

ARTICULATING BODIES IN TAPESTRIES OF SPACE: MAPPING
ETHNOGRAPHIES OF TRANS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL
COALITIONS IN WASHINGTON, DC

By

Elijah Adiv Edelman

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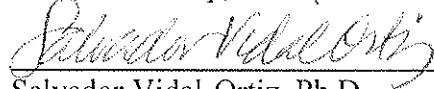
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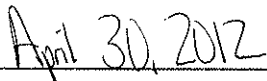
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Katharina Vester, Ph.D.



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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I explore how transgender, transsexual and other gender non-conforming subjects organize socially and politically as members of immensely diverse and discontinuous ‘trans coalitions’ in Washington, D.C. This ethnography, utilizing corporeally-anchored community map-making and interview data with over 100 trans-spectrum persons, attends to how emerging disjunctures between law, policy and lived experience—as expressed through the regulation of bodies in space—impact and highlight structural inequalities across trans-spectrum identities and practices. Ultimately, this project shifts a static view of a singular homogenous trans community into a politically and socio-economically-anchored discussion of trans-spectrum experiences, cross cut by issues of class, race, and modalities of gender expression, all within the physical, social and political arenas of Washington, D.C.

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Do all you can, with what you have, in the time you have, in the place you are
Nkosi Johnson

In many ways, I find it impossible to name and thank all of the incredible activists, friends, mentors and loved ones that made this project, and the dissertation, possible. Indeed, one of the greatest injustices of this dissertation is that in the end it is only I, rather than all of those people whose work is expressed here, that is awarded a terminal degree that grants a degree of social and political capital typically reserved for only a small percentage of the population. The words and experiences captured in the following pages are culminations of these conversations, energy, and love that I have been privileged to be a part of. To merely acknowledge these exchanges, and the gratitude I have for being provided the rare opportunity to learn, can only cheapen the depth to which this experience has fundamentally changed who I am today. I can only hope that my reiterations do some kind of justice and, possibly, make a difference in a place that all too often feels utterly broken.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATIONS: 'TRANS' SUBJECTIVITIES, CATEGORIES OF PRACTICE AND COALITIONS OF EXPERIENCE IN WASHINGTON, DC

Prelude: Wet winter Meeting

It was three days before Christmas and it had been several months since I had seen Tanya, one of the most outspoken trans activists I had met in DC and, consequently, also a core figure in my own dissertation research and activist work. I squinted through the dark rain searching for the right address in what felt like an endless repeat of the same house in the lower-income DC residential neighborhood she was staying in. I spotted a mason jar-cum-ashtray, overflowing with spent cigarette butts and I knew immediately I had the right house. I lifted my head towards the rain, double checked the house numbers, and hopped up to the steps to the door. I knocked and almost instantly she appeared at the door, draped in several coats with a cigarette wedged tightly between her pale bony fore and middle fingers. She stepped out, shielding the delicate paper of the cigarette against the wind and rain and flicked open her lighter. A muffled 'Hey!' emerged between her cold quivering lips and the cigarette as she concentrated on angling the flame away from the wind. We stood outside while she smoked her cigarette, chatting about where she had been, what she had been up to and how she was feeling. She had been laid off from her job a number of months prior and had been drifting between cities since. When we got inside and she removed the layers shielding her body from the elements outside it was clear she had lost more weight. She positioned her shivering skeletal frame into a chair, pushing aside a pile of papers and a handful of medication bottles. The lack of income, her increasing health issues, confounded by insufficient health care, along with a near-crippling depression had been hard on her. Her energy to find new work, and even her capacity to continue her local activist work, had all but run out. As I watched her shift in her seat, lifting

one impossibly thin thigh over another, I wondered silently how it was possible for Tanya, a central pillar of energy and support during her brief 3-year tenure in DC, to crumble in only a fraction of that time. I knew her experience wasn't unique and in a dark moment I couldn't help but wonder: is this what DC does to those in need?

Bodies and Space: Trans Coalitions, Bodies,
and Experience in Nation's Capital

Trans Coalition Formations:
Similarities and Departures

At the core of my dissertation project is the exploration of how transgender, transsexual and other gender non-conforming (henceforth 'trans' or 'trans-spectrum'¹) subjects organize socially and politically as members of an immensely diverse and discontinuous 'trans coalitions'² in Washington, D.C., a city wherein neoliberal processes continuously destabilize and rework landscapes of social and political policy, work, home and opportunity. My project shifts a monocular and uncomplicated view of trans lives into a politically and socio-economically-anchored discussion of trans-spectrum practice, identity and experience. I attend here to lived experience as multi-faceted and constituted by articulations between one's surroundings, feelings, sensations and embodiment. In this dissertation, I take on a multi-dimensional and experientially-anchored investigation of trans lives and coalitions within the physical, social and political arenas of Washington, D.C.

¹ I use 'trans' or 'trans-spectrum' through out this dissertation as a way to index an assortment of practices and identities that include transsexual, transgender, 'genderqueer', FTM, MTF, 'TG', 'Aggressive', 'Butch' and so forth.

² I use the term coalition here, rather than 'community' to index not a lived experience of boundedness or communal belonging but rather to highlight the ways the nation-state, the medico-legal establishment and other social powers identify this group of persons collectively and how this, in turn, becomes expressed through the narratives of those included in this dissertation project.

There is no single, unilateral form of ‘trans’ experience that can be meaningfully called upon to define all those classified within this ‘community’ without eliding difference. It is through practices of elision where such as issues of inequality, systemic abuse and violence are rendered invisible. With these concerns of inequity in mind, my project here disrupts the notion of a singular trans ‘community’ in Washington, DC. I identify ‘community’ here to represent a “symbolic totality as well as a practical multiplicity” (Miller and Slater 2000:16). That is, while there is no singular ‘trans community,’ many participants of this project index the ‘symbolic totality’ of the phrase and refer to themselves as belonging to or concerned about ‘trans community.’ In this project I acknowledge the meaningfulness of a ‘trans community’ to participants while also remaining aware of this ‘community’s’ ‘practical multiplicity.’ I account for the significance of this variability through displacing the concept of a static community with the explicit multiplicity of coalitions.

My decision to utilize ‘trans’ as a gloss for all gender transgressing experience and identities also demands discussion. The modifier ‘trans,’ as a way to mark gender transgression, functions to both elide difference and function as a meaningful and productive category of identity. For the purposes of this project I invited the participation of any person who felt a research project focusing on ‘trans’ experience resonated with their own identity or practice. I utilize ‘trans’ through out this dissertation to index a range of subjectivities, practices, experiences or identities marked by modalities of gender transgression that trigger a personal resonance, on the part of the subject, with trans-spectrum identities or practices. This project ultimately included a very wide range of gender identities, practices and experiences and included persons who identify along trans-spectrum identities and those that do not. At no point did I find it necessary or productive to ‘police’ the identities of those who shared their

experiences with me. My interest in this dissertation is to discuss how gender transgression that could be framed as ‘trans,’ visible or historic, impacts one’s lived experience in Washington, DC; to attempt to define the bounds of ‘trans’ functions to inevitably erase liminal identities and practices I may not personally be aware of or sensitive to.

While I continue to utilize the term ‘trans’ in this dissertation as a gloss for a diverse and complex multitude of expressions and identities, I have chosen to shift away from the artificial boundedness of ‘community’ and, instead, utilize ‘coalition’ as a frame of reference to the participants of this project. As anthropologist Vered Amit cautions, ‘community,’ as an analytical category “always ‘require[s] sceptical investigation rather than providing a ready-made social unit upon which to hang analysis” (Amit 2002:14 and particularly with regard to gender see Young 1995:189). The use of ‘community’ here erases differences among trans experiences; indeed, even that which binds together these subjects, a gender discordant past or present, is itself a variable and complicated experience. Thus, a general use of ‘community’ renders unclear who or what is being discussed and, ultimately, privileges hegemonic categories of practice. To be certain, the terms ‘trans’ and ‘community’ both function to discursively eliminate inequities and difference, which, in the context of this dissertation project, are precisely the features that I seek to draw attention to.

Rather than employ ‘community’ in this dissertation to capture the relationships between and across trans-spectrum identifying persons, I instead use ‘coalition,’ noting the diversity and dialectics of experience of my research populations. I use ‘coalition’ intentionally as a referent to the relationships between trans experiences or identities of, specifically, those who participated in this project. My use of this term builds from a basic definition, wherein a coalition is composed of people of varied backgrounds, such as “local government officials, non-

profit agency and business leaders, and interested citizens who align in formal, organized ways to address issues of shared concern over time” (Zakos and Edwards 2006:351). Importantly, Zakos and Edwards’ definition primarily frames difference through one’s relative relationship to decision-making power. Additionally, this explanation implies a degree of formality in coalitional structures and goals. In contrast, my use of coalition is not to elaborate on particular striations of difference or to identify coalitional goals. Following the claim that “in practice, *coalition* rather than *community* is key to understanding contemporary political movements” (Walby 2001:120, emphasis added) I utilize ‘coalition’ in this dissertation as a way to continually bring attention to the differences within, as well as collaborative nature of, ‘community’ production.

I also use coalition in this dissertation to highlight how the data collection and methodology in this project produced a collaborative environment, and shared goal, for those involved. Health researchers have long noted the beneficial role a ‘coalition,’ composed of various members of a community or allies to that community functions to better represent needs in research (Lahance et al 2006:46, McMillan et al 1995:701, Braithwaite, Bianchi, and Taylor 1994:409). This research has affirmed that coalitions function to produce better policies and also empower those traditionally excluded from decision-making practices. Coalitions, as intentional collaborations between multiple invested parties over a common goal, have the “ability to create linkages with community members as active participants in setting health priorities, making decisions, and planning and implementing strategies to achieve better health” (Peter et al 2006:58). Moreover, these collaborative efforts also provide a platform for these excluded voices to more meaningfully participate in, and ultimately produce, more effective policies, outreach campaigns and general health management. In the context of this project, the

participants' active co-constructions of DC as a 'trans city' represent a coalitional effort to produce an understanding of what a 'trans community' may refer to.

Finally, my distinction between coalition and community as a way to refer to the relationships *between* those who participated in this project is also reflected within participants' narratives. For example, one FTM (female-to-male) identifying participant in this project included in his discussion of a trans DC his relationships to trans women of color who are sex workers (see Chapter 3 for additional discussion). In this context he located their joint experiences as 'trans' but also framed himself as an ally. That is, while he situates his gendered experience and their gendered experience as collectively 'trans,' he nonetheless is aware and actively commenting upon the gendered, socio-political and material differences separating their trans experience from his.

Trans Research, Bodies and Somatic Experience

Historically, trans specific-research has focused on medical or surgical procedures or the psycho-social underpinnings of gender transgression, rather than examine critically yet without judgment, the class, race, sexuality and geographic-situatedness of trans lives (see Denny 1994 for a list of significant texts). While many currently unpublished or recently published trans-focused research projects are emerging there is, to date, still no dissertation or monograph-length ethnographic exploration of trans persons living in DC on record³. This tremendous analytic absence does little to attend to the pressing needs of the many trans persons living or working in Washington, DC, such as access to health care, legal services, gainful employment and stable and affordable housing, none of which are protected through federal guidelines.

³ The publications that do address trans lives in Washington, DC are largely trans-feminine in focus and sex worker-specific (Alliance for a Safe & Diverse DC 2008) or are limited to communities of color (Xavier et al 2005). While the communities discussed in these publications represent some of the most disenfranchised and neglected trans subjectivities and experiences in DC, their scope is, rightfully so in these cases, limited and does not attend to more upwardly mobile trans experiences.

The few texts that do reflect a geographically-situated exploration of trans lived experience (Valentine 2007, Stryker 2008b, Namaste 1996) do not attend simultaneously to multiple lived and experiential bodies but rather focus on specific particular groups or identity categories. Those that attend to a feeling and embodied trans body do so productively through phenomenological approaches (Rubin 2003:27) and through the embodied narratives of lived experience (Prosser 1998, Cromwell 1999:32), but do not attend deeply to the broader socio-political structures framing those experiences. In this project I attend to situated trans lived experience that both takes into account intersecting subjectivities as well as the somatic and sensual body in the political-economic conditions of its production. This project shifts the focus from just the body or the space and explores the conversation emerging with that dialectic; how meaning is produced and felt by the subject and in the place.

Through out this dissertation I highlight the importance of the physical, sensate and biopolitically-regulated body in trans experience and practices. As such, in order to explore how trans subjects navigate the terrain of the nation's capital as a 'trans city,' I simultaneously attend to both the phenomenology of the body (e.g., personal lived experience) as it is expressed through lived experience as well as the political economic and biopolitical significance of embodied gender discordant pasts and presents (e.g., the pathology associated with transsexuality or with expressions of trans femininity). I situate the data emerging from the maps—where one goes in the city—within the Washington, DC wherein various social and legal ideologies shape mobility.

While my fundamental question here is how trans subjects discuss Washington, D.C. as a city they live and work in, I tie these discussions to the sensory fleshy bodies that navigate the

material streets of DC. Elizabeth Grosz stresses the importance of this body/city dynamic as ‘complex feedback relation’ wherein,

[T]he body and its environment, rather, produce each other as forms of the hyperreal, as modes of simulation which have overtaken and transformed....the city is made and made over into the simulacrum of the body, and the body, in its turn, is transformed, ‘citified’, embraced as a distinctly metropolitan body (Grosz 1992:242).

In other words, affect, emotional and physical sensation cannot, and should not, be divorced from the exploration of trans lived experience (as emphasized by Rubin 2003:30), particularly in how one’s knowledge about their body potentially guides and drives the discretionary logic that frames the narratives of DC as a ‘trans’ city. With this in mind, the role of medical and psychological diagnosis places a particular burden on trans persons attempting to gain access to capital and cultural productivity. In the U.S. context, deeply infused with assumptions of neoliberal political economy, this productivity is linked to the capacity to maintain stable employment, fit normative gender roles and other normalizing technologies. To secure employment in the formal economy, one must first produce documents detailing one’s citizenship, such as a driver’s license or birth certificate, and thus candidacy for employment; for the gender transgressor, the process of acquiring these documents is lengthy, potentially costly and demands ascription to particular racialized, heteronormative and classed-based gender hegemonies (Meyer et al 2001, Roen 2001:511, Stryker 2008b, Finn 1999). Vis-à-vis fulfillment of medico-legal definitions of gender pathology as outlined by the medical establishment, a trans person can gain access to technologies that ‘repair’ this mind-body discordance, and thus access to legal documentation of one’s citizenship (Meyer et al 2001). These technologies, such as hormone treatment and surgery, ‘correct’ both the political demands made of trans subjects to be ‘normal’ but also the very real discomfort felt by many trans subjects. At present one must secure a diagnosis of ‘Gender Identity Disorder’ (the official diagnosis term utilized in the *Diagnostic*

and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) at the time of this writing) or ‘Gender Dysphoria’ (the proposed diagnosis term to replace GID in 2012 version of the DSM) to access medical and legal resources. This evaluative demand, or even the mere labeling of one’s experience as ‘transsexual,’ works to demand an erasure of variability in gender expression and identity and apply pathology to vastly different kinds of bodies and experience. That said, this ‘diagnosis’ nonetheless responds to a very real, and valid, embodied experience among persons who do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth. Not all trans people identify as having GID or as being trans, yet they all tend to experience, to varied degrees and in multiple ways, a sense of gender discordance, which in turn becomes politicized by the nation-state.

It is through a ‘successful’ body transformation, wherein one has produced an image of having ‘shifted’ perfectly from one hegemonic gender category to another in physical form, that trans subjects may acquire the documents that prove one’s citizenship and thus authenticate one’s ability to be productive (Irving 2008). What is key here is that this ‘recourse to normativity’ erases or prevents the formation of any kind of salient political or social difference which, again, serves to both unite and segment trans coalitions as a whole (Aizura 2006:302). That is, in order to appease both the medical professionals and the nation-state one must strictly reproduce a particular kind of raced and classed gender normativity; to be a person of color, queer, gender queer, a communist or a socialist, engage in ‘grey or black,’ informal economies defaults one’s potential claims to citizenship. In short, attempts made by the medical establishment, infused by a neoliberal ethos, to make sense of gender transgressing bodies and identities, work to both provide a platform of unity to an otherwise unrelated cross-section of people. Yet, these same platforms of potential unity also simultaneously work to obscure the profound difference that remains active in the lives of those ‘artificially’ (through medical

discourses) brought together under the same umbrella terminology.

Geographic Specificity: The Paradox of Washington, DC

Washington, DC, as the capital city of the United States, metonymically indexes the highest power of the nation-state. This power is expressed through DC's many historical monuments and the housing of the federal government and the majority of the nation's most powerful non-governmental agencies. As a result, governmental and non-governmental agencies work in conjunction to impact the social and political climate for those living and working within the city. Though Washington, DC is home to many of the nation's LGBT civil rights groups and boasts one of the most inclusive and progressive human rights laws for public accommodations and employment nationwide, the application of these policies to lived experience is uneven, at best. Unexpectedly, Washington, DC, as that which represents the US nation-state, also has the highest rates of HIV/AIDS in the US, which, at the time of this writing, are considered at 'epidemic levels'⁴. Thus, the relationship between public policy, opportunity and health in Washington, DC is particularly relevant in unpacking inequality in 'LGBT' communities of practice. Among the hardest hit populations in Washington, DC are trans persons of color (particularly African-American/Black, Latino/a and Chicano/a). Additionally, while some trans persons struggle within grey and black economies to subsidize basic living expenses (Alliance for a Safe & Diverse DC 2008), other trans people are among the top paid in their professional fields. In this dissertation I attend to these disjunctures of opportunity and lived experience among this extremely diverse and divergent 'community' of persons.

⁴ The most recent report published by the DC Department of Health, identifies 3% of all DC residents, one out of twenty, are known to be HIV positive (Vigilance et al 2008:20). DC's rate of HIV infection is now highest in the nation. Unfortunately, this statistic may be substantially lower than actual rates of HIV incidence, as it only accounts for those persons of who either know, or report to the DC DOH, their HIV status.

Within DC, the kinds of class and race stratification marking the broader landscapes of inequality in the city are also clear in the navigations and understandings of space within different trans experiences. To be certain, Washington, DC may be best understood as two cities in one: one of which is largely white and transient, which serves the government and juridical power of the nation-state through governmental and non-governmental agency work and, the other, a ‘sleepy southern town’ composed of DC natives who function to either support the other city through service economy work or are kept separate altogether. Trans persons living and working in DC are found across these sub-cities and are members of various communities of practice. Not all trans persons are the same nor are their needs and rights of equal standing. To be clear, my project here does not attempt to describe an imagined cohesive experience of a ‘trans community’ working, living and traversing the streets of the city; rather my project here is to highlight the ways in which this extraordinarily diverse grouping of identities and practices articulates in lived experience.

Trans coalitions of persons in Washington, DC are brought together through both proximity within the city but also through healthcare, social and political needs as they relate to trans lived experience. Particularly within the context of limited healthcare resources in DC, trans persons living in the district who seek any kind of trans-sensitive or aware medical care, whether transition related or otherwise, often must utilize the same resources, bridging together a radically diverse, and otherwise entirely unrelated community in unexpected ways. Like many cities in the late-modern, globalizing moment, Washington, D.C. constitutes a dynamic and ever-changing terrain shaped by technologies of neoliberalism including multiple forms of urban restructuring (Manning 1998, Williams 1988). Sexuality, gender and embodiment, while seemingly removed from elements of geographic concern, are instead central to understanding

how these terrains are regarded, navigated and understood by the very population traversing them. As evidenced in the events surrounding the 1998 death of trans woman Tyra Hunter, wherein DC paramedics ceased life-saving measures following a car accident upon discovery of her ‘male’ genitals, an understanding of trans experience is beyond mere desires for sensitivity in health care. Though this is not to imply that race, class and sexuality are eclipsed by transsexuality, as Hunter’s treatment was invariably complicated by being a person of color and from an assumed lower-class status, the danger posed by visible or unexpected gender transgression, whether consensual or forced, becomes a central feature in unpacking trans lived experience in DC.

To be clear, class, race and access to resources heavily impact trans experience in the city. For the trans person of whom is upwardly mobile, white, gender normative and is in a secure and well paying job, securing health care may not prove to be their primary concern. That said, this is not to foreclose the importance of *other* issues, such as job security, daily public hostility, access and utilization of representative private documents. In this dissertation I attend to this difference and rather than either marking each ‘community’ as discreet or, as one in the same, I draw out the complex tapestry that makes up trans coalitions of practice in DC, held together by the thin threads of ‘trans’ continuity, yet brought together in both imagined and very real utilitarian purposes.

Ethnographic Inquiry: Methodology, Maps,
and the DC Trans Coalition

Community Interviewing, Map Making
and Public Anthropology

Methodologically, my data collection tools have included both ‘traditional’ modes of anthropological research—participant observation and semi-structured interviews—along with

‘non-traditional’ techniques of map-making. These maps (108 collected total), produced in both one-on-one interviews as well as group discussions, were framed around DC as a ‘trans city’ (paralleling, although markedly different, productions of a ‘gay city’ in Leap 2005:238 and 2009:205). As an element of the one-on-one semi-structured interviews, I asked interviewees to draw and describe a map that depicts DC through a ‘trans’ lens. This process of mapping transcends normative cartographic methods of GIS and ‘objective’ scientific means and, instead, utilizes community conceptualizations of space and place in which to visualize the city (Geltmaker 1997:234, Bhagat and Mogel 2007:6). Those producing maps through group discussions engaged in a similar activity and were asked to produce a map of DC as a ‘trans city’ by a myself or a community member moderator (in the case of one group discussion) of which was followed by a group conversation about the maps.

I utilized this kind of map-making as a methodological tool, as well as the collection and analysis of the associated narratives produced through the mapping process, for three primary reasons: 1) this allowed for a multi-dimensional form of data collection that explicitly includes various milieu, including verbal and visual expression and narrative, 2) this provided subjects with an opportunity to reclaim space as, specifically, their own and 3) identified key places of trans interest or concern (e.g., ‘safe’ versus ‘unsafe’ spaces). These maps, as situated in the embodied knowledge of the subject can, in turn, be used to produce a far richer understanding of how trans subjects and coalitions of practice view DC as a city for trans subjectivities. This becomes of particular importance to local LGBT rights organizations and other advocates when critiques or notable exclusions of particular groups over others emerge.

Additionally, I also utilized in this dissertation project a public anthropological approach along with the notion of ‘radical cartography’ as a means in which to engage creatively with

participants but also to “actively promote social change” with the resulting research (Bhagat and Mogel 2007:6). Importantly, through map-making, the power afforded to maps culled from a number of trans subjects can be utilized by the activists and advocates to identify resources, space and experiences most valued by different trans persons living and working in the city.

Activist Group as Field Site: The DC Trans Coalition

In addition to semi-structured interviews and map-making, my participant observation has included my active membership in local trans activist and social groups from August 2006 to present, early 2012. I have spent the greatest time with the trans advocacy and activist group, the DC Trans Coalition. The DC Trans Coalition (DCTC) is unique as compared to other advocacy or activist groups in DC. The DCTC is constituted entirely by volunteers, of whom represent a diverse array of both trans-specific and non-trans specific progressive activist and advocacy groups in DC (such as Different Avenues, Just Detention International, Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive and so forth) and remains collectively run with no formal structure.

DCTC was formed in early 2005 as a working group of trans people and allies, representing different community groups, governmental offices and organizations, of whom all had a vested interest in improving the treatment of trans or trans-appearing persons living in the district. DCTC’s persistent campaigning has led to DC’s adoption of trans and gender-transgressing protections in the districts Human Right’s Act, of which has become the grounds for legally-mandated gender neutral single stall bathrooms in public spaces, the creation of guidelines for fair(er) treatment of trans inmates, and trans-sensitive Metropolitan Police Department trainings. DCTC’s campaigns also include the identification of local businesses in non-compliance with the Human Right’s Act and working with the Office of Human Rights to contact these businesses (the ‘Pee in Peace’ campaign), the aiding and advocating of trans

persons in prison filing of complaints, holding regular meetings with city council members and representatives of the Department of Corrections, and providing “Know Your Rights” trainings and pamphlets. These pamphlets and trainings are available to local LGB and trans groups and other interested organizations as a way to explain the current laws affecting trans people in accessible language and field questions, in the case of trainings.

Moreover, my participation in DCTC’s deployment of the first completely inclusive Trans Needs Assessment in DC’s history has provided me the opportunity to interact not only with an immensely diverse array of trans-identifying subjects but also to work along side and with other social researchers. As DCTC meets bi-monthly at the district’s only, yet problematic, trans medical service provider, Whitman-Walker, my participation with DCTC has also placed me in the middle of trans activism and advocacy in Washington, D.C., but also provided me with crucial contacts needed to access numerous members of the trans community.

As my primary research goal was to attend the multiple spatial, social and political implications surrounding the multiple subjectivities that compose trans experiences of the city, my outreach methodology was diverse and multi-faceted. Acknowledging the success this approach has yielded for other Washington, D.C. based trans reports (Alliance for a Safe & Diverse DC 24:2008, Xavier et al 2004) I integrated input and involvement from trans persons and allies from the initial stages of the project to the final stages of analysis and write up. I have drawn upon the central concepts in ‘Community Based Research’, of which bridge together academics and non-academics “with the purpose of solving a pressing community problem or effecting social change” (Strand et al 2003:3). All paper materials distributed during the course of this project, as well as the structure of the mapping projects were shared with DCTC members, along with other groups invested in trans issues interested in reviewing the material. I

did this for three reasons: 1) with coalition involvement this project is better informed and guided 2) the success of outreach and data collection is enhanced with coalitional efforts and 3) analysis and discussion build from “community knowledge as a building block in the development of the research agenda” (Alliance for a Safe & Diverse DC 2008:25).

My core outreach tactics included ‘snowball’-style participant collection, flyer distribution⁵ in key trans areas and events, of which were partially identified through preliminary research and were further developed through community polling in community meetings, as well as through direct inquiry with potential participants at community events. While those I interviewed independently of DCTC projects did not receive any financial compensation, those who participated in the DC Trans Needs Assessment project, of which I am affiliated and which emerged as an element of the preliminary stages of my own dissertation research, received a \$25 grocery store gift card for their participation.

Finally, my own participation in the cultivation and creation of a ‘unified’ coalition should be noted, in both the sense of my deployment of the term ‘trans’ and my use of map-making in exploring space. As scholars researching ‘trans’ subjectivities have noted (Stryker 2008a:24, Valentine 2007:22), it is the academic that ‘creates’ a cohesive trans experience through utilizing a singular term to index an immensely diverse group of persons. Indeed, many trans persons interviewed here may not consider themselves ‘trans’ or a member of a trans coalition of practice yet will feel compelled to participate in the project; conversely, persons of whom identify as having a ‘trans history’ may not have readily chosen to participate in this project at all. Additionally, numerous trans persons who may identify as trans yet may not have

⁵ It should also be noted that one the most neglected cross-sections of the trans community include persons for whom English is a second language, with Spanish as their first language. As such, flyers and outreach materials were translated into Spanish by trans native Spanish-speakers. Roundtables held among trans Latina persons were conducted predominantly in Spanish.

taken part in this project may not have their narratives and life experiences reflected here. To be clear, my is not to produce an ethnography of all trans and gender non-conforming identities and practices in DC. Rather, my interest here rests in how ‘trans,’ as an analytic and discursive category, becomes identified with, experienced somatically, organized around, and deployed in discussions and experiences of space.

Data Collection and Meaning: Maps, Map-Making and Coalition Building

Utility of Maps and the Dynamics of the Living (‘Queer’) City

Historically, maps have served as a way to silence and erase devalued experience and notions of space (Piper 2002:42). Community produced maps, in this context, reworks historical deployments of maps and allows persons typically disenfranchised from knowledge production in space articulation to re-characterize that space; to depict the cityscapes meaningfully and from their own positionalities. The concept of the map began with a colonizing investment in “overcoming the darkness of primitive territorial organization and establishing sovereignty, as whiteness, as home” (Piper 2002:12). That is, maps were utilized by administrations and persons in power as a way of legitimating their presence in a space and associated dislocation and relocation of communities living there prior to their arrival. Specifically within the context of the city, maps have been “used in attempts to tame the urban labyrinth, and to represent its spaces as 'legible' and 'knowable'... transform it’s messy incoherence’s into a fixed graphic representation” of which, in its common usage, erases and excludes marginal sexual practices and (trans)gendered bodies (Pinder 1996:407). It is through a ‘subversion’ of these kinds of maps that the streets and spaces of the city become alive (Pinder 1996:405, Perkins 2003:345 or in a specifically ‘queer’ sense, Halberstam 2005). Within a public anthropological and radical

geographic approach, this antiquated use of maps is subverted through not only the activity of community produced maps but ultimately through the utilization of a meta-map, culled from individual maps, for use by community members and advocates as a source of valid data evaluating the services and opportunities currently available to trans people in the city.

Most broadly, the ‘city’ should be regarded as dynamic, as both produced and consumed by its inhabitants and visitors. Building on the concept that the city is dialectically linked to “very physical expressions of social relations, movements and ideologies” (Hackworth 2007:79) I consider here how trans persons, as a ‘community’ living and working within the cityscape, conceptualize Washington, D.C. as, specifically, a ‘trans city.’ One’s experience of the city “is the product both of immediate sensation and of the memory of past experience, and it is used to interpret information and to guide action” (Lynch 1960:4). Simply put, literal somatic and emotive experience, the way we feel physically and emotionally, both in that moment and in the past, are called up in our understandings and perception of space. In a city wherein violence against trans persons is on going, the related somatic or affective trauma undoubtedly comes to bear in the map-making project.

Historically, ‘gay’ cultural geographies have been structured around discussions of where ‘gay’ people *lived*, specifically gay ghettos (Jackson 1989:120), and commercial locations (Ingram, Bouthillette and Retter 1997) as areas of political or social importance (Mason 2001:26, Retter 1997:327), or as terrains of de-politicized ‘play’ (Leap 2009:205). These maps, and the spaces that subjects mark as important or key to them are as contextual as the lived experience itself. Potentially transgressive sexual practices or identities may be subsumed through the performance of an economically and ideologically productive ‘good gay citizen’ as Leap cautions (2009:204-208) or sexuality, itself, erased in lesbian maps (Wolfe 1997). Thus, building

on Lynch's past-and-present affective evaluation of space, we must also integrate the potential and power of ideological disruption as an element of that evaluation. Thus, a map produced by a gay man tells us more than that singular man's personal experience; it reveals the ways *being* a gay man frames and permeates one's ideas and evaluations of space.

It should be noted that not all subjects come to evaluate space equally. Rather I consider here how multiple 'dispositions of the body' "are articulated with formations of subjectivity within particular urban contexts" (Morris 2004:686, and as discussed in Grosz 1992:242). This is particularly true within the urban context, wherein the combination of limited space, fluctuating economies and shifting cash flows literally transform the physical landscapes into nearly unrecognizable forms of redevelopment. While the 'revitalization' of an abandoned building with multi-million dollar condos may serve to make some persons feel comfortable and welcome in that geographic locality, others, many of whom cannot afford such accommodations, may suffer displacement and henceforth regard this development as alienation (Alliance for a Safe & Diverse DC 2008). In this example, the role of gentrification, as a tool of both displacement and enrichment, cannot be regarded as merely another element of multiply intersecting bodies. Rather, it should be situated in the socio-political environment in which it comes to action, wherein particular kinds of bodies or practices are negatively evaluated and displaced by those practices and persons of value to city planners and developers.

Importantly, renderings and narratives produced at my request for a map of DC that represents one's experience as a trans person produce both a personalized image of space from an individual trans subject as well as an ideologically-motivated and discursively-situated depiction of the city. My request for a map of a 'trans city' may easily trigger from the participant hegemonic notions of where trans 'people,' as a whole, should or should not go and

where they should or should not be welcome. ‘Safe space’ is a particular phrase used in LGBT organizing and civil rights groups to index spaces of ‘LGBT-friendliness,’ of which is typically only referencing friendliness to only otherwise ideologically sanctioned subjects (e.g., white, gender normative, engaged in formal economy and so forth); for trans subjects to utilize this kind of terminology in descriptions of Washington, D.C. is a powerful example of the permeation of a particular kind of LGBT civil rights discourse in trans lives. This saturation is made even clearer when situating ‘trans maps’ alongside Leap’s ‘gay maps’ (Leap 2009 and 2005) produced in DC; the complete absence of attention to ‘safe space’ discourse from ‘gay maps’ highlights the political structures and social reality—a lack of nation-state support and expectations of violence—trans subjects navigate⁶. As such, it is entirely possible a trans person who is also a sex worker will label an otherwise sex worker-negative space as a ‘safe place.’ My approach here is not to engage in politics of identification, wherein I co-opt identities and practices under a ‘trans’ moniker. Instead, I deploy ‘trans’ intentionally in the context of map-making to untangle lived experience from hegemonic ideals of embodiment and practice.

Dissertation Overview

I begin in Chapter 2, ‘Mapping Ideology and Embodied Practices: Approaches to Documenting and Discussing Lived Experience,’ with a discussion of how map making and maps, two of my primary methodological tools in this project, provide unique, and functionally useful, insight into lived experience by expressing the complex dialectics between personal embodiment, space, and place. Specifically, I explore how map-making and maps, when linked

⁶This absence is complicated by Leap’s recent (2011) discussion of gay men using narratives of homophobia as sites of self-aggrandizement, rewriting the experience of physical danger and casting it as a heroic narrative rather than as an experience trauma and tragedy. While many trans-spectrum participants interviewed in this project discuss violence—whether their own or that experienced by others—they do not individualize or personalize the experiences as moments of defiance or reclamation.

to theories of embodiment, provide forms of embodied texts, which I then unpack through Critical Discourse Analysis.

I continue the exploration of maps in Chapter 3, 'Mapping Washington, DC: Drawing a 'Trans DC,' wherein I identify the primary themes emerging from the core data sources of this project: maps produced by trans-spectrum identifying persons living in Washington, D.C. of the city as, specifically, a 'trans city.' In particular, I discuss how these themes are articulated within collected maps and how these contrast with features included in mainstream and 'GLBT' maps of DC. Ultimately, variations of representations in maps reflect material differences between trans coalitions of persons.

I further investigate the meanings of 'safety' as they relate to material liminality in Chapter 4, Liminality, 'Safe Space,' and Support: Phenomenological Mediations of Trans Biopolitical Worth.' Specifically, I explore how experiences of danger are expressed within the maps and discussed by those participating in this project. I contrast these discussions with how current models 'LGBT' 'safe space' fail to attend to either the complexity of trans-spectrum lived experience or the elasticity of space. Finally, I offer up a situated discussion of safety as a corollary of support based upon collected narratives.

I turn back to the issue of violence and regulation in Chapter 5, 'Walking While Transgendered': Necropolitical Regulations of Trans Feminine Bodies of Color', and consider how particular necropolitical disciplinary and geospatial policies function to regulate trans feminine bodies of color on the streets of DC. I explore how these policies, such as the Prostitution Free Zone, function as articulations of sovereignty and, ultimately, illuminate how local policies and practices are linked to national neoliberal citizenship demands through what I term 'necronationalism.'

Having discussed the primary issues facing trans coalitions in DC, as well as the concomitant lack of institutional support, I consider how ‘trans rights’ have been articulated and addressed at the local and national levels in Chapter 6, ‘Trans Lives, Trans Needs and Trans Rights: Efficacy in Employment Non-Discrimination and Hate Crimes Legislation.’ In this chapter I investigate the disjunctures that emerge between the lived experiences of those interviewed in this project and the application of laws and public policies intended to provide these subjectivities support. Specifically, I consider here how the 2005 inclusion of gender identity and expression as protected classes in employment non-discrimination policy and the 2009 inclusion in bias-crime reporting in Washington, DC have impacted trans-spectrum persons’ access to employment or experiences with violence.

In the final and concluding chapter, I call upon the insights from the narratives and maps collected in this project to explore how the ‘T’ articulates within the ‘LGBT’ paradigm of social policy. In this final chapter, I revisit the core themes and questions raised through out this dissertation and consider how, when set in context, these issues reflect deeper structural concerns with trans-spectrum social and political locatability. Specifically, I consider here how the lives and experiences of those who shared their time with me over the course of this dissertation research ultimately raise the question of how the ‘T’ in an ‘LGBT’ paradigm actually functions. That is, while the acronym, LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender), is commonly used to refer to identities or practices that are sexually marginalized (such as a gay identity), this kind of cultural work, based upon the narratives collected in this project, may function to harm trans-spectrum, rather than support, lives. Instead, the maps and narratives collected from participants in this project reflect a deep and structural *disconnect* between trans-spectrum lives and mainstream LGBT social and political frameworks.

CHAPTER 2

MAPPING IDEOLOGY AND EMBODIED PRACTICES: APPROACHES TO DOCUMENTING AND DISCUSSING LIVED EXPERIENCE

In this chapter I discuss how map making and maps, two of my primary methodological tools in this project, provide a unique insight into lived experience by expressing the complex dialectics between personal embodiment, space, and place. I begin by exploring how theories of embodiment function as a way to situate the somatic indexicality of the texts and maps collected in this project as a segue to understanding the complicated ways socio-political projects, such as gender, and even the notion of ‘safety,’ are felt and expressed visually. Second, I consider in this chapter the role of maps and map-making to social science research, as well as how maps are situated within power structures and ideology. Finally, I discuss how Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a tool to unpack both interview data and the map text. This approach provides insight into the somatically-laden indexicality of a text (e.g., the ways the body is referenced to) and, in turn, what particular maps tell us about bodies and experience.

Mapping the Unmappable: Mapping Bodies and Accounting for Gendered Practice

Mapping (and the process of map-making) along with spoken interviews through which the maps were elicited, serve as the primary sites of data collected in this project. As a conduit to deeper conversation about trans-spectrum in Washington, DC, I asked participants in this project to draw a map of DC from their perspectives, as, specifically, a ‘trans city.’ While at times this inquiry was met with confusion and a response of ‘there is no such thing,’ the majority of project participants ultimately produced maps reflecting their lived experiences. Their maps, and their stories about these maps, provided a conduit for understanding how networks of support and

‘safety’ function for trans-spectrum persons in DC. Additionally, these maps illuminated how space and place can be differentially utilized and experienced by various members of similar trans coalitions of practice. The relationships between theories of the body, such as biopolitics and phenomenology, and representations in the map are clearly evidenced in many of the maps collected in this fashion. Sam, a biracial female-to-male trans person in his mid-30’s who passes as white⁷ produced a map during our conversation that illuminates the complex relationships between his lived experience as embodied through biopolitical and phenomenological experience (Figure 1). Sam’s map does not follow traditional coding in maps, such as organizing around general landmarks or depicting space in geographically-accurate positions but instead reveals his own unique understanding DC, as informed by his bodily and affective movement through the city. He organizes the city according to where he is ‘clocked’ (Figure 2) as either female, male or as a neither. Sam’s map is also an example of how bodies experience and are impacted by socio-political ideologies. In particular, Sam’s map reflects how a biopolitical evaluation of embodied gender production can impact his felt, or phenomenological, experiences in space. Sam organizes his map along gradients of safety in terms of which his gender is regularly decoded. When he is read as male (indexed in his map with the male symbol ‘♂’) he is in what he views as a relatively safe space and when he is read as female (indexed with the female symbol ‘♀’) he sees this safety as compromised.

⁷Through out this dissertation when discussing a particular participant I typically include certain demographic elements, such as racial identity, gender identity, relative age and, on occasion, class status and identification. Unless otherwise noted the details and terminology included here were provided by the participant during the course of the interview. As context, these details were offered in response to my request that they (the participant) provide: ‘Any information you [the participant] think should be included with your map.’ In many cases participants limited this to racial identification, gender affiliation or identity and relative age. The inclusion of these demographics, along with the exclusion of others, is certainly striking and undoubtedly reflects assumptions about what a ‘researcher’ wants to or should know about them. The inclusion of this information along with associated maps or narratives should not act to provide a base for generalizing to populations nor should it be understood to infer information not otherwise included (e.g., sexual subjectivity, political affiliation, ability, and so forth).

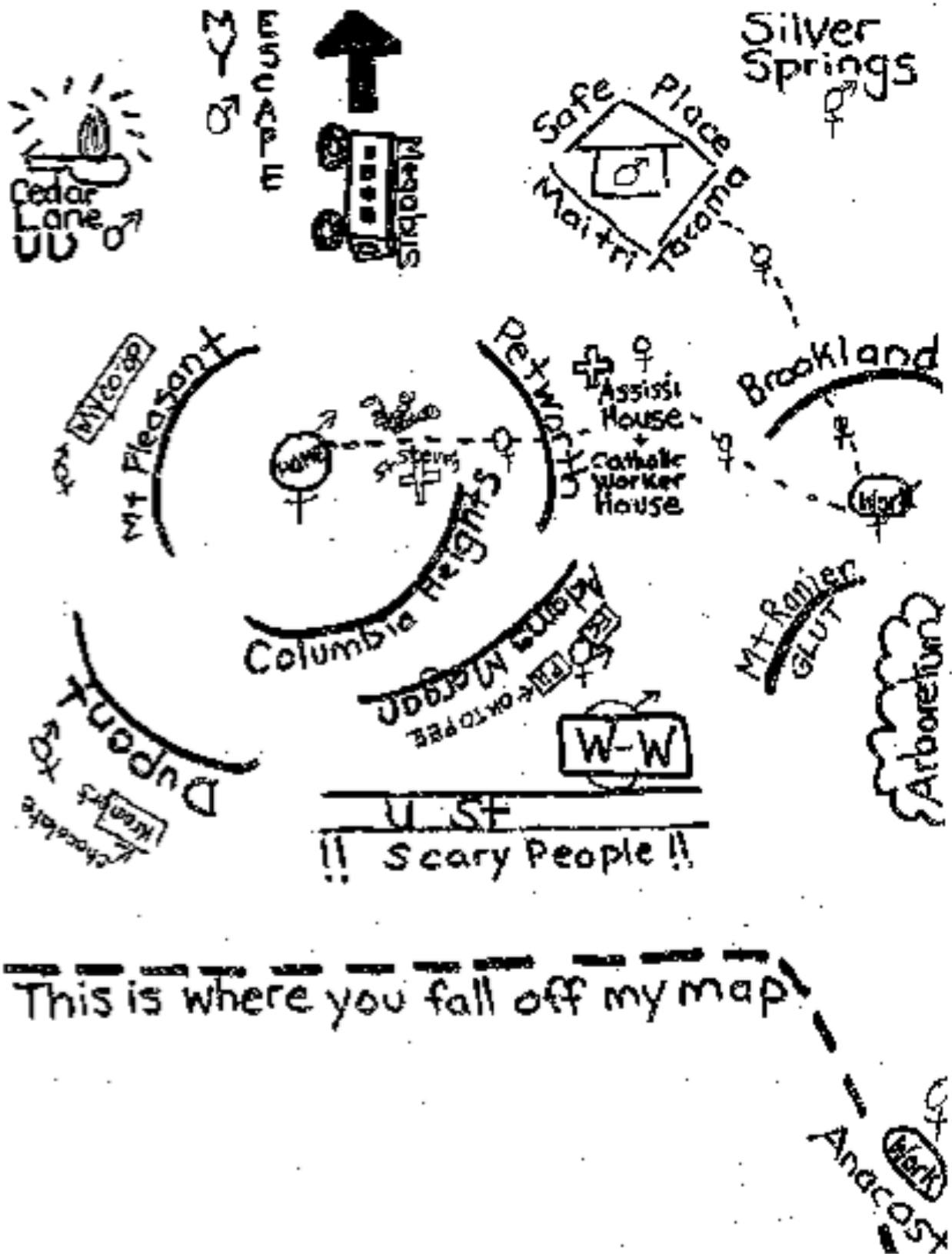


Figure 1. Front of Sam's Map

add to suggestions
 survey suggestions?

- parentage experience?
- spiritual support, sm.
- experiences of racism
- exclusion, other than trans
- oppression, community

MB 305
 New to DC (~6 months)
 biracial, pass as white
 living in intentional Christian
 community doing social justice
 I appear able-bodied
 Native English speaker
 documented

07, 07, 0 on map means
 where I get to be me
 (en route, clocked as 07
 07 when I get inside safe space)

FC = Festival
 Center
 PH = Potter's
 House

Figure 2. Back of Sam's Map

He uses a combined-gender symbol 'ø' to indicate when his gender is read variably or as gender transgressing. Importantly, the way his gender is decoded directly corresponds with how he experiences safety. The biopolitical evaluation of his gender (as either productively female, male or neither) impacts his felt and phenomenological experiences of space (as safe or unsafe).

In short, Sam's map provides information about particular spaces and places he goes to (such as a food co-op) but also about how he experiences his body in relationship to space; how he, as an embodied, gendered subject feels and responds to related socio-political evaluations of his gender performance.

The process of mapping in this project also encouraged participants to construct DC in personal and dynamic terms: as a modality of personal expression but also as a form of knowledge production and representation. Sam expresses these dynamics in his map through representations of his movement. In Sam's map, this movement may be both of his own (such as his 'escape' on the 'Megabus,' a bus company providing relatively cheap travel bus options across the eastern seaboard, Figure 2) or that of the viewer, who one is warned, "this is where you fall off my map." This warning highlights the explicit discontinuity between his own embodied experience and that of others, but also of embodied movement that transcends the map itself: this is where *you* fall and these are the places *his body* may or may not be decoded in alignment with his identified gender. In marking this spatial rupture, he is making inference to traditional depictions in maps (such as geographical markers and street names) but also how his map is inherently a statement of power, the ability to locate oneself and embodied difference. Sam's map functions to dually impart and limit the flow of information through intentional inclusions and exclusions.

To be certain, there is no singular 'trans space' that exists as a specific place that can clearly labeled or discretely located on a mainstream map. Rather many spaces that emerge in this project as important to one's trans subjectivity are commonly expressed as punctuated zones of safety and risk, where being known as a person with a trans history or present may pose a threat: affective, psychic or physical. With this in mind, I have combined mapping with

discourse analysis and embodiment theory to build a conjoined biopolitical and phenomenological approach, in terms of which this project explores trans-spectrum experiences in DC. I combine these approaches—each focusing on a different element of materiality—to attend to the complicated ways life is experienced. I explore here each theoretical and methodological tool—maps and map making, interviewing and critical discourses analysis— and then contextualize how I have utilized each throughout this dissertation.

What Maps Can Say About Bodies: Mapping Biopolitics, Necropolitics and Phenomenology

As exemplified in Sam's map, it is clear that both biopolitics and phenomenology are productive analytical tools when unpacking trans-spectrum experiences of DC. Where Sam feels comfortable going is in relationship to where his gender is not undergoing destabilization. Importantly, these two approaches in understanding embodied experience have not historically been situated as mutually-informing or even compatible as theoretical lenses. As such, I take the time here to consider what biopower and phenomenology, as materially-oriented, though ostensibly diametrically opposing modes of theorizing the body, tell us about embodied experience.

Separately, biopower and phenomenology construct the body as a site of ideological interpolation and regulation as well as a culturally contingent ground of action. Biopower, as a way of understanding the body as a site of colonizing sovereign and external powers, attends to complex ways the body is situated in political-economic milieu. In contrast, phenomenology attends specifically to the body as an experiential entity and the site of cultural production, rather than subjugation. Phenomenology is a deeply personal and individualistic science that concerns itself with the ways culture is felt and performed at the micro level. But, as some have argued, a

lens of biopower fails to attend to the individual and the personal thus rendering the feeling body numb or ‘dead,’ while phenomenological approaches may be too individualistic (Hughes and Paterson 1997:334).

In this dissertation I overcome the shortcomings of each approach through combining the socio-political framing of biopolitics and the subject-oriented expression of phenomenology in my analysis. Separately, each of these approaches falls short of theorizing the body as complexly oriented, as both sensual and political, and as micro-experienced and macro-regulated. Through combining these approaches I am able to render a flat, disjointed image of the human condition into a vibrant, multidimensional sphere. Indeed, at the heart of this project is the wrestling of conflicting yet complementary ways of understanding the body, all geared to “enhance the materiality and social-locatedness of conceptions of the Body, with an aim to teasing out the full political implications of a subjectivity” (Beasley and Bacchi 2005:350). With this in mind, I bring into conversation here these disparate modes of corporeal inquiry through a brief investigation of their theoretical underpinnings, both at in their philosophical contexts and from an anthropological perspective.

The Body as Object: Biopower, Biopolitics and Necropolitics

Approaches that utilize biopower as a lens for understanding the body vary but all agree that that, fundamentally, the body is produced, regulated and disciplined through sovereign powers. Biopower is a mode of understanding relations of power through means that transcend top-down, vertical models of control and submission. Instead, biopower highlights the ways human bodies come to be regarded, manipulated and regulated by sovereign powers in a quest to (re)produce ideological and capital productivity. Most simply biopower is “a constitutive form of power that takes as its object human life” (Foucault 1977:212). That is to say, the human

body, in a biopolitical sense, can be situated on par with work animals: merely bodies whose physical and intellectual power can be harnessed through proper discipline and regulation.

Biopower is dynamic. It is a process through which “individuals *become* subjects capable of self-knowledge and subjects knowable to others” (Hayden 2001:34, emphasis added). That is, the knowable body is *first* an object and then subject, rather than a subject then object.

Knowledge of who and what we, and our purposes in life, emerge from these macro-discourses of biopolitical worth.

Biopolitically, neoliberal modes of governance capitalize on the “capacity and potential of individuals and the population as living resources” (Ong 2006:6). That is, neoliberalism impacts how bodies are valued or devalued as ideologically of capitally productive. Similarly, a biopolitical approach to governance stresses the importance of the “concomitant deployment of political strategies aimed at improving...the participation of a plethora of political, economic, and social actors” (Elbe 2004:14) in the reproduction of ideologies of embodied value. That is, neoliberalism relies upon the continuation of biopolitical evaluations of worth for the reproduction of ideologies of difference.

Necropolitics, as an extension of biopolitics, considers the darker implications neoliberal evaluations of worth have on life and death. In contrast to biopolitics, necropolitics focuses on the implications of differentiation and devaluation on, what ultimately become, disposable bodies. These divisions, codified through race, gender, class and other categories of identification, set the stage for necropolitical, as well as biopolitical, interventions “trying to regulate these population dynamics, ranging from health insurance systems and old-age pension, through to rules governing public hygiene” to flourish (Elbe 2004:6). As opposed to biopolitics, which concerns itself with how bodies can be made productive, necropolitical technologies focus

on the productivity of *disposability*. Indeed, the relative strength of powers and technologies to regulate human bodies “resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die” (Mbembe 2003:11). Achille Mbembe, the theoretical innovator of necropolitics, describes it as “the condition for the acceptability of putting to death” (Mbembe 2003:17). That is, if one were to consider the pressure of limited resources on a given population alongside a biopolitically-suspect group, the suffering and mortality of the suspect ‘Others’ becomes an inevitable, if not ‘natural,’ consequence. Necropolitics reveals the dangers of biopolitical formations of difference; that is, the function and ramifications of sexism, racism, classism and other biologically-anchored discriminations. This particular disregard, or macabre utilization, of human life has been repeated in both western and non-western social and political formations of “subjugations of the body, health regulations, social Darwinism, eugenics, medico-legal theories on heredity, degeneration, and race” (Mbembe 2003:23). In short, the death, killing and traumatizing of others have been justified through yoking that violence to biological weakness.

Importantly, necropolitical expressions of power are deeply entangled in human management systems of the US nation-state. It is important to note that “the surface and interior of the individual body rather than its social characteristics, such as language, behavior, or clothing” are utilized in the production of difference and, specifically, race (Somerville 2000:23). Biopolitically, the production and utilization of ‘race,’ as well as embodied gender, as a distinguishing feature of a given population provides the foundation for recognizing, and denying, citizenship claims and ultimately access to the work force. In particular, popular and official perceptions of citizenship rights in the US continue to position “people of color as ‘immigrant,’ whether as aspirant minorities or dangerous threats to the liberal nation-state”

(Moore, Pandian and Kosek 2003:45, Braun 2003:198). Bodies of color may then be more readily rendered suspect (e.g., negligibly productive).

Moreover, those bodies that visibly differ from sanctioned forms, such as bodies read as gender transgressive, are, through necropolitical interventions, utilized to simultaneously demarcate the limits of valuable bodies from the invalid. These valuable bodies are elements of an imaginary anatomy, “a socially constructed body based upon what is considered ideal at a particular moment in history and what is considered its opposite” (Craddock 1997:27). Through the course of this dissertation, gender transgressing bodies, particularly trans feminine bodies of color, embodying devalued forms of race and gender, come to represent that which is, in Craddock’s formation, ‘opposite.’

The Body as Subject: Phenomenological Approaches

While volumes of literature have been produced theorizing the multiple philosophical questions raised through phenomenology, I focus here on the subject-oriented nature of this approach as a contrast to biopolitics. Phenomenology, most broadly, looks at the “existential beginnings, not of already constituted cultural products,” of the body and self (Csordas 1990:9). In other words, phenomenology situates the body as the site where the capacity for cultural expression begins rather than where culture lands; it is about the feeling, sensual body rather than the ways the outside world may attempt to appreciate that body. Phenomenology interrogates the ‘felt world’ in which “the carnal, the emotional, the cognitive and the cultural are indistinguishable” (Hughes and Paterson 1997:336). If one were to situate biopower as marking the body as an *object* that can be used to reproduce meaning, phenomenology would situate the body as the *subject* that anchors meaning. Most importantly, a phenomenological approach

views the body as “experienced in terms of the personal” wherein broader cultural narratives only help determine that meaning rather than engender it (Hughes and Paterson 1997:335).

Theorizing the body, as both political and personal, renders visible the symbiosis between knowledge production at the site of the subjective body and knowledge produced at the foot of the objectified body. This said, biopolitics, necropolitics and phenomenology, while all providing lenses through which to unpack human experience from the body forwards, rather than outward in, do not function to replace narratives of lived experience. The motivations, affects, and desire of personal experience cannot be easily accounted for through any particular modality of academic inquiry over another. I utilize these lens here as a way to contextualize the narratives of participants of this project, not to displace them.

Biopolitics and Phenomenology Combined: Gender as Example

My reason for working with maps in this dissertation is not to identify a finite space wherein trans-spectrum knowledge is produced; rather, I am primarily invested in how bodies are both experienced and regulated according to perceived bodily difference. In particular, I am concerned with how the physical human body engages, resists and explores technologies of citizenship, including those of capital and ideological productivity, from both a micro and macro perspective. The point of this approach is both “to acknowledge the necessary and ever-present links between bodies and citizenship” and explore how those links are somatically-anchored (Beasley and Bacchi 2005: 349).

In this dissertation I utilize biopolitics and phenomenology to unpack the complexity of corporeal experience and practice. While each approach traditionally locates the site of knowledge production in a different place I do not find this epistemological problem troubling in their application here. Instead, I am concerned with how living bodies that transverse the

crevasses of power experience those climbs. That is, I do not visualize the lived world as a web of power or, in contrast, a plane of existence. Rather, I highlight here the interconnectivity of these spheres. The intersubjective body can be both that which interacts with other somatic entities but can also represent the ways the subject and object rely upon each for that dialectic of meaning production. Indeed, I attend to lived experience and situate people as both “having and being bodies” (Lock 1993:136). I expound upon Dreyfus and Rabinow’s belief that:

If the lived body is more than the result of the disciplinary technologies that have been brought to bear upon it, it would perhaps provide a position from which to criticize these practices (1983:167)

Turning away from epiphenomenal accounts of life, I focus in this dissertation on corporeal experiences that, in my opinion, demand multi-dimensional analysis and discussion.

In particular, I explore how trans subjectivities are differentially regarded by the nation-state as productive ‘citizen-worker’ bodies. This evaluation is produced and experienced in relationship to the landscapes of Washington, DC. By ‘citizen-worker’ body I am referring to a body that is interpolated and maintained through technologies of the nation-state but that *also* experientially manages and responds to demands for capital and ideological productivity.

As gender is arguably the nexus of difference for trans subjectivities against cisgender populations, I find use in clarifying how biopolitics and phenomenology attend to its production and expression. Gender has been described as a set of relationships (Butler 1988:528), a form of embodiment (Guidotto 2007:48, Ziarek 2008:91) and even the site of denied citizenship (Grabham 2007:44). Biopolitically, gender is assigned, naturalized to the body and regulated. In response to Butler’s notion of gender as performance, Beasley and Bacchi remind the theorist of the materiality of that performance and that when “the materiality of the body (its substance, limits and particularity) is collapsed into culture, it becomes insignificant. Butler’s body is no body at all” (Beasley and Bacchi 2005:346). They remind Butler, among others, that while

unhinging the ideologies of gender practices from their biologically-charged social mores, there remains a fleshy instantiation of those ‘performances’ left behind.

There are corporeal implications of ideologies of gender naturalization. Within the larger western context, gender is assigned to the body based upon their genital configuration. This reduction of the body to genitals, to one particular site of imagined difference, is a model of what Grabham refers to as ‘hyper-embodiment,’ wherein only one portion of the body becomes the focal point of personhood. As such, the implications for gender transgression (e.g., any deviation from a gender-as-genital configuration) are an issue for both gender non-conforming and intersexed persons (Guidotto 2007:59). The maps collected in this project bridge this hyper-embodiment of gender transgression to corporeal experience through visual text.

Narrative and Text: Maps and Map Making

As I mention above, theorizing the body through a map also requires attention to the narratives about those maps. Through eliciting stories, and narratives, from individuals we learn something about not only the subject engaged in this production but also about the ideologies framing this experience. As Hill (2000:646), Hannabuss (2000:402), and Ward and Winstanley (2004:220), among many other social scientists, would agree, “the underlying premise of narrative inquiry is the belief that individuals make sense of their world most effectively by telling stories” (Bailey and Tilley 2002:575, and the articulation with gender and narrative, Ochs and Capps 2001; and Linde 2001:520). Moreover, I would agree with De Certeau that “every story is a travel story—a spatial practice” (1984:115) and within those space and place-based practices (however they may be defined) are yet more ‘stories’ about power, practice and somatic experience.

Additionally, all narratives and texts “can be unpacked to reveal the frequently implicit spatialities that they evoke” (Keith and Pile 1993:16). Narratives, even those disclosed in the absence of a discreet mapping context, include elements that are spatial in nature. Subjects do not move through space as disembodied creatures, but rather as corporeal beings that experience their surroundings in ways that are geographically anchored. This geography provides a critical, and often overlooked, centerpiece in lived experience.

Visualization: The Utility of Mapping

In this dissertation research, I utilized the geography featured in maps collected from participants as a platform upon which to begin each interview. While a product of a formal or semi-formal setting, these maps still confer meaning not only about space and place but also about experience, affect, the body and power. Maps always “reinscribe and resituate meanings, events and objects within broader movements and structures” (Harley 1989:9). And, in this project, these maps serve as visual forms of text as well. Rather than understanding maps as simply forms of direct representation, I consider here maps as texts that serve a multitude of projects and purposes, such as giving us visual, textual representation of lived experience (Cosgrove 1989) to reclaiming knowledge about space (Mogel and Bhagat 2008:1). That is, maps provide insight into personal experience but also represent broader discursive texts that draw upon socio-political discourses and physical experiences. In many ways, we can situate maps as serving as visual forms of knowledge and experience but also as depictions of embodied movement through space. This depiction then provides us with a dynamic dimension to an otherwise relatively static narrative about space and place.

Building upon Harley’s definition of a map to include the ‘reinscription and resituation’ of bodies in space, I want to stress the productivity of map production. Indeed, maps “actively

construct knowledge, they exercise power and they can be a powerful means of promoting social change” (Crampton and Krygier 2006:15). To this I would add that the ‘promotion’ of social change can take place in the (re)situating of maps and narratives as mutually constitutive of each other.

In this particular project, I asked trans-spectrum identifying persons to produce a map of DC as a ‘trans city.’ This provided the participant with an opportunity produce a visual image of a lived and embodied experience. These maps then serve as additional sources of ‘text’ to the narrative of the interview suited best to a critical analysis and situated reading alongside the interview. Indeed, “to read maps as texts highlights their social construction and their potential for multiple interpretations by both producers and consumers, and the landscapes that maps represent themselves, for some, written and read as texts” (Blunt and Rose 1994:10). Utilizing Blunt and Rose’s expansive definition of the composition of personal maps, I would additionally suggest that maps provide an insight into lived experience as any narrative might, but do so through the visual situating of physical and mental space in ways a normative speech-based interview may not. This platform provides a mode of expression that allows for those more visually inclined to articulate their experiences in ways otherwise inaccessible.

Power: Mapping and Space/Place

Space can now be recognized as an active constitutive component of hegemonic power: an element in the fragmentation, dislocation and weakening of class power (Harvey), both the medium and the message of domination and subordination (Massey)...it tells you where you are and it puts you there! (Keith and Pile 1993:37).

Space, place, where we go, and what we do when we get there, are articulated through and by power and ideology. When considering maps and map-making it is equally important to turn attention towards the language used to describe the spaces and places that emerge as features of importance during the process of map-making. Specifically, I consider here the

terminology historically used to describe elements within a map, either physical or mental: space and place.

While there are arguments with regard to how space and place should be discussed and defined, often ‘space’ has been situated as “a natural fact—a collection of properties that define essential reality of settings of action—and place as a social product, a set of understandings that come about only after spaces have been encountered by individuals and groups” (Dourish 2006:2). This definition would situate ‘space’ as outside or pre-human discursive interaction. To contextualize this kind of claim, let us consider an example of a hotel, or a ‘space’ wherein individuals may rent a room at a nightly fee. In this context, the individual would then construct the meaning of ‘place,’ such as where one goes to sleep for a night when visiting friends or where one goes to engage in the sex work trade. This kind of formulation is problematic as to situate a hotel, or any space, or *place* for that matter, as pre-discursive, or as potentially without human interaction, would be to ignore how something like a ‘hotel’ comes to be. Hotels, and any space, are afforded that meaning only because of human intervention into the lived world. Instead I would suggest we avoid a “myth of spatial immanence and a fallacy of spatial relativism” (Keith and Pile 1993:6) in the unpacking of space and place and rather pay attention to the nuances that exist between power structures emerging in discussions of either place, space or a hybrid of each. In this project, I am more inclined to situate space as “interpreted in multiple ways but only after its construction in the minds of those perceiving it” necessitating a situated and contextualized reading of space/place according to local and community based understandings (Blunt and Rose 1994:12). Moreover space “is “fragmented, multi-dimensional, contradictory and provisional... certain political projects construct spaces according to their strategic context and needs.” (Blunt and Rose 1994:7). That is, even if we were to situate space

and place as categorically different, spaces are constantly in flux and their meanings, however hegemonic or arbitrary, are as unstable in meaning as ‘place’ even in the absence of distinctions of public versus private (Leap 1989:12).

Avoiding this kind of logic, this project attends to space and place as similarly constructed: as real or imagined sites of social interaction. These ‘spatial forms’ that link individuals to “the social world, providing the basis of a stable identity” serve as a basis for understanding lived trans experience in a dynamic fashion (Zukin 1992:223). The theoretical differences afforded by alternative readings of space and place will not be lost here, however, as I do attend to the multiple meanings that space and place confer. That is, I attend to hegemonic notions of how space/place is or should be used (a potential alternative definition for place) along with other liminal uses of space. These liminal spaces run alongside, against, or deviate from hegemonic, dominant modes of space/place utilization (a potential alternative definition for space).

While I collapse meaning here in my choice to use space and place interchangeably, my analysis still includes differentiations of spatial evaluation as they are situated through hegemony and, alternatively, by the subject. For example, while a hotel has hegemonic uses that are actively understood to mean a place in which individuals may rent rooms at a nightly rate, that meaning is created in the mind of the subject doing the encoding and decoding. For some trans persons, particular hotels represent a kind of trans space in that it is a space that is rented for purposes of sex work in-calls and as a kind of ‘home base’ for otherwise homeless trans subjects.

‘Trans’ spaces, as evaluations of spaces according to personal experience or expression of gender transgression, represent potential spaces of liminality. To clarify, what I define as ‘trans space’ here encompasses those spaces and places those interviewed here identified as

pertinent to their identities, practices and experiences as members of different trans coalitions of practice. In many ways my project looks at how ‘liminal spaces’ as Keith and Pile would define, building upon Zukin, are “ambiguous and ambivalent, they slip between global markets and local place, between public use and private value, between work and home, between commerce and culture” (1993:7). A mall, a grocery store or a public park is no more purely trans space as they are spaces of purely public consumption. The places mapped and discussed in this project, such as a public park or a shopping mall, are not simply noted for their dominant hegemonic uses, but rather for elements of personal value (such as a public park as useful for cruising or a shopping mall as a space to meet other trans women). At times the transfiguration of space into trans space is through counter-hegemonic organizing, such as utilizing the space of the clinic to build a political action movement that may poorly evaluate the clinic itself.

Calling upon my earlier discussion of bodies, the ways trans bodies and trans embodiment, as variable and multiple as they are, play into the production and discussion of trans spaces is particularly important to this project. Throughout this research, participants have framed safety in their discussions of where they can and do go. This safety is often tied to the identification and decoding of their bodies as ‘trans’ bodies, or as bodies that read as out of gendered and physical place. To be clear, there exists no singular ‘trans body’ nor are there clear markers of gender transgression on individuals with trans histories or presents that would promote the decoding of their bodies or identities as specifically trans. Significantly, even for those subjects who do not feel they are at risk of being (mis)read as gender incongruent, many ‘trans’ spaces are framed according to the risk of being decoded as cisgendered or trans, of which, in turn, renders those spaces either ‘safe’ or ‘unsafe,’ respectively.

Mapping, Resistance and Power

While many traditional maps available in grocery stores and through internet searches can operate to reproduce mimetic depictions of hegemonic notions of space (such as a tourist map of Washington, DC might depict) maps of this sort (those that produce mirror images of geography) differ from those collected in this project. Here participants were not asked to merely produce a map of DC but rather to produce a map from their perspectives as persons with trans identities or subjectivities. This kind of ‘territorialized knowledge’ provides a degree of information that is lost in hegemonically-situated maps. Instead, the maps collected in this project emerge from lived experience. Trinh Minh-ha situates this kind of ‘territorialized knowledge’ as one that “secures for a speaker a position of mastery: I am in the midst of a knowing, acquiring, deploying world—I appropriate, own and demarcate my sovereign territory as I advance” (Minh-ha 1999:260). To claim space, however marginalized or ignored, as one’s own is a claim to territorialized and embodied knowledge about a space. Specifically, in the case of trans narratives in maps of safety, to mark a space as ‘safe’ for themselves as a body potentially decoded as trans indexes an embodied, phenomenological and territorialized knowledge of space.

Importantly, the process of map-making, and the maps themselves, elucidates the ways power and value articulate with space. While “cartographers manufacture power... it is power embedded in the map text” that remains of primary importance, thus allowing even those outside of the official cartographic role to produce a ‘valid’ map. (Harley 1989:21). The areas included in the maps collected in this project and as discussed during the follow up interviews, often serve to elucidate powers structures and the ways liminal spaces exist along gradients of marginalization. Spaces of marginalization, or of heavily contested meaning, “haunt the imagination of the master subject, and are both desired and feared for their difference” resulting

often in devaluation and, subsequently, hyperpolicing and gentrification (Blunt and Rose 1994:16, see also Madanipour 1996:187, and Peck and Tickell 2002:394-295). That is, the spaces of greatest marginalization are those that the ‘master subject,’ or hegemonic gazes of space or spatial representation, has deemed ‘bad.’ Throughout this project, spaces like this emerge, rendering clear how power, regardless of origin or extent, is at play in lived experience of space and place. Indeed, these “spaces need to be ‘mapped’ so they can be used by oppositional cultures and new social movements against the interests of capital as sites of resistance” (Keith and Pile 1993:3).

Mapping, The Body and Embodiment

In many ways, map-making serves as a way to make visible the felt experiences of negotiating the world as an embodied subject. Lefebvre discusses this dialectic between space and the body, noting that “the capacity of bodies that defy visual and behavioral expectation to disrupt the shared meaning of public space” reflects the multi-directionality of meaning-making (Brown and Knopp 2003:315, citing Lefebvre 1991). Bodies do not move through vacuums of space but rather are always-already engaged in discourses of power in even the most basic act of movement. In this project, I highlight how embodiment has a particularly meaningful relationship to mapping exercises. The subject’s experiences, as the product of a dialectic of space and body, provide a visual means to unpack where trans persons may go but also how they physically feel when they get there (e.g., biopolitical situating versus phenomenological experience).

Additionally, space, like the bodies moving through it, is dynamic. As described in this project, public space, such as a public park or a mall, may shift from in value and use through shifting associations with the bodies moving through that space. Within this project, several

trans Latina women remarked upon such experiences, listing particular public parks as ‘trans sites.’ Upon continued discussion it was revealed that the use of these particular spaces, by virtue of their past presence, represented an opportunity to engage in sex work; their bodies were decoded as objects of sexual desire and ultimately approached as such. Thus, not only does the utility of a public park shift in this discussion but also how particular public parks may afford better opportunity than others.

Maps, Queer Space/Place and Washington, DC

Historically, maps have served as a way to silence and erase devalued experience and associated notions of space (Smith 1999:118, Mogel and Bhagat 2008:2). Map-making, in the context of my dissertation research, reworks historical deployments of maps and allows persons typically disenfranchised from knowledge production through articulations of space articulation to (re)characterize that space; to depict the cityscapes meaningfully and from their own positionalities.

Rather than removed from considerations of maps and map-making, gender, and sexuality, are central elements in the project of their production. While it is true that “no two women live, in a daily and detailed way, in identical spaces created by identical ranges of the concept of Woman” (Blunt and Rose 1994:2) space mapped along lines of identity and experience reflects information about gender and sexuality. In this case, the mapping of various modalities and practices of trans experience reveals both difference and *similarities* in experience. As noted, the majority of those who participated in this project overwhelmingly discussed the geography of DC in terms of safety, regardless of whether the areas they drew overlap in each other’s maps.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, historically, ‘gay’ cultural geographies have been structured

around discussions of where ‘gay’ people *lived*, specifically gay ghettos (Jackson 1989:120), commercial locations (Ingram, Bouthillette and Retter 1997) as areas of political or social importance (Mason 2001:26, Retter 1997:327), as terrains of de-politicized ‘play’ (Leap 2009:205) or of areas of queer ambiguity (Provencher 2007:43). These maps, and the spaces that subjects mark as important or key to them, are as contextual as the lived experience itself.

Most broadly, Washington, DC, as the nation’s capital and popular tourist site, should be regarded as dynamic, as both produced and consumed by its inhabitants and visitors. Building on the concept that the city is dialectically linked to “very physical expressions of social relations, movements and ideologies,” (Hackworth 2007:79) I consider here how trans persons, as a coalition of persons living and working within the cityscapes, conceptualize Washington, DC as, specifically, a ‘trans city.’

Importantly, corporeal and emotive experience, the way we feel physically and emotionally, both in that moment and in the past, are called up in our understandings and perception of space. One’s experience of the city “is the product both of immediate sensation and of the memory of past experience, and it is used to interpret information and to guide action” (Lynch 1960:4). In a city wherein violence against trans persons is an on-going struggle, the related somatic or affective trauma often emerges within the map-making and narrative portions of this project.

Sexuality and gender are intimately linked to social exercises of power and to highly individuated experiences of desire which are interlinked and variable across time and space (Brown and Knopp 2003:313, citing Foucault 1980). Indeed, “from the closet to the body, to the city, to the nation and to the globe, new queer cultural geographies show us that a variety of subjectivities are performed, resisted, disciplined and oppressed not simply in but through space”

(Brown and Knopp 2003:322). Provencher notes this in his own readings of queer French maps, wherein “gay culture translates unequally both across national borders and among the various constituencies that coexist” within Paris (Provencher 2007:43). While the maps collected in this project are of a ‘trans DC,’ their discontinuities should not only be expected but closely attended to as representations of difference in trans lived experiences.

Evaluation of Maps

In this myriad of different ways of thinking about mapping, attention shifts onto processes, institutions, social groups, power, interactions between different elements in networks, emotions at play in mapping, the nature of mapping tasks and a concern with practice, instead of focusing on one aspect of how an individual processes combinations of visual symbols on a screen, mobile device or paper sheet (Perkins 2008:152)

Situating maps as forms of text, embedded in systems of power but also as representations of experience, demands a careful and close reading in order to fully understand their significance. Rather than see the map as a ‘mirror of the world’ I situate maps here as forms of power (Harley 2008:135, Rocheleau 2005:327-328) as well as texts that index somatic and affective experience. Perkins also reminds us that “a focus for cultural research into map use might shift towards participation and observation of real uses, as well as interviews, focus groups and read aloud protocols” in the process of map making and map evaluation (Perkins 2008:152). This project has taken special note of this suggestion. Many of the maps produced as a part of this project were done so in community roundtable settings, where trans subjects created their own maps and came together at the end of each roundtable to discuss core features of importance. This kind of community mapping represents a ‘democratized mapping’ which “offers new possibilities for articulating social, economic political or aesthetic claims” through shifting knowledge production from the individual to the community (Perkins 2008:154, see also Mogel and Bhagat 2008).

I evaluated the data emerging from these maps as situated forms of text and as extrapolated upon through community discussion. Following each roundtable (for those maps collected in a group setting) participants discussed their maps, highlighting similarities and differences, when they arose. Importantly, this process of discussion clarified areas of ambiguity (such as ‘Apartamento de luz Clarita’) featured in Naomi’s map in Figure 3, a site common to many of the maps produced by trans Latina women from the same community group. It was revealed through these maps, and associated group discussions, that Clarita is an important supportive figure to those present at the roundtable.

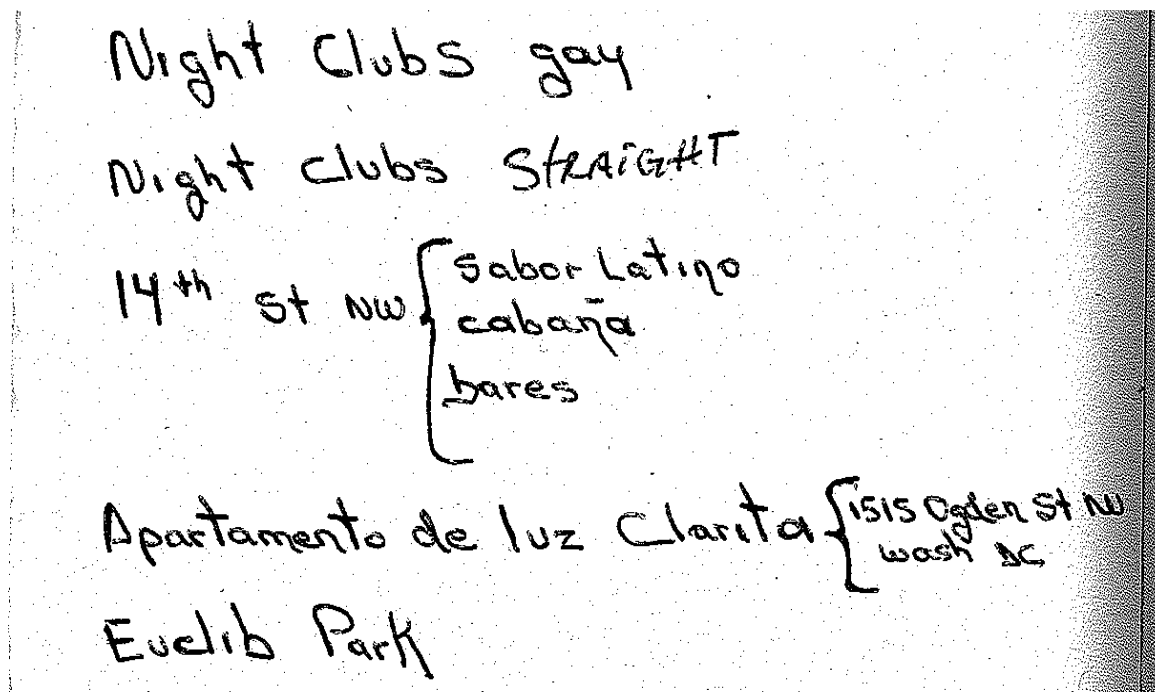


Figure 3. Naomi’s Map

Additional otherwise ambiguous sites, such as gay clubs, were highlighted in maps and discussed as where both danger and pleasure intermix into a complex web of ‘safety’ and the ‘unsafe.’ It is important to note that these kinds of complexities only emerged as part of a group conversation and group context and where the individual map became a part of a larger whole of trans-spectrum experiences.

Texts and Evaluation: Critical Discourse
Analysis and Indexicality

Texts, as forms of “actualized meaning potential” (Halliday 1994:24) in oral, written, and in map form, reveal a rich source of knowledge about not only social experience but also about systems of hegemony and structures of power. This project attends to texts in their multiple forms, as well as narratives, or “a report of a sequence of events that have entered into the biography of the speaker by a sequence of clauses that correspond to the order of the original events” (Labov 1997:396). Narratives are forms of texts that tell a story. These stories are often rich with meaning and information about not only the individual but broader discourses. My project attends to these multiple indexed sites and unpacks how, and why, they emerge in the ways that they do. Specifically, I include in my analysis how speaking subjects, simultaneously feeling and sensual subjects deploy language in ways embodiment may be indexed through language (Silverstein 2003:195) in addition to how language may also index space. That is, what one says has layers of meaning associated with it, some of which relate to the body.

I offer here a reading of language as both a ‘pointer’ towards lived and felt sensation, in some cases fear, in others safety and comfort, in the context of the trans maps collected in this project. Moreover, I offer that the reading of written text, such as the map, in conjunction with spoken text, further align and situate the body as feeling and felt object of linguistic value. To be clear, I utilize interviews in conjunction with maps produced as a data source to understanding embodied, sensual experience. Narratives of safety and risk further elucidate the ways in which these texts highlight and index the body and psychic self, as either threatened or supported.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Most essentially, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides us with an entry point and contextual anchor in unpacking what and how people say what they say. That is, discourse refers

to a larger structure of meanings, tangled together to make up what we understand to be real, and perhaps more importantly, valid (Bloomaert 2005:5). Language indexes and draws from these circulating discourses, or ideologies, in order to make meaning. Specifically, a ‘discourse’ “designates the broadly semiotic elements...of social life (language, but also visual semiosis, ‘body language’ etc)” (Fairclough 2001:2). Discourses are forms of knowledge that influence and articulate with how we make sense of our world both verbally, but also physically and somatically. Maps, the process of map-making and the narratives included in my interview data all draw upon discourses in their construction and narrative formation.

CDA is most broadly the interrogation of the “relations between discourse, power, dominance, social inequality and position of the discourse analyst in such social relationships.” (van Dijk 1993:249). CDA requires a very close reading of texts, and the situating of these texts within specific socio-political moments. CDA interrogates “the complex interrelations between discourse and society [of which] cannot be analysed adequately unless linguistic and sociological approaches are combined. (Weiss and Wodak 2003:7). My application of CDA includes the approach that “discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned... discourse is an instrument of power... and CDA aims to make it more visible and transparent” (Bloomaert 2005:25). This process of making visible and transparent involves contextualizing what one says, and how one says it, or in the case of maps, what one draws and how they discuss that drawing. One of the primary features of CDA “centres on exploring the socio-political aspects of contemporary social practices...[that] regards broad social domains as discursive phenomena” (Iedema and Carrol 2008:71). That is, CDA provides us with a tool to unpack and situate what one says, the texts and narratives, alongside the discourses that these narratives emerge from within; indeed discourse “acts as a banner for work that seeks to challenge taken-as-given

practices and associated understandings about, and perspectives on, the real” (Iedema and Carroll 2008:71).

I utilize CDA here within both interviews but also within maps produced by subjects. Through linking what is said, or what is drawn, to broader political and discursive socio-political statements or beliefs I can more accurately reflect and situate the experiences of those shared with me. For example, Sam’s inclusion of the Megabus, at face value, may have little to no meaning outside of a broader socio-economic context. Situating that inclusion within a knowledge base that the Megabus is a bus line that takes one, most commonly, to New York City, along other northern cities, for often less than five dollars, helps us understand Sam’s experience in a clearer fashion. Indeed, he is not taking the train (an expensive task within the northeastern corridor) nor is he flying or driving. While this does not necessarily situate him as living in poverty, or as living without a car, it makes clearer his choices to take cheaper public transit in order to leave the city, or in his words “escape,” a far more powerful way of qualifying his trip. To be certain, his word choice of ‘escape’ indexes his evaluation as DC as possibly negative, or at least at times overwhelmingly unbearable to the degree of requiring he assign a clear and calculated way out.

Further investigating Sam’s map and linking this text to broader discourses, during our discussion he mentioned safety and space but did not explicitly mention his own corporeality or body. That said, within the map itself, are inferences, indexes, to his own body (as decoded as ‘male’ or ‘female’) and the bodies around him (whether they be ‘scary’ or otherwise). The churches he lists offer affective and spiritual comfort, as do co-ops offering similar political positions to his own. Situating these written, and oral, narratives as situated within discourses that index the body provides a complex, and embodied reading, of his map. His body, decoded

as female or male, has a literal impact on the spaces he draws out as salient to him as trans space, given their potential for ‘clocking,’ or the reading of a body as kind of trans body.

Captured in this passage of our discussion, Sam clearly verbalizes this spatial element of embodied danger, as well as embodied escape, to which another participant agrees. He describes this escape through an ‘icon’ upon his map, understandable to the reader of the map as a point of interest or importance, and labels it ‘my escape.’

Sam: The largest icon that I made was for the Megabus with an arrow pointing north that’s labeled ‘my escape.’

Elijah: Wow! Escape route!

Greg: I also drew the way out of town.

Group: (laughter)

Breaking down his statement into smaller segments of self-contained meaning, which connote specific ideologies or discourses, allows for a closer and situated reading of his statement:

001 The largest icon
002 that I made
003 was for the Megabus
004 with an arrow pointing north
005 that’s labeled
006 ‘my escape’
Figure 3. Sam’s Escape

Through cutting up his statement into highlighted features of importance the reader is better able to unpack and situate his statement within broader discourses. Sam declares a clear understanding of the mapping project in front of him (noting his use of an ‘icon’ in 3:001, a common feature on maps of which serves as a source of important information for the reader). Moreover he identifies the avenue and vector of his ‘escape’ (3:006): the public transportation (3:003), ‘the Megabus’ and the ‘north’ (3:004), most commonly associated with more progressive socio-political agencies and communities than the relatively small District. For the reader, ‘Megabus’ and ‘north’ are most commonly associated with the New York City bound

buses, for which Megabus has gained its most popularity. Greg's uninvited affirmation of a way 'out' further situates the importance getting away from DC, and the punctuated areas of safety and danger, for places that go unnamed, yet are destinations in which one can literally remove oneself physically from the landscapes of DC. While Sam's statement most simplistically reads as a comment about getting away from DC, further unpacking and situating of his comment along with his map, wherein there are 'scary people' in certain parts of the city (Figure 3) and few areas wherein his body is decoded as accurately male, we have a far more nuanced representation of his lived experience, punctuated by affective, physical and somatic safety and fear.

As another example, I turn here to Dennis' discussion of his map and feelings about the map-making process. Dennis, a black 31-year-old trans man, framed his map in terms of safe and unsafe space, but only after first expressing hesitancy and frustration about the process (Figure 4).

Elijah: So, what did everyone think of that? [the process of mapping]

Dennis: It was really enlightening. It didn't feel good. It just...I wanted to put a big void in the center of it, y'know? Because I was like, yeah, 'where is DC trans space?'; where is that?

Figure 4. Dennis' Safe Space Framing

Considering this in conjunction with his map (Figure 5) we see clearly why his immediate reaction was to draw a void: the majority of his 'trans space' is where he is 'stealth,' or where his trans history or present is not known to those around him (Edelman 2009).

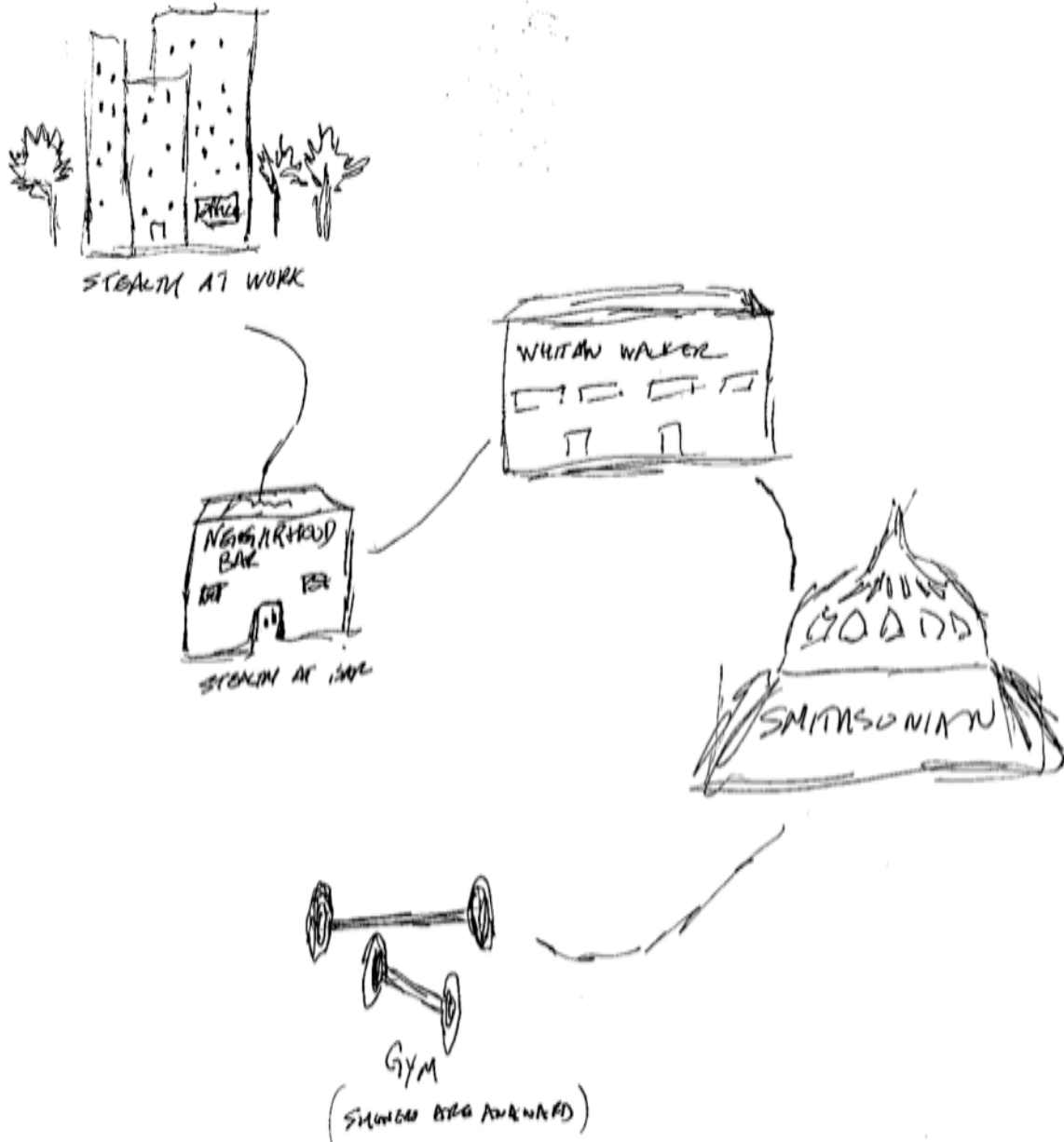


Figure 5. Dennis' Map

His comments about the places he lists reveal this 'void.' His work place, his neighborhood bar, and his gym are all places wherein he is not known to have a trans history or present, which others have coded as 'safe.' He further mentions that the showers at the gym are 'awkward,' wherein his naked form is revealed to those around him, further denoting the embodied element

his map takes on, and the ways in which trans bodies may attract unwanted attention. Only Whitman Walker, a mental and physical health clinic serving the LGBT and low income communities, which also houses the meeting where this roundtable discussion took place, and the Smithsonian, a series of museums free to public, are left unlabelled.

In the follow chapter I discuss the primary data sources for this project: maps produced by trans-spectrum identifying persons living in Washington, D.C. of the city as, specifically, a ‘trans city.’ As background for that discussion, I begin with a brief exploration of maps of Washington, DC as they are traditionally constructed by commercial companies and local residents. Often these maps are framed in alignment with tourist desires, typically focusing on the downtown portion of the city and generally only including heavily traveled roads and nation-state based points of interest. In contrast, the maps collected in this project depict DC urban spaces as personal and dynamic, rather than as fixed destinations. Moreover participants of this project don’t limit the focus of their maps to only one segment or area of DC, as mainstream maps often do. I explore here the most common features participants included in their maps, which I have grouped within ten primary themes. Finally, I consider how the commonality of certain themes over others reflects material differences between different trans coalitions of persons participating in this project.

CHAPTER 3

MAPPING WASHINGTON, DC: DRAWING A ‘TRANS DC’

In this chapter I discuss the primary data sources for this project: maps produced by trans-spectrum identifying persons living in Washington, D.C. of the city as, specifically, a ‘trans city.’ As background for that discussion, I begin with a brief exploration of maps of Washington, DC as they are usually constructed. Often these maps are framed in alignment with tourist desires, typically focusing on the downtown portion of the city and generally only including heavily traveled roads and nation-state based points of interest. In contrast, the maps collected in this project depict DC urban spaces as personal and dynamic, rather than as fixed destinations. Moreover participants of this project don’t limit the focus of their maps to only one segment or area of DC, as mainstream maps often do. I explore here the most common features participants included in their maps, which I have grouped within ten primary themes. Finally, I consider how the commonality of certain themes over others reflects material differences between different trans coalitions of persons participating in this project.

Celebrating the US Nation-State and the Annual High Heel Drag Race: Considering Mainstream and LGBT Maps of Washington, DC

Mainstream maps of Washington, DC are generally frame the city as a space for national interest and consumption. These maps are often limited in range spatially and depict only the ‘downtown’ portions of the city, typically including national monuments, government offices and other historical points of interest. As depicted in the well-known, global tourist information website, ‘The Lonely Planet,’ (<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/north-america/usa/washington->

dc⁸) the primary map available to interested visitors cuts away more than 90% of the city and repositions the White House close to the center of this imaginary version of DC (Figure 6).



Figure 6. The Lonely Planet's Version of Washington, DC

The memorials and points of interest included in this map (such as the White House, The Washington Monument, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and even the FBI) work to resignify Washington, DC as the capital city of the US nation-state, rather than as a city inhabited and understood through the experiences local citizens. The Lonely Planet's interactive map (one of the few websites directed towards tourists that features a dynamic map, available at <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/usa/washington-dc>), limits its legend categories to 'sights', 'shopping', 'restaurants' and 'entertainment.' Thus, map users are encouraged to either read DC

⁸ Permission to use granted from Lonely Planet's Copyright administrator January 16, 2012.

as a static memorialization of the US or as a dynamic platform for forms of consumption. This interactive map, while providing the user with the ability to zoom in and out and shift the gaze of the map, is initially oriented to a closely cropped portion of downtown DC, literally carving off east of the river Anacostia through visual displacement.

In these tourist and ‘official’ maps of Washington, DC, the only important part of the city appears to be this downtown area. The ‘official’ tourism website for Washington DC (<http://washington.org>) also directs viewers seeking a map of DC first to a map that focuses exclusively on the Capitol Hill and downtown areas of the city. The points of interest included in these maps include national monuments and other features of national concern, but do not make clear that few Washingtonians live or spend a great deal of the in these areas, outside of those employed by offices in this area. The near ubiquitous exclusion of other parts of the city, such as the areas east of the Anacostia river, encourage a reading of DC as simply where the president works and as an entirely consumable, nationalist-inspiring ‘fun’ place, ripe for tourist inquiry. Any sense of the rest of DC’s equally rich history, as a sleepy southern town transformed into the nation’s capital through the occupation of the federal government, is entirely erased.

Interestingly, the official DC tourism site also features a section dedicated to a ‘GLBT DC.’ This page explains why the potential LGBT tourist should come visit:

Washington, DC is a town - neither northern nor southern, sometimes urban, sometimes country and often soulful - where gays and lesbians, bisexuals and trans people actually live, work and play with our families and friends and co-workers. Just a 10 minute walk beyond the monumental corridor and government buildings will allow you to discover hometown Washington: a thriving, gay, lively and cultured capital city. From people watching in Dupont Circle and Georgetown to power watching on Capitol Hill; from the high-heeled drag race on 17th Street to the drag-queen brunches of Adams Morgan; from the crazy funky stores of U Street to the crazy happy hours at JR's, Washington, DC has unique windows and doorways for the GLBT visitor.
(<http://washington.org/visiting/experience-dc/pride-in-dc/glb-t-home>).

This guide to a 'gay' DC is woefully unclear. This passage contains an ambiguous reference to the city as 'often soulful' and is especially unclear where one should start or end in the '10 minute walk' to the 'gay, lively and cultured capital city' it refers to. It is safe to assume 'hometown' Washington does not exist in the far reaches of the remainder of Northwest DC, or at all in the Northeast, Southeast or Southwest quadrants of the city. Instead, the areas around 17th street (Northwest, of which left unmarked in this passage) and 18th street Northwest, are situated as the epicenter of the 'crazy' fun available to 'GLBT' tourists (who will assumingly feel 'at home' in the primarily white, and occasionally gay, affluence of the surrounding the Dupont circle, Logan circle and Adams Morgan neighborhoods). As with the Lonely Planet and Washington.org depictions of a mainstream DC, 'GLBT' space is framed in terms of modes of consumption, whether in the forms of alcohol at bars or within the 'funky stores' of the U-street corridor. Alternative forms of community engagement, political action and other ways 'GLBT' identity can be experienced or expressed are entirely excluded.

Other 'special interest' LGBT maps of DC often make use of the interactive, 'Google map' feature to allow consumers to interact dynamically with the map itself. The 'Fun Maps' depiction of DC makes use of this feature and maps out points of importance including bars, restaurants, and hotels along with a scant listing of four 'community resources' which list out national GLB political groups (available at <http://www.funmaps.com/index.cgi/nextState=DestinationDisplay/where:geographicalLocation=> 7). As highlighted in Leap 2009 (218-219) this depiction represents a traditional view of a LGBT citizenship, wherein the capacity to consume constitutes the 'good gay citizen' and thus focuses on areas wherein this kind of homonationalist project can be realized. Moreover, these

interactive maps are displayed in terms of pure functionality—a very traditional use of maps—wherein the importance of a map is to get between particular geographic points.

The ‘gay cities’ website (<http://washingtondc.gaycities.com/bars/>) engages in a similar homonationalist project and displays bars according to ‘type’ or gender and sexuality subcategory, as well as special interest, such as ‘leather.’ These categories refer to the particular specialty of the bar (whether it is themed) as well as to less ideologically productive categories (such as which bars feature ‘back rooms’ or are permissive of ‘nudity’).

Significantly, the places and spaces discussed in any of these maps rarely, if ever, appear on the maps included in this project, further highlighting the disconnectedness of mainstream maps of DC from local projects and interests. Moreover, in these ‘GLBT’ depictions of the city, trans-spectrum experiences or identities are absent and no subcategory exists for areas considered particularly accepting or supportive of ‘T’ experience. It is likely that this erasure is not representative of intentional exclusion by map creators but rather hints to a much larger invisibility of trans-spectrum identity or practice within LGB social and political organizing.

Noting the ways maps function as visual forms of text, this exclusion belies a deeper erasure and invisibility of trans lives not only from mainstream non-LGBT tourist maps of DC but also from within ‘LGBT’ living. Recalling the power of representation of the map, as well as the stories it tells us (Harley 1989:21, Keith and Pile 1993:3, Perkins 2008:152), gender transgression (visible or otherwise) appears to not exist in LGBT lives. Rather, gender transgression appears only in the contexts of drag performance, or as a form of consumption that, in many cases, has little to do with trans lived experiences. This kind of ‘swiss-cheese’ representation of general trans practices or experiences fails to represent meaningful spaces, such as those included in the maps produced in this project.

Washington, DC as a ‘Trans City’:
Mapping Lived Experience

Data Summary

Contrasted to these mainstream maps, the spatial depictions collected in this project via physical maps and verbal discussion focus primarily on spaces that are commonly organized around broader concerns of safety, risk and support. Among the maps collected in this project I identified ten common organizing themes for the types of space and places participants included⁹. In this section I explore these themes: Sex Work(er) Strolls; Bars, Clubs and Restaurants; Parks and Malls; Community Organizations; Friends’ Homes and Participant’s Homes; Depictions of Violence; Online Resources; Police, Jail or Courthouse; and Work. The number of maps visualizing these themes, as well as the overall percentage of inclusion across the maps, are depicted in Figures 7 and 8, respectively.

As indicated in these charts, the spatial element most common to these maps were depictions of areas I group together as ‘sex work/er strolls,’ which were featured in a little over half (51.8%) of all maps. I identify depictions of ‘strolls’ in this project to refer to the particular streets or areas of the city identified by participants, or by police, as streets or areas where sex workers may connect with potential clients. Importantly, this is *not* how the participants of this project defined these areas. Rather, these spaces, while generally acknowledged by participants to be areas of sex work, were defined as multi-layered, as spaces of work, where to meet up with

⁹ I began the process of identifying major themes by first going through each map while listening to the audio-recorded associated interview or roundtable, taking note of how participants described features included in the maps. I then went through each map again and created a list of included features in a data worksheet, tracking both the general type of feature (such as a ‘clinic’) along with specific information when available (such as ‘Whitman-Walker’). Following this process, I identified and grouped together features under themes that framed these characteristics with similar functional characteristics (such as clinics with community organizations offering direct services). Finally, I tabulated the rates of theme inclusion across the maps, which resulted in an overall percentage of inclusion of the theme. For each theme, I repeated the process so that I would have both overall percentages of inclusion as well as rates of inclusion for sub-themes (such as the number of times ‘Whitman-Walker’ was included among those who included Community Organizations in their maps).

or support friends, of police harassment and of organizational outreach. The second most common feature that participants included in their maps were health clinics, direct service organizations and other community organizations (‘Community Organizations’), which were featured in roughly a third of all maps (36.1%). 22.1% of participants included bars, clubs and restaurants in their maps and 15.7% included parks and other similar types of spaces for public recreation, such as malls. The home of a friend, or one’s own home, was featured in 11.1% and 9.3% of maps, respectively. All remaining themes, while still relatively common features, were included in less than 10% in participant’s maps. I include in the category of ‘other’ as referencing themes common to 3 or more maps (such as one’s gym or school) but not substantial enough a depiction to necessitate inclusion in the graph individually.

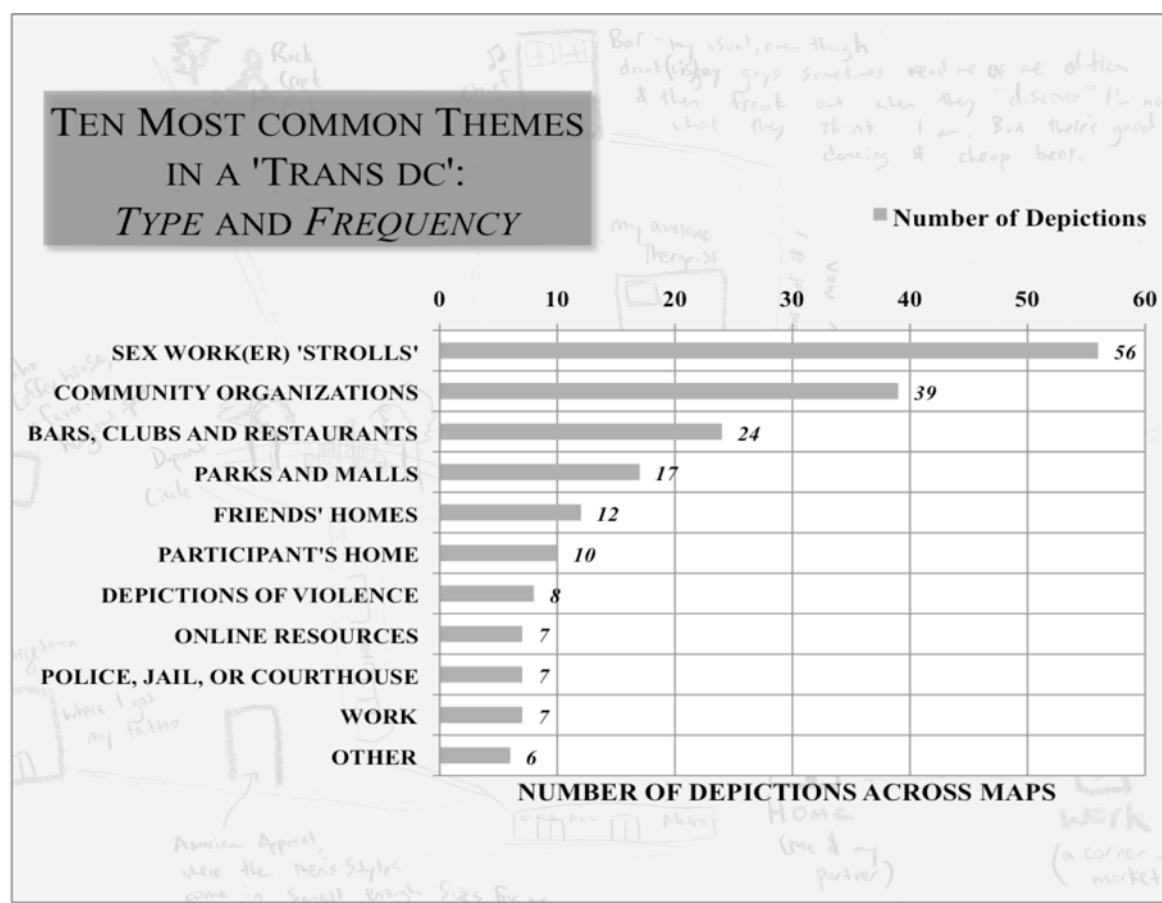


Figure 7. Ten Most Common Themes in a ‘Trans DC’: Type and Frequency

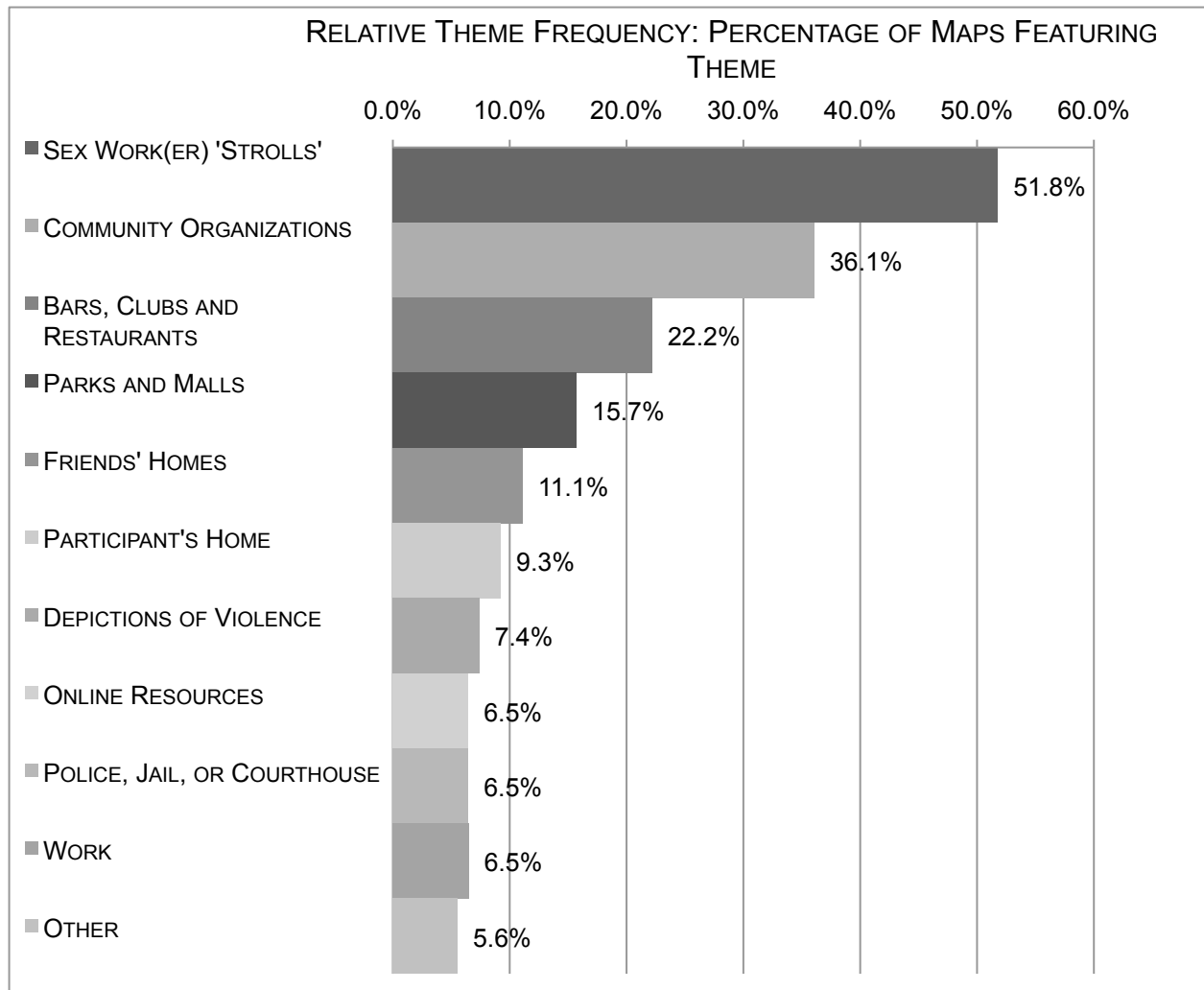


Figure 8. Relative Theme Frequency: Percentage of Maps Featuring Theme

While I do not find great utility in correlating demographics to features included in maps due to the relatively small sample size of participants, I do find one particularly salient trend worth noting. In particular, in this project, nearly all African-American or Black trans feminine identifying persons included in their maps areas known to be sex work/er strolls. Yet, based upon the narratives associated with each map, participants who included these areas are not necessarily engaged in sex work. Rather, these parts of the city were discussed as spaces where one can find or provide support to friends and other trans feminine persons of color, in addition to where sex workers may identify clients. Importantly, these areas, like space in general, are

multi-dimensional and are subject to hegemonic dictations of appropriate use. Specifically, these ‘strolls’ exemplify how racial and class liminality may articulate with space and, ultimately, criminalization, as with the case of the hyper-policed strolls.

Data Collection and Demographics

The data for this project were collected through both one-on-one interviews with persons identifying with trans-spectrum identity and practice as well as during ‘community’ roundtables. These roundtables—primarily held in the offices or spaces of trans-specific organizations, groups or meetings—were held as a component of a needs assessment project conducted by myself in conjunction with the DC Trans Coalition, a local trans activist and advocacy organization. While I began conducting one-on-one interviews for this project in August 2010, it was in March 2010 that I began collaboration with the DC Trans Coalition to utilize mapping and map-making as a data collection tool in a DC-based needs assessment of trans-spectrum identifying persons living and working in Washington, D.C.

Between March 2010 and November 2010, I, along with other DCTC members, conducted extensive outreach to the various trans coalition spaces in DC, soliciting participation from trans-spectrum identifying persons as well as donations from community groups and individuals to subsidize honorariums for participants. Outreach included distributing information about the assessment, along with a flyer in English and Spanish detailing the project, to over 200 local LGBT social, support and political groups in the DC area. Groups outreached to included a number of online DC trans-spectrum groups, clinics where trans-spectrum identifying persons may seek care, along with snowball-style distribution from interested participants to persons they knew. Moreover, we were successful in gaining media support

through articles in several local LGBT blogs, newsfeeds and print papers. Additionally, we secured roughly \$4,000 for the project from fundraisers, organizational and individual donations.

Between December 2010 and April 2011 we held a total of 6 ‘community’ roundtables, reaching a total of 108 trans-spectrum identifying persons living and working in Washington, DC. Five of these roundtables were held with trans-specific organizations or groups with a large number of trans-spectrum identifying clients/members: Latin@s en Accion, The DC Trans Coalition (DCTC), Transgender Health Empowerment (THE), Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive (HIPS), and the DC Area Transmasculine Society (DCATS). One of these roundtables was held at a DCTC volunteer’s house for other unaffiliated participants to meet. These roundtables were co-moderated by a member of the community group in question and by myself. Each roundtable lasted roughly 2-3 hours, were audio-recorded and participants received a \$25 gift card to either Giant or Safeway, the only grocery store chains available in all 4 quadrants of DC, as an honorarium for their time. The funding for this element of the needs assessment came entirely from individual donations and with institutional support from Whitman Walker, HIPS, THE, DCTC and DCATS.

The time during each roundtable was split up into three primary sections: map-making, discussion, and needs/survey questions. During each roundtable we had participants draw maps of DC from their perspective as a ‘trans city,’ or a place where they see themselves as ‘trans persons’ living and working in the city. The act of map production encouraged participants to consider how they fit in within the city, both physically and metaphorically, as trans-spectrum identifying persons. Following the map-making activity, we held a discussion about the maps and what participants included in their depictions. At the conclusion of each round table participants were asked to identify issues they felt were important to trans identifying

populations living in DC. Additionally, they were asked to sample questions they would want to see included in a formal survey-based needs assessment of trans-spectrum populations living in DC.

During the data collection process of this project a total of 108 trans¹⁰ and trans-spectrum identifying persons were reached. 18.5% (20) of participants disclosed they were male-identified, FTM or identified within a trans-masculine spectrum. 75.9% of participants (a total of 82) disclosed they were female-identified, MTF or within the trans feminine spectrum. 5.5 % (6) of participants did not disclose a particular gender identity or affiliation or identified as ‘genderqueer’ or in some way gender transgressive. 75% of participants (81) identified as people of color,¹¹ while 20.3% (22) identified as white. 4.6% (5) of participants did not disclose a particular racial identity or identified as both as person of color and white (in one instance). Among those that identified as persons of color, 41.9% (34) of participants identified as Chicana or Latina and 58.0% identified as African American or Black (47). The reported ages of participants ranged between 18 and 83, with a mean reporting age in the mid-30s.

Theme Discussion

As suggested by the high rate of sex work(er) strolls and community organizations expressed in Figure 3, many of those participating in this project discussed issues of safety and support in the context of what they included in their maps. Discussions about these themes often referred back to concerns about physical and emotional safety and support, joblessness/job security (and a lack of employment opportunities), accurate personal documentation (as either

¹⁰As noted in chapter 1, I use the term ‘trans’ or phrase ‘trans-spectrum’ as a way in which to index an assortment of practices and identities that include transsexual, transgender, ‘genderqueer’, ‘TG’, ‘Aggressive,’ ‘Butch’ and so forth. I use this term intentionally, utilizing the ubiquity of the term in social, political, and medical discourses for a broad coalition of persons, while recognizing that this term serves as a discursive place-holder rather than as a term of one-to-one representation.

¹¹I include in this category any identity that was not specifically ‘white.’

one who qualifies for ‘legal’ documentation and those that don’t), and a lack of secure access to medical/mental health resources. These concerns were articulated both verbally and within the maps. Recalling the utility and knowledge production made possible through a personal map-making (Pinder 1996:405, Perkins 2003:345, or in a ‘queer’ sense, Halberstam 2005) what is included, and even excluded, from these maps frames how trans-spectrum lives are lived.

‘Sex Work/er’ Strolls

As briefly discussed earlier, the spaces represented most among the maps collected in this project were area’s known to be sex work/er strolls. These areas were depicted in 51.8% of all maps collected in this project. Importantly, project participants did not discuss these areas of the city as simply where sex work takes place; rather, these were spaces where one could offer up support to friends, find new friends, or simply hang out.

J, a newcomer to DC and a younger trans person of color, reveals that she, in the relatively brief time she has been in DC, has, significantly, spent the majority of her time along streets known as the trans ‘strolls’ in the district (Figure 9). At first glance, her map appears to roughly depict the typical 4-quadrant sectioning of DC, cross-cut by numbered, lettered and named streets. 1st, 5th and 7th streets represent the only numbered streets and fairly high-traffic streets such as Georgia Avenue, Benning road, and North Capital Street, and lesser traffic roads such as Alabama Street and K street represent the named and lettered streets. But, with closer inspection, we see that her map does not follow along any traditional maps of DC. In her map we see that she places the Southeastern quadrant of DC in the upper left corner of the map, a ‘flip’ of the traditional map of DC, wherein the northwestern quadrant of DC sits in the upper left corner of the map. J is a resident of Southeastern DC and has produced a lay out of DC that would align with a visual perspective from someone living in this part of the city. Moreover, the

Similar to J, Alison's bare-bones map of DC (Figure 10) focuses entirely on sex work/er strolls.

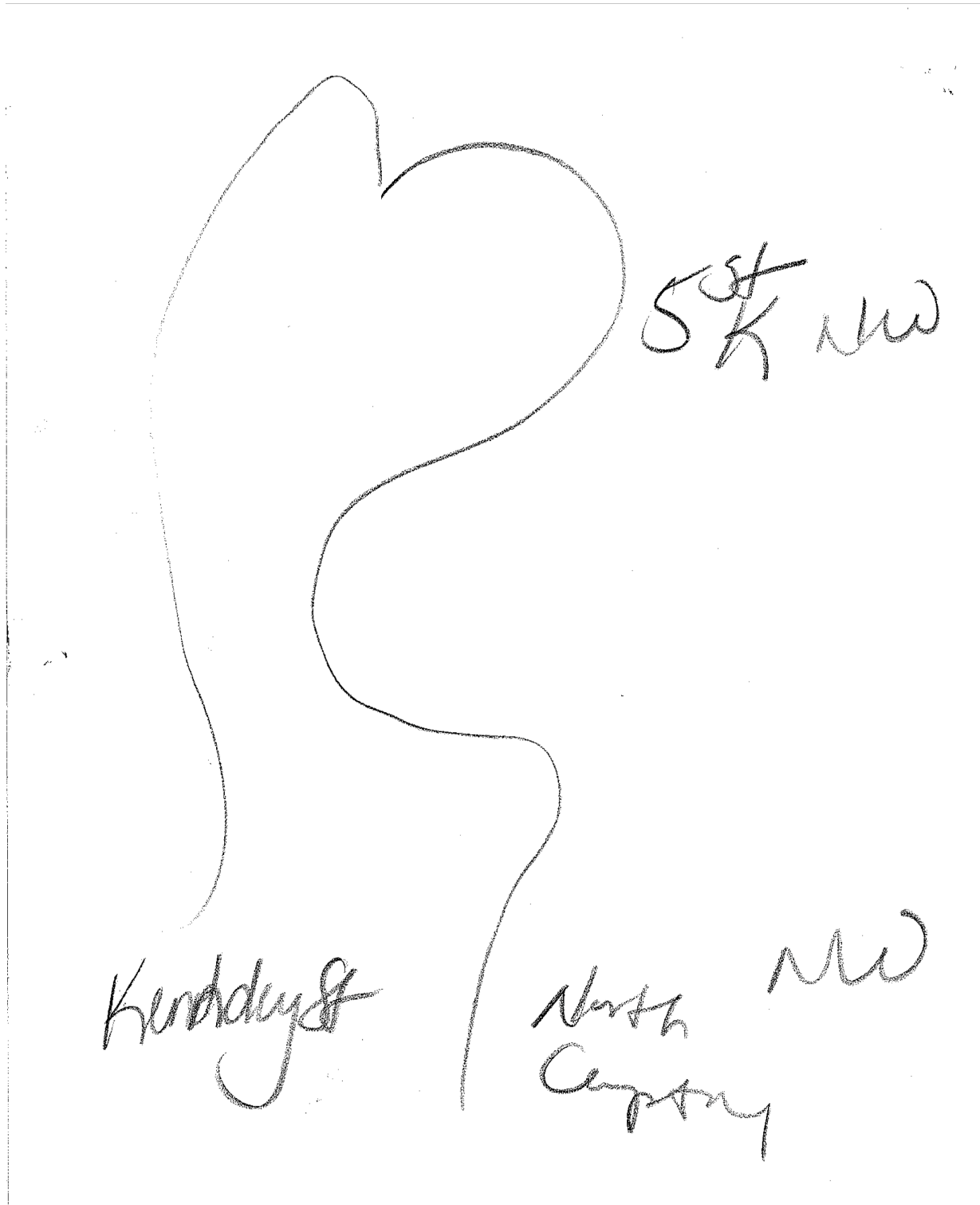


Figure 10. Alison's Map

Alison, a 26 year old black trans woman, depicts DC as one long road which connects all the important streets or intersections together. Her path across the city is dynamic—filled with twists and turns—and takes one to locations (such as 5th Street and K Street Northwest) known as areas frequented by sex workers or policed as such. But, like many other participants in this project, Alison does not discuss her map as where she works. Instead, she frames these locations as where she hangs out with friends and where she has met many of the women she knows in the room, and, most simply. While she made no mention of whether she has or does engage in sex work, her discussion about her map, and why she included what she included, provides insight into the complexity of spatial usage. Indeed, while at face value this map is nothing but a depiction of sex work hot spots, her description of her map reveals the dangers of assumption and, perhaps even more importantly, the overlapping of hyper-policed space with intra-community support networks.

Community Organizations, Clinics and Support Groups

Community organizations, clinics and support groups were also particularly salient features of the maps collected in this project. 36.1% of participants (39 maps) included either one or more of these representations in their maps. Significantly, while a little over half of all participants of project featured the very public places of streets and street corners in their maps as elements of their trans city, only slightly over a quarter included the relatively private spaces of community organizations, clinics or support groups. This gap in rates of inclusion serves to question the kind of conventional wisdom an LGBT tourist map employs, wherein private space is the most important space.

While community organizations (such as DCTC, a trans-specific rights group) function in ways that are distinct from a clinic (such as Whitman-Walker, which offers trans-

specific/sensitive mental and physical health care services), there is a blurring across these categories in the ways these spaces are discussed among the collected maps. For example, La Clínica del Pueblo, a health clinic that services Spanish-speaking communities in DC, functions primarily as a clinic, but it also offers support groups for Latina trans women. Similarly, while a group such as HIPS is a direct service organization offering support to sex workers, many trans-spectrum persons are also clients of support groups they offer.

Within this category, the Whitman Walker Clinic was featured the most making up 15% of all representations. Significantly, Whitman Walker is one of the few places in DC to accept most health insurance plans—including publically subsidized plans—offer trans health care, and provide spaces for support groups (such as DCATS) and community organizations (such as DCTC) to hold their meetings. The next most frequent depiction was of Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive (HIPS), an organization specializing in outreach and risk reduction for sex workers in DC (6% or 6 maps). The remaining groups were featured as a lower percentage, ranging from 6% to only 2%: La Clínica del Pueblo, a clinic in DC specializing in outreach and treatment of native Spanish speakers in DC (6%, or 6 maps), the DC Trans Coalition (DCTC) a trans community activist group (6%, or 6 maps), Transgender Health Empowerment (THE), a community organization dedicated to helping trans women of color out of sex work and drug abuse (5% or 5 maps), the Andromeda clinic, a clinic largely servicing the Latina/o population in DC (3%, or 3 maps), DC Area Transmasculine Society (DCATS), a support group for trans masculine, FTM and male-identifying trans people (3% or 3 maps) and the Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League (SMYAL), a community organization supporting LGBT youth (2%, or 2 maps).

Derek's map features many of the organizations participants included in this category (Figure 11). Derek, white trans man in his mid-twenties, segregates DC into three different levels of experience: 'Virtual', 'Formal Trans DC' and 'Informal Trans DC'.

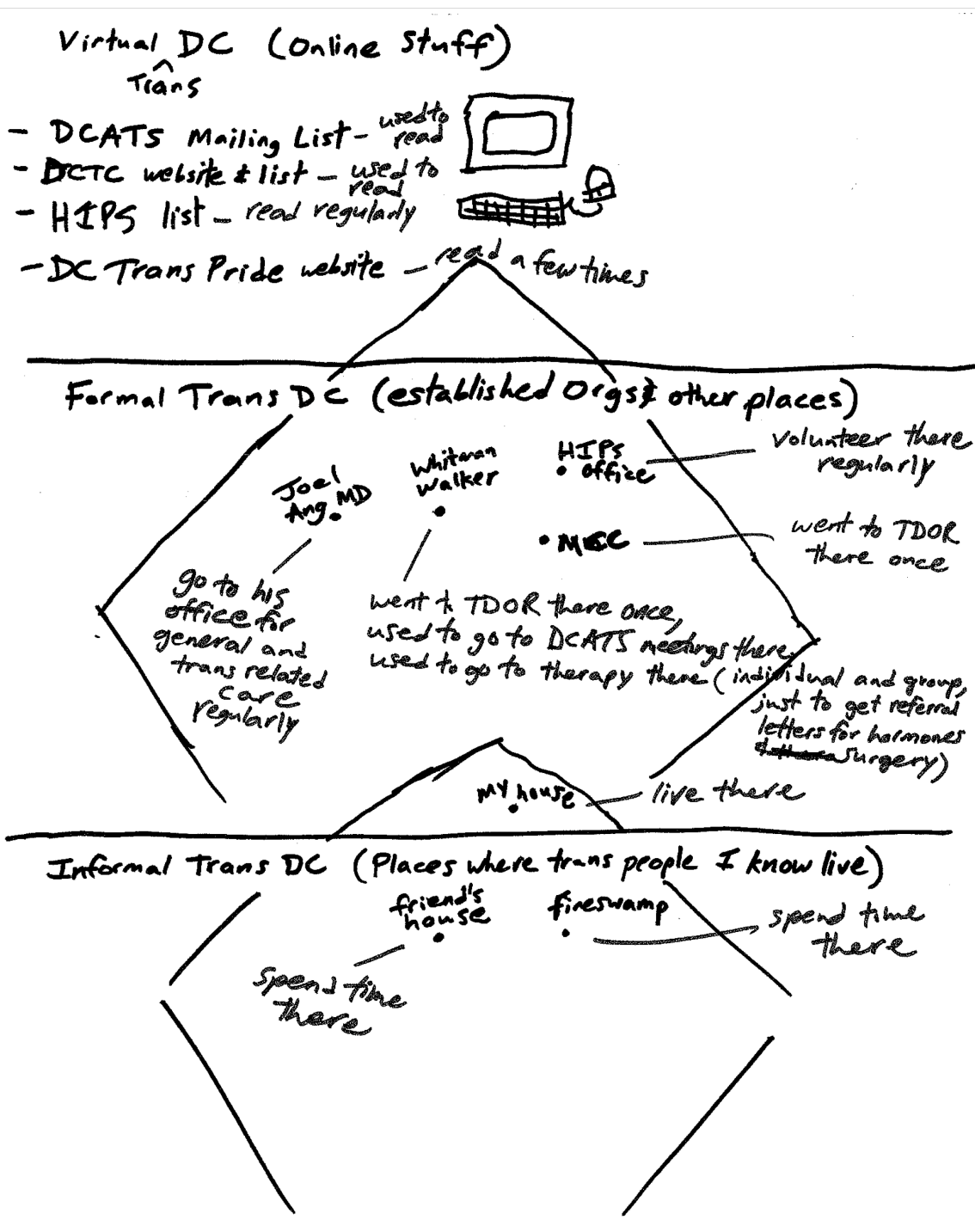


Figure 11. Derek's Map

Among the virtual elements he includes organizations that utilize email correspondence and websites as their primary vector of communication (such as DCATS and DCTC). His ‘Formal Trans DC’ includes ‘established orgs’ such as Whitman Walker, his personal doctor, HIPS (an organization which uses mobile outreach as their primary method of operation and of which also functions as a place of volunteer work) and a church where the Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) has been held. He qualifies this as the ‘formal’ elements of a trans city, while the informal elements include his friends’ homes and places where he knows trans persons live. Thus, in his map, a ‘formal’ trans city is largely governed by spaces that are accessible and applicable to many within a trans coalition of practice, while an ‘informal’ trans city is applicable only to him or those within his immediate circle of trans support networks.

In contrast, Joan, a trans woman in her early-twenties, does not differentiate between different levels of space in her depictions of community groups. Instead, she links together community organizations and clinics with friends’ houses and her home into one seamless web of interconnectivity of ‘Trans D.C. safest places.’ (Figure 12)

For Joan, community organizations exist within a larger network of support. Whitman Walker, where she gets hormones—“yay hormones!”—represents a ‘safe’ place but is located within a web of friends’ homes, her gym, and her school. Her map reflects the significance of a community organization in her ‘trans’ life as both an embedded element of importance but also as one that serves a particular function. That is, the safety provided by Whitman Walker may be through the vector of accessible health care while the safety offered by her gym may be through accessible facilities to work out in. In turn, these networks function as ways she can gain access to support and mobility but also where she, as a friend or activist, can function in a similar

manner. A friend's home, in this context, may serve to index broader structures rather than merely where a friend may reside.

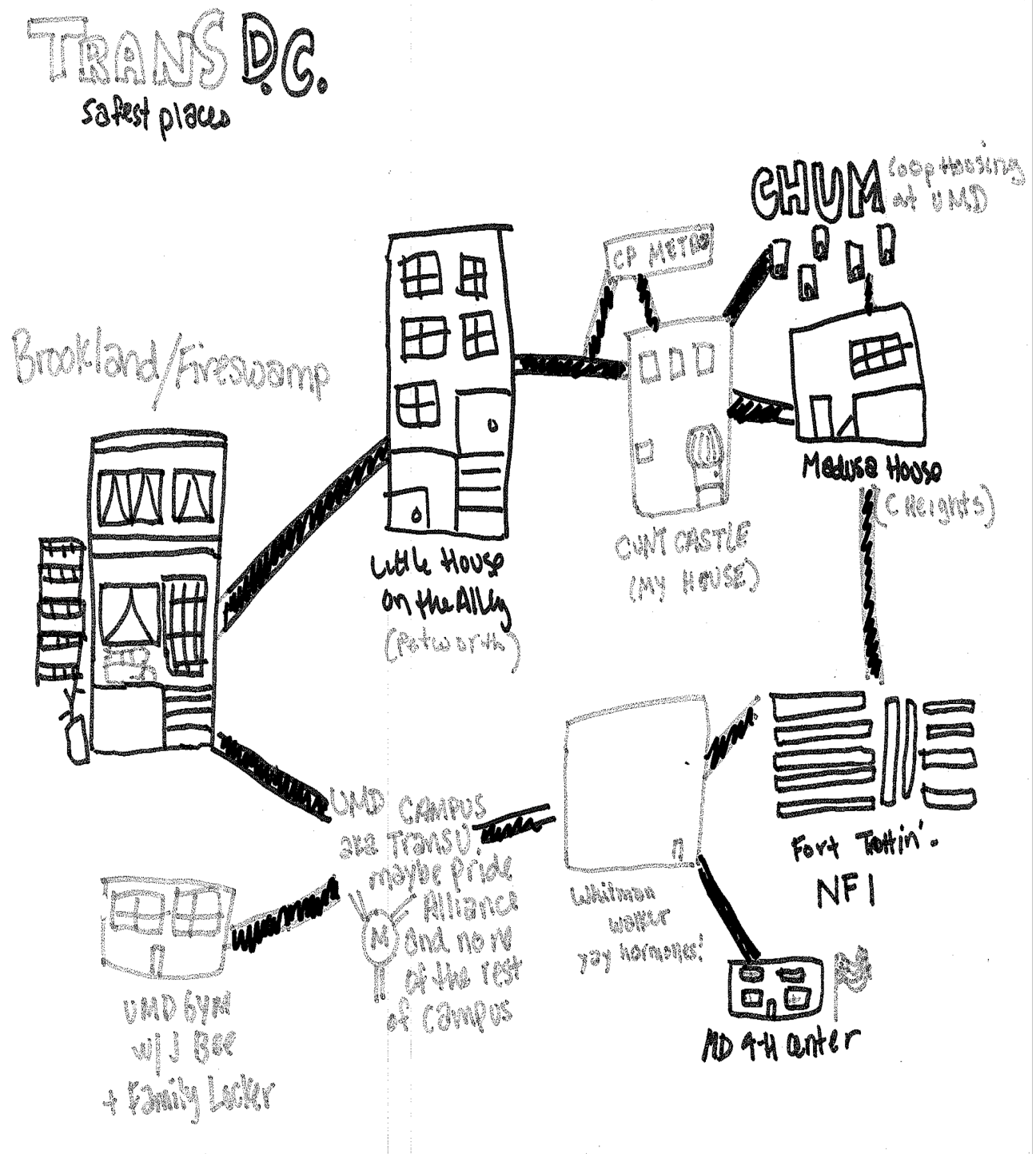


Figure 12. Joan's Map

The organizations included, as well as excluded, in the maps collected in this project reflect sizable disjunctures between LGB and T political and material practices within group affiliation. DC, like many major cities in the US, has a number of LGB organizations, support groups and other activist oriented projects. But, focusing only on the organizations and groups included in these maps, trans-spectrum identifying persons appear to identify primarily with groups that have services catering to trans subjects or affiliate themselves with organizations with similar political or religious practices (such as a food co-op or church group). Just as the ‘T’ was invisible from ‘GLB’ mainstream tourist maps, sexual subjectivities do not emerge as central organizing concerns in which groups participants affiliate themselves with. In a socio-political climate where many LGB groups are clamoring to reach out to and support trans specific issues, their absence from these maps suggests their outreach, and possibly even programming, still fail to adequately appeal to or meet the needs of participants of this project.

Bars, Clubs and Restaurants

Bars, clubs and restaurants, LGB and otherwise, were featured in 22% of participants (24 maps) maps. Unlike the imaginary, all-inclusive, color and gender-blind LGBT community the tourist maps of DC would create, the maps collected in this project reflect complex identities that simply not reducible to sexual or gendered subjectivities. This is particularly evident in many of the bars and restaurants featured among the trans Latina participants of this project yet excluded by other participants. Often the clubs and bars included were either neighborhood bars or coffee houses but also, more commonly, were spaces that regularly hold special events that cater to LGBT Latina/o communities (such as Fuego or Apex). Coco Cabana, a Latina/o bar not linked to LGB bar culture, was also featured numerous times across trans Latina maps and was described simply as where they, as trans Latina women, can go.

Interestingly, while many participants described bars and clubs as spaces of fun, other participants qualified this 'fun' as requiring a careful negotiation between safety and pleasure. As highlighted in Drake's map (Figure 13) his favorite bar is both a site of fun but also danger; the harassment he faces based upon assumed embodiment and performance co-exists with the 'fun' (affordable drinks and dancing) he experiences in this space.

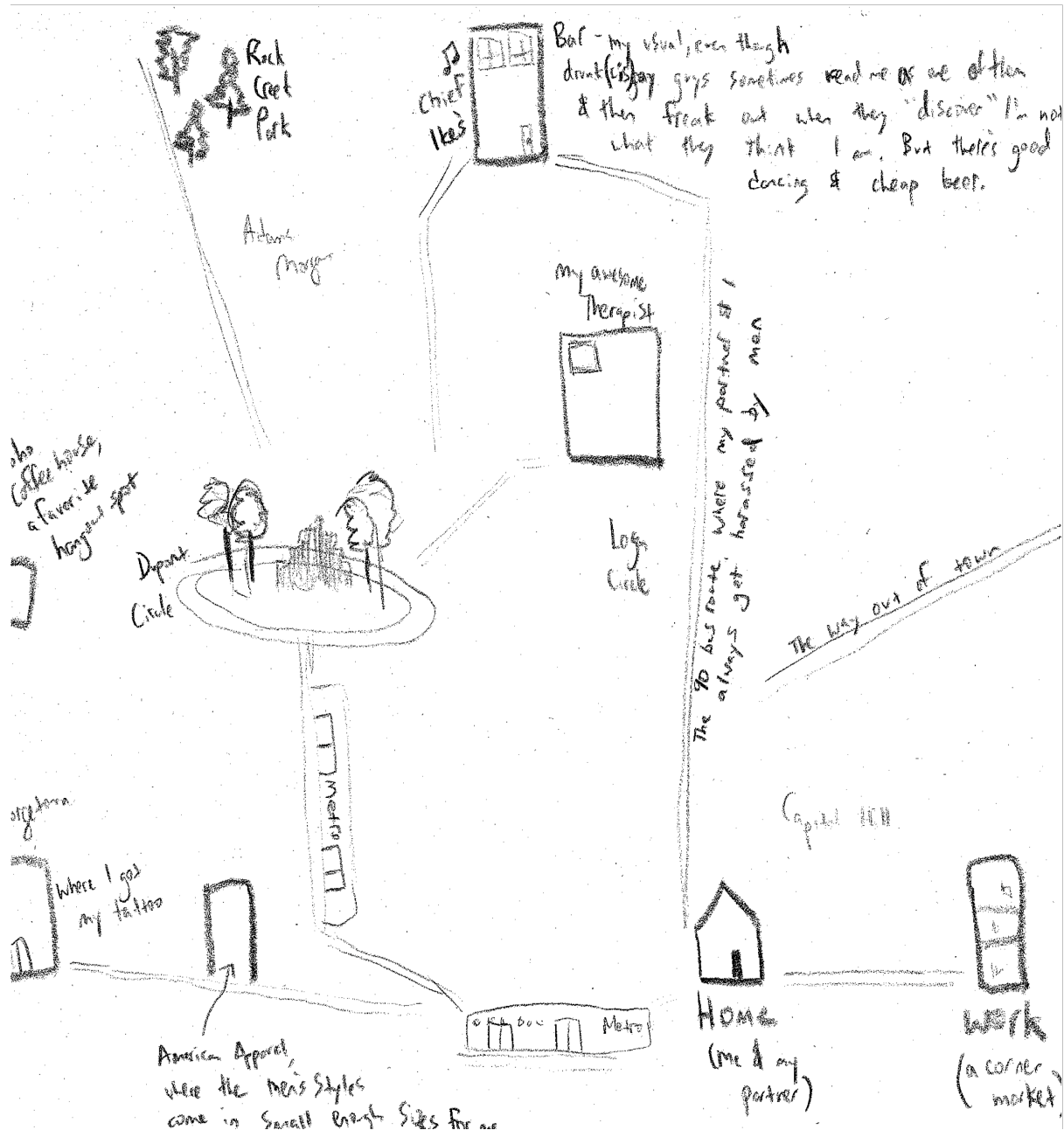


Figure 13. Drake's Map

Drake, a 23 year old FTM, has lived in DC for 2 years features four themes common to the majority of the trans maps in his map: fun, risk/danger, unsafe and safe space. Bars featured on his map display an intermix of danger and fun. He explains in the captions within his map that a bar he commonly frequents is his ‘usual’ “even though drunk (cis)gay guys sometimes read me as one of them & then freak out when they ‘discover’ I’m not what they think I am. But there’s good dancing & cheap beer” (Figure 14). That is, while the danger of gay cisgender men ‘freaking out’ about his trans history or present is very real, it is balanced by the fun offered by ‘good dancing’ and affordable beer, a rare find in the majority of DC bars. Attending to this statement more closely what composes safe versus unsafe space is rendered clearer:

001 drunk cis(gay) guys
 002 sometimes read me
 003 as one of them
 004 and then freak out
 005 when they ‘discover’
 006 I’m not what they think I am

Figure 14. Drake’s Bars

In this statement, space is rendered dangerous and unsafe when Drake’s sexual subjectivity and gendered embodiment are destabilized. Cisgender gay men are the source of danger in this situation (14:001) posed by the danger of their ‘discovery’ (14:005), to Drake’s trans history or present, representing a key turning point in which the safe becomes unsafe. The ‘unsafe’ in this situation is both the potential for danger from cis men’s reactions to him, as well as the context of that ‘discovery.’

Ana, a trans Latina woman in her mid-thirties, also includes bars, clubs and restaurants on her list of places where trans people go or can be found¹² (Figure 15).

¹² All maps and data included in this chapter from Latina/o trans people were collected over the course of several roundtables with the majority of trans Latina/o participants at one particular roundtable, held for the members of the trans Latina/o support and activist group Latin@s En Accion. During this roundtable, conducting almost entirely in spoken Spanish, many of these participants vocalized feeling frustrated creating a spatial map due to a lack of knowledge regarding geo-spatial elements of DC. As a result, my co-moderator, a leader within this

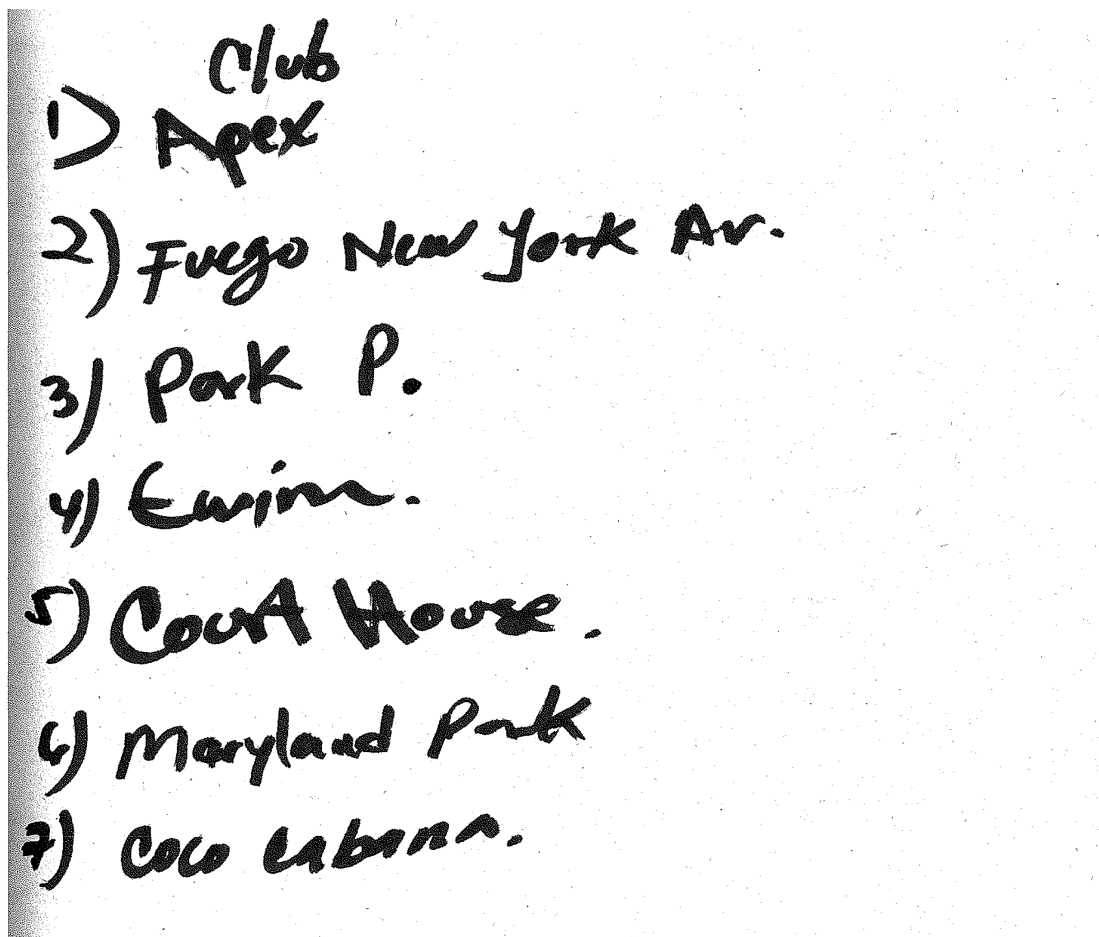


Figure 15. Ana's Map

Ana, like many of the trans Latina women participating in this project, listed restaurants and bars catering to the Latina/o community, such as Coco Cabana and Fuego, a Latina/o night held at a gay club in DC. As compared to many of the maps collected from most trans men and non-latina trans women, Latina trans women largely listed restaurants as hang out places, as well as both straight and gay bars catering to the Latina/o community.

Andrea notes in her map (Figure 16) that these spaces are not necessarily statically accessible or supportive. She indicates that one can find 'them' (other trans Latina women) in the restaurants *Sabor latino*, *Molienda*, *Salvadoreno*, and *Tropico*, but not all the time. She marks

group, recommended participants draw whatever was easiest for them, which resulted in many turning to creating lists as their 'map,' of which I include as an element of their mapping process here.

this temporality of space with ‘*Sabados y Viernes en la Noche*’ (Saturday and Friday night evenings) following these references. This focus on Latina/o space, which also functioned in this context as a space for trans persons, highlights the complex subjectivities of trans-spectrum persons and of the spaces that they inhabit. That is, participants of this project are not simply ‘trans.’

Significantly, in addition to bars and clubs, Ana also includes the court house, which refers here not to a bar or restaurant that goes by this name, but rather to *the* court house that processes those charged with a crime. Many members present during the Latin@s En Accion meeting expressed concerns about not only the criminalization of sex work but of the legal precariousness of immigration and documentation statuses.

Parks and Malls

16% (17 maps) participants included representations of parks and malls in their maps. Significantly, parks and malls were included primarily in the maps produced by trans women of color. While many trans Latina women included places such as their friends’ homes, many of these participants featured parks and malls as places where trans Latina women go or can be found. Importantly, malls are also public spaces where one can congregate without fear of police intervention, an issue one may face with parks during certain hours and on the open streets of DC.

Andrea, a trans Latina women in her mid-30’s, lists primarily restaurants and parks as places where she exclaims ‘we can find them!!,’ or, in this case, trans Latina women (Figure 16). These spaces, then, function to illustrate where she, along with other trans Latina women may go as a part of their ‘trans dc.’ Moreover, she locates each space temporarily, thus identifying when these spaces are frequented by trans persons.

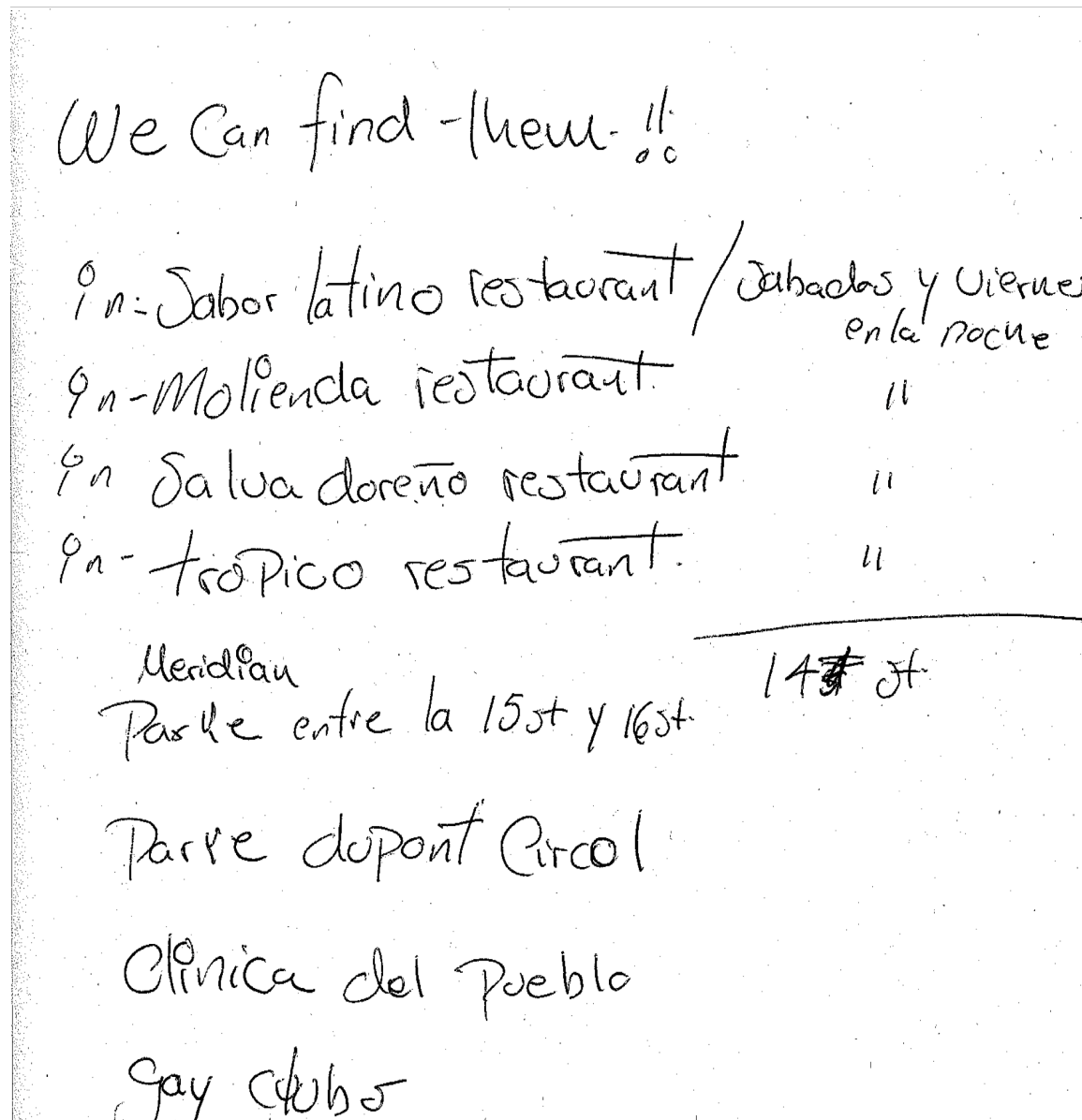


Figure 16. Andrea's Map

Andrea focuses her map on parks and other public places. She lists out Meridian Park ('Meridian Parke entre la 15th y 16th st') and the park within the circle at Dupont ('Parke dupont Circol') as spaces where trans Latina women can be found. Unlike the Latin American-themed restaurants she lists, these parks are not primarily utilized or targeted to any given population.

Just as malls serve as a public meeting place that is free from direct police intervention, parks, during daytime hours, are spaces where one may congregate without fear of immediate

police regulation. Moreover, parks serve an additional purpose of providing a space where one can locate potential sex work clients (similar to the trans strolls along certain streets in DC). This dual purpose of park use was further highlighted during the Latin@s En Accion roundtable wherein “Pigeon Park” was mentioned multiple times as a park of relative importance. While no park in DC is officially named ‘Pigeon Park,’ it was revealed to me with further explanation that this was the slang term used for a particular park bordering the historically-Latina/o neighborhoods of Columbia Heights and Mt Pleasant, known as a hot spot for hook ups for clients. The use of ‘Pigeon,’ in this context, does not refer to the bird found in many DC parks, but rather borrows from the slang use in many Latin American countries, wherein ‘pigeon’ refers to ‘penis.’

Public parks are not featured in the same degree in maps produced by non-Latina trans participants. I don’t believe this absence functions to suggest that only trans Latina women go to parks or that the other participants of this project don’t also appreciate parks. Rather, I would argue that the kind of support and functionality parks offer to those that included them are spatial cognates to other spaces participants did include in their maps. For example, sex work/er strolls functioned in a similar supportive capacity for those that included them. Moreover, as I explore in the next section the ways participants explain their inclusions of the home of a friend in their maps also suggests these function in similarly supportive ways. The specificity of where one captures this support is worth noting; there is a material difference between locating support in a private home versus a public park or along a hyper-policed stroll. As I explore in greater detail in following sections, this differential appears to follow along class, racial and gender identities; few white and trans masculine identifying participants included strolls or parks as where they locate support.

Home and Where Friends Live

10% of all participants included their homes on their maps (11 maps), 7% included the locations of friend's homes (7 maps) and 6% included both their homes their friends' homes on their maps (7 maps). M, a white genderqueer-identifying person, largely frames their map in terms of where they can find their friends, including the locations of their homes, as well as places they go with their friends, such as the gym, or to garden (Figure 17).

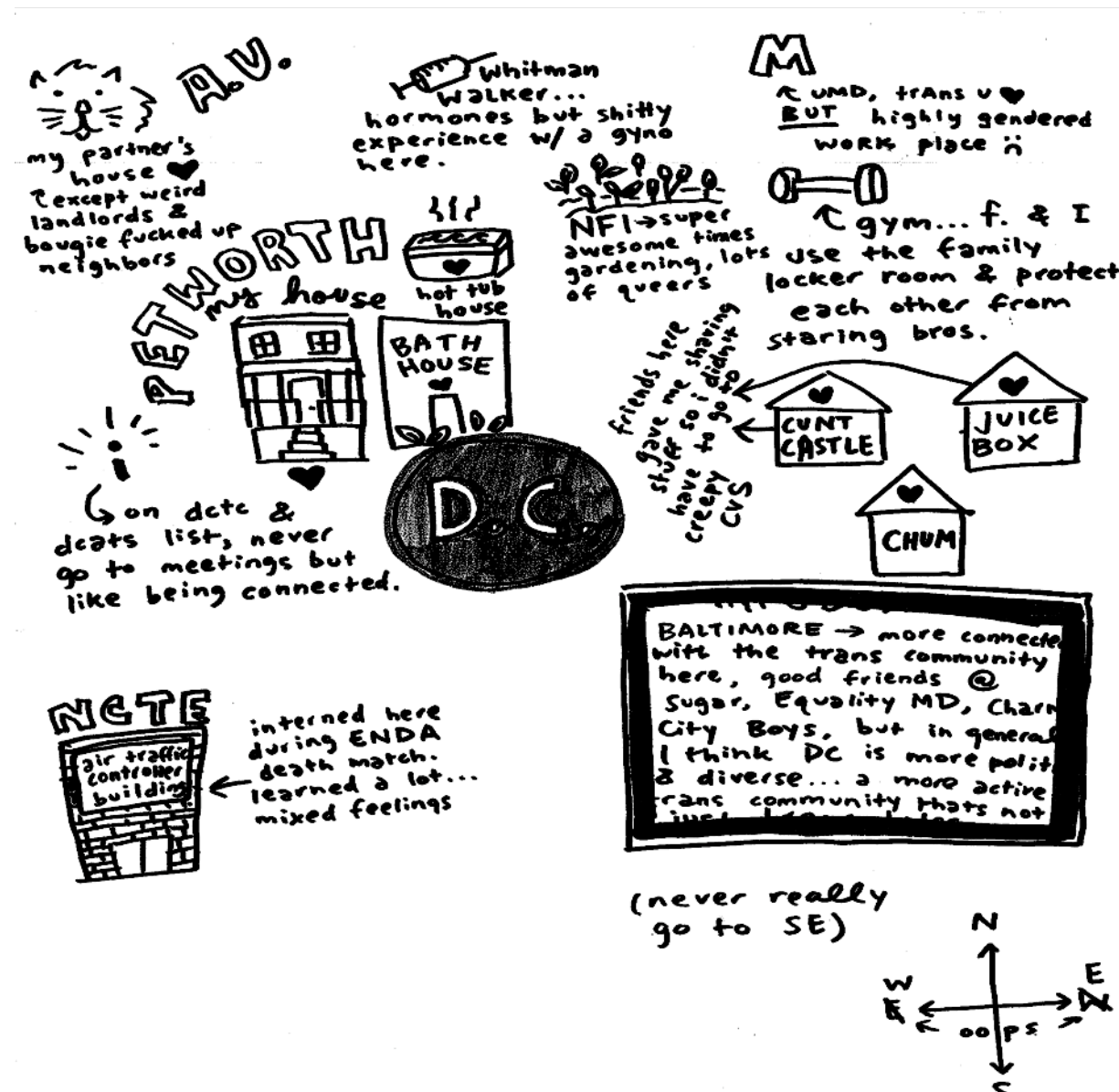


Figure 17. M's Map

Unlike Derek, but like Joan, M does not distinguish these home spaces and community spaces as either 'formal' or 'informal;' instead, they frame their map in a way that is largely organized in terms of where one can see and spend time with their friends, whether in public or private settings.

In contrast to many of those who include their home in their maps, Trey, a white trans man in his 30's, explicitly defines his home as 'boring' (Figure 18).

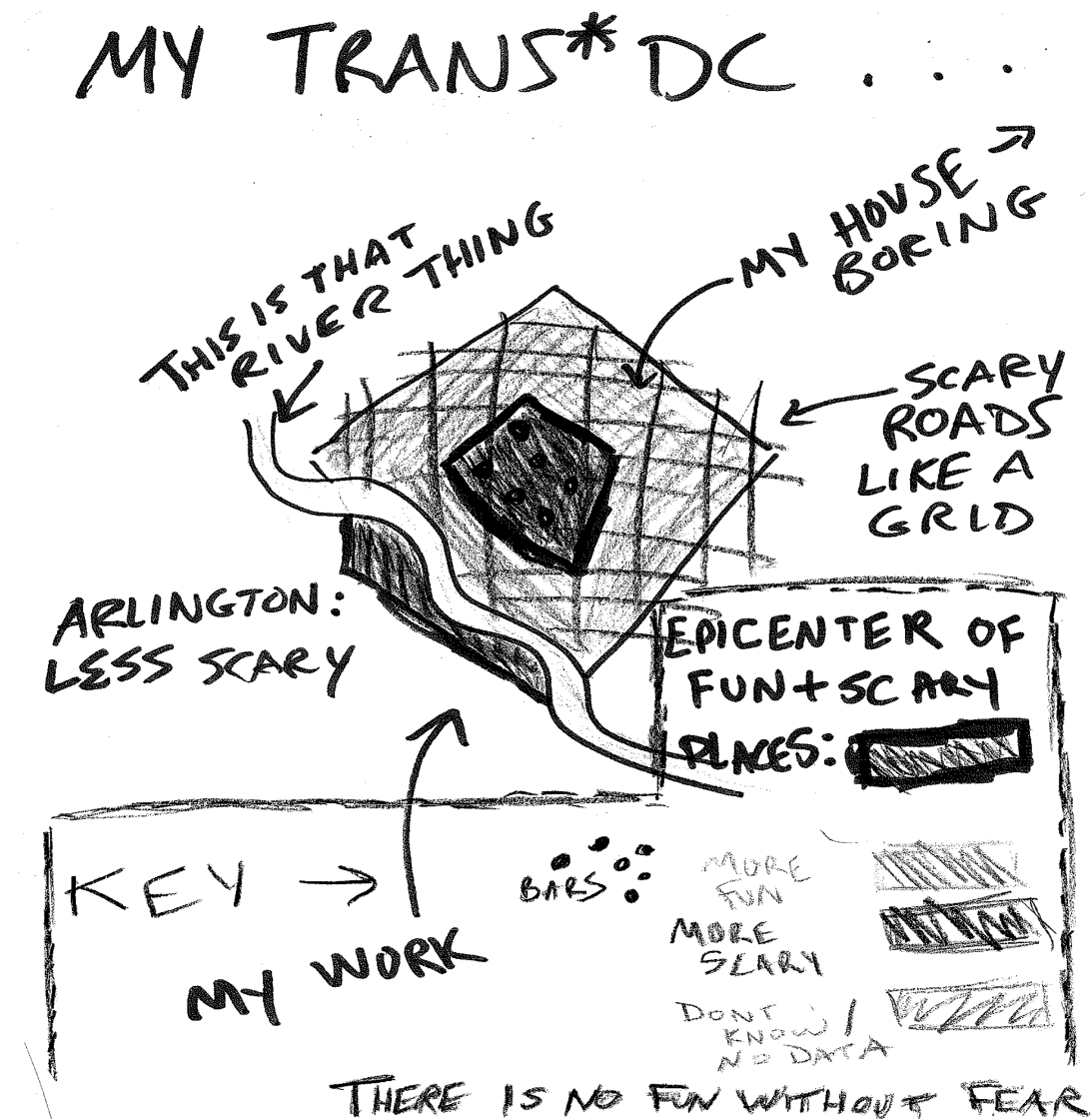


Figure 18. Trey's Map

Also unlike many of the maps collected in this project, his map does not focus upon geographic specificities (most clearly evidenced by his labeling of the Potomac River that separates the district from northern Virginia as ‘that river thing’). Instead, his map is punctuated by bars, his work place and his home—areas that he qualifies as: ‘more fun’ versus ‘more scary,’ along with a category of ‘don’t know/no data.’ Notably the epicenter of that which is both fun and scary is also the space with the highest concentration of bars, in which physical and psychic danger and fun intermix. In short, while he identifies his home as a ‘boring’ place it is also one of the only places on his map that is static in nature: it occupies neither a dangerous nor a fun space.

When a participant does include their own home in their map, it often functions to situate the participant geographically in the space of the city (which can also be inferred through how one frames their map, as J did in her map in Figure 9) and well as socially. While sometimes this inclusion is discussed as mundane, in a third of all depictions this was a way to frame interconnectivity between their home, as a group house, and other group homes. In particular, it is the functionality of these connections that frames their inclusion.

One such group home, the ‘Cunt Castle’ is featured in M’s as where “friends here gave me shaving stuff so i didn’t have to go to the creepy cvs.” (Figure 17). The Cunt Castle is also featured in Joan’s map, but as her own house. Many of these group houses¹³ are identified through titles such as ‘Juice Box,’ ‘Chum,’ and ‘Brookland/Fireswamp (Figure 12 and Figure 17). These group homes are primarily rentals of older houses in need of partial or complete refurbishing, thus providing cheaper rental costs opportunities but often at the expense of living in substandard housing. Often not all occupants are on the lease and, as is the case with the Fireswamp, occupants may stay for only several weeks to several months. This form of co-

¹³ The group house I live in was also referenced to in two maps, known as the “Bunny House/DCTC House” for our pet rabbit and the functionality of the address as the DC Trans Coalition’s official mailing address.

habitation also deflects the traditional demands of securing housing, such as providing one's legal name, a source of stable and verifiable income and a clear and positive rental and credit history. As discussed during the roundtable held in one of these homes, many of the occupants of these group houses do not have the kind of financial or legal stability to qualify for housing in other contexts. Moreover, to live in one of these homes was described as 'empowering' for a number of participants as it provided an opportunity to live communally with other queer and gender transgressing persons.

Depictions of Violence, Criminalization and Work

I group in this last category the themes that were represented in 7% or less in the maps. While not necessarily linked, 7% of participants listed where they work (7 maps), 7% listed online spaces to meet other trans people or access trans resources (7 maps), and another 7% included visual depictions of violence against trans persons, with another 7% including a police presence, the DC court house or Jail (7 maps). It is perhaps a bit disconcerting that where one works, the internet and the prison industrial complex occur at similar frequencies within the participants' representations of DC. This said, those that listed out the maps of where they work did not also depict police, jail and the courthouse. As previously noted, this would suggest vested interests are not unilateral across communities and negotiating the prison industrial complex may prove to be a greater issue for some members of different trans communities than for others.

While references to danger and violence were implicit in many of the maps (suggested through the many qualifications of space as 'safe' or 'safer'), and explicitly referred to during all the discussions held as a component of the roundtables, only 7% of participants spatially encoded this violence (8 maps). This exclusion is logical when contextualized along with what

was included in the greatest rates: areas of safety, comfort and fun. That is, it is not surprising that the majority of participants, of who framed their maps in terms of where trans people can or would like to go, would chose not to depict what they were contrasting their maps against.

Louise, a trans Latina woman in her mid-twenties, is one of the few to explicitly refer to violence in her map (Figure 19).



Figure 19. Louise's Map

Louise's map locates the area of greatest positive experience as Whitman Walker, indicated by a plus sign and a smiley face. The remainder of her map features areas of two known assaults against trans women, heartbreak and her home, of which is only 'so-so.' Also featured on her map is the image of a person jumping off of cliff and the 'stress and alienation' at her university, George Washington University. While the figure jumping, or possibly falling, from the cliff

could be read as a figure escaping from the negativity associated with the remainder of the map, I find it more plausible to understand this figure to indicate the danger of the ‘unseen’ not depicted in the map. The unknown in this case can prove to be of greater danger and risk than that of the known, of little comfort to Louise.

The exclusion of many of the poorer areas of DC by the LGBT white-focused tourist maps, situated alongside a concomitant lack of attention to many of the wealthier, white-dominated areas in the maps collected in this project, race and class emerge as particularly salient issues in these maps. Those interviewed here include members of multiple racial, class and gender identities, all of which are differentially regarded and regulated by institutional powers. But, while many share similar concerns about the city, not all face similar consequences stemming from these concerns. Many trans women of color, particularly African-American trans women, are targeted and profiled as sex workers by police officers within the district, particularly along known trans strolls. Following the recent release of prostitution-related arrest records to the DC Trans Coalition, it was revealed that during the report period (Jan 2008 - Mar 2010), there were 106 "impersonators" (the term used by officers to designate a trans woman) arrested for sex work. Of those, 103 were of African-Americans, and the other 3 were of Latinas. While no numbers exist comparing the number of trans women of color versus white women engaged in sex work in DC, or the general relative number of trans women of color versus white trans women, it is fair to say that judging from these arrest records white trans women are either facing a lesser impact of the criminalization of sex work and/or fewer are engaged in sex work. It is likely that both elements are true, and that white trans women experience some, while minimal, degree of privilege securing either gainful employment or alternative sources of financial support that a number of trans women of color are not privy to.

Significantly, a little over half of all arrests, 55%, were of trans people 25 years old and younger. Disturbingly, as exemplified by J's experiences, and supported by Alison's singular, interconnected road, younger trans feminine persons may find themselves particularly profiled while in the pursuit of meeting up with friends. Risk here, for many trans feminine persons of color, becomes a management of various modalities of violence, including police harassment, robbery or general attack.

Conclusions: Inclusions and Exclusions

DC, as a trans city constituted by the data collected from maps produced by 108 participants of this project, does not align with either mainstream tourist maps of DC or mainstream LGB maps of the city, which are governed by monuments and clubs. A trans DC is complex and can be within zones of intense marginality (such as sex work/er strolls and the areas in and around Prostitution Free Zones) public parks and particular restaurants. Community organizations and clinics to one's homes or friend's homes all are features of a trans city. But, as highlighted in Figures 9 and 10, not all spaces or places, or what I define as themes among the maps, are represented as commonly, or in the same ways, as others. Moreover, these figures do not elaborate on *how* these themes are articulated by the participants in their maps.

Perhaps of greatest different between the mainstream maps of DC and the maps collected in this project is the focus on the role of support, whether organizationally or from friends. Mainstream maps of DC focus on the capacity to consume: the places a tourist interested in consumption can go. This isn't to argue that trans-spectrum identifying people are all implicitly counter-culture subjects incapable and resistant to neoliberal tropes of consumption and production. Instead, when framing their experiences in DC through a lens of trans-spectrum

practice or identity, the participants of this project carve away those places trans subjects are not actively accepted or welcomed in.

Additionally as I suggested earlier, what is excluded from a map is as informative as what is included. Just as the mainstream maps of a GLBT DC excluded the ‘T’ from their maps, the GLB is, similarly, absent from the maps collected in this project. The ‘LGBT’ specific community centers or groups represented among these maps focus almost entirely on trans-specific activist or advocacy groups or those that primarily serve trans persons (such as HIPS). The bars and clubs that the lonely planet website situate as hot beds of queer life, are featured in less than 1% of the maps collected in this project. Moreover, when the areas discussed in the lonely planet’s guide are included in participant’s maps, their inclusion is one of negative evaluation (such as the U-street area described by Sam in Figure 13 of Chapter 2 as where the ‘scary people’ are).

Moreover, safety links these major themes together in ways not featured in mainstream maps: where one feels safe, where one does not feel safe and how, even in areas of potential criminalization, such as the sex work/er stroll, one seeks, and finds, support. What needs further discussion are the ways ‘safety’ is differentially understood among the participants of this project in contrast to the ways mainstream LGBT efforts define the ‘safe.’

Indeed, for the consuming ‘good gay citizen’ (Leap 2009:218-219) safety is “the freedom to be openly gay, to challenge the norming of public space as straight, rather than freedom from violence” (Rushbrook 2002:195). As evidenced in these maps, support and safety appears not to necessarily operate as a function of being openly ‘trans’ but rather as measured by the capacity to occupy space, if even for fleeting moments. That is, for those trans persons participating in this project, safety is both a ‘freedom from violence’ but also the ability to

transform the meanings of public space. In the following chapter I explore how the different evaluations of space, are related exclusions, articulate how issues of safety, risk and support function in the lives of the participants of this project.

CHAPTER 4

LIMINALITY, 'SAFE SPACE,' AND SUPPORT: PHENOMENOLOGICAL MEDIATIONS OF TRANS BIOPOLITICAL WORTH

I explore in this chapter how issues of inequality, as linked to liminality and danger, are expressed within the maps and discussed by those participating in this project. Specifically I consider how current models for understanding experiences of 'LGBT' safety (e.g., 'safe space') fail to attend to the complexity of lived experience, as evidenced in these discussions. Finally, I offer up a situated discussion of safety as a corollary of support, contextualizing the complex mediations of space as discussed by participants of this project.

Safety is a phenomenological experience (e.g., felt and embodied). This corporal experience is mediated by biopolitics (e.g., one's ideological 'worth'). This dialectic—between the felt subject and the ideologically-regulated object—produces one's experience of materiality. This dialectic also emerges as a core organizing subtext binding together the features included in the maps collected in this project. The spaces included, and excluded, in the maps of those collected in this project represent where project participants *experienced* safety, even in objectively 'unsafe areas', such as along the intense liminality of the strolls.

Safety and Washington, DC: Ideology, Inequality and Locating Trans Space(s) in DC

Prior to exploring experiences of trans safe(r) space in DC, I first want to emphasize that Washington, DC is an ideologically-regulated space, with those that enter it as subject to these kinds of ideological evaluations. Leandra, a 51 year old African American trans woman, directly attends to this kind of ideological-regulation in her discussions of belonging and the capacity to belong. As opposed to many of those interviewed in this project who explored various kinds of

space in their maps and discussions (as documented in the prior chapter), she defines DC as offering up *no* place for certain kinds of trans people. In her map, Figure 20, she draws a circle, partitioned into multiple circles.

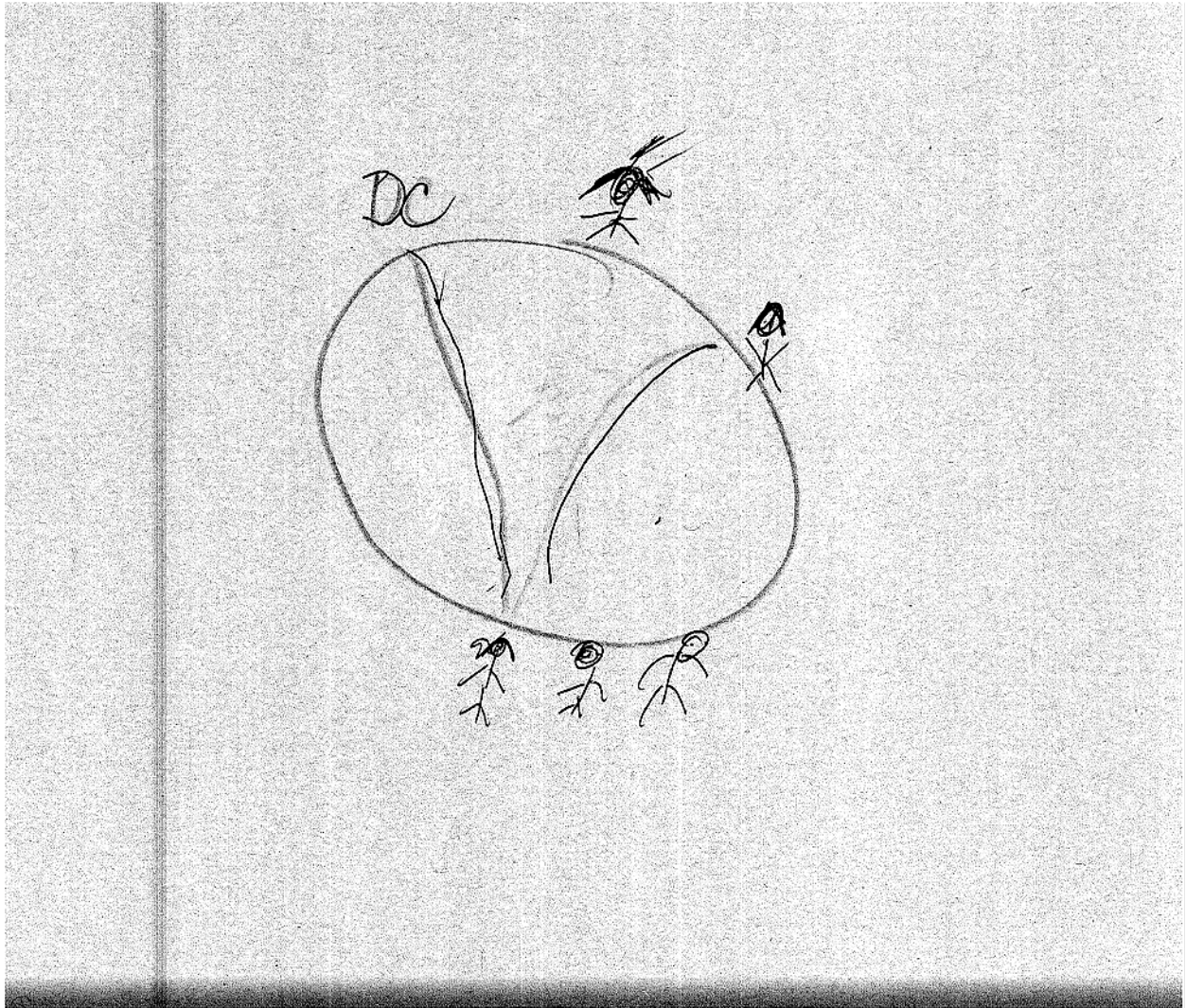


Figure 20. Leandra's Map

In her map we see a label of 'DC' in the upper left corner and, surrounding the outside perimeter of the circle, are 5 human figures. There is nothing within the circle. During the community roundtable held at HIPS, where she was a participant, Leandra shared with us this map and was eager to offer up her description of it.

Leandra: I put the transgenders¹⁴ on the outside looking in and can I iterate on why I said that?
Elijah: Sure, of course.

Leandra: I wrote..."In many ways transgender have a multitude of opportunity and rights that were not afforded [to] our ancestor community. Populations are more accepting of our needs to please our inner desires and of our plights ourselves to be who we feel we really are; for me its always been a natural feeling, one that I embraced whole hearted, but in my conquest to be me in my early years, um, I've...led to many battles and confusing strifes. However I've survived..." I drew a circle with transgenders just looking out around on the outside looking in. They're just on the outside looking in and they are ok with it....I applaud girls that go to school and want to better themselves and put themselves in a functioning society"

Figure 21: Leandra's Map Description

For Leandra, DC has excluded the trans community from its 'functioning society' but, as she comments, without any particular resistance from the transgender community. Looking closer at her statement about her map and the trans community we see a binary emerging between her community and the rest of DC:

001 I drew a circle
002 with transgenders just looking out around
003 on the outside looking in.
004 They're just on the outside looking in
005 and they are ok with it....
006 I applaud girls that go to school
007 and want to better themselves
008 and put themselves in a functioning society

Figure 22. Leandra's Exclusionary DC

Leandra situates here a binary between the 'transgenders' (22:002) on the 'outside' (22:003-004) and 'functioning society' (22:008) of which is left unmarked within the circle of DC. She stresses this binary, referring to the 'transgenders' on the outside three times in this passage. The boundary that separates them is both the physical border of DC (depicted in her map, Figure 20) but also as one of education and other ways to 'better themselves' (22:007). Thus, entry to DC (of which indexes 'functioning society' in her statement) is dependent not on DC changing but

¹⁴ While throughout this text, I use 'trans' or 'trans-spectrum' to refer and other similar qualifiers Leandra refers here to 'transgenders' here as a noun, or as a referent to someone who is transgendered. Throughout the roundtables, these kinds of variations existed, particularly salient among different demographic groups. While no research has been specifically conducted on the varied use of 'transgender' as a noun versus a descriptor in class or racial contexts, the pattern of use within this project suggests class or race may impact one's use. That said, the sample size within this project is not large enough to either confirm or negate this suggestion.

on the willingness of the subject, the ‘girls’ (22:008), to change and get a formal education, which is directly linked to self betterment (22:007).

Thus, rather than see Leandra’s map and discussion as a refusal to engage with the task at hand, we see clearly that Leandra views her younger trans affiliates as fundamentally excluded from the kinds of ideological value (e.g., biopolitical worth) that maintaining a claim to space within the city demands. Simply put, Leandra is directly noting the fact that systemic and structural inequalities keep the majority of her community from finding place within the city, or that keep the city from allowing them space. Moreover, she highlights the kinds of extra demands made of her community, wherein to be a member of a ‘functioning society’ a trans person must first have higher education. The physical and psychic exclusion of trans women of color from the metaphorical and physical landscapes of DC is clearly illuminated here and so is the embodied experience, and the necropolitical regard of their bodies as ideologically and capitally unproductive.

These remarks coincide with the recent attack and arrest of 25-year old trans woman Chloe Alexander Moore and the ideological regulation of biopolitically ‘unproductive’ bodies associated with those events. According to a news report (Chibbaro 2010), on December 1st 2010, Moore, walking along one of the sex work/er strolls discussed in the prior chapter, requested a light for her cigarette from an approaching man, who, incidentally, was an off-duty police officer, Raphael Radon. According to Moore and two additional witnesses, Radon proceeded to hurl transphobic insults at Moore before throwing her to the ground. In self-defense, Moore sprayed pepper spray into her attackers eyes. When police arrived upon the scene rather than charging Radon with assault they instead *arrested Moore* for simple assault, as well as initially refused to offer medical treatment for her wounds received during Radon’s

attack. While Radon maintains Moore's self-defensive pepper-spraying was unprovoked, he readily admits to engaging in violent transphobic insults against her. In many ways, this incident elucidates the ways in which trans women are always-already marked as criminal, even in situations in which they are clearly the victims of violence, even at the direct hands of the state.

Safety and Safe Space

Leandra's map and its parallel in Moore's attack both call into question what represents safety, or a 'safe space,' when the spaces traditionally described as 'safe,' such as home or with friends, can just as easily be sites of violence. Safety, whether physical, mental or metaphorical, is a dynamic, often space-based dialectic built upon the subjects occupying or traversing the place in question. It is important to note that safety is "realized in everyday practice, not in the dissemination of generalized knowledge repackaged as safety guidelines or practice regulations" (Iedema and Carrol 2008:69). That is, safety is dialogic, fleeting and localized to the space, time and bodies present. Safety is "situated in the system of ongoing practices, has both explicit and tacit dimensions, is relational and mediated by artifacts, that is, it is material as well as mental and representational" (Gherardi and Nicolini 2000:330).

Conversely, 'safe space' is a relatively-static metaphor and qualifier of space that, while referring to a multitude of meanings and uses across disciplines, uses and categories, represents a kind of place or space in which one's subjectivity or experience is a non-issue. The concept of 'safe' versus 'unsafe' space assumes "1) we are all isolated 2) our isolation is both physical and psychic and 3) we can become less isolated by expressing our diverse individuality" (Boostrom 1998:398). That is, to characterize certain spaces as inherently 'safe' implies a kind of qualitative difference from 'unsafe space' as it relates to one's subjectivity. Importantly, Boostrom's definition of safe space requires a degree of self-expression of one's subjectivity (or

whatever the locus of difference may be), wherein the acceptance of this kind of ‘difference’ represents a litmus test of the safety of that space.

Safe space is a slippery term when applied in dynamic, multi-dimensional spaces of loaded, and at times, conflicting meanings. Safe space is most commonly discussed in relation to education (David 1999, Ludlow 2004, Toynton 2006) as well as within LGBT organizing and community (Pardo and Schantz 2008:2-4). Hunter defines safe space as having several potential qualities: safety from bodily harm, freedom from metaphorical harm (“discriminatory activities, expressions of intolerance or policies of inequality”) and, spaces that are comfortable or familiar (Hunter 2008:8).

Put into biopolitical and phenomenological terms, safety could ostensibly be measured by one’s biopolitical value in that space, which would in turn impact one’s phenomenological experience. But, as evidenced by the clear overlapping of a sense of trans belonging to spaces where certain trans bodies have a negative biopolitical value (such as trans women of color in areas regulated by PFZs) there is not necessarily a clear formula for depicting the relationship between experienced safety and external safety. Importantly, space is “experienced in terms of the personal” wherein “the carnal, the emotional, the cognitive and the cultural are indistinguishable” (Hughes and Paterson 1997:335-336). That is, the ‘cultural,’ in this case one’s biopolitical worth in a given space, does not necessarily emerge in ways that are distinct from one’s felt experience in that space. In other words, how a person feels in a given space is both informed by the reception of their presence and their own perception of their reception in that space. A person may very well feel ‘safe’ in space that devalues certain expressions or bodies or feel unsafe in a space that ‘values’ those expressions or bodies.

LGB ‘safe space’

The notion of LGBT ‘safe space’ builds upon a “concept of a psychological sense of community” in the experiences of safety (Campbell, Sefl, Wasco and Ahrens 2004:258). That is, ‘safe space’ is rendered ‘safe’ through a dual belief that one belongs to a particular community and that this community can be found in that particular space. I focus here on a notion on ‘safe space’ most heavily relied upon by mainstream LGB community political and social organizing. In short, these ‘safe spaces’ are areas in which LGB, and the often uncritically included ‘T’, subjectivities are ‘safe.’ LGBT ‘safe space is thus where one’s sexuality or gender identity and expression does not ”pose a physical or psychic threat” (Boostrom 1998) to oneself. That is, an ‘LGBT’ safe space is framed in terms of the acceptance of the visibility of one’s sexual subjectivity or practice and/or gender presentation. Importantly, as the maps collected in this project make clear, applying mainstream LGB ‘safe spaces’ to trans ‘safe’ space fails to account for fundamental differences in various modes of trans-spectrum experience or practice. That is, while a queer safe space may be situated around one’s ability to be visibly queer, safe space for the participants of this project is framed in terms of where one can locate support, whether this be in the streets or in the privacy of a friend’s home.

LGB safe spaces exist is a variety of physical locales, serving different purposes, but often these kinds of spaces exist “to create visible allies” (Beemyn 2001:43). That is, some ‘safe spaces’ are established by non-LGBT persons in order to publically suggest their acceptance and support for LGBT subjectivities. In school and care giving situations, common locations for the circulation of ‘safe space’ discourse, faculty and staff are encouraged to creative a “safe, trusting and unbiased setting” through the use of gender neutral pronouns and avoiding the assumption of heterosexuality (Kreiss and Patterson 1997:271). Safe space in this situation regards the avoidance of potential conflict; rather than affirming or rejecting an identity a safe space here is

deployed as a ‘neutral’ space where the gender of one’s sexual object choice is erased. Moreover, they suggest one display ‘gay and lesbian’ books and flyers within one’s office to provide a visible confirmation of one’s lack of judgment. Similar to Beemyn’s definition, the locus of ‘safe space’ for the LGBT community here rests within the creation of a space that allows for visibility of one’s sexual or gender identity in the absence of any kind of danger.

In contrast, the maps collected in this project demonstrate that there are no unilaterally ‘safe’ spaces. As space, bodies and identities are engaged in a constant dialectic of which produces the moments meaning, to declare a particular space or place as a static and continuous ‘safe space’ represents a theoretical, and material, impossibility. Moreover, a conjoined ‘LGBT safe space’ “implies a universal gay experience in relation to homophobia and heterosexism...[and] fails to recognize how heterosexism and homophobia are always inflected with race and gender and fails to recognize that queers who are marked ‘other’ by race and gender experience such oppressions differently” (Fox 2007:498). To be sure, trans-spectrum experience is also far from unilateral in experience, and to propose a trans ‘safe space’ comes with its own failures to account for inherent privileges afforded to particular bodies and practices, however broadly marginalized.

As Jacob, a gay white trans man in his mid-twenties discusses, the very spaces that are expected to be LGB ‘safe spaces’ (e.g., offering an environment of allowed and encouraged queer visibility) are, in fact, the very spaces that emerge as ‘unsafe’ to trans subjects (Figure 23). Jacob includes sex work/er strolls in his map along with the public transit he takes to get around the city (in this case, the red line of the metro system). He takes care to note several major streets (14th Street Northwest and Georgia Avenue Northwest) where the HIPS van travels (the mobile outreach vehicle HIPS utilized to distribute condoms, lube, syringe exchange and HIV testing)

and the areas that border DC (e.g. 'MoCo' or Montgomery County, Maryland and VA, or Virginia, to the south).

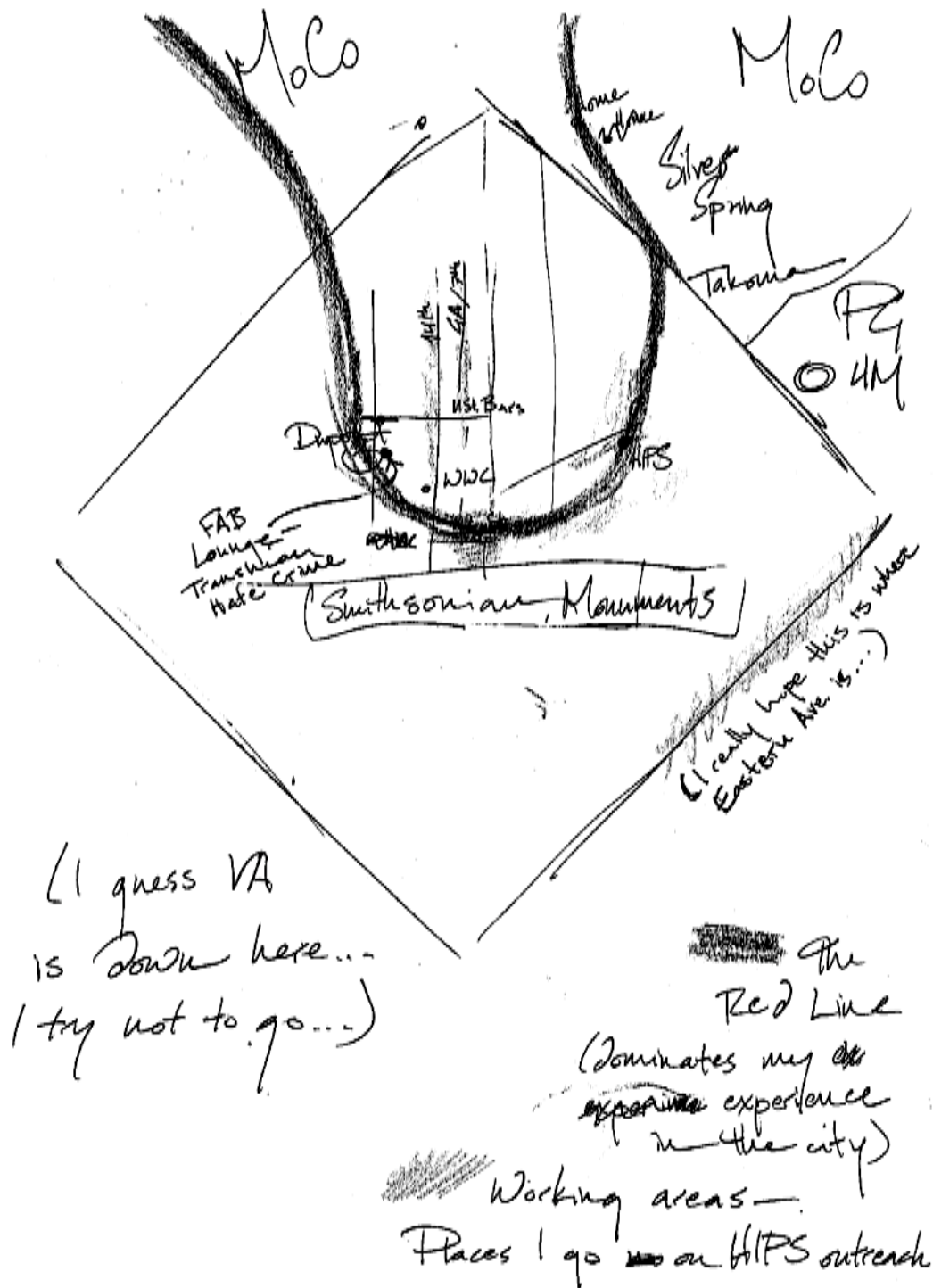


Figure 23. Jacob's Map

His map is dominated by his volunteer work with HIPS, with the Whitman Walker Clinic receiving a brief notation. The only ‘LGB’ element clearly denoted on his map is the location of Fab Lounge, a gay and lesbian bar located just north of Dupont Circle. He highlights this space not as a bar he goes to (as many have in their own maps) but rather to note it for the transphobic violence that has occurred there. Jacob shared this map with us during the roundtable held at the DCATS meeting, a space limited to only trans-masculine identifying persons. He discussed his map with us, and, in particular, explained his inclusion of Fab Lounge (Figure 24).

Jacob: People were talking about like places where they don’t feel safe, but like that doesn’t really happen for me very often, but one place like always gets my attention is fab lounge because, like that’s the only place that I can think of off the top of my head that this is some place like where trans guys were victims of hate crimes because they were trans, kind of thing. Which is, fairly unusual, like that its bad enough to make the news. I don’t go there. I just know where it is, in dupont.

Figure 24. Jacob’s Discussion

We can unpack this statement further:

001 People were talking about, like,
002 places they don’t feel safe but, like,
003 that doesn’t happen for me very often
004 but one place, like,
005 always gets my attention is fab lounge
006 Because... this is some place, like,
007 where trans guys were victims of hate crimes
008 because they were trans kind of thing

Figure 25. Jacob’s Discussion of Violence

While Jacob identifies himself as experiencing no direct violence on account of his trans present or history he, nonetheless, still lists areas that are known to have been sites of danger, attack and violence against people like him. The ‘one place’ (25:004) that stands out to him when thinking about trans space is where other trans men were ‘victims of hate crimes’ (25:007). He admits that while he, himself, does not experience these kinds of issues he still identifies them as a feature of his own trans space. Simply put, even as a gay man, the LGB ‘safe space’ of the LGBT bar fails to confer that which it is expected to: safety from psychic or physical danger.

The notion of ‘safety’ here thus demands closer attention. In many ways, trans safety, as Jacob describes it, stands in direct contrast to the kinds of ‘safety’ offered by gay bars and spaces of consumption to LGB persons. Safety, in the context of mainstream gay and lesbian maps (such as those discussed at the beginning of the previous chapter) reference spaces and places that are specifically ‘gay-friendly’ (read: largely white cisgender gay male). That is to say, these spaces offer up support, whether implicitly or explicitly, to only particular formations of publically-performed LGB subjectivities and practice (e.g., ideologically productive). In contrast, ‘safety’ for the participants in this project often refers instead to areas wherein one’s trans history or present is *not* necessarily of public knowledge. That is, one’s safety as a trans person is may be secured through invisibility, rather than the freedom of visibility afforded to particular queer bodies in queer-friendly spaces. This particular formation of safety is echoed in a number of the maps included in chapter 3: Drake’s Map (Figure 13), M’s Map (Figure 17) Trey’s Map (Figure 18). For each of these participants, ‘safety’ is framed in terms of where one can travel or go without being (mis)read as a trans-spectrum person (such as where Drake can safely get drinks, or where M can safely work out).

Danger and Risk

In considering the notion of ‘safe space’ Boostrom asks ‘safe from what?’ (1998:400) and in the context of this project, I would suggest ‘danger.’ Within these the maps collected in this project, what subjects define as a threat to safety (such as threatening men on the bus to the police) as well as what is *excluded* from the maps articulate what danger is composed of. In other words, while some map makers chose to frame their maps in terms of where they were not safe, others chose to do the opposite and chose to discuss areas that were specifically safe, thus providing a template in which to consider conspicuous exclusions (e.g., such as the

overwhelming exclusions of mainstream LGB bars, community centers and activist groups in deference to trans specific organizations). This may suggest that LGB populations may pose as much a threat to safety as straight populations to trans-spectrum populations.

Risk: A Processual Danger

In many ways, the participants of this project situate their trans spaces as existing only through risk management, or, framed differently, through processual danger. Building on Hunter's notion of a 'processual' safe space which moves "beyond the sense of protected, cathartic, or insular space" (Hunter 2002:7) I would argue that safety and danger are both dynamic processes. That is, what is a safe space one moment may be entirely unsafe in the next, or wherein one subject may feel safe yet another feel threatened. Just as the LGB community is immensely diverse, so is the trans 'community' and thus what qualifies as safety to a gender-normative trans person, who is not actively questioned with regard to their gender, may be very different from someone whose presentation is decoded as non-normative in some fashion.

As safety and risk are dialogic in nature "we must engage safety as a process through which we establish dialogues that create and re-create the conditions in which queer folks are more free from the physical and psychic violence of those normalizing processes through which we all move and operate in our quotidian experiences" (Fox 2007:506). Indeed, it is the day-to-day, quotidian activities that are called upon in these maps. Moreover, risk and perception "incorporate temporal aspects as part of a dynamic process of interpretation and reinterpretation" (Skinner 2000:163). In other words, safety and risk are not static but rather extremely dynamic and experiential.

Importantly, risk and "its inverse, safety, is embedded in social structure—in the 'social fabric'...Risk and safety and safety are not objective conditions 'out there' simply waiting to be

perceived by citizens or calculated by professional risk analysts” (Stallings 1990:80). That is to say, what is risky, dangerous or unsafe is not merely an objective truth but rather an element that emerges from within the individual’s evaluation (Lupton 1993:425). The concept of risk may be ubiquitous, and meta-discourses may render certain undesirable bodies and places as ‘risky’ but the conceptualization of what is ‘risky’ to the subject is within their abilities to decide. Indeed, the assessment of risk does not “exist independently of human observation nor do they interpret themselves” (Stallings 1990:91). The framing of space as either ‘safe’ or ‘unsafe’ requires a personal evaluation (Wildavsky and Drake 1990: 42). Otherwise, the grounds on which space is determined as ‘safe’ or ‘unsafe’ may remain entirely without subjective basis. Interestingly, and perhaps disturbingly, the concept of LGBT ‘safe space’ relies upon the notion of safe space as statically and a priori safe in the absence of clear evidence in support of this.

Boostrom argues that a person in an ‘unsafe space’ feels “isolated physically and metaphorically, yearning for comfort, struggling to cope” (1998:405). That said, this kind of clear division between that which is ‘safe’ versus that which is ‘unsafe’ does not appear in the maps collected in this project. Rather, space exists in gradients of safety, wherein risk is a common, if not expected element of moving through out the cityscapes.

Risk, as a threat to one’s physical safety, is highlighted most heavily in maps collected from Latina and African-American trans women. Issues of having accurate, or any, legal documentation, the regulation of known sex-worker strolls, such as 5th and K, Eastern Ave and other high profile areas, as well as general harassment all emerged as points of concern for these communities. As explored in the previous chapter, the overlapping of community space and criminalized space (e.g., the Prostitution Free Zones) has profound impacts for those interested in connecting with other trans-spectrum persons. Within the space of the Prostitution Free Zone

the police are empowered to disperse or arrest any persons believed to be engaged in prostitution or prostitution related activities. In short, one may face criminal charges in the absence of actual criminal activity. Because so many of the trans women interviewed in this project associate with at least one person of whom has been criminalized for sex work, these individuals face similar prosecution merely by association within these spaces.

Frederick, a 22-year-old trans person of color, took a slightly different approach in his mapping project in considering what constitutes 'safe space' for him and utilized a list to characterize space and place to supplement his discussion (Figure 26).

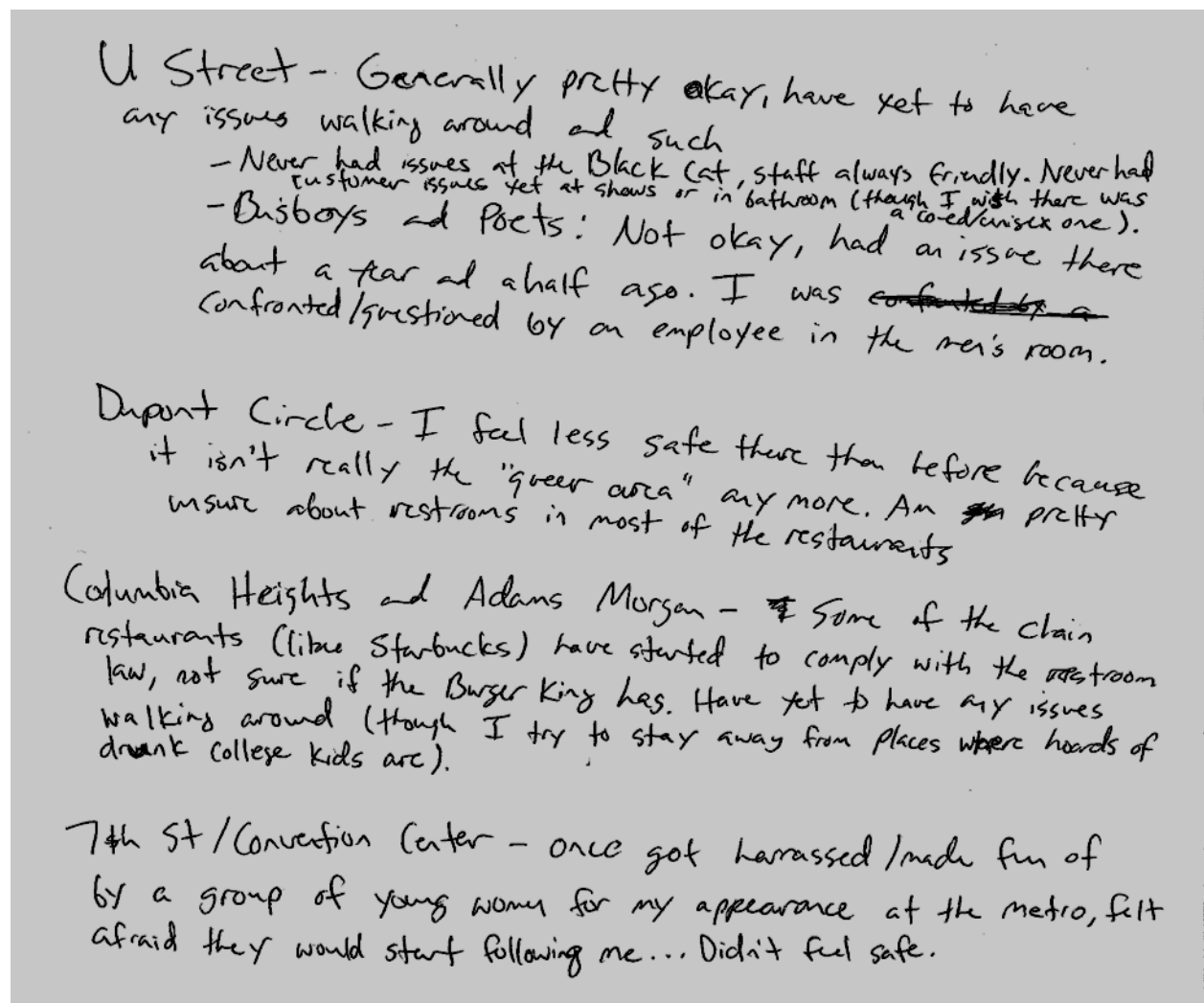


Figure 26. Frederick's Map

His map is largely organized around an indexing of particular popular areas in the Northwest quadrant of DC: U-Street, Dupont circle, Columbia Heights and Adams Morgan and the 7th Street/Convention center area. He then frames these locations according to issues of bathrooms (another site wherein bodies begin to ‘matter’) and his (in)ability to use the restroom. In this map, Frederick’s organizes the city around where he can relieve himself and where he has been harassed because of his appearance. As he discusses about the 7th Street/Convention center area: “Once got harassed/made fun of by a group of young women for my appearance at the metro, felt afraid they would start following me...Didn’t feel safe.” While his concerns about safe space echo others, his concentration on bathrooms is unique as a focal point for his map. It should be noted that for one to focus so heavily upon where one can relieve oneself—an unavoidable and necessary activity essential to human living—should raise concerns about the role bathrooms, seemingly mundane, play into the lives of various constituents of trans coalitions. We see this same kind of threat in the bathrooms where others may face issues or in the showers one faces discomfort. In short, it appears the ‘threat’ here, in unsafe, risky or scary places, stems from a similar place: to be known as having a trans history or present. That said, this alone does not appear to be the actual threat but rather the potential reactions of others that invokes fear.

Conclusions: What is ‘Trans’ Safe Space?

Gradients of safety are actualized in moment-to-moment lived experience. Stories of violence, such as called upon by Jacob in his recollection of violence at Fab Lounge or of Moore’s recent attack, serve as embodied reminders of the psychic, and at times psychical violence, offered up by even the most mundane tasks of life: using the restroom, riding public transportation, walking from home to work. To be clear, these maps serve as visual representations of largely phenomenological experience, of which is sensually experienced

through biopolitical, and necropolitical, frameworks. Fear, and the modulation of fear through risk-taking, becomes a daily sensation, which have been articulated here through the visual medium of map-making.

Notions of ‘safe space’ that circulate in the mainstream LGBT community (such as the gay bar or the ‘LGBT’ community center) are often only referenced in the maps collected in this project for their lack of actual safety. Indeed, the processes of deeming safe versus unsafe space are not purely individualistic as much as they are linked to broader discourses circling within the trans community and larger organizational efforts with regard to where ‘safety’ exists. If “our ability to live a free life depends on our ability to move out of the text and into the margin” then many members of the trans community may fail to live a ‘free’ life (Boostrom 1998:403). Indeed, this ‘freedom’ is lost in many of the maps, wherein the “places” people want to be are both dangerous and fun. The inflexibility of the margins of text in this case, keeps trans community members going to the spaces offering the greatest degrees of safety, or comfort, even in moments wherein that safety is fleeting.

Thus, can we characterize specifically ‘trans’ safe space as being characterized by accessibly gender neutral bathrooms? Clubs or bars that are trans positive? Health clinics and political centers that are concerned with the lives and needs of different trans communities? Based upon the maps collected here, there exists no singular, static ‘trans’ safe space. Instead, as highlighted by the maps collected in this project, there are gradients of safety, often inflected with danger, discomfort and instability. Rather than latch onto antiquated and problematic notions of ‘safe space’ as a kind of static formation of the lived environment I would offer up a definition that relies upon the dialogic nature of spatial construction. A trans safe space may be an area free from police harassment, an area where one can have a beer and not fear harassment

or even where one can hold down a job without the threat of transphobic disciplinarity and job loss.

The templates provided by gay maps, of which place consumption as a conduit to identity performance, fail both in theory and practice to provide spaces of comfort or relevance to the trans subjects interviewed here. While some trans subjects interviewed here listed the occasional gay bar, the relative lack of appearance articulates the invisibility of trans lives in LGB settings. Interestingly, the narratives typically associated with ‘danger’ and the ‘unsafe’ within, specifically, an urban area, are not those referenced to in these maps. That is, fear of getting mugged or getting lost in unfamiliar places, do not appear to be specifically trans concerns. Instead, the unsafe is about the potential to be ‘outed’ or known as an individual with a trans history or present and of violence pursuant to being identified as a trans subject.

Perhaps overlooked the greatest are generational differences in trans experience, particularly for very young trans people and much older trans people. The discussions held at HIPS (Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive) as well as THE (Transgender Health Empowerment), were framed largely in terms of generational difference and, specifically, how the public treatment of trans women of color has changed over time. The oldest participant in this project, 83, recounted numerous times during the roundtable discussion at THE on how trans women had been regarded over time, at one point being termed as full time drag queens and facing arrest for merely being in public in women’s clothing to being able to ride the bus without the guarantee of violence. While many of the older women, those over the age of 40, at both the roundtables held at HIPS and THE discussed how radically different, and relatively positive changes to the DC social and political landscapes have been towards trans people, many of the younger trans women respectfully disagreed with their elders. Rather, they conveyed that while

the violence their ‘mothers’ had experienced was, indeed, horrific, they too faced daily discrimination. Many of those interviewed throughout this project complained of a lack of gainful employment, leaving few choices outside of grey and black economies. Moreover, the role of police intervention proved to be a major element of their lives.

In many ways, access to secure employment opportunities articulates heavily with the capacity to mitigate risk. While no statistics exist for DC-based trans employment rates, the only nationwide study conducted about trans communities reveals that unemployment and underemployment were profound issues for many trans community members nationally. The first nation-wide report of its kind, conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in 2009 reported grim findings as to general livelihoods of the general trans population. Respondents experienced twice the rate of unemployment compared to the general population with 97 percent reported harassment or mistreatment on the job due to their transgender status. Moreover, according to this study, 15 percent of trans respondents reported living on \$10,000 a year or less, twice as high as the general population. Finally, 19 percent have been or are homeless; 11 percent have faced an eviction; and 26 percent have been forced to find temporary space. The 2008 California Transgender Economic Health Survey found that one in four trans people in California engaged in street-based sex work for income due to the high levels of housing and job discrimination (Davis and Wertz 2010:467). A study of 392 transgender women and 123 transgender men in San Francisco, California found that 32 percent of participants engaged in sex work in the past six months (Clements-Nolle et al. 2001:915). Among 151 trans women in Chicago and Los Angeles, 67 percent reported participating in sex work (Wilson et al. 2009:902). To be certain, these statistics are a stark reminder that many trans community members do not have the same

kind of access to employment that other members of the LGB spectrum may enjoy. Moreover, within the multiple trans coalitions of practice in DC, trans-spectrum persons of, particularly trans women of color, are likely to find themselves turning to street based work in order to survive and are more likely to experience victimization as a result, whether from the general population or from police.

At times it can be unclear what binds together trans-spectrum experience. Building upon the data collected in this project, it would be fair to say that, to some extent, violence, either psychic or physical, creates a degree of continuity among multiple members of the trans community. This violence is **not** of the same quality and quantity across community and identity lines, as the violence the white, gender normative trans men report is not necessarily the same as that faced by trans women of color. The violence of transphobia, or the fear, hatred, discrimination of gender transgressive or non-normative bodies or practices, impacts all of their lives and, not surprisingly, this fact is not lost on them. Their recollections and stories about violence, whether that faced at being denied access to a bathroom to that faced in lackluster or psychically violent treatment in medical setting, to that experienced at the hands of a police officer share the thread of violence. To be clear, this is not to gut each narrative and experience of its impact on the body, nor is this to claim that the violent impact possessing a criminal record has is comparable to that violence experienced when being denied fair medical treatment. Rather, this is to maintain that safety, and risk, permeate the lives of trans community members in ways perhaps not previously understood. The ways violence have organized these maps, and related conversations, demands pause. The formations of this violence requires a deeper investigation into the conditions of life, particularly for those most excluded from mainstream

narratives of normativity and from the most basic lifelines of employment, housing and institutional support.

In the following chapter I consider how violence, in particular necropolitical disciplinary and geospatial policies, functions to regulate, trans feminine bodies of color on the streets of Washington DC. I explore how these policies function as articulations of sovereignty that seek to regulate security, 'safety' and capital and ideological productivity.

CHAPTER 5:

‘WALKING WHILE TRANSGENDERED’¹⁵: NECROPOLITICAL REGULATIONS OF TRANS FEMININE BODIES OF COLOR

In this chapter I consider how necropolitical disciplinary and geospatial policies regulate, in both expulsion and discard, trans feminine bodies of color on the streets of Washington DC. These policies, such as the Prostitution Free Zone, serve to illuminate how local policy and practices are linked to national neoliberal citizenship demands. Noting how these necropolitical ideologies transform space, we see that the visibility of trans (feminine) bodies of color in certain areas of the city are articulated as a threat to national security, ‘safety’ and capital and ideological productivity.

Regulating ‘Bad’ Bodies, Regulating ‘Bad’ Space

Prelude to A Muggy Summer Evening

Around 11pm, the HIPS (‘Helping Individual Prostitutes, or ‘People’ depending on who you ask, Survive) van rolls up in front of the house. Janis is in the ‘Hot Seat’ tonight. She rolls down her window, beckons out to me and, armed with an apple and caffeinated gum, I slide in to the back seat, taking care not to knock over the precariously situated pitchers of lemonade at my feet.

I’m tired, even with the two cups of coffee sloshing in my stomach. The past several weeks, months even, have been especially hard for trans communities living in the district. Between the recent murder of Lashai Mclean, the shootings of trans women on Eastern Ave and this week’s vicious attack on 3 young trans women of color by a drunk, off-duty police officer, a lot of people are tired. A lot of people are angry. A lot of people are terrified. But not all are as

¹⁵ DC-based trans and sex worker activist Darby Hickey discusses the use of this phrase as borne out of the “almost constant profiling of transgender and transsexual women (particularly women of color) as sex workers by police” (Hickey 2008).

dumbstruck by the ‘rise in violence’ that the papers are finally taking note of. No, this kind of violence is a quotidian element of life for so many of the young black and Latina trans women we’ll see tonight. The violence isn’t new; it is the public’s sudden concern that local trans activists are struck by.

As the van cuts through the humid summer air, Susan, the team leader and driver for the evening, yells names over the pounding music, introducing me to April, a newly minted volunteer on only her second night out on the van. We make conversation as we attempt to organize and decipher the contents of the bathtub size bin of condoms, lube and paper bags that sits between us, illuminated only by the occasional brush of light from the street lamps cruising by. Yes, we have enough of the Tuxedos but we’re out of the Loves. Shit, we’re out of Magnums and, as Janis yells back, with the budget cuts we need to limit the Magnums to request only and even then only 5 or 6. Ok, we’ll push the Orange and Grays and try to get rid of some of these damn city dispensed, but free, off brands that crowd the bin.

We pull up to the HIPS office around 11:30 PM, collect the bins from the van, and after unlocking the rusting iron gate shielding the convenience-store style door underneath, we shuffle our heavy loads down the hallway and down two flights of stairs to another padlocked anonymous door. ‘Why’s it always smell like weed down here?’ Janis wonders out loud as she juggles the box of syringes and tips with a jug of lemonade in the other arm. I wonder the same thing. HIPS’ strip mall location, across the street from a neighborhood constructed almost entirely of public housing, shares its walls with a discount furniture store and a boarded up office of some sort. This location is a new one for them, a step up from their previous home: a dilapidated and cramped office on the other side of the city. That office, poorly ventilated, fan-filled in the summer and sweater-demanding in the winter, was located in the heart of Adams

Morgan. Adams Morgan, a neighborhood in NW DC, is beloved by the masses of white 20-somethings that swarm Friday and Saturday nights from their university-based enclaves to the ample bars and affordable drinks crammed along 19th ST NW. And come last call, the taxi cabs clog the road, all awaiting their turn to whisk the drunk back their college campuses, often only moments after their evening libations have found their way from the stomach to the crowded concrete gutter below. Eventually HIPS could no longer afford the rapidly rising rents for the office and, across the city, landed this spacious and cheap unit. Many of HIPS clients don't feel safe coming to this new location in a residential NE neighborhood, even though many live a quick walk or bus ride away.

We pack the van tight with prophylactics, candy, works and related supplies and enough lubricant to cram the Washington monument into the Pentagon. We're running late; it's almost 1 AM and we have a lot of folks to see tonight before the streets quiet down and Janis turns the van back towards the office at 5 AM. We settle into our seats and begin our journey around the district with the hope that tonight will be a kinder one to the people whose only offense is to exist.

The Penultimate Other: Projects in Erasure

In many ways, the route HIPS takes around DC to provide condoms, syringe exchange and HIV testing to those working, or just hanging out, on the streets, provides a mapped template for how ideologies about who belongs where, and why, articulate with space. The route HIPS takes is determined by where potential clients, and others who may benefit from their services, can be accessed. HIPS clients, and their target populations, are primarily street-based sex workers, many of who are also young trans women of color. Significantly, these women report, both anecdotally and in official capacities (Alliance for a Safe & Diverse DC 2008) an

extraordinarily high incidence of violence, from both those they might encounter on the street to those who are agents of the nation-state, such as the police. As mentioned above, this violence is a mainstay of many of their lives. Groups such as HIPS collect reports of violence from their clients, of which stream in with regularity through out the week. Disturbingly, this violence is erased in media reports, among most local and national LGBT organizations and, perhaps most disconcerting, at the governmental level. Indeed, there is something terrifyingly familiar to hear of yet another young black trans woman (presumably sex worker) dead. This kind of category of a familiar, and expected, death has been reified in both the public and academic imaginary for decades (such as the use of young black trans feminine bodies to theorize failures in gender performance, as seen in Butler's 1993 'Gender is Burning' discussion). My concern here is to unpack how this category of a kind of necropolitical other, particularly the disposable brown trans feminine body, is constructed and articulated within the cityscapes of the US nation's capital, the belly of the beast of nationalism and 'freedom': Washington, DC.

As context, it is known that between 2000 and 2011, 11 trans feminine persons of color (primarily black, all but one 25 years old or younger) were murdered. Out of this group, only two of the murders have been solved. This 'homicide clearance rate' of less than 20% is roughly one-quarter of the general homicide clearance rate of nearly 80% (MPD 2010:18). Additionally, of the numerous reports of violence that HIPS receives with unrelenting regulatory, very few are 'cleared,' taken seriously or managed appropriately by police. As a result, fewer and fewer instances of violence and assault are reported to MPD out of, at best, frustration and, at worst, fear of additional violence at the hands of the police themselves (Alliance for a Safe & Diverse DC 2008).

As that which indexes America, as the nation's capital, what is visible in DC is of national import. Whether one is thinking of the ever-present policy producers, the media makers to those that survive on the nearly endless stream of tourist inquiry and gaze into the nation's capital, what happens in DC is hyper-visible. That which is visible in DC serves to index that which US citizens, as a nation, are to value. To be certain, the erasure of trans-based violence and death is concomitantly an erasure of trans vitality, as well as any potential claims to belonging. The necropolitical disregard and complicit exceptionality of death among visible trans feminine bodies of color in DC reflects a form of nationalism of which I term 'necronationalism.' Necronationalism, built upon necropolitics, focuses on the ways in which the erasure and death of the bad citizen body carves out ideological and physical space for the good citizen worker body in the name of national interests.

Specifically, I first address here how capital, as the life force of the US-nation state, shapes the landscapes of the city through gentrification projects. Capital, as forms of monetary, ideological or cultural modalities of power, has the capacity to both create or destroy value of space, and the bodies within it (as I discuss in Chapter 2 and 3 in this text). I then turn to how these capital processes impact somatically anchored bodies, which are identified as biopolitically worthy or necropolitically disposable via nation-state intervention. Next I consider how neoliberally-informed spatial policies of exclusion, such as the Prostitution Free Zone (henceforth, PFZ) exemplify how the policy makers, and developers, of DC displace and criminalize always-already suspect bodies. In particular, these policies function to target trans women of color, of who, as I explore in this chapter, come to symbolize the antithesis of nation-state sanctioned embodiment. I then discuss how trans community members living in DC have discussed the role of the PFZ in their lives. Building on this, I turn to how DC officials have

responded to the mounting violence against trans feminine bodies of color in DC. Significantly, their response is one framed predominantly by the need to recuperate and remake these otherwise ‘bad citizen’ bodies. This disregard for the systemic abuse and death of certain bodies over others highlights how ideological notions of which bodies (e.g., the good citizen-worker body) are more deserving of ‘life’ while others (e.g., the ideologically and capially unproductive body) are disposable. In short, this paper considers how interrelationships between local, national, and transnational ideologies of citizenship, sexuality/gender, embodiment, race and space coalesce around structures and tools of displacement and erasure. I consider here how, and why, these tools are deployed in the name of preserving safety and security of the nation-state, yet function to erase, both metaphorically and literally, visible trans feminine bodies on color from the Washington, DC cityscapes. To be clear, the violence against, murders and hyper-criminalization of trans women of color in DC are *not* merely evidence of an intolerant public; these actions are end products of a systemic web of disregard borne out of public policy.

Trans Bodies in DC: Necrocapital(ism), De/valued
Space and Disposable Bodies

Capital, Geography and Bodies: Gentrification,
Necropolitics and Necrocapitalism

Spatially and geographically defined, the ‘city,’ and how bodies come to be regulated by its terrain, is a powerful site of ideological demand. In thinking about the particular spaces in which the regulation of bodies at work and place can be visualized, the ‘inner city’ becomes “soft spot for the implementation of neoliberal ideals” (Hackworth 2007:13). Gentrification, in addition to the destruction of public services, including affordable housing, clinics and community meeting space in deference to corporate development, “can be seen as the material and symbolic knife-edge of neoliberal urbanism representing the erosion of the physical and

symbolic embodiment of neoliberal urbanisms’ putative other—the Keynesian activist state” (Hackworth 2007:98). This is particularly true within the urban context, wherein the combination of limited space, fluctuating economies and shifting cash flows literally transform the physical landscapes into nearly unrecognizable forms of redevelopment.

Additionally, the discussion of gentrification, and other forms of capital reformations of space, overlooks the ways in which movements of capital and resources have an impact on bodies. In other words, the cityscape provides a productive ground in which to visualize processes of neoliberalism, nationalisms and bio/necropolitics. In the context of transgender, transsexual or gender non-conforming bodies and practices, particular forms of gender transgression operate as a threat to sex/gender normativity. For those bodies that fail to be capital product (e.g., engaging in the formal economy) along with failing to be ideologically productive, displacement and erasure are inevitable.

As discussed in earlier chapters, we can begin to understand the ways in which bodies are utilized by systems of power through notions of biopower and, as a flipside, necropolitics. Most simply, biopower highlights the ways in which human bodies come to be regarded, manipulated and regulated by sovereign powers in a quest for ideological and capital productivity. Biopower is “a constitutive form of power that takes as its object human life” (Foucault 1977:212). That is to say, the human body is situated on par with cattle or horses; merely bodies whose physical and intellectual power can be harnessed through proper discipline and regulation. Biopolitically, neoliberalistic modes of governance capitalize on the “capacity and potential of individuals and the population as living resources” (Ong 2006:6). Moreover, biopolitics, as a government-population, political economic relationship refers to a “dynamic of forces that establishes a new relationship between ontology and politics” (Lazzarato 2006:11). In other words, the potential

for the productivity of the body hinges on the cooperation and investment on the part of the subject insofar as it is permitted to engage in projects of productivity.

In many ways, we can conceptualize the violence of gentrification as a way in which necropolitics articulates with space. As opposed to biopolitics, which concerns itself with how bodies can be made productive, necropolitics explores the exceptionality of death among bodies identified as disposable. Indeed, “the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die” (Mbembe 2003:11). It is the power to let live and the power to let die. It is through these ‘biopolitical breaks’ that “enable the power to kill” (Osuri 2009:35). Thus taxonomies of difference, created through biopolitical technologies, serve to demarcate that which is valuable from that which is not (e.g., the good citizen versus the bad citizen). Systemic vulnerabilities are borne within the cleavages of exceptionality punctuating the surface of a biopolitical plane. It is within these zones of exceptionality that the ‘homo sacer,’ Agamben’s formulation of the body that may be killed with impunity but not in sacrifice (Agamben 1998) is designed. In other words, those bodies marked as ideologically suspect through biopolitical evaluation occupy a state wherein value can only be found within their death. Rather than understanding necropower to mark that which is destined to die, it serves to highlight those bodies which have been marked as disposable: occupying a subjectivity that promises neither death nor life.

Gentrification carves out literal geographic spaces of exceptionality, wherein the management of sovereignty and sovereign bodies does not sit within the nation-state but rather is co-managed by the nation-state and capital investors. It is this relationship between the nation-state and the land developers that creates these ‘death worlds’ where destruction, erasure and death can be acceptable. The way necropolitics articulates with bodies in space in gentrifying

spaces represents a kind of ‘necrocapitalism’ (Banerjee 2008). Gentrification, as a form of necrocapitalistic reformations of space, renders bodies that stand in the way of capital productivity as pathological and malignant tumors in an otherwise healthy expansion of capially productive landscapes. Specifically, the necrocapitalist “practices of organizational accumulation that involve violence, dispossession, and death” provide the logic that buttresses the destruction of public housing and low-income neighborhoods, as well as the bodies that once occupied that space (Banerjee 2008:1543). Perhaps more importantly, the violence and death emerging out of necrocapitalist reformations of space are “immune from legal, juridical, and political intervention, resulting in a suspension of sovereignty” for those who lay any claim to the spaces of new capital worth (Banerjee 2008:1544). That is, for the private land developers, there are rarely repercussions for the violence of displacement, erasure and harm that frames the lives of those standing in the way to capital expansion.

As I will explore in this chapter, it is through unpacking the collusions between the government and private industry in the elimination of unproductive (e.g., immigrant, brown and queer) bodies that illuminates the *homo sacer* of the DC urban landscape. Specifically, I explore how, and why, the widely-ignored violence against young trans women of color within Prostitution Free Zones (PFZ) and other gentrifying borderlands in DC represents a form of state-sanctioned violence. The violence perpetrated against them, from civilians and agents of the state, is normalized and rendered insignificant.

The ‘Prostitution Free Zone’: Sex Work, Exceptionality and Death

As mentioned above, Prostitution Free Zones (PFZs), and other spaces of hyper-policing, function to keep particular bodies out through police and policy-based regulation. Specifically, PFZs, deployed globally, serve to regulate particular classed, raced and gendered bodies. Zones

of exclusion, zero tolerance zones and other similar geospatial policies are not and have not been limited to Washington DC. Rather, exclusionary spaces have historically served a broader societal role to delineate and segregate those bodies deemed sick, pathological, undesirable and, in some cases, disposable. Proponents of PFZs may consider them as a kind of ‘policy of choice’ wherein the geo-spatial representation of the sovereignty of the nation-state, in this case the Metropolitan Police Department, works to criminalize those engaged in illegal activities of which they are believed to have a ‘choice’ to commit. Theoretically, PFZs have also been situated as a spatial formation of sex work (Hubbard et al 2008:137), a zone of exclusion (of some activities and/or bodies over others) (Scharff 2005:324) and as a way in which to dislocate the ideologically and capially unproductive ‘homo sacer’ sex worker body (Sanchez 2004:862). PFZs are unlike other spatial regulations of sex work, such as “the Magdalene asylum, the state-registered brothel and the red-light district,” (Hubbard et al 2008:137), which work to keep particular bodies and practices within their bounds. Instead, Prostitution Free Zones work to keep *out* those bodies and practices deemed suspect.

Within Washington, DC the first laws governing sex work were passed in 1910 and 1914 (Alliance for a Safe & Diverse DC 2008:7), with laws governing solicitation dating to 1935. With the ban on new issuances of nude dancing licenses in 1993 marked the beginning of a new era, and the beginning of a long stretch of institutionalized violence against sex workers. In a moderately well-publicized event in 1989, foreshadowing the official creation of the Prostitution Free Zone Policy, police officers rounded up sex workers working in downtown DC, drove them to the Virginia and were told not to come back (Alliance for a Safe & Diverse DC 2008:8). Indeed, the forcible banning of bodies, and not practices, is a tactic DC officials have used for over two decades predating the establishment of the first PFZ.

The Prostitution Free Zone law did not officially appear as legislation until 2006, with then-Mayor Anthony Williams signing into law the Omnibus Public Safety Emergency Amendment Act, bringing the PFZ into DC's official's legal code. To be clear, sex work, solicitation and other sex work related practices were already illegal under DC's general law; the PFZ would stand as a necropolitical spatial and temporal hyper-enforcement of these laws.

Turning to the language on the MPD website, PFZs are put into affect in areas either experiencing high rates of arrests for solicitation and prostitution related offenses *or* in response to complaints from local residents (MPD 2010). To be clear, these areas do not necessarily constitute the areas of greatest sex work within the city; rather, they constitute spaces of liminality and contested use, nearly always situated along gentrifying borderlands. Put simply, the PFZ empowers officers to ban particular bodies suspected of engaging in sex work, or have been previously identified by officers has having engaged in sex work. These bodies are then banished from the zone (often a 4-8 block radius) during an active PFZ, of which legally can last no longer than 240 hours (10 days). While PFZs in DC do have this time limit, they may be reinstituted numerous times such that the same few blocks are off limits to a number of bodies at least several weeks out of each month.

The first PFZ was put into effect Friday September 8, 2006 as a way in which to protect the 'health and safety' of residents, according to Charles H. Ramsey, Chief of the Metropolitan Police under Williams. Immediately following the first implementation of a PFZ in DC, the MPD released this statement on their website (MPD 2006):

001 "While some people may
002 still want to characterize prostitution as
003 a 'victimless crime,'
004 nothing could be further from the truth
005 for those residents
006 who must endure

007 the presence of prostitutes
008 and their paraphernalia
009 in our neighborhoods,” Chief Ramsey said.
010 “Our city
011 has made great progress
012 over the last several years
013 in reducing prostitution –
014 in particular, the presence of
015 brazen street walkers in many of
016 our communities.
017 But we know we must do even more
018 to combat this very serious problem.
019 The new Prostitution Free Zone law
020 will give our officers
021 one more tool
022 for moving prostitutes
023 and their johns
024 off the corner
025 and out of our neighborhoods,” he added.

Figure 27. Ramsey’s PFZ Statement

As evidenced in this text, Ramsey constructs a very clear binary between that which is ‘us’ and that which is ‘them.’ Ramsey situates ‘us’ as those ‘residents who must endure’ (27:005-006) and ‘them,’ as the prostitutes (27:007). He continually reproduces this imagined binary, wherein neighborhoods (27:009, 26:025), communities, (27:016) officers (27:020) belong to ‘us,’ the good landowning citizen, protected by the nation-state’s soldiers: the officers and the chief of police, himself. Ramsey clearly structures ‘them,’ the ideological other, here as the ‘brazen’ prostitute,’ who pollutes with disregard the neighborhood with their mere presence (27:007) ambiguous paraphernalia (27:008) and their ‘johns’ (27:023). He situates these prostitute bodies as dangerous, dirty and a threat to safety of the public; within this paradigm, sex workers are placeless entities, embodying illegality, always corrupting the moral landscapes of the good and incapable of community and residence. In short, their bodies represent the perfect example of that which the nation-state deplores: that which not only should, but must, be destroyed. Disturbingly, Ramsey engages here in a kind of “population management and socio-

spatial control with discourses of community, risk and security” as a means in which to subdue the potential to render the ‘prostitute’ a citizen (Sanchez 2004:871). That is, these bodies are not deserving of nation-state protection, home and place but rather exemplify that which is foreign, reviled and dangerous.

In addition to more ‘stereotypical’ acts of prostitution, such as approaching cars and offering sex in return for money, the following all constitute legitimate grounds for arrest and forced removal, according to the MPD policy, as:

Information from a reliable source indicating that a person being observed routinely engages in or is currently engaging in prostitution or prostitution-related offenses within the Prostitution Free Zone...Knowledge by an officer that the person is a known participant in prostitution or prostitution-related offenses. (MPD 2009)

According to this policy, if one has ever been convicted or simply been ‘known’ to engage in ‘prostitution or prostitution-related offenses’ their mere presence in a PFZ constitute grounds for removal and arrest. That is, these bodies are marked, *permanently*, as deviant, pathological and inherently criminal. What the MPD’s website does not detail is how women of color, in many cases *trans* women of color, are picked up and arrested for simply being in the area. In many cases, having over 2 condoms on one’s person has been used to constitute grounds for arrest (Alliance for a Safe & Diverse DC 2008). When 95.4% of sex workers have had interactions with the police in the city, with 57.7% resulting in negative experiences framed by police assault, abuse, negligence or apathy, the maintenance of ‘safety’ through this police intervention appears to reference those who lodge the complaints, rather than the bodies under investigation (Alliance for a Safe & Diverse DC 2008:32-33).

Perhaps not surprisingly, areas currently designated as PFZs are not necessarily areas known for high degrees of sex work; rather, these areas, such as the intersection of 5th ST NW and K ST NW, occupy a zone experiencing the beginnings of intense gentrification. This area

was once home to abandoned warehouses, a smattering of nightclubs and lower income residential homes, all overlooking a major Interstate entrance. Now, a massive high-end condominium complex has sprung up in recent years, along with a series of businesses catering to the young elite: gyms, bookstores and coffee shops. As complaints grew from these new condominium residents, the MPD stepped in and introduced the PFZ to the area. In other words, the police presence, and the related dislocation of people in space, is in direct reaction to gentrifying pressures; the opinions and desires of the capitally productive (in the formal economy) take precedent over all others.

In many ways PFZs sit at the intersection of the “juridico-political and the biopolitical” (Mitchell 2006:102). The exclusion of ‘undesirables’ from the urban terrain “must be seen as part of a broader process by which the law includes, weighs and assesses all urban denizens” (Carr, Brown and Herbert 2009:1962). That is, deviant bodies come to serve as necropolitical anchoring points, indexing that which is morally suspect and intrinsically disposable. These kinds of “exclusionary regimes” emphasize “the undeserving and the unreformable nature of deviants” (Becket and Weston 2001:44). That is, similar to the cordoning off of prisoners and other ‘enemies of the state,’ zones of exclusion work to physically and socio-politically cut off bodies spatially from the general public. Thus, if we situate one of the basic rights of ‘citizenship’ as the “right to access and use specific kinds of space” zones of exclusion thus operate to delineate between those that qualify as potential citizens, and those that do not (Hubbard 2001:54).

Additionally, PFZs in DC operate in line with what is expected of a ‘post justice city.’ That is, urban policies are emerging “based on social and racial containment, the purification of public spaces, the subsidization of elite consumption, the privatization of social reproduction, the

normalization of economic insecurity and preemptive crime control” (Peck 2004:225). In other words, the state has shifted its investment from supporting the marginalized to directly penalizing them as a means to enhance the experience and lives of the elite. This kind of spatial governmentality, wherein the nation-state’s policies work to “manipulate the spatial order of a regions or community” works to materialize this neoliberal ethos (Sanchez 2003:262). Thus, PFZs do not actually attend to the crux of the ‘crime’ or ‘criminal’ but rather merely shift the practices to a different space not deemed as capially valuable as that within a PFZ.

Maps, PFZs and Trans Death: Ideological Links in Projects of Exceptionality

The particular ways in which trans conceptualizations of space coalesce around Prostitution Free Zones provide a powerfully clear image for how classed, racialized and (cis)sexualist policies and powers impact trans communities in DC. As a reminder, in early 2007, members of the DC Trans Coalition, including myself, began interviewing trans community members about their experiences as a ‘trans’ identifying person living in the district. This research provided the data for the initial phase of a DC-specific trans ‘needs assessment’ conducted by community members in DC (DCTC 2011). As an element of this research, we utilized ‘map making’ as a conduit to discuss lived experience with space and place (a technique explored within gay map making in Leap 2005, 238 and Leap 2009, 205). At the close of this initial phase, we had collected a total of 108 maps and narratives from trans identifying people living in DC, wherein, significantly, 51.8% of all participants referred to the ‘strolls’ as areas they consider trans space (DCTC 2011:2). Strolls, or areas identified by community members or police as areas where sex workers gather to find clients, was the topic of greatest representation within the entire first phase. Importantly, these areas were not discussed as *simply* spaces in which one works but rather were overwhelmingly situated as places in which

one goes to *find community*. Put bluntly, over half of those who participated in this project, predominantly trans women of color, reframed the spaces in which they are the *most suspect*, vis-à-vis PFZs and other policies, as the very spaces they travel to in order to find community. Placed in context with the power afforded to police to legally profile bodies deemed out of place through the PFZ policy, the strolls come to function as the perfect necropolitical spatial management system, funneling bad bodies directly into machinery of the criminal industrial complex. In other words, the contested liminality of the space of the stroll provides a platform in which young trans feminine bodies of color are rendered necropolitically disposable. The violence perpetrated against them, whether at the hands of those on the streets or from the police becomes justified. Brown feminine bodies are assigned the category of ‘sex worker’ and thus, henceforth, may be plucked from the streets by police, when the only ‘crime’ committed was one of visibility.

Alexis, a black trans woman in her mid-thirties and also a DC-native, was one of the participants of this project who discussed her relationship to the strolls in DC. She spoke with sadness about all the places in the city she used to go but that she could not go to anymore. She produced a map of DC that represents a ghost image of that which once was (Figure 27). At first glance, her map follows a traditional map of DC, taking care to identify major roads framing the off-center diamond shape of the city. But, with deeper inspection, her maps represent a particular series of streets and places that she intermittently labels with an emphatic “Hell No.” She lists out bars and clubs, some existing and others torn down to make way for a baseball stadium (discussed in rich detail in Leap 2009). She also marks out THE, or Transgender Health Empowerment, an organization working to provide support and services to trans women seeking

to get out of sex work. Streets such as North Capital Street (of which divides the Northeastern and Northwestern quadrants of the city) and Georgia Avenue are prominently featured, with

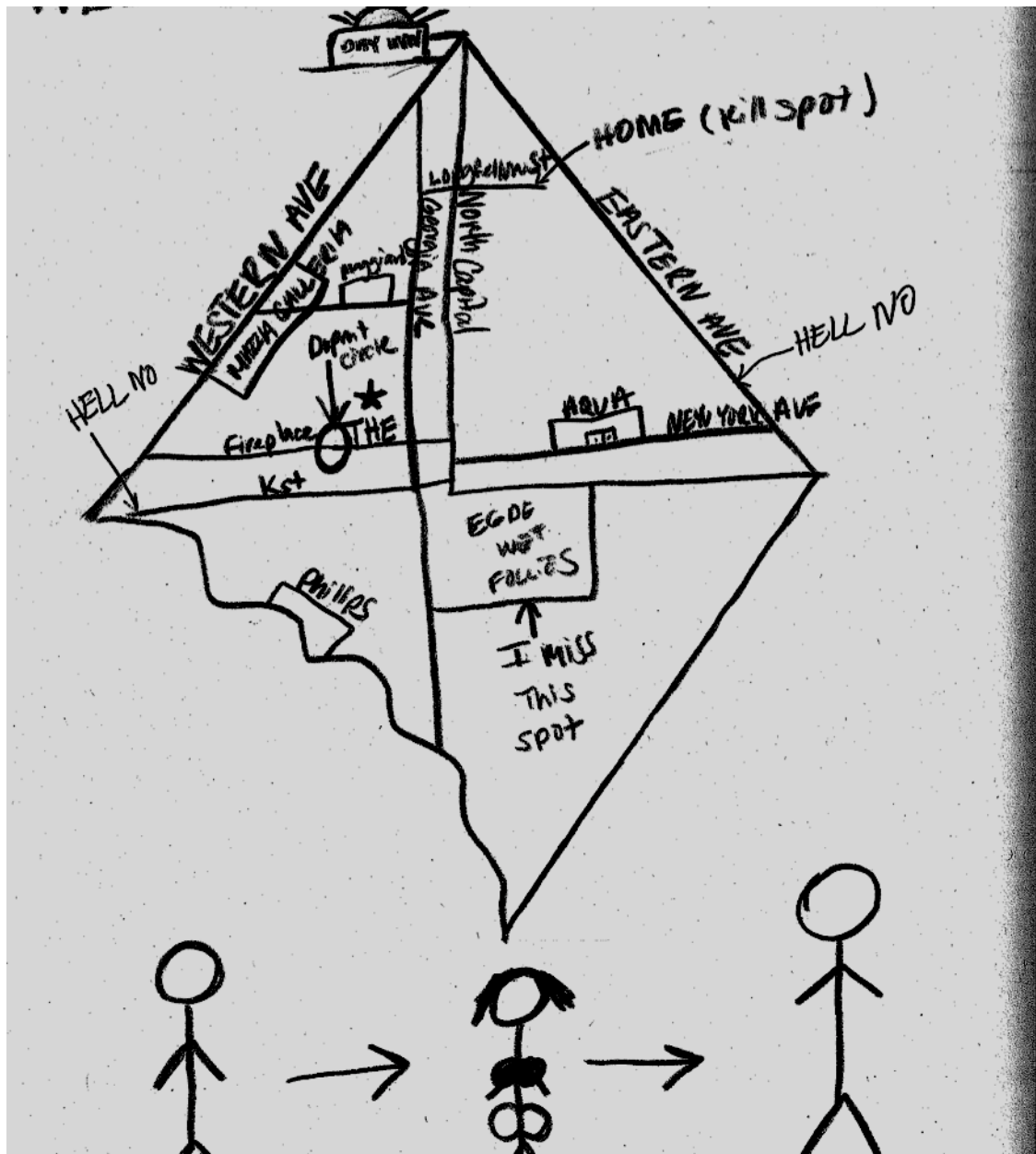


Figure 28. Alexis' Map

Western and Eastern Avenues, the Northwestern and Northeastern perimeter roads of DC, clearly labeled. K Street (Northwest), New York Avenue (limited to Northeast within this map) are the prominent roads travelling east and west, although, unlike Western Avenue, North Capital Street

and Eastern Avenue, neither border the northern quadrants from the southern quadrants. Instead, their inclusion is one of great commonality among those who participated in this project as a place to meet friends and hang. But, as police and public officials take great care to make known, these areas are also known as trans sex worker strolls. For Alexis, as someone with a criminal record related to sex work, and as someone who has struggled with substance reliance issues, these streets are laden with a particular kind of danger. As discussed earlier, with the advent of Prostitution Free Zones, a person with a criminal record can face additional charges for merely being present in these spaces. This fact is not lost of Alexis, and each ‘Hell No’ street has also been the site of a Prostitution Free Zone. In short, Alexis faces the possibility of incarceration were she to engage with her community in the wrong place, at the wrong time. Moreover, one of the most conspicuous elements of Alexis’ map is her inclusion of ‘Home’ which, as she labels, is very close to a site of where a trans woman has been murdered.

In many ways, a ‘trans DC’ for Alexis is a city of battles between ideological productivity and criminalized transgression. She features bars that have been erased through gentrification, as well as areas where hyper-policing and policy prevent her from going. She clearly recognizes the danger implicit to simply being a visible trans feminine person but also the demands made upon her by the nation-state to adhere to a particular kind of productivity under the threat of arrest and, in some cases, death.

We see a similar kind of battle taking place in Danielle’s map (Figure 28). A black trans woman in her mid-twenties, Danielle depicts the city as one where THE is featured prominently in the middle of the map, with the title caption of “this place has helped me a great deal.” Near the bottom of the map, she features her church, another beacon of support. In her map, THE is a

central figure that overshadows the presence of K Street and Eastern Avenue, both known sex worker strolls.



Figure 29. Danielle's Map

That is, through this juxtaposition, she situates THE as operating to displace the importance, and danger, these streets may serve in her life. The support, and community, THE can provide serves to supplant that which many others in this project have found on those streets. THE is the 'good'

space and the strolls on K Street and Eastern Avenue, where Lashai Mclean was murdered and two other trans women shot, occupy spaces to be avoided.

The Mayor's Response: Project Empowerment and Trans Citizenship

Following several particularly violent months for young trans women of color (along the strolls and otherwise) the Mayor's office responded to growing public outcry and offered up a solution: they would hold an employment training class for trans community members. As evidenced in this proposed solution to address violence against trans women, bodies can shift from necropolitical disposability to biopolitical worth, but only through playing the role of the good neoliberal citizen.

While no statistics exist for trans employment rates in DC, the only nationwide study conducted about trans communities reveals that unemployment and underemployment are profound issues for many trans community members nationally. The first nation-wide report of its kind, conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in 2009, reported grim findings as to the general livelihoods of the general trans population. Respondents experienced twice the rate of unemployment compared to the general population with 97 % reporting harassment or mistreatment on the job due to their transgender status. Moreover, according to this study, 15 percent of trans respondents reported living on \$10,000 a year or less, twice as high as the general population. Finally, 19 percent have been or are homeless; 11 percent have faced an eviction; and 26 percent have been forced to find temporary space (NGLTF 2009). Other studies across the US report similar findings, with trans women of color often facing the greatest degree of homelessness, un/underemployment and police abuse and discrimination (Davis and Wertz 2010:467, Clements-Nolle et al 2001:915, Wilson et al 2009:902). To be certain, these statistics are a stark

reminder that many trans community members do not have the same kind of access to employment that members of the LGB spectrum may enjoy. Moreover, trans people of color, particularly those identifying within a feminine spectrum, are likely to find themselves turning to street based work in order to survive. As a result, many are more likely to experience victimization as a result, whether from the general population or from police.

In September 2011, the Mayor's office began holding weekly meetings between the Mayor, Vincent Gray, his Liaison to the LGBT community, Jeffrey Richardson, and the Chief of Police, Cathy Lanier, with trans activists and community members. Over the course of these meetings, taking place alongside growing reports of violence against trans women, Gray provided a solution: get the women off the streets and into jobs. To be certain, employment and employment services have been a demand of trans activists and community members for many years in the district. This proposed solution by the administration marked the first time local government actively acknowledged the impact poverty, criminalization and transphobia had in putting trans women's lives in danger. As an immediate way to address joblessness and unemployment, Gray's office offered to hold a trans-specific 'Project Empowerment' program, an employment training and placement program already offered through DC's Department of Employment Services (DOES).

Project Empowerment is a 5 million dollar work-training program offered by DOES to provide subsidized training and support, as well as find viable work, for DC residents facing a number of institutional barriers to employment. As detailed on the DOES website, Project Empowerment is a:

welfare-to-work program [that] begins with orientation and pre-employment assessment at which time barriers to employment are diagnosed, and an individually tailored employability plan is devised for each participant...these components are tied together

through a continuous regimen of case management and job coaching, which provides support for the participant and employer. (DOES 2011)

Importantly, like many government-initiated programs, Project Empowerment requires several key standards be met for one to qualify for the program. As hinted to in the DOES description, one cannot be currently participating in any publicly subsidized programs, including foods stamps or disability. Moreover, one must pass regular drug tests and dress conservatively to the classes or face the threat of being dropped from the program. Participants are paid DC's hourly minimum wage (\$8.25 per hour) for their participation in the daily course, which covers issues spanning from how one should present oneself in a work situation to how to write a resume. Following the 6-week series of these classes, participants are finally paid the wages they have been earning through training and placed with local partner agencies (such as the DC Metro system) for employment and are continued to be paid at minimum wage. Following several months of this initial placement, the partner agency is then invited to hire the participant on officially, but not required to do so.

This program provides a very clear structure for how the capitally (and ideologically) unproductive, in this case victimized trans women (predominantly of color), are to be recuperated by the nation-state. In other words, the demands of this program outline how one is to access productive citizenship. Rather than regard citizenship as a simple 'rights and duties' model, I employ here a definition of citizenship that demands "the performance and contestation of the behavior, ideas, and images of the proper citizen" (Manalansan 2003:14). Indeed, one is not simply born into citizenship; one must actively cultivate and reproduce ideologies sanctioned by the nation-state. The use of drugs, the reliance on public assistance and even how one dresses are all tied to claims, and rights, to citizenship in this context. During this citizen purgatory one is only 'worth' the literal minimum one can legally be paid, of which does not

constitute a living wage. On this meager budget one can expect to only earn in one week what some were earning in a single night working the streets or working in other grey or black economies. To be recuperated by the nation-state, they must turn over their bodies, their labor and even rights to travel where they might like to go in the city.

In short, the mayor's solution to curb violence against trans feminine bodies of color functions to create a binary in which some are granted the opportunity to claim biopolitical worth at the cost of divorcing themselves from a community that is to be left at the necropolitical wayside. While certainly a way to give some trans women desperately needed jobs, offering up Project Empowerment as a singular solution fails to address the structural violences that promote the ongoing victimization of trans feminine bodies in the streets. Significantly, Gray did not offer to reconsider how the PFZs force women into working more isolated and dangerous areas or how DC's own policies are facilitating the wrongful criminalization and death of trans women in the streets. Instead, his administration offered up a way the women could redeem themselves, as potential citizen worker bodies, further implicating the violence against trans feminine bodies as earned, if not deserved.

Necropower and Vitality: Productive Death

Towards a (Queer) Necronationalism

The ways in which DC officials have managed the violence against visible trans feminine bodies of color within DC landscapes represents a form of what I refer to as *necronationalism*. While necropolitics already implicitly refers to the role of the nation-state in the power to let live and let die, I utilize *necronationalism* to highlight how the technology of letting live and letting die functions to *serve and promote* nationalistic projects. For example, the utilization of the 'death penalty' in the US is justified through discourses of national public safety and security:

they must be killed so that the nation-state may better protect its citizens. In a similar light, one could argue that the media inundation of bodies jumping from the World Trade Center buildings of September 11th 2001 serves an explicit necronationalist function. That is, the annual revitalization of these images serves to remind the American public of how the death of a valuable US citizen justifies the invasion and devastation to ‘Others,’ and all associated necropolitical functions. This kind of example extends easily to one of the most blatant uses of death by the US nation-state to promote nationalistic projects: the death of US soldiers in war times for the US greater good.

Queer Necronationalism: Vitality through the Cannibalism of the Dead

In the context of visible trans feminine bodies of color in DC, the continued violence perpetrated against these bodies functions in a necronationalistic sense. The refusal of the nation-state, and the general public, to acknowledge and attend to the relentless pain inflicted upon these bodies and minds reflects an engagement with nationalistic ideologies that find these bodies to be ideologically and capially unproductive. That is, they are disposable--but productively so. The spectacle of their suffering, and even their death, functions to support the projects which promote their erasure. In other words, the death of a trans feminine body of color supports a circular logic that these bodies are up to no good (which is why they are dead) and thus laws or policies that discriminate against them are moot (because they are up to no good). As long as this cycle is allowed to progress, there exists no impetus to attack the racist, sexist and classist structures and systems of inequality that render their bodies, or any associated practices, pathologies. The continued revitalization of this violence, set alongside lukewarm governmental concern, serves to continually resituate trans feminine bodies of color as not only criminal bodies, but as acceptably disposable bodies. Indeed, when the brutal attack of a white

Midwestern gay man triggers long-lasting campaigns, fundraisers and scholarships for the cessation of violence against the “LGBT” community, while the brutal murder of not one, but several, trans women of color in a single year in DC barely produces a national news report, we are in nothing short of a crisis of humanity.

Epilogue: The ‘Living Dead’ and the Dead Living

One of the participants of the needs assessment project I helped conduct is now dead. She¹⁶ was murdered. Early one morning, still blowing the hot mist rising from the glossy black surface of my morning coffee, I made this discovery. In that terrible moment, my own vitality thrust out against her death, my heart pounded and an arid desert spread through my mouth. I gripped my searing hot mug in my hands, letting the heat sting my skin while I stared back at the images and words staring at me. As the member of the group responsible for maintaining the confidential records of who participated in the project I was, in that moment, the only one who knew how specific elements of her private life story bled into the public narrative of her death story. I was overwhelmed. I desperately wanted to share this now bridged narrative of two disjointed stories: how her life articulated with her death in truly painful ways. But, who was I to decide how, and why, confidentiality might be broken? Who was I to decide what elements of her life should be linked to her death? What are we to do with the death stories of those who had only consensually offered their life stories? Had she died so that others might live? I spent several days struggling to determine how my own ethics articulate and contradict, as an

¹⁶ While I struggled with how to refer to the deceased and retain their anonymity, using gender-neutral language guts her life, and death, story. One of the primary aims of this chapter is to explore how gross inequality within trans communities is further stratified by gender performance and identity wherein trans femininity is of the greatest pathology. To be clear, this is not to claim, or deny, this was a trans feminine identifying person.

anthropologist, an activist, and as a White, gender-normative trans man enabled with all the power and privilege afforded to the segment of the trans community of which I am a member.

I raised these questions during a meeting with local trans community members and activists involved with the needs assessment project. Instead of finding clarity in that room I was reminded of how high the stakes really are, and how the death of a friend, a niece, a daughter or a complete stranger is both an opportunity to loudly mobilize and the time for respectful silence. As the conversation began, suggestions were delicately offered: “What if we just don’t connect their map to their death? Would that be enough anonymity?” “As long as we didn’t use their actual name, it should be okay, right?” But as each voice added to the growing din of ethical and moral confusion, the sense of where the grey area began and ended was increasingly smudged. “What if we ask her family what they want?” one person added, only to be swiftly cut short with a stern and hurt, “Her family hated her.” The voices grew louder, at times choking over the words, tears began to flow and some sought comfort in the shoulders near them. There was no clear answer. There was no distinct right and no distinct wrong. Her death had been her death and her life and been her life. Our choices to make either productive in her absence stem out of our own desires: she can neither consent nor deny our desires to render vitality out of that which is no more. Instead we are left with the macabre paradox of how to manage death with so much life at stake. At the close of that meeting, Carla, a fierce Latina trans woman and a veteran and pioneer of trans activism in DC for the past 30 years left us with these words of wisdom: “We wouldn’t be where we are today if we hadn’t been using the bodies of the dead to get us here.”

CHAPTER 6

TRANS LIVES, TRANS NEEDS AND TRANS RIGHTS: EFFICACY IN EMPLOYMENT NON-DISCRIMINATION AND HATE CRIMES LEGISLATION

In this chapter I investigate the disjunctures that emerge between the lived experiences of those interviewed in this project and the application of laws and public policies intended to provide these subjectivities support. Specifically, I consider here how the 2005 inclusion of gender identity and expression as protected classes in employment non-discrimination policy and the 2009 inclusion in bias-crime reporting in Washington, DC have materially impacted trans-spectrum persons' access to employment or experiences with violence.

I begin by revisiting the most commonly discussed concerns of those who participated in this project: safety, employment, and support. I then explore how these narratives articulate a gap between existing legal protections and lived experience. With these gaps in mind, I consider the potential efficacy and impact of employment non-discrimination' and hate crimes legislation for trans-spectrum subjectivities as a whole. I then consider how these two policies have been articulated as core issues in trans rights by national-level LGBT groups, which, significantly, are relied upon by many local jurisdictions for policy-based direction. Finally, I address how a focus on employment non-discrimination policy and hate crimes legislation at the local and national levels may shift attention away from more pressing issues for trans-spectrum persons.

Trans Lives, Trans Needs: How Materiality, Rights and Policy Interconnect

Thus far in this dissertation, I have primarily documented how trans 'issues,' as a conglomeration of concerns specific to different modalities of trans-spectrum identity and experience in Washington, DC, coalesce around issues of safety, violence and the need for

support. Specifically, I have explored how the participants of this project express ‘trans space’ within their maps of Washington, DC along gradients of safety. Significantly, some spaces, such as sex work/er strolls, represent a kind of liminal space, where safety and danger are modulated against the relative potentials to give or receive support. Finally, I have noted how different policies and laws, such as the Prostitution Free Zone, undergird a necropolitical disregard for particular trans-feminine appearing bodies in these spatial liminalities. In short, the participants of this project have recast Washington, DC as a ‘trans city’ wherein no singularity of trans experience, embodiment or identity exists yet where core issues of safety and support emerge as collective concerns. The narratives and maps collected here reveal that for the 108 participants of this project the centerpieces of ‘trans DC’ cityscapes are dynamic mediations of continuities of danger, threats of assault, and other modalities of violence. Importantly, these narratives and maps also reveal stubborn and committed collectivities of resistance, intra-community support and trans vitalities, much of which occurs within and alongside these planes of danger.

‘Trans Needs’ and ‘Trans Rights’ in DC: Cohesion and Complexity

The maps and narratives collected in this project reflect a diversity of trans-spectrum identities, experiences and embodiments. As noted in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, I have shifted away from using ‘community’ to refer to the participants of this project. Instead, I describe the dynamics of these trans-spectrum subjectivities as a collaborative series of coalitions. I frame trans coalitions as intentional collaborations between multiply invested parties working towards a common goal. In the context of this project, these goals include co-constructions of a ‘trans city’ as well as the identification of core issues facing trans persons living in Washington, DC. Additionally, their participation in this project, as one committed to

‘community’ informed research models, represents an additional expression of coalition building, but this time with me as a researcher.

Participants’ maps and narratives make clear that there exists no unilateral form of ‘trans’ experience that can be meaningfully called upon to define all those classified within a trans ‘community.’ As explored in the first chapter of this dissertation, while the notion of a singular ‘community’ is fundamentally problematic on a number of levels, this concept still functions meaningfully for the participants of this project. For those who participated, the ‘symbolic totality’ and ‘practical multiplicity’ (Miller and Slater 2000:16) of a ‘trans community’ provided a context in which to both locate themselves as a part of broader ‘whole’ and remark upon the contours and differences of trans-spectrum experience. Importantly, the expressions of these contours often took form in terms of discussions of inequity. Thus, this ‘practical multiplicity’ of ‘community’ within trans coalitions provides a conduit to address structural and material inequalities among trans-spectrum identities and practices in Washington, DC.

In order to consider what constitutes ‘trans’ needs or rights this ‘practical multiplicity’ requires close consideration. The normative deployment of ‘trans’ as a gloss for this multiplicity often invariably indexes only hegemonically-associated categories of identity or practice. The modifier ‘trans’ can be applicable to wide array of gender practices and identities. As a result, that which may constitute ‘trans needs’ is exceptionally unclear; the impact of visible gender transgression in life experience is not unilaterally the same impact for all trans-spectrum subjects. As an example, a masculine-identifying and gender normative appearing man, who was also consequently assigned female at birth, may utilize ‘trans’ as a modifier to mark his gendered history or experience. He may or may not experience any gender scrutiny of his current gender performance. Importantly, his ‘post-transition’ experience may differ according to whether he is

living in urban, suburban or rural conditions. Moreover, his racial identity and even size, all impact his experiences, and ultimately needs as a ‘trans’ person. In short, the socio-political impacts borne out of differences in trans-spectrum experience and identity, informed by race, class and ability among other factors, must be considered when attempting to qualify or define ‘trans needs’ and, subsequently, ‘trans rights.’

That said, the extent to which those who participated in this project collectively emphasized certain issues or concerns (such as violence and safety) as relevant to their experience as members of a ‘trans community’ does reflect productive points of continuity and platforms for attending to particular and specific trans needs and rights. As noted in previous chapters, the spatial depictions produced by those who participated in this project, as supplemented by discussions about their maps, focus most heavily on, and are predominantly organized around, themes of safety, fear and risk. Significantly, the spatial element most common to these maps were depictions of sex work/er strolls, which were included in a little over half of all maps. The associated narratives of those who included these strolls on their maps do not suggest that all of these participants engage in sex work. Instead, these narratives describe these areas as spaces of work, where to get and give support, friendship, police harassment and organizational outreach. The second and third most common elements of representation were depictions of organizations (direct service and community based, such as health care clinics or HIPS) and homes and friends’ homes. These locations, similar to sex work/er strolls, are also framed in terms of social networking and support. In short, the most popular themes depicted in the maps collected in this project reflect the importance of locating or creating opportunities for support and contact with other trans identifying persons.

Criminalizing the Need for Support: Sex Work/er Strolls

Sex Work/er strolls are parts of the city where many participants of this project identified the opportunity to connect with and support friends. Importantly, unlike one's home or a service organization, sex work/er strolls are sites of hypercriminalization, violence and the profiling of trans women of color as sex workers. As highlighted in Chapters 1 and 2, representations of space and place in maps should not necessarily be seen as forms of literal representation divorced from the narratives that accompany them. That is, while one could read the representation of sex work/er strolls as evidence that the majority of participants in this project are or were sex workers, the narratives collected alongside these maps reveal a far more complex and nuanced use of sex work/er spaces. Latoya's map (Figure 30) depicts this complexity.

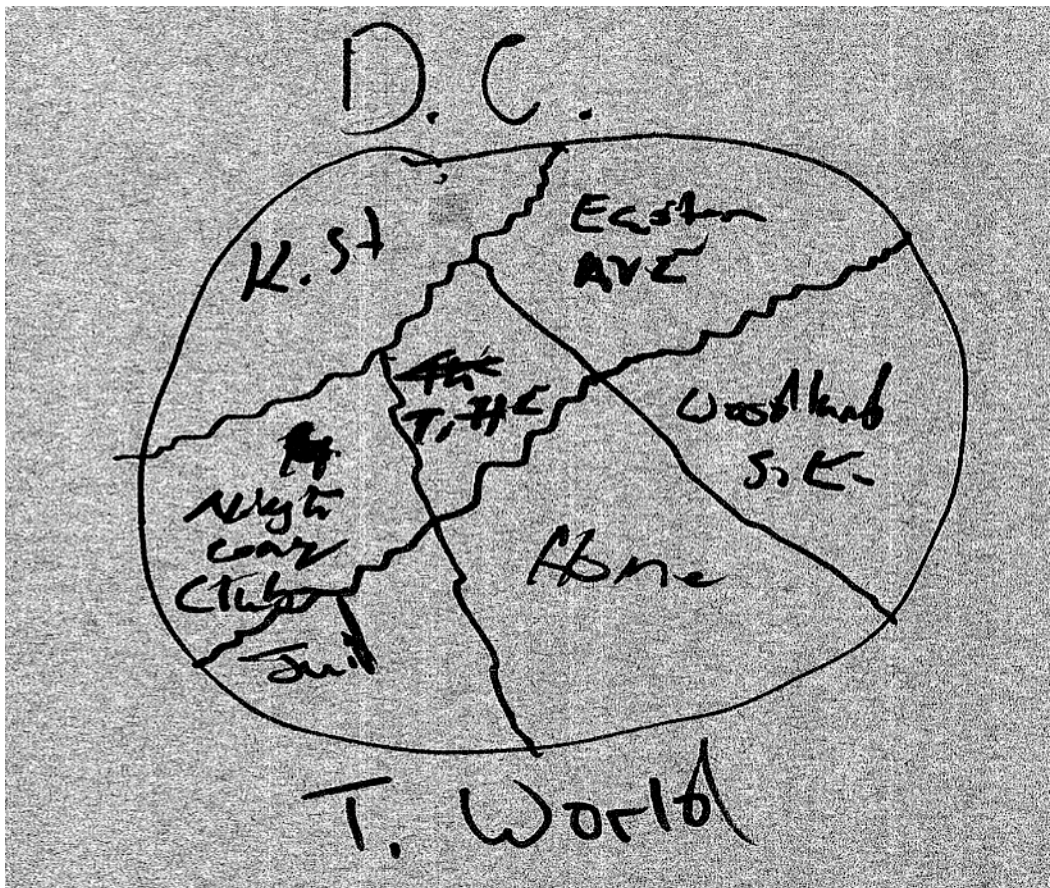


Figure 30. Latoya's Map

Latoya, a black trans woman in her early twenties, fractures the ‘T. World’ of DC into seven distinct frames. The strolls are featured most prominently, with ‘K Street’, ‘Eastern Ave’ and ‘Westland Dr SE’ all occupying their own zones. ‘Home’, ‘Jail’ and the ‘Night clubs’ of DC complete the periphery of her DC, with ‘THE’ (Transgender Health Empowerment) placed in the center of the city. While these spatial designations do fall roughly in line with which quadrant of the city they are located in, this is not a literal depiction of the landscapes of DC. Instead, like the majority of those who participated in this project, she highlights and includes only the spaces and experiences that are central to her construction of a trans DC. In this context, the strolls, occupying nearly half of her map, are an integral part of her life. THE, as an organization providing support for trans women (predominantly of color) interested in no longer engaging in sex work, is featured prominently in the center of the map. But, rather than evaluating these ‘sex work(er)’ spaces in the negative, she articulates them as pieces of a larger co-dependent whole; that is, strolls, even for those not necessarily engaging in sex work, are still an important feature for connecting meaningfully with other young trans women of color in supportive and friendship-based ways. Latoya’s map suggests that those looking to attend to trans needs and rights, as a diverse array of experiences and issues, should include in their discussion the ways sex work, and sex worker space, function to support networks and friendships.

While many narratives in this project reveal that some participants have done or do engage in sex work, these areas, such as the intersections of 5th Street and K Street Northwest, were also specifically described as spaces where many young trans women of color can locate friendship and support. The strolls, represented in a little over half of all maps in this project, should *not* be understood as *only* the site of economies of sex work. The high rate of inclusion within these maps serves to remind us that supportive ‘trans space’ does not necessarily index a

local LGBT center or group, common examples of sorts of ‘community space.’ We see this confirmed in a timely Washington Post article, published in August 2011, only a week prior to off-duty police officer Furr’s attack on a car of trans women (as mentioned in Chapter 5). Significantly, this article, following the nightly activities of ‘Staci,’ a 23 year old trans woman of color, incidentally documents the way young trans sex workers in DC utilize sex work/er strolls for community building. Staci participates in this kind of street based outreach, as someone who engages in sex work at home but not along the strolls, risking her own physical and legal safety to check in on friends and ensure their safety. As the article describes:

Staci, 23, says she doesn’t need to come down here for money. She’s got her own clients from her own escort site. Like some other women, she comes to the strip just to say hey. Socialize. See who’s got a new look. See who got out of jail. Check up on the girls who can only be themselves on this stretch of road at this time of night. Out here she becomes a mother, an aunt and a sister, tossing words of caution and “love yous” to girls whose families couldn’t deal with it all. (Zak 2011:1)

To be certain, the notion that young trans women of color may go to a sex work/er stroll for reasons other than identifying potential clients is not generally publically or institutionally recognized. As discussed in the context of Prostitution Free Zones, where many young trans women of color report being falsely detained and arrested for sex work, the lack of this complexity of understanding in public space has profound implications for the women in these areas. As noted, within a Prostitution Free Zone a police officer is empowered to detain or arrest any person merely *suspected* of engaging in sex work or sex work related activities. As a result of this ‘guilty by association’ policy, many young trans women of color in these areas are developing a criminal record for solicitation, trespass, resisting arrest and other charges that emerge from a resistant ‘criminal’ subject. These criminal records, set alongside the concern of unemployment, raised by nearly all participants in this project, become additional roadblocks to accessing the formal economy and employment. Remarkably, many of those who were at one

point wrongfully charged with solicitation may find themselves with little choice but to engage in sex work to pay for living expenses after finding no inlet into the formal economy.

Access to employment, as one particular trans ‘need,’ is hindered by the over- and unfair criminalization of those in sex work/er areas as well as through additional socio-political roadblocks not generally considered when introducing employment non-discrimination policies. Many young trans people may drop out of high school, or even at a younger age, to escape bullying on campus, at home or within their communities and thus may lack a high school diploma—a requirement for nearly any kind of ‘formal’ employment. Moreover, for some of these trans persons, particularly those coming from or living in poverty, accessible and supportive education may not have been available, further limiting one’s capacity to meet the minimum educational credentials to secure a job. In short, the lack of employment for some trans persons may not simply be an issue of job discrimination, but rather, as the narratives and maps in this project reveal, the result of a complex and interconnected system of inequalities. This kind of disjuncture between lived experience and policy intended to attend to the issue results in ineffective if not somewhat useless law.

Lacking legal or nation-state support services, many of those interviewed in this project identify and construct their own support networks. To be sure, the role and importance of support, whether through friends or LGB or T organizations, emerges as a powerful force that strings maps and multiple kinds of trans lived experience together through out this project. In the context of the variability of trans rights, and what is needed to secure these rights, the issue of support should be carefully considered. Indeed, many of the young trans women of color who participated in this project felt the benefits of supporting friends and other young trans women along the strolls outweighed the very real danger of police profiling and violence.

Acceptable Support: Community Organizations

While support along sex work/er strolls is erased through criminalization, the support offered by select LGB and T groups and organizations does not necessarily offer a workable alternative. Community organizations and activist groups, represented in one-third of all maps, were framed by participants as potential sources of support, whether emotional, psychic or physical. This said, not all organizations included in maps were evaluated positively. Some participants listed particular LGB and T organizations for the sole purpose of identifying their insufficient support of trans needs (as seen in maps included in Chapter 3). And some participants did not include organizations which might be expected to be given broader representation.

Significantly, one particularly salient omission in that regard was ‘The Center,’ a self-touting, all-inclusive LGBT ‘community center’ for the district, which was included in only one map in this project. Alone this is not significant, but in the context where roughly 40 of these maps were produced in a round table setting held in the ‘Center’s’ office, this omission is particularly noteworthy. In this context, the exclusion of the DC Center, which was not necessarily held in great regard by many of the participants of this project, highlights the failures of some local LGB groups to provide meaningful support or opportunity for the trans-spectrum identities or practices. In this particular context, the exclusion of the DC Center was a form of negative evaluation through exclusion; the erasure of this space from the collected maps reflects the insignificance this organization has in trans-spectrum lives.

As a result of the failure of larger LGBT-focused groups to provide sufficient support to the participants of this project, the bulk of their ‘needs’ become addressed through intra-community support mechanisms. This may include visiting friends along the strolls, in their homes, or at trusted LGB and T or sex worker support organizations such as HIPS and DCTC.

Importantly, not every trans-spectrum identifying person experiences the same needs. The varying degree of these needs, such as needing a place to sleep at night, managing chemical reliance issues or violence, all require different resources to adequately support or address. The impact and stress this internal reliance has had on individuals, as friends of or as a visible supportive figure in trans coalitions, has emerged as an unexpected and overlooked trans ‘need.’

Interlude: Phone Call From a Friend

I sit staring at the computer screen, fingers frozen and resting lightly on the keyboard, watching the vertical black line disappear and reappear on a white backdrop, waiting for the words to materialize from thought to screen. I feel the vibrations of a phone call against my thigh and I break away from my staring daze to dig my hand into my pocket to retrieve the buzzing machinery. The screen flashes “Lynn.” I release a deep sigh and answer the call. Lynn is possibly one of the most dedicated, brilliant and passionate activists I have ever met. Her work spans across North and South American, on topics ranging from worker’s rights to women’s rights, from prisoner rights to trans rights. I’ve seen her poetic negotiations silence a room of the angry discontent and her fierce calls to action bring even the most apathetically jaded to movement. She is a trans woman, a single woman support staff, and a leader in every way. She has mentored, supported and provided comfort to trans women (among others) in violent relationships, suffering from sexual trauma and general abuse. Most recently, the impact of this work began to take its toll on her. She is now unemployed, homeless and struggling with depression, anxiety and a mounting chemical reliance to a growing list of uppers, downers and in-betweeners. In the past week, she has attempted suicide twice through intentional substance overdosing. Each time she would call me the next day, laugh and remind me she always made

sure someone was nearby. “Harm reduction!” she would pronounce, attempting to minimize the gravity of her near death experiences.

I bring the phone to my ear and shout with all of the auditory support I can muster “Lynn!” Hello!” She’s calling to check on me, she tells me. She says she’s been worried about me; the dissertation writing has been slow, I’m anxious about my uncertain future and she’s heard that some of our friends are worried I’m depressed. I thank her for calling, mumble about the bad job market and attempt to shift the conversation to her in the most delicate way I could. I pause momentarily and ask “How are you, Lynn?” She laughs and says, with an elongated and drawn out “Baaaaaad.” I’m grateful she can’t see the visible anguish on my face. She goes on to explain she’s decided to leave DC for a while; she has come to the conclusion that she is a threat to herself and needs 24-hour care. She and I both know she doesn’t have any health insurance and even with the multiple month long waiting list for local rehab programs, none of them would be a good place for a trans woman. She explains she knows about a house with some radical people who could care for her while she tried to figure her shit out. I shut my eyes, concentrate on the tone of my voice and attempt to reassure her with an excited declaration that it’s so fantastic she has a plan. I casually ask her what bus she thinks she might take out there, trying to keep her on the phone just a moment longer and she says she’s not sure but that she thinks she’s going to leave today or tomorrow. And as quickly as the conversation began, it ends, with her apologizing and saying she needs to run some errands before she leaves. I tell her to take care of herself and she tells me to do the same. As the brief connection ends, I carefully rest the phone on the surface of the desk, and return my gaze to the heartbeat of the vertical black line on the computer screen. I silently hope this isn’t the last time I’ll hear her voice.

Eva, a Latina trans woman in her early 30's highlights the importance trans women like Lynn play in her life and the lives of other Latina trans women. As discussed in Chapter 3, at the close of each roundtable participants were asked to supply a list of questions or concerns they would like to see included in the next phase of the DCTC needs assessment on 'trans communities' living in the city. Eva provided fourteen questions she viewed as important to understanding and documenting the lived experience of trans-spectrum persons living in DC.

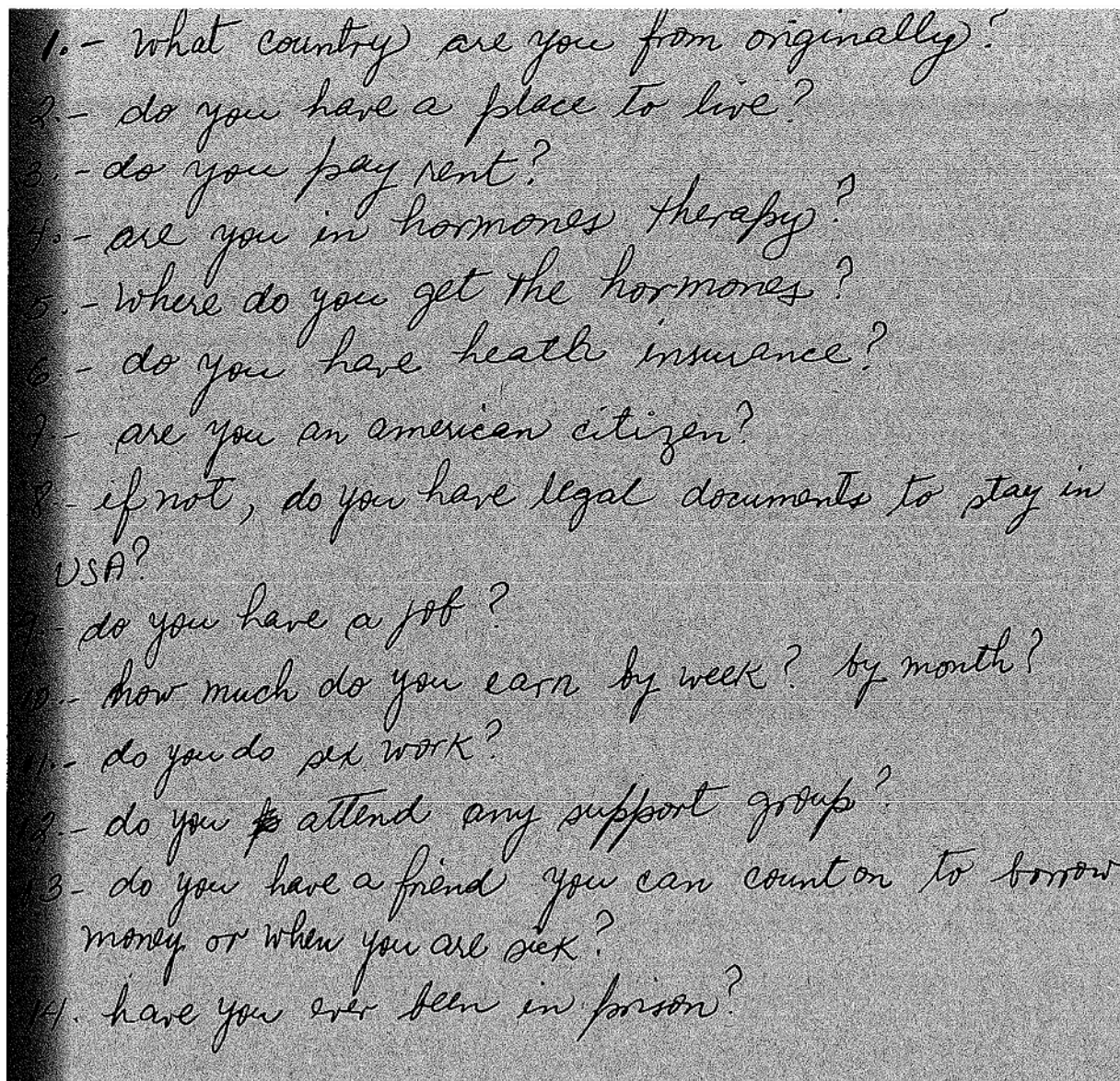
- 
- 1.- what country are you from originally?
 - 2.- do you have a place to live?
 - 3.- do you pay rent?
 - 4.- are you in hormones therapy?
 - 5.- where do you get the hormones?
 - 6.- do you have health insurance?
 - 7.- are you an american citizen?
 - 8.- if not, do you have legal documents to stay in USA?
 - 9.- do you have a job?
 - 10.- how much do you earn by week? by month?
 - 11.- do you do sex work?
 - 12.- do you ~~to~~ attend any support group?
 - 13.- do you have a friend you can count on to borrow money or when you are sick?
 - 14.- have you ever been in prison?

Figure 31. Eva's Question List

In this list, seen in Figure 31, she begins with concerns of citizenship and documentation, which quickly give way to a number of issues pertaining to money, access to trans and health-related resources and employment, rounded out by questions pertaining to prison and criminalization. The questions that most stand out in this list are questions 12 and 13, which are most concerned with one's connections to economies of support rather than organized around one's *personal* articulation with the nation-state and capital, as the other twelve questions do. In these two questions she asks: "Do you attend any support group?" and, in question number 13 "Do you have a friend to count on to borrow money or when you are sick?" In effect, Eva is identifying the crucial role of personal modalities of support to the degree that she would identify this issue as among the top concerns data collectors should be invested in. In this context the nation-state operates to limit or allow for mobility, as does access to a stable income and housing. But, it through the *personal support networks* that one secures mental, metaphysical and even physical safety.

Importantly, the kinds of support Lynn personally offers, and undoubtedly needs, are technically available through several trans-related direct service groups in DC. Unfortunately, due to a loss of funding related to DC budget cuts, the cessation of relied-upon grants and a late 2011 federal ban on public funds to subsidize syringe exchanges programs, the capacity for organizational support has been heavily gutted. As a result, many of the services and programs offered by organizations traditionally responsive to trans-spectrum issues, such as Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive (HIPS) and Transgender Health Empowerment (THE), have been terminated. One such program was HIPS' Diversion Support program, which provided client advocacy in and out of the courtroom for those facing criminal charges related to sex work of who generally only had their court-appointed, often-transphobic lawyers to advocate on their

behalf. These organizations provide psychosocial, partial medical (in the forms of HIV testing, a source of safer sex and injection materials), and partial monetary support for those most at-risk for violence and (un/der)employment in DC. Significantly, these groups have lost such a degree of funding that HIPS has lost nearly half of their operating budget and THE has been forced to partially close their limited bed shelter for queer youth, the only shelter of its type in DC.

Additionally, one of the only syringe exchange programs in DC was forced to close its doors permanently (Prevention Works) in 2010 due to a loss of sufficient funding. And as a final nail in the coffin for subsidized syringe exchange programs, in December 2011 Congress passed a version of the Fiscal-Year 2012 Budget which included a provision to reinstate a ban on allowing federal funds to be used for syringe exchange programs (for entire text see House 2011:159). At the time of this writing, DC may continue to utilize local funds as they deem fit but the extreme limitations presented by this reinstated policy will only further thin local funds now necessary to make up for federal gaps.

To only further compound the lack of accessible and affordable trans-related health care, one of the only subsidized health care programs in DC, DC Unity, a sub-contracted program of DC Medicaid, has shifted to a privatized model, which now, under the guidance of the highest bidding corporation, no longer covers trans medical needs, such as hormones. It should be noted, DC Unity is the only contracted healthcare provider to those housed in DC's jails. Thus, the neoliberal turn in increasing the privatization of the welfare state, such as health care, has served to rob many of DC's poorest and most disenfranchised trans people from the support services they need for survival and, now, from even the most essential of medical care. For those without jobs with associated health insurance programs, there are few options for locating and affording health care.

Unfortunately, the gutting of funding for trans-spectrum direct service organizations, as well as the shrinking of public programming, has resulted in an unevenness and growing gap in programming and services for lower-income trans-spectrum persons in DC. With few other options, the onus of responsibility and protection of the citizen has fallen back on the nation-state, which, in this context, would refer to policies and laws intended to address inequities. I explore here how the inclusion of gender identity and expression within two particular pieces of legislation—employment non-discrimination and bias crimes—has functioned to close this gap.

Employment Protection and Hate Crimes Law:
Washington, DC as a Case Study

Data collected in national and city-specific surveys about trans-identifying populations reveal disproportionate rates of violence and employment discrimination. Thus, theoretically, introducing and establishing law and policy that provide legal protections from employment discrimination, or greater support in cases of violence, would represent a logical goal for advocates. Significantly, at the time of this writing, DC is one of roughly only 140 jurisdictions in the US that provides protection for gender identity and expression in its Employment Non-Discrimination legislation, officially included in 2005 (§ 2-1402.1. Subchapter II, Human Rights Act of 1977¹⁷). As of 2009, only 13 states in the US identify gender identity and expression as protected categories in hate crimes legislation. Objectively, the early adoption of these laws could be interpreted as the city's commitment to ensuring the safety and vitality of its trans residents. Unfortunately, as evidenced in the narratives collected in this project, as well the outcomes of the particularly brutal summer of 2011 for young trans women of color, the efficacy of either of these laws to provide substantive trans rights is questionable.

¹⁷ Available at <http://ohr.dc.gov/ohr/cwp/view,a,3,q,491858,ohrNav,%7C30953%7C.asp>

DC's Human Right's Act and Employment Non-Discrimination

In 2005, 'Gender identity and Expression' was added to DC's 30-year-old Human Right's Act, providing legal protection for trans and gender non-conforming people in the work place, along with issues of housing, education and public space. The core premise of the Human Rights Act is that:

Every individual shall have an equal opportunity to participate fully in the economic, cultural and intellectual life of the District and to have an equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of life, including, but not limited to, in employment, in places of public accommodation, resort or amusement, in educational institutions, in public service, and in housing and commercial space accommodations (§ 2-1402.01.; OHR 2007:1).

Those included within the protected categories are to be allowed to, without hindrance, participate as full citizens. Not only are they technically granted access to capital productivity, they are to be granted access to ideological productivity, in the forms of 'cultural and intellectual' productions of life. Also included in DC Human Right's Act is a clear statement about the particular economic responsibilities on the part of the employer with regard to the law:

To fail or refuse to hire, or to discharge, any individual; or otherwise to discriminate against any individual, with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, including promotion; or to limit, segregate, or classify his employees in any way which would deprive or tend to deprive any individual of employment opportunities, or otherwise adversely affect his status as an employee (§ 2-1402.11.;OHR 2007:1)

This statement, while making very clear stipulations with regard to allowing a natural progression of economic success, does not make any statements with regard to education, work history or criminal record. These kinds of issues, such as a spotty work history or an inadequate educational background plague many of the most disenfranchised of trans-spectrum persons in DC. While this law provides a critically need platform through which trans persons are able to maintain their civil right to engage in sanctioned capital productively unhindered, for those who

may struggle to qualify for gainful employment this law falls short. This law is only effective insofar as it protects those who qualify for employment. Ironically, in this case, in order to not face discrimination at the work place, one must first have a work place to speak of¹⁸.

¿Son Legales?: The Other Kind of Employment Discrimination: Documentation

Another staggering roadblock for many trans subjects in securing employment is one of documentation. That is, in order for one to legally secure a job in the US one must be able to provide documents that function to identify one's legal right to work, and, subsequently, one's citizenship status. These documents, such as a passport, driver's license, or other state-issued Identification Cards, all display an identifying photo, one's legal name, gender, home address and certain phenotypic features, such as height, weight and age. Unless one desires to make their trans history or present known to their potential employer, one's documentation must align with their gender presentation. The process of changing name and gender markers on these documents, if one even desires to alter their identity documents, can be extremely complicated, often confusing, and, in terms of gender marker changes, at times impossible. The process of changing one's name on a state issued document, such as a driver's license, is a state dictated process. Thus, depending on where one currently lives, one may need to only pay a small processing fee to a county clerk or, in other jurisdictions, must hire a lawyer and sit in front of a judge for a name change consideration. Similarly, to alter one's gender on a legal document, such as a driver's license or passport, one must follow the process laid out by the state. In some cases, such as in Virginia, the state immediately to the south of DC and where many people

¹⁸ Unfortunately, there are, at the time of this writing, no DC-specific statistics documenting rates of unemployment among trans-spectrum persons in DC. This lack of data is due in large part to the failure of DC government to include trans-specific language in any of their modalities for data collection of the under or unemployed.

living in DC may have been born, one cannot legally change one's gender on their birth certificate without evidence of having had particular genital surgeries. For trans men born in Virginia wishing to change their Birth Certificate (and thus their legal gender on their passport) this would be a Phalloplasty, a surgery costing upwards of \$100,000 which few could afford and or may not even desire. In other words, even for those that are citizens of the US, have a formal education and are well qualified for a job, a lack of representative legal documentation may keep one from feeling comfortable to apply for a job, regardless of extant legal protections.

Possessing documentation allowing one to 'legally' work is not an issue limited to trans persons. For immigrants living in DC, documentation is an immense issue and, in many cases, gender transgression further complicates the ability to secure the appropriate legal documentation. Nicola, a middle-aged Latina trans woman touches on these concerns in her list of questions to be included in a DC needs assessment survey (Figure 32).

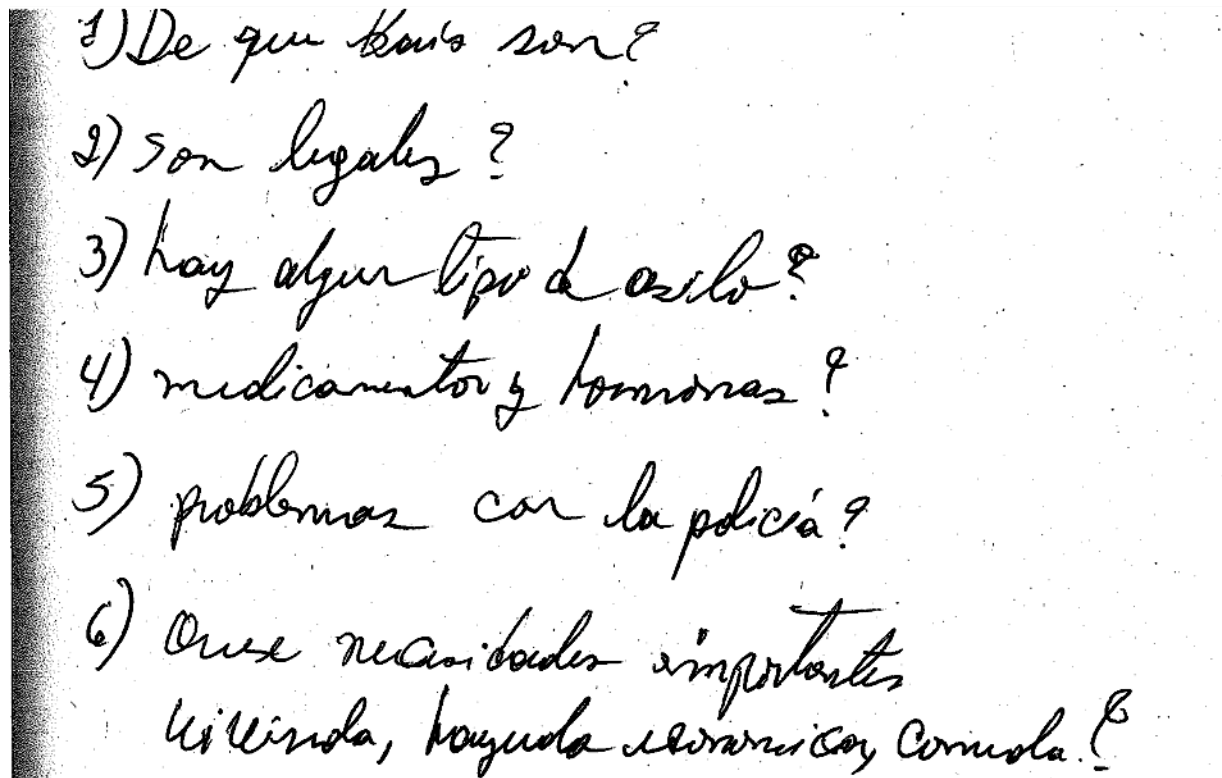
- 
- A photograph of a handwritten list of six questions in Spanish, written in black ink on a light-colored background. The questions are numbered 1 through 6. The handwriting is cursive and somewhat informal.
- 1) De que temas son?
 - 2) Son legales?
 - 3) Hay algun tipo de costo?
 - 4) medicamentos y hormonas?
 - 5) problemas con la policia?
 - 6) Que necesidades importantes
vivir en DC, trabajo, servicios, comunidad?

Figure 32. Nicola's Question List

- 1) *De que pias son?* (what country are you from?)
- 2) *Son legales?* (are you legal/[a documented immigrant]?)
- 3) *hay algun tipo de asilo?* ([do you have] any type of asylum?)
- 4) *medicamentos y hormonas?* ([do you have/where do you get] medication and hormones?)
- 5) *problemas con la policia?* ([do you have] trouble/problems/issues with the police?)
- 6) *Que necesidades importantes vivienda, ayuda economica, comida?* (what [are your] important needs, housing, financial help, food?)
- 7) any federal protección? ([do you have] any federal protection?)

Figure 33. Translation of Nicola's Question List¹⁹

In this list, Nicola primarily focuses on issues of legal documentation, trouble with the police and whether one's needs are met. Importantly, she asks whether one is 'legal' as a 'documented' immigrant. To be certain, while lacking documentation that aligns with one's gender presentation is a roadblock to employment, lacking *any* documentation validating one's presence in a country presents a nearly insurmountable obstacle to formal employment. As reflected in her remaining questions, lacking access to formal employment, and risking deportation and arrest from police, issues such as health care and access to basic needs, such as food and housing, emerge as primary issues to be considered. Again, a law prohibiting discrimination based on trans identity serves to protect those already locatable within certain securities of privilege; however for those most disenfranchised from economies of privilege, such as those lacking marketable skills and those who are undocumented or lack federal '*protección*' one has little choice but to rely on networks of persons who are either in, have been or are supportive of those in similar positions of precariousness for the most basic of human needs.

Uneven Distribution: The Application of Hate Crimes Legislation in DC

The critique of hate crimes legislation is not unique to this project or a new concern (Lee 2003, Dyer 2000, Crooms 1999, Kohn 2002, and for a particularly detailed genealogy and account see Spade and Willse 2000). Within DC, the utility of the penalty enhancement afforded

¹⁹ My thanks to E. Nell Haynes, William Leap and Esther Lopez for their assistance with this translation.

by hate crimes laws related to gender identity and expression is uncertain, at best. Not only are more violent crimes being reported against trans persons since the protections first came into effect, fewer are being qualified as bias crimes by the MPD. Moreover, as of October 2011, MPD reports zero hate crimes motivated by bias against gender identity and expression (MPD 2011). This, in context of the deadliest and most violent summer against trans women since trans-related hate crimes have been recorded, confounds the very logic that compels the utilization of hate crimes legislation.

In 1989, DC enacted their own hate crimes law (DC Code §§ 22-4001 to 22-4004) of which, according to the DC MPD website “provides for increased penalties whenever a crime is motivated by bias or hate” (MPD 2011). Also available on the DC MPD website is a statement regarding the fracturing capacity of ‘bias crimes’ in a community:

Unlike other crimes that target individuals, bias-related acts have a tremendous effect on an entire community. When one person is targeted because of his or her race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or other characteristic, others in the community who were not the direct targets of the hate crime may also feel at risk. Tensions between different communities can also arise as a result of a hate crime (MPD 2011)

MPD recognizes through this statement that the violence committed against an individual reverberates across an entire community of persons. Feelings of alienation, a lack of safety, anger and fear are all fueled by crimes committed in those of whom may be identified as particularly vulnerable targets.

Importantly, DC MPD did not begin collecting gender identity and expression based bias crime separately from sexual orientation until 2009. In each year since, between only four to ten ‘gender identity and expression’ based crimes were recorded. In contrast, Sexual orientation-based bias crimes in the same time period fail to fall below 19 (in 2007) and peak with 35 (in 2010). Oddly, given the notable murders, robberies and stabbings of young trans women of

color in 2011, MPD reports no cases of gender identity and expression bias crimes. In contrast, they currently report seven sexual orientations bias crimes for 2011 (MPD 2011).

Even the proposed benefits of hate crime legislation have been lost in the majority of the most publicized and heinous crimes committed against trans person in DC. Specifically, the August 2009 murder of Tyli'a Nana Boo Mack, a 21-year old black trans woman stabbed to death during a sunny weekday afternoon, was never classified by MPD as a hate crime despite the testimony of an unidentified witness to the crime, a friend of Nana Boo, which maintains the attacks were motivated by their gender presentation. The most recent murders of Lashai Mclean (July 2011) and Gigi/Gaurav Gopalan (Sept 2011) have also not been classified as hate crimes by the MPD, contrary to evidence that would suggest that malice against trans gender identity and expression may have been a factor in their deaths.

While Mack's, McLean's and Gopalan's deaths may simply lack the evidence needed to classify them as hate crimes, these were not the only crimes committed against trans people in 2011. MPD police officer Kenneth Furr's off-duty brutal shooting of three trans women, and two of their male friends in August 2011 has also not been identified as a bias or hate related crime by MPD. No one claims that Furr hurled transphobic rhetoric at the car as he shot round after round into the captive occupants of the vehicle (seen in Figure 6.4) but his rebuffed attempts to secure sex from either of the trans women he shot at in the car would suggest of bias motivated this attack. Multiple witness accounts of the event maintain that Furr yelled from the car's hood, after mounting it and firing his car into the car, "Imma kill you all." This statement, placed in context with an earlier dispute between the trans women and Furr, wherein they refused his sexual advances, provides a glimpse into the possible motivation behind his violent attack.



Figure 34: Remnants of Kenneth Furr's Attack²⁰

Witnesses maintain that after Furr flashed his gun at the victims from his car, they, along with their friends, attempted to get away from Furr in their own car. Furr, after colliding his car into theirs, jumped onto the hood of their car and began shooting at them. At the time of this writing, Furr, after having solicited, harassed, threatened and shot at five people at close range, currently faces only one count of assault with a dangerous weapon from Department of Justice. This charge carries a maximum sentence of only 10 years and will not include a hate-crime enhancement (D.C. Criminal Code § 22-402).

Finally, none of the nearly weekly reports of assaults and attempted robberies against trans women of color during the summer months of 2011 were identified as hate-based or bias crimes. If the logic behind maintaining hate crimes legislation is to bring harsher penalties to those who commit crimes against 'protected' classes of persons as a means in which curb future bias-related violence, the complete absence of any hate crimes qualification in these cases is

²⁰<http://www.wjla.com/articles/2011/08/kenneth-furr-d-c-police-officer-arrested-in-connection-with-shooting-65769.html>

particularly disturbing. This then calls into question the efficacy of hate crimes legislation if it has failed to be applied to what, by most standards, would be considered a chain of transphobic violence. Undoubtedly, one central issue impeding the application of bias to a crime would be MPD's unspoken requirement that certain language be deployed during the commission of the crime. If there are no survivors or witnesses present during the crime event, the potential for a hate crime qualification would then be rendered extremely difficult if not impossible. The letter of the law does not indicate what kind of language is necessary for the crime to be considered committed with 'bias,' but it allow for symbolic non-verbal aggressive acts to fall under a bias category (such as the application of a swastika or the presence of a burning cross). In the cases of the trans women who have been attacked or murdered along known trans sex worker strolls (as with the murders of Mack or Mclean) the symbolism of these attacks, as crimes committed against trans women in areas with visible trans women, should not be disregarded as insignificant. If nothing else, the narratives and maps of those who participated in this project make clear that place is sometimes *everything*. To be certain, even if one were to view social justice as emerging from the harsher penalization of offenders of bias crimes, the current limitations in discursive application of the law in DC along with the hesitancy of the MPD to qualify a crime as a bias crime when in relationship to gender identity and presentation renders DC's bias crime law useless for trans persons under attack.

How to Win Trans Rights: Trans Needs as
Identified by National LGBT
Rights Groups

With this emerging crisis of decreasing access and support within DC, the role of national LGBT groups and their mobilizations around 'trans issues' is of importance. Many local-level LGBT groups across the nation base their policy recommendations upon nation-level LGBT

campaigns. Having highlighted some of the primary concerns of the participants in this project, and the lack of current policies addressing the need for support, I consider here how these issues have been mobilized around by LGBT groups. Employment non-discrimination and hate crimes legislation are often the cornerstones of any ‘trans right’s agenda’ adopted or implemented by progressive LGBT national organizations. Both laws technically provide legal and policy-based protections for certain trans bodies, practices and identities. But, as explored in this chapter, legal policy, and in particular these policies, and material needs and experience don’t necessarily align.

As evidenced not only in this dissertation project, but as documented in a long history of diverse research on trans issues in the US (Denny 1994, Currah et al 2006, Stryker and Whittle 2006), violence and discrimination, and the ways these issues impact family, school, employment and housing, are endemic for many trans and gender transgressing persons. While ‘trans rights’ (as discussed in Currah et al 2006) are composed of a number of issues (including access to affordable health care and housing) the most visible campaigns emerging out of groups specializing in ‘trans rights’ have been focused on two issues: the securing of employment non-discrimination legislation and the inclusion of gender identity and expression in hate crimes policy and law. This trend can be seen most clearly in the largest national groups to subsidize trans specific studies, lobbying events and civil rights events, the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF)²¹. Given the degree to which these groups garner public respect and support for their trans inclusivity and

²¹These are not the only two groups in the US working towards trans rights. Moreover, their agendas, as clearly evidenced on their websites, are inclusive of a myriad of ‘trans rights’ and issues that go well beyond only two projects. I have focused on these groups not only for their success in producing the first national surveys on trans experience in the US but also for their numerous reports explaining, often in great detail, how LGB organizations can integrate trans rights into their agendas and organizations. As respected and successful activists and lobbyists, it is all the more important to note how what they suggest as primary trans concerns is translated into and adopted by the larger LGB mainstream. In other words, what these groups identify as key trans rights to fight for, has an impact on larger national, and perhaps international, discourses on that which composes ‘trans rights.’

mobilizing efforts, I consider here how these two focal points articulate with the issues raised during the course of this project.

As an example, available on the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) website are multiple documents exploring how organizations and individuals can better address the unique needs of trans-identifying persons. This literature offers up solutions to trans-inclusivity through increasing sensitivity to trans ‘issues’ within the target organization. They identify ‘trans issues’ as including the use of correct names and genders for trans people, providing gender neutral bathrooms in the workplace, offering health care that covers transition costs and not discriminating in their own hiring practices (Mottet and Tanis 2008). While these are, unquestionably, important concerns organizations working to improve their treatment of trans persons should consider, this literature neglects to address how what an organization *does* (whether this be socially, politically or capitally) can be shifted to address issues that directly impact trans persons. For example, in order for these suggestions, while important and valuable, to impact trans inclusivity in the workplace, the trans persons in question must first be able to *get* a job.

Instead of identifying systemic issues that foment in the very structures of many corporations and organizations across the US, these groups instead focus on the ways one can make the ‘T’ more visible from the interior. Indeed, it is this kind of practice that, while bringing visibility to some trans issues, does little to impact structural inequalities that keep so many trans persons, impacted by systems of racism, classism and inequality, out of jobs. Lacking a stable income afforded by stable employment, one then occupies a precarious position wherein a lack of income precludes the possibility for stable (and often safe) housing, which in turn renders underground economies and homelessness primary options. This is not to minimize

the importance of gender-accessible bathrooms to trans lived experiences, or the ways non-trans organizations can begin to address the complexity of trans issues. Rather, my point here is to highlight how even the more progressive groups in the US will still discuss trans rights through pre-existing conduits of privilege, such as how to get private health care companies to cover trans-related medical procedures. Unfortunately, this approach neglects to address how those lacking a job, or even those simply lacking the caliber of job that provides health care benefits is to manage with no health care, trans specific or otherwise.

Employment Non-Discrimination Legislation as Trans Rights: Requirements for Effectiveness

Issues of discrimination in employment practices are among the most well documented issues facing trans persons from a wide array of gender, class and racial backgrounds (Koch 2008, Lombardi et al 2001, and Nemoto et al 2004). The concern of employment is certainly highlighted in this project but also within the most expansive survey used to date on trans experience in the US, reaching 6,450 transgender and gender non-conforming people across then nation, conducted by NGLTF and NCTE. This study reports that a staggering 90% of survey participants experienced harassment, mistreatment or discrimination on the job (Grant et al 2011:3). This survey, The National Transgender Discrimination Survey, co-produced by the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, also reveals that white trans people experience double the national rate of unemployment while trans people of color experience *four times* the national unemployment rate (Grant et al 2011:51). Providing protection, particularly at the federal level, for trans people in employment discrimination is, at surface level, an immense step to provide recourse for those who have been harassed, fired or denied employment because of their trans history of present. But, importantly,

for legislation to be effective in protecting trans people from being unfairly fired, or simply not hired, one must first be ‘hirable’ in the most general sense. By this I refer to meeting the most essential demands or requirements the majority of employers request of their applicants: the ability to produce identity documents that prove one’s legal ability to work in US, as well as possessing the skills or credentials required or desired for the position. Finally, we must also consider the *types* of jobs a trans person with limited documented or documentable skills may be qualified for. If the service economy, food service and other low-level waged positions constitute the employment limits for those lacking a formal education or for those possessing a criminal record, we must also consider the financial and emotional sustainability of such positions. As journalist Barbra Ehrenreich documented in her attempt to survive on service economy jobs for a year, the work of the ‘working-class’ is often physically demanding, emotionally draining, underpaid and, ultimately, entirely unsustainable (Ehrenreich 2001:221)

Hate Crimes Legislation as Trans Rights: Disjunctures in Lived Experience

Hate crimes legislation, as a cornerstone of the current mainstream LGBT ‘agenda,’ can be traced back to the Civil Right’s Act of 1968, which was developed to protect the rights of US African-Americans, at the federal level, to “exercise constitutional rights such as voting, attending public school, utilizing public accommodations, and serving on juries” (Mogul, Ritchie and Whitlock 2011:123). While multiple jurisdictions across the country list sexual orientation and gender identity and expression among protected categories in their own hate crimes legislation, in 2009 President Barack Obama signed into law the “Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act” which provided federal protections for LGBT populations. In short, Obama’s administration has confirmed, through the passing of this act, the

validity and lives of gender and sexual transgressors; the harm that may come to them as a result of their transgression will not be tolerated.

The logic behind hate crimes law posits that harsher sentences for bias-related crimes act as a deterrent for potential offenders. Building upon a criminal justice model that requires increased disciplinarity in conjunction with the relative social egregiousness of the crime, hate crimes legislation makes a bold socio-political statement on the part of the nation-state. This statement is one that recuperates the transgressive ‘Other’ as valuable; as bodies that, while different and potentially suspect, are not necessarily disposable. That is, through defining particular ‘protected’ categories of embodiment, practice and identity, the nation-state sanctifies this form of difference.

Over time, hate crimes legislation has been developed as a tool by advocates and policy makers to make both a statement about the unacceptability of particular kinds of hate (e.g., racism and sexism) as well as potential deterrent against those considering engaging in a hate-based crime. Rather than existing as a distinct charge, the identification of an act as a hate crime act functions as a ‘penalty enhancement’ to an original maximum sentence or fine. That is, a person found guilty of committing a bias crime will face a fine or jail sentence that is greater than a crime committed of a similar nature without ‘bias.’ In DC, one may face up to 1.5 times the maximum fine or jail sentence for a crime found to be committed in bias.

According to the definition on DC’s Metropolitan Police Department’s (MPD) website, a hate crime is, most simply, “a crime that is committed against a person because of prejudice or bias. *Victims of hate crimes are singled out* simply because of their perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, family responsibility, physical handicap, matriculation, or political affiliation” (MPD 2011, emphasis

added). In short, according to the MPD, a crime committed against a person *because* of their placement within one of the listed protected categories could qualify the crime as a hate, or bias, crime. Unfortunately, the application of hate crimes legislation to actual crimes committed is far more complicated. This description is profoundly ambiguous and provides no insight into what must occur during the commission of the crime in order for it to be considered a bias-related crime.

The U.S. Department of Justice's explanation of what constitutes a hate crime fails to provide any additional clarity. As defined in a small booklet produced by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, titled "Responding to Hate Crimes: A Police Officer's Guide to Investigation and Prevention" a hate crime is "a criminal offense committed against persons, property or society that is motivated, in whole or in part, by an offender's bias against an individual's or group's perceived race, religion, ethnic/national origin, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation" (IACP 1999). While this booklet provides 'practical tips' on how to deal with potential hate crime victims, such as avoiding using 'stereotyped or biased terms,' it fails to explain what literally must take place for the threshold of bias to apply.

But, unlike the MPD website, this booklet makes a point to list out the reasons why a potential hate crime victim may not come forward after the attack, including fear of greater victimization or persecution at the hands of the police. This fear of police retribution, harassment or attack is heavily referenced to in the Move Along Report, which documents the experiences of sex workers in DC, as a reason victims do not come forward about a crime committed against them (Alliance for a Safe & Diverse DC 2008). According to this report, roughly four out of five respondents reported not going to police indicated at based upon fears relating to immigration, violence, harassment, arrest, humiliation, and generalized fear, with half

of the responses indicating a fear of harassment, arrest or humiliation for coming forward (Alliance for a Safe & Diverse DC 2008:42). Disturbingly, nearly every respondent of this report under the age of 24 (94.8%) reported a fear of the police (Alliance for a Safe & Diverse DC 2008:44).

This fear, notably, can only be exacerbated by the repeated denial that any of the violence committed against these trans feminine persons of color has been produced at the hands of the police or other agents of the nation-state. Indeed “for many LGBT people, and particularly LGBT people of color, immigrants, youth and criminalized queers, reliance on the police and criminal legal system for safety is simply not an option because of the risk of adverse consequences” (Mogul, Ritchie and Whitlock 2011:120). This kind of fear, and the impact it has had on hate crimes reporting, emerges most visibly in the context of DC hate crimes law application.

Towards Trans Rights in the US Nation’s Capital: Conclusions and Next Steps

In this chapter I have considered how the ‘needs’ of ‘trans communities’ in DC are addressed by the two common national campaigns for trans rights. A number of disjunctures emerge between policy and lived materiality when attending to the applications of law. Specifically, I considered here how the lack of employment opportunity and increases in violence in DC exemplifies the danger of relying upon the existence of a policy or law to correct systemic inequality. In other words, as the historical relationships between law and practice through out US history support, the adoption of a law does not necessarily shift the material expression of systemic ideologies or lived experience. In particular, I considered here how hate crimes laws and employment non-discrimination policy fail to address the issues of chronic unemployment and violence experienced by certain trans persons in DC (e.g. trans feminine

persons of color). Additionally, I addressed how these policies act to hinder alternative approaches for civil rights claims through obscuring systemic racism and classism within juridico-legal projects. Finally, I explored how the potential benefits of these laws (e.g., preventing unfair hiring/firing practices and increasing penalties in bias crimes) may not sufficiently outweigh the ideological and material damage produced through their application (e.g., assuming all trans subjects have equal access to employment opportunities and locating ‘justice’ through the criminalization of often already marginalized community groups).

In the following and concluding chapter, I call upon the insights from the narratives and maps collected in this project to explore alternative forms of trans social justice that transcend the failed models discussed here. In this chapter, I explore how groups, such as DCTC, along with other national trans rights groups, utilize alternative economic social justice initiatives, which rely upon empowerment rather than threats of legal action. Additionally, I consider how strategies at restructuring and, ultimately, dismantling, of the prison industrial complex, are framed as issues of trans rights and how these projects may be of use in the DC context. I conclude this dissertation with a discussion of viable ‘next steps’ for trans social justice movements in DC, as well as other jurisdictions.

CHAPTER 7

TOWARDS A GENERATIVE POLITICS OF LIFE: TRANS VITALITIES THROUGH SPATIALITIES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

In this final chapter, I revisit the core themes and questions raised through out this dissertation and consider how, when set in context, these issues reflect deeper structural concerns with trans-spectrum social and political locatability. Specifically, I consider here how the lives and experiences of those who shared their time with me over the course of this dissertation research ultimately raise the question of how the ‘T’ in an ‘LGBT’ paradigm actually functions. That is, while the acronym, LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender), is commonly used to refer to identities or practices that are sexually marginalized (such as a gay identity), this kind of cultural work, based upon the narratives collected in this project, may function to harm trans-spectrum, rather than support, lives. Instead, the maps and narratives collected from participants in this project reflect a deep and structural *disconnect* between trans-spectrum lives and mainstream LGBT social and political frameworks.

I begin this reflection with a revisit of core features and issues raised throughout the course of this dissertation project, such as objective safety and the impacts of criminalization. Building from this summation, I consider how the repeated critique or erasure of ‘LGB’ space among participants calls into question the use of a conjoined ‘LGBT’ framework in both academic research and social organizing. Positioning these narratives within a broader time frame, I briefly explore the historical emergence of the ‘LGBT’ acronym and how it has functioned in social and activist contexts to, ostensibly, build a stronger and more cohesive ‘movement.’ Yet, as the experiences and narratives of those who participated in this project express, there does not appear to be the kind of cohesion or continuity across ‘LGBT’

experiences and identities that circulate in the mainstream imagination. Instead, as I explore here, the LGBT acronym has limited its reach to only issues and bodies that are otherwise *valuable* to the nation-state and other socio-political structures, rather than building ‘community’ across differences. In other words, I consider here how the expansion of this kind of *homonormativity*, or the valuation of only particular kinds of gay and lesbian identity and practice, has functioned to erase and devalue many of the issues raised throughout this project, as well as the participants themselves.

Finally, in this chapter I turn away from the necropolitical frameworks and discussions of loss I utilize in earlier chapters to consider the *vitalities*²², or the life-making work, of the participants of this project. That is, I explore how even along streets where participants have lost friends and loved ones to violence, there remains a spatial and social capacity to support and empowerment. Specifically, I frame these vitalities as the ways coalition and life-making can, and does, happen alongside and within oppressive frameworks. I consider how these kinds of mobilizations—such as locating emotional support as a trans-identifying person through anti-poverty work—can be discussed as forms of ‘queer’ social justice work not typically linked to sexual liminality. In short, I discuss here how the personal and political transformative power of coalition-based trans social justice work can function as a productive life force, which, in turn, may provide a functional alternative to normative LGBT organizing movements.

Mapping Trans Ethnographies: Materiality and Erasure

Throughout this dissertation I have explored the ways trans-spectrum-identifying subjects organize socially and politically in Washington, DC, an immensely race and class segregated city that is best described through incoherent characterizations. In one incarnation, DC is the capital

²² I build this concept of vitality borrowing from personal discussions with Chris Roebuck and Shaka McGlotten and their use of the term in their own work.

city and decision-making hub of one of the world's most powerful and imperial nation-states: the United States of America. In the other, DC is a city suffering from the nation's highest rate of HIV-infection, at 3% of the entire population (Vargas and Fear 2009), with 36% of residents managing life while functionally illiterate (ProLiteracy 2006) and still in recovery from the 1990 branding of the city as the nation's murder capital (Urbina 2006). This immense differential of resources as well as their unequal distribution across time and space has had a profound impact on the citizens of the city, particularly those already vulnerable within systems of inequality.

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, as a component of this dissertation project research, members of trans-spectrum groups, along with myself, interviewed and solicited maps from a total of 108 trans-spectrum identifying persons living in Washington, DC²³. The majority of these interviews and maps were collected during community roundtables held in conjunction with a community-based Needs Assessment project. Within this Needs Assessment project I functioned as a grant writer, fundraiser, co-organizer and data analyst. Specifically, the Needs Assessment project was deployed as a means to ascertain and document the issues trans-spectrum persons in DC were facing. During each roundtable we—typically myself and another co-facilitator— requested participants draw a map of a 'trans DC' from their perspectives. Following the map-making activity, participants discussed their maps, addressing what they drew and, in some cases, explained in great detail why they included certain elements over others. At the close of each session, participants were asked to identify the issues or concerns

²³ I should also note that participation in this project, and in the series of roundtables conducted through the Needs Assessment, was self-selecting. As a result, the nature of the project and where outreach took place may have appealed less to those less engaged with social or political activism or those who do not access support through trans-spectrum networks. Subsequently, those that participated in this project may regard a 'trans DC' through coalitional or community anchored structures more than a trans-spectrum identifying person who does not participate in trans-spectrum community groups. As such, my analysis and discussion must be situated within this specific data set, which should not be understood as representative of all gender variant communities.

they believed to be of importance when describing the needs of trans-spectrum persons living in DC.

While in this project I explore the ways trans-spectrum subjects living and working in DC organize ‘trans space,’ I should stress that these depictions and discussions are anchored to a particular moment in time and place of production. To be clear, the spaces depicted in the collected maps should not be understood to represent an exhaustive list of trans spaces in DC nor are the included features representative of trans-only space. Indeed, the streets of DC, DC’s low-cost health clinic, and popular bars and clubs—all elements of a ‘trans DC’—are features of city that many residents would also consider a part of *their* city. Thus, while I discuss the articulation of these spaces in this project as reflections of trans-spectrum experience, the issues raised and spaces identified highlight a particular moment in time, in a specific space, among a limited group of persons. In short, there exists no singular formulation of ‘trans space,’ in DC or any location inasmuch as there exists no static and identifiable kind of ‘gay’ space or ‘women’s’ space beyond those commercially advertised as such. Trans-spectrum experiences, subjectivities and identifies are variable, complicated and are but one feature in the lives of those who participated in this project.

The majority of the participants of this project identified as persons of color (75%, or 81 participants) and as having a trans feminine spectrum identity or expression (82 participants, or 75.9% of all participants). Among those that identified as persons of color, 41.9% (34) of participants identified as Chicana or Latina and 58.0% identified as African American or Black (47). Importantly, comparatively far fewer White identifying persons were interviewed and even fewer with racial identities falling outside of these three primary categories. Additionally, trans feminine spectrum identifying persons (or persons assigned a male gender at birth who now

identify in feminine terms) made up the majority of those participating in this project. While the lack of ‘equal’ representation in this project reflects the groups that have historically faced the most visible brunt of violence and structural vulnerability in DC, this may, however, limit the application of this analysis to other jurisdictions and communities. To be certain, trans-spectrum identifying persons living in rural or even suburban areas may have a profoundly different experience of what it means to be ‘trans’.

As indicated in Figures 7 and 8 in Chapter 3, the spatial element most common to maps of DC as a ‘trans city’ were depictions of ‘sex work/er strolls,’ featured in a little over half of all maps. As I discuss in Chapter 4 and 5, these spaces, while generally acknowledged by participants to be areas of sex work, were also defined as spaces of work, where to support friends, of police harassment and of organizational outreach. In contrast, the second most common feature that participants included in their maps were what I have framed as ‘community organizations,’ or health clinics, direct service organizations and other local and national organizations invested in, or providing services to, sex worker and ‘LGBT’ populations. This element was features in slightly more than a third of all maps but, importantly, the organizations garnering the most map representations were not groups specifically catering to ‘LGBT’ issues or populations. Instead, the greatest representations were of groups catering to sex worker populations (such as with the inclusion of Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive and Transgender Health Empowerment), where one can get hormones or trans-spectrum related care (as with the inclusion of Whitman Walker Clinic) or of trans activist centered groups (such as the DC Trans Coalition and the National Center for Transgender Equality). Organizations such as ‘The DC Center,’ which advertise their work as supporting DC-based ‘LGBT’ rights and

communities, generally received little attention in the maps and, if included, were often framed in the negative, or as places where they did *not* garner the support they sought.

The remaining most common features on these maps decline to a 22.1% inclusion rate with bars, clubs and restaurants, followed by a 15.7% inclusion rate with public parks and sites of public recreation, such as malls. While the represented bars did include some ‘gay’ oriented bars, their inclusion was often to refer to specific events held in these spaces catering to the Latino/a communities or, in several cases, as places where one has experienced violence as a trans-spectrum person. Finally, the home of a friend, or of one’s own home, was featured in 11.1% and 9.3% of maps, respectively. Similar to the discussed utility of the sex work(er) strolls in the lives of the participants, the home of a friend was often discussed as a component, or even centerpiece, of a network of supportive and empowering people and places.

In short, the themes included in maps and mentioned in discussions predominately made reference to areas and experiences of the city that were connected to circulations of friendship, support, affirmation and struggle, often as contrasts to the violences of other elements of the city. In many of these contexts, such as the significant representation of sex work(er) strolls, a lack of access to sustainable employment and the historical pathologization of feminine of bodies of color coalesced to criminalize bodies viewed as out of space. Importantly, even for those occupying social and political positions that are relatively supported by the nation-state, the impact sex work, whether as one’s form of employment, the source of the criminalization, or as a productive ground form which to organize politically, emerged as a core organizing principle.

Contrasting the maps collected in this project against mainstream LGBT maps of DC reveals disjunctures between what kinds of spaces are valued by trans-spectrum persons and which are valued by commercial LGBT depictions of the DC. As I suggest in Chapter 1, what is

excluded from a representation of space is often as informative as what is *included*. Just as the ‘LGB’ is missing from the maps of DC as a trans city, the mainstream maps of a LGBT DC exclude the ‘T’ from their space. As portrayed in the commercially available maps of DC as a city for LGBT tourists (included in Chapter 3), LGBT space is primarily limited to commercial venues, such as nightclubs or bars, or, in some instances, mainstream LGBT rights groups, such as the Human Rights Campaign. As emphasized in Leap 2009 (218-219) this depiction represents a kind of *homonormative* view of an LGBT citizenship, wherein the capacity to consume constitutes the ‘good gay citizen.’ As a result, the mainstream LGBT spaces included in these commercial maps organize space according to homonormative ideals: how to be a good, productive American citizen while embodying a sexual subjectivity that is devalued by normative American ideologies.

Significantly, these tourist maps exclude the poorer parts of DC, such as Northeast or further into Southeast, bringing into focus the ways race and class are managed within homonormativity. That is, they are erased. This is not to suggest that homonormativity, or a homonormative depiction of DC, is ‘color blind’ but rather to point to how when ‘LGBT’ is flattened into one lens, that then takes on an implicitly white and upwardly mobile class status. These maps of DC focus on the capacity to consume: the places a tourist interested in consumption can go. In contrast, many of those interviewed throughout this project complained of a lack of gainful employment, with fewer than 1% including any of the bars or clubs listed on the Lonely Planet’s LGBT guide to DC. Moreover, ‘LGBT’ specific community centers or groups that made their way onto Lonely Planet’s site were virtually absent from the maps collected in this project. Instead, the maps collected here focus on organizations or community

groups that are either trans-specific activist or advocacy groups (such as DCTC) or those that primarily serve trans persons (such as HIPS).

Trans Spatialities: Specificity and the Dangers of LGBT Generalizations

Noting the ways maps function as visual forms of text, this exclusion belies a deeper erasure and invisibility of trans lives not only from mainstream non-LGBT tourist maps of DC but also from within ‘LGBT’ living. Recalling the power of representation of the map, as well as the stories it tells us (Harley 1989:21, Keith and Pile 1993:3, Perkins 2008:152), trans life appears to not exist in at least commercially driven LGBT maps or ideals of DC. While the issues raised by participants in their narratives and maps in this project ranged across a wide array of topics and issues, rarely, if ever, did participants express concern over the topics most national LGBT civil rights groups focus on: the right to serve in the military, getting married to their loved one, adopting children, or even the impact of hate crimes legislation—all political mainstays for the US’ largest national LGBT rights organizations (the Human Rights Campaign, HRC 2011, Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, as indexed through the repeated use of ‘equality,’ GLAAD 2012, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, as reflected by topics of publications and research, NGLTF 2012; and Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians And Gays, as issues that relatives and allies of LGBT people should be concerned with, PFLAG 2012). Contrasted to these issues, the spatial depictions collected in this project, and the discussions that emerged around them, focused on issues of employment, access to health and legal resources, violence and trans coalitional support and empowerment. Additionally, at the local level, groups and organizations that are intended to support LGBT persons were simply not included or, as with the DC Center, were criticized for their lack of trans specificity or support. Finally, gay or lesbian night clubs and bars were also almost entirely absent, with the exclusion

of special events catering to the Latina/o communities or in some cases as examples of where one faces trans phobia.

The templates provided by LGBT tourist maps, which place consumption as a conduit to queerness, or by these mainstream LGBT civil rights groups, which place domesticity and the capacity to serve in the military as the route to 'equality' do not include or address the kinds of spaces or issues raised by participants of this project. Thus, rather than address here what is included in these maps, as I have through out this dissertation, I turn now to what is excluded. In this case, the absence of self-described LGBT organizations, bars, and nightclubs when discussing 'trans' experiences in the city is particularly unanticipated. Additionally, this absence, when set in conjunction with the silence from groups like HRC, GLAAD and PFLAG after any of the mounting number of murders of trans women in DC from 2010 to 2011, requires careful attention.

I argue here that the disconnections between the mapped needs of those who participated in this project and mainstream LGBT activism reflect a larger structural lapse of meaningful and productive inclusion of the 'T' in LGBT. As a result I find it necessary to problematize the use of the term 'LGBT' in academic, social and political contexts to refer meaningfully to lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-spectrum. In the LGBT model, the material and lived differences between sexual subjectivity and gender identity are collapsed into a single 'community' that is to signify a singularity of needs or desires. This kind of erasure is particularly problematic when discussing socially or politically liminal sexualities and genders that may fall outside of the hegemonic or normative demands of a conjoined LGBT framework.

The Emergence of an Acronym: A Brief History of LGBT

The ways trans-spectrum issues or identities articulate meaningfully with sexual subjectivities is not a new concern. Reactions to the inclusion of gender liminal subjects in lesbian and gay spaces have long been marked by vehement push back, whether from the viscously transphobic Radical Lesbian Feminists of the 1970's and 1980's or the within homonormative desires of the Human Rights Campaign. Historically, trans-spectrum persons, often locating themselves within sexual marginal communities, were a part of sexually liminal community formation. In the late 1980s and 1990's, the push to include the T in acronyms emerged simultaneous to larger structural critiques of the gay and lesbian rights and feminist projects; while at one time these projects relied on a politics of difference to succeed, the inherent exclusivity of the politics failed to reach the goals of the members (Armstrong 2002:3, Marotta 1981, Califia 1997, Meyerowitz 2004). As exclusion and a politics of difference shifted to include queer of color critiques and in response to 3rd wave feminisms, the addition of a 'T' of LGB functioned to express the appearance of inclusivity of the movement (Green 2004). Many formerly LGB organizations began to 'add the T' to their organizational name and mission statement (Devor and Matte 2004:180, Minter 2006). This 'post identity' politics maintained that exclusion was an absolute negative and threatened the 'unity' of a bound LGBT civil rights movement. This framework, while perhaps anchored in good intentions, should also be understood as "both illegitimate and politically problematic-coupled with the assumption that any exclusion is equivalent to any other kind of exclusion" (Park 2002:754). As a result, 'difference' was collapsed so as to avoid the anxieties of addressing complicated structural exclusionary practices. This tradition led to what would become an alphabet soup of an acronym, all aimed at depicting the image of inclusion. Intersexuality, indigenous forms of gender

transgression (such as two-spirit) and other distinct categories of identity and expression were roped into this bloated acronym. Finally, with the introduction of ‘queer studies’ into common parlance and activist discourses, the term came to signify all of the letters that were now, literally, erased once again. As a result, queer, in this kind of genealogical deployment, would somehow function to index trans-spectrum subjectivities. In doing so, homophobia, transphobia and sexism were all conflated into one kind of discriminatory project. Issues of race, class, ability and pathologized modalities of gender transgression were shadowed by discussions of sexual object choice, obscuring the very differences these forms of inclusion sought to solve (Park 2002:749). Yet, as those interviewed in this project make clear, sexual object choice—whether one is gay or queer—is not necessarily a defining characteristic for trans-spectrum spatialities or coalition building. Indeed the violence of homophobic and transphobic violence should be discussed as “mutually reinforcing discourses of oppression, in which neither is fully reducible to the other, though interrelated” (Park 2002:750).

Indeed, as the surge of pregnant men, transitioning daughters and sons of celebrities and trans women super models buzz along the media circuit in the late 2000’s, the differences between trans lives and gay lives has become an increasingly accessible circulating assemblage of ideologies. As a result, while the LGBT paradigm at one time provided a functional conduit for trans activists and the general public to locate gender transgression, this inclusion has more often than not functioned as a tool of exclusion, even with critical academic fields.

Geo-locating the ‘T’ within LGBT: Ruptures and Disjunctures

The historical elision of LGBT difference has worked its way into critical social studies, including the study of space and place. Spatially, contrasting the maps collected in this project with the limited projects that have attended to trans experiences of space further highlights the

limited functionality of ‘T’ within ‘LGBT,’ or even ‘queer,’ spatialities. These projects each echo a similar concern with the collapsing of the needs and desires of trans subjectivities within ‘queer’ cartographies. Geographers Nash and Doan, while identifying the relative ‘safety’ provided by LGBT urban centers, both caution against the potential of this ‘queer’ terrain to support transgender or gender-transgressing persons (Nash 2010:590, Doan 2007:63). In contrast, social theorist Namaste foregrounds the role of structural inequality in the production of violence within trans feminine spaces in Montreal (Namaste 1996:220). Namaste frames trans feminine subjects as the ‘gender outlaws’ of the city (Namaste 1996:222) wherein gender transgression, as well, significantly, race and class positionality, render these subjects ‘out of place.’

The attention to race and class dimensions among trans-spectrum experience is unfortunately absent from both Doan and Nash’s work, which further complicates their own identified inequalities across LGBT spatialities. Taking note that space and ‘place’ are “constituted by ever-changing practices and purposes that are both informed by and generative of all kinds of lingering legacies” (Knopp 2007:50) to locate trans experiences as interchangeable concepts disregards both the temporality and historicity of race and class struggle. Instead, I would argue for a complication of ‘trans’ as a singular type of experience and stress Doan’s suggestion that, if we are to truly gauge trans-spectrum experience within LGBT spaces we must “to turn to the transgendered populations themselves and assess their perceptions of urban spaces as well as their level of connectedness with queer community spaces” (Doan 2007:64). To do otherwise would support an LGBT historical legacy of false inclusion (as seen in the political work of HRC, GLAAD, and PFLAG, among others) cloaked by homogeneity, which, in turn,

sustains the hegemony of the needs of only a small cross-section of liminal sexual and gendered ‘others.’

In particular, to overlook racial and class striations in lived experience precludes the anchoring of LGBT lived experience to the material demands of life. For example, the demands of productive citizenship, an issue made most visible through homonormative agendas pressing the importance of allowing LGB military service, include racial and class dimensions. As well evidenced by mainstream laws and social practices in the US dating back to the early days of the US nation-state, the historical legacies of the white land owner versus the black slave remain a foundation for present day policy. To be clear, slavery and the voting rights of the individual are no longer as clearly linked to race, class and gender and it is well known that social worlds are not stratified by clear class structures or through a simple black-versus-white racial paradigm. Yet, the legacies of racial and class difference, as they crosscut citizenship, remain cogent issues particularly in the ways they articulate with sexuality and gender transgression.

LGBT Erasure and Violence: Homonormativity and Homonationalism

To be certain, as trans academic work, as well as activist and community based projects, have gained additional attention within their discursive fields, emerging trans rights issues have come to clash with homonormative and homonationalist desires set forth by mainstream, eliding LGBT agendas. At the heart of the project of homonormativity is the acquisition of the dominant heteronormative ‘rights and duties’ of citizenship, including, but not limited to: marriage, serving in the military, adoption and other modes of capital consumption and (re)production. Most importantly, homonormativity does not strive to destabilize heteronormative values but rather “upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (Duggan

2002:179). Simply put, homonormativity reproduces the heteronormative “ideology of American individualistic liberalism” rather than attempting to question oppressive and racially and class-stratified exclusionary models of the ‘good citizen’ (Seidman 2001:323). If we regard homonormativity as a mode wherein gays and lesbians can gain access to rights typically withheld only to ‘good’ heterosexual citizens, then we can also conceive of homonormativity as a framework for citizenship claims; as a set of rules valorizing whiteness, (re)production and consumption, depoliticization, and only privileged, ‘normative’ forms of gender and sexed embodiment. Trans-spectrum persons, as well as any body or practice falling outside of this ‘charmed circle’ of acceptable race, class and gendered bodies, are thus pressed into a ‘recourse to normality’ which function to “exclude any kind of embodied or political difference that does not perform the correct responsibilities of the national citizen” (Aizura 2006:302). In other words, engaging in normativity, whether in a heteronormative or homonormative context, works to elide difference in deference to the systems being submitted to. Thus, trans bodies are trapped behind the reproduction of strict notions of gender and normative productive economies or are left to suffer the political, social and economic consequences of their LGBT ‘failure.’

This focus on the body, on the corporeality of homonormativity, reflects a greater political struggle shaped by the pressure for gender normativity and capital productivity, wherein the good male and female citizens are not gendered within a binary but also engaged in state-sanctioned practices of consumption and capital production. In doing so, trans identities are often defined as a lone gender, wherein “trans people are simply considered another kind or type of human than either men or women” (Stryker 2008:148). To be clear, homonormativity functions to discipline and regulate the sexual and gender outliers through twisted attempts at

false inclusion wherein the ideological ‘hail’ is aimed only at particular subjects who fall within a range of viable recuperation.

Homonationalism, in contrast, functions as a circulating assemblage of sexual normalizing ideologies which valorize only particular forms of gay and lesbian practice, all in order to buttress the demands of a growing American ‘empire.’ Building on homonormativity, the functioning of homonationalism within LGBT constructs is “contingent upon the segregation and disqualification of racial-sexual others from the national imaginary” (Puar 2008:14). This logic underlies the mainstream LGBT disregard of immigrant rights, sex worker rights and the incarcerated as, specifically, not issues for queer persons. For LGBT organizations to support these marginal bodies that would otherwise limit the capacity of ‘queer’ to reach nation-state sanctioned status. This kind of sexual exceptionalism is a form of queer as “regulatory” wherein and the “ascendency of whiteness” occupies a hegemony within LGBT civil rights discourses (Puar 2008:15). Homonationalism, concerned with the capacity of the queer subject to occupy model citizenship, exemplifies the ideological forces that limit mainstream LGBT activism from achieving a viable conduit for securing the rights of gender transgressing persons of color.

The class and racial elitism of homonormative and homonationalist ethos is most clearly evident in the practices of the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the largest gay rights organization in the United States. HRC explicitly locates civil rights as the capacity to be a model citizen, which is only acquired through the corporate investment. They disclose their plans for trans workers rights. In one of HRC’s only trans-focused ‘white papers,’ or a document offering policy-based solutions to a noted ‘problem,’ their ‘Workplace Project’ discussion of trans issues with employment is focuses on “Transgender-Inclusive Health Care Coverage” and their “Corporate Equality Index (CEI)” (HRC 2012). This policy paper explains that to “attract

and retain the best and brightest talent, employers must treat their LGBT employees equally, including in the administration of health care benefits” (HRC 2012). In this context, to be treated ‘equally’ requires only granting access to trans persons medical coverage for procedures generally not covered through public or privately subsidized health insurance plans. According to the HRC, the future of LGBT rights rests within projects of ‘fairness’ and ‘tolerance,’ both of which allow structural inequities to go entirely unchecked. Instead, HRC locates LGBT ‘civil rights’ as locatable within systems and structures that desire only the ‘best and brightest’ of queers. HRC’s call for employers to behave in more trans tolerant ways simultaneously demands trans subjects participate in assimilations into mainstream ideologies of identity and practice. Critically, the capacity to assimilate is, as Puar reminds us, limited to bodies valorized by the nation-state which, particularly in an era of intense immigration regulation and increased xenophobia, excludes those most vulnerable to homophobic and transphobic systems of violence (2008:4). Indeed, HRC does not argue for policies and laws that transform the conditions that prevent trans persons from gaining employment but rather appeals to the corporate America’s motivation for greater monetary gain. LGBT liberation, through HRC’s vision, is fueled by regulatory rather than libratory projects.

How Homonormativity Hurts: Disciplinary and Violence

The violence perpetuated by investments in homonormative and homonationalist regulatory projects is particularly salient in the context of Hate Crimes Legislation, a cornerstone of ‘LGBT’ rights. Within Hate Crimes Legislation, the regulation and enhanced criminalization of violence against LGBT subjects is articulated as the solution to curb homophobia and transphobia. To be clear, these laws do not attend to structural inequities that prevent many poor queer and trans persons of color from stable and sustainable employment and housing. These

vulnerabilities place these communities into positions of greater risk, which, in turn, is then managed by the public with equal disregard. I discuss here the violence of homonormativity, an unequal distribution of ‘justice,’ to trans-spectrum subjects, as expressed nationally as well as within the application of DC’s Hate Crimes Legislation.

Hate Crimes Legislation

As one of the strongest advocates for trans rights in the US, the Sylvia Law Project, based in New York City, has also been one of the most outspoken *opponents* of hate crimes legislation. On April 6th 2009, SLRP, along with FIERCE, Queens for Economic Justice, Peter Cicchino Youth Project and the Audre Lorde Project, released a statement declaring the official lack of support for New York State’s proposed Gender Employment Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA). Significantly, these organizations are primarily groups focused on the rights of poor and of color trans people. Initially, GENDA was introduced as legislation to protect gender identity and expression in employment non-discrimination. But, when this bill was enhanced to include the addition of hate crime legislation, these groups pulled their support and released a statement detailing the reasons behind their disapproval of the modified GENDA. Below are sections of the letter that most clearly attend to the crux of the danger of hate crimes legislation:

There might be some cold comfort in “enhanced sentencing” if it actually benefited our communities in any way. Unfortunately, the harsher penalties of hate crime laws have not been shown to prevent or deter hate crimes...Incarceration does nothing to address the root reasons why someone was violent or hateful; it only plunges them into deeper poverty, further isolates them from their community, and subjects them to further violence and trauma...Hate crime laws foreground a single accused individual as the “cause” of racism, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, or any number of other oppressive prejudices. They encourage us to lay blame and focus our vengeful hostility on one person instead of paying attention to institutional prejudice that fuels police violence, encourages bureaucratic systems to ignore trans people’s needs or actively discriminate against us, and denies our communities health care, identification, and so much more...Anything that expands the power of a system that damages our communities so severely is against our long-term and short-term interests (SLRP 2009)

As the authors of this letter make clear, the socio-political fallout from increased criminalization fails to address the core reasons why gender-transgressing persons are at greater risk of violence. As they state, “Hate crime laws foreground a single accused individual as the ‘cause’ of racism, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, or any number of other oppressive prejudices.” Placing additional criminal sentencing against a person convicted of a bias crime related to transphobia may send a weak message that trans persons should not be killed. Yet, hate crimes legislation does not address the ideological structures that allow for the accessibility of transphobia in the first place. Trans persons in media, in politics, in schools, in health care and in countless other arenas are often the sites of humor, ridicule or disgust. While this hardly constitutes a defense for attacking a trans person, putting another person in prison for an even longer period of time does nothing to attend to the socio-political climate where violence against trans people is normalized, if not expected.

Such as is the case in DC, as I noted in the previous chapters, wherein multiple trans women were murdered within months of each other, yet with no public outrage or mayoral statements demanding an end to the violence. Groups such as the Human Rights Campaign failed to make any statements about the murders happening mere blocks from their national headquarters in DC. Indeed, if even the most powerful and financially successful Lesbian and Gay ‘civil rights’ group in DC is not motivated to comment on the gruesome murders and attacks on members of their ‘community’ it comes as no surprise that non-sexual minority communities would also take no interest in the violence.

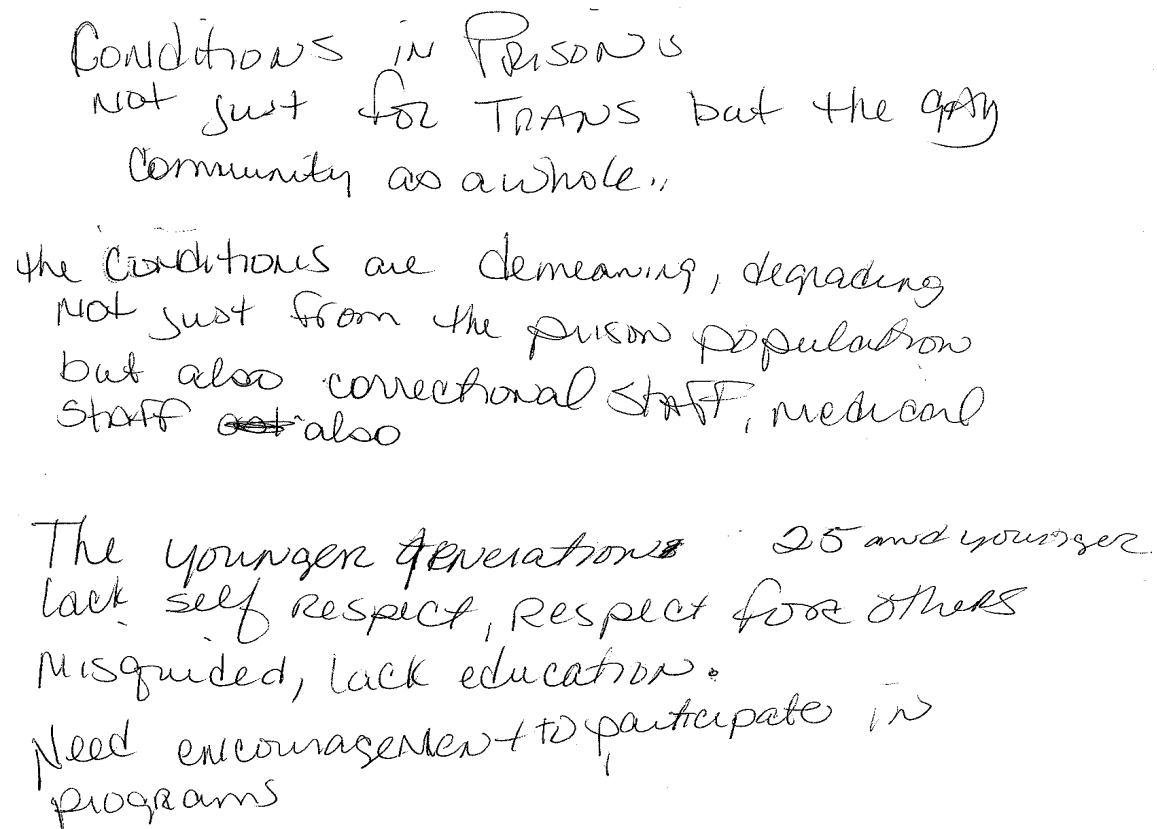
For those facing increased penalties for committing bias crimes against trans persons, one’s only source of ‘punishment’ is in the form of imprisonment. At present, no law in the US requires that crimes motivated by bias be attended to through addressing the core of that bias,

education or any kind of meaningful reconciliation or rehabilitation processes. Instead, the ‘criminal’ receives only additional time in their sentence, which only functions to insinuate to the convict that attacking certain people may put you in prison for longer. Additionally, as I discuss in the previous chapter, possessing a criminal record limits one’s ability to access formal employment and those who end up facing harsher penalties or sentences related to bias crime may find securing employment after release difficult if not impossible. Increased sentences fracture already struggling impoverished communities and fail to address the ways institutionalized transphobia operates in structures of power. Thus, in many ways, rather than address the structural failures of social welfare systems, criminalization has become “the weapon of choice in dealing with the social problems caused by the globalization of capital and the protest it engendered” (Sudbury 2005:166). That is, economic disparity, and the systematic dismantling of the welfare state, has produced the conditions wherein more and more vie for fewer and fewer resources.

Furthermore, those opposing hate crimes legislation often target the ‘Prison Industrial Complex’ as not only an inadequate method in which to deal with structural violence and inequality, but also as a system of technologies that brutalizes much of the most marginalized of trans-spectrum communities. Compounded with the privatization of prisons and jails across the country, DC included, prisons operate as body management systems, utilizing black and brown bodies as their literal fuel. Simply put, rather than address the ways in which the gross lack of resources and the ubiquity of sexism and racism have rendered brown female bodies powerless, the nation-state has capitalized upon these bodies for the benefit of the ‘Prison Industrial Complex’, which functions as a “symbiotic and profitable relationship between politicians, corporations, the media and state correctional institutions” (Sudbury 2005:166-167). This term,

coined by academic and activist Angela Davis, refers of the role of jails and prisons in the neoliberal moment. To be clear, prison and jails have been restructured according to neoliberal models of privatization and the dismantling of the welfare state. These institutions, particularly those that have been privatized and managed by the highest bidder (as is the case with DC's women's jail facility) function as money-making industries rather than spaces of rehabilitation. Incarcerated bodies then, in effect, become the property of subcontracted corporations.

Let us also take note, the participants of this dissertation project were concerned with the role of hypercriminalization and prison in their lives but also of the staff of the prison facilities, many of who are the perpetrators of transphobic violence. Angelica, an older black trans woman, took the map-making opportunity to directly attack the deplorable conditions in prison, for not only the trans or gay inmate but also for the employee (Figure 35).



Conditions in Prisons
not just for TRANS but the gay
community as a whole,,

the conditions are demeaning, degrading
not just from the prison population
but also correctional staff, medical
staff ~~and~~ also

The younger generations 25 and younger
lack self respect, respect for others
Misguided, lack education.
Need encouragement to participate in
programs

Figure 35: Angelica's Prison Statement

In this statement, Angelica lists her concerns (Figure 35):

Conditions in Prisons not just for Trans but the gay community as a whole.

The Conditions are demeaning, degrading not just from the prison populations but also correctional staff, medical staff also.

The younger generations 25 and younger lack self-respect, respect for others, misguided, lack education.

Need encouragement to participate in programs.

In her trans DC, home, work, and bar life melt away to bare the very real hardships she, and many other trans women of color, face in juridical systems. Reports of rape, abuse, and the housing of trans women within the male population are constant sources of concern for trans advocates and organizers (Alliance for a Safe & Diverse DC 2008). Her concerns rest with the violence people like her are facing at the hands of the nation-state along with the impact this is having on younger trans women, of whom, in her opinion, lack the abilities to succeed without the proper educational opportunities.

Additionally, Angelica's apt depiction of the multiplicity of violence circulating within prisons is rarely discussed as impacting all bodies present in the prison space. She remarks that the conditions in prison are 'demeaning, degrading' for both the population and jail staff. During a March 2010 DC City Council Oversight hearing of the DC Department of Corrections, it was revealed that many of the cell doors in DC's aging public jail no longer functioned²⁴. As reported during this hearing, and even earlier in 2009 by the Washington Examiner, cell doors "failed to unlock nearly 700 times over an 18 month period" (Washington Examiner 2009). This failure to 'unlock' was also a failure to 'lock.' To be certain, the proper function of doors to lock, and

²⁴ Most clearly articulated in the testimony provided at this hearing by Philip Fornaci, Director of D.C. Prisoner's project, publically available on the DC Office of General Council website: www.dcofc.org/sites/default/.../DOC%20Oversight%20Testimony.pdf

unlock, on command, is a crucial function of safety for not only the inmates (who may be at risk of attack from other inmates or guards) but also to the correctional staff. Claiming ignorance of the severity of the problem and a lack of city funding, the then-Director of the Department of Corrections, Devon Brown, neglected to address this extreme lapse of security in a space wherein ‘safety and security’ are of the most cited importance. Brown’s lack of concern, and a lack of direct mayoral intervention by then-major Fenty, supports Angelica’s charges against the prisons in DC. Indeed, these prisons serve not to rehabilitate, or even keep safe. Rather, they represent yet another space wherein violence, at both the hands of the nation-state, reigns. How this then translates into justice for those impacted by transphobia is not clear.

Extensions of Nation-State: Homonormative Deployments of Criminalization

At many levels of DC government, social and political policy, and even in the within self-proclaiming LGBT ‘rights’ organizations (such as the DC Center or HRC), the violence against trans women of color in DC has been overwhelmingly ignored and dismissed. As seen in the following exchange of victim blaming—a sentiment that disturbingly extends far beyond this particular contributor—no matter what a trans woman is doing, it is her fault. As evidenced in this particular discussion, some bodies should not, and cannot be recuperated. At the beginning of this thread, Greenbeltman4 posted a response to an article discussing the Officer Furr’s gun attack of a car of trans women. Greenbeltman4 maintains that the women shot in the car must have been engaging in sex work based upon the relative location of the shooting. Franny Jones, who implies she is associated with one of the victims, responds to this claim.

Franny Jones²⁵ August 27, 2011 at 6:28 pm

²⁵ Both ‘Franny Jones’ and ‘Greenbeltman4’ are pseudonyms. While this discussion took place on the webpage of a well-known gay and lesbian newspaper, I have chosen to maintain a degree of anonymity for the posters, at least in this document.

GB, the young woman was solicited by the po-lice, not the other way around. she rejected him. he offered her money. she refused. he offered her more money. she refused. your cavalier comments display your bigotry and your ignorance. MPD was lauded for their communication with the community – the criticism is directed at the rank and file who, like yourself, deem transgender women to be guilty solely because they are transgender, and treat them as if they are subhuman or criminals deserving of the violence that they are subjected to. que sera, sera.

Greenbeltman4 August 27, 2011 at 6:44 pm

Incorrect Franny. I'll repeat myself since apparently you don't get it: "While this is a reprehensible crime, one has to ask what are these transgender women in DC doing? As I've written in other posts of other recent similar stories, if one "works" the streets, then, well, que sera, sera." It's not the point who asked who for what. The point is, these "women" were in a known prostitute area at 5:30am with other men. Why aren't they in bed, like average Joe's and Mary's, about to get up to go to work? The answer – the incident happened while they WERE at work. One makes bad choices and one suffers bad consequences. Very simple, Franny.

In this discussion Greenbeltman4 is explicitly remarking that trans women of color are attacked because they are, a priori, sex workers. Even though the area of the attack is not known to be a sex worker stroll, nor were the victims of the attack engaging in sex work, Black and Latina trans bodies, according to this hegemonic discourse, are bodies that are suspect, dangerous and pathological. To this extent, they are *so* pathological that they maintain the capacity to literally 'bring' the contagion into the spaces they occupy (e.g., sex work).

This discourse is also, disturbingly, openly employed by staff of the Metropolitan Police Department of DC, as well as the Chief of the MPD, Cathy Lanier. On November 11, 2011, the Washington Post website featured an article exploring the rise of violence against trans person in DC. Detective Smith, a self described '13 year veteran Homicide detective' explained that:

a disproportionate amount of the crimes committed against TG (Male to Female) are committed against TG males [sic] engaged in the illegal activity of PROSTITUTION... And their cases are less likely to be prosecuted when an arrest is made because they have CREDIBILITY PROBLEMS (Due to their CRIMINAL HISTORIES)

Later he admits, when additional posters begin to question the veracity of his claims, there is no data to support his claims: he only has his personal experience (e.g., ideological locatedness) to rely on (Weil 2011).

Several months later, on January 5th, 2012 DC Chief of Police, Cathy Lanier, participated in her monthly ‘ask the chief’ radio show on WTOP 103.5FM. Early during the program, she was asked to speak about, to quote the transcript “a spike in attacks against transgendered people” (WTOP 2012). Her response locates the onus of violence at the level of the subject:

This applies to everyone: The biggest vulnerability -- just like I say don't walk around with your iPhone in your hand -- is against people who are prostitutes, or taxi drivers. We'd like to see all of those folks who are in that high-risk environment find ways to increase their safety, and help us out. (WTOP 2012)

Chief Lanier’s response deserves careful contemplation. She equates crimes of opportunity, such as the robbery of carelessly displayed electronics or the targeting of cab drivers for their fares, to the 30 or so reported attacks against trans women during the summer months in 2011 (DCTC 2011). But, in contrast to Chief Lanier’s insinuation-that all ‘transgendered people’ are ‘prostitutes’ there is no evidence that the majority of these attacks, including the murders, are in any linked to sex work economies. Detective Smith and Chief Lanier’s sweeping generalizations depict a particular kind of assumption about who ‘transgendered’ or ‘TG’ persons are; they are invariably sex workers and, ultimately, they are responsible for the fate that awaits them. These neoliberal formations of the responsibility of self bespeak not only who is actually protected by Hate Crimes Legislation but also who qualifies as the type of ‘citizen’ the police force of DC is charged with protecting.

Towards Trans Vitalities: Generative life in the
US Nation's Capital: Resilience
and Activisms

In summation, the issues of violence, economic struggle, as well as empowerment, were among the greatest concerns for the participants of this project, as seen through not only the depictions of space through maps but also through discussions of events in DC. Significantly, these issues, when set in contrast to the agendas of mainstream LGBT civil rights groups, as well as the impact these agendas have on already marginalized communities, reflects a measurable disconnect. This disconnect is not only expressed in the primary issues LGBT groups are invested in, such as marriage or military service, but also in the continued lack of interest in certain kinds of race and classed issues. To be certain, it is unclear how the mayor of DC, the MPD police chief or even HRC would have reacted had any of the trans persons murdered between 2009-2011 were white or male identifying. In the only case where the trans feminine murdered victim was identified not as a Latina but as a Nepali NASA scientist, still known to many of their coworkers through a male gender, media erased a trans feminine identity or practice and even the nature of the murder itself. What *is known* is that violence against trans women of color has become a quotidian element of Washington, DC's landscape to the degree of which when a white gay cisgendered man is attacked within days of her attack, his story garners not only more media attention but the publically stated sympathies and calls of support from both the mayor and the Chief of Police (DCTC 2012). This open and unabashed support from city officials was lacking from every attack and murders discussed in the dissertation, including the attack directly preceding his. While this erasure of racialized trans feminine violence from DC officials may not appear to be readily linked to LGBT civil rights work, I would stress the strength of that connection. Though LGBT civil rights work is certainly invested in less violence these projects are less invested in the project of violence itself but more so with the

victims and the treatment of the perpetrators of said crimes. As I explore in the following section, there exist ways to address violence without the need to identify the potential victim or enhance an investment in criminalization.

Trans Vitalities through LGBT rights?

In many ways, I have anchored this dissertation in discussions of why and how trans women of color have been allowed to let die in DC. But, rather than maintain only a focus on the conditions that precipitate the uselessness of certain trans bodies, I close here with a focus on the *vitalities* of the lives and practices of those who participated in this project. In contrast to a necropolitics, I explore in these concluding remarks the vitalities emergent in the wake of death and dying. I explore here modalities of generative life and activist projects that secure better conditions for trans-spectrum persons.

I find it most productive to begin a discussion of trans vitalities with considering how trans lives articulate with LGBT formations of rights struggles. If homonormativity and LGBT paradigms share an ideological base valuing consolidation and empty gestures of inclusion, LGBT social organizing thus also, as Stryker expresses here, forecloses the possibility for dissent and difference.

Homonormativity, I conclude, is more than an accommodation to neoliberalism in its macropolitical manifestations. It is also *an operation at the micropolitical level*, one that aligns gay interests with dominant constructions of knowledge and power that *disqualify the very modes of knowing threatening to disrupt the smooth functioning of normative space* and that displace modes of embodiment calling into question the basis of authority from which normative voices speak (Stryker 2008:155, emphasis added)

In particular, the voices and “modes of embodiment” that “[call] into question the basis of authority from which normative voices speak” (Stryker 2008:15) such as activists and persons for whom homonormative models devalue are erased. To be clear, just as the LGBT paradigm represents forms of false inclusion, I am not arguing for a consolidated formation of specific

‘trans rights’ that are fundamentally pertinent to all trans-spectrum identifying persons. Rather I articulate ‘trans rights’ here as remediations of systemic subjugations from which mainstream LGBT projects and persons in power fail to imagine. I anchor my discussion here building from Spade’s urge that

As long as our agendas are determined by those with access to these resources, and those individuals prioritize struggles in which they can see themselves...we will fail to see meaningful change in the lives of those who suffer the most acute effects of the coercive binary gender system (Spade 2006:230)

Specifically, I focus here on the ways community and coalition based activism and networking reflects a trans politics that concerns itself with ‘those who suffer the most’ within systems of inequality.

“You’re talking about Poverty Law, not LGBT
Rights”: Towards Trans Vitalities
and a Radical Trans Politics

During a conversation with a fellow ‘queer’ identifying social science researcher, I was told that employment and economic issues facing the participants of my research, which in turn exacerbate a lack of access to affordable or supportive health care or housing alternatives, was not an LGBT rights issue. Rather, in their words, these were concerns that had far more to do with law and policy regarding poverty and economic disenfranchisement rather than LGBT lives. I close here with a discussion of how Dean Spade’s model of a ‘critical trans politics’ also functions as a model for unpacking lived experience and contextualizing vitality practices through the milieu from which they emerge. Spade articulates a critical trans politics as one that:

imagines and demands an ends to prisons, homelessness, landlords, bosses, immigration enforcement, poverty and wealth. It imagines a world in which people have what they need and govern themselves in ways that value collectivity, interdependence, and difference. (Spade 2011:68-69).

This kind of critical trans politics is evident in the practices and organizing projects of the DC Trans Coalition, the group I worked primarily with throughout this dissertation project. Rather than discuss the ‘failure’ of a mainstream LGBT paradigm, I call upon Halberstam’s of the productivitiy of ‘queer failure.’ “Failing is something queers do and have always done exceptionally well; for queers failure can be a style...and it can stand in contrast to the grim scenarios of success that depend upon 'trying and trying again.' (Halberstam 2011:3). I see Halberstam’s assertion as providing an alternative way of understanding those that ‘fail’ at homonormative projects. Rather than understanding these subjects as lacking, this failure can be articulated as a modality to vitality, or a way to produce along ones own terms. This kind of framework thus allows the notion of activism to function as a way to produce life in the face of mainstream LGBT political lapses to meaningfully support.

Even in contexts wherein the battle has been lost or where city government or local organizations fail to adopt the necessary measures, the project of activism, as a transformative and affirmative collaboration redirects a need for support as a function of lack to a need for affirmation as a function of compassion and energy. Barbara, a white trans woman in her 60’s joined the DC Trans Coalition after being told by her therapist she needed to find a trans support group. Having visited one local trans support group and feeling let down by the ‘complaining’ she found the DC Trans Coalition. She explained to me in an email:

when my therapist told me that I was done, or finished (done makes it sound like I'm a muffin and the timer just went off, time to get out of the oven!)I should seek out a support group...I found out way back then, TEGA was for the crossdressers. Not me. MAGIC was a lot of people who were unhappy that there wives didn't understand them. Umm, not my problem, so I went to the town hall. I was impressed. Here were people who were actually doing something about making life better for everyone. Sure it's about the T, but others benefit also, sort of an ancillary [sic] benefit. So I went to my first meeting...My involvement with DCTC has opened doors that I thought were closed to me. Because of the encouragement of it's members, I'm in college now. I have meet

some truly awesome people and have grown so much. I can't imagine my like [sic] without it.

Barbara's narrative about how and why she got involved with the DCTC underlies a displacement of normative 'support' models in deference to engaging productively with change to secure a vitality of 'self.' She disregards pathologizing narratives of trans subjectivity and locates empowerment through working for not only the 'T,' as she notes, but also for others. While Barbara has never described the work she does, as an active member of the activist community in DC, as a type of 'radical trans politics' her investment in a 'trickle up' approach to social organizing articulate Spade's paradigm. Indeed, the core organizing principles of DCTC, as a group with no hierarchy or formal structure, buttress a logic that maintains to render life more imaginable for those in the positions of the greatest vulnerable is to render life more imaginable for oneself.

As discussed here, ultimately, in the context of securing support, safety and employment for trans persons in DC, hate crimes legislation and employment non-discrimination protection have failed as modalities to secure and maintain all trans lives. Building upon the maps and narratives discussed in the proceeding chapters it is clear that 'trans rights' in DC can be secured only once the structural inequalities in trans lived experience are directly addressed. That is, the conditions that render death and violence against some trans bodies as acceptable, if not also expected, must be critiqued. Rather than identify economic policy or identity practice as the source of this violence, I find it most productive to consider the complicated nature of inequality production. A lack of formal education may function as the root source of inequality in one instance, yet in others poverty or gender and sexual transgression may inhibit class and social mobility. In short, the most productive form of social justice emerges out of pinpointing a series of articulating issues, rather than a singularity, which serve to only maintain systems of

inequality for different trans groups. Indeed, just as trans persons occupy a spectrum of subject positions and experiences, no one root cause can be identified as that which produces the conditions hate crimes legislations of employment non-discrimination law attempt to ameliorate. Groups such as DCTC would argue that trans concerns are as fundamentally about prison abolition, anti-racism, capitalist resistance and anti-poverty work as they are gender practice and theory. As Viviane Namaste reminds us, failing to address the complicated and interwoven nature of structural inequality “leaves intact a political system that constantly invents new mechanisms to organize public and private space according to the interests of those with money” (Namaste 2005:28).

Epilogue

It was Christmas Eve and the normally crowded streets of a late Saturday night in DC were cold and barren. The vents in the HIPS van were at full blast that evening, attempting to temper the shocks of cold air that would rush in from the outreach window. Megan, a veteran HIPS outreach volunteer, was in the hot seat that night and would be the mobile siren for support and safer sex. That night we carried a little something extra; we had hand made hats and scarves to hand out to the regulars. It was a cold night and not an easy one to be working outside. This was the kind of night where those in better financial situations worked from their cars to protect their bodies from the icy winds. We took our usual tour of the city, sneaking slowly by the hot spots in seek of those beginning Christmas Day under the stars. With the white gleam of the white house peaking over the horizon, we pulled up to a woman working without the advantage of a vehicle that evening. Her glazed eyes and frozen limbs revealed her turn to a form of chemical support that evening. “Can we get you any candy or condoms? We have scarves and hats! Can we get you a pair?!” Megan repeated emphatically from the outreach

window. Her shivering lips, coated in a river of mucous pouring from each nostril, struggled to articulate the words her mind and body attempted to link together into communication. Instead, she nodded. I quickly prepared a paper bag with condoms and lube in the back while Megan ran through the color and style selection of our winter warmers. Her bare hands were immobilized and shaking and the body-mind disconnect of the drug was making it impossible for her to reach out and take the bag.

I watched from the backseat as Megan drew upon every resource she could to locate our friend's faculties. Eventually gloves were put on, condoms and lube made their way into a purse, and a tissue was brought to the aid of a leaking nose. We wished her a good night and pulled back into the vacant street to continue on. As we drove away in silence, I knew we all felt a sense of frustration, of sadness, and, somewhere in there, even a little hope. This work is about facilitating better nights, moments and lives, not solving what we might view in these snapshots of lives as catastrophic. I sat back in the soft embrace of the warm van seat and reflected on the dark beauty of the cityscapes where bodies are always in motion, bumping into one another through slivers of temporal and spatial articulations through all those strange ways that can produce communities, relationships, friendships and, even sometimes, violence.

That evening was and is a reminder that the social and material world is not a binary of good or bad, of pain or joy or even of us versus them. The strolls that evening were a place of celebration, of struggle and of companionship and love for those on the street and those in the van. Indeed, we all exist within this tapestry of life. This tapestry binds us together, each square its own worn parcel of memories and sensation. The thread that links us together is these moments of articulation: the moments where one body reaches out to another to make a real, and hopefully lasting, connection. While my project in this dissertation was to problematize the

notion that all 'trans' people fall within the same category of materiality, I have learned that the relationship is neither entirely disconnected or a solid template of belonging. Rather, we are all struggling communally together, whether we can visualize this or not. This knowledge—that we are linked in many complicated and hierarchal ways—undergirds the logic so many groups, such as DCTC and HIPS employ: if justice is secured for those most marginalized, oppressed and in pain among us, and the structures of power that regulate us all are dismantled, then, we, as members of any community, city or state, will fundamentally be in a better world. It is through this materialization of life, the humanization of the Other, and even of the political enemy, that serves as that first step towards shifting away from a reliance upon violence and oppression to a movement for a better, and more just, reality for us all.

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