

Exploring an Institutional Base: Locating a Queer Women's Community in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada

Rachael Sullivan, University of British Columbia, conducts research in the area of sexuality and gender, focusing on social space and community relations. In April 2008, she was recognized as one of three Outstanding Teaching Assistants in the Faculty of Arts at UBC.

Abstract

This article explores how an institutional base is created by lesbian, bisexual, and queer women living in the rural Canadian city of Thunder Bay, Ontario. Issues of access, exclusion, and use of the local university queer resource centre as a key site for community building figure prominently in the article.

Résumé

Cet article explore comment une base institutionnelle est créée par des lesbiennes, des bisexuelles, et des femmes gays s vivant dans la ville rurale canadienne de Thunder Bay, en Ontario. Les questions d'accès, d'exclusion, et de l'utilisation du centre de ressources gay de l'université locale comme site clé pour bâtir la communauté est paraît de façon proéminente dans cet article.

Small, isolated cities are not usually known for their inclusiveness or acceptance of sexual minorities (Korinek 2003; Kramer 1995). Despite this, researchers concerned with women's sexuality and space have revealed that lesbian, bisexual and queer¹ women who make use of business and community sites do help to foster a sense of community (Lockard 1986; Nash 2001; Peake 1993; Valentine 1995). These sites present opportunities to cement and locate an identifiable queer women's community by providing different services, functions and places to connect and socialize with other women without fear of harassment (Valentine 1993a; Wolfe 1997). When these sites are examined collectively they create an "institutional base," a term Lockard uses to describe "the gay-defined (sic) places and organizations which characterize a community and provide a number of functions for community members" (Lockard 1986, 88). Traditionally, these include women's centres, women's bookstores and residential enclaves (Lockard 1986; Nash 2001; Rothenberg 1995). While relatively little research has included university spaces as part of an institutional base for queer women, in some cases the university can offer a place for storing resources and creating social networks (see Korinek 2003 for an exception). However, this space is an ambivalent one where resources and social programming are available, but with limited access for non-students.

In this article, I explore the formation of an institutional base by lesbian, bisexual, and queer women living in the rural city of Thunder Bay, Ontario. From interviews with twelve queer-identified women, I focus on the Women's Centre, Women's Bookstore, and Pride Central, a student-run queer resource

centre located on the Lakehead University campus. Post-secondary institutions have rarely been included in the mapping of spaces used for and by sexual dissidents. Despite its central role and desire, I argue that Pride Central is unable to consistently serve the entire Thunder Bay queer community due to its location on the university campus. Yet, both student and non-student queer women attempt to use the university campus in conjunction with the Women's Centre and Women's Bookstore to hold events, provide services and/or resources, and ultimately maintain a strong queer women's community.

Through the development of space-based research, feminist geographers and sociologists concerned with sexuality have identified two clear themes: a) a distinction between urban and/or rural spaces and b) an exploration of how space, place and location are gendered (Adler and Brenner 1992; Bell and Valentine 1995; Castells 1983; Forsyth 1997; Little and Panelli 2003; Podmore 2001; Riordon 1996; Rothenberg 1995; Valentine 1993a, 1993b, 1995, 2000). Much of the research published prior to the 1990s focused on gay male space in various urban locations, beginning with Castells' (1983) work, "City and Culture: The San Francisco Experience." However, in the last two decades scholars have actively explored beyond the Anglo-western metropolis to rural and non-western contexts where multiple sexual subjectivities have been identified (Balachandran 2001; Bell and Valentine 1995; Phillips, Watt and Shuttleton 2000). Additionally, considerable focus has been placed on the spatial strategies used by queer women in specific locations to navigate through a multitude of discourses that organize the expression and representations of various power relations, including - but not limited to - gender, race, class, sexuality, age and ability in space (McDowell 1999; Nash 2001; Rose 1993; Valentine 1993a & 1995). Thus, the research presented here adds to this growing area of scholarship by considering the university as key site for lesbian, bisexual and queer women living in a rural space.

Overview of the Study: Research Site and Participants

In November 2004, I ventured to the city of Thunder Bay, Ontario to meet with self-identified lesbian, bisexual and queer women to discuss their use of particular sites and movement through the city. I chose Thunder Bay because of its unique combination of rural and urban characteristics. Not only is Thunder Bay the largest city in the Northwestern Ontario region of Canada with a population of about 109,000 people, but it is fairly isolated requiring a lengthy drive to reach any other urban centre (i.e., eight hours west to Winnipeg, Manitoba, or south to Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario). Thunder Bay was established in 1970 after the amalgamation of Port Arthur and Fort William; this "rural city" has since become a hub for social, health and government services typically found in urban centres. As a result, people who live in the surrounding towns often drive for up to four hours to Thunder Bay to shop, work and play, marking it as a major urban centre. Thunder Bay has also been described as a mill town, because of its physical landscape, isolated location, and economic dependence on natural resources (Dunk and Bartol 2005). Much of the city's economic stability is derived from the primary industries of forestry and mining (Dunk 2003). Secondary industries such as manufacturing, transportation and shipping have maintained Thunder Bay's viability as a gateway to the west (Mauro 1981). The success of these industries has spurred a growing population and a need for shops, entertainment and cultural amenities, which has made Thunder Bay one of the most urban spaces within the region.

Similarly, the racial diversity of the population and the gendered notions associated with the Northwestern Ontario region work to complicate how Thunder Bay is taken up as a rural city. In terms of population diversity, Thunder Bay is a predominantly white city, with only 2,640 residents claiming visible minority status in a total population of 109,000 according to the 2001 Statistics Canada Census.² However, Thunder Bay has a large Aboriginal population of about 7,250 people reported in the same census statistics.

Although the relative homogeneity of the population is characteristic of other rural cities and small towns, Thunder Bay is often thought to hold more employment opportunities, better living conditions and more services compared to smaller towns and reserves (Janovicek 2007). Thus, dually positioned as urban within the region, and as rural within the province, Thunder Bay is aptly described as a rural city. This creates a unique combination of cultural and ethnic diversity within the city, but it also results in a great deal of racism that has yet to be resolved (Sullivan 2005). Moreover, the city is known as a "working man's mill town" (Dunk 2003), which highlights how masculinised ideals have become associated with this region. Yet, or perhaps because of it, there is a long history of feminist organizing that has led to the development of women centred organizations, such as Thunder Bay Women's Liberation (1969), Women's Center and *The Northern Woman Journal* (1973) and Northwestern Ontario Decade Council (1976) (Adamson 1995; Janovicek 2007). As I have argued elsewhere, this ambiguity creates the potential for different negotiations as lesbian, bisexual and queer women attempt to create and maintain a feeling of community in this specific city (Sullivan 2005).

In total, twelve self-identified queer women participated in a face-to-face semi-structured interview. The sample was not meant to be representative, but rather was used to illuminate commonalities and differences in the respondents' engagement with the city as lesbian, bisexual and queer women. Within this small sample, the two categories that had the greatest variation within the group were age (five women were in their 20s, three in their 30s and four in the over 40 category) and duration of residence in the city of Thunder Bay. Four women had lived in Thunder Bay for less than a month to 5 years, four women had lived in the city between 6 and 15 years, and four others had lived in the region for more than 25 years. The sample was predominantly white as eleven women identified as Canadian with European heritage and one woman identified as Ojibwa/Cree. The lack of racialized

diversity resulted from the methods used to create the sample, and the over-identification of women who had or were attending Lakehead University, which included eight of the 12 women interviewed. In terms of sexual identifications, seven women wanted to be identified as "lesbian" and some used specific terminology such as "country dyke," "bent," or "women loving" to modify their sexuality. Three women used "queer" as their main sexual identification, one woman identified as a "dyke" and one woman used "bisexual" to identify her sexuality. Gender ambiguity was not addressed at the time of the interviews as it was outside of the scope of this research project.

Space, Place and Location: Finding a Queer Women's Community

Through spatial analysis, I have uncovered reconciliations with and resistances to dominant discourses that work to organize the lives of residents in Thunder Bay. As Rose (1993) and Massey (1994) have both argued, space is constructed out of social relations, which are already imbued with a multiplicity of power dynamics that act on and through the subjects contained and constrained by a specific space. As a result, those who occupy these spaces are always negotiating gender, race, class, sexuality, ability and a number of other social relations. Similarly, Lefebvre (1991) offers a nuanced understanding of space, which requires the inclusion of "social" along with physical and mental spaces to understand how social dynamics are unified and shaped together in a dialectical process.

For Lefebvre, physical spaces "are tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes" and to how those relations are displayed and communicated (1991, 33). For example, Valentine (1993a) provides a description of how heterosexuality is (re)produced spatially:

....heterosexuality is expressed in the way spaces are *physically* and *socially* organized...The lack of recognition of alternative sexual identities means that places and organizations exclude lesbian and gay lifestyles and so *unconsciously* reproduce heterosexual

hegemony...but more insidiously heterosexuality hegemony is maintained and policed through homophobia. (410, emphasis added)

In this description Valentine utilises the multiple dimensions through which heterosexuality is privileged over "alternative sexual identities." Moreover, Lockard's (1986) explanation of an institutional base emphasizes the need to create and locate queer spaces within the city. She notes that the mobilization of community members can only occur when a community,

...is visible, at least to some degree, to the outside world.....Bars, women's centres and bookstores provide places where lesbians can meet and exchange information...Whatever their function, the existence of these institutions is tangible evidence of feelings of identity and unity of a community.
(Lockard 1986, 88, emphasis added)

Here, "women-centred" spaces provide a site where heteronormativity can be disrupted and an alternative sexuality can be expressed and celebrated. Without these public places, only private homes would be available (Kramer 1995).

Accordingly, the public sites, which make up the institutional base, can be considered sites of resistance. While resistance is an often-contested term, for the purposes of this article I am drawing upon Foucault's theorization of resistance. In the *History of Sexuality*, he states "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (1978, 95). Much of this project is about examining how certain power relations in specific places are privileged, while others are denied, but cannot be forced outside of a central and tacit set of norms (Lefebvre 1991). More specifically, without a central gay/queer business district, typically found in urban centres, it is difficult to challenge the heterosexual hegemony maintained within the city. Despite this absence, some places are used as sites of resistance, such as the Women's Centre and Women's Bookstore, which provide an opening of social space,

pushing up against the dominant discourses that organize the expression of sexuality to make room for subordinate and marginal sexualities. Thus, sites of resistance create the opportunity to explore non-normative sexualities; these lived spaces can help create an institutional base that encourages a sense of community for sexual dissidents.

The Rural City and Relations of Gender: Mill Town Men and Pioneering Women

The complex identity of Thunder Bay, Ontario as a rural city is an important part of how queer women use and understand the space(s) of the city. Many of the women interviewed often described the city as rural because of its isolated location, its privileging of masculinity and seemingly conservative disposition. These characteristics mark the city as rural despite many of the urban amenities described above. For example, J.J., who was interviewed for this project, comments on the gendered nature of the city, "...a pulp/mill town ...and men sort of ruled the place; you know lumberjack guys or whatever you want to call them" (J.J., Ojibway/Cree, Woman Loving, 40+ yrs. old). Maddie adds, "I mean there is a macho element to this town, which I don't have to deal with; I don't really have to see it that often" (Maddie, Canadian/French/Italian, Lesbian, 40+ yrs. old). Similarly, Jane describes the city as, "...a very outdoor oriented culture...[laughter]. There's still a real frontier's mentality here, I find people sort of think of themselves as rough and tough" (Jane, Caucasian, Country Dyke, 40+ yrs. old).

All the women interviewed acknowledge the dominance of masculine discourses that are tied to the isolated and industrial nature of the city. Yet, as Maddie suggests, she does not necessarily have to deal with the macho element of the city, since she is likely to organize her social network differently to include mostly women.

In addition to the macho element of the city, Jane explains that there is, "...lots of racism here, a fair bit of homophobia, not a very diverse place, it's very white not too many ethnic minorities...um...at least not people of

colour" (Jane, Caucasian, Country Dyke, 40+ yrs. old).

Many of the women expressed similar sentiments about the amount of racism and a lack of ethnic and/or cultural diversity, but when compared to other small towns, Jackie saw Thunder Bay as having possibilities. She explains:

Well, it's definitely a Northern City. I think that actually, it's a lot more culturally diverse than people give it credit. I've lived in a Northern City before, I lived in [a smaller town in Northeastern Ontario], and I can differentiate between the two...So in a way, yes it [Thunder Bay] is culturally diverse, but you have to be willing to look for it.

(Jackie, Canadian/White, Lesbian, 20+ yrs. old)

Although these women do not account for the large Aboriginal population as part of what a diverse city might look like, Jackie's comment does suggest that there are more opportunities in Thunder Bay than elsewhere in the region.

Together, all three women expressed awareness of which ideals were privileged in their perceptions of Thunder Bay. Adamson (1995), Heald (1990) and Janovicek (2007) illustrate how gender, race and class are embedded in the dynamics of this city and how hard feminists, aboriginal activists and "women libbers" have had to work, separately and together, to establish services and centres that will serve a variety of marginalized communities. Indeed, the consistent use of the raced, classed and gendered aspects used by the informants to describe the city demonstrates "a continual appropriation and re-affirmation of the world as structured according to existing socio-spatial arrangements" (Shields 1991, 52). In fact, I argue that the different positioning of queer women allows them to draw on different spatial practices to negotiate their movement through the city (Sullivan 2005). As a result, queer women work to bend, push and resist the dominant discourses used to (re)present Thunder Bay through socio-spatial strategies. Often, this involves socializing in women-only groups, including both recreational activities, such as

sports teams and friendship groups. Thus, lesbian, bisexual and queer women may not provide a permanent break in the dominant discourses that form this understanding of the city; instead they are able to interrupt these discourses, momentarily, and construct "in-between"/lived spaces (Lefebvre 1991).

Doubling up in the Rural City:

Women-Centred Space and Queer Sites

Sites that are often identified as welcoming for lesbian, bisexual and queer women include the Women's Centre and the Women's Bookstore. While both of these spaces are not necessarily queer-identified, I agree with Lockard (1986) and Valentine (1993a) that these types of sites do provide lesbian, bisexual and queer women alternative places to gather resources and connect with other women. Established in 1973, the Women's Centre relies on a combination of donations and government funding; to this day, it remains a resource, referral and advocacy centre, addressing issues that affect a broad spectrum of women in Thunder Bay, including issues of family law, safety, and economic stability (Women's Center 2001). Conversely, the Women's Bookstore provides a common space to discover and purchase lesbian, bisexual and queer resources. This bookstore imports queer-women-friendly books and magazines, hosts reading groups, and has a notice board where event details are often listed. Despite the two very distinct functions these sites serve, the women interviewed identified these spaces as welcoming.

In our interview, Maddie described how the Women's Centre became an important site when she first moved to Thunder Bay, "When I first moved here, um...I went to the Women's Centre, and that's how I found my first place to live here. And I found, that I was able to tap into at least a segment of the lesbian community, by making myself known there" (Maddie, Canadian/French/Italian, Lesbian, 40+ yrs. old).

Here, the Women's Centre serves a purpose beyond its referral and advocacy functions by serving as a point of entry into the

queer women's community. This use of space acts as an "in between" space and a foundation of the queer women's institutional base. As Lockard explains "...in a community, the institutions are open to all, and new members can locate them through a variety of means. The lesbian who is newly out or new in town can contact the local women's centre or bookstore" (1986, 89). Additionally, Valentine argues that "many gay women...avoid publicly expressing their sexuality in environments where they perceived they will encounter...hostility" (1993b, 410). In Thunder Bay, the Women's Centre and the Women's Bookstore serve as points of entry for the queer women's community because they service a wider community of women. In fact, I argue that knowing these spaces exist, under the sign of women, momentarily opens these spaces for a lesbian-, bisexual- and queer-identified audience because the emphasis on gender helps to deflect or diminish attention away from a dissident sexuality. The ambivalence of these spaces for queer women is part of their usefulness because they can serve as sites of resistance on the inside and as more general service sites on the outside. However, it is important to also investigate the non-traditional sites that have been taken up by queer women; in this case Lakehead University and Pride Central.

The University: Queer Sites on Campus

Centrally located, Lakehead University was established in 1965 and serves as a space for community events due to its large rooms and extensive amenities. It is also home to Pride Central, which was organized in 1995 by a fourth year female student looking to create a space for queer students to hang out. To date, it is the only queer resource centre in the entire city of Thunder Bay. Funded through the Lakehead University Student Union (LUSU), Pride Central is run by a student coordinator and a resourceful group of volunteers. It works in conjunction with the Gender Issues Centre (GIC), a non-exclusive women's centre also located on the campus, and funded, staffed and coordinated by LUSU. One of the main

features of Pride Central is that it "offer[s] support to students or members of the faculty on campus at Lakehead University, and to...the wider community of Thunder Bay" (Pride Central Home Page 2006).³

Both Pride Central and the University were identified as spaces where queer women felt able to express their sexuality. Here J.J.B.'s description of Pride Central was echoed across many of the interviews. She states: "Obviously, Pride Central [is] a huge connecting source, not just for students, but for external community as well. Trying to like, be that hub for a lot of people and I think it does that very well. But, it still obviously caters to the student population" (J.J.B., White, Lesbian, 30+ yrs. old).

The obviousness and openness of Pride Central as an important site for queer women underlines the necessity and visibility of this resource centre for creating a queer women's community in Thunder Bay. As the only resource centre that caters to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Two-Spirit, Intersex and Queer (LGBTTIQ) community of Thunder Bay (Ivany 2007), Pride Central provides resources and opportunities that might not exist otherwise. Moreover, the location of the centre on the university campus provides important opportunities, such as: a) a physical space for an LGBTTIQ resource centre, b) the funding necessary to coordinate social and educational initiatives, and c) the institutionalization of a community that is organized through sexuality.

Also, the university campus is, for the most part, observed as a site where queer women might feel more open about their sexuality. As J.J. discloses, "The only place that I would feel safe,...to have my girlfriend hold my hand or hold my paw, that's what I call it, my paw, [is] in a place like the women's centre, woman's bookstore or at the university cafeteria, or at the university pub" (J.J., Ojibway/Cree, Woman Loving, 40+ yrs. old).

Here, J.J. identifies other spaces on the university campus where she felt safe to express her desire for other women. In fact, many women described a perception of safety that extended beyond the physical space of Pride Central to include much of the campus.

In some cases, the university is actively constructed as a haven from the dangers of the outside world (Quinn 2003). As a result, this site has been used by a number of feminist organizations in conjunction with groups on campus to hold various events, including the Take Back the Night Rally, December 6th Memorial and International Women's Day festivities. As a result, the university campus is (re)produced through a set of codes that imagine it as a more open space for sexual dissidents (Lefebvre 1991) and a site of resistance (Foucault 1978) for lesbian, bisexual and queer women when compared to the rest of Thunder Bay. Despite this openness there are issues of access that dissuade women from utilizing this resource centre.

Issues of Access: The Creation of Barriers Through Location

Although the university appears to provide an alternative space, some feminists have argued that the university is a privileged site (Mackinnon, Elquist-Saltzman and Prentice 1998; Quinn 2003; Richer and Weir 1995). Within the Western context, these spaces are permeated with gendered, classed and racialized power dynamics (Massey 1994; Rose 1993). In turn, these dynamics have shaped how the university is conceived and perceived as an institution, but like other institutions the university is an ever-changing space. For example Quinn argues, "we can no longer think of the university as a male space, but need to explore it as a place of women that is still imbued with masculinist notions" (2003, 450). These "masculinist notions" have been reinforced through a history of mainly white, privileged men using and shaping this space as they sought admission into the university with the goals of learning and accreditation. More recently, the inclusion of marginal students and faculty has required a change in attitude and re-examination of who belongs in the university and who does not (Westmoreland-Traoré 1999). In fact, the creation and maintenance of equity policies (Richer and Weir 1995) have made places

like Pride Central possible, even in Thunder Bay.

Although there has been considerable progress in the inclusion of marginal students and faculty, significant barriers still exist and work to exclude those who are unable to achieve sufficient educational proficiency and financial backing to meet the requirements for admission to post-secondary education. The University is a highly regulated institution that requires the completion of secondary educational requirements and the necessary financial support to pay admission fees, tuition, books, transportation and living costs. In other research, women including women of colour, Aboriginal and working class women have expressed not feel worthy of attending a post-secondary institution, because they do not want to be "found out" as not "smart enough" or as "trespassers" (hooks 1994). The privileging of the university campus as a space of higher learning prohibits access to this space, especially in the case of Pride Central. This awareness is expressed by Pearl as she explains the role of this institution for the queer community in Thunder Bay.

To me, the University pretty much has the only official role in the gay community because it has the only official centre for gay people in this community and that's tragically unfair to people who aren't involved in the University....You have to be privileged to be here, and it's a case of privileged people within the gay community who are most privileged, yet again benefiting from even more privilege, by having access, ready access to the only gay centre, gay-oriented centre in the city.

(Pearl, White, Queer/Lesbian, 20+yrs. old)

Pearl's apt description of this inequitable arrangement is significant in understanding how the university might be inaccessible for lesbian, bisexual or queer women who live and work outside the university's gates. In fact, some women might avoid some of the events organized by Pride Central because they are a) located on campus, b) thought to be only open to students, staff and faculty, despite its claim to serve the wider community and c) not adaptable to the needs of working women, mothers, or those with other family responsibilities.

Moreover, the women interviewed who were not students at the time expressed difficulty in accessing Pride Central, including information about Pride Central and events outside of the Lakehead campus. One woman, H.G., explained her impression of Pride Central as a non-student:

...Pride Central, which is LU [Lakehead University] focused but it doesn't - they welcome people from the community. But if they're doing something, word of mouth doesn't reach the community...I think more people would become involved, as word of mouth sort of passed on and if it was sustained or whatever...but then um, like it doesn't seem to go outside that box.

(H.G., White, Dyke, 30+ yrs. old)

The communication barrier that H.G. describes illustrates both a physical and social barrier between the campus and the rest of the queer women's community. The fact that information is passed through word of mouth instead of more formal and public modes of communication further defines this barrier.

Secondly, Joey explains how she related to the resource centre on campus as a non-student: "I would assume that everything through the Gender Issues Centre (GIC) at Lakehead University brings together quite a few people... But, I'm not a student there, so I don't really...you know...I'm just checking it out on my own" (Joey, Canadian/Ukrainian, Bisexual, 20+ yrs. old).

Despite her recent student status, Joey expresses hesitation about accessing the Lakehead campus in search of queer-friendly resources. Although Joey knows about and expresses an interest in both the GIC and Pride Central resources and events, she found it difficult to seek out these resources. Thus, both women articulate difficulty accessing Pride Central and other resources because they are located on the Lakehead University campus. To this end, both women need to find resources and social connections to the queer women's community on their own. This must seem doubly impossible for women who have never been students and may regard the university campus as an unwelcoming place. Although

there are multiple factors that make the university campus seem inaccessible to many women, Pride Central remains the only queer resource centre in Thunder Bay.

While issues of access plague Pride Central and its ability to meet the needs of the entire queer women's community, this shortfall makes room for both the Women's Bookstore and Women's Centre to continue to act as sites of resistance. In fact, all three sites lead to a more stable institutional base than relying on one site alone to provide all the services and resources for the queer women's community. As I have argued, Pride Central has maintained an active role in the queer women's community because it is located on a more liberal, urban university campus, which provides a contrast to the broader characterization of Thunder Bay as a rural, white, working class, mill town.

Conclusion

Throughout this article, I have demonstrated how the Women's Centre, Women's Bookstore, and Pride Central work to create an institutional base for the queer women's community in Thunder Bay, Ontario. While the Women's Centre and Women's Bookstore offer different opportunities for non-student women than Pride Central and its largely student focus, they all provide important entry points into the queer women's community (Lockard 1985). Moreover, the fact that these spaces have endured within this rural city demonstrates a need for these women-centred and queer spaces.

Indeed, as researchers continue to explore issues of sexuality and space, we need to consider the impact of University spaces on lesbian, bisexual and queer women's communities. Here, the inclusion of Pride Central as a key part of the institutional base emphasizes the uniqueness of Thunder Bay and the women who reside there. Yet, this largely unexplored site is complex and identified in unconventional ways by feminists and queer women. The extension of the university campus as a site of resistance is an important contribution to space and sexuality research, but the barriers to this space need to be examined further. Overall, the

combination of the Women's Centre, Women's Bookstore, and Pride Central as key sites helps to foster a sense of community, one that enables lesbian, bisexual, and queer women to live, work and play in this remote city nestled on the shores of Lake Superior.

Acknowledgements

Funding for the research presented here was provided by SSHRC. I also wish to acknowledge the assistance of the anonymous reviewers of *Atlantis* and my colleagues for their helpful suggestions.

Endnotes

1. I use the term "queer" to account for the fluidity and inconsistencies found in identity categories, especially when shaped to fit rural spaces (Bell and Valentine 1995b; Kramer 1995).
2. This information can be found in the 2001 community profiles at: www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Details/Page.
3. From 2006 to 2008, LUSU failed to maintain the Pride Central website. The most recent website <http://pride.lusu.ca/> (accessed March 4, 2009), no longer displays the centre's mandate.

References

- Adamson, N. "Feminists, Libbers, Lefties, and Radicals: The Emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement," *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980*, J. Parr, ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995, pp. 252-80.
- Adler, S. and Brenner, J. "Gender and Space: Lesbians and Gay Men in the City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 16.1 (1992): 24.
- Balachandran, C. "A Preliminary Report on Emerging Gay Geographies in Bangalore," *Journal of South Asian Studies* 24 (2001): 103-18.

Bell, D. and G. Valentine. "Queer Country: Rural Lesbian and Gay Lives," *Journal of Rural Studies* 11.2 (1995): 113-22.

Castells, M. "Part 3: City and Culture: The San Francisco Experience," *The City and The Grassroots: a Cross Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements*, M. Castells, ed. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983, pp. 97-172.

Dunk, T. *It's a Working Man's Town: Male Working-class Culture*, 2nd ed. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003.

_____ and D. Bartol. "The Logic and Limitations of Male Working-Class Culture in A Resource Hinterland," *Spaces of Masculinities*, B. van Hoven and K. Horschelmann, eds. New York: Routledge, 2005, pp. 31- 44.

Forsyth, A. "'Out' in the Valley," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 21.1 (1997): 38.

Foucault, M. *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1 New York : Pantheon Books, 1978.

Heald, S. "'Making Democracy Practicable': Voluntarism and Job Creation," *Community and Organization and the Canadian State*, R. Ng, G. Walker and J. Muller, eds. Toronto: Garamond Press, 1990, pp. 145-64.

hooks, b. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York : Routledge, 1994.

Ivany, D. "Pride Central Report," *The Argus: Lakehead University's Student Newspaper* 43.17 (February 12th, 2007).

Janovicek, N. *No Place To Go: Local Histories of the Battered Women's Shelter Movement*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007.

Korinek, V. "'The Most Openly Gay Person for at Least a Thousand Miles': Doug Wilson and the Politicization of a Province, 1975-1983,"

- The Canadian Historical Review* 84. 4 (2003): 517.
- Kramer, J. L. "Bachelor Farmers and Spinsters: Gay and Lesbian Identities and Communities in Rural North Dakota," *Mapping Desire*, D. Bell and G. Valentine, eds. New York: Routledge, 1995, pp. 200-13.
- Lefebvre, H. *The Production of Space* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Oxford: Blackwell 1991.
- Little, J., and R. Panelli. "Gender Research in Rural Geography," *Gender, Place and Culture* 10.3 (2003): 281.
- Lockard, D. "The Lesbian Community: An Anthropological Approach," *Anthropology and Homosexual Behavior* 11.3-4 (1986): 83-97.
- Mackinnon, A., I. Elgquist-Saltzman and A. Prentice. "Introduction," *Education into the 21st Century: Dangerous Terrain for Women?* A. Mackinnon, I. Elgquist-Saltzman and A. Prentice, eds. London: Falmer Press, 1998, pp. 1-6.
- Massey, D. B. *Space, Place, and Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994.
- Mauro, J. M. *Thunder Bay, A History: the Golden Gateway of the Great Northwest*. Thunder Bay, Ontario: Lehto Printers, 1981.
- McDowell, L. *Gender, Identity, and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- Nash, C. "Siting Lesbians: Urban Spaces and Sexuality," *In a Queer Country: Gay and Lesbian Studies in the Canadian Context*, T. Goldie, ed. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, 2001, pp. 235-56.
- Peake, L. "'Race' and Sexuality: Challenging the Patriarchal Structuring of Urban Social Space," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 11 (1993): 415-32.
- Phillips, R., D. Watt, D. Shuttleton. *De-Centering Sexualities: Politics and Representations Beyond the Metropolis*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Podmore, J. "Lesbians in the Crowd: Gender, Sexuality and Visibility along Montréal's Boul. St-Laurent," *Gender, Place and Culture* 8.4 (2001): 333.
- Pride Central. "Home Page - Welcome" <http://bolt.lakeheadu.ca/~lgbwww/index.html> (Last accessed April 19, 2006)
- Quinn, J. "The Dynamics of the Protected Space: Spatial Concepts and Women Students," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 24.4 (2003): 449-61.
- Richer, S. and L. Weir, eds. *Beyond Political Correctness: Towards the Inclusive University*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995.
- Riordon, M. *Out Our Way: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Country*. Toronto, Ont.: Between the Lines, 1996.
- Rose, G. *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Rothenberg, T. "'...And She Told Two Friends': Lesbians Creating Urban Social Space," *Mapping desire*, D. Bell and G. Valentine, eds. Seattle, Wash.: Bay Press, 1995, pp. 165-81.
- Shields, R. *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Sullivan, R. "Between Lake, Rocks, and Trees: Exploring How Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer Women Access Rural Space in Thunder Bay, Ontario." Unpublished MA thesis. Toronto: University of Toronto, 2005.
- Valentine, G. "Desperately Seeking Susan: A Geography of Lesbian Friendships," *Area* 25.2 (1993a): 109-16.

_____. "(Hetero)sexing Space: Lesbian Perceptions and Experiences," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 11 (1993b): 395-413.

_____. "Out and About: Geographies of Lesbian Landscapes," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 19.1 (1995): 96.

_____. "Introduction," *From Nowhere to Everywhere: Lesbian Geographies*, G. Valentine, ed. New York: Harrington Press, 2000, pp. 1-10.

Westmoreland-Traoré, J. "Educational Equity: No Turning Back," *Equity and How To Get It: Rescuing Graduate Studies*, K. Armatage, ed. Toronto: Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 1999, pp. 38-61.

Wolfe, M. "Invisible Women in Invisible Places: the Production of Social Space in Lesbian Bars," *Queers in Space*, G. B. Ingram, A. M. Bouthillette and Y. Retter, eds. Seattle, Wash.: Bay Press, 1997, pp. 125-38.

Women's Centre. "About Us" webpage, 2001. Retrieved November 7, 2006, from <http://my.tbaytel.net/nwcentre/aboutus.htm>