SOUNDING OUT COMMUNITY:

MEANINGS OF COMMUNITY, IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE

AMONG LESBIANS

LIVING IN NEW ZEALAND

By

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A door is suddenly open –
cross the threshold quietly –
you will, as if weaving a new pattern,
become aware of a larger tapestry
and you'll find, in your own way,
the design and direction that matters.

– Rhoda Métraux, *June 1994*

Abstract

In this dissertation I examine the "whys" and the "wheres" of community formation. I consider the role of space in the production of lesbian histories and the defining of social space as it impacts the performance of community and sexual identity. Mine is a project that uses the epistemological strength of anthropology to examine the discourses of "sexual identity" and "community." I consider how New Zealand lesbians define community from within, rather than as others experience it. I consider the creation of generational cohorts that defy the relevance of age and definitions of sexual identity that defy the relevance of the erotic. My analysis shows community to require constant connection, reinforced through repetition, and community-defined sensibilities based on a homonormative symbolic domain. Socially created boundaries and negotiated relationships allow for continued self-authoring and the socialization of new members.

Through this study, we understand community as far more significant than a gathering of people with common interests and a budding group awareness. We realize that community cannot exist as detached from the identities that shape it, the space that defines it or the "style in which it is imagined." Lesbian community allows us both to interrupt the assumed ontological significance of sex to sexual identity and to understand community as a social space implicated in the creation of social history; allowing for authenticity by allowing for a new symbolic domain from which identity may derive meaning. The strength of lesbian community and its ability to adapt through historically situated generational shifts of sentiment is based upon the foundational role of difference as part and parcel to community.

Because lesbian community is simultaneously defined by unity as well as by difference, the community-defined sensibilities – belonging/authenticity, reflection/separation, authenticity/self authoring – reflect a similar willingness to negotiate between like histories and disparate interests. The Rangirua lesbian community distinguishes itself by identifying that tension as their common ground, defining themselves by the aspiration to embrace biculturality, deny the assertion of heterosexual or class based privilege and commit to an acceptance/celebration of diversity as their goal.

Acknowledgements

From start to finish, the only time I have felt my skills to be inadequate is when I sat down to write these acknowledgements. A few sentences and key phrases cannot fully express my appreciation nor equal the generosity of spirit I have been fortunate to receive. Thank you. I am sincerely grateful to all who have helped me whether or not their names appear below.

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My partner and *beshiert*, Martha Gonzalez, has supported my aspirations, nurtured my bruises and shared with me a partnership that inspires. Her footsteps can be found on many of these pages, her laughter scattered among the words. Her everyday continues to teach me about the kind of scholar and person I want to become. I thank her for the richness she has added to my life. She's serious and silly and above all, my best friend.

When I wanted to be a wood worker, my mother bought me tools. When I wanted to learn to climb mountains, she sent me out for instruction. When I wanted to be a doctor, she gave me *Gray's Anatomy* and found me a Doctor to shadow. I was fascinated by nature and she sent me to the Galapagos Islands. She opened our home to Russian Jewish immigrants, wayward scholars and people who needed help. She taught me to appreciate equally the worlds of high art and flea markets. She opened my mind to the cultures of Denmark, Borneo, Sri Lanka, Thailand and any number of other worlds when I was too young to realize I was benefiting. Lois Kapelsohn Etz has taught me strength of spirit, the will to try, the belief to get it done, the spunk to fight the odds, and most of all, to do it My Way. What I know of survival, honesty and integrity I learned from her and it is to her that this work is dedicated.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

ABS	Club Anything But Straight
ACC	Arts Council Center
ANZUS	Australia-New Zealand-United States Defense Treaty
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
CER	Closer Economic Relations Treaty
CLP	Club Loud and Proud
FTZ	Free Trade Zone
GLF	Gay Liberation Front
HLR	Homosexual Law Reform
ILGTA	International Lesbian/Gay Travel Association
LAGANZ	Lesbian and Gay Archives of New Zealand
LSG	RAGLAN Lesbian Support Group
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation Development
RAGLAN	Rangirua Gay and Lesbian Action Network
RGA/RAGA	Rangirua Gay Action
SHE	Sisters for Homophile Equality
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
UWC	United Women's Convention
WCTU	Women's Christian Temperance Union
WLM	Women's Liberation Movement

List of Appendices

"Subjects" that Laugh

> To discover who people think they are, what they think they are doing, and to what end they think they are doing it, it is necessary to gain a working familiarity with the frames of meaning within which they enact their lives. This does not involve feeling anyone else's feelings, or thinking anyone else's thoughts, simple impossibilities. Nor does it involve going native, an impractical idea, inevitably bogus. It involves learning how, as a being from elsewhere with a world of one's own, to live with them.
>
> — Clifford Geertz, *Available Light*

> In anthropological texts, the 'subjects' rarely laugh and enjoy themselves.
>
> — Renato Rosaldo, *Where Objectivity Lies*

Introduction

To a cacophony of discussions regarding transnationalism, identity and the social significance of space, this research adds lessons learned from studying meanings of community, difference and sexual identity among lesbians living in Rangirua, New Zealand. I examine the "whys" and the "wheres" of community formation, as well as cultural, political and historical influences on that formation. I consider the role of social space in the production of lesbian histories and the defining of social space as it impacts the performance of community and sexual identity. Firmly grounded in ethnography, this dissertation reflects a theoretical commitment to feminist theory, a cultural commitment to represent richly contextualized New Zealand lives and a political commitment to the advancement of lesbian and gay ethnographic research. Most studies of minority groups concentrate on the ways in which community is established to offer safety and protection, however I posit a different set of questions. I ask not what function community appears to serve but instead, what motivates people to claim community, what social actions define and maintain it, what is the significance of belonging and what intended or unintended consequences might that belonging bring.

With personal narratives, ethnography, and an interdisciplinary approach, I consider how New Zealand lesbians define community from within, rather than as others experience it. This analysis leads me to suggest that community is not a cause-based action or a passive collective. Rather it is a conscious connection, reinforced through repetition, providing opportunities for legitimacy, authenticity and self authoring. As a social process community requires active membership, even if that activity is tangential to other parts of daily life. Internal tensions reveal socially created boundaries and institutions, negotiated relationships and a level of group consciousness based on shared assumptions, not interests, that allow for continued self authoring and the socialization of new members. Lesbian community is not internally defined in relation to heterosexuality, but rather with near indifference to it.

More than anything, the words that follow represent a story. It is the story of a group of women living in New Zealand and how they have come to define themselves as lesbians – locally, nationally and in an international context. It is a project that uses the epistemological strength of anthropology to examine and critique transnational discourses of "lesbian" and "community" and their articulations with sexual identity. In a recent review of "gay and lesbian community studies," ethnohistorian Elizabeth Kennedy (2002) suggests four research areas to which anthropology is particularly well suited, one of which is the need for work that problematizes the concepts of community and identity (Kennedy 2002:101). My research addresses this need in concert with Kennedy's belief that "the interconnections between identity and community" will play a pivotal role in future developments of lesbian and gay anthropology (2002:102).

In what follows, I provide an ethnographic vignette that encompasses many of the

issues I mention above as well as additional themes central to this project. It is not

without hesitation that I describe an event just three days after my arrival. Clifford and

Marcus (1986) have pointed out the implicit ethnographic authority apparent in much of

anthropological writing, including the trope of the arrival scene. "Writing against

culture," I chose this vignette for the specific way it challenges the idea of arrival scenes

in contemporary studies. I relish it for the way it playfully complicates what to others

seemed simple questions: How will you find the lesbians? How is this anthropology?

Aren't you a "native?" Following the vignette, I offer a general discussion of my research

questions and design. I then use the rest of this chapter to frame the four main elements of

my work: Why study community? Why a lesbian community? Why do so in New

Zealand and why use anthropology as my guide?

Are You a Lesbian?

"Excuse me, sir, but are you a lesbian?" Maud is standing alone, several meters in

front of our group, posture slightly curved but no less defiant. Her eyes squint to avoid

the dust in the air – evidence of a dry summer. The middle-aged man, previously standing

with his hands in his pockets, now crosses his arms, closed off, defensive. Maud's arms

hang by her sides, secure and unaffected.

"What?" he asks, sounding confused. He turns his head as if looking for another

person but the question is clearly directed at him. Or perhaps it is a quick look to see if

his friends heard his sexuality questioned. Did he find the question a threat or simply a

curiosity in its having been asked in the first place?

"Are you a LES-bian?" she repeats. She always says lesbian that way. LES-bian.

Drawing out the "lez," punctuating the air with it, lending the word exaggerated importance.

He seems uncertain how to answer. He looks to the gathering of forty plus women behind Maud. It's unclear if they have suspended their activities to watch the outcome of this conversation or instead, if they haven't yet started but stare anyway, enjoying the spectacle of his embarrassment. Is he looking to them for help or, again driven by curiosity, because they had looked so "normal" to him before. We are in a public area and he arrived with his friends just a few minutes ago. They are about seventy-five meters off to the left with mostly open, uneven field in-between. He probably noticed the collection of women and their dogs while unloading his truck and found us a point of interest. That, and the curious square "ring" made of small, white wooden fences. It appears that he and his friends, like many other groups in the park, plan to escape the heat by listening to music and swimming in the adjacent river. He looks back to his mates for support but they are busy setting up their sound system.

"Neh, I'm not," he replies, his answer more like a question.

"Because this is a lesbian only space right now," she explains. She is polite, but firm. He annoys the older lesbians like a beetle, constantly hitting the ceiling when you're trying to fall asleep. The younger dykes, angered but unsure how to deal with it, watch Maud, listen, and take mental notes. Most of the women seem relieved that she volunteered for this duty. Previously animated conversations had all but stopped on the man's approach. What was once a carefree environment had become guarded and slightly depressed. The event felt over before beginning.

The man is confused by Maud's challenge, but gentle. "I didn't mean no harm,"

he said, "I was just a might curious 'bout your dogs."

"Yes, it is a dog show but it's a *LES-bian* dog show."

"Oh. Alright then. Well…" he said, leaving it at that as he walked away, surveying the trees in the distance with unusual interest.

Maud turned and walked back to the main event: The Annual Lesbian Dog Show. The Dog Show was advertised to begin at 2pm and at 3:30pm it was just getting under way. As it was only my third day in New Zealand, already attending such a large event might have appeared an accomplishment were it not for the fact that my participation was planned before my arrival. It was not planned by me, but by Jo from Australia. I had been introduced to her by Suzie, from North Carolina, who had heard about me online from Jazzrider. At the time of the Dog Show, I hadn't met Jo, Suzie or Jazzrider. Yet thanks to their assistance, Joce and Mira had greeted me in the morning and drove me to the event.

It is unreasonable to think of any one place as politically or culturally bounded. It is bad taste to imagine a vibrant country of four million people as a village. Yet again and again I would be reminded that as a lesbian, "you can't get lost in New Zealand." Whether believing in lesbian community or not, each woman conveyed the same sense in which they were known to each other, never out of reach, never hidden. More than rhetoric to perpetuate a mythic visibility, it created a fictional boundedness, a reference to a homeland that was imagined, if not material.

The only advertisement for the Dog Show had been in a lesbian newsletter that provided little information. It read simply, "Location: Fern Forest Reserve." The nature reserve was also a public park and the location of the Dog Show turned out to be less apparent than expected.

"Let me know if you see them," Joce said. There were a few dirt roads through the Reserve grounds and we used them as often as not. Was I the guide?

"Will there be a sign?" I asked.

"Aren't you Americans able to know [lesbians] when you see them?"

"In the US, yes," I said, not even certain of that. "I just thought it might be different here."

We were about to give up when we noticed a group of women in the distance. My guides were still uncertain. "Do you recognize them?" I asked Joce. It seemed an obvious question. "Neh," she said, rolling another cigarette while driving. "But that doesn't mean anything." She was squinting now, trying to get a better look. "I won't know most of the women here. Doubt they'll know each other. Maybe they'll know four or five, but that's about it. That's the way these events are." Now closer, Joce and Mira recognized one of the women and decided this was the place. It was 2pm and there were seven women present. Two more pulled in behind us – the first to actually have dogs.

After setting out a blanket, Mira decided she and another woman should maybe put up signs so the others could find us. As Mira left, Kathy and Jane arrived with a trailer full of small, white wooden fences. Kathy parked and hobbled out of the car with a hurt foot. She had not been to a doctor despite her foot's curious color and instead was hoping Toni, a nurse, would be attending the show. I am told that Kathy's is not green by choice, but rather as a result of too many dye jobs too close together. Meanwhile, I had been looking around at the women gathering, trying to see if I noticed any similarities. They were mostly couples, in their thirties and forties, save the five children and two teens. Were there hidden codes in their speech or clothing that revealed their sexual

identity? Was there a lesbian way of laying one's blanket out on the grass? Would it be "more lesbian" to not use a blanket? Aside from the fact that many women seemed to have short hair, I could find nothing that marked them as a group. I'm not sure why I was expecting to find a lesbian "phenotype" or what such a look might be. Mira would later tell me, "It's never just a look – it's also how you wear the look, eh." Of the forty or so women present, only three had the long hair "look" and I was one of them. It marked me like a blond tourist in pastels visiting a rural South American village. Mira confessed her excitement at my long hair because hers was long too. As she said it, she nervously twirled her long dark hair around her index finger. I felt I should be proud as an American lesbian for having done well for my kind.

Joce began to unwrap bundles from her chilly bin: bread, mayonnaise, tomato, ham. I didn't realize I was staring and was a bit confused when Joce said, "Don't worry, we brought chicken for you. You're Jewish, right?" When had I said I was Jewish? Not understanding the connection she made between chicken and Jewish, I thanked her and decided to save that question for later. But Joce, perhaps hearing something in my voice, added, "Jews don't eat ham, right?" Now I understood.

"Well, orthodox Jews don't eat ham, that's true. But I've never been real religious. I'm more of a cultural Jew than a religious one."

"Well what in bloody hell does that mean?" she asked. During the course of my time in New Zealand, Joce and I would have many of these conversations. I found her candor refreshing and we shared a curiosity about the world that made for exciting conversations. While New Zealand has a population of roughly four million, the last census reported a Jewish population of just fewer than four thousand.[1] I was the first Jew

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[1] For an interesting study of the Jewish identity among New Zealand women, see Wittman 1998.

she had met. As much as I questioned her about being a lesbian, she questioned me about being a Jew. "What makes for a Jewish lifestyle?" "Do you know one when you see one?" "Is a past of oppression the only thing that holds you together?" I enjoyed the way her questions purposely mimicked my own about lesbian community – forcing me to think beyond the box of sexuality and neo-Marxian notions of community as class-consciousness.

Lost in my own thoughts, I had clearly missed Maud's first sentence but she was kind enough to repeat it. "Oh, hello Becca. You do prefer Becca, don't you? I'm Maud – one of those mean, nasty separatists you've been warned about. How do you do." It was a statement, not a question. "We are the separatists over there if you'd like to say hi," and she pointed to the left before walking away, smiling. "Over there" I saw several eyes staring in my direction. I had spoken to Jo about a bunch of lesbian separatists that were rumored to be living in Wàtea, not far from my flat in Tàkaro. Jo was humored to hear any women in the area called "separatist" and mentioned she had had a few laughs with friends before I arrived.[2] I couldn't help but notice Joce's smirk as Maud walked away. "You've been something of a topic," she said. And she rolled another cigarette.

By 3:30pm, the dog ring had been set up, the trailer had been returned to Carol, Toni had examined Kathy's foot, the intruder had retreated and we were set to begin. Jane opened the Dog Show by reminding us that this event was sponsored by RAGLAN's Lesbian Support Group[3] (LSG) and thanked them for their support. She also thanked Kiwi Polytechnic (among many laughs) for the "loan" of the dog ring, Carol for the loan

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[2] I found many people, both American and New Zealander, spoke of New Zealand lesbians as "separatists" and "stuck in the 1980s." As discussed in Chapter Five, such judgments were often based on the assumption that "lesbian community" followed a natural teleology and was modeled on US movements.
[3] The Rangirua Gay and Lesbian Action Network.

of the trailer and Kathy for the ability to borrow and return the white fences before

anyone at K Polytech would know. Then, quite unceremoniously, The Dog Show began.

The categories – e.g. most obedient, best trick, best dressed, most like the owner – were

decided on the spot by the group as they went along. Scooter, a beautiful slate gray pup

with fire engine red nails, was poised to win the best-dressed category. Joce had been

right: few women present knew more than a handful of those participating but that did

not seem to matter. Events like this one were advertised anytime from weeks ahead in a

flyer to hours ahead on email or by phone. Whoever wishes to participate may do so. The

group was bothered by the man who had stopped to observe them but not as much by the

fact that he was a man as by his gaze and the feeling that they were being observed as an

oddity.

Prizes were given for each category and every dog won a prize. Still trapped in

my own thoughts about the meanings of identity and community, I wondered if this were

a community and what made this Dog Show a LES-bian dog show. Was there a lesbian

way to have a dog show? Were there things that set this dog show aside as unusual?

Scooter wore nail polish and another, a stuffed toy dog, won the prize for most obedient.

One prize, a package of "dog chocolate," was met with laughter. The women all agreed

that lesbian events had to have chocolate. But these comments and contestants could

possibly be present at any number of gatherings. They were not predicated on the sexual

identity of the attendees.

I found myself wondering if there were any Māori lesbians at the Dog Show and

whether or not I would even recognize them as Māori. Months later I shared my curiosity

with Mira, a slight woman of pale complexion whose shoes always seemed curiously

larger than her head. To my surprise, Mira, of pale complexion, identified herself as a member of a Waikato area *iwi* (tribe).[4] After laughing at my reaction she explained that there were a few *iwi* from the eastern cape of the North Island that were white in complexion. For someone like Mira, ethnicity was not a euphemism for race but an identity that shared the same complexity as any other identity deemed socially significant but not readily apparent.

I was excited but confused by my first real exposure to "lesbian community" in the Rangirua. The Dog Show had been advertised as a "lesbian community" event but was there a community or not? Sandra approached me at the end of the show and offered to take me home via Nan's house. The offer to be introduced to new women in the community was constant. I checked with Joce and Mira, accepted the invitation and left after helping to load fences on a newly arrived trailer. Nan was not home: I know because we peaked into every window before settling into the backyard and playing with her dog. Nan had been unable to attend the show but had loaned Molly to a dog-less lesbian who had wanted to participate. Sandra sent me home after dinner with some furniture and a set of dishes. "When you leave, you can give it to another lesbian in need of help." We made plans to meet again the following weekend to join the lesbian faction at the Paws Animal Shelter car rally.

Several months later I would meet Julie, I thought, for the first time. However, upon entering her house I would notice a picture of myself on her refrigerator, pinned under a kd lang magnet. She, too, had been at the Dog Show. I would stare at the magnet, enjoying another private musing – this one on the developing transnational lesbian iconography spreading via refrigerators like conservatism through school boards. I

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[4] A glossary and pronunciation key for Māori terms appears as Appendix C – Māori/Pākehā Glossary.

seemed to be more known than unknown in this place had been unknown to me. And yet this unknown was strangely familiar: Rita Mae Brown on the bookshelves, Indigo Girls in the CD player, magnetic poetry on the frig. Such is the elegance of anthropology. For much as I learned the meaning of difference, so too did I learn the significance of sameness; the dynamic mix of both blending and boundary that would distinguish Americans and New Zealanders, Māori and Pākehā, global and local even while providing connection.

Research Questions

Before leaving the US, I was asked by Americans and New Zealanders alike, "Will you be working with the Māori?"[5]

"I will be working with lesbians."

"With Māori lesbians?"

"With New Zealand lesbians, though I expect there will be Māori among them."

"But will you be specifically looking for Māori lesbians, then?" It was a question I could not escape and a colonial heritage with which anthropology still struggles (Asad 1973; Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Are lesbians themselves not real enough to teach us anything? Are Pākehā, because they are white and speak "English," so like Americans that we cannot recognize their heritage as grounded, situated or in any way different?[6] I

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[5] While the focus of my research was the lesbian community as a whole, I did in fact make extra efforts to reach out to Māori lesbians who were not active members and some of whom did not identify with the community as I knew it. I address these circumstances more fully in Chapters Three, Four and Appendix B – Methodology.

[6] The term Pākehā, Māori for foreigner, signifies New Zealanders of European descent and is colloquially reduced to identifying white New Zealanders. Now seen as an ethnicity, Pākehā was meant to acknowledge the historical relationship between European settlers and those of Māori descent (Walker 1990:94). For a thorough description of Pākehā as identity, see Bell 1996; King 1985 and 1991; Pearson 1989; Spoonley 1991 and 1995; and the theme issue of *Sites* 13, 1986.

found myself asking how much difference is enough difference and how much is too much. How much sameness can we tolerate without reducing others to simple reflections of ourselves?

Throughout this dissertation, I refer to the intended and unintended consequences of community. In an interesting way, events at the Dog Show illustrate both intended and unintended research questions, all of which are foundational to understanding the meanings of sexual identity and community as constructed by the women of the Rangirua. Unintended but ultimately meaningful questions were among those directed at me before my research began: Will you be studying the Māori? How is this anthropology? Aren't you a native? How will you find them? Isn't being a lesbian about sexual practices? Why go to New Zealand when you can work with lesbians here [in the US]?

In retrospect, the issues above are clearly implicated within the intended questions of my research. To investigate community and sexual identity, I ask the following questions: How and why is community identified, defined, created, fostered, and managed among New Zealand lesbians? What qualities inform the performance, identification, and creation of lesbian identities? Of what significance are the articulations among the lesbian feminist movement, Māoritanga (Māori culture) and the Māori sovereignty movement? How has this affected sexual identity among New Zealand lesbians? What roles do social space and difference play in community and identity formation? How and to what extent do New Zealand lesbians contribute to or differentiate from a transnational lesbian community? Conversely, how does that larger network affect, foster and/or create New Zealand lesbian communities and identities? In

what ways does community affect how lesbians view themselves, sexual identity and

"appropriate" lesbian behavior? Is community a useful term or has it become so overused

and broad in definition that it is meaningless?

Research Presentation and Design

The presentation of my research is designed around the concept of *pōwhiri*,[7] a ten-

stage protocol used when entering a *marae* (ceremonial meeting ground). As a New

Zealand based study, how I present my research is as influenced by what I learned during

my fieldwork as the gathering of information itself. *Pōwhiri* represents the welcome and

safe entry onto the *marae* of *manuhiri*, or visitors, by the *tangata whenua*, or hosts

(literally the people of the land). During *pōwhiri,* the *manuhiri* must state the nature of

their visit, the issues they wish to address, and request permission to stay. The *tangata*

whenua, in turn, may allow the visitors to enter but only after a series of speeches

creating a timeline of continuity, providing social and historical context to the stories of

each group. Once this mutual respect is established, the two groups share food and

become one. It is not a literal one-ness, but rather a sharing or common ground in

purpose.

As a cultural scenario (Schieffelin 1976:3), I find *pōwhiri* to be convincing and

insightful way for framing my research. For this reason, I have designed each chapter to

mirror the stages of *pōwhiri*: to present my purpose, to review the contextual history and

then to weave the two together through the interests of lesbian community. This chapter,

and the ones to follow, conform to the format of theory, followed by history and

informed by experience – framed, situated, and part of the everyday.

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[7] For an online visual summary of the *pōwhiri* visit http://www.purenz.com/.

As a product of my fieldwork, I create and construct lesbian personal narratives that show a relational understanding of community, identity and women's felt position with regard to New Zealand's colonial history and involvement in global politics. I examine cultural and historical motives for collectivity as well as articulations of community, space and identity formation. To do so means to engage anthropology's history with the concept of community and its fascination with the islands of the Pacific. It means locating what I learn about community and identity within a richly informed, specifically New Zealand cultural framework and a rapidly building tradition of lesbian and gay ethnography.

The information presented here was gathered during a year of fieldwork in Tàkaro, a mid-sized city in New Zealand's Rangirua region. I was inspired to choose this location because it was home to New Zealand's well-known Rangirua Lesbian and Gay Rights Association (RAGLAN). I participated in several lesbian social groups, clubs and networks throughout the Rangirua, though RAGLAN and its membership remained a focal point in my work.

Likewise, working with a community that was both fluid and engaged in a global exchange of ideas meant adapting an appropriate methodology. Transnational flows of information create what some call a "third time-space," or "time-space compression;" i.e. the ability of informational and communication technologies to reach across time and space barriers in ways previously unimagined.[8] Twentieth century anthropological studies must meet the challenge of the third time-space by providing a place for socially imagined collectivities, moving "beyond the old model of culture without establishing

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[8] For third time-space, see Lavie and Swendenberg 1996; for time-space compression, see Harvey 1988, Friedman 2000.

another fixity" (Lavie and Swendenberg 1996:13). Such challenges have led scholars like George Marcus to suggest that, "empirically following the thread of cultural process itself impels the move toward multi-sited ethnography" (1995:97). As anthropologists, our interest is not the process of globalization directly, but in the local articulations of culture and social change that result.

The more culture can be recognized as unbound, the more anthropology must respond in like fashion. Thus mine is an interdisciplinary, "qualified" multi-sited approach to ethnography. It is qualified because while I was based in a single location – Tàkaro, January 1999 to January 2000 – my movement in the Rangirua was fluid, reflecting the fluidity of the lesbian community throughout the area. I made several short excursions through the surrounding area and a series of trips into Wellington while remaining focused in the Rangirua region. My initial design called for equal amounts of time spent in three disparate sites but I soon found that a limiting approach for a primary research trip.[9] My concern, as has been expressed by others, was for a "loss of depth" to social interactions and the challenge of building rapport (e.g. Clifford 1998:245 in Marcus 1995). Having a base but maintaining fluid movements allowed me to remain true to the spirit of multi-sited work. As such, my ethnography is a representation of cultural forms and does not presume to capture the whole of New Zealand lesbian life, if that is even possible (Marcus 1995).

In constructing any representation, an author is obligated to consider the impact of syntax as well as grammar. Just as *pōwhiri* represents the acknowledgement of past, present and future, working together as a whole, so do I move among these tenses as I

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[9] Multi-site ethnography is easier to carryout during projects lasting longer than twelve months or as a returning fieldworker with already established relationships and networks.

present my work. In addition to writing against the trope of arrival, purposeful changing of tenses works against the notion that ethnographic representations are captured moments in time, trapped in a holding pattern of the preserved and the past. The process of rendering fluid courses of thoughts into text is encumbered by the danger of creating mere snapshots that seem static, easily discarded with their original flavor forgotten. It is not unlike the problems created by using the "ethnographic present" in which moments of time appear ahistorical "in a way that exoticizes ethnographic subjects" (Tsing 1993:xiv). By providing cultural and historical context, I employ ethnography to help maintain and project the fullness of human experience. It is not a past that is trapped but rather a history that is told and motivated in its telling.

My analysis throughout is a feminist one, built upon the assumption that feminism is a form of social activism in which people use scholarship, as well as other forms of political engagement, both generally to better society for all persons, and specifically to better the position and status of women within that society. I share a point of reference with Sneja Gunew, a scholar of feminist and postcolonial theory, whereby she describes "knowing as a process, knowledge as an institutionalized knowing, and theory as truth claims based on knowledge" (1990:9). With such a broad scope of interest, the primary dilemma of feminism becomes clear. What defines a feminist agenda and who gets to decide what is "better" and what is not? There is no universal situation of women. Nor can we say that what is better for one is necessarily better for another. The process of evaluation and the tools of assessment become the privilege of those who assume the power of defining the problem.

I asked before: Why community and why a lesbian community? The answer is perhaps so obvious as to gather importance through its sheer force of will. Ever since the 1800s and the beginning of the "fiction of society," few concepts have been as central to anthropology as the concept of community. In the 1970s, while feminist anthropologists were busy irrevocably changing the course of our field, Victor Turner (1974) was speaking of *communitas*, a utopian sense of community, as the driving force of social life, providing direction to social behavior. Community, like any other social phenomenon, is not ahistorical or static but a living, changing process. For some, the concept of community has been asked to do so much that the term itself "seems almost hopelessly diluted" (Williams 2002:348). And yet while reviewing current ethnographies within community studies, Brett Williams notes that past theorists "have used the word to great effect…through such concepts as the 'little' community, communitas, and organic community" (Ibid). To redefine the parameters of community, to understand its "work" and "motivations" is to redefine it and to accept it as a site (habitus) of anthropological interest.

Elizabeth Kennedy and historian Madeline Davis (1993), in their ethnohistorical 1920s/1930s treatment of butch/femme culture in Buffalo, New York have noted that community is key to twentieth century lesbian identity and consciousness (1993:5). The assumption that community implies commonality and shared characteristics often exists in tandem, and in tension, with an untenable denial of internal differences (Phelan 1994). Throughout my work I view community as a process or set of continually negotiated social relations and difference as foundational to its expression. In the case of lesbians, it would be easy to infer a need for security and protection from abuse as motivations to

that process (Phelan 1994:87), as forms of "differential" or "oppositional consciousness"
(Sandoval 1991). However, as I demonstrate in the next chapter, this would not explain
why in areas accepting of a lesbian lifestyle – or at least not directly threatening of it –
community networks are equally strong, if not more so. More in line with events like the
Dog Show are the ideas of Anderson and Appadurai: the concept of "imagined
communities" and the formation of "scapes" in which human identities etch community
boundaries across, and in spite of, national or geographic obstacles.

I do not see my research as rejecting the role of opposition in community
formation. Rather, I build upon past projects that have marked gender and sexuality as
identities that motivate community formation in reaction to and against outside
opposition (Kennedy and Davis 1993; Newton 1993; Phelan 1994; Weston 1991). The
development of lesbian community in relation to New Zealand's post World War II
urbanization, postcolonial history, Māori sovereignty and Gay Liberation Movements
allows me to offer an ethnographically grounded critique of previous treatments of
community. New Zealand's progressive government and the lesbian community's
response to Māori activism question the trend of assigning primacy to oppositions, and
the consequential absence of other variables, when discussing the ongoing process of
community.

I have constructed a narrative of New Zealand lesbian communities[10] that is
clearly based on Kuhnian paradigm shifts and Foucaudian archaeologies of knowledge.
While it is arguable that lesbian ethnography is growing beyond its gestational "fringe"

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[10] Throughout this dissertation, I sometimes refer to "the lesbian community" while other times I reference
"lesbian communities" or "the Rangirua community." There is no one, or singular, lesbian community in
New Zealand; there are many. My choice of using one term or the other at a particular time is meant to
compliment the ways in which these terms were used in the field.

(Rubin 2002; Weston 1993b), my research critiques the mainstream assumptions that underlie community theory by claiming a lesbian-informed move from margin to center. As the history of feminist anthropology has shown, Kuhnian "anomalies" – such as might be found in lesbian expressions of identity and community – have always existed and yet are often ignored because of the ability of reigning paradigms to explain most other situations. During a "paradigm crisis," researchers scramble for new ways of ordering prediction and understanding social facts. Resurgent interest in community studies reflects a paradigm crisis and shows it to revolve around issues of nationalism, sovereignty and identity claims. The growth of subaltern and postcolonial studies combined with the theoretical advances of lesbian and gay anthropology evidence a paradigm crisis in community theory to which this dissertation is addressed.

As with Foucault's archaeology of knowledge, this project examines various intersecting layers of paradigm shifts; it attempts to understand conceptualizations of community and sexual identity in part by examining the ways in which they are experienced. Historian Joan Scott (1988) cautions that such examinations are empty if we fail to also realize the historicity of the categories we seek to understand. Thus, while conceptualizations of community and sexual identity change over time, it is as much because their meanings change as it is because our theories have changed focus or have become more complex. In fact, the meanings of these terms have changed so significantly in the past twenty years that "generational" differences within the lesbian community seem to have more to do with the time that one "came out" rather than the time that one was born – a situation that I discuss in greater detail in Chapters Three and Four. Likewise, the significance of these terms to New Zealand lesbians is directly related to

the cultural and socioeconomic histories in which they have lived. It is the task of the anthropologist to determine the ways in which their knowledges are "situated" and to translate that positionality through the use of ethnography and "thick description."

Though sexual identity among lesbians is most often framed as a "problem," ethnography allows me to redefine the "problem" by reorienting interest away from sexuality and towards the motivations of community and the dynamics that exist among community, difference and sexual identity. In this way, I add to a small but building collection of lesbian ethnographies that offer an (American) anthropological critique of contemporary theoretical issues. In conjunction with Kennedy and Davis's explication of butch/femme lesbian bar culture, the 1990s saw the publishing of three additionally notable ethnographies. Esther Newton's ethnohistory of Cherry Grove (1993) investigates the creation of a geographically based gay and lesbian community in which the expression of sexuality, or sexual behavior, is only tangentially material to the perseverance of the Grove community and their valuing of full participation in daily community life.[11] Kath Weston's (1991) insightful comparison of "families we choose" to "blood families" and Ellen Lewin's (1993) exploration of lesbian identity as it articulates with motherhood both point to assumptions of heteronormativity in previous discussions of kinship and family.[12] Together they demonstrate that there can be, and often are, moments when social/historical factors retain a saliency greater than sexuality when discussing sexual identities.[13]

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[11] Interestingly, Newton's discussion centers on the two main sensibilities of the Grove — "camp/theatrical" and "egalitarian/authentic." As I note in Chapters Four and Six, the concept of authenticity had similar potency among New Zealand lesbians.

[12] My concentration here is with anthropological studies, however there were also several historical studies of gay/lesbian communities around the same time, e.g. Chauncey 1994; D'Emilio 1983; Faderman 1992.

[13] This is not desexualizing but rather a de-emphasizing of the sexual as the "always already" foundational and determining factor.

What these works hold in common is the idea that sexuality is not universally expressed in the same way at all places and all times. As a collection, the fact that each ethnography is based in the US enhances the exacting way in which they demonstrate the need to contextualize social behavior within a cultural framework in order to understand it, or as Geertz has said, "to discover who people think they are." This is not to suggest that sexuality is a failure as a starting point or that community is somehow an inherent source of truth. Rather, I find a focus on community useful given its ability to lead us out of the ontological trap of heteronormativity. I agree with Elliston's assertion that "sex" may well be the "Eurocentric metonym" to lesbian and gay anthropology that blood once was to kinship studies (2002:289). My dissertation adds empirical evidence supporting that assertion.

The advent of many sociocultural groups announcing global community and connection has triggered a movement of studies regarding the how and why of transnational community formation (e.g. Appadurai 1991; Cohen 1991; Featherstone 1990; Lavie and Swedenburg 1996). As one of the four main elements to my work, I address what happens to differentiate communities that are transnationally linked, seeking to understand identity categories in terms of the global-local articulations in which they are constituted (e.g. Beollstorf 1999).

Perhaps one of the strongest effects of these "imagined communities" is "horizontal comradeship" as presented by historian Benedict Anderson (1983) and discussed in Chapter Two. With his argument, Anderson describes the process of nationalism; communities motivated by national identities that are "imagined" in the sense that they are created as wholes among individuals who can never hope to know all

of the other members. My research uses Anderson as a launching point, building upon his idea that (national) communities should be studied and considered for "the style in which they are imagined."

The effects of transnationalism – the flow of information and tropes of mass media – produce the need for national, or localized communities at the same time as those communities forge strength through transnational connections. The meaning of sovereignty and nation for New Zealand lesbians markedly differentiates them from a transnational queer community. Yet just as horizontal comradeship – through newsletters, magazines, and overlapping social networks – allows New Zealand lesbians to experience a specifically New Zealand lesbian identity, so does a similar process of horizontal comradeship allow New Zealand lesbians to gain strength through their connection to a larger, transnational flow of ideas and information. It is a tension between the advantages of a larger community, made a reality through blurred boundaries, and the pull of local communities, seeking to distinguish themselves as autonomous.

Thus through my research, I offer an analysis that deals with community on five levels: community as (1) an icon that stands for a thing, (2) a process that provides for social resources and identity definitions, (3) a process that directs/defines appropriate behavior and social attitudes, (4) an interest based collective, encompassing of a particular set of values/norms, and (5) a group identity used in a motivated way to achieve political results. In Chapters Three, Four and Five, I use apparent codes for behavior, instances of homophobia and specifically lesbian venues in ways that uncover/develop/sound out the complex relationships among community, sexual identity and social space.

Given the rise of transnational communities, my work responds to an urgent need to reconceptualize the ways in which we theorize community and the effects transnational discourses have on local community formation (Duyves 1995; Gupta 1992; Kearney 1995). The histories of women's liberation, gay liberation, and lesbian communities in New Zealand are closely linked to their counterparts in the US.[14] New Zealand's women's suffrage, granted in 1893, followed a trip to New Zealand from a member of the US Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). New Zealand's gay liberation movement began with Ngahuia Te Awekotuku but found equal inspiration in New York's Stonewall riots. New Zealand lesbian separatist communities formed in part around the values and precedents offered by *The Furies*, a US-based lesbian separatist collective.[15] To read about influential leaders in New Zealand's feminist and lesbian communities is inevitably to read about women who traveled to the US, were sparked by ideas, and returned to apply them at home.

What becomes interesting is not merely what models and ideas are able to travel and why, but the ways in which that information is applied and practiced in a specifically New Zealand context. To see New Zealand lesbian community as little more than an outgrowth of (US or) transnational communities would be to ignore the specificity of its colonial and postcolonial history, of its connection with Māori activism and its conflation of gender and ethnicity discourses. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, and Transgender (LGBT) theories, dominated as they are by Western scholars, have come dangerously close to doing precisely that which historian Joan Scott warns against: the

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[14] The ideological influences of the New Zealand feminist movement are unusual for drawing so heavily upon US ideologies – a situation discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

[15] Alison Laurie circulated copies of *the Furies'* newsletter and Charlotte Bunch, a founding member of *the Furies*, spoke at the 1979 United Women's Convention and was later interviewed in *Broadsheet*.

naturalizing of identity through like experiences without considering the historical,

political and cultural situatedness of those experiences (1991). Anthropological studies,

grounded in ethnography, are particularly effective at disrupting that essentialism (e.g.

Altman 2001; Lewin and Leap 2002; Patton and Sanchez-Eppler 2000; Weston 1998).

Romancing the Pacific, Discovering the Context

Few people have produced ethnographies so foundational as to create an apparent

"natural" correlation between anthropology and a specific geographic area. While

Raymond Firth arguably set the stage for contemporary studies of Polynesia,[16] it was

Bronislaw Malinowski (1929) and Margaret Mead (1928) who so thoroughly entwined

the discipline of anthropology with a fascination for the Pacific.[17] For many, Oceania still

occupies the anthropological imagination as an out-of-the-way place, filled with "whole

congeries of little universes, ready made isolates for study, each capable in appearance at

least of being readily grasped as a whole" (Spate 1963:253 in White 1998:3).[18] In the

style of Eric Wolf, Cluny MacPherson argues, "The Pacific was represented as a region

through which a succession of European explorers, missionaries and traders had moved,

exploring, converting, trading and possessing" (1996:128). Anthropology's continued

romance with the Pacific may indeed be for the reasons Geoffrey White suggests:

> The region spans one-third of the world's topography and an even larger
> percentage of the world's (colonized) indigenous peoples. In short, it is home to
> an anthropological mother-lode of linguistic and cultural diversity – the kind of

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[16] For a review of trends in Polynesian ethnography and ethnology, see Howard and Borofsky 1989.
[17] I refer to a connection internal to anthropology, but Mead is also credited for making the same
connections visible in popular society, "putting anthropology on the map." Thor Heyerdahl (1950) helped
to cement this connection with his well-publicized travels aboard the *Kon Tiki*.
[18] Page numbers here refer to the unpublished version presented by White at the 1998 annual conference of
the American Anthropological Association, used with permission. A later draft of this paper was published
in *The Contemporary Pacific* 13(2).

small-scale, nonliterate societies with strong ancestral attachments to land that during much of this century were the primary subjects of anthropological research (1998:2).

Haunted by the ghosts of its colonial past, anthropology's struggle between theory and practice is a struggle between its colonial creation and its postcolonial predicament. We have found it difficult to shine through the tenacious colonial shadows that so helpfully define and defend our disciplinary boundaries. While we are theoretically convinced that globalization has rewritten the meanings of culture and geography, anthropologists remain seduced by the practiced warm nostalgia of a bounded and grounded past. With Wissler-like insistence, and with particular zeal in the Pacific, we continue to carve the globe into cultural areas that are now more illusion than they are illuminating. The Pacific has been the playground of the disenchanted Western academic; a place we could still imagine witnessing a primordial battle between the traditional – a "natural" human condition, uncompromised and unsullied by technology and capitalism – and the modern – polluted by industry and its associated -isms of bigotry. Ironically, the same research that worked to create these fictional wholes exposed the very freedom of movement that has always characterized life in the Pacific, contradicting the notion of impermeable island boundaries.

Increased fluidity in the Pacific during the 1980s was an additional counter against the impulse to see fictional wholes. The competing forces of decolonization after World War II, and rapid advancements in transnational communication and mass media forced most theorists to concede that there were "no distant places" (Clifford 1988:13). Discussing this circumstance, social historian James Clifford has suggested "…we may find it useful to think of the field as a habitus rather than as a place, a cluster of *embodied*

dispositions and practices" (1997a:199). While this opinion would suggest community as prioritized above locality, my work affords equal relevance to both community and ethnographic setting.

One cannot understand New Zealand's lesbian community without placing due importance on its postcolonial setting. New Zealand national discourses clearly frame the country's position within a world system of market economies based upon reactions against former colonial rule and pride in the nation's ability to offer a unique, bicultural perspective to world politics (True 1996). This is not seen as a convergence or melding towards international uniformity. Rather, the push to recognize New Zealand as a legitimate global actor centers around the struggle, similar in many nations, for self determination and self authorship; the wish to create economic and social policies primarily motivated by their benefit to New Zealanders, and not by the force of more powerful outside markets, while maintaining a unique and readily identifiable New Zealand national character (Kelsey 1998).

Also known by its original Māori name Aotearoa, New Zealand has two competing discovery myths, both equally composed of fact and fiction: one through European geology and exploration, the other through Māori cosmology and settlement. Both refer to a landmass, roughly the size of Colorado, spread over two large islands and several smaller ones. *Te waka a Maui*, the canoe Maui borrowed from his brother, is known as the South Island while *Te ika a Maui*, the fish Maui pulled up from the bottom of the ocean, is known as the North Island. New Zealand is located in the Pacific, approximately 1400 miles due southeast of Australia. The country lies on a fault line forming continuous mountain ranges along its interior and causing regular, although

moderate, earthquakes. At roughly 500,000 square kilometers, it "has more land than the rest of Polynesia combined" and marks one of the three points that delineate Polynesian territory (Kirch 1989:15). Aotearoa was discovered in 950 AD by the Māori[19] navigator Kupe, followed by a Māori migration to the islands in 1350. Since then, New Zealand has also been "discovered" by Dutch explorer Able Tasman in 1642 and by English explorer James Cook in 1769.

By 1840, New Zealand had been claimed by the Queen through the signing of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* – the Treaty of Waitangi, in which most of the existent Māori chiefs pledged alliance to the Queen in return for protection (Pool 1991:61) and the guarantee of their rights to the land. However, from 1840 onward, "penetration of capitalism was synonymous with acquisition of land" as modes of production gradually were distanced from Māori social organization (Spoonley 1995:6): subsistence farming was transformed into organized agriculture and entry into an international market. Misunderstandings surrounding the terms of the Treaty resulted in the land wars of the 1860s and the eventual confiscation of much of Māori territory. Ironically, by 1860, more Māori than Europeans were literate due to the missionary movement. It was these "Church trained natives" who largely led the social uprising of the 1860s (Henning 1987:11). The Treaty and its history are at the heart of many contemporary experiences of racism and discussions regarding Māori sovereignty, an issue to which I will shortly return.[20]

The local history of the Rangirua region mirrors that of the country. First settled in the 1300s, the eight *iwi* who founded the area continue to maintain *marae* there today

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[19] I use the term "Māori " here for ease of clarity and convenience, when in fact, before European contact, "the word Māori simply meant normal or usual. There was no concept of a Māori identity in the sense of cultural or even national similarities" (Durie 1998:53).

[20] For detailed analysis of the affects of the Treaty and issues of racism in New Zealand, see Belich 1986; Orange 1987; Pearson 1990; Pool 1991; and Walker 1990.

(Henning 1987:34-38). The area draws its name from the Rangirua River that long served

the local Māori as a gateway for travel and communication between the opposing

coastlines (1987:89). According to one historian, Māori legend explains the following:

> Away upon the slopes of the [high mountain] Ranges there grew in the days of old a giant Totara tree, into which the spirit of a God called Okatia suddenly entered, and endowed it with the power of motion, whereupon it gradually wormed its way over the land, gouging out a deep bed as it went, until it came to the mountain range which separates the East from the West Coast. Then it clove a course for itself through this huge barrier, which the mighty Okatia split asunder as easily as a child would break a twig, and on passed the inspired tree, ploughing its irresistible way with many serpentine wanderings towards the sea, leaving the turbulent waters and still reaches of the Rangirua River flowing it is wake (Buick 1975:14).

Tàkaro, resting alongside the backs of the Rangirua River, was established in the late

1800s on land taken from settled *iwi*.[21] The local economy was dominated by timber

mills through the early 1890s, then slowly shifted towards agriculture, particularly the

cultivation of flax, dairy and meat. Tàkaro's economy later shifted as commercial

networks grew, particularly with the establishment of area railroad stations and

Polytechnics (Henning 1987:145).[22] Its current economy still includes agricultural

products, as well as light engineering, technology and distribution depots (1987:89).

While New Zealand's lesbian history predates the 1940s, the period after World

War II is an effective starting point for discussing New Zealand's social history as it

relates to contemporary lesbians lives.[23] In the 1930s, ninety percent of the Māori

population lived in rural areas. World War II encouraged migration, particularly among

the Māori, to urban centers where the need for factory labor was acute. By 1951, the

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[21] Details and identification of the *iwi* involved have been omitted to protect location identity.

[22] Polytechnics are college-level institutions often dominated by long-distance learning.

[23] This is clearly demonstrated by the historical documenting of figures such as Amy Bock, who passed for a man and married a woman in 1906, and the 1936 trial of Eric Mareo, accused of killing his wife Thelma who was revealed to be in a sexual relationship with singer Freda Stark (Glamuzina 1993). These events and others are listed in Appendix E – Historical Timeline. However, the extent of lesbian "community" pre-1950 is debatable (e.g. Blackwood 1986; Gluckman 1974).

percentage of Māori living in urban areas had doubled and continued to increase by one percent each year for the next several years (Walker 1990:197). The first lesbian social groups of which we are aware were formed by Māori, working class lesbians who were part of that migration and "found out" about each other through their connections in the factories (Te Awekotuku et al. 1993).[24]

The 1950s post war boom was followed by an economic downturn in the late 1960s. Similar to US history, it was a time of rising class conflict, the beginning of the New Left, a host of new social movements and the resurrection of Māori activism (Dann 1985; Rudd and Roper 1997). In response to growing concerns over the illegal seizures of Māori land, a 1975 Treaty Act created the Waitangi Tribunal whose purpose was to assess land claims and, given the proper evidence, to return tracts of land to the identified, legal owners. All this was happening in conjunction with growing Women's and Gay Liberation Movements, anti-nuclear movements and protests against Apartheid during the 1961 and 1976 All Blacks tours of South Africa.[25] By the 1980s, New Zealand racial relations were critical.

Decades of systematic discrimination had left the Māori in poorer health than their Pākehā counterparts with higher unemployment and lower average incomes (Poata-Smith 1996:106). According to the 1982 Race Relations Conciliator, as relayed by Poata-Smith, New Zealand was "on the edge of a prolonged and irredeemable racial conflict" (Ibid). Most of the women with whom I worked were actively involved in more than one of 1980s and 1990s social movements: e.g. the Women's and/or Gay Liberation

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[24] Another notable event in the 1950s was the 1954 murder of Pauline Parker's mother by Pauline and Juliet Hulme. The events surrounding the infamous Parker/Hulme case are detailed in Glamuzina and Laurie 1991.
[25] The All Blacks, named for the color of their uniform, is New Zealand's national rugby team.

Movements, Homosexual Law Reform, support for the Human Rights Act, anti-nuclear weapons campaigns and the Māori renaissance, perhaps best epitomized by the publishing of Donna Awatere's *Māori Sovereignty* (1984).

Lesbian identities, as they have evolved in New Zealand, have done so in conjunction with the historical/political relationship between the lesbian feminist movement and the Māori separatist and sovereignty movements (Dominy 1990).[26] During the 1950s urbanization, visible "lesbian ghettos" arose in larger cities, connected with an increase in working class jobs available to women – particularly Māori women (Te Awekotuku et al. 1993:548). Pākehā women were considered less liberated than their Māori counterparts (Pere 1987:56) and found their social atmosphere too hostile to risk public lesbian gatherings. Likewise Māori lesbians living in rural areas tended to be more focused on tribal political movements (Te Awekotuku et al. 1993). To exclude the role of Māori ethnicity in the contemporary formation of lesbian identities, or to claim the issue of Māori sovereignty as secondary to something such as sex role behavior, would be to misrepresent lesbian identities as they are experienced by Māori and Pākehā women alike.

Scholarship regarding New Zealand's women's history has not been strong in its analysis of class and ethnicity (Daley and Montgomerie 1999:9). Studies of gender in New Zealand prior to the 1990s have been conducted (e.g. Guy, Jones and Simpkin 1990; James and Saville-Smith l989), however such work is sparse within New Zealand anthropological literature. One notable exception is Michèle Dominy's research (1983), with specific its interest on gender conceptions. Unlike other New Zealand research in

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[26] The relationship between lesbian identity and Māori activism has been contested in the past, a debate I discuss in Chapter Three.

which participants were largely Māori, women in Dominy's research were chosen and identified by the political organizations through which they associated, allowing her to compare "gender conceptions as reflected in political behavior and ideology" (1983:224).[27]

In contrast to Dominy's work, studies of Māori gender systems tend to focus on sexual divisions of labor, though Dame Joan Metge, in her classic ethnography of Māori culture, notes that a strong division of labor should not be confused with the status of women, their subordination or lack thereof (1976:62). Metge finds sex roles to be clearly defined but also conceptualized as "reciprocal and complementary." Status is not dependent on sex, but rather on *mana*, an inner life force, capable of fluctuation (1976:179-80). Similarly, in a review of gender issues specific to New Zealand, Julie Park found that rank (based on prestige and genealogy), not gender, was the determining factor of roles among Māori, prior to European contact (1991). Māori and lesbian activists, in their reviving of Māori culture, and their honoring of community and land, seem intent on eliminating European-based gender assumptions as well as Māori-based notions of appropriate sex roles. Pre-European contact, Māori beliefs included the same type of gender liminality found in others parts of Polynesia (Besnier 1996).

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[27] Studies in sociology and comparative literature of New Zealand lesbian life are available through the following unpublished masters and doctoral theses: Aitchison-Windeler 1987; Atmore 1992b; Casey 1990, Tuck 1992; and Ward 1995.

A Lens of My Own Grinding

> I may insist on my lesbian identity not because I think I really am but because of the way my relation to that category shapes and structures my life.
>
> – Shane Phelan, *Getting Specific*

Beginning in the 1980s, the "anthropology of women" became "feminist anthropology" and scholars began to theorize gender, not just sex, while redressing the systematic omission of various groups of women (such as lesbians) in the development of gender theories (Abu-Lughod 1993:4). My interest in community and sexual identity stems from this theoretical genealogy and the basic tenet of feminist anthropology whereby gender – as a set of continually negotiated power relations – is involved in every facet of society: social, cultural, historical, ideological and political (Moore 1988:6; see also Collier and Yanagisako 1987; di Leonardo 1991). My approach is interdisciplinary, concentrated and directed by feminist and lesbian and gay theory.

As I stated in the beginning, ultimately this dissertation is a story. It is a vision of New Zealand lesbian community as seen through a lens of my own grinding. As a feminist scholar, I have attempted to remain responsibly reflexive regarding the politics of representation, the dangers of ethnographic authority and the implications of lesbian-defined research. Lila Abu-Lughod (1993) has well demonstrated the relationship between anthropology and the hearing and telling of stories. To these narratives, feminism has added the "inevitability of positionality" (Abu-Lughod 1993:15). Being a feminist anthropologist not only involves the writing and researching of people's lives, but includes being sensitive to the balances of power as expressed "in the society being described and in the relationship between the writer (and readers) and the people being written about" (1993:5). As ethnography, my research is also a critique of previous

master narratives. It suggests that contemporary feminist ethnographies must question what and whom they claim to represent and from where the authority of their representation derives (Moore 1994:107). It suggests that ethnography is most powerful, most successful, when the reader smells the salt in the air, feels the earthquakes roll underfoot and hears the "subjects" laugh.

The writing of results and the presentation of research are among the most challenging tasks in any research project. Clifford and Marcus (1986), and Marcus and Fischer (1986), have pointed out the implicit ethnographic authority apparent in much of anthropological writing. The tropes of the arrival scene, the return and the unique knowing of "the people" had polluted the very goals anthropology had tried to achieve. Inserting the "self" in the text was one attempt to compensate for the image of an objective, omniscient ethnographer. Peers call this the "naval-gazing" moment in anthropology – a damaging trend that has yet to fully run its course. Some researchers have used the insertion of self successfully. However, for reasons ostensibly related to identity politics, the voice of authority has moved from that of the omniscient observer, to that of the noble outsider.

In a perverse move, the insertion of self at times appears the sole prerogative of those who can claim oppression, hybridity or some other complex and misunderstood identity, with a few notable exceptions (e.g. Tsing 1993). Throughout this text, I have inserted my own presence when I feel it relevant or when it seems to flesh out a point of interest, particularly in relation to issues of transnational community and anthropology's controversial past among New Zealanders (e.g. Jaarsma and Rohatynskyj 2000). I do not intend to create authority through the appearance of innocence or the overcoming of

obstacles. Rather, when I describe such situations, I am interested in exposing the problematic concept of "the field:" of a bounded "here" and assumptions of "there." Leaving aside argument of the obvious interference of global mass communication, the danger of envisioning bounded, distinct groups is in the tendency to reify groups as objects and artifacts, trapped in time, needing preservation, lined up for the appreciation of passing connoisseurs.[28]

If knowledge is a form of power, with the potential for authority through rhetoric, then we must be forced to realize that as ethnographers, our positionality will always be problematic. I find postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak's notion of "strategic essentialism" helpful here as one method of responsibly reflective positionality (1987). While I agree with Stuart Hall that cultural identity is "not an essence but a positioning" (1990:224), it would seem that some amount of essentialism is always inevitable. Much like the early discussions of ethnocentrism within anthropology, we know bias is unavoidable. Spivak therefore suggests that we both learn to realize the necessary essentialism in our work, and to reflect on how it shapes our research designs and theories.

As should now be clear, my work reflects a dialogue with the subaltern theories of Spivak and postcolonial theory as represented by Said (1978), Fanon (1967) and others. Together they inform my approaches to history and identity – the recovery and retelling of lost and local histories, the deconstructing of master narratives to expose the local articulations of identity. It is the process of reclaiming marginal and fractured voices, of moving non-Western histories "from margin to center." New Zealand, as a member of the

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[28] The anthropologist is also not immune to the time trapping impulse. I note in my fieldnotes (October 1999) that I was surprised to learn when one couple split up and another moved to England. I had expected that they would always be as I met them – much as the ethnographic present can suggest.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and a founding

member of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) could hardly be considered a

"non-Western" country. However within New Zealand's lesbian community, the

dominance of American lesbian theory, ideology and fashion seems to threaten a New

Zealand specific story of lesbian history.[29] My work uses the strength of ethnography to

present an emotionally rich, culturally situated and structured account of firmly New

Zealand lesbian lives. As such, it contributes to the recent emergence of lesbian

ethnography?

     Esther Newton has recently asked, "What constitutes a social, political and

intellectual emergence" (2002:viii)? Prior to 1980, there was a "thundering silence"

within anthropology regarding gay and lesbian research (Rubin 2002:52).[30] Kenneth

Read has described it as an atmosphere in which homosexual research was "consigned to

the dark recesses of the discipline's closet" (Read in Kennedy 2002:94). Since then,

research efforts have significantly multiplied (e.g. Lewin and Leap 1996 and 2002;

Weston 1993b). Is there such a thing as "lesbian ethnography?" There is if "my relation

to that category shapes and structures" my research.[31] Like any other situation, there is no

one thing, held up on its own, which defines the character of a project. Instead it is a

combination of moments and nuances that taken together inform the whole. Like the

history of feminist anthropology in which an "add women and stir" philosophy evolved

to develop gender itself as a category of analysis, so is lesbian and gay anthropology

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[29] Many of the women with whom I worked felt the United States to be a source of cultural domination in reference to lesbian culture and actively campaigned against American identified "queer sensibilities," as I discuss in Chapter Five.

[30] There are a few notable exceptions, such as Newton's *Mother Camp* in 1968.

[31] While I am clearly feeding from Phelan's statement at the start of this section, I am also influenced by similar sentiments expressed by Audre Lorde, "It is not who I sleep with that defines the quality of these acts, nor what e do together, but what life statements I am led to make as the nature and effect of my erotic relationships percolate throughout my life and my being" (Van Dyke 1992:51).

changing shape. Studies that once concentrated on inclusion of homosexuality, samesex behavior, third and trans genders are now considering sexual identity itself as a category of analysis.

Informed by an intellectual history that has become a sub-disciplinary force within anthropology, a lesbian ethnography might ask: What happens to sexual identity when community membership is dependent on sexuality? How is it that an identity based on the sexual can be imagined removed from the erotic? More often than not, women with whom I worked explained that being lesbian was an all encompassing, honest lifestyle embracing caring for others, educating people to respect difference, protecting the environment and taking on native issues. Sexuality and sexual partners were important to these women but were often not paramount when discussing their lesbian identities.[32] In an interesting example, one woman was happy to participate in my research but was not sure if she belonged. Though she had been living with her female partner for ten years, she felt she had been socialized more by gay men than by lesbians and did not want to "throw off" my findings.

When I think of lesbian ethnography, I think of classic situations like the one I encountered with Renèe. On a typically cold, wet winter's day I arrived at her flat for an interview. The two of us sat huddled by a heater, recording her experiences within lesbian communities. A smoker, she absently rolled a cigarette as I thought to myself that Renèe had so much life in her the tar would never catch up. During our interview, a side door opened and her flatmate walked into the room. Renèe turned momentarily to the Dictaphone and said, "This is Doug. I flirt with Doug. And he's gay too." Turning back

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[32] I am not suggesting that most lesbians considered the sexual unimportant. Rather that when discussing lesbian identity, versus *being* lesbian, sexuality was not always the most salient qualifier.

to Doug, she added, "Not that you're not important, hon, but we're concentrating on females today. Unless you'd like to be one?" Doug had just woken up. His hair was pointing in seventeen directions and the imprint of rumpled sheets marked his face but sleepiness did not dissuade him from entering their usual banter. "Only if I can be Ken," he said. A brilliant reply to which Renèe responded with the warmth of a newlywed, "Stay as Ken or go as Doug. It's up to you, love. Coffee's in the kitchen."

This is lesbian ethnography. It does not take the identity of lesbian for granted and it does not assume a heterosexual understanding of sexual banter. Identities are fluid, defined on the spot and often constructed in ways that satirize normality. The want to be Ken, a creation of the Topp twins, is telling. Sisters and lesbians, Jools and Lynda Topp are singers and standup comics with a variety show featuring a set of repeating characters that have evolved into cultural icons. One such duo, Camp Mother and Camp Leader, are TV hosts of the newlywed game show "Mr. & Mrs." Another pair, Ken and Ken, brothers and straight, represented the New Zealand postal service, during my fieldwork, as part of a very popular ad campaign.[33] That Doug should choose this identity to claim womanhood is fascinating and a storyline to which I will return in later chapters.

Aren't You a Native?

As it happened, I was filled with entirely too much self-confidence. Standing near the Club's dance floor, I viewed the scene while waiting for Sandra to bring back the drinks. As she returns, I see she has again ignored my request for a Coke and instead carries a Lemon & Bitters. "If you want to be trusted, you better bloody-well blend in,

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[33] The New Zealand postal service has historically been one of the main employment opportunities open to lesbians, alongside healthcare and factory work. Whether this is an interesting coincidence or an intended reference by the postal service in their ad campaign, I cannot help but wonder.

hadn't you," she chides, accompanied by a smile of almost maternal protection. Lemon &
Bitters is a non-alcoholic soda that just happens to come in a green beer-glass bottle. In a
less than subtle move, Sandra has torn the label from the bottle to complete the
subterfuge.

I was ready to begin one of our usual repartees when two women wandering
towards us grabbed my attention. After having lived in Tàkaro for several months, I
found I routinely divided the lesbians I meet into two categories: the touched and the
untouched.[34] The touched are the women with whom I have regular contact. The
untouched are those who I know and see at events but who chose to remain distant. The
two untouched women approach and I prepare to leave when Sandra grabs my arm and
makes the introductions. Switching gears, I amp up all my "anthro sensors" and prepare
to capture the moment. *I* am an anthropologist and I know an ethnographic vignette when
I see one. All of our heads lean in so we can hear each other over the "Vida Loca" of
Ricky Martin. "G'day," says Sandra. "Hey, I'd like you to meet our mates. These are the
Americans Becca and Martha. Becca's researching Kiwi lesbians." Len the untouched,
thick with Irish accent and close enough to share the stale smoke on her breath, shouts,
"So are you really lesbians or are you just pretending?"

This was the moment I had been waiting for and the culmination of five years
training. Her eyes had fluttered, I was *sure* of it. Was it windy from the fan? Perhaps an
eyelash in her eye or allergies from the smoke? Was it a wink or a burlesque? I knew if I
could answer those questions, if I could make my description "thick" enough, I would be
able to understand her challenge. As I struggled to uncover what precisely had propelled

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[34] At times punchy in my fieldnotes, *touched* and *untouched* were meant as ironic labels. Playful about the
idea that there are no bits of data unaffected by our presence or unfiltered through our own biases, I tried to
remain ever-mindful of the effect of me on my results.

her eye-lid down and then unmistakably up again, I could vaguely hear my partner laughing at me in the background.

The idea of "going native," of shedding one's own cultural paradigm and totally subsuming yourself in the life and culture of those with whom you are studying has been characterized by Clifford Geertz as "inevitably bogus." Yet lesbian and gay ethnographers, when researching lesbian or gay topics, face the interesting challenge of being considered "always already" (Derrida 1978) a native. Kath Weston has referred to this "anthropological makeover" as being made a "virtual," "the colleague produced as the Native Ethnographer" (1997:163). In doing so, Weston draws attention to the ways in which virtual makeovers undermine the authority, or realness, of lesbian and gay ethnographic research, in an attempt to make it "less than" (Weston 1997). The story of Len's challenge is then a useful reminder that cultural relativity applies both to "them" and to "us." While some in the US might classify me as a native, events at the Dog Show and Club demonstrate that New Zealanders did not. Just as "thick description" relies on context and not just the mere noting of a detailed account, so do identities, all identities, require context and situatedness in order to gain cross-cultural understanding. This is the power of ethnography. It represents the tension between the world of ideas and the world of action: between language and the life it tries to represent. Len's challenge is successful for the way it counters the idea that all lesbians are the same and would accept me, unquestioned; that sexuality, or any aspect of social behavior, could exist outside of "a frame of meaning."

I found great humor in the fact that while many worried I was too native, New Zealanders found me anything but. Yet I would disagree with Geertz that the idea of

"going native" is bogus. Perhaps it is if we simply consider it the stripping off of a lifetime of cultural training in order to lose yourself in a new world. However, the practice of anthropology is premised on the idea of being "a professional stranger" (Lewin and Leap 1996); of what Kirin Narayan has called, *the enactment of hybridity…* writing that depicts authors as minimally bicultural in terms of belonging simultaneously to the world of engaged scholarship and the world of everyday life" (Narayan 1993:672). Ethnography is used to translate the meanings behind the everyday experiences of one group to another group. It is possible to become lost in a new framework of meaning; to adopt the new framework as one's own tacit knowledge, familiar enough to escape the language of observation. In this sense, going native happens when there is nothing to write – when there is no tension between "you" as ethnographer and "they" as represented.

The Women

At the time of my research, New Zealand had a population of 3.7 million.[35] Approximately 75%-80% of the population lives on the North Island, with 25% residing in Auckland alone. New Zealand's main exports are agricultural: sheep and dairy products, beef, venison, timber and various forms of produce. Education is compulsory until age 15 and literacy usually hovers around 99% (Haworth 1992). In the Rangirua, the percentages of the population that are Māori (16.5%) and European (82.1%) are higher than the national averages of 14.7% and 80.1% respectively.[36]

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[35] The national and Rangirua regional information presented in this section are according to the 2001 New Zealand Census unless otherwise indicated.

[36] Comparatively, Pacific Islander, Asian and other ethnic groups were significantly under represented.

The national median income during my research was $18,500 while hovering at $16,300 in the Rangirua, and a mere $14,500 among women. Half of the women with whom I worked identified themselves as middle-class though only one third said they had been able to add to their savings during the previous year.[37] While unemployment was at 7.5% nationally, the Rangirua experienced a rate of 8.1%, with the regional lesbian community still higher at 15%.

Of the women who participated in my research, 89% identified as lesbian, most for more than three years, with an additional 6% choosing not to identify at all.[38] Though their ages ranged from 18 to 82, the majority of participants were between 30 and 50 years old and living in long term relationships.[39] Most women had discovered they were "different" while in their teens but did not come out or realize their lesbianism until their twenties. Many had not heard of the term "lesbian" or "homosexual" until the Homosexual Law Reform of the 1980s, implicating the strong significance of HLR and other social movements in the formation of lesbian identities among participants.[40] Ninety percent had previous sexual experience with men and 17% had been previously married. Two participants were still married at the time of my research.

Fifty percent of the women had full-time employment and sixty percent had received at least some education at the university level or higher. Significantly, the majority of jobs were in healthcare, teaching and factory work consistent with historical

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[37] Demographics of participants were collected both through personal interaction and a distributed, anonymous survey, included here as Appendix D.

[38] Short biographical sketches of women found in the pages of this text are provided in Appendix A – The Women of *Sounding Out*.

[39] While information is not available regarding all lesbians living in New Zealand, the 2001 census did record information regarding same sex couples. Among 2,628 lesbian couples recorded, there are many similarities with the women in this research in terms of age, education, income and number of children.

[40] Lesbian activism was strong prior to the 1980s but had not achieved visibility among the women with whom I worked.

patterns of lesbian employment (Glamuzina and Laurie 1991; Laurie 1992; Te Awekotuku et al. 1993). RAGLAN, the Rangirua Gay and Lesbian Action Network, was less a central force and more a central point for networking among the lesbian community with a phone tree of 120 women, an email bush of thirty and a monthly newsletter sent to 180 women largely, but not solely, based in the Rangirua region. When asked for a national identity, participants reported the following: New Zealander (39%), Pākehā (28%), Māori (9%) and *Tauiwi*[41] (8%). Fifteen percent claimed nationalities outside of New Zealand. When asked if they felt closest to their neighborhoods, towns, regions or networks, 65% of participants felt a primary connection to lesbian community.

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[41] A recently adopted term, *tauiwi* literally means visiting *iwi* and places the speakers politically in allegiance with those who support Māori rights.

Unraveling the Conundrum of Community

> I remember reading a book by Lyle Watson. And he was talking about physicists finding formula. And when they've actually got the formula that's when they find it. So what I've noticed is that since I'm identified as a lesbian and been interested in women they're just there. When I wanted it, when I was in it, that's when I found it. It's like the blinders have come off and they're everywhere.
>
> – Liz, *June 1999*

As an introduction to the social theories of community and the sociopolitical climate in which New Zealand lesbians now live, this chapter is as much about finding community as it is about describing it. I consider my own search for lesbian community along side the historical search among Kiwi lesbians to find others *like them*. What makes one thing a community and another a group? Why is this called a movement and that called a group with common interests? If New Zealand lesbians are not an isolated band living on the Yuat River, or a geographically bound collective paying condo association dues, how, exactly, do you find them? And when you do, have you found community or the kind of good neighbors that result from "good fences?"

Faced with these questions – to identify community, to find perspective and to find the "elusive" lesbians – I started my own search at the lesbian Dog Show through participant observation. Drawing upon social connections tentatively forged at the Show, I gradually met other lesbians and began the intensive process of "hanging out." Not asking many questions, I spent the first few weeks becoming a regular in various social circles, similar to the process of "hanging out" described by Russell Bernard (1995:151). I learned to listen rather than ask, and to answer rather than investigate. To build rapport I opened my own experiences to their questions; I talked about my partner, my family and future plans for my research. I learned to spot native plants, to gently lean in while rounding corners to meet the infamous Tàkaro winds, and not to lean back against tables

– an important tenet of Māori culture. I became addicted to the dramas of netball[42] and

Shortland Street.[43]

Much of participant observation relies on learning to "hang out" successfully. Not

unlike socialization, hanging out allows the ethnographer as newcomer to learn social

norms that govern behavior and conversation, to build common denominators through

shared experiences and interests. In addition, "hanging out builds trust, and trust results in

ordinary conversation and ordinary behavior in [the ethnographer's] presence" (Bernard

1995:152). Though popular outlets, like *National Geographic,* have forged a bond

between anthropology and the public's fascination for the macabre and unusual, it is the

ordinary, not the exotic, that most captures our attention. To capture the ordinary through

hanging out could mean joining someone for dinner, sharing a cup of coffee or attending

a planned gathering – perhaps even a lesbian dog show. Below I describe a planned

gathering among volunteers for a local political campaign. The campaign hosts a

quarterly cocktail hour to "foster solidarity" and to introduce new members to the group.

The vignette begins a story that will end at the Karoo Kafe, linking the search for

community to the need for perspective and the histories of New Zealand lesbians.

Gone Fishin'

Free food was always a big draw for the quarterly Garden House social. It is a

welcome opportunity to grab a drink and to mingle with colleagues in an easy, informal

setting. Social cliques are easy to spot as predetermined groups gravitate towards their

usual posts. Entering from the back, just east of the gardens, Mira and I ducked to avoid a

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[42] For those unfamiliar with netball, it is a game similar to basketball but the ball never bounces and the hoop has no backboard. While not popular in the US, it is an internationally recognized Olympic sport.
[43] Popular prime time soap opera.

clumsy *kereru* making his way past. Kereru are large wood pigeons camouflaged among the shiny, dark foliage of native *puriri* trees by their mostly metallic-green coats. They are low flying birds prone to strangely erratic flight patterns, falling off tree limbs or crashing through branches, and occasionally groups of people. It was commonly felt that their diet, the puriri's cherry-like fruit, past due and fermenting on the branch in late summer, was the cause of their "drunken" behavior.

Passing the puriri trees, Mira and I walked up the back steps, entering the room to the left. The bar had already opened and trays of food littered the tables. I recognized many of the women sitting by the bay windows at the far end of the room but was grateful for Mira's company. I was still new to this scene and did not tend to spend much time with the campaign. Mira and I were quick to migrate toward the familiars. I knew ten of the twelve women gathered, all lesbians, and soon learned that the other two were significant others who had been invited to the event. When Mira and I sat down to join the group, several conversations were already underway. Brie and Deb were bonding over stories of their trials with Flora and Renèe was teasing Joce because she didn't know how to roll her own cigarettes. Instead of manually rolling, Joce used a small metal box, gently placing tobacco and paper onto an over-used leather strap that would roll, seal and produce her cigarette when the box was closed.

When Mira stood up to get some drinks, a new, young woman sat down next to me. Quiet at first, Alice listened to the various conversations and soon began to share in the gossip. During one lull in conversation, she turned to me to asked what policy area I covered. After explaining I was there to do research, she inquired, "So what do you study?"

"New Zealand lesbian communities," I answered.

"Really," she said, "how interesting," a comment meant as filler while she recovered from the shock. Regaining composure, she became curious. "And are there many here?" she asked, "… Lesbians, I mean?"

"Well sure."

A moment of thought.

"Whole communities of them?"

It was hard to know how to field the question. Alice seemed too naïve to be true and I was becoming increasingly uncomfortable, feeling the eyes of the group turned towards me. Had she really missed everything? The samesex discussion paper issued by parliament, the posters from gay clubs or the *Queer Nation* TV show? Even Whittaker's ad campaign? Whittaker, "the honest chocolate:" to eat it is to be compelled to speak honestly. The latest TV spot showed a woman and man sitting side by side in an airplane, each browsing through a magazine. Without looking away from his magazine, the man eats some chocolate and says, "I have something to tell you." Pause. "I've been seeing another woman." Pause. The woman, unphased, eats a piece of her chocolate. Nonchalantly. No eye contact. "Yeah," she says. Turns the page. "So have I." Thrilled with the campaign, Mona and Pearl gave out the "lesbian chocolate" last night after dinner. But Alice seemed honestly curious so I attempted to curb my pessimism. "Sure, there are many very active lesbian communities here."

"Far out," continued Alice. "And how do you find them?" Mira, sitting at the opposite end of bay windows, started to make faces. Edna poked her as she sucked in her cheeks, pursed her lips and mimed swimming like a fish.

"Well, when you are one, they aren't that hard to find." My eye moves –

burlesque.

"What do they look like? I mean how do you know when you've found them?"

Had I been too subtle?

"Actually, we look like normal people." Murmurs from the group. Alice moved

on to question the next person. Seeing someone walk up outside, I feigned recognition

and retreated to a new table out on the deck. I had tired of the performance and was

worried about how I was being graded. I was dismissive of Alice and uncertain about

myself. Her questions were simple and my flip responses did nothing but cover up my

inability to answer them. I had assumed a lesbian community and intended to research the

seemingly sexier project of gender in a samesex atmosphere. Yet it was community that

saturated my fieldnotes and my recent conversations. Said one woman:

> What you should be studying is the belongingness. The community. Having a
> connection with like-minded and spirited people. Knowing I am not alone and can
> identify as one of the lesbian community and access it when I need to.

Said another, "We're about community, ya know. Full on community." And still another,

"Community is why you are here. It's why these women are talking to you. You should

really try to understand that."

Mira and Edna joined me on the deck to poke some fun at the situation. "That

Alice is a strange one, eh," Edna said. "Yeah, does she think you go to a stream and turn

over the rocks to find us scurrying about," Mira laughed. As she stood, her fish imitation

morphed into a salamander as she walked around the deck, hunched over with pursed lips

and her hands wiggling at her shoulders likes gills. It was like a made-for-TV movie and

I was anxious to avoid the encroaching and emotionally revealing "Spielberg moment."

"Come on," said Edna, "we're meeting some of *The Lawless* for tea [dinner] at Café Ruby. Want to join?" I hadn't yet made real connections with *The Lawless*, the lesbian soccer team from RAGLAN. I happily joined in and followed them to the Café on my Honda scooter. Café Ruby was one of many community hangouts known to be lesbian-friendly and I knew Relle would be on duty. This was a routine I was now used to. Almost a game. How many lesbian events could I attend in one day? My record was six. How many were there? In an average week, I could "hang out" with one hundred women, a core forty of these the same but the rest always changing. What was this network? How big was it? How well defined? The people I saw at the end of the day were seldom friends with those from the start of my day. For some it became a contest. How many new women could they introduce me to? Maud would marvel at my appearance in so many places, talking to me, she said, by default. "Everyone else is [talking to you] so why the hell not." Was the campaign crowd one group and *The Lawless* another, or were they all one and the same?

The dynamics of this active, fluid and sprawling collective quickly overtook "concepts of gender" as the new concentration of my work. The women with whom I spoke could not care less about gender. What they cared about was showing me what they valued. The lesson was constant: to be a New Zealand lesbian was to be part of a community. In earlier New Zealand research Michèle Dominy has said that for lesbians:

> The meaning of self is lodged within an alternative community, and yet that community is ephemeral, constantly changing its membership and shifting its ideology while offering its adherents no clear vision of the future (1986:283).

Fifteen years later, the role of community as both necessary and ambiguous continued to

shape New Zealand lesbian lives. Community became for me a bit like culture – hard to define and yet obviously there.

Finding Community

There have been many advances in "community studies, " both generally and within lesbian research.[44] The concept of community has been discussed with such fervor that some have even begun to question whether the term is so broad as to be no longer useful. There are fishing communities, vegetarian communities and communities of people who play online card games. To find community suggests finding an entity or network, obvious in nature and apparent in character but that is hardly the case. To find it means being able to identify it and identifying it became the focus of my attention.

As a subject for study, community can be elusive. Of community, Dennis Altman has said, "the term is one of the most complex and imprecise in the vocabulary of social science" (1994:7). My evasive responses to Alice's questions betray the difficulty in finding that which you cannot define. Typically thought of as a geographically bound group, community is more than just those who live in the same area. Members must feel the connection. Says sociologist David Pearson, it is precisely that group consciousness, that sense of belonging that distinguishes communities from mere categories (1989:64-6). Community is a social creation. It is a feeling, or as Anderson (1983) suggests, a state of mind. As such, it is the nature of community to be in constant flux, in terms both of membership and of "style," or expression. Explaining *why* it is there is a pursuit unlikely to prove fruitful. Far more interesting is the attempt to understand meaning and choice:

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[44] E.g. Altman 1994, Appadurai 1991, Cohen 1995, Gupta and Ferguson 1992, Kearney 1995; for lesbian studies see Kennedy and Davis 1993, Krieger 1985, Lockhard 1986.

what community means to those who are in it and why they choose to participate.

At its most basic, the idea of community brings to mind a series of related dichotomies: community/society, group/individuals, known/anonymous, traditional/modern. Whether we think of it as a collective working for the common good, a la Rousseau, or as a loose Hobbesian association of competing individuals, the ideas we continue to associate with community stem from Enlightenment philosophy. The Enlightenists believed reality was concrete. It was unified and observable as a system of unique, internally coherent categories. To this definition of reality it was the philosopher John Locke who added that while no one person was capable of perfection, people were capable of striving for it, of being perfected if not reaching the ultimate goal. A student of the Enlightenment, sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies built upon the ideals of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau to create a theory of community still prescient of contemporary community theory more than a century later.

Many current trends regarding community theory can be traced back to Tönnies' concepts of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* (1887). Standing in as predecessors to the 1970s nature/culture debates within anthropology, *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* reflected the influence of industrialization on societies and social theories. With *gemeinschaft,* Tönnies offered the concept of community as small, pre-industrial groups living in a common place with ties based on kinship, cooperation and mutual self-fulfillment. *Gesellschaft* followed industrialization, urbanization and the specialization of interests. It was represented as community through contractual obligation and arbitrary affiliations. Tönnies pitted the good feeling of rural communities (Rousseau) against the alienation of city life (Hobbes), thereby instigating our long lasting romance with the

utopian ideals of *gemeinschaft.*[45] It is a shift toward what Anderson would later theorize

regarding nationalism; the association of industrialization with a change in the character

of community, from being spatially defined to developing a sense of mutual awareness

based on shared historical experience.

Community theory therefore begins by opposing community and civil society,

rendering the modern pursuit of "community" as a nostalgic quest; a want to return to the

better, simpler times of altruistic motivations. Contemporary theorists seem most often to

confuse these two meanings, combining community as a group of some arbitrary, albeit

important connection with a *gemeinschaft* sense of social relations. Just because people

can be defined as a group does not mean they are a community, that they have or claim a

sense of solidarity. In the past, geography – or people living in a shared space – largely

defined communities. As theories regarding how people experience social spaces became

more complex – and geographic spaces became more crowded and divided – the

theoretical concept of community suffered a postmodern shift. Communities were built

not through reliance on geographic connection but instead through the unifying force of

group interest.

It is no accident that this theoretical shift began with philosopher Karl Marx and

continued through 1960s/1970s structuralism. Marx surmised that social progress was

natural, the result of interactions between collective personal experience and historical

change. Like Tönnies, Marx noted a shift in the nature of collectivity as associated with

the rise of industry. Yet for Marx, there remained a qualitative difference between

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[45] It is interesting to compare the notions of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* with contemporary New Zealand struggles between Māoridom and the New Zealand State. Daily arguments regarding the tensions between "Māori culture" and "Pākehā culture," tradition and modernity, are similar to the tensions between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft:* an intimate and cooperative, familial like tie on the one hand, and the collapse of the traditional combined with the start of the contractual and competitive on the other.

objectively being part of a group and subjectively being aware of group connection, or class-conscious. By inference, a community was not an "arbitrary affiliation" but a group aware of itself as a group, motivated by group interests related to their position, or class, within industry. The structuralists that followed, though less teleological than Marx, were similarly interested in creating master narratives to explain social behavior and the mechanisms that caused social change. Through this genealogy, theorists came to see community as a celebrated concept, often incorporating socialist philosophy and becoming a necessary part of political struggle.

The difficulty in studying community is in conflating that which community members describe with that which the researcher thinks community "should be." One method for avoiding this ontological trap is to study communities that are, in fact, geographically bound. Perhaps this is the reason that the majority of contemporary community studies assume a "geographical base," a "microcosm" or "residential ghetto" as a starting point for research (Altman 1994:7; Weston 1991:124). Yet to limit contemporary community studies within geographically bound paradigms is misleading. It encourages us to think that communities can be studied as solitary; existing outside social/historical circumstance, immune to the influence of overlapping networks of media and mass communication. It promotes the modernist fiction of internally coherent, unified communities when, as Arjun Appadurai has said, "groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogenous" (1991:191), if they ever in fact were. What anthropology can offer, as Appadurai has suggested of ethnography, is a way to "capture the impact of deterritorialization on the imaginative resources of lived, local experiences" (1991:196).

In Appadurai's view, the world has become a system of overlapping cultural identities and image production. He posits a model of five "scapes" – ethno, media, techno, finance and ideo – through which the social practice of imagination travels and produces identity-based communities. Whether based on nationalism, sexuality or favorite music genre, what communities have in common is the process by which they form, foster motivation and continue. His view is similar to, but epistemologically different from that of theories of diaspora. Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg describe diasporic populations, saying they "frequently occupy no single cultural space but are enmeshed in circuits of social, economic and cultural ties encompassing both the mother country and country of settlement" (1996:14). Drawing on Rouse, Clifford further explains that, "separate places become effectively a single community 'through the continuous circulation of people, money, goods and information'" (Clifford 1994:303). In representing "no single cultural space" but "effectively a single community," the concentration of diaspora studies rests in the group, in-group movements and in transcultural processes.

Not about individual or emic perspectives, diaspora studies are transnational; they are about movements and ideas that link "here" and "there," creating one identity reflected through multiple groups and dispersed populations. At base, it is about transversing the local. In deliberate conversation with diasporic and transnational notions, Appadurai employs a more "global versus local" approach. He locates the anthropologist's point of interest in the negotiations between transnational flows and individuals' imagination:

> Put another way, the task of ethnography now becomes the unraveling of a
> conundrum: what is the nature of locality, as a lived experience, in a globalized,

deterritorialized world? … the beginnings of an answer to this conundrum lie in a fresh approach to the role of the imagination in social life (1991:196).

On the ground, in the imagination of culturally situated actors, how is the global articulated in the local? For me, it is the difference between describing a transnational lesbian community, and learning what it means to be a New Zealand lesbian in a world transnationally connected.

As an anthropologist, Appadurai is concerned with the view of the individual; an emic perspective of community and what it represents. "Community studies," when not geographically based, tends to cast a broader net, concerned with coalitions and "affinity groups." These studies center on the motivations for community building, generally seen as a personal or group struggle against an oppositional force. That concentration reflects the not-so-subtle influence of Marx and of postmodern theory. Postmodernism, as a school, was built upon the notion that social categories are contingent, culturally constructed and internally contested. Rather than assume social categories and identities as self-evident, postmodernists are concerned with how meanings are constructed. For modernists, material reality exists and shapes identity. For postmodernists, both reality and identity are socially constructed. It is therefore logical that postmodern theories of community rely less on the "realness" of shared identities and more on the unifying force of political struggle. Like geographically bound areas, it becomes the new "easily located."

In a review of anthropological theory "since the Sixties," Sherry Ortner (1984) identified a new trend and central symbol forming within anthropological thought which she calls praxis. As theorists interested in cultural behavior, anthropologists who use praxis are not attempting to write new master narratives, nor to understand entire cultural

"systems." Rather, praxis is used to explain local meanings resulting *between* human action *and* the system. Culture exists where human action and the system intersect. It is neither bound to bodies nor to an organic superstructure but remains a limitless abstraction, at once connected to both. The anthropologists' best chance to understand culture as suggested by praxis is therefore to look at where it is located.

Rather than avoid the question of definition, using praxis allows locally constructed meanings of community to become the way in which it is defined. Anthony Cohen (1985) has described community as a symbolic entity with no parameters because it exists in relation to other perceived communities. He claims, as I would, that community is a system of values and moral codes providing members with a sense of identity. A simple definition may not be plausible since community is not experienced as such. It is experienced as a connection through circumstance and/or purpose, fluid and intangible at the same time that its solidarity is strictly enforced.

Building on praxis theory is the linguistic concept of "communities of practice." Sociolinguists Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet define a "community of practice" as:

> an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short practices – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor (1994:463-4).

"Communities of practice" are defined by a membership focused on common actions, strategies, values, social practices and relations (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1999:198). Pulling from sociolinguist Mary Bucholz (1999), because identities are fluid, the nature of the link between individual members and the group is never pre-determined. Rather,

the expression of identity emerges through everyday practices, "the combined effects of structure and agency" (Bucholz 1999).

I am interested in "communities of practice" from an anthropological perspective. Like gender for philosopher Judith Butler (1990), I find community to be "performative," sustained through and reliant upon the culturally situated "stylized repetition of acts." As a tool for research, "community of practice" describes an environment in which the repetition of language choices and cultural behavior both support the creation of communal memory. Most importantly, paraphrasing Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, "communities of practice" create a training ground that allows for the reproduction of identities and the ability of newcomers to function by being able to instantly participate without having learned all the rules (1998:46). In terms of lesbians, it implies that lesbian identity can and does form outside of community dynamics. Community newcomers are accepted despite their obvious inability to perform correctly. However, once a part of the community, members are socialized to speak and to act in ways predicated by the group. As Gaia, a 25-year-old Pākehā dairy worker explained:

> Coming up here to join RAGLAN – I've never been around so many gay women. I didn't really know how to act, ya know? They all called me baby-dyke but I didn't really give a toss. I knew it was just because I was new and needed to figure things out. I reckon the girls will call Sam baby-dyke 'til she gets her gaydar.

At this point it would appear that the five aspects of community I identified earlier – community as an icon, a group identity, and a process that provides, directs, and promotes certain values – are incomplete. While these aspects all highlight the cooperative impulse of community, the process of community is as dependent upon internal group differences as it is upon its unity. Community exists as a constant struggle

between "like" histories that draw members together and disparate interests that pull them apart. Feminist theorist Chandra Mohanty (1992) has said that lesbian women are linked through "common context," a common history *beyond* race. At the same time, she says lesbians are "positioned as women" *through* "various systematic networks of class, race, (hetero)sexuality and nation" (1991:13). Linked both "beyond" and "through" these identities, lesbian community is then equally constructed by competing reflexes to celebrate diversity and to deny internal differences.

The struggle of unity/difference – unity versus difference – is not new to studies of lesbian community but we have yet to understand the role of difference as foundational to community building. It is true that the process of community "privileges unity over difference" (Young 1990:300). However, the inherent paradox of lesbian community, its "crux and crisis," is that it is built upon identity (Cohen 1991:72). As a premise, identity politics ignores the differences in "the same" (Cohen 1991:76). In so doing, a lesbian community inclusive of identity claims often recreates the general sense of alienation that drew women to join it in the first place. As Aileen, a 37-year-old middle-class Pākehā said:

> Lesbian community is something that really could be a positive part of being a dyke but unfortunately often isn't. It often functions in an exclusionary rather than inclusive way that is understandable in small groups but is potentially incredibly hurtful to those on the outside. It's like when I found the community, I had loads of instant friends. Then they found I don't play sport or eat the same foods and they treated me like I was a bit wonky [suspect].

Aileen repeatedly said that she felt she was part of the lesbian community but not accepted by it. She pointed out other women, such as Amy and Helen, who regularly attended community events but often stood alone and on the fringe. Throughout my work, I remained intrigued by Amy. I saw her at many events, particularly large outdoor

gatherings. She often stood so far to the side that in the beginning, I did not understand she was part of "us." Occasionally an older member of our group would wander in her direction, stand next to her for a time and then wander back. Women who were a part, but stood apart, formed a noticeable aspect of lesbian community that I would not understand until the end of my research.

Identity politics is not the only way in which difference finds expression within community. Kath Weston describes community, in her research, as "a cultural category defined in opposition to individualism and selfhood" (1991:124). This illustrates a second aspect of difference within lesbian community; the struggle against conformity. Here, difference is not framed by identity but instead by autonomy, by self-government *writ* at an individual level. Members of the community were drawn together through mutual non-conformity, through their mutual defiance of dominant values and norms. The community valued the appearance of being original while demanding conformity by defining the areas in which originality was accepted, or even expected.

In the past, political scientist Shane Phelan – like historian John D'Emilio (1983) and others – has said that community does the work of (1) demonstrating correct identity performance, (2) modeling appropriate behavior, and (3) providing a base for needed political mobilization (Phelan 1994:87-8). The political necessity of lesbian community has always received vast attention. Said poet Audre Lorde, "without community there is no liberation" (1984:112). Said Kennedy and Davis, "community is key to the development of twentieth century lesbian identity and consciousness" (1993:3). Even most Kiwi lesbians expressed some version of community as akin to "taking an active role in educating society." With such strongly voiced political models, it is easy to

understand how the roles of social imagination and cultural experience would become overshadowed. However, even models such as Sandoval's (1991) in which an "oppositional consciousness" develops within affinity groups as people individually negotiate the categories of race, class and sexuality rely on experience and imagination.

Through community, states Sandoval, members learn both what it means to identify and how to control the means of identification (1991:12-14). Community therefore becomes a forum in which members learn how to manipulate previously controlling outside ideologies through forming new internal ones. It is similar to "the imaginary domain," described by political scientist Drucilla Cornell. In a published conversation with Butler, Cornell defined "the imaginary domain" as that which "keeps alive the imaginary as a place that cannot be completely captured by the symbolic" (Butler et al. 1998:7). While Cornell is specifically referring to the formation of gender identities, the same can be said of community. Through a shared imaginary domain, lesbian community enables its members to develop means of identifying that are internally, not externally, defined.[46]

Looking back to *communitas*, Victor Turner's (1974) conceptualization of community, much like praxis, involved the interaction between an individual and a system whereby "community" gave purpose and form to that interaction. While political models focus on deduced purpose, cultural models (which would include Kennedy and Davis) consider a combination of purpose and form. They highlight internal connections over outside influences. In creating my own model of community, I therefore draw upon the work of Liisa Malkki (1997) and, through her, Barbara Myerhoff (1975).

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[46] Though discussed later, it is worth mentioning that this is not unlike the process of imagining discussed by Anderson (1983) whereby his argument carefully constructs the opening for a new imagining associated with the birth of nationalism.

Studying both "deliberate and accidental" communities, Myerhoff addresses the assumed form of purpose within *communitas*. What she discovers in the formation of accidental communities is the importance of the role of experience in creating a common link, or collective history, resulting in community consciousness. In Myerhoff's research, the groups with whom she studies are geographically located. Building on her ideas, Malkki examines the "accidental" connections of groups whose boundaries as less easily defined. She discusses "accidental communities of memory," such as can be found among those who experienced Hiroshima, or lived in a refugee camp. In her model, people who have "accidental sharings of memory and transitory experience" form communities in which members "carry something in common – something that deposits in them *traces* that can have a particular resistance to appropriation by others who were not there" (1997:91, 92). The "there" is both fixed and metaphorical. It is less a place than a lived-in moment in which location shapes experience. In this sense, even those women who live on the "fringe" of New Zealand lesbian community share a sense of connection through similar lived experiences. Lesbian community may form a base for political movements just as it may provide support and protection to their members. However, it would be a return to functionalism to assume that "what they do" is in fact "what they mean."

Karoo Kafe

Alice's challenge to me – Where do you find them? – was not naïve but common. It was understandable and mirrored the sentiment of many, before I left the US, who were concerned with how I would find the habitually elusive lesbians. Based on their own

assumptions regarding lesbian community, I was continually directed toward Auckland and Wellington as potential field sites: Auckland because it was a "global" city and Wellington because it was a "political" one. However lesbians were defined, it seemed you would not find them among your "average, ordinary" New Zealanders. I remained convinced, throughout, that finding them would not be difficult. Not only was Tàkaro home to a reportedly large and active lesbian and gay social club, but the club also had a venue – an easily identified, central location. The LSG newsletter clearly showed many planned events each week. Several businesses were lesbian run and the community was visible enough that it was once featured in the weekly telecast of *Queer Nation*. Elusive seemed ill fitting. Imagine my surprise when I lost them.

I discussed the awkward moment with Flo and Betty over dinner. After some amusing confusions in which they offered me a banger (sausage sandwich) and questioned whether I wanted to borrow a hottie for the night (hot water bottle), I thought they would enjoy hearing about my trip to the Karoo Kafe. I read in a newsletter that the "Dining Out Women" would be meeting for brunch at the newly opened Karoo Kafe. Having arrived early, I positioned myself at a large table along the wall with a clear view of the door. Watching patrons enter, one woman after another, I again began to feel I had judged Alice too quickly. Flo was amused, and Betty unphased, to hear I thought everyone was gay. I had renewed my appreciation for the roles of arrogance and humility – both necessary and bedeviling elements of most fieldwork.

"Eighty-five percent of the country looks lesbian or gay to me," I explained. I was watching the Kafe door but I had no idea what I was looking for. Thirty minutes passed the published meeting time, I sat by myself nursing a "Morning Zinger." At one point,

after watching a table of three women, I decided to make a move. As it happened, I had missed the plot. They were not lesbians. "It was a mother having lunch with her daughters," I confessed. "Brilliant!" screamed Flo and we all had a good laugh. Eventually Mag and Pearl walked into the Kafe – the only ones to show up that day. Fieldnotes: *Lesson to self* – planned events do not necessarily mean attended ones.

Betty, originally from London, confessed that she had similar problems when she moved to New Zealand. "I know precisely your problem," she explained. "It's because they're agricultural. Women around here work and they don't wear makeup and they have that Māori assertiveness about them." Flo, then in the kitchen prepping tea, stopped chopping in order to rejoin the conversation. She and Betty had never discussed Betty's perceptions and she found herself caught by the comment.

"What do you mean, we're agricultural?" Flo asked.

"Not lesbians, sweetie, Kiwis. Kiwis are agricultural." Then turning to me she added, "It's all the flannel and the gumboots they wear. It's so confusing."

"You really think New Zealand lesbians are all that different?" Flo asked.

"Sure."

"What's so New Zealand about being a lesbian?" Betty's answer:

> There's something New Zealand about sport. About trekking and bushwalks. About the strength of Māori women. About the acceptance of the Topp twins and the Sony adverts. About how you walk and how you sit.

Through the telling of her own story, Betty seemed to explain that she learned to find New Zealand lesbians when she learned to understand where they had been. Like Liz at the beginning of the chapter, when she had gained perspective, "the blinders were off and they were everywhere."

Echoing a similar sentiment was Thelma, a life-long New Zealander, dedicated activist and eloquent woman who first came out in 1961. After eight months of relationship and conversation, Thelma shared that she had had early reservations about participating in my research:

> I thought, who is this woman and what makes her think she's the one to do this work? What right has some cheeky American to write about our lives. You haven't lived here, you haven't had our experiences. What kind of perspective do you have to even understand what I tell you? It's one thing to read or hear about Māori sovereignty. It's quite another to be there when Whina Cooper marched on parliament.

During my fieldwork, Thelma had become a central figure, both in terms of information and social connections. Though her education stopped after Form Six her trim streamlined glasses gave her the look of erudition. She was known to almost every lesbian I met and enjoyed a *kuia*-like status within the community. She was not the only one who would later reveal her uncertainties to me. Joce and Renèe said they were curious about me from the start – watching to see if I would run home and take notes after each little thing. One woman, claiming to be the victim of "notes taken under the table," thoroughly questioned me regarding where I saw the boundaries of "informed consent." With so many reservations, I asked Thelma what had made her change her mind about participating.

> I thought our history is there but has a real need to be written. And I thought you all [Americans] needed to know that New Zealand lesbians are going strong. That we're here and we have been for a very long time.

The same advice had been shared with me in two vastly different settings. To find lesbians and their community required finding perspective. To find them required knowing their history; the cultural perspective from which their identity drew meaning. Such was the source of my misconceptions, as identified by Betty, and such was the

challenge presented to me by Thelma. Finding the lesbians meant understanding the connections among lesbian community, Māori history and the political atmosphere in which New Zealand lesbian identity has taken shape. For the women with whom I worked, the 1980s would prove to be one of the most formative decades in their social imagination.

Finding Perspective

The 1980s Pacific was filled with political unrest. There were riots in Tahiti, a military coup in Fiji, struggles for independence in New Caledonia, continued aggressions in East Timor and a general building of tensions throughout Indonesia. During this period, New Zealand sought to advance its global position as a "player" through the massive economic restructuring effort of 1984. It was a time of turmoil in which farm subsidies ended, land values dropped and interest rates reached a high of twenty-five percent. All the while the "she'll be alright" Kiwi philosophy prevailed. Prior to the 1920s, New Zealand's economic and foreign policies had been dominated by British political interests (Wood and Alley 1979). Through the battles of World War II, New Zealanders gained a new appreciation for the relative distance between their country and Britain. Feeling exposed and vulnerable, New Zealand sought strategic defense alliances with Australia and the US (Haworth 1992). The alliance was formalized after World War II in the form of the Australia, New Zealand, United States Treaty (ANZUS). From its signing in 1951, through the Treaty's dissolution in 1985, ANZUS was a major political force in the Pacific (Wood and Alley 1979).

The 1980s were no less eventful for New Zealand than they were for the Pacific at

large. While all around them Pacific Island countries were claiming independence in an intensive decolonization, New Zealand was occupied domestically by a problematic economy, tensions over the Treaty of Waitangi and the growing social movements of the New Left. Like other nations, New Zealand enjoyed a post-war economic boom in the 1950s. Kiwis distinguished themselves by achieving the highest per capita world income and the second highest standard of living (Glamuzina and Laurie 1991:48). Pākehā New Zealanders received the largest benefit. Seeking to cash in on the growth, the next twenty years marked massive migration among the Māori. Once a population that was 75% rural, by 1970 75% of Māori lived in urban areas (Ibid).

The first event to change the tide in New Zealand's economic growth was the collapse of wool prices in 1967. Reported historian and policy advisor Bruce Brown, "the ratio of [wool] export prices to import prices… were steeper than that in the worst years of the Great Depression" (1999:21). The economy was further weakened in 1973 when Britain joined the European Union. Although the US received 70% of New Zealand's beef, and mutton and butter were largely sent to the Soviet Union, the need to now compete for the British market visibly shook the country's economy (Brown 1999). These two events, combined, created a foothold for the punishing affects of the 1973 and 1979 oil crises.

Fortunately for New Zealand, Australia also suffered from the oil crises of the 1970s. As a result, an Australia/New Zealand trade agreement, first implemented in 1966, was greatly expanded in 1983 (Kelsey 1998:100). While Australia was able to manipulate the Closer Economic Relations agreement (CER) to its advantage, the CER afforded New Zealand a much-needed opportunity to adjust to the competition it would face in

international markets (Sandrey 1997:55; Kelsey 1998). Such was the atmosphere leading up to "Rogernomics" – the restructuring effort that began in 1984, named for its main influence, the then Finance Minister Roger Douglas.[47]

Most of the women who participated in my research were first coming out in the 1980s. It would be difficult to overstate the effect that Rogernomics had either on them or the national economy. Brown has aptly described the first wave of restructuring, from 1984 to 1987:

> The new government devalued the New Zealand dollar to US 43 cents and then, in March 1985, floated it (a clean, not a managed float) whereupon it soared up to US 70 cents, as a result of higher interest rates and an inflow of short-term overseas capital. The government removed foreign exchange controls; removed controls over prices and wages; deregulated the financial sector and opened it to greater international competition; liberalized rules for foreign direct investment in New Zealand; steadily removed remaining import controls and unilaterally lowered many tariffs as well; revised the tax structure and with the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 1986, shifted the incidence from direct towards indirect taxation; restructured the public sector and privatized some of its commercial operations; and quickly removed almost all agricultural subsidies (1999:54).

In 1984 over half of New Zealand's biggest companies were owned overseas. That number would triple by 1988 (Haworth 1992:17). The plan might have worked were it not for the world market crash of 1987. The "garage sale budget of 1988" in which New Zealand sold off state-owned enterprises, such as banks and public utilities, was not enough to help the country recuperate (Kelsey 1998).[48] High unemployment and recession carried well into the 1990s, a situation many lesbians blamed on the US, connecting it back to American withdrawal from the ANZUS Treaty.

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[47] For a closer examination of the effects of Rogernomics on New Zealand economy, see Chomsky 1998 in addition to Kelsey 1998; Brown 1999.
[48] By 1999, New Zealand had the dubious honor of being, "the least industrialized [country] of the developed world" (Campbell 199b:21).

As was happening in many other countries at the time, New Zealand's weakened economy in the late 1960s and 1970s gave rise to progressive New Left social movements. "New Zealand's national identity" as a "monocultural, interventionist and centralized welfare state," was on its last legs (Kelsey 1998:336). New Left ideology was based on egalitarianism and the personal nature of political action, giving fuel to the ideas of community and cooperation as elements necessary to political struggle. Where the boom of 1950s New Zealand can be characterized by the centralizing of power through development of resources and labor, the 1970s and 1980s were about protests: Māori activism, human rights and various liberation movements.[49]

No document, or action, could be more central to understanding Māori activism than *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* – The Treaty of Waitangi.[50] The key issues of the Treaty – land, authority, sovereignty – have remained in contentious debate since its signing in 1840. At times "dismissed" and at times "rediscovered," the political weight of *Te Tiriti* often seemed the sole prerogative of Pākehā and the Crown. The establishment of Waitangi Day in 1973, initially meant as a national rallying point during a time of economic uncertainty, became the rallying cry for a new round of Māori activism, particularly the Land Rights Movement of 1973-1984.[51] February 6, 1973 was both the first annual celebration of Waitangi Day and the first annual Waitangi Day protest. The government celebrated the birth of a nation. The protest group Nga Tamatoa mourned the loss of 25.2 million hectares of Māori land (Walker 1990:211).

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[49] Control of fishing and the anti-nuclear movement were also central concerns (Templeton 1999:62), the latter of which I discuss in Chapter Five.

[50] See, for example, Durie 1998; Orange 1987; Walker 1990.

[51] Foundation for the Land Rights movement grew from New Zealand protests of the Springbok tours, human rights activities organized by the United Nations (UN), post-war decolonization of the Pacific and civil rights movements in the US. In the 1960s and 1970s Pākehā and Māori joined in protest when the All Blacks toured South Africa, leaving their Māori players behind because of Apartheid. Additionally, 1971 was named by the UN as "the year for the elimination of racial discrimination" (Orange 1987:244).

Many felt the Treaty, which promised protections for Māori land ownership, was a failed effort in 1840 and continued to fail in 1973. Large tracts of land were illegally sold, illegally confiscated or, during World War II, legally "borrowed" but never returned. Perhaps the most defining moment of the Land Rights movement was the Land March of 1975, led by Whina Cooper (Walker 1990:212). About the impact of this moment Thelma and I would agree. None of the participants in my research took part in the march but many were present when the marchers reached parliament. Wrote one of the marchers:

> I was a young journalist at the time and was at Mangere Marae when the idea of the land march unfolded. People stood and shared their feelings of utter frustration at not getting anywhere on their lands issues after several generations of submissions and delegations to parliament. … We started out at Cape Reinga with only 40 people. By the time it reached the steps of parliament grounds, over 50,000 people had taken part. And after the march, the renaissance for Māoridom was certainly unstoppable (Hutchison 1998:5).

Whina Cooper, and those who marched with her, walked from the northern most point of New Zealand's North Island to its southern most tip – 1099 kilometers, or approximately 681 miles. Members of the Land March later organized the occupation of Bastion Point in 1977. The longest of the land occupations by far, protesters remained on Bastion Point for 506 days. Eventually evicted, the Bastion Point action symbolized a movement that united the fire of the trade union movement with Māori activism, pulling Pākehā and Māori together in common struggle against the State (Walker 1990:218).

In response, the State authored the Treaty of Waitangi Act of 1975. The Act created the Waitangi Tribunal whose charge was to make recommendations on land claims and decide whether or not contested actions were in compliance with the Treaty (Orange 1987:246). What unity the Land Rights movement enjoyed in the 1970s began to

dissipate in the early 1980s. Activists who protested together when the All Blacks (New Zealand's rugby team) toured South Africa could not agree on common actions when the South African Springboks toured New Zealand in 1981. The tour ignited some of New Zealand's most vehement protests nationwide. Many Māori activists were angered by the inability, or indifference, among Pākehā to realize a connection between South African apartheid and New Zealand's colonial history (Awatere 1981).

With rising unemployment, a weak economy and growing levels of unrest among Māori, it was incumbent on the 1984 government to act on Māori interests. Their approach was two-fold. First, the government sought to strengthen the power and legitimacy of the Tribunal through the 1985 Treaty of Waitangi Amendment Act. On the surface, it seemed like a strong step. The new Tribunal was to have six members, instead of two, a Māori majority, and the ability to consider claims dating back to 1840 (Orange 1987:250; Kelsey 1996:183). Instead, the new Act crippled an already soft Tribunal. Mocked as a Tribunal "without teeth" (Poata-Smith 1996:108), Māori disliked continued limitations on Tribunal power – the Tribunal could make recommendations but was not empowered to force government action (1996:108). In addition, since the State took two years to assemble the new Tribunal, interim decisions by New Zealand courts claimed precedence over many Tribunal rulings (Kelsey 1996:183). The second government action, a dedication to biculturalism and incorporation of Māori culture within State-run institutions, is discussed further in Chapter Three.

The net effect of renewed Māori activism and government reforms was a "bloodless revolution," a ten-year period in which every aspect of New Zealand society – political, economic, social – was radically transformed (Kelsey 1998:336). This is the

decade in which eighty percent of the women who participated in my research experienced their firsts: first political awareness, first jobs, first relationships, and first "coming out." Some were involved in the 1970s anti-racists movement and Land Marches. Some were active in the Women's Liberation movement, the Black Women's Liberation movement, the Homosexual Law Reform campaign and Gay Liberation. But even for the many who never so much as signed a petition, the impact of the 1980s was inescapable.

Woman Gone "Crazy," Bill Gone Wilde

Among participants in my research, the influence of New Zealand's women's movement was partial, and antagonistic for those who came out before joining. Much like the US, New Zealand women were empowered by the new roles and public access they had gained during and after World War II. From the time the US Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) arrived in New Zealand, helping to effect women's suffrage there in 1893, US feminist ideology has had a sustaining impact in the development of New Zealand feminist movements. The dramatic influence of the US on the growth of New Zealand feminisms is unusual among the development of New Zealand ideologies (Bunkle 1979a:24; Rosnier 1993). However, unlike the US in which feminism began as grassroots organizing and settled into universities, the New Zealand movement began in the academy and moved outward (Bunkle 1979a:25).

The first Women's Liberation groups began in Auckland, Wellington and Palmerston North in 1971 (Dalley 1999). The first lesbian faction formed in 1973 (Dann 1985). One outcome of Women's Liberation were the United Women's Conferences

(UWC), which began in 1973 and ended in 1979 due to internal friction between factions. Although the 1979 UWC as a pivotal moment in New Zealand lesbian organizing remains a dominant narrative among written accounts, it is only one kind of organizing and remains one narrative among many. Lesbian social groups formed prior to the UWCs of the 1970s, thanks to the catalyst of urban migration. The history of lesbian and gay communities internationally is similarly linked to the emergence of late capitalism (D'Emilio 1997; Te Awekotuku et al. 1993; Weston 1991). While gay men used public areas, such as hotels, parks and bathrooms, to "find others like them," New Zealand lesbians did not use these venues to the same effect. Instead, social groups formed among female dominated work environments, such as teaching and nursing (Glamuzina and Laurie 1991:160-2). Few participants in my research identified as lesbian in the 1960s. Those who did spoke of small, informal overlapping social circles and groups loosely organized through work or pubs. The first documented social group was the 1961 all male Dorian Society formed in Wellington.[52] The lesbian Radcliffe Hall Memorial Society, also in Wellington, quickly followed in 1962.

Working class women, Māori and Pākehā alike, were the first lesbian groups to formally organize but arranged meetings were difficult. Prior to 1967, pubs closed at 6pm forcing women to find other venues for social gatherings. Through the late 1970s, lesbians continued to be the targets of verbal and physical abuse. Newspapers refused to carry ads publicizing lesbian events (Te Awekotuku et al. 1993:547). As late as 1981, the Wellington City Council denied the request of the city's Lesbian Centre to advertise on city buses. Council members felt the word "lesbian" was "distasteful" and might "embarrass" riders (Jackson 1981).

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[52] The Dorian Society expanded to include lesbians in 1967.

Hetty first came out in the late 1960s as a teenager. Raised in a rural area, she left home for "the big city" and "the nightlife I so desperately craved." To see her now, one would describe her as demure, shy, mannish but soft, commanding every inch of space in her gallery while tucked quietly, unassuming, in the corner behind her desk. In her eyes is a hint of the fire within that continues to attract patrons to her gallery. Roles are reversed and now the women find her. But at one point it was she who did the searching. Below she describes her search as well as the social scene of early 1970s Wellington:

> So after college I went to Wellington. Easiest to pick out were the drag queens and trannies. My first job was at Carmen's – it was owned and run by drag queens. Those people were really big. Everyone knew Carmen and her coffee house. I worked at People's Palace, which is now Trekkers [hostel] and Carmen's was where the Salvo [Salvation] Army is now, which is really ironic if you think about it.[53] Two lesbians found me at Carmen's and took me to the Royal Oak. It was incredible to meet lesbians. I mean, we used to follow the drag queens during the day to see if they'd lead us to the others [lesbians]. There were the white-collar gay women in one bar and the hard lesbians in another. It was a bit tragic at first. I felt more comfortable with the white collars but I dressed gay male. I suppose it was that awful thing that nobody wants the stereotype to show up. But I'm not butch. After the Royal it would be private parties in people's homes. They called us the kids and took us under their wings. They'd cook us meals and invite us around.

While Hetty's story clearly demonstrates the importance of place in marking history it also tells the story of a well-established network, formed less around activism and more around the dual needs for support and "finding others."

The previously existing gay and lesbian network explains the relative ease with which New Zealand's 1967 Homosexual Law Reform (HLR) society formed. Though many lesbians were active in the society, from its inception HLR had little to do with women's interests (Glamuzina and Laurie 1991:158). Instead, it was mainly concerned

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[53] The Salvation Army was one of the many organizing forces behind those who (unsuccessfully) protested Homosexual Law Reform in the mid 1980s.

with repealing the 1908 law criminalizing sodomy.[54] HLR first petitioned parliament to change the law in 1968. Opponents to the proposed Bill presented parliament with a petition of 810,000 signatures, only 350,000 of which proved authentic, but could not stop the passing of the 1985 Wilde Bill by a vote of 49 to 44 (Laurie 1999). HLR became law in 1986, achieving success as part of the sweeping reforms of the 1984 government.

Shortly after the start of HLR, a young Māori lesbian in Auckland gathered her friends together and held a press conference. Originally involved in Auckland's lesbian KG club, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku had applied to the US for a student visa in 1970. Her intention was to study the lesbian communities of San Francisco, California. Denied a visa because of her research interests and inspired by the Stonewall Riots, Te Awekotuku was moved to act (1991:39). At a regular Auckland University forum, she addressed the audience and asked, "who out there is crazy enough to come and do this with me" (Ibid)? A couple of weeks later, forty men and women gathered before the press, eight of them on a stage before TV cameras, to announce the beginning of a new movement. So began New Zealand's gay liberation movement, with the founding of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), in 1972.

Polly was one of those on stage before the cameras and plays with her fingernails as she remembers desperately dialing her parents before the broadcast. The oldest of the women with whom I spoke, Polly was 82 at the time of our interview. She remembers the first moment she internalized her sexual identity. It was when she attended a dance at the Dorian Society:

> I walked up the stairs and into a room filled with dancing gay couples of every
> kind. It was something to find that. I could quite have gotten dressed up with

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[54] The 1961 Crimes Act criminalized lesbianism, though in a limited way. The law applied to sex acts between women over twenty-two and under sixteen (Glamuzina and Laurie 1991:150).

hanging boards saying, "I'm a lesbian," and walked up and down Lambton Quay right then and there. Course I'd have been beaten up for my trouble.

Intoxicated "by the feeling of community, of connection and belonging," Polly chose to come out to the nation, and her family, in the same televised broadcast.

While most politically active gay men were involved in HLR, lesbians tended more towards involvement in GLF and Women's Liberation (WLM) (Coney 1981:13). Sisters for Homophile Equality (SHE) soon split from GLF, in 1973, as lesbians increasingly felt their needs were not being met (Glamuzina and Laurie 1991; Te Awekotuku et al. 1993). Where the 1960s were characterized by active but hidden social lesbian networks, in the 1970s lesbian activists were breaking out, sounding out the boundaries of lesbian interests. Sparked, in part, by the assertiveness of Māori activism, groups such as GLF, SHE and UWC proliferated.

And if the 1970s lesbians were more active, the 1980s lesbians were more visible, and increasingly, more separatist. Lesbians at the 1979 UWC insisted on having lesbian only space throughout the conference (Glamuzina 1991). Lesbians split from the feminist *Broadsheet Magazine* collective in 1981 citing ideological differences (Coney 1991:18). Disagreement regarding trusteeship of the National Lesbian and Gay Archives, which had begun in 1977, spurred the creation of Waxing Moon archives in 1984 (Glamuzina 1991).[55] These moves paralleled similar dynamics in the Māori activist movements, evidenced by the first Black Women's Hui (conference) in 1980 (Hall 1981:44). Lesbians and activists of the Black Women's Movement were among those who joined forces to protest the Springbok tour of 1981.

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[55] Lesbians were mainly concerned with the potential for straight people to eventually control the archives. The Trust of the Lesbian and Gay Archives of New Zealand (LAGANZ) governs the collection now located in the Alexander Turnbull Library. Waxing Moon archives was added to the LAGANZ collection in 1998 on the condition that LAGANZ create lesbian only access for the Waxing Moon collection.

It is likely that the visibility of older Māori lesbian networks, in conjunction with the WLM and the GLF, allowed for social and political lesbian groups to become more prominent in the late 1970s and 1980s (Dann 1985; Dominy 1990). In particular, the 1979 UWC and the 1981 Springbok protests drew the attention of many women not previously active or aware that there were others "like them." Wrote one woman of the UWC, "It stands as a turning point in the development of a lesbian community" (Hall 1991:44). Said one research participant, "The UWC started it, but for my mates [friends], it was really Springbok that got us talking." Such forms the social and political backdrop within which RAGLAN began.

Finding Formula

Referring to an academic crisis of representation and the general instability of social categories, Said once wrote:

> To represent someone or even something has now become an endeavor as complex and as problematic as an asymptote, with consequences for certainty and decidability as fraught with difficulties as can be imagined (1989:206).

At the time that I began this research, an official history for RAGLAN had not been written.[56] History is often little more than the favored fiction of memory. As I present the story of RAGLAN, cobbled together from old newsletters, oral histories and published interviews, I am reminded of the inevitable partialness of my account: partial as in incomplete, partial as in biased and partial as it favors the women of RAGLAN, and more specifically the women of my research. The "fraught" nature of this endeavor is clear.

Many written accounts of New Zealand lesbian history are in the form of personal anecdotes and recorded group memories (e.g. Glamuzina 1993; Rosnier 1993; Te

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[56] A posted history of RAGLAN can now be found on the group's website.

Awekotuku 1991). Newsletters record events both "in real time" and after the fact.

Because of this, the fanciful facts of memory can easily enjoy a shelf life of decades.

Whenever possible, I confirm dates and events by contextualizing information, placing

events within a chain that I can then match to other chains for accuracy. Still, the story of

history is the story of motivated telling (Abu-Lughod 1993). Of interpretation and the

claims of realness – both by author and participants. And sometimes, it is just a good

story.

RAGLAN began its story as Rangirua Gay Action (RGA) in 1975. A dozen or so

people responded to an ad posted by Billie Hill in the local paper. Most other published

accounts also cite the 1975 date but use the more popular RAGA moniker. Some oral

accounts suggest the group could have started as Rangirua Gays (RG) in the late 1960s.

While the forming of RAGA seems more likely the retrospective influence of HLR and

the Stonewall Riots, it is clear through oral histories that like HLR, RAGA benefited

from previously existing gay and lesbian social networks.

The political bent of the group seems originally to have been in name only.

Political awareness among members was valued but RAGA's initial projects were all

social. The group established monthly socials at "Victoria's Circle Salon" and a weekly

pub night at the local hotel. Public venues were a necessity until RAGA managed to

acquire its own space in 1987. Promoting the group was always an issue. Ten years after

the start of HLR, but five years before it would prove successful, RAGA still had to fight

local papers for minimal representation. Wrote one person regarding advertising in 1979:

> People frequently wrote in wondering what the word 'gay' meant in the RAGA
> advertisements published in the [weekly paper]. The term 'gay' was not well
> understood and the word 'homosexual' was not allowed to be used, as this was a
> 'family' newspaper. However, after the use of the word 'homosexual' 12 times in

an article (and a 30 minute battle at the public counter) the [paper] finally agreed to replace 'gay' with 'homosexual' in the RAGA ad.

After the breakup of UWC, the Black Women's Hui and the Springbok protests, RAGA began to feel pressured by lesbian demands. Through the 1980s, the women of RAGA held their own biweekly meetings in each other's homes. One woman likened these meetings to the consciousness-raising groups they knew to be popular in the US. Discussing these meetings was the earliest time I heard women begin to refer to lesbian community. Prior to the 1980s, terms of reference like networks, social groups and social circles were more common. Though politically oriented newsletters and magazines – i.e. written and lesbian feminist accounts – espoused community as early as the 1960s, the term was remarkable for its absence among oral discussions of pre-Springbok times.

RAGA suffered a near demise at the end of the 1980s in the face of lesbians threatening to leave should their demands not be met. In 1986, the women of RAGA managed to form a Lesbian Support Group (LSG) within and supported by RAGA. LSG's first victory was to introduce the Lesbian "L" into RAGLAN's name in 1990. 1992 marked the successful end of a two-year fight for a regular "women's only" night at the Club. With volunteer membership dues and a small women's welfare grant, LSG established its own bank account to support lesbian specific needs. The key to the Club's new premises and LSG's checkbook were kept at a local gay owned bookshop. Both the shop and the Club were part of "the Arts Council Center (ACC)" and located in the middle of town.

RAGLAN is still a gay and lesbian organization, though these days women make up the majority of members, both active and not. During the week, their venue is home to a host of different groups. LSG has a monthly newsletter with a circulation of 200, a

"phone tree" of 120 and an "email bush" of 50. LSG and RAGLAN sponsor a variety of lesbian events: women's dances, quiz nights, a soccer team, video nights, groups for book readers, groups for moms, groups for bisexuals, for people coming out and for women in recovery. Annual events include lesbian Cabaret, the fancy dress ball and, of course, the lesbian Dog Show. Some splinter groups, such as Dykes in the Aisles and the Dining Out group, are associated with RAGA but hardly ever enter the Club. Still others attend LSG nights on Wednesdays and no other RAGLAN functions. In short, the group is as diverse as it is active.

Post 1980, RAGLAN's LSG became one of many focal points for lesbian community in a way not previously seen. New Zealand had no historical equivalent to "1920s New York, London, Paris or Berlin" (Te Awekotuku 1993:551). Before the 1970s, New Zealand women who knew themselves to be gay were more likely to find other lesbians by traveling overseas than they were to find like-minded women at home. Those who had the ability to identify were also among the minority. Even as participants in my research began to feel they were "different," most had no knowledge of "homosexuals" or "lesbians" until the late 1970s. Their sense of isolation was acute. Information was extremely hard to find, often only coming in the popular coverage of sensational crimes, such as the infamous killing of Honora Parker.

Teenager Pauline Parker and her teen lover, Juliet, were convicted in 1954 of killing Pauline's mother.[57] Twenty years later, the trial so occupied New Zealand imagination that when Edna came out to her mother in 1974 her mother replied, "Does this mean you're going to kill me with a brick like Pauline?" Edna did not fault her

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[57] The murder has been the subject of various treatments: for an academic investigation, see Glamuzina and Laurie 1991; for cinematic, see "Heavenly Creatures" feature film, directed by Peter Jackson in 1995; for fictionalized account, see Gurr 1958; for stage version see Forester 1992.

mother for asking the question. She understood her mother's confusion given that all Edna had been able to find on the subject was one book, surreptitiously passed to her in school: *The Little Red Schoolbook*. She was in Form Three (equivalent of ninth grade, fourteen years old) and read about homosexuals, heterosexuals and masturbation for the first time.[58]

Once aware of their "difference," most lesbians described an overwhelming need to find others. For those living in rural areas, others were not easy to find. Toni, a lesbian feminist originally from Wellington, moved to the rural town of Carterton in 1984. While in Wellington, she joined lesbian sports teams, helped edit a lesbian newsletter and volunteered at the local lesbian club. Carterton had none of these outlets and no visible gay community – male or female. Emboldened by her Wellington experience, Toni placed an ad in the local paper. Three couples, no singles, were all that responded. In Deb's hometown, she responded to an ad placed by a group of gay men, "and I used that to find other women." Mona lived in "Tàkaro" in the late 1970s but did not know about RAGA. She found a group of "girls like me" through work, "but we didn't know the lesbian word. We didn't know what we were – we just knew we liked girls."

While Toni struggled to find community in Carterton, women living in Tàkaro were fortunate to have an established and visible group with which to connect. Though established, RAGA was far from a utopia. Though visible, lesbian and gay lives were still subject to hostile scrutiny. A sense of fear, no longer impressive in the late 1990s,

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[58] I was unable to find a copy of *The Little Red Schoolbook* or many people who had seen it. According to one woman's private archives, the book, originally published in Australia, was edited in New Zealand by Susan Kedgley and Sharyn Cederman, published by Alister Taylor in 1972. A 1996 paper presented in New York by New Zealand sociologist Sue Middleton said the book was published in New Zealand by Hansen and Jensen (1972) as an English translation to a Danish authored book. As this coincides with the return to New Zealand from Denmark of lesbian activist Alison Laurie, the latter scenario is more probable.

pervaded the 1980s social scene. Explained Mag:

> Through the early 1980s it was still a covert community. You don't spring anybody. Don't acknowledge anyone outside of the Club, if you see them on the street or in a store, because they were closeted.

In the previous chapter I was critical of community theories that are heavily reliant on security and protection in their models of lesbian community and yet it is obvious that safety is and has been a formative factor. Even in 1999, the surrounding town of Tàkaro was very conservative. Local papers often contained letters debating whether homosexuals should be hated because God thought us an abomination, or befriended because Jesus would love us and try to save our souls. Headlines[59] read:

> God Hates Gays Or Loves Them By Asking Them Not To Play With Matches. Hetero And Damn Proud Of It – Death As An Option.

These biased feelings extended to the Māori population as well, with one letter to the editor reading, "As for the Māori way of life – tribal warfare, cannibalism, slavery, headhunting, etc… aah, for the good old days." In 1994, a Tàkaro delivery boy refused to deliver the local paper. Instead he distributed 300 fliers explaining that, "because of a front page article [he] could not in good conscience deliver the paper." The article interviewed RAGLAN members.

After my conversation with Betty and Flo in which I claimed 85% of New Zealand to be gay, I asked whether they felt Tàkaro was conservative. They responded with the unexpected claim that, "Tàkaro is a lesbian town." Most other participants could not say whether or not they lived in a conservative town and wondered why I would care. We could read many reasons into their responses, but the one they most often provided was, "I wouldn't know. I don't have much to do with them [the town]." When surveyed,

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[59] Citations omitted to protect location identity.

63% said they lived in a conservative area with only 35% of those saying that it affected their daily behavior.[60] Seldom able to adhere to the confining format of the survey, one woman wrote beneath the question, "Who cares if Tàkaro is conservative? Not me. I only play with the nice people."

Sound, Solved or Unraveled?

Liz states, in the opening of this chapter, that when you want community, when you are in it, *that* is when you find it. Towards the end of my research, Joce wondered whether I had found community simply because I searched for it. Sipping a "cuppa," rolling a cigarette, she remained ever skeptical. "It will be interesting to see if it's still here when you are gone." While every participant agreed there was a strong network of lesbians throughout New Zealand, not everyone believed in the existence of lesbian community. Explained Maud:

> Sometimes I think we have a lesbian community – a network of connections between lesbians with support, shared resources, social occasions and the like. And sometimes I think there is only a committed group of lesbians running in circles and doing lots of work for what? Lots of lesbians have no dealings with others and only occasionally show up at events. Community schmunity.

The blurred boundary between networks and communities is also reflected in American lesbian scholarship. Writes Lewin in her account of lesbian mothers:

> When I began my investigation, I still retained some notion that there was such a thing as a lesbian community. I know better now. All the same, I shall continue to use the term occasionally, for want of a better one (1993:200).

As I started the discussion of community theory earlier in this chapter, I suggested part of the confusion inherent within community studies is the friction between that which is experienced in the everyday of community – what it is – and that which

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[60] Data drawn from survey distributed in 1999, included here as Appendix D – Lesbian Community Survey.

researchers or members think community "should be." Sociologist Raymond Williams

has said of community that, "unlike all other terms of social organization, it seems never

to be used unfavorably" (1976:76). The women with whom I worked often espoused this

"warm fuzzy" view of community:

> Community means I'm not alone. There are others just like me and it's not alien
> to be me and feel the way I do. Community helps me to accept myself and the fact
> that it's okay to love women.
>> *– 64, Māori, administrator*

> It's a sense of belonging without question – like being part of a family. Very
> many out lesbians I know support others with time and money, etc. in crisis
> situations even when they're only acquaintances.
>> *– 33, Pākeha, agricultural laborer*

> Community is belonging to a group and participating in activities and functions
> that are of mutual interest. Having support when it is needed and just feeling a
> general connection.
>> *– 48, Pākehā, retail sales clerk*

Still others felt the moment of community had come and gone. Said Hetty from the crown

seat of her gallery:

> Looking for community was looking for somewhere to belong. Part of having
> community was having something the straights didn't know. Losing our under
> world, we lost some of that. I don't think we have community anymore.

Through this chapter I have established a working description of community as a

functional connection and a feeling of solidarity, as a group of people sharing values and

codes for behavior, giving a sense of identity to its members. I have described community

as a social conundrum – as fluid and intangible while simultaneously rigid and

performative, dependent upon the stylized repetition of acts in order to be recognized. In

addition to the element of unity, I have begun to create an appreciation for difference as

equally formative to community. It is this role that begins to show a picture of

community as more than a nostalgic retreat, "never to be used unfavorably." Writing for a

popular New Zealand magazine, philosopher Marilyn Frye has said:

> Lesbian community is not about what holds us together – consider it as that which works to keep us from falling apart. Not common values or politics but relationships and connections that hold us in a web of meaning, a symbolic order that we are located in and given a location and identity by. This is lesbian community – not the warm fuzzies.[61]

Though community has form – a structure and process – it is the ideational aspects of

community that have come to define it for its members.

"Where do you find it" becomes part riddle and part commentary, playing the

static notion of location – identified here and identifiable there – against the more fluid

notion of shared experience. Answering the riddle means learning to recognize the

"locating" of difference and identity, and the "social" of space and venue. In the

following chapter, I pursue the question of difference as it operates within lesbian

community following the echo of RAGLAN member Bathie:

> RAGLAN would not be RAGLAN were it not for the tensions. Political and not political, lesbian and not lesbian, Māori connection or not – that's what keeps it together. Energy of the women. Stayers and come and goers. … It's where and what we are.

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[61] Citation omitted to protect location identity.

Binocular Vision: Whence the Difference

> From the Club I get friendships and social contact and positive affirmation of how fabulous I am. It feels like home, like I belong. And I never felt that until I experienced the lesbian community. It was difficult to work at first but I never felt I didn't belong there. Even if I was obviously wearing the wrong clothes or whatever. Even when we came up here and everyone thought we were outrageously politically correct and weird and people no one could get along with and they were really careful around us. I still felt like this is my community and it may be very difficult to get to know people but it was still home.
>
> – Mona, *October 1999*

Will you be working with the Māori? Aren't you a native? How is this anthropology? Why go to New Zealand when you could study lesbians here? Like the anthropologist who is asked, "So, what digs have you been on lately," these questions were not limited to the beginning of my project but have continued to follow me throughout my research. They betray notions of identity entrenched in modernist certainty: essential, universal, unchanging, transcendent. Confronted with social resistance, musical fads or literary trends, we nimbly use a variety of political/economic/historical factors to situate and understand such social phenomena. Yet for sexual identity, assumed a biological given, we are pulled/drawn/compelled to reach back to Plato's cave, the lesbian form a dark shadow, flickering against the dirt wall.

It is folly to consider the sexual and believe it disconnected from the social. It is meaningless to study identity and not consider the context, "out of which and against which it came into being."[62] But why? With this chapter I demonstrate the relevance of history and cultural context when considering identity, sexual or otherwise. I show sexual identity as a continuous negotiation between personal experience and social expression,

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[62] This quote, taken from Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983), is presented and more fully discussed later in this chapter.

constantly shifting in response to internal and external pressures. When asked about

lesbian identity, a friend once told me that for most people, "… there is no question: they

would assume that lesbians are women who are attracted to and sleep with other women

– and this is the case wherever lesbians are found." I wish to challenge and complicate

this view. Drawing upon the strength of anthropology and demonstrating the specificities

of New Zealand lesbian lives, I use this chapter to illustrate identities contextualized by

nation, situated within community and shaped through socialization. Here I show women

drawn to community by a want to belong and confronted by the paradox of unity based

on difference. Navigating this paradox, new community members find they must now

learn how to "look, act and think" as the lesbians they thought they already were.

Just as this chapter illustrates the importance of the social to individual identity

and expression, so does it examine the role of difference as it affects "the imagining" of

community. New Zealand lesbian community is surrounded by the oppositional. It is

enveloped by a postcolonial nation still feeling the need to claim its post identity. It is

engaged with a bicultural nation in which internal groups struggle with the

meaning/significance of biculturalism as an ideal. It exists along side a Māori renaissance

that defines political strength through identities based on difference and ethnicity. To

understand the role of difference within New Zealand lesbian community necessarily

means understanding the ways in which ideologies of difference have been historically

consumed.

Bathie hinted as much when she described RAGLAN, and the lesbian community,

as infused with and defined by its tension. She drew a mental picture of a group that was

always inclusive but not always accepting; a group defined by the struggle between the

two. Perhaps this is because, as Hall (1988) has suggested, an identity or subjectivity created "by the struggle for rights" will always privilege some social differences above others. Such identity-based struggles often result in "the reduction of the political to the personal" (Fuss 1990:102), and the naturalizing of a particular political stance as an inherent element of identity. For the New Zealand lesbian community, this has meant a tension between being different and learning how to be different: between the want to be real – "community makes me real" – and the want to belong – accepted unconditionally.

They're Not Gay, They're Agricultural

The search for community, the drive among lesbians to find it, was largely about finding others *like them*. In conversations and through interviews, community was "imagined" in terms of belonging, of support and as a source of collective memory in the form of oral history. Lesbian was something women were, or became; community told them what it meant and what had been before. Women variously told me that community "helps me to accept myself" and "gives me better self-esteem."

Belonging was most often paired with phrases like "being real," "not being alone" and "belonging because there are others like me." Explained Relle:

> Community is about being without question. I always knew I was different and my family really let me explore that and that was great but they didn't understand, did they. It was like, "well I don't know what you're doing, but okay." Which was nice but just left me a big question mark. And then Lorn brought me here and it's like even though these women didn't know me, I was known. I was a real thing and I didn't have to explain why I was the way I was.

Other women described similar sentiments of "being without question" in terms of finding relief. For Barry, relief was not being asked to connect everything in her life to her sexuality, as if being lesbian was all she could be. As an example, she offered:

> I was reading this book back home and my mate says, "Oh, are you reading that because the writer's gay?" And I had to look at the cover to see who the writer was, ya know, because I hadn't a clue about that. And when I'm here, if someone asks me about a book, they just want to know if it's any good.

Dannie, short for Dorothy Ann, said that "being known" was about being identifiable, about having a word that meant what she felt and fit her experience:

> I had a whole life. I was married, I had kids… I should have been happy but I wasn't because I knew I didn't fit. But now I know that I fit somewhere. I learned a way to be that makes me feel good about my skin. I can point and say that's what I am. I can learn about all the women who came before me that are a part of what I am and know I'm a real kind of person.

Community became a repeated story of belonging, of living a meaningful life and of unconditional acceptance. However, that same belonging could be tenuous and accounts of everyday life told a story that was both varied and layered. When women professed to be accepted "without question" and "for who I am," what they meant was they were accepted *as lesbians*. However, the repeated message of belonging and automatic inclusion left many with the created impression that lesbians were inherently tolerant. Accepting what outsiders could not, lesbians must have a greater than usual ability to shed cultural bias, embracing all differences that seemed to break with "normal" as constructed by heterosexual society. Yet in their everyday life experiences, not all differences were equally valued. The community regulated which differences were acceptable and how they should be expressed. When I asked Maud about the benefits of community, she said:

> It's a support network. Shared resources. Respect for individuality. An extended family. A chance to show ourselves to the straight world. …but there isn't an easy way to describe the, perhaps, negative aspects of lesbian communities and how, sometimes, lesbians can be down on other lesbians for certain actions – going to [the wrong Club] or wearing the wrong clothes or what have you. However close [the community] is, it can be easily divided. Tolerance of difference is sometimes not easy to show.

After joining the community, many women were surprised to find that how to be lesbian was not obvious. Instead it was a complex process of continual negotiations. Learning how to be different was trading one form of acceptability for another, expressions of difference that were both a rejection of those who rejected them – straight society – and a desire to create a new way of being. Haunted by popular representations in which lesbians were seen as mimicking straight society, the community sought to support choosing a different path.

Rather than reflect straight society, community members tried instead to interpret and refract it. Facing similar situations, they used the same cultural lens they learned to value as New Zealanders but then tried to bend the reflection towards the direction of assumed "lesbian values." For instance, while we were discussing a proposed samesex registry that would afford lesbian couples the same legal rights as married heterosexuals, Pearl was emphatic in rejecting it, saying "I register and license my *dogs*, not my partner."

As Pearl spoke, her hands punctuated the air with emphasis. Her skin was dry and abrasive; her fingers calloused. In between shifts at the dairy farm, Pearl worked demolition at home, moving walls, renovating the kitchen, building a rock garden. Though always clean, her hands seemed never to lose the shadow of dirt, especially around the nails. Against this marked landscape, her pinky ring, a claddagh, stood out. I asked Pearl about the ring she wore, given her utter rejection of all things hetero, and samesex unions in particular.

> I used to wear it on my ring finger. I like looking down during the day and seeing it there and thinking about Mona. Thinking that there's a beautiful soul out there and she loves me and she gave me this. And I can see it anytime I want and know

what it is that we have together. But then I felt like other people can see it and they won't understand. They'll think I'm straight. That I'm married. So I put it on my pinky because I don't want to give them an excuse to think that way.

As some of the comments regarding "being without question" reflect, being a lesbian is not the only thing that a lesbian is. Day to day choices and opinions are sometimes made because of one's sexual identity but they are also made based on a variety of other social factors: ethnicity, class, religion, bigotry, community influence or just plain interest. It is impossible to separate sexual identity, and all of its manifestations, from the social, political and cultural context in which it is fostered and maintained.

Most of the participants in my research discovered their sexual "difference" before joining the community. Yet they credit the community for making them "feel real," for showing them "what being lesbian meant" and for directing how it should be expressed. It is for this reason that I chose this Chapter's subtitle, the *double-entendre* of "*Whence* the Difference." The term whence means both *from a place*, as in a physical or ideological origin, and *therefore*, or a statement of causation connecting action with affect. It is with a comprehension for the necessity of political and cultural context, an appreciation for the dual role of source and influence, that I examine the role of difference both as it operates within lesbian community and as it informs community expressions of sexual identity.

Betty's earlier comments – "they're not gay, they're agricultural" – and Thelma's challenge – "what kind of perspective do you have" – are about situating experience in order to understand it. Simply revealing a comment or behavior is not enough to allow for comprehension. Some say historical inquiry is a process by which experience, often seen

as "the essence" of identity,[63] is made visible (e.g. Scott 1992). If that is true then the benefit of anthropology is that it not only makes experience visible but it surrounds it with smell, taste, tenor and texture. It is not enough to reveal experience if the categories descriptive of experience and defining of difference remain unexposed, ahistorical and untheorized.

While social categories must be historicized in order not to be misleading, historicity is not a stand-alone solution. To paraphrase Thelma, "you can read about it but it's another thing to have been there." One example regarding the value of being there was the community's playful response to the arrival of my partner. Martha joined me in New Zealand during my fourth month of fieldwork. Among research participants it was not uncommon to alter or change their first names after having come out. For some it was an ideological shift, as it was for Gaia, previously known as Fredericka. For others, like Dannie, it was less an abandoning of their name – Dorothy Ann – and more a way of expressing their names in a manner felt expressive of their identity. With Martha's arrival, several women began to juggle our names, looking for playful alternatives that would stick. Though never truly over, the game of renaming lasted for a couple of months.

It was the case among several couples that one woman's name would sound like a woman's name while the other's name was more male, or gender neutral. So it came to pass for us that "Martha and Arthur" took hold, if only for a short while. I was more interested, at the time, in the *want* to rename us than I was in the actual choice of names. However, I later read and learned that the pairing of "Martha" with "Arthur" was not

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[63] For an interesting analysis of experience and its relation to identity and identity politics, see Fuss 1990, particularly chapters six and seven.

insignificant. Among gay men in 1950s New Zealand, Marthas were men "who dressed like women" and Arthurs were men who behaved as "normal" men (Glamuzina and Laurie 1991:150). Understanding the historical context of the names provides the opportunity to read more deeply into the name choices. However, understanding the ethnographic context also allows me to notice that for the New Zealander English speaker, Martha and Arthur are names that rhyme. That sometimes it is significant, and sometimes it is just a game.[64]

Ethnography and thick description provide a situating that, combined with historicity, yield a contextualized picture. It is with the combined impact of these two approaches that I present the role of difference within lesbian community, even as I write against the naturalizing of it.

Understanding the culturally embedded context in which difference operates is as important to our theories as it is to the presentation of our data. An emic view of difference means allowing participants to identify which differences are felt to be more or less salient. Western feminists have been criticized by scholars such as Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (1994) for an over-reliance on theoretical models built around the favored axes of race, class and gender. Characterizing it as a "holy trinity," Grewal and Kaplan argue that the non-reflexive use of "Race, Class and Gender" ignores the significance of colonialism to postcolonial life, particularly as it affects the formerly colonized. A solely emic perspective is vulnerable to the same faults as a perspective built from the outside looking in. However, if identities, sexual or otherwise, created "by the struggle for rights" affect the privileging of some differences above others, then

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[64] I asked the person who first called us Martha and Arthur why she chose those names. Her reply, "I couldn't think of anything that rhymed with Becca." To a New Zealander, Arthur is the phonetic equivalent of Martha, without the M.

understanding New Zealand lesbian community necessarily includes understanding their categorizations for difference and their life experiences as women living in a postcolonial nation.

Contextualized by Nationalism

It is appropriate that a discussion of nationalism begin the backgrounding of New Zealand as a postcolonial nation. Most contemporary expressions of Pacific nationalisms are a direct outcome of the decolonizations that followed World War II. As a term, postcolonial seems to encourage thinking about the past. The "post" of postcolonial gives the appearance of a process that has ended, a time after a distant something that imprinted our history and stayed there while remaining trapped in our historical past. Nowhere is this less convincing than among former colonies. Postcolonialism does not represent the end of colonialism so much as it does the continued, living influence of the past *in* the present. And for many New Zealanders it is a past of less than a generation.

When governing institutions reach a point of crisis and their authority begins to erode, one of the most captivating cultural responses is the quest to find a new source of certainty. Many have suggested that nationalism, as cultural response, has emerged to answer the compelling questions of "who I am" and "what I am." According to political scientist Benedict Anderson, the wholly modern appearance of nationalism began sometime in the late 1700s, a result of the synergy among secularism, advances in print media and the appearance of the nation-state (1983).[65] As a system of belief, nationalism was able to replace the loss of certainty once buoyed and bolstered by religious

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[65] Gellner (1983) would equally credit nationalism as an ideology emerging from industrialization.

belief. [66] As Anderson explains, "Few things were (are) bettered suited to this end than

the idea of the nation" (1983:11). He goes on to say:

> I am not claiming that the appearance of nationalism towards the end of the
> eighteenth century was 'produced' by the erosion of religious certainties… What I
> am proposing is that nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-
> consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that
> preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being
> (1983:12).

Anderson is clear in arguing against nationalism as a political ideology. Instead, it is a

paradigm similar in shape to those of kinship and religion (1983:5). In order to best

understand it, we must contextualize it not as a political system but as a cultural one, in

the company of other cultural systems, "out of which – as well as against which – it came

into being."

Within lesbian communities, understanding the role of difference must be

understood within the context of postcolonial New Zealand nationalism. Anderson has

created the compelling image of nationalism as an "imagined community." He explains

that nation-states "present" as communities "because, regardless of the actual inequality

and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep,

horizontal comradeship," one that is imagined as bound, or "limited," and self-ruling, or

"sovereign" (1983:7). As building blocks to "nation-ness," Anderson credits the shift in

language away from Latin, and therefore from the binding influence of shared religious

texts, and the discovery of new lands. He implies that through repetition, the message of

"nation" is transformed from modern happenstance to time honored tradition. The

message itself becomes real as a source of national values and historical continuity.

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[66] In the middle of the fifth century, as much of the Roman Empire was disintegrating, those who were once
definitively Roman citizens searched for new certainties to answer the questions of "who am I" and "what
am I." Though not yet a fully realized power, through Saint Augustine Christianity allowed people to
replace the certainty of "I am a Roman citizen" with "I am a creature of my Creator."

Sociologist Michael Billig offers an argument similar to Anderson's when he states:

> In so many little ways, the citizenry are daily reminded of their national place in a world of nations. However, this reminding is so familiar, so continual, that it is not consciously registered as reminding. The metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag, which is being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building (1995:9).

A visiting New Zealand colleague made the efficacy of this argument clear to me in 1998. Driving down a local road, she commented on the "over-the-top" nationalism among Americans while pointing to the flags that peppered telephone polls all along the side of the road. The fact that I did not register it as odd, she said, was evidence of the depth at which I had internalized the message. Not wanting to appear the inactive recipient or "dupe" of the media, I explained I was not surprised by the flags because such displays were common in late May, around the time of our Memorial Day holiday. However, I had only myself to amuse when I noticed the flags still present three months later.

Decolonization and nationalism go hand-in-hand, as was well established in the Pacific in the decades following the War. It was a curious time for New Zealanders as they sought new ways to answer "who and what we are." In the 1970s, New Zealand was no longer a member of the commonwealth. It was not a Māori nation, but nor was it a Pākehā one. New Zealand identity, once based in Britain, was shifting associations from Europe to the Pacific, indicative of the 1970s change in trading partners from Britain to Pacific nations.[67] Jane Kelsey has said that the diversity and power of voice present in New Zealand among the New Left social movements made national unity hard to find

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[67] New Zealand again shifted alliances in the 1990s, attempting to cast itself as an Asian nation, aligning its economic future with that continent in an "Asia 2000" campaign.

(1998:20). "The one point of apparent unity was sport," she said, referring to the

importance of the Springbok protests of 1960 and 1976, preceding the protest of 1981.

Along with sport, or perhaps in conjunction with it, New Zealand's early 1980s

national identity emerged as both nuclear-free and bicultural. While I address New

Zealand's nuclear-free status more fully in Chapter Five, the depth of New Zealand's

anti-nuclear commitment is not difficult to understand. Nuclear bombs were tested in

several Pacific locations until as late as the 1990s. Driven in part by the Cold War, the

US and UK stopped testing by the mid-1960s but France continued its detonations

through 1996. Anti-nuclear protests thus became a postcolonial and national rallying

point. The French sinking of the New Zealand protest ship *Rainbow Warrior* solidified

the place of nuclear protest as an expression of New Zealand nationalism.

Situated with Biculturalism

> It's culturally insensitive to do something traditional like paddling waka with life jackets on. It's like doing a haka in a raincoat so you don't get hypothermia. … There's a cultural and ancestral way of doing things and the [Maritime Safety Authority] needs to be aware of those ways.
> Bill Irwin, *The Dominion*, January 14, 2000

Towards the end of the 1970s economic stress and social protest had forced New

Zealand into an identity crisis. In addition to sports and anti-nuclear sentiment, 1980s

New Zealanders turned to The Treaty of Waitangi as a symbol and source of national

pride. Still smarting from the annual Waitangi Day protests that started in 1975, renewed

interest in *Te Tiriti* seemed paired with a new cultural sensibility. Explained Māori

scholar Koro Dewes of the 1980s shift:

> There is no doubt that many New Zealanders are beginning to search for something to believe in which will credibly express their nationalism, and so the

Treaty of Waitangi is becoming recognized as a symbol of our nationhood (quoted in Orange 1987:243).

In response, Dewes urged that the government also embrace the Treaty as a "true symbol" and "not just spurious sentimentalism" (Orange 1987:243).

Following the strengthening of the Waitangi Tribunal, biculturalism was the second step of a two-part governmental response to persistent Māori protests. *Māori Sovereignty* (1984), as a *de facto* manifesto for Māori activism, helped to answer the Māori question of "who and what we are." Not to create a false impression, Māori activism was far from unified but it was sharp, insistent and commanding of attention. The message of *Māori Sovereignty*, as argued by its author Donna Awatere, seemed to share a resonance among Māori of varying political perspectives. Awatere states:

> Māori sovereignty is the Māori ability to determine our own destiny and to do so from the basis of our land and fisheries. In essence, Māori sovereignty seeks nothing less than the acknowledgement that New Zealand is Māori land and further seeks the return of that land (1984:10).

By the 1980s, Awatere had been a longtime political activist. Her statement of *Māori Sovereignty* reads as a response to the felt shortcomings of other progressive movements as much as it is a call for Māori unity and the assumption of self-rule. I say "assumption" purposefully as Awatere's argument repositions the Māori as *tangata whenua*, the people of the land, who welcomed would-be settlers, later to be revealed as colonizers. In effect, she repositions Māori not as a minority but as a nation, urging them to adopt this more self-empowering position and to see their struggle as a national one.

Māori Sovereignty was meant as a powerful and radical statement. It was a reaction to the sentiment, building since 1960, that the project of New Zealand nationalism relied on the assimilation of Māoridom, the Māori people, and the subsequent

lost of *Māoritanga*, or Māori culture. The spector of assimilation was created through

twenty years of a state-led campaign promoting New Zealand as a nation of "one people"

(Orange 1987:242). The 1960 government sponsored Hunn Report was, in retrospect, a

catalyst for Māori fears. According to Orange:

> The Hunn report of 1960 crystallised Māori fears by assuming the ultimate demise
> of any separate Māori identity in New Zealand. …intermarriage would create one
> people – and that people would be all Pākehā, some more brown than others
> (1987:242-3).

Māori Sovereignty was meant as a theoretical statement. Awatere's critique was

directed at members of the women's, anti-racism and anti-war movements, as that was

her experience. She claimed Pākehā women benefited from Māori subordination, a

sentiment similar to "positional superiority" as described by Laura Nader (1989). Nader

argues that one unfortunate aspect common among of postcolonial social movements is

an attempt by displaced colonizers to re-experience lost positional superiority by

appropriating otherness as a political advantage. The past research of Michéle Dominy

supports this assertion, characterizing Pākehā identity as "a contemporary variety of

'indigenous other'" (1995:358). Demonstrating "positional superiority" in action,

Awatere was critical of efforts by feminists to characterize all women as similarly

situated. The position suggests an equality among women as a group that conveniently

ignores the systematic inequalities between Māori and Pākehā. Awatere contends that all

white people share in the benefit of Māori alienation (Orange 1987:239).

In conjunction with the 1985 Treaty of Waitangi Amendment Act, biculturalism

was then a state sanctioned answer to Māori sovereignty, as a movement. The 1986

Ministerial Advisory Committee defined biculturalism as:

> a social and cultural partnership – which involves the understanding and sharing of values and the accountability of institutions in meeting the particular needs of ethnic groups. Authority and responsibility for decisions are to be shared with the appropriate Māori people…(quoted in Spoonly 1995:93).

By 1988, "biculturalism became official government policy through the State Sector Act" (Kelsey 1996:185). As policy, it mandated the incorporation of Māori language, personnel, and Māori modes of organization in all levels of government office and practice.

With the then recent shift in trade partners and the move to identify as nuclear-free, 1980s New Zealand nationalism came to include biculturalism. The fifteen years since then have been consumed by a nationally promoted project to solidify New Zealand's place as a political actor by promoting its sustained and increasing effort to include traditional Māori culture as part-and-parcel to the modern.

The quotation at the start of this section appeared in a January, 1999 Wellington daily newspaper. Three weeks previous, an inmate in a Rotorua prison drowned in Lake Taupo while learning to row a *waka*. *Waka* are traditional canoes, differing in markings according to the various *iwi* of the indigenous Māori peoples. Far from a past when Māori children were beaten by their schoolteachers for speaking their native language, an understanding of tradition and a strong connection to tribal history is promoted as beneficial and healthy, for Māori and Pākehā alike.

The prison program to learn about *waka* is voluntary and intended to provide Māori inmates the opportunity to connect with their cultural history as part of their rehabilitation. After the drowning, there was a short-lived campaign to consider making life jackets mandatory on *waka*, as they are on almost all other vessels. The *iwi* of the men involved in the accident invited the Maritime Safety Authority and other government

officials to a three day *hui* (traditional meeting) on their *marae*. After three days the *iwi* was successful in convincing the Authority that life jackets should not be worn on *waka*, that to do so would violate the integrity of the *waka* as a Māori cultural element.

The quotation also importantly makes an analogy to *haka* performances. The *haka,* as part of the *pōwhiri*, is a song/dance presentation used for introduction, challenge and welcome when two or more groups meet. Earlier that same year, President Clinton visited New Zealand to attend the meetings of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). It was an important event, not only because the President missed the last APEC meetings, causing people to question the significance the United States gave to the coalition, but also because it represented the first thawing of US-New Zealand relations since the dissolution of ANZUS. President Clinton and his entourage were greeted in New Zealand fashion with the performance of the *haka*, by Māori men dressed in traditional style, dancing and singing a welcome – both as a show of peace and as a show of ferocity. Like the arrival of *waka* on important occasions, most ceremonies of national or regional significance include the performance of the *haka*. Both elements of traditional Māori culture are considered important national icons, exemplifying New Zealand's continuing efforts to define the role of the traditional as within and equal to modern society.

Discourses of New Zealand's position within a world system (of market economies and advances in technology) are based upon the nation's ability to offer its unique perspective to world politics. The government of the 1990s felt "the key conduits," of this perspective, "national identity, values, and culture," were critical to New Zealand's aspirations for market success (Kelsey 1998:327). It is not seen as a

convergence or melding towards international uniformity. The push to legitimate New

Zealand as a global actor centers in part on the struggle for self determination and self

authorship; the wish to create economic and social policies primarily motivated by their

benefit to New Zealanders, not by the force of more powerful outside markets, while

maintaining a unique and readily identifiable New Zealand national character.

As a political response, biculturalism was a windfall for the 1984 government. In

order to begin their restructuring projects they needed to redirect resources occupied by

the widespread social unrest and to recapture the support of the people. Biculturalism was

a particularly attractive option, requiring relatively little financial investment yet able to

give the impression of an extremely receptive government willing to undertake radically

progressive action. It revealed an unfortunate weakness in the Māori renaissance

movement which answered "who we are" through almost exclusively cultural terms with

the return to *te reo* and *tikanga*, the language and tradition.

Seen in the Māori renaissance was a political move from "Māori as race" to

"Māori as ethnicity." Nabila Jabber has explained it as "[resisting] colonial power and

representation" by "negotiating a new politics of identity, based on ethnicity and

difference" (1998:40). Unfortunately, unlike the repositioning attempted by *Māori*

Sovereignty, "Māori as ethnicity," while efficacious, continued to represent Māori as

experienced by Pākehā.[68] First, they were Māori as nation, as represented in *Te Tiriti*.

Then, they became Māori as race, institutionalized in documents such as the Hunn

Report. The 1980s message of cultural Māori allowed Māori renaissance to be easily

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[68] Similar to some of the drawbacks of the subaltern project (Spivak 1987), perpetuations of representations based not on Māori as they experience themselves, not as self authoring but as colonial objects, or that which has been experienced, is seldom libratory. Consider the similar stance of Simone de Beauvoir (1952) when she calls women the "second sex" because they are defined in society only through the ways in which men have experienced them.

subsumed by the bicultural agenda of "national harmony through mutual acceptance of

cultural differences" (Barber 1989; Spoonley 1995). Stated another way:

> Demands for change coincided with the reassertion of Māori language and culture
> and became subsumed in the rhetoric of 'biculturalism' – a policy which operated
> as a contemporary form of assimilation (Kelsey 1996:185).

Biculturalism gave the illusion of Māori/Pākehā partnership while marginalizing more

radical demands (Barber 1989), most readily incorporating Māori language and people in

the fringe offices of government (Kelsey 1996:185).

As government policy, biculturalism specifically refers to *Te Tiriti* and the

promises made therein. National debates in which the stance of biculturalism is

challenged by "multiculturalism" conflate the policy of biculturalism with the concept of

a cultural mandate for biculturality (Wittman 1998:58). As government policy,

biculturalism is not a cultural doctrine but a program specifically meant to address the

issues of land, authority and sovereignty as represented in the Treaty of Waitangi. States

sociologist Paul Spoonley:

> Biculturalism acknowledges the fact that only two New Zealand 'ethnic' groups,
> Māori and Pākehā, are *particular* to New Zealand. …Further, the Treaty of
> Waitangi and its inherited moral, political, and social obligations requires that
> Māori and Pākehā negotiate a relationship which is equitable for both (1995:93,
> *emphasis mine*).

Yet because the discourse of multiculturalism confuses biculturalism with biculturality,

the policy is popularly seen to obfuscate the extent of cultural variation within the

country, subordinating the needs of all other New Zealand ethnic minorities. While

obfuscation is a real concern, aligning that problem with the bicultural policy created the

added burden of undermining Māoridom's position with relation to the Treaty (Spoonley

1995:91-96).

The issue of multiculturalism notwithstanding, biculturalism became the aikido move of New Zealand's government; i.e. it allowed the government to redirect Māori energy and activism away from social protest and into a project of cultural recovery. The assimilation fears that previously fed Māori protest remained unanswered. The systems of oppression that created institutionalized racism were left unaddressed. Were we to consider the timing of the multicultural/bicultural debate, we might ask why multiculturalism has become important *at this moment*. Perhaps, as many have suggested, to prevent recognition of Māori as *tangata whenua*, people of the land, along with the associated rights and claims that that implies (e.g. Wittman 1998).

The key to anthropological criticism lies in knowing that theory itself is politically motivated. We must therefore recognize the "chosen tools of theory" as equally implicated by political motivation (Scott 1992:377). Left unexamined, theory can be complicitous in the very dynamic it attempts to expose. This is true of Western feminism when it unilaterally applies a model of difference based on "Race, Class, Gender," and it is true of New Zealand multiculturalism when it undermines the potential for self authored subjectivity as promised through *Te Tiriti*. Adopting theorist David Scott's critique of postcolonial anthropology to this end:

> No wonder then that [multiculturalism's] pronouncements summon the suspicions of critics who point out the paradox that the moment when ... [Māori voices] challenge the voice of the sovereign subject it is suddenly claimed that the very ground of that argument is no longer valid, that in fact there is no 'ground', properly speaking, for argument (1992:378).

The implications of Pākehā attempts at "positional superiority" and multiculturalists undermining of Māori grounds for subjectivity was not lost on the women of New Zealand's New Left social movements.

In the 1970s and 1980s, many involved in Māori activism were frustrated by the lack of analysis and unwillingness to engage what they felt were the structures, or sources, of systematic oppression in New Zealand. In particular, women activists found an acute connection between the rhetorics of racism and sexism; one that was at best unnoticed, and at worse denied, by their male counterparts. Though faced with many compelling reasons to support the various new social movements, some women such as those who participated in my research, became increasingly aware that these movements were not theirs.

A similar dynamic had once developed within the Civil Rights Movement in the US. Ruby Robinson, a member of the influential 1960s Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), presented a 1964 position paper regarding the reprehensible status of women within the Civil Rights Movement. In a now infamous statement, then leader of SNCC Stokely Carmichael responded by saying, "The only position for women in SNCC is prone" (Deckard 1975:332). For many US women activists this was their UWC and Springbok. In describing the rise of lesbian activism in the US, one scholar explained, "Civil rights had become *passé*: why petition to be let into a social system so deeply racist, sexist, militarist and heterosexist" (Adam 1987:76)? The political and historical situation of 1980s New Zealand was vastly different from the US but the sentiment of alienation was both similar and familiar to Kiwi activists of the time.

Dominy has commented on the overlapping trajectories of Māori activism and the lesbian movement within New Zealand history (1990). She has suggested that Māori women's cultural identity overlaps with that of politically active Pākehā women as Māori women find racism intimately connected to, and an outcome of sexism. Dominy

identifies gender constructions among Pākehā women activists as being parallel with "modern Māori identity categories," resulting from the conflated discourses of gender and ethnicity born of the two movements (Dominy 1990:254). These discourses share a single cultural context, forcing Dominy to conclude, "[Māori] women specifically invoke feminism as a model for Māori identity" (1990:239). While this is a generalized statement to which there are exceptions, my work supports the notion that women activists, Māori and Pākehā, mutually developed a specifically New Zealand-based women's identity informed by a "struggle for rights" that was not always just their own, but always affected by their shared status as women.

Postcolonial theorist Radhika Mohanram has been critical of Dominy's viewpoint. By drawing on the Māori land rights movement and Springbok 1981 as important markers within the New Zealand feminist movement, Mohanram feels Dominy conflates Māori and feminist movements, subordinating Māori nationalism to Pākehā dominated feminism. For Mohanram, this is evidence of Dominy's inability, and a flaw more generally among white and Pākehā feminists, to realize the influence of racism within their own political ideologies. Further, Mohanram argues that in so doing, Dominy effectively recasts the indigenous movement as a feminist one.

What Mohanram misunderstands is that Dominy does not suggest a unilateral flow of ideologies affecting Māori women's identity. Although the women's movement that helped to shape feminist Māori women's cultural identity (as New Zealanders) was a largely Pākehā one, so too were the cultural identities of the largely Pākehā feminist, and lesbian, communities greatly influenced by Māori activism. During my research, I found women of the lesbian community espoused identities intimately connected with Māori

history[69] and the reclaiming of Māori culture, as they understood it to be. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, some women point to the 1979 UWC as "a turning point" for lesbians, while others felt "it was really Springbok that got us talking." Thelma claimed Springbok 1981 not only informed cultural identities within the lesbian movement, but went farther, effectively "solidifying" the community. Even radical Māori nationalist Donna Awatere, writing just one year before she began the series of articles that would become *Māori Sovereignty*, acknowledged "the kinship" between Māori and lesbian women born of their mutual treatment by "patriarchal power" (1981:13).

The late 1990s New Zealand lesbian community reflects a cultural identity that has recognizably incorporated popularized Māori values, a cultural response out of which and against which it came into being. Some have made the conscious choice to cultivate gardens, or even become fulltime farmers, in order "to connect with the land" in a respectful, beneficial partnership, as represented through Māori cultural systems. For these women, Betty's comment – they're agricultural… they have that Māori assertiveness – would appear as truthful as it is ironic.

While she wouldn't go as far as to say she is "agricultural," Liv draws a specific connection between Māori culture and her interest in honoring her land. She is a white-collar worker, "trapped" by an office with a desk, but able to vary her hours of work by her own whim. When home, she looses the power suit for a T-shirt and jeans, settling herself into a garden that even Martha Stewart would envy. Liv explaines, "I think we've learned from the Māori to understand the important role the land has, and our connection to the land has, in creating what it means to be a Kiwi." For many lesbians, this is the

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[69] That is, Māori history not since their arrival to Aotearoa in 950 AD or previous but in terms of a Māori nation struggling for their rights within New Zealand government and society.

difference between biculturalism as political mandate and biculturality as the cultural

inclusion of Māori values in one's identity.

       In addition to connection with the land, lesbian community adopts a heightened

appreciation for those who remember lesbian *whakapapa*, or oral history, and for a Māori

cultural heritage that includes full cultural integration of variant sexualities. Discussing

the issue of Māori culture, Hanson has described culture and tradition as inventions or

fictions, "designed to serve contemporary purposes" rather than representative of a

proscribed Māori heritage (1989).[70] In terms of historical Māori sexual openness, i.e. full

integration, that may be what we find in the 1980s reinvigoration of the *takatāpui*

identity. *Takatāpui*, the popularized Māori term for gay/lesbian/homosexual, references

Māori mythology:

> For we do have one word, takatāpui. And ironically, this word is associated with
> one of the most romantic, glamourised, man/woman love stories of the Māori
> world, the legend of Hinemoa and Tutanekai. Tutanekai, with his flute and his
> favourite intimate friend, his hoa takatāpui, Tiki, and Hinemoa, the determined,
> valorous, superbly athletic woman – my ancestress – who took the initiative
> herself, swam the midnight waters of the lake to reach him, and interestingly,
> consciously and deliberately masqueraded as a man, as a warrior, to lure him to
> her arms (Te Awekotuku 1996:17-18).

In the legend, Tutanekai, a man, calls his male lover his *takatāpui*. In its contemporary

form, the term refers more generally to all homosexuals, male and female.

       By characterizing *takatāpui* as a Hanson-like cultural invention, I would not

suggest that Māori acceptance of homosexuality is strictly a creative work of fiction. In

fact, historical records quote Māori leaders as suggesting that, "homosexuality – female

and male – was not uncommon in pre-European times and that it was in fact more readily

accepted than today" (Te Awekotuku et al. 1993:548). In forging a relatively new cultural

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[70] For similar arguments regarding the inventing of "tradition" as related to nationalism, see Hobswam
1990 and 1992.

identity as lesbian New Zealanders, many women have adopted *takatāpui* and its historical foundation in order to advance their political objectives. I asked Mira why she used the term and she responded, "It's like saying yeah, homosexuality was there and as Māori, we had no hang-ups about it. That's a European and colonial problem and we roundly reject it."

The mutual adoption of cultural symbols among Māori and Pākehā lesbians tends to promote an image of apparent cultural harmony. Although it is a stated ideal within the lesbian community, such harmony has yet to be realized. Said one woman:

> My river, my iwi, my marae… all of us have varying knowledge and our own tikanga. This is where I'm secure about who I am. I don't find it in the lesbian community and I don't look for it there.

For many *takatāpui* and lesbian Māori, the message of "cultural harmony" is still a national one.[71] The same woman continued:

> I don't have many Māori lesbian friends of the Māori lesbians that hang with the white community. At times I am comfortable and at times I feel quite threatened by them. It scares me. It scares me being close to… it's in my face, it's Māori women conforming and having to conform to that whole European culture. I find it pretty hard because I find myself doing the same thing to be acceptable.

Whether stated in a national newspaper or lesbian newsletter, "cultural harmony" continues to embody problematic notions of conformity and assimilation.

Heni, like others, believes in the potential for biculturality but feels Pākehā lesbians misunderstand the significance of symbols like *takatāpui* when they try to force it into a European sexual paradigm:

> I didn't know I was Māori until I was thirty. I don't call myself Māori now. I had no access to Māori relatives, no language, no culture. It's not that I don't want to be or because I'm ashamed of it but because I don't think I am. I think it takes

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[71] I list *takatāpui* and lesbian Māori and two separate identities to respect the political divisions between the two, specifically as expressed by *takatāpui* who either do not wish to be part of the "Pākehā" lesbian community or feel alienated from it.

more than some blood to make you something. Some of my ancestry is Māori and I'm really proud of that. During Māori renaissance some people rushed out and put bones (bone carvings) around their necks and had no Māori relation at all – I didn't respect it and I didn't want to be like that.

Another Māori lesbian, Moriana, who does not identify as part of "the lesbian community," supported Heni's opinions and made specific comments regarding the misuse of *takatāpui*:

> In my experience, no one's sexuality is acknowledged [among Māori]. You're male or female and you have particular roles and you manipulate those roles to your family's best interest and that's how it works. It's not accepted or denied, just not acknowledged. Generally, it's about responsibility to the family so a woman, once she's reached sixty, if she's done right for her family and if she's given them children, then she's recognized as a kuia [an elder]. So lesbians who say they are recognized and accepted, I don't agree with that.

Moriana resents Pākehā appropriations of *Māoritanga* (culture). An active member of "the *takatāpui* community," she feels the lesbian community uses *Māoritanga,* the way any colonizer would, without real consideration for *te reo* and *tikanga*, the language and traditions:

> They come and, like the colonizers before them, they take what interests them because it's shiny and smooth like pounamu [green stone], or sounds poetic like takatāpui, and they make it into something completely different to serve a very particular purpose all their own, wrapped in Pākehā meaning with Pākehā values. Then they come to me and say I should be thankful that they mined my culture and made for me the polluted ground on which I can sit.

To most members of the lesbian community, Moriana's opinions seem extreme. However for some, they are not unfounded:

> You know, takatāpui is not lesbian or gay – it's homosexual because sexuality is not male or female. I think it's a new word but I'm not sure. I remember my dad telling me that uncle Peter, he's one of them. I said, "One of what dad?" "One of *them*," he said, and I knew he meant the takatāpui. My uncle, because of his strangeness was chosen by my family to hold our whakapapa [genealogy]. So there's that as well. I think that's happened throughout Māori history.

This was something Katerina told me while we were talking about the differences

between urban and *iwi* Māori. Lumping urban Māori and Pākehā lesbians together to

make a point, Katerina was generally frustrated by biculturalism expressed as Māori fad.

Echoing a sentiment raised by (American) feminist theorist Wahneema Lubiano, she was

critical of the "*vive la difference*" temperament of the relatively privileged "to exoticize

themselves selectively" (1991:155-6).

When Betty said New Zealand lesbians were about sport, land, and Māori

assertiveness, she was clearly referring to an image of New Zealand as a bicultural

nation. She connected being a Kiwi lesbian with the dual voice of being a New Zealander

and living in a Māori influenced New Zealand nation. Bathie had said that RAGLAN was

not just about tension but was defined by it. I have expanded this to mean that it is not

just about difference but built upon difference as foundational to both community and

sexual identity. As Dominy suggests, Māori activism and New Zealand nationalism, the

particulars of New Zealand's postcolonial situatedness in conjunction with political

events – UWC, Springbok, SHE, GLF – shape the differences of importance within

lesbian community.

Sometimes the statement that community does not exist is a reaction to its failure

to meet utopian-like expectations. By defining the parameters of lesbian identity, defining

appropriate expressions of sexual identity with all the performance modification and

training that that implies, the community becomes selective. The assumed "instant

membership," as we might see in "communities of practice," is immediately challenged

as potential new members negotiate with the community to determine which social

differences can become part of the group and which ones do not belong. For both sides of the equation it is a process of socialization and of learning.

Learning to Be Lesbian

When Turner spoke of *communitas* he spoke of a process that gave purpose to the structure of community. *Communitas* was the action and animation behind "community" as an icon; it was the driving force that held community together. As an ideology, *communitas* was "Edenic" (Turner 1974). Turner did not propose community as a socially realized utopia. Rather, through *communitas* he created the idea that communities became internally defined by the utopian ideals to which they aspire. Therefore community membership necessarily included a tacit agreement to engage, if not to support, community defined social norms. At base, it is similar to praxis theory, representing Turner's theoretical interest in the intersection, or relationship, between individuals and social structures. Reaching beyond the structural paradigm of his contemporaries, Turner's view of "the system" includes the interactions of structure and ideology.

Writing about community, Weston has said:

Among lesbians and gay men the term 'community' (like coming out) has become as multifaceted in meaning as it is ubiquitous. In context, community can refer to the historical appearance of gay institutions, the totality of self-defined lesbians and gay men, or unity and harmony predicated upon a common sexual identity (1993:122).

Similar to what Scott Morgenson has called "utopian communalism,"[72] Weston's comments would suggest that New Zealand lesbian *communitas* is the belief in the ability of sexual identity to overcome ethnic/class/political boundaries; a harmony predicated on

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[72] Unpublished paper.

being lesbian. Yet as "Binocular Vision," the title of this chapter suggests, the lesbian

community is not immune to the influence of the New Zealand society in which it rests.

In fact, with the possible exception of lesbian separatists, lesbians must not only interact

with mainstream society, they must live in it, even as they live within lesbian

community.[73] As such, lesbian community is never a complete escape from the social

divisions within New Zealand society. Newton refers to this dynamic when she

comments on the recreation of social stratification within lesbian communities, as well as

within lesbian community research:

> The most varied lesbians that I have seen in recent years attend the New York
> Liberty women's basketball games in Madison Square Garden, where one sees
> lesbians from the working class to wealthy celebrities cheering on the home team.
> However, because ticket prices reproduce cultural hierarchy, we see each other
> mostly through binoculars (2000:164).

Newton's comments are aimed at specifically US lesbian communities and their

apparent lack of internal diversity, however the idea of community connection "through

binoculars" is equally compelling as a New Zealand point of reference. The daily

rhythms of New Zealand lesbian life require the existence of stereo, or competing

visions. Lewin has commented that lesbians seldom live in "rigidly bounded

communities" but rather move between two worlds (1996:107). She explains:

> …the rhythm of activity that marks individual [lesbian] stories reveals their
> movement between gay and straight worlds, with varying degrees of comfort
> characterizing the process. Like other people, lesbians and gay men identify
> themselves along a number of axes… This perspective is vital to taking up the
> opposition between "resistance" and "accommodation" (1996:107).

This binocular vision, or stereo perspective of competing yet coexisting realities affects

lesbian views of difference in two ways. First, it locates resistance to mainstream

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[73] Even among separatists, Dominy (1983) asserts, the separation is confined to domestic life as a complete
separation from New Zealand society proved impractical.

intervention as a lesbian community norm. Simultaneously, it allows for mainstream norms and values not usually associated with sexuality to become linked with sexual identity as they carry over into the community. Binocular vision might then also be characterized as the want to view production of mainstream social stratification as distant even as it is metaphorically drawn near as a community-based outlook.

Alongside "harmonious" views of community as presented by Weston are the telling comments of Sandra in this chapter's opening quote. She talks about belonging but not fitting in, about feeling social angst while at the same time feeling "at home." Lesbian community appears from the outside to be predicated on the sameness of lesbian identity. Instead, almost as if a tacit acknowledgement of the community role in shaping identity expression, Sandra's comments reveal an expectation of difference and a community defined by a commitment to "make it work." Recalling the struggle to fit in and make it work, Sandra said:

> There were so many rules. Astrology was a big deal. I had my Saturn return when I was 28. It's kind of like believing in God, I suppose. Some kind of crutch thing. There were some issues between the lesbians and the feminist lesbian communities. Butch/femme and whatever. There were little niggles but we were still quite cohesive.

Competing rules between one group and another, political divisions whether they be class-based or generational do not distract from Sandra's view of the community as cohesive.

Voicing one of the issues between lesbians and feminist lesbians mentioned by Sandra, Renèe finds belonging in community, but not a sense of home:

> I remember my first night in the Club and feeling really comfortable and feeling like okay, this is okay. The world's not going to fall apart. And Bathie saying to me, "Isn't this amazing? Don't you feel like you've come home?" And it was like no. No. This bar and these women I don't know. Being looked at in the way I

> thought I was being.. you know, really objectified… this is not what I call coming home. I felt much more comfortable when I came out as a feminist in a feminist group. Much more supportive. Here I felt constrained to stereotypes of who and what and how I should be. And I don't fit them.

Coming to the community from an academic and feminist background, as opposed to grassroots political organizing, Renèe feels the "niggles" more acutely but still supports Sandra's general outlook. Her comments suggest she would not be comfortable attending events at the Club and yet she says, "I was determined to make it work. Because I wanted the companionship and community of other lesbians, I was going."

For Māori lesbians, community membership was not as promising and involved greater accommodations on their part than on the part of their Pākehā friends. Still, in its attempt for biculturality as an ideological rather than mere political commitment, the lesbian community was often more welcoming than the general New Zealand populace. Mirika demonstrates this point by drawing on recent experience. A Māori woman raised in England, Mirika works in sales and is often required to travel around both the North and South Islands. Mirika hates traveling though she is very social and able to blend in with almost any crowd. It is not the social pressure of traveling that she detests but rather the flying, the ferries and the "living off my duffle." Centered, philosophical, equally critical and compassionate, she presents like Camus and speaks like pundit Molly Ivans. She makes no attempt to present a romantic unified, or even knowable view of lesbian community as a whole but she does view lesbian community as ideologically different at base:

> The difference is something like this: When I went down to the South Island last week this guy at the dairy [general store] looks at me and says, "You've got colored blood in ya." And I said, "You're right. It's red." Then he says, "Where are ya from?" And I said, "I'm from England." And the wanker just scoffs and hands me my change.

> I don't get that in the lesbian community. I used to be really conscious of being a brownie but now it's not an issue. I used to walk into [the Club] and my eyes would sweep to see if there was another Māori woman or person, but no. My eyes still sweep. I'll find one or two now, but always just one or two.

In both cases, with Renèe and with Mirika, the defining point of community seems to be the acknowledgement of difference and the struggle to make it work. Rather than the competing national messages of "we are all one people" and "we are two worlds, Pākehā and Māori, living side by side," lesbian community seems built upon an alternative model. It is a paradigm based neither on assimilation nor on acculturation but instead on the values of being unique combined with the necessity to forge a symbiotic existence.

With regard to expressions and perceptions of difference, the lesbian community creates its own regime of truth. In defining what he called a "regime of truth," philosopher Michel Foucault described, "a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements," a condition, he felt particular to the birth of capitalist society (1980:133). He thus infers that the politics of expression and perception are directly related to those who create the knowledge and define the truths by which the rest of the community abides. In other words, it is the momentum of community opinion that serves to socialize new members. It is community that tells them how to look, act and think as lesbians.

Similar to the "community of practice" influence on language, behavior and memory, the lesbian community's regime of truth allows for instant inclusion and participation even as the particularly-defined lesbian sexual identity is learned, or produced. Feeling this dynamic to be a specifically New Zealand one, Katerina draws

connections between her first connections with her *iwi* and her entrance into lesbian

community:

> Because I was a lesbian, I was immediately accepted by the community even though I had just come out and didn't know what being lesbian meant. I would talk about my date with someone and they would ask me if she brought a U-haul and I didn't understand the joke. But they weren't annoyed; they just explained it to me, about lesbians moving in on the second date. It's like the first time I went to my marae. I was curious, you know. So I went to look around. And I wandered into the kitchen where a woman was working and she made me a sandwich. I didn't know any better. I didn't know about pōwhiri and that you don't just walk onto a marae. But because I was Māori, she wasn't annoyed by my ignorance. She fed me and told me the story of pōwhiri. Now I've learned the rules, though, so I'm expected to follow them.

I characterize the process of learning to be lesbian as similar to familial-like

socialization for the way in which it mirrors that process and the common claim among

members that community "is family:"[74]

> [Community] means having a sense of family. A sense of a smaller group of people who share a value system in common, who accept you from the get go because that's what family should do and that makes me feel part of the human race even though we are so vast and varied. – Brie

> It's like growing up in a family – community. It's like they teach you how to be the best you can be. To represent the community and its values. – Dannie

> Like every family I know, this group is totally dysfunctional, eh. Wanting you to be whoever you are but just don't embarrass them in public. All the fighting and bickering but no one ever doubts we belong together. – Liv

Instant inclusion is followed by indoctrination through the repetition of behavioral codes

and community defined norms. Members graduate from "baby-dyke" status when they

learn to speak "lesbian" on their own or to develop their "gaydar," the ability to read

lesbian signs – "to know one when you see one."

Some have suggested that integral to the lesbian community's regime of truth is

the concept of being a good New Zealander. As members both of the lesbian community

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[74] For example, see Weston 1991 discussion of family-like dynamics among US lesbians and gays.

and of New Zealand society, as women invested in living in both worlds, being lesbian

cannot be antithetical to being a New Zealander. Said Mag, "It's like when you lose one

of your senses and the others become stronger." If mainstream New Zealanders were

evaluated as good New Zealanders based on their commitment to biculturalism, sport and

heterosexuality, then lesbians who do not perform as heterosexuals must compensate with

an increased sensibility in the other areas. Good lesbians must also be good Kiwis.

We might now view the message of "learning to be lesbian" as misleading.

Community membership requires learning to be a *New Zealand* lesbian. In fact, as

expressed by Sol, some would say it is dependent upon it:

> When I realized I was lesbian, I thought, "Bloody hell! What kind of creature am
> I?" I felt like there was something unreal about me know. Like I wasn't a person
> or something. But these women helped me to understand I could be a Kiwi and a
> lesbian and that was okay. Being a Kiwi meant I was real.

Many felt strongly, like Sol, that their legitimacy *as people* was grounded in being a New

Zealander, which they thought necessarily meant being heterosexual. They credit the

community for making them feel real by showing them how to be both lesbian and Kiwi.

The truth regime that promoted the "look, act and think" of lesbianism was

informed by New Zealand nationalisms: the "look" was not just appearance but also

incorporated Māori symbolism, the "act" included Māori language and a classless

outlook along with sexual expressions, the "think" was an ideology built upon

biculturalism, postcolonialism and involvement in progressive social movements. Aware

of these constraints, an elusive lesbian "phenotype" almost becomes discernable as a

combination of symbols, language and mannerisms. No one thing comes to define lesbian

identity. Learning to be lesbian means learning an amalgamation of lesbian signs and

symbols and then sounding out the parameters to their flexibility. The rules that govern

flexibility – where difference is promoted, where it is permitted and where it is denied – become foundational to understanding the meaning of community.

Particular differences are selected for expression and then moderated by community for their appropriateness. Among the differences moderated are those of physical appearance. While there is no "lesbian uniform," the anti-establishment style of lesbian physical appearance is governed by community sensibility. Though generational differences are discussed further in Chapter Four, "anti-establishment" is in the eye of the generational beholder. For the "older" ones, it might mean wearing pants instead of wearing "frocks." For the "young" ones reacting against both the heteronormative and the "older" establishment, it might mean a reclaiming of dresses as the new "lesbian butch."

Hair length was mentioned as falling under a lesbian mandate, demonstrated by Mira at the Dog Show. While I was collecting "coming out" stories, Sandra made the biting comment, "When I came out, lesbian hair was not this 1, 2 or 3 shit. It was short or bloody short." Though it could sometimes appear that way, not all New Zealand lesbians have short hair. Those like Mira who have long hair may feel their minority status, but Sandra's remark revealed the rules as more relaxed now then they used to be. "1, 2 or 3" refers to settings on hair clippers and a new generation of lesbians who get their "short" hair "styled." It is reflective of a generational difference in which "older" lesbians fought a different establishment and associate butch/femme with a lifestyle while the "young ones" are more inclined to think of butch/femme as an aesthetic.

Failure to dress appropriately was also sanctioned by the community as well as other incidentals like tattoos and jewelry:[75]

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[75] An interesting illustration of generational difference, "anti-establishment" for the old guard included women with tattoos while the younger generation further confined this expression to Māori and Celtic symbols.

> The way I dress has always been scrutinized, eh? The whole short hair thing. Who's going to wear a dress to The Ball and all that. I saw two women go into the Club wearing sexy lingerie and I heard some women say, "Look at those bikes!" And I thought for Christ's sake. It's dress up, isn't it? – Renèe

> I'm not femme so the RAGLAN people get upset about me wearing jewelry up there [at the Club]. It was nothing flashy but I guess it was too femme. – Liz

The term "bike" was derogatory and signified a transgressive, or non-lesbian behavior. As a sanction, the label "bike" was derived from the slogan, "A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle." It does not demonize heterosexuality but rather the woman who draws meaning from heterosexually defined norms. The same is true of Liz's situation where she understands the criticism against her wearing jewelry as violating both class and aesthetic boundaries.

Answers to the survey I distributed in 1999 indicate that over one third of respondents changed their language and appearance after coming out. An additional third made no changes but felt that their language and manner of dress *mattered* more to others after they joined the community. Several women wrote in testimonials of hair too long, not long enough (on their legs), and dresses that even among "femmes" were too flash, or fancy.

Use of language was moderated in two ways: as an expression in support of biculturality and as a lesbian appropriate signifier. Biculturality of language often seemed more an appearance then a behavior. While it was common practice to abbreviate words in conversation – relatives became rellies, breakfast became brekkie, presents were pressies, and so on – to truncate Māori words was felt to be culturally insensitive. The most common transgressions were for place names. Posters at the Club admonished, "Piecock = Paekakariki" and "Param = Paraparaumu." Māori place name typology is

most often commemorative, cultural or descriptive (Henning 1987). Paekakariki means

"parakeet perch" and Paraparaumu means "oven scraps." It was felt that to shorten the

place names was to mangle their meaning, destroying the elegance of the language.[76]

Community members tried to encourage recognition of Māori place name

meaning by admonishing short cuts. The attempts were only marginally successful but

still represented a commitment to biculturality. Said one woman:

> [Lesbian] muddling of the Māori language can be a bit tragic but not nearly as
> much as everyone else. I once had a woman ask me how to get to "a-COW-tree"
> and I didn't even figure out where she wanted [Aokautere] until later.

Pronounced closer to <ā-oh-ka-TE-re>, Aokautere means "cloud moving swiftly." To

look towards Aokautere is to look up at a ridge on which hundreds of windmills power an

energy plant that services the city of Palmerston North. Still, for some women, the

attempt for Māori inclusion did not ring sincere:

> I feel isolated at the Club. Not much recognition of Māori there – Club
> decorations could be much more Polynesian than what it is. No Māori support
> group... the community is non-welcoming through non-recognition. I hear
> comments about making too much of my color but only from white women. I told
> one woman this and she said, "Well, don't you think it's because you haven't
> involved yourself?" and well that's actually valid but also doesn't matter.

As lesbian signifiers, language choice is also encouraged to match a gendered

sensibility not predicated on heterosexual paradigms. Admonishments regarding

language use were among the most complicated and interesting to follow. Take, for

example, the following situation described by Pearl:

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[76] This was an explanation and practice that I often struggled to understand. English, associated with modernism, colonialism and industry, *writ* not "traditional" and therefore not elegant was popularly dissociated from its own rich history in which words were combined to develop new meanings. For example, "brekkie" interrupts the ontology of breakfast, the first meal of the day and literally meant as the breaking of the fast since the night previous. Perhaps the insult was because the shortening originated among Pākehā speakers who felt the long words cumbersome, and not among the Māori themselves. The subject was too guarded for me to investigate further.

It's like the other day. A bunch of us were playing cricket and Mona was having a go of it but she'd never really played before. So I gave her a tease when she got the ball and said something like "Hey look, Mona's throwing like a girl." Just a tease, ya know? And then Carol got mad at me because I said "girl" and the feminists were made at me because I said she was "throwing like a girl" and Mona just didn't even give a toss. She just told me to piss off, ya know?

Community prescribed behavior does not mean community consensus. In such cases as described above, the motivating factor is whether or not the speaker is perceived to be drawing on non-lesbian imagery.

For Carol, the term girl was objectionable because like the situation of women within a patriarchy, it subordinated Mona in relation to male adult behavior. For the feminists, at least according to Joce, Pearl's comment suggested that the women's way of throwing was somehow less worthy than the men's way. Yet for Pearl, a self-defined sports dyke, Mona's throw was simply a physical wonder too good to let pass. Pearl felt community monitoring of "every little thing is just over the top" and an unnecessary interference. That said, she admitted that she would refrain from similar public comments in the future to be respectful of community sentiment.

In choosing to belong to lesbian community, members enter a type of "social contract" (Pateman 1988). In exchange for the benefits of belonging, members agree to follow certain rules. However, unlike the implied social contracts of government, there is no agreed upon set of rules to which members can point. Closer to the dynamic of "accidental communties," membership begins with the happenstance of like experiences and continues based on similarly situated points of view with at least tacit agreement to support community ideals. The "rules" are a point of constant negotiation; community is a commitment to negotiate. As is true of most cases when joining a new community, the

rules are most evident when they are broken and thereby exposed. Laughed one research participant:

> I thought I knew what being a lesbian was about. It's a woman who loves women, right? Like, I don't sleep with guys, I have sex with women so I must be a lesbian, right? And then it was like don't eat this and don't drink that. I had to join the lesbian community to learn that lesbians are vegetarian and probably in rehab. I mean really!

Her comments reflect a comic frustration with the assumed license of some members to impose their views on others. The line between community-defined identity and the right to self-expression was subject to a continual tug-of-war between the sought after certainties of "who I am" and "what I am." The willingness within the community to give equal voice to variant opinions is one of the ways in which difference has defined the process of community.

Where the "look" of being lesbian was about physical appearance, the "act" of being lesbian was governed not only by language but also by sexual expression.[77] The one third of respondents who reported having changed their appearance and language after coming out was trumped by the over sixty percent who reported having changed their behavior. Anecdotal information about community monitoring of behavior, when not referring to language, was predominantly about sexual expression. While community "border guards"[78] had favored opinions regarding drug use (don't do it), drinking (only when responsibly) and whether or not to eat meat (equally split between for and against), restrictions on sexual expression were far more pronounced.

Lesbians are extremely sexual, engaged in sexually active, serially monogamous

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[77] The "act" of being lesbian included a host of behaviors, the extent of which expands beyond the scope of this dissertation. In choosing to highlight language and sexual expression with regard to "acting," I have drawn on the two most dominant sensibilities expressed among participants.

[78] Inspired by Barth 1969.

relationships with women biologically born as women. They abhor penetration and value

long-term relationships, even though said relationships can lead to bed-death, the end of

all sexual activity, thus conflicting with their naturally sexual nature. At least, this is what

Liz told me while we walked along the Lake Waikaremoana Track, her fourteen year old

dog running circles around us like a puppy. Though an active member of the community,

Liz resented "the tyrannical" control of the community over sexual expression:

> At the Club they have this definition that to be a lesbian, you have to be sexually active. Why? I say I'm a lesbian but celibate. How is it any different from committed partners who haven't had sex in eons? I could be straight and celibate and there's never a question. As [a] lesbian, I have to be bonking [having sex] or somehow I'm not credible.

It was fringe members of the community who would most often point out the

singularity of accepted sexual expression, although privately most women admitted it was

unlikely that private behaviors were even a close match to public projections. When

Lesley went through a period of questioning her sexuality, she found the community

unforgiving of her public uncertainty:

> They were completely biphobic. I needed to find a safe place to explore that [bisexuality]. But it wasn't okay in any shape, way or form to be bisexual. Even among friends who were lesbian. My romanticism of the community was completely shattered. Even if it was an unfair and ridiculous notion of what it should be. I really thought they would still accept me.

One woman chose to share her views anonymously through the comment section

on the 1999 survey:

> The community is close-minded. We were around long before feminism was. They want to tell me how to be. My girlfriend is an MTF [male-to-female transsexual] and she's a good mate but others have a problem with her. I find the Rangirua community to be close-minded and I don't go anymore because they are unexcepting of my mate.

Her comments support Liz's assertion that to be lesbian was to have sexual relations

specifically with biologically-born women.[79] Even with her more open views, Liz bought

into parts of the "party-line." During our walk, she confessed:

> To me, every woman if they've got the right education has got the potential to be
> a lesbian. I can't see anyone choosing heterosexuality if they know the options. A
> majority of women talk to women. If penetration plays a part in your lovemaking,
> get a vibrator.

Liz envisioned penetration as a heterosexual act, one that could be accommodated but

was inherently non-lesbian.

Similar to conscriptions on behavior, "thinking" lesbian meant embracing

politically and socially progressive movements, if not necessarily with a progressive

outlook. In conversation, Edna once said, "Being lesbian, being in the community, is

important for me because it's embedded in social justice." For some, the feeling is an

active one, as expressed by Edna. For others, it need not be active but must be present as

a set of shared assumptions:

> I find I can talk to my lesbian friends more about Māori and sensitive cultural
> issues than with my hetero friends. You know, because of the trust and the bond.
> They won't assume I'm trying to be ignorant and they aren't as offended if we
> disagree. – Emily

> If you're a lesbian than you're not coming from the position that being lesbian is
> weird or strange and will therefore cover your opinions about everything. When
> talking, you might disagree but there's comfort that you're coming from the same
> assumptions. If a lesbian asked me if I'm a feminist I would say no, I'm a lesbian
> not a feminist – they are not the same thing. If a straight asks me I feel obliged to
> say yes because I think they won't understand and they'll just think I don't want
> to be called a feminist. – Mona

The first speaker feels the common link of being lesbian allows each woman to assume

the other is coming from a common place and a belief in progressive ideologies, or at

least a position open to dialog. Mona's comments point more explicitly at the felt

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[79] It is interesting, however, that she leaves the option for variation open by chastising the Rangirua
community and not lesbian community as a whole.

freedom of knowing lesbians pull from the same pools of reference; that her comments might be misunderstood by "straights" because they don't understand sexuality from a lesbian point of view and, seeing her comments as sexually defined, would misunderstand her intentions.

Perhaps one of the most salient illustrations of "thinking" lesbian while I was in New Zealand came during the meetings of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). The lesbians were against it, mostly as a failed program. Politically informed lesbians spoke of uneven power dynamics among APEC members forcing the New Zealand government to make economic choices not solely motivated by their benefit to New Zealanders. According to columnist Gordon Campbell, "[this] has been underlined by the fact that, though the US tells us to liberalise our economies, it still maintains a great deal of subsidy and protection in its own agricultural trade" (Campbell 1999a:19). New Zealand became interested in APEC as part of their move away from dependence on Britain as a trading partner. In 1999, the mission of APEC, to create a Free Trade Zone (FTZ), seemed far from becoming actualized. This was the sentiment behind lesbian community opinion, equally upheld but those who learned to be lesbian but had little interest in politics.

Around August 1999, one month before APEC leaders met in New Zealand, small talk among most community members included dismissive comments about APEC. When questioned, most offered the same canned responses, "APEC is bad. It's about power and that's not good. The Americans run APEC and we don't want to be run by Americans." It was a learned response and reflex that some even contradicted as conversation continued. Others said it was a sentiment influenced by "Māori

communism," or the pull against centralized power. What interested me was not the

reasoning later offered but the similarity of language and attitude in the initial response,

as if responding the way expected. Reading the paper in a café, drinking coffee,

commenting "that APEC's not on, eh," and turning the page. It was similar in behavior to

other small talk expectations, like the "how are you" question that replaces hello. An

answer given as a quick "Fine," if given at all.

Difference as Expression, Struggle, Paradox

Before poststructuralism and predating Derrida, before Lévi-Strauss divided the

world into "the raw and the cooked," the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure proclaimed, "In

any relational definition, juxtaposition of two terms gives meaning to both" (1959:27).

New Zealand lesbians claimed a paradigm of identity entirely "indifferent" to

heterosexuality while at the same time describing sanctions that governed the very thing

about which they claimed no interest. Although no community is ever entirely void of

contradiction, it would be difficult to understand lesbian community without juxtaposing

it to the heterosexual world. After all, it is the accidental dominance of a heterosexual

paradigm that allowed for the accident of contemporary lesbian community to form.

More affective for understanding the significance of lesbian community would be

to examine the motivations behind members' behaviors. They are not mimics, they are

self-defined. They are not less than, they are equal to. It is less a matter of indifference

and more a matter of priority; a lesbian identity based upon lesbian defined symbols,

imagination and communal history. While community sanctions had the immediate effect

of juxtaposing homosexuality to heterosexuality, the behavior they addressed was less

about sexual practices, language or hair style than it was about defining a symbolic domain not subordinated to the heteronormative.

In her autobiographical *The Woman Warrior*, Maxine Hong Kingston muses that she wished her mind would become broad enough to hold paradox. Paradox, as statements that seem contradictory and yet may be true, well embodies the role of difference within lesbian community. Like Donald Kraybill's *The Riddle of the Amish*, what appears contradictory to the passing observer follows an internal logic based on shared experiences, common histories and community-defined expression. Lesbians may not define their sexual identity in terms of sexuality when asked, but learning to be lesbian includes learning a correctness of sexual expression, along with a vast array of other "marked" behaviors. The community is built upon, and respectful of, eccentricities only in so much as they do not offend community defined sensibilities. Who does the defining is a matter of majority decision; sometimes it is a feminist one, sometimes it is a Māori one and sometimes it is an "old school" one but always it is a New Zealand one. The strength of the community and its ability to adapt through generational shifts is based upon the foundational role of difference as part and parcel to community.

Growing Up Without Mirrors

> I came out at eighteen. … It was a friend who became a lover very quickly. In the next few hours, actually. It wasn't something I had planned on. She wasn't actually somebody I had any interest in but when I told her 'bout my feelings for a mate we had in common she reckoned she had those sorts of feelings towards girls as well. And I have to say she got me into bed very quickly. We had a relationship for the next five years… I was always aware of my attraction to women but didn't always know it was possible. I don't come from a religious family but I would pray at night that I would wake and be a boy the next day. Because I knew that I wanted to love women and it was very sad because I knew at that stage that if I couldn't love them I would never love anybody. Being queer, being different, it was like I was growing up in a place without any mirrors, really. There was nothing to reflect back at all so I was really hungry for it.
>
> – June, *April 1999*

The "Problem with No Name"

As a moment in women's history, Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* was pivotal in the US for giving voice to the "problem with no name." She, in conjunction with a cohort of 1960s American feminist scholars, developed an argument and a language that defined a generation of women and how they experienced themselves as women. For lesbians, the "problem with no name" is the way in which they understand and interpret their difference from the heterosexual world. It is all aspects of life that are touched by the fact of sexual attraction, samesex or not. It is living in a world where the sexual banality that infects the whole of public life is exposed by the heteronormative foundation on which it rests. To "come out" is to find the ability – sometimes freeing and sometimes containing – to name the difference and to speak the previously unspeakable. Among lesbians, the sometimes social sometimes personal action of coming out is as complicated as it is mythical. Loosely defined, it refers to a group of experiences and internal/external declarations of samesex desire, sometimes internalized as sexual

difference. To come out as a lesbian is the willingness to recognize within you, or to share with someone else, the fact of your samesex attraction.

As an experience, coming out fully integrates – or implicates – community, history and language in the formation of sexual identity. Among women in the Rangirua, coming out was an experience that itself created community. It was an accidental community – based not on common interests or needs but on fluke coincidence, on the happenstance of everyday life, on the accidental sameness of a profound experience that would forever change what was familiar and what was not, where women felt known, and real, versus where they felt partial, and hidden. It created an imagined shared history – you are like me because you have experienced things similar to what I have experienced – as well as an impulse to reorganize one's personal history; to review past experiences as leading up to the eventual present.

The acquisition of a common language among Rangirua lesbians, of the ability to collect and compartmentalize coming out experiences for the purpose of discussing and sharing them with others, often resulted in a fundamental shift of perception. The language, itself a negotiation among community, history and personal experience, became codified and reified. Coming out was no longer a term used to represent an amalgamation of experiences. It was a process in which all lesbians shared, a gradual change from one thing into another, a process that had a before and an after, one that resulted in realizing the "truth," living an "honest" life, and affirming a sense of self that was both internally defined by personal experience and externally defined by community interpretation.

With this chapter I investigate the relationship of language to community and history as evidenced by coming out stories. Of particular interest to me is the apparent creation of generational cohorts that defy the relevance of age as well as the creation of sexual identities that defy the relevance of the erotic.[80] Generations, traditionally defined by age group, were defined among lesbians by historical circumstance. What mattered was not when they happened to be teenagers but rather when they happened to experience puberty. Sexual identities were part sexual experience but might just as easily be described as part social ideology or political standpoint, depending on the tenor of conversation.

Curiously, while the lesbian community in which I worked seemed well established, highly political and unnervingly connected, more than half of the women with whom I spoke came out at a time when they had never heard the words lesbian, gay or homosexual.[81] Coming out stories, circulating like legends and exchanged like currency, exposed what for many women had been "the problem with no name." They had no language for what they were experiencing and experiencing the unspeakable is what bound them together.

In the past, coming out was theorized as a static, contained, localized social phenomenon. It was seen as a gay person's *rite of passage*, as the liminal stage through which a person entered the then unnamed, but fully recognized, gay club called "community." More recently, coming out has been both popularly and theoretically understood as a continuous process: for every aspect of life in which the sexual is

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[80] As explained later in this chapter and throughout my dissertation, that women intend sexual identities that "defy" the erotic is not to say the erotic actually becomes irrelevant but is rather to expose the problematic and vulnerable position of sexuality with respect to sexual identity.

[81] While a few women mentioned the word "poofter," and fewer still used "queer" or "kamp," the overwhelming similarity among narratives was the absence of such terms.

publicly engaged, lesbians must actively manage that which appears tacit to their heterosexual counterparts. I find the language of "process" problematic as a means for understanding those social facts loosely gathered under the umbrella of coming out. I write against the implications of process as processual; as one-way, linear and teleological in direction. Lesbian identity can no more be described as a static location than can any other identity category. Many women move in and out of the lesbian category, coming out as many different socially defined identities during the course of their lifetimes. Yet despite these theoretical drawbacks, I use the language of process here in absence of a suitable replacement.

Among the women of the Rangirua, coming out narratives were a primary aspect of lesbian community. As narratives, they served purposes similar to those described by Anderson and postmodern theorist Jean-François Lyotard. For Anderson narratives support the creation of imagined community through repetition and stock elements thereby creating a common landscape and providing the possibility of unknowing connection (1983:22-26). Lyotard called narratives "the quintessential form of customary knowledge" determining "in a single stroke what one must say in order to be heard, what one must listen to in order to speak" (1984:19, 21). Often relied upon as a data source, it is important to remember that even autobiographical narratives are stories of motivated telling. They do not reveal past subjectivities so much as they offer favored stories of the past; stories which, in the case of coming out narratives, contribute to the positioning of personal experience within a larger community-based definition of lesbian identity. Like any other instance of remembering, they are culturally bound and politically informed.[82]

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[82] For examples of seeing narratives as a means to systematically create national imaginaries and build a preferred historical past to contemporary political alliances, see Bernal 1989; Said 1978; Wolf 1982.

Most of the coming out narratives I heard shared similar characteristics and

thematic plots. They were often cast as creation stories: "how I as a lesbian was created,"

"came to be," "discovered myself," "made sense of my difference." Taken together, they

were perceived as part history, part myth and part legend. Individual stories were equally

group stories as the accidental community was realized and narratives became formulaic.

People whose stories shared historical context, and like levels of emersion in the labeling

of lesbian identity, often had stories that shared common elements: predictable outcomes

with similar realizations and possible morals as a result. The stories became legend in the

sense that they shared a formula, based on structure not content, and an extraordinarily

weighted significance within lesbian life. Thus the popular truism: every lesbian has a

coming out story. Explaining how legends function, folklorist Michael Bell has said:

> While legends revolve around a memorable, stable core, their forms tend to be
> unstable. Exactly how a legend takes shape is subject, in part, to the composition
> of the group of people who happen to be present: such elements as their
> personalities, beliefs, and attitudes, and their relationships to one another, help
> determine what kind of story gets told (2001:289).

Legends, in this case coming out stories, often serve a similar purpose even if the

elements within the stories change. While women who came out in the repression of

1960s New Zealand will have remarkably different experiences from those who came out

in the relatively liberal 1990s, the coming out story, regardless of historical context, still

pays the price of community admission.[83]

As expected in any motivated telling, the narratives are often a combination of

fact and fiction, of personal experience combined with community expectation.

Sometimes intentionally, sometimes not, the language of sexual identity and coming out,

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[83] Though many women live fully realized lesbian lives without ever joining the "lesbian community," my
interest here is the way in which community membership shapes/creates/depends upon women's coming
out narratives.

as developed within the lesbian community, infuses coming out narratives with collectively agreed upon understandings of meaning. A lesbian comes out when she gives words to the "problem with no name." How she then makes sense of her newly expressed identity becomes in part a product of the language that she has learned to use, the ways in which she has learned to perceive, the experiences she has had and the historical context in which she had them. These steps – *discovering* the "problem with no name," *claiming* sexual identity through naming, and then *learning* through community what it means to live life as a lesbian – together form the stages of coming out as I discuss them below.[84]

Many scholars frame coming out in multiple terms: as a personal telling, a public action, and an ongoing process. Commenting on this trend, Weston has said:

> The meaning of coming out has shifted steadily over the years gradually assuming its current dual sense of claiming a lesbian or gay identity for oneself and communicating that identity to others (1991:44).[85]

Others, like D'Emilio (1997), have suggested that the continued fiction of gay "silence, invisibility and isolation," once historically meaningful but less so in late capitalist societies, has caused "an over reliance" among lesbians and gays on the narrative of coming out. In essence, he suggests, though once of primary importance, the continued significance of coming out is less a matter of personal necessity and more a matter of community-based lore. In the following sections I consider both viewpoints as I investigate Rangirua lesbian coming out narratives.

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[84] Again, though stages imply process, to use stage as opposed to process provides a starting point for escape from the linear.

[85] For more regarding Weston's characterization of coming out stages, see Weston 1991, pp 44-77. For more on stages, see also Herdt and Boxer 1993.

On Discovering

According to sociologist Jenny Rankine (1997), a survey of New Zealand lesbians conducted in 1992 showed that over half of them had been in previous, heterosexual relationships. Among those answering the 1992 survey, the average age at which they noticed they were "different" was seventeen while knowledge of their sexual identity as "lesbians" usually happened in their early twenties.[86] When I surveyed the women with whom I worked in 1999, I found similar results: two thirds of them became aware of their sexual difference between the ages of eleven and nineteen with 36% identifying as lesbians before the age of twenty and an additional 35% identifying as lesbians between the ages of twenty and thirty.[87]

Many describe their early awareness of difference in terms not unlike the experience of culture shock. Social situations that *looked* familiar did not *feel* familiar. Women described feeling high levels of anxiety as they tried to fit the expected behavior patterns of a world that felt foreign to them. They spoke of cultural rules that to others seemed inherent, or implicit, but for them contained a foreign logic and required laborious learning. Upon learning the rules, the most common internalizations were similar to those voiced by Radcliffe Hall's character Stephen in *The Well of Loneliness*. When care taker Collins would comment, "Doesn't Miss Stephen look exactly like a boy," Stephen would respond saying, "Yes, of course I'm a boy. … I must be a boy, 'cause I feel exactly like one" (1950:19).

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[86] Of 1000 surveys distributed randomly by Rankine, 261 were returned and analyzed.

[87] Of 200 surveys distributed by mail, 105 were returned and analyzed. An additional 50 were distributed anonymously at select locations. Only two of these were returned. Respondents were 85% Pākehā, 9% Māori and largely self-identified as middle to working class.

For women of the Rangirua, understanding the expected rules of sexual attraction yet not "feeling" their role "appropriately" most often led them either to feel a sense of lack at not being able to perform the female gender, or to feel a strong affinity to their assumed opposite gender.[88] Awareness of this common experience was perpetuated through the repetitive sharing of coming out stories. While at times I solicited these stories, they were often shared at random and unceremoniously among friends; sometimes in their entirety, sometimes in pieces. Comments, like the one below made by Brie during dinner were not uncommon:

> I remember when I got my boobs. I was so disgusted. I thought I was a chap [boy]. For a long time I thought I was a guy in a girl's body. Especially being attracted to all those girls.

Most of the women present at this confession laughed while simultaneously sharing the general sense that the situation described was anything but funny. It was uncomfortably familiar.

Like June in the opening quote, many women felt male or wished for the ability to be male as a way to find happiness. In both cases women often tried to perform as expected either to please those around them or simply to work through their "problem." Polly is an older woman with an urgency to share her experiences. I had met her in the New Zealand national gay and lesbian archives, LAGANZ.[89] She listened patiently as I complained of my inability to find written New Zealand lesbian stories, then spoke to me quietly of a lesbian life lived in that position.

Two weeks later, Polly sat on my couch relating her story. "I wasted so much time trying to be normal," she says, speaking directly into my tape-recorder. She came

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[88] When used as a noun, I intend gender to be the culturally determined social role associated with the biological category of male or female.

[89] Lesbian and Gay Archives of New Zealand, housed in Wellington's Alexander Turnbull Library.

out at the age of 54 having dated but never married. Her hair is thick and white, responding rhythmically to her time honored swagger as if holding its own conversation. She carries papers a bit brittle and delicately folded with apparent reverence for the story they capture. These are her notes. She refers to them as she explains the process of trying to fit in, "I had some crushes in college," she says as the papers gently shake:

> And some, well I suppose we would call them sexual experiences but I had no idea of sex then, and I'd never heard of lesbians or lesbianism. So I was passionately kissing a girl or two but still looking for Mr. Right because that's what we were supposed to do then. I'd kissed some boys but didn't feel anything. I just figured I was cold or frigid or something. I had heard other girls talk about such things [feeling cold/frigid]. It was horrid, really. And I had some boy callers, you know. And they would respond well enough when I stopped their advances but eventually they figured out the wall was there and didn't call again. I was terribly mixed up, you see.

She recounts crushes and "moments of tension," explaining each time, "I had no idea about sex then. Of course I had all these experiences but I didn't understand them as sex. I was still looking for the right man."

For some, the want to perform correctly became exaggerated after being discovered and chastised for inappropriate behavior. Blanche described the aftermath of being discovered by her mother:

> [It really] hit the fan when my mums opened a letter from my woman lover. She burned all my photos on the lawn and I had to call Eve in front of my pop to say it was off. Mum bought me this pink outfit and I tried to wear it and perform. I really wanted to – I didn't want to see them hurt. I didn't understand it all – I just wanted to be normal. To feel right. I was just never right from the go.

She relates the moment as if casual and detached and yet it was the only time during our conversation in which she fidgeted restlessly, stroked the cat, turned her glass around on the table, tried to sit up straighter in her chair. Only years later did Blanche ever realize anger because of this experience. At the time, she most recalls a sense of remorse. She

describes feeling frustrated by the loss of Eve while at the same time feeling a great deal of anxiety over wanting to perform correctly and "fit in." "I wanted to please [my parents]. I really did. And it was so hard because I felt like I didn't know how. The world was so fragile and I was so clumsy I was going to break it."

Many women repeated the sentiments of either feeling "like a boy" or feeling "frigid" when they attempted to have boyfriends and relationships:

> I was different in so many ways I didn't want to be different about this. I had a boyfriend for three years. Not a thing happened with that one. I often wondered if I was frigid or if he thought I was old fashioned. Then I met another boy and I thought to get it on with him, you know, but couldn't. – Barry

> Yes, I was married and had children but the sex was never anything to me – I just thought I was frigid. – Brie

> I was such a Farmer Diles [tomboy]. I wore all my brother's clothes and learned to climb trees and play sport. I think I thought if I kept at it, I could be a boy and nobody would notice any different. – Sara

Though certainly not all, a large number of the women with whom I spoke characterized feeling different by not feeling sexual desire, or at least not what they understood desire to be. Some were able to claim moments of samesex sexual attraction and a series of short, fleeting experiences – hand holding, an infrequent kiss, an awkward, palpable tension. However, more often than not, they interpreted their sexuality as that which they experienced with "boys," or men. They felt themselves to be frigid, asexual, born into the wrong body, "not right from the go." These experiences were most common among women who came out prior to the mid 1980s.

For those women who came out during the mid 1980s and after, the stories are often quite different. Rather than looking for "appropriate" sexual experiences, these women specifically sought lesbian experiences. They knew the words lesbian and

homosexual, likely from the HLR campaign, had incorporated the possibility of samesex

desire into their worldview and thus interpreted their difference as a difference of sexual

identity. Rather than doggedly looking for "Mr. Right," they looked for women, for

women's communities and for women who shared their interests. For them, coming out

was less of a sexual awakening – that is, less of the awkwardness of puberty – and more

of a practice that created a context for binding sexual desire and personal meaning with

collective imagination.

Always the performer, Sandra amuses herself in the kitchen by fixing lemon

"fizzy drinks." She completes the drinks with a flare suggestive of the need for an encore.

A matriarch in the community, she is impossibly small for the size of her personality,

energizing the air with her voice and displaying a soft grin on her otherwise angular face.

Comparing her experience with that of the "old guard," she says:

> It didn't even occur to me to think, "oh my god I'm a lesbian what am I going to
> do." It was more like, "oh my god what happens at the end of a date!" Dates with
> guys didn't give me the butterflies because I simply didn't care.

While women of the "old guard" gained their awareness of difference through

social experience, many of the "younger generation" were politically active in feminist

and grassroots politics. Their social and intellectual activities exposed them to

possibilities the "old guard" never knew. As a result, their encounters with difference and

variant sexual identities often came from a variety of directions. Explained Deirdre when

she discussed joining a feminist collective in late 1987:

> I first identified as lesbian because I love the lesbian politics. Then this one really
> aggressive woman made a pass at me and I didn't like it so I figured I was just
> "head" gay. Later, when I had my affair with Amy, Hamilton [my husband] just
> didn't smell right, didn't feel right, there was nothing right about him.

Deirdre frames her awareness of difference first in terms of her status as a woman in a

male-dominated society and only later in terms of sexual desire. Sol, on the other hand,

shares a similar mindset but begins her coming out narrative solidly within the discovery

of samesex desire:

> I first came out to myself with sexual dreams. I knew the world was outrageously unfair to women so I stopped writing in my journal because I thought someone might read it and I didn't want them to know I was a lesbian yet. Not until I found the right woman.

Like others who came out during this time period, Deirdre and Sol demonstrate a political

awareness, a grassroots urgency for social change, and perhaps most importantly, a

language to describe their experience.

Then inevitably, as the coming out mythology unfolds, somewhere between the

recognition of difference and the moment of claiming, or of giving name to the

difference, comes "the *Click*." [90] That sudden, memorable moment of awareness. The

moment it all comes together. The moment desire is noticed. The moment desire makes

sense. The moment of recognized or spoken samesex attraction:

> There I was. Blue hat, white tee shirt, sleeves rolled up, fishing in the river… saw a woman and that was IT. [*Click!*] I thought if I were a guy I would so fall for her. I wasn't looking to be attracted to women. I just saw her walk by and thought "bloody hell – she's brilliant!" I felt busted up inside and didn't know what to make of it. I remember at one point she looked over at me and I had my cigarette in my mouth, trying to look so cool. And she gave me such a look, I took in this deep breath and spent the next five minutes choking on the smoke. Bloody graceful. And I knew I had to be with her. – Lorna

> Coming out is like a focus on the bumps of coming out. I was in my late teens and was dating guys. But it never gelled, ya know. My blood didn't burn. I remember so clearly. Going to the cinema with Brian, walking down the stairs away from the movie, he grabbed my hand, eh, and I remembered thinking – *ech*! This would be so different if this were a *woman's* hand. [*Click!*] And the idea just crystallized in my mind. – Mirika

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[90] Not unlike "the Click" once described by Jane O'Reilly during the American women's movement of the 1970s, when restless and unhappy housewives realized the source of their sadness/anger.

I had a student who was on to me. She opened my eyes in Wellington by inviting me to a coffee bar. Now I had never said anything. I didn't even know anything to tell you the truth so saying I didn't say anything isn't saying much. But she took me to this place and we climbed up a set of stairs and when I got to the top I saw a floor full of women dancing with each other. [*Click!*] I remember looking and thinking, "That's it – that's me. This is me." – Brie

For some women, the *Click* is momentous and exaggerated. For others, it is less pronounced, passing by with all the effort of turning a page in a book, as found among the many narratives of the "I had a really close friend and we just crossed the line with it" theme. The absence of previous experiences of desire and the lack of understood "rules" for dating often left some women, regardless of age, feeling they were experiencing puberty for the first time. "I ran a coming out group later on," said Thelma:

The younger and older women were often different. The young ones sometimes took off faster. Old ones wanted to know "How do I find a partner?" "What do I do on a date?" "How do I let someone know if I'm interested?" They had to learn how to be teenagers again.

For some, like Sandra, this meant not understanding how to tell when meeting was about dating or about friendship. "I remember my first date," she says, raising her hands on either side, bending her fingers and to capture the word "date" in imaginary quotes:

I didn't know it was a date. Dannie asked me down to the beach and it was all a bit of sweet, really. We had a blanket and a Barbie [barbeque] and we were just looking out at the stars and I thought this is just what lesbians do with their mates [friends]. The poor thing. It was certainly a depressing start. But we managed to suss it out [figure it out] from there.

For others, the reality of responding to their newfound desire was terrifying and overwhelming. Lorna and Essie are sitting side-by-side at Dorothy's, a town café favored because of its queer ownership. She, Lorna, is leaning forward in her chair. Her weight is supported by her right hip while her left leg extends towards a neighboring table. Her left hand holds a fork, inverted but firmly poised midair, moving slightly with each accented

syllable, a survival of New Zealand's British past. Her right elbow sits on the table, wrist

loose as she talks while waving her knife. She, Essie, sits straight-backed in her chair.

One arm is in her lap while the other holds her fork, lowered as she eats. In contrast to

Lorna, her movements seem poised, practiced and graceful.

> "So there she was at the bar, in the corner," says Lorna. And Essie interrupts:

> I had left my husband and decided I was gay. I wanted to be around gay women so I went to the Club and it was scary, really. It was dark and smoky. The women were dressed as butch and femme. You couldn't just sit with the femmes because the butches would watch you with these terrible glares. And you couldn't just sit with the butches because the femmes could be even meaner. But I wanted to find other gay women. So I went. I just sat in the corner…

Lorna's grin is now widening. Essie has another bite of her lunch.

> "So there she was by herself in the corner and she was so quiet and beautiful…"

> "Lorna was different. I reckoned I liked her."

> "That's right. Dan told me she liked me. So I walked up to her and asked her to dance and her face got all pink and she ran and hid in the toilets for the rest of the night."

Without the Club as a place to be, Essie is confident she would never have met anyone. "I

went to watch, really," she says. "I'm tragically shy. And what did I know about dating?"

As I discuss more fully in Chapter Five, having a place to be lesbian and to see

other lesbians is an important aspect of lesbian community, whether that place is fixed or

imagined. For women first coming out and wanting to understand their newfound

samesex desire, community was necessary as a place and a resource, as something both to

see and "to watch." For Mag, like June, it was being able to see something to reflect and

to emulate:

> I had been raised with no TV and no magazines. I had never heard gay or lesbian. I had heard poofter but didn't associate it with gay or lesbian. It wasn't until meeting lesbians and bisexuals that I realized what I was feeling.

For Kathy, out before the mid 1980s, community represented privacy, then not easy to come by:

> When I came out we couldn't even have private conversations on the phone. All New Zealand had party lines, you know. So you never knew who was on the line when and it made relationships really hard.

Stories like these point out another important element of coming out narratives: that of historical context. Constantly concerned with remembering, lesbian coming out narratives seemed purposely to include commentary regarding "the way it used to be" as a way of positioning, explaining patterns of behavior, a New Zealand-based context and imposing a sense of almost familial continuity.

The social and economic reforms set in motion by New Zealand's 1984 government were dramatic.[91] Lesbians and samesex identified women – women not "out" to themselves or to others – who realized the "problem with no name" before that "bloodless" revolution shared a life experience of remarkable difference from their peers, out just ten, and sometimes as little as five years later. With a change of social and political circumstance so extreme and so rapid, many women sensed a loss of personal narrative; a virtual unwriting of historical context that seemed too impossibly distant from contemporary norms to have existed only a few years previous. Oral remembering, the act of narrative telling, was therefore a self authoring against erasure, against a growing, competing narrative of disbelief, or worse, non-importance. The fact that New Zealand lesbian stories prior to the 1980s are difficult to locate in written, published form, serves to further support this myth of undoing.[92] Thus the sharing of coming out

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[91] Refer to pages 64-70, this thesis, for economic reforms and pages 92-107 for social reforms.
[92] In a review of New Zealand women's history, Labrum (1993) comments on the dearth of information regarding New Zealand lesbians, suggesting it as a necessary area of research waiting to be done. Writers like Laurie and Glamuzina often cite this absence as the motivation for their work.

stories, inclusive of remembrances of what used to be, suggests that the remembering itself and the placing of one's identity within that remembrance is a necessary aspect of coming out in the lesbian community.

In a discussion of myth, history and identity, Friedman (1992) has said that history and myth are "simultaneously a discourse of identity" consisting "of attributing a meaningful past to a structured present" (194). He went on to say, "History, then, is very much a mythical construction, in the sense that it is a representation of the past linked to the establishment of an identity in the present" (195). To become a part of the lesbian community is then to weave a tapestry between your personal present and the group's past, much like the *mihi* (speeches) of *pōwhiri*, giving legitimacy to your (sexual) identity by also granting it a kinship, a past, and therefore an implied future. The relationship of lesbian sexual identity to the retelling of history is then another aspect of coming out stories that serves to frame their primacy within the Rangirua lesbian community.

In addition to constructing a *group* past, coming out stories beg the recreation of a *personal* past, one that leads to and builds up identifiably towards the present. Many conversations and stories were filled with references to bits of one's childhood that were seen in hindsight as foreshadowing the present. Over two thirds of respondents to my survey reported the importance of being able to reconstruct their past in light of their newfound sexual identities. The need to tell the past necessarily implies that identity is never fixed but is rather performative, constantly created and recreated through the telling. The authority of the telling, its significance and meaning, is directly connected to the context in which it is interpreted and shared. Further, while identity is never fixed, perceptions regarding a particular identity can come to embrace a sense of fixity – that is,

a fixity of meaning – as it bears the stamp of the language through which, and historical moment in which, it came to be realized. The telling of coming out stories is therefore not just a sharing. It is a claiming. A creation through repeated claiming; an ongoing telling that works both to create a present and to prevent the history of the present from being unwritten.

On Claiming

> "Erica Morley Punshon, ambassador of Australia and 104 years of age comes out because Sir Joh Bjelke-Peterson wishes her to be less gay."
> – Lorna, *personal archives*

Though I have searched, I have never found a mainstream published account of the "coming out" of Ambassador Erica Morley Punshon. However, I have found many references to her coming out scattered through various personal archives belonging to women in the Rangirua. Coming out *as a process* seems to embrace a dual meaning of personal – discovering, claiming, being – and political – visibility, presence, degree – imperative. While the personal imperative is one of naming and therefore making sense of the "unspeakable" (being through doing), the public imperative, that one "is always coming out" and never done (being through being seen) seems also to be an integral part of the coming out legend. It implies that the process is directed, that constant public recognition of lesbian sexuality, i.e. visibility, is necessary for both individual and community health. The heralding of Ambassador Punshon is indicative of "community claiming," of circulating narratives that anyone can do it at any age; that the community has heroines; that lesbians are everywhere; that the naming will not contain you if you name yourself. Ambassador Punshon's declaration also seems to imply that it is never too

late to claim your identity, that sexual banality infects all aspects of life, even into well old age.

There is therefore a sharp contrast between coming out, as the naming/learning to make sense of samesex desire, and the claiming of lesbian identity. While coming out may pay the price of admission to lesbian community, not all lesbians choose to join. Claiming is the point of connection. Claiming lesbian identity is the active pursuit of lesbian community and the acceptance of, or willingness to engage with, community defined ways of being. In a sense it implies, as Gilbert Herdt and Andrew Boxer have suggested, "a context for binding individual energy and personal meaning with collective social action and imagination" (1993:102). Through claiming, women who initially experience samesex desire as isolating, as marking their difference, learn to recast their desire in terms of inclusion. Explained Aileen:

> For the first five years, [my partner and I] didn't know any other gays. On our tenth anniversary, we organized a party and finally it was out in the open – afterall, conversations could only go so far. It's hard to live with that constant distance.

Claiming lesbian identity was motivated by the want to find others, to feel connected, to feel whole in terms of not holding back.

Connected to the fiction that identities are fixed, claiming was also a statement of decision making, of not turning back. In this sense, the creation implied by coming out is both a new start and the recognition of a new past, or more pointedly a break with identity through difference in order to claim identity through sameness. As a community narrative, claiming therefore fits within the coming out legend as "finding oneself." It is a finding mediated by homophobia, community, social space and venue. It is a claiming

motivated by the want to belong, the compulsion to find others and the need to discover a personal history that supports and explains the present.

Through interviews and surveys, women of the Rangirua often spoke of a small group of factors that led to the decision to claim a lesbian identity: meeting other lesbians, seeing that there were other lesbians, living a truthful life, wanting more lesbian stuff in life, meeting a partner and finding one's self. Fear and homophobia were often important influences regarding behavioral expression but were seldom deterrents for coming out. Things such as witnessed bigotry, fear of losing jobs or family, and opinions in the press were among the factors least reported during the process of claiming. Narratively, claiming was a series of moments, a building awareness and purposeful acknowledgement that more and more of public life was affected by sexual definition, understanding and perception.

Unlike the *Click*, which was characterized by a sudden awareness, by a punctuated moment of time, claiming was most often described as gradual, as the slow building of one thing upon another, most often as steps of positive feeling or affirmation. "I loved pulp fiction when I first came out," said Deb, "and *The Killing of Sister George* had a *huge* impact on me. They both helped me understand taking on the identity." Deb spoke of moving from reading to film to reading again, building a series of positive experiences that both taught her what it meant to be lesbian and slowly, over time, allowed her "to feel comfortable in my skin." It is interesting that she mentioned *The Killing of Sister George* as influential.[93] Deb was among many who voiced a visceral

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[93] *The Killing of Sister George* was a black comedy, controversial when released and rated X for its lesbian love scenes. It features the life of fictional actress/lesbian June, nicknamed "George" for the treacle Sister George, which she plays on TV. Though George is nasty and often violent to most who surround her, she remains the most likeable character of the bunch for her uncompromising lesbianism and unflinching dedication to the real in a world overrun by the superficial. George is no hero but in the end, it is the sweet TV Sister that dies while the fury of George lives on.

connection to the film, the importance of seeing lesbian life depicted not as sensational but as setting, and the subsequent motivation to find other sources of lesbian storytelling. Produced in 1968, the film often has been acknowledged as the first to feature a woman unapologetic for her lesbianism (and she is even allowed to live in the end). For Deb and the women of the Rangirua, claiming was a process of building pride, of finding images they could reflect or in which they could see their own desires reflected.

Within the lesbian community, coming out through claiming was intimately connected to the idea of reflection. In the opening quote, June poignantly notes that growing up "different" meant living in a world "without mirrors," with "nothing to reflect back." In Weston's *Families We Choose*, she notes, "In coming out narratives, seeking one's own reflection often symbolizes an effort to affirm a coherent self in a situation that promises (or threatens) to transform identity" (1993:139). She thus suggests that coming out is a kind of individual paradigm crisis, that women experience a shift in their sense of self as they begin to claim lesbian identity. Finding reflections, or others *like them*, is then a common strategy used to learn this new paradigm. From Lacan's (1977) "mirror" stage to Krieger's (1983) "mirror dance," the idea of reflection as an integral part of identity claiming and is an often-identified strategy. Yet for lesbians living in the Rangirua those reflections, if necessary and wanted, were not entirely unproblematic.

Similar to the other side of reality in Alice's Wonderland "looking glass," identity reflections for lesbians sometimes appear as a barrier, as a muddled point of confluence between two assumed identifiable and mutually exclusive worlds: the gay and the straight. Reflected is identity as seen through a different set of rules: it is part "this" world (read straight) and part not (read lesbian). Meanings are not obvious in and of

themselves as competing identity paradigms converge, thus the culture shock that such a paradigm shift creates. At the same time that lesbians are invested in claiming through reflection, they are equally invested in creating themselves as more significant than mere reflection. Seeing themselves as different from the straight world, but not opposite, Rangirua lesbians claim their sexual identity by learning to read meaning through a lesbian-informed lens. If coming out is at first about *naming*, then claiming is about *finding*, whether couched as learning to be lesbian, developing "gaydar" or discovering something to reflect. Claiming is intimately connected to the sharing/learning of knowledge associated with finding a partner, finding reflection and finding community.

During the claiming stage of coming out, more than half of the women I surveyed identified lesbian friends, a commitment to women and being politically informed as life aspects important to understanding their newfound sexual identity. With slightly less frequency, women identified community and being a feminist as additional important aspects. Conversations with Toni were particularly interesting on this point. Toni was active early within the New Zealand feminist and lesbian movements. She sits and speaks of her early lesbian experiences with unassuming confidence. Legs crossed, fingers picking at a corner of her dining room table, Toni's no-frills way of answering my questions is both informative and amusing: she has a habit of simultaneously sharing her story while commenting on the efficacy of her decisions in hindsight.

Toni came out at school with her flatmate-become-lover. She was invested in feminist scholarship, active in local political groups, and enjoyed a rewarding city life. It was when she moved to Carterton that Toni first realized the isolation that accompanies the absence of community. Previously critical of those who choose to remain hidden, she

remembers this time as "the first time I understood the closet." Toni actively pursued

community in her little, rural town. She published adverts in the local paper and wrote to

lesbian newsletters about her search to find community. After some time, Toni managed

to pull together a small group of six and was happy with her success. She remembers

writing to one of the lesbian publications in Wellington regarding the relief at having

found others. Enjoying the project of community, and some associated euphoria, she

wrote tongue-in-cheek, "I'd like our group to enlarge so much we could take over this

small town and call it Lesbianville."[94]

The importance of community and reflection was common to the claiming

element of coming out narratives. Some women found coming out groups to be helpful,

some felt them too butch/femme. Some met "others" through clubs, some through

colleagues at work. Still for all, the company of others *like them* was a defining aspect of

claiming. Like June, they were hungry for reflections. Unlike June, many stories included

telling someone, anyone, as also important to claiming. Telling, laying claim through

announcement, was ultimately how lesbians found each other. As stated above, telling

was a powerful experience, a personal promise that there was no turning back, a creation

and a new start, an expressed commitment to a new life, new past, new community. As

one of the most easily identified and salient aspects of coming out, many people

mistakenly reduce the idea of coming out to the public telling of lesbian identity. Coming

out as a process therefore becomes never ending in that you can never run out of people

"to tell."

Most of the women with whom I worked, when asked about the experience of

"telling," felt the telling had gone well. They described experiences that ranged from

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[94] Quote is not taken from the newsletter but represents Toni's best estimate of the words that she wrote.

"good" to "mixed," findings similar to those who were surveyed. I noted little difference in reported receptions of coming out between Pākehā and Māori participants, though the number of Māori respondents from whom I was able to gather information was too small to consider this finding significant.[95] Overall outcomes were similar but the deciding factors were different as discussed farther on. Similarly, it would be hard to say if religion was all-important or insignificant as 65% of 1999 survey respondents claimed it was unimportant, 75% reported they had no religious affiliation while an additional 5% identified their religion as "mine." Anecdotally, two women identified a strong religious upbringing that they promptly abandoned after having come out. One woman felt compelled to tell me, "I am a Christian and I am a lesbian and God still loves me," yet curiously resisted elaborating further.[96]

Following the legendary pattern of coming out narratives, most women came out to their friends first, unless unexpectedly discovered by their family. Women with children were a notable exception to this rule. While their discovery, or naming, often happened in the company of friends, telling (claiming) was most often directed towards family first and friends second. I heard very few accounts of children who responded badly to the news. Most narratives exposed a mixed reception, following a version of events similar to those shared by Liz. Liz was married for fifteen years and had three children – two daughters and a son, aged thirteen, eleven and eight:

> When I told my kids, one of my daughters said, "Lessie? Oh mom's just being crazy." She wasn't mad but she just didn't accept it as true. Couldn't take it in.

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[95] In her 1992 survey, Rankine found Māori respondents reported higher rates of homophobia than their Pākehā counterparts suggesting either the possibility of mine as a skewed sample or indications of a different demographic. Whether the women were out or closeted is likely to impact these results.

[96] What specific information I collected regarding religion I have purposefully left out because of the likelihood that it would make the participants transparent to potential readers of this research.

My other daughter now sees every woman in my life as a potential mum and grades them to let me know.

With few exceptions, parents were both the last people to be told and the ones who tended to respond most negatively. Out of the 42 women who reported bad experiences when telling,[97] 39 described poor experiences with their biological parents. Though they represented less than half of the women with whom I spoke or surveyed, the idea of parental rejection was acknowledged as a common, perhaps even dominant element of coming out narratives. Some felt their parents, living with the "limited" social awareness of a "pre-1984 generation," would not know how to respond:

> Isn't that terrible? I said I've told my family and I haven't. I haven't told my dad. That's because I'm really scared he's going to ask me what a lesbian is in some incredibly horrendous, innocent way. "Is that like being a new kind of vegetarian, Renèe?" God, I wouldn't know what to say to that. I would if I were in a relationship…

There were others, like Renèe, who simply wanted to avoid a presumed, inevitably awkward moment. However more often than not, knowledge of rejection was offered as the reason most influencing of women's decisions to delay telling their parents.

On Being

The search for community, discussed previously, was largely about finding others *like them*, or as some would tell me, "finding what it means to be me." When asked what it meant to be a lesbian, women offered a variety of responses:[98]

> *— It means I repudiate the norms of heterosexuality and all the mores that go with it; that I question cultural institutions based on heterosexuality and attempt to be insightful and creative in my choices of lifestyle.*

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[97] This information is based both on personal communication through formal and informal interviews, and on data reported by those who completed the survey, distributed in 1999 and found in Appendix D.

[98] These responses are from conversations and written answers to the 1999 survey.

— *It means that I as a woman can do what I feel is good for me and those I love and care about in my way.*

— *Not having to live a lie anymore. Being able to be who I am whenever or wherever it may be.*

— *Being able to simply be me — a womyn who loves womyn; who enjoys the sexuality of being lesbian; being able to live my life honestly and embrace it. It also means pain, rejection, homophobia from a large chunk of society and sometimes living a double life.*

— *Being a lesbian means I live my life in a way that is most comfortable for me. It also means I am a bit of a "fringe dweller" on the edge of "average" society.*

— *It means being a woman who loves other women. I do not believe that you need to be in a sexual relationship with a woman to be a lesbian, but I do believe that a lesbian is not someone who has sex with men (except in a case of sex workers).*

— *It means I have to be more aware of other people and try to judge how I will be treated in different situations by coming out.*

— *It means being able to stand squarely in my own boots with my head held high and my lover at my side.*

— *I don't think about it, I just get on with my life; I think of myself as being a normal human being.*

— *It is an all-encompassing lifestyle. Not just about love and sex with another woman. It embraces respecting and caring for others, educating other to respect differences, caring for the environment, respecting nature and other creatures. Taking on native issues, being informed, and an active part in community. Being honest. Getting in touch with your spirituality.*

— *Being lesbian hopefully gives one wisdom and strength to stand up for your own beliefs amongst a complex and confusing array of lifestyles, etc.*

— *It is an incidental part of my life, no more important than any other facet.*

— *It means that I am sexually and socially attracted to women.*

— *It means being true to myself. Sometimes it is a source of great sadness for a lot of reasons but it is also a source of great pride. It means climbing mountains and looking for more.*

These examples fairly demonstrate the range of women's responses. Interestingly, few women answered the question of what it means to be lesbian by speaking of samesex sexual desire. During conversation, women most frequently said being lesbian meant things like "I can be me," "I'm free to be me," "I am woman-centered," "at home with myself" and "living truthfully." A small number of women did answer by saying being lesbian meant "being with my partner" and "being with women" suggesting an element of sexuality activity, with fewer still stating "good sex" directly. The variety of differences among answers is clearly linked to the historical circumstances surrounding their self-recognition of samesex desire and whether or not the women had knowledge of lesbians and lesbian life prior to realizing their "difference."

Repeated among narratives and discussed in the previous chapter, many women were surprised that being lesbian was something to be learned. Seeing your reflection was one thing – understanding what it meant and how to own it was quite another. It required a shift of personal paradigms; a shift in the lens used to interpret the world, to generate and to guide appropriate behavior and expression. One aspect of this socialization was the narrative itself, allowing for the fiction of a unified subject to hang in illusion. Promoting the idea of a coming out narrative – and "every lesbian has one" – taught women that lesbian identity was that which brought together disparate part of their lives, lending an air of completeness. Thus the corollary to "every lesbian has one:" coming out is good and will make you feel whole. The more you do it, the better you will feel.

Another aspect of this socialization, not addressed in my previous discussion, is the lasting imprint of historical circumstance through which the meaning of samesex desire was first interpreted and internalized. After the naming of difference as samesex

desire, and claiming of that desire as a lesbian sexual identity, coming out narratives revealed a process of learning whereby women actively seek to discover what being a lesbian means. Often what they learn is that being lesbian is beyond ethnicity, class or any other popular social signifier. Though subdivisions within community may form around such identity categories, lesbian narratives with their primacy on the sexual suggest the ability to internalize something "lesbian" outside of all things "learned." Among the unintended consequences of this twist is the ability of lesbian community to create within itself that which successive New Zealand governments tried and failed, the fiction of a classless community.[99]

Much like any other process of socialization, learning to be lesbian cannot help but be infused by the historical and political moment in which lesbian meanings for an individual first take shape. Regardless of biological age, the sociohistorical context in which the syntax of community-defined language, behavior and desire are learned creates generational cohorts and historically situated interpretations of meaning. As Lesley, perhaps more than anyone, was responsible for converting my own language, getting me to speak the code of "old guard" and "young ones," I often challenged her to draw the lines between the dots for me, to reveal the logic of this group of "agemates," sometimes the same age, sometimes not. She humored my interest in generational jargon, fueling many conversations with analogies meant to "clear up the silly issue" – silly, not for being irrelevant but for being so obvious, and therefore uninteresting.

Looking off to the side, as she always did when trying to rework a thought, Lesley once said:

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[99] "In the twentieth century it was common for the people of New Zealand to be told by successive governments that they were a 'classless society'" (True 1996:111).

> It's like that movie, *The Haunting*. In the first one [in 1968] the lesbian becomes
> a lesbian when she is enveloped by the evil in the house and she dies in the end.
> In the one that just came out [1999], Zeta-Jones starts out as a lesbian and is the
> only one to live. It's the same thing. It's the difference of when you come out that
> you can never leave behind.

She often spoke of generational differences as age differences, yet here Lesley is clearly

framing sexual identity and coming out as implicated within a particular political climate.

For New Zealand women in the 1970s, the climate was one of the United Women's

Conventions, the beginning of Law Reform and the start of both the Women's Crisis and

Women's Refuge movements. While these movements were small in the 1970s, they

greatly expanded during the 1980s, a time of heated political turmoil all but replaced by

the comparative lull of the 1990s.[100] Sociologist Mary Helen Ward has noted in the past

that women who came out prior to the 1970s had narratives that concentrated on sexual

awakenings while the stories from women out after the '70s were dominated by feminist

scripts of exposed inequalities and triumph (1995).[101] I found similar instances of

politically and historically situated narratives in my own work.

Long before Donna Haraway and Joan Scott urged feminist scholars to consider

"situatedness" and responsibly reflective use of historical data, Franz Boas spoke about

historicity, about the need to consider artifacts, traits, and language within the

sociohistorical context in which they are found and not the one that we would bring to

them. Most of the women who participated in my research were first coming out in the

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[100] I am not suggesting that the 1990s should be characterized by political apathy. Notable during the '90s
were both the nationally organized "queerspeaks," arranged by a group including Alison Laurie, and the
successful pushes to pass Human Rights Legislation. However, among lesbians living in the Rangirua, the
activity of the '90s is in no way a match to the fervor that can be said to characterize the 1980s.
[101] Ward also notes that prior to the late 1970s, women came out as gay whereas women out after the 1970s
were more likely to use the word lesbian (1995:30). In Ward's work 1978 was a defining moment, a similar
marking of "before" and "after" generations. It is not surprising that her findings would differ from mine as
they were based on the textual critique of specifically feminist lesbian newsletters. What her project and my
work do hold in common is the highlighted significance of historical context on the internalization of
sexual identity and the narrative form of coming out stories.

1980s. During that seemingly short decade, New Zealand experienced a 180-degree shift in political climate, from that of a social welfare state to that of a consumer-oriented, privatized society.

As I listened to these women's stories, I came to understand that lesbian "generations" had less to do with when they were born and more to do with when they came out. Agemates developed as a natural part of enculturation, as women learned what it meant to be lesbian. Generational cohorts were not about relative age but instead about community involvement, historical context and when you developed the language to understand. Baby-dykes were lesbians who had not yet learned the "lingo;" they lacked gaydar, a lesbian informed humor and the ability to "read the signs." Older, experienced women were not necessarily older but were respected because they had been out for so many years: an indication of triumph, survival and an impressive amount of self-awareness. Implicit to generational categories was the understanding that maturity is linked to "true" sexual experiences; the sexual banality of growing up.

Many differences within the lesbian community, seen as internal contradictions, might best be understood as cultural conflict *writ* generational friction. During one conversation, Thelma highlighted these differences of definition, ideology and expectation when she complained about the interference and self-righteousness of the "younguns:"

> Some of these ones, you'd think they invented the thing [lesbian identity] the way they talk. I got really annoyed when some of those women were telling me about how to be a lesbian when some of them were only out of the door five minutes. I'd been out five *years*. This time of being out has always been a big thing in the lesbian community. You know, so-and-so's been out all those years.

Thelma's frustration is both with the threatened unwriting of the past by contemporary

definitions of lesbian identities and the lack of cross-generational understanding.

Past discussions of history and identity by Stuart Hall have proved influential to anthropological understandings of what I view as a subjectivity-based response to significant and fast-paced social change, affected by globalization. While discussing the realities of global subject-positions, Hall suggests that history must be understood, used and evaluated as a story we tell ourselves; as a telling that is interpreted and constructed by our own internal desires. Addressing the relationship between history and identity, he has said:

> Far from being grounded in a necessary "recovery" of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past (1990:225).

In conversation with subaltern and postcolonial theory, Hall is in part responding to the project of "recovered histories," popular among many formerly colonized groups as a way to reclaim a lost, or forcibly removed, cultural heritages. Personal histories, like group histories, include what facts we choose to include. Likewise, they omit what we choose to omit. As Hall suggests, we recover in part what we are able to see and in part what we choose to find.

The impulse to recover, or recreate, the narrative of one's past is not particular to lesbians but is itself something of a time-honored tradition. New Zealand may now consider itself a bicultural nation but that shift in policy and sentiment is a historically recent one. Mira is only twenty-four but speaks as if she remembers being stripped of her cultural identity in school. She relates her mother's stories, beaten for speaking Māori, as if they were her own. At the same time, Mira acknowledges a pervading fear, and an

absence of all things Māori in her life, until she was "old enough to understand." When old enough, she explains:

> I searched for my Māori past. Who am I? When I first went to a colored school I was really scared. I'd never been around so many Māori before. People would walk up to me and say, "*kia ora*" [common Māori greeting] and I'd be like, "Okay. Well, hi," having no idea what they just said. And of course they'd look at my face and say, "oh, you're a Turetahi [family name]," because Māori do that. Especially the old people. It's just incredible. And I had no idea of all that stuff.

Though valuable and empowering, Hall warns that recovering the past should not be seen as the locating of past truths now able to rewrite history and provide a lost sense of continuity to contemporary identity categories. This warning applies both to previously unknown, or unrepresented cultural histories as well as the personal histories we write for ourselves when making sense of identity shifts. Essentially, Hall says, identity is not only what you make of it – what you find and how you tell it – but also *when* you make it. The context from which the historical narrative derives its authority directly relates to what makes the identity meaningful.

Lesbians of the Rangirua, "the old guard" who came out before HLR made words like homosexuality commonplace, had no language for what was happening to them. Yet what their coming out narratives lack in common language they make up for in descriptive elements. Their stories share common themes: they employ a language of boy and girl as opposed to men and women; they often describe themselves as being a boy, as feeling as a boy would feel, as feeling frigid. Said one woman on a survey, "I never explored my sexuality primarily because of fear. I knew I was attracted to womyn but unable to understand why until early 30s. I thought I was just frigid." In addition, those out before the mid 1980s often described their first recognized moment of arousal as a moment of samesex attraction. Their first samesex sexual experience was less likely to be

the target of their attraction and more likely to be a person they could trust, a person they found, coincidently, had experienced similar samesex desires. Likewise, they shared a tendency to stay with their first partner for a prolonged period of time, often motivated more by a sense of safety, familiarity and joy in having found themselves than by a sense of passion or feeling of intimacy for their sexual partner.[102]

Perhaps most interesting, without a word to bind together "these strange feelings and experiences," what women would later identify as "lesbian" became an all-encompassing identity seen as informing of all that they were and would be. It was in part about sexuality but even more about pervading difference, about what more than one woman would describe as "an under-the-skin" kind of difference. For the old guard, to be a lesbian was everything, "from what we eat to what we read to how we tie our shoes." They had always felt different, they were born that way and it would never change. There was no escape. It was an identity that was exact in a world strictly divided between the women who were heterosexual and those who did not fit. For both generations, realizing sexual identity was about knowing realness and belonging for the first time. However, different from the old guard, the young ones located their sense of being lesbian not in finding themselves but rather in finding community, not in *being* themselves but rather in *joining* the others. Community, once primarily a source of safety, was now a source of identity learning.

"Coming of age" after the 1980s reforms, the "younger" generation were more sexually aware when they began to identify as sexually different. Their narratives show a working knowledge of lesbian and homosexual identities. They often refer to men and women, as opposed to boys and girls, demonstrating a difference of sexual maturity.

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[102] Such circumstances may well represent an historical root of truth to the popular "U-haul" joke.

Their sexuality, coming from a point of political or theoretical interest, not just through personal experience, was contained: an important part of their self-definition but always partial to the whole. Unlike the older generation, who saw identity as fixed – born different, am different, always will be – women out after the reforms viewed identity as fluid – I was one thing, now I am another, it could always change tomorrow. Renèe was rarely bitter when discussing personal disagreements with RAGLAN, The Rangirua Gay and Lesbian Action Network, and those affiliated with it. She was always the first to use her disarming sense of humor to diffuse and sugarcoat difficult conversations. Yet one of the few grudges she carried was for the inflexibility among the old guard when she was questioning her sexuality:

> They'd be like, "Oh you may be bi now but you're actually just in the process of coming out [becoming lesbian]" – which *okay*, was *true* – but at the time that was completely devastating! Like you had to be one or the other. So I went and had a two-year relationship with a guy. But I couldn't escape women in my dreams.

Identity claims among the older generation were strongly affected by qualities of absolute difference and absolute sameness. There could be little allowance for a middle ground that was part sameness (with heterosexual society) and part not. Lesbian identity, in all of its modernist fixity, could not be compromised.

In the younger community Renèe describes, lesbians were far more playful with their sexual expression, more willing to relegate it to the status of part but not all of their identity. Outward appearances such as dress or hair-length, a badge of courage for a generation that feared physical abuse and possible arrest, were a matter of fashion and aesthetic for a younger generation. Liv appears to favor the days of clear direction, "It was all about the lesbian uniform when I came out. Swamies and woolies and bloody short hair." Yet explains Flossie:

> For the old ones, like me, it [butch/femme] is who they are but for these new ones it seems like more of a look. It's a decision they make before going to the Club. Not how they live. But we all agree that straight use of it is offensive because they only think in straight terms.

The clashes within the community are hard to see as generational when they are camouflaged by differences in age, class and ethnicity.[103] More often, the conflicts are seen as a clash of the competing values associated with community and consumerism, the genuine and the superficial, the meaningful and the casual.[104] However, if we consider the dual roles of community and language use, combined with the historicity of their coming out experiences, what we might find is a group of adults having trouble relating to their teenagers.

Though not writing about New Zealand, historian Lillian Faderman (1984) has previously commented on the relationship between the sociopolitical climate during coming out and the historicity of sexual identity. Discussing women in the US who discovered their lesbianism during the radical feminist movement, she describes a group whose language use reveals an ability to critique heterosexuality and imagine sexual alternatives. They became aware of their samesex desire before having samesex sexual experiences. In addition, women out during the radical feminist movement were less likely to experience being lesbian as isolating because of the active role community played prior to and during their discovery. Her findings support what we learn in the New Zealand context.

By now it should be clear that historical circumstance, the ability to discuss one's difference and the presence or lack of community all serve to create lesbian generations

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[103] I would not suggest age, class or ethnicity as insignificant. Rather, for the differences of narrative that I am discussing, age, class and ethnicity have a lower salience than generational variation in affecting narrative elements.

[104] *Gemeinshaft* and *gesellshaft*.

that cut across the lines of age, and blur the boundaries of class and ethnicity. This is not to say that social categories, such as ethnicity, have no effect. In fact, an interesting exception to generational differences was the role of *whānau*, or family, among Māori lesbians. Through surveys, while 63% of respondents chose "finding yourself" as the life aspect most closely related to the choice to coming out and 54% chose "coming home" as the aspect most significant, fears of hurting family (37%) or friends (35%) were also reported as important. The most common reasons I heard from Māori for the prioritizing of family were similar to those written by Māori scholar Leonie Pihama, "My coming out to my whanau was received as more of a shock because I 'wouldn't have children' than because of anything to do with sexuality" (1998:179).

Though not all of the experiences among Māori who came out to parents were bad ones, Moriana's story below exposes common themes among the Māori narratives I was able to gather. She came out to her parents first, unlike the non-Māori in her cohort, equally single and without children:

> I came out to dad first on a Saturday afternoon [8 years ago]. Couldn't use the lesbian word. Said I was gay. He knew. But he said he didn't want me to give up on men because he wanted grand kids. And said he loved me. And he said it with no joy in his voice – he was upset. After that he didn't speak to me for three months. And I was working with him in a wool store. Mum was so angry. Didn't care I was gay [she didn't know], just cared that I hurt my father. She had come home and found him sobbing. Sobbing, sobbing, sobbing. He had never showed her crying and she related this to me. That he had fallen to his knees. She obviously knew something must have hurt him very badly and of course I was the reason for that. Dad got his grand kids through my brother. I went off to [university]. Life went on. A month later mom came and stayed with me and that was the beginning of a change in my mother. Something must have gone down. She became very supportive. Always very welcoming of the women in my life. Eventually things with dad started to get better.

While Māori participants in my research were few, common in their narratives was the importance of *whānau* and the idea that lesbianism meant an inability to have children

and thus an end to the family line. For Moriana, part of her "salvation" in the eyes of her family was granted through the *whānau's* future as represented by her brother's children. More than anything else, negative responses to lesbianism were described as if mourning the loss of children once vividly imagined, disconnected from the Pākehā imagined fears of the abnormal and immoral.[105]

The fear of shrinking *whānau's* aside, one of the most common differences between the generations was that of the perceived role of community: among the old guard, community was about survival while for the others it was about avoiding assimilation. The old guard still struggle to pass their history and sense of community on to a new generation. It is maybe for this reason that the legend-like model of sharing coming out narratives includes a cross-generational description of community as protection from the outside. Like Kennedy and Davis in their discussion of working class butch and femmes, among Rangirua lesbians I suspect the old guard "had forged a culture for survival and resistance under different conditions and had passed this sense of community on to newcomers" (1993:2). Historical, fluid, once concerned with protection, contemporary lesbian community now represents different interests, each interest a product of historicity in its own right. Regardless, to this date no formation of lesbian community has existed outside the pressures of both internal and external homophobia.

From my survey, 80% of Rangirua area lesbians reported experience of homophobia, with half of them having been verbally attacked and ten percent suffering

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[105] Disconnection does not imply an inability to exist in tandem with other fears. The influence of the Anglican Church was particularly noticeable. Rather by disconnection I mean to imply that one fear draws its authority from "tradition" while the other draws from "modernity." There were also dissenting opinions with some of the older Māori suggesting the influence of religion. Younger Māori dismissed such opinions with statements like, "Oh, that's not a Māori thing. That's just a generation of Māoridom coopted by religion."

physical attacks.[106] When sorted according to coming out date, these numbers are

dramatically reduced with the old guard receiving the brunt of the impact. In addition,

interviews and informal discussions revealed differing "expectations" of homophobia:

what it might look like and what form it might take. Experiences related by those who

were out before and during the 1980s were largely obvious, public and confrontational in

nature, both in social settings and through coming out narratives. Many stories like

Thelma's below, circa late 1970s, incorporated blunt challenges:

> I didn't come out so much as I was outed. My girlfriend's brother heard about us
> at school and told his mother. She gave me five minutes to tell my mother before
> calling her on the phone and I knew it would devastate my mother. It was a still
> quiet summer's night in suburbia and here we are having a screaming row
> [argument] on the front lawn and she told me I should be dead so at that moment I
> moved out. We get along now. She thinks having a lesbian daughter is her
> payment for having an affair with a married man.

Expressions of homophobia were less frequent and less publicly tolerated, while

still present at the start of the 1990s. By all accounts, the expectation of homophobia, a

common element to coming out stories, far exceeded the degree of homophobia reported

in conversation and through surveys. More typical would be narratives like the examples

below:

> Dad and my partner got on like a house on fire. I remember he asked me "Well if
> you had had kids, what would you have called them?" Like being a lesbian meant
> I was never going to have children. And I said "For a girl I don't know but if it
> was a boy it would have been David or Jordan." "Well thank god you're not going
> to have kids then," he says. – Edna

> My mother was gorgeous [wonderful, understanding]. When you have children,
> you want them to have the easiest life possible and we live in a really hideously

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[106] Rankine's survey of lesbian and bisexual women's experience of discrimination conducted in 1992
yielded the following numbers: 41% reported experiences of discrimination with 75% of those
experiencing verbal assault and 13% experiencing physical attacks. Rankine notes that Māori women report
higher than average rates of discrimination. I found similar correlations among Māori women, working
class women and women with strong religious backgrounds, though again, my samples for this information
are small.

> homophobic world. She said she was sad because she doesn't ever want me to come across horrendous, horrible, homophobic people who are going to be mean to me. – Jane

These are the experiences of a new generation, of women coming out a mere five years after their "elders." While the new generation community concentrated on claims of difference, the elders continued to favor sameness. The young ones struggled to incorporate new political ideologies and interests while the old guard fought to have their harsh realities remembered. In the narrative fall-out of this generational rift, homophobia, resilient and adaptable, emerged as the common ground.

Bad Weather[107]

WE'RE JUST WATCHING THE NEW GAY AND LESBIAN WEATHER
FORECAST TO DECIDE IF WE'RE COMING OUT

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[107] The drawing is a reproduction of a cartoon found in archives. It is credited to illustrator Garrick Trensain of the *Evening Post*, a paper no longer in circulation. Date not given.

In Chapter One I was critical of the reduction of lesbian community to the role of personal protector. However, I would not undervalue the role community plays in mediating homophobia, teaching members how to recognize it and how best to respond when faced with this fear-induced bigotry. The felling of "Pinky" provides an interesting example both of the impact of homophobia and the difference between generations. This was my community coming out story.

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For the first few weeks of my research I was on foot while I searched for an economical means of transportation. I soon caved to necessity and purchased a used Honda scooter. The options were limited. New scooters were similar in price to small cars. "Cool" looking scooters were high-powered machines, requiring a motorcycle license; something I did not have and did not wish to get. The local dealership had only one option left for me and I staunchly avoided it. I am not a "pink" person and this scooter was Statement-Making Pink. The kind of Barbie doll pink that screams for your attention. "Don't you have anything not quite so… pink?" I asked the salesman. He laughed, though I'm not sure he really understood the joke. His attempts to comfort me were feeble. "Pink is a very masculine color," he said, "lots of guys wear pink these days."

After a couple of weeks, I bought a helmet – a respectable bluish-black – and took Pinky home. Those in town who knew me, even for the few short weeks, already understood the humor. It was Joce who nicknamed the scooter Pinky. Like Margaret

Mead's thumbstick, you could use it to identify me in a crowd.[108] I was often greeted with

comments like, "I saw you and Pinky at the theatre last night" and "So, you and Pinky

were at the library this morning?" Comments partially meant to create bonding through

jokes and partially meant to remind me that I can be observed as well as anyone. Through

Pinky, my movements were tracked.

A couple of months later I was at the Club folding fliers, early for a "community"

meeting. Many women among the old guard remained suspicious but tolerant of my

presence. It was my habit up to this point to remain quiet during these meetings, taking

notes only when I returned to my flat so I could be as unobtrusive as possible. Avoiding

attention. Melting into the background. So naturally, that's when it happened.

Sandra and I folded fliers while other members, mostly women, milled about the

Club waiting for the meeting to begin. Liv was sitting in the window watching activity on

the ground below. Concentrating on my folding as if it were an art, I just caught her

remark. "Hey – anyone in here own a Pink scooter? Some guys just tipped one over in the

alley." Embarrassed, and trying to act as nonchalantly as possible, I turned and stood.

"That'd be me," I said, then mumbled, "I'll take care of it. Thanks." And without

looking, I left the room to upright my bike. I moved quickly, though less out of concern

for the bike than from my discomfort with being the center of attention in a setting that

was not always forgiving. So focused was I on the flush of my face and on making a

quick exit, it wasn't until I reached the stairs that I noticed I was surrounded.

I had asked no one and no one had said a word. Many women in the Club had

simply continued on with business as usual. Yet as I approached the stairway, Lesley and

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[108] Mead's thumbstick (a walking stick with forked top) became part of her public persona later in life, iconic of her presence. Collegial stories tell of Mead using her thumbstick to navigate professional settings

Jane appeared in front of me leading the way. To my side was Sandra. Behind us I felt the presence of at least four other bodies. The mood was not tense, just matter of fact. It felt strangely choreographed and practiced. I was distracted from my immediate problem by the seeming routine nature of a response that took me so by surprise. As we channeled into the alley, I made my best effort to look casual, approaching my bike to examine it. In my mind I imagined teenagers, recently released from school, pulling what they felt a harmless prank.

Sandra stood at my side while I worked on the bike, making no move to help with eyes pointing out. The two pairs behind us headed in either direction down the alley, I assume to locate the miscreants. I found it hard to concentrate on my scooter as I was mesmerized by the activity around me. After a couple of minutes the pairs returned reporting they had found nothing, and headed back into the Club. Still confused by what had happened, I followed them up the stairs. The Club now felt different. The atmosphere more relaxed. The once standoffish and suspicious were now joining in folding fliers and making attempts at small talk. I found myself wondering, given their reaction, if I should be considering the event as something more than a foolish prank. The location of RAGLAN was well known around town. In the end, I was not sure that it mattered. Without reference to the interruption, the community meeting began.

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This story remains one of the more intriguing moments during my fieldwork. The programmed response of these women haunted me for days, eerie for the unexpected ease with which they fell into their patterned response. These were the women who claimed to live in a "lesbian town," who said the town atmosphere "had no effect" on their behavior.

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and to command attention, "tapping it on the floor to split a path through the crowd like the Red Sea."

"Is the town conservative?" I asked. "I wouldn't know," they said, so detached were they from caring. The "Pinky Brigade," as I named them in my notes, seemed to share nothing in common and yet in retrospect I understood it as an old guard activity. They were quick to assume homophobia was at work and were clear about the need for protection, both for me and for each other as pairs, regardless of my "questionable" status within the community. After the incident, those who had doubted my "lesbian credentials" were now satisfied of my "membership" in their accidental community, having shared an identifiable "like experience" with them. As an incident, it seemed analogous to stories from Melanesianists who speak of being "adopted" by a kin group in order to secure a place in the social imaginary.

The young ones were those who remained in the Club, nonplussed by the goings-on outside, clear in their interpretation of the moment as a prank, unrelated to the Club or the identity of the scooter's owner. Still, conversations later would reveal that their detachment was as practiced as it was paradoxically attentive. Said one woman, speaking of this incident and relating it to another:

> It was like I felt I should be paying attention but I didn't know why. Like at the [soccer] game. But there I knew what was happening. I just couldn't suss [figure] how to deal with it.

The game to which Joce refers was a regularly scheduled soccer game. RAGLAN's team competes in the local women's tournament. As many would say, theirs is the only all-lesbian team "… but we aren't the only dykes on the field." The team players and their spectators were markedly different from the women more involved in the day-to-day of the Club. These were the "sporty dykes," supported by their "young" friends with a few of the old guard to bolster the ranks and supervised the "kids."

RAGLAN's team was competitive, winning more games than they lost. Supporters of opposing teams were most often respectful and as limited in number as we were. During the half-time period of one particular game, players complained to Maud that some guys among the opposing team's fan-base were making "rude and homophobic comments." They were not sure how they should handle it and did not want to "make a fuss." "Really," said Maud, "Who?" and with that she sauntered away towards Pearl. I imagine the first ten minutes of the second half were probably long for the young men. Maud stood on one side of them and Pearl on the other. Together, they had a harmless conversation: not shouting, but definitely using "outside" voices. Maud spoke to Pearl of how wonderful the league was and how respectful most of the teams were to RAGLAN's players. Pearl spoke to Maud of the things that *could* happen but usually *did not*: things like name-calling and stupid jokes. Wasn't it wonderful, they both agreed, that New Zealanders could move beyond such nonsense during their lifetimes.

Reminiscent of the start of the Lesbian Dog Show, most eyes were on Maud and Pearl, watching how they handled the situation and taking mental notes. Though the community was often a good training ground for young ones wanting to learn how to respond to phobic behavior, the internal effects of homophobia were far more insidious. These two events, Pinky's fall and the soccer game, were the only direct contact I had with phobic behavior during my research. And yet coming out narratives revealed a disturbing pairing of high and low expectations: a high expectation of frequent encounters with homophobic behavior and a low expectation regarding the general treatment they felt acceptable to receive from others. When I asked Dannie if she felt Tàkaro was safe for lesbians, she answered:

> Oh sure. Violence against lesbians is way down, eh. There was heaps more during HLR. Now it's just the young ones going other places [not RAGLAN's Club] or staying out late [past 10pm] that get the problems. And only now and then. A gay boy was beaten up last year around the toilets in the Park but it was *really* late. And one girl was harassed a few months ago leaving the Club but that's just because the bars had just let out, eh. We usually leave in groups anyway.

Dannie's comments reflect an accepted lower expectation of safety outside of the community than inside it.

Lesbians in the Rangirua do not live in a utopia. Many have experienced homophobia; some have seen more than others. However, the expectation of homophobia looms larger than the reality and, like an autoimmune virus, has infected the narrative of lesbian identity. It has become a heritage of fear turned inward. That outward occurrences of homophobia have greatly decreased does not matter; the leftover phobic residue continues in the repetition of coming out narratives, reified through history's retelling.

Lowered expectations would seem the by-product of internal homophobia. I once asked Barry how she would define internal homophobia when she complained that too many of her friends suffered from it. She responded:

> It's not being able to admit you're a lesbian. Going to the hotel and "Oh, I'm sorry, the room only has one bed." Or in a shop and, "Oh, you two look so alike. Are you sisters?" The sales call for the Mister of the house. The present for the partner and, "Oh, what's he like?" The every form and wondering if you should write single or not. The lesbian snot [dirty laundry] that shouldn't be shown.

Barry's string of comments continued. Each one a description of small daily events in which a lesbian must decide to (publicly) come out or not. Is this setting safe? Can this person be trusted? Is there any reason I shouldn't? Here, the glory of self-discovery is gone. Here, homophobia is implicated in the ability to come out and in the consequences of claiming. Explained Relle, when dealing with catering customers:

Clients are always asking, "So what does your partner do?" You know, "And your partner, what does he do?" And it's always a judgment call. But sometimes the hardest thing is how [my partner's] family introduces me. I'm the friend.

With each potential coming out situation, I would follow the comment with the question:

"And did you?"

Sometimes yes, sometimes no.

"And was it bad?"

Usually not.

"Did you ever have a bad experience?"

No, but I expect I will.

In some cases, the internal homophobia was extreme. Polly remembers a

particularly sad moment during the Homosexual Law Reform:

I didn't know from Stonewall back then. I just remember the Sally Army [Salvation Army] tried to get me to sign their petition [against passing the HLR Bill]. I know an old gay man that did the canvassing for them because he couldn't bear to let his family know.

Polly connects internal homophobia with the inability to come out. At other times, levels

of internal homophobia were so high that external homophobia escaped recognition,

blending into other aspects of expected behavior. "I never experienced homophobia,"

explained Sara during our one and only conversation. We met in a room in her office

building out of eyeshot of her co-workers. It was a conference room, steely-gray, stark

and impersonal, like much of the feel of our conversation. Sara had approached me

through a friend after hearing about my research. She waited for me to sit, then chose a

seat catty-corner to mine, with three feet of table between us:

We've [my partner and I] been luck not to experience it [homophobia]. I came out to some friends who never talked to me again but some of them stayed on. I can

remember times when my partner and I were denied board, you know at a hotel or something, but we always found a place to stay.

She is unphased by this treatment, feeling "that sort of thing happens," it is "hardly worth mentioning" and "not a big deal." She says again that she is comfortable with the conversation and she says so with a steeliness that matches the room.

Then there are the smaller moments. Discussions of homophobia that stand out for the contradictions that they represent. Mag was rare among members of RAGLAN in her support of Women's Refuge but even she had her limits:

> Even though they say they're for women and lesbian visibility that's crap. Refuge and [Rape] Crisis are really homophobic. They've got three things they uphold: lesbian visibility, commitment to the Treaty [of Waitangi] and collective decisions. But when I was working there cleaning out a drawer, I found a tiny manila envelope in the back of a drawer. It was a folder labeled "lesbian visibility" and it was empty. Then, during a workshop a woman got up and left because she was disgusted to hear about lesbians and apparently that was okay. I'm embarrassed that I came out at Refuge because it's a myth that women do that but it's not like people think. Lesbians started the Refuge movement in the early 1970s and people have never got past that.

Mag was frustrated but said nothing and continues as a Refuge volunteer.

Lesbians out prior to the Law Reform were particularly attentive and intolerant of the smallest of infractions against their "honor." They were quick to act, confident in confrontation, comfortable with the certainty of their identity position. Coming out narratives kept alive the struggles they had endured and the warning of what might happen if the community became politically complacent. They also kept alive the specter of homophobia, allowing a younger generation to be influenced by the fears of the past. Where the elders were confident, the young ones were tentative, watching and learning how to act and how to be. Though often empowering, coming out stories sometimes allowed fear to turn inward, distorting their view. Learning what homophobia looked like

and expecting it in the form of high drama, they were at times unsettlingly grateful for the smallness of daily indignities.

The Lesbian *Mystique*

> That to me is my coming out story. Coming to grips with it myself. Telling my parents. And the hard slob afterwards. It led to a point where I can accept me and feel comfortable at the same time.
>
> – Mag, *November 1999*

Coming out narratives have become a lesbian language capable of defining generations and how they have come to experience themselves as lesbians. Along with conceptions of difference as presented in the previous chapter, these narratives expose the belief that learning to be lesbian is about "shared experiences, common histories and community-defined expression." In tandem with Hall, the "coming out legend" demonstrates that cultural identity is "not an essence but a positioning" (1990:224); a combination of personal expression and community interpretation. As such, the remembering of coming out stories is both necessary for self authoring and for the continuity of lesbian community. Bound by like experiences, both fictional and real, the merging of lesbian generations within the community creates, and becomes defined by, the social tensions it produces and the fear that it promotes, as well as the reflection it provides. Coming out might best be seen not as an individual process but as the lasting impact and dependence of language on community and history.

The Space of Reflection

> In gradually building a community, which at last they came to command, Grovers were caught in mid-flight between escape and nesting, between voluntary exile and the longing to belong. …This is the story of a place where gay people of contrasting and sometimes clashing personalities and social types lived as good citizens or as thoughtless slobs – like people anywhere – without, for once, being crushed by the consciousness and the consequences of our differences.
>
> – Esther Newton, *Cherry Grove, Fire Island*

Space without the Crush

Historically matched to the project of modernity is the concept of spaces as socially constructed.[109] They allow for, and are partially defined by, the social interactions that they come to embody. In this chapter, I explore the significance that lesbian-defined spaces and places have for community and sexual identity. I begin as one would expect, with a discussion of lesbian separatism and the history of the search for lesbian-accessible social space and place. Once appreciating the history from which the community "old guard" derives meaning, I turn my focus to the physical places of Rangirua's two competing gay nightclubs, Club All But Straight and Club Loud and Proud. Club All But Straight (ABS) was RAGLAN's location and characterized as a community-based venue, while Club Loud and Proud (CLP) was a for-profit venture created by two men who tired of All But Straight's limitations. After considering these places, I turn my focus to the construction of social spaces in an effort to read and evaluate the Club-based turf war and its social aftermath within the community and between generations. The frictions seem to suggest the conflation of meaning between place and space and the conflicting expectations associated with both. Taken together –

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[109] For more on the historicizing of space, see Frankenberg and Mani 1993, Smith and Katz 1993; for an analysis of space as something that must be practiced, see de Certeau 1984; for examples of lesbian geographies, see Bell 1991, Bell and Valentine 1995, Valentine 1993; and for specifically anthropological investigation of lesbian space see Kennedy and Davis 1993 and Newton 1993.

conflicting expectations and conflated meanings – the story of a topless woman censured in RAGLAN's Club (ABS) illustrates the relationship among social space, social history and sexual identity.

Gupta and Ferguson (1992) are just two of many who now comment on the increasing interest among social scientists to explore social spaces and their histories. They have suggested that space "anchors" a community by providing a symbolic domain in which individual members can feel grounded (1992:11); what the women in my research identify as the ability to belong and to feel real. Equally compelling, Gupta and Ferguson challenge the assumption that internal homogeneity is automatically afforded by these spaces. Responding to arguments that imply cultural change as the handmaiden of "global capitalism," Gupta and Ferguson, "explore instead the production of difference within the common, shared, and connected spaces" (1992:16). Their view – that differences internal to social spaces are part of a shared process, "that differentiates the world as it connects it" (1992:16) – is evidenced in my research by the turf war between All But Straight and Loud and Proud.

As a combination of social experience and engagement, lesbian community space is a setting in which identity meanings are culturally created. For this research, I am less interested in recognition of social relations in a space than I am intrigued by the role of spaces in social history, manifested within lesbian community through separatism, directed energy and identity. Within lesbian community, space, as an arena for power, is governed by group actions and individual expectations. Among lesbians living in the Rangirua, there is no question that space is inextricably linked to community and identity. Their coming out stories stressed that "finding community" was akin to "finding space:"

community as space "allowed me to come out," "gave me a place to belong," "gave me

room to think" and "something to reflect." Talking about her time in Carterton, Toni

equates "isolation" with the All But Straightence of community and ability to

"understanding the closet." Even the names of coming out support groups highlighted the

significance of space, from Wellington's 1980s "Breathing Space" to RAGLANs 1990s

"Closet Space," (Te Awekotuku 1991:553).

The insatiable quest for community as space was not limited to those at the point

of discovery but could equally be found among lesbians of each generation. At the time

of my research, Heni had been out for over twenty years and living in Tàkaro for thirty.

Confident and amiable, she still felt like an interloper when strolling downtown:

> I really feel it when I go to work in the straight public. I just feel like a fish out of
> water completely. I work with people I like and talk to and they're *really* good
> mates. I like talking to them and they're *completely* accepting of who I am…but I
> still feel… just walking through straight parts, I really feel I don't belong there.

Many women described similar experiences, crediting community as both space and

place, affording both mental relief and a physical location that allowed them to avoid the

"crush." In searching for others they actively sought a social atmosphere in which

lesbianism was the assumption. The purpose was not to escape the straight world but

rather to enter/own/have a space in which the privilege of assumption belonged to them

and the straight world did not matter; in which identity narratives were not responding to,

based upon, or rejecting of hetero influence but rather were formed in the All But

Straightence of

caring. Independent, creative, faulty, and unquestionably their own.[110]

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[110] As one interesting outcome of this sentiment, fourteen of the women who completed my survey
conspicuously skipped the set of questions that I identified as comparison questions and which had
appeared in a previous survey of national New Zealand values. Though most made no written comment,
one woman wrote, "I feel no need to be compared and measured by straight values."

The *Truth* Invasion

The use of experience and its relation to feminist theory was perhaps best captured in the movements of the late 1960s, and early 1970s. The central, if not always overt role of experience in contemporary feminist thought represents the historical legacy of those feminists who claimed the personal – *their* personal – was politically and theoretically relevant. Their observations demonstrated the effectiveness of responsibly reflective experiential data in exposing dominant ideologies and informing political theory.

As scholars interested in the value of experiential knowledge, we need always to consider what motivates its deployment. Said Charlotte Bunch, an early US lesbian feminist theorist and activist of her experience with lesbian separatism:

> You have to take separatism as we defined it in the context of a cultural moment when black separatism had defined black pride. It was a black power model; we will separate and be better than you. Show you who we really are. It was both fun and All But Straightolutely horrible.[111]

Separatism, as defined by Bunch, has played an interesting role in New Zealand's lesbian history. The newsletters of *The Furies*, Bunch's former US-based lesbian separatist collective, found circulation in New Zealand and were used by some women as inspiration for forming their own collectives. Bunch traveled to New Zealand on more than one occasion and was the keynote speaker during 1979's infamous United Women's Convention, mentioned in Chapter Three. Equally significant to the influence of Bunch's theories was the demand at the convention that Bunch step aside to allow New Zealand lesbians to speak. They then presented a public statement on their separatism and the importance of lesbian-only space at the Convention. As with the US, New Zealand

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[111] 1994, personal interview.

lesbian separatism must be understood within the context of its own cultural moment, as influenced by, separate from and reacting against its American ideological roots.

When Toni wrote of her isolation living in a rural town, she sent her letter to *Circle*, then a lesbian feminist magazine. Of the moments she remembers most vividly in her life, one that stands out is the day she saw her own words on a billboard. She did not know the words were hers at the time and did not realize the significance they would have as a crystallizing moment in lesbian history. *New Zealand Truth*, a newspaper with national distribution, was advertising for new readership by highlighting its current stories. Toni was driving home from work and contemplating dinner when her thoughts were interrupted by a billboard that announced, "Group Takes Over Town, Calls it Lesbianville." Laughing at the All But Straighturdity, feeling "now this I've got to see," she stopped to buy the conservative paper on her way home.

Toni had intended to read the story as a source of comic relief. It was fun to imagine that it might be true, that her more radical sisters might inspire her with their outlandish escapades. It was two years after her submission to *Circle* and she had since moved towns again. Paging through *NZ Truth*, she was shocked to find that her old letter, meant as joke and humor, was the story's primary source of information:

> The group wants Carterton, 14km south of Masterton, renamed Lesbianville, and all men banned from the area. The idea is just one of several strange, often sick, schemes advocated by the underground lesbian feminist magazine, Circle.[112]

The year was 1982.

Lesbians who were out at the time spoke of an extreme sense of violation and invasion. Many "community" meetings were held to discuss "how this could happen" and

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[112] *New Zealand Truth*, May 4, 1982. Adding irony to this story, the rural town, Carterton, at the time itself a seat of conservative sentiment, is now also known as the world's first town to elect a transsexual Mayor, now MP Georgina Beyer.

"what we should do about it." Some community newsletters already read "for lesbian

eyes only" on the cover and others soon followed suit. Lesley explained this as, "not

about secret lesbian knowledge but about lesbian energy and knowing where it was

going." The event itself was small but the rallying cry was strong and an "Anti-*Truth*"

campaign ensued. Lesley continued:

> This was our venue. Our energy. We didn't have many spaces. This was ours.
> They [straights] had heaps of places. We felt lesbian energy should go to lesbians
> and they didn't just take the newsletter which they had no right to do but the dirty
> little bastards took our time and they were laughing at us.

She said the last sentence with no breaths or breaks, her face flush with emotion from

remembering. Straight society had entered their space and compounded the injury

drawing energy away from the community.

Prior to the "*Truth* invasion," lesbian separatists were often considered the pariahs

of the community: extreme in their views, theories and practices.[113] They were man-

haters, stubborn, irrational and unrealistic. Said one New Zealand lesbian, out and active

during separatism's heyday, "Separatists felt feminists were disowning lesbians in order

to be more acceptable to patriarchs," while the feminists, in turn, "aggressively attacked

[separatists] for being aggressive" (Rosier 1993:165). Another woman told me she had

left a separatist collective in 1981, "because I felt they gave me too much permission to

hate men." During the "Anti-*Truth* campaign," an interesting ideological shift began to

take place whereby those not previously open to a separatist life began to adopt a

separatist sentiment. The lesbians of my research were less divided by separatism as

seems to have been apparent in the past. Though none identified as separatist, a clear

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[113] During my research I found that I was not immune to the impulse to judge separatists negatively. One
woman, upon receiving my survey, challenged me to explain why questions asking about separatist
involvement were framed as negative statements – something I had not realized I had done. See questions
81 and 82 in Appendix D – Lesbian Community Survey.

separatist sentiment informed by recent political events, permeated throughout the community and particularly among the "old guard."

The second lesbian community invasion happened in 1985, this time by the French secret service. During the 1980s, and since then, part of New Zealand's national identity had been built around its status as a nuclear-free zone. For fifty years, from 1946-1996, nuclear weapons were frequently tested in the South and Western Pacific; first by the US, then by Britain, and lastly by the government of France. New Zealand's nuclear-free status was not only an environmental position but it was also, rather pointedly, a postcolonial one, and a statement of independence against the Commonwealth.

In the 1980s, lesbians who would later become members of Rangirua's old guard, were invested in New Zealand nationalism, and comprised an active, well-known membership base for Greenpeace, the largest of the country's four hundred peace groups (McKinnon 1999:145). Greenpeace's ship, the *Rainbow Warrior*, had been a successful nuisance to the French, often blocking their efforts by blocking the path of their planned nuclear testing. While moored in Auckland Harbor in 1985, a couple of well-placed bombs sank the *Rainbow Warrior,* killing one of several people then on board. Two French secret service agents were later arrested and plead guilty to charges of manslaughter and of sinking the ship. Retold within the lesbian community was the story of French secret service agent Dominique Prieur who had pretended to be gay in order to infiltrate Greenpeace and gain access to the ship. Separatist sentiment among New Zealand lesbians – the impulse to pull back, conserve energy and protect their space – must be seen as informed by these events and not, as some have suggested, the mere consumption of US ideology then stuck in a 1970s intellectual quagmire of despair.

While *NZ Truth* and the sinking of *Rainbow Warrior* were not the sole inspiration for

New Zealand separatism, they clearly influenced and fueled both separatist sentiment and

the subsequent concentration on protecting community "spatial borders."

Underlying separatist sentiment as later incorporated by the Rangirua lesbian

community is the notion that they are "a community of service," energy inward, and not

"a service community." Pearl is firm regarding this point. Disappointed to hear I had

attended Club Loud and Proud, RAGLAN's area "competition," and further, that I would

be spending time at Women's Refuge, Pearl had hoped to point out the error of my ways:

> We are a community of service. We know where our energy goes. They just show
> up for the salary – might as well be on the dole [collecting unemployment]. How
> can you just give it away? What if it's some sod that benefits from your efforts?
> What will you do then? … They let all kinds in, ya know. They [straights] have
> enough places to go to need what we've got.

By "all kinds," Pearl means straights and men as well as lesbians.

At the Dog Show, I found the separatists I had been warned about did not exist.

Later on, I would realize that what had been identified as "separatism" was less an all-

encompassing philosophy and more a sentiment of preference; less about place and being

stuck in the 1980s, and more about recognizing the roles of social space and difference in

the 1990s. It was not, as advertised, the desire to create Lesbianville. Rather it was a

preference to support lesbian efforts, whether they were lesbian-owned businesses,

lesbian-specific social outlets or lesbian research, such as my own. None of the women

who participated in my research identified as lesbian separatists.[114] However, seven

women mentioned they had previously been separatists while five defined being lesbian

as

"having no men in my life." Over one third of participants specifically sought out lesbian fiction, lesbian owned business and, when possible, lesbians as employees though an equal number felt that none of those things mattered. More than two thirds of those responding to my survey indicated that most of their friends were lesbians. Some women happily had close male friends while maintaining a distain for all things straight:

> I don't even want to socialize with straight women. It's not that I don't like them. They're just totally different, eh? We went to the Alchemist and Barrister for drinks on Friday night. And it was just… you know, women are so pathetic around men. It's annoying. You just want to bump they're heads against the bloody wall, don't you? Men think they're better than us because they've got pricks, most of them. And it's so annoying. Not all of them. I know some men that are good mates. But most of them.

While what people report on a survey and what they say is not always an indication of what they do, the sentiment among community members towards separatist practices, or lesbian-only experiences was significant.

Though not self-identified as a lesbian separatist, Liv speaks clearly about separatist sentiment when she talks about her "feeling of ease" in RAGLAN's Club. She often sat in the side window at the Club – her perch – as she was doing on the day that Pinky fell. She feels "freer" there than in most other areas around town and she spends as much time at the Club as possible. She explained it as being about conversation as well as behavior, about expressions of privilege as well as exertions of energy:

> You're not coming from the position that being lesbian is weird or strange and will therefore color your opinions about everything. When talking, you might disagree, but there's comfort that you're coming from the same assumptions.

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[114] I was fortunate to meet a few lesbian separatists though they chose not to participate in my research. While my research would have been the lesser had I not experienced their influence, I have done my best to honor their request.

Liv described the Club as a place where she could escape the heterosexual gaze and assumption, a place where "I can be just me. Not me compared to something." Other women avoided the Club because they felt the space not protected enough:

> Then at the dance I saw some straight women show up. Even though this is our only space save our homes. That's why I don't go.

To respond to this need, the Club had created monthly "lesbian only" nights, "but only after two years and after we threatened to leave."

The history of lesbians in the Rangirua is mirrored by their quest for lesbian informed and defined space. Mere tolerance felt borrowed. They sought social space infused with lesbian energy, not just female bodies. Before there was a community place like the Club there were only social spaces:

> House parties were the venues back then. Simply brilliant having a space, a venue that's ours… that's affirmation. The Clubs – in Wellington and the like – they would be around for a few years and then fold. That was the pattern of the '80s. So we'd have to find something new. That was the life then.

The space they sought and created was both public and private, both social and intimate:

> I met one woman and she said we [my partner and I] could use her place and go to bed. So you don't forget those things.

It was a place to be sexual, to belong or to just be. Though not a place for "warm fuzzies," or an endless garden of sunshine, members never failed to value community as a provider of social space:

> Finding community, it was a world I wasn't ready for. I didn't drink, I wasn't butch. I didn't wear a twin set and pearls. It wasn't what I wanted to reflect but I was bloody grateful it gave me the space to make a choice.

The loss of community, lamented by members of the old guard, is often a reference to the loss of lesbian-specific space; to the desire as well as the need for it:

> There isn't a lesbian community anymore but there used to be. In the 1980s Cuba Street was heavily lesbian in Wellington. There was a general feeling of butch/femme code. Each generation brings its own way of being and the older must move over. These folks never joined gay liberation and I suppose I think they've lost the plot, haven't they.

Said Hetty, as quoted previously in Chapter Two, community was "something the straights didn't know. Losing our under world … I don't think we have community anymore." For lesbians social space was a natural extension to community: tangible and necessary. It helped to conserve lesbian energy, to deflect the hetero gaze and to create a symbolic domain in which they were the privileged, in which their behaviors and assumptions were felt tacit and familiar.

The Tension that is not Straight

Anthropologists often show an interest in social space as place by examining borders and deterritorialization, by investigating hybridity and mobility and considering the "scapes" of everyday life. My interest in social space is informed by this history with a focus akin to Foucault's, i.e., space as a playground for power relations and a means by which identity expression is as disciplined as it is freed. Suggested by Foucault (1980:149):

> A whole history remains to be written of *spaces* – which would at the same time be the history of *powers* (both of these terms in the plural) – from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat.

Such is the story and history of RAGLAN. While the fluidity and ease of generational shifts were equally inherent to RAGLAN's history, it is possession of a venue and the protection of that place to which members credit the strength and longevity of the Club.

The social space of RAGLAN, like the community itself, became ever defined by the tensions of difference: by power, by generation, by "gaze" and by privilege. While the older generation was driven by the "personal as political," the younger generation seems to place the priority of privacy over the evils of privilege. Thus after contextualizing separatism as represented by the "old guard," and considering its survival in terms of separatist sentiment, I turn my discussion to the generational clash inherent in the All But Straight/Loud and Proud struggle and the implications it represents for generational interpretations of gaze and privilege. Community served the role of providing space for experience but also became a venue for community-informed expectations and containment. The same space that allowed for new identities and belonging was now implicated in the production of their acceptable parameters.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the space of the Rangirua community was constantly shifting. They met weekly at one Hotel but lost that space when it closed. After a couple of years, they began weekly nights out at another hotel, stopping in the mid 1980s when the group was told it was "unwelcome." It was in response to this ebb and flow of space-made-accessible-by-straight-whim that RAGLAN began Club Anything But Straight, a space of their own with a dance club setting on Friday and Saturday nights. Enabling them to do this were the facilities recently acquired by RAGLAN at the Arts Council Center (ACC). Funded by the city's Arts Development Fund, ACC "was established to give the city a central site for the arts, combined with related retail and community activities."[115] The wording of the ACC mission, with its use of "diversity" and "culture," had allowed RAGLAN to qualify for tenancy.

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[115] Quote taken from City Council literature.

Most of ACC was accessible from the town center, however the only entrance to the Club's location was through a back alley. Club members hotly debated whether this was good for their privacy or bad for visibility but the location was not picked for its entrance. The choice had been financial – those who qualified to be part of ACC received subsidized rents from the mostly conservative and Christian led Council. It was an irony relished by RAGLAN members.

As the significance of community-defined social space continued into the 1990s, a woman's merit was measured by what she brought to this space. Did she add resources, energy, skills or liveliness? Was she gracious and generous with what she had or was she a drain, superficial or interested in exerting her own privilege. It is in this way that the meaning of social space, and the tensions between the two competing clubs, came into focus for me. All But Straight "came out" in the mid 1980s, Club Loud and Proud in the late 1990s. One supported the community, protected space and conserved energy. The other was a "sell-out," chasing profit and promoting privilege. The old guard, certain of the connections between social space and social thought, viewed Loud and Proud as an amalgamation of privileges: the straight gaze, American consumerism – *writ* "user-pays" capitalism – and a heterosexually defined symbolic domain. The willingness of young lesbians to patronize Loud and Proud was proof among the old guard that they just did not understand. Lamented Heni:

> Seems like the baby dykes think it [having a space] is about pulling out and no worries, ya know. Like as if talking about oppression would leave a bad taste in their mouths but coming out they find just scrummy [scrumptious].

As a community split, All But Straight and Loud and Proud was an ideological split, highlighting the historicity of privilege, space and energy and identifying them as

generational issues. Privilege and class were not synonymous terms. Community concern with class often seemed limited to its potential for expression as privilege, an occurrence deemed antithetical to belonging and inclusion.

At the start of this chapter I referred to a topless woman, censured for her behavior while attending the Club. The details of the story are no longer clear but most narrators of the scene agree on a few basic facts: she arrived with two men, danced with them for a while, and later as the three sat drinking at a table, she exposed her breasts to one or both of the men. It is unclear if she was simply drunk, teasing the men or taunting the patrons. She was not the first woman to expose herself at All But Straight, but she was the first one who proved to be controversial. Some members, angry that Hetty had censured the woman, claimed it was "bi-phobia." Would Hetty have done the same thing if the woman were not accompanied by two men? Or was it the flaunting of privilege that so enraged – a privilege that might gain her acceptance anywhere but here? Others insisted such behavior was generally inappropriate at All But Straight, whether the woman was bisexual or not. "It makes people uncomfortable," said Gaia, though it was hard to take her seriously with the pictorial, step-by-step instructions on safe sex silhouetting her head. Most members of the old guard concluded that Hetty was right to make the woman leave because she was probably straight anyway. "Only a straight woman would assume a queer club means anything goes." The use of the term queer was significant as it was the first time I had heard the word in the Club or among its members. Conversation regarding the woman would hang in the background for a couple of weeks later to return during a community meeting.

As it happened, the topless woman was a regular at Club Loud and Proud. Though I did not recognize her, all of the RAGLAN members who never attended the "off-limits" club were sure of it. I say that without sarcasm or any intended commentary on the truthfulness of RAGLAN members. My purpose is to paint the scene for discussion regarding the motivations and ideas behind the use of such terms as community and inclusion, and the assumptions that feed into their meanings. This woman had been deemed "straight" by majority opinion; her own self-definition was unimportant. And while I had seen some of the RAGLAN members at Loud and Proud, her patronage of that club was based not on sightings of her there, but rather on her behavior. The competing gay nightclub was imagined to be overflowing with such "straight" displays. As eighty percent of RAGLAN was lesbian and the majority of those attending Loud and Proud seemed gay male, transvestite or transgendered, the label "straight" was curious and a point to which I will return.

Important to the conversation of the topless woman's censure, and to understanding the motivations behind Hetty's actions, is the history of RAGLAN's venue and the difference in atmosphere between RAGLAN's All But Straight and Club Loud and Proud. Unlike most of its counterparts around the country, RAGLAN's space (a dance floor and six adjoining rooms) is theirs alone. It has no dual purpose as a women's center, Women's Refuge, business, or sexual health center. It has no salaried employees and is run on a combination of grants, dues, stolen/donated office supplies and 100% volunteer energy. During the week, the space is used by various gay and lesbian groups for meetings, programs, and rap sessions. And on Friday and Saturday nights RAGLAN's venue transforms into the unlicensed nightclub, All But Straight. "Unable" to sell alcohol

without a license, All But Straight sells plastic coins that may then be exchanged for drinks. In return, coin sales from All But Straight are used to pay the bills and sponsor RAGLAN's soccer team, *The Lawless*. *The Lawless* and their fans make up half of the younger generation, and the majority of the twenty-somethings active in the Club. They are a small bunch when compared with the number of gay and lesbian twenty-somethings who prefer to hang out at the more commercial looking Loud and Proud, along with most self-identified transgendered and bisexual people who do not feel at ease in All But Straight.

Frustrated by the lack of consistency from year to year, the eclectic décor, and dominance of 1970s and 1980s music, two gay men broke away from RAGLAN in the late 1990s to create Club Loud and Proud, a gay and lesbian nightclub open to the straight community. Loud and Proud had two distinct sides in their venue; one for dancing and one for drinking or loud but social conversation. In contrast to the dark colors that covered All But Straight, Loud and Proud was dominated by metallic hues, by beiges and grays. The walls around the dance floor were sculpted in relief, the techno music trapped and echoing throughout the "dance chamber." On the opposite side was the bar, surrounded by computer monitors showing a constant rotation of snapshots from the previous night's adventures. The bar counter was curved and evenly covered with business cards reading, "I met you at CLP" to help capture a new name or number from the night. Ages were far ranging, as were apparent social classes, in the largely singles scene. And the bathrooms were a popular point of conversations, still newly labeled as "those who identify with the male of the species" and "… the female of the species," respectively.

Like their demographics, Loud and Proud and All But Straight were markedly different in character. Loud and Proud was a club 24/7 but to walk into All But Straight during the week was like visiting a young friend's first flat. The furniture and fixtures were a hodge podge collection, utilitarian and collected for convenience, not aesthetic. The kitchen was open and stocked with coffee and tea. The dance floor had the feel of a studio hall, half covered with tables and chairs that might as easily be found on a patio as they would be on a pub floor. It was social and casual and a place to hang out. Club nights were only a moderate transformation – the house lights turned down, the dance lights turned up and the tables pushed to the far sides of the room. The social scene was a mix of couples of cliques with very few singles appearing on their own; the same faces, all known, and the same social dramas – it was daunting to be new but familiar to return. RAGLAN criticized Loud and Proud as a for-profit venture with salaried employees and a consumer aesthetic. Lacking the respectfulness of a "community for service" design, it drained energy from the community and potential financial support for RAGLAN's social programming.

Loud and Proud opened and closed in the same year due to lack of interest. Loud and Proud, owned by two queens, was dubbed "too straight," "too disruptive to community-building" and was subsequently boycotted by RAGLAN's membership. It seems more likely that it was the breakup of the original owners and not the boycott that forced Loud and Proud to close, however its shutdown was widely considered a victory by RAGLAN. Loud and Proud opened again within a year only to suffer a forced closure

six months later, having failed to renew its liquor license. By the time I finished my

fieldwork, the club was again open for business.[116]

Part of the animosity RAGLAN members felt towards Loud and Proud was the

fact that it was open to everyone, gays and straights alike. Many lesbians expressed

frustration to me, saying they did not like the idea that straights might enter the club "to

watch the queers in action." They did not like knowing they were the subjects of

voyeurism or worse that the privileged could *pass*, or "play gay," and later play

acceptable. "Playing gay" was strongly guarded against at All But Straight, not just

because some of the members were old enough to have suffered undercover cops but

because many of them had been active in Greenpeace when Prieur had passed as lesbian

in order to sink the *Warrior*. Until a woman's lesbian credentials could be proven, the

community accepted her but remained cool and aloof.

RAGLAN believed its venue was the source of the group's longevity. As such,

the most valued quality of their venue was that straight society was of no concern.[117]

Local newspapers debated whether gays should be hated, because God thought us an

abomination, or befriended, because Jesus would love us and try to save our souls. Yet

most RAGLAN members could not say whether or not they lived in a conservative town.

Their most frequent response, "I wouldn't know. I don't have much to do with them."

Even those who chose never to enter All But Straight believed the Club a necessity. It

was the only location felt to be beyond the straight gaze. Ultimately, this is why Loud and

Proud was straight first, and gay second. It was the claim of being a gay space by turning

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[116] Plagued by bad luck, Loud and Proud closed its doors again and has since been unable to reopen.
[117] As a model, this is not unlike the dynamic within early 1980s separatist groups, as described by Dominy. There, as with RAGLAN, while the ideal of self definition created in complete disregard for men or heterosexuals was not possible, they defined their space by the aspiration to do so (9183:88-89).

gayness into a commodity, and the soliciting of a mixed gay and straight clientele that kept Loud and Proud from gaining favor among RAGLAN members. Where Loud and Proud took pride in things like the creative restroom signs, All But Straight felt the "hip slogans" too belittling, superficial and geared towards straight consumption. That All But Straight prospered when Loud and Proud closed was a mixed blessing, turning the tide against the topless woman whose assumed Loud and Proud-style "canned queerness" was her eventual undoing.

Two weeks after the woman's ousting, RAGLAN had a community meeting to discuss the renewal of their lease. With Loud and Proud closed, its lease was up for grabs. The logical question: should RAGLAN try to get it? All But Straight was part of ACC and enjoyed the benefits of a subsidized rent. Loud and Proud's location, though more visible, would mean a 200% increase in payments. RAGLAN's income had ballooned after the first Loud and Proud closing and it continued to grow after the second. The patron twenty-somethings who had favored Loud and Proud brought a new economic strength to the Club so the possibility of a move was a real one. Central to the debate of whether or not to move was RAGLAN's statement of purpose, "to provide a open and safe venue for all persons of alternative sexualities."[118] Would the new space support the group's mission?

In its current location, RAGLAN was already struggling to meet its goal for inclusion. The group's population was largely lower to working class, over the age of thirty, five percent Māori and eighty percent female.[119] While piercings and tattoos were

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[118] Since the location of All But Straight was accessed only by staircase, members were particularly interested in a venue more accessible to disabled members of the community.
[119] Although the surrounding areas had higher than national average populations of Thai, Chinese and Samoans, few people representative of these groups, or of Pacific Islanders, ever attended either club.

commonly seen at All But Straight, the "alternative" crowd with face piercings and colorful hair would more likely be found at Loud and Proud. RAGLANs members were aware of the limits to their diversity and actively worked to correct it. Posters had been added that discussed Māori culture and the more liberal sounding "All But Straight" moniker was adopted to make the Club seem more welcoming. Ultimately it was "community need" that kept RAGLAN from making a bid for the lease. The political need for visibility could be maintained through newspaper ads and social programming but the community, it was decided, must protect the need for space among everyone, even the closeted.

Through discussions surrounding the topless woman, it appeared that RAGLAN pursued safety and inclusivity by prescribing which identity differences were allowed and which ones were poor behaviors. Its membership suggested that people in their twenties, out after the mid-1980s, transgendered, bisexual, and/or above working class were in some ways alienated from All But Straight. As an organization, RAGLAN acknowledged a common political purpose with all community members but was perceived as unable to embrace the unity and diversity "All But Straight" was meant to represent. In contrast, Loud and Proud was straight: commercial and thus not community; too visible but not political; not community for service, not community at all, but merely a for-profit venture. In contrast to All But Straight, Loud and Proud's demographic suggested butches and femmes, dykes and fags, and those otherwise not straight but not "queer" did not feel welcome. Loud and Proud had a high concentration of those under thirty, a barely visible Māori contingent and a highly visible drug and sex trade.

"Queerness," allied in the Rangirua with American ideology, was considered a US commodity and a form of cultural domination. At Loud and Proud, similarity of personal experience was insignificant. Anyone who paid the cover charge paid for an evening's entrance into a queer community. "Queerness" at Loud and Proud was more style than life and the Club not only reflected that style, allowing outsiders to "pose" as insiders for the thrill, but it also imposed the style, suggesting that one must buy into it in order to be queer. Older lesbians complained that the younger ones thought New Zealand's gay and lesbian movement really did originate with Stonewall. Said one woman, a professor, after her students read *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*:

> The younger [lesbians] wanted to know what lesbian nightlife was like here in the 1950s bars. I had to tell them we didn't have bars, we had pubs, and they closed at six and women weren't allowed in.

The imported queerness was threatening to overwrite local lesbian and gay history. The ease and fluidity it represented carried with it a dangerous complacency. RAGLAN members felt in part that the rejection of "queer" safe-guarded their place in terms of history and their imagined space for everyday life. By embracing queer and supporting Loud and Proud, the younger generation showed the old guard that they had "lost the plot," that they had lost sight of what was important. Said Hetty:

> They expect it [All But Straight and RAGLAN] to be there, like when Loud and Proud closed, but don't understand what that means. They're totally complacent. They don't remember what it was like not to have a place – not to be welcome in other places.

Great Expectations

The tensions apparent in the story above were less about straight intrusions and more about lesbian expectations. As community space, the expectations were great.

Authenticity, belonging and inclusion are not easily achieved but they are the goals to which the Rangirua's lesbian community aspires, opposing themselves to the profit-driven, American-compromised, privilege flaunting Loud and Proud. And yet a community that is "home" means a nightclub that is "home" as well. For the old guard, the dual purpose of the space was born of necessity. For the younger generation, it was stifling and inconvenient. Joce seemed to be at ease in both clubs and was sad to see Loud and Proud close its doors:

> I *loved* Loud and Proud because you could go there and dance and get drunk and dance. At RAGLAN you have to be your worst at home. There if you go with a woman, they all say she's a girlfriend. At Loud and Proud if you go with a woman you're just there with a woman.

Joce's point is not just the pressure of pairing off, a common concern in the couples-oriented RAGLAN community, but in the freedom to get drunk, to be a slob, to experience the awkwardness of a first date without the feeling of doing so in front of one's family. What happened in the community stayed in the community, seemingly never to be forgotten.

Drinking, an activity that once plagued the community, was now enjoyed but carefully monitored. It seemed as if the older generation was split in three: the drunks, the light social drinkers and those in recovery. As any parent might describe their child, the younger generation was characterized by excess: loud music, heavy drinking, and extremes in behavior. All But Straighters did not care for a baseline so strong it could be felt vibrating in your chest. They allowed the young ones their fun but not everyone was supportive and at times, the disapproval was palpable. The "gaze," though not straight, was still ever-present. In response to the inability to "be slobs" at home, some lesbians would seek out non-lesbian venues, often in different towns. There they were free to

experiment without community repercussion. Describing herself as "tougher than most," Sol supported RAGLAN and the community because "others need it even if I don't." The straight gaze, and the related assumptions that go with it, did not bother Sol so much as it humored her. "With all their privilege, they just don't get it," she said, as we nursed our bowls of coffee in her backyard. "I'm a lover of many things," she said when I asked her about her love for coffee. Sol was ever single and ever flirtatious. Our coffees were served in "mugs" that lacked handles and held enough substance to form a small meal.

With an interesting choice of metaphor, not wanting to "expose my laundry at home," Sol relayed an incident that had occurred two weeks previous:

> Relle and I had gone on Holiday in Turangi. We were in a straight bar and snogging [kissing] which we could *never* have done at All But Straight. They'd all be watching. They were watching in Turangi but we didn't care. We were too drunk. The next night I was in the same pub and this woman approached me. She was out with her husband and she'd seen me the night before and she said to me that her husband and her were wondering if I'd be interested in going back to their place. And I said no, no thanks. And she lets out this big breath and says, "I knew I should have sent my husband over to talk to you." And I says, "why?" And she said, "He wouldn't have botched it up like I have." And I said, "Your husband wouldn't have had any more luck, honey." But I don't think she got it straight away.

Sol felt that straight society assumed lesbians were overly sexual and would be interested in any sexual adventure that came their way. "You don't get that at the Club," she explained, "You know, you don't get people looking at you like you're a crazed sex freak or something." Sol enjoys the anonymity of dating in the straight world, but she returns to the Club "when I get tired."

Like social norms, the meanings given to space are most evident when the rules that govern them are broken. This is what happened with Loud and Proud and with the topless woman at All But Straight. The space created allowed for certain freedoms but

also affected the way in which expressed behaviors were read. For the old guard Loud and Proud was a meat market, embracing the "use and discard" mentality of the "user-pays," profit-driven straight society associated with the advent of Rogernomics.[120] For the younger generation, and those who dabbled across generational boundaries, Loud and Proud was more relaxed and more playful, free of the serial monogamy that dampened dating options at All But Straight. Though the younger generation appreciated All But Straight for shielding the heterosexual gaze, they equally appreciated Loud and Proud for changing the "setting" in which their behaviors were read.

What both generations shared was an understanding that in straight society, they were always on, meaning always *on alert*. Ever-watching their word choice, ever-managing their identity expression, ever-monitoring their physical touching. Finding community was finding the space to be off, not on.[121] It was a space to be expressive and sexual and banter with the best of them, but it was not a space beyond controls. As Kennedy and Davis have argued, community as a claiming of space is also a claiming of intimacy (1993:5). Yet in Loud and Proud, what seemed to be the claiming of space as commodity and not community had the added advantage of allowing lesbian attendees to be read in non-sexual and non-sexualized terms. They could touch without the assumption of sexual desire and they could kiss without the assumption of intimacy. Expanding the sensibilities of their community space outside of the "community gaze," they cared little about the straight interpretations of their behavior and cared more about their freedom to be slobs without censure. The community created space that allowed for behavior but it also created the gaze for reading it; it opened a space for the expression of

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[120] The economic systems associated with financial reforms of the 1984 government.

desire but also created the parameters that contained it. Pointed out by the clashes between Loud and Proud and All But Straight defined space were the competing expectations that accompanied lesbian assumptions. In leaving one space, they had taken on the baggage of another.

RAGLAN, as a projection of gay and lesbian community, even provided space for those who never entered it. It was a virtual embodiment of imagined community. It was a hub of activity, allowing area lesbians to participate in community when and how they felt it appropriate. It allowed women to enjoy the fiction of a potential chance meeting on the street even if they lived many towns apart. Through the Club's visibility, it created a space that comforted simply because it was there as a place to go when and if you "got tired." With the newsletter, phone tree and email bush, it was not difficult to find lesbian company if you wanted it. Feel like seeing a movie? Send out an email, "going to see *Life Is Beautiful*, 8pm at the Regal," and a dozen women might show up to join you. The space created by community was not just a space of social or sexual experience. It was also a space of "deep horizontal comradeship," of both imagined and virtual connection. Newsletters showed women telling coming out stories, bartering services and posting memorials. They showed community as a space to celebrate and to mourn, to share resources, to feel known, to imagine possibilities. Community was imagined both for the "horizontal comradeship" and for the mental freedoms it afforded.

With the constant connectedness of community, being known sometimes led to the unsettling feeling of never being anonymous; of space as small and limited:

> The size of the Club can be hard. It would be nice to go to a bigger gay bar where you're not in the spotlight the minute you walk through the door. It would be nice

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[121] Though ironically, this is precisely why the younger generation crossed community to enjoy Loud and Proud. Being a slob, having a drink, enjoying a date free of expectations was also a form of being off.

> to just stand in the back and watch. See women being with women and it's no big deal. Carefee without all that tension.

This feeling was particularly present in the Club of the past, of the pre 1980s lesbian life. Dannie is so at ease in the Club it is hard to imagine a time when she was not. "A little something for everyone," is how she describes the Club now as its space weekly transforms from support groups, to political action meetings, to the Friday night Club All But Straight. When the club first began, "it was incredibly rigid." Dannie was never much of a drinker. Her options at the Club, while limited, were still greater than anywhere else:

> I went to the Club even though I didn't like it because I wanted friendships with other dykes. It was a meat market but I went because it was the only place to be. You don't go to a bar to find a friend but when that's all you have, you do, eh?

> Blanche also felt the need to attend, to claim the space even if the fit was less than

perfect. Though not always approving of her life choices, the Club is still a space for her:

> I still go to the Club and used to do pubs before that but that wasn't me. A social space? It's the *only* space. Folks up at the Club say, "ah, there's Blanche with another straight woman," because Bathie wears makeup. Club was hard for me because I was always with femmes and the Club didn't accept that. No one asked me about how I was when we would break up. Older generation was like that.

For her part, Bathie remembers the old Club:

> [It was] like a biker bar. Scary. I was gob smacked and chocked to the back teeth the first time I went in. It was really butch femme then. Before Blanche. I was femme then, too, but it's changed. They [butches] wear colors now. Not just black. No one sat at the tables like they do now. They all stood round the bar. I went every single time even though I was uneasy.

> Every woman with whom I spoke imagined community as a place of belonging.

Whether it was "scary" or they "didn't fit" or they felt the space was "not me," as members they still maintained the expectation of belonging and the aspiration to be inclusive. RAGLAN was not all lesbian but the lesbian community had succeeded in

creating the Club as a lesbian space with lesbian specific events, nights, newsletters and support groups. While the attitude of the space might change, whether through time and generations or through the days of the week, the same expectations remained. Many of the struggles within the Club were border struggles, the result of competing expectations and identity definitions. Learning to be lesbian was not a process without friction.

Bathie's earlier comment was apt: RAGLAN was defined by its tension, through both its existence and the community's willingness to embrace it. And while embracing, they seemed embattled by the question: Does creating space for lesbian community mean creating fixity for lesbian identity? By defining some lesbians as in, are others defined as out? What about Amy and Helen, discussed in Chapter Two, always circling events but never the welcomed participant? What about the topless woman, self-defined as lesbian but community-defined as straight? RAGLAN claimed itself a celebration of biculturalism – are two language posters on a wall enough to support that claim? RAGLAN claimed an aura of classlessness – is a sliding scale for membership dues enough to evidence such a view? In creating a space that lesbians could reflect, with RAGLAN as both the embodiment and product of that reflection, the Club was also a space for debate, both imagined and material. The space of lesbian community was of a definitively New Zealand community, not immune to the ethnic, class-based and able-bodied tensions that preoccupied the society in which it rested.

In constructing lesbian space, women built upon the romantic notion of a creation/construction of history that would allow for the transcendence of ethnic and class differences as well as the return to a hypothetical past in which gender was fluid, lesbianism flourished and diversity was accepted. The strong links between lesbian

community and New Left social movements are reflective of the tension between the

political reality of marginalization and the social reality of romanticized acceptance. As

such, Rangirua lesbians sought not just to claim space but to claim space as New

Zealanders; to gain legitimacy as Kiwis by exceeding the expectations of New Zealand

society, proving themselves better than the mark to which straight society aspires.

Ironically, political scientist Jacqui True describes New Zealand nationalism

much as New Zealand lesbians might describe themselves, as having transitioned through

"the best of British stock" to "better than Britain" to "avidly not British" (1996).[122] While

the younger generation was perhaps more inclined to commit themselves to biculturalism,

older New Zealand lesbians seemed more committed to "classlessness," as a social reality

if not a material one. Here the old "social welfare state" brood struggled with the new

generation and their adoption of a "user pays," capitalist mentality.

As a world system, capitalism is ostensibly about the constant expansion of value.

Among Rangirua lesbians, that expansion carried with it the ills and expectations of a

doggedly heterosexual society. Loud and Proud was a straight space because it was profit

driven, thus promoting an inherently straight ideology.[123] With its techno-beat, "queer"

clientele and visual monitors of conspicuous consumption, Loud and Proud had literally

"sold out" in the eyes of RAGLAN members. While Rangirua lesbians expressed disdain

for Loud and Proud's violations of community mores, a larger, advertised as "national"

New Zealand gay and lesbian community seemed compelled to fight similar demons.

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[122] That is, avidly not British because they are Kiwis first. It does not mean anti-British as some women maintained British connections through family or chose to live in Britain for extended periods of time.
[123] There are interesting connections and historical dramas to be told regarding the connections between hetero and capitalism, hetero and homophobia, capitalism and homophobia. While such topics are beyond the scope of this dissertation, I find it intriguing that most of my fieldnotes in which I discuss some of the more interesting aspects of class are the same notes that include women who asked not to be part of this research.

Vinegar Hill, an annual "queer friendly" New Year's celebration summer camp, opens

each year on the banks of the Rangitikei River. Originally created as a gay male venue,

lesbian participation at Vinegar Hill began in the 1980s was on the rise in the late 1990s.

Historically a free venue, as the popularity of the site increased so did the perceived need

to provide essential services, such as bathrooms, first aid and security. When the

commercial group Deus assumed control of the venue, offering these services but also

charging an entry fee, the community response was immediate. Though Deus tried to

explain the entry cost as merely covering their expenses, a Rangirua- like generational rift

seemed evident in the "national" community reaction. The commercial aspirations of

Deus were unwelcome. The blocking of gay space from those who could not pay,

unacceptable.[124]

The issue of class among Rangirua lesbians generated cross-generational

agreement when it came to expressions of privilege. On this, the community presented an

almost united front. To have property and resources was no violation of community

values but could become one if those resources were used to exercise privilege. As an

outsider and academic, the issue of privilege had greatest saliency for me when the

women discussed their distrust of "intellectuals." What had been described to me as anti-

intellectual sentiment was deeply grounded in the battling of privilege. Like many who

live in the Rangirua, Mona is a manual laborer. Valuing any work done that is done by

hand and hardly reticent in her views of academics, she mused:

> They sit up there and get paid five times our salaries to think and take long
> vacations. God forbid they should think to share their precious knowledge with

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[124] Deus managed to overcome the bad publicity the first year but was unable to leave the stain of the controversy behind them. In the end, as they argued all along, they made little if any profit from the venture. As of 2002, the venue was again free for all however social services are no longer offered.

us. And if we pull their teeth to drag them "down" [to the Club] then they talk down to us and use language we don't understand anyway.

Mona's comment was both a general complaint and a particular critique of Dr. Flora, the last academic who had spoken at the Club. Dr. Flora had not only violated Club space by expressing her privilege through jargon-ridden language, she added insult to injury by extending her privilege to Bert. Invited to speak about lesbian identity on a designated lesbian-only night, Dr. Flora was accompanied by Bert, a "man," who had planned on attending the talk. Not understanding the extent of her violation, Dr. Flora felt Bert should be allowed to attend as "an honorary postmodern lesbian." The women of RAGLAN were unimpressed by the turn of phrase and insulted by the attempt to violate their space, made by "one of their own."

When I began my research, my interest was in feminist gender theories and the various gender expressions apparent within lesbian ideologies. Though I abandoned that line of research to investigate community, many women were aware of my interest in gender and a few had asked if I would speak at the Club. Had I continued with my inquiry into lesbian genders, I am not sure what my response would have been. Asking about lesbian genders while at the same time leading discussions on feminist and gender theory would have been a difficult road to navigate. Thankfully, since I had changed my research focus, I was not bogged down by the methodological implications and was happy to answer the request. The debt one feels towards participants when conducting social science research is as hard to describe as it can be to suffer. I was grateful for the chance to give back.

Like the felling of Pinky, holding theory discussions at the Club became another way in which my "lesbian credentials" were proven within the community. I discussed

this idea with Betty, herself an accepted "intellectual outsider," and she hardly missed a

beat:

> I've thought a lot about this. I think that New Zealand lesbians value the practical
> above all else. It's changing but still the person who can get out and fix something
> is often valued more than the person who can shed light on something. Academics
> are essentially impractical and therefore a fairly dispensable "frill."

I read her comment as pertaining to the sharing of "lesbian energy for lesbians,"

immediate and within the community. Later I suggested the same idea to Renèe, she

agreed but added:

> It's not just sharing. There's a certain amount of sacrifice involved, really.
> There's nothing brilliant [good] about being poor. But if you're a lesbian, there is
> always something that you do because it helps other women. You know, not
> because there's money it. Or maybe it's not women. Maybe it's us indirectly. But
> like Refuge or being a vegetarian or fostering one of the dogs from Paws [no-kill
> animal shelter]. Lesbians are always doing stuff like that, even if they don't do
> shift work.

My privilege – as (an assumed middle class) American, academic and white – was not

erased by my actions but it was forgiven, largely due to my perceived correct identity

performance and the meeting of community expectations. As events, Pinky and the

gender talks suggested lesbian identity as intertwined with lesbian space, underscoring

the importance of maintaining that space and supporting the community through

sharing/sacrifice in a way that neutralizes privilege. It does not erase class difference or

conflict but does try to lessen its impact, thereby working to promote the community

myth of "classlessness."

Passing Through

> If the [Homosexual Law Reform] Bill is passed in its present form the country
> will become a Mecca for thousands of homosexuals from Australia, the
> Continent, and America, who will jet in here. Our 16-year-olds are virgin

territory. The Minister of Tourism will be able to advertise New Zealand to homosexuals throughout the world: "Come to New Zealand for sun, for scenery, and safe sodomy."

– MP Norm Jones, *1985 after reading of proposed HLR Bill*

Much of the effort expended on creating, defining and defending lesbian space was directed at the *pass*: whether concerned with experiencing the sweet and the sensual or consumed by preventing it as an instrument of privilege. The importance of the pass was unavoidable – not just politically as in passing bills but socially in trying to pass, needing to pass, not caring about passing, not wanting to pass, wanting to be free to make a pass or receive a pass, having space in which to pass or preventing your space from the invasion of passing. Identity, intimacy and authenticity were all wrapped up within social space, defined by historically situated community sentiment, separatist or otherwise.

Perhaps MP Norm Jones was right to think the passing of Homosexual Law Reform would set the country on a new path.[125] By 1999, New Zealand was something of a lesbian and gay tourist destination, earning the country over $150 million annually from gay travel (McLeod 1999:8). In September of 1999, Wellington hosted the annual International Lesbian/Gay Travel Association (ILGTA) symposium. For a brief but relished moment, gay space expanded within the public imagination. A billboard in Wellington Airport read "Welcome to the home of the Kiwi *Fruits.*" A full-page ad from ferry service *InterIslander* read "Welcome from one of New Zealand's biggest *Fairies,*" instead of ferries. Even Wellington's own City Council ran an ad featuring a picture of both the North and South Islands and renaming the waterway between them, "Cook

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[125] Continuing its strange position as both New Zealand's friend and foil, the US's moral right also opposed New Zealand's HLR in 1985. Explains Dennis Altman, "American evangelists linked the alleged "soft" line of the government on moral issues to their prohibition of visiting nuclear warships" (2001:153). Altman considers such actions as evidenced by "the particularly American combination of free-market economics with restrictive sexual morality," providing an interesting comparison with New Zealand lesbian connections between capitalistic ideology and heterosexual normativity (Ibid).

~~Straight~~ Gay." It was a far cry from the City Council that denied the advertising of Wellington's Lesbian Center on public buses in 1981. Importantly, while commenting on the symposium, Rosemary McLeod notes that while ILGTA introduced a spike of gay presence in the media – "[Gays are] A bit like Furbies, aren't they? Every home should have one" – it managed little in terms of lesbian visibility. [126]

The most subtle power reversal effected by the lesbian community was the colonizing of straight space for lesbian purposes; mini rebellions in which lesbian identity, humor and/or activity can "pass" or press forward within straight society. On "Coming Out" day, I had joined Pearl and Gaia for dinner in the local mall food court. "We're always on the prowl for the young ones," said Gaia, referring to the potential to spot new baby-dykes. On a different day, I was with Lorna strolling on a downtown footpath, when we passed by a group of bystanders. Lorna pointed to specific women saying, "you and you and you and you," then turned to me and proclaimed, "and they know what I mean."

The strength of Maud was her ability to claim space outside of the confines of lesbian community. Within straight society she assumed her lesbian identity and expressed it as a sign of privilege. When the younger generation watched, they learned what it meant to define space from a lesbian point of view. Even *Queer Nation* broadcasted an episode, "gay ways to see straight places." Through the imagined space that accompanied their imagined community, lesbians learned to project their identity and aestheticize their surroundings with a homonormative style. Community not only allowed them the space to imagine, it gave them the ability to imagine a lesbian social space that was as fluid as their movements were through it.

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[126] McLeod 1999:8.

Sounding Out Community

We didn't know what we were – we just knew we liked girls.

– Mona, *August 1999*

Sounding Out the Silences

This is an ethnography of the Rangirua lesbian community as defined and connected by those with at least a loose affiliation to the Rangirua Gay and Lesbian Action Network (RAGLAN). These are women generally ranging in age from 30s to 50s who largely identify as middle and working class and who have received at least some college level education. They work in both white-collar and blue-collar jobs; they maintain a separatist sentiment, are somewhat politically active and for the most part are Pākehā, or white by complexion. There are ranges in class, though they speak little of it. There is a normal amount of sexual activity, though in terms of sexual identity they seem rarely to acknowledge it. Their value of community as difference combined with unity is more aspiration than it is a statement of attainment. Though butch women and feminist women do occupy the same space, bisexuals and queer women feel decidedly unwelcome. And while community members make attempts to demonstrate Māori inclusion, they are as yet unable to realize the value of biculturality to which they aspire. Such are the women of this story.

I was home and alone with my cats when I first read this excerpt from Esther Newton's latest collection of essays:[127]

> Recently I met a white anthropology graduate student who told me she was doing an ethnography of "the lesbian community" in a south-western city. "That's great," I said. "How did it go with the Chicana women?" She looked at me blankly. "Oh, I hardly have any Chicana informants," she said, revealing that in her mind, Anglos *were* "the community." Seeing my disapproval she explained

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[127] This particular quote is from an article previously printed in 1982 though within the book publication is the first time I encountered it.

> defensively, "It's so hard to do this kind of work. I couldn't deal with Spanish too." It *is* hard. The few of us with the interest and nerve to do this kind of project lack resources and encouragement. But if we are unaware of our own limitations, we will naively reproduce them" (Newton 2000:155).

The cats scurried away as I laughed to myself, all too familiar with my own work's limitations. The project of representation is decidedly "fraught," perhaps even more than the asymptote of Said's (1989) suggestion. When conducting my research within the Rangirua, there were some lesbians who expressed an eagerness to participate but also those who remained supportive but aloof. Navigating the terrain I soon found that no matter the relation of a particular woman to my research, two elements regarding the expectations of my work would always be clear: it must be particular enough to represent the whole of each person and yet general enough to embody the whole of community. It must demonstrate a sense of being there in order to be believeable, or as one woman would put it, "if you don't know that my Aunt Judy buttons her waistcoat like this, well then, you just don't understand what it means to be part of this community."

As a narrative, ethnography is suited to neither project described above. It cannot be used to represent the whole of a person nor can it assume the ability to represent the whole of community. The work is important but as Newton suggests, equally important is our recognition of our own limitations, whether informed by the limits of resources, of ability or of scope. In sounding out community and its relation to identity, we must also be careful to heed notice and to listen to the silences; we must avoid the essentializing of community and identity by confronting and acknowledging that which has been left out.[128]

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[128] For more information regarding the limited scope of this work, see Appendix B – Methodology.

Unintended in my work is the way in which community silences continue such myths as internal classlessness, ethnic diversity and an unconditional deference to difference. As a representation of Rangirua lesbian life, I have opted to share this space with the voices of the women with whom I worked, and from whom I learned, but I am left feeling uneasy with the gaps that remain. It would be simple to suggest the relative conservatism of the community as grounded in a relatively middle class sensibility. Yet the lesbian defined value against the expression of privilege complicates the reduction of any behavior to class. What mattered were not the resources at your command or even a difference of social values. Community sanctions were clearly aimed at attempts to place hierarchy on privilege and not on the privileges themselves. The fiction of classlessness was therefore so effective in delivery, and so implicated by a history of dramatic shifting – from social-welfare state to capitalist society – that class seemed a dynamic too difficult to pin down within the course of this work. Instead it remains as an avenue for future investigation.

Likewise, while I was able to include the voices of some Māori women, the number of Māori participating in my research was limited. Though the city of Tàkaro had sizable Chinese, Thai and Pacific Islander populations, I saw little of these women, either in the RAGLAN community or at CLP. Though I actively sought out non-Pākehā participants and enjoyed a limited success, I remained ever mindful of their tangential relation to the community and the implications of my strides to represent them.

And then there were the silent women, like Amy and Helen, ever appearing on the fringes and engaging my imagination. They seemed an aspect of the older generation that the young ones were (as yet) unable to face. They remained a visible to the community

but at a tolerable distance. Strangely I do not know why but I made no attempts to engage them in conversation figuring that like Sara, if they chose to participate they would make their feelings known. While my notes retain little information about them, I keep their shadows in the forefront of my mind and my work as a reminder of what lesbian community is and is not; a reminder of what my work does and does not represent.

Introduction to Why

Gayle Rubin created the notion of a "sex/gender system" in an attempt to identify and analyze the locus of women's oppression. She had hoped to develop a concept that would "adequately describe the social organization of sexuality and the reproduction of the conventions of sex and gender" (1975:168). Over the past thirty years, anthropologists have naturalized this concept. No longer is it a conceptual tool, used to describe a social domain historically, politically and culturally defined; for us it has become the "always already" (Derrida 1978) of the present. Like Rubin's sex/gender system, categorized sexualities have become descriptive of cross-culturally occurring, normalized sets of social relations, deemed obvious in both character and nature. While anthropologists have had recent success in deconstructing the ideas of "sexual identity" or "community" as both identifiable and discrete, we have remained comprised and trapped by the assumed ontological significance of sexuality and sexual behavior to sexual identity formation.

As an important conceptual tool that is now used without reflection, sex/gender systems – and the related sexuality/sexual identity pairing – has come to imply the categories of sex and sexuality as appropriately systematic, appropriately applying to all

things (and only things) defined as gender and sexual identity. Repetition of this model has naturalized a worldview in which biology and sexual behavior generate truth; in which biological sex is necessarily foundational to sexuality and sexual identities are necessarily dependent upon the "natural significance" of a heterosexual world. Within such a truth regime, alternative sexualities, or even alternative models, will always be seen as just that: alternative – the "always already" that is denied the arbitrary status of naturally significant.

In making these statements, I do not mean to suggest that sexuality or sexual identities are meaningless social distinctions with little or not socially constructed connection. Rather, I would suggest the tenacious hold of "sex" on sexual identity is effectively shaken when we realize that sexuality, though always present, need not always be foundational to identity expression. I suggest that social experience and identity expression be theorized for what they are – the work of ideology and the means for exposing how that work is produced, fostered, altered and maintained. The study of lesbian community is just such a project. Through it we understand that community and sexual identity are never single, integrated and obviously observable things. They are concepts that we *bring* to our analyses, not qualities that we *discover*. Studying these concepts through an anthropological lens – contextualizing them, situating them, grounding them in the ordinary and the everyday of life experiences – does not tell us where they came from, or prove them as naturally existing, but rather tells us why people might chose to favor one identity over the another, why they are motivated to claim community connection and what qualities they understand that such a belonging might bring.

Part of my purpose here is to stage an encounter with anthropology's history; to learn from our mistakes, to recognize what is valuable, and to understand that our discipline must be able to adjust to the world while the world – both ambiguously our "subject" and our environment – adjusts around us. If anthropology once created an artificial separation between the local of culture and the global of such processes as nationalism, progress, and transnational flows, we now understand that (the once purposeful) separation is no longer a survivable fiction. Instead, we must reassess the motivations for, and the ways in which, communities are dually created as both bounded and boundless.[129] If populations around the globe increasingly claim "lesbian" and "gay" as identities, then we should be asking "why now," rather than how is this natural as past anthropological literature demonstrates this has not always been the case. At a time when religious jihads have transnational significance and discourses of nationalism create "naturalized links between places and peoples" (Gupta and Ferguson 1991:12) – when debates of nationalism revolve around belonging and authenticity as fundamental to citizenship, the answers to why community, why lesbian community and why through an anthropological lens now seem clear.

Through this study, we understand that community is far more socially significant than a mere gathering of people with common interests and an awareness of belonging to a greater whole. In fact, much like the history of a nation does not exist in a vacuum, our understanding of community cannot exist as detached from the identities that shape it, the space that defines it or the "style in which it is imagined." As social phenomena, all

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[129] Such discussions inevitably involve the flow of cultural and material capital, the analysis of which was profoundly altered with the introduction of Wallerstein's (1976) "World-System" theory, though that is not my current concentration.

communities are accidental, built on arbitrarily designated marks of social sameness.

Community is significant not just in its appearance but also for what it provides, defines,

motivates, and continues. In terms of lesbian community, investigating how all of these
qualities function also allows us to make to additional discoveries. First, it allows us to

interrupt the previously assumed ontological significance of sex to sexual identity. We

realize sexual identity not as a shadow on Plato's wall, not as a biological given, but as an

identity like any other. It must be learned, as community is, through continual repetition

and social negotiation, a combination of personal fact and group defined appropriate

expression. In fact, coming out narratives, inclusive of claiming and acknowledgement of

socialization illustrate the importance of community in learning about sexual identity.

Awareness of samesex sexual desire is what brings an individual into the conversation

but it is in community, and not the fact of sexual desire, that lesbians situate their identity

claims and formation.

Second to studying community, we understand it as socially defined space,

implicated in the creation of social history; allowing for authenticity by allowing for a

new symbolic domain and "regime of truth" from which identity may then derive

meaning. The most important defining aspect of this space is the creation of community-

defined normativities; a domain of specifically lesbian homonormativity in which lesbian

sensibilities are the assumptions with lesbian identity as the assumed subjectivity.

Speaking as if to Butler (1990), they are not the mimics but rather the originals.

As members of an accidental community, the participants in this research have

shown that they carry within them and define their connection by "traces" of memory,

history and experience "particularly [resistant] to appropriation by others who were not

there" (Malkki 1997:92). So resistant, in fact, that Thelma wondered aloud if I had the

right or even the ability to understand these traces by simply stating, "it is another thing to have been there." Her challenge demonstrates the organic connection between community and the local. Whether "imagined" or "real," communities are intimately connected to spaces and places, both the metaphorical and the physical. When coming out stories reveal the moment of claiming, they include as necessary elements both the where and the when in order to best define the narrators location within community. Community as a process is dependent on spaces and places in order to allow the symbolic domain both a reference for a commonly held social imaginary and a location in which it can be defined, revised, debated and ultimately contained by group members.

Community-defined spaces become governed by sensibilities and values that are the collective product of member life experiences. Because community is simultaneously and equally defined by unity as well as by difference, the lesbian community-defined sensibilities – belonging/authenticity, reflection/separation, authenticity/self authoring – reflect a similar willingness to negotiate between like histories and disparate interests. While many communities have been described as torn by the struggle to celebrate diversity but deny internal difference, the Rangirua lesbian community distinguishes itself by identifying that tension as their common ground, defining themselves by a conversation that does not pose unity and difference as a binary opposition.

Sounding Out Community

The Rangirua lesbian community defines its unity by the accidental sameness of personal histories as interpreted through individual experience, collective memory and the structure of coming out narratives. When considering this research and the lives of the

Rangirua women, the idea of sounding out community becomes an interesting phrase. Realizing their sexual difference and sounding out its significance, the lesbians of Rangirua who engage in community learn/uncover/develop what it means to live a lesbian life. They "sound out" through testing the parameters and feeling the edges of socially defined lesbian interest. They sound out by developing a language of coming out and by being out, announcing privately and proclaiming publicly their realness and authenticity acquired through belonging. They literally learn to sound out the noise of a heterosexual society, replacing "the foreign world" with a symbolic domain their own. Developed within a separately defined lesbian space, new community members learn, by watching and through reflection, how to carry the domain with them, marking their sexual identity as privileged and colonizing public spaces to suit their homonormative interests. By sounding out they are out, can drone out, can be out, can travel out and feel out the edges of their social, changing as their cultural setting changes both with and around them.

Similar to the essentializing reflex of theory, defining the relationship and process that is lesbian community has the tendency reify and naturalize it; two outcomes we can avoid by remaining responsibility reflexive.[130] It is possible that in describing lesbian community and its connection to sexual identity we might promote a naturalized connection between community and identity as the assumed "always already" of lesbian life, necessary and obvious in both character and nature. Is it not possible for lesbians to exist outside or in absence of lesbian community? Rangirua lesbian survey information

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[130] Every neophyte anthropologist returning from "the field" is convinced they have found people "exciting and different." Exclaimed one returning colleague, "They don't fit a mold! They don't conform to our theories!" Were we to strip away every other benefit of fieldwork, the experience alone is reason enough to do it. Every social theorist should have to face the complex ambiguity of the human condition in an effort

suggests the answer is yes.[131] While 98% of respondents reported that lesbian communit(ies) exist, 2% were not sure. Only 66% said they were actually members of the community and an additional 8% could not say if they were members or not, choosing instead to report, "I don't know." In absorbing what we learn from the Rangirua lesbian community, and from area lesbians "on the fringe," we must remain cognizant of the limits to this research, resist the urge to invest it with an all-encompassing significance and maintain regard for the silences. Though only 66% of women surveyed reported they were members, 83% of women felt lesbian community was important suggesting that the community, though limited, is still socially significant, even retaining significance among some of those who do not or choose not to belong.

As a normalizing process, lesbian community is "imagined in a style" that suggests the ability of lesbian identity to cut across the boundaries of ethnicity, class and culture. The seeds of this fiction are planted in the accidental sameness of experience, in the ways in which all lesbians who travel the coming out narrative view as their binding source the significance of that experience. Lesbian generations form across social boundaries, if in a limited way, to create sensibilities informed by the convergence of the discovery of samesex desire with the happenstance of political atmosphere and historical context. Within the defined of realm of sexual identity claiming, the commonalities of nationalism and large social structures, "out of which and against which" lesbian identity retains significance, form the foundation of common history and common memory for lesbian women. Lesbian identity does not exist outside of social and cultural influence. It is not natural or given or ordained as a "natural plane" above the social, once formed. It

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as a warning against the essentializing reflex of theory and an over confidence in the rightness of social categories.

is, however, an identity able to form social bridge not otherwise imagined, much as is true of any other identity category.

As a community built upon the developing of common histories and memories, lesbian community socializes new members and provides them with something against which to reflect. The community is fluid and intangible while maintaining rigid definitions, monitored by sensibilities continually informed over time. Though the generational interpretation of each sensibility is different, informed by a different historical context and moment, the sensibilities are notable for their ability to retain social significance. With this research, I have limited my investigation to the relationships among community, sexual identity and difference. As such, the sensibilities of belonging/inclusion, reflection/separation and authenticity/self authorship retained the greatest salience. These are not dichotomies but pairings, one side suggestive of expectations within the other. Members search for belonging and then struggle with the expectations of inclusion. They seek out reflection and then struggle to define themselves as both separate from and "comrade" to the rest of New Zealand society. In their search for authenticity, a quality promoted by nationalism, they seek to a way to define themselves as real, one that denies the heteronormative as naturally significant and allows them privilege of lesbian assumption and self definition.

Guided by these sensibilities, as demonstrated throughout this dissertation, there exist at least six priorities within lesbian community: those of history, narrative, language, energy, privilege and social space. History is important both in terms of personal memory and public record. With few publicly accessible histories of lesbian

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[131] Information based upon 1999 survey results as collected using Appendix D – Lesbian Community Survey.

community written, oral histories carry with them a Māori-informed weighted significance. Like coming out narratives, they combine personal interest with group-motivated imperative. Narratives themselves are invested with structure, part personal fact and part social construction. In the constructing, they reinforce community mores and the social facts of sameness that pull members to the group and demonstrate their belonging. In the telling, they protect the historicity of sexual identity formation. Members keep alive the particularities of their own stories. At the same time, in the face of rapid change and a "bloodless revolution," the telling prevents the deauthorizing of their social and historical past.

The importance of language as defining of community and sexual identity is apparent in the outside concern that containing – whether read as language or community – leads to fixity. The labeling of sexual identity as lesbian and learning to be lesbian through the community does not necessarily lead to the idea of sexual identity as fixed. In fact, for the older generation who came out during "the problem with no name," the lack of language to describe their experiences is what led to their feeling of sexual identity as all encompassing, "from what we eat, to what we read to how we tie our shoes." It is the new generation, with their awareness and the developing of options, that categorizes sexual identity as but one part of their identity, as flexible and contingent and able to change at any time. The importance of language within the community is also expressed through the respect for Māori words. The community's expressed aspiration for biculturality is supported by the sanctioning of Māori language abuses, connecting sexual identity to language use as much as to the language used to describe sexual desire.

Of the last three priorities – energy, privilege and social space – generational differences are most apparent in their interpretation. Before HLR, lesbian informed space was at a premium and many lesbians were defined out of all that was deemed socially significant. For these women, much like the women in Carol Stack's *All Our Kin*, the sharing of energy and resources was necessary for survival. The assumption of privilege has been both difficult and fleeting, the assumption of class had been governmentally denied. For the younger generation the worldview was dramatically different. Hard fought spaces were already won and were taken for granted with some of them infected by the assumed privileges of the old guard, an assumption as stifling as those found in the straight community. What counted as privilege for the younger generation was less rigidly defined; an outlook the old guard largely viewed as a weakness, deriding it as informed by the evils of straight-defined capitalism.

Still, it is not enough to understand these priorities. As an anthropologist, my interest is not limited to behavior but extends to the motivations and the knowledge that inform that behavior. If these are the priorities of lesbian community, in addition to naming them we should ask why they were chosen and in what way the community is able to measure them. As all of these social facts are based on a community equally defined by its unity and its difference, we understand the way in which difference is expressed when we realize the ways in which New Zealand ideologies of difference have been historically consumed.

Sounding Out the Context

To define the "masculine" lesbian by her will to "imitate the male" is to stamp her as inauthentic. Whenever she behaves as a human being, she is declared to be

identifying herself with the male. Her activities in sports, politics, and intellectual matters, her sexual desire for other women, are all interpreted as a "masculine protest;" the common refusal to take account of the values to which she aims, or transcends herself, evidently leads to the conclusion that she is, as subject, making an inauthentic choice.

— Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

The ideologies of difference within lesbian community are informed by New Zealand nationalism, Māori renaissance and the country's position as a postcolonial nation. The three are interrelated, as New Zealand's national identity is based upon the fact of their postcolonial position as well as their relationship with the Māori, recognized as the *tangata whenua*, or people of the land. Within a world social arena, New Zealand defines itself as incorporating both Māori and Pākehā, based both on internal unity and the viability of internal differences. At the same time, national discourse characterizes Māori identity as opposed to Pākehā identity, much like the traditional opposes the modern. The cooperation and familial connection of Māori cultural life is, by virtue of comparison, favored to the contractual and competing sensibility of the capitalist nation-state. New Zealand's national identity, as symbolized in *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, incorporates the struggle, if only symbolic, to find a balance between the two.

Of interest regarding the Treaty is the great significance it places on land, privilege and self-definition – land, authority and sovereignty – sensibilities the Rangirua lesbian community have chosen to reflect. Of interest regarding New Zealand nationalism is the ideological high road assumed by the country in terms of progressive movements, such as peace actions and anti-nuclear proliferation campaigns. So too does the lesbian community claim an ideological high road, holding itself to the priorities identified by national discourse but as yet unrealized or unimagined by the majority of the nation. Here

again, "the style" in which lesbian community is imagined has the effect of creating

sexual identity as significantly informed by nationalism.

New Zealand's position regarding the Māori as a people stands as a point of

national pride but the concession was more of a demand than it was a given of Pākehā

moral imperative.[132] The resurgence of a Māori renaissance, having gained political

strength through an identity politics based upon separatism and difference, also fueled the

imagination of the Rangirua lesbian community. Lesbian separatism was informed by

Māori separatism as much as it was by American separatism, if not more so. The lesbian

community's interest against assimilation, against defining lesbian identity within the

symbolic domain of heterosexuality, might just as easily borrow its fire from the Māori

demand to be recognized on its own terms, as stated in Awatere's *Māori Sovereignty*. Just

as de Beauvoir pointedly marks the faulted authority of a masculine model to encapsulate

a feminine paradigm, so too do the Māori define themselves as apart from the Pākehā and

not in comparison to them; so too do the Rangirua lesbians choose to favor a symbolic

domain of their own creation. As such, Rangirua lesbian sexual identity is firmly a New

Zealand sexual identity, informed by the accidental confluence of both lesbian and Māori

struggles for rights.

In terms of sociopolitical strategies, the recovering of suppressed histories and

assertion of voice are commonly associated with postcolonial nationalisms. History,

representation and the colonial gaze[133] have maintained central positions in the analyses

of colonial discourse. Implicated in the gaze and the politics of representation is the

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[132] Recall from Chapter Three, pages 96-107, that biculturalism as policy might even be characterized as the survival and guerilla tactic of a government in distress.
[133] For more information regarding "the colonial gaze" from which much of postcolonial theory derives its inspiration, see Foucault 1979.

power incumbent in self-definition. Living within a heterosexually defined society, Rangirua lesbians are similarly situated to colonial subjects in terms of their position vis-à-vis a dominant symbolic domain. They are in what Laura Nader would call a "double bind;" asked to uphold dominant system of heterosexuality as good national subjects while remaining themselves defined as aberrant and secondary by that same symbolic domain, more colonial object than sovereign subject (1989:344).[134]

To similar ends, addressing colonialism, literary theorist Diana Fuss described the double command of "be like me, don't be like me, " a process of alienation in which the colonized is told "to assimilate but not to incorporate" as a means of survival (1994:23). She goes on to say that within such a bind, "they are commanded to imitate the colonizer's version of their essential difference" (Ibid). Although the lesbian community professes to frame their identities not against straight society but "in absence of caring," the rules governing behavior take the heterosexual as their referent, implying a contradiction in community stance. However, as I read their strategy, and that of the Māori before them, the move is less a literal disconnect from straight defined social reality and more of an assumption of the power to self author through which lesbians can lay claim to authenticity. To borrow the words of Simone de Beauvoir, by taking into account "the values to which they aim" lesbians construct themselves both as "subject" and as "making an authentic subject choice."

The manner in which Rangirua lesbians assert their subjectivity has itself been informed by internal and intersecting paradigm shifts through which the phenomena of lesbian generational cohorts takes shape. Through the previous chapters I have

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[134] While Nader's argument applies specifically to the position of women within Islam, the model is apt to Rangirua lesbian community and their position.

investigated the differences effected by generational shifts and have pointed to some of the unintended outcomes resulting from their "binocular vision." In particular, my research points to three particular unintended consequences of lesbian community against which and through which the community now struggles. First is the instilling of high and low expectations related to homophobia, communicated through coming out narratives and community lore. Like an autoimmune virus that attacks from within, legends of homophobia maintain a level of fear within the community that is incongruous with the sentiment of "outside" opinion. As a result, the younger generation seems in the ironic position of least likely to experience physical or verbal attack and most likely to experience the fear of it. Expecting the worst and grateful for second best, the younger generation is less likely to recognize homophobia in action and more likely to feel awkward and uncertain about confrontation. I have been consistent throughout in stating that community should not be viewed as a caused-based action, created to protect lesbian members from outside oppression, only to dissipate when the need no longer exists. That lesbian identity may be so pathologized does not mean that lesbian identity forms in response to that pathology. Yet neither are we well served to ignore the real ways in which external hostility can become incorporated by the targets of hostile social imagination.

The second unintended consequence is one of assumed "positional superiority," whereby Pākehā women adopt the mark of the disenfranchised, that is the mark of the Māori, in order to gain a position of political and social significance. With what Lubiano calls a "*vive la difference*" mentality, Pākehā women of relative privilege regal in adopting a Māori exotic and the associated righteousness of the socially alienated.

Though unintended, it produces the same dynamic against which Awatere gave warning: Pākehā benefit from Māori alienation. It is in precise response to the potential to exoticize and subordinate that Heni had said, "some people rushed out and put bones around their necks… I didn't respect it and I didn't want to be like it."

Last but perhaps most intriguing among the consequences unintended was demonstrated by the topless woman, deemed straight, and the younger generation members who felt more "at ease" in Club Loud and Proud (CLP). By creating a social space that was both "community" and "dating," both "home" and "nightclub," the Rangirua community unwittingly created an atmosphere in which women were defined by the sexual, even as their sexual identities were professed as anything but. That the woman at Club All But Straight (ABS) identified as bisexual did not matter. Her choice of sexual expression was defined not by her but by group sensibility and she was therefore labeled as an outsider accordingly. Likewise, the young ones balked at the idea that one space could serve the dual needs of community center and community playground. Though ABS allowed them to escape the gaze of straight community, it submitted them to a new gaze – that of lesbian community. Their want to be slobs ran headlong into the older sensibility of recovery. Their want for carefree dating was confounded by the older sensibility of monogamy, if serially expressed. They saw CLP not as rife with expressions of privilege but as a chance to escape their parents, to be anonymously, ambiguously and outrageously themselves.

Dignity and Grace of Belonging

> I am not tragically colored. There is no great sorrow damned up in my soul, nor lurking behind my eyes. I do not mind at all. I do not belong to the sobbing school

of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a lowdown dirty deal and whose feelings are all hurt about it….No, I do not weep at the world – I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife.

– Zora Neale Hurston, *World Tomorrow*

Having answered why New Zealand lesbian community, we are faced at last with the question of why through an anthropological lens. Though I have answered this question at various stages, left unanswered are some of the lessons that lesbian community teaches our discipline, informing our theories like diaspora from margin to center. Though we speak a great deal about the global and the local, what do we really know of the local and how it differs from locality? And does the local differ from locality like the metaphorical space does from the physical place? Nationalism promotes of the construct of people naturally associated with places. Colonialism once promoted the construct of a globe marked the boundaries of ownership with cultural and informational flows able to be controlled and confined. These social constructs no longer ring true.

New Zealand lesbian community tells us something of place but it also challenges us to understand place as a space of ambiguous boundaries, flexible, mobile and contingent upon identities of accidental sameness and acceptable difference. It is true that social space can "anchor" a community but as we have seen here, the reverse is also true. A community defined symbolic domain can anchor social space as much as space anchors it. Carrying the strength of homonormativity with them, members of the lesbian community bring with them community as space, infecting others social spaces as they travel through the day. This is the fluidity of the local and the constraints of locality with which anthropology must now contend. If the modernists mourned the lost sense of certainty that accompanied the knowledge of a true and essential whole, the postmodernists now mourn the lost sense of certainty associated with deterritorialization

and the questions of continuity that from there derive. At one time to be authentic was to be whole. Now to be authentic is to be grounded in continuity, a quality sorely lacking in a world of rapid change. With dignity and grace the women of Rangirua develop their own continuity through a shared memory of the past and a shared vision for the future.

Appendix A – The Women of *Sounding Out*

      To create this body of research, I worked with women who variously identified as gay women, dykes, lesbians, bisexuals and kamp[135] girls. All participants were given the option not to participate. To those who chose to participate I assigned, as pseudonyms, the names of women who have had influential roles in New Zealand women's history.[136] To protect identities, some biographical details have been altered and some stories combined. What follows is a list of short biographical sketches for the 39 women appearing most frequently in this thesis. This list is not meant to replace or repeat demographic information found in Chapter One, or elsewhere within the dissertation. Rather, it is intended as a helpful guide to remind the reader of the narrators' stated subject positions. As such, these sketches are not full descriptions but are only intended as a source of quick reference. All time references are based on year of work, 1999.

Name	Partner	Context
Aileen	unnamed	Now 37, out at 25, younger generation, identified as Pākehā and middle class, lab technician, partner is upper class and closeted
Barry	Gaia	Now 27, out at 19, younger generation, identified as New Zealander and lower class, works at animal shelter
Bathie	Blanche	Now 37, out at 17, identified as part Kiwi part Thai and middle class, healthcare aid, is not femme but feels too feminine to be part of RAGLAN, did not fit the mold for placement in a generation

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[135] Kamp is an acronym adopted by women who came out largely before the 1960s. It stands for "known as male prostitute" and was used by police when arresting gay men. The term became an identity adopted by gay men and later by gay women (Laurie 1992).
[136] Names not taken from oral histories were found in two volumes: Coney 1998 and MacDonald, Penfold and Williams, eds. 1991.

Name	Partner	Context
Betty	Flo	Now 42, out at 19, identifies as English and middle class, is a paralegal, moved to New Zealand seven years ago
Blanche	Bathie	Now 39, out at 20, old generation, identifies as Kiwi and working class, works the floor in a slaughter house, identifies as butch and attends Club but does not feel accepted
Brie		Now 34, out at 28, younger generation, identifies as Kiwi and working class, works multiple part time jobs, politically active
Dannie, short for Dorothy Anne	Liv	Now 43, out at 24, old generation, identifies as New Zealander and middle class, administrative assistant, used to identify as butch but no longer, was femme looking when married, has two children, recovering alcoholic, sober for twenty years
Deb		Now 51, out at 27, old generation, identifies as Pākehā and working class, full time nontraditional student, currently dating but would not say in a relationship
Edna, also goes by Ed	unnamed	Now 42, out at 17, old generation, identifies as Tauiwi and working class, assistant in government office, deeply invested in support of Māoridom, politically active
Essie	Lorna	Now 43, out at 24, old generation, identifies as Pākehā and currently unemployed, was married and is friendly with her husband who now identifies as gay, considers herself femme
Flossie, also goes by Flo	Betty	Now 43, out at 26, old generation, identifies as New Zealander and middle class, works at the power plant, identifies as butch, says it is hard to be Flo and butch
Gaia	Barry	Now 25, out at 18, younger generation, identifies as Pākehā and working class, dairy floor worker, not political but tries to stay aware

Name	Partner	Context
Heni	Mirika	Now 43, out at 23, old generation, identifies as Pākehā and Māori and middle class, artist and sales clerk, is proud of Māori heritage but does not try to claim it as an identity
Hetty	Lesley	Now 48, out at 17, old generation, identifies as New Zealander and middle class, gallery owner, feisty
Jane	Kathy	Now 45, out at 32, identifies as Pākehā and working class, assistant in political advocacy group, does not fit generational paradigm I propose
Joce	Mira	Now 40, out at 31, younger generation, identifies as Pākehā and working class, teaches *te reo*, used to be married, has two children
June	Thelma	Now 43, out at 18, old generation, identifies as Pākehā and Māori and middle class, postal worker, seems connected through many nationwide lesbian networks
Katerina, also goes by Kat	unknown	Now 24, out at 17, younger generation, identifies as Māori and middle class, placement office in government, considers herself urban Māori and is making strong attempts to learn more about her *iwi* Māori relatives
Kathy	Jane	Age not disclosed, identifies as New Zealander and working class, works security
Lesley	Hetty	Now 47, out at 23, old generation, identifies as Pākehā and working class, retail/entertainment work, does not identify as separatist but says she is a "sister to separatism"
Liv	Dannie	Now 39, out at 22, old generation, identifies as Pākehā and middle class, manager in allied health, is not closeted but "changes identity" when she leaves work
Liz	Currently married	Now 49, out at 47, younger generation, identifies as New Zealander and middle class, cleans houses, now married but in process of divorce, has three children

Name	Partner	Context
Lorna, also goes by Lorn	Essie	Now 31, out at 19, younger generation, identifies as Kiwi and working class, lab technician, holds personal archives, identifies as butch
Mag	Sandra	Now 38, out at 21, identifies as Pākehā and middle class, counselor, expressed both new and old generation opinions though mostly aligned with old generation, one of the welcome-wagon for new lesbians in town
Maud		Now 62, out at 36, old generation, identifies as Kiwi and lower class, agricultural worker, considered a lesbian community kuia
Mira	Joce	Now 24, out at 20, younger generation, identifies as Māori and middle class, part time at animal shelter, often referred to as having "old spirit"
Mirika	Heni	Now 33, out at 23, younger generation, identifies as Māori and middle class, traveling sales, raised in England, fascinated by Eastern philosophies
Mona	Pearl	Now 29, out at 21, younger generation, identifies as Pākehā and working class, manual laborer
Moriana		Now 26, out at 18, younger generation, identifies as Māori and middle class, office assistant, does not feel a part of the Pākehā lesbian community, currently dating
Pearl	Mona	Now 38, out at 20, old generation, identifies as Pākehā and middle class, agricultural worker, jock, approves all work with the hands
Polly		Now 82, out at 54, old generation, identifies as New Zealander and working class, postal worker – retired, has given up on love at this age but is very happy with life
Relle	Newly single	Now 34, out at 27, younger generation, identifies as New Zealander and middle class, chef, broke with partner during my research

Name	Partner	Context
Rènee		Now 27, out at 22, younger generation, identifies as Pākehā and middle class, café work and aspiring poet, a couple of dating prospects but nothing regular, free spirit and quick wit
Sandra	Mag	Now 45, out at 16, old generation, identifies as Pākehā and middle class, theatre worker, also considered community kuia
Sol		Now 39, out at 26, younger generation, identifies as Kiwi and working class, retail position, ever flirtatious, every politically active
Thelma	June	Now 53, out at 24, old generation, identifies as Pākehā and upper middle class, finance, says her coming out was in 1961 but also 1972 and 1979 at different levels of awareness, supports the community but also doubtful of what that really means
Toni	unnamed	Now 43, out at 21, old generation, identifies as Pākehā and middle class, nurse, partner chooses to not participate in research
Sara	unnamed	Now 34, out at 31, younger generation, identifies as New Zealander and working class, computer technician, now identifies as FTM and has begun transitioning

Appendix B – Methodology

During my fieldwork, I relied most heavily upon participant observation to collect information. This meant becoming involved in local lesbian events, networks and clubs, sharing meals, going to movies, and giving talks at local clubs. I maintained weekly contact with a group of fifty women and monthly contact with a wider group reaching two hundred. Overall the voices of 350 New Zealand lesbian women are represented in the pages of this research. Of the women with whom I worked, 85% lived around Tàkaro and 20% fit a category other than Pākehā, whether that was Māori, Samoan or of a different nationality. Half of the women with whom I worked identified themselves as middle-class though only one third said they had been able to add to their savings during the previous year. While unemployment was at 7.5% nationally, the Rangirua lesbian community experienced a rate of 15%.

Of the women who participated in my research, 89% identified as lesbian, most for more than three years, with an additional 6% choosing not to identify at all. Though their ages ranged from 18 to 82, the majority of participants were between 30 and 50 years old and living in long term relationships.[137] Most women had discovered they were "different" while in their teens but did not come out or realize their lesbianism until their twenties. Many had not heard of the term "lesbian" or "homosexual" until the Homosexual Law Reform of the 1980s. Ninety percent had previous sexual experience with men and 17% had been previously married. Two participants were still married at the time of my research.

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[137] While information is not available regarding all lesbians living in New Zealand, the 2001 census did record information regarding same sex couples. Among 2,628 lesbian couples recorded, there are many similarities with the women in this research in terms of age, education, income and number of children.

Fifty percent of the women had full-time employment and sixty percent had received at least some education at the university level or higher. Significantly, the majority of jobs were in healthcare, teaching and factory work consistent with historical patterns of lesbian employment (Glamuzina and Laurie 1991; Laurie 1992; Te Awekotuku et al. 1993). RAGLAN, the Rangirua Gay and Lesbian Action Network, was less a central force and more a central point for networking among the lesbian community with a phone tree of 120 women, an email bush of thirty and a monthly newsletter sent to 180 women largely, but not solely, based in the Rangirua region.

I attended an average of four community events per week and relied most heavily on the process of snowballing in order to meet new women for my research. I conducted thirty formal interviews that were semi-structured and recorded. In addition, I sent out a ten page anonymous survey to 250 women as mentioned in Appendix D – Lesbian Community Survey. From this survey I received an over 50% return.

Half way through my research I joined the RAGLAN organizational committee and attended committee and community meetings. Though I actively pursued participation from obviously silent voices, I was able to speak with only a handful of women marked by religion or class or ethnic identities not prevalent within the community. [138] I had though my efforts in terms of outreach were extraordinary but soon found they might better be described as ill informed. Though I imagined I was accessing what I could of the lesbian Māori and *takatāpui* community, I somehow missed even the mention of the annual National *Takatāpui* Conference, though I happened to be in the same town at the time it was held.

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[138] For the ways in which a research population can be skewed because of the politics of the community and not the want of the researcher, see Newton 1993; Kennedy and Davis 1996.

As I mention in Appendix A – The Women of *Sounding Out*, pseudonyms for participants were taken from the written and oral histories of New Zealand's lesbian past. In the naming of places, I adopted Māori words to indicate the tenor of the place within the name. Thus the region of Rangirua translates as the region of ambiguity and the city of Tàkaro is the city of play. Though I use these fictional names without intending to exoticize either the location or the language, I do so understanding that their interpretation as such may be inevitable.

Appendix C – Glossary

For the pronunciation of Māori terms, use the following guide:

Letter(s)	Sounds
NG	Like "ng" in sing or ping with a breathy ending, as if saying "singa" without pronouncing the "si-."
R	Close to "l" or "d" in English, the sound is subdued and acts as a stop between vowels, much like "d" "midi."
T	Also more of a stopping sound, the sounds is similar to a "d," avoiding the breathy ending of the English "t."
WH	Pronounced most often as the English "f," as found in father.
A	Without macron, similar to the "u" in but or hut. With macron (ā), like "a" in father.
E	Without macron, like the "e" in den or hen. With a macron (ē), like "ay," similar to the "ai" in hair or the "e" in there.
I	Without macron, like "i" in sit or bit. With macron (ī), like "ee" in bee or "y" in happy.
O	Without macron, like "o" port or fort. With macron (ō), like "o" in store, or bore.
U	Without macron, like "u" in put. With macron (ū), like "oo" in boot or moon.

What follows is a list of Māori and Pākehā terms used in this dissertation. The listed definitions represent common usage of the terms. When uncertain regarding the proper definition for a Māori term, the *Reed Dictionary of Modern Māori* (Ryan 1995) was used.[139]

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[139] For additional definitions concerning Maori terms, the online source http://www.learningmedia.co.nz/ngata/index.html is an affective tool. The site provides multiple definitions with a sentence for each definition to contextualize the term's use.

Term	Definition
Aotearoa	Original Māori name for New Zealand, it means Land of the Long White Cloud.
Banger	Refers to sausage or sausage sandwich.
Brownie	Derogatory slang term for a Māori person.
Chilly bin	Ice bin, or cooler.
Dodgy	Questionable, off-color, suspicious.
Fizzy	Soda; non-alcoholic, carbonated drink.
Haka	Traditionally, this term refers to a dance that expresses the fierceness and mana of a person or iwi. In the case of pōwhiri, it is used to grant permission for manuhiri to enter the marae.
Hapū	A sub group of iwi, sometimes called a sub-tribe.
Hongi	Known by the touching of forehead and nose, it symbolizes and joining of minds and spirits (breath) in a common understanding or cause.
Hottie	Nickname for hot water bottle.
Hui	A meeting; used to describe the gathering together of a group of people for a particular purpose.
Iwi	Tribe.
Kia ora	A Salutation; hello, good morning/afternoon/evening
Kuia	Usually defined as "an old woman," this term refers to older women who are considered to be particularly wise, both culturally and morally.
Manuhiri	Visitors, usually referring to those entering another iwi's marae.
Māori	The indigenous people of New Zealand, just prior to European discovery. Originally, the term simply meant "people" and came to represent the indigenous group as a by-product of colonization.

Term	Definition
Māoritanga	General term to represent Māori culture or perspective.
Marae	The sacred ground or meeting area that serves as a focal point for a particular iwi, or tribe.
Mihi	Individual speeches during pōwhiri that represent personal narratives and histories.
Pākehā	Originally a Māori term for the European visitors, it came to represent all non-Māori New Zealanders as a by-product of colonization.
Pōwhiri	Refers to the standard protocol used when entering a marae. The exact sequence does vary from iwi to iwi.
Rangirua	Ambiguity; pseudonym for fieldsite region
Scrummy	Short for scrumptious, used to indicate good feeling/tasting.
Shout	Our shout, as in our treat. Most often refers to volunteering to pay for another person.
Snogging	Colloquialism for kissing.
Suss	To figure out.
Tàkaro	Play, sport, fun; pseudonym field site base.
Takatāpui	Samesex partner, homosexual.
Tangata whenua	People of the land, most often used to refer to the resident iwi of a marae, this term is also used colloquially to refer to the Māori as a whole in reference to their claims on New Zealand as land.
Tauiwi	Foreigner or visiting iwi
Te ika a Maui	The fish of Maui, or the North Island.
Te reo	The language, meaning Māori language
Te waka a Maui	The canoe of Maui, or the South Island.

Term	Definition
Tikanga	Customs or traditions, obligations; sometimes used to mean rules for living.
Tiriti o Waitangi	The Treaty of Waitangi.
Trannie	Used most often to refer to pre and postoperative transsexuals. Used by some to also refer to transgendered (often colloquially defined as pre-operative transsexuals).
Wāhine	Women. (The singular, woman, is wahine.)
Waka	Traditional canoes
Wàtea	Free, freedom, safe, space; pseudonym for field location
Whakapapa	Genealogy, family tree
Whānau	Family, inclusive of extended family.
Wonky	Someone who is off balance or deliberately deceiving of others.

Appendix D – Lesbian Community Survey

A survey similar to the one found here was distributed in November 1999. While the content of the survey below is identical to the one distributed, the layout has been altered for inclusion in this dissertation. The original survey was ten pages, printed on size A4 paper and distributed with a cover letter that described my research project and gave addresses for my advisors in New Zealand and the United States. Also included was an addressed, reply-paid envelope.

250 copies of the survey were handed-out. I had addresses for 150 women from the RAGLAN "Lesbian Newsletter" and previous personal contacts. To ten individuals on my list I mailed five extra surveys and asked them to please hand the surveys out to other lesbians they knew who might not be on my mailing list. Of those 200 surveys, 105 were returned and two requested that reporting of their responses be limited to lesbian only venues. The last fifty were marked with an extra period on the first page and placed in Club ABS, CLP, the Women's Center and Women's Refuge. The surveys were marked because I wanted to know if placing them in those locations would prove an effective methodology. Two of them were returned. Questions mark by an asterisk first appeared in *The New Zealand Study of Values.*[*] It was my intention to use this information to compare lesbian values with "New Zealand" values as a response to many comments I collected suggesting that lesbians "thought differently" and were "more progressive" in their views. Several women chose to leave these questions blank for that reason.

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[*] 1998. The New Zealand Study of Values: A Part of the World Values Survey 1998. Palmerston North: Massey University. I thank Paul Perry for making giving me the opportunity to use some of his questions for eventual cross-comparison.

Lesbian Community Questionnaire

This questionnaire is one part of a larger project attempting to understand the lives of lesbians living in Palmerston North and surrounding areas. It is being conducted in conjunction with my research that attempts to understand the meanings of community, lesbian identity, and gender among lesbians living in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the 1990s. While limited in scope, this questionnaire will be an important addition to my research. Some questions mirror questions appearing in The New Zealand Study of Values, 1998 and have been used to create a limited basis for comparison with that study.

How to fill out this questionnaire

To answer these questions all you have to do is tick (√) a triangle or triangles, or write in the space provided. Some questions may not apply to you - instructions will explain how to proceed if that is the case. It will take you approximately 10-15 minutes to complete this questionnaire. No special knowledge is required. Please do not include your name, phone number, or address anywhere in this questionnaire.

Returning the questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this project. Your participation is completely voluntary and collected information is entirely confidential. When you have completed the questionnaire, please post it back in the reply-paid envelope, as soon as possible. When the results of this questionnaire have been tabulated, they will be made available through the Lesbian Support Group, myself, Palmerston North Lesbian Line, and other key locations. If you have any interests or concerns regarding this questionnaire or my research, please feel free to contact me at home (90A Albert Ave, Tàkaro), via phone (04/555-3709) or email (complxgal@hotmail.com). The email address is my primary email address and can be used to contact me when I'm in the US as well. Thank you for your energy and your time.

DEMOGRAPHICS

*1. Please indicate, for each of the following, how important it is in your life. Would you say…

	Very important	**Rather important**	**Not very important**	**Not at all important**	**Don't know**
Community Organizations	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^9
Education	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^9
Family	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^9
Friends	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^9
Leisure Time	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^9
Politics	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^9
Religion	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^9
Work	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^9

*2. Taking all things together, would you say you are…
Δ^1 Very happy $\quad\quad$ Δ^2 Quite happy $\quad\quad$ Δ^3 Not very happy $\quad\quad$ Δ^4 Not at all happy
Δ^9 Don't know

*3. All in all, how would you describe your state of health these days? Would you say it is…
Δ^1 Very good $\quad\quad$ Δ^2 Good $\quad\quad$ Δ^3 Fair $\quad\quad\quad\quad$ Δ^4 Poor
Δ^5 Very poor $\quad\quad$ Δ^9 Don't know

4. All in all, how would you describe your self-esteem these days? Would you say it is…
Δ^1 Very high $\quad\quad$ Δ^2 High $\quad\quad$ Δ^3 Good $\quad\quad\quad\quad$ Δ^4 Fair
Δ^5 Poor $\quad\quad\quad\quad$ Δ^6 Very poor $\quad\quad$ Δ^9 Don't know

5. In what year were you born? Year 19 _ _

6. At the time of this survey, where are you currently living?
Δ^1 Tàkaro, Rangirua $\quad\quad$ Δ^2 Rangirua, generally
Δ^3 [location omitted] $\quad\quad$ Δ^4 [location omitted] $\quad\quad$ Δ^9 Other

7. Do you feel your home town is conservative? Δ^1 Yes $\quad$ Δ^2 No $\quad$ Δ^9 Don't know
8. If conservative, does this affect your daily life? Δ^1 Yes $\quad$ Δ^2 No $\quad$ Δ^9 Don't know
9. Do you behave differently in less conservative towns? Δ^1 Yes $\quad$ Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

10. To what religion do you belong? _____

11. How do you identify (for instance, Māori, Pākehā, New Zealander, Pacific Islander, Tauiwi)**?** _____

12. Which one of these categories *best* describes the highest level of *formal* education you have had? Please tick one only.
Δ^1 No formal schooling $\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad$ Δ^5 Completed university/polytechnic degree
Δ^2 Secondary school for up to 3 years $\quad\quad$ Δ^6 Some post graduate study
Δ^3 Secondary school for 4 years or more $\quad$ Δ^7 Completed post graduate degree
Δ^4 Some university, wananga, polytechnic or other tertiary

*13. Which of these categories describes your employment status? Please tick no more than one for each group.
a) I am employed… Δ^1 Full time, 30+ hrs weekly Δ^2 Part time, 15-30 hrs
$\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad$ Δ^3 Less than 15 hrs $\quad\quad\quad$ Δ^4 Not employed

b) I am… $\quad\quad\quad$ Δ^1 On perm/temp disability Δ^2 Temp out of work $\quad$ Δ^3 Retired
$\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad$ Δ^4 Self-employed $\quad\quad\quad\quad$ Δ^5 Work part time/student part time
$\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad$ Δ^6 Student full time $\quad\quad\quad$ Δ^7 Unpaid work, home/family business

c) I receive… Δ^1 Unemployment benefit Δ^2 Domestic Purposes Beneficiary
Δ^3 No income support

14. In which profession or occupation do you or did you work? If more than one applies, tick primary job.

Δ^1 Manual worker Δ^4 Clerical Δ^6 Professional, eg lawyer, teacher, accountant
Δ^2 Health/service worker Δ^5 Retail Δ^7 Agricultural worker
Δ^3 Armed forces/security Δ^9 Other Δ^8 Admin/managerial worker

*15. During the past year, did your family (however you define your primary domestic unit/living unit - it can be just you)**:**

Δ^1 Save money Δ^2 Just get by Δ^3 Spend some savings
Δ^4 Spend saving and borrow money Δ^9 Don't know

*16. People sometimes describe themselves as belonging to the working class, the middle class, or the upper or lower class. Would you describe yourself as belonging to the:

Δ^1 Upper class Δ^2 Upper middle class Δ^3 Middle class
Δ^4 Lower middle class Δ^5 Working class Δ^6 Lower class

17. Would you describe your parents (be they biological, adopted, step, foster, etc) **as belonging to the…**

Δ^1 Upper class Δ^2 Upper middle class Δ^3 Middle class
Δ^4 Lower middle class Δ^5 Working class Δ^6 Lower class

*18. How interested would you say you are in politics?

Δ^1 Very Δ^2 Somewhat Δ^3 Not very Δ^4 Not at all Δ^9 Don't know

19. How many brothers and sisters do you have? ____
20. How many children do you have? ____

21. If you have any children, do they live with you?

Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^3 Occasionally Δ^4 I don't have children

22. Have you ever been legally married? Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No

PARTNERS/SEXUALITY

23. Was here ever a time when you considered yourself heterosexual? Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No
24. Have you ever had consensual sexual relations with a man? Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No
25. Have you ever been in a short-term heterosexual relationship? Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No
26. Have you ever been in a long-term heterosexual relationship? Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No

27. If you *have not had* heterosexual relationships, please skip to Question 29. If you have, how many significant (of one year or longer) **heterosexual relationships have you had**: _____

28. Have you ever considered having children with a male partner? Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No

29. In the table below, please indicate whether or not you have come out to the following people and if it was a good or bad experience.

	I haven't, they don't know	I haven't, but they already know	I have - it was Good	I have - it was a Mixed reception	I have - it was Bad	N/A
Close friends	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9
Casual friends	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9
Siblings	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9
Mother	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9
Father	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9
Children	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9
Extended family	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9
At work	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9

30. Women choose to come out or not for many reasons. Below are just a few of them. Realizing that coming out will always be an ongoing experience, please state if you have been primarily, partially, or not at all affected by the following factors when deciding whether or not to come out (to an individual or in general)**:**

	Primarily	Partially	Not at all	Don't know
Social/political feeling of your town	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Social/political feeling of your work space	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Opinions expressed in written/TV press	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Meeting other gay or lesbian people	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Visibility or access to lesbian communities or social circles	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
The gay and lesbian liberation movement	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
The Homosexual Law Reform	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Lesbian activism - that you've seen or in which you have participated	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Witnessed or experienced hatred or bigotry	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
What you felt it meant to live a truthful or honest life	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Want for more "lesbian stuff" in your life	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Fear of losing job or future opportunities	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Fear of losing connection to family/friends	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Meeting your partner or life companion	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Excitement having finally 'found yourself'	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9

31. When did you first become aware of being 'sexually different'? Age: ___
32. When did you first become aware of being a lesbian? Age: ___

33. Do you believe you were always a lesbian, whether you knew it or not?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

34. How long have you known yourself to be a lesbian?
Δ^1 Less than 1 year Δ^2 1-2 years Δ^3 3-5 years
Δ^4 6-10 years Δ^5 11-15 years Δ^6 More than 15 years

35. How many female sexual partners have you had?
Δ^1 1-3 Δ^2 4-8 Δ^3 9-15 Δ^4 16-30 Δ^5 30+ Δ^6 Don't know

36. How many significant (of one year or longer) **lesbian relationships have you had?**

37. Have you ever considered having children with a female partner? Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No

38. Have you ever had or considered having a commitment ceremony with a female partner? Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No

39. Are you currently… (tick all that apply)
Δ^1 In a heterosexual marriage Δ^2 In a short term relationship
Δ^3 In a long term relationship Δ^4 Divorced
Δ^5 Single Δ^6 Chasing a love interest
Δ^7 Not involved Δ^8 Recently broken up
Δ^9 Dating Δ^{10} Other

40. If you *are not* involved in a long term, committed lesbian relationship, please skip to Question 41. If you *are* involved in a long term, committed lesbian relationship, do you and your partner…

Δ^1 Yes	Δ^2 No	Δ^3 Considering	… have combined economic resources?
Δ^1 Yes	Δ^2 No	Δ^3 Considering	… live together?
Δ^1 Yes	Δ^2 No	Δ^3 Considering	… share credit cards and/or bank accounts?
Δ^1 Yes	Δ^2 No	Δ^3 Considering	… have written wills to include each other?
Δ^1 Yes	Δ^2 No	Δ^3 Considering	… envision being together forever?
Δ^1 Yes	Δ^2 No	Δ^3 Considering	… think it is possible to envision 'forever' with anyone?
Δ^1 Yes	Δ^2 No	Δ^3 Considering	… take legal steps to qualify your relationship (for things like hospital visits and power of attorney)?

41. Do you identify as a lesbian? Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know
41. Do you identify as bisexual? Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know
41. Do you choose not to identify? Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

44. *For you*, is the choice to identify or not…
Δ^1 A political one Δ^2 A personal one Δ^3 Both political and personal

45. After coming out to yourself, did you begin to create a lesbian past for yourself (looking back at your childhood or adult past, searching for moments of early indication of your lesbianism)? Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

46. Is/was finding indications of your lesbianism in your past important to you?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

POLITICAL

47. When you want to find out what's happening in society, how important are the following sources to you?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Don't know
Radio	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Newspapers	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Magazines	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Gay and Lesbian press	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Lesbian newsletters	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Television	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Grape-vine, friends	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9

48. Here are some different forms of political action that women can take. For each one, please indicate whether you have actually done any of these things, whether you might do it or would ever under any circumstances do it.

	Have done	Might do	Would never do	Don't know
Signing a petition	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Joining a boycott	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Attending lawful demonstration	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Occupying building or land	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Letter writing campaign	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Working for a political campaign	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Co-writing a position paper	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Consciousness-raising	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Joining an activist group	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9
Attend political workshop/retreat	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^9

49. What is your position regarding whether or not lesbians *should* be out? Being out is… (tick all that apply)

Δ^1 Necessary for personal health $\quad$ Δ^2 Politically necessary
Δ^3 Good, but not necessary $\quad$ Δ^4 Neither good nor bad
Δ^5 Above all, an individual choice $\quad$ Δ^6 Above all, a community obligation
Δ^7 Something no lesbian can avoid $\quad$ Δ^8 Other

50. What is your position regarding whether or not lesbians *should* be visible? Lesbian visibility is… (tick all that apply)

Δ^1 Necessary for personal health $\quad$ Δ^2 Politically necessary
Δ^3 Good, but not necessary $\quad$ Δ^4 Neither good nor bad
Δ^5 Above all, an individual choice $\quad$ Δ^6 Above all, a community obligation
Δ^7 Something no lesbian can avoid $\quad$ Δ^8 Other

51. Below is a list of issues and behaviors that may or may not be important to you as a lesbian. For each issue/behavior, please indicate if it was important to you before you came out, after you came out, or if your opinions did not change before you came out versus afterwards. The following were important to me…

	Before I came out only	After I came out only	While coming out and after	Before, during and after coming out	Never	Don't know
Learning lesbian history	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9
Seeing lesbian art	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9
Being a feminist	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9
Commitment to women	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9
Having lesbian friendships	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9
Māori rights	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9
Being an activist	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9
Feeling politically informed	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9
Being part of a community	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9
Reading lesbian fiction	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9
Supporting businesses for their politics or hiring	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^9

52. Do you think lesbians ought to have the legal right to marry? Δ^1 Yes $\quad$ Δ^2 No

53. Do you think lesbians should spend energy trying to get the legal right to marry?
Δ^1 Yes $\quad$ Δ^2 No

NEW ZEALAND VALUES

*54. With which of these two statements do you tend to agree?

Δ^1 Regardless of what the qualities and faults of one's parents are, one must always love and respect them.
Δ^2 One does not have the duty to respect and love parents who have not earned it by their behavior and attitudes.
Δ^9 Don't know

*55. Here is a list of qualities children can learn at home. Which if any do you consider to be especially important. Choose up to five.

Δ^1 Good manners Δ^2 Independence Δ^3 Hard work
Δ^4 Feeling responsibility Δ^5 Imagination Δ^6 Tolerance and respect for others
Δ^7 Unselfishness Δ^8 Obedience Δ^9 Thrift and saving money on things
Δ^{10} Religious faith Δ^{11} Determination and perseverance

*56. Here are various groups of people. Could you please tick any that you would not like to have as neighbors? (**I replaced "homosexual" with "religious fundamentalist".)

Δ^1 People with criminal records Δ^2 Heavy drinkers Δ^3 Europeans/Pākehā
Δ^4 Emotionally unstable people Δ^5 Māori Δ^6 People who have AIDS
Δ^7 Religious fundamentalists** Δ^8 Drug addicts Δ^9 Political extremists
Δ^{10} People of a different race Δ^{11} Pacific Islanders Δ^{12} Immigrants/foreigners

*57. Here are some more aspects of a job that people say are important. Please look at them and indicate which ones you personally think are important in a job. Tick all that apply.

Δ^1 Good pay Δ^2 Not too much pressure
Δ^3 Good job security Δ^4 Good hours
Δ^5 A responsible job Δ^6 A job respected by people, in general
Δ^7 An opportunity to use initiative Δ^8 Generous holidays
Δ^9 A job that meets one's abilities Δ^{10} A job that is interesting
Δ^{11} A job in which you feel you can achieve something

*58. Here are four statements about the Treaty of Waitangi. Which *one* statement do you think comes closest to *your own* view of the Treaty?

Δ^1 It should be strengthened and given the full force of law.
Δ^2 It should be dealt with through the tribunal as it is at present.
Δ^3 The Treaty should be abolished.
Δ^4 There need to be greater limits on claims under the Treaty.
Δ^9 Don't know.

*59. In the past three years have you taken part in a *town/area* community project?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

*60. In the past six months have you attended a *town/area* community event?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

*61. If there is a *town/area* community issue, do you take the initiative to do what need to be done even if no one asks you to? Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

62. When you get together with your friends, how often would you say you discuss political matters? Δ^1 Frequently Δ^2 Occasionally Δ^3 Never Δ^9 Don't know

*63. I feel closest - most emotionally attached - to… (tick all that apply)
Δ^1 My neighborhood Δ^2 My town or city Δ^3 My province or region
Δ^4 Aotearoa/New Zealand Δ^5 The South Pacific region Δ^6 My lesbian network

LESBIAN SPACE/IDENTITY

64. In the past three years have you taken part in a *lesbian* community project?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

65. In the past six months have you attended a *lesbian* community event?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

66. If there is a *lesbian* community issue, do you take the initiative to do what need to be done even if no one asks you to? Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

67. Would you say being a lesbian is…
Δ^1 Of primary importance in your life Δ^2 A secondary part of your life
Δ^3 As important as anything else Δ^9 Don't know

68. Is being a lesbian something… (please *tick one only*)
Δ^1 You decided Δ^2 You discovered Δ^3 You realized
Δ^4 You became Δ^5 You were told Δ^6 You always were

69. If you could tick two options, would you say being a lesbian is something…
Δ^1 You decided Δ^2 You discovered Δ^3 You realized
Δ^4 You became Δ^5 You were told Δ^6 You always were

70. After you came out, did you notice that… (tick all that apply)

	Yes	No	Don't know
You acted/behaved differently	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^9
You dressed differently	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^9
Your language use changed	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^9

How you acted/behaved mattered more to you Δ^1 Δ^2 Δ^9
How you dressed mattered more to you Δ^1 Δ^2 Δ^9
Your use of language mattered more to you Δ^1 Δ^2 Δ^9

How you acted/behaved matter to other lesbians Δ^1 Δ^2 Δ^9
How you dressed mattered to other lesbians Δ^1 Δ^2 Δ^9
Your use of language mattered to other lesbians Δ^1 Δ^2 Δ^9

71. How important to you were/are any of the following pressures when you think about your lesbian identity?

	Very	Somewhat	Not that important	Not at all important	Don't know
Feeling like a sexual deviant	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^9
Feeling loss of an easier life	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^9
Wanting to fit in with the norm	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^9
Fear of hurting your family	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^9
Fear of hurting your friends	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^9
Feeling abnormal in some way	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^9
Struggling with religious values	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^9
Feeling like you came home	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^9
Feeling you've found yourself	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^9

72. Have you ever experienced homophobia? Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

73. Have you ever been physically attacked because of homophobia?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

74. Have you ever been verbally attacked because of homophobia?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

75. Do you know anyone who has been physically attacked because of homophobia?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

76. Do you know anyone who has been verbally attacked because of homophobia?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

77. Do you think internalized homophobia is an issue for some lesbians you know?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

78. Do you think internalized homophobia is an issue you personally struggle with?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

79. Do you identify as a lesbian separatist*? Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

> * If you are a separatist, please be aware that this survey will be shared with an audience that is not exclusively lesbian. If you wish for your survey answers to be known, but not included beyond a lesbian audience, please indicate so here:
>
> 79a. Δ I wish my survey answers to be shared with lesbian audiences only
>
> Δ Please include my survey in your wider project

80a. If yes, for how long have you been a lesbian separatist?
Δ^1 Up to one year Δ^2 1-3 years Δ^3 3-5 years
Δ^4 5-7 years Δ^5 7-10 years Δ^6 More than 10 years

80b. If no, have you ever considered yourself a lesbian separatist in the past?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No

81. Do you have any personal objection to lesbian separatism?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

82. Do you have any political objection to lesbian separatism?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

83. Do you know any lesbian separatists?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

	Yes	No	Sometimes	Doesn't matter
84. When you need work done – do you prefer to employ a lesbian?	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4
85. When you go to the hospital – do you prefer to be treated by a lesbian?	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4
86. Do you prefer to read lesbian authors (fiction, non-fiction or news)**?**	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4
87. Do you specifically seek for lesbian fiction/non-fiction books?	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4
88. Do you specifically seek to support lesbian businesses?	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4
89. Do you specifically look to purchase lesbian music?	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4
90. Do you specifically look for lesbian art exhibits?	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4

91. Does lesbian visibility affect your decisions regarding where you choose to live? Δ^1 Δ^2 Δ^3 Δ^4

92. Does lesbian visibility affect where you choose to travel or holiday? Δ^1 Δ^2 Δ^3 Δ^4

93. Upon meeting a new lesbian, do you expect to feel a kind of instant connection? Δ^1 Δ^2 Δ^3 Δ^4

94. Do you find that most of your friends are lesbians? Δ^1 Δ^2 Δ^3 Δ^4

95. Do you consider any of the above behaviors (questions 84-94) **to be separatist behaviors?** Δ^1 None are Δ^2 All are Δ^1 Most are Δ^2 Some are Δ^9 Don't know

96. Do you feel any social and/or political connection with gay men?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

97. Do you feel any social and/or political connection with bisexual people?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

98. Do you feel any social and/or political connection with transsexual people?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

99. How do you meet other lesbians? (tick all that apply)
Δ^1 Social clubs Δ^2 Lesbian dances Δ^3 RAGLAN Δ^4 School/polytech
Δ^5 Political clubs Δ^6 Lesbian camps Δ^7 Club ABS Δ^8 Work
Δ^9 Internet group Δ^{10} Lesbian retreats Δ^{11} CLP Δ^{12} Newsletters
Δ^{13} Sports Δ^{14} Social circles Δ^{15} Other clubs Δ^{16} Trips out of town
Δ^{17} Social events Δ^{18} Mutual friends Δ^{19} Personals Δ^{20} Don't know

100. Please indicate if you have done the following the past month, 3 months, 6 months, year. I have…

	past month	three months	six months	year	I haven't
Spoken with other lesbians through the internet	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5
Attended a social event at which most were lesbian	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5
Gone to Club ABS on a Friday or Saturday evening	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5
Gone to CLP on a Friday or Saturday evening	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5
Attended a discussion/support group at ABS	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5
Watched Queer Nation	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5
Read a lesbian newsletter	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5

Read a lesbian magazine	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5
Gone to a nightclub other than CLP or ABS	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5
Had a dinner or party meant for mostly lesbians	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5
Organized/joined a lesbian group at a public event	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5
Watched a lesbian movie	Δ^1	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5

101. Do you believe there are such things as lesbian communities?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

102. Do you consider yourself part of (a) lesbian community(ies)?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

103. Do you feel having/creating community is important?
Δ^1 Yes Δ^2 No Δ^9 Don't know

104. Why did you take the time to answer this questionnaire? (Tick all that apply)
Δ^1 I was bored Δ^2 I was curious about the questions Δ^3 It came in the mail
Δ^4 Why not Δ^5 I always support lesbian work Δ^6 Personal reasons
Δ^7 Loyalty to Becca Δ^8 I sometimes do questionnaires Δ^9 Don't know

With two or three sentences, briefly answer the following questions.

105. What does being a lesbian mean to you?
106. What does community mean to you?

COMMENTS

Please return you completed questionnaire using the addressed, reply-paid envelope provided. If you have any comments or feedback you wish to provide, please do so below. Again, thank you for participating in this survey.

Appendix E – Events in New Zealand Lesbian History

The list below identifies important moments in the history of New Zealand
lesbians, through 2001, with particular attention to the lives of the women included in this
research. Lesbian newsletters, collected oral histories, the National Lesbian and Gay
Archives of New Zealand, *Out Front: Lesbian Political Activity in Aotearoa, 1962-1985*
(Glamuzina 1993), and *Express* – New Zealand's bimonthly gay and lesbian newspaper –
were the primary sources of information. It is not meant to be a comprehensive listing but
rather a source that serves as a companion to this dissertation.

Year	Lesbian History
17th c.	Hinemoa swims Rotorua and takes Tutanekai from his takatāpui, Tiki.
1837	Reverend William Yate is dismissed from the Church Missionary Society for "indecent acts" with Māori boys.
1840	Signing of the Treaty of Waitangi.
1860s	New Zealand land wars.
1893	Women receive suffrage.
1906	"Boy" Bertha, from Hokatika, is arrested in Sydney in men's clothing and described as Sapphic.
1907	Britain gives New Zealand Dominion status.
1909	Amy Bock is imprisoned for fraud after passing as a man and marrying.
1910	Lesbian Freda Du Faur is the first woman to climb Mount Cook.
1916	Gay man Alexander Turnbull dies and leaves his library to the King.
1919	Women are permitted to win seats in Parliament.
1920	Harry Crawford is arrested for the murder of his wife in Australia. During the trial he is revealed to be Eugenia Falleni of Wellington.
1924	Effie Pollen moves from Wellington to Christchurch to live with life long partner Mary Ursula Bethell.

Year   Lesbian History

1929   US market crash affects New Zealand economy.

1931   New Zealand is granted autonomy by the Crown.

1933   The first woman is elected to Parliament.

1935   First Labour government is elected.

1936   Musician Eric Mareo is accused of murdering Thelma Mareo. During the trial it is revealed that Thelma had a sexual relationship with Freda Stark.

1939   Beginning of World War II – New Zealand fights allied to the British.

1945   Two women are convicted of breaking the Marriage Act; one partner had had a mammectomy and successfully passed as a man.

1947   New Zealand formerly claims independence.

1949   First National government is elected.

1951   ANZUS is formed, uniting Australia, New Zealand and the US.

1954   Juliet Hulme and Pauline Parker kill Pauline's mother, Honora.

1960   Second National government is elected.

1961   The Dorian Society begins and lasts until 1988. This is the first known attempt among gay men to form a political organization. Lesbians are permitted to join in 1967.

1962   The Radcliffe Hall Memorial Society forms in Wellington. It is the first known attempt among lesbians to organize politically.

1964   Wellington lesbians receive the Ladder and Arena 3. Fear prevails and lesbians leave New Zealand in search of rumored communities in Britain, Australia and the US.

1967   Pubs no longer have a 6pm closing.

1968   The Homosexual Law Reform (HLR) Society forms and petitions Parliament for law reform.

1969   Stonewall riots in the US.

1970   Ngahuia Te Awekotuku applies for a Student Visa to the US and is rejected based on her desire to study lesbian culture in California.

Year   Lesbian History

1971   KG club in Auckland is formed by four Māori women and four Pākehā
women. Ngahuia Te Awekotuku is interviewed on TV after describing
herself as a Sapphic woman. Phoenix Society, a mostly Māori group, is
started by hospital workers.

1972   Third Labour government is elected. The Gay Liberation Front begins in
Auckland with a press conference organized by Ngahuia Te Awekotuku
and seven others. It lasts until 1977. After the press conference, chapters
of GLF also begin in Wellington (until 1978), Victoria University (until
1974) and Christchurch (until 1978). Broadsheet – New Zealand's first
feminist magazine – is founded and the first National Gay Liberation
Conference is held in August (annually until 1984). The first Gay Pride
week is held in June.

1973   The first of two oil crises dramatically affects New Zealand's economy.
Waitangi Day is established to celebrate the signing of the Treaty.
Lesbians broke away from GLF to form Sisters for Homophile Equality
(SHE) in Christchurch, Canterbury, Palmerston North, Dunedin and
Wellington. SHE Wellington publishes Circle, an all lesbian newsletter
(until 1986). Club 41 opens in Wellington, the first all lesbian nightclub.
Four women leasing the building from a local transvestite run Club 41. It
becomes The Pub in 1977 and closes in 1980. Broadsheet magazine has
its first lesbian cover. There is a workshop for homosexual women at the
biannual United Women's Convention.

1974   Herstory Press begins and the first National Lesbian Conference is held at
Victoria University. The words "strictly not for men" appear on the cover
of Circle.

1975   Third National government is elected. Crimes Amendment Bill, trying to
make lesbianism illegal, fails. Treaty Act creates the Waitangi Tribunal.
The Venn Young Bill, to decriminalize sodomy, is defeated in
Parliament, 34 to 29 with 23 abstaining. Police raid club 41. A lesbian
dance is used to raise funds to paid Club 41's fines. The first lesbian
summer camp is organized (until 1977, then off and on through 2001) and
lesbians start the first Women's Refuge.

1976   Lesbians protest New Zealand's All Blacks tour in South Africa, acting
against Apartheid. All lesbian Amazon softball team forms. Dunedin
bookshop "Daybreak" opens (until 1982), stocking lesbian books.
Lesbian magazine Juno begins in Auckland (until 1984).

1977   The government funds a lesbian to organize a national lesbian and gay
archive, which later becomes LAGANZ.

Year   Lesbian History

1977   Linda Evans speaks at the United Women's Convention, male members of the media are kept out. Lesbians Ignite Fire Brigade formed. The first National Gay and Lesbian Rights Resource Center opens in Wellington.

1978   Introduction of the Freer Bill in the fight for law reform (it fails). First New Year's day celebration at Vinegar Hill. The Broadsheet collective splits – lesbian members leave the collective. Women's Liberation Congress, Piha, features addresses by Ngahuia Te Awekotuku and the Lesbians Ignite Fire Brigade. National feminist lesbian conference.

1979   The second oil crisis. The last United Women's Convention is held and Charlotte Bunch is their keynote speaker. Lesbian only space is available throughout the convention. The Lesbian Network is started in Wellington after the Convention and begins a newsletter. Also established were the first Lesbian Center (in Wellington, later moved to Cuba St, until it closes in 1982), Breathing Space (a coming out group), and the first HERA group (Help Erase Repressive Attitudes), in Dunedin. At the national gay rights coalition, a lesbian caucus challenges the sexism of gay men.

1980   The first Lesbian Liberation Weekend is held. Gay Rights Waikato group forms (until 1987). Lesbians march against the docking of American nuclear ship USS Truxton in New Zealand waters.

1981   The Equality Bill is introduced but fails. Lesbians picket the Human Rights Commission for not specifying the inclusion of lesbians in the Human Rights Act. "Black Dykes" hold their first Hui. Lesbian Line begins. Many lesbians protest the Springbok Tour.

1982   The tenth annual National Gay Rights Conference is held at Tirahau Marae, hosted by the Maramatanga Movement. The first TV documentary on the history of lesbians and gays in New Zealand. An "Anti-*Truth*" campaign is held in response to the printing of an anti-lesbian article in *Truth*. First Lesbian Fancy Dress Ball in Auckland.

1983   Lesbian Line is formed. First known New Zealand AIDS death.

1984   Fourth Labour government is elected. Power of the Waitangi Tribunal is made retro active to 1840. Radical economic restructuring begins. The first all lesbian weekly radio programme begins, continuing through 2001. The first book on lesbianism – *Amazon Mothers* – is authored and published by Miriam Saphira. Tàkaro starts a lesbian group called "The Fury's." Zoe Catherine Alice begins the Waxing Moon Archives, later added to LAGANZ. At the national gay rights coalition, lesbians again challenge the sexism of gay men. First lesbian caucus occurs at the national women's studies conference.

Year   **Lesbian History**

1985   Rainbow Warrior is bombed in Auckland Harbour. The US pulls out of ANZUS after the USS Buchanan is denied access to New Zealand waters. Homosexual Law Reform and Human Rights Act are introduced – human rights part of the bill is later dropped. All lesbian Māori groups becoming more visible. The Wilde Bill is introduced in Parliament. Petition against Homosexual Law Reform in the form of the Wilde Bill is presented to Parliament with 810,000 signatures. Only 350,000 signatures were decided to be authentic.

1986   July 9th the Wilde Bill is passed, 49 to 44. The National Gay and Lesbian Archives is damaged by arson. First annual lesbian and gay fair in Newton (through present).

1987   Market collapse impedes New Zealand's ongoing restructuring.

1988   An English lesbian in Wellington is given New Zealand residency without an interview based on her more than four-year lesbian relationship with a New Zealander.

1990   Fourth National government elected.

1991   *Man to Man,* biweekly newspaper begins and later becomes *The Express.* The First Devotion party is held.

1992   First Hero party is held and hosts the first performance of a "queer" haka.

1993   Introduction of the new MMP Parliamentary system. Fifth Labour government is elected. Frontwomen is the first lesbian play to be performed in New Zealand. Chris Carter "comes out" after election to become New Zealand's first "out" MP. Human Rights Act makes discrimination based on sexual orientation unlawful.

1994   High Court rules post-operative transsexuals can marry in their adopted sex. Witi Ihimaera launches the first gay novel by a well-known author.

1995   Georgina Beyer is elected as mayor of Carterton. It is the first election in the world of a transsexual mayor.

1996   Fifth National government is elected. MP proposes legalizing of samesex marriages. The first "Express Report" is aired; later becomes "Queer Nation." Three lesbians couples are turned down by the High Court in a bid to legally marry. D.vice, an online sex toy business, is born of three lesbians in Wellington. For the first time the census records record information on samesex couples.

Year	Lesbian History

1997   Intersex Center opens in Wellington. The Topp twins have their own TV series, the "Mr. And Mrs." game show. Hero parade is broadcast on TV.

1998   Paula Bock's novel of teenage lesbian awakening, *Dare, Truth or Promise* wins the New Zealand Post "Children's Book" award. Transsexual Jacqui Grant is made a member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for her work with children.

1999   Sixth Labour government is elected. Ken and Ken are center of ad campaign for NZ Post. Three "out" candidates (of fourteen who ran for positions) are elected as MPs in the new Labour government. Queer Nation is nominated for the TV Guide "Best Lifestyle Series" award.

2000   Parliament issues the "Same Sex Discussion Paper."

2001   March 29 passing of the Property Relations Bill Replaces the 1976 Matrimonial Property Act and gives same sex and de facto couples the same property rights as married couples (after three years). Booklet on LGB issues is given out in all secondary schools to promote safe environment for LGB staff and students.

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