2008

Sources on lesbian subjectivities for the production of lesbian of color identity formation through literature, art, film, or documentation: An annotated bibliography

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QUEENS COLLEGE
OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

SOURCES ON LESBIAN SUBJECTIVITIES
FOR THE PRODUCTION OF LESBIAN OF COLOR IDENTITY FORMATION
THROUGH LITERATURE, ART, FILM, OR DOCUMENTATION
AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
DR. COLLEEN COOL OF
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE
AS REQUIREMENT FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF LIBRARY SCIENCE

BY
SHAWNTA SMITH

FLUSHING, NEW YORK
MAY 2008
Acknowledgements

This thesis was made possible by my undergraduate work in Queer Women’s Studies with the City University of New York’s (CUNY’s) Baccalaureate Program and my advisors Professor Paisley Currah and Professor Flavia Rando. Post undergraduate degree study was primarily influenced by my volunteer year at the Lesbian Herstory Archives with direct access to Maxine Wolfe as well as to texts and collections by lesbians from around the world. All helped to contextualize my studies even further. This thesis is a compilation of these many learning experiences for which I am grateful and hope is reflective of this collective understanding of lesbian subjectivities and the organization of this field of study when overlaid with the dynamics of race.
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Abstract

An historic trait of coming out as a lesbian and then forming an identity of a 'lesbian of color' are the seeking out of like voices and stories. Librarians who hold an understanding of the lesbian of color coming process as well as the fluidity of language in Queer Studies will be better equipped to service lesbian of color patrons. This paper holds three tools for reference librarians: A literature review outlining the history of lesbian of color identity formation, secondly, a bibliography with interdisciplinary humanities reference annotations that source lesbians of color in literature, film, performance art, and identity, and thirdly, a model of content analysis that is strategic for finding applicable lesbian of color sources in multiple formats.
Introduction

Entering into the queer community was extremely simple for me. I came out to the world during high school at the age of 16 when questions of maturity, college and future aspirations were at stake. This was the time for me to not only explore my sexuality, but also to define myself amongst the many sub-cultures that existed in a city as large as New York. While other students my age were contemplating their areas of study, which college to attend, or whether they would follow their childhood dreams or that of their parents, I was limited to thoughts of women’s flesh and accessing the modes of entry into this fantasy world of women.

Accessibility to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered world was as close as a trip to the guidance counselor’s office where issues of student-produced zines, newsletters and flyers filled the resource table. I merely had to pick which on or off campus group I deemed interesting to attend. My courage was stinted by a three year long boyfriend, multiple suicide attempts –perhaps one for each male sexual partner, an abortion, transferring from a specialized to an alternative high school, nipple, tongue and navel piercings, and multiple hair colors, all until my senior year when I finally entered a youth meeting at a lesbian and gay center.

To my surprise, the room set-up with chairs in a circle for over forty kids preparing for that evenings’ annual dance party far surpassed my expectation of a continuous orgy. I wasn’t prepared for the smiling faces, the trannies, the outnumbering of boys, or for being the only black girl in the room. My search began on that day in that room. Any hint of disappointment was overshadowed by determination to define myself as a lesbian for life; I had come too far to turn back.

Upon my entrance into the lesbian community, I found that there were women of varying ages who were on a similar mission. In my pubescent mind, our hidden sexual
agendas became the elephant in the center of the room that morphed into activism as the scapegoat for our continued participation. Like a nomad, I traveled in and out of organizations whose missions were often similar but whose bodies lacked the brown skin that I had so often fantasized about and yearned to understand.

My search continued throughout college, this search for familiar faces. And along my journey, I morphed from high femme to soft butch, from black naturalist vegetarian to beer drinking pierced leather dyke. I rallied for prison moratorium, academic freedoms, abortion rights, and same-sex marriages. But these changes were all external; searching for community was a scapegoat for what I was really searching for – myself.

And so I created her.

Relinquishing myself from the pre-established notions of what a lesbian ought to be, I used visual and written art as the tool for defining my identity. As embracing as this process was, it was also extremely isolating. That’s when I took a course that mandated I attend an academic event on any topic in LGBT studies. In the same semester as a course in the Lesbian Experience, I began to seriously study lesbian of color produced writings, film and art. My thesis emerged during this undergraduate learning experience. Listening to other women’s stories displayed to me that as a lesbian of color, our searches lead us to produce art with intentions of creating our own histories and filling the inner and societal void of our identities. This realization sparked my choice to attend an event on lesbian feminisms where it seemed the source of this feeling of displacement might be formally addressed.

Prior to entering the room, my post-pubescent mind imagined a room filled with women who sought to aggressively attack the questionable demise of a once prosperous lesbian sub-culture. I yearned for intense dialog that could evolve into answers to the basic questions posed in its advertisement: What is the Lesbian Feminist
Agenda? Does one exist? And what are we to make with what we have now? To my avail, the women of the room all sought similar answers, all with a feeling of disconnection from the community.

Within the Lesbian Feminisms 1970-2005 – Conversations Across Generations event, held on a breezy Friday, October 28th 2005 sponsored by the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at the CUNY Graduate Center, there were generational divides, which seemed to only heighten the sense of urgency that emerged amongst the women of the audiences, all who sought and expected a resurgence, a revolution. The panelists, with roots based in the 1970s and 1980s lesbian feminist era, had feelings of growth and accomplishment, but also of obligation, as they set the groundwork for a movement that never materialized. On the panel sat Cheryl Clarke, a very well cited and ‘influential elder’. She presented with little energy, and a balancing sense of humor that spoke to her disillusioned state of periphery. Aware of the capacity and sense of urgency required for a lesbian feminist agenda, Clarke scanned the room almost certain of its absence before her.

Yet the women who sat patiently and hungrily facing the panelists, seemed empty and yearning. One young woman announced that her generation is unique because in college, of which she was a recent graduate, the existence of courses that focused on lesbian feminists, that assigned the writings of Cheryl Clarke, was a new phenomenon, but nonetheless, had repercussions. The young women who take these courses are not receiving them as historical fragmented moments in time through the History Department, but from Sociology, Women’s Studies, or Political Science Departments, all which lead to a continuous, existing entity – a source of study that can lead to a career or a form of mobilization outside of the academy.

However, it seemed unanimous that the lack of a tangible current base of lesbian feminism leads all that was previously learned to reposition itself as an individual
demonstrative theoretic, one that must be applied to a career in teaching, writing, or performance art. The current generation of emerging scholars, of which I included myself as a constituent, listened aptly and openly for an actual occupation of a ‘lesbian feminist’, similar to the ways in which a ‘literary critic’ is not simply a politically correct, self-enhanced title, but holds stature, entails duties, and is prescribed a profession. It seemed our futures lied in being an Artist and/or Director of a not-for-profit organization, and simultaneously, if lesbian feminism was conceived through academia, also a Professor.

What I learned from the event was the unintended side effect by the women of the 70s and 80s who coined, ‘lesbian-feminism’: that we are trapped within ourselves, that without a cohesive community, without direct struggle, we have ceased the exploration of lesbian feminist agendas. It’s as if the new generation is more “afraid of freedom than slavery” (Sneed, Title, 1998).

I decided to become a librarian.

For my first experience working in a library, I learned that librarianship is not a woman-centered profession. When I started out, librarianship was a good ‘idea’ because it was as close to my post-80's lesbian-separatist lifestyle that I could conjure in today's career driven society. And this realization came to me as a real, palpable occurrence when I came in for the interview where only the director and I were women, me being the only black woman. In addition, regardless of the gender dynamics of the staff, the academic community with whom we worked was multi-gendered. I learned about the complexities of professional relationships and the ways in which I have allowed my language, race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation to limit my interactions, and therefore opportunities to build advancing professional relationships
with colleagues. My primary role, however, outside of being sexually harassed and constantly undermined by male colleagues and students, was to educate librarians on the basis of queer studies. The acquisitions librarian was queer, but likely not out, and still male. Lesbian texts were scarce or hardly noted as such. Educating librarians on sources applicable to lesbian student of color populations was for me, a tangible goal.

Reflecting back on my undergraduate years and the event held at the graduate center on new generations of feminists, as well as only a year ago referencing at an academic library, I treasure these experiences. They brought me full circle to the same question, the lesbian question. Because although I do not claim to be a feminist, I understand the significance of connections made between feminists and lesbians throughout history. My journey does define me as three things: a lesbian of color, an artist, and a librarian. More generally, I am as other lesbians of color, on a mission to define myself, to solidify my identity, and to expand the historical representations of lesbianism to include our faces, our participation, and our stories. Within the rhetoric of answers to the lesbian question, I present this thesis to that sixteen-year-old version of myself who burns for the knowledge of who she will become.
Literature Review

I. Lesbianism

The sexual revolution stemmed from the newfound independence that many white women developed during their move from the New Left to the Women’s Liberation movement. Retracting from the abuse that the male sexual revolution produced during the period of free love practiced by New Left activists, women began to explore and understand their bodies separate from men (Rosen, 2000, p.144).

Further dividing the movement, first wave feminists such as Betty Freidan did not foresee the benefits of including women’s sexuality to the dialogue of women’s rights. Additionally, the Black community did not receive women’s sexuality as a topic appropriate for organizing for racial justice. The sexuality of black women is often only spoken from the mouths of black women when they are queer. Silence erupts from lack of representation of black women’s sexuality, or through homophobic attempts of censorship from the black community. Even amongst radical blacks, sexuality is deemed deviant and, still, relegated through the black male. The prominent voice, however, was the voice of the second wave - younger feminists who began to build coalitions with lesbians and even redefined what lesbianism meant, turning a previously understood sexual orientation into a political sexuality.

Redefining lesbianism was at the pinnacle of this divisive debate and counter-movement within the sexual revolution. Most of the language formulated spurred from the need for a formal inclusion of lesbians into the feminist agenda. Many lesbian feminists, internationally and locally sought for inclusion through defining lesbianism as an evolved form of feminism. Although it was ‘in’ to be a lesbian, to the point where feminists felt pressure to ‘come out’ as heterosexual, some feminists denied that the only alternative to patriarchy was lesbian love (Rosen, 2000, p. 170). Radical Lesbians, 1970, defined lesbianism as a political position where women were challenged to denounce
patriarchy by not only coming together and forging alliances with other women through coalition building, but also having intimate relationships with other women, reversing the process of exclusion by excluding men.

Radical Lesbianism emanated also from Monique Wittig, a French lesbian feminist. Wittig, 1981, questioned at a Modern Language Association assembly the definition of a woman, stating a revolutionary idea: a lesbian is, by definition, not a woman (Jagose, 1996, p. 55). As women are the products of a market economy in which they are the producers of society and function second-handedly to husbands, fathers and sons, a lesbian who does not partake in these rituals is therefore not a woman. In addition to this model of thinking is the idea of ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ coined by Adrienne Rich in 1980 in her essay “Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Existence.” Rich defines this as a system in which heterosexuality is bred, not for the benefit of women, but to maintain a system of patriarchy and sexism, in which women’s bodies function as machines, vessels, and tools for male pleasure and control. Furthermore, she introduces an essentialist perspective for lesbianism based on the institutionalized method of women—as—mothers; since women are the first bodies we identify with as infants, it is natural for women to be attracted to women (Jagose, 1996, p. 49). Rich, Wittig and other lesbian feminists argue that in order to dispel economic, social, and political based oppression lesbianism is the answer to recreating a society in which heterosexuality – the dominating force to all systems, is annulled.

Arlene Stein’s essay, (1997), “Difference, Desire, and the Self”, prescribes lesbianism as a combination of influence from the feminist and gay liberation movements, and self-knowledge through collective women’s circles – women identification. Stein uses interviews of women who came out in the times of these social movements to narrate their women-identification processes and to illustrate how the feminist movement has helped shape lesbianism just as lesbianism helped shape feminism. According to
Stein, this shaping is due to the process of women identifying with themselves and each other in a new way, as rebelling from the constraints of patriarchy. Because white lesbians were marginal in a woman’s movement that did not include a context for sexuality, Stein sees woman identification and lesbian identification as one in the same: identities that are inclusive of gender and sexuality in a political sphere. This political ideology of an egalitarian sexual context for women who were not traditional was what framed lesbianism as political and feminism as sexual.

Stein (1997) identifies ‘coming out’ as a necessary and integral process to lesbianism, but that it happens in two spheres: coming out as a ‘new gay’ and an ‘old gay.’ According to her research, old gays are women who had sexual relationships with women prior to the feminist movements, while new gays were entering their first intimate relationships with women due to feminism and not necessarily sexual. This disparity is what Stein notes as the cause for separation between lesbian feminists. “The old gay world conceptualized lesbianism as desire; the new gay world recognized it, more diffusely, as woman identification” (Stein, 1997, p. 140).

Sarah E. Chinn, (2003), author of “Feeling Her Way Audre Lorde and the Power of Touch”, contrastingly demonstrates how Audre Lorde, an iconic black lesbian activist, poet, and librarian defines lesbianism as grounded in the power of the erotic, specifically touch. Chinn uses Lorde’s theories including her biomythography, ZAMI, as a mapping of lesbian woman identification through the amplification of touch as sexual desire and self-knowledge (Chinn, 2003, p. 181). Chinn compares Lorde’s work to the extremities of touch in sadomasochism and states, “both recognize sexual desire as constitutive of meaningful sexual identity” (p. 183). This depiction that desire is at the core of lesbianism, leads Chinn to prescribe an understanding that all lesbians are essentially what Stein would define as ‘old gays.’ Chinn notes that Lorde recorded her life during the peak of the feminist movement; Incorporating her many facets of identity and personal
experience into lesbian feminist participation, presents a viewpoint of lesbian feminist separation that differs from Stein's.

Although Stein (1997) does acknowledge identity and difference as the reasons for lesbian feminist separation, she abandons the notion of desire completely when she states,

But now women who had never experienced themselves as deeply and irrevocably different, but who shared a sense of alienation from gender and sexual norms, could also claim lesbian identities by developing 'gay consciousness.' The discourse of lesbian feminism conflated feminism and lesbianism. Lesbianism was reenvisioned [sic] to signify not simply a sexual preference but a way for women to gain strength and confidence, to bond with other women. (p. 140)

This separation is a ‘claim’ on lesbianism by feminist women as a goal to ending male dominance and healing from white supremacy and patriarchy, not however a reenvisioning of sexuality.

Chinn (2003) demonstrates how lesbianism articulated though desire and touch eliminates separation based on ‘claim’ that is primarily political. She highlights

But Lorde’s deep explorations of lesbian sexuality render impossible the liberal feminist fantasy of her as dyke mammy. Indeed, her persistent focus on the embodiedness of lesbian sex, and her attempts to represent in language the world-making (and breaking) power of that sex, is inextricable from her latter-day persona as griot to the lesbian nation.

(p. 183)

Chinn stresses the need for touch as an integral part of lesbianism in order to separate lesbians from non-lesbians (or old gays from new gays) while still leaving room for bonds with non-lesbians. It is the power to exist as a lesbian and embrace women
sexually that leaves room for revolutionary movement building. Chinn, (2001), proves, “Lesbian bodies are not the sources of knowledge and power; they are a conduit to them” (p. 195).

Separatism stems from the method of emancipating women from male oppression. Although separatist societies existed prior to lesbian-feminist counter culture (within the hippie, environmentalist, and secular religious denominations such as the Shakers), lesbian feminist separation was intended to model a patriarchy-free world. Lesbians of color, however, were in the margins. Their marginalization stemmed from exclusion within lesbian communities. This ethic of exclusion is mirrored with the idea of suffrage movements, civil rights, human rights, and anti-war agendas. Naturally, with a growing population of cultures, nationalities, and the educated left, more and more people who were marginalized within mass movements forged movements of their very own.
II. Lesbians of Color

Separatist spaces were overwhelmingly white and middle class. Many lesbians who have provided firsthand experiences of co-existing in separatist communities have expressed their feelings of displacement in reflective writings. Historically the search for community is a constructed characteristic of a developing identity. Similar to the trend of white women leaving Civil Rights and New Left organizations, women entered and left these communities often without alternative spaces for representations and freedom from oppressions. Whether some lesbians found their grounding in separatist communities is debatable, but the divisive pattern of lesbian feminism led to continued questions of misrepresentation and exclusion.

Juana Maria Paz (1980) is one of many lesbians of color who sought separatist spaces in order to exist as a whole person. She sought separatism, not amongst other lesbians of color, but amongst white lesbian feminists. In her journal, titled, The La Luz Journal, she chronicles her journey to self-identification, through the loss of displacement and falling in love. An excerpt of one of her first entries poetically describes her feeling of displacement (although she refrained from using this term). Paz (1980) writes:

La Luz/February, 1978...Perhaps I am a madwomyn roaming the earth in search of a vacuum where I might find peace. And perhaps their reality is different from mine. Perhaps my language is foreign to them and my words fall around their circle like dead leaves, sinking in the earth, forgotten, before they rise up in another form. Perhaps I do not know the answer and I am tired of searching for the question. It is too much work now, life; I need a rest. Perhaps it would help if I remembered my dreams, completely, not glimpses of men and madness and murder. (p. 7)
Naomi Littlebear Morena (1981) wrote in her piece, "Coming Out Queer and Brown", which was excerpted from a 1980 rock opera called Survivors, a story of a white middle class incest survivor and her brown woman lover also a survivor of rape and sexual abuse named Clara. Morena discusses how the many overlapping issues developed as a Latina Lesbian within separatist communities leads to marginalization. Morena (1981) writes:

Clara: Now why is it i hear so many people ask me, 'why are there not very many Latina Lesbians involved in the feminist movement?' …Let's face it, if you've got the bucks together it's easier to leave town, unless you're lucky enough to live in a big city; i wasn't. i ended up here by accident; i thought Oregon was somewhere near New Mexico. What did i find when i stumbled into the women's community? A gauntlet of white women on one side and straight leftists (ex-boyfriends) on the other".

(p. 345)

As this is the feeling many lesbians of color had in the late 70s and early 80s, the path to entering separatist communities was not a welcoming one. Even within separatist culture, the overwhelmingly white lesbian population led lesbians of color such as Paz disappointed to find that their utopia did not exist. Paz heard of Sassafras by a friend in 1976 and ventured to the land in search for community and a place that she could call home. When reflecting on her disappointment, Paz (1980) recalls:

I surmised that there would be an out-group and I wondered who it might be. I wondered who the out group of the larger society would ostracize and I pondered the question with intellectual amusement./ I never thought it would be me. So, here I am, pen in hand, lying on the mat of my loft in paradise. I feel that I do not belong here. How dramatic that I am a woman with no home, no place, no culture. I mock so easily the absurdity
of life and self and yet, underneath, I have always felt the need to go home. (p. 6)

White lesbians were not intentionally racist. Many white lesbian separatists worked to be inclusive while suffering from their own feelings of displacement due to class, age, and differences in life experiences. Joyce Cheney (1985), for example is a white lesbian separatist who published a collection of lesbian separatist first hand experiences. Her goal was to include each and every lesbian separatist or intentional community that existed in the United States and overseas, but found that the intention of inclusion does not sufficiently prevent exclusion. In the introduction of her book, *Lesbian Land*, she has a section titled, “The One’s That Got Away.” Here, she grapples with the frustration of witnessing the displacement of other women. Chaney (1985) writes:

This book does not meet everyone’s needs. “Where” said a mother, “are more articles which discuss kids’ issues?” “Where,” asked a Jewish dyke, “are the articles discussing being Jewish in these environments?” A dyke of color asked, “Is there enough mention of country dykes of color?” …I corresponded with women from the women-of-color land in the Ozarks. They had submitted material that dealt specifically with race, class, and ownership issues on the land. In the end, those women decided not to have that material included. (Chaney, Introduction)

Cheney highlighted the war-like reactionary choice of direct rejection by women of color to include their experiences into an anthology created by a white woman. Furtive with the self-determinative power of the Civil Rights Movement, lesbian feminists of color were realizing their collective ability to organize themselves, without dependency on a community built by white lesbians. Women of color began to separate from white lesbians and formulated a community and an identity of their own.
Audre Lorde (1984), who was referenced by Chinn as, rightfully, “the griot of the lesbian nation” (Chinn, 2001, p. 182), was a successful leader and revolutionary black lesbian poet with tremendous influence towards the dialogue of representation within the lesbian feminist movement. Lorde pressures a need for dialogue amongst women in spaces that were problematically silencing towards women of color, poor women, women with disabilities, and others who claimed a position of marginality. In her book of essays, *Sister Outsider*, 1984, an affirming statement in response to the awakening of the lesbian separatist movement’s fight against oppressions directly addresses the act of overcoming silences as the first step to re-building a fragmented movement. Lorde (1984) declares,

I have come to believe over and over again, that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood… My silences had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you… and while we wait in silence for that final luxury of fearlessness, the weight of that silence will choke us. The fact that we are here and that I speak these words is an attempt to break that silence and bridge some of those differences between us, for it is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken. (p. 41)

Maya Chumu’s (1980) essay “Coming Out Coloured”, was written in response to the American never-ending and consistent state of war on women and culture. Chumu asserts that the construction of race has led lesbians of color to be ostracized from the black civil rights community because of sexuality, marginalized within the queer community because of gender, and tokenized within the lesbian community because of
race. Chumu (1980) asserts, that “Although the melting pot theory has led some to believe that we all merge into mainstream, Latinas, Asians, Natives Americans, blacks, people of color have been isolated and identified as different than the dominant culture and thus more easily exploited” (p. 53). She also states,

As wimin with color with cultures different than dominant, loving other wimin with color, facing a lot of shit in straight racist sexist society, we can’t afford to accept dominant values even though survival needs continue to pressure us into submission. (Chumu, 1980, p. 26)

It is within these lesbian of color only spaces that Chumu’s rhetoric of answers could develop and be criticized. Women of color within separatist communities have been extremely vocal about their need to reinvent intentional separatist space, specific to lesbians of color. The largest indicators of difference have been race and class. Historically, lesbians of color have fallen into both categories of poor or working class and of racial minority within separatist spaces. Defining lesbianism as primarily a white middle class construction directly affected feelings of placement and community. As Chumu (1980) details,

it is a sad situation to be a woman of color trying to know whether you identify with being a lesbian. The women’s movement has been white oriented with no recognition or space created for other cultures to exist thus a lack of gay, non-white culture to come out to… Even though most lesbians defined their culture as lesbian or world-feminist, wimin-identified-wimin of color across the nation are starting to meet in ethnic groups either to work on projects… or for social get to-gethers. (p. 53)
Imagine, however, entering a space that has been fought for and created just for you, yet you are the only one of your kind for miles around: a room filled with displaced people. Lesbians of color found just this. As sociologist Anthony Oberschall (1999) highlights in his analysis of the decline of the 1960s social movements, where he identifies the media’s contribution to its rise and fall, he states that, activists and transitory teams played a large role in mobilization,

But some mechanism had to exist or had to be created to maintain these often very diverse sets of people in a collaborative working relationship for supplying their contribution greatly to some collective goal. The most common means of doing so relies on organizations and a shared political culture. (p. 358)

A co-existence amongst other women of color did not completely enforce cohesion. Even with displacement as the defining characteristic for why lesbians of color sought separatist spaces from white women, coupled with a feeling of loss and separation, and an unnerving feeling of ‘not belonging,’ many women found that living amongst and organizing with a core group of lesbians of color did not ensure a shared political culture.

Paz witnessed this repetition of displacement when in La Luz. She documents on December 7, 1978:

I love the womyn with their fiery words and spirit, but these are dark-skinned African womyn and I am a light-skinned Puerto Rican. They are city people, I am a committed to womyn’s land. When these womyn mistrust me and accuse me of things I do not understand, I hear that it is their oppression talking, an experience of isolation and despair that even I, with my childhood of beatings and girlhood rape, cannot understand. (Paz, 1980, p. 37)
She begins to rant with a measure of defeat, as if reliving a moment in her own life from the perspective of those who have scorned her.

Because in truth, no matter what I have suffered, I am an olive-complexioned, straight-haired womyn in white America and there are things about pain and fear that even I do not understand… When you speak to me with words that send me back to my shell, I cannot oppose you, I cannot disrespect you. Ah well, so time will go on, and I will recover. So you think I’m crazy? I am crazy my friend. (Paz, 1980, p. 38)

What Paz displays is the realization of being both oppressor and oppressed, yet not feeling any less displaced. The cycle of displacement continues as long as lesbian communities are based on the preservation and definitions of identity. Reestablished communities will become smaller representing more specific groups of lesbians. Just as the women’s movement spurred a dichotomy of heterosexual women and white lesbians, the lesbian separatist community spurs the dichotomy of white lesbians and lesbians of color who continue to create counter-movements.

As a Puerto Rican mother, on welfare, from New York City, Paz’s experience with Latina spaces was limited. The first organization for Latina Lesbians doesn’t develop on the East Coast until 1986. Understanding the position of a Puertorriqueña Lesbian, is similar to understanding the underrepresented and the impoverished. Human rights activist Malika Dutt (1998) explains,

Organizing around identity lines has been important for marginalized groups in society to empower themselves and develop strategies to counter their oppression. However, the focus on diversity and identity politics has led to several problems. In many instances, the struggle has focused on who sits at the table. (p. 225)
Just as separatist communities were microcosms of larger society, these did not last, due to violent attacks, theft, domestic violence, betrayal, mistrust, and lost friendships (all of which Paz details in her journal). So lesbians poured back into society, ‘leaving the country’ with their separatist experiences with them. Some still with a feeling of displacement, they created organizations that could feed their need for inclusion.

Third World Women were women who were indirectly excluded from Black politics but still needed their voices to be heard. As the nation’s face included women from Native American, Latin American, Asian American, and other women of color who were coming out as lesbians in their communities, women of color were among the first communities to integrate an expanded agenda. Latina lesbians, for example, were outcast by their Latino communities for ‘coming out’ as not simply just the lesbian who has sex with women, but as political lesbians. This form of social displacement left many Latinas with nowhere to turn but to a feminist agenda, and also, physically, to separatist communities, where lesbianism was a way of life and at times, criterion for admission. Issues arose in these communities, however, when primarily all white institutions, couldn’t formulate contexts for Latina feminism – one that entails the oppression by all whites including women and all men including men of color.

Levels of outrage led to the creation of art and poetry as a tool for healing. Audre Lorde authored a poem, which after her death became a black lesbian ‘household’ term: ‘Poetry is Not a Luxury.’ This new form of coping with pain and healing has enveloped into further dialogue on issues of multiculturalism and the complexities of individual identities within lesbian of color communities. During the early 1980s, as political agendas have shifted to broader coalition building, there was a community of lesbians who sought to embrace the multiplicities of their identities. As ‘women of color’ broadened, individual women found themselves dealing with every issue, some not directly related to their own.
For example, does a middle class, white-skinned, butch, Chicana from the west coast directly relate to the issues dealt with by a poor, southern, Black-skinned, Caribbean, femme, lesbian? Does a Spanish-speaking Morena from the Bronx who is seen as a Black woman relate directly to a Carib, Garufina lesbian who has lived in this country only ten years? Within these communities of color, internal issues arose during national conferences and publications that questioned, what is the face of a Lesbian of Color? Economist Mancur Olsen Jr. (1999) points out in his essay on rational self interest that, “Indeed unless the number of individuals in a group is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, rational self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests” (p. 346). May Joseph (1998), a self-affirming black lesbian expresses this well in her prose “Transatlantic Inscriptions: Desire, Diaspora, and Cultural Citizenship,”

there is no essential black subject

what does it mean for afro south asians to claim blackness/ in britian, in the caribbean, in the east and south africa,/… in the US/?/ coolies, slaves, indentured servants/ bondsmen, middlemen, nomadic entrepreneurs,/ dingos from east africa, fiji, seychelles, mauritius,/ hybrids from guyana, trinidad, jamaica, barbados/ mongrels playing bhangra, salsa, the rhumba, chimurenga/ syncretics playing ngoma, soca, juju, and zouk/… if you have long hair –how come you are a dyke/?/ If you’re bi, you’re not queer,/ being bi, lesbian or queer/ in the diaspora, struggling for coherence/… traveling many bodies, multiple nations/ her blackness tenuously wrapped around her/… must the name be the accounting? (p. 363)

Sources on Lesbians

Possibility,” Sullivan comments on the content and conventions of Watermelon Woman as: 1) De/Reconstructing Images of Black Women by commenting on the historical invisibility of the black woman in film and noting Dunye’s goal of representation of the black lesbian image, 2) Avoiding essentialism of the lesbian image as a whole by its diverse range of characters as well as its depiction of class and racial difference within the lesbian community, and 3) (Re)writing History – by creating a fictional character in documentary style and by the three possible viewings of the film based on its fiction: either never realizing Fae is fictional, realizing Fae is fictional while viewing the film, or knowing before viewing that Fae is fictional. All viewpoints can be paralleled to a lesbian identity, where each vantage point represents a positioning of the lesbian experience, synonymous to a self-inscribed fabrication and ultimate fiction.

Dunye’s creation of a fictional character is symbolic of the construction of lesbian self-representation. In a multi-dimensional, and intertextual format, Dunye as a black lesbian 1) creates a film, 2) about a black lesbian filmmaker, 3) who researches the existence of a black lesbian performer, 4) in order to create a historical film on the life of a black lesbian performer. The characterization of Dunye as main protagonist further symbolizes the goal of a self-representational image; and the creation of the researched lesbian as fictional, strategically revealed at the end of the film, symbolizes the need for the self to not only search for self-representation, but to create ones own. Sullivan discusses how Dunye ends the film, (before revealing the fictional identity of the researched character) by directly addressing the viewer with a proclamation for what creating a film of a black lesbian means in a larger context. According to Sullivan (2000). Dunye says,

> It means hope; it means inspiration; it means possibility. It means history.

And most important what I understand is it means that I am gonna be the
one who says, ‘I am a black lesbian filmmaker,’ who’s just beginning, but
I’m gonna say a lot more and have a lot more work to do. (p. 459)

This quote is further demonstrated during the film as Dunye holds to the screen a collection of photographs of black women in early American films such as Hattie McDaniel among others who played mammy roles. These photographs are rotated, one after another, until a photo of the fictional character appears, further promoting the assumed existence of black lesbian identity. Lastly, the photos are pulled down to a still frame of Cheryl’s face whose hands were initially rotating the photos. The viewer is intended to place Cheryl with the collection of these women, the groundbreaking black lesbian filmmaker, or theoretically, an iconic representation of a lesbian of color identity.

Because lesbians of color are grounded from so many different experiences, and therefore have acquired different forms of documentation from these experiences, the creation of history is not limited to film. Film requires extreme financial resources and expertise to produce. Literature, contrastingly, requires dedication with limited finances to produce. The lesbian of color community has noted Audre Lorde for stating, ‘poetry is not a luxury’ because many lesbians of color, as well as other marginalized groups, identify their experiences through collective writing. Many of these collective writings are grounded in anthologies due to their inclusion of various authors as well as the coalescence of visual art, poetry, essays, and prose.

*This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (1981) was a groundbreaking anthology that featured women of color discussing issues of representation and identity. Due to the many anthologies that have emerged since its dissemination, however, along with the subgroups that encompass a lesbian of color identity, targeting an anthology that is specific to a singular group identity is, for this essay, more effective.
Sharon Lim-Hing (1994), editor of *The Very Inside: An Anthology of Writing by Asian and Pacific Islander Lesbian and Bisexual Women*, describes the reason she chose an anthology:

I liked the format of an anthology; a successful anthology presents in an intelligent and engaging way, an array of visions and voices. Some are sure, experienced artists to whom we readily surrender. Others are rough-cut and raw, hesitant yet insistent, or even idiosyncratic and quirky: new voices to add to the polymorphic richness of the whole. The Asian Pacific Lesbian (APL) community …certainly had its established writers, and as my four-year odyssey confirmed, more than its share of undiscovered, gifted creators [italics mine]. (p. i)

The task of creating an anthology of Asian and Pacific Islander lesbians and bisexuals is no easy feat. The search for identity exists in the very naming of a group of women, and how even the nouns of ethnic identification can become problematic. As the women of color community is too vast to call attention to self-identity under this umbrella, the Asian and Pacific Islander community is also representative of myriad singular identities. In order for this subgroup within the lesbian of color community to affect social change, it is pivotal for a self-identity to crystallize. May Joseph (1998) echoes in her essay, “Transatlantic Inscriptions” the ways in which, acquiring political visibility is neither immediately available nor easily occupiable for new social identities. For many bisexual South Asians, political visibility involves struggling between legal and the unofficial, between the intertwining categories of identities like Asian-American and queer, and the arenas of ambiguity and disaffiliation generated around sexuality, nationality and belonging. (p. 358)
As a third generation Jamaican-born immigrant, Lim-Hing acknowledges the complexities of inclusion in the creation of an Asian and Pacific Islander anthology. She concedes, however, in her “Introduction” that the need for an anthology of inclusion of not only lesbians but bisexual women as well, from all segments of the Diaspora, is significant towards the path of a singular identity, even if that identity becomes one that has many directions. Lim-Hing, (1994) states,

Different relationships to a real or imagined Asia do not illustrate atypical ways of relating to one’s ‘heritage’ (because there is no one model), but rather point to the wide range and potential of any definition. It also indicates the choice we each have between conforming to available identities or challenging and extending the content and boundaries of those identities to suit ourselves. (p. iv)

The anthology does just this as its first section is titled “Origins, Departures” and discusses the “seeming imperatives, the construction, and the choices around identities” (Lim-Hing, 1994, p. v). In line with the pattern of producing singular identities after the displacement and searching for community, the anthology ends with its last section titled, “Out of Fire, Grace” where “contributors write of organizing, activism, creativity, art: necessary, inspiring pieces for all of us” (Lim-Hing, 1994, p. vi).

Multiculturally, the queer community is known for its ‘coming out’ stories where one searches for others to mirror or acknowledge the deeply personal and societal experience of having same-sex desire. Along with the need to come to terms with a homosexual identity, queers from many cultures (and all races within American culture) display the need for community and therefore embody a search for self-identity. Jewel Gomez (1999) highlights the process of her search for self-representation through literature and film in her essay, “Black Lesbians: Passing, Stereotypes, and Transformation,” where she finds, “Lesbians, usually white in movies and books, are
generally presented as a bundle of tics and quirks that reflect the heterosexual world’s fear and ambivalence. As a teenager, I looked for myself in all of them” (p. 166). Just as other queers antagonize with this search, Gomez does so within the boundaries of a personalized racial community. As her essay continues to point out, a lesbian of color’s search for self-identity is a search unchanging.

Mirrored images within people of color communities are so scarce, the development of a self-identity, one that may mold an individual’s position in the construct of the larger society, are unavailable or inexistent. Therefore, Gomez’s experience of a search for identity as a black lesbian is not an anomalous one. She goes on to state,

In almost every case, when I encountered the images of black women, the subtleties of who we might be were almost completely unexamined – in the media, in the public consciousness, and in the black community. And the particulars of who black lesbians might be are not even a question in the larger world. (Gomez, 1999, p. 166)

As a black lesbian author, her findings are in line with other lesbians of color who often find that their search does not end until images are created themselves.
III. Bibliographies

One of the first published bibliographies to come out of the lesbian of color separatist feminist movement, *Black lesbians: An Annotated Bibliography* by J.R. Roberts (1981), has a forward by noted leader Barbara Smith, a leading black lesbian feminist in the late 70’s and early 80’s. It can be found in over 250 libraries world-wide and has been canonized in queer studies as an ideal source for literature on black lesbians. It doesn’t define queer because the term did not exist at that time, but is significant in its historical implications and formatting. Although it only exists as 93 pages of text, it brings along with it a rich assortment of items, most of which are non-existent or only available in an archive. Due to the scarcity of the items sourced this bibliography is an excellent primary source that discusses the time of womanism, white lesbian feminism, gay vs. old gay, and responses to the lesbian feminist movement in the early eighties.

If sifting through the sources listed in this bibliography, many issues emerge. Firstly, the ability to create a detailed bibliography of a specific race within the lesbian community, over twenty years ago, prior to the mass production of electronic resources, epitomizes the disregard that exists within modern day libraries who seldom have more than a handful of texts specific to black lesbians. Secondly, the formulaic of the bibliography may allow for more concise indexing with intention to either group, or not group races, either way, with a basis for what a racial grouping would look like. Lastly, the need for naming to be a constituency-led process, meaning, to define what is lesbian, a lesbian must do the defining (similar to Cvetkovich’s theory of archiving feelings).

Kilpatrick begins the article with a brief historical outline that illustrates the core issue of visibility within lesbian and gay American society. This brief overview is meant not only to describe a culture that requires documentation, but primarily to highlight the human rights struggle that is no longer separate from the lesbian and gay identity or community. As a result of these two traits, the American Librarian Association is credited for grounding within their personal doctrine the ideal to properly represent the lesbian and gay community. The majority of this article, however, is a literature review for the small body of research that has been conducted on the availability of and access to gay and lesbian materials in US libraries. In addition, a detailed content analysis is conducted of the 1993 ALA midwinter forum presented by Polly Thistlethwaite and Michael Montgomery on the indexing of gay and lesbian journals in six academic databases. This forum which led to the watershed bibliography *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender* by Thistlethwaite and Tsang, is the text in which Kilpatrick continues to analyze the state of LGBT literature.

The discussion surrounding Thistlethwaite and Tsang bibliography, when related to the discussion of LGBT history, creates an understandable progression as to what Kilpatrick aims to concede about LGBT subject headings. The portions of the bibliography that were paid the most attention were those in reference to demographic representation (or lack thereof). Based on the history of a community whose basis, especially within the ALA has been based on fighting for inclusion, which Kilpatrick highlights eloquently, use of this particular bibliography and its findings of lack of representation within US libraries highlight this ultimate point. Kilpatrick’s continued reference to “bisexuals, transvestites and transsexuals” as “special interest groups” similar to how these groups were referred in the Thistlethwaite and Tsang study, without criticism, is indicative of both how lack of representation is prevalent in libraries, but more specifically, how a queer theoretical interpretation is not often applied even
amongst LGBT queer librarian scholars. Additionally the segregation of “people of color” as distinct from “Asian American” was also not questioned by Kilpatrick, therefore, seemingly affirmed. These technical issues of terminology are precisely what discussions on subject headings aim to detect, yet it seemed here, that Kilpatrick chose not to critique the advocates.

Bibliographies also exist online. As an internet resource, originally created in 2002, the Guide to Gay and Lesbian resources: A Classified Bibliography Based Upon the Collections of the University of Chicago Library, the new and updated edition provides an additional 1700 entries with a grand total of over 4500 monographs and serials that deal primarily with gay and lesbian themes. This resource is specific to the collection at the University of Chicago, but as a free on-line resource is useful for collection developers, researchers, and bibliographers. Defined as a sub-category within sexuality, the compilers agree that sexual orientation and homosexuality are merely components of this very exhaustive subject. The listing begins with disclaimers for its aim and scope, then has a twenty-three part contents listing, a two-hundred eighteen part detailed table of contents, as well an exhaustive index which can be searched through the searching mechanism of the library catalog.

Entries 1138 – 1149, for example, are detailed under “lesbian of color”. Within these individual entries, monographs are subcategorized, highlighting author name, title, publishing information and all that would be found on a verso. Usefully, however, for constructing theory around lesbian of color subject headings are the subject listings that appear towards the end of the listing. Although no annotations exist, the subject listings and at times, table of contents listing help for the reader to construct their own understanding of the work. Additionally, this subject listing leaves no room for cross-listing, but instead allows for the compilers to formulate a method for indexing LGBT subjects. This listing is limited in that it only highlights those texts that exist in the
University of Chicago library, thereby, due to its limited scope of being based on inventory alone, does not include prominent titles.

Other on-line bibliographies include those that are often race, gender, or subject specific. “Queer Black Studies: An Annotated Bibliography, 1994-1999” by N. Boggs (2000) was published in Callaloo. Boggs constructs a format for annotation that divides work in subjects of journal articles, critical anthologies, book length studies, and books and anthologies. The contexts of materials are based on Callaloo’s focus on Arts and Letters with extreme attention to literary criticism, sociology, visual culture, and cultural studies in general. Incidentally, many of the sources are originally published in Callaloo. Whether due to the content, and accessibility of the significant texts, or the preference of the author, may remain disputable, but the lesbian only sources are outnumbered by those specific to black men or LGBT as a whole.

Complied by Juana Maria Rodriguez (1995), the “Latina Lesbian & Bisexual Bibliography” of La Casa Electrónica de Arenal is a short but concise bibliography, from the same Juana Maria Paz of Sassafras, and details the premier works for Latina lesbians and bisexuals. Although the bibliography is written in English, there are included Spanish-only texts for complete accessibility within Latina communities. Formatted in html, white background, black letters, this clearly labeled formatted bibliography covers all monographs available for print for Latinas. Unfortunately, the bibliography is not annotated, but stands as a great beginning step for researchers or lesbian and bisexual Latinas who aim to partake in identity construction. Included are primary and secondary sources, essays, short stories, narratives, by emerging as well as established writers.

Significant to the act of bibliography for targeted subjects, although not queer in scope, but a comprehensive on-line bibliography that spans the disciplines in an effort to highlight the contributions of Black American women in academia, this bibliography has
queer subjectivities. Its curator, Sherri L. Barnes (2007), is a Librarian at the University of California and has studied in NYC’s Graduate Center has a background in American Studies and therefore interdisciplinary in its scope of the American experience and the subjects that encompass American studies. Cross-listing exists. An example is within the sub-category: Lesbian Subjectivities: Theorizing, Critiquing, Personalizing where listings of lesbian film critiques by filmmakers such as Dunye are also listed under film. Highlighted subjects are categorized as Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, Health, Medication & Science, as well as Interviews, Speeches, and Auto-Biographical Sources.

Although specific to Black American feminist writings and without annotations, Barnes creates a bibliography that is specific to lesbian studies subject indexing and cross-listing. This act of cross-listing is revolutionary and cognizant with Barnes’ overall mission of dispelling marginalization and making an attempt towards unifying identities. When creating a topical resource based on an identifying characteristic, especially when that characteristic is a controversially political ascribing term, the choice of naming is significant. Barnes uses quotes of others to illustrate the naming of those who have not named themselves with this controversial marker. As the compiler, Barnes exemplifies cataloguers, archivists and information specialists as a whole must provide a definitive characteristic for how a collective experience and/or identity will be synonymous to this marker. Barnes is aware of this need for defining feminism and defining lesbianism while not simultaneously defining the individual, who of course, can only be defined by the individual herself.
**IV. Lesbianism, Language, and Librarianship through Queer Theory**

Developed as a term to evoke passion and controversy in the academy, ‘queer theory’ has in a sense replaced Lesbian and Gay Studies for the purposes of intersectionality; now no longer a discipline, a theory has developed for use in a multi-disciplinary framework. D.M. Halperin (2003) has defined the evolution of queer theory in his essay, “The Normalization of Queer Theory”, by citing Teresa de Lauretis as the scholar who coined the phrase. Choosing ‘queer theory’ as the title of a 1990 conference, de Lauretis intended to scandalize what she saw as complacent lesbian and gay studies rhetoric. Halperin notes de Lauretis’ scholarly intention with the use of the phrase stating that,

she hoped both to make theory queer (that is, to challenge the heterosexist underpinnings and assumptions of what conventionally passed for ‘theory’ in academic circles) and to queer theory (to call attention to everything that is perverse about the project of theorizing sexual desire and sexual pleasure (pp. 340).

Providing an evolutionary framework, Halperin does concede that the basic tenets of ‘queer theory’ have undergone a metamorphosis, whose effects most generally have “supported non-normative expressions of gender and sexuality, encouraging both theoretical and political resistance to normalization” (p. 341).

Cooptation by other disciplines of queer theory has led to a spiraling of interpretive applications. A.I. Green (2007) in his essay “Queer Theory and Sociology: Locating the Subject and the Self in Sexuality Studies” defines queer theory by pitting it against sociological theories. Historically, a complex formulation, queer theory is concluded to be a deconstructionist theory that is useful in its very act of deconstruction, but argued to be oxymoronic by queer theorists and sociologists. When used with sociological analyses, queer theory helps to define normalizing factors, and pinpoint
instances of sociological essentialism, yet works against these frameworks even while sourcing their significance. Green’s primary point is to “argue that the precise theoretical promise of queer theory requires a sustained commitment to deconstruction that operates in tension with, not as an extension of, sociological approaches to the subject” (27; emphasis original).

Identity Formations – Gender Identity as Narrative

Librarianship uses book history often to define the persistence of the written text as a form of information exchange that will effectively contribute to history along with technological advances. The printed text as a medium (or tool if consistent with queer theory rhetoric) has historically been used as a variable towards the collective understanding of a narrative. W. Iser (1980) and R. Chartier (1992) discuss the ways in which the reader is the primary determinant of narrative meaning. Contrastingly, M. Foucault (1984) questions the notion of readership as a primary source for narrative meaning in his response essay to Barthes (1977), titled, “What is an Author?” These contrasting discourses are the formulation for book history’s rhetoric of readers versus authors.

Iser (1980) discusses the blank in the text, and the formulation of vacancies as pre-requisite to the development of the reader’s imagination. Gaps, blanks, vacancies, negations, all “control the process of communication in their own different ways: the blanks leave open the connection between textual perspectives, and so spur the reader into coordinating these perspectives and patterns – in other words, they induce the reader to perform basic operations within the text” (Iser, 1980, p. 393).
This textual analysis assumes that the reader’s imagination, however, is created typographically, and not by the intention of the author. Although it is clear that the reader develops an understanding of the narrative based on the physical act of reading, what is not discussed is the ways in which an author uses the many facets of form in writing as an instrumentality towards engaging the reader’s experience.

In his question of authorship, Foucault (1984) agrees that defining a ‘work’ and its’ parts is a significant point when defining an author. In examining the notions used to replace the authorship of an author (with that of the reader), he discusses two notions.

The first is the idea of the work. It is a very similar thesis that the task of criticism is not to bring out the work’s relationships with the author, nor to reconstruct through the text a thought or experience, but rather to analyze the work through its structure, its architecture, its intrinsic form, and the play of its internal relationships. (Foucault, 1984, p. 282)

The second notion is of writing itself. This notion leads to the disappearance of the author, thereby leading to the author’s name and, even larger, ‘the author function’. This will be addressed below when discussing performativity.

R. Chartier (1992) analyzes the physical form of a text in his essay, “Labourers and Voyagers: From the Text to the Reader”. Chartier’s depiction of the narrative is one that exists somewhere between the reader and the author, with more importance played towards cultural interference. Providing very little attribution to the author, Chartier, ultimately attests that when discussing, the modes of reception of works, it is necessary to maintain, that forms produce meaning, and that even a fixed text is invested with new meaning and being…a history of modes of reading must identify the specific dispositions that distinguish communities of readers and traditions of readings. (p. 88)
With the inability to differentiate a narrative from its reader, Chartier pays close attention to these communities of readers, displaying then, that these communities are based on cultural separations. Asking for a complete conception of the social realm, (in contrast to French sociocultural history), Chartier makes it clear that,

> In privileging only socioprofessional classifications, [French sociocultural history] has forgotten that other principles of differentiation, also fully social, could explain cultural divisions with greater pertinence. Thus, there are also considerations of gender or generation, religious belief, community membership, academic or group traditions, and so on. (p. 90)

According to Chartier’s reference to the principles of differentiation, the development of social spheres of readers is synonymous to the development of new texts based on these spheres. A similar illustration points to how an LGBT-specific historical and group analysis of readership is significant to the understanding of a narrative.

J. W. Cheseboro (1994) discusses gay and lesbian discourse in American rhetorical theory and the “emergence of postmodern rhetorical theory and criticism that has challenged traditional and basic concepts in the discipline of communication such as the meaning of the term audience” (pp. 78). Cheseboro’s (1994) essay, “Reflections on Gay and Lesbian Rhetoric”, defines the postmodern principle as one in which, “every rhetorical analysis inherently conveys multiple and contradictory meanings” (p. 84). This is comparative to Chartier’s principle of differentiation because,

> The principle presumes that we exist within a multicultural environment in which different sociocultural groups – be they ethnic, racial, religious, socioeconomic, or gender-based – have constructed diverse symbolic systems which affect how discourse is perceived, understood and evaluated. In this sense, the intent of the author may provide little indication of how discourse is apprehended by multiple audiences that will
come into contact with a rhetorical act. In terms of rhetorical theory and criticism, this postmodern principle advises that the effects of consequences of any rhetorical act should be examined in terms of several audiences rather than one homogeneous one. (Cheseboro, 1994, p. 84)

Chartier (1992) and Cheseboro (1994) reveal the narrative as fluid and dependent on the perspective of the reader, but particular to instances of assumed multi-group, multi-cultural and heterogeneous readers. Chartier emphasizes cultural division while Cheseboro states that the author’s intent is inconclusive when visited by multiple audiences. What is not discussed by either Chartier or Cheseboro, however, is the meaning of a narrative by an author who writes directly for an intentional homogeneous audience or group, one in which the author is a member. The author who has self-identified as a member of a group, wherein which the text is written for direct applicability, may formulate the author’s intention thereby providing the narrative’s primary meaning.

**Authorship as Performance**

In a special issue of the *Journal of Lesbian Studies* whose topic was “Challenging Lesbian Norms: Intersex, Transgender, Intersectional, and Queer Perspectives, an article written by R. VanNewkirk (2006), titled, “‘Gee I Didn't Get That Vibe From You’: Articulating My Own Version of a Femme Lesbian Existence” the author summarized identity and readership in a formulaic that proposed a queer theoretical reading on book history’s discourse of readership and authorship. Among other things, the summary stated, “It contextualizes the author’s experience of being read by the queer community as straight and of doing femme as a means for placing oneself...."
Written by a lesbian, femme, the hypothetical act of applying queer theory to the discourse of book history, exemplifies authorship as primary to a given narrative.

Van NewKirk discusses the prevalence of an absence of femme existence within queer theoretical frameworks. This issue of the Journal for Lesbian Studies was reflective of trans-identity, and gender normativity/variance as components of a lesbian community, or within feminist spaces, or within interjections of sexuality from a lesbian context. VanNewkirk's article is synonymous to the many ‘femme to female’ or ‘FTF’ identity circles who choose to critically analyze gender from a ‘queer’ perspective by denouncing femininity as an essential female trait, but instead, a constructed identity that can be held by the spectrum of male and female bodies. Specifically, VanNewkirk discusses doing femme, as opposed to being femme, in the context of performativity. She states simply,

Doing femme, for me, is an appropriation of a sign that is legitimated and understood in a queer context, something that helps to strategically place me on the gaydar screen, however, I want to differentiate doing from being femme. Differentiating the two meanings from one another recognizes the way speech is used to create a form and a myth out of labeling, and treats the category as driven by vision rather than destiny. One is not born a femme, but rather becomes one. ...Performance gives form to the formless and words to the speechless....I say all this as a strong believer that everything is a performance. (pp. 76-77)

Texts such as this one ought to be considered when defining queer because it is written from the perspective of lesbian studies, thereby altering the chosen definitions. The relevance of the journal is so prominent that it was formatted into a book for distribution as a single monograph. Still, as a result of this text being presented as a representation
of lesbian rhetoric on the subject of gender variation and trans identities, there is a gap and lack of consensus amongst the queer community as this single perspective being a sole representation of queer.

If, according to VanNewkirk, everything is a performance, then the author is in a consistent state of construction, and cannot be read as anything but his or her individual intention.

A.I. Green (2007) quotes Judith Butler (2000), a scholar who is coined for her analysis of performativity within queer theory, for detailing the framework for reading from a self-prescribed subject position.

If the identity we say we are cannot possibly capture us, and marks immediately an excess and opacity which falls outside the terms of identity itself, then any effort we make “to give an account of oneself” will fail in order to approach being true (Butler, 2000; In Green, 2007, pp. 35)

Singularly, an author, or a person, can do nothing but speak, record, perform their identities. Their personification of their own text authorizes their authorship. A reader’s interpretation of this narrative does not change the identity of the author. Foucault’s idea of the author function echoes this notion by noting the relevance of text, or a narrative. The meaninglessness of an idea is bound by the absence of the author. Foucault attests,

literary discourses came to be accepted only when endowed with the author function. We now ask of each poetic or fictional text: From where does it come, who wrote it, when, under what circumstances, or beginning with what design? The meaning ascribed to it and the status or value accorded it depend on the manner in which we answer these questions. (p. 285)
'Queer’ in Librarianship – Research and Bibliographical Literature

A significant portion of ‘queer’ in librarianship discusses young adult literature and the absence or prevalence of LGBT fiction on library shelves. Because this annotated bibliography is specific to non-fiction and reference resources for queer theoretical research, the sources attended to were those primarily surrounding academic and research libraries. Research in the fields of academic and special research libraries focused on the presence as well as scope of queer literature available to patrons. Available bibliographies and annotations have been created to fill the gap of lacking resources. The 2007 article, “Barriers to GLBTQ Collection Development and Strategies for Overcoming Them”, by authors Alexander and Miselis, discuss the lack of collections that stand as models for effective collection development through the findings of a survey of librarians and their libraries’ collections of LGBT materials as well as service to the population. This article is specific to young adult librarianship, but significant because of its “Note on Terminology” section which discusses the lack of knowledge amongst colleagues when defining LGBT.

Most librarians who promote LGBT collections and/or classification systems are often burdened with performing information literacy to colleagues. Even with years of research and curriculum vitae of publications on the topic of LGBT collection development, classification, indexing, and having cited a massive body of literature within the field, there will often exist a colleague who aims to discredit the need for such a field. Because it is unclear as to whether the colleague is being facetious, homophobic, or is simply unknowing, a synopsis must be developed (a sound byte, if you will) that summarizes decades of scholarship in order to validate professionalism. Alexander and Miselis’ article on Barriers to Development indirectly responds to this occurrence by providing a brief and elementary overview of precisely what LGBT and queer mean to those who claim the term as well as to librarianship and/or library general collections.
This summary is intended for the audience who is extremely unknowledgeable of LGBT sources, but for example, as a reference librarian, ought to know the basics.
Methodology

Annotated Bibliography
An annotated bibliography of sources made for lesbians of color, collected by the instruction of lesbian feminist and lesbian separatist writings will be compiled and organized based on subject. Annotations will be geared towards revealing whether this source is actually abundant in lesbian of color material. Because the formats are different, the annotations will be listed based on their contexts for ease of use and the applicability for how lesbianism ought to be represented based on the field of study. Sources are also cited in MLA style for the purpose of the Annotated Bibliography in order to remain consistent with its’ relevance to the applicable fields of study in humanities.

Content Analysis
The content analysis will proceed without annotations, and will be based on the order of the formats. Some items will have more than one format, and therefore will be analyzed more than once. This content analysis will allow for an array of sources on lesbians of color produced art, literature and film by deciphering its applicability to lesbian of color subjectivities contextually and its’ format for accessibility for public use. Each item will have a number based on its context of identity, performance, visual, or literature, with a corresponding Context number to keep track of numerical replication. For example, Lesbian Art in America will be numbered V5-C26.

Questions addressed from both the annotations as well as the content analysis are:

1. In which formats may one find lesbian of color subjectivities?
2. What is the best way to determine sourcing lesbians of color of a specific field through a search engine?
3. Are lesbians of color creating works that promote inclusion?
4. How are lesbians of color documenting themselves through the creations of art?
Due to the limitations of this Master's Thesis, the content analysis will hold a single sample for methodology in finding lesbian of color content. The methodology for the content analysis is sampled below and is detailed for viewing in the Appendix. Sources were chosen via databases using the terms lesbian, race, gender women, and lesbian to determine its applicability in databases. An example of the search will be displayed via a content analysis of a single subject: FILM. This very specific research was the basis for the sources listed for literature, art, and identity in general. Film was chosen as a search field for the database search content analysis because of the controlled databases available in the Queens College database specific to the field.

Detail
To determine the scope of each journal, by use of the Queens College Journal Listings, a search was conducted by subject for Film. Results yield 59 academic film journals listed in alphabetical order with corresponding databases and years covered per database detailed under each journal title. In order to have an idea of the scope of each journal within specific years, databases were searched with separate keyword searches: film, women, race, gender, and lesbian. The total number of results given per search determined the efficiency of coverage each journal held for the subject "Lesbians of Color in Film". Annotations included are the film journals annotations, as well as the annotations for broader formats for the general art, literature, and identity. The content analysis is two fold:

1. Film Databases are reviewed for journals on lesbian content
2. Lesbian of color sources are organized by content to reveal prevalence in formats of either print sources, primary sources, bibliographies, encyclopedias, anthologies, archives, or web-specific sources.
Librarians and Sourcing Materials for Lesbians of Color Annotated Bibliography

SOURCES on Queer Theories 
for the Production of Lesbian of Color Identity Formation 
through Literature, Art or Documentation

CONTEXT

Sources on Lesbian of Color Identity Discourse, Identity Formation, and Documentation


<http://www.library.ucsb.edu/subjects/blackfeminism>.

A comprehensive on-line bibliography that spans the disciplines in an effort to highlight the contributions of Black American women in academia. Its curator, Sherri L. Barnes, is a Librarian at the University of California and has studied in NYC’s Graduate Center has a background in American Studies and therefore interdisciplinary in its scope of the American experience and the subjects that encompass American studies. Cross-listing exists. An example is within the sub-category: Lesbian Subjectivities: Theorizing, Critiquing, Personalizing where listings of lesbian film critiques by filmmakers such as Dunye are also listed under film. This act of cross-listing is revolutionary and cognizant with Barnes’ overall mission of dispelling marginalization and making an attempt towards unifying identities. Highlighted subjects are categorized as Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, Health, Medication & Science, as well as Interviews, Speeches, and Auto-Biographical Sources.

See also: bibliographies, web-sites and online databases

Similar to what this annotated bibliography aims to attain, Boggs constructs a format for annotation that divides work in subjects of journal articles, critical anthologies, book length studies, and books and anthologies. The context of materials are based on *Callaloo*’s focus on *Arts and Letters* with extreme attention to literary criticism, sociology, visual culture, and cultural studies in general. Incidentally, many of the sources are originally published in *Callaloo*.

Whether due to the content, and accessibility of the significant texts, or the preference of the author, may remain disputable, but the lesbian only sources are outnumbered by those specific to black men or LGBT as a whole. So not to replicate this occurrence, I will end the discussion of scope here. This bibliography is available on-line through all on-line databases citing *Callaloo*, including *ProjectMuse*.

See also: bibliographies, print sources, websites and online databases

Gil-Gomez uses the theories of Gloria Anzaldua and Judith Butler to discuss how the lesbian of color constructs an identity even within the constraints of racism, heterosexism, xenophobia and homophobia. The idea of “performing” is cognizant with wearing a mask within the realms of heterosexist society and even still within queer communities. Gil-Gomez seeks to construct identity through the direct acknowledgement of the act of performative identities that chicanas and all lesbians of color have submitted within queer theoretical frameworks. Ultimately, this article speaks to the lacking that currently exists, and calls for a change that starts with reclamation of identities along with ending negating performances.

See also: print sources

Although the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice is particularly relevant as a source for international projects that are based on art as activism. Astraea’s International Grant-Making Program for Sexual Minorities is monitored by a panel of activists who have expertise in the specific regions. The regions funded annually are Africa, Asia/Pacific, Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States, Latin America & The Caribbean, and The Middle East. With over 40 grants awarded in a fiscal year, an understanding of the needs of each organization, community, and region, along with direct contact information and charted reporting on the work, makes Astraea.org an invaluable resource.

Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, however, grants primarily within the United States. Their funding recognizes the work of contemporary lesbian visual artists, emerging lesbian poets and fiction writers, as well as those projects and organizations that directly address issues pertinent to the current climate of LGBTQI communities. Format for projects funded include film, video, media, and cultural projects. With a beautifully formatted website with a warm and accommodating modern theme, Astraea is recommended for advanced research on contemporary, or international lesbian identity formations and the complexities of lesbian art subjectivities.

See also: websites and on-line databases

Somewhat of a groundbreaking anthology, its presence is cognizant of the climate of the time, naming and idealizing itself a "critical" anthology. With works from varied established and emerging authors, this collection of perspectives engenders the current state of race, particularly blackness on and within queer studies. The connecting themes of the essays are specific to lesbian issues in general because they include topics such as marginalization, representation, identity, and community. Specifically, there are featured essays that are specific to black lesbians, and representations through film, and literature. Although this is primarily a collection of criticism, as a complete text, its breadth creates a new primary source, filling a gap created by emerging queer theory and popular culture.

See also: anthologies, print sources

Complied by Juana Maria Rodriguez, this short but concise bibliography since 1995 details the premier works for Latina lesbians and bisexuals. Although the bibliography is written in English, there are included Spanish-only texts for complete accessibility within Latina communities. Formatted in html, white background, black letters, this clearly labeled formatted bibliography covers all monographs available for print for Latinas. Unfortunately, the bibliography is not annotated, but stands as a great beginning step for researchers or lesbian and bisexual Latinas who aim to partake in identity construction. Included are primary and secondary sources, essays, short stories, narratives, by emerging as well as established writers.

See also: bibliographies, web-sites and online databases

Conveniently formatted by state and a few locations in Canada, or a repository name index, this listing is inclusive of contact information, and information about each archive. A comprehensive and complete entry will include: location information, history, information about holdings, time periods/geographical regions documented, significant people/organizations/subjects documented, collecting interests, comments about access and use, services, and other services notes such as news about collections. This list is an excellent resource for an in depth comparative analysis of LGBT archives in terms of collections or location.

See also: archives, bibliographies, websites and on-line databases


As only a single screen scroll down with a pink background and blue 12-point font, this site hosts the primary sources that stands as the backbone for all lesbian of color research within queer theory. With only three images, Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldua and Barbara Smith as the centered images, respectively (so as not to over accentuate the image of the black woman), this highly visited page is under the url of Ohio State University. Included are four simple links that lead to a web of resources for the beginning researcher including a definitive context for the demographic, “Lesbian Feminist of Color”, a “select bibliography”, “some sister links”, and lastly, with a surprisingly intentional separation, “Third-World and Post Colonial Sister Links”. Unfortunately some of the links are not operative, and therefore, this is likely to be viewed as an archived website. Many of the links, however, are operative including the third world sister links. Highly recommended for use of the bibliography and concise definitions.

See also: bibliographies, web-site and on-line databases

Famed as the authoritative reference for lesbians of color, written for and by a black, lesbian, poet, revolutionary, mother, librarian, feminist. Lorde has a host of organizations, scholarship funds, health facilities internationally named for her as well as this watershed collection of essays. The context resides in the post lesbian feminist rhetoric that excluded the complete voices of a lesbian-feminist framework inclusive of lesbians of color. Lorde defines this new framework by identifying the lacking components of, at the time, current formalities. Much of the text remains relevant and is synonymous to sources used today as lesbian of color documentation.

See also: primary sources, print sources

A non-fiction collection of essays that, compared to *Compañeras*, is a bold attempt to respond to the many questions raised by the multiplicity of issues that arise when defining a Latina Lesbian. Bringing to the fore issues of identity, immigration, tensions between nationality/race/sexual identity, and class. As anthologies become tradition within queer theory, so does their subject headings within a structured monograph. This text dissects the intersections of identity in the naming of its sections, quintessential to the queer experience: coming out, desire, resistance, and race. The act of responding to these very queer headings from a Latina Lesbian perspective has allowed this text to stand as a primary source of writings quintessential to the lesbian of color experience as well.

See also: anthologies, primary sources, print sources
Select databases for the research of lesbians of color and their methods of documenting their identities through art and literature are: Black Women Writers, Women and Social Movements, Latin American Women Writers. Alexander Street houses databases designed to provide full-text primary and secondary documents in History and Personal Narratives, Literature, Music, performing arts, drama and film, psychology, religion, sociology, and women’s history. Alexander Street publishes more than 25 collections totaling many millions of pages. They are concentrating on building the best collections and unique resources for scholarship in six disciplines across the humanities. All databases use Philologic Software developed by the University of Chicago that search within Full-Text Primary Documents. The rich collection leads for searches within authors’ works from various time periods and disciplines. Searching within the databases of women of color writers allows for an advance searches within the context of lesbian subjects.

See also: primary sources, websites and on-line databases

This free on-line resource houses discourse on issues of identity politics and its intersection with historical understandings of race, gender, and sexual orientation. Although it has not been updated since 2002, (which may make it an archived web-page) the terminology is surprisingly relevant to the current discourse on identity formation. Included in each entry is a substantial bibliography which houses many key texts some of which ought to be canonized within this subject and the larger queer studies. Editors for the Encyclopedia include scholars who specialize in a range of philosophical movements including feminism, African and African-American Philosophy, Latin American and Iberian Philosophy, Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy among others. Editors are from universities in the United United States, Canada, China, and throughout Europe providing a varying perspective.

See also: encyclopedias, websites and online databases

This text has a forward by Barbara Smith, a leading black lesbian feminist in the late 70’s and early 80’s. It can be found in over 250 libraries world-wide and has been canonized in queer studies as an ideal source for literature on black lesbians. Although it only exists as 93 pages of text, brings along with it a rich assortment of items, most of which are non-existent or only available in an archive. Due to the scarcity of the items sourced this bibliography is an excellent primary source that discusses the time of womanism, white lesbian feminism, gay vs. old gay, and responses to the lesbian feminist movement in the early eighties.

See also: bibliographies, primary sources, print sources


Based in Minnesota, at the University of Minnesota Libraries, this academic supported institutions has two websites that are convenient for on-line use. The special library itself acts as an archive in that it holds ephemera and regalia that is specific to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender existence. Specific to lesbians is direct accessibility to Lesbian Review of Books. Organizational Records with an on-line description of the content of the collection dated 1995 – 2002. The materials do not circulate, therefore only accessible at the libraries’ special collection. Similarly, the Daughters of Bilitis papers 1960 - 1965, Womyn’s Braille Press papers, 1988 – 1996, Nancy Manahan papers 1967, 1982-2001, Toni McNaron papers 1968 – 1999, to name a few are property of the collection and are contributory as secondary sources to the queer theories on documentation of lesbians of color. Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies also has an extensive films/video collection whose contents are listed on the website, in alphabetical order of title, listing title, date, format, duration, and formatting comments. The collection has a total of 25,000 items in counting.

See also: archives, websites and on-line databases

Also available in print in its 2003, four volume publications, this encyclopedia is now available as an e-book through NetLibrary and GaleGroup. Due to its tremendous resource, as a complete encyclopedia, with comprehensive indexing and lists of resources including national listings of archives and organizations that source lgbt history, this publication will likely spearhead new and continued research within lgbt studies. With a libraries’ subscription, users are allowed to receive updated information within the field and read at their leisure, which one year prior, was only available as a print source. Due to the nature of the text, on-line access leads for safer accessibility due to needs for privacy that accessing a reference source at a library may not perform.

See also: encyclopedias, website and online databases

As the official website for the Lesbian Herstory Archives based in Brooklyn, NY in a collective run space, housed on a residential block in an historic brownstone, this site is limited to its on-line resources. As the project has yet to digitize its collection, and without any current intent to do so, the site is a great source for receiving a concrete outline for referencing the content of the collection. Without providing frequent updates, the site lists special collections, a monthly calendar for viewing of the site, as well as links to sites that are more on-line accessible. A unique component of the site, however, is the listing under “other queer sites” which leads to a page separated by “Archives”, “Organizations”, “Personal”, and “Study Guides”. When the user clicks on the listing beneath “Archives”, the page hidden within this web of clicks is significantly informative. “Queer and Mainstream Archives Collecting Lesbian Materials”, researched and compiled by Polly Thistlewaite, a lesbian Librarian of the City University of NY Graduate Center, a comprehensive and international list of archives follow, is complete with contact information including websites and e-mail addresses where available.

See also: Archives, Websites and On-line Databases

This quarterly journal abstracts significant research in thirty key areas of study in the discipline of Women’s Studies. Of the topics regularly covered sex roles and characteristics details articles that have lesbians and lesbian subjectivities as a subject. In addition, a featured category, Sexuality, not in every issue, but appears in the majority of volumes is more specific to lesbianism, lesbianism in relation to heterosexuality, and gender roles, such as butch women and sexual behavior. Because this is a traditional women’s studies abstracted journal, the subject headings are general and therefore cover a broad range of topics within a given subject, yet are cross-listed to reflect intersectionality. Cross-listing occurs in a “see also” at the beginning of every subjected section where article titles are listed in bold numerical order.

The scope is limited in that the journal abstracts only articles within women’s studies publications and not likely to source articles that represent lesbians or lesbian studies within art, film, music, literature specific journals. Half of the journal’s print is leafed with pages of index for comprehensive searching.

See also: bibliographies, print sources
Sources on Lesbian of Color Performance Art (theatre, music, plays)


For an historical overview of lesbian music, pages 376-379 provides a very comprehensive overall introduction to lesbians, music, and the history of lesbian music development. What is specific about this entry is the biographic bibliography it offers. There are listings of individual contributing women and particularly lesbian African American women. An expert in the field is likely going to have a great portion of the listed women within her database, but an overview that includes typically named figures may be a reference for credibility. The featured musicians are separated through paragraphs by genre which include but are not limited to opera repertoire, musical theatre, symphony orchestras, grassroots feminist chorus among others. The earliest date noted is 1871 which refers to the Vienna Ladies Orchestra American tour wherein which lesbian interpretation, listening, and speculation was based. This collection of dates and names written in essay form, ultimately is demonstrative of the concept of "lesbian music" as it expands and deepens in the interdisciplinary works of lesbian studies, queer studies, and music studies.

See also: encyclopedias, print sources
Without a specific lesbian of color bibliography, the Women’s Studies Librarian’s office of the University of Wisconsin is successful in providing annotations of significant bodies of work relevant to women within various genres of women’s studies. For lesbians of color in arts and literatures, the list of bibliographies includes “Annotated Bibliography of Feminist Aesthetics in the Literary, Performing and Visual Arts, 1970-1990”, by Linda Krumholz and Estella Lauter (1992). “Gender and Creative Writing: A Bibliography” is also useful to browse. Unfortunately, the ability to search through the bibliographies is not available, but the level of scholarship placed within the annotations allows for a brief comprehension of each citation from the perspective of feminism, or ecofeminism, depending upon the field-specific bibliography chosen.

See also: bibliographies, web-sites and online databases
“Rivers of Honey.” WOW Café Theater. 2007. WOW Café Theater. 30 April 2007

<http://wowcafe.org/rivers/>

Based in the oldest international woman’s-run theater house, WOW Café Theater, Rivers of Honey is the women of color performance space that has co-opted the first Friday of the month. Defined as a woman of color cabaret, primarily for and by lesbians of color, the house is completely volunteer run for and by lesbians, women allies and trans people of color who are artists and consumers of art. Performances at Rivers are archived on the website so that a single on-line user may chart past performances inclusive of biographies of performers, performance dates, as well as themes for the times. Although WOW has housed Rivers for a short period of time, women of color have been a part of the collective and therefore are also featured on the main website archives. As a collective-run space, performers are allowed to produce their own shows and/or become aware of the production process. In addition, a large amount of the information is available on-line (all except performance excerpts).

See also: websites and online databases

*Women of Color, Women of Words* is dedicated to African American women who have added to the field of theater and performance art through their contribution of powerful words. Its curator is Angela E. Weaver, graduate of Rutgers Library Science Program. The site is broken down into critical resources, organizational links, play bibliographies, announcements, and theaters where plays by and/or for black women may be seen, produced, and celebrated. Notably, *Women of Color, Women of Words* contains a bibliography of women of color playwrights, their biographies, play listings, anthologies, and complete resources (including a section on male playwrights). Listed are the dissertations written in the United States on these playwrights, not in full-text, but with publication information. This bibliography gives a concise understanding of the discourse each playwright adds to their particular field, identity, and scholarship. The dissertations are compiled by Dissertation Abstracts at Rutgers University. Only a few featured playwrights contribute to lesbian discourses, but all focus on identity, and due to the authors of the dissertations, speak to the ways in which women of color writers choose to study their predecessors in order to formulate their own identities.

See also: websites and on-line databases
Sources on Lesbian of Color visual art
(paintings, film, photography)


Duke University Press highlights two journals with related titles: differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies and GLQ: the Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies. The scope for Camera Obscura is somewhere in-between the two journals mentioned above; its mission is to provide “innovative feminist perspectives on film, television, and visual media.” With media studies as its primary terminology, it has become a leader in the field of feminist studies in relation to post-colonial studies, race studies, and queer studies using media as its methodology. Due to the cutting-edge nature of its scope, Camera Obscura has frequently introduced new writers in these emerging fields. Similarly, the fields (primarily queer studies) have been further developed due to the continued production of Camera Obscura. Using debates, interviews, summary pieces, essays and interviews the journal seeks to highlight its scope in a range from the very marginal to the very mainstream on an international and domestic playing field. With a historical focus on feminism, and a valued angle of queer studies, this journal is a primary target for lesbian studies in the context of production, aesthetics, and representation. Indexed in over 30 indexes, the 1996 – 1999 volumes are available on-line with subscriptions.

See also: Websites and on-line databases

*Cinema Journal*’s scope of film articles, since its dissemination, reflects scholarly discourse on intersectional issues of race, gender and sexuality. In the 2nd and 3rd volumes, article titles reflect Aboriginal peoples, Chinese scroll paintings, and a 1964 article on “Documentary and the Negro”. Unique to *Cinema Journal* is the “Professional Notes” section which is included in all keyword searches and includes comprehensive bibliographies and author comments on particular methodological perspectives. Published by an academic university, *Cinema Journal* is available on-line from its first issue up until 2003 with a JSTOR prescription. Individuals pay $44, and Institutions $100, annually.

See also: Websites and on-line databases
An Encyclopedia of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer culture. 2007. glbtq, Inc. 20 April 2007

<http://www.glbtq.com>

This on-line encyclopedia provides a general overview of glbtq history and key terminology used within the intersections of queer communities. It is best used for its arts and special features section, where biographies, images, description of works, and dates of works (in particular photography images) may be found and compared with other credible sources. As this site is not specific to lesbians or women of color, there is a disparity of representation and qualitative information when in depth information is needed. What it is, however, is a well formatted site with superior search capabilities and an extensive database that will allow for quick referencing (as meant for encyclopedias). Ideal for biographers and fact checking assignments.

See also: encyclopedias, websites and online databases

With an advanced search engine, and a mission to represent women from underrepresented communities, with a multi-cultural and multi-racial framework, this website is filled with access to titles and descriptions of women of color and lesbian of color themed films. Developed by Women Make Movies, a non-profit media arts organization, with resources for film makers including fiscal sponsorship and workshops, as well as resources for consumers, the accessibility to WMM makes for on-line access as a primary method of contact. The films are listed by title and subject category, but are not searchable by keywords that are not in the title, such as keywords in abstracts. Searching is, however, by filmmaker’s name, format, and year of release.

See also: web-sites and databases

Separated by time period, Hammond illustrates lesbian art as it existed in relationship to the trends of representation of lesbians in American history and their reactions. As this is definitive of lesbian art, the images are represented through the feature of artists in relation to the time period (from 1970 to present) in which they are represented. The first of its kind in reference to breadth and context, Hammond features the 18 artists not as representatives of their time, but as proof of the diversity that completes lesbian existence. Formatted somewhat like an archive, less like an art historian's timeline, due to the need for the construction of an identity, Hammond highlights lesbian art and artists in unconventional and challenging ways, unlimited and essential to the understanding of lesbian visual representation.

See also: print sources

Moving Image focuses on the technical issues such as preservation and restoration of film, television and digital moving images. This new journal uses behind-the-scenes techniques and subject categories within race, gender, and sexuality is prevalent in a keyword search for this journal. An example of a search on “lesbian” will produce results that discuss camera angle and lighting, or the use of cinema as a tool may result in queer interpretations. Produced by the Association of Moving Image Archivists, it’s noted for its acknowledgement of under-represented visual cultures and presents these items through reviews and essays. Archivists who seek to discuss their roles of establishing those items and images of the canon use Moving Image as a forum.

See also: Websites and on-line databases

Formatted like an annotated bibliography or detailed index, the content of this collection features international films and distributing companies that specialize in LGBT film. Complete with bibliography, a distributor directory, and an international directory of lesbian and gay film festivals and about 300 pages of film descriptions, Olson has set the standard for film guides. Classification of film is also an interesting trait for this collection. Olson indexes the films in a cross-listed format under subject headings that are separated by length, “features” or “shorts”, and the subject index defining identity as “images” such as “Black images” and “Asian images”. The indexing is seemingly specific to overarching themes within LGBT film such as “Camp”, “sex work”, or “S/M and Alternative Sexuality” (separate from “Pornography” or “Sexuality”). Included is a Director’s Index which useful when names are cited from either noting a director from a feature, short, or film. Not a biographical outline of filmmakers, but distinctly a directory of film with over 2000 catalog entries, Olson has created an ultimate source for the documentation of film and video and construction of identity through the production of these films by queerly classifying the works.

See also: bibliographies, print sources

Includes within its archive page, “Contempo Lesbos”, “Portraits of Lesbian and Gay Writers” (including a photo of Sapphire in 1988 that is rarely published), “Queer Women and Religion”, among other featured exhibitions that are inclusive, although not exclusively, of lesbians of color. Much of the site is focused on gay white men, but the components that are specific to or represented by lesbians of color are rich in originality. These exhibitions, because conducted by independent artists, are likely rare as on-line resources. The site contains contemporary and modern art, without much attention paid to historical representations of art. With high quality images, and complete biographical outlines of featured artists' works, the Queer Arts Resource is recommended as a point of reference for the levels of artistry and precision in the need for visual representations.

See also: websites and on-line databases

Includes sound (hence “voices”), in the formats of film, interviews and on-line conversations of and for artists, scholars, teachers, and activists who reside in the academic community. Because it is a site of women of color, this resource includes women who identify as lesbians, with critiques of their works by those who study them and create artistically relevant analyses. As an on-line community as well as reference resource, the site operates heavily on the feedback that is provided by its users for continual evaluative purposes. An actual organization that is housed in the Department of English and the University of Minnesota, much of the site is dedicated to blackboard use for students of the University. Nevertheless, the existence of academically oriented biographies of women artists, and critiques relevant to contemporary theories, this site is a prime example of visual art accessible on-line documenting women and lesbians of color.

See also: websites and on-line databases
Sources on Lesbians

**Visual 10; Context 31**


According to Project Muse, "after volume 29, 1999, *Wide Angle* is no longer published by The Johns Hopkins University Press and no longer published online in Project Muse. Volume 18, 1996-vol. 29, 1999 remain permanently in Project Muse and available to subscribers". Despite its limited access, *Wide Angle*’s eleven volumes of availability through the academic publisher John Hopkins University, enables access to a range of interdisciplinary leading scholars including professors and doctoral candidates, who feature cutting edge articles wherein which race, sexuality, gender, politicos, and disciplines are intertextualized with film. Select issues have guest editors including its July 1999 special issue: SuperRocheros, with guest editor Jesse Lerner who initiated each article's author to submit a Spanish translation in accompaniment. Current issues of *Wide Angle* are unavailable on-line inasmuch as John Hopkins University Press no longer posts the journal on its website. A basic keyword search under *Project Muse* search engine of "gender or lesbian and race" led to twenty results of highly cited articles on the body, spectatorship, issues of representation, and sexuality. Keyword searches lead to illustrated articles, book reviews, and interviews with filmmakers. *Wide Angle* through *Project Muse* is recommended for the facilitation of discussion in an era of controversial, interdisciplinary film scholarship.

See also: Websites and on-line databases

Maya Chumu’s short narrative, *Coming Out Coloured*, 1980, was written in response to the American never-ending and consistent state of war on women and culture. It is the first in a series of pamphlets by a Lesbian Separatist group. Chumu asserts that the construction of race has led lesbians of color to be ostracized from the black civil rights community because of sexuality, marginalized within the queer community because of gender, and tokenized within the lesbian community because of race. This text is written in both English and Spanish language for purposes of accessibility. Historically, lesbians of color have fallen into both categories of poor or working class and of racial minority within separatist spaces. Defining lesbianism as primarily a white middle class construction directly affects feelings of placement and community. Chumu directly reacts to definitions of her identity by literally redefining what is means to “come out colored”.

See also: anthologies, primary sources, print sources


Although there are myriad examples of literature based on the development of lesbian of color identity, this text in particular speaks to the relevancy of multiple identities and has been cited as a source for queer perspectives and multi-nationality. Joseph discusses how her identity as a female-bodied woman of color with varied forms of sexual expression creates an ambiguous identity in all of the worlds where her singular identities resonate. The idea of “cultural citizenship” is introduced and challenged though the application of art and poetics. Her poetry is multi-lingual and non-traditional in format, juxtaposed with essay and prose, and uses terms applied to identities. As a queer artist, Joseph poses question on how identity is constructed throughout the differing diasporas.

See also: anthologies, primary sources, print sources

Lesbian of Color identity is an international issue. Women throughout the world consider the silences that provoke them, many of which are present in the art of language. Simply the act of defining oneself is imperative to the construction of identity. Classifying terms for use, within a home culture is part of the necessary traits for identity documentation. Lee introduces to the scholarly and Western queer community the term “kuaer” and the ideology of “kaer” theory. Describing this term as one that challenges race, sex, gender, and sexual orientation, as one that is race-conscious, womanist and transnational, Lee traces genealogical sources to construct identity. Taiwanese and Chinese lesbian experience has affirmed “nu-nu” or female-female as an historical term and frame of reference. Lee challenges contemporary, western-centric queer thought through language and historical analysis of the "nu-nu" workd of Taiwan.

See also: print sources
A California-based rare books store has books that are unavailable on-line or out of print. Their collection is compiled with texts that are relevant to over 50 categories including time periods designated by numerical years within the 1800’s and 1900’s. Time periods are separated by decades. Books can be searched using title, author or by subject wherein which use of catalog subject entries will be efficient in compiling topical titles. An example of a search would be “African American” and “Lesbiana” which are designated search terms. Dozens of titles are included beneath each subject search term with distinct cross listing.

See also: Web-sites and on-line databases

The task of creating an anthology of Asian and Pacific Islander lesbians and bisexuals is no easy feat. The search for identity exists in the very naming of a group of women, and how even the nouns of ethnic identification can become problematic. As the women of color community is too vast to call attention to self-identity under this umbrella, the Asian and Pacific Islander community is also representative of myriad singular identities. In order for this subgroup within the lesbian of color community to affect social change, it is pivotal for a self-identity to crystallize. As a third generation Jamaican-born immigrant, Lim-Hing acknowledges the complexities of inclusion in the creation of an Asian and Pacific Islander anthology. She concedes, however, in her "Introduction" that the need for an anthology of inclusion of not only lesbians but bisexual women as well, from all segments of the Diaspora, is significant towards the path of a singular identity, even if that identity becomes one that has many directions.

See also: anthologies, primary sources, print sources

The 1983 publication was a groundbreaking anthology that features women of color discussing issues of representation and identity. Due to the many anthologies that have emerged since its dissemination, however, along with the subgroups that encompass a lesbian of color identity, targeting an anthology that is specific to a singular group identity is also necessary for the complete understanding for a lesbian of color identity ethic. Similar to Lorde’s *Sister Outsider*, this collection of essays have signified the basis of language for lesbian of color politicos. Critics have noted that this text has defined feminism, womanism, or lesbianism. Ultimately, for a collection that identifies lesbian of color documentation, this anthology stands as a canonized work.

See also: anthologies, primary sources, print sources

Written by a Boricua lesbian, feminist, separatist, Paz’s La Luz Journal is a personal narrative of a woman’s journey of coming out, confronting identity, and co-existing with other lesbians. Based in a lesbian separatist community, Paz’s journal questions community because of a need to separate herself from patriarchal constraints. While falling in love, caring for her daughter, battling racist lesbians (as well as redefining racism once entering a woman of color only space and realizing the power of her own white skin privilege), Paz discovers the meaning and challenge of “community”. La Luz is a lesbian separatist community of the 80’s based in Arkansas where the narrative takes place. Still disputed as to whether the La Luz Journal is fictional or an actual first hand account, it is housed within archives throughout the country (as well as 12 libraries internationally).

See also: primary sources, print sources

Similar to the *Contemporary Gay American Novelists: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, edited by Emmanuel S. Nelson (Greenwood Press, 1993), this text was chosen instead due to the need for women-centered texts to take precedent over male-centered text, even if these men are gay. As a result, this collection highlights only a handful of lesbians, but places lesbian and lesbian of color experiences into the context of women’s studies, further defining their marginalization yet presence from such a context. In addition, many of the featured lesbians, including Clarke and Anzaldua use classical lesbian feminist rhetoric to neatly paint a portrait of American existence amongst lesbians, women, and people of color.

See also: anthologies, print sources.

This complex collection of stories is accompanied by an introduction that speaks to the complexities of "latina" and the ways in which a singular identity can be binding. Voices from Latina lesbians who are puertorriqueñas, chicanas, cubanas, chilenas, hondureñas, brasileñas, colombianas, argentinas, peruanas, costarricenses, mexicanas, ecuatorianas, bolivianas, dominicanas, and nicaraguenses hints to the multifaceted identity issues within a specific community. The 3rd addition is improved with Spanish translation so to respond to the growing need for accessibility in the Latina community.

See also: anthologies, primary sources, print sources

A primary source for lesbian of color experiences who were born in the Caribbean, and for those who emigrated to North America. Because a good percentage of the stories are written from the perspective of women who live in the United States as well as Canada, a multi-cultural as well as a multi-national perspective exists. Similar to *Compañeras*, this text is an intertextual themed text that combines a varied amount of cultures that reside within a single identity. Since the collection is a rarity in type, many of the stories are coming out stories and are not focused on literary style as much as the implementation of a voice for readers and writers alike.

See also: anthologies, primary sources, print sources
**Yrs Truly Delicious Books.** n.d. 20 April 2007 <http://yrstruly.net/delicious/books.html>

An alphabetical listing of books with no particular subject listing, but with detailed annotations and visual representations. Without the need to sell items, this listing of books, formatted as well-aligned books a bookshelf, provides information on publisher information, current value of book (in contrast to listed current value of book), country of publication, UPC number, and genre of book. Most of the books, though not all, will have a description of the plot, storyline, or non-fiction context. The annotations are written by critics and are usually published along with the book, so there is no original material. This page is useful for book images or visual representations of books along with their general information. Also a holder of DVDs and games, this commercial site is sporadic in its title holdings but useful if books needed are actually found on shelf.

See also: Web-sites and on-line databases
CONTENT ANALYSIS

Sources on Lesbian Subjectivities for the Production of Lesbian of Color Identity Formation through Literature, Art or Documentation

FORMAT

Sources in The WRITTEN WORD – Print Sources


Pollack, Sandra, and Denise D. Knight, eds. Contemporary Lesbian Writers of the United States: A Bio-bibliographical


Sources from the SOURCE – Primary Sources

Sources as REFERENCE –Bibliographies


Sources as REFERENCE –Encyclopedias


Sources in COMMUNITY –Anthologies


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<th>Sources of EPHEMERA – Archives</th>
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Sources ON-LINE –Websites and On-Line Databases


An Encyclopedia of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer culture. 2007. glbtq, Inc. 20 April 2007


Yrs Truly Delicious Books. n.d. 20 April 2007 <http://yrstruly.net/delicious/books.html>
## Appendix

### Search for Lesbian of Color in Film on Film Databases

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*All race results were the result of race as a verb, as in “rat race” and not race as an identity of social construct.

Findings: Journals best to use for Lesbian of Color Sources on Film:
Film Quarterly with 128 hits on “lesbian”
Cinema Journal with 105 hits on “lesbian”
Camera Obscura with 39 hits on “lesbian”
References


