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The City as a Sexual Laboratory: The Queer Heritage of the Chicago School

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This article documents the pioneering—and largely overlooked—sociological studies of sexuality undertaken by scholars at the University of Chicago during the first decades of the twentieth century. Focusing primarily on their investigations of a wide range of non-normative sexualities, including prostitution, cross-racial sexuality and homosexuality, it argues that these studies provided the foundation for a radical new understanding of sexuality that emphasized the social context and meaning of sexual practices and types, rather than their biological or psychological determination. Finally, it demonstrates the forgotten centrality of these studies to the establishment of the field of urban sociology by explicating the sexual subtext of several key concepts from the so-called Chicago School, including natural areas, concentric zones of urban development, mobility, social personalities and the marginal man.

KEY WORDS: Chicago School; sexuality research; history of sociology.

In a 1915 essay, Robert E. Park first proposed that the city provided an ideal "laboratory or clinic in which human nature and social processes may be most conveniently and profitably studied" (Park 1915, p. 612)—an idea that shaped more than two decades of subsequent research by his students and colleagues at the University of Chicago.[2] In published monographs and essays and in unpublished

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[2]As sociologist Lester R. Kurtz aptly notes, "Although the notion of Chicago as a laboratory for social research is usually associated with Park and Burgess . . . it was part of the program [at the University of Chicago] much earlier" (Kurtz 1984, p. 60). Kurtz cites a 1902 description of the Department of Sociology's graduate program, which notes that "the city of Chicago is one of the most complete social laboratories in the world" (ibid.; Tolman 1902, p. 116). Nevertheless, I begin with Park and Burgess's designation of the city as a social laboratory because this is the commonly accepted starting point and because it was primarily under the direction of these two scholars that the city became a sexual laboratory as well.

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theses and field research, this group of scholars (who later came to be known as the Chicago School) compiled a remarkable collection of materials documenting the social organization of early twentieth-century urban life. Epitomized by landmark texts such as Louis Wirth's *The Ghetto* (1929), E. Franklin Frazier's *The Negro Family in Chicago* (1932), Frederic M. Thrasher's *The Gang* (1927), and Clifford R. Shaw's *The Jack-roller* (1930), these studies have long been cited as founding frameworks for sociological inquiry into the urban dynamics of race, ethnicity, delinquency and crime. But the equally pioneering work that this same Chicago School undertook in the field of sexuality has been almost completely forgotten. Demonstrating that the city was as much a sexual laboratory as a social one,[3] these studies focused on the "moral organization" of urban populations and the emergence of the city's "moral regions," including "Bohemia, the Half-World, the Red-Light District, and other[s] . . . less pronounced in character" (Park 1915, p. 611). And in doing so, they not only documented a wide range of non-normative urban sexual practices,[4] including prostitution, cross-racial sexuality and homosexuality, but also charted their relationship to the social and physical landscapes of the city.[5]

Although it has become commonplace in recent years, at least within academic circles, to think of sexual practices and identities as social constructions, the Chicago School's investigations of the social organization of sexuality were quite remarkable for their day. At a time when most scholars and lay people alike usually resorted to legal or medical frameworks when examining sex outside the norm of monogamous, racially homogeneous, marital procreation, Chicago sociologists developed theories that depicted the perceived sexual abnormalities of working-class immigrants, blacks, homosexuals and others as products of the broader social

[3]Echoing Park's directive in a 1928 essay on the changing American family, Ernest W. Burgess reinforced this notion of the city as a sexual laboratory. "Life all around us affords a great laboratory for research," he wrote. "Every conceivable experiment in the field of sex life and family relationships is now taking place, and is available for observation and comparison. This behavior should be studied carefully and understandingly" (Burgess 1928, p. 415).

[4]Throughout this essay I refer to prostitution, cross-racial sexuality, racialized sexualities and homosexuality collectively as non-normative sexualities, rather than as sexual or social deviance, because the latter terms were not widely used during the interwar period; they were more a product of the post-WWII studies conducted by Chicago researchers and alumni. My understanding of this range of sexual practices and types as non-normative, or even anti-normative, owes much to recent scholarship in queer theory and history (see especially Terry 1991; Warner 1993; Umphrey 1995).

[5]Most of the Chicago School's research on non-normative urban sexual types and spaces remains unpublished, tucked away in the dusty rows of M.A. and Ph.D. theses in Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago or in the voluminous archival files of the Ernest W. Burgess papers in the Special Collections Research Center of that same library. In recent years, however, a number of historians of early twentieth-century sexuality—including Kevin White, David K. Johnson, Allen Drexel, Kevin J. Mumford, Randy D. McBee and others—have begun to mine these rich resources (see White 1993; Johnson 1997; Drexel 1997; Mumford 1997; McBee 2000; Heap 2000a). At the same time, an excellent essay by anthropologist and cultural historian Gayle Rubin (2002) and a public exhibition (and accompanying catalog (Heap 2000b)) that I curated for the University of Chicago Library have begun to re-establish Chicago's pre-eminent role in the history of the social and cultural study of homosexuality.

processes of urban industrialization and modernization. They disputed contemporary juridical notions of sexuality that linked non-normative sexual practices with criminally dangerous behavior, prompting the incarceration of working-class prostitutes, homosexuals and other suspected "degenerates" for violating laws forbidding sexual commerce, sodomy and miscegenation (see D'Emilio and Freedman 1988; Spickard 1989; Chauncey 1994; Pascoe 1996). And at the same time, they challenged the endeavors of medical experts to define such practices and individuals in terms of physical and mental abnormality, including the eugenicist association of female prostitution with "feeble-mindedness" and genetic inferiority, and early sexological characterizations of homosexuality as the product of bodily or psychic hermaphroditism (see Rosen 1982; D'Emilio and Freedman 1988; Terry 1999).

Drawing on a wealth of archival sources, as well as several foundational texts in urban sociology, this article reexamines the early and unprecedented efforts of Chicago sociologists to situate sexuality in a social context. While acknowledging that such studies rarely exhibited the moral objectivity associated with similar present-day inquiries, it shows how the Chicago School's characterization of non-normative sexualities as *social*, rather than personal, pathologies produced a remarkably rich map of the dynamic sexual order of early twentieth-century Chicago. More surprisingly, perhaps, given the almost complete erasure of these studies from historical memory, it demonstrates that Chicago's early sociological investigations of sexuality were integral to the development of the field of urban sociology. Whether exploring the emergence of natural areas and concentric zones of urban development, examining the pivotal role of mobility in structuring these spaces and the social groups that inhabited them, or grappling with the social-psychological relationship between these groups and individual personalities, early twentieth-century sociologists at the University of Chicago built upon their indispensable knowledge of the social dynamics of non-normative sexual practices and communities in the city.

"A DANGEROUS SUBJECT TO STUDY": CHICAGO SOCIOLOGISTS' EARLY INVESTIGATIONS OF SEXUALITY

Although Chicago sociologists did not fully incorporate the study of sexuality in their research projects until the 1920s, members of the University of Chicago's sociology faculty began to examine the social dynamics of non-normative urban sexual practices and communities many years earlier. In 1910, for instance, two of the department's most prominent professors, William I. Thomas and Charles R. Henderson, participated in a municipally sponsored investigation of commercialized sex in Chicago. Appointed to Mayor Fred A. Busse's famed Vice Commission, these two scholars—along with twenty-eight other medical and legal

professionals, clergy and community leaders—oversaw a massive research enterprise designed to identify and propose remedies for the underlying social conditions that promoted female prostitution and "white slavery" in the city. Employing a force of "[t]rained expert investigators, both men and women"—comprised primarily of social workers, medical practitioners and graduate students—the commission gathered a wealth of information on the vice districts of Chicago's near North, South and West Sides (Vice Commission of Chicago 1911, p. 31). Indeed, they uncovered an elaborate network of social spaces that served as the foundation for a set of unique urban communities centered around sexual activity and populated by working-class immigrants, casual and professional female prostitutes, sporting men, panders, female impersonators and "sex perverts" (ibid., p. 296).

In its 1911 report, *The Social Evil in Chicago*, the Vice Commission introduced scholars and lay readers alike to this world of illicit sex. Quoting extensively from detailed investigative reports of the city's assignation houses, dance halls and saloons, this publication not only documented the mechanics of an estimated $15 million-per-year commercialized sex industry, but also indicted the city's legal codes and business practices for contributing to the perpetuation of the "social evil" of female prostitution (ibid., p. 32). In particular, the commission noted the role that urban poverty and unemployment played in encouraging immigrant and black working-class women to enter the financially lucrative sex trade, while criticizing the city's policy of prosecuting female prostitutes rather than the male panders and johns who exploited these women (ibid., p. 47).

While likely considered progressive and even feminist at the time, these concerns betrayed the commission's unwritten, white middle-class assumptions about the proper role of gender and sexuality in urban American culture: Men and women were expected to assume distinct, highly gendered positions in society; sexual matters and women themselves, if they were to retain their respectability, were to be excluded from the public sphere; and sexual activity was to be properly restricted to monogamous marital procreation. Such assumptions were especially evident in the commission's pronounced consideration of the apparent proliferation of "sexual perversions" in early twentieth-century Chicago. "Pervert methods are on the increase in the higher priced houses," the commission noted with alarm, referring to the apparent willingness of female prostitutes—especially those "cater[ing] to a so-called high class trade"—to offer oral sex to their patrons (ibid., p. 73). Yet of even greater concern was the commission's unexpected discovery of "whole groups and colonies" of male "sex perverts" who solicited male sexual partners in the dance halls and saloons of the city's bustling vice districts—not to mention similar "circles of the very well-to-do" and "the much more occasional cases among women," of which the commission had failed to secure any firsthand evidence (ibid., p. 296).

To combat this dual threat of female prostitution and sexual perversion, Chicago's Vice Commission proposed a number of correctives. First, it

recommended the introduction of "scientific" sex hygiene instruction for all public school children "beyond the age of puberty," in order to prevent the spread of these conditions to another generation (ibid., pp. 36–37). Second, it encouraged a movement away from the criminal prosecution of female prostitutes, advocating instead that they be placed under the supervision of "intelligent and sympathetic women officially connected with the court" who could help them secure reputable employment and advise them how to live "respectable" lives (ibid., p. 46). Contending that most women and children could be educated or reformed into respectable sexual actors who complied with middle-class norms, these recommendations demonstrated the commission's incorporation of both the academic principles of sexology and the compassion of social reform. But this combination of compassion and science clearly had its limits. When addressing the "latter day growth of degenerate traits" among the "definite cult" of feminine men and female impersonators in Chicago, the commission urged legislators to incorporate a more "scientific" understanding of sexual perversion in the state's 1845 statute forbidding "the infamous crime against nature" (ibid., pp. 296–298). Such revisions, it argued, would not only "make it clearly understood that society regards these abhorrent deeds as crimes," but would also improve the likelihood of obtaining convictions on this charge (ibid., p. 298).

Although it is impossible to determine the extent to which Chicago sociologists shaped the Vice Commission's report, its social analysis and recommendations clearly resonated with the academic and reform work of Professor Charles R. Henderson. An ordained Baptist minister and pioneer in the field of ecclesiastical sociology, Henderson approached the study of sexuality through an intellectual focus on the family, a strong conviction that education provided a powerful means to social betterment, and a firm belief in the reformative power of compassion and the Social Gospel (see Diner 1975; Deegan 1988). Like Chicago's Vice Commission, he encouraged the social acceptance and reform of female prostitutes rather than their legal prosecution (see Henderson 1901, 1909; Deegan 1988). Moreover, he promoted sex education as a means of protecting youth not only from the "social evil," but also from the "chief physical evils arising from ignorant or wilful [sic] perversion of the sexual functions" through "masturbation, excessive indulgence of the sexual appetite even in marriage, and the venereal diseases caused primarily and principally by prostitution" (Henderson 1909, pp. 21, 22).

William I. Thomas, on the other hand, increasingly distanced himself from the Vice Commission's publication. Although he agreed that an examination of the underlying social and economic conditions of prostitution was integral to any attempt to end the sexual exploitation of working-class women, he openly criticized the commission for failing to produce an objective, "scientific report" (Thomas 1918, p. 16). Citing the commission's insistence that its analysis had to conform to "existing moral norms," Thomas argued that its report was compromised not only by the commission's assumption that middle-class marital monogamy was

necessarily superior to working-class sexual practices, but also by its failure to recognize the social and economic contingency of middle-class sexual norms (ibid.). In his own research on sexuality, which began with a series of essays later published as *Sex and Society* (1907), Thomas diligently worked against such flawed logic by insisting that changing social conditions inevitably produced shifts in the construction of sexual norms and practices. In his landmark study (co-written with Florian Znaniecki) *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918–20), Thomas charted such changes among Polish immigrants to the United States: As American Poles became less dependent on marriage for social and economic survival, he argued, the monogamous marital norms of the old country often gave way to "normal" sex lives that included nonmarital sexual practices and even "informal polygamy" (Thomas and Znaniecki 1918–20, vol. 5, p. 261). In other publications, Thomas documented similar shifts in the sexual norms of native-born middle-class whites—shifts he attributed to the growing social acceptance of divorce and nonmonogamous relationships as modern alternatives to traditional, lifelong marriages (Thomas 1909).

Despite occasional flare-ups, the potentially explosive content of Thomas's sociological studies of sexuality initially generated little significant concern at the University of Chicago (see Janowitz 1966; Bulmer 1984). But when a series of front-page, local newspaper articles revealed that his interest in nonmonogamous relations was physical as well as intellectual, University president Henry Pratt Judson dismissed the controversial professor from the school's faculty ("Dismiss Thomas from U. of C. on Judson's Order," 1918). Thomas's apparently open marriage had become the subject of public discussion in mid April 1918, when he was arrested on a disorderly conduct charge,[6] after falsely registering at a Chicago

[6] Although a number of scholars (for example, see Bulmer 1984; Rubin 2002) have claimed that Thomas was charged with violating the Mann Act, a 1910 federal statute designed to combat the white slave trade by prohibiting the interstate transport of women and girls for immoral purposes, this apparently was not the case. Contemporary newspaper accounts suggest that federal authorities investigated the possibility of bringing such charges, but later "admit[ted] they have no proof that the couple violated the Mann Act" ("Raid Arrests at Stake in Thomas Case Decision" 1918). The perpetuation of this misinformation—as well as the assertion that Thomas had fallen under federal surveillance because of his wife Harriet Park's antiwar activities—apparently stems from a decades-old misinterpretation of sociologist Morris Janowitz's slightly more nuanced claim that Thomas "was arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation on a charge involving alleged violation of the Mann Act and of an act forbidding false hotel registration," supplying federal authorities with the "means for embarrassing and discrediting Mrs. Thomas" (Janowitz 1966, p. xiv). Yet according to contemporary newspaper coverage of Thomas's arrest, his brush with federal authorities arose primarily because "[t]he disparity in [Thomas and Granger's] ages caused the hotel people to suspect that they were not married" ("'Dr. Thomas' and Woman Taken in Loop Hotel" 1918). After a search of the guests' luggage provided evidence that they were registered under assumed names, hotel management complied with "the recently established rule that hotels must report to the federal authorities all cases where persons pose as married couples in order to get rooms" (ibid.). Apparently, this rule had been devised by the Bureau of Investigation (not yet called the FBI) and local authorities to help identify white slave traffickers for prosecution under the federal Mann Act, hence Thomas and Granger's initial arraignment on municipal morals charges and their subsequent, and quickly aborted, federal investigation. (A search of the General Records of the Department of Justice card index to names of persons in General

hotel as the husband of Mrs. R. M. Granger, the young wife of an army officer ("'Dr. Thomas' and Woman Taken in Loop Hotel," 1918). Yet from the very beginning, Thomas adamantly denied any suggestion of sexual indiscretion. Although he would later argue that there was "a large region of sexual life, both inside and outside of marriage, in which the state and public should not concern themselves," Thomas insisted that his arrest stemmed solely from the public's—and presumably the state's—inability to differentiate between a scholar's sex research and his own sexual activities (Thomas 1918, p. 16). "[S]ex is a dangerous subject of study," he cautioned fellow scholars, "because it is the only remaining subject which has not been opened up freely to scientific investigation" (ibid.).

Although the charges against Thomas were soon dismissed, their devastating impact on his academic career surely gave pause to other potential sex researchers at the University of Chicago. (After his dismissal, Thomas never again held a permanent university appointment and was even forced to remove his name from a forthcoming book, *Old World Traits Transplanted* [1921], in order to secure its publication by the University of Chicago Press [see Janowitz 1966; Bulmer 1984]). Indeed, no other Chicago sociologist ever became as closely identified with the topic of sexuality as Thomas had been. Rather, under the guidance of Professors Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, the department's later studies of sexuality were largely submerged in broader sociological investigations of urban social groups, such as hobos, bohemian radicals, African Americans and Chinese laundrymen (see Anderson 1923a; Zorbaugh 1929; Frazier 1932; Siu 1953), or in more quantitatively focused studies of intermarriage that approached issues of cross-ethnic and -racial sexuality only obliquely (see Reuter 1918, 1931; Rosenthal 1922; Mowrer 1927; Adams 1937; Slotkin 1940). Moreover, in an effort to further insulate their studies from potential public condemnation, interwar researchers often framed their investigations as attempts to ameliorate the social pathologies commonly associated with non-normative sexual practices and groups. To this end, they often found it expedient to pursue affiliations with local reform organizations, such as the Chicago Council of Social Agencies and the Urban League, which, respectively, provided partial funding for Nels Anderson's study of hobo sexuality (1923a) and E. Franklin Frazier's analysis of black families and their sexual practices (1931, 1932).

Such alliances clearly contradicted Park and Burgess's oft-remarked insistence that the establishment of a "science" of urban sociology demanded its careful separation from the practical applications of social work—the latter of which they increasingly disdained as "women's work" (Deegan 1988, p. 155). Yet

Department Files, 1917–1930, at the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland, turned up no reference to William I. Thomas among those charged for violating the Mann Act or any other federal statutes, further confirming that no federal charges were ever brought against Thomas [J. L. Wiggins, personal communication, May 15, 2003].)

Chicago's sociological studies of urban sexuality persistently blurred this emerging distinction.[7] First, these studies relied heavily on the voluminous case studies and investigative reports gathered by the city's social workers and reformers—a factor that inevitably reinforced the sociologists' tendency to regard non-normative sexual practices and groups as socially pathological. But even more significantly, they were often produced by student researchers whose paid employment by these same urban reform organizations encouraged them to assume an active role in the policing of the very individuals they studied. In the mid-1920s, for example, Nels Anderson not only assisted the Juvenile Protective Association (JPA) with its investigations of female prostitution in Chicago's brothels and cabarets, but also exploited his contacts in the city's hobo community to complete a reform-oriented study of "the homo-sexual group of men and boys who have their headquarters in Grant Park, publishing a paper of their own, using a vocabulary which no one outside the group could easily understand" (Juvenile Protective Association 1925, p. 12; Anderson 1923b). Likewise, graduate student Paul G. Cressey fashioned his 1932 study of *The Taxi-Dance Hall* from the undercover investigations that he conducted for the JPA, after joining fellow graduate students Roger Freund and Lillian Carmichael to assist this same organization in 1925, as it attempted to police the "homosexual practices" that had apparently become a "common thing" among the men and boys who frequented the city's news alleys (P. G. Cressey 1925; see also Carmichael 1926).

While such conflicts of interest routinely compromised the department's sex research during the interwar period, the studies generated by the Chicago School of urban sociology were still remarkable for their pioneering investigation of the social and cultural construction of sexuality. From the clippings files of the Chicago Citizens' Association and the investigative reports of private regulatory organizations such as the JPA and the Committee of Fifteen, students and faculty not only produced unprecedented studies of urban sexual practices and groups (for example, see P. G. Cressey 1932; Reckless 1933), but also began to make sense of the broader social disorganization that, in their estimation, characterized early twentieth-century U.S. cities. Indeed, Chicago's early sociological investigations of non-normative sexualities became integral components in the development of several key concepts in the emerging field of urban sociology.

[7]While Park fairly consistently held that "scientific" sociological research should be carefully distinguished from the more practical considerations of social work and moral reform, especially when examining urban poverty and race relations, Burgess seems always to have occupied a more conflicted position in relation to this divide. His writings on sexuality and marriage, in particular, seem fairly steeped in conventional notions of morality, and his service on the boards of two prominent anti-vice organizations, the Committee of Fifteen and the Juvenile Protective Association, for most of the 1920s and 1930s demonstrates a willingness to participate directly in the regulation of urban sexuality and the maintenance of middle-class social norms (see Deegan 1988; Abbott 1999).

NATURAL AREAS, CONCENTRIC ZONES, AND THE SEXUAL FOUNDATIONS OF URBAN SOCIAL ECOLOGY

Examining social relations as "relations of space" was central to Robert E. Park's formulation of the "science" of urban sociology (Park 1926, p. 13). Almost certainly influenced by the pioneering combination of field research and cartography published by Jane Addams and others as the *Hull-House Maps and Papers* in 1895 (see Deegan 1988), Park argued that "all we ordinarily conceive as social may eventually be construed and described in terms of space" (Park 1926, p. 12). In an effort to prove this contention, for most of the period between the two World Wars, Park and his colleague Ernest W. Burgess supervised a long-term research project charting the geographic dimensions of a wide range of social phenomena in Chicago. At least as early as 1918, students enrolled in their courses on field study and in Burgess's social pathology class (which he first offered in 1922) were charged with the task of amassing mappable data pertaining to Chicago's immigrant and African American communities, prostitutes, dance hall patrons, apartment house dwellers and other significant populations (Faris 1967). From this wealth of field research and from additional data gleaned from the case files of urban reform organizations, Chicago sociologists then constructed a series of elaborate maps documenting "the social selection and segregation of the [city's] population" into what Park referred to as distinct "natural areas"—that is, social spaces created through the "natural" ecological growth of the city, rather than its planned commercial development (Park 1926, p. 8).

As a conceptual framework, Park's natural area proved instrumental to early urban sociologists' attempts to find "patterns of regularity in [the] apparent confusion" of urban life (Janowitz 1967, p. viii). By giving shape to previously unrecognized disparities in the distribution of "desertion, divorce, delinquency, crime and other evidences of social disorganization" across urban neighborhoods and populations (Park 1929, p. 15), it created a visual representation of the shifting social and sexual norms of interwar U.S. cities. For the most part, however, scholarly analyses of this influential framework have neglected its sexual aspects. They have focused, instead, on the way that Chicago researchers employed this concept in their early studies of ethnicity and race, often with problematic results (for example, see Cox 1942; Myrdal 1944; Chrisman 1970). Historians such as Henry Yu (2001), for instance, have shown how Park's equation of "Chinatown" and other natural areas with the presence of "natural social groups" or "the so-called historical races" (Park 1926, p. 9) largely served to essentialize racial categories by attempting to contain them in visible, easily demarcated, geographic spaces.

No matter how persuasive such critiques have been, they have often had the unintended effect of furthering the invisibility of Chicago's pioneering sociological studies of sexuality. Indeed, their almost exclusive focus on the racial dimensions of Park's natural areas has encouraged scholars to overlook the extent to which

this framework was prefigured by Park's earlier attention to the "moral regions" of the city (Park 1915). Moreover, it has eclipsed any serious consideration of the role that natural areas played in promoting the understanding of sexuality as a social rather than a medical or psychological concept. Yet nearly a year before Park put the term in print (Park 1926), at least one of the department's graduate students had already begun to apply the concept of natural areas to sexual contexts. In his 1925 dissertation on "The Natural History of Vice Areas in Chicago," Walter C. Reckless argued that "vice areas . . . are natural areas," not only because they provided examples of the tendency of particular "forms of behavior . . . to become specialized and segregated into definite areas," but also because their appearance in the city could "be said to offer a picture" of the ecological, unplanned "growth of the city itself" (Reckless 1925, p. 1).

Similar linkages between the study of natural areas and non-normative sexualities played a crucial role in at least two other foundational texts of Chicago urban sociology. Usually characterized as a class-oriented study of transient male workers, Nels Anderson's *The Hobo* (1923a) included one chapter specifically dedicated to an investigation of the ways that the "Sex Life of the Homeless Man" shaped his social world. In this published version of his master's thesis, Anderson suggested that the social and spatial configuration of Chicago's "hobohemian" district and the non-normative sexual practices of the men who inhabited this area were mutually constitutive. The nearly all-male character and extreme mobility of the district's population, Anderson argued, contributed to the proliferation of commercialized and increasingly casual heterosexual relations. Likewise, it gave rise to a set of unique, same-sex, urban sexual practices, including both the highly gendered, intergenerational relationships that older homeless men established with their youthful male "wives," and the more egalitarian "fifty-fifty" relations that flourished among the district's male adults (Anderson 1923a, p. 145; Anderson n.d., p. 3). ("I took a crack at him, and he took a crack at me," Anderson quoted one hobo's description of a fifty-fifty encounter—a description that avoided any passive construction, apparently safeguarding both men's masculinity and sexual "normality" [ibid., p. 4; see also Chauncey 1994].) Conversely, Anderson insisted, this distinctive system of transitory, hobo-sexual practices played an unmistakable role in shaping the physical geography of hobohemia by prompting hobos to congregate in a section of the urban core where cheap flophouses and largely deserted, nighttime parks and alleyways provided social cover for their unorthodox relations.

In a similar vein, Harvey Warren Zorbaugh documented the spatial organization of a variety of social groups and sexual codes on Chicago's Near North Side in his 1929 book *The Gold Coast and the Slum*, a published version of the first University of Chicago dissertation constructed largely around the concept of natural areas. According to Zorbaugh, despite the close physical proximity of the district's various populations, each maintained a distinct social and sexual world

with relatively specific geographic dimensions. Along the district's eastern border, for instance, some of the city's wealthiest Gold Coast residents upheld relatively traditional norms of social and sexual respectability, while on the district's western border, in the neighborhood popularly known as "Little Hell," Sicilian immigrants adhered to even more rigid definitions of sexual propriety. In between these two groups, Zorbaugh noted, participants in the district's "world of furnished rooms" had created a space where "quick and intimate relationships spring up in the most casual way, and dissolve as quickly and as casually" (Zorbaugh 1929, p. 86). While in the tearooms and studios of neighboring "Towertown," an enclave of bohemian radicals, artists and poseurs, he chronicled the presence of still other non-normative sexual relations and spaces. Here, Zorbaugh remarked, it was "not uncommon to see two names—John Jones; Mary Smith—on 'village' mail boxes, indicating a man and a woman living together unmarried" (ibid., p. 99). In addition, Zorbaugh noted that "Towertown's debates on free love and its reputation for promiscuity, coupled with its unconventionality and anonymity" seemed to provide a "harbor" for the "[d]istorted forms of sex behavior" that he associated with lesbians and homosexual men (ibid., pp. 98, 100).

During the 1930s, when Chicago sociologists launched a more sustained, though largely unpublished, examination of homosexuality in the city, the concept of natural areas was integral to their research. Written at the very historical moment that a "pansy craze" was captivating amusement seekers in the queer cabarets of Chicago and other major U.S. cities (see Chauncey 1994; Johnson 1997; Heap 2000a), these term papers, field notes and life histories exhaustively documented the location of the nightspots, bathhouses, parks, streets and other public venues that formed the nexus of gay life in Depression-era Chicago. The most comprehensive of these investigations, conducted by Earle W. Bruce during the latter half of the 1930s in preparation for his 1942 M.A. thesis, disclosed a well-developed "social world of homosexuals" located on Chicago's Near North Side—a world where homosexual men "have their particular status, participate in common activities, where they can express themselves in their particular fashion without being inhibited by a hostile world" (Bruce 1942, p. 11). Interviewing more than fifty-three gay men, Bruce discovered that more than two-thirds (thirty-four men) rented rooms or apartments in this section of the city, and nearly all the others spent the majority of their leisure hours in the public nightspots and private parties that defined the "Near North Side homosexual world" (ibid.). By 1938, Chicago sociologists' association of homosexuality with particular urban spaces was so complete that Professor Burgess could expect students in his social pathology course to provide an affirmative answer to the true-false exam question, "In large cities, homosexual individuals tend to congregate rather than remain separate from each other" (Burgess 1938, p. 2).

While such studies yielded a new appreciation for the geography and social dimensions of homosexuality, they tended to essentialize the groups and practices

under examination. Like Chicago sociologists' investigations of racialized natural areas, they did so by suggesting that homosexuality could be equated with an easily identifiable population living within a particular neighborhood. This conflation of homosexuality with the city's Near North Side not only encouraged researchers to overlook the lesbians and gay men who lived and worked in other urban and suburban districts, but also prompted them to overestimate the cohesiveness and uniformity of homosexual experiences and identities. That is, in focusing on the city's public homosexual world, Chicago researchers largely neglected to analyze the extent to which this world—and their perceptions of it—was shaped by broader social forces: women's generally lesser access to public space and the disposable income that encouraged participation in public amusements, the racial segregation of Chicago that restricted non-whites' interactions on the Near North Side, and middle-class economic imperatives and traditions of sexual reserve that often encouraged lesbian and gay professionals to confine their social and sexual lives to less visible, private spaces.

Ernest W. Burgess's influential model of urban ecology further encouraged Chicago researchers to associate non-normative sexualities almost exclusively with central urban space. In his famed diagram, Burgess depicted urban growth and social organization as a set of five concentric zones, spreading outward from the Central Business District (Zone I) to the Zone in Transition (II), the Zone of Independent Workingmen's Homes (III), the Zone of Better Residences (IV), and the Commuters' Zone (V) (Burgess 1924a). For Burgess, these zones defined an outward progression of increasing social and moral organization, in which non-normative sexualities were confined principally to the natural areas—the hobohemias, Chinatowns, vice districts, racialized ghettos, bohemian enclaves and "the world of furnished rooms"—of the inner transitional zone. Beginning from this core of sexual abnormality, Burgess implied that the further one moved away from the city's geographic center, the closer the zone's inhabitants approached the ideal of middle-class sexual normativity.

This conceptual containment of non-normative sexualities to transitional zones became so predominant in the thinking of Chicago sociologists that E. Franklin Frazier employed a similar framework in his analysis of the city's South Side black community. While Burgess had depicted the Black Belt as an elongated urban district straddling the zones of transition and of workingmen's homes (Burgess 1924a), Frazier dissected this natural area into seven successive zones that established a roughly "progressive stabilization of family life," moving from north to south (Frazier 1931, p. 140). The one exception to this progression came in Frazier's third zone which, due to the presence of cabarets, dance halls and other urban amusements, Frazier posited as both a zone of transition and a natural area defined by non-normative sexual groups and practices. "In this area, which was related to the Negro community as the business area and adjacent deteriorated area are related to the larger urban community," Frazier remarked, "Negro family life tended to disappear" (ibid., pp. 296). Not only was this "the area of crime and

vice and free relations" (ibid.), in Frazier's formulation, but it was also the only zone in which Frazier documented the presence of homosexuality in Chicago's black community, encapsulated in a young female informant's description[8] of an apartment building that "ain't nothin' but for . . . (female homo-sexuals)" (ibid., p. 233).

MOBILITY AND SEXUALITY

While their pioneering research on urban natural areas and social groups confirmed Robert E. Park's belief that it was possible to "reduce all social relations to relations of space" (Park 1926, p. 13), Chicago sociologists recognized that urban ecological growth was much more dynamic than such place-based studies often implied. Examinations of natural areas, Park insisted, had to be augmented with a consideration of the mobility of individuals within and across those spaces (ibid.). This was especially true during the early twentieth century, when extraordinary rates of immigration and domestic migration and the emergence of new means of transportation (streetcars, commuter rails and automobiles) facilitating movement within urban spaces rendered U.S. cities, such as Chicago, especially mobile. Despite its seemingly static formulation, even Ernest W. Burgess's model of concentric zones of urban development accounted for this extraordinary level of mobility. Although describing a persistent organization of urban space, it also accommodated the natural succession of social groups from one zone to another, incorporating Burgess's strong belief in the ideology of American upward social mobility. Indeed, Burgess argued that urban growth was fueled by the gradual movement of immigrant and migrant populations steadily outward from the disorganized central areas of first settlement to increasingly stable, higher-status residential neighborhoods in the city's outer zones (Burgess 1924a). (Louis Wirth's *The Ghetto* [1929] was one of the earliest and best-known studies to examine this natural succession, charting the movement of Chicago's Jewish immigrants from the inner-city "ghetto" to the "Deutschland" of the city's middle-class Lawndale community—located in Burgess's third zone—and beyond [see also P. F. Cressey 1930].)

As with their studies of natural areas, sexuality was integral to Chicago sociologists' understanding of mobility. They analyzed the outward movement of social groups across the zones of urban development not only in terms of upward

[8] Although the content of the original field notes that Frazier quotes here has apparently been lost to history, his use of an ellipsis followed by an inserted parenthetical phrase—"... (female homosexuals)"—in published excerpts from this document suggests that he was "translating" one of the slang terms ("bulldaggers" or "bulldykes") commonly used by blacks during this era to refer to lesbians. (Extensive research in the Ernest W. Burgess papers at the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, as well as the E. Franklin Frazier papers at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University, has failed to turn up the original source of this quote.)

economic mobility but also in terms of these groups' increasing adherence to traditional middle-class sexual norms and family structures. E. Franklin Frazier's study of *The Negro Family in Chicago* (1932), for instance, argued that after an initial period of single life in the northernmost, vice-ridden zones of Chicago's Black Belt, the majority of rural migrants moved slowly southward to more stable, marriage- and family-oriented urban neighborhoods characterized by decreasing rates of delinquency, desertion and divorce. Although such studies suggested a link between mobility and the reinforcement of middle-class sexual normativity, Chicago researchers more often linked mobility with social disorganization, demoralization, and the proliferation of non-normative sexual practices and spaces. "Movement in the person, as from one social location to another," Burgess argued, "carries with it the possibility or probability of cultural decadence. The cultural controls over conduct disintegrate; impulses and wishes take random and wild expression. The result is immorality and delinquency; in short, personal and social disorganization" (Burgess 1924a, p. 408). At its most extreme, Chicago sociologists argued, mobility led to the complete disintegration of sexual norms. In his 1925 Ph.D. thesis, the ironically named Walter C. Reckless observed that "[v]ice areas . . . manifest[ed] perhaps the greatest mobility within the community," due in large part to their dependence upon "transient patrons" drawn from a "wide area" of the city (Reckless 1925, pp. 181, 355).

But the association of mobility and, to employ Burgess's terminology, "promiscuity" was hardly limited to urban vice districts (Burgess 1924a, p. 409). By the mid-1920s, Chicago researchers noted that "high-class, magnificent dance gardens and palaces, and . . . the so-called 'wonder' theaters of the 'bright light' areas" (ibid.) also facilitated non-normative sexual relations among the city's youth, by catering to their "desire . . . to escape from the[ir] local community and to find adventure and romance in the larger outside world of the city" (Burgess 1929, pp. 168–169). In a study of female sexual delinquency, sociology graduate student Evelyn Buchan argued that such spaces often promoted "promiscuous"—read *casual*—sexuality, by establishing a "promiscuity triangle" in which the homes of each of the intimate parties and the site of their intimacy were located in three different urban neighborhoods, thereby negating traditional community oversight of such relations (Buchan 1922; Burgess 1924b). During the late 1920s, Chicago sociologists further explored this relationship between mobility and non-normative sexual practices by undertaking a series of studies focused on the city's dance halls, roadhouses and cabarets. In his 1929 M.A. thesis, for instance, Paul G. Cressey noted that the nonresidential location of the city's "closed dance halls" (that is, dance halls that did not welcome young women or couples but specialized in providing paid female dance partners for men) facilitated the cross-racial social and sexual interaction of Filipino men and white working-class women (P. G. Cressey 1929). Likewise, Constance Weinberger and Saul Alinsky's almost contemporaneous survey of Chicago dance halls turned up at least one nightspot in the bright

lights section of the Near North Side—namely Diamond Lil's, located at 909 Rush Street—where homosexual men wearing cosmetics and jewelry danced together and "stare[d] quite boldly at everyone else" (Weinberger and Alinsky 1928, p. 2).

While such studies charted the effects of easier physical movement in U.S. cities on the maintenance of social norms, Chicago sociologists' attention to mobility extended beyond mere locomotion. "Mobility depends, not merely upon transportation, but upon communication," Robert E. Park argued, encouraging students and colleagues to examine the impact of the telephone and the proliferation of newspapers and other mass-produced literature on the reconfiguration of early twentieth-century urban social and sexual relations (Park 1915, p. 589). In his 1931 study of Chicago's black community, E. Franklin Frazier took up this challenge. He argued that popular early twentieth-century romance magazines, such as *Love Stories, True Stories, Love Affairs, True Confessions* and *Fairy Tales*, "helped to define the meaning of sex" for many rural southern African American migrants as they struggled to adapt to city life (Frazier 1931, pp. 235–236). Noting that one of the young women that he had interviewed "recounted in her life history a story from one of these magazines that centered around the romantic career of an unmarried mother and her child," Frazier further implied that these publications contributed to the destabilization of black urban families, by suggesting that illegitimacy was an anticipated and socially acceptable part of modern urban life (ibid., p. 236).

Chicago sociologists' examination of the effects of mass publications on sexual practices and ideas was also central to the department's earliest studies of homosexuality. Following the publication of several novels with gay and lesbian protagonists—including Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), Blair Niles's *Strange Brother* (1931), André Tellier's *Twilight Men* (1931), Robert Scully's *A Scarlet Pansy* (1932), and Anna E. Weirauch's *The Scorpion* (1932)—students at the University of Chicago canvassed nearly one hundred local rental libraries in an effort to measure the impact of these books on the sexual culture of early 1930s Chicago. Finding that the novels had been borrowed until "worn out" by heterosexual and homosexual readers, highbrow and lowbrow alike, in almost every section of the city, the students' survey reinforced their growing belief that such books played a significant role in shaping popular conceptions of homosexuality ("Survey of Rental and Retail Book Outlets" n.d.). Sociologist Cynthia Cohen, for instance, found it expedient to refer to *The Well of Loneliness* when discussing homosexuality with a local prostitute who claimed to have "met men that wanted only men, and women that wanted only women, and . . . some bisexuals" (Cohen n.d., p. 6). Yet the survey also confirmed Chicago sociologists' understanding of these novels as conduits into the city's burgeoning gay world for previously uninitiated young women and men. As historian David K. Johnson has noted, one young Polish American named Harold made this connection explicit by telling a University of Chicago sociologist that, after reading *Twilight Men*, he

"wanted to find out more about the life [th]at was in the book" ("Life history of 'Harold"' n.d., p. 3; Johnson 1997, p. 99). Combining his book-knowledge with an overheard comment that a "whole bunch of fair[i]es" hung out around Chicago's Michigan Avenue Bridge, Harold reported that "the first possible chan[c]e that I had I went out on Michigan ave . . . Saturday night . . . April 1934 [intending] to me[e]t some of these so called fair[i]es" ("Life history of 'Harold"' n.d., p. 3; Johnson 1997, p. 97).

Unpublished archival documents indicate that Chicago sociologists' examination of the relationship between communication and the proliferation of non-normative urban sexual practices and groups extended to interpersonal communications, as well as mass publications. Following the pioneering example of W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (1918–1920), who used such documents to demonstrate the complex web of social relations linking Polish immigrants to both the old country and the new, members of Chicago's Department of Sociology collected the personal correspondence of local gay men. The surviving collections, though apparently never analyzed in any published work, provided sociologists with a unique glimpse into the social networks that connected suburban and even small-town homosexuals with their counterparts in cities such as Chicago. One set of letters documents the developing—and already fractured—friendship between a man from suburban Zion, Illinois and one of the gay Chicagoans he met at Navy Pier in August 1932 (Ned 1932). A second collection represents a more extensive set of social relations, linking a Chicago man named James to three separate pen pals (located in South Bend, Indiana, Saginaw, Michigan, and Baltimore, Maryland), whom he hoped to meet when they visited Chicago's Century of Progress World's Fair during the summer of 1934 (Paul 1934; Bill 1934; Jay 1934).

The department's attention to sex-oriented interpersonal communication also prompted students and faculty to collect lists of slang terms and jokes used by members of non-normative urban sexual groups. During the mid to late 1930s, for instance, sociology graduate student Paul C. P. Siu not only compiled a list of "Slangy Expressions Using Among the Chinese Immigrants" but also prepared a social analysis of the terms in an unpublished essay entitled "The Use of Bad Language among Chinese Immigrants" (Siu n.d.a; Siu n.d.b). Arguing that immigrant women and men used different sexually explicit terms—especially those associated with male and female genitalia, prostitution, and the supposed sexual activities of one's mother—to insult one another, Siu demonstrated that a study of subcultural slang could be used to confirm the highly gendered social structure of the social world of Chinese immigrants (Siu n.d.c; Yu 2001). At the same time, he indicated that the discovery of newly created Chinese American slang could provide a unique perspective on the formation of new social relations among Chinese immigrants to the United States. Noting the proliferation of expressions related to homosexuality—including the term *tching*, literally translated as "you slept

soundly" and implying that "you slept so soundly last night that I had homosexual relation[s] with you and you didn't even know it" (Siu n.d.c, p. 10)—he suggested that such terms gave voice to the social anxieties generated by the relative absence of women in the nearly all-male "bachelor society" of Chinese immigrants (Yu 2001).

Yet even as Siu acknowledged this new set of social and sexual circumstances, he participated in the regulation of acceptable urban sexual practices by selectively interpreting Chinese immigrants' "bad language." Despite the proliferation of homosexual slurs, Siu insisted that "homosexual acts can not be extensive" among Chinese immigrants, because same-sex relations among the Chinese were usually limited to intergenerational encounters between older men and boys and Chinese "boys are few in number" in U.S. cities (Siu n.d.c, pp. 15–16). However, Siu's own compilation of the immigrants' slang vocabulary implied other possible sexual scenarios. In China, men had long made use of a wide range of terms, including *kai-doi* ("womanly man"), to refer to a "male prostitute" or homosexual man (the two are sometimes conflated in Siu's writing), but upon their arrival in the United States, they apparently felt compelled to add another "more offensive" slur to their arsenal of insults (ibid., p. 14). This new, more vulgar term—*see-fo-quai*, literally translated as "devil of excrement hole" (ibid.)—might easily have been interpreted to show that the presence of such individuals posed a more pervasive and explicitly sexual concern to Chinese men in the United States. But by foreclosing this interpretation, Siu worked to downplay the existence of same-sex relations among Chinese immigrants, simultaneously reinforcing the boundaries of sexual normativity.

Other Chicago sociologists offered more subtle interventions in the policing of urban sexual norms. A comparison of the "special vocabulary" that Paul G. Cressey compiled for his 1929 M.A. thesis with a similar list published in his 1932 book, *The Taxi-Dance Hall*, provides a useful illustration of how the presentation of seemingly raw field research could be used to selectively emphasize particular sexual taboos. Both of Cressey's lists underscored the public anxiety that the taxi-dance hall's supposed promotion of cross-racial sexuality generated, by cataloging terms such as *bata* and *puti* (which were said to be the Filipino's terms for his "white sweetheart" and for white men, respectively), as well as white working-class references to Filipinos as "niggers," to the white women who dated them as "nigger lovers," and to the act of "accepting dates from only white men" as "staying white" (P. G. Cressey 1929, pp. 128–129; P. G. Cressey 1932, pp. 35–36). But the published version of Cressey's list omitted nearly every slang term that taxi dancers and their white patrons might have used to refer to casual, same-race sexuality. Among the omitted vocabulary were references to simulated sex on the dance floor ("dry stuff," "mixing it up," etc.), terms for sexual intercourse ("good time," "monkey business," etc.), labels applied to taxi dancers who engaged in illicit or promiscuous sex ("broad," "bum," "hustler," "P.O."), and, more curiously,

the study's lone reference to homosexuality ("lady lovers," a term commonly used to refer to lesbians during the 1920s and 1930s) (ibid.).

Despite their apparent manipulation of such glossaries, Chicago sociologists' attention to insider language demonstrated an interest in understanding not only the broader social groups under examination, but also the individual personality types within these populations. While an uninformed outsider might easily overlook existing differences *within* particular urban groups, sociologists' knowledge of the groups' slang allowed them to discern much more complicated sets of interior social relations. An unpublished "Glossary of Homosexual Terms" compiled by students at the University of Chicago during the 1930s, for instance, provided significant insight into the process of social differentiation within the city's gay world. Demonstrating the salience of biological sex in structuring one's position within this group, the glossary documented at least four terms that specifically designated lesbians ("dyke," "bull," "bull-dyker," "Miss Lesbos"), while noting more than a dozen that referred exclusively to gay men ("belle," "Marjorie," "lily," "bitch," "queen," etc.)—the disparity in numbers likely reflecting the greater participation of the latter in the city's public gay world ("Glossary of Homosexual Terms" n.d.). But sex was not the only important social characteristic in Chicago's gay world; its participants also used age, experience and participation in particular sexual practices to define distinct sexual types. Older homosexual men were referred to as "Auntie" or "Ella," a "homosexual who is ignorant of his condition" was called "green," and a whole array of terms were developed to describe men with particular sexual preferences (ibid.). "[O]ne who practices fellatio on women" was called a "fish queen," while those who "practice[d] fellatio on men" were designated "goop gobblers," "fruiters" and "flute-players," and "an older man who like[s] to coitus [sic] in anus with younger persons" was called a "wolf" (ibid.). "Three way person" was the term applied to a man who was willing to "blow" (perform oral sex), "brown" (engage in anal sex), and "rim" ("insert tongue in anus"), while the terms "trade" and "hustler" were used to designate an otherwise "normal" man who was willing to "permit [a] homosexual to have sex relations with him, usually for money" (ibid.; see also Chauncey 1994). And each of these social and sexual types had a unique relation to the rest of the members of Chicago's gay world—a relation that was more fully explored in Chicago sociologists' studies of the development of social personalities.

SEXUAL TYPES, THE DUAL LIFE, AND THE MARGINAL MAN

While most of Chicago's foundational studies in urban sociology emphasized the social and spatial configuration of urban groups, the department's faculty and students also examined the making of new social types and personalities particular to the city. Distinguishing such studies from the psychiatric examination of the *individual*, Chicago sociologists focused these investigations on the *person* as a

"product of social interaction"—a concept that, in Ernest W. Burgess's formulation, addressed both "the individual's conception of his own rôle" and "the attitudes toward him of the fellows in his group, of the community and of society" (Burgess 1923, pp. 662, 671–672). During the interwar period, this framework structured a series of graduate theses and undergraduate research papers documenting a range of early twentieth-century urban social types that extended from the jack-roller and the beggar to the race leader and the "allrightnick" (*mensch*), and even the charity girl and the homosexual (for example, see Shaw 1930; Freund 1925; Strong 1940; Wirth 1926; Zorbaugh 1929; Bruce 1942). Yet like their studies of urban social groups, Chicago's sociological investigations of urban personality types have been remembered almost exclusively in terms of the department's broader interests in the social dynamics of race, ethnicity, delinquency and crime—despite the publication of at least three graduate studies demonstrating Chicago sociologists' considerable attentiveness to the study of sexual types (see Reckless 1933; Zorbaugh 1929; P. G. Cressey 1932). This oversight becomes especially apparent when one examines the reams of unpublished student research that Burgess preserved in his personal files.

During the interwar period, a routine assignment to record at least one person's life history forced every student who enrolled in Professor Burgess's social pathology course to participate in the study of urban social types. While most fulfilled this requirement by documenting the effects of poverty, addiction or juvenile delinquency on the lives of friends and acquaintances, by the early 1930s, students increasingly submitted accounts of the role that non-normative sexual practices and types played in shaping their friends'—and, occasionally, their own—social experiences. In 1932, for instance, Helen Baker wrote about a fellow coed who entered into a lesbian relationship after she "began to consort with the long-haired intelligentsia on campus" and "convinced herself that homosexuality was a natural and beautiful thing" (Baker 1932), while another undergraduate confided his own childhood homosexual seduction as part of the case history of a hometown music teacher ("Social Pathology" 1931). Even studies designed primarily to document other social types, including Italian immigrants, Chinese laundrymen, and Mexican, German and African American juvenile delinquents, often carefully recorded the "gang shags," "fag balls," group masturbation, "sex orgies" and other non-normative sexual practices that sociologists increasingly came to understand as constitutive components of a wide array of urban pathologies (see Sayler n.d.; Siu n.d.c; Baur 1938; "Autobiography of Alexander Stahl" n.d.; Moses 1936).

Under even the most scientific conditions, the collection and analysis of such life histories bordered on exloitation and voyeurism by positioning the sociologist as an unquestionably normative, all-knowing interpreter of the supposed peculiarities and abnormalities of particular urban populations. But in the hands of over-eager student researchers with differing degrees of professionalization and training in sociological methods, the moral difficulties of approaching such topics became especially pronounced. In a related study of the Chicago School's

investigations of urban dance halls, sociologist Steven C. Dubin has suggested that 1920s student research at the University of Chicago constituted a "moral continuum" of sociology that "ranged from horror to vicarious identification," while only occasionally exhibiting any true "commitment to objective social inquiry" (Dubin 1983, pp. 76, 78). This observation seems equally applicable to Chicago sociologists' investigations of non-normative sexual types, which also fell along a continuum. Although student researchers rarely expressed outright horror or disgust toward the subjects of their study, their unusual attention to the graphic details of these individuals' non-normative sexual practices could hardly be characterized as objective inquiry. Indeed, at times, the extent of their "vicarious identification" with the non-normative sexual types under examination produced quite shocking results. One of Burgess's students reported, for instance, that in order to document the cross-racial sexual activities of a white prostitute known as "Peggy," he finally joined her in bed, "putting it in"—a research technique that he found ultimately unsatisfying since her frequent sexual activity had apparently left her "as big as a washtub" ("Peggy" 1936, p. 6). Yet even after "having intercourse with her," the student admitted, "I could not find out, who her negro [sic] man was," although "thru her actions, and terms of endearment, I gathered [that] she was having homo-sexual relations with Amy," a black woman who had walked in on the student researcher in the midst of his "investigation" (ibid.).

Out of fairness to both Chicago's student researchers and their informants, it is important to remember that these studies were conducted at a moment when sociology was still taking shape as an academic discipline and ideas about research methods were rudimentary at best. Yet given the undeniably exploitative and voyeuristic methods employed by at least some Chicago sociologists, it is surprising how many local women and men permitted the transcription of their sexual histories. Students likely gathered at least some of these histories surreptitiously, a practice that was not at all uncommon more than a decade before the atrocities of World War II-era "scientific" experiments prompted physicians and academics to begin formulating notions of informed consent. But a significant portion of the students' informants were apparently willing participants in these rather primitive sociological studies. One local drag queen, who had adopted the name of vaudeville comedian Fay Templeton, claimed to have consented to at least four previous interviews by sociology students from Loyola, Illinois, Northwestern and Notre Dame, before sitting for yet another life history with a student at the University of Chicago. Despite initial concerns that the explicit details of his life could be used "to blackmail me," Templeton was apparently convinced to cooperate by the student's assurance that "I only want it for social studies" ("Untitled Manuscript" n.d.).

From our historical remove, it seems difficult to understand why Templeton and many other gay men, lesbians, prostitutes and other non-normative sexual types agreed to collaborate with researchers who sought to explain their lives in

terms of social pathology. Clearly some of them did so simply out of curiosity or amusement, likely indulging in a bit of hyperbole; Templeton admitted that, on at least one occasion, he had "exaggerated greatly" when recounting his life history in front of "a few queens sit[t]ing beside me, bragging about their affairs" (ibid.). Yet others, like many of the lesbians and gay men who were involved in contemporaneous medical and psychiatric studies conducted by New York's Committee for the Study of Sex Variants, probably viewed their participation in such research as an opportunity to gain professional insight into their lives or to muster scholarly assistance in combating the social and legal impediments they faced (see Terry 1999; Minton 2002). Whatever their motivations, the elaborate descriptions of daily activities and social relationships that informants recorded in their life histories provided the foundation for a radical new understanding of sexuality—one that emphasized the social context and meaning of sexual practices and types, rather than their biological or psychological formulation.

Although most student researchers focused their investigations on non-normative sexual types, Ernest W. Burgess argued that this research was instrumental in demonstrating that even normative heterosexuality, despite its seeming biological necessity, "can only be fully understood as a cultural phenomen[on]" (Burgess 1934, p. 147). The broader social relations detailed in the "intensive case studies . . . of the different types of persons who find their way into the world of homosexuality," for instance, permitted scholars to draw a sharp distinction between the "sexual personality" and "sexual practices *per se*" (ibid., pp. 149, 148). While "curiosity seekers, sexual adventurers and those who seek in different ways to exploit homosexuals" might engage in homosexual practices "for a longer or shorter period of experimentation," Burgess insisted that they were not properly considered to be homosexual if they eventually "return[ed] to the world of heterosexuality" (ibid., p. 149). Likewise, the participation of women and men in heterosexual activities did not necessarily guarantee their heterosexuality. "[F]or the determination of both heterosexuality and homosexuality," Burgess argued, was the product of the "constant interaction of one's conception of one's sexual role and of the expectations and reactions of others to it" (ibid., p. 148).[9]

[9]While Burgess argued that heterosexuality and homosexuality were both products of dynamic social relations, his research—and that of his students—continued to differentiate between these two practices by associating the former with sexual normativity and respectability and the latter with social pathology. In this respect, Burgess's understanding of the social construction of sexuality was much less radical than that advocated by his former colleague, William I. Thomas, in the works he published after being fired from the University of Chicago. In *The Unadjusted Girl* (1923), for instance, Thomas juxtaposed the case histories of female juvenile delinquents with personal narratives from more mature women to deliberately challenge the popular conception that marital heterosexual monogamy was somehow more "normal" than promiscuity, prostitution, or homosexuality. Indeed, by quoting at length from the autobiography of a happily married woman who insisted that most female college students—herself included—had "tasted homosexuality in some degree," Thomas suggested that homosexual experimentation might even provide a foundation for a healthy sexual life (Thomas 1925, p. 95; see also Cappetti 1993).

Chicago sociologists were especially attentive to the ways that urban social dynamics shaped the sexual lives of individuals. Because "[t]he processes of segregation establish moral distances which make the city a mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate," Robert E. Park argued, it was possible for individuals "to pass quickly and easily from one moral milieu to another," prompting "the fascinating but dangerous experiment of living at the same time in several different contiguous, but otherwise widely separated, worlds" (Park 1929, p. 41). In his 1925 dissertation, sociology graduate student Walter C. Reckless documented a number of individuals who maintained respectable sexual lives and reputations within their families and home neighborhoods, while participating in less normative sexual relations elsewhere in the city. Young men who traveled outside their neighborhoods or to "nearby towns for their 'wild parties,' so as to avoid discovery" were exemplars of this phenomenon, but Reckless observed that during the 1920s "[t]his social pattern is becoming equally applicable to women" (Reckless 1925, pp. 372, 370). A young woman named Bernice, who "acquire[d] the habit of going [t]o a high class 'call flat' twice a week, on the opposite side of the city," while representing herself as a more respectably normative woman to family and friends, served as a typical example of the trend that Reckless characterized as leading a "dual life" or "double life" (ibid., pp. 371, 370).

In at least some instances, especially for members of the working class whom Chicago researchers assumed were already leading somewhat non-normative sexual lives, this dual life could be a positive experience. For the "bright and clever girl from 'Back of the Yards"' who was "handicap[ped] . . . [by] community and family," Paul G. Cressey noted in his 1929 study of Chicago's taxi-dance halls, participation in the city's sex-oriented public amusements might provide an opportunity "to break with one's past and . . . to gain a superior status, a new personality and . . . a new and satisfying conception of oneself' (P. G. Cressey 1929, pp. 380, 379). But for the most part, Chicago's urban sociologists understood the dual life to be a dangerous, demoralizing and personally disorganizing experience that created cultural conflict in the individual and a longing for some clear resolution. Reckless argued that the dual life led to the creation of three distinct urban personality types: the reorganized, the demoralized and the unorganized. The first category comprised those men and women who not only "effectively organize[d] their activities in two conflicting worlds and ke[pt] them separate," but also always remained aware of "the effect that disclosure would have upon their role in society"; this was the "group of persons," Reckless noted, "who are constantly 'settling down"' in more normative social roles (Reckless 1925, p. 373). The second, the demoralized, referred to those women and men who found themselves ostracized from their local neighborhoods when their dual lives were disclosed, forcing a "break with local mores," according to Reckless, and a move "to a more emancipated and more tolerant world, such as the amusement areas in the downtown sections of large cities" (ibid., p. 376). The final type, the unorganized, designated those individuals living

double lives who were, from their earliest years, understood to be "devoid of the usual moral and cultural background, and in that sense . . . unorganized rather than disorganized"; in a highly problematic formulation, Reckless associated this urban personality type specifically with those "individuals who have been brought up in the midst of a high degree of social disorganization, particularly in the slums of large cities" (ibid., pp. 384–385).

Although never explicitly linked by Chicago sociologists, the urban personalities created through the dual life resonated in extraordinary ways with Robert E. Park's characterization of the "marginal man." Both were new personality types produced through the mobility of once stationary populations, and both were—as Park first defined the marginal man in his landmark 1928 essay, "Human Migration and the Marginal Man"—"cultural hybrid[s] . . . living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples," yet never feeling fully accepted or comfortable in either (Park 1928, p. 892). Despite these undeniable similarities and Park's certain awareness of them (Walter Reckless's dissertation was, after all, submitted to the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago three years before Park published his foundational essay), the department's studies of the marginal man largely neglected sexuality as a serious topic for consideration, adopting an almost exclusive focus on race and ethnicity instead (see Park 1928; Wu 1928; Park 1931; Stonequist 1938; Drake and Cayton 1945; Siu 1953). Indeed, on the few occasions that such studies incorporated any discussion of non-normative sexual practices or types, it was to explain their presence as an undesirable by-product of the cultural confusion experienced by marginalized racial groups. Graduate student Ching Chao Wu, for example, argued that Chinese immigrants' association with prostitution was a direct result of their cultural confusion; "[p]ulled by two forces," Wu argued, such immigrants had trouble determining the "right way to follow" (Wu 1928, pp. 329–330; Yu 2001, pp. 114–115).

This insistence on the separation of the racialized marginal man from the sexualized dual life was more a reflection of Chicago sociologists' moral values and political goals than of any objective social reality. Given his commitment to race politics and to the struggle for a color-blind society (see Raushenbush 1979; Bulmer 1984; Lal 1990), Park surely recognized the strategic value of distancing the marginal man from any taint of non-normative sexual behavior. But the distinction that sociologists drew between these two concepts also reflected their understanding of the relative cultural conflict experienced by each. While Walter C. Reckless and Paul G. Cressey insinuated that the cultural crisis associated with the dual life could usually be resolved at will (if the affected parties chose to refrain from so-called "immoral" activities), Park insisted that "in the case of the marginal man the period of crisis is relatively permanent" (Park 1928, p. 893). The very premises of this distinction, however, were highly problematic. First, Reckless's and Cressey's suggestion that the dual life was both a matter of choice and a product of immorality undermined their growing appreciation of the

social construction of sexuality by insinuating that individuals who chose to pursue non-normative sexual relations were necessarily socially pathological. Likewise, Park's assertion of the permanence of the marginal man's crisis—especially in the case of the penultimate marginal man of "a mixed blood, like the Mulatto in the United States or the Eurasian in Asia" (ibid.)—unintentionally implied a lingering biologization of race by suggesting that the marginal man's ability to resolve such conflicts was restricted or even negated by genetics. Yet even more problematically, the continued separation of these concepts betrayed a willful amnesia regarding the almost certain origins of the racialized marginal man in the sexualized dual life; for if the "racial hybrid" or "mixed blood" was the most characteristic representative of the former, then he was inevitably a product of the latter, given Chicago sociologists' relegation of cross-racial sexuality, like all other non-normative sexual practices, to the realm of the double life.

The maintenance of this distinction also flew in the face of substantial evidence to the contrary gathered by Chicago sociologists in the city's vibrant gay world. In his 1942 master's thesis, for example, Earle W. Bruce described the social experiences of a number of gay men who led successful "double lives," consciously compartmentalizing the various aspects of their social relations (work, family, leisure, etc.) and associating each with a different self-presentation and identification (see also Chauncey 1994). But he also documented men whose "serious difficulties in adjusting to two worlds—homosexual and heterosexual," clearly resonated with the marginal man's sense of being a participant in two distinct cultures while never fully belonging to either (Bruce 1942, p. 6). Noting that his sexual desires made him feel like an outsider at work and with family, one "masculine homosexual" told Bruce that he experienced a similar feeling of exclusion in Chicago's gay world:

> In the homosexual group, I have tried to be effeminate in order to put the homosexuals at ease, but I became so awkward, and so I gave it up. Because I look masculine, the kids think I am dirt [a term that gay men used to refer to violent sexual partners and likely blackmailers]. I have tried to make myself more delicate so that they will like me; but some are scared of me" (ibid., p. 43).

For such gay men, surely the experiences of leading a dual life and of being a marginal man were one and the same.

CONCLUSION

Given the frequency with which Chicago sociologists took up the study of sexuality during the interwar period, how is one to explain the virtual erasure of these studies from historical accounts of the Chicago School? Surely this omission is due, in part, to the fact that so few of these studies were ever published. But it also had roots in the increasing public regulation of non-normative urban sexual practices during the late 1930s, when authorities scrambled to respond to a series of

local and national sex crime panics. Fueled by the sensationalistic press coverage of a string of unrelated child murders and rapes, these panics not only equated homosexual men with child molesters and sexual psychopaths, but also prompted a nationwide drive to rid American cities of such "sex criminals" (see Freedman 1989; Chauncey 1993; Terry 1999). In Chicago, the resulting portrayal of the city as a dangerous space filled with sexually "deviant" individuals effectively terminated students' hands-on examination of the lives of lesbians, gay men, prostitutes and other non-normative sexual types, while the closure of a number of public venues catering to these same populations further hampered their sociological research. In fact, to complete one of the last papers on homosexuality submitted to Professor Burgess's social pathology course, undergraduate Ruth Padnos was forced to make the sex panic itself her subject of inquiry. Documenting a three-hundred-percent rise in the number of sex offense cases prosecuted in local courts during the first months of 1937, Padnos showed how authorities' zeal to rid Chicago of dangerous rapists and child molesters soon devolved into a general roundup of local gay men and the surveillance of public theaters and cruising grounds where such men searched for consensual sex (Padnos 1937).

During this period of increased sexual regulation, at least two members of the faculty of the University of Chicago—the prominent bisexual writer and social critic Paul Goodman, who was then pursuing graduate studies and serving as an instructor in the Department of English, and a popular professor in the Department of Music, Cecil Smith—fell prey to local sex panics, losing their academic appointments as a result of their homosexual activities. Although the university never initiated a wholesale purge of the lesbians and gay men in its employ, as the federal government did during this same period (see D'Emilio 1983; Johnson 2003), it did occasionally take action against those employees whose public behavior either generated or seemed destined to generate unwelcome publicity for the university. With the 1939 case of Paul Goodman, who later acknowledged being fired from the university "because of my queer behavior or my claim to the right to it" (Goodman 1973, p. 24), the administration apparently launched a pre-emptive strike, fearing that Goodman's open cruising in Jackson Park would eventually land him in trouble with local authorities. But in the case of Cecil Smith, who was acquitted after a very public arrest on charges of fondling a sailor in a Clark Street theater in December 1944 ("U. of C. Teacher Denies Sailor's Morals Charge" 1944; Morgenstern 1944), the university agreed to his continued employment provided he did not generate any more unflattering publicity (McKeon 1945). Apparently following a second arrest, however, Smith was forced to resign in the spring of 1946 (Colwell 1946).

Such dismissals undoubtedly had a chilling effect on the study of homosexuality and other non-normative sexualities at the University of Chicago by forcing potential researchers to worry about the possibility of becoming too closely identified with such research. Certainly the arrests were discussed extensively on campus. More than fifty years after the fact, Chicago alumni Ruth Padnos Fishman

(personal communication, April 22, 2000) and Howard S. Becker (personal communication, April 5, 2000) still vividly recalled the Cecil Smith case and the accounts of his arrest in the *Chicago Tribune*. But the dissolution of Chicago's studies of non-normative sexualities was not simply a result of the era's scare tactics. It was also a product of sociologists' diminishing cultural authority in this realm as psychologists came to dominate such research by positioning themselves as the experts most capable of addressing the presumed proliferation of sexual psychopaths.

During the 1940s, only one major sociological research project at the University of Chicago examined non-normative sexualities in any depth, and even it reflected the growing influence of psychology. By 1942, sociologist Earle W. Bruce had been documenting Chicago's vibrant homosexual world—its nightspots, private parties and colorful participants—through nearly a decade of study at the university. But as he turned to his master's thesis, he chose not to parlay this research into a full-scale ethnographic study like those produced by department colleagues for nearly two decades. Rather, he examined the psychological and sociological "personality traits" of the homosexual man, supplementing the life histories he had gathered with psychological testing, dream analysis and even occasional hypnosis (Bruce 1942). The result was an unusual mixture of sociology and psychology that attempted to situate the results of his informants' personality tests within the particular social problems that they faced as urban homosexuals.

Only in the 1950s and 1960s did a later generation of Chicago sociologists—including such prominent alumni as Howard S. Becker (1964; 1973), Erving Goffman (1963), Albert J. Reiss, Jr. (1961), William A. Westley (Leznoff and Westley 1956), and John H. Gagnon and William Simon (1967; 1973)—return to the study of homosexuality, prostitution and other non-normative sexual practices and groups as part of their broader sociological investigations of "outsiders" and "social deviants." Yet unlike earlier Chicago studies, this new research questioned the assumed pathology of such groups by focusing on the process by which some acts and individuals came to be labeled "deviant" while others were considered "normal." Participation in non-normative sexual activities did not constitute deviance in and of itself, these sociologists argued. Rather, it was *made* deviant by the social development of rules and sanctions designed to regulate such practices.

While this later body of scholarship has been well documented and is currently being reevaluated as a founding cornerstone in the social constructionist study of sexuality (see Rubin 2002), Chicago's earliest sociological investigations of non-normative sexual practices and types remain largely forgotten and unpublished. Yet surely they, too, merit reappraisal, not only as previously unrecognized precursors to present-day studies of sexuality, but also as integral components in the founding of urban sociology. The recognition of the city as a sexual laboratory, as well as a social one, is long overdue.

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