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CARE, INTIMACY, AND SAME-SEX PARTNERSHIP IN THE 21st CENTURY

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Abstract

The paper addresses the emergence of same sex relationships as a public policy issue in contemporary society. Historical and cross-cultural evidence shows how same-sex relationships have been an integral part of the kinship system, household economies, and iconography of many societies, and that desire and relationship are produced in diverse ways at the confluence of kinship, gender, and life stage expectations circulating in different societies. Recent history of the advanced, industrial societies is characterised by sharp shifts in the conceptualization of same sex relationship, from sin, sickness, and crime to a patchwork of "relationship recognition" forms in just a few decades. Relationship recognition and "gay marriage" are just the beginning of a process of documenting and affirming relationship innovation among LGBT people. On the horizon are looming new debates over reproductive rights, child raising, the (over)valorization of the couple, and social service provision throughout the life course.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the advanced industrial societies of the European Union, North America, and Australia continue to struggle with questions of the "placement" of same-sex relationships in family policy and regulation. The social treatment of affective and sexual relationships between men and between women has followed a path of dramatic twists and turns through the last two centuries. Variously conceived as sin, crime, or sickness, and subjected to suppression by states and social elites, same-sex relationships have nevertheless persisted, and today flourish in unprecedented ways. Significant numbers of people in all of these societies, and increasingly in Asia, Africa, and Latin America as well, have become sufficiently networked and mobilized to defend their relationships, insisting on being participants in the processes that determine their fate, and generating counter-discourses that engage the states and social institutions around them.

At the risk of constructing an ostensibly essentialist history, one might say that same-sex relationships have "always" been there in the social traditions of the West (Carpenter, 1982; Anderson & Sutherland, 1963; Boswell, 1994). The roots of the political and philosophical traditions of the West are in a society deeply affirmative of homosexual relations of the mentor/acolyte model (Halperin, 1990; Foucault, 1978). Indeed most of the heros of ancient Greek mythology had male lovers: the founding of political democracy is attributed to the male couple, Harmodias and Aristogeiton, who slew the tyrant, Hyppias

in 514 BCE. Hercules was endowed with an extensive list of male and female lovers. The success of war heros, like Achilles, was attributed to the steadfastness of their partners (Patroclus in the case of Achilles). Zeus, the most powerful god of all, had Ganymede at his side. The "heroic friendships" between men, celebrated in classical Greek mythology and literature, have bequeathed the (now carefully desexualized) term 'mentor' to contemporary usage, and Sappho's poetry has inspired contemporary constructions of lesbianism. The Greeks are but one of many societies around the world with a strong sense of the rich variety of emotional, affective, and erotic relationships that are part of the human potential. These forms and meaning of same-sex bonding have been lost in the reigning models of 'family' in the 19th and 20th centuries; today we struggle to re-imagine and reconstruct social spaces for unofficial, submerged "little" traditions in western societies which have been gaining voice and mobilizing for social inclusion.

The Christian era in the West has been characterized by sometimes extreme measures to annihilate 'sodomy' and 'special friendships' both from European societies, and from societies colonized by European invaders. But contemporary scholarship has begun to recover the hidden relationships that survived during these centuries through the writings of such members of the literate classes as Michelangelo, Montaigne, Francis Bacon, James I, and the Ladies of Llangollen, and also through the clergy's documentation of the confessions made by the larger nonliterate population (Murray, 1996). There is now much

written on 19th century "romantic friendships" between women and between men and the ways in which they differ from the relationships of modern lesbians and gay men (Faderman, 1981; Rupp, 1999). What unites these historical examples together may be less than what separates them given their disparate combinations of: social expectations and recognition, erotic and emotional elements, models of friendship and transitoriness, and engagement with other-sex relationships. But the recuperation of lost traditions and submerged voices, suppressed by centuries of overt censorship and heterosexist bias, is providing new insight into the historical construction of gender, sexuality, and relationship, and into our own parochial ideas about same-sex relationships in the contemporary West.

Few easy generalizations flow from the anthropological record, but it is noteworthy how many non-Western cultures have found a place for same-sex relationships in the overall social organization of production and reproduction. What is clear from the cross-cultural evidence is that at least some indigenous societies on every inhabited continent have socially valued same-sex relationships that include a sexual component in their make up. These relationships fall into a few major patterns typically defined by life stage, gender, status, and/or kinship (Adam, 1985; Greenberg, 1988; Trumbach, 1989; Murray, 2000). One major pattern, well-documented across North and South America and Polynesia, is the "berdache," "two-spirited," or transgendered form. In these societies,

homosexual relations are a common part of a larger pattern where some men and women take up some or most of the social roles and symbols typical of the other gender, and enter into marital relations with people with conventional gender attributes (Jacobs, Thomas & Lang, 1997; Lang, 1998). The anthropological research literature reports numerous instances of men marrying both women and transgendered or gender-mixed men among aboriginal societies. There are also instances of women marrying transgendered or gender-mixed women in aboriginal societies in the Americas. In these relationships, male gender-mixed same-sex partners are very often engaged in the full range of labour and child-care activities typical of women in those societies.

A second major pattern takes the form of hierarchical, military, age-graded, and mentor/acolyte relationships, where adult men bond with younger, subordinate males (Dover, 1978; Herdt, 1984; Adam, 1985; Halperin, 1990). Examples of this pattern have been documented in ancient Greece, medieval Japan, pre-colonial Africa, and Melanesia. These male partnerships typically follow the same kinship rules as heterosexual relationships.

A third pattern, sometimes overlapping with the first two, orders homosexual relationships along the same kinship lines as heterosexuality. Thus where particular clan members are considered appropriate marital partners—while members of other clans may be prohibited as incestuous—both males and females of the same appropriate clan may be

considered attractive and acceptable partners. There are Australian and Melanesian cultures where, for example, one's mother's brother was considered both an appropriate marital partner for girls and an appropriate mentor (a relationship including a sexual aspect) for boys (Adam, 1985). Similarly in some societies where the accumulation of brideprice is the prerequisite to attracting a wife, occasionally women with wealth are able to avail themselves of this system to acquire wives (Amadiume, 1980). Men have been able to provide a corresponding gift to the families of youths whom they take into apprenticeship that is equivalent to the gift provided to families of prospective brides. These kin-governed bonds have been documented in some societies of Australia, Africa, and Amazonia. In kin-based models of homosexual attachment, socially disapproved or "criminal" relationships refer to relationships formed between persons of inappropriate clans, regardless of gender.

These examples of same-sex relationship acquire life and meaning only in particular socio-cultural contexts, and do not cohere into a singular, transhistorical category, but they do show the limitations of conventional western constructions of 'family.' Same-sex relationships have been an integral part of the kinship system, household economies, and iconography of many societies. In the contemporary advanced industrial societies of the West, the conceptualization of same-sex relationship is remarkably underdeveloped, both in scholarship and the public imagination. Current historical scholarship points toward a

slow re-mapping of same-sex relationships in western societies over the last three centuries where, for example, public expressions of affection (like kissing) have been stripped away from same-sex interactions and made an exclusive heterosexual monopoly (Bray, 1982), and where robust sensual visions of friendship have been poisoned by post-Freudian visions of "perversion." One need only note the contrasting portrayals of male friendship in pre-war Britain in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited:* two central protagonists in the novel exemplify an older and richer sense of romantic affection between young men occurring as a transitory stage of life preceding marriage, while other images present the newer and more dreaded homosexual as an inhabitant of a lurid demi-monde. The attempted erasure of same-sex relations in law and civil society have pressed its adherents into gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) identities and cultures. Now we are in an era of the return of the repressed, and of an unavoidable confrontation between heterosexist regimes of regulation and the opposition generated by them.

Postwar changes and the welfare state

By the early 20th century, it becomes possible to refer to some pioneering relationships as exemplary of the traits characteristic of modern gay and lesbian couples. Among these relationships are the perhaps iconic partnerships of Gertrude Stein and Alice B Toklas, and of Edward Carpenter and George Merrill. Stein and Toklas participated in the rich cultural

milieu of early 20th century Paris, and were part of an extended network of artists and intellectuals (many of whom were lesbian or gay) that met in the famous salons of the era (Wickes, 1976; Hahn, 1979). Carpenter was a socialist and reformer noted for his work with the Sheffield working class (Tsuzuki, 1980). He and Merrill eventually retired to a rural retreat in Bradway, south of Sheffield, where their house became a mecca for progressive thinkers and writers. Their lengthy, publically known relationship was all the more remarkable given the chill cast over British society by the conviction of Oscar Wilde in 1895, just a few years before Carpenter and Merrill met.

What makes these relationships recognizably modern is a set of sociological prerequisites that create an opening for relationships that break away from the strictures of the dominant kinship system. They show a degree of exclusivity and autonomy that function as an alternative to, rather than simply a supplement to, dominant social institutions. Like the heterosexual relationships around them, some same-sex relationship have become able to partake of rising ideals of voluntary mateship, romantic attachment, companionate marriage, and neolocal household formation, all of which are founded on the financial autonomy provided by wage labour or, especially in earlier instances, more privileged class standing. These are opportunities afforded especially to men, and police records extending back to the 18th century document men seeking each other in public parks, and living together in major European cities (Rey, 1982). It is perhaps not

surprising that as women enter wage labour en masse in the early 20th century, they too are able to exercise new freedom in the choice of partners, and the once-benign "romantic friendship" becomes re-labelled as 'lesbianism' by authorities shocked by the "new woman" emerging from the colleges, dance halls, and boarding houses of the era (Faderman, 1981).

The world wars further galvanized changes in gender and relationship formation. The war mobilizations reorganized millions of men and some women into gender-separated milieus away from home and conventional family relations (Bérubé, 1990). The comrade affections of male soldiers have recently been collected into a volume of letters and poetry (Taylor, 1998). The re-siting of a good deal of female labour from home to factory, and the new female presence in the streets and at night during the wars also provided opportunities for friendship formation.

In the early postwar period, many of the major programs of the welfare state came into being. Employment insurance, medicare, pensions, and so on helped provide supplements or alternatives to traditional family support. With the post-1950s re-entry of women into paid labour, women began to regain financial autonomy and the ability to found households of their own choosing. By the mid-20th century then, there were new opportunities, awareness, and connections among people in ways that included homosexual ties, and improved conditions for founding households of choice.

Still, gay and lesbian people were never the "intended" beneficiaries of state welfare, and overt state policy around family reconstruction exerted an onerous regime of repression over unsanctioned affective relationships. Sexual connection between men remained subject to harsh criminal penalties in northern Europe and Anglo-American jurisdictions. (The Europe subject to Napoleonic conquest, and thus the introduction of modern civil law, lost its medieval sodomy laws in the early 19th century.) Cold War paranoia and the search for subversives caught "sexual perverts" in its nets and legitimated persistent police repression of gay and lesbian venues. The destruction of the early gay and lesbian movement by Nazism left a free field for the postwar hegemony of medical/psychiatric pathologization of gay and lesbian people. In the first two postwar decades, then, the social conditions for same-sex relationships were improving, but the realization of such relationships was subject to panoptical surveillance by a full range of repressive state apparatuses (Adam 1995}.

The last quarter of the 20th century saw yet another realignment of social forces. By the 1970s, feminist and gay/lesbian movements pressed for a range of family reforms, and for the most part, succeeded in at least removing homosexual relations from criminal laws. A direct challenge to medicine and psychiatry also forced a retreat of the sickness paradigm; gay and lesbian communities began to win social space for themselves pushing back the domination of churches, states, and professions that had sought to annihilate

them. Much of this mobilization has proceeded apace during neoliberal regimes characterized by corporate reshaping of the welfare state and constriction of state mandates.

But at the same time, much of the 1980s and 1990s were also preoccupied with the AIDS epidemic which was first identified in gay men in Los Angeles and took a devastating toll of a generation of gay men around the world. It was only after a couples of decades that public comprehension of AIDS began to include an understanding that the epidemic, that had hit gay communities, was but one part of a worldwide epidemic that impacted whole nations, and certainly heterosexuals, as much as, if not more than, gay communities. The identification of AIDS with gay men in the public mind in the first decades of the epidemic had several contradictory consequences for the social construction of care, intimacy, and same-sex partnership in western societies. On one hand, it emboldened traditionalists who seized upon AIDS as evidence of gay immorality and further heightened obsessively sexualized definitions of same-sex relationships. These right-wing discourses fed into the "family values" rhetoric of the neoliberal governments of Thatcher's United Kingdom and Reagan's United States, and proved useful to ideologues advancing a program of divesting the state of welfare responsibilities by downloading them "back" to families. Included in the "family values" agenda was yet another wave of legislative penalties intended to prevent the full participation of lesbian and gay people in

civil society (Smith, 1994; Adam, 1995; Herman, 1997). While today there are signs of a "thaw" in "family values" doctrine in the United Kingdom, this reactionary formation remains influential in the United States (with the exception of a handful of state legislatures) (Adam, 2003).

AIDS, on the other hand, generated alternative discourses of gay relationship over the longer term that have worked to disrupt the ill-informed conventional wisdoms circulating in western societies and propagated by traditional authorities. When the lives of lesbians and gay men are reduced to a "sexuality," and sexuality is defined as a "private" realm with no place in the public domain, then the confinement of (homo)sexuality to the "private" sphere entails a set of social implications that impose special disabilities on gay and lesbian people. The difficulty with the "private" category is the inequity in the language applied to heterosexuality and homosexuality. While heterosexuality is quickly distinguished from its "non-sexual" public manifestations, such as romance, courtship, marriage, and family—which are documented and celebrated in the arts, and institutionalized in the legal system—homosexuality is often not accorded the same amplitude. Same-sex courtship, romance, partnership, home-building, mutual support, and communication through the arts are not always allowed the same public manifestation, but rather are often subjected to the linguistic "squeeze" of the 'sexuality' category and thus consigned to the private.

The first community-based responses to the epidemic in the early and mid-1980s emerged from gay men and lesbians supporting their friends and lovers at a time when government, church, and public health services were withholding support or acting punitively toward gay communities (Adam, 1992). Over time, these community-based mobilizations of care and support, with their "buddy" programs and HIV prevention campaigns, have helped make visible the many ways in which men can and do nurture and care for men. The sizeable body of research devoted to AIDS and social support shows how great a role partners and friends play in the lives of HIV-positive gay men along with, or in place of, biological families of origin (Hays, Chauncey & Tobey, 1990; McCann & Wadsworth, 1992; Britton, Zarski & Hobfoll, 1993; Kimberly & Serovich, 1999). AIDS forced the domestic and sexual lives of gay men into the public realm, and thus into public acknowledgement creating new opportunities for representation in the arts and public media. It is perhaps an irony of the AIDS epidemic that a culture of men caring for men has come increasingly into public view, supplementing the traditionally hypersexual image of gay men (Adam, 1992).

Same sex relationship recognition

After the trenchant critique of gender posed by the women's movement, same-sex relationships no longer look so "different" at the end of the 20th century. It is noteworthy

that Anthony Giddens (1992, p. 58) holds out lesbian relationships as exemplary of the

"pure relationships" which are the new wave of the contemporary period. A "pure

relationship" is "a social relation...entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by

each person from a sustained association with another; and is continued only in so far as it

is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within

it."   And lesbians, having presumably thrown off the traditional detritus of gender,

construct voluntary, egalitarian, and emotionally rich relationships without the pressure of

patriarchy. (As Giddens employs a feminist trope signifying men as the emotionally

crippled gender, gay men don't "make sense" in quite the same way and have none of the

salience enjoyed by lesbians in Giddens's text.)   In an era when typifications of

heterosexual families are still often captured by discourses of "decline," same-sex

relationships, by contrast, now look especially vital, reclaiming and reasserting the values

of care and intimacy in the midst of the competitive individualism of advanced capitalism.

Not just scholarly discourse, but popular culture too seems to want to take a new look at

gay and lesbian relationships–a rehabilitation of recently reviled connections in light of the

perils and disillusionment afflicting conventional heterosexual romantic scripts (Simpson,

1999; Roseneil, 2000a).

    While real gay and lesbian relationships are not likely to be able to live up to any

new idealization–any more than they could have been as wicked as they were previously

held to be–they do offer a range of constructions that do not fit neatly into conventional categories, and are neither mirror images nor simply parallel forms of their heterosexual counterparts (Weeks, Heathy & Donovan, 2001). An emergent scholarly interest in indigenous kinship forms in LGBT communities reveals a valuation of friendship networks where the couple is not so sharply differentiated from other forms of intimate connection, whether friends, lovers, sisters, buddies, tricks, triples, and other relationships exceeding conventional English-language terminology (Weston, 1991; Nardi, 1999; Roseneil, 2000b). And while primary, coupled relationships are, in fact, widespread among lesbians and gay men, they still often "queer" the conventional wisdoms surrounding such relationships by refusing to toe the monogamy line, displaying both trust and permeability at the same time (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Blasband & Peplau, 1985; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1988; Bech, 1997).

It is in this socio-historical context that advanced industrial societies (and increasingly in eastern Europe, South Africa, and some Latin American countries) have embarked on a process of incorporation–or reactionary denial–of same-sex relationships into law and social policy. While 'family' is a term repeatedly invoked as reactionary tool to deny gay and lesbian participation in civil society (Calhoun, 2000), it is also a morally charged category through which a great many gay and lesbian people are understanding their own relationships. While traditionalists in general resist same-sex relationships as a

transgression upon the "holy family," there are perhaps two forces pressing strongly toward legal recognition. While LGBT communities are scarcely united around the issue themselves, often fearing assimilation into rigid state-regulated heterosexual family models, there is also a strong will to claim the legal benefits and responsibilities that go along with marriage, from medical decision-making, to child support, to inheritance. Much of the current impetus for relationship recognition has come from women and men who have been disturbed that their children are denied the support and social entitlements that are taken for granted in families with heterosexual parents, and who have been concerned about providing medical care to their partners struck down by AIDS and other debilitating diseases, just as heterosexuals can provide for their spouses disabled by illness. But there is also a force exterior to LGBT communities in the convergence of neoliberal corporate and state interests that find same-sex relationship recognition to make a great deal of sense. At a time when the social responsibilities of the welfare state are being peeled away, lesbians and gay men are voluntarily offering to take on financial responsibility for the care of other (unrelated) men and women (and their children). The state interest in conscripting lesbians and gay men, along with more usual targets of divorced fathers, into taking on the costs of family support has long been clear in the Netherlands. When the Canadian government recognized same-sex relationships in 2000, its tax division was quick to announce that all same-sex couples *must* now declare themselves for taxation purposes or face criminal

penalties, despite the fact that recognition, unlike marriage, occurs automatically and involuntarily after one year of cohabitation.

Much of the legal recognition that has been happening in the European Union, Canada, and Australia (but only sporadically in the United States (Adam, 2003)), has been through assimilation to 'common-law' status without any clear or coherent policy around the particular needs or differences of same-sex relationships. Gay and lesbian relationship recognition has been coming about as a concession or exception made to a minority group, rather than being integrated into an overall state strategy to support families *as they are*. As a result, various jurisdictions have been piecing together inconsistent sets of rights and responsibilities associated with marriage while withholding other legal elements. As of 2003, only the Netherlands and Belgium have permitted same-sex relationships the status of marriage. The Scandinavian states, France, Canada, Germany, and Hungary have versions of common-law, *pacte civil de solidarité*, or civil union status that diverge from marriage through one or more exceptions typically relating to inheritance, adoption, separation, or obligation to support a former partner. Limited or partial relationship recognition that accords only symbolic recognition, or one or a few of the legal elements of marriage, has come about in Australia, Austria, Brazil, Colombia, Czech Republic, New Zealand, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the U.S. states of Vermont and Hawaii.

In the concluding section, I would like to suggest a series of family issues that remain, and have the potential to grow larger in the public agenda.

Looming struggles in family politics

In recent decades, there has been a widespread emergence of lesbian parenting (Arnup, 1995; Nelson, 1996) almost always in defiance of the state and private structures intended to support fertility in heterosexual couples. There is at least one instance of a community-based organization designed to maximize fertility opportunities for both lesbians and gay men (Rainbow Flag Health Services, 2002) though, for the most part, almost insurmountable barriers are placed against gay male parenting. Contemporary debates over new reproductive technologies seem typically to result in almost reflex attempts to suppress surrogate parenting, cloning, and genetic experimentation, thereby thwarting the development of the technological infrastructure for same-sex biological parenting. While LGBT communities have not yet tried to take on these issues as collectivities (being preoccupied with basic human rights and relationship recognition struggles), individuals are taking the initiative to address these issues.

Child raising is another potential frontier of family politics. The public sphere is still largely taken up by reactionary discourses intended to guarantee an exclusively heterosexual regime in regards to the development of children. In child custody and

adoption, gay and lesbian parents are repeatedly required to affirm (and social scientists obligingly support with the necessary evidence) that neither their children nor any other children will grow up to be queer (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). The many millions of children who will be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered as adults continue to suffer in public institutions explicitly intended to deny, suppress, or ignore their experience. Schools remain institutions of heterosexist terror exercised actively and passively by staff, parents, and peers alike as verbal harassment, intimidation, and physical violence (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Gay and proto-gay children and youth continue to be brutalized with impunity by families and public institutions who presume an exclusive right to discipline them into conventional gender and sexual categories (Sedgwick, 1993; Calhoun, 2000).

Current debates over relationship recognition will not end with provisional legal status, or even with legal marriage. Despite the anxieties among parts of the LGBT intelligentsia that relationship recognition will signify the full assimilation of their relationships by the heterosexist hegemony they sought to escape, the greater legalization and visibility of relationships will continue to pose challenges to simplistic and rigid official categories. LGBT people are not likely simply to consign the diversity and innovation of their relationship forms to the half-world of "deviance," "immorality," "infidelity," or "promiscuity" that the traditional patriarchal regime has used to condemn the range of non-conforming heterosexual relationships, but rather they will celebrate the

queerness of human adhesiveness.

The legal institutionalization of the couple runs up against two limitations. On one side, are the diverse arrangements entered into by lesbians and gay men in initiating a parenting process, involving at times two women and one man, two men and one woman, or two same-sex couples, all of whom seek to co-parent together. Inevitably current legal structures freeze out any third or fourth co-parent, and thus manufacture yet another wall to be scaled by gay and lesbian families. On the other are the practices and realities of a continuum of primary and secondary relationships, where the former are not fenced off from the latter by the requirements of monogamy. There has been a lesbian critique since the so-called "sex wars" of the 1980s that has called for the exploration of polyamory and rejection of monogamy. In a study of seventy male couples in central Canada, we (Adam, 2003) found that monogamy, as a firmly held principle for organizing relationships, appears to be more common among men in early stages of relationship development, younger men who refer to hetero-normative models, and men whose formative years were passed in cultures with no, or limited, autonomous gay worlds. Monogamy often shows itself in the speech of study participants as an accomplishment, rather than a presumption, and as a provisional rule-of-thumb subject to revisiting. It is often counterposed to an active consideration of alternatives in the narratives of men in relationships. Even more

common than monogamy among the couples in our study (and consistent with other research on gay couples), was some version of an "open" relationship. Many couples had experimented with, or were continuing with three-way relationships, usually structured in the form of a primary couple with transitory additional partners. The men in this study did not want to give up the promise of romantic love, and many expressed impassioned commitments to the other men in their lives. But in an all-male environment, they also show allegiance to particularly masculine discourses of autonomy and adventurism, insisting on a right to sexual self-determination, and attraction to the sense of affirmation and pleasure experienced with other men. This evidence points toward a less privatized and more communal sense of sexual connection, than the nuclear family model. Related to this is the salience of friendship networks for both lesbians and gay men. Friendship norms and values infuse couple relationships, perhaps more than marriage ideals, and individuals and couples are embedded in a larger family of friends, many of whom derive from previously sexual relationships (Weeks, et al., 2001).

Finally, there are of course a good many issues faced by gay and lesbian families that are common to all, but lesbian and gay families often find themselves omitted or excluded from state and social services intended to address such issues as poverty among the elderly, retirement housing, domestic abuse, or family break-up. A generation of gay men who hoped to grow old in the midst of a supportive community have found their

personal support networks devastated by the AIDS epidemic (Murray & Adam, 2001). For the most part, they are left to fend for themselves at this time.

The AIDS service organizations that sprang up in many nations over than last twenty years may, in time, become a platform for a more general LGBT health movement and service system. In Canada, a step toward an alternative and broader vision has been articulated in the document, *Valuing Gay Men's Lives* (National Reference Group, 2001). Community-based groups have had some success in acquiring funding for research separate from funding devoted exclusively to orthodox research proposals conforming to the medical model. In the United Kingdom, a Gay Men's Health Network (Alessio, Kwok, Lynch, Nutland & Wright, 2001) has formed to articulate a broader agenda beyond traditional HIV prevention. In the United States, gay men's health has been the focus of a set of conferences held in Colorado each year. This movement from dealing with AIDS as a single issue toward a recognition that HIV transmission cannot be effectively understood apart from the larger context of gay men's lives has much to learn from African American and women's health projects that have sought to keep AIDS in focus as one element in a larger conjuncture of social forces. It also returns to earlier initiatives under way in gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities before the advent of AIDS (Rofes & Hollings, 2000).

Conclusion

At the turn of the 21st century, many of the citizens of advanced industrial societies (and indeed in many developing societies as well) are "voting with their feet" by entering into personal and intimate relationships that do not conform with legally-institutionalized and culturally-reified forms received from the past. A good deal of this cultural ferment is contained by impoverished public discourses of "decline of the family" in government, mass media, professional, and indeed social science texts. So powerful is this family rhetoric that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people are only beginning to represent their own indigenous cultural forms through ambivalent strategies of demanding to be let into the language of family and marriage, and at the same time groping toward new language that escapes out from under the deadweight of family-values orthodoxy. Same-sex relationship recognition, and even marriage rights, are an important step toward full participation in civil society. That the dominant regime of family ideology assigns the realms of romance, courtship, marriage, and family to heterosexuality, while relegating alternatives to the "just" sexual, has long been part of the peculiarly western construction of, and oppression of, LGBT traditions. But at the same time, these first steps toward legal recognition are just a beginning.

Appendix: Social science representations

Much of the invisibility of same-sex relationships in family studies derives from the active

erasure of their existence by demography and state-run censuses. Until recently, censuses have routinely failed to count, or expunged, same-sex households from their figures. Gay and lesbian couples who have tried to override the imposition of official categories have found their responses to the census coded as "error" or heterosexualized at the data entry point. This is, of course, scarcely the first time that the ostensible "objectivity" of quantitative science turns out to be the enforcement of an ideological hegemony in scientific drag.

In the 2000 census, the United States, for the first time, permitted its citizens to report same-sex relationships and 1.2 million Americans declared themselves to be members of same-sex couples. Same-sex couples reported themselves in 97.5% of the 67,388 census tracts in the United States (Guerra, 2002). This is especially noteworthy given that, at the time of the 2000 census, gay men were still criminalized by state law in a third of the United States. In Canada, the 2001 census collected this data for the first time, finding 0.5% of couples to be same sex (Statistics Canada, 2002).

The uncritical adoption of state-regulated discourses has generated derivative social science categories that pretend that gay and lesbian households are trivial or nonexistent. Demography thereby gives itself permission, for example, to talk about the mystery of rising "single motherhood" without ever acknowledging the lesbian baby boom currently underway in many countries. "Single motherhood" is yet another subject location

generated by decline-of-the-family discourse which shields itself from recognizing grassroots innovation in family and household formation.

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