The collective space is named and contained within the covers of 4-colors.

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[70] Artisan comics refers to categories of either "industrialized production" or "artisan production" as distinguished by Mark Rogers in "Understanding Production: The Stylistic Impact of Artisan and Industrial Methods," in International Journal of Comic Art 8, no. 1 (2006): 509-517. Rogers does note that these categories bleed into one another and are not strict binaries. However, for most LGBT artists the category of industrialized production is not available to them as the content of their work precludes mass readership or following.

[71] "Manic D Press: Great Books Since 1984," accessed May 02, 2015, http://www.manicdpress.com./.

One method of connection happens through the direct relationship between the artist's strip or series of panels and text and how the reader/viewer experiences these panels. The artist creates the narrative (not always linear in its inception or in its reception) through drawings situated in panels and paired with text that juxtaposes, compliments, and or is companion to the drawings or images. Within the pages of this volume (*Juicy Mother: Celebration*), each artist adheres to the traditional use of panel delineation. At the end of the volume, Camper's epilogue breaks with comics panel methodology and finishes the collection with a series of drawings by G.B. Jones and story by Camper. What the epilogue does do is present sequential art with images connected to text. Throughout the volume, each artist's section or contribution to the volume spans one to ten pages. The narratives presented are short and act as snippets of everyday life. The longer narratives create more visual space and "interpretive" time so that the reader can scan the more complex relationships or networks between the visual and textual. This comix or underground/alternative printing is in black and white. The only color pages to *Juicy Mother* is the front cover and back cover. The color cover is printed on a coated cover stock in a satin finish, the 4-color artwork suggests an explosion or energy contained within the pages. The high-quality reproduction of the artwork on the cover involves gradations of values, tone and subtlety of colors which are rendered in a true 4-color process in order to print a multitude of colors on a black background (see figure 2.9). The reader/viewer's first impression encounters the color artwork. While the interior pages lack the explosive and seductive nature of the 4-color process, the book's interior and exterior form an aesthetic bond typically found in book volumes of comics: color and black and white, cover stock, and book stock weight pages, etc. The material elements of printing the comic book connects genres of comics together and in this case *Juicy Mother* represents alternative, underground comix, and mainstream circulation.

Creating a network of affiliations, connections, associations, and interaction is central to how the social functions. In a comic book, the typical connection is limited to traveling from artist to the object to the viewer/reader, a somewhat one-way system that perhaps does not take on the characteristics of a network. However, the social manifests when the object travels across networks, whether they are distribution networks or more intimate networks of sharing and fan culture; there is another process that performs the social, housed inside the pages of *Juicy Mother*. This process is the comix or "cartoon jam." The jam happens when multiple artists draw together across a narrative (see figure 2.10). The collaboration exists as a hand off where each artist draws a frame and hands the narrative off to the next artist. The jam is reminiscent if not derivative of the Surrealist game "Exquisite Corpse" or "Le Cadavre Exquis." The artists' jam visually and socially links the panels into a social relationship or a community made up of individual artists.

The social happens not just because there is a group of artists "drawing" together. The social forms through physically linked lines, shapes, characters, camera views, emanata, ink, gutters, panels, borders, style, and all the elements of narrative which include the plot and themes as expressed via drawn bodies and words inside and outside of bubbles. As previously mentioned, *Juicy Mother's* jam is appropriately titled "The Party." The premise of the narrative is that a group of characters from various titles/artists' work are gathering at a friend's apartment for a party. In addition to the premise of the jam, what's particularly visually significant is how these panels connect to each other, side by side, switching author/artists and still sewing together a narrative through the interaction of boundaries or the edges of "frames" or panels. In the first panel, is a character knocking on a bathroom door, yelling at another character to hurry up. It is inferred that the first character wants to "get ready for (hosting) the party." The artist drawing

first or the one who establishes the opening panel (Jennifer Camper) cleverly pushes the form

and the content forward in order to accommodate the next artist. The next artist picks up on

emanata lines (BAM! … with lines expressed from the door, indicating the banging sound), and

draws the scene on the other side of the door. Howard Cruse's character is shaving, getting ready

or primping for "the party." The character comments, "Oh, chill out, Roxie! Eveybody knows

that dykes don't need mirrors! Whadda ya think they put all that chrome on your Harley for?"

"The Party" establishes a "dyke" body in the first frame, a body which circulates throughout

subsequent frames, even though the artist/author changes, the drawing of the dyke(s) travels

through a network made up of gay, lesbian, queer, and gay super-hero characters. The sixth

panel, which is the final in this first sequence of all the artists, pulls all the characters together by

drawing them in an elevator. For Ivan Velez, Jr., number six or last in the sequence of drawing,

the scene becomes a "copy" or iteration of the previously introduced characters, with Velez, Jr.'s

one addition, front and center, a shorter Latino man with bulging muscles, tattoos, baseball hat,

wearing a t-shirt with a "Y" on it. The panels continue with the same order of drawing (1-6).

Each frame offers a change in the plot, but clearly "redraws" the same characters, the same

bodies with differences manifesting in style. Thus, the drawn body (bodies) becomes the

overarching connection in the network of "gay" friends meeting at Roxie and Rob's apartment

(see figure 2.11).

　　　"The Party" spins out of control as the artists introduce radical elements into the plot.

Like an unbridled improv, where an actor introduces a completely implausible element to the

skit, the other actors, and in this case artists/authors have to adapt and make sense of the

outrageous turns. One such turn occurs when "three hours of hot, sweaty, very loud, and

excruciatingly safe sex later..." the police show up at the apartment as a result of a loud and

noisy party and neighbor complaints. This frame takes its cue from the established "orgy" that was drawn across seven frames, which means that each artist "had a go" at this particular storyline progression. When the police show up, the police are drawn as animals, specifically pigs in uniform. One officer fires his gun, shooting a hole through Alison Bechdel's character Mo. Humorously, the artist who takes up the next frame, Howard Cruse, has Mo exclaim, "I can't believe you just blew a six-inch hole in my chest, officer! ... Don't you realize I am a Lesbian icon?!" The following frame in this sequence reveals the hand of an artist, with a spilled ink well and the characters drawn squashed in the lower half of the panel. The caption reads, "Why do you little fuckers always gotta get so outa hand?! I don't have time for this!!!" Ink spills out of the bottle. In a moment of referential accent, the reader is forced into the reality that he or she is reading/viewing a cartoon or comic strip, and that this strip is drawn by multiple artists. In one panel, the artist interrupts the network, the circulation of bodies, by drawing attention to the act of drawing and the fictitious nature of comics art or cartooning.

Through the means of distribution, the reiteration, redrawing of a character across decades and artists, and through formal conventions of how panels or frames interact and progress, the social networks of dyke bodies in comics perform layered nuances of gender politics, sexual expressions, and queer color critique. What comics art offers happens in the positive space – the space where ink exists and the negative space or the space where the reader sutures meaning is the space where artists hand off the story. Both spaces can pressure normative relationships between negative and positive. These social networks that are created through the actual narrative production, the creation of characters and their interrelationships, are also forged through the collaboration and cooperation of artists meeting in the space of a cartoon jam.

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Circulating Slickness Becomes Digital

Within the print industry, Four-color, slick or glossy heavy weighted comics come at a price. They are the norm for major comics books from DC comics and Marvel, but this didn't used to be the status quo. Four-color was usually reserved for the cover of comics and the interior of the book was printed on newsprint, creating an aesthetic and material similarity to newspapers and other low resolution or cheap printing processes. Mark Rogers in his essay "Political Economy: Manipulating Demand and 'The Death of Superman'" argues that the early part of the comics industry (up until the 1970s and 1980s) was based on the Fordist economic model which meant that comics were mass produced and sold at a low, affordable price. In 1970 a mainstream comic book like *Superman* cost 15 cents, today the same title costs around $4.99. Accounting for inflation, if the same distribution and production processes were used today, the *Superman* comic book should only cost 66 cents. Rogers explains that the shift from a Fordist economy to a post-Fordist economy in the U.S. in the 1980s allowed for the comics industry to print on a title on demand model and target a smaller niche audience. Underground comics have always operated on this model and thus have a smaller readership and smaller printing runs.

Another change in the industry is the momentum created by fan culture. Fans helped fuel the comic bookstore phenomenon. According to Rogers, they also create a more limited scope of titles offered on shelves inside the store. This limited stock excludes some of the more subcultural comics produced by Fangraphics Press, Cleis Press, Soft Skull Press, and others that specialize in printing LGBTcomics. As Rogers points out, comics have turned to the book industry as a means for wider distribution. With print on demand possibilities and 4-color presses from China entering the market, self-publishing has entered a new economy that allows

circulation globally due to the Internet and marketplaces that exist solely on the Internet. Unlike the demise of newspapers and other "periodical" printing, comics continue to thrive in print form.[72] As scholar Sue-Ellen Case argues, "[T]he victory of the screen, accompanying the victory of global capitalism and the new virtual construction of social and economic practices, yields a variety of consequences."[73] One of these consequences is that subcultural comics that had little distribution power in the 1970s, 1980s, and even the 1990s, now have a global market in which to disseminate. With the advent of ebooks and digitized content, the comic book's very materialness or materiality is changing. The comic book moves across transnational popular culture markets, narrow subcultural niches and alternative publication methods. It does not adhere to any one format as hybrid formats have abounded since its early 20th century U.S. incarnations.[74] The most recent digitization of comics depreciates the comic book as a collectable as it moves into an even more "objectless" market where content hovers in some virtual cloud which is really a data server and this content is downloaded via proprietary software or via membership. This new niche of comics celebrates or values its non-objectness which is in direct conflict with the brick and mortar model of consuming, collecting, and trading comics in print.[75] The object, the comic book, performs as connective tissue in the network of collecting bodies. The comic book is produced (the drawing of it, the printing of it, and the dissemination of it), is sold, traded, collected, and circulated by individuals who are affiliated through fandom or the social network of consuming and appreciating the comic book as an art form. The social network

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[72] Regis Delmontagne, "Chinese Printing Industry: Primed to Be Largest Market," *Printing Impressions*, accessed December 5, 2014, http://www.piworld.com/article/chinese-printing-industry-growth-statistics-regis-delmontagne-25059045/1.

[73] Sue-Ellen Case, *The Domain-Matrix: Performing Lesbian at the End of Print Culture* (Indiana University Press, 1996), 27.

[74] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (HarperCollins, 1994), 18.

[75] Ian Gordon, "Culture of Consumption: Commodification through Superman: Return to Krypton," in *Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories and Methods*, ed. Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith (A&C Black, 2009), 158-9.

(collective) of the specific content of the particular book clusters around the image of the character, i.e., the character of Batwoman – a mainstay of DC (Detective Comics) or Mo in *Dykes to Watch Out For* who brought together lesbian fans in the 1980s and 1990s across the U.S. through subcultural and locale-centered publications like *The Washington Blade*, *Real Girl*, *Bay Times*, mainstream gay and lesbian magazines and newspapers like The *Village Voice*, *Ms.*, and *off our backs*. Like networks that connect real bodies, networks of performances of reading comic books cluster around the drawn bodies of characters and the utterances of gestural text. A particular lesbian social performance is constructed through these objects that connect individuals in the community, which includes the artists who draw the characters and form the narratives as well as the reader/viewers who complete the performances through their interpretive connections to the objects – the strips, the books, the collections of frames. These networks of connections happen across wide networks of circulation, small dense networks of subcultural connections, and with the advent of electronic culture, the possibility of networked culture extends beyond the material of the object.

Figure 2.1: Batman #84, 1954.

Figure 2.2: World's Finest Comics #59, 1952.

Figure 2.3: The Batwoman, #233, 1956.

Figure 2.4: Detective Comics, #233, 1956
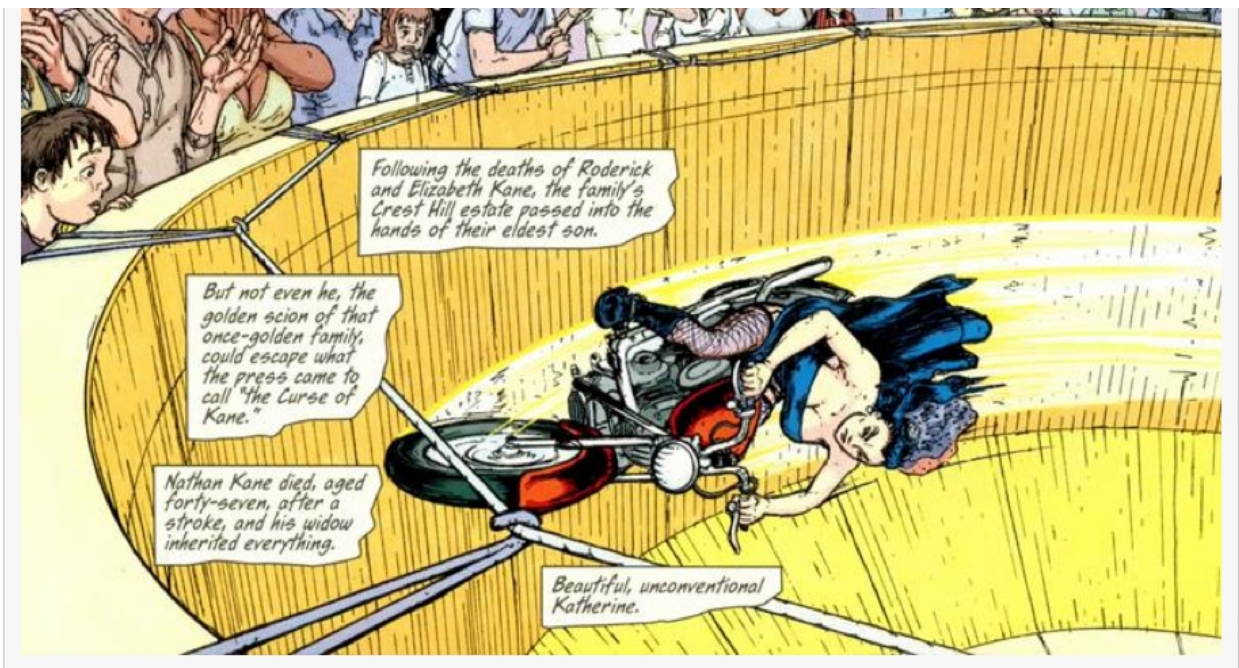
Figure 2.5: The Batwoman, Riding The Wall of Death, 1979, screenshot.

Figure 2.6: Greg Rucka and J.H. Williams III, Batwoman, Elegy, 2011, screenshot.

Figure 2.7: J.H. Williams III and W. Haden Blackman, Batwoman #2, DC Comics, 2011, screenshot.

Figure 2.8: Alison Bechdel, "Holiday On Ice" from *Dykes To Watch Out For*, 1999, screenshot.

Figure 2.9: Karen Platt, cover artwork, *Juicy Mother,*
Vol. 1: Celebration, edited by Jennifer Camper, 2005.
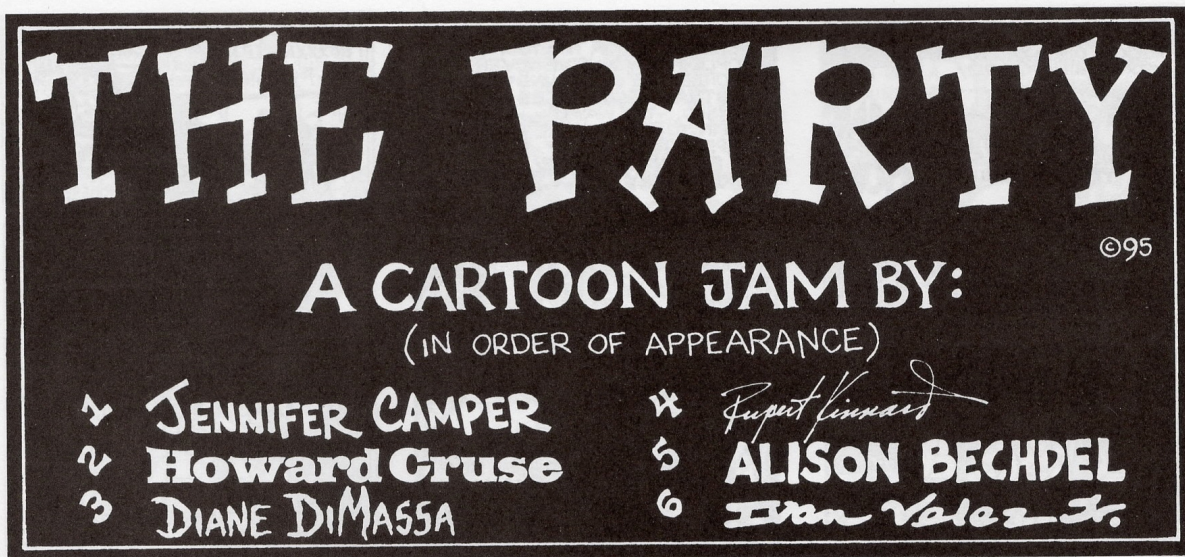
Figure 2.10: Jennifer Camper, "The Party: A Cartoon Jam," from *Juicy Mother, Vol. 1: Celebration*, 1995, 2005.

Figure 2.11: frame 6, "The Party: A Cartoon Jam," from *Juicy Mother, Vol. 1: Celebration*, drawn by Ivan Velez, Jr., 1995, 2005.

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Chapter III: Imagined Networks IRL (In Real Life): The Lesbian Bar and Mapping a Past

In this chapter undertakes a study of the imagination and memory of both individuals and collectives play key roles in the production and the rendering of imagined, shared, and physical networks across real spaces – bars, parade routes, and the stage (live performance) and these varied connections reveal how the lesbian body performs specific socialities in relationship to other bodies and the physical spaces in which these bodies inhabit. The connotation of these spaces as public or semi-private reveal layered meanings of what is public and private visibility within lesbian social realms and the larger society. In this chapter I argue that space is not only produced through the social function of networks or connections and thus produces complex interlocking nodes of relationships, space as both a real, remembered or an imagined phenomenon significantly shapes how lesbian culture performs and is represented offering an alternative archive or historiographic understanding of itself as lesbian culture. I will examine how subcultural expression found in documentary testimonies, photographs, drawings, and performance creates networks of remembered connections that no longer exist in a "now" but are rendered legible through various media. These connections represent and capture a specific place and time, and are references or stand-ins for actual bodies that are no longer. In this chapter I demonstrate how representational systems capture descriptive, measured meaning and through these measurements, an alternative archive is possible for the forgotten, no longer, or erased bodies, structures, and events significant to lesbian culture in the U.S. in the latter part of the 20th century and early part of the 21st century.

In order to investigate how memory and absence render or mark out imagined and real social connections within lesbian culture, it is important to define how I am using the terms

"real," "connections," and "memory" or what is "remembered." This chapter looks at "real" as lived moments and tangible objects. Jean Baudrillard defines "real" as the relationship between presence and absence, Baudrillard writes, "In a real face to face encounter, there is a complex relation, in which each person is an actor at once both present and absent. In on-screen discussion, there is only an alternating presence of one and the other. Expression is more targeted, more functional and completely disembodied."[1] So, for Baudrillard, the vacillation between presence and absence happens through an embodied experience, whereas a virtual or onscreen exchange is disembodied. This distinction will become more important in the next chapter in my examination of online connections. For now, an "In Real Life" connection – emphasizing "Real" as embodied experiences in space together – spaces in which lesbians gather, congregate, socialize and connect. Connections (IRL) occur when bodies are present with each other as actors. I borrow the term actor not from the theatre, but from Bruno Latour's Actor-Network-Theory or ANT. Latour defines an actor as "what is made to act by many others."[2] Within the social Latour writes, "Groups are made, agencies are explored, and objects play a role."[3] What I am contending is that in addition to easily understood associations between human actors, connections also happen through place, objects, and the act of imagination and memory – thus displacing a normative sense of space and time. Borrowing from both queer theorist Judith Halberstam's concept of "queer time and space" and from French cultural-theorist Pierre Nora's theory of "cultural memory," the definition of time can be configured to include or be based on an orientation point and not just a calendrical or clock measurement. Halberstam writes "Queer uses of time and space develop … according to other logics of location, movement, and

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[1] Claude Thibaut, Jean Baudrillard - Baudrillard on the New technologies: An Interview with Claude Thibaut, March 6, 1996 Translated by Suzanne Falcone, March 6, 1996.
[2] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (OUP Oxford, 2007), 46.
[3] Ibid., 87.

identification."[4] Halberstam indicates that geographic or locative positioning influences an understanding or even expression of time – which means that multiple time scapes operate simultaneously. That is, if individual location and position coexist with other positioning – multiple timings occur, and multiple concepts of reality or what is real are understood. According to Pierre Nora, "Self-consciousness emerges under the sign of that which has already happened, as the fulfillment of something always already begun." [5] Nora's argument sets up a direct binary opposition between memory and history. His concept of "Les Lieux de Mémoire" and "Les Milieux de Mémoire" refers to a dialectical relationship and condition of modernity. "Les Lieux de Mémoire" signifies places such as a site where a monument has been erected and displaces the event or memory from the actual bodies or society that experienced the event, whereas "Les Milieux de Mémoire" is the significant bodily, familial, social investment in a connection to the past event and to a heritage of memory. Nora writes, "There are lieux de memoire, sites of memory, because there are no longer milieux de memoire, real environments of memory."[6] However, he points out that time is an active participant in the shaping, reshaping and expression of understanding of the self and history. Time is tied to individual mappings of experiences and these individual experiences interweave or intersect as multiple memories reconstruct a past through the present. What is real or imagined is joined with position and location as well as time. Its expression impacts the way in which a network is created, invested and sustained In Real Life.

Networks are active affiliations, connections of bodies and objects with shared interests, shared culture and at times can be considered communities. A network is not always a

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[4]   Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (NYU Press, 2005), 1.
[5]   Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, no. 26 (April 1, 1989): 7–24, doi:10.2307/2928520.
[6]   Ibid.,7.

community nor is a community synonymous with a network. Pulling apart the definitions of network and community reveals the intersections of both of these terms. Bruno Latour describes a network as a text or narrative with "active" actors as mediators.[7] Latour writes, "network is an expression to check how much energy, movement, and specificity our own reports are able to capture. Network is a concept, not a thing out there." In other words, Latour emphasizes the "active" aspect of a network and its participants as well as its productive nature. A network is made up of actors who create something, they perform, act, react, and move through time and space. So, while Latour describes a network as a conceptual textual active process that reveals the social, Miranda Joseph notes that social relationships as expressed in a community are bound by the forces of capitalism. Joseph writes, "communal subjectivity is constituted not by identity rather through practices of production and consumption."[8] Joseph also writes that "social relationships that are discursively articulated as community are imbricated in capitalism."[9] Through what might be considered a queer counter-community lens, Halberstam writes, "Subcultures provide a vital critique of the seemingly organic nature of "community," and they make visible the forms of unbelonging and disconnection that are necessary to the creation of community."[10] These disconnections and unbelongings are at the heart of subcultural queer community formation and resistance to heteronormativity as well as homogenized articulations of culture. Thus, Halberstam's argument hinges on the movement against "connected" culture as community; the social happens through shared senses of "disconnection."

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[7] Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 138.
[8] Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (U of Minnesota Press, 2002), viii.
[9] Ibid., viii-ix.
[10] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 153.

Time and Space: Mapping the Social

In order to locate or map where and how the social happens between lesbian bodies (actors), I turn to the underpinnings of any locative device: time or temporality, and space or the relationship of the body to other bodies and objects in three dimensions. According to Donna Haraway "time and space organize each other in variable relationships that show any claim to totality."[11] In other words, Haraway argues that to interpret any figure, body, or phenomenon we need to look at how time and space (together) are organized. Haraway writes, "Temporalities intertwine with particular spatial modalities … ."[12] The language associated with a particular cultural phenomenon signifies its time-space relationship and its organization of these principles. Borrowing from Jen Luc Nancy's ideas on community, Judith Halberstam argues that the term "community" is linked to a Judeo-Christian emergence of the ritual of communion. Halberstam points out that subcultural movements like punk rock in the 1970s in England as well as more recent cultural phenomenon of riot dyke bands and drag queens pull apart the normative timeline of childhood into adolescent, delaying adulthood and reproductive futurity, Halberstam also locates these movements in specific urban centers, thus mapping queer time to queer space as resistant time-space.[13] The combination of time and space also referred to as the fourth dimension or the time-space continuum is, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari argue in *A Thousand Plateaus*, "a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance." Deleuze and Guattari define an individual as a "longitude and latitude, a set of speeds and slownesses between unformed particles, a set of nonsubjectified affects."[14]

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[11] Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Modest−Witness@Second−Millennium.FemaleMan−Meets−OncoMouse: Feminism and Technoscience* (Psychology Press, 1997), 41-2.
[12] Ibid., 12.
[13] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 5.
[14] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, 1

Individuals are not subjects but events in assemblages inseparable from time and space. Deleuze and Guattari's explanation or definition of a body is quick to reject notions of a self as separate from a background or as independent subjects. Instead, an individual body is a part of a larger whole that possesses potentiality as well as movement in relationship to its membership in an assemblage and other assemblages.[15] How this is useful in an investigation of queer communities and specifically lesbian subcultures is through the application of assemblage theory as a reference point for how lesbians connect or assemble and break apart – the mapping of the motion, the longitudinal and latitudinal positions and timing of networks. This application reveals how groups assemble in specific spaces and the movement or events that shape the politics of visibility and erasure of these specific groups or assemblages. The mapping of space, the lesbian bar, and its relationship to the past, present, and future marks a genealogy of resistant communities and an erasure of these pasts as well as potential shifts in future coordinates.

Visibility and Erasure: The Disappearance and Appearance of Networks

Within queer and specifically lesbian culture the politics of being seen or not seen has long been at the apex of the LGBT triangle. Privileging of sight, who is seen by whom and where one is seen affords access and or refusal, inclusion in historical narratives or exclusion from the archive. As Judith Halberstam argues in the chapter "The Transgender Look" from her book *In A Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives,* visibility for the transgender subject is a paradox. Passing and disappearing are at times intricately connected to certain kinds of visibility and politics.[16] Halberstam illustrates how visibility interrupts time and how time

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edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 261-2.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 76-78.

queers visibility. Visibility becomes attached to bodies. As Nicole Fleetwood argues visibility

politics are intricately attached to "bodies, goods, ideas, and aesthetic practices..."[17] Performance

Studies theorist Sue-Ellen Case in the introduction to *Feminist and Queer Performance:Critical*

Strategies points out the complex politics associated with lesbian visibility and what she calls

"INvisibility."[18] Case's emphasis on the prepositional articulates a connection between spatial

and temporal relationships to visibility. The relationship of site to sight implies an entire system

of meaning. Visual Culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff remarks, "[Visual Culture] is a fluid

interpretive structure, centered in understanding the response to visual media of both individuals

and groups in everyday life."[19] I argue that visibility is attached to how we see places, spaces,

and locations in and out of conventional time and how we remember these places, spaces and

locations. How we see is as much about signification and signfiers as it is about the position of

the gaze. As part of an urbanization and gentrification process tied to late Capitalism, the

disappearing spaces of lesbian culture, like the bar, continue to be mapped through palimpsestic

strategies taken up by artists and performers. Through the use of memory, documentation,

testimony, and performative strategies of textual modalities, artists like Kaucyila Brooke, Liz

Rosenfeld and Mary Coble produce visualizations of events – events that point to the social, that

reveal networks of associations – which have disappeared and are no longer visible. Mirzoeff

argues, "Visual culture does not depend on pictures but on this modern tendency to picture or

visualize existence."[20] So, while subcultural institutions like the lesbian bar disappear, the power

of "picturing" a past and "visualizing" what isn't in the archive provide a new space of historical

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[17]   Nicole R Fleetwood, "Introduction," in *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 20.

[18]   Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminist and Queer Performance: Critical Strategies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 8.

[19]   Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Introduction," in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (Psychology Press, 2002), 11.

[20]   Ibid., 6.

record.

Interactive Spaces

Like the term "network," "space" reveals a complex notion of the physical, conceptual, and temporal. Henri Lefebvre argues that social space is "the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others."[21] Space is produced through the connections of bodies, objects, and movement or action. Bruno Latour argues against space as a measurable or fixed social phenomenon, instead he suggests that by examining social connections an ever changing landscape emerges. He writes, "It is a landscape which runs through, crosses out, and totally shortcuts the former loci of 'local interaction' and of 'global context'." Locative discrete language that would normally identify place and the types of space produced are expressed and understood as networked or interconnected, assembled with humans and nonhumans alike. Latour describes these connections across sites, "In effect, what has been designated by the term 'local interaction' is the assemblage of all the other local interactions distributed elsewhere in time and space, which have been brought to bear on the scene through the relays of various non-human actors. It is the transported presence of places into other ones that I call articulators or localizers."[22] In other words, any place is a "space" that is affected by other times and places and actors, thus creating a hidden network of affiliations or "localizers." The location or space is actuated by hidden events and actors that cross time and space.

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[21] Henri Lefebvre, *The production of space* (Oxford, OX, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991), 73.
[22] Ibid., 194.

Sites of Lesbian Sociality

The bar within lesbian culture has long been a significant space of political, social, and sexual connections. Prior to the 1970s feminist and gay rights movement, the bar served as space where lesbians would meet to drink, dance, show affection, and potentially "hook-up."[23] It also served as a meeting space where political planning, activist visions, and collective structures were manifested. The space of the lesbian bar is constituted of an historical past and embodied memories. As geographic specific sites of coming out and performative spaces housing the sights and sounds of coming out, the bar is an integral social space for the lesbian community.[24] As an historical past, the bar holds significant meaning in LGBT politics of visibility as a flashpoint in the beginnings of the Gay Liberation Front – sparked by the Stonewall Riots – which began as a political and social protest in and around the bar. The Stonewall Inn was being targeted by police and raided for "illegal homosexual activity."[25] Bars in the U.S. have a long and tenuous relationship with the law, from the 1920s speakeasy in an era of Prohibition to the 1950s neighborhood taverns, clubs and gay and lesbian same-sex bars. The bar is an American icon of "neighborhood," "subcultural denotation," and underpinning of what is complex about a community and its intersections – class, race, gender, orientation.[26] The bar was the last place Matthew Shepard was seen alive; the bar is "a place where everybody knows your name" like on the television show *Cheers;* the bar is a space to meet, hook up, where social activism can happen; the bar is the performative space where great dance scenes are staged as in the television

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[23] Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 29.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (Macmillan, 2012), 97.
[26] David Gottlieb, "The Neighborhood Tavern and the Cocktail Lounge a Study of Class Differences," *American Journal of Sociology* 62, no. 6 (May 1, 1957): 559–62, doi:10.2307/2773130.

series *Queer As Folk;* the former bar *Maud's* was famous for lesbian culture, night life and political activism in San Francisco and the subject of a full-length feature documentary titled *Last Call at Maud's* (1993); the bar holds a significant role in the community where so many lesbians meet, met, and will meet friends, lovers, affiliates, and other connections. The bar is a social space where lesbian bodies connect in order to form networks across shared interests, associations, and desires.[27]

Networked Spaces

The concept of space, as previously defined, focuses on the singularity of space and on its connection to other spaces via a network. For example, a bar indicates a specific location, an address, or a street name, a cross road, an intersection, a zip code, a meeting time and place. Space becomes meaningful through its reference to place, location, a moment, an action, an event, or something limited in terms of geography and time. The imagination and representation of space is at times more complex than a singular pinpointed location in time or place. Spaces can exist simultaneously as connected and networked locations, places, actions, and moments where plurality and complexity coexist. In our everyday lives, we experience networked spaces through highway systems, the internet, big-box chain stores. Networked spaces are both real and virtual (virtual in the sense that the network happens via electronic signals and technology and real in the sense that actual bodies occupy them, connect them, use them, and imagine them). The interstate highway system, not always an efficient network, is nonetheless, a network of pavement and concrete that connects communities, bodies, and goods in real time. Like any

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[27]   Kennedy and Davis, 29.

network, a highway system divulges the politics of its own construction and use. According to John Urry in his book *Mobilities*, "the car-system reorganizes time and space … . This capacity of automobility to reshape public and private life and time and space through a dialectic of freedom/coercion."[28] Urry aligns freedom with the road. The car or automobile and all the subsequent systems and industries associated with cars create or reorganize specific types of spaces and time. Henri Lefebvre argues that the construction or production of space, specifically social space, "is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder."[29] So, in other words Lefebvre points out how social space is inclusive of not just discrete objects and bodies but their connections physically and temporally. The network's apparent structure produces a sociality that is dependent on its participants, actions or what is produced, including its past, present, and even future connections.

Judith Halberstam argues that "Queer uses of time and space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction."[30] Drawing from Michel Foucault, Halberstam writes, "queer friendships, queer networks, and existence of these relations in space and in relation to the use of time mark out the particularity and indeed the perceived menace of homosexual life." Halberstam is clearly aligning queer with two modes: one, where queer is oppositional and two, where queer is "not" heterosexual. For this reason, in order to advance my own argument, I will use "lesbian space" and "lesbian time" but not "queer" as I am investigating the phenomenon of lesbian bars and lesbian bodies connecting in social networks. As a physical space, a lesbian bar by definition serves the lesbian community; its

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28   John Urry, *Mobilities*, 1 edition (Polity Press, 2007), 117.
29   Henri Lefebvre, *The production of space* (Oxford, OX, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991), 73.
30   Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 1.

affiliation with "Lesbian" and not "Gay" sets up the exclusionary and inclusionary boundaries of its spatial, temporal and social network. What Halberstam does offer in her definition of queer space and queer time is an acknowledgment of non-heterosexual space and non-heterosexual time as potential alternative social production for the queer or LGBT community.

Space, then, is necessary for alternative community building, alternative politics, and non-heterosexual desire. What this chapter aims to examine is the ways that disappeared spaces continue to influence how a community builds itself, how non-space creates alternative politics, and where desire lies when the building is no longer. For the lesbian community in urban spaces like San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York City, disappeared spaces are the result of gentrification, disappearing middle class, and housing shortages.[31]

Networking through Memory of Space and Place: Photography

The relationship of the photograph both to space and time presses at something the camera can capture that is there in space and time, then represented in that moment – frozen and suspended. But, the photograph can function as more than a mere document, as Rebecca Schneider suggests in *Performing Remains*. Schneider rejects the framing of the photograph as something not live (dead) and something that refers always to the past. Schneider argues that the photograph is more complicated in its relationship to time and to the subject's pose (still or live) and the viewer's relationship to viewing.[32] Photography has always been linked to time – the nature of the mechanism is time. Exposure is an act of unmasking and a durational act. The photograph is a depiction or light writing of transmission, reflection, and refraction of light. It

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[31]   Amin Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 18.
[32]   Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2011), 141-2.

simulates real space and is embodied in a two dimensional object which functions as a palimpsestic artifact, referencing a moment when something occurred; the shutter opens and shuts, time is measured. Susan Sontag in *On Photography* argues that "Photographs are a way of imprisoning reality … . One can't possess reality, one can possess images – one can't possess the present but one can possess the past." Marianne Hirsch suggests that the photograph "testifies to that past instant's reality."[33] Time is stopped for an instant and the viewer of the photograph looks back in time. The photograph is evidence and ephemeral residue. Ephemera, the archive, and oral history are tactics for a project of remembering. Objects become stand-ins for bodies that are no longer, for lost connections of bodies and for empty spaces where bodies once connected. The photograph holds a central position in collective memory as well as nostalgia about spaces where history and action intertwine. Well-known Picture theorist W.J.T. Mitchell in his book *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* argues that a "photograph occupies the same position in the world of material signs that the 'impression' does in the world of mental signs or 'ideas' … ."[34] Media outlets like newspapers, magazines, television, and even online sources use photographs to solidify a visual concept or impression into the minds of its viewers and readers about an event without always using the mimetic image from the actual event. The opposite also occurs when a specific image of an event stands in for larger concepts or historical moments. New York Times columnist, curator, and academic Andy Grundberg notes that "a symbolic photograph can supersede in importance a picture that purports to represent an event as it happens."[35] So, photographs have "mighty weight and powerful narratives embedded" in their iconicity.[36] And the photograph can simply refer to an idea, its meaning is produced through the

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[33] Marianne Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14, no. 1 (2001): 5–37, doi:10.1353/yale.2001.0008.

[34] W. J. Thomas Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), 60.

[35] Andy Grundberg, *Crisis of the Real* (New York: Aperture, 2010), 177.

[36] Nicole R Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (Chicago; London: The

act of viewing and through cultural construction. "The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being, as Sontag says, will touch me like the delayed rays of a star."[37] In other words, the photograph's power is in its presentness, in its capture, and its viewing or what Schneider calls "an encounter."[38]

In Real Life Embodiment: Implied Bodies in Kaucyila Brooke's Photography

By referring to what is beyond the surface and what is excluded or erased, a photograph reveals what is not there through its metonymy, simultaneously existing as indexical of what is there. The metonymic power of a photograph is elicited through the performance of the missing body. When a photograph, say a "tourist" photograph of the Eiffel Tower in Paris is captured, the photograph points to the object depicted, described (manipulated into the substrate of the film by light) and it stands in as a part of a whole ... the whole is the event or the vacation/visit to Paris, France and all the other experiences, flavors, and "Les milieux de mémoire" associated with temporal and embodied performances outside of the frame.[39] I draw from Pierre Nora's theory of the "Les Milieux de Mémoires" as a way to understand the photograph as a memory device and as something that connects lost environments to memories and bodies. The photograph connects bodies to places and objects, even those outside of the frame. Nora defines "Les Milieux de

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University of Chicago Press, 2011), 34.

[37] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Vintage, 1993), 80-1.

[38] Schneider, *Performing Remains Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, 163.

[39] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, no. 26 (April 1, 1989): 7–24, doi:10.2307/2928520.

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Mémoire" as real environments of memory that are no longer.[40] The photograph can point to (indexicality) what "used to be." The photograph can "incite" a response to and in and out of time by the viewers or spectators in what Rebecca Schneider refers to as "inter-temporality."[41] Christoph Wulf argues that images can create community in the sense that images help a group recall a social memory and through this recall the linking of members within the group becomes even stronger. Wulf writes, "representations and mental images of social life are key aspects of both the individual and collective worlds of images and of social imaginary."[42] Thus, photography and photographs have an uncanny, poetic function as well as being an object that produces the social. This function of the photograph as performing the social and being a referent to an embodied event, metonymically is key in seeing what is not included in or absent from the frame of the images in *The Boy Mechanic* by artist Kaucyila Brooke. *The Boy Mechanic* encompasses series of large scale photographs taken by Brooke as well as video interviews, text panels, drawings of mapped connections, and snapshots. She describes the project:

> Loss of architecture and the frailties of public memories have often been the
> motivation for photographic documentation of changing urban spaces; focusing on
> the lesbian bar reveals how sexuality and sexual identity inform larger narratives
> about public identity and social space.[43]

Brooke's schema and skena conjures the work of social documentarians and urban topographists as she captures dilapidated buildings, deserted lots, and boarded up buildings. But, it is what is no longer in the photograph that constitutes a metonymic reference to lesbian bodies, lesbian

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[40]   Nora, 7.
[41]   Schneider, 168.
[42]   Christoph Wulf, "Images of Social Life," in *Dynamics and Performativity of Imagination: The Image between the Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Bernd Huppauf and Christoph Wulf (Routledge, 2013), 174.
[43]   Kaucyila Brooke, *The Boy Mechanic*, photography, drawing, video, 2002-present. http://www.kaucyilabrooke.com/index.php?/projects/archive--the-boy-mechanic/

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history, and to the networked connections of spaces through past embodied practices.

Much has been written about the evidentiary nature of photography, both as a medium of documentation and as an artifact or object of the archive. The debates about its performative qualities and its presentness and pastness are also numerous. My argument centers on how the photograph serves as a touchstone to multiple connections across time and space – it creates connections in social networks. As a result of its engagement with the social and with the imaginary, the photograph is a performative object. The performance and cultural theorist Peggy Phelan claims that the photograph is a reproduction of performance. Her argument locates performance as existing as an embodied moment that is never fixed, always in the process of dying because once it is represented, i.e. photographed or videotaped, and viewed... the original is gone. For Wulf, the photograph itself is performative. The distinction here between the two arguments focuses on photography as a substitute for a performance or live event versus photography as performative text. I am not suggesting that photography is a substitute for a live event, a point that Schneider pulls apart in *Performing Remains* and argues for the crossing of medial boundaries in the study of an image, challenging absolutist assumptions about performance or photography.[44] Roland Barthes argues that "Not only is the Photograph never, in essence, a memory (whose grammatical expression would be the perfect tense, whereas the tense of the Photograph is the aorist), but it actually blocks memory, quickly becomes a counter-memory." So, while the debates about whether a photograph can capture the live, or whether or not a photograph is a true memory toss around as mimesis and performance undo each other, I suggest that a photograph performs the work of the social through its ability to (re)connect place, body, and time.

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[44]   Schneider, 168.

Locations of sites of memory, an idea heralded by Pierre Nora in his essay, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," are disembodied places, objects, buildings that mark a past event or "unmark" a present memory. Nora describes "Les Lieux de Mémoire" as places of memory that contain empty objects and disembodied monuments memorializing the past.[45] For Nora, the concept of "Les milieux de mémoire" is where true memory resides. Dislocation of memory, erasure, and connections across time are some of the ideas found in *The Boy Mechanic.* The project consists of several bodies of work differentiated through geographical location.[46]

Photographic, performative, and temporal *The Boy Mechanic* which includes sites of "former" lesbian bars in multiple cities – San Diego, Los Angeles, New York, and Berlin, continues to grow as Brooke collects more and more "memories." Brooke captures doorways, windows, walls that seem to suggest entering, exiting, visiting, looking – the bodies. The text panels and interviews operate in conjunction with the photographs creating "Les Milieux de Mémoire" – recalling stories and memories of what the bar "used" to be called or who frequented the bar. The collection about Los Angeles currently features sixteen different locations. The locations are no longer lesbian bars. They exist only in the memory and the performances of that memory, and in the texts of these recollections.

The locations are represented and visualized around maps which are organized by the principle logic of the highway system of Los Angeles. There are three main maps: West Los Angeles, North Hollywood, and East Los Angeles. The complex history of Los Angeles revolves around resources and access. Since the turn of the 20th century, Los Angeles has been a haven for the automobile. The tourist industry boasted boulevards and beautiful panoramic coastal

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[45] Nora.
[46] Kaucyila Brooke, *The Boy Mechanic*, accessed May 25, 2012, http://www.theboymechanic.com/.

highways.[47] The structure and web of highways continues to sprawl like never ending vectors in a virtual landscape. As Jean Baudrillard notes even the ocean doesn't seem to halt the inevitable concrete byway.[48]

Brooke's North Hollywood Map reveals the location called The Big Horn. The series of photographs of Big Horn depict an empty field, rusted fence, numbered sign, and urban street. There is no building at this site of memory. (Figure 3.1) There is no indication of a bar existing. The text panel that is joined with these photographs of The Big Horn reads "First it was The Big Horn and later it became Club 22. Now it's an empty lot. Building Red-Tagged after the Northridge quake and they tore it down. Address doesn't exist it would be somewhere between 4888 and 4878." The photograph of the empty field with only grass and weeds is a large scale print, assembled together like a panoramic stitch. The stitch is apparent as the four portrait (vertical) oriented images overlap and connect to blend into the one landscape (horizontal) oriented photograph. This stitching itself is like the lost memories of a forgotten space, memories being pieced together through gay yellow page listings, oral history, and the lesbian body, all outside of the frame of the photograph and physically.

Within the green field of grassy weeds, shadows and highlights suggest a specific time of early morning or late afternoon. The long shadows of trees moving from the bottom to the top of the frame. A human shadow appears, perhaps the shadow of the photographer peering through the bars of the rusted metal fence, ghosting the ground and the frame. The shadow like memory is looking for a past in the present only to become past as soon as the shutter closes. The text panels describe what used to be there. The image and the text description perform part of the act of disappearance. As Peggy Phelan writes, "The descriptions remind us how loss acquires

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47   Norman M. Klein, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* (Verso, 1997).
48   Jean Baudrillard, *America* (Verso Books, 1989).

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meaning and generates recovery – not only of and for the object, but for the one who remembers. The disappearance of the object is fundamental to performance; it rehearses and repeats the disappearance of the subject who longs to be remembered."[49] The next image in the series is also a "stitched" photograph – a panoramic of the same location. This time the viewpoint is from across the street – outside of the fence, on the other side, locating the empty lot. The text panels describe the lesbian bar that "used to be." "First it was The Big Horn and later it became Club 22. Now it's an empty lot." The text tracks the name of the lesbian bar and its later incarnations.

In *The Boy Mechanic* the lesbian bar is both a fixed physical location in the photograph and an unfixed location in memory. The photographs and texts complicate temporality as they depict a past, a present and a longing for what Jose Muñoz describes as a "stepping out of the linearity of straight time" into a queer temporality.[50] Muñoz describes how desire in a photograph "is born of the no-longer conscious, the rich resonance of remembrance, distinct pleasures felt in the past."[51] In Brooke's work this idea of presence of pleasure is performed through the memory or palimpsestic triggers of these locations. The photographs connect the memory of the interviewees to the objects of the installation. These memories exist outside of the frame of the photograph as the photograph depicts an absence and an erasure of lesbian bars and the disappearance of the social network.

Another location on the North Hollywood map in *The Boy Mechanic/LA* is the Hialeah House 8542 Lankershim Blvd. North Hollywood, CA. The text panel reads "Now it is Vasco Electric. The address is missing because they don't use the same door that the club used to but the door is still there. And you can see where the window was." The collection of images that

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[49] Peggy Phelan, "Chapter 7: The Ontology of Performance: Reoresentation without Reproduction," in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), 147.
[50] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 26.
[51] Ibid.

depict this location include a photograph of the highway system, street sign with the block number, and traffic stop sign. (Figure 3.2) This melange of signage suggests a dependency on the automobile and highway for access and mobility. In Norman M. Klein's book *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and The Erasure of Memory*, the automobile is credited for the depopulation and "business exodus of downtown" resulting in over two-thirds of the metro center devoted to the automobile. Los Angeles has barely looked back with its notorious traffic jams, sprawling highway system, and suburban intoxication.[52] Brooke's project archives and situates the invisible lesbian body in between these relocations, suburban sprawl and automobile-centric figurings. According to Brooke her motivation for developing *The Boy Mechanic* "was to make a picture archive of the buildings and addresses... the locations of the bars would disappear as women died or forgot about the important things that happened there, because bars are seen as disreputable places – it is an even more fugitive memory."[53]

Lesbian Love Octagon: Sites of Sociality, Performing Nodes

In the 2013 musical *Lesbian Love Octagon,* A Musical Comedy About Dyke Drama by Kimberlea Kressal and Will Larche (book and music, respectively), sites of sociality connect the characters across an imagined community of femmes, butches, dykes, trans, and other lesbian love interests. The world of the play is imagined as a late 1990s encounter across locations in New York: the Lower East Side and Park Slope in Brooklyn. The setting as described in the script reveals a specific, if not nostalgic aesthetic, "the world of the play should feel as if the characters have built it themselves, it should ooze the DIY aesthetic of late 90s lesbian culture, it

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[52] Klein, *The History of Forgetting*, 47.
[53] Kaucyila Brooke, email message to author about "The Boy Mechanic," June 7, 2012.

should feel like a "zine" or a riot grrl manifesto."[54] The community depicted in *Lesbian Love Octagon* is imagined as riot grrrl infused femmes and butches who intersect across various locations: the women's bookstore, the lesbian bar, the lesbian cafe, the sex shop, and an apartment in Brooklyn, NY (Park Slope). The DIY (Do-it- yourself) style of the '90s youth culture and the specific locations depicted in the script create an imagined community of lesbians of past, a community that is no longer physically connected as the bars have closed, the bookstores shutdown and neighborhood gentrification. Yet audiences experience the community in real time through memory and through the scenic aesthetics. Benedict Anderson defines a community – "Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined."[55] Kressal and Larche weave together the myth of the '90s lesbian community into a touching story of love and friendship that interconnect through the various social networks fundamental to queer community. While the places described in the script are "stereotypes" of lesbian experience, the locations anchor the characters across private and public queer spaces. The play opens in the Wimmen's bookstore and cafe, setting the scene for an environment of feminist and lesbian politics and showcasing the riot grrl paraphernalia and cultural production of 90s music, 'zines and protest posters. In the opening song "An Ordinary Day At The Wimmin's Bookstore" a bookstore volunteer sings, "Who mixed the Kathy Acker in with the Gertrude Stein?" Then the girl with a guitar sings, "Did you get in the new Ani?" Only to be answered with "She's no longer carried, ' cause she got married." Immediately we have a mental picture of punk and riot grrl style through the cultural references. The line about Ani DiFranco, while humorous, is a jab at Righteous Babe's indie music label creator and musician Ani Difranco's heterosexual marriage and subsequent "rejection" by lesbian fans. Other

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[54] Kimberlea Kressal and Will Larche, *Lesbian Love Octagon*, 2009, 5.
[55] Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 1991), 6.

lines in the song illustrate the third-wave '90s aesthetic and gender politics like "And the butch girls are packing for a gender revolution," and "She's a less than butch dyke." The references to the expansion of the butch/femme dyad and the beginnings of a visible transgender subjectivity are highlighted as the story begins with a break up revealing the inevitable lesbian web of interconnected dating pool – a network of lesbians on the Lower East Side. The Chorus lays the foundation for the story to begin:

CHORUS gossips

She's a less than butch dyke with a broken heart

This is the point where our octagon starts

CHORUS

Drama O'Mama Drama

CHORUS MEMBER #1

I hear she got dumped for a post-op tranny

CHORUS

Drama It's Drama-Rama

CHORUS MEMBER #2

You mean you haven't heard he's her ex-girlfriend Jerry.

(Kressal and Larche, *Lesbian Love Octagon*, 2009, 7)

The following scenes take place in an apartment of Wendy (the character who has dumped Sue-the less than butch dyke) and Jerry's in Park Slope named Dyke Slope in the script. After the couple unpacks, the scene shifts to the sex shop where a priestess named Anya is leading a group

of women in meditation. More references to a '90s lesbian popular culture abound as Anya leads

the women in prayer- "to the great goddess k.d. Lang, memorize the words to every song she

ever sang!" Perhaps referencing Annie Sprinkle's film *Sluts and Goddesses Video Workshop –*

Or How To Be A Sex Goddess in 101 Easy Steps(1992) which features on the Video cover an

image of tantric Anya (Annie Sprinkle) as new age version of the hindu goddess Kali- Sprinkle's

version with her multiple arms, holding vibrators and dildos (see figure 3.3). In *Lesbian Love*

Octagon the women who are mediating with Anya (denoted as Priestesses) chant the names of

sex toys:

PRIESTESSES

Hitachi

Magic Wand

Deluxe

Rubber Harness

Blue Hawaiian

Neptune Ring Vibe

Rabbit Pearl

(Kressal and Larche, 10)

The scene shifts from sex shop to the lesbian bar as the character Wendy telephones Anya and

asks her to meet her at the bar in order to cheer up Sue who is in her newly found "single-hood."

Taking center stage in the musical, the bar reveals more than just love interests – it represents a

larger phenomenon of how the social is formed and performed. As a literal site of the social, the

ever disappearing lesbian bar continues to play a part in the mythos of lesbian relationships from monogamous hook-ups to polyamorous connections, butch/femme expressions and alternative transgender manifestations. The lesbian bar is an important physical space that marks an historical and social past in lesbian culture, politics and community. According to Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis in their extensive ethnographic study of the history of a lesbian community in Buffalo, New York, the lesbian bar in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s created a space of "possibility for group consciousness and activity."[56] The bar was a place where lesbians built community. Even prior to the 1930s, gay and lesbian bars were "well established in New York City."[57] And of course the bar has played a central role in gay and lesbian civil rights with the Stonewall Riots as one of the tipping points in gay and lesbian visibility, action, and protest – often cited as a changing moment in gay and lesbian history in the U.S.[58]

In *Lesbian Love Octagon* the bar circulates as a symbolic space – the bookstore song, "An Ordinary Day At The Wimmin's Bookstore" – shifts from being about the bookstore to threading various characters across different places – pulling them all together to the 'Lesbian Bar." The refrain, "To The Lesbian Bar" brings the characters literally from the sex shop, the bookstore and Park Slope to meet up at the bar. The song returns to its beginning chorus ending with the lyrics:

> JERRY AND DARLA
>
> *And in Dyke Slope, where we lesbians reside*

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[56] Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993) , 29.

[57] Ibid., 31.

[58] Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (Macmillan, 2012) , 97-99.

ALL

A Love triangle is far too small

SUE, JERRY, DARLA, WENDY, JESS, CHRIS, ANYA, AND SCOUT

But an octagon can include us all

CHORUS

Here

At the Wimmin's Bookstore, Bookstore, Bookstore

(Kressal and Larche, 14)

In addition to representing a social and political space where bodies interact, the bar is used as a node (of connection) where the characters collide and disperse. The bookstore is also used as a node-like space- where characters interweave, cross paths, dropping in and surprising each other. Nodes serve as spaces of affiliations and connections. They connect one site to another site and strong links or clusters of nodes represent strong community.[59] Within the world of the play the other spaces serve various functions in terms of depicting a '90s lesbian scene such as the sex toy store and the cafe where the characters have Sunday brunch – these spaces are a part of the cluster representing the lesbian community in the play. The world of the play also hinges on meetings on street corners. So, location and time help tell the story of Sue as a story of networked connections and disconnections as Sue "bumps" into her ex on a street corner, hooks up with her other ex, and creates the entanglement of the octagon. (Figures 3.4 and 3.5)

Lesbian Love Octagon presents overt stereotypes of lesbians in tangled webs or networks of love relationships. The play furthers the concept of the lesbian network by staging scenes in

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[59] Albert-Laszlo Barabasi, "Introduction," in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, ed. Zizi Papacharissi (Routledge, 2010), 1–14.

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different locations, simultaneously. The opening scene, while predominantly set in the Wimmin's Bookstore, highhlights other "nodal" locations specific to the story. What this does is to distort the time and place connections of lesbian spaces. While one character sings a refrain in the bookstore, another character picks up the melody in the Lesbian bar, and two other characters begin in Park Slope (Dyke Slope) only to enter the bookstore toward the end of the the scene. The melody pulls together all of the locations, notes performing the work of linking characters (bodies), settings (locations), under the "time" of the music. Figure 3.5 depicts (using network visualization software) the ways that the spaces are connected via geographical proximity as well as through specific characters. I also link the "love" relationships: past and present" through linking lines or "connections." What this visualization reveals is how both bodies and spaces can act as hubs within complex networks and that time is also connected through bodies and locations.

The Backroom: Linking Time and Locations Through A Body

In her fifteen minute performance titled *The Backroom,* media and performance artist Liz Rosenfeld melds together remembered events that are separated by years and geographic space into a new site where the presence of the body cannot escape a past or the present. Rosenfeld's performance relies on past recollections, an audience's present experience of these recollections, and the performer's embodied experience in real time through the dislocation of remembered time. Rosenfeld conjures a physical reality through her monologue which transports her and the audience to a childhood location of shame and an adult exploration in sexuality. The performance relies on the textual testimony or spoken word as Rosenfeld recalls events separated

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by time and space. The two social spaces: summer camp and the bar are connected through the performer's memory; memory is performed via her body, through the mechanism of blindfolding herself and through her vocal expressions and physical gestures. The presentation and use of sensory deprivation which alters the input and output of information for both the performer and the audience forces both the performer and the audience to relate to the "memories" as if they are being pulled out of the recesses of the mind of the performer for the first time as traces of physical sensations.

Unlike Kaucyila Brooke's work that relies on memory through a present absence, Rosenfeld's work relies on the presence of the body and its ability to "reconnect" experiences from disparate locations and time. Rebecca Schneider argues that mimesis and the theatricality are "vehicles for access to the transitive, performative, and cross-temporal real."[60] Borrowing from Gertrude Stein's *Lectures in America: Plays*, Schneider problematizes the concept of live and presence as a complex relationship between "reading, hearing, and viewing." Schneider unfolds many of the debates about "liveness" and "time" and settles on a definition that performance is a "mode of access" that does not disappear, thus it is separate from any notion of linear time if it is to be read across media. So, while Schneider is dissecting the modes of "re/performance" in civil war reenactments "as" access to the the live, the dead, the present and the past, Schneider unravels many of the articulations and debates surrounding re/performing, re/circulating, and re/living historical and contemporary artworks. Schneider writes:

> ... the performance studies lens that looks at everything "as" performance might limit cross-medial inquiry. Rather, let us ask the following: How can we account not only for the way differing media cite and incite each other but the ways that the meaning of one form *takes place* in the response of another? Relatedly, how can we account for a

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[60] Schneider, *Performing Remains,* 30.

temporal inter (in)animation by which times touch, conversations take place inter-
temporally, and the live lags or drags or *stills*?[61]

In other words, Schneider not only questions the multitude of theories within performance

studies and critical theory that exclude cross-disciplinary approach to examining and researching

a cross-discipline like performance, Schneider argues that media specificity should not occlude a

cross-media analysis rather media is interrelated in the sense that one borrows approaches,

techniques, conceptualizations from another. Schneider unpacks the complexity of performance

through the use of many positions and likewise photography. And through these various

positions we can then see performance as an act of remaining and an act of collective memory

that challenges notions of disappearance. Liz Rosenfeld's performance of *The Backroom*

confronts visual, aural, and felt notions of a disappeared body – the body of the no longer child –

performing a memory of that child. So, through the act of performance, Rosenfeld creates an

access point to memory and to what remains in her body.

In *The Backroom*, Rosenfeld begins the performance facing upstage, holding a wireless

handheld microphone (see figure 3.7). A soundscape begins to play...depicting the social scene

of the inside of a bar. We hear voices, the sound of glasses, and an overall ambience of multiple

bodies talking, chatting, conversing – the location is vague – as it could be any bar, we do not

discern any actual conversations or words, just the sound of people interacting. Rosenfeld begins

to speak: "I'm so fat that when I fall in love I break it."[62] Her diatribe of so fat jokes continues for

a few minutes, then she turns around and we see that she is blindfolded. She feels for the chair

next to her, and settles in (see figure 3.4). The soundscape changes to sounds of slurping, licking,

clicking as Rosenfeld begins to recall her fist experience with "this mythical place" – the

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[61]   Ibid., 168.
[62]   Liz Rosenfeld, *The Backroom*, performance, video docmentation, 2011, https://vimeo.com/user4333102.

backroom in a gay bar. She recollects:

> The first time I went cruising I was 21. And I thought I was passing as much as I possibly could. I bound my breasts. I had really really short hair at the time – I was quite androgynous – as I possibly could. I was really really nervous and it was up north in Chicago, at this leather bear bar called "Touché. And I thought "okay, well, if I could pass anywhere, it could possibly be in a bear bar." And I remember I walked in and nobody said anything to me and I sat at the bar longingly looking at the backroom, wondering what was going on in there, had a beer. And finally, the bartender said, "Why don't you go check out the backroom?" And I thought, "Oh My God, I'm passing. I'm actually about to pass for the first time in a cruising space. And I went to the backroom of this bear bar. It was really hot.[63]

Rosenfeld continues to narrate her "first" experience passing as a gay man in a gay space. Through describing the memory in great detail, Rosenfeld re-lives her backroom encounter in a different time and space – namely a live performance in a gallery/theatre setting (see figure 3.8). During the backroom recollection, the soundscape of "guys jerking off" becomes louder and more prominent, forcing the memory even closer to the present time-space. Rosenfeld draws a distinct comparison to her memory of the backroom being bright than what she had first imagined the backroom to be and the live performance under red light, where she, the performer is blindfolded, unable to see the audience, to see their reaction. In the backroom, her body has access to the bacchus (in her memory) where her body is incorporated into "the scene." Just as her memory accesses the point where she thinks she will be found out, to her surprise and delight, a bear engages with her. Rosenfeld switches the story and starts to recall a time when she was eleven years old.

The soundtrack continues with groaning and moaning as well as smacking lips, chewing and slurping. In one sense, the aural aspect of the performance ties the different pasts and the

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[63]   Ibid.

present together. The memories are located in the body of the performer who is "improvising" the words.[64] The body serves as a linking mechanism for the text, a text that can be seen as performative or what Amelia Jones calls "a queer feminist performative." Rosenfeld's performance while physically static, using words or text – highlights embodied experiences and gestures at feminist body art, feminist performance art, and queer art. Drawing from Sarah Ahmed's notion of queer phenomenology and disorientation, Jones writes, "Queer is anamorphosis, the disorienting of the subject in space and time."[65] Rosenfeld's performance is disorienting as she jumps from one location to another in her narrative, while the soundscape becomes more and more explicitly vivid through its sexual content. As Rosenfeld unfolds the next narrative, a different sort of desire emerges. Remembering attending "fat camp" or summer camp for fat kids, Rosenfeld describes how she "got to the backroom." She lost too much weight and was "secretly summoned by one of the counselors at the camp." Before Rosenfeld divulges what is in the backroom at fat camp, her memory switches back to the backroom at the Bear Bar Touché. She shares with the audience how her experience at the bar launched more adventures of going to gay bars, packing and trying to pass at some level. For Rosenfeld, passing is tied to how her body is read as something other than what she identifies as and as something belonging to the community she is "infiltrating." Her next adventure takes her to the Bijou Theatre, a space with layers of remembered networks. Rosenfeld recalls, "It's like the oldest porn theatre which is now in this super gentrified area [of Chicago] and somehow they have managed to keep it going as some sort of historical landmark." The space of the bar is both remembered in Rosenfeld's mind and exists in the gay community of Chicago as a "lieu de memoire."[66] The place (the backroom)

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[64] According to the artist, Liz Rosenfeld, the performance is an improvisation, not scripted, recollection of real life experiences, as opposed to fantasies or dreams.
[65] *Amelia Jones, Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (Routledge, 2013), 175.
[66] Nora.

functions on both levels of memory and history, in this moment in Rosenfeld's performance as the place of this previous embodied experience is being re/collected as a transformative space for queer bodies, the place is also being recollected and reconstructed as history. This dialectic challenges audiences to consider where memory resides and how networked spaces produce these queer bodies or as Pierre Nora writes "Memory is life … . It remains in permanent evolution. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer."[67] The performance ends as Rosenfeld retells the moments of being found out. At fat camp her stash of treats hidden under her bed are confiscated. The memory switches as she recalls wanting to experience a "glory hole" spot in a sex/bookstore. She enters a booth when she is "found out" and outed as a "fucking girl." Rosenfeld's performance of *Backroom* merges various locations separated by geographic distance but tethered together through Rosenfeld's performing body and performing memory. Through the use of a blindfold, Rosenfeld accentuates the process of "remembering" (see figure 3.5). Closing her eyes in order to "see" the picture of the past. Forcing the memory, she displaces her body in time and space as she reconfigures a different picture for the audience.

The Body as a Site of Networks: Names & Memory

Connecting spaces, bodies, memory and pain propels Mary Coble's performance work into a networked space on the surface of the body which functions as a linking material. The body as a site to remember the disappeared, injured, and victims of hate crimes and the subsequent residue of the performance remind viewers that our connections happen across

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[67] Ibid., 8.

bodies, real bodies. Mary Coble's *Note to Self* (2005), a twelve hour performance and subsequent installation in which the artist has four hundred and thirty-six names tattooed on her body without ink creates a physical and visual network of named bodies connected through violence.[68] The four hundred and thirty-six names of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender victims tattooed without ink on Coble's body signify more than just a textual image as they represent real bodies, bodies or individuals who died as a result of hate crimes, individuals who are only remembered because of violence done to their bodies (see figure 3.9). The network of names gives Coble's performance extended meaning as Coble's body stands in as the site of connection. Amelia Jones points out that the artist's body, the audience or viewer, and the signified other(s) are brought together through the performance and the aesthetic practice, resulting in "individual connectedness, also communal experiences of suffering, making personal wounds speak to others and thus giving them social and political valence."[69] In *Note To Self* the first names of the victims are painstakingly and painfully tattooed all over the live body of artist Mary Coble (see figure 3.10). Arranged alphabetically, and tattooed or written in a simple font, all capital lettering style, the names start at the base of the artist's neck and progress down over the rest of the body. After each name is tattooed, a blood pain/ting on watercolor paper is produced by pressing the blank paper against the freshly tattooed body – leaving the bloody imprint of the name – reversed as a mirror image of the original tattooed text. The artist creates the situation and willingly performs as the body being tattooed making the work self-inflicted pain which is a way to connect the live body to past pain or suffering. Relationships between the artist, the audience and remembered bodies emerge. Amelia Jones writes:

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[68] Mary Coble, "Note To Self" artist statement, accessed March 1, 2013, http://www.marycoble.com/performance-installation/note-to-self-2005/statement.

[69] Amelia Jones, "Performing the Wounded Body: Pain, Affect and the Radical Relationality of Meaning," *Parallax* 15, no. 4 (October 21, 2009): 45–67, doi:10.1080/13534640903208891.

self-wounding performances, albeit often known through documentation, can, through activating a relation of pain in and through the body of the artist/performer collapse the 'painter' or 'agent' (the person who represents the suffering) with the unfortunate sufferer.[70]

Note To Self bonds Coble's body as a "self" with the multiple names of each person in her list of victims of hate crimes. The documents, as post-performance residue, serve as "visualizations" of the performance and the visual network. The network is configured through the display and arrangement of blood paintings on the gallery walls (see figure 311). Like sorted columns in a spreadsheet, each name Coble creates by uniting her flesh with a historical past, and the forgotten, "captures" a moment of categorization or association. The names are contained in this newly formed network both by the historic record (Coble's resource material) and by Coble's performance. Coble's body is a literal repository or base for the data points collected from her research.

As documents, the blood paint/ings function as indexical signs which refer to queer bodies killed through violence (hate crimes). These signs mark Coble's body in relationship to the temporality of the performance and the pain or endurance of being tattooed for twelve hours. The temporality is also linked to the pain and suffering of the named victims, that is the temporality of past occurrences. Jones remarks that the wounds themselves in performance art function as a sign system. She writes, "Fundamentally, the wound makes pain, and the body itself, into a representational field.That is, it makes the painful experience of the other 'readable' to the spectator."[71] The audience watches as Coble has each name tattooed on her body. Because the performance is also a "durational" performance which occurred for over twelve hours, the

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[70]   Ibid., 48-9.
[71]   Ibid., 53.

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audience was "invited" to watch for three hours and then the rest of the performance was witnessed via webcam and video footage. The blood paint/ings also document the liveness of the performance as the blood itself is only available for a small window of time as each freshly tattooed name is pressed into the watercolor paper. Between the act of tattooing, the bleeding, and the blood printing, Coble's performance and process to document tugs at the temporal relationship the body has with pain and suffering. And although Coble's performance is bound by time and the space on her body, Coble creates an archive and a process of connecting to others outside of her body.

Coble's work may be received as reminiscent of Vito Acconci's *Trademarks* (1970) in which Acconci bit and marked his own body by biting himself. He then photographed the marks and bruising left by his teeth as a document of his performance and pain.[72] Acconci's indexical markings point back to Acconci's own action and thus his authorship. They also inscribe a painful marking of the flesh. Christine Poggi, in writing about Acconci's 1970 performance notes that "[t]he bites, which are hard and break through the skin, open this closed region, transgressing the boundary between inside and outside... through this process the body is made to signify, to participate in the circulation of signs...the bitemarks function as surrogate gestural traces or signatures..."[73] Like Acconci's *Trademarks* Coble's *Note to Self* circulates signs, yet Coble's indexical markings point outward to others, reversing the position of author and object authored. Through signs of the Other, signs that refer to other bodies outside of Coble's signature, *Note to Self* signals a belonging and a community.

The title of Coble's performance and installation *Note To Self* refers to the quotidian activity of writing oneself a note, as to not to forget something of importance: a grocery list, a to-

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[72] Chrisitne Poggi, "Following Acconci/Targeting Vision," in *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*, ed. Amelia Jones, Andrew Stephenson Nfa, and Andrew Stephenson (London ; New York: Routledge, 1999), 259.
[73] Ibid., 261-3.

do list, a reminder to pay a bill. Writing notes to the self draws attention to a closed loop

process of writing and reading, writing a note meant only for the "self" to read, reading the note

with personal shorthand or abbreviations. Yet, in Mary Coble's work, the notion of the "self"

and the singular body is juxtaposed to an open loop of missed bodies, the bodies of the dead, the

victims of hate crimes, and the bodies that will soon be forgotten as the tattoos (with no ink – no

medium of permanence) heal and disappear. The permanence of the performance remains only in

the documentation: photographs (self-portraits of the artist) and through the blood pain/tings

which are text mirrors of the referenced bodies. The arrangement of these pain/tings in the

gallery creates an analytical visualization of the lost bodies.[74] Organized alphabetically, in a

tightly positioned scientific-like table of rows and columns, each name has a double reference to

an unseen body and Coble's body. The names were gathered by Coble through research, from

newspapers, news accounts and crime reports. The knowledge of the process of Coble's research

was not made available to visitors to the gallery. Nor was there an artist statement.[75] The names,

being first names only could also be read as anyone's name. The names are printed onto

watercolor paper by pressing onto the freshly tattooed flesh. As a result of this pressing onto a

live body the names (of the dead) were smeared or smudged onto rectangular pieces of paper.

Archived as almost unreadable documents, the names are abstracted even further from their

initial significance as they are reversed. The size of the documents (4 inches by six inches)

emphasizes the statistical or disconnected bodily representation that happens through

measurement and categorization of bodies as objects. The mirrored smudged name is a body

print of the inscribed text and blurs the readability through its reversal and smear, distancing the

object even more from both producing bodies (victim and Coble). What the blood paint/ting

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[74] Mary Coble, "Wall Documentation" from *Note to Self,* accessed March 1, 2013,
    http://www.marycoble.com/performance-installation/note-to-self-2005/view/7.
[75] Mary Coble, e-mail message to author, March 14, 2013.

intimately retains is the mark of the blood, the result of pain. The blood is the referent and it is the bodily documentation of the event (the tattooing). The blood is also an indexical sign of the violence enacted on the victims, archiving an event without bodies.

Finally, the names become unwritten over time as the body heals from the piercing, cutting gestures, leaving no mark. Cut without ink, the marks eventually disappear. Time shapes and reshapes the meaning of the work. The performance's visibility exists only in the "now" of the incision, the scab of the wound and the residual "blood prints" that refer to the initial inscription as a mirroring or sanguine painting registered in reverse. The tattoo artist worked for twelve hours covering Coble's body, systematically and alphabetically. Coble's work could not exist without the assistance of the tattoo artist who is physically present in the performance documentation. The final self-portraiture (existing as a vertical photograph) features only Coble's body, post performance, with the collective markings of other bodies and another artist, placed on Coble's body. It is the process of creating a collective of names at the site of the body that references other bodies in an imaginary network. The body is the substrate that holds a temporary writing; writing that indexes other bodies – forgotten, erased (literally and figuratively) and momentarily merged together. The blood paintings are documents that will last after the performance and after Coble's body has healed. This doubling is what theatre historian Thomas Postlewait claims to "disrupt[] the notion of a single self and single point of view narrative."[76]   The multiple narratives are indexed through the initial tattoo performance as readable text and then through the paintings which are arranged the way the dead are called in memoriam. In her artist statement on her website Coble describes the names as "the list of names

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[76]   Thomas Postlewait, "Autobiography and Theatre History," in *Interpreting The Theatrical Past: Historiography Of Performance*, ed. Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. Mcconachie, 1 edition (Iowa City: University Of Iowa Press, 1989), 249.

compiled on [my] body – the same list was mirrored on the gallery walls."[77] The mirroring from body to blood print refers to two bodies simultaneously, though the mirrors will eventually unmirror as Coble's skin erases the tattoos. Left as reside and left as an incomplete archive, the blood pain/tings document forgetting.

Coble's performance signals a doubleness: the body being marked, the artist marking the body; it signifies the multiplicities of stories and bodies with lost narratives, narratives that are gestured toward or at with the mark of the tattoo.   The names are written like bloody autographs, rendered through the violence of the tattoo. But, whose autographs are they? The artist Mary Coble's blood marks the paper. The tattoo artist draws the lines in the skin, causing Coble to bleed. The names written refer to bodies that are no longer, bodies with other stories. In *Note To Self* the act of writing performs the past and present merging autographs of disparate bodies incapable of ever being present together. Traces of bodies and pain circulate through the icon of the tattoo. The tattoo which is typically thought of as the permanent mark, an indelible ink, is used in *Note To Self* to indicate the impermanence of the "self, the body, memory and stability of identity. The documentation of performance is the only permanence of bodies and even the archive can be undone. What Coble's *Note To Self* does construct is the collaborative narrative of pain and erasure through the documentation strategies of portraiture photography and bodily inscriptions. The erasure of bodies and the erasing body come together as co-authors.

From IRL to Virtual: Lost Lesbian Space

IRL networks are traceable through the social and through productive forces and the

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[77]   Mary Coble, "Note To Self" artist statement, accessed March 1, 2013, http://www.marycoble.com/performance-installation/note-to-self-2005/statement.

ephemera left behind. But what happens when the real networks disappear or are imagined we are left to trace these past connections through our oral history, memory and the devices or objects that activate memory, memory of the social. For lesbian culture, the bar and other spaces important to the community are disappearing as urban renewal and gentrification in our cities change where we gather. The next chapter will investigate how our gathering and organizing has benefited and been harmed by gentrification as well as social networking online. The digitization of our inter-personal relationships allows us to span farther across continents and to create global movement, but to what end if local becomes too expensive and diluted by mainstream culture.

4888-4878 Lankershim Blvd. (formerly Club 22 and The Big Horn), North Hollywood, CA, 2005

Figure 3.1: Kaucyila Brooke, *The Boy Mechanic,* color photograph, 2005. Courtesy of the artist.
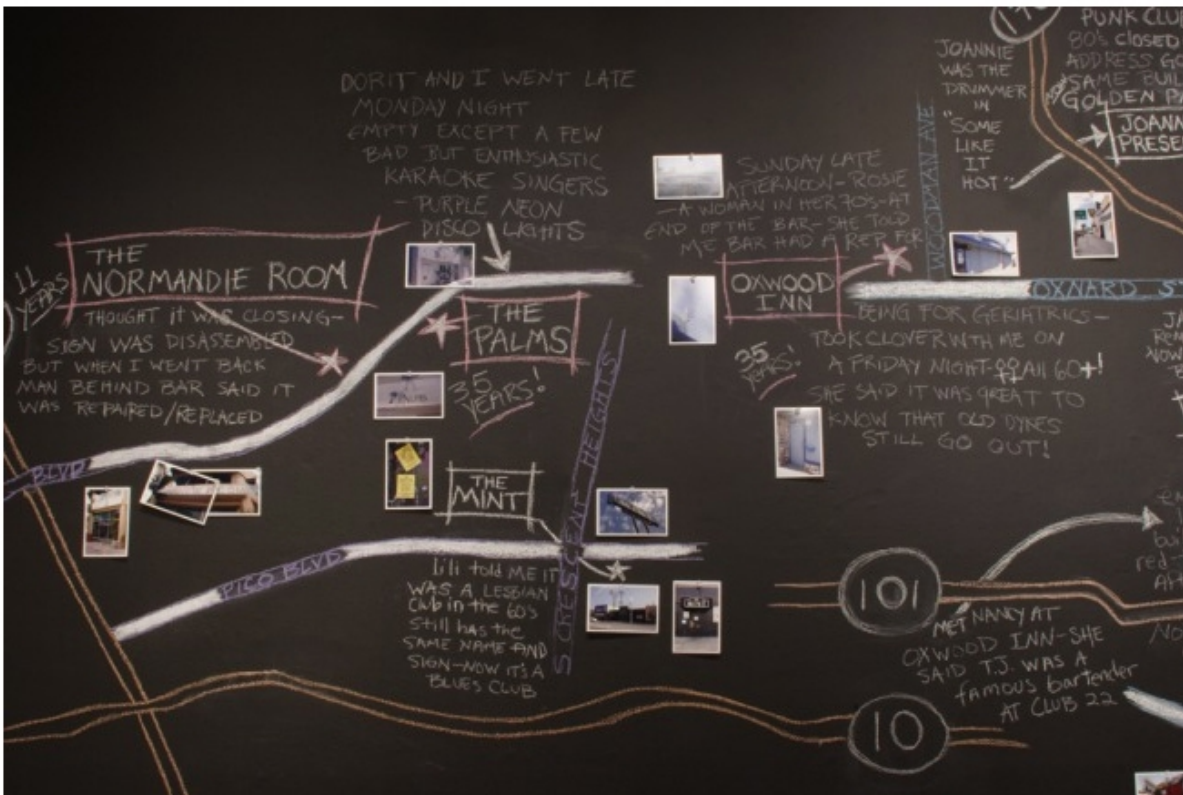
Map Detail, Los Angeles Municiple Gallery, Barnsdall Park, Los Angeles, 2005

Figure 3.2: Kaucyila Brooke, *The Boy Mechanic*, chalk drawing, 2005. Courtesy of the artist.

Figure 3.3: Annie Sprinkle*, Post Porn Goddess,* 1999. Photo by
Amy Ardrey, Art Direction by Leslie Barany.
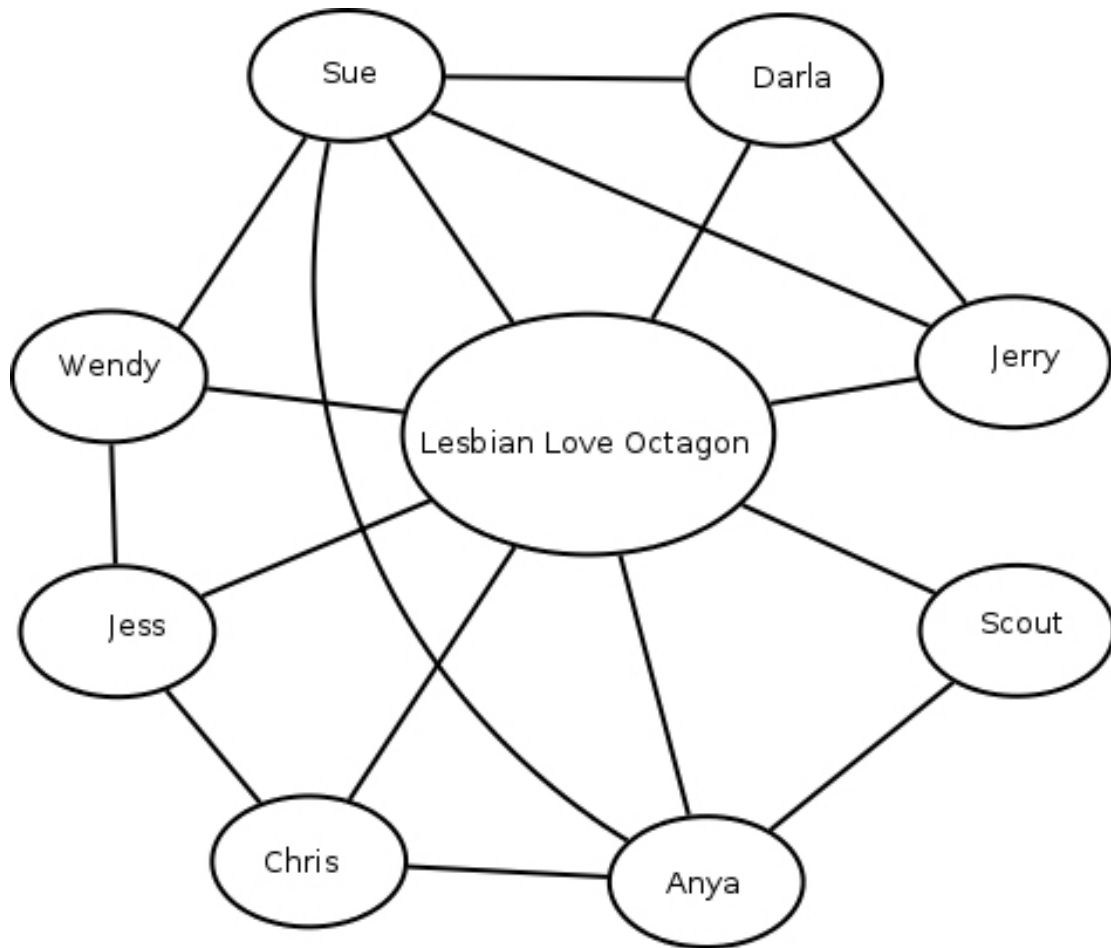
Figure 3.4: Kimberlea Kressal and Will Larche, *Lesbian Love Octagon*, 2009, Network of Characters and Love Relationships, 2015, graphic by Sheila Malone.
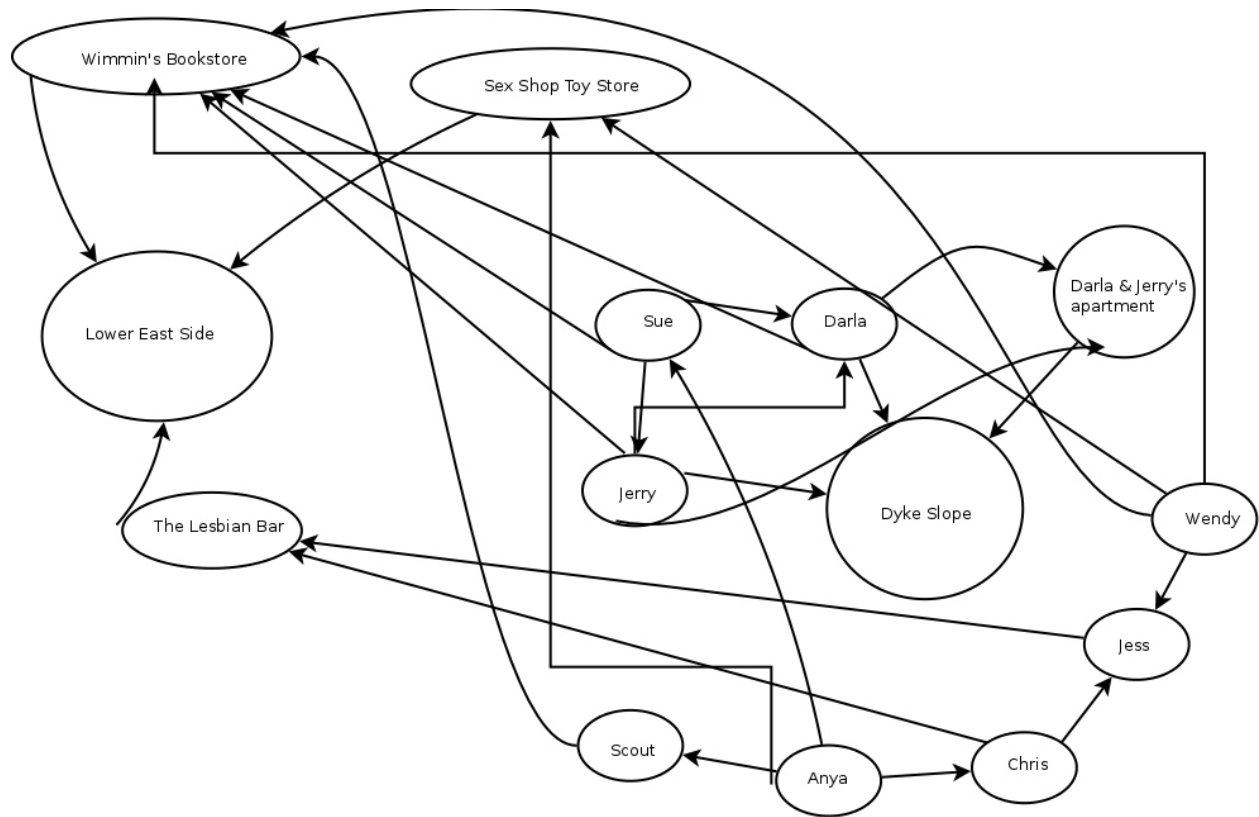
Figure 3.5: Kimberlea Kressal and Will Larche, *Lesbian Love Octagon*, Act I Scene 1, 2009
– Locations and Characters, graphic by Sheila Malone.

Figure 3.6: Liz Rosenfeld, *The Backroom*, performance, video still, 2011.

Figure 3.7: Liz Rosenfeld, *The Backroom*, performance, video still, 2011.

Figure 3.8: Mary Coble, *Note To Self*, Archival Inkjet Print Edition: 5, 2005.

Figure 3.9: Mary Coble, *Note To Self*, performance documentation, 2005.

Figure 3.10: Mary Coble, *Note to Self*, Wall Documentation, 438 Unique Blood Paintings, 2005.

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Chapter IV: Virtual Lives, Converging Brands:

Selling Images, Connections, and Lesbian Space

In this chapter, I argue that as in real life (IRL) or physical social spaces disappear, like

the lesbian bar and the community center, lesbian subcultures find new ways to socially organize

online using paradigms specific to digital culture and to networked technology, and in doing so,

a trade-off between sustainability and far-reach is incurred. In order to calculate community, I

trace some of the ways that lesbians formed social networks IRL in the post Stonewall era and

suggest that print and image technology was central to generating community involvement. I also

investigate how in recent years, Web 2.0 and social networking sites have generated expansive

real time communication across networks and across digital spaces leading to new forms of

lesbian visibility and community involvement. As such, this digital mode of organizing reveals

the differences between physical connections and virtual connections. I argue that as IRL closed,

dense social networks are easier to sustain than larger virtual diluted networks. I use sociologist

Mark Granovetter's terms "strong ties" as an indicator of the density of a network or cluster of

links and "weak ties" to indicate the diffusion or dilution of connections.[1] I look at how the

structure of social networks IRL and the structure of online networks reveal that density does not

translate to economic sustainability, thus impeding smaller networks from competing globally. I

also look at how larger distributed networks allow bodies to transfer information more quickly –

shrinking time-space relationships and crossing borders that previously separated groups, and I

investigate how these diluted connections compromise concepts of community through the

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[1]   Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited," *Sociological Theory* 1, no.
    ArticleType: research-article / Full publication date: 1983 / Copyright © 1983 Wiley (January 1, 1983): 201–33,
    doi:10.2307/202051.

necessity of brand sustainability in the for-profit landscape of technology. The meaning of community and its ability to sustain its membership is predicated on meeting IRL. By tracing organizing motivations, principles, and strategies in LGBT communities and specifically Dykes on Bikes®, I hope to uncover some of the structures that continue to support the flesh of collectives and the actions that have changed how we think about connecting across sexualities, genders, orientations, and the Other within lesbian social networks.

Strategies of community formation have changed with the advent of the Internet, social networking, and the speed at which information can travel globally. Influenced by social action and political protest of the 1960s and 1970s, the civil rights marches, anti-war protests, gay rights, and women's liberation movements, lesbian community-based organization uses a combination of modes of communication in order to reach more like-minded people and create long-term sustainability of community. Through the use of flyers, local newsletters, posters, and even t-shirts, these means of physical dissemination of information have now been synthesized with Internet distribution and the specific reiteration of information across social networking sites, popular culture blogs, and news sites. Networked culture has reshaped and reconfigured what visibility is and the political power of subcultural groups. In 1990, the World Wide Web in its nascence promised through its own ideological and collegiate beginnings to provide a democratic and free space, where information could be shared and new communities formed around the instantaneous communication and the uploading and downloading of data.[2] Over the past two decades, access and even information is bought, sold, and forms the base of a commodity culture extended from real space to cyberspace.[3] Niche communities that started on

[2] "History of the Web," *World Wide Web Foundation*, accessed March 4, 2015,
    http://webfoundation.org/about/vision/history-of-the-web/.
[3] "Facts About W3C," *The World Wide Web Consortium*, accessed March 4, 2015,
    http://www.w3.org/Consortium/facts.

Bulletin Board Systems and in Chat Rooms have found that even they are the targets of mass

advertising, commodification, and exploitation through free labor and prosumer models of

content production. What began as an altruistic means of sharing information and making

connections across borders (geographic and disciplinary) has become an extension of other mass

media where financial backing translates to access as well as aesthetics of platform. However,

according to the Web Foundation which supports the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)'s

mission:

> [The Web should remain] as a place for stakeholders to reach consensus around the
> specification and guidelines to ensure that the Web works for everyone and that it evolves
> in a responsible manner. W3C standards have enabled a single World Wide Web of
> information and people, and an increasingly-rich set of capabilities: Web 2.0 (personal
> and dynamic), Web 3.0 (a semantic Web of linked data), Web services, voice access,
> mobile access, accessibility for people with disabilities and for people speaking many
> languages, richer graphics and video, etc. The Web Foundation supports the work of
> W3C to ensure that the Web and the technologies that underpin it remain free and open to
> all.[4]

All of these capabilities listed by the World Wide Web Foundation do exist, but so does

the reality that most content exchanged (uploaded, downloaded, etc.) across the Web requires

high speed access; most high speed access in the U.S. costs the average consumer upwards of

$60 per month[5]. The Web has evolved within an environment of high Capitalism in a post-

Fordist economy which means as Nicole Cohen argues in "The Valorization of Surveillance:

Towards a Political Economy of Facebook," that "Web 2.0 can thus be considered as a

continuation of the tendency of capital to offload labour costs onto consumers."[6] So an attempt

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[4] "History of the Web," *World Wide Web Foundation*, accessed March 4, 2015,
    http://webfoundation.org/about/vision/history-of-the-web/.
[5] Claire Cain Miller, "Why the U.S. Has Fallen Behind in Internet Speed and Affordability," *The New York Times*,
    October 30, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/31/upshot/why-the-us-has-fallen-behind-in-internet-speed-
    and-affordability.html.
[6] Nicole S. Cohen, "The Valorization of Surveillance: Towards a Political Economy of Facebook," *Democratic*

to analyze how a website functions within and for a subculture or niche community also requires

an understanding or an exploration of the systemic underpinnings of the form or medium itself.

As Marshall McLuhan declared in 1967, "Any understanding of social and cultural change is

impossible without a knowledge of the way media work as environments. All media are

extensions of some human faculty – psychic or physical."[7] In other words, to understand how a

niche community organizes socially, its connections and how individuals perform identifications

within that subculture, one must look at how its communication media are organized, connected,

and structured, including its economy. A communication medium provides a backdrop of

aesthetics, spatial relationships, senses of time, and ultimately meaning that is specific to itself –

its structure, etc. It is from this point that I am interested in investigating how lesbians move

from real life (IRL) social spaces of bars to online connections and representations on social

networking sites and websites like Meetup.com. In particular, I will look at sites where users

share information, join groups, post events, share images, text, and create connections through

affiliations, keywords, and meta information or metadata. My hope is to reveal some of the

specific strategies and conditions unique to online networking that have been taken up by LGBT

groups like Dykes on Bikes® as a way to reconfigure the social and to create new spaces

virtually that can and do influence real-life spaces and real-life time.

While websites have changed aesthetically from the World Wide Web's initial simple

hypertext markup language to more sophisticated Content Management Systems (CMS and Web

2.0), the concept of connecting individuals across a network has not changed. In 1993 Howard

Rheingold wrote *Virtual Communities: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*.[8] In his lengthy

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Communiqué 22, no. 1 (October 17, 2011): 5, http://journals.fcla.edu/demcom/article/view/76495, 9.

[7] Marshall McLuhan, Quentin Fiore, and Jerome Agel, *The Medium Is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*, 1st edition (BANTAM, 1967), 26.

[8] For a history of html see The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)'s link to Dave Raggett's book *Raggett on HTML 4* accessible at: http://www.w3.org/People/Raggett/book4/ch02.html

ethnographic study and analysis of the WELL, Rheingold argues that virtual communities offer new ways of connecting that bridge physical space and time.[9] The WELL stands for the Whole Entire 'Lectronic Link which was founded in 1985 in association with the publication *The Whole Review* which brought "fiercely independent writers and readers" together. The WELL identifies itself as "the birthplace of the online community movement."[10] Rheingold writes, "Virtual communities are social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace."[11] Noted new media artist and activist Stephen Wray links Deleuzian and Guattarian rhizomic structure to ways that electronic culture can be employed, suggesting that the Internet can support rhizomic and nomadic activity while also being used for more linear, hierarchical connections.[12] Wray writes, "Unlike most early types of mediated resistance, the Internet enables the spatial parameters of resistance to be international, intercontinental, and global."[13] Thus the Net or the Web is a space of potentiality – contingent on use or intention of the actor/user. The Deleuzian concept of the rhizome has been a useful metaphor for understanding how connections grow, spread, and operate across the Net in nonlinearity, without beginnings or endings. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari argue that a "rhizome connects any point to any other point.... It is composed not of units but rather dimensions...."[14] The Web is a connection of servers, sockets, sites, computer terminals, and users, all woven together in various densities and configurations. It is arguable that there isn't a beginning or ending to the Web, only a middle or "milieu" as Deleuze

9   "The Well Conference," *ANY: Architecture New York*, no. 10 (January 1, 1995): 12–43, doi:10.2307/41847839.
10   "The WELL - Learn About The WELL," accessed March 19, 2015, http://www.well.com/aboutwell.html.
11   Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (MIT Press, 1993), xx.
12   Stefan Wray, "Rhizomic-Nomadic Resistant Internet Use," *Rhizomes, Nomads, and Resistant Internet Use*, July 7, 1998, http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ecd/rhizomatic.html#INTRODUCTION.
13   Ibid.
14   Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, 1 edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 21.

and Guattari describe the rhizome.[15] If the nature of the Web is truly rhizomic then at any one

moment it is impossible to create a static genealogy as the Web is in constant motion and

change; sites go down, are renewed, expired, are bought, sold, recreated, migrated, and leave

behind digital breadcrumbs of its past. While Wray describes how the Internet can be used for

resistant action, the flip side of this description is that the Internet is also used to produce wealth,

power, and hegemony.[16]

   Much of the Internet today is made up of advertising spaces in which bodies perform free

labour for corporations and stockholders. Drawing from both Mark Coté and Jennifer Pybus's

work on "Immaterial Labour 2.0" as well Ursula Huws's theory of the "cybertariat" or the new

cyber-proletariat, Nicole S. Cohen argues that users of social media, specifically Facebook, are

exploited as "workers" as they perform prosumer activities – generating content and consuming

that same content, performing the role of producer and consumer. Facebook like many other

Social Networking Sites (SNS) surveils users' data: personal preferences, profile information,

activity, content, clicks, and browser use, in order to sell this data or "movement" which

translates to eyeballs on an ad to third party advertisers.[17] Advertisers seamlessly target a user

with ads specific to the user's interests and activities – all generated through the use of Facebook

and even through the use of "connected" sites, i.e. Amazon, Fandango, Starbucks, and others.

Cohen's analysis of Facebook uses the work of Coté and Pybus who in turn draw from

sociologist Maurizio Lazzarato's theory of "Immaterial Labour." Influenced by Antoni Negri and

Michael Hardt's concept of a new Imperialism in which new technologies, communications, and

transnationalism from Lazzarato's theory looks at prosumer culture as an inevitable result of the

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[15] Ibid.

[16] "Internet Hegemony and the Digital Divide," *The Economist*, November 16, 2005,
  http://www.economist.com/node/5165014.

[17] Nicole S. Cohen, "The Valorization of Surveillance: Towards a Political Economy of Facebook," *Democratic Communiqué* 22, No. 1, (Spring 2008).

changing labour processes, demands, and sources of the global market. Lazzarato writes:

> Manual labor is increasingly coming to involve procedures that could be defined as "intellectual," and the new communications technologies increasingly require subjectivities that are rich in knowledge. ... What has happened is that a new "mass intellectuality" has come into being, created out of a combination of the demands of capitalist production and the forms of "self-valorization" that the struggle against work has produced. The old dichotomy between "mental and manual labor," or between "material labor and immaterial labor," risks failing to grasp the new nature of productive activity, which takes this separation on board and transforms it. The split between conception and execution, between labor and creativity, between author and audience, is simultaneously transcended within the "labor process" and reimposed as political command within the "process of valorization."[18]

Lazzarato describes the diminishing line between the producer and consumer (author and audience) not just evident with computer/online technological fields, but across multiple fields of labor. Contemporary theorists Michael Coté and Jennifer Pybus take Lazzarato's theory of Immaterial Labour a step further and apply it to the environment of Web 2.0. revealing how social media and social networking sites are designed to harness, collect, and deliver data. Coté and Pybus argue that "Web 2.0 is an incubator for a free labour market."[19] Cote and Pybus write, "We 'work' amidst our myriad interfaces with Information and Communication Technology (ICT); and ... the digital construction of our subjectivity within such social networks is a constitutive practice of immaterial labour 2.0."[20] Drawing from both Lazzarato and Coté and Pybus's theories, Cohen points out that any labour that is performed in the process of commodifying information from communication and commodifying cultural content without compensation is free labour.[21] While the implications of online activity as tightly ensconced with

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[18] Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor," trans. Paul Colilli and Ed Emery, accessed March 28, 2015, http://www.generation-online.org/c/fcimmateriallabour3.htm.

[19] Mark Coté and Jennifer Pybus, "Learning to Immaterial Labour 2.0: MySpace and Social Networks," *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization*, 2007, 1–19.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labour," in *Radical Thought In Italy: A Potential Politics (Theory Out Of*

capitalism or what scholar Sue-Ellen Case argues, as "networks themselves build virtual

international communities... related to constructed appetites for particular commodities."[22] This

critique of the economic drive of networked life and capitalistic forces shaping how we connect

online is significant in understanding the structure of online communities, and is also important

in understanding how marginalized groups both use technology or ICT and are used by

technology and corporations in the business of technology. Building on Coté and Pybus's theory

of Web 2.0, Cohen writes, "While these sites can offer participants entertainment and a way to

socialize, the social relations present on a site like Facebook can obscure economic relations that

reflect larger patterns of capitalist development in the digital age."[23] In other words, Cohen's

particular concern is the economic connections that Web 2.0 not only provides but "causes" as a

result of prosumer activity. Underlying economy of Web 2.0 in terms of "free labour" is a

structural foundation of SNS, but the impact and significance of sociality online shapes more

than an economic force. For lesbians online, Web 2.0 and SNS function as spaces that as Gill

Valentine argues in "The Role of Information and Communication Technologies in Maintaining

and Creating Relationships" "creates … complex geometries of intimacy."[24] Lesbians "access"

and form community through connections online and they also form unique intimacies.[25] My

interest in Web 2.0 is both in looking at how social networks as virtual space configure how

lesbians create community and how they participate in prosumer activities that reinforce

heteronormativity, hegemony, and dilute the density of a "lesbian" network.

Bounds), ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 133-50.

22 Sue-Ellen Case, *The Domain-Matrix: Performing Lesbian at the End of Print Culture* (Indiana University Press, 1996), 202.

23 Nicole S. Cohen, "The Valorization of Surveillance: Towards a Political Economy of Facebook," *Democratic Communiqué* 22, no. 1 (October 17, 2011): 5.

24 Gill Valentine, "Globalizing Intimacy: The Role of Information and Communication Technologies in Maintaining and Creating Relationships," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 1/2 (April 1, 2006): 365–93, doi:10.2307/40004765.

25 Ibid.

Hegemony online or in virtual space adheres to many of the same tenets as hegemony in real life (IRL) or across other media. These tenets include the exploitation and commodification of non-stakeholders and the everyday user who perform free labor in the ubiquitous Web 2.0 environment – an environment where fewer and fewer companies control how we interact online and the information flow. To explain how hegemony works online, it is necessary to unravel some of the ways it works across mediums. Content produced for television, film, and print culture is dominated by large mega-corporations. Take for instance, Disney who owns ABC and Pixar as well as other subsidiaries. The economic model is homogenous in the sense that one corporation controls multiple facets of production and media across platforms. In other communication media such as radio, iHeartmedia which is a "rebranding" of Clear Channel owns radio stations in almost every state in the United States and multiple stations in most major markets like Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, and New York City.[26] When one company owns multiple outlets, they control the message or content. The Internet is no different than these other media formats in that a handful of companies control access, hosting, searching, and other forms of navigation across sites. Concerned consortiums like the Knowledge Commons Brasil publish statistics about the U.S. dominated Internet environment, even comparing the current Internet culture as digitally divided across hemispheric borders, emphasizing a cultural colonialism that exists through U.S. dominated aesthetics, language, programming, etc.[27] Both Henry Jenkins, media theorist, and scholar Julie Cohen argue that along with technological interconnectedness, network culture raises new concerns and issues with ownership, privacy and the law. In 1983, MIT media theorist Ithiel de Sola Pool foreshadowed some of the debates that a

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[26] Justin Oppelaar, "No. 14: Clear Channel," *Variety*, accessed April 1, 2015, http://variety.com/2001/biz/news/no-14-clear-channel-1117851842/.

[27] "Digital Colonialism & the Internet as a Tool of Cultural Hegemony | Knowledge Commons Brasil," accessed March 6, 2015, http://www.knowledgecommons.in/brasil/en/whats-wrong-with-current-internet-governance/digital-colonialism-the-internet-as-a-tool-of-cultural-hegemony/.

networked culture would face. Pool writes, "Freedom is fostered when the means of communication are dispersed, decentralized, and easily available, as are printing presses or microcomputers. Central control is more likely when the means of communication are concentrated, monopolized, and scarce, as are great networks."[28] For the LGBT community issues of public, private, out of the closet, in the closet, are central to connections made online. Valentine argues that "online and offline worlds cannot be understood as separate or discrete spaces, rather life around the screen and life on the screen are mutually constituted."[29] For lesbians connecting online, concerns over who sees and controls information are as important as freedom of speech, censorship, and privacy rights IRL. What can be of particular difficulty is the negotiation of or even control over one's personal data when using software and SNS owned by large corporations. Through a monopolized approach, whether it is the content delivery method, the airways or bandwidth, servers or hosting providers, search engines or browser compliance, corporations create a market system that shape the environment of the Internet and control the flow and function of the Internet. What this means for any niche group seeking anonymity or privacy is that all communication is subject to surveillance online, and personal ownership of data is in flux.

Despite market forces, efforts by specific corporations to control data, and commodity/prosumer "culture" online, a multitude of subcultural networks and specifically lesbian networks find ways to perform social identifications, resistant politics, and social communication using the specific attributes of online life – the social connections and the speed of connections, challenging homogenous representations of lesbian culture, and forming networks across commercial or "ownership" based nodes and hubs through the use of image and

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[28]   Ithiel de Sola Pool, *Technologies of Freedom* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 5.
[29]   Valentine, 25.

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textual identifications. As danah boyd argues in "Social Network Sites as Networked Publics" the Internet or digital social spaces provide similar connections as real life social spaces and afford unique connections specific to electronic/computer/digital media.[30] Boyd writes, "While networked publics share much in common with other types of publics, the ways in which technology structures them introduces distinct affordances that shape how people engage with these environments."[31] In other words the attributes of the digital, networks, electronic, interface design, connection speed, all of which are specific to networked computing, contribute to how "publics" or individuals with shared interests interact, act or behave online. It is precisely the nature of electronic media that allows subcultural groups such as Dykes on Bikes® or other niche associations to reiterate, propagate, and invest in the circulation of specific imagery and to ultimately organize bodies across political and social spaces. Through the network itself, images including videos, sound, graphics, animations travel simultaneously across a mesh of intersections and overlays. The Net (Internet) provides spaces (storage, and active computing through software) that gather and scatter in time and through time.

Organizing (IRL) and Networks

Social networking IRL and online have particular congruences dictated by the nature of how networks are formed and also who creates them and uses them or are used by them. According to Julie Cohen in *Configuring the Networked Self: Law, Code, and the Play of Everyday Practice*:

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[30] danah boyd, "Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications," in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community and Culture on Social Network Sites*, ed. Zizi Papacharissi (New York: Routledge, 2011), 39.
[31] Ibid.

> ...all the changes catalyzed by networked information technologies do not simply make cyberspace a different place. Changes in the ways that information is experienced and the ways that economic, political, and personal interactions are structured alter the character of experienced space. The emerging networked space is both new and old, both real and virtual, both the same and different.[32]

What Cohen argues is that the similar social, political, economic, and even cultural forces impact experiences online as well as with IRL experiences. However, networks "reconfigure" our understanding of space and time. Cohen writes, "Networked information technologies do not simply empower the networked self; they configure it … . Networked space is neither empty nor abstract, and is certainly not separate; it is a network of connections wrapped around every artifact and human being … ."[33] The networked self is a body that expresses its sense of self through what scholar Mary L. Gray has termed "boundary public." Drawing from Jürgen Habermas's concept of "public sphere" and Michael Warner's theory of "publics and counterpublics," Gray defines a boundary public as "iterative, ephemeral experiences of belonging that happen both on the outskirts and at the center(s) of the more traditionally recognized and validated public sphere of civic deliberation."[34] This is a space that is public and exists in the boundaries of heteronormative culture. Gray further argues that "boundary publics offer moments of occupation for queer identity work and praxis to challenge local and universal expectations of queer invisibility."[35]

On the other hand, Cohen is quick to decipher is the attributes of the network that have changed our "bodily boundaries" and "flows of information." Space is not bound by geographic

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[32]   Julie E Cohen, *Configuring the Networked Self: Law, Code, and the Play of Everyday Practice* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2012), 11.

[33]   Ibid. 12.

[34]   Mary L. Gray, "From Websites to Wal-Mart: Youth, Identity Work, and the Queering of Boundary Publics in Small Town, USA," *American Studies* 48, no. 2 (July 1, 2007): 49–59, doi:10.2307/40644068.

[35]   Ibid.

or "Cartesian" measurements, instead, space is experienced through time: how fast information is received and sent, or how far reaching information is disseminated. If the network(s) configures lesbian bodies online, what configures lesbian bodies IRL? The term configure in this instance, as related to online networks, refers both to hardware and software. The attributes of each of these aspects of computing are contingent on how the technology functions and also what the end-user selects or how the end-user interfaces with the technology. For example, SNS require the user to create an account and subsequently a profile. Profiles then become markers of identification, as well as other "associations." Lesbian visibility online is contingent on a user's publicness and on recognition of the system to aggregate the identifying profile field with other users of the community. Other attributes of "software" might include how the network proliferates or in other words how connections are made. The SNS Twitter is based on the "following" concept, so the network is created through clusters – multiple users following one user, whereas, Facebook creates more closed networks that look more like IRL networks – graduating classes from high school, college, and other normative associations. For lesbian community members, association with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender culture and politics creates an "outing" of the "boundary public." Other forms of queer community making converge through profile pictures, personal quotes, inspirations, reposting of news headlines specific to LGBT politics, and the profile relationship status – all of these configurations have to do with the user interface and software design. The hardware configuration of a SNS is interrelated to its software configuration. Most SNS have stand-alone applications for smart phones, and now smart televisions. Converging technologies and converging media drive communication with these new ways of socializing in virtual space and time that affect how lesbians form communities online, find each other, and connect in public and private networks.

The Internet is a space of converging media, converging communities, and converging social networks. I use the term space to mean both a screen technology and a space measured through navigation and human machine interaction.[36] The concept of "convergence" also conjures spatial relationships, indicating an apex or point or confluence where multiple objects, assets, users, media come together, bump into each, merge, and interweave. Media theorist Henry Jenkins argues that "convergence culture [is] where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways."[37] Jenkins's definition of media convergence seems to encompass a large spectrum of possibilities of intersections. Jenkins writes:

> … the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between
> multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will
> go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want.[38]

Spatially, media convergence crosses boundaries of devices (objects) and geographic boundaries through networks of communication, and boundaries of the body as textual, visual, aural information interlink. As a theoretical lens, convergence makes sense of the ever changing landscape of technological devices, software interfaces, and the latest hot or viral media byte. Extending Pierre Levy's theory of collective intelligence, Jenkins articulates change in community formation. Jenkins writes:

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (NYU Press, 2006).
[38] Ibid.

The new knowledge culture has arisen as our ties to older forms of social community are breaking down, our rooting in physical geography is diminishing, our bonds to the extended and even the nuclear family are disintegrating and our allegiances to nation states are being redefined. However, new forms of community are emerging. These new communities are defined through voluntary, temporary and tactical affiliations, are reaffirmed through common intellectual enterprises and emotional investments and are held together through the mutual production and reciprocal exchange of knowledge.[39]

However, just because media is converging and technology is creating new ways to connect and form communities, does not mean that communities organize in completely unique ways online. As Julie Cohen argues, "Individuals and communities are constituted by the social and political cultures that surround them, and those cultural contexts in turn shape the forms of self-determination and participation that emerge."[40] In other words, social, cultural, and technological forces IRL are replicated online. As Gill Valentine points out, online spaces have offered LGBT people alternative "meeting" spaces from the early days of Chat Rooms and other Internet Communications Technologies (ICT) environments.[41] Network Theorist Albert-László Barabási argues that "networks exist for a reason. They spread ideas; they spread knowledge; they spread influence. [M]ost networks are full of communities or groups of nodes that tend to connect more to each other … ."[42] Barabási applies Mark Granovetter's concept of the strength of weak ties (SWT) between nodes in a network in order to understand how networks across disciplines, modes, and fields emerge, perform, and break apart.[43] Granovetter's research reveals

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[39] Henry Jenkins, "The Cultural Logic of Media Convergence," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 7, no. 1 (March 1, 2004): 35, doi:10.1177/1367877904040603.

[40] Julie E Cohen, 25.

[41] Valentine, 378.

[42] Albert-Laszlo Barabasi, "Introduction," in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, ed. Zizi Papacharissi (Routledge, 2010), 12-14.

[43] Mark Granovetter's 1973 essay titled "The Strength of Weak Ties" and his later essay (1983) "The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited" examines the micro patterns in network interactivity as well as what Granovetter calls the density of the connections; both essays reveal a social theory of networks.

that social clumps of individuals (clusters) are made up of strong (dense) ties of close

relationships and these clumps are then connected to other clumps or clusters through weak ties.

This concept of weak ties means that the individuals in the clusters don't necessarily know each

other across the clusters, but have the one person in common who makes the weak tie. On the

other hand, the members of the clumps tend to know each other, thus creating close-knit

connections and density. So clumps or close-knit communities are connected through weak ties.[44]

While Granovetter conducted his research in the 1970s and 1980s, his theoretical model is

currently applied in Social Theory and in understanding Social Networking online.[45] The power

of SNS to promote not just lesbian visibility but to reshape lesbian organizing is potentially an

opportunity that members of social movements can harness.[46] Sue-Ellen Case argues that

"cyberspace" is a space of corporate networks and not a space of individual identifications of the

user.[47] SNS are corporatized, logo-centric, market-driven spaces vying for "eyeball time" and

"clicks" *and* they are structured in such a way that brings together the power of strong ties and

the expansive reach of networks with weak ties. For lesbian activism, visibility, and even

personal exploration, SNS offer the lesbian user "reach." Online space is a contested space where

individuals get "swallowed up into their logo displacements."[48] Online space is also a space that

continues to challenge a notion of identity (the user, prosumer, friend, customer, etc.). Lisa

Nakamura argues that as "the user base changes, and changes in software make it [the Internet] a

more enriched graphical space that enables youth in particular to express their taste cultures,

which are often imported from other media, the "profiles" and avatars they create to literally

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[44] Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited," *Sociological Theory* 1, no. ArticleType: research-article / Full publication date: 1983 / Copyright © 1983 Wiley (January 1, 1983): 201–33, doi:10.2307/202051.

[45] Barabási, 12.

[46] Urvashi Vaid et al., "What's Next for the LGBT Movement?," *The Nation*, June 27, 2013, http://www.thenation.com/blog/175015/whats-next-lgbt-movement.

[47] Sue-Ellen Case, *Performing Science and the Virtual*, 1 edition (New York: Routledge, 2006), 214.

[48] Ibid.

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embody themselves in disembodied spaces … ."[49] Nakamura points out that spaces like Instant

Messaging (IM, AIM) resist(ed) commodification and therefore offer alternative identifications

as well as creating networks connected through IRL and virtual connections, alike.[50]

Alternatively, Jesse Fox and Katie M. Warber argue in "Queer Identity Management and

Political Self-Expression on Social Networking Sites: A Co-Cultural Approach to the Spiral of

Silence" SNS are similar to other computer-mediated communication (CMC) such as Chat

Rooms, IM, and list-serves, however, SNS offer more than one-to one communication. They

employ the logic of networks, networked culture, and the networked body. And for this reason

Urvashi Vaid identifies social media as "a queer space of organizing and movement building."[51]

Registering Granovetter's theory of weak ties/links and strong ties/links with Bruno Latour's

Actor Network Theory, we can start to see the complexity of how networks connect people,

objects, and spaces across time (real time and other senses of time). Fox and Warber assert that

very little research into LGBT community formation using SNS has been conducted (as of the

date of their publication – 2015). Their research centered on the use of Facebook. Part of my

investigation looks at other SNS- specifically the SNS Meetup and the success Meetup has in

creating semi-private space for meeting and organizing. In considering the relationship of people

(actors) and objects (actants) the fortitude of social networks is dependent on the networks

flexibility and sustainability and the emergence of the social. This registration also allows a more

complex understanding of how lesbian community changes over time with the loss of traction of

specific social movements (Gay Liberation, LesbianNation, ACTUP) or the disappeared

communities (and spaces) of lesbian activists (and activism), and the breakdown of weak ties

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[49] Lisa Nakamura, *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 47.

[50] Ibid., 48-9.

[51] Urvashi Vaid et al., "What's Next for the LGBT Movement?," *The Nation*, June 27, 2013, http://www.thenation.com/blog/175015/whats-next-lgbt-movement.

through the loss of relationship of actors to other elements/members of the network.

What's So Great About Community, The Media, and Organizing?

In order to dissect how niche subcultures like Dykes on Bikes® organize social networks online, I turn toward the legacy of social protest in the LGBT community in the U.S. in the 20th century in order to trace some of the principles of organizing. Like the civil rights movement of the 1960s, Gay Liberation protests, marches, and ultimately, Pride parades came out of specific flashpoints. As previously discussed in chapter 1, the Stonewall Riots ignited action across the U.S. in major cities.

Community is both a powerful connection between members who share ideas, causes, desires, and even differences. Community can be a contested term and as Miranda Joseph argues in *Against the Romance of Community* that community is shaped by capitalism and the global economic forces of consumption and production and it can also displace these forces.[52] For the LGBT communities in the U.S, community has been an important tool in achieving policy changes, visibility, and media attention concerning group activism. The relationship of local community organizing to national efforts has created global participation in Pride parades, gay marriage equality, and other gay rights. So, while there is much critique surrounding the heterosexualizing of LGBT causes and culpability of LGBT people in the exploitation of other bodies like laboring bodies in the clothing and textile industries in third world nations (Miranda Joseph's argument), the genealogy of LGBT activism in the U.S. has shed light on a multitude of issues like visibility, decriminalization of homosexuality, harassment by police, the AIDS crisis,

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[52] Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (U of Minnesota Press, 2002), xxxiii.

queer resistance, hate crimes, marriage equality, and other legal equal protections. All of these

changes in law and public policy have been influenced and affected by community organization

or the formation of social networks. Within these networks, objects or actants like community

newsletters, magazines, and newspapers helped shape the social specific to these communities.

In the early days of the Gay Liberation, the publication *Come Out! A Newspaper By and For The*

Gay Community circulated in New York City as the first publication of the post Stonewall Riots

movement or Gay Liberation Front (see figure 4.1). A call to organize and collaborate by one of

its founding members, Lois Hart, in a column titled "Community Center" reads:

> It has been two months now that Gay Liberation Front was conceived: a turbulent,
> violently divisive collection of opposing and attracting forces that coalesced
> sufficiently that the embryonic spirit could be named. During demonstrations,
> meetings, and groups the forces continued to collide and explode, to congeal and
> reform – new members, new structures emerged – unexpected accords discovered,
> and all the while the spirit gets stronger and more harmonic.

The column continues in its call to action to come out, throw off the derogatory labels

and help with the effort. The final paragraph is a request for space – a physical meeting space

that can be used 24 hours a day, seven days a week, a community center where GLF members

would get together. The localness of gay and lesbian community organizing in the late 1960s and

early 1970s as evidenced by the grassroots publications like *Come Out!* (New York City) *Gay*

(New York City), *Gay Rays*, (Melbourne, Australia) *The Gay Blade* (Washington, D.C.), *Come*

Together (London), *Come Out Fighting* (Los Angeles, CA), and *Gay Sunshine* (Berkeley, CA)

reveal a network of like-minded gay rights activists who used the power of printed material to

connect members to the cause – gay rights, gay visibility. The 1970s saw even more magazines,

newspapers, newsletters pop up as political awareness and activism intertwined across

publications.

Much work has been done on the formations of the social in queer life. My interest and investigation focuses on the subcultural lives of lesbians and the networks they create. Social Network theory, specifically, Actor Network Theory reminds us that groups form around affiliations, boundaries, inclusions as well as exclusions.[53] Bruno Latour writes, "consider social aggregates as what should be explained by the specific associations provided by economics, linguistics, psychology, law, management, etc."[54] In other words, networks (groups) form through relational connections. Latour explains, "Group formations leave many more traces in their wake than already established connections which, by definition, might remain mute and invisible."[55] The traceable connections are what is left behind in the testimonies, memoirs, ephemera of groups or networks that are no longer. And it is through the investigation of these traces that we can have a clearer understanding of the formation of specific clusters, and, of course, their disappearance. The inclusionary and exclusionary traces yield a more complex historical picture. Networks like the GLF or ACT UP centered around specific inclusionary ideals or motivations and excluded other ideas and individuals from membership. As theorist Ann Cvetkovich argues how lesbians collectively organized within ACT UP had as much to do with a legacy or connection with the civil rights, gay rights, and feminist movement of the 1970s as with exclusion from other causes.[56] Cvetkovich's ethnographic study of lesbian membership in the activist "community" of ACT UP sheds light on some of the factors of how a particular IRL network forms.

Drawing from Michael Warner's and Lauren Berlant's theory of public culture,

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[53] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (OUP Oxford, 2007), 5.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 31.
[56] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 174-5

Cvetkovich uses the term *public culture* as a way to define what is "lived experience" and what is "collective activity."[57] Cvetkovich opens up Warner's meaning of a *public* beyond the address. She argues, "In using the term public culture, I keep as open as possible the definition of what constitutes a *public* in order to remain alert to forms of affective life that have not solidified into institutions, organizations, or identities." In other words, Cvetkovich adopts a *public* that refers to what Michael Warner has defined as a social totality, an audience, or an association around a text and its circulation or discourse.[58] Even though Warner describes a public as "the kind of public that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation." Cvetkovich argues that within queer subcultures finding its texts, its discourse in the archive is "difficult" as these communities do not have a traditional archive (see figure 4.2). Warner writes, "A public is a space of discourse organized by nothing other than discourse itself." It is precisely this idea of a space organized by its discourse that Cvetkovitch applies the word "public" to lesbian membership in the activist group, ACT UP. Through the "collective activity" of a public and its disidentification with institutional formations, Cvetkovich identifies some of the markers of how this network or collective of lesbian activists was formed and proceeds to unearth its discourse. Cvetkovich writes, "ACT UP's camaraderie was central to its activism, and it fostered strong bonds between gay men and lesbians that gave substance to newly emerging notions of queer identities and politics." The idea of "strong bonds" is central to the strength of a cluster or hub of a network – whether it is IRL or online. Weak links are connections that are easily "knocked" out and affectively and effectively destroy connections between communities. So, the community Cvetkovich is looking at in *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Culture* is the lesbian community in New York City during the 1980s and 1990s. The larger

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[57] Ibid., 9.
[58] Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 49–90, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/public_culture/v014/14.1warner.html.

network is the network of ACT UP that includes the community of gay male members.

Cvetkovich interviews with multiple lesbian members of ACT UP reveal the strengths of the

overall network through affiliations and shared associations beyond the HIV+ or HIV- bond.[59]

Fundamentally, both Warner and Cvetkovich identify the importance of kinship in terms of

addressing a public. Notions of belonging, affiliation, and associations create strong networks

and "self-organizing publics."[60] In addition to these notions of belonging, Cvetkovich argues that

"disidentification" also formed collective bonds with members of ACT UP.[61] Using José

Muñoz's employment of "disidentification," Cvetkovich uncovers it as a bonding element. Yet

according to Granovetter's social theory of networks, disidentification can also lead to weak ties,

or the opposite of strong bonds. Where disidentification becomes a strong bond is when multiple

individuals share the same disidentification and form a group around this commonality. This

contributes to the density of the network as like individuals cluster together. These types of

strong ties keep groups insular and disconnected from other groups. Granovetter argues that

"more people can be reached through weak ties" than with strong ties.[62] The ramification of

Granovetter's studies has led to enormous applications of SWT theory in the analysis of

community organizing, business success, and how information is disseminated across SNS.[63]

The strength of weak ties (SWT) and the presence of strong ties or links as a requisite for

successful community organizing suggest that organizations like Dykes on Bikes®'s longevity

and effectiveness is directly related to it having both kinds of network connections. The

organizing principles of Dykes on Bikes® consists of individuals who have close relationships

with each other and relationships with other LGBT organizations including other Dykes on

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[59] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 177.
[60] Warner, 52.
[61] Cvetkovich, 174.
[62] Granovetter.
[63] Barabási, 13.

Bikes® chapters. As explored in Chapter 1, the trademark suit has manifested changes to the organization's public image and its propagation of its image in mainstream media. The key aspects of how the group is organized as a social network and what sorts of social traces are found online and on SNS reveal its strengths and weaknesses in its "organizing" connections. The original organization started in San Francisco in 1974. The group's official date of incarnation is 1976. The discrepancies in the tow dates have to do with the definition of "organizing" and perhaps when the group became public culture. Images of a few lesbians on motorcycles who showed up to the Gay Day March in San Francisco can be found in the GLBT Historical Archives in San Francisco. The use of the phrase "Dykes on Bikes®" by the media was in full swing by 1976 and images of multiple "dykes on bikes" from the Gay Day Parade in the Castro exist in the GLBT Historical Society Archives in San Francisco. Somewhere between 1974 and 1976 the discourse around these motorcycle riding lesbians changed and a self-organizing group emerged. By 1978, the group was fully engaged as a community organization with social activities, meetings, plannings, and even institutional recognition by the Pride Parade organizers. The network of Dykes on Bikes® has continued growing and as of 2015, there are chapters all over the U.S. and the world.

Is Dykes on Bikes® a site of lesbian public culture? According to Cvetkovich's definition, mentioned previously in relationship to ACT UP, Dykes on Bikes® is a site of "lived experience" and "collective activity." It creates discourse through its activism. However, as it becomes "institutionalized" or "corporatized" through its trademarking, its discourse is diluted. I contend that Dykes on Bikes® continues to produce discourse surrounding lesbian visibility and lesbian rights, and in recent years part of its discourse has been framed around issues of gender, transgender rights, and cisgender privilege. Dykes on Bikes® is a community of women-

identified and their allies with common interests and commitment to LGBT motorcycling. Dykes on Bikes® clubs congregate at the fronts of Pride Parades around the world addressing a lesbian public culture. Is it possible, then, to consider a public culture as a network of communities? If so, then how might strong ties and weak ties manifest and influence the organization of a community and its diffusion of its mission as well as its discourse both IRL and online?[64] How Dykes on Bikes® organizes itself is as important in answering this question as it is in answering the question of its diffusion and possible dilution. In the next section I will trace some of the ways that the club organizes as well as where it organizes; thus expanding on how lesbians create culture and how this culture is changing with changes to the city, the economy, technology, political concerns, and changes inside LGBT organizations, like PRIDE.

The model of organization that Dykes on Bikes® adopted in its early years stems from other motorcycle clubs. Some academics have made the comparison to Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMG); however the structure of Motorcycle clubs is not a specific outcropping from outlaw groups. In fact, the oldest Motorcycle clubs are the San Francisco Motorcycle Club, the Yonkers Motorcycle Club, and the Oakland Motorcycle Club – all founded between 1904 and 1907, respectively. Hells Angels is an Outlaw Motorcycle Gang that emerged in the post WWII era in California in 1948.[65] Thus, the running, organizing, and community of motorcycle clubs had already been well established in the U.S. by the time the Hells Angels came into existence. I mention this point because some studies on OMGs suggest that the positions of leadership, the recruitment, and membership process is unique to Hells Angels or OMGs in general, but this is not the case. The structure of a motorcycle club is probably more closely related to other Anglo-American social clubs from the turn of the 20th century such as Music Societies, Elks Lodges,

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[64] Granovetter defines diffusion as the ability to spread information across a network and even across other networks through weak ties.

[65] "HISTORY," *Hells-Angels.com*, accessed March 18, 2015, http://affa.hells-angels.com/hamc-history/.

and other cultural societies. Peter Clark, author of *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World*, writes, "clubs and societies developed complex administrative regulations and organizational structures." Clark's historical research reveals organizational methods such as the planning and running of regular meetings, structures for debate, minutes, and other membership requirements. While British Societies aren't exactly motorcycle clubs, the influence of the creation of "social clubs" and how they organize in the U.S. can be traced from across the Atlantic.[66] By 1978, when San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® began to organize itself "officially," clubs and societies, including various motorcycle clubs were well established in the U.S. How San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® club meetings run (internally) derives from Roberts Rules.[67] Using the format of Robert Rules, San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® (club) conducts business weekly as a way to prepare for the big ride (Pride Parade).

In the early days of San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®'s organizational meetings, the group promoted volunteer participation through the printing and distributing of home-made or DIY flyers. The flyers advertised their weekly and monthly meetings, fundraisers, and other events that the club sponsored. These flyers were distributed locally at bars, cafes, community centers, and motorcycle shops. The flyers were also mailed to an ongoing list of people who have ridden in previous Dykes on Bikes®/Women's Motorcycle Contingent at San Francisco Pride. Even today the secretary keeps a mailing list and each year sends out the registration forms with other fundraising, volunteering information.[68] The meetings took place at Amelia's, one of the now defunct lesbian bars of San Francisco. The bar was situated as a spatial hub, bringing women together from the East Bay, South Bay, Peninsula, and San Francisco. When Amelia's closed

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[66] Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 428.

[67] "A Short History of Robert's Rules," accessed March 20, 2015, http://www.robertsrules.com/history.html.

[68] The author joined Dykes on Bikes® as a result of a friend giving her a flyer.

(part of the ever increasing gentrification of San Francisco and resulting disappearance of lesbians living in San Francisco) the group started meeting at the Eagle Tavern. Later years brought schisms and debates about whether or not the group should be meeting at a "gay leather bar" in terms of the bar's associations with gay men, leather/BDSM subcultural practices, and the bar atmosphere. Here the organization had to decide if the meeting place benefited the group or was a threat to its cohesion. For several years the organization met at the Castro Country Club, a LGBT Clean and Sober House and Meeting Club with a coffee bistro in the Castro, but competition with AA and NA groups made it difficult to keep meetings at scheduled times in the main meeting room. For a year the group met at the Center for Sex and Culture. Again, the benefit was that the space promoted alternative culture, but the cost of using the space started to impact the organization's economic stability and the lack of motorcycle parking also impacted the attendance. Dykes on Bikes® returned to the Eagle Tavern, only to have their re-found space threatened by the sale of the establishment. The Eagle closed its doors for a few months and eventually reopened under new ownership. Dykes on Bikes® currently meets at the Eagle every Wednesday night at 7:30 p.m. from April 1st to July 1st.[69] I trace the past fifteen years of the organization's meeting space as a way to illustrate both the reach of gentrification and subsequent impacts on LGBT community organizing and the importance space plays in how a community organizes.

In more recent years Dykes on Bikes® has been impacted by online organizing, online communication, and social networking, including social networking sites (SNS). The impacts of online community formation have increased Dykes on Bikes®'s global presence through the

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[69] The history of meetings is documented in the archives of SF Dykes on Bikes® which is in the SFDOB's storage facility. In addition to meeting notes, flyers and other artifacts, I was an organizing member from 2001 to 2011 and participated in meetings at all the locations mentioned with the exception of Amelia's as it closed in 1991. Meeting times are published on SF Dykes on Bikes®'s website: http://www.dykeonbikes.org

strengthening of weak ties. Online networking has weakened some of the strong tie modalities, specifically, in person, face-to-face recruiting, flyer distribution, and IRL community networking. What this means for Dykes on Bikes® is a dwindling number of participants in the PRIDE Day Parade and other lesbian-focused or women-focused events that Dykes on Bikes® produces. One could argue that other factors are influencing the dwindling numbers, like an aging lesbian population that was instrumental in the organization of Dykes on Bikes® in its early days and instrumental in opening up the scope of the Gay Day Parade to include LBTQQ and I persons. For the purposes of this chapter, my focus is on the differences and similarities in Social Networking IRL and Social Networking online and how these differences and similarities change the network itself. As danah boyd has argued, "the affordances of networked publics are fundamentally shaped by the properties of bits, the connections between bits, and the way that bits and networks link people in new ways."[70] Some of these unique ways that the digital creates alternative connections relies on code and the algorithms behind the software. We see this particularly with keyword association and visualizations of who is connected to whom. Facebook, LinkedIN, and Twitter operate in such a way that the software learns your habits and suggests interesting groups to join, people to follow, or friends of friends to connect to.[71] The real-time nature of Social Networking Sites (feeds) also contributes to new ways of connecting for a group like Dykes on Bikes® that has traditionally been grounded in physical meetings, mail correspondence, and presentational spectacle.

The circulation of media (documenting Dykes on Bikes®) in real time and beyond the

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[70] danah boyd, "Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications," in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community and Culture on Social Network Sites*, ed. Zizi Papacharissi (New York: Routledge, 2011), 42.

[71] Andrew L. Mendelson and Zizi Papacharissi, "Collective Narcissism in College Student Facebook Photo Galleries" in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community and Culture on Social Network Sites* edited by Zizi Papacharissi (New York: Routledge, 2011), 251.

event has helped Dykes on Bikes® gain international recognition and win its trademark suit.

Social media which refers to media that is shared on and across online Social Networks also has

the capability of connecting individual bodies, and groups. Take for instance Flickr which is

owned by Yahoo. The premise behind how Flickr operates is both an IRL photo album and a

Social Networking Site. It uses content generated by the user to create nodes and connections

between other users. The connections exist through the media (images) through group

association, metatagging with keywords, and other data associated with the image – this could be

the date of upload, the camera used to photograph, or any of the camera generated data like

aperture, shutter speed, ISO, etc. So, the networks on Flickr are both human created through likes

and data driven. Why and how this is important has to do with the types of social ties that are

possible on a large scale network like Flickr. Searching and finding certain key words and thus

affiliations can lead to thousands and thousands of images from hundreds of users who aren't

necessarily a part of the subculture or community. Flickr like YouTube allows for both private

communities and public communities. This is where Facebook sets itself apart from other SNS.

Facebook is more of a closed system. Drawing from the research on SNS and specifically

analysis of Facebook by Cliff Lampe, Nicole Ellison, and Charles Steinfield as well as their own

qualitative analysis Andrew Medelson and Zizi Paparachisi write, "SNSs are most often used to

connect with individuals, people known from offline environments, rather than for meeting new

people online."[72] For a group like Dykes on Bikes® that is constantly recruiting new volunteers,

this paradigm of closed networks limits the transmission of its information. Obviously, mailing

flyers to a predetermined mailing list is also a closed system, however, my point is that other

SNSs provide more outreach or what Granovetter designates as weak ties.

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[72]   Ibid., 253.

More recently, Dykes on Bikes® moved from the model of posting its updated meeting information and other events on its website to using the platform of MeetUp. In an effort to extend its network through weak and strong ties, Dykes on Bikes® uses MeetUp to connect to other women in the San Francisco Bay Area who enjoy motorcycling and to connect to other LGBTQI organizations. On the San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® WMC Meetup page the keyword cloud reads, "Lesbian, Women and Motorcycles, Women on Wheels, female Motorcycle Riders, Women Bikers, Female Motorcycle Organization, Gay Riders, Female Bikers, San Francisco Bay Area, Motorcycle Riding, Lesbian Motorcycle Riders." The keywords generate cross-pollination or the reach of the network across its members extending to other networks. This would be considered weak ties as the network spans out as opposed to creating more density from within a cluster. The density of the cluster, in this case, San Francisco Dykes on Bikes®'s Meetup membership when more users join this particular Meetup group. So, as membership increases, the strong ties increase in the sense that within the membership users have more in common (i.e., the mission of the organization) than users connected from different groups.

The layout and interface of San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® Meetup bares significant resemblance to a website (see figure 4.3). The integration of social modules and social media makes the page even more useful for creating an online community than simple links, email sign-up lists, galleries, and other more Web 1.0 standards.[73] On the right side of the Meetup page is a membership feed which updates as members join. One can see not only the latest members but what other groups in which they belong (see figure 4.2). On the left hand side of the page, as

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[73]   I use the term Web 1.0 to refer to the design and code of the Web in the 1990s and early 2000s. Tim O'Reilley refers to Web 1.0 as related to the design of a page on a book or magazine, this is in contrast to Web 2.0 which allows data to be shared and aggregates from that data shape our experiences online. See: http://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html#__federated=1

previously listed, are the keyword attributes. These keywords are hyperlinks to other Meetup

groups who have used the same keywords (see figure 4.3). Instantly, by using certain types of

robust and germane terms, San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® connects to other groups. The

keywords "Motorcycle Riding" has 1,337 Meetups worldwide, whereas the keywords "Female

Motorcycle Organization" has 7 Meetups worldwide. An even more narrow return of Meetups is

found with the keywords "Lesbian Motorcycle Riders" at 1 Meetup worldwide. The Keyword

links create an instantaneous mapping of Dykes on Bikes® connections.

Web 2.0, of which Meetup is a part, is dependent on consumer/user participation, and

content creation.[74] As a member of the Meetup page, one participates as a prosumer. The

members of San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® Meetup are prosumers and willingly provide free

labour for the company. Meetup is a privately held corporation which was founded in 2004. Its

success is attributed in part to its early days and association with Howard Dean's Presidential

Campaign.[75] According to its financial profile on Google finance "the company helps people get

together in groups that share a common interest. The site offers a network of local topic-specific

Meetup Groups though which people self-organize gatherings. "Meetups" take place in

thousands of cities around the globe at cafés, restaurants, bookstores, and other local

establishments. Revenues come from Meetup organizers, who pay a fee to use the service. In

addition, Meetup earns money from advertising and sponsorship."[76] Sprung from "altruistic"

intentions, the founders describe their idea to create Meetup as a response to a post 9/11 New

York City. "There was a yearning for community."[77] Meetup has been on the tech/Internet scene

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[74]   Mark Coté and Jennifer Pybus, "Learning to Immaterial Labour 2.0: MySpace and Social Networks,"
       Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization, 2007, 1–19.
[75]   Adrianne Jeffries, "The Long and Curious History of Meetup.com," *Observer*, accessed March 25, 2015,
       http://observer.com/2011/01/the-long-and-curious-history-of-meetupcom/.
[76]   "Meetup Inc. : Quotes & News Google Finance," 2015, http://www.google.com/finance?cid=887952.
[77]   Jeffries.

for a long time in comparison to other SNSs, Facebook launched in 2004 but didn't open up to general membership until 2006, Twitter.[78] As noted in several news media articles, its steady growth puts it at about several million active users per month.[79] With this sort of membership and activity groups are able to build large networks depending on their keyword associations.

What is social about an SNSs like Meetup? One of the "advertised" tenets or promotional slogans of Meetup is to help people connect online and "meetup" IRL. The combination of IRL and virtual experiences allows Meetup to escape some of the criticisms heralded at SNSs. Words like "narcissism" and "ruining" and "dopamine" litter the blog posts, book reviews, and articles about the way that social media is destroying our ability to connect IRL.[80] From the perspective of community organizing, democratizing of publishing, and global circulation of knowledge, the Internet and social media have liberated the individual and the group – to publish, promote, perform the self.[81] Staff writer for *Buzzfeed.com* Summer Anne Burton describes online community formation as instrumental in her self-discovery and feeling of belonging. She writes, "I've met wonderful people online, connected in much deeper ways to the friends I had, and I've used dozens of networks and platforms to figure myself out."[82] Burton considers herself lucky to have grown up on the Internet, first with BBSes, then chat rooms, and now Web 2.0. The line between real life and the virtual isn't a distinct one as Burton believes that online connections are as powerful and meaningful and "real" as IRL, a position completely contrary to Baudrillard's

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78 See danah boyd's essay "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship" for a visual timeline of the launchings of SNSs. "danah boyd," accessed March 25, 2015, http://www.danah.org/.

79 Alex Kantrowitz, "Meetup CEO Trumpets Booming Growth As Site Passes 100 Million RSVPs," *Forbes*, accessed March 25, 2015, http://www.forbes.com/sites/alexkantrowitz/2013/04/23/meetup-ceo-points-to-booming-growth-as-his-company-hits-100-million-rsvps/.

80 Eliana Dockterman, "Kim Stolz: How Social Media Is Ruining Our Relationships," *Time*, June 24, 2014, http://time.com/2917916/kim-stolz-how-social-media-is-ruining-our-relationships/.

81 Andrew L. Mendelson and Zizi Papacharissi, "Collective Narcissism in College Student Facebook Photo Galleries" in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community and Culture on Social Network Sites* edited by Zizi Papacharissi (New York: Routledge, 2011), 251.

82 Summer Anne Burton, "How I Grew Up On The Internet," Blog, *BuzzFeed*, (December 8, 2014), http://www.buzzfeed.com/summeranne/social-networking-a-love-story?utm_source=digg&utm_medium=email.

theory of the virtual video char versus real face-to-face meeting. The question is does online social networking do something different than face-to-face meeting? By applying Granovetter's theory of Social Networks, the difference might exist in its amplification of the network. As we have seen that space and time change in an electronic/digital environment. Simultaneity and crossing boundaries are made possible through digital connections. Weak ties are amplified, multiplied, and spread like the rhizomatous roots of the Aspen.

Online communities offer an altered temporality of connection; these connections exist, momentarily on servers, drives, the cloud. However, extended memory is a past where only traces of conversations, emails, and other textual interaction exist as fragmented digital artifacts, screenshots, old message folders, and partially preserved servers. It's been thirty years since the WELL began its digital community. The design of the WELL, for better or worse, relies on Web 1.0 technology (see figure 4.4). The interface displays a bulletin boardesque and list-serve posting environment. What the WELL emphasizes in its "member agreement" is "You Own Your Own Words."[83] It is a non-anonymous environment which is certainly a common attribute of most SNSs – however, when you sign up for a Facebook account, a person doesn't call you on your phone versus when you sign up for a WELL account, a IRL person calls you and confirms your recent transaction. The distinction between a SNS that is based on strong ties and a SNS that is based on weak ties might help us understand how SNSs are failing at creating a sense of community in 2015. The differences between SNSs that have weak ties is that they amplify circulation, redundancy, and speed, whereas, strong ties which create a deeper sense of community, tend to have difficulty creating systemic change over time because the ties are insular. There is debate about Granovetter's theories over what constitutes a strong tie and what

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[83]   "The WELL - Learn About The WELL," accessed March 26, 2015, http://www.well.com/aboutwell.html.

constitutes a weak tie (See David Krackhardt). What the WELL does continue to do is create

opportunity for "interested" individuals to find each other and have meaningful conversations.

The main bulletin system is labeled "conferences." The word "conference," according to the

Oxford English Dictionary, means "the action of bringing together."[84] The social process of

bringing bodies together around or through technology continues to destabilize our

understanding of IRL communities as the two (IRL and virtual) co-mingle and converge. In a

Time Magazine article from 2003 about one of the founders of the WELL, Chris Taylor writes,

"[Larry] Brilliant has been scaling peaks ever since, not in medicine but in technology.

Understanding the body, he discovered, helped him understand computers – the science of

physiology translated into that of networks."[85] This science is constantly changing as media

converge, and as technology embeds itself into biology and vice a versa – as biology embeds

itself into technology. Our failure to use SNSs to improve community and to make connections

that matter has larger implications than just a missed post on Facebook or unfriending an

annoyingly rowdy high school alumnus. Our expectations of SNSs to connect us in meaningful

ways have to do with our definition of community and possibly nostalgia. Marshall McLuhan

writes, "When faced with a totally new situation, we tend always to attach ourselves to the

objects, to the flavor of the most recent past. We look at the present through a rear-view mirror.

We march backwards into the future."[86] What we can gain from studying and analyzing SNSs

has enormous reach as Stephen Borgatti, Martin Everett, and Jeffrey Johnson argue in *Analyzing*

Social Networks. They write, "a general hypothesis of network theory is that an actor's position

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[84] "'conference, v.," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed March 27, 2015,
      http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/38741.
[85] Chris Taylor, "Unwired: Will You Buy WiFi?," *Time*, accessed March 27, 2015,
      http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1004713,00.html.
[86] Marshall McLuhan, Quentin Fiore, and Jerome Agel, *The Medium Is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*, 1st
      edition (BANTAM, 1967), 74-5.

in the network determines in part the constraints and opportunities that he or she will encounter." Through the study of networks and the ties that bind networks together, Borgatti, Everett, and Johnson agree that the attempt to quantify the social world is both an attempt to formalize social network theory as a methodology without considering network theory as a theoretical concept. What that means is that we can measure phenomena, calculate and foreshadow community formation, program computers to detect patterns, trends, activities, and still be wrong. The debates over the value of online communities continue to plague cultural theorists. As the editors of *Community in the Digital Age: Philosophy and Practic*e ask, "Are virtual communities 'real' enough to support the kind of personal commitment and growth we associate with community life, or are they fragile and ultimately unsatisfying substitutes for human interaction?"[87] Fragility is an important concept as well as sustainability. However, the question that affects most SNSs is how profitable are they and how expandable is their base of users/customers. An example of the fragility of the base of an SNS is the rise and fall of MySpace. MySpace's eventual failure as a business and failure to sustain itself as a popular SNS brings into focus the reality that SNSs are at the mercy of the nature of the medium. So while the Internet (the World Wide Web) has an expansive reach and offers up a massive base of users for startups, edgy online sites, and SNSs, any online business, collective, or group has to contend with relevancy, redundancy, memory, and the temporality of the medium.

How the WELL sustains or sustained itself over thirty years is a story of unprofitability and community specificity. Katie Hafner traces the unusual and unique community formation of the WELL, in an article that appeared in *WIRE Magazine* in 1997. She writes, "History has already decreed The Well to be synonymous with online communication in its best, worst, and,

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[87] Phillip E. Agre et al., *Community in the Digital Age: Philosophy and Practice*, ed. Andrew Feenberg and Darin Barney (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004).

above all, most vital forms. Though always small in overall numbers, its influence and recognition far outweighed any significance that could be measured by membership or revenues."[88] Hafner points out that the WELL began as a "social experiment" and not as a "business proposition."[89] Despite its beginnings as a social space, The WELL was sold in 1999 to Salon.com. By 2005, Salon was ready to "dump" the online subscription based community. And in 2006, Salon announced in a press release that it had not found an "appropriate buyer" and would stay with Salon.[90] In 2012, Salon sold The WELL to its members. In a sense, the WELL's future is invested in by the members who use the network and is not dependent on advertising, selling data and other strategies that the dominant SNSs use. New membership in the WELL happens at a very slow rate with the current membership at about 2700 subscribers – the same number it had in 2006.[91] One member calls it the anemic aspect of the WELL. Other SNSs have fallen out of popularity due to multiple factors: a static business model, a static interface design, or simply a newer, more popular social software application comes along and for awhile its novelty dominates. The WELL sustains itself through its strong ties and not through weak ties, which is counter to the design and structure of most SNSs as they rely on massive membership (1.2 billion members on Facebook as of 2014) as the audience for advertisers. Access, usability, and the integration of the medium into multiple devices means that SNSs travel with us to work, at home in every room, and other IRL spaces. What this means for digital communities is a process of nomadic migration, critical mass, and the boundaries of the real are crossed through social networking.[92]

[88] Katie Hafner, "The Epic Saga of The Well: The World's Most Influential Online Community (And It's Not AOL)," *Wired Magazine*, May 1997.
[89] Ibid.
[90] "The WELL To Stay With Salon," accessed March 25, 2015, http://www.well.com/p-release/wellsalon.html.
[91] Nick Wingfield, "The Well, a Pioneering Online Community, Is for Sale Again," *Bits Blog*, June 29, 2012, http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/06/29/the-well-a-pioneering-online-community-is-for-sale-again/.
[92] Raul Pertierra, "Diasporas, the New Media and the Globalized Homeland," in *Migration, Diaspora and Information Technology in Global Societies*, ed. Leopoldina Fortunati, Jane Vincent, and Raul Pertierra

The concept of nomadic activity, borrowed from Stephen Wray's theory of nomadic activism on the Internet, in part is an important lens to view how community is formed and dispersed, and/or diluted online. Wray writes, "the use of their [Deleuze and Guattari] nomad model to discuss how capital's increased dispersion, mobility, and electronic form requires new electronic tactics for disruption of that flow."[93] Wray argues, "Resistant texts, images, and sounds on web sites are often linked hypertextually with similar sites. A reader, a user, an audience member of a resistant web site can connect easily to another such site and in this way can rhizomatically and nomadically travel through a territory of cyberspace that has been occupied by a series of interconnected resistant web sites." For Wray, there are two types of resistance online: "rhetorical and technical." These two types of resistance may also be applied to the theories of weak ties and strong ties. As Wray points out the resonance of resistance depends on its rhizomatous and nomadic dispersion. Resistance is more effective when dispersed in multiple directions. This concept seems counter-intuitive to building strong ties, but completely in line with Granovetter's theory that information flows further and farther across weak links or a network with less density. For Wray, density means redundancy, distribution, and interconnectedness. For Granovetter, density means an amount of clustering in a network or multiple ties and links. The way images and text travel across SNSs is both nomadic and rhizomatous in that one person will post an image or headline or link and then other people in that cluster will repost the information, and so on until the information dies out. Critical mass happens when enough people across networks align and post, cross post, repost images that change public opinion, policy, etc. Recent nomadically successful activity like #BlackLivesMatter, #NOH8, and criticism of Indiana's Religious Freedom Act emphasize how

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(Routledge, 2013).

[93] Stefan Wray, "Rhizomic-Nomadic Resistant Internet Use," *Rhizomes, Nomads, and Resistant Internet Use*, July 7, 1998, http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ecd/rhizomatic.html#INTRODUCTION.

the Internet and social networking can be used as a tool to affect change.

For the LGBT community, one of the earliest social environments, PlanetOUT was a space where members could chat online on various subjects, post a profile for potential dating, and post events of interest to the community. PlanetOut was founded in 2000 in San Francisco and went public with its IPO in 2004.[94] By 2007 it was on the brink of bankruptcy. The San Francisco based "webportal" followed the trajectory of many dot-com companies: boom, acquisitions, bust to being bought and merged with larger all-consuming corporations. The reason the history of PlanetOut is important in that it follows many of the same economic and absorptive trajectories that other SNSs follow. It navigates the world of commodities, prosumer labour, and monopolizing forces. It also leaves behind very little in terms of digital traces of community formation. Another site that has impacted lesbian visibility, online community formation, and the creation of a lesbian public is AfterEllen.com. AfterEllen.com went live in 2002. Inspired by Ellen DeGeneres's famous "coming out" episode on Ellen the ABC sitcom, Sarah Warn created the online site. AfterEllen.com is popular online magazine/blog about lesbian popular culture. Warn sold the site to Logo TV (under MTV's Network which is owned by Viacom). In 2014 Evolve Media bought the brand from Viacom.[95] Over the eight years that Viacom owned AfterEllen.com, the site changed its emphasis from user generated articles to a model of aggregating stories from other sources (newspapers, online magazines, etc.). By comparing archived pages of AfterEllen.com over multiple years, one can see this change from community involvement in producing the content of the site to the site functioning like most other news magazines online which draw from other sources or feeds creating a media loop (see

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[94] "PLANETOUT / On the Record: Lowell Selvin," *SFGate*, accessed April 3, 2015, http://www.sfgate.com/business/ontherecord/article/PLANETOUT-On-the-Record-Lowell-Selvin-2736314.php.

[95] Paresh Dave, "AfterEllen.com Acquired by Evolve Media from Viacom," *Los Angeles Times*, accessed February 13, 2015, http://www.latimes.com/business/technology/la-fi-tn-afterellen-evolve-viacom-lesbian-website-20141007-story.html.

figures 4.5-4.11). While individual involvement slowed in terms of content generation on the

main pages, the forums seemed to remain active. These forums included the categories:

introductions, movies, music, people, television, entertainment industry-related topics, the

written word, and everything else.[96] When Evolve media bought the brand from Viacom, a

redesign of the front page went into effect, like any other commercial website, AfterEllen.com

has to keep up with the innovations of Web 2.0 and 3.0 technology in order to remain relevant.

The 2015 (the most recent iteration as of this writing) site emphasizes video content. The new

design interface for the forum removed many of the functions originally created to connect

members to each other. One member states in a post, "When I came back I found the new layout

a bit disappointing. It seems that a lot of the great functions and active forums were just

completely wiped and AE went for a simpler feel. It'd be a whole lot more helpful if your help

link actually did what its link stated."[97] The performance of the brand AfterEllen.com is tied to a

sense of community and buying power. Brian Fitzgerald, the Chief Executive of Evolve Media

remarks about AfterEllen.com "arguably the largest but the most influential site of its kind."[98]

The Los Angeles Times and Fitzgerald refer to AfterEllen.com as a "lesbian-focused

community." Fitzgerald also refers to AfterEllen.com as a "brand" that is "well-established and

well-respected within [its] audience."[99] For Evolve, AfterEllen.com is both a brand and a

community. But really Evolve is looking to market to the audience of AfterEllen.com through

selling advertising space to companies. AfterEllen.com represents the last hurrah of website-

centric spaces for LGBT visibility. SNSs and other media are converging and the article based

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[96] "Forums | AfterEllen.com," July 24, 2008,
      http://web.archive.org/web/20080724015348/http://www.afterellen.com/community.
[97] "Forums | AfterEllen.com," December 11, 2014, http://forums.afterellen.com/threads/what-happened-to-
      ae.2641/.
[98] Paresh Dave, "AfterEllen.com Acquired by Evolve Media from Viacom," *Los Angeles Times*, accessed February
      13, 2015, http://www.latimes.com/business/technology/la-fi-tn-afterellen-evolve-viacom-lesbian-website-
      20141007-story.html.
[99] Ibid.

format that was behind AfterEllen.com's community cohesion is disappearing and being replaced by 140 character tweets, hashtags, and media bytes. The paradox of an online community forming on a high-profile (heavily invested in) sites is one that dates back to even the WELL, as Hafner argues, "The Well created a paradox: scruffy, undercapitalized, and armed with a huge amount of clout. It would become a harbinger of both the excitement and the concerns that would arise on the Net over the uses of electronic networks and virtual dialogs, free speech, privacy, and anonymity."[100] The WELL continues to be a space where there is no anonymity, unlike AfterEllen.com where a user can sign up with just an email address, or keep a profile private. The connections made through profiles, conversations and IRL contact are part of what keeps an online community sustainable.

The expanse of networks distributing information, images, and other media is part of what makes SNSs so powerful as marketing tools. Clicks and eyeballs get measured and translate to dollars for the advertiser. One cannot escape the commodity market online. Sites get "gobbled up" by larger companies in order to decrease competition and expand reach. For the LGBT community, they are as much a viable audience, consumer, user, and producer of content and Evolve's recent purchase of AfterEllen.com shows a speculation about increasing its audience. PlanetOUT which was launched in 1995 failed to reach its set advertising revenue and was "dumped" by the Microsoft Network in 1997. Over a period of twelve years, it would change "investor" and corporate hands, change its interface, and finally get swallowed up by Here Media.[101] But before it became defunct, there was a hope that it would impact LGBT lives globally. The CEO, Lowell Selvin, in 2005 remarked:

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[100] Katie Hafner, "The Epic Saga of The Well: The World's Most Influential Online Community (And It's Not AOL)," *Wired Magazine*, May 1997.
[101] Steven E.F. Brown, "Sun Sets on PlanetOut," *San Francisco Business Times*, January 9, 2009.

For this company to have a business model that works, to have made it through the dot-com crash successfully and then to go public with a ticker symbol that says LGBT, I think is an extraordinary community event that has political and social and other ramifications. It's also, I believe, a tremendous economic event. This is an under- served market -- $600 billion in buying power in the United States alone. We reach 3.3 million active members (out) of roughly 15 million adult gays and lesbians in the United States and 260 million adult gays and lesbians in Europe, Latin America, Asia and North America combined. We're just scratching the surface.[102]

Juxtaposing Selvin's comment to the company's slogan or motto: "PlanetOut seeks to connect, enrich, and illuminate the lives of LGBT people everywhere" emphasizes even more the paradox that SNSs contend with: creating community or creating profit. This paradox seems to drive more wedges between the two camps. Even so, what has made a site like the WELL survive has more to do with actual bodies organizing and meeting IRL than the global reach to which social networks have access. For lesbian online and IRL community, sustainability can be imagined and possibly achieved through local action and using the power of SNSs. Unfortunately, SNSs and the nomadic pathways carved onto drives may not be available for an understanding of today's lesbian public.

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[102] "PLANETOUT / On the Record: Lowell Selvin," *SFGate*, accessed April 3, 2015, http://www.sfgate.com/business/ontherecord/article/PLANETOUT-On-the-Record-Lowell-Selvin-2736314.php.

Figure 4.1: ACT UP Flyer, 1994 "ACT UP 25 Years of Radical Action," Advocate.com, screenshot.

Figure 4.2: San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® MeetUp Page, screenshot.

Figure 4.3: San Francisco Dykes on Bikes® MeetUp Page Keywords, 2015, screenshot.

Figure 4.4: The WELL's Conference Portal, April 2015, screenshot.
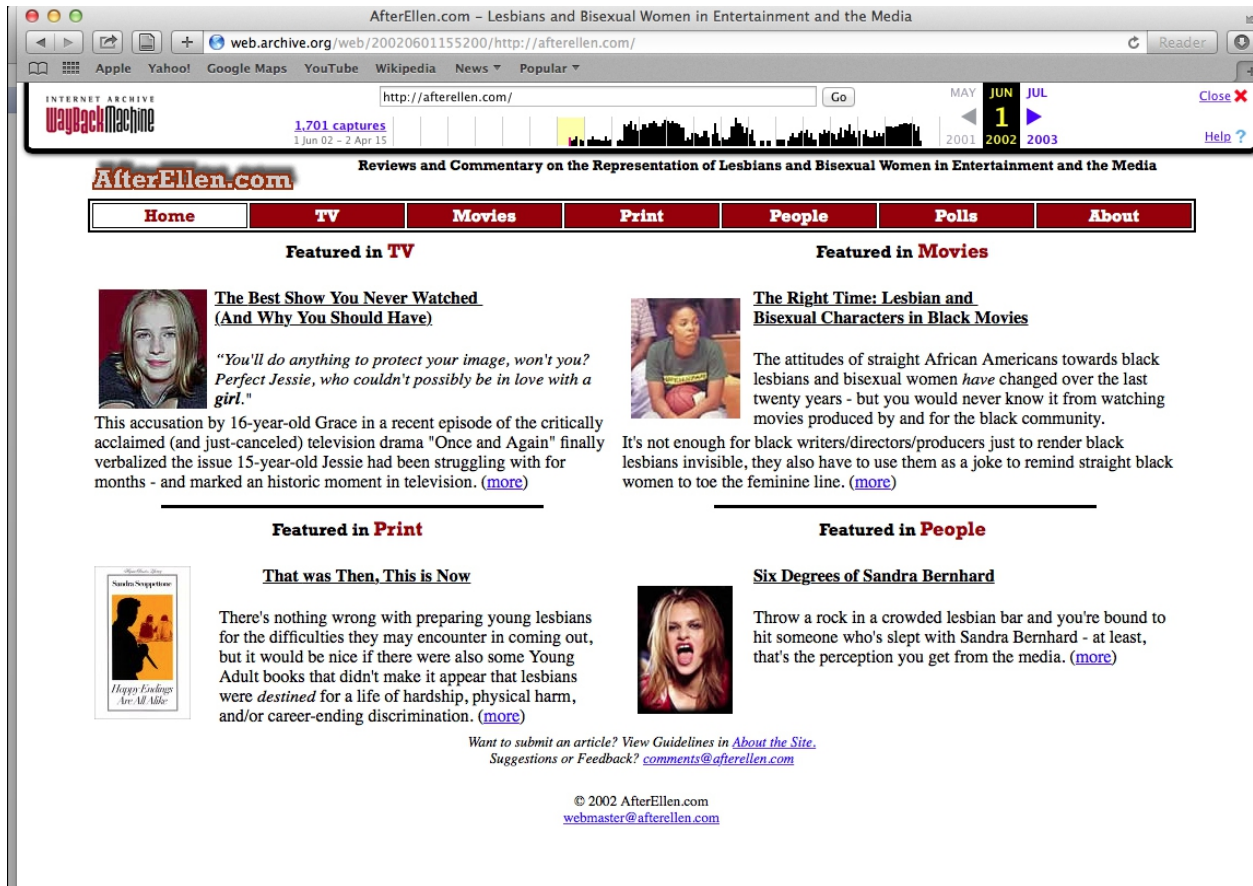
Figure 4.5: AfterEllen.com capture from June 01, 2002, archive.org, 2015, screenshot.

Figure 4.6: AfterEllen.com capture from November 23, 2005, archive.org, 2015, screenshot.
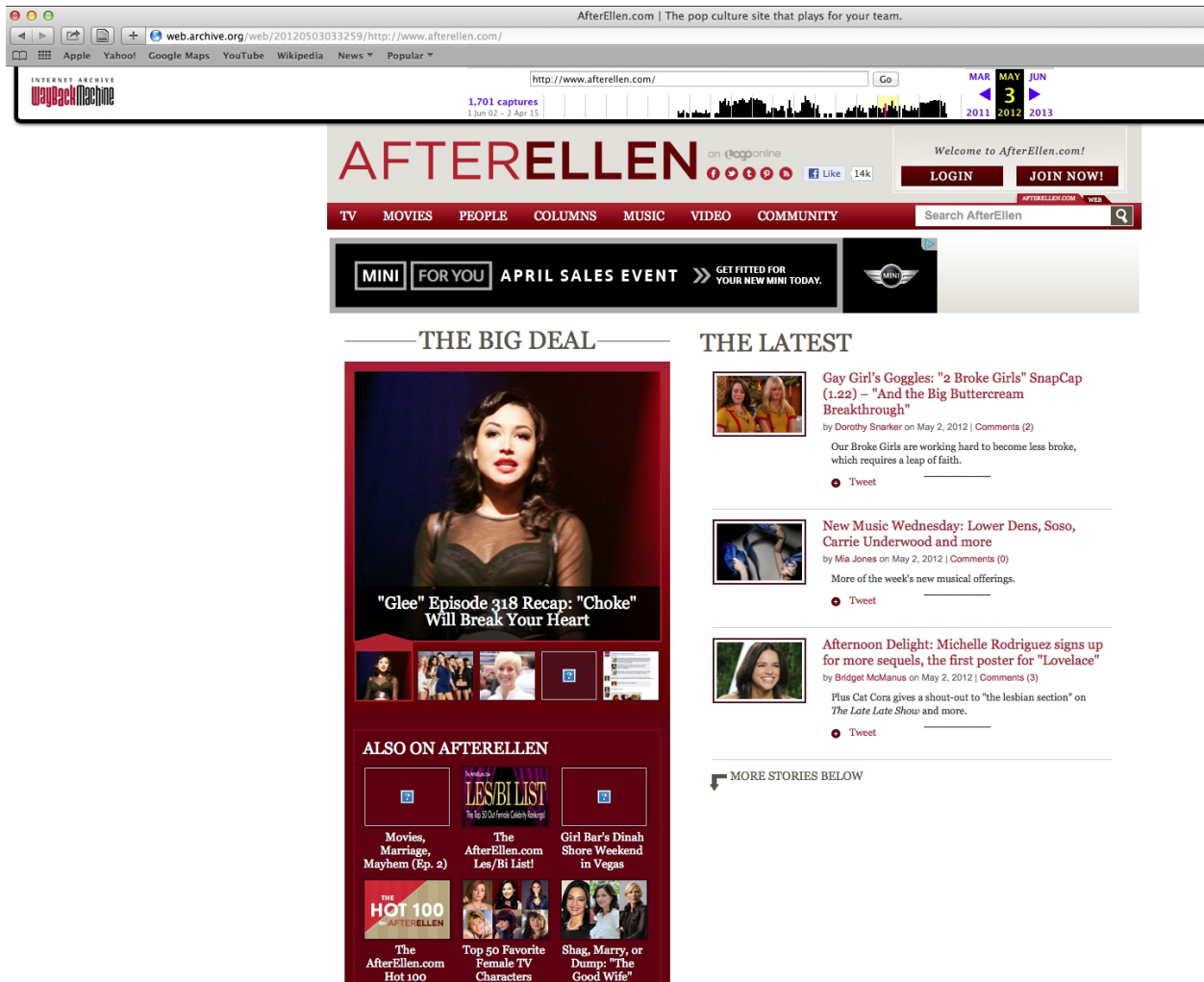
Figure 4.7: AfterEllen.com capture from May 03, 2012, archive.org, 2015, screenshot.

Figure 4.8: AfterEllen.com contributors' page, 2015, screenshot.
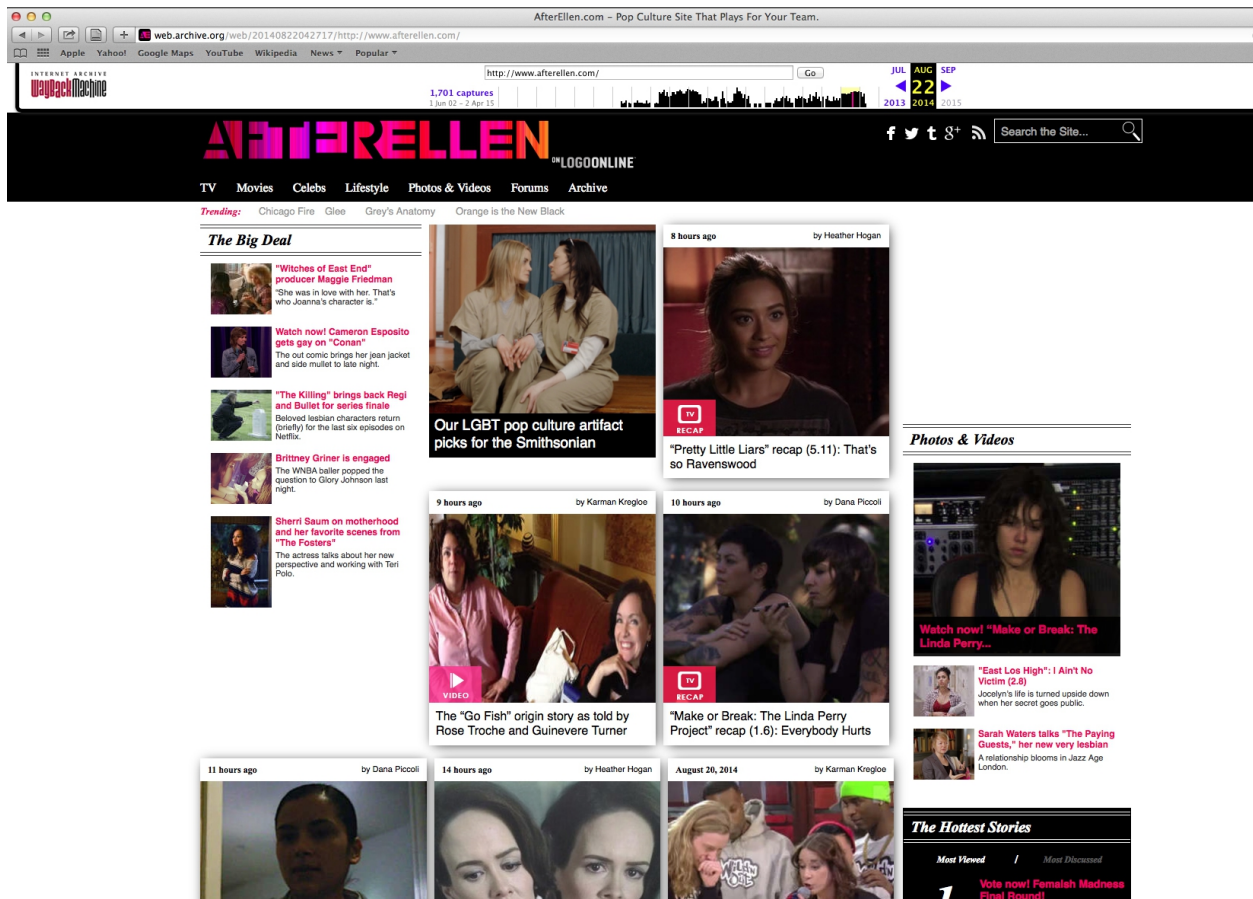
Figure 4.9: AfterEllen.com capture from August 22, 2014, archive.org, 2015, screenshot.

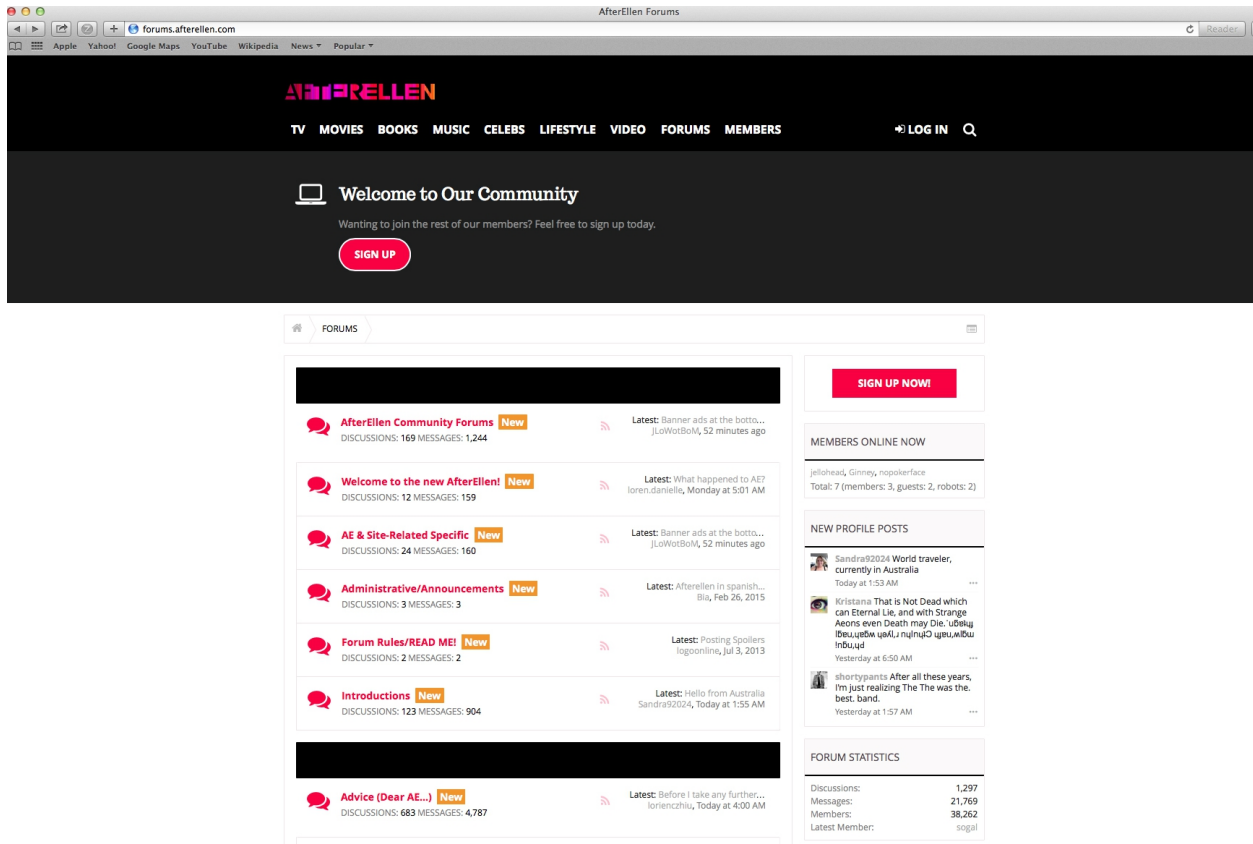*Figure 4.10:* AfterEllen.com's Forums before Evolve Media bought the brand, 2014, screenshot.

Figure 4.11: AfterEllen.com after Evolve Media bought the brand, 2015, screenshot.

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