This Afterword aims to locate the past (“Looking” and “Looking In”), the present (“Looking Out”) and the potential future (“Looking Ahead”) of sociological work around same-sex relations. As other summaries have pointed out (Plummer 1981, 1992; Stein and Plummer 1994), until the 1950s, with notable exceptions from non-sociologists such as Kinsey or Hirschfield, there was a total neglect of same-sex research in the social sciences. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, studies of “sociological aspects of homosexuality” – usually of the empirical, survey type (Schofield 1965; Westwood 1960) – gradually appeared. From the late 1960s onwards, paralleling the rise of the lesbian and gay movement, a stronger theoretical turn towards “labeling theory” and issues of social constructionism began.

Then, in the 1970s, an interest in gender and power, alongside a more empirical sociology of lesbian and gay lives, emerged. This is largely interrupted by two forces in the 1980s: the specter of HIV/AIDS, which generates its own research momentum and leaves room for little else to be considered; and the “Foucauldian Deluge” where analyses of discourse overtake the analysis of real world events. With the popularization and ascendency of lesbian and gay studies beginning in the late 1980s (chronicled in Escoffer 1992), new disciplines come to dominate over sociology, which is itself seen to be in another state of crisis.

“Queer” becomes a key concern from the late 1980s onwards and, with that, a taste for somewhat “wilde” theorizing. By the time the benchmark *Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (Abelove et al. 1993) is published, only four of its forty-two contributions are written by people who could even be called social scientists: Gayle Rubin, TomÁs Almaguer, Stuart Hall, and Esther Newton.

There has been, then, a spectacular rise and fall of sociological analysis around same-sex experience. This Afterword elaborates on this brief historical overview and assesses the impact of sociology on lesbian and gay studies before concluding with some directions for the future.
IN SEARCH OF A SOCIOLOGICAL PAST: FROM SOCIOLOGICAL MYOPIA TO SOCIOLOGICAL FERMENT

For the first hundred years of sociology, the discipline betrayed its conservatism by showing almost no concern for the subject of homosexuality. This history of erasure, denial, ignorance and neglect continues, as evidenced by the relative lack of attention given in contemporary introductory texts to sociology. It is indeed a future topic for gay research to see if any work was actually done in the past and whether it might have become hidden from history. Chauncey’s (1994) Gay New York, Berube’s (1991) Coming Out Under Fire, Newton’s (1993) Cherry Grove, D’Emilio’s (1983) Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, and Davis and Kennedy’s (1993) Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold make it very clear that there were large hidden social worlds of homosexuality throughout the twentieth century: it would be surprising if a few sociologists had not investigated them. There are hints, for instance, that some of the Chicago sociologists of the 1920s and 1930s investigated the homosexual world, but nothing seems to have been published (Murray 1984).

Yet, we could easily write the history of the sociology of homosexuality as if nothing at all happened before the post-World-War-II period. Whilst the public domain was full of discussion of sex, sociologists – true to their frequently conservative biases – remained silent (Seidman 1992, 1994). The earliest self-conscious accounts of modern lesbian and gay experiences start to arrive in the late nineteenth century, but they have little to do with sociology. They emerge at the very moment when the homosexual category was being established alongside the hetero/homo binary split that has organized much of Western twentieth-century thinking (Sedgwick 1991). But sociologists generally had other things on their mind: any notion of these crucial gender and sexual problems seems centrally missing from the writings of Marx, Durkheim or Weber. Only Simmel takes gender as a major focus, but even for him same-sex relationships are beyond the pale. It is important to note that although same-sex experiences may be universal, the term homosexual was not inven-
ted until the 1860s and the clear division of the world into a heterosexual-homosexual one is not to be found in all societies. Hence, although this was a time when a consciousness of homosexuality was growing, the newly developing discipline of sociology was very distant from such changes.

More significantly, the very early homophile rights movement was creating the first wave of “gay liberation.” Most conspicuously in Europe, a number of “scientists” and scholars became engaged in attempts to explain and understand the difference that was eventually called homosexuality. Ironically, it has now become increasingly clear that some of these earlier studies of the causes and classifications of “the homosexual” – to be denounced by the 1970s – were in fact done by men (qua men) who would, these days, almost certainly be gay-identified (but could not then because the very idea hardly existed). Some of the studies could well be seen as the harbinger of empirical sociology which focused on the experiences of self-classified gay men.

The term "homosexual" was coined by K. M. Kertbeny in 1869; Karl Heinrich Ulrichs invented the term "uranian," embracing the mistaken idea of a third sex with a woman’s mind in a man’s body, and vice versa – an idea which misleadingly pervades much contemporary sexology; and Magnus Hirschfeld created the Scientific Humanitarian Committee and Institute for Sex Research to study the lives of thousands of "homosexuals" (Lauritsen and Thorstad 1974; Weeks 1990). The work in North America of Kinsey – although not a sociologist but a zoological taxonomer – gave rise to some of the first social findings about homosexual lives in North America, and provided a major impetus for change.

For lesbians the literature was different; it mainly lodged in the Victorian male discourses of law, medicine, and pornography and it was murkier, more hidden, and more stigmatized. Women did not have much of their own discourse on sexuality outside that imposed by men. It was usually very negative and rendered the lesbian into a morbid pathology directly linked to the diseased male homosexual (Faderman 1991; Jeffreys 1990). Nevertheless,
several cultural patterns of lesbianism become consolidated in this period: the Bohemian such as George Sand, the middle-class cross-dresser such as Rosa Bonheur, and “romantic friendships” (Faderman 1981). It is in literature, however, that the new lesbian started to emerge, as part of the construction of the New Woman, canonically and controversially, as the “mythic mannish lesbian” of The Wall of Loneliness (Newton 1984; Showalter 1991).

For all their now much considered flaws, these early writings of the modern period start providing an articulation and a coherence to “the homosexual” as a distinctly modern idea. And yet it is hard to find a single sociological voice that addresses such issues. In its first hundred years, the discipline of sociology betrayed its conservative origins and engaged in a systematic neglect of the social relations of sexuality.

The history of the sociology of homosexuality is usually seen to start with two major clandestine studies produced in the 1950s. The first clear Anglo-American sightings are from the pseudonymous Donald Webster Cory (1951) in the US and Gordon Westwood (1960) in the UK. Both of them, as sociologists, went on to make further contributions in their real names (i.e., Sagarin [1975] and Schofield [1965]). They were primarily concerned with a simple documentation of the social lives of homosexuals and the ways in which discrimination, prejudice and hostility affected their lives. These studies come at a time when the emerging homophile world was also developing its own institutes and magazines (see Legg 1994).

At this time a scattering of papers appeared, including Leznoff and Westley’s 1956 article “The Homosexual Community” which is generally seen as the first empirical study of a small gay community in a Canadian town. It now has considerable historical value, but it also draws out a key distinction between the overt and the covert. A few years later, in 1961, Albert Reiss published his work on male hustlers and the ways they make sense of their lives having sex with other men. These are amongst the earliest field reports of an empirical sociology (and, of course, North American where such a style of work was popular).

By the 1960s, several papers appeared in North America which applied labeling theory to homosexuality: John Kitsuse’s (1962) study of student reactions, Edwin Schur’s (1965) account of criminalization and its effects, and John Gagnon and William Simon’s 1967 formulation of a broader sociological perspective. But it was the neo-functionalist framework established by the English sociologist Mary McIntosh which was to go on to be the single most influential paper from sociology in the whole field. Indeed, “The Homosexual Role” has been reproduced so many times that cutting it from this anthology was seriously considered. But it couldn’t be cut — it is simply too important and too influential. McIntosh broke the mold: instead of taking “the homosexual” as a given, she turned it into the very problematic to be examined. Using a Parsonian framework, she started removing homosexuality from the dominance of biologists and psychologists who had hitherto seen it as a “condition.”

By the early 1970s an exciting moment was reached: it was the time for sociology. A series of important studies started both to document lesbian and gay lives and to develop theorizations around the very notion of “the homosexual.” The sociology of deviance and most especially “labeling theory” came to dominate this moment. Barry Dank problematized identity and the coming out process; Laud Humphreys brought a radical ethnographic turn into sharp focus through his investigation of public sex in “tearooms”; Carol Warren applied the insights of phenomenological interactionism to see the links between community and identity; and my own work charted the general theoretical baseline of interactionism as a new approach to homosexuality (Plummer 1975). Major studies appeared from the Kinsey Institute which classified lesbian and gay lives and brought a comparative dimension. Most of this work “looked in” at homosexual life with sociological insights.

To summarize, the sociological achievements of this time, as are evidenced in the articles in this book — and feeding into and from such disciplines as anthropology and history — helped
to shape a radical new approach to same-sex relations. Broadly, it worked on both theoretical and empirical levels. Theoretically, sociology

1 problematized the notion of "the homosexual," asking questions about the nature, origins, conditions of application, and impact of the category, thereby setting up what was to become known as the essentialist versus constructionist debate (a debate that appears in sociology long before the popularity of either Foucault or queer theory);
2 turned attention to the societal reactions towards homosexuality (never being happy with the simplistic concept of "homophobia," sociology's more historically grounded comparative analysis culminated in David Greenberg's (1988) massive, important, yet too neglected *The Construction of Homosexuality*);
3 questioned the meanings of sexualities and offered new social metaphors, like "script," in preference to biologically reductive ones like "drive" (especially as developed in the vital work of John Gagnon and William Simon);
4 explored the concept of identity long before it had become fashionable, providing valuable accounts of how identities get assembled;
5 investigated the social organization and meanings of culture and community (Ferguson 1991);
6 identified and challenged a "heterosexual assumption" in much research;
7 inserted a political analysis into much study of sex, broadening the arena of debate beyond gay politics *per se*;
8 connected to social theory, with versions of interactionism dominating this stage of analysis, although there were also attempts to bring in more structural approaches (such as Barry Adam's (1978) neglected study of oppression, *The Survival of Domination* and the Continental European work of Hochschild, Mieli, Dannecker and Reiche); and
9 showed a plurality of "homosexualities," as Bell and Weinberg's (1978) book was called, whilst demonstrating "normalization homosexuality," as Gagnon and Simon did.

Empirically, sociology started investigations of

1 the institutions of gay life, especially those connected to sociability (like bars) and sexualities (bathhouses, tea rooms, truckers, and public spaces, as well as the whole ecosystem of "getting sex" (see Lee (1978));
2 the relationships and patterns of gay lives, notably the creation of elementary typologies;
3 the everyday lives of everyday gay and lesbian folk and studies of the ways in which communities and community institutions were generated;
4 the tales of "coming out" in the voices of lesbian and gays;
5 the links between gay and lesbian lives and problems of gender;
6 the social reactions to homosexuals both historically (Greenberg [1988]) and situationally (Plummer [1975]); and
7 methodological issues such as "sampling" gays and lesbians (Plummer 1981).

Despite these achievements, in sheer quantity, sociology did not produce a lot. For most sociologists, lesbian and gay matters could be shunted into a ghetto and ignored. And even when it made the contributions listed above, overwhelmingly sociology brought the now more widely recognized traditional biases of white middle-class men (though in these cases they were usually not heterosexual ones). Curiously, too, lesbianism had been ignored, probably because most feminist sociologists focused attention on women and gender issues. Many of the key contributions to the study of lesbians came from outside of sociology and social science generally.

**THE FOUCAUDIAN DELUGE AND THE ARRIVAL OF AIDS**

The heyday of sociological research on lesbian and gay issues was probably between the mid 1970s and the early 1980s. But several events turned the attention from this analysis. One was AIDS. Not surprisingly, there was a tremendous shift away from most of the earlier fields of inquiry and an urgent move towards more and more research on aspects of the health crisis. AIDS was studied both as disease and as symbol. Studies of changing sexual behavior were initially brought to the fore; subsequently, studies of social movement change, responses to and adaptations to AIDS, including media responses, all became key areas of investigation. These borrowed from some research areas of sociology like medicine, media, and stigma.

For a while, old and new scholars actually seemed to desert gay and lesbian research as the dire needs of AIDS activism took precedence over all other concerns. Every aspect of the AIDS crisis developed its own literature. From behavioral studies of sex to socio-psychological
studies of coping with AIDS; from media analyses to discourse tracts; from histories and politics to poetry and biography, an enormous culture of AIDS research and writing was generated. At the same time, there was the tragic loss of a number of leading gay scholars, including Philip Blumstein, Martin Levine, and Richard Troiden.

Whilst AIDS generated specific kinds of research, the arrival of Michel Foucault (1978) started to herald a distinctive turn towards homosexuality as a discourse. Here a focus shifts from what might be called “real life events” to a preoccupation with the power-language spirals on which social life is constituted. Foucault himself became a major intellectual symbol for the gay intellectual community, not just because of his own theories which came to dominate much “left” discourse in the 1980s but also because his own life history as sex radical came slowly to the fore after his death. James Miller’s (1993) hugely polemical The Passion of Michel Foucault and David Halperin’s (1995) Saints Foucault both highlight how important, yet controversial, his work is. Although Foucault is much discussed in sociology his links to lesbian and gay studies are not often mentioned. Ultimately much of this “deconstructivist turn” may be seen to lead to the queer studies, discussed in the next section.

Curiously, then, despite a flourish of analysis and research using sociology in the early days of lesbian and gay studies, its impact rapidly declined during much of the 1980s: almost all significant sociological work turned its attention to AIDS. And once lesbian and gay studies started to establish itself in the late 1980s, the mantle of influence had passed to humanistic and literary scholars. At any major lesbian and gay academic conference, sociologists were few in number. Yet, sociological insights infuse much work in other disciplines – acknowledged, as in George Chauncey’s (1994) Gay New York, or unacknowledged, as in Judith Butler’s (1990) Gender Trouble, a discovery of a dramaturgical/performance theory of gender.

But, in general, with a few major exceptions, there is little innovation and development currently taking place within sociology on same-sex relations. Two exceptions might include the British Sociological Association conference on sexualities in 1994 where a surprising number of papers had aspects of gayness as a focus (see Holland and Weeks 1996); and the emergence of a new cohort of young sociological gay and lesbian scholars in the US.

THE PRESENT AND ITS CONTROVERSIES: SOCIOLOGY IN DECLINE AND QUEERING THE FIELD

There are a number of reasons why sociology seems to be playing a lesser role in lesbian and gay studies. These include tensions that have emerged from four sources: a sociological community that marginalizes lesbian and gay concerns; a lesbian and gay community that militates against the constructionism of most sociological analyses; a generationally based “queer studies” that favors cultural studies over sociological studies; and a number of social movements that see much of sociology as inevitably skewed to white male biases. Sociological work can be situated at the intersection of these tensions; its future will depend in part upon how it handles them.

Most obviously, it remains the case that the sociological community has little room for such study. Indeed, it still marginalizes, minimizes, and minoritizes our work. This is not a matter of overt discrimination since few sociologists, one hopes, would wish to be seen as homophobic or discriminatory. Rather, it is simply that, when sociologists in general study the world, they elect to ignore dimensions that are of direct relevance to lesbian and gay lives. The study of social movements or the study of identities are good examples.

In both of these important, influential and currently fashionable areas, gay and lesbian sociology has contributed much. Arguably our movement is one of the most successful of the new social movements and lesbians and gays have been key protagonists in the emergence of identity politics debates (Phelan 1989). There is a very significant amount of primary material available about the lesbian and gay movements, its schisms and conflicts, its history and
The rise of a Lesbian and Gay Movement; and a brief review of major journals, yearbooks, and textbooks finds almost total neglect.

It doesn't get much better with the fully blossoming “identity studies” literature. For instance, Craig Calhoun's (1994) Social Theory and the Politics of Identity treats us largely as if the sociology of lesbian and gay identity added nothing to the debate (there is a brief mention of Diane Fuss), whereas in fact it is not only central to it but it has been so for a very long time. Sociologists of lesbian and gay lives have been debating the politics of identity for the past twenty years. Is this a willful ignorance from major social theorists, or even a latent homophobia? It is certainly very puzzling.

There has also been a long and uneasy relationship between the sociology of lesbian/gay communities and the lesbian/gay communities themselves. Some lesbian and gay sociologists are part of this movement but it often leaves them in a curiously contradictory tension: their theories and their politics often seem ill at ease. Thus community members often believe passionately in a “folk essentialism” – that we are born this way – whilst sociologists much more generally take a constructionist line (see Whisman 1996). The popularity of the work of Simon LeVay, celebrating our shrinking hypothalamus, meets disbelief in sociological circles. It is a tension long recognized and widely discussed, but not one that can be easily resolved. Likewise, movement members may take for granted the power and significance of “Stonewall,” whilst for sociologists “Stonewall” is a symbol of a shared collective memory for rewriting history. This does not weaken its importance, but it gives rise to a very different perspective.

In addition, it is apparent that movement members have their own schisms and conflicts, from assimilationists to tribalists, something that sociologists can recognize as driving forces in all social movements. But this recognition makes them “strangers” to some of the movement’s activities. At the very least, the sociological imagination has to permit multiple ways of seeing and to acknowledge that every way of seeing is a way of not seeing. This makes the taking of sides in such schisms much harder.

Yet even with an eye for the multiplicity of meanings, sociologists have not been attentive to important differences in identity and community that are shaped by racial, ethnic, and national cultures. The articulation of these issues has occurred primarily within the anthologizing efforts of lesbian and gay people of color, including many poets and authors like Gloria Anzaldúa, Audre Lorde, Barbara Smith, and Cherrie Moraga. Once again, sociologists have not been leading the way. Lesbian and gay sociologists need to see the differences within as much as the differences without (as some of the selections in Part 4 argue).

Equally important these days is the direction lesbian and gay studies is taking into “queer theory” which does not appear to encourage sociology. Until recently, very few sociologists have even recognized the existence of queer theory, although the July 1994 (12:2) issue of Sociological Theory, edited by Steven Seidman, presents a symposium around it and might make for some increased awareness. Sociology will be the poorer if it fails to engage with queer theory.

However, there is no automatic or easy affinity between the two. Queer theory may have as much to learn from sociology as sociology has to learn from queer theory. Indeed, this theory often draws from sociology but refuses to acknowledge it. It sometimes fails to recognize that the whole deconstructionist project started intellectually before the lesbian and gay movement. Didn't Mary McIntosh, after all, deconstruct the homosexual in 1967? It refuses to recognize that much of queer theory centers on generation differences. Each new cohort of scholars necessarily needs to rewrite their intellectual and political project. They have to invent their own ideas, languages, concepts, and canons.
Second, gaying (or queering) of sociology. There is a need to bring mainstream sociologists into an awareness of lesbian and gay concerns so that they may incorporate such understandings in their everyday non-gay research and theory. This would be a major achievement and lead to the weakening of the ghettoization of lesbian and gay research. For example, two possible projects could include: (1) anti-homophobic or anti-heteronormative inquiries into a range of fields (e.g. education, family) alongside a concern over the production, organization, intensification, and destabilization of heterosexuality (see Katz 1995); and (2) the placing of homo/hetero/queer debates at the forefront of classic fields (e.g. social theory and classic texts). For instance, what would happen if Durkheim’s Suicide, Park’s The City or Duneier’s Slim’s Table were given “gay” readings?

Third, broadening the analysis of same-sex relations. Although it has long been a truism that “a homosexual is not a homonormalis not a homosexual,” very few sociologists have “stretched” their analyses beyond what could be called “the homosexual.” Protestations notwithstanding, the focus has remained “the homosexual.” But just as queer theory may have helped broaden and weaken the conventional area of analysis, so there are recent signs that sociologists may be looking at the messiness of the field. How, for instance, do some non-gay men come to have – and have to deal with – an array of gay friends; how do women respond to gay men – the “fag hag” syndrome; how do gay men and lesbians live together; or how do lesbian and gay categories come to no longer matter in relationships? What happens in the gym and amongst the body-builders? And how is gender linked into all this (Connell 1992)?

Fourth, rediscovering ethnography. Ethnography has been rediscovered within cultural studies, but it has a long lineage within sociology. What is odd is just how little the full richness of gay lives and gay communities has not been followed through in sociology. For instance, I do not know of a single published ethnography of any aspect of London’s lesbian/gay scene. So many areas here cry out for research. Ethnography has taken a much more reflexive turn recently which will lead to more sophisticated treatments.

Fifth, developing media studies of homosexuality. There is major research to be done on mass media and homosexuality: not the rather obvious reading or rereading of texts where “I Love Lucy” can be read as a sign of lesbian life, as in Doty’s (1993) Making Things Perfectly Queer, but rather with a sense of media research. How do actual lesbian and gay men come to appropriate non-gay and gay images; how do they really consume and read texts? Just as media studies now show a whole array of negotiated repose to media images, so we could have studies of lesbian and gay negotiations (and not just those of the “expert” film critics or the expert “queer theorist”).

Sixth, stratifying sexualities. Despite the advent of multiculturalism and some forays into the study of lesbian and gay lives from black, Asian, or Latino perspectives, the major forms of inequality, domination, exploitation, and marginalization around the lesbian and gay communities remain hardly touched (Leong 1995). Research on gay and lesbian issues must consider the intersection of race, class, age, gender, and sexual orientation.

Seventh, analyzing heterosexual practices. Sylvia Walby’s (1990) work on patriarchy provides a blueprint for sociological work on heterosexualism. By seeing heterosexism as a set of practices, a number of institutional domains, such as families, workplace, religion, political, media, schools, and of course sexualities, could be evaluated from another perspective.

Eighth, transcending discourse. None of the above suggestions seeks a continuation of the currently fashionable concern with discourse, text, and story. It seems to me that this has become the dominant trend in lesbian and gay studies – and it is a dangerous one. It cuts us off from the study of real-world events and turns out to be a stream of analyses which see only language, rhetorics, and discourse. In a special issue of Critical Sociology (20: 3, 1994) which aims to provide a critical gay and lesbian sociology, every article but one has a focus on discourse: the Jeffrey Dahmer discourse, the meanings of the AIDS Quilt, the rhetorics of the right, homophobia discourse, hegemonic dis-
course, and the like. Much of this is valuable work; but it is as if the complex, concrete living social worlds of lesbians and gay men do not exist. Instead, we enter a world where language games are prime.

We are not arguing for a simple minded return to streams of small-scale and useless empirical studies. But we do see the need for social theory to become tempered with the everyday lived lives of lesbian and gay men struggling globally in a culture mediated by strong structures of sexual hatred and forms of domination. It is time for sociology to take a major lead in returning lesbian and gay studies to the empirical world.

NOTE

1 The author is very grateful to Peter Nardi and Beth Schneider for their helpful comments on this afterword. A slightly different version is to be found in Theo Sandfort et al.’s Lesbian and Gay Studies (forthcoming).

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