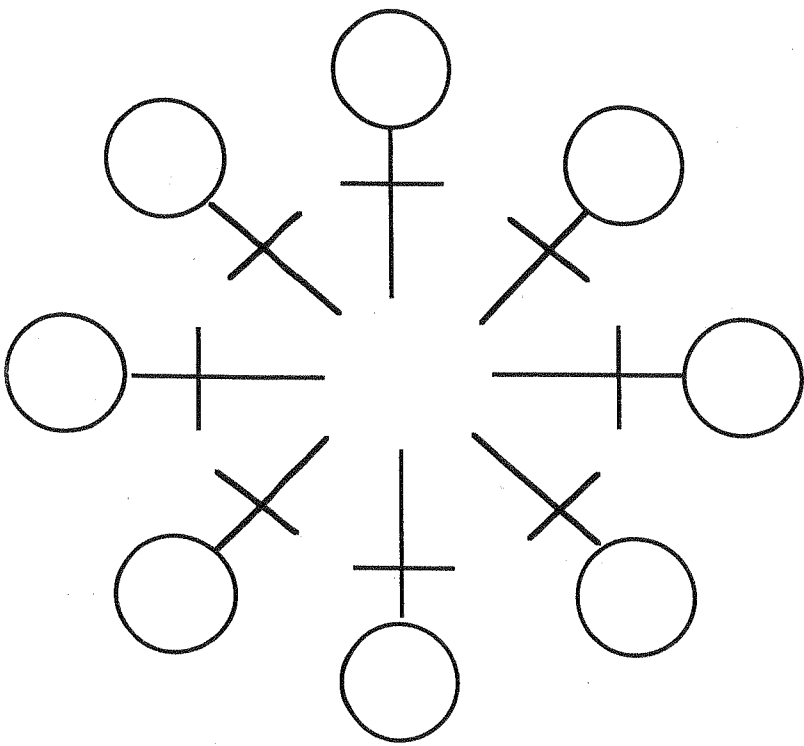


Center for Research on Women

Beating the Canon into a New Synthesis of History

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BEATING THE CANON INTO A NEW SYNTHESIS OF HISTORY

BY

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Beating the Canon Into a New Synthesis of History

Kenneth Goings

"The United States has always been a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-racial society," notes Lawrence Levine, former president of the Organization of American Historians in his presidential keynote address. He continues, "in our own times these truths have become increasingly difficult to ignore. As the university becomes more open to, and representative of, the diverse peoples, experiences, traditions, and cultures that compose America, it has to enable its students to comprehend the nature of the society to which they belong; the history of groups and traditions they will interact with, the meaning of ideas and experiences they will inevitable encounter."¹

One area in particular of the curriculum where these lessons are not being ignored is in the now old "new" social history, with particular reference to African-American history, and Gay and Lesbian history, and U. S. Women's History. And these new social histories have evolved over time. We have gone from simply recognizing that the aforementioned groups did have their own histories to a point where increasingly scholars of the "new" social history are calling for a new synthesis of American history--a new synthesis that reconceptualizes the scholarship of the past several decades. This "new synthesis" has to be more than the inclusion of previously ignored groups, the new synthesis really calls for a new structural understanding of our history.

As Levine further notes "critics of the contemporary historiography have gotten one thing wrong--social, racial and ethnic fragmentation are not the result of the new historiography--rather the new historiography is, in part, a response to the continuing fragmentation in America that has led many scholars to question, and to rethink, the old formulas and explanations."²

Now, that the "new" social histories have actually become or are in the process of becoming part of the canon, we can, and at this point should, begin to "beat them into a new synthesis of history." For those of you who are theologically deficient, i.e., have not attended church, temple, or mosque lately, the title is a bad, bad paraphrase of the prophecy that someday the instruments of war will be beaten into the plowshare of peace--or something to that affect.

At this point I would like to go through the various stages of the development of these new social histories and end with some examples of what I have been trying to do through some of my research and teaching. I will in no way be thorough but will just highlight particular points I have found of interest. To do this, I will discuss specific stages of development. I am going through these because it was very helpful to me to understand how this new knowledge was being developed and once I began to understand how the process worked, it really became extremely helpful as I attempted to synthesize these new ideas into my course materials.

There are generally four stages of development for the "new" social histories:

1. The first is what I call the "Outing Stage." The reason for the title will quickly become apparent.

2. The second stage is a bad paraphrase but still an appropriate title: "The Trail of Tears Stage."
3. The third stage I call the "Hattie McDaniels Stage." Hattie McDaniels, for those unfamiliar with her, played the stereotypical Black maid in the movies during the 1930s and 1940s. And again, the reason for that designation will become apparent (I hope) as we proceed.
4. And the fourth stage, the stage we should all be striving for, I call the "John D'Emilio Stage." John D'Emilio, for those unfamiliar with his work, is a historian of gay America. His most prominent and important work to date being Making Trouble.³

The "Outing Stage."

This title obviously refers to the magazine of the same name, which "outs" or reveals the names of supposedly closeted gays. I use it to refer to this first stage because in a way it is doing the same thing: revealing to us the name of prominent people who have always been Americans, but now we know that they are prominent African-Americans, Gay Americans, and Women Americans. Another reason I use the term "outing" is that the researchers and writers believe that if these prominent people are "outed" then they will serve as examples or as role models to others.

"Outing" says that you are not alone.

And I believe that is the purpose of the first stage of development for the three

histories under study. A revelation of just who is who and then a use of these historical figures as examples and role models. The research and writing of this first phase has often been dominated by activists who must bring us academicians along, sometimes hollering and screaming, to the realization that there is a legitimate story out there.

During the "Outing Stage" the first questions generally asked is: Who were the heroes and/or role models? The people "outed" in this stage are individuals who have been identified as noteworthy often because they fit the Euro-American male heterosexual conception of greatness and or excellence. In African-American history, you can identify these people largely by observing the names of high schools in the inner cities, for example, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Booker T. Washington, and George Washington Carver. This is not in any way meant to demean the achievements of these individuals but to simply note that those who are first "outed" in these histories tend to fit the dominant culture's view of who is exceptional.

Other African-American people "outed" during this phase include: Crispus Attucks, the first person killed in the American Revolution during the Boston Massacre; Charles Drew, who first perfected the blood transfusion technique yet died for want of a blood transfusion following an automobile accident, and Rosa Parks, who supposedly, impulsively, started the civil rights movement when she was too tired that day to give her seat on the bus to a white man.

In Lesbian and Gay Male history the situation has been a bit different. The "history" of homosexuality dates back at least one hundred years. The person

credited with being the first modern historian of homosexuality is John Addington Symonds, who in 1883 published A Problem in Greek Ethics.⁴ In 1897, Havelock Ellis' Sexual Inversion appeared.⁵ The Institute for Sex Research in Berlin was founded in 1919. Of course, their materials were the first to be burnt by the Nazi book burners. Perhaps, you've seen the famous photograph of the first book burnings--of course, what the books were about was never identified. In the mid-1950s the ONE Institute for Homophile Studies was founded in Los Angeles, but its work has largely been ignored.⁶

Gay history pretty much languished in this state until the mid-1970s. And as with African-American history and Women's history, the first scholarship was really done by activists rather than by people from the academy, most notably, Jonathan Katz, who in 1976 published Gay American History.⁷ In the mid to late 1970s, gay history projects were founded in New York City through the Lesbian Herstory Archives and in San Francisco at the Lesbian and Gay History project.

Academic and/or professional historians have been very reluctant to do research and publish in gay history. And again, it has been gay and lesbian activists on campus who have spurred historians to do this social history, with its attention to ordinary people, the structure of everyday life, and the "private"--not public--sphere. Also women's history has had a direct and dramatic effort on questions of lesbian history, the best example being Carol Smith-Rosenberg's essay, "The Female World of Love and Ritual."⁸

Some people "outed" during this phase of gay history were the writers Willa

Cather, Walt Whitman, Countee Cullen, and Gertrude Stein. As these names indicate, during this "first phase," most of the research conducted concentrated on the literate elite. They are more prominent and their materials are much easier to access.

The development of U. S. Women's History roughly follows the same pattern found in African-American and Gay History. The first phase was dominated as much or more so by activists. They asked the question, "What women made contributions to American History?" These women were first generally found in the political sphere. They were women who had made contributions to public/male oriented activities, such as political wives, leaders of reform movements, et cetera.

The first women to be "outed" in this type of history of course were the literate elite. Historians did acknowledge that George Washington had a wife, that Betsy Ross made the U. S. flag (although that it is now in serious doubt), and that Eleanor Roosevelt pushed her husband to be kind to Black people, to mind his manners and not tell "darkie" jokes in public. It really wasn't all that bad . . . but almost, particularly when American history was dominated by the field of political history.

Trail of Tears Stage

The Second Stage, the "Trail of Tears Stage," really concerns itself with filling in the gaps. A history of more than just the literate elites, the second stage is marked by the reconceptualization of a particular group's place in history. As the title suggests, the second stage centers heavily on the oppression and discrimination felt by that particular group. It is important that this be established, but excessive concentration on this phase, whether for African-American, Lesbians and Gays,

and/or Women, makes people become merely "objects," people acted upon by the forces of history, rather than the subjects of history. Of course, this title comes from the forced removal of Native Americans from the southeastern United States and the hardships they endured on the way to the reservation.

In the "Trail of Tears" stage, the questions are a bit more complex. In the second stage, there is a focus on oppression. For example, some typical questions in African-American history would be: What is racism? Who oppressed African-Americans? How were they oppressed? How have African-Americans been excluded from power in the United States?

And the answers in African-American history that were derived in this second stage concentrated on the European and Euro-American search for cheap labor. In this stage the story has traditionally been: They went to Africa, imported ten million slaves to the New World, put them to work on the plantations, and worked them to death. Those slaves who were still alive in 1865 were freed by Abraham Lincoln, the Great Emancipator. After the Civil War, the Republicans tried to take vengeance on the South by letting a politically "immature people" "reconstruct" the South. This "experiment" had to be stopped in 1876 when the nation "returned" to sanity. Booker T. Washington with his accommodationist philosophy offered a way out of the quagmire for those who would take it, but northern radicals rejected his approach. Black people then fled the South, going North, to places like Harlem, where they had a Renaissance. Encouraged by Franklin Roosevelt and the strides made under the New Deal, Black people sought out interracial organizations which created the Civil

Rights movement, sparked by a tired washerwoman named Rosa Parks. This led President Kennedy and the Democrats to propose a Civil Rights bill, which really gave Black people all that they had been asking for. But this was rejected in the Black Power movement and after King's assassination, Black people have wandered in the wilderness, leaderless and purposeless ever since.

For Lesbians and Gays, questions in this second stage include: What is homophobia? Who has oppressed lesbians and gays? How were they oppressed? Did this oppression cause intra-orientational divisions?

Their story in this stage reads: Basically, there have always been lesbians and gays. Lesbians were a bit more tolerated than gay men, particularly effeminate gay men. "Butch" lesbians are not even dealt with, however. Lesbians and gay men have always been oppressed, and the only areas in which they have been able to achieve anything has been in the arts and in literature, due to their "gay" sensibilities. Then, in 1969, there was the Stonewall Rebellion, and now they're political, particularly in San Francisco and South Beach, Miami.

For U. S. women, the questions in the "Trail of Tears" stage read: What is sexism? Who oppressed women? How were they oppressed? How have women been excluded from power?

In this second stage, the history of American women sounds like this: All men oppressed all women. Puritan mothers and plantations mistresses echoed the values and sensibilities imposed by their husbands, fathers, and brothers. Prominent women tended to be political wives or women who have somehow made it in a

"man's world." Revolutionary women were Martha Custus Washington, Dolly Madison and Betsy Ross. After the American Revolution, educated women became involved in reform movements such as temperance, abolition, and suffrage. After the Civil War, when Black men got the vote, women turned their full attention to getting the votes for themselves. During the second World War, they worked in the factories and then returned home in the 1950s to raise their families. In the 1960s, some female students worked for the Civil Rights movement, but then they found feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s. But after the defeat of ERA and Geraldine Ferraro, women have wandered in the wilderness, leaderless and purposeless ever since.

The Hattie McDaniels Stage

The third stage of social history, the "Hattie McDaniels" stage is when history is seen from the perspective of the people under investigation. African-Americans, lesbians and gays, and women become the subjects rather than the objects of their own history. I named this category for Hattie McDaniels because in the 1940s and 1950s she caught much criticism for playing the stereotypical maid roles in the movies. But few had ever bothered to ask her why? Why she would play such roles. In her biography, she explained this quite simply: "I'd rather play a maid than be a maid!"⁹ What were the job opportunities for an African-American woman in the 1930s and 1940s? She clearly had decided for herself what she wanted to do and she lived her life with dignity and self-respect; which anyone who had bothered to listen to her in the 1930s and 1940s could have easily found out.

Some questions asked in the third stage in African American history are: Who are African-Americans? How does gender, social class, or marital status of African-Americans influence their lives? Is "race" a crucial historical determinant? How have African-Americans exercised autonomy and "agency?" Is race a social construction?

African-American history in the third stage reads as follows: Europeans and Euro-Americans went to Africa in search of cheap labor. They were assisted in this process by indigenous people who believed that slavery in the New World was similar to slavery in the Old World, where people were still people and not chattel. The Africans who were brought to the New World brought no physical artifacts of their previous life, but they did bring a rich and sustaining culture. This cultural heritage was important in helping to sustain that and other generations through the degradations of slavery. In British North America, later the United States, males and females were imported in roughly a 1:1 ratio. This meant that slave labor was just as likely to be female as male. Also, this 1:1 ratio meant that a family life of some kind could and did exist, unlike other societies in the New World where ratios of ten men to one woman meant that reproduction was out of the question, and those communities quickly died off or were greatly diminished.

We also know now that Lincoln did not free the slaves. As the Union armies moved through the South, slaves took advantage of the situation and freed themselves.¹⁰

So-called Black Reconstruction was one of the most positive things to happen in the South. The newly freed Black people were not just concerned with themselves

but concerned with other poor people in the region and established social institutions such as schools, hospitals and asylums, to help start the "reconstruction" of the South.¹¹

After the War there were clear divisions between African-Americans; they were not just slaves anymore, now they were Northerners and southerners, working class and middle class, light and dark skinned. "Middle-class" African-American women as members of a "middle-class" found themselves having to fight for their race and their dignity as well as against conceptions of beauty and womanhood which were clearly designed to exclude them. And indeed a pattern developed where in times of heightened racism, African-American women put the struggle for race before gender issues. African-American males rarely reciprocated, almost always placing race and their gender issues first.¹²

During World War I, African-American males lead by W.E.B. DuBois almost universally supported the United States war policy in a futile attempt to prove "Americanism and Manhood." In World War II support was qualified, with African-Americans calling for a victory at home as well as abroad. By the time of the Korean War, prominent African-Americans advocated outright resistance causing President Truman to order the desegregation of the armed forces.

In the New Deal for their own reasons, principally heightened politicization, African-Americans reversed a 70-year habit and switched to the Democratic party nationally. Once in the party and with their increased numbers in urban centers in the North, African-Americans helped northern Democrats break the southern hold on

the party.¹³

After World War II, racial attitudes relaxed a bit. But a generation of African-American women in the South, people who came to adulthood just before and during World War II, continued their efforts to desegregate public institutions. Their work was carried out through churches, Boy Scout troops, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Youth divisions. Through these activities they prepared the next generation of African-Americans (principally students) for their great work in the activist phase of the modern Civil Rights movement.¹⁴

For lesbians and gay men, questions for the third stage are: Who are lesbians and gays? How does gender, race, ethnicity, and social class affected the lives of homosexuals? Is sexual orientation a crucial historical determinant? How have lesbians and gays exercised autonomy and agency? Is homosexuality a social construction?

There has been a whole spate of scholarship which has countered the second stage trend of just concentrating only on oppression and has established that lesbians and gay men did resist--in individual and collective ways--and were able to lead lives of dignity and self respect.¹⁵ Rather than a who's who of gay life, or a description of what society has thought about gay people, this stage is a history about what gay people themselves saw through their perspective. Michel Foucault and others would contend that "gayness" or homosexuality, indeed all such social categories and identities, are socially constructed and historically specific. The "modern

homosexual," the social constructionist would say, was specifically created by social forces in late nineteenth century Western society.¹⁶ David Halperin in his One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love, agrees with the social constructionists in his belief, for example, that the ancient Greeks could not conceive of homosexual men who would want a sexual relationship with other men, but rather there were two "sex" roles--dominant and passive. Free males were dominant, women, slaves (male and female) and youths were passive. Free males could and did have sex with whomever they wanted. Sex reinforced their social standing.¹⁷ (I won't elaborate further on this idea but it is one of the most intriguing to come out of the field).

But directly opposing that view are those who contend that while the specific categories might have been different, "homosexual" and "bisexual" have been with us always. Most notable in this school of thought is John Boswell.¹⁸ Further complicating this as you've probably already noted, given the examples I have used, has been the tendency of historians of the gay experience to view the experience of gay men as the "gay experience," overlooking lesbians and their historical experiences. This omission is being rapidly addressed by scholars such as Lillian Faderman.¹⁹ Also as Joan Nestle asks in her essay, "Butch-Fem Role: Sexual Courage in the 1950s," are emotions alone enough to characterize lesbian relationships? This of course raises additional questions of definition. What are the political and social statements made by Butch-Fem roles? Did they serve as Nestle believes "as a conspicuous flag of rebellion"? These are the kind of questions that are helping to

form the third stage of gay and lesbian history.²⁰

The new gay and lesbian history has also clearly established if it needed to be established that not all gays were members of the upper class or artists or White. Indeed, in homo-social environments, such as military barracks particularly during and immediately after wars, removed from the social structures of family and community, the incidence of homosexuality greatly increased in the United States. Indeed, as George Chauncey has demonstrated there was a highly developed gay male sub-culture along the seaports and navy bases in the U.S. during World War I. In addition, there was a strong sense of collective identity growing out of this sub-culture. And once the war was over, large numbers of these men were not content to return to their closeted lives.²¹

During the Harlem Renaissance one thing that clearly flourished was an extremely active Black lesbian and gay male community which formed networks with the White lesbian and gay male community. Lesbians and gays were not only prominent in the arts, as singers, sculptors, painters, and cabaret performers, but were also ordinary working people. The speakeasies of Harlem were home to an extensive gay club scene. The Harlem Renaissance is clearly a major movement in lesbian and gay male history as well as in African-American history as well as in U.S. history.²²

And although we think of San Francisco as a "gay city," Madeline Davis and Elizabeth Kennedy in an article entitled "Oral History and the Study of Sexuality in the Lesbian Community: Buffalo, New York, 1940-1960," describe how working-class

lesbians in Buffalo and really all over the northeastern United States fought to create a public space in which sexual relationships could develop. The scene in Buffalo was pretty incredible with dozen of lesbian bars and an extremely active lesbian community.²³ This life, organized and largely carried out by working-class women, directly challenges our previously held notion about whom lesbians were and what they did.

For women's history at this stage, the questions are much the same: What is a woman? While this may seem obvious to most of us, Monique Wittig challenges even that notion in her essay, "One Is Not Born A Woman."²⁴ How did the variables of race, ethnicity, social class, marital status, and sexual orientation effect women's lives and history?

Starting in the late 1970s, we have seen the development of the third phase of a "new" women's history. This scholarship acknowledges legitimate differences among women, and not just race and class. Women need to be placed into the cultural, intellectual, political, legal, economic, and social realities which shaped their lives. Historical scholarship to truly integrate women's history must not only deal with women in set categories (i.e., contain something on sexuality, give increased attention to the importance of the family and children, have more about the everyday realities of life and death), this scholarship should also use the same questions and intellectual frameworks for discussing the efforts of individual women as those applied to individual men. Scholars should avoid pre-judging where women will fit into a research project, class discussion, class lectures, or into the structure of a

textbook. Rather, we should cast our nets as widely as possible and think as openly as we can, about what constitutes politics, intellectual achievement, and historical accomplishments. Examples of this "new" women's history are books by Sara Evans, Paula Giddings, Jacqueline Jones, and Carl Degler.²⁵ These important additions have made this new scholarship very accessible. In the "new" women's history, I will only mention a few of the newer topics this scholarship explores.

Fifteen hundred years before Columbus sailed the ocean blue, Native Americans discovered and settled the Americas. Women were essential for the group's survival and worked as gatherers, processors of food, nurturers of children and played important roles in the ritual and ceremonial life of the community. Sex roles were differentiated which lead to gender solidarity and distinct experiences.

During the American Revolution women did more than sew flags. They actively participated in economic boycotts and helped to create a patriotic literature to inspire themselves and the troops. Women worked to replace British manufactured goods with home created products. In addition, Washington's Army had little or no staff, so women cooked food, mended uniforms, and tended to the sick and wounded. Women were camp followers, wives of soldiers, and played an instrumental role in the war and some in early examples of cross dressing were soldiers.

Increasingly after the Revolution, economic forces created new divisions among women. Black women remained in the southern fields or as domestics in the North, working class White women were increasingly forced into factory work, and

middle- and upper-class White women increasingly received more education and increasingly sought and gained opportunities outside the home.

The 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s, in the U.S., were times of associations. Doctors, lawyers, and ministers were all joining voluntary associations with other like minded people. Educated women (Black and White) did the same. Increasingly notions of public and private, male and female, were played out through the voluntary associations. Educated White women and to a lesser extent educated African-American women began to claim a growing place in the public sphere by asserting a moral mission to teach and engage in social reform.

One of the greatest of these movements was the quest for suffrage. The most important point to make about the women's suffrage movement is that it was not just about women "getting the vote." It was the single most important democratic movement in this country. Furthermore, it brought the vote to more people than any other national effort to extend the franchise.

There has been so much work in recent years I cannot even in an outline form present the "new" women's history. But let me mention a few other items which have been often overlooked, but are addressed in the "new" women's history. Demographics have played an important part in women's lives. As the West opened up and young men in larger numbers that women went to seek their fortunes, who did the young women at home have left to marry? Or even did they marry or even was that a question. Also, over 600,000 Americans lost their lives in the Civil War, most were young men. What effect did this have on families back home? Women

had always been part of the workforce in the U.S. and it should not be surprising that they were also part of the early union movement in the 1880s and 1890s. What role did they play in the union movement? For middle-class women, the new consumers of the 1910s and 1920s, producers tried to create "idealized" types of homemakers, wives and mothers; people who might use the "right" product. How successful were they?

In the late 1930s there was a significant shift in women's political roles and as was the case with African-Americans, it was not women being seduced into the Democratic party or New Deal idealism, but rather the opposite. In the 1930s as the nation struggled out of economic depression, social welfare reformers found that their concerns were suddenly at the forefront of American politics -- the role of women in the New Deal is something that is only now receiving much needed attention.

After working in the 1960s student movement and the 1960s civil rights movement and effectively having their contributions ignored, ridiculed, and dismissed, increasingly women raised questions in "consciousness-raising groups." These discussions led to the conclusion that their lives were not unique, that they were part of a pattern and they began to question why: What is the root of women's oppression? Who is the enemy? A new feminist movement was born, declaring that "the personal is political." They challenged the traditional definitions of males and females and the even more traditional notion of what is power within a society. An excellent example of this process is provided by Sara Evans in Personal Politics.²⁶

Issues at the John D'Emilio Stage

This now brings us to the fourth stage, the John D'Emilio stage. I've named this stage after John D'Emilio because he is one of the first practitioners of the "new synthesis." And as such we need to recognize and applaud those who are helping us re-conceptualize who we are. As I noted before, he is a historian of gay America. He is currently researching and writing a biography on Bayard Rustin. Bayard Rustin was an African-American activist, who was a supreme strategist and an indefatigable worker for civil rights. He was a founding member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the idea for the 1963 March on Washington, where Dr. King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech, was conceived by Bayard Rustin. You probably have not heard much about his incredibly significant contributions because he was forced to take a back seat because he was "gay."

What D'Emilio is doing is breaking the taboo that White scholars don't do African-American history. He is also breaking another taboo and letting us know that not all gay men were White and middle class. But more importantly, he is letting us know that when you write about human beings you should not fragment their existence--if you want to be true to your subject and to yourself. By necessity, and not wanting to repeat the mistakes of the past, D'Emilio is writing a history that will combine African-American history and gay history in new and different ways--the new synthesis. What I would like to do now is to offer some suggestions on just how this initial recombination might work for African-American and Gay and Lesbian history. (I am working on reading up more in the literature in U.S. Women.

I believe the same processes were at work and hope in the near future my analysis can extend to include African-American, Gay and Lesbian, and U. S. Women's history, but I'm just not there yet). One way to start is with a history of the construction of the category "race" and "homosexuality." Barbara J. Fields addresses critical questions of the social construction of race with regard to the African American experience in her New Left Review article in 1990. In this work she is able to disassemble the process by which African-Americans became a race. She notes:

Africans and their descendants might be, to the eye of the English, heathen in religion, outlandish in nationality, and weird in appearance. But that did not add up to an ideology of racial inferiority until a further historical ingredient got stirred into the mixture: the incorporation of Africans and their descendants into a polity and society in which they lacked rights that others not only took for granted, but claimed as a matter of self-evident law.²⁷

Of course, while notions of "natural law" stirred the mixture "emancipation" really got it to boil. Now that African-Americans were now free and technically equal how were they to be treated? Increasingly by the time of the Civil War, African-Americans were increasingly being seen as morally, then biologically, and then genetically inferior. Fields further notes:

it was not Afro-Americans, furthermore who needed a racial explanation [of why African-Americans should not be equal]; it was not they who invented themselves as a race. Euro-Americans resolved the

contradiction between slavery and liberty by defining African-Americans as a race.²⁸

A different race from the then only existing race, "the human race" and as we know being different automatically carried the connotation of being inferior. A truly remarkable feat of social construction.

I believe this same kind of basic process can be seen in terms of a gay and lesbian identity. Overtime, a group identified as "inverts" became increasingly seen as "perverts." The notion of "inversion" was basically that men who "desired" other men had the "soul" of a woman inside them and women who "desired" other women had the soul of a man inside them, hence they were "inverted." The Church, of course, condemned this Sodom and Gomorrah-like behavior. The next major step came with the "medicalization" of this condition. Freud believed that gay people (male and female) were immature adults or people with "arrested development," not to be confused with the music group although the men in that group do wear sarongs. From "arrested development" it was just a quick step to believing that "inversion" was a sickness. When it became defined as a sickness and people could not accept the cure, which was basically stop doing it--whatever it was--then the condition had to be treated. And on a very serious note those treatments included electro-shock therapy, hormone medications, psychoanalysis, lobotomies, and aversion therapy. It was increasingly believed that the reason these treatments did not work was because the gay person [surprise! surprise!] enjoyed who they were and did not want to change. Well by god, if they won't stop that mess, then they

will have to face the all-American solution of jail or some other punishment which was (if you'll pardon the pun) supposed to "straighten" them out, so to speak.²⁹

In a further development of this thesis, John D'Emilio in his article "Capitalism and Gay Identity," traces how the rise of capitalism freed individuals from the family by replacing the family as the primary unit of economic production. Educated women, and especially men, were now free to leave the farm or small workshops to pursue livelihoods within the larger capitalist structure and develop identities that didn't define them exclusively as "father," "mother," "husband," "wife." Sexuality itself, freed from the narrow family structure, no longer needed to define itself exclusively in terms of procreation. Outside the home, human beings could pursue relationships with members of their own sex. Sexuality no longer needed to be defined in a purely procreationist context.

The great irony is that capitalism, while undermining the family as an economic and social unit, fostered the idealization of the family--the myth of the family--as it were, in its need to supply for itself a steady stock of workers. Hence, the family identifications "husband," "wife" were good and, by implication, everything not "husband/wife," in a procreationist context, were nonproductive, hence "bad."

The end point of D'Emilio's argument is this: definitions by their nature exclude. And "heterosexuality," by excluding all "deviant" behavior as "other," therefore by definition labelled homosexuality as wrong."³⁰

This process as I noted earlier was very similar to the creation of "race" in the

United States. Once that definition was made "African-Americans" like "homosexuals" were then cast as the "other" --outside the norm and therefore inferior. By understanding these structured connections we can proceed to a history of the American people that underlines our humanity. D'Emilio's biography of Rustin, I believe, will, when published, illustrate this point. Traditionally, Rustin was "only" seen as a peace activist/civil rights worker. But D'Emilio's biography of Rustin also demonstrates that after his arrest on "sexual perversion" charges, Rustin was "ostracized" by his Civil Rights colleagues. From that point on, he was fighting a dual battle; to promote and secure civil rights for African-Americans and to live his life in dignity and self-respect as a gay man. The fact that he was ultimately successful in both endeavors is a testament to his human spirit and should be acknowledged in African-American as well as U.S. Lesbian and Gay history.³¹

Convergence of History

A few other observations. I would like to briefly discuss some moments in American history when African-America, Gay History, and U. S. Women's history converge. There are lots of these moments which can be used to radiate out from as you expand your expertise in these and other areas. We should all know when these moments have occurred. The two things that all three of these groups have in common are their humanity and the fact that for good or ill, they are all Americans. Some of those moments when all of these histories converge in a prominent way are those times of heightened nationalism. I think that one of the best times to see this

convergence at work is during World War II.

The Second World War had an obvious and profound impact on the United States and the world. For African-Americans, World War II was another attempt to prove their Americanism--that they deserved equal and unqualified citizenship. Instead of almost blindly going into war as had been the experience in the War of 1812, the Civil War, the Spanish American War, and World War I, African-Americans male and female waged a Double V campaign, meaning "Victory at Home, Victory Abroad." This campaign meant fighting racism on both fronts. Because their support was needed for the war effort, African Americans were able to gain some small concessions that helped lay the groundwork for the "modern" phase of the Civil Rights movement.

For gay Americans, female and male, World War II was an extremely crucial moment in their history. Clearly the most important work is now being done by Allan Berube.³² He notes that "the massive mobilization" of all Americans for World War II allowed the U.S. military to adopt its first explicit anti-homosexual policy which included provisions for temporarily utilizing homosexual men and women in situations that served the war effort. The massive war mobilization in a homo-social environment enabled many American women and men to discover their homosexuality for the first time. The mobilization ended their isolation in small towns and provided a space for them to find other people like themselves, which helped strengthen their identity as a minority in American life. And of course, outside of the barracks, the interactions in the lesbian and gay bars that developed

around military bases also helped solidify a "homosexual identity."³³

For Black and White women, besides military opportunities, the war opened up unprecedented opportunities for experiences outside the home. By 1945, women were 36% of the labor force. Primarily the work was in clerical and factory jobs, particularly in war-related industries. Some federal day care centers were set up to facilitate women in the work force, but they were not funded after 1946. There was an unspoken assumption that women (particularly White women) would leave the workforce after the war was over. For Black women, who had always traditionally worked outside of the home, the war provided some upward mobility. Before the war, 72% of employed Black women were domestics, after the war the number fell to 48%.

After the War, the traditional histories had all three groups retreating back into "closets" of non-resistance. Hence when one picks up some of the older American history textbooks one is struck by chapter titles such as "The Black Revolution of the 1960s," "Stonewall," and "The Feminist Revolt." The contents of these older textbooks were guided by notions which said that somehow the activism of the 1960s (like Topsy) just grew. But the "new" social histories have begun to fill in these "missing" years after World War II. As African-Americans, female and male, lost their wartime jobs, they stepped up their fight against segregation preparing the way for the 1960s Civil Rights and Black Power generation. It was not a "revolution" but a very "evolutionary" process.

For gay men and lesbians, as wartime "freedom" disappeared in witch hunts, bar raids, and arrests, they did not retreat. Gays and lesbians formed organizations, support networks, and literally prepared the way for the Stonewall generation.

For women, Black and White, as the media began to assert that now that the war was over their contributions were no longer needed or valued, they did not retreat. Instead, they began to work to change laws, institutions, and attitudes, preparing the way for the feminist movement of the late 1960s.

This in brief has been a tiny summary of the "new" social histories and the kinds of changes it is helping to create as we try to understand who we are as a people. I encourage you to incorporate as much of this new materials into your courses as you can and I would be pleased to hear from you about the usefulness of this paper and how it can be improved.

I've included an appendix which contains a graduate course syllabus where I have attempted to combine African-American and Lesbian and Gay history, structurally, by concentrating on similar topics for both histories. For example, the social construction stage (the creation of African-Americans as a "different race" and the creation of lesbians and gays as a different gender), the segregation stage (for African-Americans, de jure and de facto Jim Crow, for lesbians and gays, the creation of gay ghettos and gay bars), the Civil Rights stage (where both groups push for constitutional rights and protection) and the "act-up" stage (both groups overtly struggle to control/create their own identity).

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