

Introduction

In October 2011, a dozen members of the South African Black lesbian organization Free Gender picketed in front of a police station in the township of Nyanga, located about twelve miles outside Cape Town. The group was protesting police inaction in the case of Nontsikelelo Tyatyeka, a young lesbian murdered by her neighbor. Members sang songs and *toyi-toyied*, a form of dance historically directed at apartheid officials and designed to motivate resistance to state repression. Funeka Soldaat, the founder and then chairperson of the organization, took to a megaphone to address the crowd that had gathered and to present a memorandum to the station commander demanding that police take steps to close the case. Police neglect of the investigation into Tyatyeka's disappearance a year before underscored the low value placed on lesbian life and the frequent dehumanization of lesbians through violence.

With their actions, the organization drew attention to the institutional indifference to violence against lesbians that contradicted the promises of nondiscrimination against gays and lesbians enshrined in South Africa's postapartheid constitution. In addition to calling for a full investigation of her death, the memorandum that Soldaat presented to the police that day called on them to "work in partnership with organisations and members of the Nyanga community" (author's notes) in the apprehension of the perpetrator. Despite the confrontational tactic, the group's deployment of their identity highlighted the relationship of lesbians to multiple communities, including the local community of fellow Black Africans and the broader human community entitled to freedom from violence. Specifically, the group emphasized the commensurability

of Black lesbian identity with other important social identities such as African and community member.

On the other side of globe, in Argentina, a group called La Fulana was similarly dedicated to countering discrimination and violence against lesbians. In March 2011, the group held a major public event at Buenos Aires' Parque Centenario in honor of Natalia Gaitán, a young lesbian killed by her girlfriend's stepfather. The event was to raise awareness that *la lesbophobia mata* (lesbophobia kills). The group contracted the well-known singer Hilda Lizarazu to help draw in a large crowd that included casual passersby. Group members took turns reading statements repudiating violence before a dozen took to the stage wearing matching T-shirts and turned their backs to the audience. The activists' T-shirts, made for the event, proclaimed *Yo tambien soy Natalia Gaitán* (I too am Natalia Gaitán) above the logos of La Fulana, the Federación Argentina LGBT (FALGBT), and the Instituto Nacional contra la Discriminación, la Xenofobia y el Racismo (INADI), the state entity that sponsored the event. La Fulana deployed identity visibility, including activists' own lesbian visibility at the event, as a vital way to oppose deadly violence against lesbians.

I share these scenes to demonstrate some important features of contemporary lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) organizing that motivate this book. First, these scenes reflect one of the biggest changes to citizenship in recent decades – the formal inclusion of LGBT people into democratic regimes. In 1996, South Africa became the first country in the world to incorporate nondiscrimination protections for lesbians and gays into its constitution (Croucher 2002). In July 2010, when Argentina became the first Latin American country to adopt same-sex marriage, then President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner declared, “We are a more equitable society this week than last week,” adding that thousands of Argentines could now exercise a right she already had (Encarnación 2016: 148). Fourteen countries, including Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, and Malta, have banned the discredited practice of “conversion therapy.” In 2019, Taiwanese lawmakers adopted a same-sex marriage law, the first of its kind in Asia. Two years later, Spain approved a draft law that would allow anyone fourteen years of age or older to alter their gender marker without medical approval. LGBT people have gained inclusion into formal state structures, whether as candidates for major political parties, bureaucrats in state machinery, or civil society advisors for state initiatives. More than ever before, countries are incorporating queer people as citizens, granting rights previously denied based on sexual orientation or gender identity (Gross 2018).

As these scenes also make clear, rights are not enough to ensure the realization of full equality for LGBT people. The reality is that many continue to confront forms of marginalization and violence, even as they now also experience substantial improvements in legal rights and inclusion (Richter-Montpetit 2018). For every story of success in the policy arena, there are dozens more documenting the violence that LGBT people face. In both South Africa and Argentina, the high-profile murders of lesbians occurred just months before the passage of marriage equality laws. The lived experiences of sexual and gender minorities have highlighted this contradiction in the acquisition of citizenship rights for some time. In the 1990s, Urvashi Vaid (1995) described the situation of lesbians and gays in the United States as “virtual equality,” saying that sexual minorities have attained only the appearance of equality rather than its full realization because of the persistence of discrimination, negative public opinion, and internalized stigma. LGBT people have been described as “strangers” to citizenship (Phelan 2001) or “fragmented citizens” (Engel 2016), unable to access all the benefits of citizenship. Not all LGBT people are equally vulnerable to violence; the benefits of rights and protections are contingent upon “access to normative power” (Stanley 2021: 2). In other words, the degree to which someone can exercise their rights depends on their position in social hierarchies determined by sexuality, race, gender, and ability, among other characteristics, a fact that is often forgotten in discussions of universal citizenship (Van Zyl 2009). In this sense, the extension of formal citizenship rights can obfuscate rather than illuminate the realities of LGBT people and their relationship to each other and the rest of society (Fischel 2019; Rao 2014).

Finally, the scenes I have described provide a glimpse into the different ways organizations may use the same sexual identity – lesbian – in pursuit of increased wellbeing for lesbians and other queer people. The near ubiquity of the identity categories lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender belie the specific characters of these identities when social movement organizations strategically take them up in pursuit of their goals. Though the construction of LGBT identities is influenced by Western trajectories, collective identities and the claims associated with them are “situationally specific” (Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994: 186), intimately tied to the political histories of each national and local context and reflective of varying responses to transnational discourses (Ayoub 2014; Hoad 2007; Howe 2002; Moussawi 2015). Few studies have considered how identities are strategized differently by different LGBT movements or in relation to race, class, and gender identities – identities that also take on

different meanings across contexts.¹ An exception is Apoorva Ghosh's work (2015), which argues that organizations' negotiation of "post-colonial ethnicity" complicates the binary distinction between "respectable" and "queer" organizations, with the former being associated with corporate and mainstream cooptation and the latter associated with a critical perspective more likely to produce change. The negotiation of LGBT identities and culturally specific ones such as *hijra*, in the case of one Mumbai-based organization, has produced an agenda that cannot be easily classified in simple dichotomous terms. In identity strategizing, it is important to take an approach that recognizes the simultaneous negotiation of multiple identities because such an approach illuminates the scope of identity negotiation and provides insight into how organizations may challenge normative power along more than one dimension.

The realities facing LGBT activists in many parts of the world raise questions for scholars concerned about social movements and citizenship: How do activists manage the apparent contradiction between the promises of rights and persistent forms of marginalization? What are the various ways that activists use identity to reach beyond policy to eliminate violence and improve the lives of their constituents? What can specific strategic articulations of "lesbian" tell us about rights and democratic citizenship?

I AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO CITIZENSHIP AND IDENTITY STRATEGIZING

The goal of this book is to explain the various ways organizations deploy identity in pursuit of improvements in the day-to-day lives of their constituents. Examining this issue addresses a significant gap in our understanding of LGBT politics and social movements. Up until now, most political science work in this area has focused on movements' ability to advocate for gay rights or, more recently, transgender rights (Currah, Juang, and Minter 2006; Díez 2015; Edelman 2020; Encarnación 2016; Hollar 2018; Pierceson, Piatti-Crocker, and Schulenberg 2010; Taylor, Haider-Markel, and Lewis 2018). These scholars argue that pro-LGBT policies result from activists' ability to access to the political system, take advantage of opportunities to form alliances with state actors, and frame their claims in terms of human or civil rights (Brown 2002; Croucher 2011; Díez 2011;

¹ See Anderson-Nathe, DeFilippis, and Mehrotra (2018) for an intersectional analysis of collective identity formation in the queer liberation movement in the US context.

Grundy and Smith 2005; Marsiaj 2011; Mertus 2007). While helpful for understanding how LGBT movements can expand the terms of citizenship, this literature does not consider the implementation of pro-LGBT policies and largely takes for granted the role of identity in mobilization.

When scholars do examine identity in LGBT social movements, they are divided on the utility of identity-based activism. One perspective argues that framing activism in terms of identity is largely ineffective. Identity claims draw upon the injury that marginalized groups have suffered, paradoxically solidifying their victim status (Brown 1995). Others maintain that identity-based approaches can narrow the scope of demands for change, limit the potential of coalitional work, and lend themselves to legalistic agendas because claims for rights are made based on belonging to a discrete identity group (Cohen 1997; One in Nine 2013; Spade 2015). The assimilationist strategies favored by many mainstream movements rely on static notions of lesbian and gay identity and overstate sameness to heterosexuals. This excludes LGBT people who cannot or do not want to be “just like” the majority (Mucciaroni 2017; Murib 2023; Phelan 2001; Stulberg 2018; Weiss 2003). In the global context, scholars argue that LGBT identity frameworks can override local ways of understanding sexuality and conceptions of justice (Altman 1996; Calvo and Trujillo 2011; Long 2009; Najmabadi 2012; Waites 2009). The globalization of LGBT identities can exacerbate tensions for activists outside Euro-America when they employ identities perceived to be foreign or Western (Babb 2003; Chabot and Duyvendak 2002; Currier 2012; De la Dehesa 2010; Hoad 2007; Thoreson 2014). This interdisciplinary literature adeptly demonstrates the problems with use of identity but often struggles to explain why activists invested in change would choose to continue to use it.

Other scholars argue that identity plays a vital role in the strategic repertoires of social movements (Bernstein 1997; Gamson 1995, 1996; Longaker 2021; Taylor and Whittier 1992). These scholars argue that identity strategies coalesce around depicting lesbians and gays as similar to or different from the heterosexual majority, depending on contextual factors (Bernstein 1997; Cortese 2006; Dugan 2008; Ghaziani 2011; Ghaziani, Taylor, and Stone 2016). While this literature has acknowledged that social movement actors negotiate multiple identities (Einwohner, Reger, and Myers 2008; Ghosh 2015; Moussawi 2015), it has not fully integrated the insights of intersectional theory on the development and effects of identity strategies. Specifically, there has not been sustained discussion of how race, class, and gender generate the factors

that influence sexual identity strategizing or the key role of the body in the public presentation of identity strategies.

Overall, research has not explained the conditions under which organizations strategize the relationships between identity categories and the potential effects of these strategic choices. In this book, I endeavor to fill this gap by taking a close look at how two lesbian organizations strategize identity in legal contexts that afford rights and recognition to sexual and gender minorities. I argue that, in addition to strategizing one identity category, organizations may strategize the relationships between identity categories to address the ways that interlocking systems of power affect their constituents. Despite commonalities transnationally and across many movements, such as the use of LGBT identity categories and liberal rights discourses, identities and the relationships between them vary according to context. Scholars must therefore consider the specificities of the process of inclusion. I conceptualize these specificities as differences in the historical construction of citizenship to understand how organizations respond to this new chapter in political context. As the opening anecdotes in this chapter demonstrate, activists' ability to embody these identity strategies in public is a crucial tactical component that allows for context-sensitive manipulation of identity for multiple, competing audiences and demands.

With these arguments, I make several contributions to existing literature. First, I join other scholars intent on examining the intersections of sexual identity with race, class, and gender in the study of LGBT social movements (Cohen 1997; Kollman and Waites 2011; Murib 2023). As I explain in Chapter 1, I apply an explicitly intersectional lens to analysis of the factors that influence strategic identity deployment to assess the conditions under which organizations choose to publicly deploy multiple identities. I challenge the idea, often implicit in social movement scholarship, that it is possible to mobilize on the basis of sexual identity in isolation from other identities. Instead, I show that organizations are always confronted with multiple identities but can choose how to publicly deploy sexual identity in relation to other identity categories. In doing so, my analysis addresses, but extends beyond, discussions of sameness and difference that characterize existing scholarship on strategic identity work (Bernstein 1997; Einwohner, Reger, and Myers 2008). By homing in on how sexuality relates to other identities, my analysis opens up space to consider additional characterizations of identity strategies.

Second, I intervene in conversations about citizenship and sexuality (Alexander 1994; Boston and Duyvendak 2015; Cossman 2002). I do

this by advancing inclusive citizenship as a conceptualization of the environmental factors that influence activists' decision making. As this chapter's opening anecdotes make clear, I explicitly theorize the way inclusive citizenship complicates identity work by creating a gap between rights in theory and rights in practice. That inclusion would complicate strategic calculations is somewhat counterintuitive, as LGBT movements worldwide have inclusion as their goal. Yet, as I explore throughout the book, legal success can raise new issues for LGBT organizations.

Third, bringing citizenship into conversation with identity strategizing reveals how differences in the historical construction of citizenship create variation in contemporary strategies. This includes the various ways the identity categories of race, gender, class, sexuality, and nationality have been constituted over time and how more recent expansions of citizenship on neoliberal terms affect organizations' strategizing. Here, I am indebted to scholarship that insists upon the historical specificity of sexuality and queer identities, and their imbrication in the logics of colonialism and state-building (Canaday 2009; Epprecht 2004; Hoad 2007; McClintock 1995; Mignolo 2016; Morgensen 2011; Stoler 1995; Wekker 2016).

Fourth, building on work that considers emotion and embodied performance, I center the embodied dimension of identity strategizing (Kaminski and Taylor 2008; Whittier 2012). I contend that embodiment is a key aspect of how strategies function and accounts for how organizations and their members can effectively deploy strategies that encompass multiple identities. A focus on embodiment reveals the role of identity strategies in contesting and upholding dominant notions of the rights-bearing citizen, allowing a conceptualization of how identity strategies influence the terms of legal inclusion without directly engaging the formal political system. Overall, this book provides an account of social movement organizations' identity strategies that takes multiple identities to be fundamental, rather than incidental, to these organizations' development, deployment, and political impact.

The insistence on bearing in mind the relationships between identity categories highlights the operation of power through which groups remain excluded from the benefits of citizenship. Examining how groups manage these power dynamics provides greater insight into how people live in "actually existing democracies" (Oxhorn and Postero 2010). Top-down approaches to democracy that focus on elite bargaining for rights and the adoption of inclusive policies that stop analysis at the moment of rights acquisition miss the side of the story that considers

not only the effective implementation of these rights by state actors but their interpretation, meaning, and everyday use. Indeed, there is a tremendous difference between “having citizenship and living it” (Gouws 2005: 87). Identity strategies allow groups to politicize dimensions or aspects of social, political, and economic life that are often thought to be outside of the realm of contestation (Waylen 1994). Yet depending on the strategy itself, it may leave relationships between identity categories – and therefore power relationships – unexamined and assumed. Understanding deployment of identity therefore clarifies how marginalized groups expand the terms of the political to question their relationship to the state, other members of the polity, and the parameters of the rights-bearing subject.

In the rest of this chapter I present the conceptual background of this project, which adopts an intersectional approach to understanding LGBT inclusion into citizenship. Toward the end of the chapter, I discuss some methodological aspects of this research and present the plan for the rest of the book.

2 LGBT INCLUSION: FROM OUTCASTS TO CITIZENS

Understanding the significance of LGBT people’s inclusion into citizenship, and subsequent consequences for identity strategizing, requires an account of colonialism’s influence on creation of identity categories and their relationship to each other. The “cornerstone” of the colonial process was the “racial codification of the world’s population” (Bertolt 2018: 6). In both Latin America and Africa, colonists racialized Indigenous peoples and designated them as sexually deviant and perverse, which legitimized the appropriation of land and resources and the exploitation of Indigenous labor (Mignolo 2016; Picq 2018). As part of the colonial process, colonists dismantled kinship structures and delegitimized existing practices related to gender and sexuality, finding justification in notions of Christian morality and civilization (Adam 2020; Rohrer 2014). Maria Lugones (2008) calls this racialized classification scheme the “colonial/modern gender system.” This system did not simply impose existing European notions of gender on to Indigenous peoples but also created racialized gender and sexual categories designed to ensure European domination. Authorities drew on this classification system in the colonial state-building process. In and through the establishment of state institutions, and often using science as their authoritative discourse, state-sanctioned experts created categories classified as either normal

or abnormal and enforced them across multiple institutions including immigration and judicial systems (Canada 2009; Lewis 2012; Luibhéid 2005; Rohrer 2014). In this way, the establishment of modern citizenship helped to entrench identity categories and hierarchies of human value.

The colonial process set up “patterns of power” that shaped social, cultural, economic, and political systems that persisted even after formal decolonization (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 243). In places where colonial laws criminalized sodomy, such laws persisted or were reimagined in the postcolonial era. In her foundational work, M. Jacqui Alexander (1994) traces the historical process in Trinidad and Tobago through which populations were racialized and sexualized under colonial rule, and how the postcolonial state continued the project of population control to produce a normative citizenry. When postcolonial elites in the country passed the Sexual Offences Act of 1986 expanding colonial-era prohibitions of same-sex activity, the state inscribed the power of categories and criminalization on to the body. Elites cast their project as fighting internal “contamination” from the West, depicted as out-of-control bodies – immigrants, people with HIV, and those engaged in nonprocreative sex. This reproduced the terms of colonial (white) governance by projecting respectability in the international sphere, buttressing the country against a legitimacy crisis provoked by the precarity of their dependent insertion into the international economy.

Since at least the middle of the twentieth century, movements organized around gender and sexuality have targeted exclusionary legislation and cultural norms to contest the hetero and cissexist boundaries of citizenship (Campbell 2019; Croucher 2002; Díez 2015; Encarnación 2014; Marsiaj 2011). Whether working against the backdrop of formal democratic institutions or taking advantage of transition to democracy from authoritarian rule, LGBT activists have pursued what social movement scholars call “political opportunities” to advocate for and realize the adoption of pro-LGBT laws and policies (Bernstein, Marshall, and Barclay 2009; Brown 2002; Croucher 2002; Encarnación 2014; Green 1994; Paternotte and Tremblay 2015; Pecheny and Petracci 2006; Piatti-Crocker, Schulenberg, and Pierceson 2013; Tremblay, Paternotte, and Johnson, 2011). “Political opportunities” refers to aspects of the political environment that encourage mobilization, such as the openness of political institutions and the availability of allies in government (Meyer 2007). LGBT activists have taken advantage of resonant discourses of rights to frame their demands and communicate them to politicians and fellow citizens (Ho and Rolfe 2011; Kollman 2010; Mertus 2007; Thoreson

2014; Tremblay, Paternotte, and Johnson, 2011). For example, in both Argentina and South Africa, transitions from authoritarian rule provided LGBT activists with newfound political space to organize and make demands on democratizing political institutions using the language of human rights (Brown 2002; Croucher 2002). As mentioned earlier, the movements in Argentina and South Africa obtained important legal protections such as the right to be free from discrimination and to relationship recognition.

Partly because of these legal victories, the normative terrain confronting LGBT movements has shifted in many places from states' "insistence on heteronormativity to the increasing inclusion of homonormativity" (Puar 2013: 26). Reflecting upon political changes in the United States in the 1990s and early 2000s, Lisa Duggan (2003) introduced the concept of homonormativity to capture the way a normative white, middle-class gay subject had emerged that did not challenge heteronormative institutions or neoliberal consumption, but rather sought inclusion into them. Rather than presenting inclusion as successive processes of the betterment of a population, queer scholarship has demonstrated that inclusion is a violent process of "differentiation" through which deadly violence becomes legitimated against certain subjects (Haritaworn, Kuntsman, and Posocco 2014: 446). Jasbir Puar (2007) argues that the inclusion of some lesbians and gays into US citizenship in the post-9/11 era, through both law and cultural practices, is "contingent upon the segregation and disqualification of racial and sexual others from the national imaginary" (p. 2). Mainstream lesbian and gay organizations took advantage of anti-Muslim sentiment in politics and public opinion to craft demands for rights such as same-sex marriage in civilizational rhetoric that reinforced American exceptionalism and cast Middle Eastern countries as racially and sexually "backward" (Weber 2016). White, middle-class gays and lesbians became complicit in the state's projects of racialized exclusion in exchange for rights and belonging in a process referred to as "homonationalism" (Puar 2007). Overall, the inclusion of LGBT people into citizenship does not necessarily challenge identity hierarchies around race, class, gender, or sexuality, and may even reify heteronormative standards in and through the incorporation of gender and sexual difference.

Though national citizenship presents a normative configuration of identity categories, the norms involved in the construction of these categories exceed national boundaries. Recent figurations of the "normal" homosexual have come to accompany figurations of the "perverse" homosexual in international relations (Weber 2016). For example, the

Obama administration made use of notions of the “gay rights holder” in development of its foreign policy, especially the withdrawal of aid to Uganda after introduction of legislation that would have further criminalized homosexuality in 2014. Organizations such as the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) produce color-coded maps of the spread of LGBT rights that recapitulate Eurocentric notions of progress and reinforce a hierarchy among states (Rao 2020). These maps allow South Africa to stand out as a continental exception as the only African country to adopt same-sex marriage. International reception of Argentina’s adoption of same-sex marriage likewise lauded it as an achievement for the continent (Barrionuevo 2010; Schmall 2012). In certain international venues, LGBT inclusion now acts as a litmus test for the legitimate exercise of state authority (Rao 2020). Homonormativity and gay rights have become tools of statecraft for Euro-American states to advance an understanding of themselves as epicenters of democracy, human rights, and modernity (Adam 2020; Weber 2016).

Existing literature suggests that the pressures of inclusion will be too much to resist for LGBT organizations, tending to the adoption of assimilative or normalizing identity strategies that permit homonormative access to inclusion while not disrupting relationships between gender, sexuality, and other identities. Organizations can advance their agendas without “interrogating normative logics” (Ward 2008: 2). For example, the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center adopted a “corporate diversity model” that “fueled the organization’s growing interest in race, class, and gender diversity and its development of multi-issue programs” (Ward 2008: 78). Their approach included hiring a more diverse staff but “did little to change the ‘white culture’ of the organization” (Ward 2008: 78). Because of this reliance on existing identity configurations, organizations may engage in “secondary marginalization,” defining the most nonnormative members of the identity group as outside of it entirely (Cohen 1997, 2009). By relying on existing configurations of identity – the supremacy of whiteness, for example – assimilationist identity claims maintain existing power relations, securing rights and benefits for gays and lesbians “at the expense” of others (Puar 2013: 25).

The construction of the modern state and the existing terms of inclusion into it have shaped the creation of and relationships between identity categories. These categories exert power over individuals and groups. LGBT social movements have challenged these normative parameters of citizenship to include LGBT people. However, this inclusion does not

necessarily indicate broad acceptance of sexual and gender nonnormativity, nor does it indicate that sexuality and gender's relationship to other categories of difference have changed.

3 INTERSECTIONALITY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SEXUALITY

It is a social fact that individuals possess multiple identities (Snow 2013). An intersectional approach to identity extends beyond this acknowledgement to conceptualize the ways in which power creates identity categories that are historically co-constituted and materially embodied. Intersectional theorizing emerges from the intellectual work of Black and women of color feminists (Collins 1990; Combahee River Collective 1981; Lorde 1984). This body of thought centers the lives of marginalized peoples who experience multiple forms of oppression simultaneously (Hancock 2007; Jordan-Zachary 2007; Nash 2008). The lived experience of marginalization is therefore not reducible to any one of these forms of oppression (Crenshaw 1989). In her critique of discrimination law in the United States, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991) coined the term “intersectionality” to “denote the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences” (Crenshaw 1991: 1244). Black women's experience of employment discrimination became legally invisible because the law could only conceptualize their experience as either racist or sexist.

Intersectionality reveals the limitations of formal inclusion into existing structures of legal or political representation in part because marginalized groups tend to be incorporated along only one axis of difference at a time. By explicitly taking up Black women's experience, Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality asks scholars to look beyond the structuring dichotomy of sameness and difference; Black women's experience could not be understood as simply “similar to” or “different from” the experiences of white women or Black men, and therefore Black women cannot simply be included into existing legal logics. In this way, intersectionality is “part of a larger critique of rights and legal institutions” that is “premised in part on understanding how [law] reified and flattened power relationships into unidimensional notions of discrimination” (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013: 791). This is particularly evident in discussions of vulnerability to violence, where legal protections rarely provide adequate safety under conditions of economic, racial, sexual, and gender precarity. Indeed, violence is a “saturated site of power relations” that

renders the simultaneous work of colonialism, racism, sexism, and classism especially apparent (Collins 2019: 238).

In this book, I use intersectionality as a lens or approach to access “new angles of vision” (Collins 2019: 34) on the topic of identity strategizing. Intersectionality puts the emphasis on the operation of power (Cooper 2015), describing the operation of a “matrix of domination” or “intersecting systems of oppression” (Collins 2017). Attention to these forms of domination highlights common aspects of oppression across contexts, yet the precise operations will vary across time and space. An intersectional analysis does not gloss over these differences but rather illuminates the relationships between intersecting systems of power (Collins 2017). As I elaborate in Chapter 2, Argentina and South Africa have distinct histories of sexuality. Nevertheless, intersectionality provides a lens through which to examine the interrelation of sexuality, race, class, and gender and the colonial process through which these categories became instituted in contemporary politics. Relatedly, intersectionality is useful for bringing into focus the relationships among identity categories and the connection between the creation and operation of identity categories and the nation-state (Yuval-Davis 1997). Scholarship has established the role of the state and national discourse in creating the categories into which individuals and groups are arranged (Canaday 2009). The state’s role in privileging certain categories over others is a particularly clear example of the operation of power in and through identity, yet this connection has not been thoroughly explored in the literature on social movement strategizing.

When intersectionality’s theory of power and critique of law is put in conversation with lesbian and gay identity strategizing, it becomes clear how a singular focus on sexual subordination and acquisition of legal rights will fail to address the structures of power that maintain the marginalization of gays and lesbians. Cathy Cohen (1997) criticizes the US gay and lesbian movement for their strategy of assimilation into dominant institutions. Assimilationist strategies rely not only on stable notions of identity but also on a focus on only one identity – sexuality – to the exclusion of others. Consideration of multiple identities reveals that queers of color often cannot access the benefits of assimilationist politics because of their relationship to racial, class, and other relevant vectors of power. At the same time, even a strategy of radical difference along only one axis will leave most systems of power unchallenged. Rather, Cohen advocates an approach to social and political change that criticizes the systems of oppression, which the dichotomy of heterosexual and queer

leave unexamined. Stated differently, a thorough critique of heteronormativity is not possible without analysis of its production in and through forms of racial, class, and gender normativity, among others.

To better understand how social movement organizations strategize identity, I apply an intersectional lens to “tease out the ways in which discourses on race, sexuality, gender, class, ability, nation, and Indigeneity require and rely upon presumptive conceptual information about other categories of difference” (Brandzel 2016: 17). Even when organizations are presumably only publicly presenting one identity category, doing so must “rely on” existing conceptions of other categories of difference in order to make sense. Any framework for understanding LGBT identity strategizing must therefore build on the crucial insight that sexual and gender identities are not politically negotiated separately from other identity categories but must also accommodate variation in organizational strategy and the possibility that activists can deploy identity in such a way as to challenge or problematize the relationships between identities.

4 STRATEGIZING IDENTITY

While I elaborate extensively in Chapter 1 on what it means to use identity strategically, it is worthwhile to clarify that when I talk about identity strategizing, I am looking at the kinds of identities people form when they come together in groups and communities to collectively determine who they are (Taylor and Whittier 1992). This collective identity is distinct from, though related to, individual and social identities. Individual identity refers to “self-definition in terms of personal attributes,” and social identity refers to the social categories that are often ascribed to individuals, as in the race, class, and gender categories described earlier in this chapter (Van Stekelenburg 2013: 1). Collective identities are an interactional accomplishment that require considerable effort to create and maintain. Scholars refer to the work activists do to construct and maintain collective identities as “strategic identity work” (Einwohner, Reger, and Myers 2008). In the chapters that follow, I consider strategic identity work to be a large umbrella under which I put identity strategizing, or the action of generating identity strategies. The specific strategies, then, are a kind of social movement output or product. Individuals and collectives deploy or publicly express identities such that identities themselves become the subject of public debate (Bernstein 1997). In the next section of this chapter, I discuss some of the methodological choices I made during the research process.

5 THE RESEARCH PROCESS: CASE SELECTION
AND METHODS

In this book, I look at social movement organizations in Argentina and South Africa to examine how LGBT activists strategize identity in contexts of robust legal rights. The question I am asked the most about this project is “Why those two countries?” At the time of my initial research in 2010, Argentina and South Africa stood out as countries with relatively strong LGBT movements that had achieved significant legal victories, permitting me to examine what happens to organizations in the wake of formal inclusion. The selection of Argentina and South Africa allowed employment of an “extreme case method” that permits the researcher to examine a case that is “prototypical or paradigmatic of some phenomena of interest” (Gerring 2008: 653). In the decade that has passed since I began working on this project, LGBT rights have gained momentum globally, and these country cases are far less “extreme” examples. Today the two countries are exemplary of several trends affecting LGBT organizing, making insights generated from these cases more broadly applicable. As is the case in many countries in Latin America and Eastern Europe and in some African countries, the movements in Argentina and South Africa were embedded in broader struggles for democratization and employed a transnational vocabulary of human rights (Croucher 2002; Epprecht 2013; Figari 2014; Munro 2012; Pousadela 2013). Unlike civil-rights-based LGBT movements in the United States, for example, neither of these two LGBT movements conceptualized their struggles as being for minority rights, but rather presented a broader program of democratization (Figari 2014; Hoad 2007). In the aftermath of the transition, each country adopted neoliberal economic reforms and the LGBT movement formed part of a broader human rights movement that couched its claims in these terms.

Comparing two countries similar in terms of legal equality and social movement success opens space to consider important differences that endow identities and their relationships with political significance. Following Karen Beckwith (2000), “a gendered comparative politics is best constructed on the grounds of context, which can be dynamically specified” (p. 434). I do this by looking at the historical construction of citizenship. For example, while racialization was a key aspect of citizenship construction in each context, in Argentina elites promoted a policy of racial mixing to generate a white national population. In South Africa, elites used segregation to create and maintain populations distinguished

by race and to maintain control over a majority Black population. Additionally, while each country transitioned to democracy from authoritarianism, South Africa underwent a simultaneous decolonization and democratization in the early 1990s (Hoad 2007). As part of a nationalistic response to colonialism, many South Africans see rights for LGBT people as a foreign import, associated with white rule (Currier 2012; Matebeni 2017). Comparison of these cases highlights the differences in how power relationships, and by extension identity categories, have developed over time, shaping the contemporary political landscape in which LGBT organizations strategize.

When I was a graduate student preparing this project, far fewer studies of LGBT activism existed than today, and even fewer examining the work of activists in the Global South. The large body of research that considered the specificities of women's social mobilization in both Latin America and Africa had not paid sustained attention to issues of sexuality. Likewise, literature on LGBT movements tended to look at the movement as a whole or focus on gay men's organizing (Bazán 2004; Epprecht 2001, 2008; Hoad 2007; Hoad, Martin, and Reid 2005; Meccia 2006). I sought to address this gap in the literature through working with queer women's organizations to consider how they might articulate specific relationships to rights.

I did not set out to assess existing theories of identity strategy. My qualitative approach to data collection sought to better understand the meanings people attach to political phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). What I observed in the groups I worked with was the ongoing importance of identity to their activism, but also very different manipulations of identity in group activity. As I discuss in Chapter 3, in the Argentine case, the issue of "internalized lesbophobia" surfaced regularly in group meetings, to which the organization proposed "lesbian visibility" as a solution. In the South African case, activists constantly insisted to me "just because we are lesbians does not mean we are not women." In contexts where legal- and policy-related goals did not take precedence, and in the spirit of qualitative inquiry, I wanted to know what these manipulations of identity meant to leaders and members of the organizations (Chapter 3), and why they felt compelled to share these identities publicly (Chapter 5). Upon reflection, I thought the best literature in which to situate these findings was the literature on strategic use of identity, to which I believe I make an important contribution through inductive reasoning and theory-building. In Chapters 1 and 2, I draw upon existing social movement theory to specify the conditions

under which organizations will be compelled to strategize the relationships between identity categories in their public presentations. As I explain in those chapters, an organization's decision is influenced by political and discursive opportunities, opposition and oppositional discourses, and intramovement and organizational dynamics. To be clear, this is not a causal framework, as my research design does not allow me to control for a sufficient number of differences between the two cases. Rather, by exploring how activists interpret and understand their identity work, as well as the external factors that affect their strategizing, I view my project as walking the line between an interpretivist account of social movement activity that focuses on contextually dependent meaning and an account whose argument can be generalized to other cases.

5.1 Participant Observation and In-Depth Interviews

To explore how queer women's organizations strategize, I worked with two groups. In Argentina, I worked with La Fulana from 2010 – shortly after the adoption of same-sex marriage – until 2011, with a return visit in November 2019. La Fulana is a grassroots voluntary organization for lesbian and bisexual women based in downtown Buenos Aires. Founded in 1998, the group is part of a broader pro-democracy movement that found new opportunities to organize after the end of the last dictatorship in the 1980s. While working specifically on lesbian and bisexual women's issues, the organization forms part of a national coalition of LGBT organizations, FALGBT, that pushed for and won same-sex marriage. In South Africa, I worked with Free Gender, a Black lesbian organization in Khayelitsha, a township of Cape Town, from 2011 to 2012, with follow-up visits in August 2015 and July 2019. Like La Fulana, Free Gender is grassroots and voluntary. The group began organizing in 2008 as a response to the lack of attention paid to violence against Black lesbians living the townships, an issue that more professionalized national NGOs had struggled to address consistently. I have replaced all the participants' names with pseudonyms except those of public figures who are regularly interviewed in the press (such as the leaders of La Fulana and Free Gender).

To understand how each organization deployed identity to the outside world, I attended movement events such as Pride marches and rallies, and events and meetings specific to each group, including planning sessions and regular weekly gatherings of members. In addition, I gathered

primary sources such as flyers, magazines, petitions, and newspaper clippings.² In doing so, I engaged in what Erica Simmons and Nicolas Rush Smith (2015) consider ethnographic comparison, building my argument from analysis of more than one social field. Such examination of multiple field sites has the potential to “generate novel insights about the practices scholars observe in one field site or push us to theorize those practices in new ways” (Simmons and Smith 2015: 15). With the juxtaposition of the activism of these two groups, similarities, differences, and alternative perspectives emerged. For example, it was only through thinking about the work of La Fulana and Free Gender together that I appreciated how I had overlooked differences in how lesbian identity was or was not explicitly strategized alongside other identities. I also came to appreciate that, while all social movement organizations may strategize their public presence, not all organizations prioritized identity visibility, putting me on to questions about what such an articulation of identity meant for members of La Fulana.

During in-depth interviews and day-to-day interactions with group members, I was able to build relationships and contribute to group activities. As a white, English-speaking North American, I worked in a second language (Spanish) and in cultural contexts different from the one I grew up in. Through spending time with organizations, I became what some researchers call a “trusted outsider” (Bucierius 2013). I did not share many of the group members’ identities, but organizational leaders strategically entrusted me with in-group information such as access to organizational documents, budgets, and passwords, and gave me responsibilities such as leading discussion groups or interacting with other organizations. Through this process, I was able to collect detailed data on how the organizations work, specifically how they crafted and deployed collective identities.

Throughout the text, I use the term LGBT to refer to the broader movement in which Free Gender and La Fulana situated themselves when I worked with them in 2010–2012. In the South African context, activists often referred to themselves as part of the LGBTI movement, with the “I” standing for intersex, so sometimes “LGBTI” appears in the text with reference to that movement. I use “lesbian and gay” to refer to both movements historically prior to the inclusion of bisexual, trans, and intersex activism. Over the past ten years, the terminology activists use to refer

² Additional detail on my selection of organizations and interview participants can be found in the Appendix of this book.

to each movement has continued to change to incorporate more sexual and gender identities, including queer and nonbinary. While “queer” was infrequently used among participants in this study, I occasionally use the term “queer” in the text to refer broadly to nonnormative sexualities and genders, and in reference to queer scholarship.

6 ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

To advance the argument outlined in this chapter, I have organized the book as follows. Chapter 1 lays out the theoretical framework that guides the rest of the book. In this chapter, I argue that an intersectional lens clarifies how social movement organizations’ external environment influences the process of identity strategizing and the political effects that identity strategizing can have beyond policy adoption. In the first part of the chapter, I integrate insights from literatures on collective identity, collective action framing, and identity strategies into a synthetic picture of the factors that influence identity strategizing: political and discursive opportunities, opposition and oppositional discourses, and intramovement and organizational dynamics. By applying an intersectional lens to these factors, I elaborate the conditions under which organizations choose to strategize multiple identity categories at once. In the second part of the chapter, I use an intersectional approach to demonstrate the political effects of identity strategies on multiple systems of power simultaneously. An intersectional perspective points analysis toward the connections between identity, embodiment, and emotion, illuminating how the embodiment of identity strategy can challenge and uphold the subject of rights.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the emergence of lesbian organizing in Argentina and South Africa that situates La Fulana and Free Gender in their historical contexts. Drawing on the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 1, I argue that an intersectional approach illuminates the role that race, class, and gender played alongside sexuality in the historical process of constructing citizenship, and therefore in mediating organizations’ contemporary interactions with the political system, with opposition and oppositional discourse, and with other social movement organizations. I begin by looking at the construction of the colonial state in each context, which instantiated strong norms of race, class, gender, and sexuality that were sometimes codified in law. With democratic transitions and changing citizenship regimes during the late twentieth century, activists found new political and discursive

opportunities to advance their agendas. Human rights became a dominant discursive framework that organizations leveraged for access and mined for cultural symbols. After the transition, opposition discourses to the LGBT movement continued to erase sexual difference in the public sphere in Argentina and to impose identity hierarchies in South Africa. The ongoing relevance of identity categories and the power differentials they create shaped how each organization interacted with the broader LGBT movement and each organization's identity strategizing.

Chapter 3 looks deeply at how members of La Fulana and Free Gender strategically construct identity. I argue that organizations use identity to address the limitations of legally inclusive citizenship, which may require challenging the relationships between identity categories. As a result, organizations may strategize identity to commensurate an identity with other important social identities, or they may strategize it to increase the salience of an identity or identities relative to others. I show how Free Gender strategizes lesbian identity to be commensurate with other important social and political identities such as "woman," "African," and "community member." In contrast to Free Gender, La Fulana employed lesbian visibility as a strategy to correct the social and political erasure of lesbians in public that has persisted after the acquisition of citizenship rights.

In Chapter 4, I consider dilemmas that arise for "successful" LGBT movements with increasing access to and interactions with state bureaucracies. Here I apply an intersectional lens to neoliberal inclusion to reveal how inclusion along one dimension (sexuality) may constrict organizations along other dimensions (access to resources), influencing the ability of organizations to deploy their identity strategies. In Argentina, activists who took up salaried positions in the bureaucracy were able to deploy lesbian visibility from within the state to advance pro-LGBT public policy. However, their engagement with the state weakened the organization overall and compromised the organization's ability to deploy their identity strategy in the public sphere. In contrast, Free Gender declined to participate in the South African government's National Task Team (NTT) on LGBTI issues despite its members being the ostensible target group for the initiative. Instead of pursuing participation in this national initiative, Free Gender chose to engage with local police and deploy their identity strategy in these interactions.

Chapter 5 shifts analysis toward the effects of identity strategies on systems of meaning. Accessing the public is a key component of the way social movement organizations challenge existing social and political

relations (Fraser 1990). I argue that by embodying strategies in public, activists can politicize the terms of personhood and citizenship, giving rights a specific, embodied form. I compare lesbian interventions in emotionally-charged public spheres – memorial services in Cape Town, and the annual Pride march in Buenos Aires. In this chapter, an intersectional approach illuminates the parameters of gender, sexuality, race, and class that define the universal citizen.

Chapter 6 situates the case studies of activism in Argentina and South Africa in global trends in LGBT rights and distills some general lessons from my research. I briefly explore the implications of my arguments for understanding LGBT activism in the Netherlands and Russia, two cases that differ significantly in terms of legal inclusion. My analysis highlights the necessary negotiation of multiple identity categories, the ongoing influence of the colonial process on contemporary sexual politics, the importance of exploring organizational-level variation, and the role of organizations in moving beyond formal inclusion to improve the everyday realities of their constituents. The Russian case points to the limits of this study in underscoring contingency of identity deployment on the ability to express identity in public and meet collectively in public and private spaces. I conclude the book with a reflection on directions for future research, including how the framework I present can help scholars understand identity strategizing by other movements in other national contexts.