

Invisible Women in Invisible Places: Lesbians, Lesbian Bars, and the Social Production of People/Environment Relationships

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Résumé

Bien qu'invisibles dans les travaux sur "milieux pour les femmes", les bars lesbiens sont présents dans les petites et grandes villes des Etats-Unis et à travers le monde. Cet article présente l'histoire de leur développement aux Etats-Unis, leurs usages et leurs significations pour les Lesbiennes dans différentes communautés, leurs relations à la culture lesbienne et à l'émergence du mouvement politique moderne gai et lesbien, ainsi qu'aux collectivités auxquelles ils appartiennent. Le point de vue adopté est celui de l'étude de la production sociale des rapports personnes-milieux, à travers laquelle l'analyse historique permet d'établir un lien entre les approches macro- et micro-sociales. Cette perspective permet d'explorer la relation entre les changements environnementaux et le changement social et elle soulève des interrogations nouvelles sur les postulats, les concepts et les méthodes en vigueur dans le domaine d'étude des rapports personnes-milieux.

Summary

Though invisible in our literature as "environments for women" Lesbian bars exist in small towns and in large cities, all over the United States and the world. This paper traces the history of their development in the United States, their uses and meanings for Lesbians in different communities, as well as their relationship to Lesbian culture and to the emergence of the modern Lesbian and Gay political movement, and to the larger communities of which they are a part. A perspective called the "social production of people/environment relationships" is used, one in which historical analysis provides the link between existing macro- and micro-level approaches to understanding people/environment relationships at the present time. This perspective explores the relationship between environmental change and social change and leads to questions about assumptions, concepts and methods in current work in our field.

1. Introduction

Existing approaches to understanding the relationship between people and environmental settings include those at the micro (i.e., environmental/architectural psychological) and macro (i.e., political, cultural and social) levels of analyses. The former typically decontextualize people/environment relationships from the larger societal context; the latter either focus on abstract space/social categories or eliminate

individual/group experience and interpretation. The approach taken in this paper - the social production of people/environment relationship - uses an interpretative and contextualized historical method to show the relationship between micro- and macro- level processes in creating and transforming people/environment relationships (Manzo & Wolfe, 1990)

Yet, historical analyses, as a method for understanding people/environment relationships, can inhibit change if the past is seen as a set of "facts" leading directly to the only "true" story. The present approach, by contrast, is based on questioning whose interpretations are available and why; whose past is made visible and whose invisible (Davidson & Lytle, 1982; Lerner, 1979). It has as its premise understanding what Foucault called a "history of the present" (Dreyfuss & Rabinow, 1983). It seeks to clarify and relate the historical interplay among forces at the present moment and at other times, looking for differences and similarities, discontinuities and continuities, changes in language, use and meaning as well as physical form.

However, many analyses based on Foucaultian concepts, or growing out of other neo-Marxist approaches, focus exclusively on the history of normatively identifiable building types and assume that dominant discourses reveal the story of their production, uses and meanings. Yet this leads to only a partial story of people/environment relationship - a story of domination. In contrast, the current perspective focuses on the "marginalized discourses", seeks to hear the voices of "ordinary" individuals, to recognize the importance of daily experiences, and to account for forces larger than the individual but not to artificially inflate their dominance (Diamond & Quinby, 1988). Its premise is that people are active creators of their own identities and environments rather than mere bearers of dominant social relations or passive absorbers of dominant ideology.

By focusing on settings other than mass-produced normative built forms - in this instance, Lesbian bars - and on uses for and meanings of existing forms which were never intended, either by those who created them or who currently manage them, I am seeking to clarify the relationship between environmental change and social change brought about by other than dominant groups - in this instance, Lesbians. Yet, existing attempts to understand environmental/social change as a process of consciousness and contestation still privilege economic explanations. Of particular relevance to the present paper is Castell's approach to understanding the role of the "Gay" community in affecting urban change in San Francisco (1983). While on the surface his analyses appears to use a "cultural" explanation, he focuses only on Gay men, claiming that Lesbians could not be identified on the Landscape of San Francisco because they did not own property. Yet, Lesbians in San Francisco do have a culture and a known geography as part of it - neighbourhoods they live in, places they frequent - despite their lack of economic power. And, they have played a role in the social/environmental change in that city. The present approach, while drawing on some of his concepts, attempts to deal with the social production of people/environment relationship by focusing on the intersection of class, gender and race as well as sexuality in understanding the creation, uses and meanings of the sociophysical world, its relation to social change and to definitions and transformations of culture.

The concept of culture, in environmental social science as well as other disciplines, is often used in a static fashion and as a barrier to change. "Tradition" is frequently cited as a basis for continuing oppressive ways of living. We need to question whose traditions are being continued, who defines what constitutes a "culture" as

opposed to a "subculture", who benefits from such definitions, and why (Grahn, 1984; Ladner, 1973). It is also premised on the idea that any culture is in a continual process of creation, maintaining parts of the past but being transformed as well. As a Lesbian I have a particular interest in documenting and understanding various aspects of Lesbian culture, agreeing with Grahn (1984) that:

What gives any group of people distinction and dignity is its culture. This includes a remembrance of the past and a setting of itself in a world context whereby the group can see who it is relative to everyone else. I have always been bothered by the definition of homosexuality as a behaviour. Scratching is a behaviour. Homosexuality is a way of being, one that can completely influence a person's life and shape its meaning and direction (xii-xiv).

Though Lesbians and Gay men, and aspects of our culture, have existed for thousands of years in every known society and nation, yet our existence, history and transformations are rarely represented in any work in this field or others. Our culture has been trivialized as a "life-style" and our places, spaces and geography are unknown and invisible to most people.

This invisibility reflects and is reflected in the heterosexist biases in our literature, including the literature on "women and environments", in which Lesbians are rarely, if ever, mentioned and then only in passing. We are neither part of the generic category of "women" nor are we identified as a particular group of women with particular needs. Yet, we are not the only people who are made invisible (Bradley & Wolfe, 1987). In our case, an unraveling of heterosexist bias raises particular questions. Some may be applicable to invisible others; some may be specific to who we are and how we lead our lives. In our case, heterosexist bias has led to a consideration of women primarily in relation to men and children, most often in nuclear family arrangements. Apparently we are neither the housed nor the homeless, we do not use public transportation nor do we work inside or outside the home. This bias has led to an understanding of the "home" as the primary site of identity formation and place attachment and to a lack of focus on environments outside the home which are not workplaces. It has also desexualized people/environment relationships. The current research speaks to these biases and demonstrates how consciousness about them can change the understanding of people/environment relationships.

Finally, in relation to all unrepresented people is the issue of accessing and interpreting information. Existing literature is often bigoted and hateful, especially if written by people with overt anti-Lesbian and Gay political agendas. It is also likely to be stereotyped and inaccurate if writers have not examined their heterosexist biases, consulted diverse members of Lesbian and Gay communities or the literature. Historical information is more difficult to locate since much of it has been deliberately destroyed either by governments,¹ by families, or by Lesbians themselves. And, much written material, whether archival or current, is about middle and upper class white people. We have little information, except from dominant media, about others. Much of our information must come from fiction and oral history, sources generally not considered to be "hard" or "acceptable" data in the social sciences. We have to dig harder and do a lot of interpreting. In the current paper, I have used a wide range of

¹ For instance, the National Socialists burned the archives of Magnus Hirschfeld, which contained material about Lesbians and Gay men pre-1900.

sources, some archival and some current. Much of the information I have gathered comes from the Lesbian Herstory Archives Bar Project. We mailed out a request for information, disseminating it through Lesbian organizations, events and individuals. We asked women to write to us and give us the names and locations of bars they knew about, to describe them and their experiences. Women gave incredibly detailed and rich descriptions, remembering the physical appearance and specific addresses of bars, the names of women they met, and so on - often 40 to 60 years after their experience.

In summary, in this paper I use the concept of the social production of people/environment relationships to focus on particular aspects of some Lesbian lives in the United States - Lesbian bars. I use historical analysis, linking micro- and macro-levels to understand their development, sociophysical characteristics, meanings and uses, the role they play in Lesbian lives and culture, and their relationship to social change within and outside of Lesbian and Gay communities. I conclude with implications for understanding all people/environment relationships.

2. Lesbians, Lesbian Identity, and Lesbian Cultures in Context

One of the most significant controversies for Lesbians today is whether individual "Lesbian" identity, group identity and Lesbian culture, existed prior to the end of the 19th. century in the Western world (Vicinus, 1989). This controversy is partly due to the dearth of historical information. Yet, more importantly, for my purposes, it reflects the historic period we are living in, which has its own form of sanctions. For example, in the 18th. century and continuing throughout the 19th. century, "romantic friendships" between women (called "Boston Marriages" in the 19th. century), two women living together for life and being treated as a "couple" were found in upper middle-class circles (Cott, 1977; Faderman, 1980). Some scholars argue about whether we can prove these women were "Lesbians", a term which in the current historical period describes women who have sexual relationships with or erotic desires toward women and a self-conscious "Lesbian identity". The argument stated this way is impossible to resolve given the historic suppression of the public expression of female sexuality (Vicinus, 1989). Thus, while these women expressed passion for one another and often shared the same bed, neither they nor others described their sexual behaviour.

It is the existence of the argument itself, rather than its resolution, which is significant. Heterosexuals never have to prove sexual activity in order to be considered to have a heterosexual identity. Thus, the argument reflects the profoundness of the still remaining stigma attached to being labeled "a Lesbian" in 1992 - even 100 years after one's death. It also reflects the reality of having to confront legal actions for "slander" brought by living relatives of the deceased.²

It is within this current context that recent research is clarifying some issues while raising new questions. For example, it is clear that although it was in the 19th. century that in public discourse (i.e. medical texts) the idea of "homosexuality" began to be applied to individuals rather than to sexual acts, some kind of organized "Gay culture" existed much earlier. Using police records, Trumbach (1987, 1989) has documented that a "minority Gay culture" was "fully established by 1750 at least in north-

² Two years ago, a Black Gay British filmmaker, Issac Julien, had to cut out portions of his film about Black Gay male experience, "Looking for Langston", in order to distribute it in the U.S. The surviving family of Langston Hughes, a well-known Black poet of the Harlem Renaissance, threatened a lawsuit.

western Europe, that is, in the Netherlands, France, and England" (Trumbach, 1989, 150) and their forefathers appeared even earlier in urban Italy. In France, court records show that twenty or thirty of these "sodomites" would gather together at particular taverns. In fact, they were arrested simply for being there at certain times because authorities used this as evidence that an individual was a "sodomite" (Rey, 1987).

Much less specific information exists about women known to have engaged in same-sex sexual relationships and to have formed social groups or networks on this basis. Court and police records, a rich source of archival information about early Gay male experience and transformation, hardly mention Lesbians. There were "communities of women", religious and non-religious, far earlier than the 19th century (Bennet, Clarke, O'Barr, Vilen & Westphal-Wihl, 1989) and women, both inside and outside of these communities, consciously acknowledged and acted upon their erotic desires for other women (Brown, 1986; Whitebread, 1992). Yet, the extent to which they consciously grouped themselves, conceptually or physically, with other women on that basis is unknown, but possible. For example, "passing women", women who dressed in men's clothing, took male roles, and were thought to be men, existed in early modern Europe (Dekker & van der Pol, 1988). Some had sexual relationships with other women; some married and lived together for years. Some passing women hid their gender from their partners, but in other relationships both women consciously lived together despite religious condemnation and the threat of severe secular legal sanctions. Since most were poor, it is possible that there existed some kind of network for obtaining the necessary male clothing, given a world where owning a set of clothes was a luxury.

Some writers have maintained that Lesbian identity and, therefore, a Lesbian culture, could only have developed in the 19th. century because the ability for women to live independently necessitated changes in the larger economic and social structure (Ferguson, 1981). However, as Vicinus (1989) points out, from the 18th. century some working-class and professional women earned their own money and lived independent of their families, often with other women. Yet, public discourse prior to the 19th. century, while documenting different types of Lesbians foremothers (i.e., passing women, wandering groups of "flamboyant actresses" and vagrants, powerful political figures and "romantic friends") did not treat them as cohesive, conscious, social groups of women with same-sex desire, i.e., Lesbians who were part of a Lesbian culture. Vicinus (1989) concludes this was the result of men controlling public discourse and interpreting women's same-sex desire either with condescension, amusement, or curiosity or as despicable but rare sexual aberrations which required horrible punishment or expulsion.

There is much more to unravel about Lesbian life and culture prior to the 19th. century, its continuities/discontinuities with modern Lesbian culture, and the ways in which it did or did not overlap with Gay male cultures. Yet, as Grahn (1984) points out, aspects of modern Lesbian and Gay culture clearly have a long history in different parts of the world:

The [Lesbian] and Gay culture... is old, extremely old, and is continuous... a result of characteristics that members teach each other so that the characteristics repeat era after era [for example, the use of the colour

purple]... [it] is sometimes underground, sometimes above ground, and often both (xiv).³

Today, there exist Lesbian and Gay cultures which reach from Chile to Soweto, from Canada to Kenya, from the U.S. to Russia. While there are specific cultural expressions in different countries there is also an international culture with an array of links, often passed on by person to person as well as through international organizations (i.e., the International Lesbian and Gay Association). In the United States (but elsewhere, as well) there are Lesbian and Gay community centres, retirement villages, travel guides, hotels, bookstores, arts, literature, health services, religious organizations, and more. But one of the first collective "public environments" to emerge, and which still remain in the U.S. and elsewhere, was bars.

Though invisible in our literature on "women and environments", Lesbian bars exist in small towns and large cities, in the United States and in many countries in the world (Ferrari, 1992; Zoe, 1991). I can trace Lesbian use of bar environments in the U.S. to the late 1800s (Katz, 1976) and the existence of bars used exclusively by Lesbians to the 1920s. The development of Lesbian bars must be viewed in light of the role science (particularly social science and medicine) and secular law played in defining some women as "deviant" during that time, as well as the role of media in publicizing Lesbian existence. Yet, I agree with Chauncey (1988) and Weeks (1991) that the public discourse did not create an individual Lesbian identity or a Lesbian culture. Most writers described what they saw and used language already in use of the streets, i.e., "pansy", "queer". And, in fact, doctors were surprised that their "cases" did not consider themselves to be "perverts". This discourse did, however, provide some of the parameters within which, and outside of which, Lesbians could create a meaningful world and survive, a world in which bars became a significant sociophysical environment for some.

3. The Emergence, Transformation, and Legacies of Dominant Views of Lesbians "Deviance"

The defined deviance of Lesbians has been and is based on heterosexism and sexism - the ideas that heterosexuality is the only "normal" and, indeed, "natural" form of sexuality, that all women want to be or are bonded to a man, and if they don't want to be or aren't, they hate men, have been rejected by men or want to be men. The unnaturalness of homosexuality began to be codified in the early 1800s, after the American Revolution, when medical and legal professionals began to take over the church's role in defining sin and morality. Prior to the 19th. century, sodomy statutes used religious language. But at the beginning of the 1800s "...the phrase 'crimes against nature' increasingly appeared in statutes, implying that acts of sodomy offended a nature order rather than the will of God" (D'Emilio and Freedman, 1988, 122). According to Vicinus (1989), at this time there was more public commentary by men about Lesbian sexual relationships, especially in relationship to Bohemia, where "women who were not necessarily wealthy... could choose to live a sexually free lifestyle" (184). At the same time, some middle-class working women began to wear simple and practical clothing, though it was described as "masculine". They entered

³ Grahn uses the term "Gay" to include "Lesbian and Gay"; similarly, some Lesbians call themselves "Gay women".

previously all-male public arenas, i.e., medicine, art, literature, and travel. "The active mannish woman from the middle-classes can be found throughout Europe and America by the mid-century" (184). Working class and poor Lesbians were more likely to be part of a "passing" relationship during the early part of the century (Bérubé, 1979) or working as prostitutes (Bérubé, 1979; Everhard, 1986; Vicinus, 1989), both of which received some media attention. By the end of the 1800s, since women were being defined as "asexual" (which they weren't), physicians began defining Lesbians as "inverts" and "perverts" - women who were man-like in their sexual desire, were "masculine" looking but who hated men. Their "madness" was ascribed to congenital physical, physiological and mental abnormality (D'Emilio and Freedman, 1988). Lesbians who did not look "masculine" or dress in male attire were made invisible since they were considered to be behaving appropriately for their sex, i.e., playing the female role. If women didn't look manly but were unmarried, they were "spinsters" - a term which began to be used pejoratively at the turn-of-the-century to refer to women who were rejected by men. Previously it has described women who were not married and devoted their lives to good works and social pursuits.

After 1900, the term "homosexual" also began to be used, and between 1900 and 1920, medicine and social science began to define Lesbians centrally by their supposedly deviant sexual object choice. This could now include women who did not look or dress in a "masculine" fashion. This shift occurred at a time when women's sexual and erotic desire and behaviour were publicly being acknowledged. Yet, despite research which showed that sexual behaviour between women was not uncommon (described below), it nevertheless was seen as "deviant". The attempt to separate inversion from homosexuality so as to include "non-masculine" looking women was not totally successful. For example, Havelock Ellis, though separating transvestism from male homosexuality, could, in 1915, still describe "Lesbian transvestites" and even noted that those Lesbians "who wore female attire usually showed some traits of masculine simplicity in their dress" (quoted in Chauncey, 1989). The notion of sexual object choice as being significant was solidified by Freud who classified "children, animals and persons of the same sex deviations 'in respect to the sexual object'" (Chauncey, 1989).

By the end of the 1920s, the public image of Lesbians was as dangerous, man-hating, "mannish" women, who were morbid and pathological. Remnants of all of these attitudes and definitions exist today. In addition, during and after World War II, the development of psychiatry solidified the pathological aspects of Lesbianism and saw it as something that could and should be cured. This was codified in the psychiatric classification system. It was not until 1973, after extreme pressure from the Lesbian and Gay Liberation movement, that this was changed so that homosexuality was not automatically considered pathological. As possible pathology, however, it still remains a ground for exclusion from immigration and, in March 1992, a well known psychoanalyst leads workshops about Lesbianism based on its pathology and describes methods for curing it. Furthermore, today, even in New York and San Francisco, supposedly "free" places for Lesbians and Gay men, when a woman and a man engage in behaviours in public which have an erotic, sexual/sensual component - holding hands, hugging, dancing together, kissing - they can do this with impunity. Yet, two women holding hands, hugging, dancing or kissing in public in the same fashion, that is, with a clear or even suspected erotic component, are at best tolerated as "flaunting their life-style" (we apparently do not have a life) and, in most cases, are putting our lives at risk. How did these definitions and attitudes arise and how do they relate to the emergence and development of Lesbian bars?

4. The Emergence of Lesbian Bars in Context

These changes in law and new definitions of "female deviance" came in the wake of the development of political movements dominated by or being about women, including the abolition movement, the union movement, and the suffrage movement. Middle-class women entered the universities and professions and demanded a voice in the political system. They created the all-woman environments of settlement houses. At the same time, published writings began to claim that women were negatively affected by intellectual life (D'Emilio and Freedman, 1988). Yet, by the end of the 19th century more middle-class women were following in their footsteps. Public pressure increased. There was a definite counter-development in public discourse aimed specifically at the middle-classes. It denigrated the concept of "separate spheres" for men and women which had supported the existence of all-female environments and organizations and pushed, instead, for a heterosexual family definition of life. D'Emilio and Freedman quote G. Stanley Hall, the psychologist, as writing in 1904, that "higher education threatened to produce women who were functionally castrated... deplore the necessity of childbearing... and abhor the limitations of married life" (190).

And, indeed, the number of never-married women in the late 1800s was the highest it has ever been in the U.S. (until the last few years) and the number of children per married household was decreasing despite the passage of anti-abortion laws and laws which prevented the dissemination of contraceptive devices. After 1900, some writers made a direct connection between politically active middle-class women and Lesbianism (D'Emilio and Freedman, 1988). Despite these attacks, research conducted by Kathryn Davis (a well-known Progressive Era researcher and Lesbian) and published in 1929, found that sexual relationship between unmarried college women were not uncommon. She found that, of the 1200 unmarried women college graduates she interviewed, twenty-eight percent of the women who attended all-women's colleges and 20 percent of those from coeducational institutions reported intimate relationships with other women which were of a sexual nature; 50 percent reported having erotic feelings for other women (Davis, 1929).

Throughout this time (and up to the present) there were still many women "passing" as men, several of whom came to public attention (Bérubé, 1979). And, a group of passing Black women, none of whom were ever discovered, worked for the New York Central Railroad in Buffalo and formed a secret social group. In the mid-19th century the word "dike" meant a well-dressed man or a full set of male clothes; by the turn of the century, "dyke" came to mean a "masculine" Lesbian (Bérubé, 1979). By 1908, new slang appeared in these circles to describe Lesbians - "bulldyers". And, after 1920, women who occasionally wore men's clothing and those who passed as men began to socialize more openly in cafés and night clubs (San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project, 1989).

The largest group of women who did not engage in the traditional domestic role, beginning at the turn-of-the-century, were poor and working-class women who entered the public sphere, working as low-paid wage labourers. In 1880 there were 2,6 million women known to be in the paid labour force; the number grew to 10,8 million by 1930, far greater than the increase of women of working age in the population. Described by Progressive Era reformers as "women adrift", they lived apart from their families in boarding houses, YWCAs, cooperative apartments, and furnished rooms. In 1900, in urban areas, one in five women in the paid-labour force lived "adrift". They

were a heterogeneous group, although all were poor. Most were young and had never been married; some were older women who were separated, widowed, or divorced. They were Black and white women from small towns and rural areas and immigrants from Europe and Canada (Meyerowitz, 1988).

At the end of the 19th century, these "women adrift" were often described as symbols of moral decay. Middle-class reformers saw them as exploited victims. At the same time, heterosocial (mixed male/female) leisure environments were developed and geared specifically toward working-class women and men (dance halls, amusement parks, and so on; Peiss, 1986). By the late 1920s, those who were still "adrift" were described as "symbols of modern urban individualism" and "a self-seeking woman who shunned the constraints of family" and was a sexual experimenter (Meyerowitz, 1988, xix). From 1900 on there is evidence that some of these women were Lesbians, and by the 1920s Lesbian communities were apparent in both the Black and white furnished room districts of Chicago (Meyerowitz, 1988). Zorbaugh (1929) described Lesbians meeting in tea rooms in those areas and cited one woman who described Lesbian parties in boarding houses.

The 1920s have been described as the time of the "heterosexual revolution", when heterosexuality was socially enforced as the only normal way of life for white middle-class women. Many white women's organizations (clubs, union groups, and so on) which had flourished between the mid-1800s and World War I lost strength after women won the vote in 1920. There was political repression, especially against women who had been active in the anti-war pacifist movements (Rapp and Ross, 1981); "Lesbian-baiting" was combined with "Red-baiting", a pattern which would repeat itself during the anti-Communist McCarthy Era in the 1950s. The image of the fun-loving "Flapper" was accompanied by a consumer campaign geared to women which the Ladies Home Journal called the "cosmetics revolution" (Rapp and Ross, 1981). A massive literature on sex and marriage directed at a popular audience "redefined female freedom within the context of heterosexual 'fulfilment' and male control" (Duggan, 1981, 80) and presented the ideal of the "companionate marriage". This literature appeared liberal, for example judging sex for pleasure (within marriage) as good. However, all-women's institutions were denigrated, feminist views of female independence were attacked as "extreme", and ... "individual feminists, female friendships, celibacy, or 'spinsterhood', 'Lesbianism', and 'frigidity', were judged as deviant, pathological, misguided or pathetic" (Duggan, 1981, 80). Statistics show this had some effect on women in that marriage rates increased. Yet, women's participation in the paid labour-force increased. And, Lesbians of different social classes started to form their own communities.

Bullough and Bullough (1977) describe one such community formed in Salt Lake City, Utah in the 1920s. These women, both middle and working-class, met often and even read and discussed Freud's views of homosexuality. Kennedy and Davis (1989) identified an upper-class community in Buffalo, New York, during the 1920s, and Black and white working-class communities during the 1930s which they suggest began even earlier.

Beginning in the 1920s, as it became more acceptable for women, in general, to be in bar environments, the use of bars by Lesbians also increased and the first known bars used exclusively by Lesbians came into existence, appearing in many large and

small cities. The "butch-femme" style of dress became part of this milieu.⁴ The bars were used predominantly by working-class Lesbians, both Black and white. In Harlem, Black Lesbians and Gay men, "in the life", met in cabarets which also attracted a white Lesbian and Gay male clientele. Many Black Lesbians became part of the entertainment world, for example as chorus dancers, creating a safe space for themselves in a largely female environment. They often held parties in apartments, which were safer in terms of the police; others met in "Buffet flats", apartments where sexual performances would take place and where Prohibition liquor was available (Garber, 1989). Prohibition probably increased bar use by Lesbians because speakeasies (illegal clubs where liquor was served) were already a partly "hidden world" where they could exist more freely along with heterosexuals who were also breaking the law and moral convention. Garber documents that several Harlem speakeasies catered to what they called the "pansy trade". Lait and Mortimer (1946), in an otherwise bigoted, right-wing book, describe the transformation of Greenwich Village during Prohibition into a place for speakeasies which catered to Lesbians and Gay men, claiming it shared with Harlem the appropriate physical pre-requisites of being off-the-beaten track, as well as having narrow and dimly lit streets.

Significantly, then, Lesbian communities and Lesbian bars as "public places" to gather, developed in a time of backlash - a time when Lesbianism was being publicly denounced as pathological. Bérubé (1979) suggests that though much of the public discourse was negative, the existence of public discussion allowed individual Lesbians and Gay men to know that they were not alone in their erotic desires. Bérubé describes the impact in the late 1800s of the publicity about the Oscar Wilde trials in England: Gay male culture was pushed further underground, a stereotype was created, but isolated Gay men came to be aware of the existence of others like themselves and of an existing urban homosexual culture of which they could become a part.⁵

Thus, the evidence points to the use of bars by Lesbians as early as the late 1800s, but it was in the 1920s that they emerged as coherent sociophysical settings and took on many of the characteristics they still have today. Evidence from the 1930s is sketchier and suggests they continued to function but in the more sombre fashion of the Depression (Davis & Kennedy, 1989; Gray, n.d.). During World War II their numbers expanded dramatically in urban areas and in towns around military bases (Bérubé, 1991) as millions of men and women found themselves in a homosocial environment together. They continued to increase during the 1950s and 1960s, despite the anti-Communist McCarthy Era purges of thousands of Lesbians and Gay men from the military and despite unrelenting police raids and arrests of patrons. Again, the media publicity about these events created great fear and anxiety but it also broadcast the existence of Lesbians and Gay men and, in the latter case, provided others with the names and locations of bars. And, although not all Lesbians used them, until the late 1960s they were the only "publicly" identifiable places for Lesbian Life. However, Lesbian bars, Lesbians' experiences of bars and their uses of them, from their inception to the present, has always been framed in at least two ways: (1) by the profound expe-

⁴ Refers to women who dressed in male attire (suits) and women who dressed in female attire (dresses). In different time periods it also referred to a way of behaving publically. It does not refer to women believing they are men or to re-creating heterosexual relationship between women.

⁵ In 1929, there were similar public controversies about a Broadway play which had a Lesbian theme and about the U.S. censorship trial of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, which Bullough and Bullough (1977) describe as being hotly debated in the Salt Lake City community.

rience of being able to be who we are and were in a social space shared by others like ourselves; and (2) by the ways in which we were and are viewed and treated within these places and by the larger society.

5. The Meanings, Uses, Sociophysical Environments and Experiences of Lesbian Bars in Context

Lesbians' experiences in Lesbian bars were framed by definitions and attitudes about Lesbian "deviance", codified into law or evidenced by selective applications of generic laws only to Lesbians and Gay men (Editors of the Harvard Law Review, 1989). Secular laws against women dressing like men, which dated back to early modern Europe, had their counterparts in the U.S. They formed one of the bases for police raids on bars. In the 1950s and 1960s, when bars were raided, women who did not have on at least three pieces of women's clothing were arrested for impersonating a man. One Lesbian from New Orleans describes her response: "I wore lace on my socks so the cops wouldn't have any problems seeing they were women's socks..." (Impact, 1980). Similarly, laws against "sexual misconduct" and "lewd and lascivious acts" were used to arrest women found holding hands or dancing together; "no visible means of support" was another law applied selectively. Until the late 60s, when organized Lesbian and Gay groups brought and won law suits, it was illegal for Lesbians and Gay men to gather in a public place where liquor was served (D'Emilio, 1983).

Today, sodomy laws still exist in 24 states and the District of Columbia. These laws often do not distinguish between heterosexual and homosexual sodomy, but they are applied selectively to Gay people.⁶ In Georgia, in the mid-1980s, a Gay man was arrested under this law by a police officer who came to deliver a summons on some other matter and found him having sex in his own home. In 1986, in ruling on this case, the U.S. Supreme Court (the highest court in the U.S.), upheld the Georgia law as constitutional. We were found to have no rights to privacy, even in our homes, under the U.S. Constitution. The majority opinion stated: "To hold that the act of homosexual sodomy is somehow protected as a fundamental right would be to cast aside millenia of moral teaching" (Bowers v. Hardwick, 1986). The "tradition" of the Bible was cited as precedent for this ruling in a country which is supposedly predicated on the separation of the church and state.

These types of laws, the mentality behind them and their selective application, have meant that Lesbian bars as "public" meeting places for "deviant" women, have been subject historically to police raids, closings, arsons, and their users to humiliation, arrests, rapes, beating and other forms of violence by the police as well as by heterosexual men who are not the police (San Francisco Bay Guardian and other articles, various dates). Bar raids occur unpredictably. They are frequently a governmental response to criticism about laxity of law enforcement, relying on the bigoted attitudes of heterosexual citizens and their lack of sympathy towards Lesbians and Gay men for their political currency. Other "crackdowns" on Lesbian and Gay bars occur when conservative and right-wing political factions control local and national government. Bar raids were prevalent in the 50s during the anti-Communist McCarthy Era. In the late 1970s and early 1980s they began again in the wake of Anita Bryant's anti-homosexual "Save our Children" campaign (focused on repealing Lesbian and Gay anti-discrimina-

⁶ Even when sodomy Laws are not used legally for their intended purposes, they provide basis for other legal decisions, i.e., evaluating Lesbians and Gay men as unfit parents, de facto, because of their sexuality.

tion laws) and when the Reagan government took power and started promulgating overt anti-Lesbian and Gay hatred and bigotry. The governmental response to the AIDS crisis threatened to close all Gay establishments (including bookstores) but an organized political response prevented that overtly, except in the cases of Gay bathhouses, many of which were raided and closed even though they were the major venue for the distribution of safer-sex material.

One bar in 1958 was raided 78 times in a year and a half. Women arrested had their names published in the newspaper and even had their employers notified (Impact, 1980). Attitudes of the police and media were reflected in newspaper reports. In 1958, an article was titled "That Was No Lady, That Was...". A patrolman involved in the raid was quoted as saying: "The establishment is frequented by many sexual degenerates..." (San Francisco Chronicle, Sept. 1, 1958). These incidents and attitudes continue. In 1979, off-duty policemen and some friends attempted to enter a Lesbian bar in San Francisco, shouting "Let's get the dykes". They were told they could not enter and replied, "We are the police and we can do what we goddam well want to". Several women were injured before they could push the men out and lock themselves in (San Francisco Bay Guardian and other articles, various dates). Earlier that year, when two women were leaving another San Francisco Lesbian bar, they were abused, beaten and arrested by the police and charged with resisting arrest and failure to present identification (San Francisco Bay Guardian and other articles, various dates).

The publication of names or a criminal arrest record may seem to have been more threatening in the 1950s than today. However, most Lesbians and Gay men are still not "out" on their jobs or to their families.⁷ The felt need to "be in the closet",⁸ even in 1992, is because one can still be fired from one's job, lose one's housing or children, be discharged from the military, or thrown out of one's family, if one's identity as a Lesbian or Gay man is known. Only three states and 60 cities have even limited anti-discrimination legislation⁹ and there is none on the national level. Fighting discrimination, even in states with these laws, requires a costly and lengthy law suit. And, laws do not protect Lesbians against rejection by their families or violence from others. In the U.S., anti-Lesbian and Gay violence increased over 300 percent in the last five years; increases in different cities ranged from 17 percent to 202 percent last year. In 1991 there were eight known anti-Gay murders, compared with three the year before (New York Times, March 19, 1992). In New York State, with a large and politically active Lesbian and Gay population, there is no statewide anti-discrimination legislation and the Republican controlled state Senate has, for five years, defeated a Hate Crimes Bill, refusing to allow sexual orientation to be included as a bias cate-

⁷ Most Lesbians and Gay men do not fit stereotypes and are not easily identifiable. Therefore, they are often expected and pressured to conform to heterosexual behavior unless they let other people know about their sexuality. This is called "coming out."

⁸ Not letting others know one's sexuality, most frequently, kept hidden to avoid repercussions. Many Lesbians and Gay men, for example, are married for this reason. Due to societal pressure and negative images, some Lesbians and Gay men do not even admit to themselves they are Lesbians and Gay men or are only out to some people and not to others. "Coming out" is a continual process as one meets new people.

⁹ Prohibits discrimination against Lesbians and Gay men in some forms of employment, in the use of public accommodations (hotels, restaurants) and in some cases, housing. However, religious organizations can still discriminate and only housing with a certain number of units is covered.

gory.¹⁰ Violence and discrimination occur with little recourse, legally or politically, even today. It is still a risk for a woman to be in a Lesbian bar in the U.S. in 1992. This is also true in other countries. For example, in November 1988, a Lesbian bar in Guadalajara was raided by the police who took the women to a secluded part of the city and raped them (Letter to Lesbian Organizations, 1989).

Yet, women continue to go to Lesbian bars all over the world. That more Lesbians go to bars than to Women's Centres, and that the women who use them are more diverse in terms of age, race and economics, emphasizes the major role they still play in Lesbian life. Their continued existence speaks to a complicated set of issues, including the needs of Lesbians to have places to go which validate the reality of their world and lives as social and sexual beings. Yet, this validation today, as in the past, occurs in places which, in most cases, we neither own nor control and in which illegality takes its toll.

That Lesbian bars continue to exist or came into existence, even though their users and their existence were (and still often are) illegal, has been because the owners, overwhelmingly heterosexual men, had and do have agreements with police, with governments in general, and with organized crime. The owners and the police use the situation to make money, but also to reinforce dominant definitions of "normality" and "deviance" and as a way of keeping all women "in their place". Lesbians, like heterosexual women, rarely own their own businesses because they command less economic resources than men.¹¹ In an illegal business it is even rarer. When a heterosexual owner does not run the bar himself, he rents it to Lesbians. He has the money to pay-off to get a liquor license and to pay-off the police for protection from the police, themselves, and from other men. Yet, in the 50s and 60s, even when the police were paid-off, often they would raid bars just to frighten the women. They would notify the owners in advance, who would then alert customers to stop dancing or holding hands and would also turn the lights on brightly. The police would arrive, walk through the bar harassing the women with questions and comments and then leave (Nestle, 1987).

Lesbians operating a bar someone else owns get a percentage of the entrance fee and of the drink sales. If a bar becomes a popular meeting place, and because there is a captive audience, owners raise the rent. Since research shows that most Lesbians come to bars to socialize, to dance, shoot pool, and so on, and not to drink (Levi, 1980), in order to pay the raised rent either the entrance fee or the price of drinks must be raised. The lower discretionary income of women compared to men usually means the patronage drops. Eventually the bar closes (often re-opening as a heterosexual bar). This is one of the reasons for the short existence of most Lesbian bars in New York and other cities.

When Lesbians attempt to own a bar it is often more than they bargained for in terms of the violence and harassment. One Lesbian owner describes her attempts to run a bar in St. Louis, Missouri, in the late 1970s:

[...]women's cars were frequently vandalized and/or burglarized. Two women were beaten up. Our windows were broken, we were robbed twice... Many nights I risked a gun or knife in my gut by threatened angry men who couldn't get in.

¹⁰ This law would add specific penalties for a crime shown to be motivated by bigotry based on race, sex, religion, physical or mental ability or sexual orientation.

¹¹ In every city there are many more Gay male bars than Lesbian bars.

She finally closed the bar and then attempted to open another bar in a better, less isolated neighbourhood. The windows were broken and shot at. The police did not respond to a bomb threat, and "four men frequently harassed women on the streets and in their cars... [I] discovered that 3 of the 4 men were in the police academy about to graduate" (*The Trouble with Women's Bars*, 1979). People in the neighbourhood then petitioned to have the bar closed and her liquor license was revoked. Then, a judge reinstated it temporarily. But, the bar was firebombed while they were preparing to fight the closing in the courts.

The combination of laws, their use, concepts of deviance, ownership, and the prospect and experience of violence, combine to affect the location, stability and actual physical environments of Lesbian bars, as well as Lesbians' experiences of being in them. Judy Grahn (1984) describes the first Gay bar she went to in the 1950s: "It was on a sleazy street of pawnshops, clubs featuring women dancers pushing watered-down drinks on a quota system between dances, tattoo parlors, rundown hotels, and hamburger counters... The street had a permanently dislocated look, unwashed and untended, a look of transience and worn-out baggage" (29). Here is a description from 1979:

[...] they're all across the street from the Pepsi Cola Bottling Company or Joe's Electrical Heating Service or right next door to the Climax Lounge where loud women kiss on loud men right out front of God and everybody then stare at you when they realize you're not going into their bar but into the "other one"... (Waters, 1979).

This is as true today as it was then. During a recent Environmental Design Research Association Conference in Champaign-Urbana Illinois, I decided to go a local bar with a friend. We could not locate it by the address we had, we were told at a heterosexual bar that it was located on the "other side of the tracks". It was just a couple of blocks away from the Police Department. Location in some deserted place raises the likelihood of rapes and beatings; location near the Police Department insures surveillance and control, though not necessarily safety. The bar was across the street from a pool hall used by heterosexual men, which raises the likelihood of harassment and violence. An isolated location often means that Lesbians who do not have cars have to use public transportation or taxis. Lesbians in Champaign-Urbana told us they have taxis pick them up in front of the heterosexual bar because they have been attacked by drivers when picked up in front of their bar. While locations vary from industrial areas to downtown office areas, these places are usually deserted at night when bars open.

To insure continued patronage and to protect their premises (or if Lesbian owned, their users) from men passing by who might break the windows, or who come in to "beat up women" or to assert their male prerogatives to go anywhere they want, most Lesbian bars have no windows or cover up their windows. They are generally very dimly lit to protect their users from recognition should unwanted people enter purposefully or unknowingly. Lesbian bars generally don't have signs or names or other distinguishing physical features outside which might give them away to non-Lesbian citizens. In the 50s there was often a back room where dancing took place. Yet, even today, generally the dance floors or even the entire bar are not visually accessible from the entrance. At many bars you are buzzed into the inside after you have entered a closed-in foyer, where you pay an entrance fee to a person who is in a closed-in "box-office". This was my experience in Ashville, North Carolina and even

in Rotterdam in 1990, in a country supposedly tolerant of Gay people. I was also questioned as to how I found out about the bar's location.

Many Lesbian bars are not "places" in the sense of a consistent physical location, which one could design or decorate permanently. Often they are "women's nights" at other bars. A few years ago in London, the "Lesbian bars" moved continually on different nights of the week (being held in the private, usually basement, party spaces in heterosexual pubs) to protect women from being beaten up.

In the last few years gentrification has taken its toll: the location of Lesbian bars in industrial areas or older commercial areas in cities has meant that as condo-conversions occur, Lesbian bars are pushed out either by huge increases in rent or by legal manoeuvres. One bar in New York, located in a downtown commercial area and which had operated as a restaurant during the day and a Lesbian bar at night for 34 years, had to close in 1984 when the building owner created apartments in the industrial space above and threatened eviction. A judge prevented the eviction but ruled that no music could be played after 11 p. m. - the time when most Lesbian bars start filling up. A heterosexual bar opened in its place (Pickett, 1984; Letter to Lesbian Herstory Archives, 1984).

That Lesbian bars continue to exist is also because Lesbians use them. In most areas, they are the only places, outside of private homes, where Lesbians feel they can be who they really are - socially and sexually. Here are how some women described this in relation to the bars in the 1950s and 1960s:

We needed the Lesbian air... to breathe the life we could not see anywhere else, those of us who wanted to see women dance, make love, wear shirts and pants... we found each other and the space to be a sexually powerful butch-femme community (Nestle, 1987, 37).

Bars were the places we could be together... That's where I could be open, where I could totally be who I was (Barrett, 1990, 167).

And, a Lesbian says, about bars today:

"I can flirt and be flirted with" (Barrett, 1990, 176).

In a world where most of us cannot openly exist, Lesbian bars provide a momentary, safe, separate place to meet other Lesbians. They can be the place where people thrown out of their family can create a new support network or where Lesbians can do things they might get hassled for somewhere else, like playing pool or dancing with other women (Levi, 1980). Yet, they are not really private in the sense of autonomy, or of controlling the environment, or for many, of choosing them over some other place where we can be "out". Often married Lesbians come to Lesbian bars to meet and be with other women because they wouldn't risk going somewhere more open (Barrett, 1989).

They function as "public places" for Lesbians to meet other Lesbians, the only Lesbian "public places" in most of the U.S. or the world. And, Lesbian bars are the places where, most often, Lesbians "come out" (that is, make a statement to themselves and to others that they are Lesbians):

From the minute I entered the doors... and gaped in thrilled shock at the self-assured, proud Lesbians. I ceased then to be a nice white Protestant girl with a tomboy nature who had once had a secret and very loving Lesbian

relationship with another nice girl who was attending college to become a teacher. That definition no longer applied, as I stepped into my first Gay bar to become a full-fledged dike, a more-than-a-Lesbian (Grahn, 1984, 30).

One Lesbian says: "Where is the young Lesbian supposed to get her notions about what it can be like to be a Lesbian if she doesn't go to college?" (Bulkin, 1980, 42), and, another Lesbian, talking about bars today, says: "... people come out through the bars because they are the most accessible places" (Barrett, 1990, 63).

Yet, Lesbian bars are not legally or socially "public" since they are not open to everyone nor can one be open about going to them. Their dual status has repercussions and reveals that, in some instances, a law that seems positive to heterosexual women can be negative for Lesbians. In 1980 in New York, and undoubtedly spurred on by the real estate connected Mayor in New York and the push for gentrification, a Lesbian bar centrally located in Greenwich Village had its liquor license revoked by the State Liquor Authority. Two undercover investigators attempted to enter, were discouraged and then overcharged as a way of pressuring them to leave. The city filed suit on the charge of sex discrimination based on statutes passed in the 1960s and used successfully in the 1970s by heterosexual women seeking access to all-male clubs. As a result, at the present time in New York, it is illegal to have a Lesbian-only bar. Yet, Lesbian-only bars exist as a refuge from homophobic society where experience shows that heterosexual men try to enter only to harass or gawk at Lesbians. In one case I know of a woman who was raped by a heterosexual man at a mixed Lesbian and Gay bar (contrary to stereotype, you can't always tell a Gay man from a heterosexual one). In some cities keeping men out has meant that Lesbian bars operate as private clubs with memberships. Another member has to bring you with her, making it very difficult for young Lesbians to use them as places for "coming out".

6. Conclusion: Lesbian Bars as Sites of Domination and as Sites of Resistance

The fact that we could not and still cannot have open and visible places which we control, and in which we can be who we are with impunity, takes its toll. The bars in the 1950s and 1960s, controlled by others treating Lesbians in a humiliating way, and operating illegally, added to some women's sense of unworthiness and deviance. In the 50s many women felt alien to the butch-femme culture, yet felt compelled to be part of it in order to have a community. This rigidification of sex roles within the bars mirrored the heterosexual world of the 1950s, just as the androgynous world of the 60s which affected heterosexual culture (i.e., unisex) was made into a norm for Lesbians in the wake of Second Wave feminism and also caused some women to feel alienated from it. The bar culture, although integrated racially in some places, also mirrored the larger racist society of which it was a part. During World War II most bars were segregated even in urban areas. Subsequently, even today, Black Lesbians can have difficulties at bars which serve a predominantly white clientele. Similarly, there were and are some bars which catered to an "upscale" clientele. However, as a rule, wealthier Lesbians are more likely to meet in private homes. Thus these have been few in number although guide books make class distinctions, i.e., describing some as "Ivy League", "sophisticated", or "rough". In smaller places, if Lesbians want to be in a bar they learn to mix with different classes and often with Gay men while in larger cities class, race and sex segregation is more easily implemented by owners and sometimes chosen by clientele. And, the constant stress of the homophobic society, of leading dual lives,

then as now, in a context where there is alcohol along with constant pressure from management to buy drinks even when women don't come for that purpose, has led many women to become alcoholic. It also created a volatile atmosphere, especially in the 50s and 60s where fights would start between customers.

Yet, these sites of domination also became sites of resistance. In the 1950s, constant fear and experience of arrests loomed large and many women finally retreated, under pressure, into the closet, i.e., they got married. Others, at the end of the 1950s, who wanted a different way of life and some with clear middle-class biases, formed social organizations such as the Daughters of Bilitis. At the time this group had an assimilationist perspective, attempting to prove they were just like heterosexuals. They had dress codes which required members to wear "feminine" clothing. Unlike their counterparts in similar male organizations, they didn't think fighting bar raids was a women's issue. They eventually identified with liberal feminist organizations in the mid-1960s and did not survive after the beginning of the Lesbian and Gay Liberation movement.

Women who remained in the bar environments in the 50s and 60s had a conscious sense that they were risking a great deal to be there and decided it was worth it. In that sense, Lesbian bars served a function neither their owners nor the government wanted. They became sites of resistance because they clearly demonstrated the social validity of Lesbian sexual desire and existence, as well as the operation of male domination, homophobia and the political rather than individual nature and effects of oppression. Joan Nestle (1987) describes this experience. To use the bathroom in these bars Lesbians had to wait in a line, a line that wove throughout the entire bar. To reinforce the view that the Lesbians were "sexual deviants", the owners had someone watching them enter at the bathroom door and only one woman at a time was allowed inside. This created the line. Each woman was given a specific amount of toilet paper as they entered:

Buried deep in our endurance was our fury. That line was practice and theory seared into one. We wove our freedoms, our culture, around their obstacles of hatred. Every time I took a fistful of toilet paper, I swore eventual liberation. It would, however, be liberation with a memory (Nestle, 1987, 39).

Davis & Kennedy (1989), using oral history, document the role that bars played in the transformation of Lesbians' confrontations with a hostile heterosexual world. In the 1940s, "women braved ridicule and verbal abuse, but rarely physical conflict... In the fifties,...the street dyke emerged..." (427-428). These Lesbians dressed as they wanted outside of the bar, took jobs which allowed that, and fought back when harassed. The street dyke was a "full-time 'queer'... ready at any time to fight for her space and her dignity" (428). Visibly "butch", or in "butch-femme couples", using the streets and public transportation to get to the bars even on weekday nights, "participants in bar life were engaged in constant, often violent struggle for public space" (429). Here is what one of their narrators said about that experience: "Things back then were horrible... [but] even though I was getting my brains beaten up I would never stand up and say, 'no, don't hit me, I'm not Gay.' I wouldn't do that" (428).

The Civil Rights and black Power movement of the 1960s created the context in which this bar experience could be transformed into the beginnings of an overt political movement. In 1969, at a police raid on a Greenwich Village bar, it was a "street

dyke" who refused to go with the police when they tried to arrest her and whose resistance was the final straw that triggered what is called the Stonewall Rebellion. This was a violent confrontation between Lesbians and Gay men and the police considered to be the beginning of the modern Lesbian and Gay Liberation Movement (Truscott IV, 1969). In describing what patrons said motivated their actions, Truscott (1969a) reported that most understood that "what was and should have always been theirs, what should have been the free control of these people was shown up for what it really was, an instrument of power and exploitation" (2).

There have been many changes in the Lesbian and Gay community and political movement after the Stonewall Rebellion. At the end of the 1960s, Lesbian and Gay Community centres emerged as other "public" spaces. I am currently investigating their development. Yet, Lesbian bars continued to exist. In the 1970s Lesbians began to picket and boycott bars with racist admission policies. And, in the 1980s bars became the site of the pro-sex Lesbian movement, a reaction to the emergence of the conservative right-wing anti-Gay and anti-sex Reagan government and some parts of Lesbian-feminism which some believe de-sexualized Lesbianism to make it more acceptable to heterosexual feminists. The AIDS crisis has brought Lesbians and Gay men together in direct-action groups like the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), and they have pushed for a "queer" identity once again and socialize in bars more often together. This part of the story needs to be told at another time.

7. Implications for Environmental Social Science Theory, Research and Action

Jeffrey Weeks (1991) wrote, in relation to identity:

It is striven for, contested, negotiated, and achieved, often in struggle of the subordinated against the dominant... It is put together in circumstances bequeathed by history, in collective experiences as much as by individual destiny (94).

The same can be said for the sociophysical world and for people/environment relationships. Theories of people/environment relationships, as well as research and action based on it, must incorporate the existence of both domination and resistance and must bring together the micro- and macro-levels of analysis. Regardless of the people, environments, or environmental issues we are concerned about, we have to seek to understand the nature of systems and values (including our own) that create certain types of environments and not others, for certain people and not others, and how and why this happens. Then, and only then, can we understand why people living under certain circumstances view the world and act in the world in the ways they do and how and why they create environments for themselves in order to survive and make life meaningful. A process of change and its end products can only be understood and evaluated in relation to a set of values as to what constitutes a better world and for whom. This requires understanding the nature of and relationship between the past and present, and a serious consideration of whether our work continues a past which is oppressive or helps to change it. In doing this, we raise questions about the very basic nature of the categories we use to describe the world and our work within it, categories which influence the nature of our work and its outcomes. As this research has shown, people will create changes in the physical, social and political world in pursuit of their own survival and liberation. Our choice is whether we will be part of those changes and learn

from them or whether we will not and, even if by errors of omission, be an added barrier against them.

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