

Introduction

QUEER WORK IN A STRAIGHT DISCIPLINE

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Evelyn Hooker was ahead of her time. Best known for her 1957 paper, “The Adjustment of the Male Homosexual,” she was one of the first research psychologists to decouple homosexuality from psychopathology and to argue for a new view of sexual diversity as benign human variation. In staking that maverick claim, she had no idea how broad her impact would be on cultural conceptions of gay lives, but she already knew a great deal about the personal and professional costs it would bring.

Hooker’s project was a combination of insight and serendipity. A student introduced her to the gay world of Los Angeles, which was, at the time, largely invisible to heterosexuals (White 2009). There, Hooker learned about the social function of gay bars, witnessed the LA Police Department’s notorious gay-baiting vice squad in action, and observed the emergence of a nascent gay rights movement. Through her ethnographic fieldwork, she experienced a crisis of faith in the representations of homosexuality in her field of psychology. Using the psychological tests most prevalent at the time, she collected her own data on gay men’s mental health and concluded that many of the problems her respondents faced came from social stigma rather than individual pathology.

Pushing against disciplinary conventions and orthodoxies, Hooker worked at the margins of her field. Her research in gay communities brought, at best, ridicule from her colleagues and, at worst, police surveillance and harassment. Mentors told her it was impossible to study “normal male homosexuals,” because “no such a person” existed (Hooker 1993: 451). The McCarthy-era government agency that unexpectedly agreed to fund her research referred internally to her work as “The Fairy Project” and assigned police to tail her every move. She eventually destroyed most of her archive to protect her research subjects. Describing the emotional costs of working at such ideological odds with her home discipline and with the dominant legal and cultural conceptions of her time, she wrote in a retrospective essay near the end of her life, “Without a colleague with whom to share the sympathetic knowledge of human suffering, sometimes one’s own vicarious suffering becomes unbearable” (1993: 451). She remembered vividly the relief she felt when she first encountered another researcher, Finn Carling, who shared her commitments. After comparing their research findings about gay men over tea, Hooker remembered, Carling turning to her and said hesitantly, “I want you to know that I am on their side.” Hooker leaned in and conspiratorially replied, “So am I” (452).

Like the scholars we showcase in *Other, Please Specify: Queer Methods in Sociology*, Hooker believed deeply that rigorous empirical data could inform the tactics of progressive social movements and change public and scholarly opinions; and, indeed, her research set the wheels in motion for the removal of homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association in 1973 (Minton 2001). Yet it was her willingness to look at how gay men made sense of their worlds, rather than to accept the taken-for-granted assumptions about gay men in psychology at the time, that allowed her to think outside the prevailing discourse in her discipline. This volume is a reflection and reference manual for scholars who, like Hooker, are seeking to harness social scientific methods for a politically informed research agenda, who are navigating the professional and emotional challenges of doing such work within a traditional discipline, and who are willing to invest time and energy into building community with others who are, so to speak, on their side.

We locate this volume within the critical conversation about what it might mean to “queer” research methods that have developed over the past

decade in conference panels, workshops, edited volumes, and journal symposia. This complex question explores the possibilities and pitfalls of knitting insights from poststructuralist queer theory, a body of scholarship that renders the subject destabilized, multiple, and fluid, with social science research methods that utilize categories and explicitly bounded concepts as a starting point (Browne & Nash 2010). Such engagement between queer theory and the social sciences is an important development. More recent critical interventions into the early discourse of queer theory (see Butler 1990; Sedgwick 1990), such as queer of color critique (see Hong & Ferguson 2011; Puar 2007), black queer–diaspora studies (see Allen 2012; Johnson & Henderson 2005), and transgender studies (see Stryker & Whittle 2006; Stryker & Aizura 2013), have shaped the development of an interdisciplinary field of queer studies that “insists on a broadened consideration of the late-twentieth century global crises that have configured historical relations among political economies, the geopolitics of war and terror, and national manifestations of sexual, racial, and gendered hierarchies” (Eng, Halberstam, & Muñoz 2005: 1). Yet, in this move from queer theory to more socially oriented queer studies, little widespread cross-pollination has happened.

The dominance of the humanities in queer studies reflects, to some degree, a “queer suspicion of method” (Brim & Ghaziani 2016: 16) as reductionist. And, even among researchers invested in building bridges between queer theory and empirical research, there can be a lingering discomfort with the social sciences, disciplinary fields with a historical legacy of categorizing populations and practices as “normal” or “deviant” in ways that uphold racialized formations of hetero- and cisnormativity. The conversation around queer methods signals a willingness among some social scientists to reevaluate the axioms and knowledge claims of their disciplines, and offers a chance to take stock of how, thirty years after the emergence of queer theory, “queer conceptualizations have intersected . . . with research design” (Browne & Nash 2010: 4). As Matt Brim and Amin Ghaziani argue, turning such critical attention to queer methods creates new avenues of inquiry that move beyond the question “What is queer theory?” to ask, “How is queer theory done?” (2016: 14).

Building on these discussions, *Other, Please Specify* turns a queer lens on the production of knowledge in sociology in the United States. A

disciplinary context caught in a (very long) moment of quantitative hegemony, U.S. sociology has a tendency to push to the margins any work that problematizes (or, we might say, *queers*) the field by bringing to the forefront the experiences of people and groups considered too “indecent,” too “fringe,” or too “micro” to warrant attention from the established sociological center. Steven Seidman’s pathbreaking edited volume, *Queer Theory/Sociology* (1996a), incited this critique, focusing predominantly on the long erasure of gay and lesbian lives from mainstream sociological research. Seidman and his colleagues provided a provocative roadmap for creating a “more queer sociology.” Two decades later, we see that while sociology has become more “gay-friendly”—a change we appreciate and applaud—it does not look decidedly queerer. Since the 2010s, studies about LG (but still rarely B, T, or Q) populations have found a home in survey and demographic research through the increasingly more common inclusion of “sexual orientation” as a variable (see, for example, Ueno, Roach, & Peña-Talamantes 2013; Mize 2016). Yet the investment in positivism in U.S. sociology makes the academic field less receptive to work that engages in a poststructuralist critique of scientific knowledge production or to research on identity formations and practices outside the bounds of hetero- and (more recently) homonormativity.

The barriers to a “more queer” sociology are complex. The lingering discomfort with research that takes an appreciative approach to identities and practices widely held to be nonnormative or “fringe” by the sociological center—for example, gender fluidity and sex work in this historical moment—creates professional legitimacy problems for sociologists invested in such research.¹ These are problems that colleagues working on more sociologically acceptable areas of study, such as income inequality, are less likely to face even when they draw on qualitative methods of inquiry. Queer work has made some inroads in U.S. sociology, most notably in the subfields of sexualities and gender. But the lack of disciplinary support for critical queer theory as a legitimate epistemological underpinning for sociological research, coupled with the continued stigma associated with research on identities and practices that go beyond the binary formulations of man-woman and gay-straight, can keep early-career sociologists invested in doing this work in the proverbial closet. We see this volume as an opportunity to show the value of bringing a queer critique to

both our research and to the disciplinary conventions that disparage politically engaged work as too ideological to be “good” (i.e., objective) research and too nuanced to be “useful” (i.e., abstract) theory.

This critique of U.S. sociology has much to contribute to the growing conversation about queer methods. In its “ideal type,” a queerer method of social science inquiry would work to dismantle essentialist disciplinary conventions and exclusionary epistemological traditions from the inside out, thereby engendering a research practice that seeks to grow, rather than codify, possibilities for how to be in the world. At the heart of this project is a desire to find ways to gather empirical data about the experiences of people who are politically and socially marginalized without reproducing such marginalization through practices of research and theorizing that conflate objectification with “good science.” To date, however, most attempts at putting queer methods into practice have come from researchers working in academic fields that as a whole prioritize archival or ethnographic methods (see Brim & Ghaziani 2016 for an exception). We see much to be gained from looking closely at the experiences of researchers who do social data analysis from a queer vantage point in a disciplinary context in which ethnography, interview, and archival methods exist alongside, but are not always afforded the same gravitas and legitimacy as, survey and demographic methods. While many sociologists doing queer work do draw on qualitative methods in an effort to prioritize people’s self-understandings and phenomenological worldviews, they face, unlike their colleagues in history or cultural anthropology, evaluation from a disciplinary center that privileges causal mechanisms and generalizability over locally situated knowledge and meanings.

Highlighting the dominance of quantitative methods of inquiry in U.S. sociology, most PhD programs require students to take statistics courses, while qualitative methods are almost always an elective. A quick perusal of the top three general-interest journals in the field further demonstrates that qualitative research is published much less frequently than statistical work—a pattern that holds true particularly for qualitative research on queer areas of study. Sociologists seeking to publish queer work in these journals often navigate positivist gatekeepers who evaluate the significance of research in terms of *p*-values, and generalists who prioritize broad “so what” claims. These demands to make qualitative research

about nonheteronormative identities and practices that are often locally situated and in flux matter to sociologists invested in generalizability and “large N ” metrics of evaluation creates a paradox for researchers. Abstracting from people’s lived experiences can feel like turning agentic subjects into theoretical objects, drawing a line between “us,” the researchers, and “them,” the people we study. Yet keeping an analytic lens on the center from a vantage point of the margins can limit publishing and job opportunities, a professional barrier that can push early-career scholars away from doing queer scholarship or lead them to leave sociology altogether. As we show in this volume, the experiences of people doing queer work in a disciplinary environment in which positivist logics form the basis for evaluating “good” or “bad” work bring into high relief a range of epistemological and institutional challenges—as well as strategies for navigating these challenges—that can advance the queer methods discussion and motivate sociology to be more receptive to critical queer work and the people who do it.

In *Other, Please Specify*, the contributors present an array of experiences, insights, and approaches that show the power of queer investigations of the social world and of disciplinary conventions. All of the authors undertook their graduate training in a U.S. sociology program, though some of us have made our professional homes in other fields. Working at the intersections of LGBTQ studies, the sociology of gender and sexualities, and queer and trans studies from within many different subfields, we often felt isolated during our training, underprepared for the complex professional field we were entering, and in great need of others who were on our side. We speak from varied social locations, methodological approaches, and epistemological investments but share a common goal of making more space for queer research and researchers within sociology.

In the chapters that follow, some authors engage explicitly with methodological issues, offering discussions of how they transformed or, at times, abandoned conventional sociological research methods in their queer work. Others elucidate the challenges and pleasures of putting a critically queer research agenda into practice and offer strategies for world building in the academy. Taken together, the book’s chapters provide roadmaps for getting queer research off the ground, present models for what Amy Stone in this volume calls “queer persistence” in our research and our

careers, and highlight strategies for continuing to push back on the disciplinary conventions that can keep queerly disruptive research on the margins. We use the term *strategy*, rather than *solution*, purposefully. As Matt Brim and Amin Ghaziani suggest, the mandate of a queer methodological approach should be to “clarify, but not overdetermine, the conditions that make life livable” (2016: 19). In this spirit, our book aims to elucidate practical strategies for livable world making, not merely for the communities we study but also for ourselves, for our colleagues who strive to expand the space for pluralistic gender and sexual discourses, and for our students and the academic world within which we want them to flourish.

FROM *QUEER THEORY/SOCIOLOGY* TO
QUEER SOCIOLOGY

One of our initial goals when we conceptualized this book in the mid-2010s was to capture a snapshot of the state of the field of queer work in sociology since the publication of the edited volume *Queer Theory/Sociology* (Seidman 1996a). This now-canonical book began as a symposium in a 1994 issue of *Sociological Theory*—to date, the only such symposium in a general-interest sociological journal—and then expanded to become the definitive text for sociologists seeking to harness critical insights from humanistic queer theory in their research (see also Gamson & Moon 2004). The volume’s contributors take as a central problematic how to think about the anti-normative and deconstructionist challenge that humanistic queer theory poses to the positivist epistemology of sociology without surrendering a disciplinary investment in “fundamentally sociological questions” (Epstein 1994: 199) grounded in empirical methods, such as how political contexts and social institutions enable and constrain particular forms of gender and sexual identity formation, and how social actors come to embody, disrupt, and transform such possibilities through collective action. As Charles Lemert, the series editor for *Queer Theory/Sociology*, notes in his introduction, the slash in the book’s title was “one of the rare instances where such an odd editorial mark is required—here to signify that two distinct traditions of study are being brought into a still indefinite relationship” (1996: x).

Seidman and colleagues acknowledge at the outset that while queer theory as an interdisciplinary endeavor has built bridges with some social sciences, particularly anthropology and history, theorists in the humanities showed little interest in possible queer contributions from sociology, a discipline that, with its prioritization of positivism and categorization, could seem “irrelevant, or at the very least, a bit stuffy” (Epstein 1994: 188)—a fair critique, in many ways, for a discipline that resisted the critical interventions of feminist theory (Stacey & Thorne 1985), gay and lesbian studies (Stein & Plummer 1994), critical race studies (Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva 2008), and transgender studies (Namaste 2000). Yet, the contributors posit, the seeming irrelevance of sociology to the project of queer theory resulted from contests over epistemologies and knowledge claims in the discipline rather than an inherent incompatibility. To this point, Steven Epstein argues that the social constructionist approaches to homosexuality that emerged in sociology in the 1960s pushed back against “naturalized conceptions of sexuality as a biological given, against Freudian models of the sexual drive, and against the Kinseyan obsession with the tabulation of behavior” (1994: 188) to assert that sexual categories, meanings, and identity formations were “intersubjectively negotiated social and historical products—that sexuality was, in a word, constructed” (188). This theoretical paradigm, he notes, predates the work of theorist Michel Foucault, the figure most widely held up as the progenitor of humanistic queer theory, and, thus, represents a lost queer lineage that is uniquely sociological.

Bracketing the missed potential of a queer theory rooted in sociological traditions, the authors make a case for what is uniquely exciting about poststructuralist queer theory for sociologists who wish to “rethink sexual (and gender) nonconformity in ways that do not reproduce marginality” (Stein & Plummer 1994: 178). Steven Seidman highlights the importance of queer theory’s destabilization of categories and its move toward seeing identities as “multiple or at best composites with an infinite number of ways in which they can intersect or combine” (1996b: 11). This theoretical intervention disrupted the idea of a unified homosexual identity long central to the organization of Western gay rights politics and to gay and lesbian studies in the academy. Queer theorists, in other words, sought to “shak[e] the ground on which gay and lesbian politics has been built,

taking apart the idea of a 'sexual minority' and a 'gay community,' indeed of 'gay' and 'lesbian' and even 'man' and 'woman'" (Gamson 1996: 395). Moving past a unified, essential identity created analytic possibilities for exploring how "identity constructions function as templates defining selves and behaviors, and therefore excluding a range of possible ways to frame the self, body, desires, actions, and social relations" (Seidman 1996b: 12). And queer theorists did not stop with the self, but also trained a critical lens on the "institutional practices and discourses producing sexual knowledge and the ways they organize social life" (Seidman 1996b: 13).

This focus on social power and the institutional and interpersonal regulation of identities and bodies allowed queer theorists to shift the direction of the analytic gaze, offering a critique of the center from the margins (Stein & Plummer 1994). In particular, the work of Judith Butler (1990) and Eve Sedgwick (1990) transformed heterosexuality from a naturalized and unmarked identity into an object of analysis—a shift later encapsulated in the concept of "heteronormativity" (Berlant & Warner 1998). Making such a queer turn in sociology was crucial for building more reflexive studies of sexuality, Viviane Namaste argued, noting that "if we focus only on the 'subculture' of homosexuality, and if we never interrogate the conditions which engender its marginalization, we shall remain trapped within a theoretical framework which refuses to acknowledge its own complicity in constructing its objects (and subjects) of study" (1994: 204). Further, this view of the center from the margins could push the study of sexual identities in sociology away from a narrow and stigmatizing focus on *sexual deviance* and into a pluralistic view of *sexual difference*.

Bringing queer theoretical insights into sociology could, many of the authors suggest, engender a "more queer sociology" (Stein & Plummer 1994: 183), one that is "critical of its categories" as it considers "the ways that knowledges [*sic*], including sociology, shape sexual and social orders" (Seidman 1996b: 17). Putting the analytic lens on the social construction of *sexualities*, rather than on homosexuality, would also enable sociology as a discipline to take seriously the queer idea that the psychic and institutional life of sexual power permeates all aspects of the social world. With greater reflexivity, sociologists could more clearly illuminate their unique disciplinary contributions to the queer theory project, particularly a commitment to understanding people's lived experiences through

empirical research. Emerging from traditions of philosophy, political theory, and literary criticism, queer theory rarely moved past textual or discourse analysis. For sociologists, such a focus created a “dangerous tendency . . . to ignore ‘real’ queer life as it is materially experienced across the world” (Stein & Plummer 1994: 184). Viviane Namaste extends this critique, noting that while queer theorists have dedicated much analytic attention to drag and gender performativity, “these works have shown very little concern for those who identity and live as drag queens, transsexuals, and transgenders [*sic*]” (1996: 183). In contrast, a queerer sociology would “integrate the emphasis on discourse in queer studies with a sociological focus on social institutions” (1996b: 17) and strive for empirical and theoretical work that simultaneously understands identities as multiple, stable, and subject to culture while keeping close to the subjective experiences and meaning making of individuals and communities.

More than two decades after *Queer Theory/Sociology*, this vision for a “more queer” sociology has, to some degree, come to fruition, embodied in theoretical and empirical research that encompasses a range of methodological approaches and topical areas. The subfields of sexualities and gender that house most of the queer research in the discipline have grown and thrived, supported by a series of institutions, such as the Sexualities and Sex & Gender Sections of the American Sociological Association (ASA), the LGBTQ Caucus, the ASA Committee on the Status of LGBTQ People in Sociology, and, most recently, Sociologists for Transgender Justice. LGBTQ studies has held a place on the list of recurring “regular sessions” at the ASA annual meeting since the early 2000s, joined in 2018 by transgender studies. These forms of institutional support, though perhaps normative from a radically queer anti-assimilationist position, create space for queer research to flourish in sociology. Further, these institutions bring people together to form communities of support and to problematize and challenge the marginalization of LGBTQ sociologists and queer work in the broader discipline (see Irvine 2014; Taylor & Raeburn 1995).

Yet the preponderance of queer work within the niche of sexualities and gender has provided a ready excuse for sociologists in other subfields to neglect queer topics in their own research, in their conference panels, and in their teaching. Highlighting this point, queer theoretical work is rarely taught in contemporary sociological theory courses or published in sociological

theory journals (for an exception, see Green 2002; 2007). While research on the workplace and health outcomes of gay and lesbian people or the dynamics of gay and lesbian social movements can now be found more readily in general sociology journals, it is still uncommon to encounter research on non-heteronormative identities and practices that draws explicitly on queer theory (for an exception, see Pfeffer 2014). The lack of legitimation of queer work in our journals and in our conference halls, coupled with the continued association of queer research with “dirty work” (Irvine 2014; see also Hoang, this volume; Jones, this volume)—work that is considered inappropriate, indecent, or immoral in the professional imaginary—creates barriers for sociologists interested in entering this field. Further, the persistent undercurrent in the discipline that queer work is “not sociology” (Schilt, this volume), can lead sociologists to migrate to interdisciplinary fields, such as area studies or gender and sexualities studies, where they can find colleagues who see the value in their work (see Ward, this volume).

While U.S. sociology has not undergone a queer paradigm shift that transforms “the orienting assumptions and conceptual frameworks which are basic to a discipline” (Stacey & Thorne 1985: 302), the developments of and in queer research since the millennium highlight exciting new terms of engagement with both interdisciplinary queer studies and sociological conventions. Sociologists doing queer work from the starting point of sociological theories of gender and sexuality have brought empirical weight to theories of performativity, notably in C. J. Pascoe’s ethnographic study (2007) of how high school boys engage in “a constellation of sexualized practices, discourses, and interactions” that she terms “compulsive heterosexuality” (86). Pascoe analyzes the ways in which compulsive heterosexuality, which reproduces male supremacy over bodies coded as female or feminine, or both, is legitimated by boys’ interactions with peers and teachers, as well as through institutional logics and practices. Queer sociologists also have used their empirical research with LGBTQ people to highlight the limits of a deconstructivist approach to queer lives, such as Adam Isaiah Green’s slightly tongue-in-cheek critique of performativity theory in which he argues: “Even as an individual gay man will intellectually apprehend the epistemological limitations of sexological classifications and their central historical role as a disciplining apparatus, it will do him no good to cite [Judith] Butler when confronted with a pack of gay

bashers (or a homophobic landlord or employer), and protest that his identity is multiple and unstable, thus exempting him from the ensuing beating (or discrimination)” (2002: 530; see also Johnson 2001). Pascoe and Green’s work shows a shift that we imagine in this volume as a move away from sociological anxieties that we are “not yet queer enough” (Valocchi 2005) in the eyes of our humanistic colleagues, toward the development of a body of queer research that is informed by poststructuralist critiques of knowledge production but remains grounded in a commitment to empirical investigations—a definitively sociological endeavor that takes the insights of queer theory as a useful provocation rather than as an aspirational how-to guide for doing our queer research.

SOCIOLOGY/QUEER THEORY: REDEFINING THE RELATIONSHIP

Imagining an agenda for a “more queer” sociology in the early 1990s, the contributors to *Queer Theory/Sociology* put forth several areas of inquiry that might be fruitful: sexual meanings and categorizations, social movement dynamics, and the construction and regulation of sexual identity categories and meanings by institutions such as the state, the law, and medicine. Taking stock of the current state of the field, we see that while many of these areas of study have a central place in the sociology of sexualities, the range of topics and salient questions in what we identify here as “queer sociology” have developed in ways perhaps unimaginable even a decade ago. This body of work reflects the growth of institutional space for LGBTQ studies within sociology, the greater visibility of transgender scholarship and activism, and the rapidly shifting cultural and political landscape of contemporary LGBTQ rights in the United States. Further, much of this work has been responsive to interventions from queer of color critique and transgender studies, interventions that render visible the racialized and hetero- or cisnormative domain assumptions of much social science research—including much work within the sociology of sexualities and gender. Finally, conversations about the “doing” of queer sociology, particularly around questions of the relationship between anti-normative political commitments and methodological orthodoxies, have

emerged and developed as quantitative researchers begin to consider the possibilities of a queer (or queerer) demography. Here, we provide an overview of these developments.

The lives of gay men, and, more specifically, white, cisgender gay men, long dominated critical sexualities research in sociology. As progressive gay studies expanded to include the experiences of lesbians and, less frequently, bisexual and transgender people, researchers started to address the lack of empirical research on LGBTQ lives with research on topics such as family and kinship (see Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer 2013 for an overview; see also Baumle & Compton 2015; Pfeffer 2016); workplace discrimination (Connell 2014; Schilt 2010); the racial and class politics of so-called “gayborhoods” (see Greene 2014; Ghaziani 2015); the rhetorical strategies, political shifts, and internal divisions within social movements and organizations (see Ghaziani, Taylor, & Stone 2016 for an overview; and political and religious opposition to LGBTQ rights (Fetner 2008; Stone 2012). Alongside these important developments in LGBTQ studies, researchers drawing on queer theoretical interventions have shifted the focus to sexual identity formation and practices in general, rather than on homosexuality exclusively; and from initial investigations of the alternative kinship structures that organize gay life (Weston 1997), to the very relational structures we consider familial.

One central body of queer work examines the institutional regulation and interpersonal formation of nonnormative sexual practices. In *Beyond Monogamy* (2016), for example, Mimi Schippers studies polyamorous communities to identify “how compulsory and institutionalized monogamy is constitutive of and legitimates the discursive construction and institutionalization of gender as a racialized, hierarchical binary” (2016: 5). Schippers’s work is in conversation with critical heterosexuality studies that take the reproduction and maintenance of heteronormativity as a central problematic (see Dean 2014; Ingraham 2004; Ward 2015). As Jane Ward and Beth Schneider argue in their introduction to a special issue of *Gender & Society* on heteronormativity, “The attention to the social construction of heterosexuality has challenged conceptions of difference limited to the triad of ‘race, class, gender’ while also demonstrating that the realm of sexuality encompasses far more than marginalized, essential (gay and lesbian) identities” (2009: 434).

Building on the insights of heteronormativity, another queer area of inquiry examines the co-constitutive relationship between gender and sexuality—the concept of “gendered sexualities” (Gagné & Tewksbury 2002). The importance of understanding this relationship began to emerge in *Queer Theory/Sociology*, but often remained a parenthetical aside for most contributors who adopted the formulation of “sexual (and gender) identity” (Stein & Plummer 1994: 178). The critical investigation of gendered sexualities opened up areas of inquiry around gender performativity and identity formation in queer communities (Rupp & Taylor 2003; Shapiro 2007). Sociological research in transgender studies also offered a corrective to the long-standing positioning of transgender and gender-nonconforming people as objects, rather than subjects, in sociological research (see Rubin 2003; Namaste 2005; Vidal-Ortiz 2008; Lombardi, this volume) by building “a research agenda which accounts for the intersections of race, class, and gender in the context of the lived social relations of transgender people” (Namaste 1996: 195). Transgender studies in sociology examine areas of inquiry such as sexuality, family, and kinship (Dozier 2005; Meadow 2011; Pfeffer 2016); the legal and medical regulation of gender identity (Meadow 2010; Shuster 2016; Windsor 2011); and experiences of violence and discrimination (Miller & Grollman 2015; Nordmarken & Kelly 2012; Schilt & Westbrook 2009). Building on critical developments in the interdisciplinary field of queer and transgender studies, more recent work has begun to examine “cishnormativity,” an ideology that “assumes and expects that all people are and should be cisgender by disallowing transgender experience and enforcing cissexism in beliefs and practices” (Sumerau, Cragun, & Mathers 2016: 294; see also Mathers 2017; Westbrook & Schilt 2014).

Recent work from a queer of color or “quare studies” (Johnson 2001) perspective urges greater reflexivity concerning the unmarked racialized assumptions and historical erasures of the complex intersections between race and sexuality. Much of the “interventionist work” on racialized sexualities has come from the humanities (Johnson & Henderson 2005: 2), since sociology, for its part, has often been antagonistic to black and brown sexualities, both normative and nonnormative, “exclud[ing] and disciplin[ing] those formations that deviate from the racial ideal of heteropatriarchy” (Ferguson 2004, 18; see Johnson & Henderson 2005).

Efforts to “quare queer,” or to extend its service to the interests of blackness (Johnson 2001), employ a three-pronged epistemological agenda. First, its proponents recognize that “as sexuality was rendered into a social construction, it was turned into a technology of race, imagining African American culture as the antithesis of compliance, discipline, and normativity” (Ferguson 2005: 59). Sexuality itself was conceptualized in an ethnocentric context that, rather than offering it up as an alternative formation to race, invested in its very contours an articulation of racial privilege (Johnson & Henderson 2005). In important response to that legacy, some queer sociologists center the experiences of communities of color within the field (see Battle & Barnes 2010; Moore 2011; Ocampo 2012; Vidal-Ortiz 2005), uncovering institutional practices, cultural logics, and psychic structures that reproduce the racialization of erotic desires (see Han 2015; Hoang 2015; Jones 2015). This marks a disinvestment from a politics of identity that opposes queer and heterosexual, recognizing that differing communal ties can be crucial for individual survival, and disinvestment from notions of radical politics built not on identity per se, but on the idea that different identity categories are invested with differing degrees of power (Cohen 1997).

Whether through performing insurgent readings of classical texts (Ferguson 2004), writing into the scholarly center subjects previously relegated to the margins (Allen 2012), examining the sexual politics of racialization (Hong & Ferguson 2011), or tracing the racialized histories of trans identities (Snorton 2017), scholars of color are merging social science scholarship with political pursuits in novel ways. If, as Jasbir Puar writes, “queer times require even queerer modalities of thought [and] analysis” (Puar 2005: 121), we might look for its evidence in creative empirical investigations such as those found in Cathy J. Cohen’s book on the racial and sexual dimensions of HIV-AIDS (Cohen 1999) and Juan Battle’s Social Justice Sexuality Project. Despite the ever-present tension between the normative pull of academia and the urgent need for cogent empirical investigations of state violence (Cohen and Jackson 2016), scholars are making headway on these issues as we write, including expanding the sociological canon to include meaningful engagement outside the English-speaking world (see Carrillo 2018; Puri 2016; Savci 2017). Finally, in conversation with a growing body of interdisciplinary rural queer studies

(see Gray, Gilley, & Johnson 2016), queer sociology has started to fill the lacuna of empirical research on LGBTQ lives in rural and southern cities in the United States (see Abelson 2016; Crawley 2008; Kazyak 2012).

The development of methodological discussions in queer research is the last innovation we examine. The majority of queer research in sociology utilizes qualitative research methods, such as interviews, ethnography, and media analysis. The prevalence of qualitative studies reflects in part an epistemological commitment to methods that can more readily capture the phenomenological dimension of people's worldviews and feelings (Rubin 2003). Yet sociologists invested in making quantitative interventions into sexual and gender discrimination are exploring ways to potentially "queer" survey and demographic research. Such research includes examinations of heterosexual attitudes toward gay communities and gay-rights activism (Powell, Bolzendahl, Geist, & Steelman 2010), as well as statistical estimations of the size of the LGBTQ population in the United States (Flores, Herman, Gates, & Brown 2016; Gates and Herman, this volume). Other research, often done collaboratively with queer and transgender activists and communities, seeks to develop best practices for designing more open and inclusive gender and sexual identity categories on surveys (see GenIUSS Group 2014; Lombardi & Banik 2016; Westbrook & Saperstein 2015). A final strand of research seeks to problematize the normative and heterosexist assumptions built into much quantitative research, and to find ways to make more space for queer demographic and attitudinal research (see Grzanka 2016). This push for a "more queer" demography (see Baumle, this volume) reflects a growing demand in mainstream LGBTQ political activism to be counted in order to achieve larger-scale changes in anti-discrimination policies. Such quantitative investigations in queer sociology are far afield from the anti-categorical imperative of humanistic queer theory that takes the position that "it is illogical to 'count' subjects once one has argued that a 'countable subject' does not exist" (Browne & Nash 2010: 11). Yet we see the inclusion of these attempts as critical to the conversation about queer methods even while we acknowledge that the ability to effectively "queer" quantitative methods in a way that would disrupt normative power hierarchies is still very much up for debate.

TOWARD A QUEER AGENDA FOR SOCIOLOGY

So, what, then, is queer sociology, once we remove the idea that “queer” is just shorthand for LGBTQ studies or that it requires a shared commitment to qualitative modes of inquiry? We identify a set of tenets that connect the disparate epistemological and methodological investments, areas of inquiry, and social locations of researchers and research that we discuss under the umbrella of “queer sociology.” First, these works prioritize bringing empirical data to bear on analyses of gender and sexual formations that are set apart from the normative center. Second, this work adopts a perspective from the margins to illuminate the hidden workings of power and normativity around racialized gender and sexual categories and to provide critical investigations of how investments in hetero-, homo-, and cisnormativities are deeply embedded in much sociology theory and practice. Third, queer sociology remains sensitive to the ways in which people draw on identity categories to make sense of their lives and desires while accounting for how these regulatory socially constructed identities emerge and shift across historical, political, and national landscapes. Fourth, queer sociology employs intimacies, erotics, reflexivities, intersectionalities, and hybridities that from a positivist position may seem to weaken a method but that are, we argue, crucial for understanding social and sexual life. And finally, building on important interventions from queer, feminist, and critical race theory, queer sociology examines how institutions, communities and social networks, and social locations, such as race, class, and nationality, shape people’s lived experiences with sexuality and gender in ways that both enable and constrain the possibilities of achieving a livable life.

In *Other, Please Specify*, we bring together sociologists working at the queer intersections of gender and sexualities who embody these tenets in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. We sought contributions from early-career scholars who had discussed in the appendices of their often field-defining first books, on conference panels, or over late-night drinks at local gay bars near the annual meeting hotel the limits of conventional sociological methods—and the disappointment of receiving conventional responses from the sociological center—that make queer

innovation and community building difficult. We asked people to write about these experiences and, if they felt able, to share personal accounts of the joys and quandaries of being queer and doing queer work in sociology. Understanding the feelings of professional and personal risk that accompany “talking out of school” about one’s discipline, for the most part we approached potential contributors who were, or who hoped to be by the time of publication, on the other side of tenure—a privileged location that can afford more stability for taking career risks. But we also acknowledge that our strategy omits the voices of our graduate student, adjunct, and tenure-track colleagues. The majority of contributors also are white and cisgender—a demographic characteristic that reflects who is most likely to be tenured in sociology, as well as who often has the most institutional resources for doing queer work. We hope this volume will open up more room for a greater diversity of queer voices in sociology by making the case for the value of this area of inquiry to the broader discipline and encouraging more scholars—queer or not—to mentor the graduate students and junior colleagues who are, as we write this, developing the next critical interventions in the field. We see this book not as the definitive word on queer sociology but rather as an opportunity to take stock of how the field has developed and shifted since the first attempts to blend queer theory and sociology in the 1990s. We remain critical of the voices and topics that are still missing, and seek to help foster and make space for the next iteration of queer—or whatever comes after queer—sociology.

Drawing on their research and career experiences, our contributors engage with questions of epistemology, methodology, and political commitments across a range of topical areas that include transnational sexualities, queer communities of color, sex work, queer kinship and family formation, transgender studies, and queer demography. Connecting to the legacy of queer and feminist “tales from the field” (see Lewin & Leap 1996; Laslett & Thorne 1997), some authors share personal experiences from their research that reflect the “queer vulnerability” (Meadow, this volume) that many of us faced in the communities we studied and in our broader discipline. Other chapters address how LGBTQ communities can challenge methodological conventions, such as those defining what constitutes an ethnographic field site or an archive. Some contributors flip the gaze to show how queer work can bring into high relief the sexist, racial-

ized, Western-centered, or positivist assumptions embedded in sociological epistemologies and methodological logics, as well as the limits of a queer theoretical approach that neglects the social. As a whole, this book provides methodological advice and practical strategies for getting queer research off the ground, and for navigating the absence of mentorship that many queer scholars face in sociology, first as graduate students and often again as faculty members. We see this volume as a way to transmit the emotional support and informal advice we give one another in conference hallways and offer our students during office hours.

While we engage with methodological challenges and quagmires, we, like other editors of collections on queer methods, resist the allure of offering a (or even multiple) solution(s) or the promise of a new queer method. Instead, taking a page from the early conversations about feminist methods in the social sciences, we make a decision not to say what a queer sociological method is but rather to “illustrate by example what it includes” (Reinharz 1992: 5). This decision allows us to embrace the “messiness of everyday life” (Browne & Nash 2010: 14) that occurs once we move away from texts and into the field (or the survey lab, as it might be). Further, in this way we can more fully capture the diversity of epistemological traditions and methodological investments and disinvestments of our contributors. What we mean when we invoke the idea of queer methods, then, has less to do with technical advice (though, we throw some of that in for good measure) than with the vein of C. Wright Mills’s classic formulation of methodology as the practice of making visible “actual ways of working” (1959: 195). In the spirit of Shulamit Reinharz’s (1992) engagement with feminist methods, we are not interested in telling queer sociologists what methods to use, but rather wish to document, and encourage the expansion of, the diversity of voices in queer sociology.

The vision of queer sociology we present here—critical of ossified categorical systems, reflexive about the constitutive power of knowledge on the social world, and integrative of queer studies discourse with a practical focus on institutional life—requires directing a fine lens on our daily practices. To do this, we must acknowledge the ambivalent relationship many of us have with both the level of theoretical abstraction found in much humanistic queer studies work and the positivist and normative yardstick by which our work is measured in our discipline. Most of us maintain

commitments to empiricism and the processes of categorization that expand understanding and generate political and rhetorical force while taking seriously critiques of the reductionist tendency in much social science. We put this ambivalence on the table for discussion to highlight our “practical strategies” (DeVault 1999: 2) for negotiating the tension between doggedly following disciplinary conventions and utterly rejecting them—particularly for scholars early in their careers, as most of us were when we started the studies we write about here. Strategies for managing a middle ground generate the potential for opening lines of inquiry that simultaneously produce and critique knowledge. Such strategies often require, as Marjorie DeVault has argued about efforts to do feminist sociology, participating in existing institutions of knowledge production and accepting that our efforts “will always be only partially successful” (DeVault 1999: 3). We discuss strategies that have worked for us while acknowledging that these same strategies may not translate to other researchers or settings, and present methodological and theoretical ideas for pushing queer sociology forward. Above all else, we share details of strategies that have not worked for us in an effort to embrace what J. Jack Halberstam (2011) has termed “the queer art of failure.”

Opening up the conversation about queer methods and strategies in sociology will, we hope, provide some collaborative, pedagogical advice for new generations of sociologists. In these pages, we acknowledge our embarrassments and missteps and, for many of our contributors, our experiences of stigma within the broader discipline. We do this not to suggest that we came of age in the “bad old days” of sociology that today’s graduate students have the luxury not to face (though, we wish that were true), but rather to demystify the process of career building and world making within queer sociology. Further, we want to challenge the professional delegitimation that many of us have faced—and that we still see junior colleagues face—from peers and colleagues, such as having our work dismissed as “me-search,” “too political,” or “too micro.” While all of the contributors have found ways to navigate these forms of professional dismissal, we see it as critical to make visible the prevalence of these kinds of stigmatizing experiences in an effort to emphasize the difference between doing work strategically *from the vantage point of the margins* and *being* marginalized by one’s colleagues and peers.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

Appreciating the irony of ending a book about queer interventions into social science methods with a series of categories, we move now to this volume's chapter organization. Finding an organizational schema that respects the different and sometimes conflicting epistemological and methodological investments of the authors, but manages to avoid leaving the reader with a sense of vertigo, is not an easy task. In an attempt to bring some order to the following pages without sweeping the messy reality of how research actually happens back into the sociological closet, we locate the chapters across four broad themes: (1) anti-orthodoxies, (2) relationships, (3) strategies, and (4) epistemologies—though, in the interest of full disclosure, these categories are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive (a little sociology humor for the humanists who may be reading this), nor are they intended to be stable or universal (a little queer theory humor for the sociologists who may be reading this). Within these themes you will find varied strategies and approaches for studying gender and racially diverse queer communities and nonheteronormative practices alongside the shared problematic of how to do collective world building within the field of sociology.

We open with “Anti-Orthodoxies,” a section that brings together authors who identify, and offer strategies for navigating, disciplinary barriers to a more politically engaged sociological project. From a range of approaches and areas of inquiry, the authors in this section discuss the challenges of doing research that pushes back against methodological, epistemological, and moral conventions in the field. Some authors end with strategies for building a more inclusive sociological field, while others show the power and impact of working in other disciplinary fields, such as gender studies and public health, or in public policy advocacy.

In “The ‘Not Sociology’ Problem” (chapter 1), Kristen Schilt lays out a set of interactional practices that limit any research that seeks to disrupt the disciplinary status quo by locating it outside the realm of “real” or “good” sociology. Arguing for the importance of mentoring innovative queer work even when it may challenge our own theoretical commitments and ontological realities, she ends with a discussion of collective strategies for expanding what “counts” as sociology. We then move to Jane Ward’s “The

Methods Gatekeepers and the Exiled Queers,” which examines the tense relationship between sociological methods and queer modes of inquiry. Showing how queer work in sociology is often dismissed in the discipline through methodological critiques, Ward argues that such methods talk masks disciplinary anxieties about race, gender, and sexuality by operating as a seemingly neutral set of concerns by which to undermine politically invested research. In “Trans Issues in Sociology: A Trans-Centered Perspective,” Emilia Lombardi continues this conversation by highlighting how years of activism and advocacy by transgender scholars has begun to reshape how data about transgender and gender-nonconforming people are collected and used in policy research in sociology and public health. Lombardi emphasizes the power of a trans-centered sociology that locates transgender people as active participants in knowledge making around their experiences and lives. Keeping the focus on quantitative research, Gary Gates and Jody Herman discuss the importance—and potential pitfalls—of doing public sociology that pushes back against controversial policy initiatives that uphold discriminatory cultural conceptions about queer and trans lives. In “Beyond Academia: Strategies for Using LGBT Research to Influence Public Policy,” Gates and Herman assert that policy advocates, activists, media, courts, legislatures, and even voters, all become potential critics of scholarly work and research design, and caution that when data are relatively rare and populations are stigmatized, the importance of new research findings can be heightened and even lead to misuse. We end part I with Angela Jones’s “Pornographics as Queer Method.” Drawing on the institutional barriers she faced when she began to study sex workers, Jones elucidates how cultural conceptions of nonheteronormative practices as “dirty” and “immoral” that are deeply embedded in the discipline operate as a constraining force on sociologists who seek to study sexual behavior rather than sexual identity formation. She ends with a manifesto that calls for queer sociology to develop a “pornographic imagination” that brings the study of sex (real, actual sex) back to the study of sexualities.

The second section highlights relationships with our work and in the field. Continuing the tradition of “tales from the field,” contributors discuss how issues of embodiment and social location impact possibilities for queer presence and relationality across an array of field sites. Taken

together, these chapters underscore empirical research as an investment involving both intellectual and emotional risk and further illuminate the difficulties of working at or beyond the limits of traditional sociological frameworks.

In “Not Out in the Field: Studying Privacy and Disclosure as an Invisible (Trans) Man” (chapter 6), Cayce Hughes discusses his decision to come out as a transgender man in his professional life while conducting his dissertation research on motherhood and poverty. Hughes’s chapter shows how, even when we do not consider our research to be queer, our queer experiences with gender and sexual identity in the field can shape our research questions and methodological commitments—though in ways that are not always visible to our respondents, our colleagues, or, at times, ourselves. Catherine Connell’s chapter, “Thank You for Coming Out Today: The Queer Discomforts of In-Depth Interviewing,” introduces a number of ethical and epistemological challenges for qualitative researchers who have queer commitments. Connell highlights how the dependence on coming-out narratives in queer fieldwork shapes data collection in ways that can have unexpected effects on researchers and participants. In “Studying the ‘Right’ Can Feel Wrong: Reflections on Researching Anti-LGBT Movements,” Tina Fetner and Melanie Heath discuss the specific challenges and emotional costs that can arise for queer and queer-supportive scholars who do research with groups that embrace a politics of disgust against LGBTQ people. In the final chapter of part 2, “The Mess: Vulnerability as Ethnographic Practice,” Tey Meadow describes the anxieties that can arise for researchers who seek to resist typical ethnographic orthodoxies, like the complementarity of subject-object and the predator-prey model of erotic engagement. Meadow explores moments in her fieldwork with parents of trans and gender-nonconforming children that show what happens when these well-hewn distinctions break down, when the researcher becomes a site of study, and when erotic encounters are neither benign nor exploitative.

We move then to “Strategies,” whose chapters offer examples of the many ways that scholars expand and adapt traditional sociological frameworks to create work-arounds that more closely align with specificities of queer populations, topics, and epistemologies. Illuminating where we are willing to go to find and answer our questions, contributors discuss the

complexities of recruiting participants, conceptualizing and reconceptualizing sociological concepts and measures, creating quantitative-qualitative synergies, and achieving rigor. They further offer insights on and strategies for negotiating struggles with legitimacy, believability, and validity in queer work.

In chapter 10, “Challenges, Triumphs, and Praxis: Collecting Qualitative Data on Less Visible and Marginalized Populations,” Mignon Moore details approaches to creating spaces and community for diffuse and hard-to-reach populations, such as queer communities of color. Detailing what she describes as “the inverted order of the gatekeeper” technique of locating an informant, Moore exemplifies how the researcher can be resourceful and inventive in recruitment, rather than succumbing to the myth of “invisible populations” that can stop queer research before it even gets under way. Relatedly, D’Lane Compton’s “How Many (Queer) Cases Do I Need? Thinking Through Research Design” discusses the long-standing idea in sociology that LGBTQ populations are too challenging or too small for traditional sampling frames and research designs. Speaking to these popular misconceptions, Compton provides a model for designing and assessing queer research. Amin Ghaziani, in “Queer Spatial Analysis,” lays out both theoretical and logistical issues in defining and studying gay neighborhoods. Ghaziani concludes with a field-shifting assertion that sociologists must move beyond binary conceptions to generate creative indicators of sexual geographies. From spatial analysis we move to Amy Stone’s chapter, “Queer Persistence in the Archive.” Detailing how queer archival work often requires her to go, literally, into the closet, Stone asserts that scholars must be open to research in unexpected places and willing to follow leads, and must realize the power of making alliances. She further elucidates how dealing with dead ends and pushing through self-doubt is part of the process of doing queer research, in which, more often than not, we have less to work with because of omissions and the invisibility of queer experiences. We end part 3 with Kimberly Hoang’s “Gendering Carnal Ethnography: A Queer Reception,” a chapter that explores how informal disciplinary reactions to our work can limit our attempts at methodological innovation. Highlighting sociological responses to her embodied ethnographic research with sex workers in Vietnam that were simultaneously salacious and dismissive, Hoang argues

that unpacking the gendered double standard in status that ethnographers receive from their colleagues when they literally put their bodies into their research can illustrate tensions, struggles, and trade-offs that come with bringing queerly disruptive research out of the field and into the academy.

In the final section, “Epistemologies,” we present chapters that engage with some of the structural, intellectual, and emotional barriers to building more complex thought around queer work in sociology. These chapters think through the possibilities and limits of a queer theory of knowledge in the authors’ specific field sites and areas of inquiry. While all of the authors maintain commitments to empiricism, they seek simultaneously to push back on processes of categorization, calcified traditions, and historical erasures in ways that expand our sociological understanding of queer lives and generate political and rhetorical force.

We start with Evren Savci, who makes a case for “translation as queer methodology” in her chapter (15) about doing transnational sexualities work on queer identities. Drawing from ethnographic research in Turkey, she argues that the framework of translation allows for the undoing of false dichotomies, particularly between discourse and practice, and can call into question the “colonized” versus “authentic” binary when talking about the non-West. In chapter 16, “Queer and Punishment: Sexual Social Control and the Legacy of ‘Nuts, Sluts and Preverts,’” Trevor Hoppe considers how changes in political landscapes and social movements around seemingly non-LGBTQ issues can push sexuality scholars to explore new meanings and conceptualizations in their own work. Challenging the dismissal of “deviance studies” in the field of sexualities, Hoppe argues that studying sexuality through the lens of punishment and the state can shift the sociological gaze toward practical techniques of social control that limit the possibilities for queer lives. We then turn to another epistemological challenge to queer orthodoxies, in Amanda Baumle’s “The Demography of Sexuality: Queering Demographic Methods.” Challenging an easy dismissal of quantitative modes of inquiry as anti-queer, Baumle argues that the incorporation of queer theoretical perspectives and nonheterosexual experiences into population research illustrates that many “nonsexual” demographic outcomes (such as income and place of residence) are shaped by sexual identities and practices. In a related conversation about queer insights for

qualitative methods, C.J. Pascoe asks in her chapter, “What to Do with Actual People? Thinking Through a Queer Social Science Method.” Pascoe makes a case for adopting a queer theoretical sensibility that interrogates the basis of categories and patterns that often are taken for granted in our discipline. As Pascoe argues, such an adoption may “fail” from an established disciplinary position—but what we learn and gain from such “failures” is what makes our queer work better collectively. Finally, we end with “Queer Accounting: Methodological Investments and Disinvestments,” Carla Pfeffer’s challenge to the use of a positivist epistemological framework for evaluating (and often dismissing) politically engaged queer work. While scholars doing queer work are often faced with responses from journal editors, grant reviewers, and colleagues that suggest (or explicitly state) that their work is less legitimate than that in other subfields, Pfeffer makes a case for how to shift the normative center by carving out systems of support that create more spaces for queer scholarship. We end with this piece, as it serves to wrap up the conversation about queer collaboration and world building that we develop across this volume.

Coda: A final note on queer collaboration

We see this book as an experiment in collective process, as itself an instance of queer world making within a straight discipline. Many graduate programs in sociology afford few opportunities for working collectively within the subfield of queer sociology—or even the broader category of the sociology of sexualities. Most of us in this volume were mentored by the single sociologist in our department who was doing work on sexuality or gender (if we were lucky), or on related topics, such as embodiment—a situation that, while a vast improvement over previous generations, made it difficult to form scholarly community. Often, it was only as junior faculty that we began to develop such a community and were able to start more complex conversations about the craft of sociology. In casual discussions with our peers, we encountered story after story of people making initial forays into the field with an underdeveloped toolkit for deciphering queer worlds, in isolation or in direct defiance of our mentors’ counsel. Taking these conversations as the starting point for this volume, we asked contributors to write up these experiences as first-person accounts.

Yet, while we were met with much excitement about this project, it was difficult at first to get the chapters off the ground. Contributors wrote to us with common questions: How personal should I get? What is everyone else writing? Is there a model for the type of chapter you are envisioning? Even as the editors, we found ourselves dragging our feet about committing our own experiences to the page. What we realized from this collective hesitation was how emotionally risky it felt to write against disciplinary convention—how “queerly vulnerable” (Meadow, this volume) we made ourselves in admitting struggle, confusion, ambivalence. Acknowledging as a group that we felt stuck in our writing, we came to realize just how difficult it is to pull back the curtain and show the messiness and anxiety that often lies behind our attempts to produce politically informed empirical work in a discipline committed to objective, depersonalized reporting of theory and data.

We chose to address what people felt to be an individual stumbling block with a collective strategy. As the chapters of this book took form, we met with the contributors in small groups in three different cities to workshop early drafts. In these sessions, we gave and received feedback and assisted one another in thinking through our ideas. Most important, we were able to try out provisional ways of presenting our experiences and linking them to broader questions and methodological considerations without the fear of being “wrong” or unable to support our ideas with “evidence.” After meeting in these small groups, we edited our chapters and submitted them for a round of blind peer review from within the group. This process offered each contributor a second set of eyes on the revised work. Through this method, we worked against the isolationist model of journal review, one that expects perfection before engagement. We tried instead to cultivate an ethic of collaboration in which we helped authors execute the work in their own vision.

There are several implications of this model of collective knowledge production. It created the conditions for us to work in community, which, for most queer scholars, is rare. It offered us the unusual opportunity to glance behind the curtain at the processes that created the studies we read and used in our own work. It cut against the disciplinary convention that we are, by definition, in competition for scarce resources and thus must guard closely our intellectual product. It allowed us to see that we were encountering a similar set of practical, empirical, and emotional obstacles, even

though many of us do vastly different kinds of work. Finally, it generated a pool of knowledge for future scholars doing this work to build on, critique, and extend. We offer up our model of queer collaboration to readers in an effort to encourage more dialogue around building queer community in a straight discipline.

NOTE

1. In using the term *appreciative*, we draw on the work of sociologist David Matza (1969) to distinguish between a research approach that seeks to understand a particular practice or identity from the point of view of respondents, and an approach that seeks to correct such ways of being in accordance with prevailing norms.

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