Chapter 18

Sexuality

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Introduction

By beginning to address questions of sexuality and sex, cultural and other geographers have not only drawn attention to some hitherto-uncharted human geographies, they have also thrown a new form of critical light upon some otherwise familiar places. To explain how they have done this and what it has achieved, I want to begin with a series of case studies, snapshots of real and imagined geographies: a scene from Gayfest, a gay and lesbian festival in Manchester, England; an illustrative map that appeared in a British colonial adventure story set in southern Africa; and a street scene in the United States suburb of Levittown (figures 18.1 to 18.3). These diverse images are associated with a variety of geography's overlapping subfields – including urban, historical, political, postcolonial, and cultural geographies. They do have something important in common, though, since each is shaped in some way by sexual identities and relationships. By sexual, I refer to both sexuality and gender. These are complex and interrelated. Put simply, a person's sex is defined by their anatomy as male or female, whereas their gender is defined with reference to the social roles they learn and perform as men or women. Sexuality has been defined differently in different historical and geographical contexts; today in western countries considerable attention is paid to the gender of a person's sexual partners, which define him or her as heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual (though members of these groups sometimes use different terms to identify themselves). Rather than elaborating abstract definitions of sexuality and gender, though, I will suggest some of their tangible, geographical meanings and outcomes by introducing the images (which are examined in greater detail later on).

Gayfest presents an overtly compelling illustration of the way in which sexuality and gender can shape human geographies. The festival functions not only as a party but also, more seriously, a marginalized sexual group's assertion of their existence – and right to exist – in society and in a particular area, known locally as the 'gay village.' Gayfest reveals relationships between sexuality and space that are present, if less overtly or tangibly, elsewhere. The second image, an illustration that appeared in the opening pages of Rider Haggard's bestselling colonial adventure

Figure 18.1 Gayfest, Manchester, UK, 2001 (courtesy of Alexandra Hopps)

story, *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), shows a map that led the book's male heroes to some treasure. It portrays the story's African setting as the body of a woman. The map raises questions about how, why, and with what effect textual and other intangible geographies have been sexualized. The final image appears to depict an 'innocently' asexual place: an area of 1950s suburban housing in the United States. Yet this, perhaps more than anywhere, was constructed around expectations about sexual behavior. It would be impossible to understand Levittown without understanding that the people who lived there were expected to form heterosexual relationships, the women to have babies and raise children.

The three snapshots raise questions about how geographies are shaped by sexual relationships and identities. The remainder of the chapter examines these themes: by charting the evolution of cultural geographies of sexuality and gender, with emphasis upon the former (see chapter 6 for a fuller discussion of gender); by identifying present trends in these closely related subfields; and by pointing towards some of the most exciting developments and research directions within this subfield. These themes – evolution, trends, and directions – are examined with reference to the two main forms of cultural sexual geographies, which correspond to a division within cultural geography more generally, between the analysis of concrete and representational spaces.

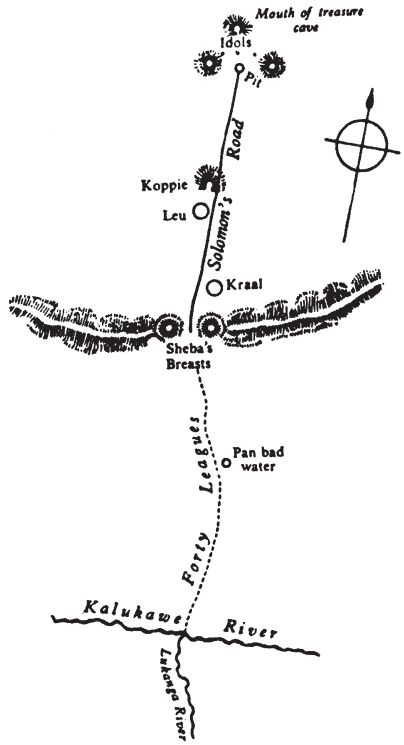

Figure 18.2 Map from *King Solomon's Mines*, by H. Rider Haggard (1885, frontispiece)

Figure 18.3 The US suburb of Levittown (Gans 1967, frontispiece)

(Sub)cultural Spaces

The image with which I began – that of a celebration, but also a policiticized assertion of identities, a territorial claim, and a critical transgression of dominantly heterosexual public space – invokes many of the issues that geographers began to confront in the 1980s, when they first admitted questions of sexuality to the disciplinary agenda. These (mainly urban) geographers were interested in overtly sexualized spaces and groups, and paid particular attention to gay men and female prostitutes (on the latter, see Symanski 1974; Hubbard 1998).

Manuel Castells' influential book, *The City and the Grassroots* (1983), mapped the emergence and development of gay residential areas and "places where gays gather" including bars and social clubs (Castells 1983: 148). Castells found that maps of gay residential areas and gathering places correlated with those of gay voting patterns. He argued that the emergence of San Francisco's Castro district as a gay neighborhood contributed to the development of the city's gay community as a politicized social movement. Researchers in geography, planning and related disciplines have further mapped and examined the significance of gay residential areas, in works such as *Queers in Space: Communities/Public Places/Sites of Resistance* (Ingram et al. 1997) and *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities* (Bell & Valentine 1995). Julie Podmore (2001) has extended Castells' project – originally limited to gay men – to the analysis of lesbian spaces and community formations. Others have begun to reflect more critically on the place of these communities within the capitalist space economy. Quilley's (1997) analysis of the emergence of the gay village in Manchester addresses the ambivalent mixture of displacement and urban renewal that gay-identified gentrification has brought, not only to this district but also to the surrounding areas that have absorbed and traded on its new-found chic. Larry Knopp (1992) has positioned this form of gentrification within the context, not of abstract liberation, but of the wider capitalist space economy and land market. Peter Jackson has noted that only a small proportion – "the most politicized and vocal fraction" (Jackson 1989: 128) – of gay men and lesbians are represented in US gay- and/or lesbian-identified residential areas, and suggested that some others have been economically excluded. A more critical geography of sexuality would recognize the large numbers of gay and lesbian Americans living in poverty and/or homelessness, and address the limitations of a geography of sexuality dominated by patterns of consumption – of housing and services.

There are other reasons for the relative smallness of *urban* gay- and lesbian-identified areas and communities. While many gays and lesbians continue to migrate to large cities, others remain in or move back to smaller towns and rural areas, where they tend to be less visible than their urban counterparts. In a study of rural North Dakota, Jerry Lee Kramer (1995: 213) noted that while he used "the terms homosexual, gay, lesbian and bisexual," he was "aware that many of the men and women who do have homoerotic feelings, experiences and behaviors would not identify as any of these." This finding has been interrogated in more detail by Angelia Wilson (2000), with reference to the lives and identities of lesbians and gay men in rural areas of the American South. She has suggested that lesbians and gay men have found ways of coping and integrating socially and culturally in the wider rural community. Their tendency not to identify with terms such as gay and lesbian

was not wholly the product of 'closeted' or unformed identities, but, in part, alternative strategies for organizing social and sexual lives. In other places and among other people, still other strategies have emerged. These range from identifying as 'queer' – a radical gesture that inverts a term of homophobic abuse – to eschewing all of these terms and refusing to be labeled. This range of sexual identities presents a partial explanation for the relative smallness of urban gay- and lesbian-identified communities, and it also underlines the complexity of relationships between geographies and sexualities.

Evidence for the geographical variability of gay and lesbian identities in the United States suggests that urban – and, in different ways, rural – spaces are significant for the formation of sexual identities. Sociologist Dick Hebdige helps to explain how and why, in *Subculture, the Meaning of Style* (1979), a book that has been particularly influential in social and cultural geography. Hebdige argues that the "expressive forms and rituals," the material culture and cultural spaces of "subordinate groups," enable members of these groups to recognize each other and also to be recognized by others (Hebdige 1979: 2). Symbolic objects and behaviors, which tend to be displayed and performed within identifiable subcultural spaces, "warn the 'straight' world in advance of a sinister presence – the presence of difference" (Hebdige 1979: 3). Though sometimes products of repression and exclusion, subcultural spaces may facilitate the formation of community and identity. For example, San Francisco's gay population was originally a product of the US Navy's discrimination against homosexuals. The city became a place of exile, but then of empowerment, to men and women who had been dishonorably discharged from their positions in the Pacific Fleet. Though not inevitably, concentrations of gay and lesbian residents and/or consumers may facilitate related processes of community and identity formation. Gill Valentine (1993) stresses that lesbian- and gay-identified areas do not cause communities or identities to form, but they do play an important part in the process, as individuals and groups pass through and draw upon these spaces in the course of their daily lives. With David Bell, she presents a site-specific and "performative" theory of sexuality and sexual identity:

> To avoid a rupture of their 'identity' many lesbians use time-space strategies to segregate their audiences. These include establishing geographical boundaries between past and present identities, separating different activity spheres and hence identities in space, expressing a lesbian identity only in formal 'gay spaces,' confining their 'gay' socialising to homes or informal 'gay spaces,' expressing their lesbian identity only in public places at specific times, and altering the layout and decoration of private spaces to conceal clues about their sexual identity from specific people. (Bell & Valentine 1995: 147)

Material spaces become 'humanized' as spaces of community and identity in the course of individuals' and communities' encounters with and in them. More than simply material geographies, these places acquire meaning as they are reflected in the formation of personal and collective memories, bodily displays and performances, desires and fantasies.

Gay and lesbian subcultural spaces may also function as spaces of resistance. Defiant resistance to a homophobic police raid on the Stonewall Inn in New York is widely identified as marking the beginning of the modern struggle for gay and lesbian rights, in 1969. Gay Liberation flourished in the 1970s alongside other, more

established civil rights movements including those of women and African Americans. This history of political engagement has continued, in new forms and in response to new challenges. Urban homosexuals have organized in response to AIDS, as Michael Brown has shown in his Vancouver-based study, *Replacing Citizenship: AIDS Activism and Radical Democracy* (Brown 1997). Gay and lesbian activists have also organized to assert their existence and sometimes their political objectives, notably in 'pride' marches and celebrations such as Gayfest and its more spectacular counterparts such as Sydney's Mardi Gras festival and parade.

The politicization of cultural processes by which sexualities are expressed and constituted extends not only to urban material geographies, the subject of this section and of the most important early works on sexual geographies, but also to a series of less tangible spaces. This is illustrated in an essay by Tracy Skelton, which examines resistance – and the spaces of resistance – to allegedly homophobic performances of Jamaican ragga music. Skelton concentrates on resistance to British and American gay organizations such as Outrage!, which led to certain tracks being banned in a number of places, and to action on the part of the record company, which then persuaded the performer to issue an apology. Skelton's analysis of "spaces of resistance" moves far from the concrete urban spaces examined above to consider representations of space and spaces of representation. She suggests, for example, that "in Britain the space of resistance has been predominantly the gay media" (Skelton 1995: 281). This points towards the significance of imaginative geographies of sexual identity and resistance.

Imaginative Geographies

Though traditional cultural geographers privileged material culture (see chapter 2), new cultural geographers have turned increasingly to expressive or imaginative forms including the textual geographies of film, literature, and art (see chapters 27 and 28). Indeed, it is in this area that cultural geographers have made some of their most distinctive contributions to the emerging exploration of geographies of sexualities.

Sexualized geographies have been portrayed in the media, for example, as cultural historian Judith Walkowitz has shown in her analysis of the press coverage of the 'Jack the Ripper' murders in London in 1888. Sensational media reports were accompanied by detailed accounts of their settings: illustrations of the streets where murders took place, maps of the murder sites including escape routes to the affluent and brightly-lit West End, and drawings of the victims. The stories moralized the places in which they were set, presenting the reading public with "an immoral landscape of light and darkness, a nether region of illicit sex and crime, both exciting and dangerous" (Walkowitz 1994: 193). They also promoted certain interrelated ideas about how 'respectable' women should behave and where they should be, particularly at night. The murder victims were portrayed as 'public women' – a euphemism for prostitutes – who held some of the blame for their own fate because of their presence on the streets at night, their defiance of the convention that unaccompanied women should remain within the home. The media-generated panic encouraged and legitimated the emergence of 'night patrols' by male vigilantes, who also called upon men to protect women and to repress brothels and street walkers

– and thereby sought greater control over the sexuality of women. In this manner, imaginative geographies were instrumental in shaping ideas about gender and sexuality, which in turn shaped peoples' sexual identities and lives.

The gendered and sexualized nature of imaginative geographies may also shape relationships between people and land or nature. In an early and influential contribution to feminist cultural history, Annette Kolodny argued that the European colonization and resettlement of North America revolved around gendered and sexualized ideas of nature and land. She identified within American culture an idealization of nature, which she termed pastoralism, and which constructed land as a metaphorical woman:

> Implicit in the metaphor of the land-as-woman was both the regressive pull of material containment and the seductive invitation to sexual assertion: if the Mother demands passivity, and threatens regression, the Virgin apparently invites sexual assertion and awaits impregnation. (Kolodny 1975: 67)

Kolodny argued that the relationship between 'patriarchal' (male-dominated) European-American society and its metaphorically, sexually feminine environment left tangible marks upon the landscape because it shaped the ways in which men regarded and treated the land, in the course of settlement and colonization.

The gendered and sexualized imaginative geographies of American settlement are echoed in other colonial contexts. An important colonial region – the vaguely defined 'East' or 'Orient' – was widely represented by geographers, as well as by painters and writers, as a "sexual *lieu*" (Kabbani 1986: 19). Colonial Africa and its inhabitants were portrayed in extremely sexual terms, as a footnote by Sir Richard Burton, a prominent Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, illustrates:

> Debauched women prefer negroes on account of the size of their parts. I measured one man in Somali-land who, when quiescent, numbered nearly six inches. This is a characteristic of the negro race and of African animals; e.g. the horse. (Burton 1885: 6)

Europeans filled in the details of their colonial geographies largely according to their own tastes: some populated colonial regions with women in harems or on beaches (Kabbani 1986; Phillips 1999a), others with sexually available boys and men (Aldrich 1993; Phillips 1999b). The form and significance of the sexualization of colonial imaginative geography is illustrated in the map that appeared in the *King Solomon's Mines* (figure 18.2), which has been interpreted by Anne McClintock (1995: 1–3):

> On the one hand, it is a rough sketch of the ground the white men must cross in order to secure the riches of the diamond mines. On the other hand, if the map is inverted, it reveals at once the diagram of a female body. The body is spread-eagled and truncated – the only parts drawn are those that denote female sexuality. . . . At the center of the map lie two mountain peaks called Sheba's Breasts – from which mountain ranges stretch to either side as handless arms. The body's length is inscribed by the right royal way of Solomon's Road, leading from the threshold of the frozen breasts over the navel *koppie* straight as a die to the pubic mound. In the narrative, this mound is named the "Three Witches" and is figured

by a triangle of three hills covered in "dark heather." This dark triangle both points to and conceals the entrances to two forbidden passages: the "mouth of treasure cave" – the vaginal entrance into which the men are led by the black mother, Gagool – and, behind it, the anal pit from which the men will eventually crawl with the diamonds . . .

By portraying protagonists as heroic and virile, and the land as a sexual woman, Haggard was able to make the adventurous act of European conquest appear natural and legitimate – as 'natural' as a man's sexual conquest. Thus, in a general way, sexualized imaginative geographies have naturalized and legitimated colonial acts and power relations.

They have also naturalized certain ideas about sexuality and gender. It is now widely agreed that sexualities are not naturally or biologically determined, but are socially constructed. Michel Foucault's influential *History of Sexuality* (1978) traces the 'invention' of heterosexuality and homosexuality to sexologists in late-nineteenth-century Europe. Previously, sexualities were defined less by the gender of sexual partners than by the nature of sex acts, and the relevant laws reflected this (a man could be convicted of sodomy, for example, regardless of the gender of his sexual partner). New ideas about sexuality were expressed in a variety of contexts and by a variety of professional and amateur sexologists and professionals with interests in sexuality, including lawyers, legislators, doctors, religious leaders and academics – including geographers. For example, Burton, who signed many of his books simply as a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, described sexual customs and intervened in sexual politics. He mapped regions in which he claimed certain sexual practices were common – such as a 'Sotadic Zone' in which sex between men was commonly practiced and widely tolerated (Phillips 1999b). In his sexual geographies, Burton charted forms of sexuality and morality, which demonstrated the variety of sexual cultures and asserted the rights of individuals to live their sexual lives without interference. In an age when the government was increasingly regulating sexuality, his interventions were not entirely successful, but they do illustrate the part that geographers can play in shaping understandings of sexuality and sexual morality.

Sexualities are also represented and structured in a series of more abstract imaginative geographies, notably the 'closet.' Eve Sedgwick has called this "the fundamental architecture of gay oppression this century," which "evokes a sense of concealment and erasure typical of lesbian and gay desire" (quoted by Brown 1999: 185). Michael Brown poses the following rhetorical question: "If the closet represents the place where gay and lesbian desire remains hidden, what sort of space is it?" (Brown 1999: 185). His answer includes an analysis of the language of the closet, illustrated for example in a reading of travel writing by Neil Miller – *In Search of Gay America* (1989) and *Out in the World* (1992) – which concentrates on "travels into two of the most closeted places on his tours" (Brown 1999: 185). Figuratively moving between real and imaged closets, Miller's travel books demonstrate the interplay of these two spheres, which together act to structure sexual identities and lives. As a mechanism for the concealment of homosexuality, the closet may function as a vehicle of heterosexual power; this space is a marker and a maker of relationships between homosexual and heterosexual people and places. The next section critically examines heterosexual spaces.

Heterosexual Spaces

Sexuality is not just an attribute of sexual 'others' and their geographies, but of all people and all places – Levittowners and their suburban streets and homes, for instance. David Sibley has shown that it is impossible to understand the social and spatial margins without understanding the processes and imperatives that construct the social center; it is impossible to understand 'deviance' without understanding how certain powerful social groups invent their own 'normality' and use it to reproduce their social power (Sibley 1995: 25).

Overt expressions of sexuality may be particularly unwelcome in certain places, particularly those associated with the family such as homes and suburbs. Yet these places are sexualized in important ways – they are identified with normalized heterosexuality. Heterosexual spaces may reproduce the hegemonic (dominant) sexual order, both ideologically by making this construction of sexuality and the power relations inherent in it appear natural; and materially by physically accommodating and therefore encouraging or enforcing certain heterosexual lifestyles, which are historically constructed rather than 'natural' (Katz 1995). Thus, Julia Cream argues that it is important to make visible and problematize everyday sexual spaces:

> We need to know how space is produced as uncontaminated, and shorn of its associations with sexuality. Sexuality is so often hidden away in the upstairs of homes, behind closed doors, or in the upper reaches of the disciplinary house. We need to expose the ways in which it has been excluded, obscured and rendered irrelevant . . . (Cream 1994: 122)

From a critical geographical perspective, this problematization of heterosexualities means seeking "to understand the straightness of our streets as an artifact; to interrogate the presumed *authentic* heterosexual nature of everyday spaces" (Bell et al. 1994: 32). This entails developing sensitivity to the taken-for-granted sexualization of everyday space, and an understanding of how this sexualization may be performatively constructed in places such as homes, streets, workplaces and (less tangibly) national and other symbolic landscapes.

Home, both a place and an idea, is closely linked to normative constructions of gender and sexuality. As a gendered space, it is fundamental to ideas about femininity and masculinity. These ideas were set out in unusually bold terms by the British Victorian moralist, John Ruskin, who labeled man "the doer, the creator, the discoverer" (Ruskin 1887: 135), woman the home-maker whose talents lay in "sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision" (Ruskin 1887: 136). Ruskin idealized the woman who stayed home and made it a "place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division" (Ruskin 1887: 136). These ideas about the proper places of men and women, known as the ideology of the separate spheres, have changed over time but consistently identified the home as the sphere of women (see chapter 5). Society has continued to reward women who 'choose' to stay close to home and family, to spend their days in suburbs such as Levittown, by praising their femininity (Kelly 1993). This was particularly true in the United States in the postwar period, when the FHA (Federal Housing Authority) financed suburban homes for heterosexual nuclear families – while at the same

time refusing mortgages to female-headed and other households, as Hayden (1984: 8) explains:

> Levit's client was the returning veteran, the beribboned male war hero who wanted his wife to stay home. Women in Levittown were expected to be too busy tending their children to care about a paying job.

From the layout of its housing to the conditions of its mortgage provision, Levittown, like many other state-sponsored suburban housing projects, was a space of closely prescribed sexuality. Contemporary anthropologist Margaret Mead observed some of the sexual attitudes that fed into the design of postwar suburbs. She observed a dominant "belief that every family should have a home of its own" (Mead 1949: 325), and concluded that "all other forms of living are seen as having great disadvantages" (Mead 1949: 326). While people were expected to marry and have children, and while they were only considered worthy of housing if they did, their housing was also designed to ensure that only they were sexually active and reproductive. Their children were also to be segregated, partly in order to preserve their chastity, with boys and girls in different sleeping rooms. This provision, facilitated by the construction of housing with three or more bedrooms, further distinguished FHA housing from some of its predecessors, particularly urban tenements, in which crowded conditions meant multiple occupation of sleeping quarters (Kelly 1993; see Langford 2000).

Public spaces including streets and workplaces also function as heterosexual spaces. Mitchell (2000: 172) notes, for example, that:

> heterosexual sex and sexuality have always been quite public. Take the very public marriage ceremony with its various ritual fertility rights, for example, or the simple acceptability of heterosexual couples kissing in public.

The voyeurism and hostility that generally greets equivalent public displays of affection by gays and lesbians underlines the dominance of public space by heterosexuals.

Similarly, many workplaces privilege and reward heterosexuality. In a study of merchant banks in the City of London, Linda McDowell found that the grooming and presentation of workers' bodies and the performance of heterosexuality, whether in the form of homosocial relationships between men or flirtatious heterosexual play between men and women, was central to their success in this potentially lucrative employment.

> Being in control of your own presentation and image was vital not only in competition with fellow traders but also in managing relationships with clients – an importance reflected in the body culture of gyms and fitness clubs in the City. Men might adopt a clubby bonhomie with clients while women might deliberately play a mock game of 'seduction.' What this points to is the way that workers have to adopt a series of performances in the different spaces of their work. Gay workers would adopt a heterosexual role during the day to enable them to function in the dealing rooms; all men might have to adopt a stereotypical, thrusting, macho culture. (McDowell 1995: 75)

In this heterosexist environment, women and gay men were made to feel out of place, and/or to conform outwardly to the dominant heterosexual culture. McDowell concluded that "a hegemonic idealized notion of heterosexual masculinity is the dominant image in the world of merchant banking" (McDowell 1995: 86).

In addition to the home, street and work place, national landscapes are often heterosexual spaces. Sibley suggests that English symbolic landscapes – places and images that represent Englishness and are invoked in English nationalism – are particularly exclusionary, hostile to difference and deviance.

> The countryside, as it is represented by those who have a privileged place within it, is the essence of Englishness, so those who are excluded from this purified space are also, in a sense, un-English. . . . I think we can recognize a number of building blocks or key sites of nationalist sentiment, including the family, the suburb and the countryside, all of which implicitly exclude black people, gays and nomadic minorities from the nation. (Sibley 1995: 108)

Sibley argues that in these symbolically important spaces there is a heightened sensitivity to the possibility of "pollution" by the presence of deviants or outsiders such as those mentioned above, whose presence may be seen as a threat to the purity and stability of the social order (Sibley 1995). Indeed, national landscape and nationalism have often been closely allied to reproductive heterosexuality (Mosse 1985). In national and nationalistic literature, for example, Lynne Pearce finds certain "contemporary Scottish and Welsh writers advocating, however indirectly, sexual endogamy – and preferably that which is heterosexual and reproductive" (Pearce 2000: 246). In Northern Ireland, Vincent Quinn notes a general adherence of both Nationalists and Unionists to heterosexual norms. But the heterosexual domination of nationalisms and national landscapes, like that of homes and streets, may be contested (Parker et al. 1992). Quinn suggests that 'coming out' as gay or lesbian in the province may destabilize sectarianism (the conflict between Irish Nationalism and United Kingdom Unionism) by promoting nonsectarian primary identifications (Quinn 2000). The heterosexuality of certain spaces may therefore be contested, and this may have far-reaching implications for the homes, workplaces, and nations that are affected.

Conclusions

Geographies of sexualities have drawn attention to the positions – often the plights – of sexual minorities. In so doing, they have addressed a broader set of academic questions and political issues, concerned with relationships between society and space. These questions and issues are concerned with social and spatial diversity; with spaces of inequality and exclusion; and with geographies and politics of identity. The mechanisms of exclusion and identity formation are complex. Most tangibly, for example, the United States has subsidized housing for nuclear families and excluded homosexuals from certain forms of employment (such as the military). Alongside these formal processes and material geographies, the identification and exclusion of certain groups has operated through a range of cultural representations and politics. Certain imaginative geographies and geographical discourses have been particularly significant for the construction of sexual identities and for resistance to

exclusion and marginalization. It is here that cultural geographers have made some of their most important contributions to understandings of relationships between sexuality and space. Approaching this question at its broadest level, they have critically contextualized geographies of sexual minorities. Sibley in particular has shown how the marginality of some can only be understood as a product of the privilege and power of others, and how this has a spatial dimension. Thus, while geographies of sexuality may begin in urban enclaves, and with the important project of giving voice to and otherwise empowering sexual minorities, these critical geographies must ultimately reach out to other, less overtly sexualized people and places. By showing how these superficially 'normal' spaces actively normalize heterosexuality and thereby naturalize the power of heterosexuals at the expense of others, critical geographies of sexuality may help to disrupt compulsory heterosexuality and the particular form of patriarchy upon which it rests. This contributes not only to a gay and lesbian political agenda, but also to a much broader critical politics. Since sexuality is not a discrete area of social life, but one with close and complex relationships to others including gender and race, and one which structures a wide range of real and imagined geographies including homes, workplaces and nations, geographies of sexuality must leave no stones unturned. Geographies of sexuality may therefore work on a variety of levels to address a variety of issues, some long-standing, others more recent and urgent. At the local level, for example, they may address the family homes and classrooms in which discrimination on the basis of sexuality is often perpetuated. On the national and international level, geographies of sexualities may address such problems such as the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases in the context of a globalizing world (Altman 2001; Brown 1995). Critical geographies of sexuality may thereby play some part not only in explaining the world, but also in changing it.

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