

Syracuse University

SURFACE

Theses - ALL

June 2018

Queer'ing Croporate Pride: Memory, Intersectionality, And Corporeality In Activist Assemblies Of Resistance

Hunter C. Thompson
Syracuse University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://surface.syr.edu/thesis>



Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Thompson, Hunter C., "Queer'ing Croporate Pride: Memory, Intersectionality, And Corporeality In Activist Assemblies Of Resistance" (2018). *Theses - ALL*. 252.

<https://surface.syr.edu/thesis/252>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by SURFACE. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses - ALL by an authorized administrator of SURFACE. For more information, please contact surface@syr.edu.

Abstract

This thesis chronicles two areas of queer social movement activity—the history of Pride in major metropolitan American cities, and Queerbomb a DIY Pride festival in Austin, Texas—to critique the material-spatial impacts of corporate culture on performances of LGBTQ Pride, pinpointing how business interests limit the lines of solidarity that can be drawn around queerness at Pride assemblies. Using fragments gathered from historical accounts, field interviews, and the internet, I explore scenes of radical activist worldmaking resisting the corporatization of numerous Pride events. This exploration intervenes in counterpublic theory (Asen; Brouwer; Fraser) by emphasizing the need to explore public space and bodies coming together as assemblies (Butler) through a performative materialist standpoint. This project advocates for the importance of a performative materialist analysis, as such analysis helps critical rhetoric engage in dialectical reading of counterpublics as generated both through and within structures, while also linked to discourse that works to recite and therefore create new structures; exploring how both the material world impacts the circulation of these discursive spaces, while simultaneously considering how discourse can also constitute alternative practices in wider public spheres. Using performative materialism, the thesis engages in theorizing queer memory (Morris; Dunn; Muñoz), intersectionality (Crenshaw; Hill-Collins; Spade), and corporeality (Edelman; Grosz; María Rodríguez) within assemblies that function to move grids of intelligibility to build new alliances of solidarity. I advocate to move the social, the groups in this thesis do more than gain publicity, they break down walls and barriers, cross borders, and forge alliances. However, public appearance alone does not mean this work will happen; it is merely the first step and after this step sustained work is needed to make change.

QUEER' ING CORPORATE PRIDE:
MEMORY, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND CORPOREALITY
IN ACTIVIST ASSEMBLIES OF RESISTANCE

By

Hunter Thompson

B.A. University of Northern Iowa, 2016

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Communication & Rhetorical Studies

Copyright © Hunter Thompson, 2018
All Rights Reserved

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my advisor, Erin J. Rand, who has shown me what critical generosity looks and feels like. To my committee members: Dana L. Cloud, Charles E. Morris III, and Robin Riley your influence echoes throughout this project, I am proud to have worked under your guidance and known your friendship. Thank you to the Communication & Rhetorical Studies community at Syracuse University, with special appreciation for Joanne Balduzzi and Sarah Francesconi; you two were lifesavers whenever something was awry. To my fellow graduate students, you have influenced my professional, intellectual, and personal development in more ways than you will ever realize. Thanks for sharing the brilliance Y'all!

Thank you to Chris DiCesare for not only your smart and affectionate advice but for challenging me to explore defiant ideas that challenge my social location. Thank you to Matt Ringard for providing a comfy couch during our evening writing sessions. Thanks to Cate Palczewski for seeing beyond my many malapropisms and informing me about Syracuse back in 2015. Thank you to Sade Barfield and Josh Hamzehee for inspiring my interest in both rhetoric and performance and for putting up with my early attempts to do collegiate speech. Thank you to my parents who contributed to my education in the form of both financial and emotional labor. Pam, Craig, and Hannah now that my Syracuse adventure is finished we can finally have some R&R time together! Thank you to Emily Harsch, Tucker Olson, Jacob Meade, Abbie Shew, Alex Coppess, and Collin O'Leary. While we were not around each other during the production of this work, I had already found the words due to your friendship.

Finally, thank you to the wild and loving of queers who have changed lives for so many, whose power I only write of. Keep loving, breaking the rules, and interrupting the ways we imagine each other.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	iv
Introduction: Gay Pride, Corporatization, and The Public Sphere	1
Not Just Because It's Assimilationist: The Need to Queer Pride.....	6
Focal Objects: Assemblies of Pride	15
Reading Counterpublics from a Performative Materialist Perspective	18
Memory: Calling Upon the Origins of Gay Liberation.....	26
Intersectionality and Corporeality: Balancing Difference with Collectivity	32
Overview and Implications	38
Chapter One: Stonewall Was A Riot, But What Is Pride?	41
An Emblematic Moment: Specters In The Shadow Of Stonewall.....	48
Unresolved Tensions: Creating a National Pride Movement and Post-Stonewall Outlaws.....	61
The World Turned: Queer Visibility Goes Consumer at Pride.....	70
Conclusion: Interrupting Queer Fictions.....	77
Chapter Two: Keeping Austin Queer'd	80
Urban Entrepreneurialism and Family Values: The Changing Face of Austin Pride	84
Welcome To Queerbomb! Intersectional Formulations of Queer Family	94
It's Time to March! Queer Collectivity and the Alteration of Public Space.....	104
The After-Party: Recruitment and Queer Utopia	112
Conclusion: Rethinking Counterpublic Emancipation.....	115
Conclusion: The Possibilities and Limitations of Assemblies	117
Modes of Going Public: The Multifaceted Nature of World-Making	120
Fictions of the Queer Past, Frictions in the Queer Present, Flourishing a Queer Utopia.....	125
REFERENCES	128
Vita	137

Introduction: Gay Pride, Corporatization, and The Public Sphere

Despite widespread fear of police obstruction, violence from both spectators and the state, and risk to personal livelihoods on June 28th 1970, the first Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day March was held. Traveling uptown from Greenwich Village on Sixth Avenue to Central Park, gays and lesbians in New York City marched out of their enclave and into public. In that moment, 2,000 people publicly marching together in the streets lit a fuse that would forever change the discourse around queerness in the public sphere. Solely through the embodied act of walking these individuals formed a collective, which would lead to a movement changing millions of lives. Starting at the Stonewall Inn, marchers commemorated the infamous uprising that had occurred one year earlier, in which queers of color fought back against the state's reign of terror in their lives. Holding signs calling to "smash imperialism," marchers embodied the uprising's spirit by demanding radical social change. On the same day, sister marches were held in Los Angeles and Chicago, and by the end of the decade, Liberation Marches were being held across the United States.

A lot has changed since the first Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day Marches were held. First, they are no longer called *Liberation*, but *Pride*. Second, many events now constitute themselves as *parades*, rather than *marches*. Third, what was once an oppositional political statement, increasingly, is considered by some to be part of hegemonic culture. Fourth, tied to both the name change and assimilation is the influx of corporate influence on these events. Contemporary examples of corporatization appear every Pride season, as costs associated with participating and attending festivals continue to rise; creating systemic issues impacting the most vulnerable in the LGBTQ community. In some cities, Oreo cookies and celebrity-grand marshals

are now the face of Pride, as those recognized and honored increasingly are centered for fame and advertising value, rather than grass-roots activism. Pride is not just about politics, community building, and activism but also is a significant site of commerce and advertising. Numerous Pride organizations have grown to the point that they are no longer just a social movement organization, but have employees, boards, and CEO's. Arguably, because opposition to corporate involvement and advertising at Pride is rarely heard, the politics and structure of corporate-Pride events have been institutionalized as hegemonic "common-sense."

In June of 2017, contestation of corporate involvement at Pride was ripe on social media, with various opinion pieces commenting on the issue after a series of activists in different cities both disrupted corporate-Pride parades and held alternative events across the country. In Washington D.C. the group No Justice-No Pride, shut down and rerouted the D.C. Pride parade due to Pride organizers involvement with military contractors and other corporate entities known for harming members of the LGBTQ community.¹ Less than twenty-four hours later, Los Angeles Pride was also not business as usual—as everyday queers took to the street without corporate floats or logos. Christopher Street West (CSW), the organization that produces annual Pride events in LA, previously months before, canceled the official Pride parade along with its corporate sponsors and replaced it with a Resistance March, conceding to community activists who were already planning a grassroots led LGBTQ march. Meanwhile, in Austin, Texas Queerbomb, a DIY Pride celebrated eight years of holding a non-corporate sponsored Pride rally. These examples of contesting corporate involvement at Pride are not a new phenomenon, as throughout the 90s and early 2000s groups such as ACT UP, The Dyke March, Queer Nation, and Gay Shame also began to organize alternative forms of community mobilization.

¹ No Justice-No Pride, "Calling Pride Back to Its Roots," accessed October 3, 2017, <http://nojusticenopride.org/>.

In this thesis, I investigate those that have not bought into corporatized organizing and commercial media to assemble Pride by exploring three concepts present in the counterpublicity strategies of assemblies contesting corporate forms of organizing Pride. Using speeches, performances, and demonstrations this project examines *memory*, *intersectionality*, and *corporeality* within assemblies attacking the problems created by commercialized modes of doing Pride, mobilizing not only a disruption of corporate organizing but moving grids of intelligibility to build new alliances of solidarity. Together memory, intersectionality, and corporeality tactically function to foster public modalities that engage in what Michael Warner refers to as counterpublic worldmaking, creating a “space of circulation in which it is hoped that the *poiesis* of scene-making will be transformative, not replicative merely.”² This transformation occurs through *assemblies*, formed by the public appearance and expression of vulnerability by disproportionately injured bodies, an ethical demand for recognition, a practice of solidarity, a collective *jouissance*, and through a politics of persistence a performance of conditions of shared livability. Judith Butler has recently articulated in this moment of entrepreneurial logics regulating publics, that “the public assembly embodies the insight that this social condition is both shared and unjust.”³ Jumping off Butler’s performative theorization of assemblies, I explore recent grassroots mobilizations of Pride along with their complicated relationship to commercialized Prides.

To explore this relationship, I ask three overarching research questions: first, “what do resistance assemblies teach us about the erasures, harms, and constraints of corporate involvement at Pride?” Second, “what about the rhetoric and performance of these assemblies

² Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (Cambridge: Zone Books, 2002), 122, emphasis added.

³ Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 15-16.

creates a public life that is different than Pride events with a corporatized culture?” Third, “how can Pride be reformulated into a public assembly that fosters solidarity without flattening difference?” By answering these questions, this thesis intervenes in the study of rhetoric by grounding the performative work of counterpublics in the formation of assemblies, arguing for the importance and complexities of bodies moving together to shift beliefs and build coalitions.

The primary intervention foregrounded in this project is a rethinking of how rhetorical studies understands the public sphere, advocating that studies of public assembly, life, and culture should engage in a dialectical reading of counterpublics as generated both through and within material structures while simultaneously always linked to discourse that works to create new structures. I advocate for rhetorical scholarship that values both the performative and the material as co-constitutive to understand holistically the circulation of discursive and embodied rhetoric, while simultaneously considering how discourse and embodiment constitute and make alternative practices and spaces. Simultaneously, this perspective also has implications for how queer theory thinks about the act of queering both discourse and space within public spheres, as the tensions forming counterpublic assemblies complicate the way we think about publics and their formative relationship with identity. Examining counterpublics in this project from a standpoint that values both performative and material analysis reveals a complicated arrangement of movement factions in tension with each other, and that more than economics and assimilation of identity are at play in the rise of corporate organizing in LGBTQ movements and resistance to this trend.

Late capitalism has brought into being a corporate culture fixated on marketizing all aspects of life, which in the contemporary moment is connected to deindustrialization, globalization, and the rise of nationalistic populist movements. Critiquing how these systems

have led social movements to use tactics of commodity consumption is, of course, important, but scholars must consider how factors beyond structural capital are indexed in choices to engage in consumption. Looking at the resistance efforts to corporate organizing at Pride events pinpoints that examining consumerism alone fails to reveal exigencies that activists and scholars wishing to engage in building a counter-hegemony must grapple with, especially if they hope to use the force of the assembly in a more inclusive and transformative manner. Thinking through these efforts, this thesis is interested in experiences people attach to Pride and the meanings assigned to this lived experience, considering the creation of social movement belief and coalition building. Throughout this project, I chronicle a series of demonstrations that this project accrues as an archive to theorize about the corporatization of Pride and resistance to it. Moving from the birth of Gay Liberation to the present, this thesis demonstrates that a national movement currently exists that opposes corporate involvement at Pride and scholars can and should view these demonstrations as part of a broader anti-corporate queer movement. While separate groups have created these demonstrations, their displays share a goal of combating the political difficulties of a Pride organized around corporate interests, collectively aiming to disrupt belief while generating innovative ideas about queer movement organizing.

In looking at these demonstrations, two trends become evident that warrant further examination. The first is that numerous *fictions* around Pride are connected to the *frictions* that have birthed alternative modes of organizing Pride. Of these fictions, the one most fundamentally at play, is that Pride has always been a site of unity. However, looking critically at Pride as a cultural and political event reveals it has never been made up of a single public or group and instead has always been a collective performance full of tensions. In the current moment conflicts from the original Christopher Street Liberation Day March continue to

reemerge in perverse ways, and therefore reexamining the past through new lenses yields innovative hermeneutics for understanding the present. Second, while our contemporary moment is marked by economic and political spheres coming together, scholars should be careful in how they articulate critiques of neoliberal sexual politics as economic determinism tends to overlook the many other practices that exist that foster alternative ways of relating. Instead, of spending time in this thesis critiquing “family” or “assimilation’s” connection to the consumption practices that marketize queer publics, I explore the forms of kinship and affective connection that make a large assembly a coalitional place of discovering solidarity.

Not Just Because It’s Assimilationist: The Need to Queer Pride

In utilizing the terms corporatization or corporate culture I am describing an ensemble of material practices both institutional and ideological that function to govern social movement activity both politically and pedagogically, by placing interaction with brands as the primary means of social change while political strategy and goals are made by the hands of private decision-making bodies to produce consumer-citizens. Corporate influence on LGBTQ life isn’t just exclusive to Pride and is representative of the formation of a gay market. After the crossover success of disco, mainstream advertisers began to show interest in a gay market by creating ads for alcohol, entertainment, financial services, luxury goods, and fitness equipment. While public backlash during the AIDS crisis stifled the development of this market, the invention of antiretroviral therapies re-energized the market in the 1990s as pharmaceutical companies began to target gay men in advertising. In the early 2000s, a series of guidebooks were published instructing members of the managerial class in the art of courting gay consumer dollars. Of influence, was former *Advocate* marketing strategist Grant Lukenbill’s, *Untold Millions: Secret Truths About Marketing to Gay and Lesbian Consumers*, in which Lukenbill asserted that due

to” gays discretionary income” and “social stigma” a “recession proof” “untapped market” of gay wealth existed. ⁴ Accompanying this guidebook trend, corporate discourses and images began to picture the LGBTQ community “as America’s most affluent minority,” with the aim of cashing in on this allegedly untapped market. Quickly, these claims stuck as gay and lesbian subjects were rendered universally normative, white, and upper-middle class in a clear majority of commercial media. ⁵

Coinciding with this development along with the growing acceptance of gays and lesbians in popular American culture, Pride events in major metropolitan cities became a significant site of brand activation. Brands such as Absolute, Bud Light, T-Mobile, along with numerous other fortune 500 companies, currently use the public space of Pride to enable consumers to experience and engage directly with a brand. Efforts such as these are an attempt to build loyalty and community around products and services by performing an interactive and inclusive experience with consumers, hoping that this performance will establish a connection with members of the community associating the product with queer identity. Recently, these companies have taken their efforts to a new level. Burger King in 2014 launched a product called the “Proud Whopper” during San Francisco Pride with rainbow wrapping, which opened to reveal the slogan: “We’re all the same inside.” A video of a woman eating the burger went viral, showing her tearing up, and asserting: “a burger has never made me cry before;” while a young child ponders: “I think, this wrapper, means we have the same rights.”⁶ Last summer, Master Card in a nod to North Carolina’s “bathroom bill,” sponsored a toilet at numerous Pride events

⁴ Grant Lukenbill, *Untold Millions: Secret Truths About Marketing to Gay and Lesbian Consumers* (Philadelphia: Hayworth Press, 1999).

⁵ Katherine Sender, *Business, Not Politics: The Making of the Gay Market* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 173.

⁶ “Proud Whopper I Burger King US” YouTube Video, 1:54, a commercial on February 20, 2015, posted by “David The Agency” March 31, 2015.

that could be used by anyone applying their hands to a heart-shaped pulse sensor, presenting the idea that anyone with a heartbeat could use it, with the tagline “This restroom accepts all humans.”⁷ Bud Lite tents across the nation read “We’re Here With Beer! Get Used To It.”

In the contemporary moment Pride celebrations in most metropolitan cities contain far more of these brands than community organizations, far outpacing representation by members of the LGBT community. In 2015, of the 200 groups involved in the Chicago Pride parade, 132 of the slots were held by corporations, compared to 11 LGBTQ groups, 1 bisexual group, 1 trans group, and 5 groups representing queer people of color.⁸ The New York City Pride parade has more than quadrupled its number of Fortune 500 corporate sponsors since 2012, moving from 8 to 36.⁹ In San Francisco, the parade has gone from a three-hour affair to being over 8 hours in length, with the vast majority of its contingent consisting of technology companies.¹⁰ In the United States, the average number of corporate sponsors at a Pride event is 26, with the vast majority of these companies being from the beverage, tourism, technology, and financial sectors.¹¹ All of these developments have come with controversy, as many in the LGBTQ community have asked: Does commercial involvement risk Pride events losing sight of their political roots? Has Pride become too straight? What is Pride’s current purpose? What do these corporate sponsors have to do with the LGBTQ community? These questions reflect much older annual debates that predate corporate sponsorship, which typically describe one faction of the

⁷ MasterCard Restroom For All,” *The Spirit Awards*, <http://shortyawards.com/1st-socialgood/mastercard-entry-for-all/>.

⁸ Riley Kollaritsch, “What Are Pride Parades Really About?,” <http://projectqueer.org/post/122957180303/to-view-enlarged-chart-click-here-what-are>.

⁹ India Ross, “The Business of Gay Pride,” *The Financial Times*, August 11, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/228207c6-5f46-11e6-ae3f-77baadeb1c93>.

¹⁰ Sam Levin, “Too straight, white and corporate: why some queer people are skipping SF Pride,” *The Guardian*, June 25, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jun/25/san-francisco-gay-pride-corporate-orlando-shooting>.

¹¹ Eric Olson, “An Exploration of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Festival Sponsors,” *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism* 18, no. 1 (2017): 60-73.

community wanting to “clean up” Pride for families through pushing out drag queens, overt sexual displays, the dykes on bikes, along with any angry political rhetoric. Another faction responds by reminding people of the transgressive lineage of the event, most commonly invoking the queers at Stonewall fighting the police to support grassroots mobilization and critique the involvement of private sector businesses.

Issues around commercial media at Pride in mainstream gay and lesbian cultural texts such as *The Advocate* and *Out*, commonly have represented collective concern through questions concerning whether Pride festivities have become too much of a “party” absent from “politics,” rather than asking questions about how corporate involvement impacts participants along the lines of race, class, and gender. Often, connected to this coverage are images of children, implying that it is important for LGBTQ families to have a space to move in public freely and for the broader public to see the significant role of the family in today's LGBTQ community. Recently, the communication director for Washington DC's Capital Pride explained, "When the television crews came to the festival we had a family, a kids area. I always send the cameras there, because I think that's something the general public wouldn't necessarily associate with a pride event."¹² In contrast, performance scholar Juana María Rodríguez claims, “in the queer community's most celebrated public manifestation of Pride and unity, children and their families are given special consideration and protection: a sheltered space, closed off from the public.”¹³ Meanwhile Bryan McCann describes recent fights over corporate involvement and sexual displays at gay Pride as connected to the “deep ideological rift in the LGBTQ rights movement,”

¹²Dean Mundy, "Shifting, Broadening, and Diversifying: How Gay Pride Organizations are Reshaping their Mission to Build Crucial Relationships in a Complex 21st Century Stakeholder Network," *Public Relations Inquiry* 4, no. 1 (2015): 51.

¹³ Juana María Rodríguez, *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 30.

which “represents a choice between a corporate politics of prudence on one hand, and a corporeal politics of desire on the other.”¹⁴ Invoking both family values and the concept of party, often activists’ critiques of corporate involvement at Pride focus on these terms, leaving critical consideration about who is explicitly harmed, erased, and constrained by commercial media and corporate politics absent from the conversation.

In contrast to this conversation, queer theory has described these recent movement divides through terms such as “homonormativity,” “homonationalism,” and “queer liberalism.”¹⁵ These overlapping terms contain essential nuances amongst themselves, but share a thread of describing sexual politics operating in neoliberal contexts. Lisa Duggan describes homonormativity as “a politics that doesn’t contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption.”¹⁶ Jasbir Puar explicitly adds empire to the conversation through the term “homonationalism,” to describe “collusion between homosexuality and American nationalism that is generated both by national rhetorics of patriotic inclusion and by gay and queer subjects themselves.”¹⁷ Others such as David Eng assert it would be “premature” to embrace these terms entirely, and instead utilizes the term “queer liberalism” to describe a “confluence of the political and economic spheres that forms the basis for the liberal inclusion of particular gay and lesbian U.S. citizen-subjects petitioning for rights and recognition before the law.”¹⁸ The framework

¹⁴ Bryan McCann, “Queering Expertise: Counterpublics, Social Change, and the Corporeal Dilemmas of LGBTQ Equality,” *Social Epistemology* 25. (2011), 250.

¹⁵ Lisa Duggan, “The New Homonormativity,” In *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, eds. Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 179; Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 1; David Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 3.

¹⁶ Duggan, 179.

¹⁷ Puar, 39.

¹⁸ Eng, 3.

these scholars provide to analyze neoliberalism's influence beyond economic realms and how it feeds into ideologies that shape and affect queer lives has been influential in three ways. First, scholars have noted that normative gender performances and domesticity are inescapably linked to consumerism. Second, scholars have marked political goals such as marriage and entry into the military as single axes politics that negate intersectional relationships concerning race, class, and gender. Third, many have emphasized that queer subjects now actively participate in imperialist projects through calls to citizenship.

Much has been written about neoliberalism, a slippery term used to mean various things by numerous theorists, but most concretely is a theory of economic relations that produces and validates marketized understandings concerning the relationship between public and private; neoliberalism promotes individualistic thinking, emphasizes personal responsibility, and economizes all aspects of life.¹⁹ In this context, activists resisting corporate involvement at Pride make some of the following claims:

- (1) Corporate participation at Pride is assimilationist, leading to the interpellation of queer subjects as nationalistic consumer-citizens.
- (2) Individual corporate shareholders make far-reaching decisions through considerations of maximizing wealth instead of democratically considering the needs of grassroots political organizations.
- (3) Everyday people's ability to march and participate in the festivities becomes difficult if not impossible, as Pride organizations force non-profits to pay exorbitant and unrealistic fees.
- (4) While visibility is maximized through commercial media, this visibility comes with strings attached as material interests of corporate sponsors police transgressive embodiments of gender, sexuality, and race through a politics of prudence.

¹⁹ Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2015).

While this project is concerned with the harms and constraints listed above, which index each other and are enacted through a "transfer of wealth" that moves social movement politics away from "more-or-less accountable decision-making bodies to individual or corporate accountable hands," this project is concerned with critiquing the flattening and erasure of difference at Pride events.²⁰ Corporate involvement at Pride isn't problematic just because it is assimilationist or prudish, but because it limits the political struggles the movement can imagine, stifling the lines of solidarity queerness can generate around mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interests within a public assembly.

Early Pride events, while encapsulating numerous social movement divides, were a space where members of the community relatively had the same access ability to move with others and engage in coalitional work. Of course, there were conflicts at the parade, but it also was a place where the movement learned to move as one so that they could engage in instrumental politics. In the contemporary moment, Pride is transformed into a mechanism that confuses economic gains within its assembly as political gains for all. While tensions existed over race, class, and gender before the development of a gay market in the 90s, recent expansion of corporate involvement forces individuals and groups who cannot afford to participate in the parade to be side-lined by being unable to gain access to the space of appearance Pride events constitute. Currently, the cost to participate in both the San Francisco and New York Pride typically averages around \$15,000.²¹ Meanwhile, this year Heritage of Pride in New York grossed \$2,767,409 in revenue and San Francisco Pride comparably grossed \$2,729,438.²² Heritage of

²⁰ Duggan, 178.

²¹ San Francisco Pride, "Registration," accessed March 31, 2018, <https://register.sfpride.org/sfpride>; New York City Pride, "The March," assessed March 31, 2018, <https://www.nycpride.org/events/the-march/>.

²² Tax Forms, "Heritage of Pride Inc.," *GuideStar*, April 9, 2018, <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/13-3299634>; Tax Forms, "San Francisco Lesbian Gay Freedom Day Parade & Celebration Committee," *GuideStar*, April 9, 2018, <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/94-300669>.

Pride has trademarked the phrase "NYC Pride" and litigated against groups in New York City trying to hold Pride events using the phrase.²³ Marketized political parades such as these fail to recognize those subjects whose material lives are not and cannot be represented by free market-based sponsorship. Further, the strings attached to these corporations' sponsorship in many cases chills the ability for marginalized voices to be heard; as corporations' main material interest in participating is making profit, and not appearing next to contingents criticizing culture and the state. Hence, corporate involvement puts road blocks on access points to public space and the politicization of that space, making some Pride events *no longer* an assembly *formed* by the public appearance and expression of vulnerability by disproportionately injured bodies; where solidarity can be learned through continuous persistence. A hope that collective gathering might foster more sustainable performances of recognition and shared livability.

Resistance groups expose oppressive practices of consumer citizenship at Pride, practices which suture over difference and stifle the creation of a multifaceted queer movement by emphasizing the free market as a means for liberation. While this project is sympathetic to the liberatory possibilities and modes of cultural expression the development of a gay market has helped bring, the resistance groups this thesis examines aim to expose oppressive practices embedded within contemporary LGBTQ political strategies that utilize the free market for visibility, whose voice must be heard. Failing to listen to these critiques means continuing oppressive practices that suture over difference and rob queer subjects at the intersections of race, class, and gender—who also collectively constitute the collective feeling of Pride, Pride's embodied space, and public form—of the ability to critically intervene in opposing problematic

²³ Steve Weinstein, "Heritage of Trademark: The Legal Battle Over Ownership of 'Pride,'" *South Florida Gay News*, July 14, 2014, <http://southfloridagaynews.com/National/heritage-of-trademark-the-legal-battle-over-ownership-of-pride.html>.

structures within these areas. Almost fifty years ago, the first Christopher Street Liberation Day March formed an assembly that radically altered spaces and discourses within the public sphere through the act of queering. How might the act of queering be utilized in the contemporary moment to dramatically change spaces and discourses of contemporary Pride celebrations that have centered consumer citizenship within their practices?

Queering connotes what José Esteban Muñoz refers to as "insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world."²⁴ Queerness is a gesture to something else, something that is different, something that dares to imagine the world remade. Focusing on queerness's potentiality for political imagination I point to the assembly as a rhetorical agent that has the potential to destabilize the problematic effects of neoliberal privatization, as the assembly holds potential not just to resist, but to forge new relationalities and worlds into existence. In *The Feeling of Kinship*, David L. Eng critiques homonormativity's economic determinism, arguing that "configuring queer politics in such narrow terms obviates the political possibility of democratizing the (supposedly) private sphere of family and kinship relations, of recognizing and responding to the diverse ways in which we now structure and live out our intimate lives."²⁵ For Eng, queer diasporas exist within, and in potential resistance to neoliberalism, a space where kinship can be resignified. Building on Eng, the assembly of Pride, whether corporate or not, is a space where new forms of queer kinship have been created. However, we must think critically about the new forms of kinship created at Pride that have been corporatized, while simultaneously thinking about why alternative forms of assembly have been mobilized due to the stifling of political imagination, rather than proclaiming the pervasiveness of assimilation. Doing

²⁴José Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The then and there of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 1.

²⁵ Eng, 30-31.

so allows one to think about how queer publics are always made of multiple factions in tension that create our contemporary moment, forming new hermeneutics for resisting and queering spaces of consumerism.²⁶

Focal Objects: Assemblies of Pride

Pride is the LGBTQ community's primary public venue, an event where queer bodies assemble to voice their needs, lives, and desires. Queer intimacies historically have been enclaved to private realms, making Pride a space where queer affection has been able to publicly form kinship within the space a public culture affords. Pride is also the primary event through which members of the LGBTQ community publicize, recruit, and engage in activism to change both culture and the state. While Pride creates feelings, memories, and movement collectively shared within public space, this project explores how alternative spaces of counterpublic worldmaking are created in response to the commercialization of this space, utilizing the counter in counterpublic theory to theorize the work of demonstrations opposing corporate modes of organizing Pride. A hostility between these two material ways of organizing symbolic action has been omnipresent for several decades and deserves a rich theoretical treatment that doesn't flatten over differences amongst the community. To avoid a flattening of this tension, I critically examine the material and lived conditions in which these tensions operate through two substantive chapters exploring Pride's fraught relationship to corporatization, assimilation, and resistance.

First, skimming through the history of Pride, I examine how Pride has been organized in major American cities since its inception. While such a massive cultural phenomenon would

²⁶ See: Gavin Brown, "Homonormativity: A Metropolitan Concept that Denigrates "Ordinary" Gay Lives," *Journal of Homosexuality* 59, no. 7 (2012): 1065-1072; J. K. Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

often be considered too large and encompassing to be an object of study, I insist that looking at how the origins of Pride are remembered in relation to historical documents reveals that conflicts from the original Christopher Street Liberation Day March continue to reemerge in perverse ways today, and therefore that not every problem associated with corporate organizing and commercial media at Pride are recent. While corporate organizing is not the only root of conflict, I assert that corporate culture is a major root that must be theorized in relation to earlier conflicts to avoid essentializing both commercial involvement and the past. While Pride events might establish a rhetorical form that favors unity, the “realness” of this unity has continuously been questioned by those in various flanks of the movements regarding differences at intersections outside of the axes of sexuality, with the corporeal bodies and memories intricately tied to these locations contesting a shared identity and history. A primary argument I forward is that corporatization inhibits critical consideration of difference across queer identities while actively erasing difference within contexts of exploitive powers and systems, which might be a location of solidarity. Therefore, I follow Carole Blair’s recent work emphasizing the importance of context by “identifying the when and where of rhetorical practice,” to demonstrate what *contexts* have silenced difference, those that have crystallized movement divides, and those that have created solidarity within the focal object of Pride assemblies within the United States.²⁷

Second, beyond engaging a historiography of Pride, I explore Queerbomb, a DIY Pride in Austin, Texas to focus on how resistance is constituted through both rhetoric and performance that is transformative in scene-making. Utilizing video fragments of the event, news-coverage, and field notes I recapture the lived experience of the Queerbomb collective, conveying how resistance is felt relationally to other bodies through space. In between these bodies and space is

²⁷ Carole Blair, “Conceits of Context: Diffident Reflections” (Keynote, Public Address Conference, Syracuse, NY, September 29, 2016).

the formation of an assembly where disproportionately injured bodies express not just bodily vulnerability but also moments of collective *jouissance*—the pleasure of coming undone and then becoming one with others. I look to Queerbomb’s cultural production process to understand embodied means of resisting corporate-Pride, theorizing how alternative scenes and possible queer worlds are not only formed but lived. Queerbomb is interesting because it counters the rhetoric of family values by asserting queer kinship as its primary value. Organized around queer family values, Queerbomb creates a space where bodies relate to each other and engage in the creation of a coalitional movement.

Despite differences amongst these two objects (one being a contextually constructed historiography and the other an affective life-world), I utilize both to theorize how assemblies comprised of speech acts and bodies moving together create participatory democratic space that doesn't use commercial media or resources of corporate organizing to express politics, feelings, identities, and shared interests. Important to understanding assemblies is the space between bodies, as it is through these spaces that relations are formed. Recently, Judith Butler has theorized how bodies moving together enact broader demands concerning: recognition, freedom, and the right to a livable life. Butler emphasizes that collective bodies and the space between them form assemblies, which constitute “a space of appearance” that “contest and negate...existing forms of political legitimacy.”²⁸ Bodies are integral to the creation of this space as “no one body establishes the space of appearance...this performative exercise happens only ‘between’ bodies,” through the space that constitutes the relational gap between one's body and another's.²⁹ Butler's point is that the body does not act alone when it acts politically, meaning that relationality is vital for public assemblies engaging in instrumental political action. Here, through

²⁸ Butler, 85.

²⁹ Ibid. 77.

the concept of relationality, we can pinpoint what has happened to Pride that is exceptionally appalling: relations of capital are prioritized over relations that don't further capital, hindering the appearance of vulnerable bodies. Essentially, chilling the forging of alliances amongst vulnerable bodies of queers of color, intersex persons, sissies, dykes, leather daddies, queens, and genderfuckers along with those who might have a shared interest with these vulnerable populations by hindering the ability of such alliances to alter the space, politics, and routines of the dominant public sphere that make their lives precarious. While pride events were intended to bring the community together to celebrate each other, the marketization of Pride always risks flattening these differences through privileging subjects who produce the most capital.

Reading Counterpublics from a Performative Materialist Perspective

To adequately describe how assemblies of Pride, both corporate and anti-corporate, express a political imaginary that alters space I draw upon public and counterpublic theory to understand the grids and spaces public assemblies move through. My theorization of counterpublics thinks in terms of multiplicity and does not assert a binary between Pride events that have been corporatized and those that have not. Not all Pride celebrations are the same, operating and mobilizing in myriad ways, based on geographical and sociopolitical contexts. I also recognize for many Pride is a compelling experience regardless of commercial involvement, a political assembly where queer identity is always politically embodied and expressed through appearing in public. Turning to counterpublic theory is helpful to theorize the growing antagonism between grassroots forms of organizing Pride and those organized around large bureaucratic organizations with free-market interests.

A counterpublic is a public defined by its opposition to dominant publics and is often referred to as a “subaltern counterpublic.” Coined by Nancy Fraser, “subaltern counterpublics”

are “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.”³⁰ Fraser combines Gayatri Spivak’s “subaltern” with Rita Felski’s conception of a “counterpublic,” noting that counterpublics come into formation via being excluded from dominant public spheres, and tracing their existence is helpful to understand the formation of oppositional “interpretations of ... identities, interests, and needs.”³¹ Fraser’s and Felski’s theorization of counterpublics arise as a critique of Jurgen Habermas’s *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, in which Habermas argues that the bourgeois public sphere functioned as an ideal discursive space, stimulating rational-critical debate and thus promoting democracy.³² Habermas saw this public sphere as a space that was universally accessible, in which citizens could debate openly about matters of general interest. Important to the development of this new public sphere was the formation of new types of rhetorical texts, such as pamphlets, journals, and newspapers that widely addressed larger audiences than an orator could, leading to these texts being widely discussed in various public locations. This account by Habermas has been subject to a series of criticisms, mostly concerning his lack of attention to women’s and laborers’ exclusion from discursive space, leading to a picture where everyone in a public universally has common interests and accessibility.³³ In response, counterpublic theory

³⁰ Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in Craig J Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas And The Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 123.

³¹ Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in Gary Nelson and Larry Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271; Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1989); Fraser, 123.

³² Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1st MIT Press ed. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991).

³³ Stanley Aronowitz, "Is Democracy Possible? The decline of the public in the American Debate," in Bruce Robbins (ed.), *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press), 42-74; Geoff Elly, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century," in Craig J Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas And The Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992), 289-338; Marie Fleming, "Women and the 'Public Use of reason,'" *Social Theory and Practice*, no. 19, (1993): 27-50.

functions to explore how those outside of the bourgeois public sphere voice oppositional needs and values that are contradictory to the universality of the bourgeois public sphere. Scholars of counterpublic theory are keenly interested in how these publics manage to engage in a variety of communicative processes, outside of the management and discourse of dominant public spheres.

An important question that has been raised about counterpublics concerns: what exactly is *counter* about a counterpublic? This question has not been easy to answer; as Robert Asen and Daniel Brouwer have noted scholars often “write about counterpublics with frustrating vagueness.”³⁴ Looking at the origins of the term, Felski locates the counter in counterpublics via the commonality of shared experience of oppression of those who participate in a counterpublic, as “the experience of discrimination, oppression, and cultural dislocation provides the impetus for the development of a self-consciously oppositional identity.”³⁵ In contrast, Fraser sees counterpublics counter function via their “withdrawal and regroupment,” functioning as both “bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics.”³⁶ Asen has argued that scholars seeking the counter in counterpublics have inversely engaged in reductionism by “fixing or implicitly relying on persons, places, or topics” as the necessary criteria/markers of a counterpublic.³⁷ While counterpublics emerge in and through these locations, reductionism often manifests in the scholarship of rhetorical critics who define these elements as the limit of what a counterpublic can be and where it might be found. Asen argues critics ought to seek the counter in counterpublics through examining “‘participants’ recognition of exclusion from wider public spheres and its articulation through alternative discourse practices

³⁴ Robert Asen and Daniel Brouwer, *Counterpublics and the State* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 8.

³⁵ Felski, 167.

³⁶ Fraser, 124.

³⁷ Robert Asen, “Seeking the Counter in Counterpublics,” *Communication Theory* 10, no.4 (2000): 26.

and norms.”³⁸ Utilizing this conception of counterpublics positions it as a *critical term*, signifying the *struggle* and *power* relations at play in the recognition of counterpublics as public. This understanding makes counterpublics not just an enclave or a subaltern group identity, but a public that is marked by its engagement with larger audiences constituting *counterpublicity*—an activity that is “akin to ‘*going public*.’”³⁹ Therefore, counterpublics are a rhetorical phenomenon as their counter nature is marked by audience engagement. Asen suggests that scholars theorize counterpublics through how publics “imagine themselves explicitly as alternative collectives,” to avoid essentializing counterpublics; and instead view them as “emergent collectives,” that are not “necessarily composed of persons excluded from wider public spheres.”⁴⁰

Asen’s suggestion is difficult though, largely due to Fraser's original formation of counterpublics, as this theorization has been extremely influential in the application of counterpublic theory. Fraser builds a theory by troubling Habermas's conception of a singular public sphere, as not accurately describing the material patterns that constitute “actually existing” democracies with long histories of systemic inequality. Furthermore, Fraser is fundamentally challenging Habermas's argument that to enter the public sphere members must “bracket” their status and backgrounds to enter a rational debate for the good of the public. Due to this, counterpublic theory is primarily built around identity and presents publics in a binary fashion. Consequently, Fraser's antagonism with Habermas's singular public sphere means her conception of public spheres is binary, consisting of: (a) the singular dominant public sphere, composed of bourgeois (white and upper-class) men, and (b) “subaltern counterpublics,” comprised of those who are oppressed and marginalized. Due to this, counterpublic theory has

³⁸ Ibid., 427.

³⁹ Ibid., 441, emphasis added.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 440, 439.

been primarily identity-driven, leading to little or no attention pertaining to conflict or diversity inside spheres. Hence, often identity is focused on more than the articulation of discourses that challenge power relations, nor is attention paid to the possibility of counterpublics conflicting with other counterpublics. It is as if counterpublics never struggle amongst each other over power and the politics of social change.

Understanding that “emergent collectives” often do not speak in harmony or simultaneously for a whole public, scholars have begun to take Asen’s suggestion to expand counterpublic theory to include a heuristic vocabulary that pivots towards a multiplicity of publics. Catherine Squires has proposed that scholars should not equate all marginalized publics as counterpublics, proposing that scholars instead incorporate consideration of the different resources marginalized publics have available to them. Through this analysis Squires proposes the terms “enclaved public,” “counterpublic,” and “satellite public” to foster more flexible descriptions of publics defined outside of identity, allowing for a more comprehensive comparison of publics across wider public spheres.⁴¹ Daniel Brouwer has followed Squires in arguing that counterpublics should be analyzed in communication studies by recognizing “resource disparities among social actors,” calling for scholars to examine “how various qualities and quantities of various resources delimit the available means of persuasion.”⁴² These calls theorize the public sphere through a multiplicity of publics, and therefore differentiate dominant public spheres from counterpublics through analysis of how constituents of these publics interact, intersect with each other, and focus on how successful specific publics are in obtaining resources in comparison to others.

⁴¹ Catherine Squires, “Rethinking the Black Public Sphere: An Alternative Vocabulary for Multiple Public Spheres,” *Communication Theory* 12, no. 4 (2002): 446.

⁴² Daniel Brouwer, “Communication as Counterpublic,” In *Communication as Perspectives on Theory*, ed. Gregory J. Shepherd, Jeffrey St. John, and Ted Striphas (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006), 200, 201.

Maneuvers to multiplicity therefore have utilized a resource-based analysis as the base of new public theories. A materialist-based perspective to publics appropriately creates a distinction between discourse and material conditions, but risks undervaluing the importance of speech regarding how publics challenge power relations amongst public spheres. For example, Dana Cloud has argued for a class-based model of the public sphere due to concerns that contemporary theorists in their search for the constitutive power of discourse, have conflated discourse and material conditions.⁴³ Cloud writes: “political discourse’s fidelity to a working-class public’s interests is tested by real experience.”⁴⁴ For Cloud counterpublicity is located in a counterpublic’s ability to rhetorically mediate the contradictions between ideology (discourse) and reality (material conditions); with “reality” being the entry point that creates discursive conflict, as what has been described as reality often does not match material conditions. While Cloud is right to focus on the alienation between discourse and reality, reality *does not speak*, and therefore understanding how a public uses symbols to articulate and challenge ideology is still important.

A materialist perspective of public spheres differs greatly from Michael Warner’s assertion that publics come into being through “mere attention” and “only in relation to texts and their circulation.”⁴⁵ For Warner, a counterpublic becomes “‘counter’ to the extent” that it supplies “different ways of imagining stranger sociability and its reflexivity.”⁴⁶ Therefore, it is implied by Warner that counterpublics are organized around a text, which via circulation constitute alternative material relations. A question remains concerning what forces these

⁴³ Dana Cloud, “The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric,” *Western Journal of Communication* 58 no. 3(1994): 141-163.

⁴⁴ Dana Cloud, “The Matrix and Critical Theory’s Desertion of the Real,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 3, no. 4 (2006): 340.

⁴⁵ Warner, 66.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

alternative relations are comprised of: do they just exist in alternative discursive practices? Or do they constitute ideological and socioeconomic alternatives? Warner's theorization of publics leaves the material conditions of how counterpublics constitute lifeworlds undertheorized.

It is evident that there is a divide concerning how to approach publics with critical considerations that do not essentialize or described publics vaguely. Some critics have favored a materialist approach, investigating the material resources that different publics have access to, and theorizing how resources position publics in relation to other publics. Other critics have moved to a performative approach, tracking the circulation of a text as constituting and hailing publics into existence. These different theoretical perspectives have consequences for abstract and practical understandings of publics, impacting the heuristic term counterpublic and its hermeneutics around agency and resistance. Rather than pitting these perspectives against each other, this thesis aims to explore counterpublics from the standpoint of "performative materialism," drawing attention to the "relationships between the socioeconomic and the culturally performative, linking historical social transformations to local and subjective performances."⁴⁷ Performative materialism leads to a dialectical reading of counterpublics as generated both through and within structures, while also linked to discourse that works to recite and therefore create new structures. Through performative materialism this project draws on the critical spirit of counterpublic theory to survey the discursive space of anti-corporate-Pride counterpublics, exploring how both the material world impacts the circulation of these discursive spaces, while simultaneously considering how discourse can also constitute alternative practices in wider public spheres.

⁴⁷Margot Weiss, *Techniques of Pleasure: BDSM and the Circuits of Sexuality*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 8.

Performative materialism helps this project and rhetorical studies explain the cultural production process of counterpublics, without reducing counterpublics to merely discourse or a singular notion of identity as the means through which they go public, instead focusing on the complexities of how both are limited by and challenge relations of power in contrast to other publics. Approaching the study of public spheres from the perspective of performative materialism aims to avoid reducing public spheres and counterpublics to facile binaries, which as stated earlier, often essentializes these publics leading to theorization that is often inaccurate or unproductive. Instead, performative materialism engages with both discourse and the context that it is articulated in, meeting Phaedra Pezzullo's call to study subaltern or emerging counterpublics by "highlighting the ways in which power is articulated and rearticulated in specific contexts."⁴⁸ Pezzullo complicates counterpublics by asserting they are not comprised of "a single public, counter or otherwise."⁴⁹ Movements, publics, and the individuals that form them are made up of varied groups and forms of activism, therefore, they cannot be theorized as just a singular entity, but rather as complexly linked entities. Pezzullo suggests that critics add participant observation techniques to their study of public spheres, as a critical tool that enables an exploration of the "messy complexities of public life."⁵⁰ Pezzullo compels critics to "consider the rhetorical force of counterpublics and of cultural performances," serving as a reminder "that publics are not phenomena that exist 'out there;'" they involve real people, affect real bodies, and that these complexities must be added into rhetorical judgment.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Phaedra Pezzullo, "Resisting 'National Breast Cancer Awareness Month': The Rhetoric of Counterpublics and their Cultural Performances," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89, no. 4 (2003): 361.

⁴⁹ Phaedra Pezzullo, 361.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Performative materialism follows Pezzullo's lead by gauging counterpublic transformation as occurring within public *modalities*, a heuristic term used to implicate “the ways that social actors engage others publicly... [in] processes of public engagement.”⁵² For Asen and Brouwer, “modality entails a focus on multiplicity, movement, activity, and the mutual implication of theory and practice.”⁵³ This project considers how modalities enable not just certain discourses but expressions of relationality, which create the environment through which public life occurs. Utilizing a performative materialist perspective to publics emphasizes more than, simply, how performative discourses articulate publics, but how structures in place are the context through which publics articulate their needs, wants, and desires—theorizing the relational mediated space in-between structures and discourses. Therefore, I approach counterpublic resistance to corporatized publics not just through discourse but also account for the political economy within these publics and their ideological impact, along with the embodied space that resistance occurs in. To work through specific contexts operating within the modal force of assemblies, I continue by describing two different rhetorical trends present in both the engagement and movement of Pride events.

Memory: Calling Upon the Origins of Gay Liberation

At the first Queerbomb rally, Austin activist and performance artist Silky Shoemaker challenged how Stonewall's legacy was being represented by contemporary Pride celebrations, echoing a concern that queer world-making was being stifled at contemporary Pride celebrations. Shoemaker noted that those at Stonewall broke from the pressure of what “the world wanted them to think,” as “forty-one years ago, when the Stonewall riots lit up the Lower

⁵²Daniel Brouwer and Robert Asen, *Public Modalities: Rhetoric, Culture, Media, and the Shape of Public Life* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 16.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3.

East Side of Manhattan, no one apologized to their board of trustees afterward."⁵⁴ Shoemaker continued by invoking the memory of a series of transgressive corporeal acts from queer history, noting that Queerbomb was honoring this legacy through Queerbomb “making love: BIG GAY LOVE out on the streets!”⁵⁵ Tethered to Shoemaker’s demands for a world-making project based in a corporeal queerness, was a call to public memory, creating a tactical narration of common identity by using memory as a resource.

Numerous scholars have demonstrated that a public’s memory is invented rhetorically, and concurrently reproduced and reinforced through cultural production. Kendall Phillips describes public memory as being "multiple, diverse, mutable, and competing;" Edward Casey calls it an "external horizon" within the public sphere; and Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian Ott forward it as “beliefs about the past...shared among members of a group.”⁵⁶ Operating within and amongst publics, public memory through rhetoric forms complex and important relations that are a substance for public life.⁵⁷ Recently, queer rhetorical studies has begun to examine public memory following Charles E. Morris’s advocacy to study *queer public memory*, a “revolution” of memory “when public memory and (homo)sexuality collide.”⁵⁸ Morris describes queer activists and social movements making a “deliberate turn toward memory

⁵⁴Silky Shoemaker, “Who we are and what we love,” *The Austin Chronicle*, June 11, 2010, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/features/2010-06-11/1040127/>.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶Kendall Phillips, “Introduction,” In *Framing Public Memory* edited by Kendall Phillips (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 2; Casey Edward, “Public memory in Place and Time,” In *Framing Public Memory* edited by Kendall Phillips (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 30; Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian Ott *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 6.

⁵⁷ While multiple forms of memory have been written about within the field of memory studies, for purposes of examining activists uses of memory as resistance to a corporatized model of Pride I primarily utilize public memory as a term to get at the publicness and publicity induced by rhetoric.

⁵⁸ Charles E Morris III, “My Old Kentucky Homo,” In Charles E Morris III *Queering Public Address: Sexualities in American Historical Discourse* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 89.

in culture for which public memory itself is defined more by absence than presence.”⁵⁹ While related to the concept of history, memory is different from history, as history is an attempt to chronicle memory and account for memory's loss. History also resides within the language of dominant forms of power, presenting the past in ideologically neutral terms.⁶⁰ In contrast, memory is not set but is an embodied phenomenon that is continuously evolving. Memory is not just a singular experience, but also is formed and constructed by collectives in a variety of ways.⁶¹ Due to this co-construction, memory is something highly contested and negotiated. For this project, I'm interested in how activists use public memory for resistance to narrate shared identities to construct communal belonging while contesting other memory practices.

Many of the activists attempting to forge counterpublics to corporate-Pride, such as Ciora Thomas, note that “Pride has historically been about resisting. It’s about bringing visibility to a marginalized community.... That's the history of Pride. We are trying to carry on that legacy.”⁶² Therefore, this trend follows Thomas Dunn’s notion of “queer counterpublic memory,” which strategically calls on the past “to contest conservative memory practices.”⁶³ How Stonewall is remembered, misremembered, or not remembered at all is at the root of ideological conflict over who should and shouldn’t be included in the public Pride constitutes, warranting the forms of expression and organizing structure that are appropriate in shaping the relationalities of a queer public assembly. Due to this trend of activists contesting corporatism and commerce through calls to public memory that engage in reclaiming the past as transgressive, with these

⁵⁹ Ibid. 92.

⁶⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

⁶¹ Phillips.

⁶² Kristina Marusic, “This City Sold The Naming Rights To Its Pride Parade To A Corporation—And People Are Pissed,” *New Now Next*, May 23, 2017, <http://www.newnownext.com/this-city-sold-the-naming-rights-to-its-pride-parade-to-a-corporate-sponsor-and-people-are-pissed/05/2017/>.

⁶³ Thomas Dunn, “Remembering Matthew Shepherd: Violence, Identity, and Queer Counterpublic Memories,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 13, no. 4 (2010): 616.

transgressive origins as central to the ethos of Pride events, I am obliged to read and construct an archive considering the role of memory in the emergence of anti-corporate-Pride counterpublics and the subjectivities they culturally produce.

Turning toward memory is essential for queer activists constructing alternative modes to corporate-Pride as Pride is a ritual built around memory, through the act of commemorating Stonewall, an act embodied in Pride events. Leaving symbolic remains of the past, Stonewall has functioned as a site of memory that provides a shared rhetorical resource for constructing collective remembrance at Pride, allowing Pride to be a performative ritual that rhetorically represents the genealogy of the movement while spotlighting contemporary LGBTQ struggles, building cultural knowledge about the past and informing contemporary values through the widely shared commemorative vehicles of marches, parades, festivals, and other forms of assembly. While the Stonewall riots left small trace remnants of eyewitness accounts, public documents, and a physical location behind the most significant resource of their memory has been Pride events, meaning while Stonewall is remembered as the genealogical origin of the movement this story was created by Pride events themselves.⁶⁴ Every June, cities across the United States and the globe hold annual Pride parades and festivals with these origins credited to the first Gay Liberation Day March, which through commemorating Stonewall have birthed not just Pride events but a multiplicity of memories, as those who support commercialization and those who don't both call upon the past to support or challenge organizing practices at Pride.

These tangled memories reveal that social movement decisions and divides from almost fifty years ago are shaping lives today, forming the roots of contemporary conflict between queer grassroots activism and LGBTQ professional organizing. However, uncovering debates and

⁶⁴ Elizabeth Armstrong and Suzanna M. Crage, "Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth," *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 5 (2006): 725.

logistics around these decisions is difficult due to the strategic ways memory has been deployed by LGBTQ movements to grow the movement and contest heteronormativity. Scott Bravmann refers to these strategies as “queer fictions of the past” a compelling “common-sense” fiction that “we share at least some common goals—goals that are symbolically represented by the resistance at Stonewall.”⁶⁵ While these fictions have been important for creating political action, those concerned with queer politics should heed Derrida’s warning in *Archive Fever* that “archivization produces as much as it records the event,” meaning that the materials of archived pasts still have the ability to homogenize or delete aspects of the past even when they are used by the marginalized, suiting the agendas of power structures such archives were constructed to contest.⁶⁶ Failing to make considerations about how both material and performative forces shape the past risks viewing Pride as one monolithic public, ignoring fragmentation between the symbolic representation of Pride and the multiple factions that make up the LGBTQ community at large.

To avoid essentializing the past, I follow Amin Ghaziani’s observation to methodologically track the interplay between movement consciousness and political economy through magnifying infighting, as “infighting operates as [a] *cultural carrier* that transports meta-meanings fashioned from the *assemblages* of logistical decisions.”⁶⁷ Ghaziani argues that

⁶⁵ Scott Bravmann, *Queer Fictions of the Past: History, Culture, and Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 85.

⁶⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 17. Additionally, the archive I am constructing in this project also risks engaging in such erasures. For example, a significant resource in this project is pieces written for *The Advocate* in the 70s and 80s describing community culture at Pride. While archival fragments such as these are helpful in forming an assemblage of the past, the material interests of the institutions who captured, organized, and published these fragments did not do so neutrally impacting how ideas and stories were rhetorically framed, often with reality being in stark contrast to the actuality of inter-community dynamics.

⁶⁷ Amin Ghaziani, *The Dividends of Dissent: How Conflict and Culture Work In Lesbian and Gay Marches on Washington* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 20.

scholars aiming to understand the construction of movements should not look for points of unity, but instead focus on how dissent within the movement creates identity, political goals, and rhetorical messaging to culture at large. While Pride events have and continue to create unity in the LGBTQ community, scholars examining the movement have privileged the construction of unification at the event, inadvertently underplaying contestation within the rhetorical, embodied, and economic modalities of the event.⁶⁸ Thinking with Bravmann's "queer fictions" and Ghaziani's notion of "dissent," my first chapter interrogates how contemporary public memories do not always align with the past, but rather are a product of cultural production. Even though movement infighting, both now and in the past, operates as a cultural carrier, fashioning an assemblage of symbolic action primarily influenced by logistical decisions, conflict around these decisions remain absent from public memory. Instead, a queer fiction exists, asserting that the movement has always agreed on these issues leading to a disengagement with the rhetoric of the queer past. While the queer turn toward memory is strategically helpful, the framing work currently being employed on the ground by many anti-capitalist activists' risks failing to account for how conflict has been both erased and is tied to material structures. Utilizing a performative materialist approach to queer counterpublic memory surveys the discursive space and use of queer counterpublic memory within modalities opposed to corporate-Pride by searching for queer fictions, while simultaneously considering how queer fictions are the assembled product of logistical conflicts.

⁶⁸ See: Katherine McFarland Bruce, *Pride Parades: How a Parade Changed the World* (New York: New York University Press, 2016). Elizabeth Armstrong and Suzanna Crago, "Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth," *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 5 (2006): 724-751; Lillian Faderman, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2015). In pointing these studies out, I am not asserting that studying identity formation is wrong, nor am I arguing these studies don't consider tensions and conflict. Instead, my point is that the focus on collective identity formation sidelines the marginalized histories of those abjected by identity formation.

Intersectionality and Corporeality: Balancing Difference with Collectivity

A protest-focused voice remains present at many Pride events, however, increasingly the focus by many organizers is representing LGBTQ identity as part of the broader cultural landscape. The director of Denver's Pridefest recently explained:

As we gain full equality, LGBT will be a culture, like being Jewish, or like going to the Scottish festival ... So there will be a lot of changes in Pride across the country. If you look at a Greek Festival, it's not just Greeks that go there. If you look at St. Patrick's Day, it's not just the Irish that go there. So, our goal is also to try to make our festival just friendly for the community to come to.⁶⁹

In fact, in many cities Pride has become similar in size if not bigger than St. Patrick's Day parades. All of this reflects a cultural environment where national understanding of LGBTQ issues have not only gone mainstream but have become a celebrated part of American culture. As Pride festivals celebrate finding a footing in dominant culture by interacting with corporate entities, rarely is there consideration by those who run these organizations about how the entities that produce dominant culture engage in economic injustice amongst members of their own community at the axes of race, class, and gender. The fact is that a majority of those planning Pride events are white gays and lesbians, who often fail to recognize choices they make in planning Pride events may sideline or actively marginalize those who are not a part of American mainstream culture. Leading to organizing boards where members do not critically consider how police actively target people of color and represent symbols of violence and danger rather than safety and protection for many in the community, or how corporations such as Wells Fargo are involved in exploiting vulnerable members of the community. In the contemporary moment, many queer and trans people are facing exceptionally precarious issues, such as homelessness, job insecurity, and inadequate access to healthcare. Still, at many metropolitan Pride parades, it

⁶⁹ Quoted in Mundy, 51.

is difficult to find organizing committees and other large queer-oriented organizations working to address these issues systematically within the message of the event. Marginalized community members, especially, have a tough time making their voices be centered in people's consciousness due to the stark contrast of large contingents of corporate floats proclaiming LGBTQ identity in relation to the free market and nationalistic displays, which that occupy copious amounts of space at numerous Pride celebrations.

Besides memory, one of the key tools that activists contesting corporate culture use is intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to combat legal precedent that treats gender and race as separate issues, positing instead that identities overlap, influence each other, and cannot be separated.⁷⁰ Since Crenshaw, the concept has developed as a feminist theory of overlapping power, oppression, and privilege, becoming a concept used to highlight the experience of lived identities, sites of marginalization, loci of power, and recognition of structural systems. Intersectionality, therefore, attunes to a multipronged existence by rejecting "single axes" categories that attempt to universalize experience, and instead turns to a "matrix mode of thinking" that encapsulates multiple forms of power.⁷¹ While commonly articulated as a theory of identity, intersectionality is a theory attempting to work through power with a focus on praxis and emancipation.⁷² In short, intersectionality substantially shifts the conceptualization of group identity, political alliance, and relationality by identifying gaps between conceptual goals and actual practices. I utilize intersectionality to describe the critical heuristics of activist rhetoric

⁷⁰ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43 no.6 (1991): 1241–1299.

⁷¹ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

⁷² Vivian May, *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015).

that this project tracks, which refuse erasure or forgetting, disrupt narratives of progress, and trace systematic patterns of precarity. Intersectionality is more than a complexity device, buzzword, varying demographical factors, or a way to highlight oppressive power. Instead, intersectional tactics represent a shifting of political imagination, practices, and interests toward mentalities of anti-subordination, a matrix approach to power, reading against the grain to set aside norm emulation as a political strategy. Through a both/and set of thinking, intersectionality ruptures political hegemonies to embark on a journey of discovering and creating solidarity among selves, bodies, and imaginaries. Part of this discovery is dealing with disparities within and between groups in a coalition or public through considering different relations to power; assemblies are made up of and foster discoveries of coalitional alliance, as bodies discover each other and attempt to work across differences, through the spaces that exist amongst them.

Intersectionality is essential to the resistance of those this project chronicles, as activists contest the flattening of difference a corporatized model of Pride has helped reify. Tactically deploying intersectionality, these activists engage with heterogeneity, enmeshment, and divergence within the collective assembly of Pride and voice concerns about how a singular marketized gay (or even queer) identity fails to capture, voice, and embody larger struggles of race, class, and gender. Centering a marketized gay identity makes it difficult for the struggles of queers of color, undocumented queers, and other subaltern queer experiences to be able to express difference due to the centering of consumer citizens through a marketized space of appearance. Resistant assemblies invert the rhetoric of mainstream gay and lesbian rights organizations by opposing the centering of those that society deems as most respectable in social change campaign rhetoric. Primarily, because these campaigns back a top-down approach to social change, which risks repeatedly masking differences to mobilize against homophobia by

fighting autocracy with cohesion and democratic citizenship. However, such calls to citizenship often create a social movement where the invocation of freedom is built on the exclusion and silence of others, as the political goals of those who are already living respectable lives often do not alleviate the material oppression of others. Instead, the groups in this project follow what Dean Spade refers to as “trickle up social justice,” strategically choosing intersectional struggles marked by exceptional precarity to assemble against a corporatized model of consumer citizenship; instead pursuing intersectionality to make public the adverse material effects of queers at the intersections of race, class, and gender. Spade argues, as do the groups in this project, that engaging in a “‘bottom-up’ mobilization for transformative change rather than top-down empty declarations of equality,” focusing not just on changing minds but improving conditions of livability for the marginalized, will create a better world for all.⁷³ However, to distribute resources requires deconstructing universalist notions of identity and engaging in negotiations over how subjects are materially oppressed in distinctly different ways that matter.

Attention to how hegemonic discourses of identity and resistance circulate within an assembly requires thinking of publics in rhetorical theory as always consisting of bodies, whose meanings are always raced, classed, and gendered.⁷⁴ In this project, a significant tension at play is how to rhetorically address intersectional identities within an assembly, without disavowing the corporeal ties of affective unity that bind bodies together. Intersectionality, while at the core of resisting the erasure of difference and material inequalities, is often not the performative mechanism that builds sustainable ties for resistance, and instead these formations occur through

⁷³ Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 94.

⁷⁴ Lisa Flores, "Between Abundance and Marginalization: The Imperative of Racial Rhetorical Criticism," *Review of Communication* 16, no. 1 (2016): 4-24.

bodies moving together in concert, leading to the alteration and formation of new public spaces. Bodies connected in concert are what collectively *make* an assembly's address *public*. For Elizabeth Grosz, "bodies are not inert; they function interactively and productively. They act and react. They generate what is new, surprising, unpredictable...they are centers of perspective, insight, reflection, desire, and agency."⁷⁵ Grosz proposes scholars examine the inscription, embodiment, and fluidity of the body to better understand how bodies are a site of agency by transforming space in performance and constituting themselves. Thinking with Grosz here, the centering of intersectional struggles is not enough to engage in transformative work, as the corporeal ties of bodies moving together is needed to actualize material change. At contemporary Pride events, we come upon a tension between the performativity of collective life and the need for deconstructive work to create ideological and socioeconomic alternatives.

This is not to advocate for abandonment of intersectionality, but instead that for this project I am interested in the negotiation between centering marginalized perspectives and engaging in the transient corporeal experience of a large public assembly. Throughout this project, I utilize the term corporeality to describe not just the body but the emotions and affects occurring within the body. Parades, festivals, marches, and demonstrations, while rhetorical, are all vehicles for publicity created through a form that is embodied. Marking the corporeality of the assembly is needed for understanding the power of its message as it asks participants to not only experience but create that message through their bodies, which is extraordinarily compelling; as to learn something in the body is to incorporate it into the self, allowing that knowledge to potentially enter a domain of common sense.

⁷⁵ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), xi.

One of the fundamental means of publicity that has been utilized by queer movements is queer corporeal style, demonstrated by the embodied resistance that Pride and queer movements have roots in, whether it be via the act of bodies collectively forming in public to constitute the first Christopher Street Liberation Day, or ACT UP deploying vulnerable bodies, or the masses that form Pride parades throughout the globe, today. Within the public modalities this project chronicles, the body is not just a rhetorical message but is also a building block forming public life, which Michael Warner describes as a “corporeal expressivity” that gives a counterpublic its specific shape and structure that enables it to challenge dominant publics. Queer corporeal bodies present at assemblies within this project, demonstrate how bodies come to signify radical transformations taking place at Pride under the rampant social conditions of corporatization and neoliberal privatization, aiming to reconfigure the lifeworld of this event in a shape that is not corporatized.

What made the first Christopher Street Liberation Day March a scene-changing moment was the queer corporeal body asserting itself into public, unashamed and filled with Pride. Whether in the form of a parade or a march, Pride is built by bodies assembling, gesturing, and moving through space together while simultaneously creating public space. Berlant and Warner echo this sentiment in their essay on queer counterpublics, arguing that the relationalities of queer intimacy challenge heteronormativity and its intertwined private capitalist politics, engaging in a “world-making project, where world, like public, differs from community or group because it necessarily includes more people than can be identified, more spaces than can be mapped beyond a few reference points, modes of feeling that can be learned rather than experienced as birthright.”⁷⁶ However, the felt collectivity that can be learned in these spaces of

⁷⁶ Warner and Berlant, 198.

collectivity does not guarantee that the embodied experience of new modes of feeling will constitute a political strategy that attunes to the material consequences of difference. Thinking about intersectionality in relation to corporeality as a world-making activity is essential because all a march takes is bodies agreeing to move together; meaning that rhetoric is vital for directing the performative power of the assembly, and that subjects could also disregard the work of negotiating difference due to the collective experience of moving as one.

Overview and Implications

Exploring Pride's fraught relationship to corporatization, assimilation, and resistance, the two substantive chapters of this project take up a historical and a contemporary case study to theorize the different rhetorical and performative functions of assemblies. Assemblies might establish a rhetorical form that favors unity as bodies move together through space and time. Still, the "realness" of this collectivity is always a performance, which means that scholars interested in public assemblies must consider the numerous factors that influence this performance. My first chapter, which provides a historical context of the history of Pride assemblies, disrupts narratives of shared identity and history that typically are referenced in academic work exploring the formation of gay Pride. Instead, in my historical account, I center intercommunity concerns regarding difference at the intersections of race, class, and gender to theorize more than just identity as influencing performances of collectivity, and that multiple factions have always marched in Pride assemblies. In tracing the resistance efforts that emerge in response to corporate culture, I connect how other social movement struggles interact with and have influenced the development of alternative modes of Pride based on a broader politics of alliance. A primary argument I forward in this chapter is that corporatization inhibits critical consideration of difference across queer identities while actively erasing difference within

contexts of exploitive powers and systems, which might be a location of solidarity. Moving away from just identity as the tie that enables assemblies to perform collectivity involves thinking about how assemblies engage in a variety of rhetorical functions that make different actions public; Pride marches, parades, and festivals have been a site of cultural protest, identity construction, coalitional activity, and hedonistic partying. Chapter Two focuses on the embodied experience of these contrasting functions by considering the three modes of public engagement that Queerbomb, a DIY Pride in Austin Texas conducts in its annual assembly. I consider how Queerbomb's rally, march, and party modalities index each other in the creation of public culture and how these modal ties are counter to Austin Pride's modes of engaging and building collectivity. Queerbomb, of course, is not perfect; therefore, I investigate the moments in which bodies can and do connect across difference to question corporate modes of organizing and, also moments where such connections are interrupted, inevitably falling into similar pitfalls of Pride celebrations built around corporate culture.

This project examines the possibilities and limitations of assemblies by engaging with the transformative power past Pride assemblies have had while simultaneously engaging with how corporatization limits what this power can transform. Assemblies are rhetorically powerful not only because of words but because of the performative power of the people within. As the bodies connect, the speech acts that unfold from there can articulate and reinforce something that is already in progress: an ethic of solidarity. However, it would be naive to argue that masses of bodies coming together alone move social, political, and affective structures in the same way. Interventions are needed in articulating and making plain that assemblies often change modes of public engagement, and that scholars writing about their transformative power must consider how particular modes of publicity amplify or limit transformative social change; along with

specifying what register of human experience is changed through the assembly. Through engaging in theorizing the assembly and the tensions within it, we might come to understand new modes of moving together.

Chapter One: Stonewall Was A Riot, But What Is Pride?

“Are you choking on the vomit of a consumerist ‘gay pride?’—Darling Spit that shit out—GAY SHAME is the answer!” proclaimed a 2002 flyer for the activist group Gay Shame.⁷⁷ Protesting Budweiser’s sponsorship of the San Francisco Pride parade, Gay Shame distributed the flyer to onlookers while demanding that Pride organizers “Vomit Out Budweiser and the Selling of Queer Identities.”⁷⁸ Located in New York and San Francisco in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Gay Shame became famous for asserting that Gay Pride had become a symbol of an assimilationist, neoliberal, corporate gay movement.⁷⁹ The group’s manifesto framed themselves as exposing “the evildoers who use the sham of gay ‘pride’ as a cover-up for their greed and misdeeds,” insisting that they were fighting a “rabid assimilationist monster of corporate gay ‘pride.’”⁸⁰ David Halperin and Valerie Traub contextualize that Gay Shame was based on a willing embrace and solidarity with

queers whose identities or social markings make them feel out of place in gay Pride’s official ceremonies: people with the ‘wrong’ bodies, sadomasochists, sex workers, drag queens, butch dykes, people of color, boy-lovers, bisexuals, immigrants, the poor, the disabled. These are the queers that mainstream gay pride is not always proud of, who don’t lend themselves easily to the propagandistic publicity of gay pride or its identity-affirming functions.⁸¹

In other words, Gay Shame sought not only to label and represent a new queer activism that addressed “issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality” absent at Pride celebrations, but also

⁷⁷ Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore, *That’s Revolting: Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation*, revised ed. (Brooklyn: Soft Skull Press, 2008), 271.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 274.

⁷⁹ David Halperin and Valerie Traub, *Gay Shame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

⁸⁰ Quoted in Sender, 233-234.

⁸¹ Halperin and Valerie Traub, 9.

expose how the commercialization of Pride further inhibited the expression of those at these intersections.⁸²

Directly confronting Pride organizers about how their choices harmed members of the community without resources or power, organizers in San Francisco held what they called the Gay Shame Awards, an event that turned the rituals and logics of Gay Pride upon their head. The submission call for the awards asked for names of those who had “traded in their movements radical roots ‘for a place at the table.’”⁸³ During the awards, Shame activists wore carnivalesque outfits made of Abercrombie and Finch shopping bags, handed out shame buttons, burned Rainbow flags, and bestowed awards for categories such as: "Exploiting Our Youth, Helping Right-Wingers Cope, Making More Queers Homeless, Best Target Marketing, Best Gender Fundamentalism, Best Racist-Ass White Only Space, and the ‘In’ Award (Celebrities Who Should Have Never Come Out of the Closet)." All of which were awarded with the purpose of disavowing winners as turncoats to “the origins of gay liberation and Stonewall.”⁸⁴

Gay Shame’s framing of shame award winners as opposed to the roots of gay liberation is reflective of a more significant contemporary trend, one that calls upon the ideological and affective power of history to critique corporate involvement at Pride. For example, the manifesto of the contemporary group No Justice No Pride explains their “resistance is an effort to return pride to its roots as a direct response to state violence, led by visionary, transgender women of color.”⁸⁵ Ciora Thomas, organizer of Pittsburg’s Roots Pride, an event that doesn’t utilize corporate sponsors, defended the event from detractors this summer by arguing that “Pride has

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Gay Shame San Francisco, “About,” www.gayshamesanfrancisco.com/about.

⁸⁴ Bernstein Sycamore, 271.

⁸⁵ No Justice-No Pride, “Calling Pride Back to Its Roots,” accessed October 3, 2017, <http://nojusticenopride.org/>.

historically been about resisting. It's about bringing visibility to a marginalized community. That's the history of Pride. We are trying to carry on that legacy."⁸⁶ Annually at Queerbomb, a DIY Pride in Austin, speakers argue that those at Stonewall didn't care about what "the world wanted them to think," as "forty-one years ago, when the Stonewall riots lit up the Lower East Side of Manhattan, no one apologized to their board of trustees afterward."⁸⁷ Continually rhetors at the event invoke the birth of Pride as transgressive, with grassroots Pride events embodying these transgressive principles. With the rise of corporate organizing at Pride, those who resist material changes to the event's organizing structure tether Stonewall and the first Gay Liberation Day Marches to the demands of their world-making projects, calling upon the past to create a resistant collective by using memory as a resource.

In the summer of 2017, many also invoked Pride's origins to criticize those who had disrupted Pride events in the name of gay liberation. Gay activist Richard J. Rosendall responded to criticism of corporate involvement at Pride by asserting "corporate sponsors must be welcome at pride" because they "are part of a multi-generational struggle, and denigrating them in our celebrations dishonors those who brought us this far."⁸⁸ Echoing this statement, national president of the Log Cabin Republicans, Gregory Angelo wrote: "our ancestors at Stonewall quite literally put their lives on the line fighting for a world where the retailers of mainstream

⁸⁶ Kristina Marusic, "This City Sold The Naming Rights To Its Pride Parade To A Corporation—And People Are Pissed," *New Now Next*, May 23, 2017, <http://www.newnownext.com/this-city-sold-the-naming-rights-to-its-pride-parade-to-a-corporate-sponsor-and-people-are-pissed/05/2017/>.

⁸⁷ Silky Shoemaker, "Who we are and what we love." *The Austin Chronicle*, June 11, 2010, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/features/2010-06-11/1040127/>.

⁸⁸ Richard Rosendall, "Police, corporate sponsors must be welcome at Pride," *Washington Blade*, May 3, 2017, <http://www.washingtonblade.com/2017/05/03/no-justice-no-pride-critique/>.

America could proudly fly the rainbow flag...without corporate America and capitalism, our nation's move toward full LGBT equality would be neither as fast nor as fulsome."⁸⁹

This polysemy around gay liberation can be linked to the progressive telos of Stonewall, whose mythic genealogy and continued stickiness is connected to Pride marches themselves. For Elizabeth Armstrong, Pride parades were essential in the formation of collective gay identity, as “the parade, through its very structure conveyed the message of unity through diversity,” functioning as a “glue holding the project [of gay identity] together.”⁹⁰ Armstrong argues through this glue “real political differences were finessed” by the structured form of the parade, which created “the vision of a unified but diverse movement.”⁹¹ Similarly, Martin Duberman describes the first Christopher Street Liberation Day March as a “euphoric...unimaginable coming together,” a “testimony to a difficult past surmounted and a potentially better future in view.”⁹² Katherine McFarland Bruce argues while “diversity made community a challenge,” in the contemporary moment Pride “has ultimately united” differences across “barriers of demography, culture, and diversity.”⁹³ The embodied form of parades, marches, and other types of assembly indeed create an appearance and feeling of unity, as people with different viewpoints walking together perform collectivity.

Reflecting on Gay Shame's disavowal of Pride, gay liberation activist Tommi Avicelli Mecca pleaded for older activists not to write off Gay Shame, even though their message “may be a hard pill to swallow;” as Gay Shame symbolized a “younger generation's disgust with an

⁸⁹ Gregory Angelo, “Sorry, but corporate backing for Pride is just another sign of success,” *New York Post*, June 23, 2017. <https://nypost.com/2017/06/23/sorry-but-corporate-backing-for-pride-is-just-another-sign-of-success/>.

⁹⁰ Elizabeth Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality In San Francisco, 1950-1994* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 98.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁹² Martin Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York, Penguin Books, 1993), 280.

⁹³ McFarland Bruce, 207.

over-commercialized pride celebration more concerned about corporate sponsorships, celebrity grand marshals, and consumerism than they are about the radicalism that gave birth to our post-Stonewall gay-liberation movement.” Mecca continued, meriting that the concerns of “these young Shame activists” represented a deeper ideological divide in the community, as the questions Gay Shame asks have been “asked *before*, but they've gone *unaddressed*, and that's the real *shame*.”⁹⁴ Building on Mecca’s statement about Gay Shame’s connection to gay liberation, this chapter intervenes by demonstrating how using public memories to strategically engage in counterpublic action risks not just forestalling tactical critique concerning queer disconnects of the past, which hold matter and meaning, but also reifies queer fictions currently preventing the building of a monstrous queer coalition.

Following the queer turn toward memory, Thomas Dunn has argued using memory as a strategy allows counterpublics a new way “of challenging conservative worldviews not through tactical critique, but through strategic production.”⁹⁵ While recognizing the value of what Dunn refers to as “queer counterpublic memory” in contesting conservative and problematic memory practices, calling upon the past strategically contains the possibility of continuing problematic practices in the contemporary moment.⁹⁶ Especially, since “public memory” is most often invoked as a means of narrating a “common identity,” and therefore strategically using memory risks reifying fictions within identity that prevent critical engagement with difference.⁹⁷ Scott Bravmann reminds scholars that queer identity contains numerous “antagonisms ‘within’ that

⁹⁴Tommi Avicolti Mecca, “Gay Shame,” *Alternet*, June 6, 2002, https://www.alternet.org/story/13327/gay_shame.

⁹⁵ Dunn, 638.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 616.

⁹⁷ Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian Ott, “Introduction: Rhetoric/Memory/Place,” in *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, eds. Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian L. Ott, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 7.

identity" along the lines of race, class, and gender, and that the "queer past" is full of "fictions" concerning how this identity has been symbolically represented, fictions that impact identity formation and politics in the contemporary moment.⁹⁸ While calling upon the past might contest conservative memory practices, queer counterpublic memory also contains the possibility of reifying questionable memory practices by not mediating lessons of the coalitional successes and failures of the past. Instead, recreating the same fictions that are at play in creating problematic practices at Pride, and therefore these fictions need to be addressed within resistance efforts contesting corporate modes of organizing Pride.

Contrary to contemporary public memory, gay liberation activists were torn between a politics of identity that articulated a positive public affirmation of gay identity and a politics of social redistribution focused on radical economic and political restructuring of American society. For nearly the last fifty years, Pride events have never been a singular counterpublic but instead have always contained multiple factions that formed Pride's public culture, with underlying contestation amongst these factions concerning rhetorical, embodied, and economic practices and modes of public engagement. Today, divides around these factions remain present and continue to be a specter that haunts LGBTQ organizing and Pride celebrations. While in the contemporary moment corporate culture is a barrier hindering those at the margins of Pride from confronting exploitive contexts by actively excluding those unable to embody the subject position of consumer citizen, this erasure is connected to the emblematic unification narrative around Pride. Together, corporatization along with this historical narrative inhibit the ability of marchers to voice critical questions necessary for achieving a solidarity constructed around difference.

⁹⁸ Bravemann, 5

To demonstrate this argument, I focus on representation of past tensions at Pride in contemporary discourse in contrast to their rich histories. Proving while memories are a valuable strategic resource for resisting corporate Pride, they also risk furthering queer fictions of the past, inadvertently stifling the lines of solidarity queerness can generate around mutuality, accountability, and difference by calling up shared historical identity rather than engaging in the process of critical coalition building. In what follows, I recreate the early Christopher Street Liberation Day Marches as a contested site of meaning amongst its participants to examine tensions present in the assembly, considering how these early tensions have been pedagogically performed in memory work. Second, I discuss various contextual factors throughout the 70s and 80s that led multiple factions at Pride to fuse together to create a counterpublic challenging the heteronormative culture and routines of dominant publics, noting with the passage of time tensions amongst queer groups have both waned and regrouped. At the end of the 80's, though, a narrative of Post-Stonewall outlaws emerged that forgot these coalitional interactions. Third, I examine how altering the material conditions of Pride events through commercialization not only blurs distinctions between private and public, but simultaneously splits factions of the queer community and sutures over tensions amongst them; leading to the formation of new queer modalities concerned with redistributive politics, that disrupt Pride events to reveal and make public bodies, issues, and politics no longer able to access the space of mainstream Pride events. I conclude by arguing while the formation of grassroots spaces helps challenge movement hegemony, the counterpublic memories put forth by resistance modalities risk engaging in calls to history that do not address queer fictions of the past, but instead continue these fictions persistence. If activists hope to create an assembly that destabilizes the problematic effects of a

corporatized Pride, neoliberalism is not the only exigency that needs addressed, but also how solidarity has been stifled in the past.

An Emblematic Moment: Specters In The Shadow Of Stonewall

New York City, June 28, 1970. “Scared to death” at 2:15 P.M. on a Sunday afternoon, marchers proceeded up the far-left lane of 6th Avenue in the first ever Christopher Street Liberation Day March.⁹⁹ Starting late, since many waited on the sidelines because of fear, the march quickly swelled from a few hundred to over two-thousand bodies.¹⁰⁰ Those joining were greeted by the message:

Welcome to the first-anniversary celebration of the Gay Liberation movement. We are united today to affirm our pride, our lifestyle, and our commitment to each other. Despite political and social differences, we may have, we are united on this common ground: For the first time in history, we are together as The Homosexual Community.¹⁰¹

While this statement gestured to a unified bloq, the assembly was made up of multiple groups who were not unified. March organizer, Craig Rodwell faced enormous difficulty planning the event as “ideology tended to derail the work at hand.”¹⁰² Divisions between the two most prominent organizations Gay Liberation Front and Gay Activists Alliance “over the shape of the event was fierce.”¹⁰³ Gay Activists Alliance wanted the demonstration, “to make homosexuals aware of the need to exercise political power and to confront politicians and public officials with evidence of the gay voting bloq. Instead of a picnic in the park, they wanted a program of speeches by political leaders and politicians.”¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile, Rodwell wanted to affirm “liberated

⁹⁹ Martin Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York, Penguin Books, 1993), 278.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 277.

¹⁰¹ Toby Marotta, *The Politics of Homosexuality* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 167.

¹⁰² David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked The Gay Revolution* (New York, St. Martin’s Griffin, 2004), 247.

¹⁰³ Armstrong, 107.

¹⁰⁴ Marotta, 164.

gay lifestyles” and celebrate “the gay community” with a picnic at the end of the march.¹⁰⁵ While these perspectives clashed, they shared consensus over the idea of all gay institutions, including gay bars participating in the commemoration, as “every institution associated with the gay should be encouraged to participate and that most of the homosexuals who had to be politicized enjoyed bars.”¹⁰⁶

In contrast, Gay Liberation Front opposed the participation of any business, due to their understanding of gay oppression being linked to the struggles of other groups exploited by capitalism.¹⁰⁷ Influenced by the New Left, a coalition of movements “committed to a radical form of Democracy” tethered together through an ethos of “power to the people,” GLF saw themselves as part of a much larger movement aimed at transforming the American political system and economy.¹⁰⁸ Due to this, GLF’s view of oppression as multifaceted and connected to capitalism led them to link Stonewall to anti-capitalist struggle as the mob profited from the criminalized economy of gay bars, guaranteeing a significant consumer constituency dependent on the mafia to find community and intimacy. Further, this criminalized economy benefited a corrupt police force who profited from mob payoffs and blackmailing members of the gay community. The economic exploitation of the gay community through criminalization of homosexuality and gender deviance was a crucial factor in the spark that ignited the Stonewall Riots, which GLF keenly remembered. Ending gay oppression for GLF would require “the militancy generated by the bar bust and by increasing pig harassment to a program that allows homosexuals and sexually liberated persons to confront themselves and society,” which could be

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 168.

¹⁰⁷ Carter, 220.

¹⁰⁸ Van Goose, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretative History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 2.

achieved by stopping the "money-making machine," being "out of the closet," and creating a "experimental living commune" that challenged "existing social institutions."¹⁰⁹ While GLF and GAA shared a goal of getting organized crime out of gay bars, they disagreed about the role of capitalism in gay oppression and whether gay businesses should be allowed to participate in their new symbol of liberation. So, while the sign "GAY PROHIBITION CORRUPT\$ COPS\$ AND FEED\$ MAFIA" appeared at the inaugural Christopher Street Liberation Day, there was disagreement about the role of capitalism in this process.¹¹⁰

Conflict over capitalism vs. anti-capitalist approaches reflected disagreements over how to best embody a transition in movement consciousness through the formation of the upcoming march. While the dispute remained unsettled, these groups shared an interest in forming a public modality that proclaimed a liberated gay identity, and in doing so helped transition gay life from the context of a closet economy to a liberation economy. Within a closet economy the primary material practices that queer life was organized around included "bars, baths, adult bookstores, and heavily coded mail order services" that operated on the margins of legality within criminalized economies.¹¹¹ Stonewall helped initiate a socio-economic shift to a liberation economy that was already in progress, as activists and community members began to assert the right to open their own bars, baths, consumer services, along with a series of new political organizations that were liberated by gaining a semi-legal status with state institutions. While successful for several reasons relating to recent homophile legal wins, this process was made possible through the proclamation of gay identity. That is, the question of capitalism's place in

¹⁰⁹Ron Ballard, Michael Brown, and Louis Hart, "Gay Revolution Comes Out," *Rat*, August 12, 1969.

¹¹⁰ Fred McDarrah, *Gay Pride: Photographs from Stonewall to Today* (Chicago: a cappella books, 1994), vi.

¹¹¹ Jeffery Escoffier, "The Political Economy of the Closet: Notes toward an Economic History of Gay and Lesbian Life before Stonewall," In *Homo Economics: Capitalism, Community, and Lesbian and Gay Life*, eds. Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed (New York: Routledge, 1997), 124.

gay oppression was never uniform and instead activists agreed to work together to rhetorically develop and assert a publicly liberated identity, created in opposition to state policing.

Related to liberated gay identity, a contributing factor to the success of Christopher Street Liberation Day was a shared rejection of the homophile movement's Annual Reminder, which the event was replacing. A forgotten precursor to Pride, the Annual Reminder occurred from 1965 to 1969, during which homophile activists picketed silently in front of Independence Hall in Philadelphia during the 4th of July. Envisioned by Craig Rodwell as a "gay holiday" to remember "that a group of Americans still don't have their basic rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."¹¹² However, the procedure of the demonstration was controlled zealously by Mattachine Society leader Frank Kameny. Picketers were to be dressed in appropriate gendered clothing, men in suits and ties, women in dresses, and were instructed to smile cordially. Kameny notoriously had a reputation for pulling people from the picket-line who didn't meet his expectations of proper attire, and only Kameny could speak to members of the press, to whom he would articulate that American culture did not need to change to house gay and lesbian public life.¹¹³

Possibly feeling emboldened by the energy of Stonewall, just a week later during the Annual Reminder two women broke from the line-up and held each other's hands. In response, Kameny is reported to have become furious and tore the women's hands apart. Craig Rodwell responded with anger, asserting to the press that the uprising at Stonewall a week earlier demonstrated the bankruptcy of contemporary gay leadership, that gays were entitled to do what

¹¹² Duberman, 113.

¹¹³ Ibid., 210.

they wanted in public, and that included holding hands.¹¹⁴ Quickly, the Annual Reminder of 1969 was full of contestation, as recalcitrant homophiles did not see Stonewall as inspiring a departure to a new defiant spirit. Immediately it was apparent to Rodwell "that this would be the final Reminder—that a new day had dawned, which required different tactics, a different format."¹¹⁵ Just because the Annual Reminder needed undoing, it didn't mean that a commemorative event wasn't still required. Thus, only seven days after Stonewall, Rodwell began plans to commemorate Stonewall, an idea that would eventually make Stonewall's memory into an icon.¹¹⁶

At the 1969 Eastern Regional Conference of Homophile Organizations, Rodwell's friends strategically introduced a resolution that proposed this tactical change, reading:

RESOLUTION #1: that the Annual Reminder, in order to be more relevant, reaches a greater number of people, and encompass the ideas and ideals of the larger struggle in which we are engaged—that of our fundamental human rights—be moved both in time and location. We propose that a demonstration be held annually on the last Saturday in June in New York City to commemorate the 1969 spontaneous demonstrations on Christopher Street and this demonstration be called CHRISTOPHER STREET LIBERATION DAY. No dress or age regulations shall be made for this demonstration. We also propose that we contact Homophile organizations throughout the country and suggest that they hold parallel demonstrations on that day. We propose a nationwide show of support.¹¹⁷

While there still was significant disagreement over the proper way Stonewall should be embodied in remembrance, activists from GAA, GLF, and numerous other organizations bracketed these conflicts to collectively reject the limitations of accommodation that had plagued homophile activism.¹¹⁸ While still disagreeing about the role of economic forces in gay

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 211.

¹¹⁷ Marotta, 164-165.

¹¹⁸ While I use the term "plagued" here, I find it necessary to note that I am not denouncing all homophile activism. Organization's such as the Mattachine Society despite their limitations laid essential frameworks that made same-

oppression and what Stonewall meant for the movement, these factions collectively had their consciousness raised about the limitations of an accommodationist approach to social change.¹¹⁹ Both GAA and GLF agreed the time had come to challenge detrimental policies and cultural meanings head-on rather than advocate for the right to privacy, and one effective way of doing this was to appear in public as a collective force.

Photographs of the Christopher Street Liberation Day picture an event of jubilation, where grids of intelligibility suddenly were flipped as collective masses challenged hegemonies within the dominant public sphere concerning homosexuality. Homosexuals were not supposed to assert behavior publicly, so to proudly declare a collective identity was a relatively new phenomenon challenging compulsory heterosexuality. Christopher Street Liberation Day was unique because it marked a shift to mobilizing in mass participatory numbers demonstrating the organizational growth of the movement through the form of an assembly of bodies moving together in concert. Through a tumultuous street politics, these activists didn't rely on dominant media or positive press to get their message out. In contrast, photos of the Annual Reminder show only a few picketers rather than a massive assembly, who instead of celebrating are disciplined and solemn in expression, which while questioning heterosexual dominance lacked a questioning of society at large within their decorum, dress, and signage petitioning the state; all of which engaged in a rational style of argumentation. While the Annual Reminder aimed for good press, Christopher Street Liberation Day discursively worked to shatter worldviews and

gender attraction a salient possibility, which would form a base assumption that gay liberation organized around. Further, homophile organizing was full of different parties of thought and continually changed formation over its tenure.

¹¹⁹ I use the term accommodationist instead of assimilationist in an effort reflect the language of activists at the time, who used this term to describe and criticize homophile politics.

transform conditions of possibility by opening spaces for thinking and enacting sexuality differently.

In Los Angeles, tensions similar to the feud between GLF and GAA were dealt with at “Christopher Street West: A Freedom Revival in Lavender.”¹²⁰ When the time came, flags and banners floated in the wind on a chilly sunlit afternoon as hundreds of bodies assembled onto Hollywood Boulevard, eventually leading to “vice cops” chasing “screaming fairies.”¹²¹ Starting at the intersection of Hollywood Boulevard and Highland Avenue, the inaugural—of what would later be known as LA Pride—was held, overcoming at the last minute a series of legal challenges.¹²² While the LAPD would grant a permit, they only would do so if a 1.5 million dollar bond was put forward and organizers paid for police protection.¹²³ Luckily, a judge found the bond excessive, asserting that organizers could march without having to put forward a bond or pay the police. Conflict emerged, once again, over the role of gay bars at the event, but debates over the expression of sexuality were more prominent in Los Angeles after a man, dressed as a crucified Jesus, appeared at the event next to a giant Vaseline jar.¹²⁴ Although often forgotten about in historical accounts and not as rigorously covered, a much smaller contingent of activists in Chicago also assembled to march on that last Sunday of June, asserting a more anti-capitalist message than the other sister marches.¹²⁵ Occupying Chicago's Civic Center Plaza the following year, demonstrators asserted they were showing “the world that gay people protest

¹²⁰ McFarland Bruce, 48.

¹²¹ “1,200 Parade in Hollywood; Crowds Line Boulevard,” *The Advocate*, June 22, 1970, 1.

¹²² McFarland Bruce, 46.

¹²³ Lillian Faderman, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2015), 209.

¹²⁴ “1,200 Parade in Hollywood; Crowds Line Boulevard,” 1.

¹²⁵ Timothy Stewart-Winter, *Queer Clout: Chicago and the Rise of Gay Politics* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 100.

job discrimination, housing discrimination, and all other unequal treatment!”¹²⁶ Signs promoting the event urged participants to have a “kiss-in” in full view of a variety of Chicago bureaucrats offices, as doing so would “Bring Gay Liberation to the Office Workers!”¹²⁷

In combination with New York City’s commemoration of the Stonewall Riots, these modalities constituted a call for creating a communal identity with Stonewall as a genealogical centerpiece to celebrate this identity’s public liberation. However, slight differences existed already in the rituals of the event as the Freedom Revival was described by many as taking on the commemorative ritual of a parade instead of “a militant civil rights march;” while Chicago deemed its demonstration as a protest focused on the economic penalties of police intimidation and worker's rights and not as a direct proclamation of gay identity.¹²⁸ Meaning inside the various public modalities of the Gay Liberation movement there were already tensions within modes of engagement around political goals, inclusion, what activities should be engaged in, and what was the message these bodies were expressing by going public.

In 1974, New York City’s march had its direction reversed: no longer did it move from Christopher Street to Central Park, but instead came from uptown back down to Greenwich Village, gesturing inward to the gay enclave, rather than gesturing out to the city and world at large. Upon seeing the marches double in size, Ed Murphy, a mafioso who worked as a bouncer at the Stonewall, created the Christopher Street Festival Committee, which sold booth space to vendors at the end of the parade route and “succeeded in reversing the march’s direction.”¹²⁹ As

¹²⁶ Stewart-Winter, 102.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ “Hollywood,” *The Advocate*, July 21, 1971; Stewart-Winter, 95-105. Stewart-Winter's work emphasizes that in the case of Chicago the demonstration was much more focused on economic penalties than on the proclamation of gay identity.

¹²⁹ Carter, 252.

historian David Carter notes, “Murphy manipulated matters so that the march started uptown and went down to the village, so that he and his cronies could once again make money off the gay populace as they drank in the bars and ate food at the festival.”¹³⁰ Over the years as Stonewall became an icon, Murphy would participate in the annual marches calling himself “the first Stonewaller,” “Mayor of Christopher Street,” and taking credit for starting the riots.

Interestingly, the anti-mafia part of the Stonewall story is virtually unknown in many popular narratives of Stonewall in the LGBTQ community—a sign of the complicated ways that certain aspects of the Stonewall story are remembered, and others forgotten. The mafia did not only contribute to sparking Stonewall but also influenced its recollection, as their venture in profiting off its commemoration was a precursor for changes to come in the embodied memory of Stonewall. To this day, Murphy's rerouting remains as the present trajectory of New York Pride. No longer did the march form a modality that revolutionarily moved into the world, but instead went back into its enclave, marking the beginnings of the commemorative ritual interacting within a territorialized economy—a period beginning in the mid-70s where gay life was organized around the development of enclaved gay business neighborhoods.¹³¹

Despite the fact, early movement infighting operated as a cultural carrier, fashioning an assemblage of symbolic action largely influenced by logistical decisions, conflict around these decisions is absent from public memory. At Pride events it is rare to find critical considerations of the past within cultural performances, leaving disputes around capitalism's place in queer oppression, public embodiments of gender and sexuality, and the mafia's role in changing the organizing structure of the event unexamined within contemporary publics. Of course, detailed

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Escoffier, 124.

historiographies of queer life have never been available for public consumption, as queer memory practices are exceptionally fraught, due to institutional archives refusing to perform queer memory rhetorically by not considering the possibility of figures or publics being queer while actively avoiding creating accessible visions of known queer pasts. Because of this absence, queer history and queer memory are not taught or transmitted through institutional and public spaces such as the classroom.¹³² Therefore, both queer history and public memory have been deployed primarily through repertoire performances such as parades and marches, sites of memory that have given Stonewall an emblematic quality. Pride is thus inadvertently placed as a site of unity, due to the appearance of a collective walking in unison. Elizabeth Armstrong and Suzanna Cragge have documented that Stonewall is remembered because it was the first riot to be commemorable and have the mnemonic capacity of a national movement to circulate the memory of the event. They explain, “the claim that Stonewall ‘sparked’ gay liberation was a movement construction... initiated by gay liberation activists and used to encourage further growth. The Stonewall story is thus better viewed as an achievement of gay liberation rather than as a literal account of its origins.”¹³³ Stonewall, due to its connection with early parades and marches, is an icon with extreme rhetorical power, but it is extremely contested because the cultural work of Pride assemblies circulated its memory through embodied means. Likely the event would be less contested if its iconicity hadn’t been created through the parades, marches, and processions that carried the story to strategically generate publicity nationwide through bodies moving together in concert. Caitlin Bruce’s work has demonstrated that broad circulation of an icon through embodied means, entails a “flattening of meaning and context” as the origins

¹³² Charles E. Morris III, "Sunder the Children: Abraham Lincoln's Queer Rhetorical Pedagogy," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 4 (2013): 395-422.

¹³³ Armstrong and Cragge, 746.

of an icon are rendered to “background status” in contrast to embodied experience.¹³⁴

Commemoration, while remembering also always involves elements of forgetting as not every aspect of a story can be mediated to publics at large; especially, when creating an icon.

Beyond Pride events, the most utilized institutional resources for understanding the birth of gay liberation, David Carter and Martin Duberman’s books, both entitled *Stonewall*, further contribute to this problem. Despite an effort by both to tackle cultural myth and evoke “the decades preceding Stonewall... not as some neolithic wasteland,” and to strive for “multiplicity” in understanding how “various strands eventually came together to create this turning point for the gay and lesbian rights movement,” both authors’ decision to end their books how and where they do forecloses the possibility of understanding Pride outside this narrative.¹³⁵ Duberman closes the narrative of his six subjects, by writing “they had all somehow come through, had managed to arrive at this unimaginable coming together, this testimony to a difficult past surmounted and a potentially better future in view.”¹³⁶ Carter writes in his conclusion a similar vision, asserting “it was a departure point for gays like the Bastille was for the French people...it is now a worldwide movement that has won many significant victories, most of them flowing from those six days in the summer of 1969 when gay people found the courage to stand up for themselves on the streets of Greenwich Village.”¹³⁷ Here, the public culture of these first marches is reduced to a single public entity whose historic emergence forestalls an integration with tensions present within the newly formed public ritual.

¹³⁴ Caitlin Bruce, “The Balaclava as Affect Generator: Free Pussy Riot Protests and Transnational Iconicity,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (2014), 55.

¹³⁵ Duberman, xv; Carter 2.

¹³⁶ Duberman, 246.

¹³⁷ Carter, 266.

Both authors, by choosing to focus on the commemorative march in New York City, enable a forgetting of exploitive contexts and intercommunity differences. An alternative framing of gay liberation's birth reveals not a story of unity, but rather the loss of unity within Pride celebrations. In Duberman's narrative, Sylvia Rivera recollects that she believed Stonewall would establish "unity for the rest of our lives."¹³⁸ However, in 1973 Rivera would famously quit the gay movement after trans exclusionary radical lesbians refused to let her speak at a CSLD event, during which she gave a speech lamenting the "white middle class club" of gay liberation while gay men booed her for advocating for the needs of her community.¹³⁹ Similarly, Carter debunks the myth that Stonewall was sparked by the death of Judy Garland, yet does not question a cultural narrative of unification despite engaging in chronicling early movement disputes. This is a testament to how the genealogical mythos around Pride and Stonewall remains unquestioned by those chronicling it for public memory. Leaving tensions between *identity* and *redistribution* unquestioned by refusing to consider that the festive occasions of triumph celebrating community unity have an illusory quality, and that divisions between white and Third World activists remained in constant tension within the movement. Instead, most popular narratives, even those critiquing problematic practices and erasures, frame the story in terms of unity, equality, and revolution, leaving the logistics of Pride widely unaddressed.

In the recently published children's book *Pride: Celebrating Diversity and Community*, author, Robin Stevenson, engages in a similar practice to Carter and Duberman. While briefly acknowledging early concerns amongst activists concerning cis-gender male voices

¹³⁸ Duberman, 246.

¹³⁹ Susan Stryker, *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution* Second ed. (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2017), 110.

marginalizing queer people of color and women, the children's book still engages in writing a narrative that frames the movement as unified and radical. After describing issues of race and gender within a single paragraph, Stevenson then writes that post-Stonewall activists

saw connections between different forms of oppression, and they wanted to take action to make the world a better place for everyone...Pride has had some growing pains, but the central values of diversity, equality, and freedom have been a strong thread guiding the community through the decades of change.¹⁴⁰

While recognizing early disputes, turning back to the predominant narrative of Pride as an event of public unity makes the recognition of these disputes merely an add on to the story. Allowing the narrative of public assemblies circulating through urban downtowns across the nation where the silence that had engulfed lives was broken, to remain dominant. Thus, failing to publicly transmit a narrative about how these assemblies contained multiple, some assimilationist and some radical groups who worked, in tension, together.

These accounts reveal some of the primary ways the memory of early Gay Liberation groups have been circulated, and that these narratives struggle to narrate the complex ways various factions negotiated coalitional politics due to their emphasis on the moments monumentality. Failing to locate precisely how coalitional success came about in a moment that many described as an “unimaginable coming together;” while also simultaneously failing to note the short-lived nature of this new political horizon. Beyond failing to narrate these coalitional struggles, the means through how most people learn about Pride events is not from these textual resources but Pride events themselves, through which participants come to understand the story primarily through their bodies marching in a parade. Hence, memory of Stonewall has been mediated primarily through embodied means, which while powerful, the collective common

¹⁴⁰ Robin Stevenson, *Pride: Celebrating Diversity & Community* (Victoria: Orca Book Publishers, 2016), 18-21.

sense this mediation constructs engagement that lacks knowledge of the coalitional possibilities and struggles contained within early Liberation Marches. Because post-Stonewall LGBTQ movements have been organized around a progressive teleological claim of coming out and pursuing liberation, the story of Pride events struggle to be framed in any other terms. Within this logic, various institutions and grassroots movements claim Stonewall's legacy for themselves, due to the story's sense of stability, resolution, and closure, which while effective in inviting evocative responses, erases and masks crucial differences, dissolutions, and ruptures amongst LGBTQ communities of the past.

Unresolved Tensions: Creating a National Pride Movement and Post-Stonewall Outlaws

While the organizational and rhetorical strategies of early Christopher Street Liberation marches were highly contested by movement factions of “gay pride,” “gay power,” and “gay rights”—all of whom radically disagreed about social change strategies—by the mid-1970s these tensions had cooled for several reasons.¹⁴¹ First, with the fall of the New Left, gay power, which focused on revolutionary struggle, lost its influence in the movement. Focus on redistribution is essential for considering the stakes that caused contestation in gay politics, as those at the intersections of race, class, and gender were more likely to rely upon a politics focused on redistribution of resources than the construction of a new identity. Stonewall, its aftermath, and the first Liberation March occurred in a much larger socio-political context where strands of radical social movement work in the United States were flourishing; helping to inspire a nationwide grassroots movement due to previous successes. However, historian John D’Emilio explains that due to the downfall of the New Left:

¹⁴¹ Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*, 85, 107.

The belief that a revolution was imminent, and that gays and lesbians should get on board was fast losing whatever momentary plausibility it had. By the early 1970s, the nation was entering a long period of political conservatism and economic retrenchment. With every new proclamation of revolutionary intentions, radicals compromised their credibility.¹⁴²

Within this context, radical gay liberation went on retreat, ceasing to be a leading edge of a movement that had already begun to prioritize the creation of identity over redistribution, and by the mid-1970s, both GAA and GLF began to lose momentum in shaping the movement.

Second, focus increasingly was on growing the event to ensure that its commemoration spread the construction of a collective gay identity, which would help mobilize the movement on a national scale. Boston joined in organizing a march in 1971, while San Francisco had its first Gay Freedom Day in 1972. However, it wasn't until the rise of Anita Bryant's rampant crusade against the community in 1976 that many cities had their first commemorative event. Third, as the event became institutionalized leaders assumed more control over messages and organizational tactics, leading forums for planning to become increasingly homogenized.¹⁴³ In contrast to both these claims, is Elizabeth Armstrong's argument that since the commemorations "took the form of a 'pride parade' there has been little debate within the community about the assumptions underlying the event."¹⁴⁴ While Armstrong acknowledges conflict has existed over "the parade," such "conflicts have not been about whether the parade should exist or whether the event should be a political demonstration."¹⁴⁵ Armstrong, while adequately noting that many

¹⁴² John D'Emilio, *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 245.

¹⁴³ D'Emilio asserts that this change in organizational structure was not necessarily anti-democratic but necessary. As planning meetings were usually chaotic, making it structurally impossible to get things done. While tension was still present between multiple factions, dissenting participants often lost access to formal channels of communication and become difficult to locate in archival documents. Numerous Stonewall Commemoration organizers increasingly used theme's such as "unity through diversity," indicating fractures still were present from liberation ideology, and therefore, there were likely vernacular disagreements over movement consciousness that the event's rhetoric aimed to soothe.

¹⁴⁴ Armstrong, 109.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

have engaged in a collective forgetting of the radical demonstration the event once was, asserts "even those who think the parade should be more political rarely suggest that the parade be transformed into a demonstration."¹⁴⁶ Missing from Armstrong's narrative, though, is a consideration about how the rise of enclaved gay communities and a flourishing territorialized economy impacted how the community defined itself.

Before the mid-1970s carefully coded bars and shops had catered to the community, but now an evident and coded gay male customer base had emerged. Many of these customers engaged in daily practices of consumption attached to their identity, birthing what many activists soon complained about as the "gay clone," a sculpted muscular man who cared more about clothes and bars than politics.¹⁴⁷ In this context, a more extensive community was forming that needed organizations to publicly represent them, leading to the growth of The National Gay Task Force, Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, and the *Advocate* becoming a widely circulated newspaper. Those in charge of these institutions tended to sit in positions of privilege and began to sever themselves from groups they deemed as counterproductive or fringe. *Advocate* editor, Richard Mitch labeled gay radicals at Stonewall commemorations "destroyers," who were sabotaging "mature, responsible, talented experts with widespread financial backing."¹⁴⁸ As the territorialized economy took shape through gay meccas such as the Castro, and Stonewall became an increasingly abstract icon associated with the event, Stonewall Commemorations which were commonly called Christopher Street Liberation Day or Gay

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. While Armstrong's account of gay identity formation is imperative, a focus on unity at the "parade" fails to consider two important contextual factors in this appearance: the role of an enclaved community and the impact of conservative backlash.

¹⁴⁷ Gregg Blachford, "Male Dominance and the Gay World," in *The Making of the Modern Homosexual*, ed. Kenneth Plummer (London, Hutchinson Radius, 1981), 208.

¹⁴⁸ Richard Mitch, "The Destroyers Strike!," *The Advocate*, February 28, 1973, 36.

Freedom Parades increasingly took on the label of Pride, with Chicago and New York changing their name to Pride in 1978, while others, such as San Francisco, held out and didn't change their name until 1994.¹⁴⁹

Further, there were moments of controversy around Pride in the late 70s due to the conservative backlash of Anita Bryant's "Save the Children Campaign." While infighting occurred at Seattle's first Liberation Day March, other cities used the threat of Bryant as a reason to unify and set aside past disagreements about their marches. While decorum and displays of public sexuality previously had been a location of conflict, an attempt to curb "the licentiousness of the event" by San Francisco's Freedom Day Committee in 1977 was almost "universally celebrated" by many factions of the community.¹⁵⁰ The *Bay Area Reporter* described a new consciousness arising from the local community, as "the sudden jettison of the gay rights battle into the national media with Anita Bryant...has caused deep concern throughout the gay community here over the parade—fearing the repercussions of bad press."¹⁵¹ News coverage of the event pictured a unified "Gay Nation" with banners proclaiming, "Save Our Human Rights" accompanying American flags.¹⁵² Activist David Goodstein proclaimed that Anita had united movement rifts, earning a "Gay Unity Award," by doing more "to bring gays together than anything that ever happened before."¹⁵³ In the shadow of Bryant, many cities asserted a collective identity and did not address contradictions in movement ideology or the parade, but instead, unified to slay a common enemy. Also, at this moment several factions within the

¹⁴⁹Marc Stein, *Rethinking the Gay and Lesbian Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2012). Names changes are surprisingly hard to track in the gay histories I have utilized for this project, as most historians do not give much thought to this switch and often use the contemporary language of Pride to describe these events.

¹⁵⁰ "March and Be Proud," *Bay Area Reporter*, June 23, 1977, 4.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² "A Gay Nation at Civic Center," *Bay Area Reporter*, July 7, 1977, 22-23.

¹⁵³ Quoted in Alexandra Chasin, *Selling Out: The Gay and Lesbian Movement Goes To Market* (New York: Saint Martin Press, 2000), 170.

coalitional assembly of many “Gay Freedom Days” took on gay nationalism within their rhetoric. Remembering Stonewall by metaphorically invoking *nation* as the ideal the event stood for, calling upon an imagined community to seek enfranchisement through achieving the ideals of the American Nation.

Despite the numerous contradictory ideologies present in the parade, they continued to not be recognized by culture at large. Denis Altman asserts that as "annual marches" became the largest demonstrations in the United States "since anti-Vietnam rallies," the event presented a "false image of a united, centrally controlled movement embracing lesbian separatists, militant socialists, and gay business-men in a common front bent on destroying society."¹⁵⁴ Through the imagined comradery of its form, marches recapitulated a community that conceived of itself as aligned, regardless of inequality and disagreement still present within the movement. So, as some marchers found themselves marching further and further away from culturally revolutionary principles of the New Left and redistribution, significant influences of the gay political economy, outside political threats, and news coverage created a perceived notion of harmony. Projecting a gay identity and public culture to publics at large, a gesture of unity that meant while various axes of race, class, and gender continued to impact the event—these divisions were often put on hold and/or ignored to shore up claims of political clout.

Of course, these tensions never subsided and by the mid-1980's were in full swing again. Noticing a reduction in corporeal expressions of sexuality, leather, and drag, sociologist Richard Herrell asserts that Pride events became increasingly bureaucratic and focused on highlighting

¹⁵⁴ Denis Altman, *Homosexualization of America, Americanization of The Homosexual* (New York: St. Martin, 1982), 114.

community institutions.¹⁵⁵ Churches, sports teams, professional organizations, and family-focused groups quickly joined the event. According to Herrell parades/marches began to function as a battleground of rhetorical strategies between “confrontationist” and “assimilationist” messages competing for dominance.¹⁵⁶ Harrell describes Chicago Gay Pride Parades of the mid-80s as still engaged in a struggle over movement identity:

What it is to be gay itself is being argued about—is contested—in the mix of ways and discourse about how the gay community defines itself in a Chicago parade. How the community “index”—should create—itsself is the controversy. Watchers and marchers alike do not agree about—indeed fight about—how to define the community in the parade. The two...assimilationist and confrontationist are both present and unresolved in the parade today.¹⁵⁷

While these tensions were still present, the AIDS crisis had created some unique changes to the material organizing practices of many metropolitan Pride events. Within an AIDS economy, the most significant economic and political institutions of the homo-economy were those that provided service to the dying, meaning a proliferation of service organizations began to take the reins of marches throughout the country. A significant reason for this shift in planning is that community politics refocused during the AIDS crisis, taking care of the dying and engaging in safe-sex campaigns became prioritized, and besides getting pills into bodies as fast as possible, many challenged medical institutions and heterosexist beliefs fueling the plague. While unity, at least initially, was invoked as necessary by many within the community to handle the crisis.

However, the AIDS crisis also helped foster underlying radical attitudes that would characterize rhetorical contestation of Pride that would come in the next decade. Inspiring a

¹⁵⁵ Richard Herrell, “The Symbolic Strategies of Chicago’s Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade,” In Gilbert Herdt’s *Gay Culture in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 231.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

surge of confrontational activism, informed by the awakening that a business of callous selfishness drove the motives and goals of medical and governmental institutions, and that these institutions were willing to be complicit in the death of thousands to maintain power. Many chapters of AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) adamantly worked not just against homophobia but issues of race, class, and gender. Identity was being questioned by many in the movement in favor of a broad-reaching political consciousness.

In New York, the Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee disbanded in 1984, and planning was taken over by the newly formed Heritage of Pride (HOP).¹⁵⁸ At the time, like its predecessor, HOP continued to call the event a march, but the event's planning became less of a grassroots effort, increasingly controlled by HOP alone. However, many soon became displeased with the choices made by HOP. On the last Saturday of June 1989, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, ACT UP, upset by the unwillingness of HOP to directly attack institutions killing those living with AIDS and the participation of New York Mayor Ed Koch, who ACT UP had criticized for failed policies on HIV, decided to challenge HOP through grassroots efforts. ACT UP responded with a counter-HOP rally with the theme “IN THE TRADITION: LESBIANS AND GAY MEN FIGHT,” a message that called on the past to narrate a radical political identity opposed to the current status quo.¹⁵⁹ Art historian Douglas Crimp recollects the event as a recovery of memory through the embodied form the counter-demonstration mounted. Crimp writes:

In the early 70s, we had marched out of the gay ghetto, up Sixth Avenue, and into Central Park for a militant rally. We had no police permits; we simply took to the streets and

¹⁵⁸ New York City Pride, "The March Continues," accessed February 3, 2018, <https://www.nycpride.org/about/>. It's important to note that other sources indicate that heritage of Pride while founded in 1984, didn't fully take over the parade and its associated events until the mafia were forced out of the Pride festival in the early 90s. This history remains absent from heritages website.

¹⁵⁹ Douglas Crimp and Adam Rolston, *AIDS Demo-Graphics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1990), 100.

proclaimed our right to be everywhere. By the early 1980s, when we achieved official sanction, the direction was reversed. We walked downtown, into the confines of the gay ghetto, where instead of attending a rally we could eat, drink, dance, and spend our money to enrich Mafia-owned, gay-run businesses. The traditional rally severed from the march altogether and moved to the preceding day in Central Park. So, ACT UP decided to hold a March of our own on Saturday—no police permits, up Sixth Avenue, chanting militantly in route to the rally. By wheat pasting a QUEERS, READ THIS announcement around the city, we got other gay groups to join us, and our ranks swelled to well over a thousand. The police tried to stop us at 14th street—the dividing line between downtown and uptown—but we were too many, too determined as we confronted them with our chant: ARREST US, JUST TRY. REMEMBER, STONEWALL WAS A RIOT¹⁶⁰.

This recollection notes that direction, geography, and gesture were instrumental in creating different rhetorical effects between the mode the original Christopher Street Liberation Day Marches engaged in, in contrast to the increasingly commercialized, but not yet corporatized New York City Pride march.¹⁶¹ ACT UP's performance, in the vein of the original CSLD March, attempted to undo this posturing by making a statement that encapsulated the innovative spirit of a politics of social redistribution. Members of the coalition wore tee-shirts asserting "I Am Out, therefore I Am," a play on the famous anti-consumerist phrase "I Shop, therefore I Am," which Crimp asserts was designed as a post-modern "swipe" at the "empty politics of being merely out."¹⁶² Being out at Pride was not enough for ACT UP; radical action was needed immediately in the present moment, action that extended beyond identity.

ACT UP's invoking of Stonewall to support their politics reflects the ways anti-capitalist queers today rely on the origins of Pride and Stonewall as a resource for resistance. That is, despite a rich history of conflict between multiple groups at Pride, a narrative emerged forgetting the omnipresence of these tensions to instead engage in strategic deployment of anti-assimilationist messages. Halperin and Traub argue that this cultural narrative emerged in the 90s

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 100-101.

¹⁶¹ It's of interest to note, that Crimp's recollection of the changing forms of the march is not entirely accurate, as Ed Murphy had succeeded in profiting off the rally by changing the marches direction by 1974 and not in the early 80s.

¹⁶² Ibid., 102.

as academic discourses rehabilitated “pre-Stonewall queer outlaws” whose deviance had made them “inimical” to the ethos of the Pride of “self-respecting lesbians and gays of the post-Stonewall era, and resistant to inclusion within affirmative histories of homosexuality.” Within this discourse, these outlaws are framed as resisting being “bought off by gay pride” as “they had lived too early to have been tempted to purchase social respectability at the price of conformity and assimilation.”¹⁶³ Responding to Halperin and Traub’s endorsement of the queer outlaw narrative, Erin J. Rand warns when history is “painted with strokes this broad it obscures” distinctions within “the dramatic changes that have occurred in Pride discourses over the years.”¹⁶⁴ Echoing Rand’s concern, focusing on queer life as moving from radicalism to assimilationism fails to narrate the complicated history of post-Stonewall assemblies as always being constituted by conflict amongst multiple factions. This leads to a strawman version of the past where queers at Pride were once radical, and now they are not, rather than recognizing that queers at Pride have always been both revolutionary *and* assimilationist.

Today, numerous memory projects concerned with Pride have taken up the post-Stonewall outlaw narrative without narrating the complex tensions between political ideologies in the movement from 1970 to the late 1980s, which while they were divided, these factions marched together challenging heteronormative culture and routines of dominant publics due to numerous contextual factors. Post-Stonewall outlaw narratives contest Pride moving away from revolutionary ideals, but in doing so still fail to address the complex issues that are at stake through their pronunciation; strategically contesting assimilationist tendencies, but not engaging in a tactical mediation of historical difference and how those differences come to matter and

¹⁶³ Halperin and Traub, “Beyond Gay Pride,” 7.

¹⁶⁴ Erin J. Rand, *Reclaiming Queer: Activist & Academic Rhetorics of Resistance* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2014), 149.

where solidarity might be fostered. Instead, the post-Stonewall outlaw narrative engages in a war between whether the legacy of Pride is a politics of disavowal or acceptance by the American political system, without consideration about how Pride has always been both.

The World Turned: Queer Visibility Goes Consumer at Pride

In the 90s “the world turned” and acknowledged gay people in its midst for the first time, and marketers and corporations began to develop a mentality of “business, not politics” regarding the gay community.¹⁶⁵ Advertising “in gay media rose throughout the 1990s to a record 120.4 million in 1999, a 20.2 percent rise from the previous year.”¹⁶⁶ Professional organizations claiming to represent the movement collectively on a national level radically expanded; the Human Rights Campaign became a massive lobbying organization, creating a new series of disputes within the movement. In New York, activist Randy Wicker finally wrestled away mafia control of The Christopher Street Liberation Day festival, only to see other commercial interests soon take their place. Pride events radically changed at this time for Alexandra Chasin, who states

Around the country, “marches” became “parades” and “rallies” became “parties.” Where participants gathered at the end of such parades, the opportunities for shopping at booths proliferated, while floats and the parade itself increasingly were the display for banks and professional politicians.¹⁶⁷

While the terms “march” and “parade” along with “rallies” and “parties” had long been fluid in describing Pride events, Chasin’s recollection here, reflects that during this time a public

¹⁶⁵John D’Emilio, *The World Turned: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), ix; Katherine Sender, *Business, Not Politics: The Making of the Gay Market* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁶⁷ Chasin, 214.

consciousness was arising that began to articulate and recognize that Pride assemblies weren't necessarily unified.

In 1993, both *New York* magazine and *Vanity Fair* featured covers of what they labeled as “Lesbian Chic,”¹⁶⁸ portraying queer women in a manner that Erin J. Rand describes as visually exemplifying “the sexualization of lesbianism” through a “heteronormative economy of desire.”¹⁶⁹ Gay publications such as *The Advocate* began to cleanse objectionable ads for phone sex, hardcore leather culture, and radical politics. Business and marketing publications started to run headlines insisting on the potential for a gay market, with bylines like “The Gay Market: Nothing to Fear But Fear Itself,” “Untapped Niche Offers Marketers Brand Loyalty,” and “Mainstream's Domino Effect: Liquor, Fragrance, Clothing Advertisers Ease into Gay Magazines.”¹⁷⁰ Within this same period, marketers utilized symbols of American nationalism intermixed with the rainbow paraphernalia of gay Pride, creating: “Rainbow USA pins,” clothing designed to let consumers “express patriotism, pride, and joy,” campaigns targeted at the “All-American boy,” and “rings sold to commemorate Stonewall.”¹⁷¹ Despite these developments, multi-million dollar corporate sponsorship of Pride had yet to arrive. What had arrived, though, was various queer political groups engaged in performative spectacles critiquing corporate politics, asserting a critical view of the conditions of visibility given by corporate media. For Cathy Cohen, this activism aimed “to make ‘queer’ function as more than just an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered” identity.¹⁷² Amongst this new political ideology

¹⁶⁸ Jeanie Russell Kasindorf, “Lesbian Chic: The Bold, Brave New World of Gay Women,” *New York Magazine*, May 10, 1993; Leslie Bennetts, “k.d. lang Cuts It Close,” *Vanity Fair*, August 1993, 146.

¹⁶⁹ Rand, 109.

¹⁷⁰ Quoted in: Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed, “The Gay Marketing Moment,” In *Homo Economics: Capitalism, Community, and Lesbian and Gay Life*, eds. Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed (New York: Routledge, 1997), 4.

¹⁷¹ Chasin, 121-125.

¹⁷² Cathy Cohen, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?,” *GLQ* Vol. 3, (1997), 439.

and practice was also the rise of third-wave feminism and critiques of globalization, all of which helped produce a moment where social movements were challenging capitalism within the public sphere through new rhetorical tactics, focused on disrupting the norms of dominant public spheres.

Queer Nation, an activist group that emerged from ACT UP, marched through American downtowns chanting: “We’re here, we’re queer, we’re not going shopping.”¹⁷³ Engaged in an what the group labeled “The Queer Shopping Network,” the group invaded hetero-capitalist spaces to queer them via kiss-ins and created commodities that parodied recent attempts by corporations to woo the gay and lesbian market.¹⁷⁴ Queer Nation highlighted how advertising targeting gays and lesbians repeatedly played on ideas about national identity, essentially queering the appeals of corporations to demonstrate and highlight underlying economic interests of these appeals. Accompanying Queer Nation's critique, The Lesbian Avengers recognized commercial visibility as a double-edged sword that made queer women a product of desire while simultaneously not engaging in the material embodied struggles of these women's lives. Across the country, Dyke marches provided an alternative space on Pride weekends to deal specifically with the issues of queer women.¹⁷⁵

Miller Lite in 1995 came on as a primary sponsor of the New York Pride March, opening the door for other Fortune 500 companies to follow suit.¹⁷⁶ In *Virtual Equality*, published the same year, former chair of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Urvashi Vaid was wary of

¹⁷³ Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, “Queer Nationality,” In Michael Warner’s *Fear of a Queer Planet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 210.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹⁷⁵ Kelly Cogswell, “Lesbian Avenger Documentary Project,” *Lesbian Avengers*, accessed August 30, 2017, http://www.lesbianavengers.com/LA_documentary_project.shtml.

¹⁷⁶ Ross.

this development. Vaid noted that corporations, who were already starting to fund the gay and lesbian movement, commonly only supported national organizations with centrist logics, and that turning to corporate involvement might limit the viability of the movement taking on more radical causes.¹⁷⁷ In the years that followed, Pride events in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco increasingly became sites of marketing for United Airlines and Budweiser.¹⁷⁸ With the progression of the decade, corporate sponsors became the main contingent of numerous metropolitan Pride events, not just dominating the message the parade presented but limiting the diversity of organizations able to enter the parade and hold viable political demands. Within this same period, systematic effects of late capitalism began to rework several local contexts of metropolitan areas these events occurred within, through gentrification and quality of life campaigns, which had disproportionately precarious effects on queer people of color, the homeless, immigrants, sex workers, and queer sex publics who often were targeted by governmental apparatuses. For some queer activists, no location was more salient of rapid reworkings of public and private than Gay Pride celebrations, echoed in Gay Shame leader Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore's recollection that by this time Pride "had become little more than a giant opportunity for multinational corporations to target gay consumers."¹⁷⁹ Thus, Gay Shame emerged in Brooklyn in 1998 to publicly assert an alternative space of cultural production to Pride celebrations.

¹⁷⁷ Urvashi Vaid, *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation* (New York: Anchor Book, 1995), 268-272.

¹⁷⁸ Adam Nagourney, "For Gays, a Party In Search of a Purpose; at 30 Parade has Gone Mainstream As Movement's Goals Have Drifted," *The New York Times*, June 25, 2000, <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/25/nyregion/for-gays-party-search-purpose-30-parade-has-gone-mainstream-movement-s-goals.html>.

¹⁷⁹ Bernstein Sycamore, 269.

While Gay Shame was extremely effective in generating publicity that critiqued consumer culture at Pride, after the group's emergence national conversation around Pride in relation to the rapid development of consumerization of the event becomes difficult to track. Likely, this is due to corporate involvement creating barriers for radical groups to be able to access the space of appearance within a parade or march, as registration fees suddenly climbed to thousands of dollars for community groups.¹⁸⁰ Lisa Duggan, at the time, cautioned that homonormativity was an apparatus with the goal of bringing a “desired public into political salience...primarily through a rhetorical remapping of public/private boundaries designed to shrink gay public spheres and redefine gay equality against the ‘civil rights agenda’ and ‘liberationism,’ as access to the institutions of domestic privacy, the ‘free’ market, and patriotism.”¹⁸¹ Of course, free market and nationalistic queers had already existed within the movement for decades, nor were concerns over race, class, and gender new to the movement; still, Duggan's marking of the rhetoric of privatization and patriotism does reflect an important historical shift in material practices of organizing occurring within the neoliberal context it was written. Increasingly, gay social movement activities such as Pride strategically aligned themselves with free market and consumer culture, reflecting a broader trend of governance moving practices of democratic citizenship from a political frame to a strictly economic one.¹⁸² Within the logics of economic governance, political assemblies risk failing to recognize subjects whose material lives are unable to be affirmatively represented by free market-based politics.

¹⁸⁰ Another important consideration for this absence is much of the inter-community conflict at this time revolves around marriage equality, with debates focused on how prioritizing marriage as a goal allocated movement resources to privileged members of the community over those facing more precarious situations.

¹⁸¹ Duggan, 179.

¹⁸² This transition is not exclusive to just Pride events, as various non-profits and social movement organizations have increasingly not only articulated their goals through language of the free market but also weigh their sense of identity through strictly economic terms. For more on this see: Spade.

Radical modalities who were once part of Pride's collective were left to struggle to appear in public spaces of appearance, due to their inability/refusal to align or define themselves with private free market interests; as the diversity of voices is drained out of the public assembly through a lack of access, past tensions amongst the politics of queers voicing intersectional demands are eased, helping privileged gays and lesbians unhitch axes of queer solidarity to express solidarity along the axes of class and nation, instead.

Recently, numerous counterpublic modalities have forced wider public consideration of the adverse effects of corporate involvement at Pride. In 2014, Chelsea Manning became a catalyst for contesting corporate Pride after she was removed as grand marshal of the San Francisco Pride parade but corporations complicit in harming the community were not, leading to demonstrations that challenged a corporate run Pride and disavowed the Pride board.¹⁸³ Dyke Marches across the country continue to grow.¹⁸⁴ Black Lives Matter activists have shut down multiple Pride celebrations and forced them to be re-routed.¹⁸⁵ Various Pride events have conceded to grassroots organizers. For instance, Los Angeles Pride, previously known to boycotters as "Gay Coachella," referencing the expensive southern-California music festival popularly known as an "oasis for douchebags and trust fund babies," canceled the official Pride parade along with its corporate sponsors and replaced it with a Resistance March, conceding to community activists who were already planning an LGBTQ Resist March in response to

¹⁸³ Glenn Greenwald, "Bradley Manning is off limits at SF Gay Pride parade, but corporate sleaze is embraced," *The Guardian*, April 27th, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/apr/27/bradley-manning-sf-gay-pride>.

¹⁸⁴ Claire Landsbaum, "Why I'm Skipping the Pride Parade and Going to the Dyke March," *New York Magazine*, June 22, 2017, <https://www.thecut.com/article/skipping-nyc-lgbtq-pride-parade-dyke-march.html>.

¹⁸⁵ James Kirchick, "Politics on parade: How Black Lives Matter halted a gay pride parade in Toronto," *The New York Times*, June 6, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-kirchick-gay-pride-black-lives-matter-20160705-snap-story.html>.

Trump's election.¹⁸⁶ They created an event where Wells Fargo, Bud Light, and Sky Vodka, nor their corporate dollars, were no longer present, asserting "Floats and marching bands are nice when we are not at war. Now is the time to shake things up and take to the streets."¹⁸⁷

Encouraging and attempting to give all, regardless of race, class, and gender the ability to participate, march, and appear in public.

Still, it is important to remember that while these outsider Pride events have something of the grassroots feel of early Pride assemblies of the 70s, allowing direct participation, examination of intersectional queer issues, and lack of commercial involvement; the tensions fostering their mobilization are not new. Currently, these tensions are merely more visible due to corporate involvement, as corporate involvement has exacerbated issues of economic justice while limiting the ability to work across difference by defining the politics articulated at numerous Pride events within single-axis frameworks. In many ways, unresolved debates about Pride are themselves concerned with the public sphere, raising questions about access points and the qualities of spaces defined as queer. Making debates about corporate sponsorship fundamentally tied to the tension and possibility of a community organized around difference, with corporate culture heeding the ability to articulate difference.

¹⁸⁶ Tre'vell Anderson and Hailey Branson-Potts, "LA Pride has sold out and become 'gay Coachella,' critics say." *Los Angeles Times*, May 20, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-10102020-gay-pride-boycott-notourpride-snap-story.html>; Marlow Stern, "Coachella, should be avoided at all costs." *The Daily Beast*, March 11, 2014, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/coachella-oasis-for-douchebags-and-trust-fund-babies-should-be-avoided-at-all-costs>; James Mills, "CSW Acknowledges LA Pride Parade Will Be Replaced with Protest March." *WEHO ville*, March 9, 2017, <http://www.wehoville.com/2017/03/09/csw-acknowledges-la-pride-parade-will-replaced-protest-march/>.

¹⁸⁷ Steven Blum, "Advertisers Are Fleeing L.A.'s LGBT March Against Trump." *Four Two Nine*, April 17, 2017, <http://fourtwonine.com/2017/04/17/resist-march-la-trump-sponsors/>; "LA Pride Canceled," LAist. assessed October 3, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/theLAist/posts/10155305180730649>.

Conclusion: Interrupting Queer Fictions

Up until his death, Craig Rodwell lamented the bar owners who had succeeded in changing the route of the march he had created, making it progress south into Greenwich Village to spill thousands of resistant bodies from the streets into gay bars, who learned early on there was profit to be made from this ritual. Rodwell, without a doubt, would be unhappy to see the march now, anchored by massive multi-billion-dollar corporations. However, this transformation shouldn't be viewed as a sudden ideological shift from the gay movement as there have always been tensions between different queer political groups at Pride. It is essential to consider how the current political terrain, though different than the past, is based on fictions that have always existed between these groups. This chapter has demonstrated that Christopher Street Liberation Day Marches and Pride events have always contained multiple factions internally struggling over contradictory political logics. For nearly the last fifty years, pride events have never been a single counterpublic but instead have held numerous groups, which together form a public culture, with underlying contestation within the rhetorical, embodied, and economic practices of the modalities these groups moved collectively within. While corporatization stifles these tensions by suturing over them through remapping public/private space, impacting the access radical groups have to the venue of public space, in the contemporary moment many are resisting.

This chapter demonstrated first, that the primary means Stonewall's memory has been mediated does not examine coalitional interactions, and instead invoke ideas and feelings of unity. Second, I demonstrated contextual factors that made the community work together at Pride, along with the birth of the post-Stonewall outlaw narrative. Third, I demonstrated how

neoliberal influences blurring distinctions between private and public, has relegated numerous more radical factions of the queer community out of Pride, leading many to organize their own modalities of Pride that are concerned with redistributive politics. Calling upon public memory is a primary means that contemporary pro-corporate and anti-corporate Pride modalities have utilized to support their organizing practices. However, as the Stonewall riots recede further into the past and gay pride celebrations continue to expand widely, calling upon memories of gay liberation and Pride's roots as universally radical in origin for purposes of establishing a counterpublic modality to resist corporate modes of doing Pride, risks continuing to erase tensions between these factions; tensions that carry important disjunctions holding matter and meaning that should not be brushed over through strategic calls to the past. Susan Stryker's work, on events such as the Compton Cafeteria Riot, demonstrates that the dominance of Stonewall prevents transgender folks and queers of color from asserting other moments of struggle and past histories, limiting their ability to do work in the present due to the flattening of difference within movement identity and ideology.¹⁸⁸ In the same essay on history, Stryker emphasizes that Duggan's articulation of homonormativity fails to articulate the historic "double sense of marginalization and displacement experienced within transgender political and cultural activism."¹⁸⁹ Of course, calling upon the past is useful for critiquing neoliberal governance, but activists must recognize the queer fictions they are calling upon and how these fictions may prevent critical work along lines of race, class, and gender.

For many, such as D'Emilio, "Stonewall is our symbol of resistance, our myth of emancipation...[we must] use the symbol and dispense with the myths."¹⁹⁰ Recognizing the

¹⁸⁸ Susan Stryker, "Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity," *Radical History Review* 2008, no. 100 (2008): 145-146.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ D'Emilio, "The World Turned," 147, 153.

power Stonewall has, it is still important to heed Bravmann's warning that queer "common-sense" fictions where "we' share at least some common goals—goals that are symbolically represented by the resistance during the riots” problematically erases and creates historical memory that flattens over differences between gays and lesbians along with critical racial differences.¹⁹¹ The queer “turn toward memory” is and continues to be a valuable rhetorical strategy, but it also may risk flattening over disconnects that can't be easily resolved (nor should they). Such disjunctions around queer fictions hold matter and meaning and should not be brushed over easily. Memory alone does not guarantee lessons will be learned from the past or that memory will foster solidarity, and in some instances, memory may interrupt solidarity by leaving the past uninterrogated and idealized. Activists and scholars concerned with corporate Pride need to make critical historical distinctions between gay and lesbian and queer forms of the past, and that early Pride events were not necessarily radical or assimilationist but contained multiple overlapping queer ideologies who formed an emergent collective. If the queer turn toward memory is to constitute a resistant imaginary that intervenes into the harms of Pride assemblies based around corporate citizenship, then queer counterpublic memory needs not to think in binary terms and recognize the multitude of memories that construct a public, instead using memory to interrupt how queer subjects imagine the past and each other.

¹⁹¹ Bravmann, 85.

Chapter Two: Keeping Austin Queer'd

Texas summer heat beat down on the pavement of empty Austin streets. Late in the afternoon, the air was not only humid but suspiciously quiet. Not a soul was around, inside I presumed, avoiding the blistering sun. Suddenly, three elaborately dressed unicorns emerged from a chapel and disrupted this silence, running down the street. Being unfamiliar with the city, I followed these three individuals dressed as unicorns through the streets of Austin, presuming they were also heading to Queerbomb, a DIY Pride that I was in the city to attend. As we ventured forward, the streets slowly came to life as more bodies wearing eye-catching costumes appeared, interrupting taken-for-granted practices of everyday life and routines. These three unicorns attracted attention, with people changing directions and plans to follow the excitement of the collective that was forming near the city's downtown. A middle-aged couple having drinks at a patio bar quickly downed their liquor, scurrying to see what was occurring. Accompanying these bodies were numerous signs displaying campaign messages: "STONEWALL WAS A RIOT, NOT A TRADE SHOW"; "PRIDE BEFORE CORPORATE WEALTH"; "STOP RACISM, HETEROSEXISM, AND EXPLOITATION WHERE IT STARTS"; "QUEER JUSTICE NOW." Together, these signs and people led not just me, but others to the Queerbomb rally.

Soon after I arrived, a flood of community members followed suit. As we gathered, activists began to deliver speeches and performances concerning HIV prevention, queer activism, community building, support for queer youth, sexual freedom, racial and economic justice, and access to trans friendly healthcare. While listening to these speeches, I chanted

slogans, cheered for myself and others, and interacted with those around me. Surrounded by thousands of bodies, I danced in the Austin summer heat, noticing not just the space around me altering, but that I was as well. As sweat profusely left the openings of my pores, I was nourished by those at the edges of me. Queer women parading topless, transgressive drag performers, and suburban teenage punks in skinny jeans twisted the social forces around me. Through actual movements of the body, they enacted a figurative reworking of not just space but how these bodies might come to understand each other. Humidity in the air turned the heat of the day into a thunderous storm. Huddled in a sizeable sheltered pavilion at Fair Market, the collective rides the storm out. Finally, we march onto the streets of Austin as one body inserting an expression of our queerness to publics at large, shutting down streets, and attracting onlookers' attention. However, this disruption was cut short when the storm changes directions and returns; quickly we stagger back to our starting point. Still the night ends with a disco heaven, mirror balls a burning, bodies dance and groove to the beat of the music.

Queerbomb, an homage to the Lesbian Avengers bomb symbol, has formed every June since 2010 to culturally produce performances, discourse, and an organizing structure that counteracts what has been pushed out of Austin Pride. The event is free to participate in and is therefore affordable, as there are limited structural barriers—at least in the form of capital impacting one's ability to engage with the collective LGBTQ community. Since its first march it has grown with over 7,000 people annually participating in a free all-inclusive rally, march, and party. In this chapter, I think about three different modalities of engagement that Queerbomb engages publics through: rally, march, and party to create a DIY Pride that resists harms, constraints, and erasures inflicted by corporatized involvement at Pride. To do so, I first chronicle Queerbomb's emergence and its relationship with Austin's "official Pride" event.

Second, I articulate how Queerbomb uses its rally to speak different versions of “family” or “kinship,” engaging with recent anxieties amongst queer communities concerning not only commercial involvement but queers forming normative legally sanctioned kinship networks together, which have sometimes appropriated conservative family value discourses. Queerbomb counters this reappropriation of family values discourse by continuing the reappropriation, using the term family to cultivate different political orientations of queerness focused on coalition building. Third, I march with Queerbomb’s procession to think about how bodies moving together alter both the public sphere and themselves. Fourth, I get ecstatic at Queerbomb’s party and ponder the possibilities of exploding understandings of sexuality.

Queerbomb interrogates corporate modes of doing Pride, yet, it also still shares the same desire as numerous Prides with corporate involvement, a hope that was collectively organized around at the first Christopher Street March in 1970: the right to appear in a heteronormative public. However, this appearance does not guarantee the enactment of coalitional activity amongst its body politic. Therefore, I also chronicle and consider the ways Queerbomb is limited, as appearing in public does not guarantee a critical engagement with how race, class, and gender matter in queer struggle. I argue that the modalities that comprise Queerbomb’s culture are wedged in between two sometimes overlapping yet unevenly positioned versions of queerness, one of corporeal expressivity and the other intersectionally imaginative. For some Queerbombers, what it means to be queer is about what one’s body does to and with other bodies that break social norms. Seeing Pride organizers police the sexuality of the queer body is a paradox for them, as they locate Pride as a place to celebrate the essence of their understanding of queerness: a corporeal relationality, a kinship built around the shared copulation of nonreproductive bodies that unravels the gendered/sexual/national identities articulated within

family and consumer values. Connected to this unraveling is another queer perspective that always, to some extent, has presented a challenge to identity, meaning that queerness also entails an intersectional political imagination; this queer perspective is also present at Queerbomb, defined by its demand that Pride must be a space to think across realms of the social in the construction of identity and the material consequences of subject formation. For many who come to Queerbomb, they do so because mainstream contingencies of the LGBTQ rights movement do not consider their needs, wants, and desires when constructing public space. Instead, organizers at Austin Pride often made logistical choices that inhibited the possibility of coalition building at Pride by forestalling the possibility of forging alliances across lines of race, class, and gender by inadvertently putting barriers to accessibility in the way. Queerbomb aims to explode these barriers and work through the complexity of multifaceted queer identities and desires.

Some of the description and material in this chapter was gained through participant observation, which supplements the more traditional research methods this chapter uses. Over the past decade, rhetorical critics have increasingly utilized field methods and other ethnographic, performance, and qualitative methods to make informed theorizations about vernacular and everyday rhetorical discourses.¹⁹² Following this turn, interviews and field notes collected from Queerbomb were conducted following IRB standards and were found to be exempt from in-depth IRB review. In using this work to inform my theorization, I take seriously post-colonial theorist's Trinh Minh-Ha's warning concerning the danger of "reducing field work

¹⁹² Michael Middleton, Aaron Hess, Danielle Endres, and Samantha Senda-Cook, *Participatory Critical Rhetoric: Theoretical and Methodological Foundations for Studying Rhetoric in Situ* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015); Sara McKinnon, Robert Asen, Karma R. Chávez, and Robert Glenn Howard, *Text + Field: Innovations in Rhetorical Method* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016). Field methods have become a major methodology and topic of conversation in rhetorical theory, with these two books recently published on the subject. In researching, this chapter I sought advice from these two sources on how best to utilize my time in the field. Both books advocate for the importance of participation, as to experience the event like those who make and experience various aspects of public life. While these books were helpful in this experience, my intervention in this project is not within the literature of field methods.

to a question of technique and method.”¹⁹³ Attending Queerbomb doesn’t mean that I suddenly can speak for the group. However, what this does allow me to do is record the *movement* of the Queerbomb collective between different modes of public engagement to theorize the importance of oscillating between different world-making activities. During my time at Queerbomb I was able to gauge how participants come to understand their experience, but more importantly how the act of moving impacted the formation of space. A formation where the material strategy of organizing Pride is based on making the space accessible to the public appearance and expression of vulnerability by disproportionately injured bodies, in the hopes that solidarity might be potentially learned through this appearance. Textual data, collected through traditional means helps trace socio-economic contexts, rhetoric, and performances, but this type of data cannot, alone, account for the subjective nature of Queerbomb’s performances around solidarity; as solidarity is a knowledge that remains incomplete until one knows how it is lived.

Urban Entrepreneurialism and Family Values: The Changing Face of Austin Pride

Changes to Austin Pride reflect the trajectory of many metropolitan Pride celebrations in the United States concerning organizational structure. Overcoming cultural abjection in the 90s, the growing expansion of Pride in Austin was narrativized as a product of the political progress experienced by lesbians and gays. However, it was also widely connected to another narrative: the development of urban entrepreneurialism as a model of urban governance. Urban entrepreneurialism refers to a reorientation of local governments prioritizing economic growth over democratic choice, to improve the respective position of local geography within production

¹⁹³ Trinh Minh-Ha, “Documentary Is/Not a Name,” *October* 52, (1990): 93.

and consumption activities.¹⁹⁴ Based upon strategies that commodify cities through this mode of governance, a focus is placed on the aestheticization of the urban landscape leading to cities increasingly being self-reflexive about their multicultural areas, while former industrial areas and districts in decline are transformed into highly stylized regions of retail experience to provide a post-industrial economic infrastructure.¹⁹⁵ Increasingly, cities rely on the manipulation of events and spaces around which tourists shop and engage in other acts of consumption through destination marketing tactics. Spaces of cultural difference, such as gay-neighborhoods, are now viewed in many cities as cultural and economic assets supporting the placemaking activities of cities desiring a cosmopolitan ethos.¹⁹⁶

Austin Pride 2008 followed this trend, as organizers tried to put Pride on the map as a significant vacation destination, with the hopes of an influx of tourists journeying to the metropolis to express their Pride. Previously, Pride in Austin had maintained a grassroots organizing structure, with multiple perspectives and community contingents democratically planning the annual event. Notoriously marked as chaotic, due in part to this democratic organizing structure, Pride in previous years had been marked by disagreements and controversy. Further, due to the city's geographical limitations concerning a lack of significant public spaces to have a rally, the two anchor events (or modalities) associated with Pride—the parade and the festival—were held on two different weekends, presenting a logistical problem for those wishing to entrepreneurialize Pride activities within the new tourist aesthetic of Austin. In 2008, this

¹⁹⁴ David Harvey, "From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation of Urban Governance in Late Capitalism," *Geografiska Annaler* 71 (1989): 3-17.

¹⁹⁵ Jane Jacobs, "Staging difference: Aestheticization and the Politics of Difference," In Ruth Fincher and Jane Jacobs *Cities of Difference* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999), 253-278.

¹⁹⁶ Kevin Markwell, "Mardi Gras Tourism and the Construction of Sydney as an International Gay and Lesbian City," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 8 (2002): 81-99; Jasbir Puar, "Circuits of Queer Mobility: Tourism, Travel, and Globalization," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 8 (2002): 101-137.

changed as two 501(c)(3) organizations, Austin Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (AGLCC) and Equality Texas, utilized their political clout along with language of bureaucracy to move red tape previously prohibiting organizers from using Auditorium Shores, an iconic Austin location and a site that would enable the parade and the festival to occur within the same weekend. Geographically moving to Auditorium Shores meant that participants could shop at booths during the day, and then pour out of festival-grounds and onto streets for a nighttime procession that ended on Fourth Street, Austin's gay-bar central.

Many considered this change in location and structure an "upgrade," but others worried the change would further invoke a politics of respectability, as children and families would likely become the largest contingent of the merged procession—leading to a parade focused on a digestible commercialized gay identity, that secretly set up barriers around race, class, and expression. A primary reason for this suspicion, was because Auditorium Shores is a location that few cultural events are given access to in the city, and to receive access is to follow the rules of the city of Austin with the primary goal of catering to tourists. Responding to accusations that Pride was being watered down for mainstream absorption, organizer Ceci Gratias asserted that changes were “not out of acceptability but rather out of respect for the families watching.”¹⁹⁷ Local queer activists responded to children being invoked by also invoking children, asserting that dividing a community “based on looks or ‘outrageous behavior’ for ‘normal’ status is not what our children should be learning.”¹⁹⁸

However, when Equality Texas, who had long steered the grassroots organizing of Pride, announced at Pride that it would be handing the organizing effort to a newly formed Pride

¹⁹⁷ Kate Getty, “Respectable Street: as Austin Pride revs up, will its soul get lost on the roadside?” *The Austin Chronicle*, June 13, 2008, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/features/2008-06-13/635095/>.

¹⁹⁸ Scott Tankersley, “Pride Should Be Outrageous!,” *The Austin Chronicle*, June 24, 2008, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/feedback/2008-06-24/639498/-/>.

coalition, activists were hopeful that concerns were being heard and engaged.¹⁹⁹ Community leaders praised the possibility of a truly democratized Pride, as institutional resources and assets owned by Austin Pride transferred to this coalition. Expectations of Pride belonging to the people soon were shattered when AGLCC released the following statement:

Equality Texas has officially turned the [Austin Pride] Festival over to its fellow members in the Pride Coalition, which have decided to turn the task of organizing 2009's Festival over to the AGLCC. So, the AGLCC is already underway planning its inaugural sojourn into Pride Festival territory! In fact, they've already set the date: June 6, 2009 (first Saturday in June.) Of course, the AGLCC is no virgin to planning Pride events, having organized the annual Gay Pride Parade for the past seven years. But with adding the Festival to its program, that means the AGLCC will pretty much "own" Pride in Austin -- and will require a whole new approach in their event planning, promotion, sponsorship solicitations, publicity and volunteer coordination.²⁰⁰

Following the takeover, earnest voices raised questions regarding AGLCC claiming to "own" Pride, as community members were confused as to why none of their organizations were asked to participate in the announced coalition. Kate Messer, a journalist for the *Austin Chronicle*, put pressure on AGLCC by repeatedly writing articles concerning community members' questioning of the coalition's function and validity. Over the next few months, headlines from the *Austin Chronicle's* coverage read: "What does this Pride Coalition actually do?" "Pride Coalition Whuuuuuut?" "Really. What does this Pride Coalition do?" "What does this Pride Coalition purport to do if not PRIDE?"²⁰¹ Coverage from the *Austin Chronicle* pressured AGLCC to clarify the precise role of the Pride coalition, whether it was a separate organization, and who controlled Austin Pride's assets, responsibilities, liabilities, and resources. AGLCC finally

¹⁹⁹Kate Messer, "Pride Punt: So, what does the Pride Coalition actually do? (Spoiler: The answer isn't in here.)," *The Austin Chronicle*, October 3, 2008, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/daily/gay-place/2008-10-03/682018/>.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Kate Messer, "More 'Pride Coalition' Whuuuuuut? Is it 4th Quarter Clarity or Last-Minute Butt-Covering?," *The Austin Chronicle*, October 13, 2008, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/daily/gay-place/2008-10-13/688054/>; Kate Getty and Kate Messer, "Really. What Does this Pride Coalition Do?," *The Austin Chronicle*, October 17, 2008, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/columns/2008-10-17/689771/>. Kate Getty and Kate Messer, "What Does this Pride Coalition Purport to Do if Not PRIDE?," *The Austin Chronicle*, October 10, 2008, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/columns/2008-10-10/686138/>.

answered they had taken sole control of all of Austin Pride's properties, consolidating Pride without any independent oversight or community input. A majority of the decision-making, for the community's most significant event, had moved entirely into the hands of AGLCC.

Soon, AGLCC engaged in remaking Pride in a multitude of ways, and by 2010, many non-profits of Austin, Texas found themselves unable to participate in Pride festivities because of a hike in already exorbitant vendor rates, charged by AGLCC.²⁰² Following this sudden change, the AGLCC also canceled previously announced performers for the event, including provocateur comedian Sandra Bernhard, justifying the decision in claims of wanting the event to be “inclusive” and “family friendly.”²⁰³ Following these changes concerns over cost, corporate sponsorship, and policing of queer self-expression became a significant community discussion, entering the discursive space of various Austin newspapers. The material impact of these changes were spatial effects moving not just the proximity of diverse types of queer bodies in engaging with each other, but also drastically impacting those at the intersections of queer identity from being able to access modes of publicity found within the parade.

Responding to the disappearance of diversity associated with these changes, Austin's AGLCC president Chad Peevy, an Austin business owner, insisted that the changes were due to the fact that the organization “didn’t want pride... to become just another circuit party,” that the event needed to encapsulate the politics of “Stonewall,” and that the AGLCC “wanted to showcase the best among us and the best within us.”²⁰⁴ Peevy further noted that he knew that he and the board were correct in this decision, because he had “felt isolated in (his) gay experience”

²⁰² Richard Whittaker, “The Pride Divide's Aftermath: Wrap-up of 2010 Pride and QueerBomb festivities,” *The Austin Chronicle*. June 18, 2010, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/news/2010-06-18/1042261/>

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Michael Barnes, “Not Just One Way to Salute Gay Pride,” *Austin 360*, June 1, 2010, http://www.austin360.com/blogs/content/shared-gen/blogs/austin/outandabout/entries/2010/06/01/who_owns_gay_pr.html

by the hedonistic circuit party atmosphere of previous Pride events.²⁰⁵ Through Peevy drawing on his experience, AGLCC framed themselves as making these changes to Pride to ensure it was an all-inclusive space that must be protected from the hedonism of past Pride celebrations. Peevy therefore fashioned the AGLCC as concerned with how the overtly sexual, and consequently corporeal elements of Pride, were preventing Pride from being something more inclusive. While Peevy asserted that family values were at the root of changes, the previous emphasis on urban entrepreneurialism in changing the location of the event indicated to many that market interests were at play in influencing these changes (at least subtly), making Pride friendlier for businesses hoping to make a profit.²⁰⁶ Hence, tables of economic value were certainly influential in the material changes AGLCC was making to highlight those they deemed to be “the best” within the community. For Dana Cloud, pivoting to family values rhetorically “conceals the reality of widespread economic inequality and structural racism in favor of individualistic explanations.”²⁰⁷ Certainly, Peevy’s emphasis on the family while focused on defending organizing changes, also inhabited the ability for political exigencies regarding how these changes would impact access to the event at the axes of race and class. Peevy’s use of family also reflected how urban entrepreneurialism in Austin focused on making the event an attraction friendly to onlookers wishing to safely indulge in queer culture with its sexual fangs and political militancy removed.

Connected to this debate concerning the appropriate place of corporeal queerness is the figure of the child, whose innocence must be protected at all costs. Lee Edelman articulates that

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Gordon MacLeod, "From Urban Entrepreneurialism to a "Revanchist City"? on the Spatial Injustices of Glasgow's Renaissance," *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (2002): 602-62.

²⁰⁷ Dana Cloud, "The Rhetoric of <family Values>: Scapegoating, Utopia, and the Privatization of Social Responsibility," *Western Journal of Communication* 62, no. 4 (1998): 411.

the figure of the child, representing a future and possibility is antithetical to queerness, as queerness is an embodiment that lacks reproductive futurity. Edelman asserts that the child “coercively shapes the structures within which the ‘political’ itself can be thought.”²⁰⁸ Advocating for a queer anti-futurity, Edelman embraces anxieties around the queer body, asserting that such anxieties are correct, as queerness destabilizes and has the potential to undo the social fabric that is built around the figure of the child. Antithetical to the queer, the child is an assured future yet to come, a prop on which to rest a politics of predictability, sameness, and heterosexuality. Edelman advocates for an embrace of queer negativity in the here and now, to say no to the future and live irreverently to avoid the toxicity that the future holds. A means to embrace this negativity can be found by giving into the jouissance of the death drive, where subjects figuratively fuck the future and fabric of the social order.

Following Peevy’s usage of families with children and Stonewall to defend organizing changes, a contingent of Austin’s LGBTQ community contested the family-friendly ethos that was espoused by AGLCC to justify the changing nature of Pride. Under the rallying cry: “How queer is your Pride? How Austin is your bomb?” Queerbomb formed a sexual public based on embracing queer corporeality; creating discursive opposition voicing the concern that Austin Pride was unable to materially provide an all-inclusive space for all intersections of the LGBTQ community.²⁰⁹ Queerbomb’s manifesto encapsulates the rhetorical situation it was created to contest, responding to Peevy’s and AGLCC’s calls of inclusivity, by invoking transgressive

²⁰⁸ Lee Edelman, “The Future is Kid Stuff: Queer Theory, Disidentification, and the Death Drive,” *Narrative* 6, no. 1 (1998): 19.

²⁰⁹ Kate Messer, “Pride Weekend 2010: I Am QueerBomb. I Am Austin Pride.” *The Austin Chronicle*. June 4, 2010, <http://www.austinchronicle.com/>.

notions of the past associated with Pride's origins. The organization's manifesto, which is read at the event each year, proclaims:

Queerbomb is a family of LGBTQIA individuals gathering to support our unique and collective pride. Our purpose is to provide a space to celebrate each and every member of our community and encourage all to embrace the manifold ways we contribute to building a beautiful and diverse society. We look to the traditions of our queer radical past, embodied in the struggles of our ongoing fight for equal justice and the right to express ourselves in whatever way we see fit. Each June, the month of Stonewall, we stand forth to embrace our sexuality, bodies, personalities, art, music, literature and politics. We are reclaiming the radical, carnal and transgressive lineage of our ever-changing community to capture a meaning of pride that refuses to put rules on what you can and can't be proud of. Queerbomb does not apologize, Queerbomb does not make excuses. Queerbomb stands proud, and so should you.²¹⁰

Reflected in this manifesto is Queerbomb's mission to promote a corporeal politics based on queer desire. However, unlike Edelman's advocacy for *jouissance* to avoid engaging in socio-material practices connected to institutions of the family that support rather than resist heteronormative neoliberal projects of the state, Queerbomb insists on queering kinship by invoking family within a queer politics of desire. Via this politic, Queerbomb also constitutes a public culture focused on inclusivity, actively confronting and violating AGLCC's more conservative views concerning inclusivity.

In this sense, Queerbomb follows the vein of Juana María Rodríguez's critique of Edelman and queer theory's treatment of kinship formations, arguing that these perspectives have failed to consider how children and families of color are not part of the nation's future, but instead are a "nightmare" to that future.²¹¹ Simultaneously, Rodríguez critiques neoliberal attempts to assign respectability to gay and lesbian families as being unable to address the social realities of many queers, yet is careful in thinking about the politicized meanings of these forms

²¹⁰ Queerbomb, "Queerbomb Manifesto," accessed October 3, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/pg/QBATX/about/?ref=page_internal.

²¹¹ Juana María Rodríguez, *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 35.

of family. Instead of rejecting family and kinship relations concerning the law and culture, Rodriguez advocates for not using them to seek recognition but instead herald them through queer gestures “to reduce harm, ameliorate violence, heal trauma, and change social conditions that create hierarchies of human value.”²¹² Instead of seeing queerness as a rejection of the social fabric, for Rodriguez queerness is a gesture where the “literal and the figurative copulate,” creating energy that twists social forces and changes the material world.²¹³

Echoing Rodriguez’s articulation of queer gestures, Queerbomb manipulates how energy and matter around normative kinship relations flow by queering the notion of family values. Emerging out of a controversy in which organizers positioned children and queer families as needing not only space, but protection, Queerbomb attempts to jam understandings of kinship, rather than outright rejecting normative families or the possibility of queer family. Queering the relational ties of family in a manner that attempts to sidestep children as the figure making family, and instead places both queer corporeality and coalitional interactions as the political figure to organize kinship around. Sexual in nature, but unlike Edelman's *jouissance*, the corporeal interaction of this public isn't built around shame or negativity and instead centers an intersectional logic in its politics.

In response to the exclusion of a Pride based in corporate culture, Queerbomb formed. Unlike the increasingly neoliberal nature of Austin Pride, which attempts to frame itself as apolitical, Queerbomb centers radical queer politics through community members and activists delivering speeches and performances. At a rally, various rhetors discuss queer activism, queer community building, support for queer youth, sexual freedom, in conjunction with racial,

²¹² Ibid., 48.

²¹³ Ibid., 4.

economic, and reproductive justice. Hence, a wider variety of exigencies impacting the LGBT community are addressed as the discussions that Queerbomb, as a public, is organized around. Creating a politic that weaves together queer, marxist, and feminist arguments to critique the corporatization and demobilization of Pride.

Immediately after this rally, bodies assemble and march down West Sixth Street, one of downtown Austin's most iconic and heavily trafficked streets—a capitalist space of white heteronormative bars. Queer women parade topless, others express themselves through carnivalesque outfits, glitter, transgressive drag, minimal to no clothing, and leather. While many of these forms of expression could be found at Austin Pride, many were also actively policed by AGLCC for not being family friendly and/or the possibility of alienating sponsors. Those not wearing extravagant or sexual outfits, instead donning “everyday” clothes, are of course, also welcome, including numerous families who push strollers and are accompanied by children. Despite differences, these factions move spatially together within the same modality. Sexually explicit props and signs accompany traditional rainbow apparel. Chants of “we’re here, we’re queer, we’re not going shopping!” fill the streets, challenging what participants see as Austin’s GLCC tethering queer identity to consumerism, corporate politics, and exclusion.

Upon finishing, Queerbomb's collective does not disperse to numerous gay bars, but instead gathers in a space where members collectively as a community dance together, drink, eat, and play. Music pulsates as the lights dim; people throw their heads back, hips a banging, dancing to the music. Promises of corporeal sexual exploration made earlier in the day become possible as the queer family celebrates sexual freedom in the confines of a space that many call the "best party of the year." And, then, just like that it's all over, becoming an ephemeral trace as the night comes to an end and partygoers disperse into the night.

Welcome To Queerbomb! Intersectional Articulations of Queer Family

Family values at Queerbomb were first turned on their head during a sweltering summer night in early June of 2010, when organizer, Silky Shoemaker, a subcultural performance artist, delivered the first inaugural Queerbomb rally speech. Donning a bedazzled velvet wizard cape, Shoemaker queered family as a term by asserting:

This night has been a long time coming. I'm so glad we're all here to celebrate our wild and beautiful queer identities. Tonight, we proclaim who we are and what we love, without shame or apology, or beer commercials. Pride is strength in what we love, and it is what we make it, together. And now we show Austin that we can make it without money or corporate sponsors or exclusionary tactics or billboards. Without fear of sex or bodies, of filth or poor people, without fear of speaking the truth. As "the Gays," we have an incredible lineage of radical lives on the line to exist in this world. To exist in flaming, exuberant queerness. Their struggles have paved the road we walk tonight. And when we take to the streets for Pride, we carry their torches in honor of the work they have done, the lives we have lost, and the work we still have left to do! Forty-one years ago, when the Stonewall Riots lit up the Lower East Side of Manhattan, no one apologized to their board of trustees afterwards. They did not consider themselves "too freaky" or "too vulgar" or "unsuitable for families." Even though that's exactly what the world wanted them to think. They were queers of color, they were trannies, they were activists and organizers. They were sex workers and drag queens and passing butches. They were backroom cocksuckers and bitter old queens and underage twinkles. They were drunks, loudmouths, and perverts – tired, disappointed, and angry. And they fought for their right to exist in just these ways, and more! (So, every time you see a bitter old queen at Charlie's, you can thank Sylvia Rivera.) They fought to be unapologetically extravagant in their queerness and irrepressible in their demands! We will be told again and again to make ourselves presentable, to hide behind closed doors, to button up, butch up, hush up, pay up – to sell out our values for mainstream acceptance. BUT this is wrong! And it's also BORING! They will say we should do it in the name of normalcy or decency or that it's the only way to get it done. And especially they will say, "Do it in the name of families." I'm reclaiming that word. (Again!) Because my family is built around respecting and honoring each other in our many facets, in the beauty and dignity of our varied experiences. And in this shared family we inherit a responsibility from the faggots and bulldaggers of yore, our flaming foremothers and forefathers.²¹⁴

²¹⁴ Shoemaker.

Shoemaker's address was organized around three major themes: the need to resist family friendly conservatism, reclamation of corporeal queerness as Stonewall's legacy, and the need to build coalitional solidarity within the community. While calling upon the past to establish a collective identity, Shoemaker also utilized that past to assert a universal queer kinship aiming to bridge overlapping differences (facets) while simultaneously honoring those differences. For Shoemaker, while shared history is principal to this kinship, it operates not only within memory, but also embodied acts tied to that past. In this section, I think about the use of the term family at Queerbomb and how it extends beyond a corporeal version of queerness concerned with what one's body does sexually with other bodies that break social norms, which is also linked to a version of queerness concerned with intersectional issues. Using the modality of a political rally engaged in centering voices normally not heard at Pride, Queerbomb's rally does not address Austin at large but instead operates as an enclaved cultural production site. To borrow words from Karma Chávez, Queerbomb's "rhetoric functions to build coalition and eventually compel social movement."²¹⁵ Through the modality of a political rally Queerbomb's articulation of queerness and queering family values goes far beyond acts of transgressive sexuality and gender deviance, though, positing queerness as an intersectional political orientation and attempting to imagine beyond stable identity categories.

One year after Shoemaker's inaugural Queerbomb rally speech, questions about what precisely the queer kinship Queerbomb was trying to articulate were present in the group's ongoing dialogue with AGLCC organizers. Due to remaining tensions, *The Austin Chronicle* held a sit down between the two groups entitled, "One Big Gay Happy Family?" During the

²¹⁵ Karma Chávez, "Counter-Public Enclaves and Understanding the Function of Rhetoric in Social Movement Coalition-Building," *Communication Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2011): 13.

discussion, different understandings of family values emerged amongst the participants with Queerbomb members using the terms "collective," "queer history," and "radical lineage" to define their conceptions of family. Silky Shoemaker once again emphasized that blood is not the ancestral lineage she makes decisions around, insisting "queer for me is rooted in that idea of the radical lineage of all of these amazing creatures that have come before and paved the way."

Fellow Queerbomber Matt Korn echoed this sentiment by arguing that changing liberation to Pride in "the 80s" left members of the queer family abandoned, by saying a certain "facet of our community should not have their voice heard and should not be allowed a platform." Rick Holmberg, a secretary for AGLCC, responded that no one was excluded but that there were conflicts around sexuality in front of children, and the organization struggled "with that a little bit." New AGLCC president Karen Thompson assessed that both groups wanted the same thing, that being unity: "We want all the community – your community's important to you; my chosen family is important to me. I move in lots of circles." At a surface level, queer family and kinship based on inclusion appeared to be a unifier for the two groups, with *The Austin Chronicle* asking the question: "Is this the dawn of one big gay happy family for Austin's LGBTQ community?" However, following this question differences amongst how members of these groups were utilizing these terms became clearer, after the *Chronicle* asked the panel "How do we all invite people into our different ways of being?" Thompson of AGLCC answered:

We want the community represented... but I want just to address the "family-friendly" very quickly; there is a whole group of our community that is not being given the respect that they deserve. Parenting children as a gay couple, however that happens, or as a single GLBTQ person is one of the bravest things that a person can do.

Shoemaker responded to this usage by articulating "transgressive queers of the past" as part of her family, and that "family-friendly" shouldn't only mean "kids," as "there are elements of celebrating queer lifestyle that don't need to involve kids."²¹⁶

Reflected in the *Chronicle's* panel is an ideological divide that has been omnipresent in queer organizing, long before the formation of a marketized gay identity, over what queerness means concerning kinship formations. In *Families We Choose*, Kath Weston tracks American discourses of national belonging that have historically *framed* gays and lesbians as exiles incapable of kinship. For Weston, this discourse was challenged in the wake of the AIDS epidemic, as a redemptive discourse around chosen family emerged, recognizing and generating visible alternative queer kinship practices.²¹⁷ For the last two decades, significant constituencies of gays and lesbians petitioning for same-sex marriage rights have dominated mainstream legal, political, and cultural activism. This struggle for state recognition of LGBTQ kinship structures, through normative citizenship frameworks, have provoked an extensive series of critiques in queer theory and activism. In response to this trend, many have envisioned that queers once rejected these ties and now are embracing them due to acceptance by the free-market and nation-state. Queerbomb simply makes public an already growing divide emphasized by the formation of a gay market, as business interests add another force that envisions only some bodies as family friendly within Pride celebrations. The consequence is that members of the community whose bodily needs and identities cannot be articulated through the free-market and the nation-state have begun to mobilize their own spaces, away from forces of the dominant social order.

²¹⁶ Kate Messer, "One Big Gay Happy Family?" *The Austin Chronicle*, June 3, 2011, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/features/2011-06-03/queerbomb-pride-roundtable-extended-remix/>.

²¹⁷ Kath Weston, *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 43.

However, as my previous chapter indicated, these debates concerning queer ways of life, expressions of Pride, and who should be involved in Pride are not new. Since the beginning of gay liberation, community members have fought over transgressive displays and angry political rhetoric; nor are queers raising children new. As Rodriguez emphasizes in her critique of Edelman, although queers have been framed as anti-social, “queers have always raised, loved, and cohabitated with children.”²¹⁸ So, while in the contemporary moment the formation of the gay market and rise of urban entrepreneurialism have reworked material organizing practices of Pride events, the family is still central in Queerbomb’s contestation with AGLCC due to the long-standing history in which queer subjects have been viewed as the anthesis of kinship. Suggesting, access to public space was being limited through corporatized hands due to remnants of the historical abjection queers have faced from normative kinship ties, as organizers wanted to also make Pride a place where one’s biological/legal family could come and not be uncomfortable with public expression of sexuality found in queer kinships. In prioritizing these forms of kinship whether to keep sponsors happy or biological families comfortable, queers who have fostered alternative forms of kinship once again faced a devaluation of their subcultural construction of family.

To contest family being articulated only in connection with normative notions of kinship, Queerbomb embraces these abject sexualities and gender embodiments as the corporeal ties for their articulation of family values. The rhetoric of Queerbomb’s family values is based upon the queerness of what one’s body does to and with other bodies that break social norms, along with the shared experience of breaking these norms. Seeing corporate involvement further engage in a policing of decorum and sexuality of the queer body is a paradox for those at Queerbomb

²¹⁸ Rodriguez., 40

concerning what Pride and queerness is; for these corporeal queers the essence of their queerness is a corporeal relationality, a kinship built around the shared copulation of nonreproductive bodies, and around this kinship circulates a variety of other kinships that violate the heterosexual arrangement of society. In this sense, the corporeality Queerbomb puts forward fits into Edelman's description of queerness as an "energy of resistance" that unravels the gendered/sexual/national identities articulated within family values through jouissance.²¹⁹ However, instead of attempting to tear apart the social fabric through which the political can be articulated by engaging with negativity, the corporeal queerness of Queerbomb is relational in how it engages political struggles at its rally, aiming to bridge the energy of queerness to other struggles tied to class, race, and immigration status. This sense of family articulated by Queerbomb doesn't assert that familial connections are wrong, but instead adds these struggles as connected to its corporeal articulation of family.

Looking at past promotional material for Queerbomb's rally reveals that the group invokes family beyond debates about sexuality, and it does not believe in embracing negativity, shame, or self-destruction. Instead, the group continually asks the question: "Who is Queerbomb?" to show queerness as a coalitional orientation. A 2015 promotional video for the group answers "Who is Queerbomb?" by giving an answer that is multifaceted. Rather than simply avowing the LGBTQ community, every organization participating at Queerbomb is introduced in a one-minute time frame, including: Texas Freedom Network, Austin's City Health Department, Outsider Fest, Afro-Gender-Queer, Central TX Women's Community Center, Mankind Project, Love is Respect, Queer People of Color and Allies, Planned Parenthood, The Q Austin, along with numerous others appearing. These groups are shown playfully interacting,

²¹⁹ Edelman, 19.

dancing, frolicking, and rolling in the grass, and the video concludes when they proclaim in unison: “WE ARE QUEERBOMB!”²²⁰ Much of the group's promotional materials follow a similar message, emphasizing that Queerbomb is a non-hierarchical group comprised of a collective family not tied together by biology or a singular identity, yet still working together to nourish each other.

A video of the 2015 rally demonstrates Queerbomb's effort to construct a political imaginary that re-hitches queerness to precarity of queers of color and the undocumented, and to consider the matter and meaning of these queer struggles. During this rally Sheridan Aguirre, an undocumented queer filmmaker and immigrant rights organizer, introduced Somma, a queer immigrant facing imminent deportation. After sharing Somma's story, the Queerbomb collective followed Aguirre in a call and response, yelling: "Undocumented!" "Unafraid!" "Queer! Queer! Queer!" "Unashamed!" Aguirre then told the audience that "shit is going to go down this week; we are going to need all of your help to keep Somma here." Similarly, Khattie Q, a queer Puerto Rican performer, shared experiences of being the only person of color at Pride events. Pictured below (figure one) is Khattie, as she asks tearfully "How can we get these communities together to unite? Because I'm tired of being forced to separate myself." Responding to her question, many audience members, who are white, wipe tears from their eyes (figure two).

²²⁰ “Queerbomb 2015,” YouTube, 2:21, a promotional video May 26, 2016, posted by “QueerBomb ATX,” November 30, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DGw-XyI5zo&t=10s>.

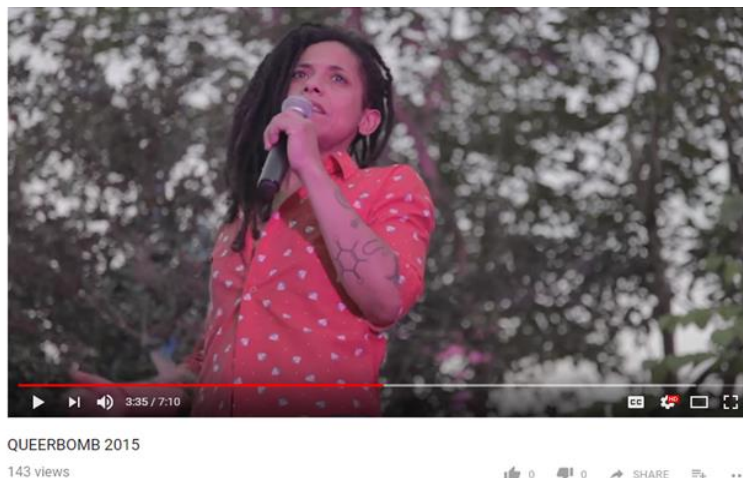


Figure One (Khattie's Speech)

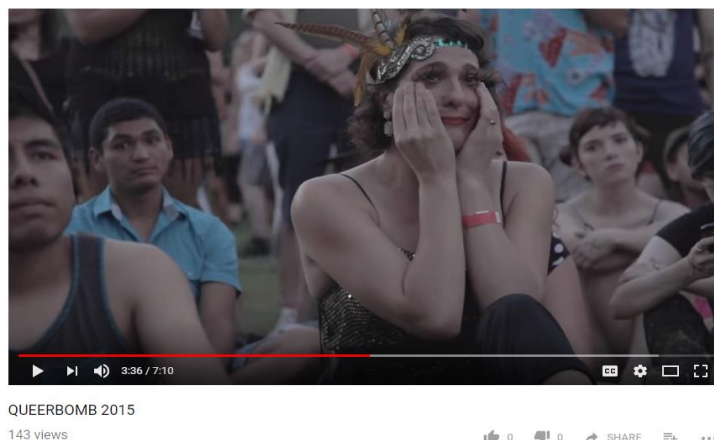


Figure Two (Woman Wiping Tears from Eyes)

In this example, Queerbomb's assembly fosters the development of queer bonds by engaging collectivity without relying on assumptions of a shared singular identity or on queerness as embodied sexual negativity. This example also shows struggles that normally wouldn't be heard at a Pride modally organized in line with commerce, as stage time for the rally at Austin Pride often consists of reality television celebrities from *The Real Housewives*, who typically lack the lived standpoint of those at the margins of queer struggle. Instead, what is

shared amongst these kinship bonds is an articulation of queer family based around the search for a new political direction, a bond formed by a shared desire to create and transform the social fabric. A chosen family who believes in a resistant imaginary, which intervenes into memory, interrupting the ways members of the community imagine each other and witness political obligations. A queer imaginary that creates community and cooperation not just in the face of political, economic, and cultural oppression by heterosexual society at large but also recognizes intergroup differences to forge solidarity.

Upon arriving at the Queerbomb rally, I noticed organic possibilities of queer solidarity; queer parents push a stroller of tiny tots next to a drag queen in six-inch leather stiletto boots walking her bulldog—a non-human progeny. Punk rockers with piercings dance with suburban moms. A leatherman walks together in hand with a man in a flowing bridal gown, while a young twink shares a cigarette with a man in his seventies. A vast array of bodies engaging with each other, comprising a large ever growing queer family who might come to understand each other's struggles. Organizers assured that Queerbomb was not anti-Pride, "but something else entirely, an open forum." At first, I wasn't quite sure what this organizer meant. In what way was it an open forum in a way that Austin Pride wasn't? While listening to rally speeches, it became apparent that the rhetoric of various Queerbomb speakers opened up an inventional space: where the transformation of ideas, relationships, and emotional bonds beyond Pride in gay identity became apparent. Of the six speakers I listened to, all were concerned with conditions of livability beyond the axes of sexuality and gender, using those axes as just an entry point to discuss the needs of embodied lives that cannot be separated. Despite rampant precarity, all the issues spoken on at Queerbomb increasingly have faced difficulty in accessing a space to publicly speak and express precarity due to the gay market's assumption that the collective

LGBTQ community is affluent, nor would marketers target those without a disposable income. In addition, the space to speak about these issues is marketized at Austin Pride, leading to non-profits and activist groups having to buy space to appear. Kinships flourishing at Queerbomb function to perform coalitional work that integrates the intersections of queerness into the political work of an assembly such as Pride, aiming to reconnect lines of sexuality with those of race, class, gender, and nationality to build solidarity within an assembly.

During my time at the political rally, I was instructed by speakers to find those different from me and to engage in activities and conversations about the local Austin community. Speakers from various embodied social locations told me about their material concerns connected to their lived identities. These included livable wages, deportation, access to healthcare. We were instructed to think about ways identity politics narrowly define us, yet reminded that identities matter. Here, kinships formed based in a political vision that wasn't identity focused, and while brief in interaction functioned as the base for making friends with strangers and forming networks to organize around. In conversation we searched for locations of connection. For brief moments, the kinship relationships I saw forming at Queerbomb emphasized the still-undiscovered utility of queerness's potentiality, regarding what it might allow us to not only think but live. Various community members I talked to applied queer intersectionality not as an analytic, theory, or method but as a commitment to dreaming, wondering, and imagining while demanding action now for justice.

Still not everyone at Queerbomb was dreaming in this fashion, as many arrived well after the rally and without an interest in coalition building. A group of gay men in their mid-20's invited me to come and sit with them. As I explained my interest in Queerbomb, a tall, white, blue-eyed, tech industry bro asked: "What do you mean this event is anti-corporate?" Fervent

amongst the group was an understanding that this event was just another version of Pride, one that they preferred over Austin Pride because it “contained a trace of sex.” While the enclaved cultural production of Queerbomb contains multitudes of potential, as a modality its inward orientation in centering an intersectional articulation of queerness risked failing to hear more than its pro-sexual freedom message. This is not to say that the inward engagement of the rally didn’t do important work, but that the impact of coalitional activity at the Queerbomb rally was unevenly experienced by the large masses that arrived late. Queerbomb has more than one modality in which it goes public, and the late arrivals indicate a disconnect between modes of engagement and who those engagements serve. So, while many came late and did not arrive for intersectional thought, by being within the same proximity as those advocating for an intersectional vision there was the hope organic interaction might occur with the possibility of moving consciousness.

It’s Time to March! Queer Collectivity and the Alteration of Public Space

At the first Queerbomb, Silky Shoemaker finished her rally speech and kick-started the march by stating:

When I think about Queerbomb, I think about us making Big Gay Love, Out On The Streets! To honor our history and build a future. To bridge and overlap movements for freedom and justice and good looks. In the words of Sylvester, "You make me feel mighty real!" Let's march!!²²¹

After a brief pause, the bodies already assembled in the street began to move together, shifting from a political assembly to a different form of assembly, one that enacted Shoemaker’s message. 1,500 people marched in unity, displaying a wide multitude of queer bodies moving through the streets and attracting attention. Rolling through Austin, Queerbomb marched on the

²²¹ Shoemaker.

most heterosexual and capitalist space in the city: West Sixth Street. Stopping traffic and forcing onlookers to recognize queer people in their midst; celebrating each other and making queer space for themselves. In this section, I work through the march and how it creates collectivity amongst its members to harnesses power to alter space. While Queerbomb is certainly full of possibility, I pinpoint a limitation within its performance concerning the politics this large collective is able to perform.

Several things make Queerbomb marches different than Pride parades organized by AGLCC. Most importantly, it being free to participate means those facing various queer precarities represent themselves, as anyone regardless of class status can participate, rather than be represented by a bank, tech company, or car dealership. Accessibility with Queerbomb's march is essential for creating synchronized action that might enact the collective solidarity articulated by the political message of the rally that predated it, meaning the march as a mode of public engagement indexes the modal promises of the rally. Essentially, the collectivity the march exercises, performs that which the rally asks of the community: collective unity built in solidarity; made possible by marching in the streets. This mode of marching follows Judith Butler's notion of performativity making a collective unit come into being through exercising collectivity itself. *In Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Butler writes:

To be a participant in politics, to become part of concerted and collective action, one need not only make the claim for equality (equal rights, equal treatment) but one needs to act and petition within the terms of equality, as an actor on equal standing with others. In that way the communities on the streets that assemble on the streets to enact another idea of equality, freedom, and justice than the one that they oppose. The "I" is thus at once a "we," without being fused into an impossible unity. To be a political actor is a function, a feature of acting on terms of equality with other humans.²²²

²²² Butler, 52.

In this passage, is an emphasis on social change actors having an equal footing, as it is through this experience of learning to share power that one might learn solidarity. Corporate involvement at Pride limits the possibility of such a queer collective, because those unable to access space are impaired in their ability to configure alliance with others. Through the logic of the performative, the first step in creating coalition is moving together as one, in hopes that movement will take the group to an actuality of community not quite present yet. However, before the Queerbomb march, coalitional work at the rally focused explicitly on negotiating understandings of solidarity, meaning that rhetoric is needed to articulate a cause for which to march and form community around. With the hope that through the march, that which was articulated at the rally might be rendered possible as solidarity is always a practice and cannot be imagined without equal access to space were through repetition, such a practice might be learned beyond rhetorical invocation.

Beyond creating a collective, a second function is performed through the mode of marching in public, a mode concerned not just with community building but also the queering of space. In her 2013 post Queerbomb speech, Austin's premier "It Girl" music act, Ursula Lucadevic crumpled up a speech she had previously written, choosing instead to speak to the present power of marching together. Asking: "do you think I walk down West Sixth often? I don't ever. So, to walk with you all. I don't know what to say, my legs are shaking." Lucadevic then proceeded to cry, thanking everyone for the experience.²²³ This reaction is not unique as Sixth Street is an entertainment district frequented by Austin tourists, and has become a symbol of and ground zero for gentrification and urban entrepreneurialism in Austin, the effects of which

²²³ "Queerbomb 2013," YouTube, 7:13, a promotional video May 4, 2014, posted by "QueerBomb ATX," November 30, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DGw-XyI5zo&t=10s>.

have been disproportionately precarious in their impacts on queer people of color, the homeless, and the working-class. Space constituted while marching revealed what these groups had in common: they wanted a space to be themselves publicly, without being told how they had to look and act, to express themselves, to express vulnerability caused by recent changes to the city and begin a demand for conditions of livability. Austin Pride being commercialized, not being free or inclusive, creating a parade oscillating from a tourist space to gay bars in its celebration of community inhibited the possibility of marginalized bodies to engage in contesting local exigencies that had not only shrunken queer public spheres but made life even more precarious. Through cultural performance, these bodies rhetorically communicated that space is always politicized, and that it matters where a collective moves and who is given access to this movement. On the politicization of the transformation of space, Butler writes:

So the limits of the political are exposed and the link between the theater of legitimacy and the public space is severed; the theater is no longer unproblematically housed in public space, since the public space now occurs in the midst of another action, one that displaces the power that claims legitimacy precisely by taking over the field of its effects. Simply put, the bodies on the street redeploy the space of appearance in order to contest and negate the existing form of political legitimacy—just as they sometimes fill or take over public space, the material history of those structures also works on them, becoming part of their very action, remaking a history in the midst of its most concrete and sedimented artifices.²²⁴

Queerbomb aims to remake the concrete history of the city by marching on West Sixth Street, as Sixth street materially and symbolically represents the impact urban entrepreneurialism has had on Austin, as a site of consumption activities and economic forces impacting queer lives in Austin. Ventures such as West Sixth are connected to changes at Pride, that focus on tourist dollars and those of middle class queers rather than precarity of the local community. Marching on it functions as an attempt to not only frame that space as materially connected to community

²²⁴ Ibid., 95.

problems, but to challenge those material conditions themselves. In this instance, marching as a collective isn't just a means to insert a message into the public sphere, it is a hope to change spaces of the public sphere that have been privatized; becoming sites of harm in the contemporary moment.

During my time at Queerbomb, the importance of politicizing this space was made evident after a hot humid Texas afternoon cooked up a thunderous storm. As the wind howled, thunder boomed, and the rain poured, bodies huddled in the shelter at Fair Market, yet stayed in place, ready to march. Delayed for over an hour by the weather, many around me worried we wouldn't be able to march at all. Finally, a break came in the storm, and we began to move onto the street. As we took off drag performer and procession leader Paul Soileau, scantily clad and prancing through the street, yelled into a megaphone: "When I think of QueerBomb, I think of us all making love: BIG GAY LOVE out on the streets! I'm so proud to march with you all; my family tonight. Now queer family, let's march on to West Sixth and show them what a real Texas party looks like!" Soileau's words echoed Shoemaker's inaugural Queerbomb speech, and as we marched through the streets, chants of "BIG GAY LOVE!" OUT ON THE STREETS!" began to echo amongst ourselves.

Slowly, we moved through various parts of the city as a collective; many of the bodies comprising the collective, normally, might worry about moving queerly in public, but marching with other bodies negated this apprehension. Onlookers ran to examine the commotion that was occurring, giving high fives to those passing by. As it continued to drizzle, a group of drag queens began to collectively sing the classic Barbra Streisand ballad, "Don't Rain on My Parade." Queerbomb oscillated across spaces, moving from the mode of a rather intimate political rally to moving loudly and proudly through publics at large. However, before we made

it to Sixth Street, the storm regained its bearings and for our safety the march was stopped by the police who re-routed the collective back to Fair Market, the site of the rally.

If there was one universal comment I heard at Queerbomb, it was a widespread disappointment over the inability to march onto West Sixth Street, demonstrating the importance for many in severing previous relations with that space during the act of assembly or protest. However, this commentary revealed two competing understandings of the collectivity Queerbomb was organized around and the queering of space. An unrecognized tension arose, within the flow of the event, between a collectivity organized around queerness as a corporeal relation and those who viewed it as always intersectional. Here, the corporeal relation was the feeling of collectivity that is connected to the sexual culture the event creates through affective immersion, which inspires, moves, and transports bodies without necessarily engaging in articulating a clear political ideology. Recent work, at the intersection of affect studies and the embodied experience of rhetoric indicates that collective immersion can lead to temporary passivity of political difference due to the affective intensities of collectivity.²²⁵ Intersectionality is of course always embodied, my concern with Queerbomb's march is that the feeling and corporeal expressivity experienced while marching in the collective is left ambiguous to many marchers, without any critical heuristics to work through thoughts and feelings concerning what solidarity might entail. Bodies at Queerbomb are certainly engaged in a coalitional alliance by queering the spaces they moved through, embodying larger struggles of race, class, and gender that centering a marketized gay identity has failed to encapsulate; that private interests hinder from appearing in the space of appearance at Pride events. Still, missing within the march is the

²²⁵ Erin Rand, "'What One Voice can do': Civic Pedagogy and Choric Collectivity at Camp Courage," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2014): 28-51; Dana Cloud and Kathleen Feyh, "Reason in Revolt: Emotional Fidelity and Working Class Standpoint in the 'Internationale,'" *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (2015): 300-323.

deconstructive work of how intersections matter concerning how those marching are not all the same in their struggle.

Despite the centering of marginalized voices at the rally, it is important to remember that only a few hundred people attended to engage in coalition building expressing concerns about racism, classism, and transphobia. It wasn't until a half-hour before the march was scheduled to depart that thousands came to march and party, indicating the success of Queerbomb's queer public culture was based in modalities creating affective experience rather than coalitional engagement. Many of these late comers expressed disdain for not being able "to upset straight people" or march into "the symbolic heart of the hetero-patriarchy," rather than voicing many of the intersectional critiques heard earlier at the rally. This sentiment was also reflected in a piece published on Queerbomb, a few days before the march, chronicling the rising cost of the event and its continued growth:

For many attendees, it's the sashay down Dirty Sixth – the 'straightest street in Austin,' as a Queerbomb speaker once put it – that makes the event so powerful. If the procession were rerouted, organizers fear the event would lose value. 'The heart of Queerbomb is the march because it's all about visibility,' says Brian Zabcik, another new volunteer who previously worked with AIDS activist organization ACT UP. 'It's forcing the [straight] world to look out and see the queer community, it doesn't make sense to have a march if no one sees it.'²²⁶

In this coverage, there is an unevenness concerning what exactly is being made visible through Queerbomb's mode of invading the space of Sixth Street. There are other issues besides heterosexism at play, as capitalism and racism have been omnipresent in changing Austin's geospatial arrangement; yet, commentary on those issues is absent from news coverage of the march. To queer Pride for those at the axes of race, class, and nationality did not appear to be a significant factor in many white middle-class queer people's decision to attend Queerbomb.

²²⁶ Marloff.

Thus, while critical coalition building happens through Queerbomb's march, a sizeable portion of its contingent falls short in employing the essential intersectional work necessary for articulating a counter to numerous problems connected to corporate-Pride. In this sense, the collective excitement of marching in Queerbomb's processional modality functions as a double-edged sword; enabling the group to recruit bodies that contest material changes happening in Austin, yet, while these bodies are present and do contest space, they might not engage in the critical labor necessary for critiquing intersecting vectors of power.

Bodies assembling, gesturing, and moving through space together indeed might create relationalities of queer intimacy that challenge heteronormativity and its intertwined oppressions; still, this collectivity does not guarantee that the queer publicity it generates will not also be limited to a single-identity framework. The collective ties moving bodies together, for many Queerbombers, wasn't the need for an intersectional form of relating but was instead the culturally performative work of moving in an assembly focused on articulating desire in non-heteronormative ways. Many at Queerbomb are susceptible to Cathy Cohen's critique concerning queer activism tending to engage in "a single-oppression framework that misrepresents the distribution of power within and outside gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities, and therefore limit the comprehensive and transformative character of queer politics."²²⁷ Critiquing these single framework tendencies is not to discredit the possibility of queer world-making, but that attention is needed concerning how the mode through which the publicity around Queerbomb's message moves is essential in shaping understandings of queer politics.

²²⁷ Cohen, 439-440.

To create an assembly that is both collective in solidarity and reconfigures space through counterpublic activity, multiple modes of public engagement are needed. The modality of Queerbomb's rally rhetorically voiced coalitional possibilities, while the embodied act of moving in a collective performed this action. Embodied space might be a site to organize within, but consideration of the multiple modes of public engagement that index and move amongst each other are necessary for creating transformative politics. If I had only attended Queerbomb's march, there is a strong likelihood that I would have experienced moving through the street differently, thinking only about queerness in a corporeally sexual, single-identity stance rather than intersectional. A similar problem has plagued past Pride events, as collectivity is valued over deconstructing difference, as the unity of a march while coalitional, risks not engaging in the ways that differences matter inside a coalition.

The After-Party: Recruitment and Queer Utopia

Running through the rain, the collective made its way back to our starting point at Fair Market. Instead of dispersing to numerous bars in Austin's gay neighborhood on 4th Street we all gathered in the large pavilion we hid from the storm in, breaking from the routine of Austin's official gay Pride parade. Within the same space the community ate, drank, and played with each other. Promises of corporeal exploration asserted earlier in the day are made possible, as I witness a dance floor full of queers from all walks of life moving with each other. Queerbomb, for many, is first and foremost about this moment, repeatedly described as "the best party of the year!" by most of its attendees. Writing about radical activist worldmaking spaces that organize the DIY punk community to do instrumental activist work, Ryan Bince has recently presented the notion of a party modality, as a "double-entendre that can signify both a gathering of bodies for fun, conversation, network building, or the construction of affective alliances and an

expressly political, organized group of like-minded people bent on accomplishing some particular goal."²²⁸ To some extent, this double entendre is at work in Queerbomb's recruitment efforts, as people come for the party, allowing them to be exposed to coalitional work at the margins of queerness absent from a Pride comprised of commerce. People who come to this queer party, inadvertently, have the possibility of being exposed to critical messages that they might not otherwise hear at Austin Pride, meaning that despite some of Queerbomb's limitations it still holds the possibility for engaging in a war of position that slowly readies larger critical and instrumental work.

Within Queerbomb's disco party, I found myself challenged by ordinary moments that I wouldn't have imagined leading me to ponder the limitations of me. At one point, Sylvester's "You Make Me Feel Mighty Real," blares to an eclectic mix of bodies, indicating that which has been made real: a coalitional possibility altering forms of kinship and the spatial routines of Austin. For several factions of the community, this is one of the few spaces in Austin they have to publicly explore the corporeality of their queerness. Distinctly, I noticed queer women getting down on the floor, hypnotically moving with each other; rather than gay men dominating the dance floor, these women—some fem and others butch--danced in ways that were foreign to me. Throughout my time at Queerbomb, queer women discussed the lack of space to engage with other queer women in Austin, due to the lack of not having even a single bar or other space catering to and welcoming queer women. Dancing, these women forced me to consider my own positionality and privilege as their collective movement was something new and exciting to watch, creating a sort of provisional unexpectedness. I realize this is the first time

²²⁸ Ryan Bince, "Getting Out of the Basement: Space, Performance, and the Oscillation of DIY Punk Publics," *ProQuest Dissertations Publishing* (2017), 62.

I have ever been in a space with this many queer women, that the gay bars I have spent my early twenties in are not a space frequented by queer women, nor, likely have they been friendly to queer women. I hadn't had to grapple with the fact that queer women, of course, also have an investment in pressing, jamming, and reorienting their bodies together.

Here, within circuits of pleasure, my reaction to these performances was not entirely subversive (I shouldn't have been surprised to begin with), but something evidently political happened to my consciousness on the dance floor. For Rodriguez, such sexual embodiments are an opportunity not to reject politics, but to make the appearance of politics evident in our ordinary everyday lives, as:

Queer makes the sexual and social meanings that surround bodies and gestures appear. It should not surprise us that these meanings are often steeped in narratives of heterosexual gender and heteronormative sexuality barely tinted or boldly coated through figures of racialization; these are the discourses, images, and performative acts that hail us as subjects.²²⁹

These queer women dancing are etched into my mind, I think, in part, because they made me recognize my own subjectivity, and that my subjectivity is limited in understanding the lives, desires, and needs of others. Differences matter, and by attempting to produce a cultural site inclusive for the entire community, Queerbomb creates a space where understandings of difference might organically arise. The *queer* and *bomb* in Queerbomb function as the possibility of exploding conventional categories of understanding through the space of coalition.

Because I was challenged at Queerbomb's party space, I believe it provides the opportunity for people to get together and openly share experiences that offer a glimmer of what might be called queer utopia. It is wise to heed José Muñoz's reminder that "Queerness is not yet

²²⁹ Rodriguez, 136.

here... We have never been queer,” as “queerness is a *mode* of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present.”²³⁰ One can depart from where one is, but only through modes of engagement that involve moving with others. Queerbomb’s party modality might function to enable a desiring based around publicly imagining a queer future, but it will require continuous public engagement through other modalities that are less ephemeral in structure to make such a future possible.

Conclusion: Rethinking Counterpublic Emancipation

Queerbomb attempts to keep Austin and Pride queer by gripping the material practices that touch the lives of many in Austin’s community while also attempting to create a space that fosters utopian longings, whose party might pull us toward other futures. Exploring both these functions, this chapter ventured through modalities to understand Queerbomb’s social movement activity; as a single organization, Queerbomb doesn’t go public in just a singular way but instead oscillates between the modes of rally, march, and party. Within these modes the group articulates two overlapping yet unevenly positioned versions of queerness, one of corporeal expressivity and the other of intersectional imagination. I demonstrated that at specific points the mode that Queerbomb is engaged in determines which of these articulations goes public, meaning that different audiences and members captured within public engagement might unevenly favor one articulation of a queer message based on oscillation in relation to mode. In Queerbomb’s case, this occurs in the oscillation between coalitional activity and queering publics at large.

Nancy Fraser famously articulated that it is precisely in the oscillation between the modes of “withdrawal and regroupment” and “activities directed toward wider publics” that the

²³⁰ Muñoz, 1, emphasis added.

“emancipatory potential” of counterpublicity resides.²³¹ Fraser is, of course, right to think about emancipatory potential as being directed to wider publics; yet, if we think about Queerbomb’s activities it becomes clear that intergroup negotiations that are produced through slightly different modes, modes that are inward, must also be viewed as having emancipatory potential. The way that intersectional articulations of queerness might be displaced at Queerbomb through the mode of a march and activities directed toward wider publics, shares many similarities with the course of action numerous metropolitan Pride events in the United States have taken. To keep Austin queer’d, it will require not just a free Pride, but recognizing the helpfulness of multiple modalities indexing each other to engage in multiple forms of rhetorical action that perform the act of queer world-making.

²³¹ Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” 124.

Conclusion: The Possibilities and Limitations of Assemblies

Currently, in the shadow of Donald Trump's election as the 45th president of the United States, the inauguration, along with the year preceding it, have been marked by women taking to the streets, protests rallying against national profiling at airports, and students shutting down white supremacist speakers. In short, there has been a trend of people showing up for issues that don't always directly and materially impact their lived identities. Inspired by the success of the Women's March, in many cities Pride celebrations were recalibrated away from corporate forms of organizing, allowing everyday people to join in marches without having to pay to enter. Organizers of numerous marches disseminated the message that these marches were focused on moving Pride away from a commercialized atmosphere, by centering intersectional concerns of those lives at the margins of race, class, nationality, and sexuality within the contemporary moment of crisis. Ultimately, a tension arose, though, because many arrived and participated not only because they were concerned for the precarity of disproportionately injured bodies, but also because of the public culture and connection the event fostered. Experiencing a performance of collectivity, of course, doesn't automatically entail a rejection of engaging in structural political critique but as this thesis has demonstrated balancing the affective power of collectivity with tactical critique is challenging.

Stephen Ross, a blogger for *Out*, experienced this frustration while attending a grassroots Pride in D.C. Following the event, Ross wrote a piece complaining that the Washington D.C. march lacked militant spirit because people prioritized the "Pride festival," a "Miley Cyrus concert," and various "corporate parties" over the march; worse yet, many of those who did

come were only interested “in having fun.”²³² Ross’s solution: “let’s keep Pride prideful, and have resistance events at another time... We needed marchers to shout and not be distracted by competing events and parties.”²³³ While in no way does it occur to Ross that perhaps commercial endeavors should be put on hold, Ross’s framing reveals the difficulty of organizing large collectives focused on addressing intersectional issues but who recruit members to their cause through performative spectacle. In the case of Pride events, there has been a long-standing cultural debate about whether Pride events are a celebration or a political demonstration, with such binary thinking reductively placing Pride events as needing to be either explicitly targeting governmental apparatuses, culture at large, or inter-movement expressivity exclusively. For instance, after many contingents displayed carefree intercommunity celebration at San Francisco’s 1974 Gay Freedom Day March, the *San Francisco Chronicle* pondered whether “gays and lesbians had given up radical action?”²³⁴ Organizational infights amongst grassroots political leaders leading up to Stonewall’s 25th anniversary in 1994, prompted *Advocate* columnist Mary Breslauer to pessimistically write that Pride “now graphically symbolizes our inability to organize in masse for anything but a party.”²³⁵ Most recently, a sign displayed at the Los Angeles Resist March proclaiming: “If Hillary Had Won, We’d Be at Brunch Right Now,” prompted think pieces wondering when Pride had become annotated by a collective belief that the event was supposed to be a party absent of politics; that the event should have been political no matter who had won the election.²³⁶

²³² Steven Ross, “Forcing Us To Decide Between Pride & Protest Was A Big Mistake,” *Out*, June 16, 2017, <https://outbuzz.com/pride-protest-washington-dc>.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Quoted in McFarland Bruce, 226.

²³⁵ Mary Breslauer, “Another Weekend Lost,” *The Advocate*, February 22, 1994, 5.

²³⁶ Jim Patnoudes, “Hillary Clinton Was Not the Lesser Evil, and This Image is Every Reason Why,” *WeAreMedia*, June 14, 2017, <http://wearethedia.tv/opinion/2017/opinion-hillary-clinton-not-lesser-evil-image-every-reason/>.

While critiquing the anti-intersectional tendencies present within a massive public gathering of gays and lesbians only focused on grand narratives of celebration is essential, as these narratives engage in masking struggles at the margins, it is vital to theorize how the evocative feelings of unity within these large public gatherings might be incorporated into and amplify a more critical politic. Failing to gauge the importance of corporeality, risks continuing to support the logic behind the "If Hillary had won" sign, by positing that expressions of pleasure are inadequate and separate from critiquing structural inequities. Of course, vast, celebration is a rhetorical and performative apparatus that often enables inter-group discrepancies to be brushed over, despite their matter and meaning. However, embracing collectivity is vital for engaging in transformative politics, as transformation occurs not through identity but through creating a collective performance, an assembly that practices solidarity. The tension becomes, how do we balance the critical work of rupturing hegemonies, without stifling the corporeal feelings evoked by collectivity, feelings that are needed to construct a political imagination that moves bodies.

The story I have told in these last two chapters reflects this tension, illustrated directly by the complex ways that different factions come to move together within a mode of public engagement. Political action conducted through acts of collectivity are not just comprised of large bodies publicly engaging, petitioning, and resisting culture and the state, as such collectives also entail engagement amongst factions that constitute an assembly when going public. Chapter One discussed how despite claims of both unity and radicalism in the history of Pride, it has never been an entirely unified modality, implying that the formation of a gay market along with neoliberal discourses of mainstream acceptance are just one root in a massive rhizome of harms, erasures, and coalitional failures at Pride. Despite problems associated with corporate Pride not being new, corporate culture hinders accessibility and articulates gay identity in a manner that

severely limits the ability of the LGBTQ movement to engage intersectional struggles. Chapter Two demonstrated that DIY Pride assemblies can resist corporatization and that considering the mode of engagement they use is helpful for thinking about how Pride events already do and should continue to perform a multitude of public functions. In this conclusion, I summarize critical tensions around modes of going public and queer public memory at play in this thesis regarding the pressures occurring within assemblies and how they make their message public. I suggest that those interested in the rhetorical power of collectivity pay more attention to socio-political forces that foster such performances along with the multiple modes of public engagement occurring within collectives. In working through these tensions, I directly answer the three research questions asked at the beginning of this thesis.

Modes of Going Public: The Multifaceted Nature of World-Making

Since the first Christopher Street Liberation Day March, organizers have long debated what precisely the diverse sets of bodies taking to the streets were organizing around. Early on, identity won favor due to a variety of socio-political influences, as activists viewed asserting a public identity as the primary means for emancipation. In his seminal essay “Capitalism and Gay Identity,” John D’Emilio recognized that gay identity owes its emergence to industrial capitalism in urban geospatial locations during the 19th and 20th centuries, as economic patterns of labor, mobility, and migration outside of the family unit created the opportunity for the collective emergence of new sexual identities; as these conditions created the possibility for these identities to be avowed positively and publicly.²³⁷ D’Emilio’s essay is helpful for thinking about why identity construction became a primary means through which Pride events publicly asserted identity as a positive force, as through this context what D’Emilio terms “affectiveal

²³⁷ D’Emilio, *Making Trouble*, 3-17.

communities" were made possible. Supporting this new-found sense of community was linked to building networks organized around shared identity, hoping that the ties of these networks would limit vulnerability by challenging how culture and the state made queer life one of extreme precarity.

In my introduction, I asked, "what do resistance assemblies teach us about the erasures, harms, and constraints of corporate involvement at Pride?" While D'Emilio is correct in recognizing the ways that capitalism has explicitly helped white cis-gender gay male communities come into being, there are limitations to who can be included in public gatherings based on affirming queer identity. This project emphasized how those with various intersecting queer identities have not benefited from commercial involvement at Pride, and that in particular marketization places constraints on the political imagination of Pride events as a consumer version of identity fails to encapsulate the socio-political realities of those marginalized by intersecting forms of oppression. Marketized political parades fail to recognize those subjects whose material lives are not and cannot be represented by free market-based sponsorship. Further, the strings attached to these corporations' sponsorship in many cases chills the ability for marginalized voices to be heard; as corporations' main material interest in participating is making a profit, and not appearing next to contingents criticizing culture and the state. Hence, corporate involvement puts roadblocks on access points to public space and the politicization of that space, making some Pride events *no longer* an assembly *formed by* the public appearance and expression of vulnerability by disproportionately injured bodies, where solidarity can be learned through continuous persistence; a hope that collective gathering might foster more sustainable performances of recognition and shared livability.

Second, I asked, “what about the rhetoric and performance of grassroots DIY Pride assemblies create a scene that is different than Pride events with a corporatized culture?” There are two fundamental aspects of non-corporatized Pride events that are at play in making grassroots DIY Pride assemblies different: first, a focus on precarity, and second, an engagement with multiple modalities to enact worldmaking. First, a focus on precarity considers that not all in the community can go public in the same manner due to uneven levels of precarity, and therefore many grassroots Pride organizers think through intersecting queer identities when making a space based in equal economic access. However, a focus on precarity alone like identity does not always guarantee solidarity. Recently, Judith Butler has insisted on vulnerability and interdependency as a shared embodied condition of existence in the contemporary moment and as a site for movement building, arguing that recognizing shared conditions are essential to a coalitional ethic as “once life is understood as both equally valuable and interdependent, certain ethical formulations follow.”²³⁸ Butler's notion that in the contemporary moment we all are in the same neoliberal house, undoubtedly, is a persuasive point and a productive belief for organizing collectives that disrupt individualistic ethics. However, when theorizing modes of coalitional collectivity, it is essential to remember that while conditions may be shared, differences matter and must be engaged with. In this project, different modes of public engagement impacted members of the LGBTQ community in diverse ways; made most apparent by those whose multifaceted identities allowed them to benefit from the visibility connected to capitalist marketization in contrast to those whose ability—to be seen and heard—were stifled by such efforts.

²³⁸ Butler, 43.

The assembly, early Pride marches put forward, voiced a public affirmation of gay identity that was connected to vulnerability and interdependency of shared embodied conditions that were tied to identity. Still, while precarity and identity might be shared, that doesn't mean that LGBTQ people have a singular identity or even remotely close to the same level of precarity. These differences matter and impact different factions' ability to make public their precarity, identity, and interests. In the shadow of Pride celebrations lurk multiple commitments and negotiations around identity, politics, and culture that still require engagement from theorists. Not everyone can go public in the same manner and disruptions need to be heard, even within assemblies resisting corporatization.

Second, beyond disrupting universalist narratives, an answer to some of the erasures that Pride events have pedagogically and performatively enacted is not necessarily a complete overhauling of the visibility Pride events support. Instead, activists and theorists should reconsider the counter in counterpublics, thinking about how oscillating between not just publics but also different modes of public engagement might invite people to participate, and then once they have been engaged activists should utilize other modes of public participation to raise consciousness. Queerbomb's multiple modes of going public reveals that Pride events can have numerous rhetorical functions that might be able to index each other in positive ways. Pride in some cities might have various modes of engagement that occur at different points in a day, or that simultaneously coincide. While Butler advocates that those studying rhetoric and philosophy "take account of the forms of alliance and solidarity that are only partially dependent on the ability to appear in the public square," we must also consider the multiple modalities within an assembly that also perform this work.²³⁹ Thinking through how multiple modes of public

²³⁹ Ibid., 155.

address both utilize resources (or lack of) along with performative politics to both challenge larger discourses while simultaneously attuning to intergroup differences. What makes an event, such as Queerbomb, unique is that it engages in multiple forms of engagement, recruiting bodies through fun while simultaneously enacting modes of worldmaking that articulate critical politics.

Pride is an event that does all kinds of work, or, at least, is supposed to. It does traditional activist work that affects the flow of bodies refusing to hide their identities, lives, and embodiments. Recently, it offers a space for queers from all over the world to gather and see the size of their community. Further, in the past, it allowed an opportunity to perform both disagreement and unity, space wherein the dividends of dissent, groups, created movement identity. Of course, major metropolitan Pride events also enact more than one mode of public engagement, but due to the influence of the market and business interests, the primary goal for each mode of engagement is profit. Hence, what makes corporate involvement so dangerous is that modes of engagement not based on consumerism aren't prioritized, hindering coalitional work and blocking access points for those unable to buy their way in. Meaning that modes of relating across difference and learning to practice solidarity are effectively blocked. Space must be traversed to build networks of solidarity, something that becomes difficult when corporate involvement blurs the line between public and private, as modes of going public based on marketization hinder queer possibilities.

Fictions of the Queer Past, Frictions in the Queer Present, Flourishing a Queer Utopia

Due to what Charles E. Morris refers to as “mnemonicide—the assassination of memory,” queer pasts have not only been relegated to obscurity but actively destroyed.²⁴⁰ Past queer lives were forced to flourish in the shadows, evidence of their existence torched, and their histories left out of educational settings, leading to Pride events in the present becoming a site that performs tremendous rhetorical labor to create a queer historical moment to commemorate and gauge a variety of contemporary struggles. This is evidenced by both my chapters where Stonewall and the origins of Gay Liberation are utilized to articulate what Pride should be. However, while frequently invoked, the memory of Pride's birth hasn't been publicly engaged collectively in a tactical manner, as to challenge Stonewall's memory is to question a potent symbol of LGBT Pride and ideology. Stonewall is mighty because it is one of the first queer memories not to be subjected to mnemonicide, as through commemoration, Pride events, saved its memory from such a fate.

Pride events, relatively quickly, have become a holiday not far off from St. Patrick's Day, where the cultural expression work of the ritual has been far removed from its original context, effectively taking on a life of its own. Queer rhetors contesting corporate Pride are in an awkward position as to assert that the event has always been a transgressive world-making activity risks erasing histories of marginalization, a phenomenon that is important to address in order to rupture hegemonies that articulate rhetorics of universal equality, freedom, and shared identity. On the other hand, narrating a version of history concerned with historical nuances and

²⁴⁰ Morris, *Queering Public Address: Sexualities in American Historical Discourse*, 103.

truth isn't necessarily the most persuasive rhetorical strategy. Especially, since Pride's very origins are built around myths concerning Stonewall, and these myths are one of the factors that gives it such affective charge. Still, activists should also be reminded of the critiques that have been made by Third World and Women of Color Feminists, concerning the erasure feminist theories that center historiography based on normative citizenship and waves metaphors conduct; as these narratives, while rhetorically useful for creating understanding of past histories of mobilization, exclude both the contributions and struggles of women who were not white, upper-middle class, or proper liberal citizens.

Perhaps, Muñoz might be able to help weigh the ethics of deploying Stonewall's memory through his reminder that "the future is queerness's domain."²⁴¹ While we, as Muñoz asserts, have never entirely been queer, its traces can still be located via the past. Muñoz presents a both/and set of thinking here that demonstrates a need to look to the future to create a new political horizon, but that we cannot abandon the past entirely. If queer activists are to bring about a queer future, it will require more than just Stonewall's memory or Pride events, and instead engaging in the act of queer world-making by creating space to speak memories of queer pasts beyond simplistic myth. From critically revisiting the past we might arrive at a new genealogy that fosters collective potentiality to make a queer political future. This thesis examined the possibility of assemblies in bringing about a queer political future. To do this requires engaging with the transformative power of past Pride assemblies along with their limitations, while simultaneously engaging how corporatization of Pride events has limited queer political imagination. Assemblies are rhetorically compelling not only because of words, but because of the performative possibility of the people within them. However, it would be naive to

²⁴¹ Muñoz, 1.

argue that masses of bodies coming together alone move social, political, and affective structures in the same way. While 2,000 people publicly marching together out of their enclave and into the streets in late June of 1970, was indeed an emblematic moment speaking to the power of the assembly, its legacy is lopsided as the coalitional possibilities of the event remain unrealized. Assemblies can bring new political horizons that contain new forms of relating, existing, and mattering, but to reach this possibility requires continuous engagement. If the transformative potential of Christopher Street Liberation Day is to be made possible, rhetorical studies must give equal attention to the socioeconomic and the culturally performative properties of assemblies along with the multitude of functions they engage in.

In this thesis, I investigated the origins of Gay Pride, its commercialization, and those that have not bought into corporatized organizing and commercial media to assemble Pride. Two trends became evident through this the journey, the first is that numerous fictions around Pride are connected to the frictions that have recently birthed alternative modes of organizing Pride. Second, critical consideration is needed about the multiple forms of public engagement Pride events perform for those within them. These tensions lead to the pivotal point this thesis offers: collectives moving through public engage in more than mere appearance. In moving the social, groups do more than gain publicity they break down walls and barriers, cross borders, and forge alliances. However, public appearance does not mean this work will happen it is merely the first step and after this step sustained action is needed to make change, as underneath collective appearances are numerous tensions. This thesis is about the complicated arrangement of LGBTQ movement factions in tension with each other, and that complex engagement is needed with these tensions. Above all, though, it is through engaging these tensions that we might come to learn a new mode of moving together.

REFERENCES

- “A Gay Nation at Civic Center.” *Bay Area Reporter*, July 7, 1977, 22-23.
- Altman, Denis. *Homosexualization of America, Americanization of The Homosexual*. New York: St. Martin, 1982.
- Anderson, Tre'vell and Hailey Branson-Potts. “LA Pride has sold out and become 'gay Coachella,' critics say.” *Los Angeles Times*, May 20, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-10102020-gay-pride-boycott-notourpride-snap-story.html>.
- Angelo, Gregory. “Sorry, but corporate backing for Pride is just another sign of success.” *New York Post*, June 23, 2017. <https://nypost.com/2017/06/23/sorry-but-corporate-backing-for-pride-is-just-another-sign-of-success/>.
- Armstrong, Elizabeth. *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality In San Francisco, 1950-1994*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- Armstrong, Elizabeth and Suzanna Crage. “Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth.” *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 5 (2006): 724-751.
- Arnowitz, Stanley. “Is Democracy Possible? The decline of the public in the American Debate”, in Bruce Robbins (ed.), *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press), 75-92.
- Asen, Robert. “Seeking the Counter in Counterpublics.” *Communication Theory* 10, no.4 (2000): 424-446.
- Asen, Robert and Daniel Brouwer. *Counterpublics and the State*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.
- Aviccolli Mecca, Tommi. “Gay Shame.” *Alternet*, June 6, 2002, https://www.alternet.org/story/13327/gay_shame
- Badgett, Lee and Brad Sears. “Beyond Stereotypes: Poverty in the LGBT Community.” *Momentum*, 4. Williams Institute: University of California Los Angeles School of Law. 2012. Accessed from, <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/headlines/beyond-stereotypes-poverty-in-the-lgbt-community/>.
- Ballard, Ron, Michael Brown, and Louis Hart. “Gay Revolution Comes Out.” *Rat*, August 12, 1969.
- Barnes, Michael. “Not Just One Way to Salute Gay Pride.” *Austin 360*. June 1, 2010, http://www.austin360.com/blogs/content/shared-gen/blogs/austin/outandabout/entries/2010/06/01/who_owns_gay_pr.html
- Bince, Ryan. "Getting Out of the Basement: Space, Performance, and the Oscillation of DIY Punk Publics," *ProQuest Dissertations Publishing* (2017).

- Blachford, Gregg. "Male Dominance and the Gay World." In *The Making of the Modern Homosexual*, ed. Kenneth Plummer. London, Hutchinson Radius, 1981.
- Blair, Carole. "Conceits of Context: Diffident Reflections." Keynote Address, Public Address Conference, Syracuse, NY, September 29, 2016.
- Blum, Steven. "Advertisers Are Fleeing L.A.'s LGBT March Against Trump." *Four Two Nine*. April 17, 2017 <http://fourtwonine.com/2017/04/17/resist-march-la-trump-sponsors/>.
- Bravmann, Scott. *Queer Fictions of the Past: History, Culture, and Difference*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Bruce, Caitlin. "The Balaclava as Affect Generator: Free Pussy Riot Protests and Transnational Iconicity." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 12, no. 1 (2014):42-62.
- Bernstein-Sycamore, Mattilda. *That's Revolting: Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation*. New York: Soft Skull Press, 2008.
- Bennetts, Leslie. "k.d. lang Cuts It Close." *Vanity Fair*, August 1993, 146.
- Brouwer, Daniel. "The Precarious Visibility Politics of Self-Stigmatization: The Case of HIV/AIDS Tattoos." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 18 (1998): 114-136.
- Brouwer, Daniel. "Counterpublicity and Corporeality in HIV/AIDS Zines." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22 no.5 (2005): 351-371.
- Brouwer, Daniel. "Communication as Counterpublic," In *Communication as Perspectives on Theory*, ed. Gregory J. Shepherd, Jeffrey St. John, and Ted Striphas. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006.
- Brouwer, Daniel and Robert Asen. *Public Modalities: Rhetoric, Culture, Media, and the Shape of Public Life*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010.
- Brown, Gavin. "Homonormativity: A Metropolitan Concept that Denigrates "Ordinary" Gay Lives." *Journal of Homosexuality* 59, no. 7 (2012): 1065-1072.
- Brown, Wendy. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2015.
- Butler, Judith. *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.
- Carter, David. *Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked The Gay Revolution*. New York, St. Martin's Griffin, 2004.
- Chasin, Alexandra. *Selling Out: The Gay and Lesbian Movement Goes To Market*. New York: Saint Martin Press, 2000.
- Chávez, Karma. "Counter-Public Enclaves and Understanding the Function of Rhetoric in Social Movement Coalition-Building." *Communication Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2011): 1-18.
- Cohen, Cathy. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3, no. 4 (1997): 437-465.

- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 no.6 (1991): 1241–1299.
- Crimp, Douglas and Adam Rolston. *AIDS Demo-Graphics*. Seattle: Bay Press, 1990.
- Cloud, Dana. "The Rhetoric of <family Values>: Scapegoating, Utopia, and the Privatization of Social Responsibility." *Western Journal of Communication* 62, no. 4 (1998): 387-419.
- Cloud, Dana. "The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric." *Western Journal of Communication* 58, no. 3 (1994): 141-163.
- Cloud, Dana. "The Matrix and Critical Theory's Desertion of the Real." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 3, no. 4 (2006): 329-354.
- Cloud, Dana L. and Kathleen Eaton Feyh. "Reason in Revolt: Emotional Fidelity and Working Class Standpoint in the 'Internationale.'" *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (2015): 300-323.
- Cogswell, Kelly. "Lesbian Avenger Documentary Project." *Lesbian Avengers*. Accessed August 30, 2017 from http://www.lesbianavengers.com/LA_documentary_project.shtml.
- D'Emilio, John. *The World Turned: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.
- D'Emilio, John. *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Dickinson, Greg, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott. *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010.
- Duberman, Martin. *Stonewall*. New York: Dutton, 1993.
- Duggan, Lisa. "The New Homonormativity." *In Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, 175-194. Eds. Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).
- Dunn, Thomas. "Remembering Matthew Shepard: Violence, Identity, and Queer Counterpublic Memories." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 13, no. 4 (2010): 611-651.
- Elly, Geoff. "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century." in Craig J Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas And the Public Sphere*, 289-339. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992.
- Eng, David, Halberstam, Judith and José Muñoz. "What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?" *Social Text*, 23, no. 3-4(2005): 1-17.
- Eng, David. *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

- Escoffier, Jeffery. "The Political Economy of the Closet: Notes toward an Economic History of Gay and Lesbian Life before Stonewall." In *Homo Economics: Capitalism, Community, and Lesbian and Gay Life*. eds. Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed. New York: Routledge, 1997. 123-134.
- Faderman, Lillian. *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle*. New York, Simon & Schuster, 2015.
- Felski, Retia. *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Fleming, Marie. "Women and the 'Public Use of Reason.'" *Social Theory and Practice*, no. 19, (1993): 27-50.
- Flores, Lisa. "Between Abundance and Marginalization: The Imperative of Racial Rhetorical Criticism." *Review of Communication* 16, no. 1 (2016): 4-24.
- Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." in Craig J Calhoun, *Habermas And the Public Sphere*, 109-142. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality* Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.
- Gay Shame San Francisco. "About." www.gayshamesanfrancisco.com/about.
- Getty, Kate. "Respectable Street: as Austin Pride revs up, will its soul get lost on the roadside?" *The Austin Chronicle*. June 13, 2008, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/features/2008-06-13/635095/>.
- Ghaziani, Amin. *The Dividends of Dissent: How Conflict and Culture Work In Lesbian and Gay Marches on Washington*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. *A Postcapitalist Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.
- Greenwald, Glenn. "Bradley Manning is off limits at SF Gay Pride parade, but corporate sleaze is embraced." *The Guardian*. April 27th, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/apr/27/bradley-manning-sf-gay-pride>.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Goose, Van. *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretative History*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. 1st MIT Press pbk. ed. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.
- Halperin David, and Valerie Traub. *Gay Shame*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Harvey, David. "From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation of Urban Governance in Late Capitalism." *Geografiska Annaler* 71 (1989): 3-17.
- Herrell, Richard. "The Symbolic Strategies of Chicago's Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade," In Gilbert Herdt's *Gay Culture in America*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992. 225-252.

- Hill Collins, Patricia. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Jacobs, Jane. "Staging difference: Aestheticization and the Politics of Difference." In Ruth Fincher and Jane Jacobs *Cities of Difference* (New York: Gilford Press, 1999), 253-278.
- Kasindorf, Jeanie Russell. "Lesbian Chic: The Bold, Brave New World of Gay Women." *New York Magazine*, May 10, 1993.
- Kirchick, James. "Politics on parade: How Black Lives Matter halted a gay pride parade in Toronto." *The New York Times*. June 6, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-kirchick-gay-pride-black-lives-matter-20160705-snap-story.html>.
- Kollaritsch, Riley. "What Are Pride Parades Really About?" Accessed April 1, 2018. <http://projectqueer.org/post/122957180303/to-view-enlarged-chart-click-here-what-are>.
- LAist. "LA Pride Canceled," Assessed October 3, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/theLAist/posts/10155305180730649>.
- Landsbaum, Claire. "Why I'm Skipping the Pride Parade and Going to the Dyke March." *New York Magazine*. June 22, 2017, <https://www.thecut.com/article/skipping-nyc-lgbtq-pride-parade-dyke-march.html>.
- Levin, Sam. "Too straight, white and corporate: why some queer people are skipping SF Pride." *The Guardian*. June 25, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jun/25/san-francisco-gay-pride-corporate-orlando-shooting>.
- Lukenbill, Grant. *Untold Millions: Secret Truths About Marketing to Gay and Lesbian Consumers*. Philadelphia: Hayworth Press, 1999.
- MacLeod, Gordon. "From Urban Entrepreneurialism to a "Revanchist City"? on the Spatial Injustices of Glasgow's Renaissance." *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (2002): 602-62.
- "March and Be Proud." *Bay Area Reporter*, June 23, 1977, 4.
- Markwell, Kevin. "Mardi Gras Tourism and the Construction of Sydney as an International Gay and Lesbian City." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 8 (2002): 81-99.
- Marloff, Sara. "Queerbomb 2017." *The Austin Chronicle*. June 2, 2017, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/arts/2017-06-02/queerbomb-2017/>.
- Marotta, Toby. *The Politics of Homosexuality*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1981.
- Marusic, Kristina. "This City Sold the Naming Rights To Its Pride Parade To A Corporation—And People Are Pissed." *New Now Next*, May 23, 2017, <http://www.newnownext.com/this-city-sold-the-naming-rights-to-its-pride-parade-to-a-corporate-sponsor-and-people-are-pissed/05/2017/>.
- May, Vivian. *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015.

- “MasterCard Restroom For All.” *The Spirit Awards*. Accessed March 30, 2018.
<http://shortyawards.com/1st-socialgood/mastercard-entry-for-all/>.
- McCann, Bryan. “Queering Expertise: Counterpublics, Social Change, and the Corporeal Dilemmas of LGBTQ Equality.” *Social Epistemology* 25. (2011): 249-262.
- McDarrah, Fred. *Gay Pride: Photographs from Stonewall to Today*. Chicago: a cappella books, 1994.
- McFarland Bruce, Katherine. *Pride Parades: How a Parade Changed the World*. New York: New York University Press, 2016.
- Messer, Kate. “Pride Punt: So, what does the Pride Coalition actually do? (Spoiler: The answer isn't in here.)” *The Austin Chronicle*. October 3, 2008, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/daily/gay-place/2008-10-03/682018/>.
- Messer, Kate. “More 'Pride Coalition' Whuuuuuuut? Is it 4th Quarter Clarity or Last-Minute Butt-Covering?” *The Austin Chronicle*. October 13, 2008, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/daily/gay-place/2008-10-13/688054/>.
- Messer, Kate, and Kate Getty. “Really. What Does this Pride Coalition Do?” *The Austin Chronicle*. October 17, 2008, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/columns/2008-10-17/689771/>.
- Messer, Kate, and Kate Getty. “What Does this Pride Coalition Purport to Do if Not PRIDE?” *The Austin Chronicle*. October 10, 2008, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/columns/2008-10-10/686138/>.
- Messer, Kate. “Pride Weekend 2010: I Am QueerBomb. I Am Austin Pride.” *The Austin Chronicle*. June 4, 2010. Accessed July 12, 2017. <http://www.austinchronicle.com/>.
- Messer, Kate. “One Big Gay Happy Family?” *The Austin Chronicle*. June 3, 2011, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/features/2011-06-03/queerbomb-pride-roundtable-extended-remix/>.
- Middleton, Michael, Aaron Hess, Danielle Endres, and Samantha Senda-Cook. *Participatory Critical Rhetoric: Theoretical and Methodological Foundations for Studying Rhetoric in Situ*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015.
- Mills, James. “CSW Acknowledges LA Pride Parade Will Be Replaced With Protest March.” *WEHO ville*, March 9, 2017, <http://www.wehoville.com/2017/03/09/csw-acknowledges-la-pride-parade-will-replaced-protest-march/>.
- Minh-Ha, Trinh T. “Documentary Is/Not a Name.” *October* 52 (1990): 77-98.
- Mitch, Richard. “The Destroyers Strike!” *The Advocate*, February 28, 1973, 36.
- McKinnon, Sara Robert Asen, Karma R. Chávez, and Robert Glenn Howard. *Text + Field: Innovations in Rhetorical Method*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016.

- Morris III, Charles E. "My Old Kentucky Homo." In Charles E Morris III *Queering Public Address: Sexualities in American Historical Discourse*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007.
- Morris III, Charles E. "Sunder the Children: Abraham Lincoln's Queer Rhetorical Pedagogy." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 4 (2013): 395-422.
- Mundy, Dean. "Shifting, Broadening, and Diversifying: How Gay Pride Organizations are Reshaping their Mission to Build Crucial Relationships in a Complex 21st Century Stakeholder Network." *Public Relations Inquiry* 4, no. 1 (2015): 41-59.
- Muñoz, José. *Cruising Utopia: The then and there of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press, 2009.
- Nagourney, Adam. "For Gays, a Party In Search of a Purpose; at 30 Parade has Gone Mainstream As Movement's Goals Have Drifted." *The New York Times*. June 25, 2000, <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/25/nyregion/for-gays-party-search-purpose-30-parade-has-gone-mainstream-movement-s-goals.html>.
- New York City Pride. "The March." Assessed March 31, 2018, <https://www.nycpride.org/events/the-march/>.
- New York City Pride. "The March Continues." Accessed February 3, 2018, <https://www.nycpride.org/about/>.
- No Justice-No Pride. "Calling Pride Back To Its Roots." Accessed October 3, 2017, <http://nojusticenopride.org/>.
- Olson, Eric. "An Exploration of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Festival Sponsors," *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism* 18, no. 1 (2017): 60-73.
- Pezzullo, Phaedra. "Resisting 'National Breast Cancer Awareness Month: The Rhetoric of Counterpublics and their Cultural Performances." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89, no. 4 (2003): 345-365.
- Phillips, Kendall. *Framing Public Memory*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004.
- "Proud Whopper I Burger King US" YouTube Video, 1:54, a commercial on February 20, 2015, posted by "David The Agency" March 31, 2015.
- Puar, Jasbir. "Circuits of Queer Mobility: Tourism, Travel, and Globalization." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 8 (2002): 101-137.
- Puar, Jasbir. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Queer Strike and Payday. "Chelsea Manning: Whistleblower on San Francisco Pride." *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 1, no. 1 (2014): 139-147.

- Queerbomb. "Queerbomb Manifesto." Accessed October 3, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/pg/QBATX/about/?ref=page_internal.
- "Queerbomb 2013," YouTube, 7:13, a promotional video May 4, 2014, posted by "QueerBomb ATX," November 30, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DGw-XyI5zo&t=10s>.
- "Queerbomb 2015," YouTube, 2:21, a promotional video May 26, 2016, posted by "QueerBomb ATX," November 30, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DGw-XyI5zo&t=10s>.
- Rand, Erin. *Reclaiming Queer: Activist & Academic Rhetorics of Resistance*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2014.
- Rand, Erin. "'What One Voice Can Do': Civic Pedagogy and Choric Collectivity at Camp Courage." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 34 no. 1 (2014): 28–51.
- Rosendall, Richard. "Police, corporate sponsors must be welcome at Pride." *Washington Blade*, May 3, 2017, <http://www.washingtonblade.com/2017/05/03/no-justice-no-pride-critique/>.
- Rodriguez, Juana María. *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings*. New York: New York University Press, 2014.
- Ross, India. "The Business of Gay Pride." *The Financial Times*. August 11, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/228207c6-5f46-11e6-ae3f-77baadeb1c93>.
- San Francisco Pride. "Registration." Accessed March 31, 2018, <https://register.sfpride.org/sfpride>.
- Shoemaker, Silky. "Who we are and what we love." *The Austin Chronicle*, June 11, 2010, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/features/2010-06-11/1040127/>.
- Spade, Dean. *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*. Revis and expand. ed. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.
- Sender, Katherine. *Business, Not Politics: The Making of the Gay Market*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Spivak, Gayatri. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In Gary Nelson and Larry Grossberg (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, 271-314. Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Squires, Catherine. "Rethinking Black Public Sphere: An Alternative Vocabulary for Multiple Public Spheres." *Communication Theory* 12, no. 4 (2002): 446-468.
- Stein, Marc. *Rethinking the Gay and Lesbian Movement*. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Stern, Marlow. "Coachella, should be avoided at all costs." *The Daily Beast*. March 11, 2014, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/coachella-oasis-for-douchebags-and-trust-fund-babies-should-be-avoided-at-all-costs>.
- Stevenson, Robin. *Pride: Celebrating Diversity & Community*. Victoria: Orca Book Publishers, 2016.
- Stewart-Winter, Timothy. *Queer Clout: Chicago and the Rise of Gay Politics*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

- Stryker, Susan. "Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity." *Radical History Review* 2008, no. 100 (2008): 145-157.
- Stryker, Susan. *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution* Second ed. Berkeley: Seal Press, 2017.
- Tankersley, Scott. "Pride Should Be Outrageous!," *The Austin Chronicle*. June 24, 2008, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/feedback/2008-06-24/639498/-/>.
- Tax Forms. "Heritage of Pride Inc." *GuideStar*. April 9, 2018, <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/13-3299634>.
- Tax Forms. "San Francisco Lesbian Gay Freedom Day Parade & Celebration Committee." *GuideStar*. April 9, 2018, <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/94-300669>.
- The New York City Dyke March. "Herstory of the Dyke March." Accessed August 30, 2017, <http://dykemarchnyc.org/>.
- Vaid, Urvashi. *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation*. New York: Anchor Book, 1995.
- Warner, Michael. *Publics and Counterpublics*. Cambridge: Zone Books, 2002.
- Weinstein, Steve. "Heritage of Trademark: The Legal Battle Over Ownership of 'Pride.'" *South Florida Gay News*, July 14, 2014, <http://southfloridagaynews.com/National/heritage-of-trademark-the-legal-battle-over-ownership-of-pride.html>.
- Weiss, Margot. *Techniques of Pleasure: BDSM and the Circuits of Sexuality*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Weston, Kath. *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.
- Whittaker, Richard. "The Pride Divide's Aftermath: Wrap-up of 2010 Pride and QueerBomb festivities." *The Austin Chronicle*. June 18, 2010. Accessed August 20, 2017, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/news/2010-06-18/1042261/>.
- "1,200 Parade in Hollywood; Crowds Line Boulevard." *The Advocate*, June 22, 1970, 1.

Vita

Hunter Thompson—a native of Monticello, IA—attended the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, IA where he received a Bachelor of Arts in Communication in 2016. He has always been fascinated with the performative power of speech, so he pursued graduate study in the Communication and Rhetorical Studies program at Syracuse University in the fall of 2016. His research focuses on the relationship between consumer culture and the rhetoric of LGBTQ social movements. After graduation, he will be working on the 2018 midterm elections doing political consulting and plans on continuing his education in the near future.