

Queering Canadian Homonationalism: Limited Approaches to Foreign Homophobia

by

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Abstract

Since the 2005 legalization of same-sex marriage, lesbian and gay rights have gradually become a marker of Canadian national identity. In a prominent display of support for global queers, Canadian politicians from every level of government nearly unanimously condemned a 2013 Russian anti-gay law that was enacted ahead of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi. Through the employment of Jasbir Puar's analytic framework of homonationalism, I examine the ways in which Canada's emerging national position on foreign homophobia, which has been informed by the mainstream LGBT rights movement, operates under the presumption that Western conceptualizations of sexuality are universally true. I contend that this approach fosters sentiments of cultural superiority, thereby dismissing the situated knowledges of foreign queers, and effectively limiting the potential for adequately challenging global homophobia.

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Introduction

In the months preceding the 1976 Summer Olympic Games in Montreal, the city's gay village was effectively shut down. For the first time since the 1896 revamping of the Olympics, Canada was given the opportunity to play host to the world. As is the case with preparing for any major international event, the host country and city strive to showcase their cultures' best in an effort to sell a carefully marketed image to the global community. This endeavour necessarily entails a concealment of people and places whose visibility are considered to be incompatible with evoking sentiments of pride and captivation. Contemporarily, this has often entailed diverting attention away from a city's homeless population via their forced removal from the international public's purview, as demonstrated by Vancouver's preparation for the 2010 Winter Olympics.¹ For 1975 Montreal, it meant greater police presence and the attempted erasure of the city's gay village and its inhabitants.² Deemed to reflect poorly on the city and Canada more broadly, many of Montreal's gay and lesbian clubs and bars were shut down as a result of police investigations that concluded that such locations were frequented for the purposes of indecency. Simultaneously, bath houses were raided in Ottawa – the imagined epicentre of Canadian political identity – in conjunction with Montreal's efforts to clean up the presence of sexual deviance.³ As demonstrated by these actions, gay and lesbian identities were conceptualized by the state as being incompatible with Canadian national identity. In the

¹ See: Lucy Hyslop, "Winter Olympics on Slippery Slope after Vancouver Crackdown on Homeless," *The Guardian*, February 3, 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/feb/03/vancouver-winter-olympics-homeless-row>.

² Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security and Sexual Regulation* (UBC Press, 2010), 304.

³ *Ibid.*, 314.

decades since the 1976 Montreal Olympics, Canadians have witnessed a gradual transformation of this national narrative.

Limited Approaches to Foreign Homophobia

The focal point of this research is centred on recent social, legal, and political developments pertaining to the intertwining of lesbian and gay rights with dominant understandings of Canadian national identity. This evolving phenomenon, which has been met with praise by LGBT activists for challenging homophobia in Canada, has also raised the question of sparking positive change in other countries. In sum, the success story of lesbian and gay rights in Canada has been conceptualized as being globally implementable. This has entailed the perpetuation of the belief that lesbian and gay identities are necessarily liberating and that they ought to be adopted by all global citizens who experience sexual attraction exclusively to members of the same sex. This project is as much of a critique of the Canadian government as it is of the mainstream LGBT rights movement.

The lack of visibility of lesbian and gay identities in other nations has been presumed to signify a repression of authentic identity and deep-seated cultural animosity towards sexual diversity. In actuality, a host of sexual identities exist outside of the Western categorization of LGBT. I raise this point not to dismiss the global prevalence of violence against sexual minorities, but to highlight the primary importance of considering culturally specific conceptualizations of gender, sexuality, and sexual identity in order to adequately respond to such violence. Various scholars including Jon Binnie and Joseph Massad argue that the failure to consider the situated knowledges of foreign queers⁴ is a significant

⁴ Throughout this project, I use the term “queer” to refer to practices and sexual identities that are not definable as heteronormative or homonormative. Additionally, I use the term more broadly to refer to

oversight of the mainstream LGBT rights movement, which imagines gay and lesbian identities as being the authentic identities of all homosexuals.⁵ Consequently, Western initiatives to dispel foreign homophobia have neglected the legitimacy and cultural importance of native identities by projecting Western knowledges onto foreign queers. This oversimplifies cultural divergences and reduces the matter of social equality for sexual minorities to a question of how well other countries reflect the West. As an extension of literature addressing this phenomenon, my research addresses Canada's hegemonic involvement. Through the development of Canada's pro-gay national image, the oversight of the LGBT rights movement has been absorbed into Canadian foreign policy aimed at protecting the rights of sexual minorities. Although the growing Canadian response to combatting foreign homophobia has been well-intentioned, my research demonstrates that it has emerged out of Western imperial thought.

Throughout this project, I advance the central argument that Canadian foreign policy is engaged in a process that discursively authenticates the myth of the global gay and consequently limits endeavours to challenge the global persecution of sexual

sexualities and sexual identities that do not fit within the Western oriented LGBT acronym. This employment of "queer" is intended to resist dominant Western narratives regarding sexual minorities that presume a natural and universal applicability of Western cultures and LGBT identities. "Queer" allows me to address non-normative sexualities and sexual identities without having to hegemonically understand them as strictly lesbian, gay, bisexual, or trans.

⁵ This presumed universality of gay and lesbian identities is referred to as "the global gay"; Jon Binnie, *The Globalization of Sexuality* (London: SAGE, 2004); Joseph Massad, "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World," *Public Culture* 14, no. 2 (March 20, 2002): 361–86, doi:10.1215/08992363-14-2-361; See also: Dennis Altman, *Global Sex* (University of Chicago Press, 2002); John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, Fifth Edition (New York: Random House, 1978); Martin F Manalansan, "In the Shadows of Stonewall: Examining Gay Transnational Politics and the Diasporic Dilemma," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2, no. 4 (January 1, 1995): 425–38, doi:10.1215/10642684-2-4-425; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (University of California Press, 1990); Carl Stychin, "The Globalization of Sexual Identities," in *Between Law and Culture: Relocating Legal Studies*, ed. Lisa C. Bower, David Theo Goldberg, and Michael C. Musheno (Minnesota: U of Minnesota Press, 2001), 275–87.

minorities. Canadian foreign policy initiatives further legitimize the belief that Western sexual identities are and should be universally adopted. As a result, Western knowledges are imagined as being key for all global queers to achieve social justice. Primarily, I focus on how this perception fosters sentiments of cultural superiority and how the consideration of foreign queers' situated knowledges are lost in the process. The Canadian endeavour to challenge homophobia in other parts of the world effectively denies unique cultural understandings of sexuality by reading them through a narrow Western lens. The solution to foreign homophobia is thus thought to be the cultural Westernization of the non-Western world; however, this approach betrays the very principle of diversity and acceptance that the LGBT rights movement claims to promote. In order to adequately improve the lives of foreign queers, the Canadian government must take into consideration the specific cultural contexts of the nations it wishes to help. Instead of simply condemning anti-homosexuality laws and imagining Western identities as being universal, the Canadian government must work with local queer activists who understand the cultural contexts of their respective nations. It is not my intention to trivialize or minimize the detrimental impacts of the abhorrence of laws that criminalize homosexuality; rather, I wish to highlight the non-universality of Western conceptualizations about sexuality and identity. Anti-homosexuality laws attempt to limit sexual plurality similar to how Western responses to such laws have failed to recognize or account for foreign queer sexualities that exist outside of the Western categorization of LGBT. Moreover, I do not wish to dismiss the usefulness of foreign policy responses to human rights violations; instead, I call for social and political responses to foreign homophobia that attentively consider the situated knowledges of non-Western queers. Unjust laws do not justify unwarranted cultural imperialism.

Homonationalism and the Canadian Context

The term “homonationalism” is both a descriptor of a state’s actions and a method of inquiry.⁶ With regard to the former, states may engage in homonationalist practices by fostering notions of Western cultural superiority, either through intent or neglect, in the name of defending lesbian and gay rights. Additionally, “homonationalism” may be used as “an analytic category [...] to understand and historicize how and why a country’s status as ‘gay-friendly’ has become desirable.”⁷ Homonationalist analyses rely upon cultural and queer critiques of social and political narratives pertaining to Western hegemony and LGBT rights. According to Jasbir Puar, homonationalism is “fundamentally a deep critique of lesbian and gay liberal rights discourses and how those rights discourses produce narratives of progress and modernity.”⁸ The term also addresses the relationship between nationalism and the protection of lesbian and gay rights, the fostering of sexual normativity, the delegitimization of non-Western queer identities, and the condemnation of non-gay-friendly nations as being backwards, barbaric, and uncivilized.

As a research method, I have adopted Puar’s concept of homonationalism and considered its applicability to the Canadian context in order to demonstrate the shortcomings of Canada’s foreign policy approach to protecting the rights of global sexual minorities. While Puar and other LGBT scholars consider the ways in which homonationalism operates within the contexts of the United States and Israel, my research expands upon such literature by providing an analysis of Canada. As I trace the

⁶ Jasbir Puar, “Rethinking Homonationalism,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45, no. Special Issue 02 (2013): 336–39, doi:10.1017/S002074381300007X.

⁷ Ibid., 336.

⁸ Ibid., 337.

development of this unique brand of homonationalism, I turn to the Canadian political response to the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games. I examine recent social, legal, and political developments pertaining to LGBT rights in Canada, which entails observations of changing public opinion and shifting political interests. I analyze the national narrative of support for lesbian and gay rights by examining official government statements, policy developments and commitments, and news coverage of federal, provincial, and municipal political commentary.⁹ The collection and organization of these sources has allowed me to provide a comprehensive overview of the nation-wide approach to lesbian and gay rights in both domestic and foreign contexts. My research is situated in scholarship on post-colonial and queer theory, as I advance a socio-legal and political analysis of the Canadian state's commitment to protecting lesbian and gay rights. In Chapter 2, I examine the recent development of lesbian and gay rights becoming a marker of Canadian national identity, which entails a consideration of how Stephen Harper's Conservative government has responded and contributed to this phenomenon. In Chapter 3, I address the imperial implications of this national narrative as it has come to shape Canadian foreign policy.

The inspiration for this project arose as I observed the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's (CBC) live coverage of the opening ceremony for the Sochi Olympics, which occurred on February 7th, 2014. The Games, which were hosted in Russia following the Canadian 2010 Winter Olympics, had been surrounded by international controversy due to the 2013 enactment of a Russian law that criminalized public expressions of non-

⁹ For national media sources, I refer mainly to *The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Daily Xtra*, and the *National Post*. These media outlets provide added content of political commentaries that do not appear in official government sources.

heterosexual identities.¹⁰ The CBC's coverage provided a uniquely Canadian perspective of the Games' commencement, as official commentators addressed each participating country's stance on lesbian and gay rights, thereby dividing states in to one of two categories: those that are progressive like Canada, and those that are homophobic like Russia.¹¹ As a result, Canadians could pat themselves on the back for their nation's protection of lesbian and gay rights, which is largely credited to the 1969 effective decriminalization of sodomy and the 2005 legalization of same-sex marriage.¹² The CBC's evocation of national pride, which was clearly linked to Canada's growing social acceptance of gays and lesbians, was not simply the result of a corporate media decision or the side-effect of Olympic fever; rather, it was the by-product of a larger Canadian political response to combat foreign homophobia.

I contend that the national political response to Sochi 2014 can be addressed as a case study that best exemplifies the existence and ramifications of Canadian homonationalism. Politicians from every major political party and from each level of government nearly unanimously condemned Russia's anti-gay law, thereby exemplifying the link between lesbian and gay rights and Canadian values. In light of the controversy surrounding the Sochi Games, Canadians seized the opportunity to demonstrate their solidarity against Russian homophobia. As my research indicates, despite this display of support for queer Russians, Canadian politicians perpetuated the discursive association

¹⁰ Russian State Duma, *For the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values*, 2013.

¹¹ I contend that this framing participated in a larger Canadian national political narrative regarding the condemnation of Russia's anti-gay law. I expand upon this narrative in greater detail in Chapter 3.

¹² It should be noted that sodomy was only decriminalized in private places between men over the age of 21; Bill C-150, *Criminal Law Amendment Act 1968-69*, 2d Sess, 27th Parl, 1969; *Reference Re Same-Sex Marriage*, (2004) SCC 79; Bill C-38, *Civil Marriage Act*, 1st Sess, 38th Parl, 2005.

between sexual equality and Western knowledges of sexuality and identity. This approach failed to consider the existence of Russian queer identities, which do not necessarily adhere to the Western LGBT umbrella. While I consider the social and political differences between Russian and Western sexualities, my central point is to address the implications of Canada's failure to grasp the complexities of sexual identity in Russia. Non-LGBT queer identities were effectively dismissed, and Western imperialism was latently advanced through the Canadian response to Sochi 2014. Subsequently, Canada's condemnation of Russia's anti-gay law did little to nothing to counteract the violence which continues to be waged against Russian queers. The Canadian approach merely reifies the imperialist undertones of the mainstream LGBT rights movement.

Chapter Overview

In Chapter 1, I draw upon Puar's analytic tool of homonationalism. This critical framework scrutinizes Western lesbian and gay rights politics by addressing its implications in the discursive labelling of nations as progressive or as backwards and in need of civilizing by the West. According to homonationalist scholars, the latter categorization fosters the production of nationalist, xenophobic, imperialist, and anti-queer narratives. Puar's work, which addresses homonationalism in the contexts of the United States and Israel, has emerged from a wider body of literature on queer theory. This method of inquiry challenges the hegemony of normative sexual identities, which are commonly understood as being naturally espoused. Moreover, homonationalism must be considered in relation to the field of scholarship on sexual imperialism. While Michel Foucault and John D'Emilio have traced the unique Western development of homosexual identities, Jon Binnie, Dennis Altman, Joseph Massad, and Martin Manalansan have documented the imperialist

implications of projecting gay and lesbian identities onto non-Western queers. Although same-sex desire may in fact be present in every region of the world, it is important to acknowledge that both the categorization of homosexuality and the emergence of lesbian and gay identities are specific to Western historical, cultural, and medical developments. Finally, in order to demonstrate the usefulness of Puar's work, I address some of the major criticisms of homonationalism as an analytic tool. While Aleardo Zanghellini insists that some homonationalist critiques have been too cautious to address the prevalence of foreign homophobia, I consider how this perspective demonstrates an oversimplification of homonationalism. The question raised by scholars like Puar is not whether homophobia exists in other countries – certainly it does, as demonstrated by the violence perpetrated against sexual minorities – but how global LGBT initiatives can be improved by not advancing imperialism or fostering xenophobia. Additionally, despite the fact that some foreign queers may find support and comfort by identifying in accordance with the Western categorization of LGBT, one must not assume that all global sexual minorities consent to welcoming the imposition of Western knowledges about sexuality and identity.

In Chapter 2, I outline the applicability of homonationalist inquiry to the Canadian context. In so doing, I address the development of lesbian and gay rights becoming a national value and a symbol of Canadian identity. This entails a consideration of how Canadians understand and define themselves in relation to the United States, which has lagged behind Canada in granting rights to sexual minorities. Next, I examine how the global protection of lesbian and gay rights has become a state concern even in an era of Canadian politics that has been defined by social conservatism. With the rising social acceptance of gays and lesbians, politicians from each major national party have

demonstrated support for the rights of sexual minorities, even at the risk of alienating Canadian voters who oppose such rights.¹³ In particular, the Harper government has actively spoken out against homophobic violence in other nations, such as Uganda.¹⁴ Although laws that criminalize homosexuality should be condemned, the imperialist implications of Canada's denouncement of Uganda's now-defunct anti-homosexuality law must also be considered. Here, I reassert the significance of acknowledging lesbian and gay identities as uniquely Western and non-universally experienced.

In the final chapter, I consider the existence of Canadian homonationalism by providing a case study of the Canadian political response to the Sochi 2014 controversy. To contextualize my analysis, I address the political climate of the Olympic Games in relation to national pride and the International Olympic Committee's interest in protecting the rights of gays and lesbians.¹⁵ I then outline a number of key comments and gestures condemning Russia's anti-gay law made by Canadian politicians from every level of government across the country. When considered collectively, these actions speak to a wider Western expectation of global conformity. Moreover, they advance the imperialist notion that Russia must civilize itself by entering the modern era in order to become a progressive nation like Canada. Although I do not set out to provide the truth of Russian

¹³ See: Gwendolyn Landolt, "Same-Sex Marriage Has Changed Canada," *REAL Women of Canada*, n.d., <http://www.realwomenofcanada.ca/same-sex-marriage-has-changed-canada/>.

¹⁴ Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, "Canada Strongly Condemns Ugandan Anti-Homosexuality Act," *Government of Canada*, February 24, 2014, <http://www.international.gc.ca/media/aff/news-communiques/2014/02/24b.aspx?lang=eng>.

¹⁵ Jules Boykoff, "The Anti-Olympics," *New Left Review*, II, no. 67 (February 2011): 41–59; International Olympic Committee, *Olympic Charter* (Lausanne, Switzerland, 2014), http://www.olympic.org/Documents/olympic_charter_en.pdf; Alan Tomlinson and Christopher Young, *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup* (SUNY Press, 2006).

sexuality, I do examine the imperialist implications of the lesbian and gay rights movement and how such limitations have been adopted by the Canadian government.

Chapter 1: Homonationalist Narratives

In this chapter, I provide an overview of key thinkers who have shaped Jasbir Puar's work on homonationalism. I begin by addressing the historical context of Western conceptualizations of sexuality in order to demonstrate the Western-specific development of lesbian and gay identities. Specifically, I turn to John D'Emilio's account of Western social organization following the rise of the industrial revolution and its effects on the growth of queer political activism. D'Emilio's work provides added context to Michel Foucault's theorization of sexuality and notions of authentic identity. Next, I examine the field of post-colonial scholarship and its usefulness for assessing the notion and effects of Western cultural superiority. This body of literature has informed critical feminist studies and advanced research pertaining to sexual imperialism. Finally, I examine the situation of Puar's work within queer studies in order to provide a comprehensive definition of homonationalism. In order to defend the usefulness of Puar's analytic tool, which provides a foundation for my analyses in chapters 2 and 3, I finish by engaging with well-informed criticisms raised by Aleardo Zanghellini.

The Emergence of Western Sexual Identities

There is [a] historical myth that enjoys nearly universal acceptance in the gay movement, the myth of the 'eternal homosexual.' The argument runs something like this: gay men and lesbians always were and always will be. We are everywhere; not just political function in the first years of gay liberation. In the early 1970s, when we battled an ideology that either denied our existence or defined us as psychopathic individuals or freaks of nature, it was empowering to assert that 'we are everywhere.' But in recent years it has confined us as surely as

the most homophobic medical theories, and locked our movement in place [...] [G]ay men and lesbians have not always existed. Instead, they are a product of history, and have come into existence in a specific historical era.

- John D'Emilio

According to Michel Foucault and D'Emilio, despite supporting evidence that suggests same-sex desire has existed throughout the history of humanity, the ways in which sexual acts have become tied to sets of identities is a relatively recent development in the West. Although the terms “gay” and “lesbian” are commonly thought to be interchangeable with “homosexuality,” the latter refers to a classification of sexual behavior that emerged out of nineteenth century Western medical discourses, whereas the former denote senses of personal identity that have developed in response to homophobia.¹⁶ Before considering the critiques raised by Puar in her analysis of homonationalism, it is primarily important to examine the specific cultural and historical contexts from which lesbian and gay identities have emerged.

Prior to the rise of the industrial revolution, the survival of agrarian Europeans was dependent upon the formation of large families. This meant that heterosexuality and the family structure was key to the maintenance of European societies, as populating rural families was necessary in order to create more workers; “producing offspring was as necessary for survival as producing grain.”¹⁷ Due to the existence of same-sex desire, homosexuality was widely castigated by Christian leaders because of its incompatibility with furthering the family structure and human survival.¹⁸ D'Emilio traces Christian

¹⁶ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*; D'Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity.”

¹⁷ D'Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity,” 469.

¹⁸ Ibid., 470.

condemnations of homosexuality in New England to the 1600s, as he notes that “there was, quite simply, no ‘social space’ in the colonial system of production that allowed men and women to be gay.”¹⁹ Due to the suppression of homosexuality and the consequent pervasive limitation of queer association, there existed no common identity to challenge the moral proscription of non-heterosexual, non-procreative sexualities. As a result of the mid-eighteenth century industrial revolution, however, the agrarian system of social organization which forbade homosexuality slowly underwent major transformation. The shift from the rural farming household to the growth of industrialized urban centres created new job opportunities and caused an influx of workers to migrate to developing cities.²⁰ Industrial citizens gained greater opportunities to seek employment not necessarily dependent upon raising children, which meant that sex, no longer as important for survival, could now more freely be sought out for the purposes of pleasure. In the developing social and economic contexts of industrial Europe and colonial North America, people with mutual sexual interests independent of marriage were capable of conveniently locating one another in highly populated urban areas. Although the moral stigmatization of homosexuality was nonetheless pervasive, an increase in population meant an increase in individuals finding others to satisfy their same-sex desires.²¹

D’Emilio’s research complements that of Foucault’s as it provides added context to the formation of contemporary lesbian and gay identities. Throughout the three volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault’s work explores the ways in which sexuality has become imagined as being integral to defining an individual’s true sense of self. Foucault

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity.”

²¹ Ibid., 470.

dismisses the common assumption that discussions of sexuality were effectively silenced beginning in the seventeenth century. Instead, he asserts that as prudishness grew in prevalence, so too did public discourse regarding sexuality.²² Specifically, due to the mid-sixteenth century resurgence of the Catholic Church, “the Counter Reformation busied itself with stepping up the rhythm of the yearly confession in Catholic countries,” resulting in the encouragement of citizens to seek absolution by confessing their sins of sexual impurity, whether they were committed mentally or physically.²³ The Catholic confessional thus served as a site of sexual discussion that tightened the link between sex and morality. According to Foucault,

[d]iscourse, therefore, had to trace the meeting line of the body and the soul, following all its meanderings: beneath the surface of the sins, it would lay bare the unbroken nervure of the flesh. Under the authority of a language that had been carefully expurgated so that it was no longer directly named, sex was taken charge of, tracked down as it were, by a discourse that aimed to allow it no obscurity, no respite. It was here, perhaps, that the injunction, so peculiar to the West, was laid down for the first time, in the form of a general constraint. I am not talking about the obligation to admit to violations of the laws of sex, as required by traditional penance; but of the nearly infinite task of telling – telling oneself and another, as often as possible, everything that might concern the interplay of innumerable pleasures, sensations, and thoughts which, through the body and the soul, had some affinity with sex.²⁴

The authority of the church thus extended beyond the confessional, into the realm of everyday life where one’s sexual desires were thought to be central to their identity. Foucault claimed that by the beginning of the 1700s, “sex became a ‘police’ matter,” which D’Emilio also asserts in his observation that human survival and prosperity was understood as being dependent upon procreative heterosexuality.²⁵ Foucault’s remark about the policing of sex can best be understood in relation to his concept of “bio-power,” a term

²² Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, 18.

²³ Ibid., 19.

²⁴ Ibid., 20.

²⁵ Ibid., 24 and 26; D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity,” 469.

used to address the self-regulation of populations.²⁶ In this sense, while states have a clear interest in the maintenance of population growth, power extends beyond the authority of political and religious figures. Bio-power address the ways in which citizens behave in manners that uphold purported truths about human nature, including sexuality. Further to this point, Foucault's work addresses the impact of the biopolitical discourse of sexuality in the eighteenth century on perceptions of homosexuality. The discursive labelling of same-sex desire as deviant, immoral, and unnatural resulted in civilians, alongside state leaders, becoming gatekeepers of procreative heterosexuality. By the 1800s, homosexuality became conceptualized as more than just an act that an individual engaged in; "the homosexual was now a species."²⁷ One who experienced same-sex desire was not simply committing a sin, but the sin itself was "everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle [...] [homosexuality became conceptualized as] less a habitual sin than a singular nature." It is important to acknowledge that this development is specific to the West, as other cultures did not instantaneously adopt the same perception of same-sex desire as being definitive of a specific type of person. This understanding of the homosexual species eventually resulted in the medicalization of homosexuality, beginning with Carl Friedrich Otto Westphal's 1870 classification of same-sex desire as a psychiatrist disorder.²⁸ From this point onward into the twentieth century, because "sexuality was a medical and medicalized object, one had to try and detect it — as a lesion, a dysfunction, or a symptom — in the depths of the organism, or on the surface of the skin, or among all the signs of behavior."²⁹ Through

²⁶ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, 140.

²⁷ Ibid., 43.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 44.

medical examinations of homosexual men and women arose the belief that homosexuality could be identified by a set of observed common behavioural characteristics. The homosexual was thus a detectable species that could be identified and subsequently disciplined in accordance with the biopolitical enforcement of social norms.

As D’Emilio’s work demonstrates, by the mid-1800s, the growth of capitalism allowed for Westerners to seek employment outside of the family structure. This opened up the possibility for sex to be sought out for the purposes of pleasure – a desire which had been previously trumped by the necessity of procreation.³⁰ Towards the turn of the century, “a class of men and women existed who recognized their erotic interest in their own sex, saw it as a trait that set them apart from the majority, and sought others like themselves.”³¹ The emergence of the medicalization of homosexuality thus coincided with the development of homosexuals who began to converge due to their common interests. D’Emilio notes that

[i]n this period, gay men and lesbians began to invent ways of meeting each other and sustaining a group life. Already, in the early twentieth century, large cities contained male homosexual bars. Gay men staked out cruising areas, such as Riverside Drive in New York City and Lafayette Park in Washington. In St. Louis and the nation’s capital, annual drag balls brought together large numbers of black gay men. Public bathhouses and YMCAs became gathering spots for male homosexuals. Lesbians formed literary societies and private social club [...] By the 1920s and 1930s, large cities such as New York and Chicago contained lesbian bars. These patterns of living allowed individuals to survive beyond the confines of the family.³²

Through these associations, gay and lesbian identities began to develop, but as D’Emilio claims, heterosexual norms continued to persist even in the new urban settings of capitalist

³⁰ D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity,” 470.

³¹ Ibid., 470–471.

³² Ibid., 470.

societies. Gay and lesbian subcultures thus existed in secrecy.³³ It was not until the advent of World War II that the final seeds of the gay liberation movement were planted, as millions of men and women were displaced and removed “from the [family] settings where heterosexuality was normally imposed.”³⁴ Although homosexuality was still widely condemned, many men and women found themselves in sex-segregated scenarios where same-sex desires could be explored. By the 1950s and 1960s, gay and lesbian subcultures began to emerge from the shadows of heterosexist societies. Following the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City, the gay liberation movement and contemporary lesbian and gay identities were born not only for the purpose of bringing homosexuals together, but for the prospect of combatting homophobia.

Addressing the historical development of lesbian and gay identities is necessary for considering the unique cultural phenomena from which such identities have emerged. Although the Western subject may observe homosexuality in other parts of the world, it is important to acknowledge that other cultures do not necessarily strive to identify by Western standards. Indeed, while “homosexuality as a practice has been in existence in traditional societies since time immemorial, sexual identity has never become an agenda of political struggle in any of these societies until recently”.³⁵ In fact, some queers make it a point to resist gay and lesbian identities. It would be overly presumptuous and even imperialistic to assume that a person in a foreign culture who engages in sexual acts with a member of the same sex necessarily identifies as gay or lesbian. To do so would be to

³³ Ibid., 471.

³⁴ Ibid., 472.

³⁵ Subir K. Kole, “Globalizing Queer? AIDS, Homophobia and the Politics of Sexual Identity in India,” *Globalization and Health* 3, no. 8 (July 11, 2007): 2.

understand Western sexual identities as static, ahistorical, and universal. As D'Emilio and Foucault's work demonstrates, such an understanding would be significantly limited.

Sexual Imperialism

Upon consideration of the unique Western development of lesbian and gay identities, it is curious that many proponents of queer rights envisage Western conceptualization of sexuality in all global cultures. Although this imagining often arises due to the desire to challenge homophobia throughout the world and to extend protection to all those who are persecuted for their engagement in acts definable as homosexual, it also presumes that the history of humanity progresses in a singular, linear fashion with the West being at the forefront of cultural modernity. The imperialist implications of this broad perception has been well documented in colonial and postcolonial literature. Moreover, various scholars have addressed Western-centric understandings of the world in relation to the studies of gender and sexuality. Assessing the world through a narrow Western lens fails to account for the significance that cultural diversity that has had in shaping the history of humanity in a multitude of contexts. In order to adequately address the global prevalence of homophobia, one must contemplate the hegemonic role that Westerners continue to play in shaping discourses of foreign cultures.

As a foundational leader in this field of inquiry, Edward Said has inspired various scholars to examine the lived realities of those global citizens whose cultures are framed as oppositional to the West. Said employs the term "orientalism" to address discourses of Western knowledge that illustrate cultural "others" as socially inferior beings in need of

civilizing.³⁶ Orientalism thus denotes a “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority” over cultures deemed to be backward and barbaric.³⁷ Historically, Europeans have invoked orientalist sentiments in order to expand empires and to justify the colonization of foreign peoples. Although the colonial period has largely come to an end, “imperialism [...] lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices.”³⁸ Contemporarily, even if nations do not endeavour to engage in colonialism, Westerners nonetheless strive to imperialistically reconfigure other cultures, as Western supremacy is carried out in the name of advancing modernity. Gayatri Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?” builds on Said’s analysis, as she considers the situated knowledges of Indian women by addressing how their cultural understandings of sati have been dismissed and silenced by Westerners claiming to advance civility. Spivak situates her analysis within the wider body of literature of post-modernism, thus rejecting the essentialist belief that there is a single knowable truth about the social world. She contends that the European colonization of India, which came to an official end in 1947, has resulted in Britain becoming an authority of Indian cultural knowledges, even well after the colonial period ended. As a result, “a whole set of knowledges [...] have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated,” resulting in a limited Western illustration of sati through the dismissal of the lived realities of Hindu women.³⁹ To answer the title question she poses, Spivak argues that the subaltern is certainly capable of speaking, but the issue

³⁶ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁸ Said defines imperialism as “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory,” Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Vintage Books, 1993), 9.

³⁹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Greenberg (London: MacMillan, 1988), 281.

at hand is that the subaltern cannot be heard due to overpowering Western demonizations of sati. For this reason, Spivak claims that “the notion of what the work [of the subaltern] *cannot* say becomes important,” where what cannot be said is that which challenges orientalist discourses of Western understandings of Hindu women.⁴⁰ Instead of “saving” the supposedly oppressed women of India from a “backward” cultural practice, Westerners have advanced epistemic violence through the criminalization, demonization, and contemporary erasure of sati from Hinduism.⁴¹

Spivak’s work has been immensely influential in cultural and feminist studies, and the point I wish to draw attention to is that of the Western saviourist mentality. As other scholars have pointed out, while this mentality is descriptive of Western politics, it also sheds light on the shortcomings of Western feminist initiatives to help women in other regions of the world. Chandra Mohanty elaborates on this issue, noting the importance of considering unique cultural contexts when addressing foreign sexism. She claims “there is, it should be evident, no universal patriarchal framework [...] unless one posits an international male conspiracy or a monolithic, transhistorical power structure,” calling out the myth that sexism is experienced identically in all cultures.⁴² Mohanty thus rejects the presumption that all women are part of a global “sisterhood” simply because of the commonality of their gender identities.⁴³ This generalization “assumes that men and women are already constituted as sexual-political subjects prior to their entry into the arena of social relations,” which cannot account for the complexities of cultural diversity.⁴⁴ In

⁴⁰ Ibid., 287.

⁴¹ Ibid., 297–298.

⁴² Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” *Feminist Review*, no. 30 (October 1, 1988): 63, doi:10.2307/1395054.

⁴³ Ibid., 67.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 68, 72.

recent years, Mohanty's critiques have been contextualized by the involvement of Western feminists in imperialist relations with the Middle East.⁴⁵ Specifically, Western demonizations of Islam have intensified after the events of September 11th, 2001. Nearly a month following 9/11, in an address to the American people, First Lady Laura Bush stated that "the fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women," as she asserted that "the brutal oppression of women is a central goal of the terrorists."⁴⁶ Regardless of the validity of Mrs. Bush's comments, the War on Terror was immediately framed as a liberation movement for the supposedly oppressed women of Afghanistan. This neocolonial discourse shaped dominant perceptions of Muslim women living in the Middle East, and also those who had been living in the West prior to 9/11.⁴⁷ The demonization of Islam then allowed for such women to be commonly understood as "slaves in need of saving by the West," and as being "victimized and in need of our help."⁴⁸ Supporting the War on Terror thus became equated with protecting women's rights.⁴⁹ Consequently, many Western feminists engaged in what Leila Ahmed categorized in 1992 as "colonial feminism:" an imperialist mission that attempts to answer the woman question with the exportation of Western norms and values.⁵⁰ Within the context of the War on

⁴⁵ My use of the term "Middle East" excludes Israel largely due to the similarities between Israeli and Western cultures with regard to sexual identity. These similarities are made evident in analyses of American and Israeli homonationalism, which I address in the following section of this chapter.

⁴⁶ Kevin J. Ayotte and Mary E. Husain, "Securing Afghan Women: Neocolonialism, Epistemic Violence, and the Rhetoric of the Veil," *NWSA Journal* 17, no. 3 (October 1, 2005): 124.

⁴⁷ Usamah Ansari, "Should I Go and Pull Her Burqa Off?: Feminist Compulsions, Insider Consent, and a Return to Kandahar," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 25, no. 1 (2008): 56, doi:10.1080/15295030701849340.

⁴⁸ Ayotte and Husain, "Securing Afghan Women," 121; Ansari, "Should I Go and Pull Her Burqa Off?," 51.

⁴⁹ Ansari, "Should I Go and Pull Her Burqa Off?"; Laura Bush, *Radio Address by Mrs. Bush*, November 17, 2001, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=24992#>; Jennifer L. Fluri, "The Beautiful 'other': A Critical Examination of 'western' Representations of Afghan Feminine Corporeal Modernity," *Gender, Place & Culture* 16, no. 3 (2009): 241–57, doi:10.1080/09663690902836292.

⁵⁰ Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (Yale University Press, 1992); See also: Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*

Terror, this has largely entailed the vilification of Islamic veiling practices. Indeed, “the presence of the burqa on television confirms to the Western audience their moral rightness and the need to save women from their backward configurations of patriarchy.”⁵¹ If Islam is antithetical to women’s equality, as many Western feminists have argued, then the removal of the veil has come to symbolize an important step forward in mirroring Western understandings of equality. In this process, however, Muslim women’s voices are silenced and an erasure of their situated knowledges occurs. In practice, this works counteractively to granting Muslim women freedom, as it presumes they have no agency to choose to veil and works to deprive them of their cultural association. This case of epistemic violence, which has arisen in the name of advancing social equality, perfectly exemplifies the same issues addressed by Spivak.

Similar to the colonial feminist endeavour of ‘saving’ oppressed women in other parts of the world through the attempted imposition of Western values, the mainstream liberal LGBT rights movement often fails to consider unique historical and cultural components which have shaped specific conceptualizations of sexuality and sexual identity. Just as there exists no global sisterhood of women, neither is there an equivalent for homosexuals simply because they share experiences of same-sex desire.⁵² As Dennis Altman asserts, “those outside the west tend to be more aware of the differences between traditional homosexualities and contemporary gay identity politics, a distinction sometimes lost by the international gay/lesbian movement in its eagerness to claim universality”.⁵³

(Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006); Ella Shohat, “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial,’” *Social Text*, no. 31/32 (January 1, 1992): 99–113, doi:10.2307/466220.

⁵¹ Ansari, ““Should I Go and Pull Her Burqa Off?,” 57.

⁵² Binnie, *The Globalization of Sexuality*, 70.

⁵³ Altman, *Global Sex*, 95.

That is to say, while Westerners may wish to help foreign queers to challenge homophobia, there exists a common misconception that all homosexuals identify as gay or lesbian – identities which are specific to historical developments in the West. Joseph Massad labels this flawed perception of lesbian and gay universality as the Gay International.⁵⁴ Massad's work situates Martin Manalansan's point that while 'coming out of the closet' and embracing the gay or lesbian identity is perceived as fundamental to accepting one's sexual desires in the West, in other cultures, "the closet is not central to [all homosexual] personal narratives".⁵⁵ Moreover,

the presumption that gay liberation must be performed through the public articulation of one's sexuality (i.e., being 'out and proud') privileges a narrow idea of what it means to be a 'gay' subject, thereby denying or erasing the multiple other ways that such sexualities can be lived or inhabited.⁵⁶

The discourse of lesbian and gay rights, which attempts to read Western sexual identities into the histories of all global cultures, often fails to consider the epistemology of same-sex desire across time and space.⁵⁷ Indeed,

[t]he identities lesbian, gay, and bisexual were taken up within a politics of identity in North America and Western Europe beginning in the 1960s. In an era of rapid communications, increased mobility, diasporic communities, and the hegemony of American culture, the globalization of originally Western identity categories is an ongoing phenomenon.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ In relation to the Islamic Middle East, Massad posits that "the Gay International has reserved a special place for the Muslim world in both its discourse and its advocacy. This orientalist impulse, borrowed from predominant representations of the Arab and Muslim worlds in the United States and Europe, continues to guide all branches of the human rights community;" Massad, "Re-Orienting Desire," 362.

⁵⁵ Martin F Manalansan, "In the Shadows of Stonewall: Examining Gay Transnational Politics and the Diasporic Dilemma," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2, no. 4 (January 1, 1995): 434, doi:10.1215/10642684-2-4-425; See also: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (University of California Press, 1990).

⁵⁶ Stacy Douglas, Suhraiya Jivraj, and Sarah Lamble, "Liabilities of Queer Anti-Racist Critique," *Feminist Legal Studies* 19, no. 2 (August 1, 2011): 113, doi:10.1007/s10691-011-9181-6.

⁵⁷ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*.

⁵⁸ Stychin, "The Globalization of Sexual Identities," 275.

Although many queers throughout the world do adopt lesbian and gay identities in order “to be part of global culture in all its forms,” others wish to defend the legitimacy of their cultural sexual identities.⁵⁹ Moreover, it would be an oversight to presume that all queers wish to participate in this sense of universality that only reflects Western historical developments. While Altman questions whether “a common consciousness and identity based around homosexuality” may arise as a result of social and economic modernity, Binnie convincingly asserts that Altman’s position fails to appreciate the depth of Western imperial hegemony.⁶⁰

According to Manalansan, many queers reject the Western labels of gay and lesbian, which is not always reducible to the fact that they are too repressed or oppressed to ‘come out’. For example, Filipino men with same-sex desires often communicate in *swardspeak*, a secret language and discursive tool used to resist Western gay assimilation.⁶¹ Manalansan notes the prevalence of this language in the Philippines and as well as in the West.⁶² The Gay International thus attempts to counteractively deny the cultural truths of foreign queers and their agency to resist Western domination. Within the context of the Philippines, this struggle is also exemplified by the *bakla* identity which has traditionally referred to a “woman-hearted man”, but in recent years, Westerners have failed to accept the legitimacy of this identity, and have instead presumed that the term refers to a lower class gay men.⁶³ As Ronald Baytan notes, “the *bakla*’s appropriation and *localization* of gayness is one of the most visible proofs of the implantation of Western homo/sexual

⁵⁹ Altman, *Global Sex*, 93.

⁶⁰ Ibid.; Binnie, *The Globalization of Sexuality*, 77.

⁶¹ Altman, *Global Sex*, 47.

⁶² Manalansan, “In the Shadows of Stonewall,” 433.

⁶³ Ronald Baytan, “Evolving Identities in Philippine Cinema” in Fran Martin “Asia Pacific Queer: Rethinking Genders and Sexualities” (University of Illinois Press, 2008).

discourse in the Philippines”.⁶⁴ This is not to say that some homosexuals in countries like the Philippines do not identify as gay or lesbian, but evidence that Western LGBT identities are sometimes adopted in the non-Western world should not be misconstrued to suggest that *all* global homosexuals wish to identify as such.

Similar to Filipino queer identities that intentionally resists the labels of gay and lesbian, Laurie Essig notes that in Russia, “homosexual acts are read differently” than in the West due to the fact that homosexuality has historically been understood as something that merely constitutes an act, not an identity.⁶⁵ Referring back to Foucault, homosexual acts only translated into the conceptualization of a homosexual species in the West in the nineteenth century as a result of Christian ideology.⁶⁶ Gay and lesbian identities in the West are tied to the belief that homosexuality is an internal, innate characterization of an individual’s true sense of self, whereas the same perception and identities are not necessarily shared by the experiences of queer Russians. In contrast to Foucault and D’Emilio’s analyses of homosexuality in the West, Essig notes that

[i]n Russia, despite the development of a similar matrix of disciplinary sciences, the birth of the homosexual species was much more belabored. Homosexual acts did not metamorphose into the homosexual person until much later, and even then, the homosexual was seen as a temporary aberration, always capable of being cured or eradicated with the advance of socialism.⁶⁷

This contrasting discourse of sexuality, which has not resulted in the same queer identity politics as in the West, has caused confusion for Westerners who look to locate and ‘save’

⁶⁴ Ibid., 182.

⁶⁵ Here, I intentionally address conceptualizations of sexuality in Russia in order to provide a foundation for the analysis that I advance in Chapter 3; Laurie Essig, *Queer in Russia: A Story of Sex, Self, and the Other* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1999), 3–4.

⁶⁶ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, 43.

⁶⁷ I return to this quote again in Chapter 3 in order to provide more elaboration; Essig, *Queer in Russia*, 4.

gays and lesbians in areas of the world where such identities do not dominantly exist.⁶⁸ While colonial feminism engages in a process that Spivak describes as “white men saving brown women from brown men,” Sara Ahmed asserts that the Gay International operates under the goal of “white queers saving brown queers from brown straights.”⁶⁹ Although homophobia is undeniably pervasive, global understandings of homosexuality are not necessarily reflective of Western perceptions. The life experiences of Western and global queers vary considerably, which highlights the limitation of using a Western model of identity as a basis for comparison.

Homonationalist Critiques

Since the 2007 publication of Jasbir Puar’s *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, the analytic framework of homonationalism has been employed and critiqued by an array of activists and scholars. In this section I examine key pieces of literature from which Puar’s considerations stem. Having already addressed the works of Foucault, D’Emilio, Said, Spivak, Mohanty, Ahmed, Binnie, Altman, Massad, and Manalansan, here I begin by outlining the core scholarship on queer theory that has informed Puar’s analyses in order to define the often-ambiguous concept of homonationalism. Next, I examine the contexts in which homonationalist critiques have been advanced by Puar and others: the United States and Israel. The purpose of this overview is to provide a comprehensive definition of what homonationalism is in practice. Finally, I engage with Aleardo Zanghellini’s criticism of homonationalism as a useful analytic tool. By responding to

⁶⁸ Massad, “Re-Orienting Desire.”

⁶⁹ Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” 297; Sara Ahmed, “Problematic Proximities: Or Why Critiques of Gay Imperialism Matter,” *Feminist Legal Studies* 19, no. 2 (August 1, 2011): 28, doi:10.1007/s10691-011-9180-7.

Zanghellini's thoughtful commentary, I aim to defend the invocation of homonationalist analyses, thereby providing a groundwork for the applicability of related critiques to the underexamined Canadian context.

Fundamental to queer scholarship are the contributions of Judith Butler, Michael Warner, and Lisa Duggan. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler challenges the semblance of naturalness commonly associated with sex, gender, and sexuality. She asserts that female and male bodies are performative constructions that have been discursively created as a result of biological classifications.⁷⁰ Moreover, Butler rejects the essentialist position that males and females are naturally inclined to embody masculinity and femininity, respectively, as she asserts that gender is an identity that is both learned and performed.⁷¹ Because the socially idealized performances of gender identities are tied to heterosexual attraction, the theorization of gender as performative suggests that sexuality also lacks biological truth.⁷² In *Fear of a Queer Planet*, Warner expands on Butler's work through his analysis of the relationship between essentialist understandings of gender and sexuality. He coins the term "heteronormativity" to address the social normalization of heterosexuality.⁷³ In subsequent work, Warner defines heteronormativity as "institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only as coherent – that is organized as sexuality – but also privileged".⁷⁴ The term is used to describe the manner in which heterosexuality, monogamy, marriage, and procreation are

⁷⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 146.

⁷¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (U of Minnesota Press, 1993).

⁷⁴ Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (January 1, 1998): 538, doi:10.2307/1344178.

held as standards of social acceptability. While analyses of heteronormativity are frequently used to critique the marginalization of queer individuals, Lisa Duggan considers how a similar normalization and privileging of certain practices has emerged among gays and lesbians. She reimagines Warner's concept and applies it to the social tolerance and normalization of certain gay and lesbian practices which reflect heteronormative ideals. Thus, "homonormativity" is epitomized by urban, gay or lesbian, monogamous parents.

Duggan argues that homonormativity

does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption.⁷⁵

Contemporarily, this mirroring of heteronormativity has been exemplified by the battle for the legalization of same-sex marriage.⁷⁶ Duggan claims that the assimilationist strategy of homonormativity effectively upholds the very institutions that preserve the social climate for queer discrimination to exist. As an alternative, she calls for the challenging of these institutions and heteronormative practices, as homonormativity produces a hierarchy of acceptable queer sexualities. For example, while same-sex marriage laws are meant to generate equality for gays and lesbians, in effect, they only protect those who support the heteronormative institution of marriage.⁷⁷ Duggan and other proponents of queer theory wish to challenge the very concept of sexual normativity.

⁷⁵ Lisa Duggan, "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism," in *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, ed. Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson (Duke University Press, 2002), 179.

⁷⁶ Duggan, "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism."

⁷⁷ Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (Harvard University Press, 2000).

During the 1990s, queer theory emerged as an analytic framework conceptualized to interrogate the discourse of sexuality and to explain queer culture. According to David Halperin, “queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, [and] the dominant.”⁷⁸ In other words, queer refers to the fluidity of identities that fall outside of the discourse of the heteronormative status quo. Queer theory can be defined as a critical lens through which social hegemonies of gender, sex, and sexuality become unsettled, disputed, and challenged. As queer theorists submit, “*deviation from the normal will persist*”;⁷⁹ therefore, the very concept of sexual normativity – heteronormativity or homonormativity – must be called into question in order for all queers to adequately pursue social acceptance.⁸⁰ The act of queering something refers to the desire “to quiz or ridicule, to spool, put out of order” by scrutinizing the ways in which it fosters sexual normativity and subsequently ‘others’ non-normative (read: queer) sexualities.⁸¹ Additionally, “the queer movement distinguishes itself from mainstream gay movements in that it is less about identity-based politics and more about anti-oppression political actions, less about individuality and more about building community.”⁸² Further to this point, Samuel Chambers contends that

LGBT politics is a politics of inclusiveness of diverse categories of gender and sexuality; queer politics is a challenge and resistance to dominant and debilitating norms of gender and sexuality. *This does not mean that the aims and goals of LGBT politics do not often intersect, overlap, and remain intermeshed with those of queer politics.* It does mean, however, that we

⁷⁸ David M. Halperin, “The Queer Politics of Michael Foucault,” in *Saint Foucault* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 62.

⁷⁹ Samuel Chambers, “A Queer Politics of the Democratic Miscount,” *Borderlands* 8, no. 2 (2009): 12.

⁸⁰ Halperin, “The Queer Politics of Michael Foucault.”

⁸¹ Nikki Sullivan, “*Queer: A Question of Being or a Question of Doing?*,” *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (NYU Press, 2003), 52.

⁸² M. Hogan, “Radical Queers: A Pop Culture Assessment of Montréal’s Anti-Capitalist Ass Pirates, the Panthères Roses, and Lesbians on Ecstasy,” *Canadian Woman Studies* 24, no. 2 (2005): 155, <http://pi.library.yorku.ca.proxy.library.carleton.ca/ojs/index.php/cws/article/viewFile/6133/5321>.

cannot collapse queer theory and politics into the frame of LGBT politics and identity-based liberal political theory.⁸³

Chambers' assertion aligns with the works of Binnie, Massad, and Manalansan, as queer theory challenges the discursive linkage between sexual acts and culturally-specific sexual identities by advancing the understanding that sexuality is fluid. Queer theory thus rejects essentialist claims that a person's gender and sexuality are innately predetermined and static.⁸⁴

Puar's work combines postcolonial and queer scholarship as she analyzes the relationship between Western supremacy and lesbian and gay rights. She employs the term "homonationalism" to advance "a deep critique of lesbian and gay liberal rights discourses and how those rights discourses produce narratives of progress and modernity".⁸⁵ This critique is not meant to devalue the achievements of the Western LGBT rights movement; rather, it underscores the ways in which the movement is implicated in the production of nationalist, xenophobic, neocolonial, and anti-queer narratives. As a site of analysis, Puar examines the American political responses to the events of September 11, 2001, noting how feminism and lesbian and gay politics have functioned to justify the War on Terror. Puar's homonationalist critiques have also been adopted by Sarah Schulman who considers the applicability of related analyses to the politics of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Schulman uses the term "pinkwashing" to name the ways in which Israeli lesbian and gay rights have been become entangled in the state's subordination of Palestine.⁸⁶

⁸³ Chambers, "A Queer Politics of the Democratic Miscount," 2.

⁸⁴ See: Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

⁸⁵ Puar, "Rethinking Homonationalism," 337.

⁸⁶ Sarah Schulman, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International* (Duke University Press, 2012); John Greyson, "Pinkface," *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 27, no. 2 80 (January 1, 2012): 145–53, doi:10.1215/02705346-1597240.

These homonationalist studies, which have sparked nationalist and queer debates, have raised a number of important considerations for the future of contemporary LGBT politics.

A fundamental component of Puar's analysis of American homonationalism is based on how Muslim populations have been discursively constructed by the West. Specifically, she draws upon Said's work in order to address post-9/11 American military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq.⁸⁷ She argues that this orientalist project has cultivated Western understandings of Middle Eastern Muslims as barbaric, uncivilized, sexist, and homophobic. Accordingly, the prospect of 'saving' Muslim women has often been cited as the moral justification for the War on Terror.⁸⁸ In this dynamic, Muslim men are imagined as threats to modernity, typified by the positioning of Americans as valiant soldiers of peace, modernity, and liberty. In addition to the advancement of colonial feminism, Puar considers how support for the War on Terror was also backed by many gays and lesbians due to the prevalence of anti-homosexuality laws in the Middle East.⁸⁹ Puar suggests that this association explains why repealing the now-defunct "Don't Ask Don't Tell" military policy became a central focus of the lesbian and gay rights movement during the last decade.⁹⁰ Fighting terrorism also meant fighting global homophobia. In fact, there was even brief political discussion about the suspension of Don't Ask Don't Tell in 2001, which would have meant an increase in military personnel and greater American

⁸⁷ See: Said, *Orientalism*.

⁸⁸ See: Ansari, "Should I Go and Pull Her Burqa Off?," 2008; Christine Delphy, "A War for Afghan Women?," in *After Shock: September 11, 2001 : Global Feminist Perspectives*, by Susan Hawthorne and Bronwyn Winter (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2003); Fluri, "The Beautiful 'other.'"

⁸⁹ Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007).

⁹⁰ "Don't Ask Don't Tell" was an American policy which effectively barred known homosexuals from active participation in the military. The policy was adopted in 1993 and its enforcement continued until 2011.

state support from gays and lesbians.⁹¹ Puar suggests that gays and lesbians became increasingly patriotic after 9/11, as many “identified with the national populous as ‘victims of terrorism’ by naming gay and queer bashings as a form of terrorism [in addition to claiming that] it was important to support the war on terror in order to ‘liberate’ homosexuals in the Middle East”.⁹² Puar also notes the hypervisibility of American flags in gay villages across the country, which represented queer support for the War on Terror, and by association, allegiance to the state.⁹³ Gay and lesbian politics thus became concerned with supporting and gaining access to the military, as opposed to questioning the war’s role in the perpetuation of Islamophobia. Intrigued by this development that connects lesbian and gay rights advocacy to American nationalism, Puar contends:

the Orientalist invocation of the terrorist is one discursive tactic that disaggregates U.S. national gays and queers from racial and sexual others, foregrounding a collusion between homosexuality and American nationalism that is generated both by national rhetorics of patriotic inclusion by gay and queer subjects themselves: homonationalism. For contemporary forms of U.S. nationalism and patriotism, the production of gay and queer bodies is crucial to the deployment of nationalism, insofar as these perverse bodies reiterate heterosexuality as the norm but also because certain domesticated homosexual bodies provide ammunition to reinforce nationalist projects.⁹⁴

Here, Puar is also drawing on the association between nationalism and sexual normativity. She contends that in the post-9/11 world, lesbian and gay rights have become framed as oppositional to Islam, promoting a surge in Islamophobia from gays and lesbians.⁹⁵ While access to same-sex marriage – and by association, homonormativity – was the dominant concern of many lesbian and gay rights activists during the 2000s, Muslim migrants were

⁹¹ Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 41.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 41–43.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

conceptualized as barriers to the achievement of marriage equality.⁹⁶ As Puar argues, American homonationalism is not only imperialist, it is also homonormative. She writes that “homonormative Islamophobia in the Global North, whereby homonormative and queer gay men can enact forms of national, racial, or other belongings [contributes] to a collective vilification of Muslims”.⁹⁷ Thus, Islamophobia became bound up in the fight for same-sex marriage and the furthering of homonormativity. In sum, Western nationalism and lesbian and gay rights were thought to be able to flourish if the perceived anti-Western and anti-gay religion of Islam could be moderated. The American vilification of Islam as a homophobic religion is reliant upon the social imaginary that the United States is a safe(r) environment for homosexuals in comparison to the Middle East. Further to this point, Puar explains that homonationalism is “an analytic category [...] to understand and historicize how and why a nation’s status as ‘gay-friendly’ has become desirable”.⁹⁸ Similar the protection of women’s rights, lesbian and gay rights are also understood as a maker of modernity. The issue with this perception, however, is that it is based on the belief that queers in the Middle East necessarily understand their sexuality and identify in the same manner as gays and lesbians in the West. This point echoes Binnie’s assertion that Western

[n]arratives around the centrality of coming out and the closet are based on the idea that gay liberation is the highest form of modernity and progress. The failure to come out and conform to somebody else’s notion of what a gay or lesbian identities is is a reflection of one’s failed subjectivity or spoiled identity.⁹⁹

In order for a nation to be regarded as modern for its protection of lesbian and gay rights, its cultures must first mirror Western conceptualizations of sexuality. This position fuels

⁹⁶ Ibid., 20–22.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 20–21.

⁹⁸ Puar, “Rethinking Homonationalism,” 336.

⁹⁹ Binnie, *The Globalization of Sexuality*, 80.

sentiments of Western supremacy, as it furthers the notion that Westerners know the ‘truth’ about gender and sexuality. For Puar, “the homosexual question itself – how well do you treat your homosexuals? – is a re-articulation of the woman question” posed by colonial feminism.¹⁰⁰ Jin Haritaworn notes that “since gender and sexuality are the new yardsticks for democracy, white gays claimed a central role in this ‘war on terror’. In the ‘liberation’ of Muslim gays, they delivered [an] ideological justification for the ‘civilising’ mission.”¹⁰¹ It is important to note, however, that the protection of such rights in the West does not need to be optimal, it simply needs to appear superior by comparison to non-Western cultures. Puar is especially skeptical of this superficial defence of lesbian and gay rights due to the use of homophobic rhetoric to demonize the terrorist ‘Other’. In particular, the Muslim terrorist not only represents a cultural threat, but also a threat of masculinity, which is constituted by the submissiveness of Muslim women and the ‘success’ of 9/11.¹⁰² In order to combat these threats, “American retaliation promise[d] to emasculate bin Laden and turn him into a fag”.¹⁰³ As part of the U.S. orientalist discourse, the hyper-masculine, heterosexual, and homophobic terrorist needed to be subdued by American forces. Puar contends that this is precisely why Iraqi prisoners were literally sodomized and sexually humiliated by U.S. military personnel at Abu Ghraib.¹⁰⁴ Here, homosexuality was used as both an instrument of torture and shame in order to exert sexual and cultural dominance. The tension between the development of American homonationalism and the

¹⁰⁰ Jasbir Puar, “Homonationalism Gone Viral: Discipline, Control, and the Affective Politics of Sensation” (American University of Beirut, 2011), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a0Dkn3SnWM>.

¹⁰¹ Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco, “Black Skin Splits: The Birth (and Death) of the Queer Palestinian,” in *Queer Necropolitics* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 12.

¹⁰² Jasbir K. Puar and Amit Rai, “Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots,” *Social Text* 20, no. 3 (2002): 117–48.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁰⁴ Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 138.

demonstration of American homophobia suggests that lesbian and gay rights were merely exploited as part of an orientalist discourse. Homonationalism therefore addresses, in part, “how gay and lesbian identities became available to conservative political imaginaries.”¹⁰⁵

Sarah Schulman develops Puar’s work further by exploring the relationship between homonationalism and anti-Palestinian Israeli politics. She uses the term “pinkwashing” to describe Israel’s promotion of lesbian and gay rights as “a deliberate strategy to conceal the continuing violations of Palestinians’ human rights behind an image of modernity signified by gay life”.¹⁰⁶ Schulman’s point is not to dismiss the success of the LGBT social movement in Israel, which achieved great success in the 1990s – known as the “gay decade” – through the legal system.¹⁰⁷ Instead, her point is to consider how homonationalism operates to exploit lesbian and gay rights. Similar to how the politics of the War on Terror generated Islamophobic support from gays and lesbians, Israeli pinkwashing functions in the same manner. As Scott Morgensen observes,

Israeli LGBTQ activists were surprised in the early 2000s to find conservative Israeli government representatives proposing to protect them as a testament to their enlightened rule. In retrospect, this shift can be seen to coincide with the post-second *intifada* expansion of Israeli settlements and the stepping-up of pinkwashing campaigns, when Israel’s ‘brand’ called for major overhaul.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Puar, “Rethinking Homonationalism,” 337.

¹⁰⁶ Sarah Schulman, “‘Pinkwashing’ and Israel’s Use of Gays as a Messaging Tool,” *The New York Times*, November 22, 2011, sec. Opinion, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/23/opinion/pinkwashing-and-israels-use-of-gays-as-a-messaging-tool.html>.

¹⁰⁷ This period was defined by “protection against workplace discrimination, increasing institutionalisation of same-sex partner benefits, and greater inclusion in the Israeli Defence Forces”; Jasbir Puar, “Citation and Censorship: The Politics of Talking About the Sexual Politics of Israel,” *Feminist Legal Studies* 19, no. 2 (August 1, 2011): 135, doi:10.1007/s10691-011-9176-3; Alon Harel, “Gay Rights in Israel: A New Era?,” *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law* 1, no. 3 (March 1, 1996): 261–78, doi:10.1177/135822919600100304.

¹⁰⁸ Scott Lauria Morgensen, “Queer Settler Colonialism in Canada and Israel: Articulating Two-Spirit and Palestinian Queer Critiques,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 2 (January 1, 2012): 176, doi:10.1080/2201473X.2012.10648848.

Schulman is specifically interested in understanding how Israel's subordination of Palestine is connected to the \$90 million Brand Israel marketing campaign which was commissioned by the Israeli government in 2005 to improve the nation's reputation on the world stage. The project has placed significant emphasis on promoting Tel Aviv, and Israel more broadly, as an "oasis of gay freedom in an otherwise violently homophobic backwards region".¹⁰⁹ The economic success of Brand Israel, which has been developed by American marketing executives, relies on perpetuating xenophobic understandings of Palestinians and Muslims as homophobic.¹¹⁰ According to Puar, one of the main reasons states engage in homonationalist discourses is for capital gain.¹¹¹ In other words, if the promotion of lesbian and gay rights can be used to both serve Islamophobic imperialism and generate economic growth, then gay tourism is the perfect recipe for Israeli pinkwashing. For Israel, Tel Aviv's lesbian and gay culture validates its image of civility and modernity. Critics like Schulman and Puar allege that this discourse of Israeli lesbian and gay rights not only delegitimizes Palestinian sovereignty, but it also attempts to downplay human rights violations perpetrated by the Israeli state.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Nada Elia, "Gay Rights with a Side of Apartheid," *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 2 (January 1, 2012): 50, doi:10.1080/2201473X.2012.10648841.

¹¹⁰ Schulman, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International*; "About Us," *Pinkwashing Israel*, 2014, <http://www.pinkwatchingisrael.com/about-us/>.

¹¹¹ Also, Anne Pellegrini claims that "corporations have calculated that the benefits of pitching to gay and lesbian consumers may outweigh the risks of enraging conservative groups"; Ann Pellegrini, "Consuming Lifestyle: Commodity Capitalism and Transformations in Gay Identity," in *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*, ed. Arnaldo Cruz-Malave and Martin Manalansan (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 139; Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*.

¹¹² In particular, the first and second intifada, and apartheid, which the United Nations defines as "inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them"; Puar, "Homonationalism Gone Viral: Discipline, Control, and the Affective Politics of Sensation"; United Nations, "1973 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid," 2013, <http://legal.un.org/avl/ha/cspca/cspca.html>.

Since the publication of *Terrorist Assemblages* in 2007, various scholars and activists have taken up Puar's work on homonationalism while others have criticized its usefulness and approach. One of the best informed critiques has come from Aleardo Zanghellini, whose background in critical legal and sexuality studies compares to that of Puar's. While Zanghellini acknowledges the validity of homonationalist critiques, he argues that some applications of the analytic tool are too relativist. He emphasizes this point as he rejects the notion that lesbian and gay rights are Islamophobic; instead, he claims that homophobia, regardless of the context in which it occurs, must always be acknowledged as such.¹¹³ While his account of homonationalism raises a number of important questions about how homonationalist analyses have been taken up by scholars and activists, he nonetheless oversimplifies the body of work on sexual imperialism. Specifically, Zanghellini analyzes a London-based activist group, Decolonizequeer, which allegedly defends Islamic homophobia.¹¹⁴ Following a 2011 incident in which anti-gay stickers began to appear in Tower Hamlets, the United Kingdom's largest Muslim community in London, LGBT activists planned to march through the area in a demonstration of resistance. Despite expressions of disapproval regarding the stickers from many local Muslim community leaders and queer Muslims, the incident was nonetheless framed by the gay media as a specifically Muslim problem.¹¹⁵ In response to Decolonizequeer's position that the framing of the incident perpetuated homonationalism,

¹¹³ Aleardo Zanghellini, "Are Gay Rights Islamophobic? A Critique of Some Uses of the Concept of Homonationalism in Activism and Academia," *Social & Legal Studies*, June 6, 2012, 7, doi:10.1177/0964663911435282.

¹¹⁴ Zanghellini, "Are Gay Rights Islamophobic?"

¹¹⁵ Sarah Lamble, "Queer Investments in Punitiveness: Sexual Citizenship, Social Movements and the Expanding Carceral State," in *Queer Necropolitics*, ed. Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco (Routledge, 2014), 156; "Safra Project Statement on East End Gay Pride," *NO HOMONATIONALISM*, March 13, 2011, <http://nohomonationalism.blogspot.ca/2011/03/safra-project-statement-on-east-end-gay.html>.

Zanghellini claims that this stance “risk[s] discrediting homonationalism as an analytic category” as the organization was “reluctant to admit that Muslim or racialized groups might be capable of homophobic acts”.¹¹⁶ In sum, Zanghellini believes that Decolonizequeer failed to acknowledge the presence of homophobia, reducing its significance to a matter of excusable cultural difference. Although this raises a good point – that homonationalist analyses must not be afraid to name homophobia – Zanghellini’s argument misses the point of homonationalist inquiry; scholars and activists are interested in considering *how* pro lesbian and gay responses to othered cultures are executed. The focus is not about condemning homophobia, as this is of more concern to the liberal lesbian and gay rights movement, but to investigate the implications of such condemnation. Zanghellini’s point is less of a constructive critique of homonationalism and more of a defence of the mainstream lesbian and gay rights movement. Moreover, it is important to note that Decolonizequeer’s response to the 2011 incident did not condone the posting of anti-gay stickers, it merely sought to call attention to the fact that the LGBT march through the community was as much about being pro-gay as it was about being anti-Islam, as homonationalist discourses have conflated these positions.

Further to Zanghellini’s first critique, his analysis continues to display a general misunderstanding of Puar’s work. He asserts:

the fact that the *raison d’être* of homonationalism as an analytical category is to unearth queer people’s co-option in racist agendas should not preclude an acknowledgement of homophobia by racialized or Muslim perpetrators, or within racialised or Muslim communities.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Zanghellini, “Are Gay Rights Islamophobic?,” 6.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 7.

Puar would likely agree with the basis of this point; however, she would reject this as the “*raison d’être* of homonationalism”, as she clarifies that the concept “is not simply a synonym for gay racism”.¹¹⁸ While this is certainly a component of homonationalism, it must also be considered in relation to sexual imperialism. Zanghellini dismisses this point as he critiques Massad’s work by suggesting that global queers might benefit from the “promising” adoption of lesbian and gay rights, as opposed to maintaining “indigenous modes of organising [sexual] desire”.¹¹⁹ He goes on to claim:

[t]he problem with [the imperialist] argument, as Habib (2010) points out is that ‘it champions the right not to come out and to resist [LGBT] activist resistance as though these are culturally unique ways of existence, instead of seeing these as resultant from the impact that prohibition has had on the individual’s readiness to resist and protest dominant/oppressive social forces.’¹²⁰

Here, Zanghellini is referring to the idea that even if Muslim queers wish to adopt the gay or lesbian identity, they may not have the liberty to do so. Although this highlights an interesting complexity, it is not necessarily a critique of Puar or Massad’s work. First, homonationalist scholars are concerned with the notion that foreign queers ought to adopt Western sexual identities, not that some may wish to. The question that Zanghellini raises is one of opportunity, not of homonationalism. Being denied the right to sexual expression does indeed constitute discrimination, but this is more of an issue for domestic social politics than it is of homonational analysis. Second, simply because a non-Western queer may identify as gay or lesbian does not mean that all queers, Western or otherwise, desire to or should. This nuance is made clear in Manalansan’s analysis of sexuality in the Philippines, as explored earlier in this chapter. Third, “championing the right not to come

¹¹⁸ Puar, “Rethinking Homonationalism,” 337.

¹¹⁹ Zanghellini, “Are Gay Rights Islamophobic?,” 8.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 10; Samar Habib, “Introduction: Islam and Homosexuality,” in *Islam and Homosexuality* [2 Volumes] (California: American Bibliographic Company - Cilo Press, 2009), xvii – lxii.

out” is not necessarily negative, as it considers the legitimacy of non-Western queer situated knowledges.¹²¹ This last point is further explored in Scott Morgensen’s contributions to the study of homonationalism.

Morgensen’s work on queer settler colonialism examines the epistemic violence of the European regulation of native sexualities. He notes that Aboriginal populations in pre-colonized North America had their own understandings of gender and sexuality. Following the onset of European colonization, however, Western gender norms were implicated in the ‘civilizing’ mission. This process, which Morgensen refers to as “settler sexuality” worked to erase queer Aboriginal knowledge about gender and sexuality through the privileging of whiteness and heteronormativity.¹²² The two-spirit identity and “Native gender and sexual diversity [more broadly] persistently troubled the boundaries of sexual colonization”, which resulted in “the violent sexual regulation of Native peoples [becoming] a proving ground for forming settler subjects as agents and beneficiaries of modern sexuality”.¹²³ Contemporarily, this sexual colonization continues under the lesbian and gay rights movement which infers that Aboriginals with same-sex desires should identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.¹²⁴ Morgensen claims that this approach ignores how lesbian and gay politics are implicated in the colonial discourse to assimilate indigenous peoples to identity categories legitimized by Westerners. Although Zanghellini suggests that such identities may be useful to non-Western queers, it is also important to consider how “a Western, hegemonic notion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT)

¹²¹ See: Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (October 1, 1988): 575–99, doi:10.2307/3178066.

¹²² Scott Lauria Morgensen, “Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, no. 1–2 (January 1, 2010): 106, doi:10.1215/10642684-2009-015.

¹²³ Ibid., 116–117.

¹²⁴ Morgensen, “Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities.”

identity has been exported to traditional societies thereby destroying indigenous sexual cultures and diversities”.¹²⁵ As an alternative, Morgensen asserts the necessity of recognizing that lesbian and gay identities are not always useful for queers to challenge oppression. He notes that the usefulness of the two-spirit movement is not exclusively about sexual politics, as it also requires “a renewal of indigenous traditions of personhood and governance that can spark and lead collective work for decolonisation”.¹²⁶ This approach preserves Indigenous knowledges and resists cultural domination.

Similar to this example, recognizing the rights of queer Palestinians is also dependent upon decolonization and resisting Israeli pinkwashing.¹²⁷ Recently, the majority of scholarly and activist debates on homonationalism have been centered on Puar and Schulman’s pinkwashing critiques. For example, Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA), a Toronto-based organization, works to “engage in a queer analysis of colonialism and anti-colonial struggles [in order to] build Palestine solidarity in queer communities”.¹²⁸ QuAIA, which is also part of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement,¹²⁹ runs the dual risk of appearing anti-Israeli and homophobic. Critics allege that QuAIA and pinkwashing scholars (often referred to as *pinkwatchers*) vilify Israel and blindly support Palestine, while also neglecting the success of the LGBT rights movement in Israel. Responses to these accusations are necessary for demonstrating the usefulness of homonationalist critiques.

¹²⁵ Kole, “Globalizing Queer?,” 2.

¹²⁶ Morgensen, “Queer Settler Colonialism in Canada and Israel,” 170.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ “Who We Are,” *Queers Against Israeli Apartheid*, 2014, <http://queersagainstapartheid.org/who/>.

¹²⁹ See: Omar Barghouti, *BDS: Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions : The Global Struggle for Palestinian Rights* (Haymarket Books, 2011).

First, pinkwatchers must not be labelled as anti-Israeli simply because they are critical of Israeli politics.¹³⁰ It is not the purpose of QuAIA, Schulman, or Puar to condemn the existence or legitimacy of Israel, as some have suggested.¹³¹ Instead, homonationalist and pinkwashing critiques are meant to address the systems of power, such as the subordination of Palestine, which underpin Israel's promotion of lesbian and gay rights. While pinkwatchers have been criticized for stifling productive dialogues between Israeli and Palestinian supporters,¹³² they actively contribute to narratives of conflict resolution. Pinkwashing analyses cannot simply be defined as propaganda; rather, they provide an important perspective to the overlooked influence of sexual politics on Israel's relationship with Palestine. Furthermore, it ought to be considered which of the following more so constitutes stifling a debate: a group's participation or censoring its controversial and inconvenient message.

Second, pinkwatchers have also been accused of sympathizing with Palestinian violence against queers and downplaying the significance of the LGBT rights movement in Israel.¹³³ In addition to this argument being strikingly familiar to colonial feminist support for the War on Terror, it also echoes Zanghellini's point that homonationalist critiques are too relativist in their approach. As Altman, Massad, and Morgensen demonstrate however, gay and lesbian identities are specific to Western cultures due to unique historical developments. Given that gay and lesbian identities are also popularly

¹³⁰See: Joseph Levine, "On Questioning the Jewish State," *The New York Times*, March 9, 2013, sec. The Opinion Pages, <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/03/09/on-questioning-the-jewish-state/>.

¹³¹ James Kirchick, "Pink Eye," *Tablet Magazine*, November 29, 2011, <http://tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/84216/pink-eye>; "A Tale of Tory, Tories and the Torah," *Macleans.ca*, accessed December 7, 2014, <http://www.macleans.ca/authors/emma-teitel/a-tale-of-tory-tories-and-the-torah/>.

¹³² See: Anna Mehler Paperny, "Toronto's Gay Pride Parade Will Exclude Contentious Group," *The Globe and Mail*, May 22, 2010, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/torontos-gay-pride-parade-will-exclude-contentious-group/article1211394/>.

¹³³ See: Kirchick, "Pink Eye."

adopted by Israeli homosexuals, as opposed to being dominantly resisted, a parallel can be drawn to Western culture.¹³⁴ The same, however, cannot be said for Palestinians, whose dominant religion renders them un-Western. What this means in relation to how Islam is depicted by the West, and how Palestine is depicted by Israel, is that cultural understandings of sexuality are falsely presumed to be universal. If homosexual identities have not historically developed identically in Muslim countries, then it stands to reason that laws criminalizing homosexuality have not evolved similarly to recent legal developments in the US or Israel.¹³⁵ While this does not excuse the persecution of people who experience same-sex desire in other parts of the world, it does explain why such persecution exists. To understand is not to justify.

¹³⁴ Harel, "Gay Rights in Israel"; See also: Essig, *Queer in Russia*; Kole, "Globalizing Queer?"

¹³⁵ For example, sodomy was not officially decriminalized in Israel until 1988, whereas sodomy remained illegal in 13 American states until 2003.

Chapter 2: The Roots of Canadian Homonationalism

Although the vast majority of literature on homonationalism focuses on the United States and Israel, the Canadian context remains largely under analyzed.¹³⁶ While one might assume that this is the case because Canadian homonationalism is either non-existent or inconsequential, this chapter endeavors to illuminate what may otherwise be considered little more than an afterthought. Puar and Schulman's analyses, which are fundamental to the development of homonationalism as an analytic tool, provide insightful critiques of American and Israeli public policy regarding gays and lesbians; however, these analyses merely address the most prominent displays of homonationalism. I contend that Canadian homonationalism is worth analyzing precisely because it exists in the shadows of the US and Israel, which have rendered it seemingly innocuous by comparison. For the mainstream lesbian and gay rights movement, Canada has escaped criticism due to its growing status as a global defender of lesbian and gay rights. For homonationalist scholars, minimal focus has been placed on analyzing Canada because its lesbian and gay rights politics cannot seemingly be equated with spearheading a violent assault on the Middle East or perpetuating the operation of an apartheid regime.¹³⁷ But is this to suggest that Canada is free of homonationalist critique? The country's complacency in supporting the War on

¹³⁶ For analyses on Canadian homonationalism, see: Scott Lauria Morgensen, "Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, no. 1-2 (January 1, 2010): 105-31, doi:10.1215/10642684-2009-015; Melissa Autumn White, "Ambivalent Homonationalisms," *Interventions* 15, no. 1 (March 1, 2013): 37-54, doi:10.1080/1369801X.2013.770999.

¹³⁷ Here, I am referring specifically to American homonationalism and the War on Terror. For literature on Israeli apartheid, see: Barghouti, *BDS*; Uri Davis, *Apartheid Israel: Possibilities for the Struggle Within* (Zed Books, 2003); Elia, "Gay Rights with a Side of Apartheid"; Michelle Flores, "No Pride in Apartheid: Modernity, Sexuality and Culture in Homonationalism" (Whitman College, 2014).

Terror and remaining a close ally of Israel hardly make it a key player in homonationalist politics; however, one must not confuse the contexts of Puar and Schulman's analyses as being essential to defining homonationalism. Upon consideration of American and Israeli homonationalist analyses, as outlined in the previous chapter, I have identified three central components of homonationalist critique that best apply to the Canadian context: lesbian and gay rights becoming intertwined with narratives of nationalism, lesbian and gay identities becoming compatible with conservative political imaginaries, and the incitement of cultural superiority. While I address the first two points in this chapter, I expand on the third in relation to sentiments of cultural superiority in Chapter 3. I begin by contextualizing my analysis with an overview of the development of lesbian and gay rights in Canada. Next, I consider how contemporary lesbian and gay rights issues have been framed in Canada through contrast to the US. This largely entails an examination of the symbolic importance of same-sex marriage. While analyses of American homonationalism are tied to the War on Terror, just as similar critiques regarding Israeli homonationalism focus on relations with Palestine, I contend that the discourse of Canadian lesbian and gay rights must be considered in relation to US. Finally, I analyze the Canadian conservative political climate in relation to the shifting national narrative on contemporary issues facing gays and lesbians. I contend that this development has not manipulated the mainstream LGBT rights movement, but rather, is reflective of it and its limitations.

Lesbian and Gay Rights, Canadian Nationalism, and the United States

Canada is widely recognized as a global leader in lesbian and gay rights. Such recognition necessarily entails an understanding of Canada in relation to other countries that fail to offer adequate legal protection for their queer populations. Many lesbian and gay rights

activists, allies, and scholars often point to laws in in Africa and Asia that criminalize homosexuality with sanctions of imprisonment and death.¹³⁸ While such examples are undoubtedly egregious and underline stark differences in legal protection, Canada's stance on lesbian and gay rights must be also considered in contrast to the United States. The discursive comparison between both countries, which exists due to their partnerships and similarities in terms of legal systems, media outlets, economies, and social policies, often fosters the notion that both countries are gradually becoming identical.¹³⁹ Despite their vast array of similarities, Michael Adams asserts that Americans and Canadians differ significantly in terms of values.¹⁴⁰ One of the most pronounced examples in recent memory that has highlighted this difference in public policy is that of same-sex marriage. For many proponents of lesbian and gay rights, gaining access to marriage equality has been conceptualized as a key component for challenging homophobia and achieving social equality.¹⁴¹ While queer theorists have critiqued same-sex marriage on the basis of what Michael Warner calls "the trouble with normal,"¹⁴² one must not dismiss the symbolic

¹³⁸ See: Michael Hollander, "Gay Rights in Uganda: Seeking to Overturn Uganda's Anti-Sodomy Laws," *Virginia Journal of International Law* 50 (2010 2009): 219; Sylvia Tamale, "Out of the Closet: Unveiling Sexuality Discourses in Uganda," in *Africa After Gender?*, ed. Catherine M. Cole, Takiwaa Manuh, and Stephan F. Miescher (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2007), https://books.google.ca/books/about/Africa_After_Gender.html?id=IYcOgxeVTrMC; Brian Whitaker, *Unspeakable Love* (London: Saqi Books, 2006).

¹³⁹ David Rayside, *Queer Inclusions, Continental Divisions: Public Recognition of Sexual Diversity in Canada and the United States*, 2nd Revised edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Michael Adams, *Fire and Ice: The United States, Canada and the Myth of Converging Values* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2003).

¹⁴⁰ Adams defines values as "ideas that motivate people to behave the way that thy do, good, bad, or neither;" Adams, *Fire and Ice*, 12.

¹⁴¹ Miriam Smith and Dean Spade assess this popular conceptualization; Miriam Catherine Smith, *Political Institutions and Lesbian and Gay Rights in the United States and Canada*, vol. 1, Routledge Studies in North American Politics (New York: Routledge, 2008); Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* (Brooklyn, NY: South End Press, 2011).

¹⁴² Warner, *The Trouble with Normal*.

importance of the public policy issue in shaping dominant perceptions of Canadians and Americans. As Miriam Smith notes,

[i]n Canada, same-sex marriage is a final and to some extent symbolic step in a successful legal and political campaign for the recognition of same-sex partners in Canadian law and policy. In the U.S., same-sex marriage is seen as the means to the achievement of many of the parenting and relationship rights that are already available to lesbians and gay men in Canada.¹⁴³

When it comes to the most pressing and contemporary legal issue facing gays and lesbians, Canadians were able to achieve success a decade earlier than Americans. It was not until June 2015 that same-sex marriage became legalized nation-wide in the US. In contrast, Canada is commonly thought to be generally more progressive, but as Smith and David Rayside explain, the issue has not simply been a matter of social mobility, but also of institutional barriers. In Canada, solving the issue of legalization has been expedited by the constitutional division of powers.¹⁴⁴ While a majority of provinces and territories had already legalized same-sex marriage prior to the 2005 enactment of the *Civil Marriage Act*,¹⁴⁵ the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed in 2004 that the definition of marriage could only be amended by the federal government.¹⁴⁶ Thus, when Parliament legalized same-sex marriage in 2005, the matter was unilaterally settled in all provinces and territories.¹⁴⁷ This is not to suggest that there has not been strong opposition to same-sex marriage prior to and following legalization,¹⁴⁸ nor is it to undermine the work of lesbian and gay rights

¹⁴³ Smith, *Political Institutions and Lesbian and Gay Rights in the United States and Canada*, 1:5.

¹⁴⁴ Rayside, *Queer Inclusions, Continental Divisions*; Smith, *Political Institutions and Lesbian and Gay Rights in the United States and Canada*.

¹⁴⁵ Bill C-38, *Civil Marriage Act*, 1st Sess, 38th Parl, 2005

¹⁴⁶ Reference re Same-Sex Marriage, [2004] 3 S.C.R. 698, 2004 SCC 79.

¹⁴⁷ It is important to note, however, that it is within the constitutional power of the provinces and territories to invoke the notwithstanding clause to block the *Civil Marriages Act*, as the government of Alberta threatened to do in 2005; "Alberta May Invoke notwithstanding Clause over Same-Sex Marriage," *CBC News*, July 27, 2005, <http://www.cbc.ca/1.528949>.

¹⁴⁸ See: Ibid.; Landolt, "Same-Sex Marriage Has Changed Canada."

activists in Canada; rather, Smith and Rayside aim to highlight the Canadian jurisdictional advantage. In the US, due to greater state autonomy and the pervasiveness of the *Defence of Marriage Act*,¹⁴⁹ legalization has unfolded in individual jurisdictions at a moderate rate in lieu of a nation-wide approach.¹⁵⁰ Nation-wide legalization only occurred after a series of appeals reached the US Supreme Court. As Rayside explains, this lag in comparison to Canada cannot be boiled down to a simple question of motivation or tolerance;

[t]here is no country in the world where activists have been able to mobilize support for the public recognition of sexual diversity as widely, intensely, or continuously as in the United States. Yet they operate in a context that creates formidable challenges for them, far greater than those faced by their much smaller and more irregularly mobilized counterparts in Canada and in those parts of Europe where most gains have been secured.¹⁵¹

This point, coupled with the reality that greater opposition to same-sex marriage exists in the US in comparison to Canada, illustrates the degree of challenges which have impeded the US from making faster progress than Canada.¹⁵²

Despite the implications of structural difference in Canada and the US, which have significantly impacted the ways in which the legalization of same-sex marriage has played out differently in both countries, there exists a common perception that Canadians are simply more progressive than Americans.¹⁵³ This belief has fueled the narrative that Americans are homophobic, especially in comparison to Canada. In his analysis of the

¹⁴⁹ Bill C-38, *Civil Marriage Act*, 1st Sess, 38th Parl, 2005.

¹⁵⁰ Rayside, *Queer Inclusions, Continental Divisions*, 19; Smith, *Political Institutions and Lesbian and Gay Rights in the United States and Canada*, 1:17.

¹⁵¹ Rayside, *Queer Inclusions, Continental Divisions*, 19.

¹⁵² Forum Research Inc., “One Twentieth of Canadians Claim to Be LGBT” (Toronto, June 28, 2012), https://www.forumresearch.com/forms/News%20Archives/News%20Releases/67741_Canada-wide_-_Federal_LGBT_%28Forum_Research%29_%2820120628%29.pdf; Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project, “Changing Attitudes on Gay Marriage,” September 24, 2014, <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/09/24/graphics-slideshow-changing-attitudes-on-gay-marriage/>.

¹⁵³ Himani Bannerji examines this general perception of Canadian benevolence in *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2000).

early 2000s' Canadian and American legal battles for same-sex marriage, BJ Wray emphasizes the fact that the US is popularly "depicted as falling behind the advancement of other countries; [...] however, [...] with a little help from its Canadian neighbours, the American nation might just be able to redeem itself."¹⁵⁴ Conversely, Canada is often understood to be more tolerant and diverse, which has contributed to the perception that "same-sex marriage is a marker of national pride and an indicator of the expansiveness of Canadian nation-ness."¹⁵⁵ The comparison between both countries tends to illicit the same sentiment from American and Canadian proponents of same-sex marriage: Canada's approach to lesbian and gay rights is superior to that of the US. It is not my intention to refute this point; rather, I raise it to address the resulting nationalist implications.

The discourse of Canadian lesbian and gay rights cannot be separated from the discourse of American lesbian and gay rights due to the ubiquitous comparisons between both countries. While Adams claims that most Americans do not wish to adopt Canadian values, Canada's stance on same-sex marriage is a standard that many American proponents of lesbian and gay rights aspire to replicate.¹⁵⁶ More tellingly, Canadians are well aware of this admiration. I contend that the intertwinement of lesbian and gay rights with national identity in Canada has developed alongside Canada's complex relationship with the United States. According to the popular adage, many Canadians define themselves primarily as *not* being American. That is to say, Canadians understand themselves, in part, through the perpetual comparison to Americans. Adams' assertion that values are what

¹⁵⁴ B. J. Wray, "Screening Desire: Same-Sex-Marriage Documentaries, Citizenship, and the Law," *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 24, no. 1 (2009): 5.

¹⁵⁵ Wray, "Screening Desire."

¹⁵⁶ Adams, *Fire and Ice*, 126; Rayside, *Queer Inclusions, Continental Divisions*; Smith, *Political Institutions and Lesbian and Gay Rights in the United States and Canada*.

distinguish Canadians from Americans highlights important differences in national identities. Subsequent to Canada's growing defence of lesbian and gay rights, which I address in the following section and chapter, the United States' comparative lag on the issue has contributed to lesbian and gay rights being read into the Canadian national imaginary.¹⁵⁷ While regional identity in Canada has historically remained stronger than national identity,¹⁵⁸ support for lesbian and gay rights, and same-sex marriage more specifically, is an emerging national value. A 2005 EKOS survey revealed that a majority of Canadians "indicated that giving legal recognition to same-sex unions would send a positive signal to the rest of the world about current Canadian values and beliefs."¹⁵⁹ Moreover, according to a 2012 public opinion poll, 66.4 percent of Canadians supported the legalization of same-sex marriage.¹⁶⁰ Support was strongest in Quebec at 72 percent, whereas only 45.6 percent of Albertans approved of same-sex marriage.¹⁶¹ Despite low approval ratings in Alberta in comparison to the rest of the country, a Pew Research study found that an average of only 48 percent of Americans supported same-sex marriage in 2012.¹⁶² Even in Canada's least supportive province, Alberta's approval rating was on par with the entirety of the United States in the same year. Given this information, support for same-sex marriage is considerably higher in Canada, which underlines its symbolic

¹⁵⁷ See: David Pettinicchio, "Public and Elite Policy Preferences: Gay Marriage in Canada," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, January 1, 2010), 146, <http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2542556>.

¹⁵⁸ J.M.S. Careless, "Limited Identities in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 50, no. 1 (1969); P.A. Buckner, "Limited Identities Revisited: Regionalism and Nationalism in Canadian History," *Acadiensis* 30, no. 1 (October 1, 2000): 4–15.

¹⁵⁹ Peter Marshall Butler, *Polling and Public Opinion: A Canadian Perspective* (University of Toronto Press, 2007), 154; EKOS Research Associates, "Update on the Political Landscape: BMD, Same-Sex, and Gomery - Issues Facing the Liberal Minority Government" (Toronto, February 14, 2005), <http://www.ekospolitics.com/articles/14Feb2005Background.pdf>.

¹⁶⁰ Forum Research Inc., "One Twentieth of Canadians Claim to Be LGBT," 9.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, "Changing Attitudes on Gay Marriage."

importance as a distinct, shared national value. Lauren Berlant's analysis of American nationalism can be applied to the Canadian context, as she notes that "Americans experience themselves as national through public sphere accounts of what is important about them: this is why the manufacture of public opinion is crucial both for producing citizens and seeing how citizens are reproduced."¹⁶³

Canada's social and political stance on lesbian and gay rights has further distinguished Canadian national identity from that of the US. Moreover, this value has defined Canada on the world stage. As Puar asserts, nationhood and modernity are often evaluated on the basis of how a country treats its homosexuals.¹⁶⁴ She references the spectrum of modernity in order to demonstrate how Western cultures are dominantly imagined as superior to those that are classified as barbaric and uncivilized for failing to embrace Western values. This addresses the ways in which diverging cultural norms are heavily cited by Westerners as a means of illustrating the Middle East as a threat to both Western culture and modernity. Specifically, "not only women, but now especially homosexuals, have become the symbols of civilisation aptitude."¹⁶⁵ Puar demonstrates this point by analyzing the United States' interactions with the Middle East, whereby the American endeavour of cultural domination has unfolded in conjunction with its status as a modern nation. To rephrase Puar's argument: the better a country treats gays and lesbians, the more modern it is considered, and the more justified it is assumed to be in 'saving' foreign queers. Further to Puar's assessment of modernity, Canada's status as a modern nation outranks the US with regard to greater institutional advancements and wider public

¹⁶³ Lauren Gail Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Duke University Press, 1997), 10.

¹⁶⁴ Puar, "Homonationalism Gone Viral: Discipline, Control, and the Affective Politics of Sensation."

¹⁶⁵ Puar, "Citation and Censorship," 135.

support for lesbian and gay rights. Consequently, Canadian authority on the matter is afforded more legitimacy, which makes the Canadian sociopolitical context a unique site of homonationalist inquiry. I return to this point in Chapter 3 to develop it in greater depth by analyzing Canada's international defence of lesbian and gay rights and considering its subtle, latent, imperialist undertones.

Turning Over a New Leaf? Conservative Politics and Lesbian and Gay Rights

Many conservative voters, and Tory MPs, may well have moral objections to homosexuality, but they also have a strong, patriotic belief that their country has superior values worth exporting, and those values include such things as equal rights for citizens, even homosexuals. As uncomfortable as homosexual sex may still make many people feel, those same people will have no trouble believing their country's equal treatment of gays proves its moral superiority. Patriotism, in short, trumps squeamishness

- Matt Gurney, *The Globe and Mail*

Homonationalist analyses often draw upon the phenomena of right-wing leaders invoking the need to protect the rights of gays and lesbians.¹⁶⁶ While homonationalist scholars have indicated that such political undertakings are merely guises to distract citizens from more sinister objectives, such as conjuring up popular support for the War on Terror or strengthening the alleged Israeli apartheid machine,¹⁶⁷ the Canadian context differs in comparison. Since the late 2000s, the Conservative government led by Stephen Harper has become an outspoken authority on the issue of lesbian and gay rights. Although the Conservative Party's putative transformation into an advocate for sexual minorities has

¹⁶⁶ See: Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*; Morgensen, "Queer Settler Colonialism in Canada and Israel."

¹⁶⁷ Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*; Schulman, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International*.

invited skepticism from some Canadians, it has also won over the approval of many lesbian and gay rights activists and citizens from all positions on the political spectrum. On the surface, it might almost seem unnecessarily inimical to support sexual liberation and criticize the federal government for its recent work in the international arena; however, the need for such a critique becomes all the more apparent upon closer examination. While I contend that Canadian homonationalism ultimately fosters ethnocentric beliefs, my analysis differs from those of other homonationalist scholars in the sense that I consider how the consequences of Canadian homonationalism are the result of misguided – not malicious – interventions. Instead of adopting Puar’s top-down argument that the lesbian and gay rights movement has been manipulated by conservative political elites, I address how the issues inherent to Canadian homonationalism are the result of changing public opinion and the mainstream lesbian and gay rights movement itself.

When Stephen Harper was first elected Prime Minister in 2006, it seemed highly unlikely that the newly formed Conservative government would become a defender of lesbian and gay rights domestically, never mind internationally. The Conservative Party was formed in 2003 as a merger between the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservative parties with the goal of fortifying social conservatism as the dominant political narrative in Canada.¹⁶⁸ The promise of defending pro-family values was made particularly clear by the Party’s commitment to blocking the legalization of same-sex marriage.¹⁶⁹ In 2005, an overwhelming number of Conservative Members of Parliament voted against the *Civil Marriage Act*, insisting that the law threatened the integrity of

¹⁶⁸ Tom Warner, “Faith, Politics, and the Transformation of Canada,” in *Queerly Canadian: An Introductory Reader in Sexuality Studies*, ed. Maureen Fitzgerald and Scott Rayter, 1st edition (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc., 2012), 99–117.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

religious freedom.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, on the first day of the official 2005-2006 federal election campaign, Harper announced his party's intention to hold a free vote on overturning the *Civil Marriage Act*.¹⁷¹ When the motion materialized in the House of Commons in 2006, it was supported by 90 per cent of Conservatives and a handful of Liberals, but it was ultimately defeated by a majority of opposition MPs. Despite the bill's failure, its introduction in the House of Commons was nonetheless beneficial, as it symbolized the Conservative Party tipping its hat to its socially conservative fan base. Maintaining the promise to revise the legalization of same-sex marriage meant keeping anti-gay Conservative voters happy in exchange for future electoral support. As Rayside explains, however, the newly formed Conservative government intentionally downplayed the question of morality as public opinion polls indicated that a majority of Canadians now supported same-sex marriage, including a growing number of Conservative voters.¹⁷² Rayside goes on to note that "it was increasingly obvious that the parliamentary motion to reopen the marriage issue would lose. A number of conservative legislators known to be opposed to gay marriage now realized that the issue could harm their chances of re-election."¹⁷³ The Conservative Party was faced with the challenge of appealing to pro-gay voters without running the risk of alienating social conservatives. The minority government's decision to hold a free vote on redefining marriage meant that a defeat of the bill could not result in a motion of no confidence. That is to say, while introducing the bill was particularly important for the Party and its supporters, the Conservative government

¹⁷⁰ Hurley Marc C., "Bill C-38: The Civil Marriage Act," *Parliament of Canada*, February 2, 2005, http://www.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/LegislativeSummaries/bills_ls.asp?ls=c38&Parl=38&Ses=1#footnote31.

¹⁷¹ Warner, "Faith, Politics, and the Transformation of Canada," 103.

¹⁷² Rayside, *Queer Inclusions, Continental Divisions*, 116.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 117.

was not willing to fully commit itself to the bill by allowing its defeat to consequently topple the government, especially given that the bill's chances of success were bleak. Although the decision to hold a free vote was strategic for maintaining power, its advantage allowed the Party to appease social conservatives without ever having to implement a law that could further disaffect potential lesbian and gay voters. The Harper government has had to develop a way to pander to both sides, and its delicate approach has been moderately successful.

Following the defeat of the free vote on same-sex marriage, Harper declared the debate closed.¹⁷⁴ He reiterated the same stance during the 2011 federal election campaign,¹⁷⁵ and again in 2012 following public concern that the government was attempting to challenge the legality of the *Civil Marriage Act*.¹⁷⁶ His approach to the topic has been discernibly calculated, but not entirely free of criticism from social conservatives and lesbian and gay rights advocates. In 2008, evangelical Christians questioned the effectiveness of Harper's leadership due to his assumed inability to overturn the legalization of same-sex marriage, in addition to other concerns such as failing to denounce abortion.¹⁷⁷ The president of the Canadian Family Action Coalition even went so far as to declare that the Conservative "honeymoon" had come to an abrupt halt.¹⁷⁸ Conversely, some Canadians who support lesbian and gay rights have suggested that Harper's approach

¹⁷⁴ Warner, "Faith, Politics, and the Transformation of Canada," 107.

¹⁷⁵ Steven Chase, "Majority Won't Spur Change on Abortion or Same-Sex Marriage, Harper Says," *The Globe and Mail*, April 4, 2011, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-notebook/majority-wont-spur-change-on-abortion-or-same-sex-marriage-harper-says/article613110/>.

¹⁷⁶ Janyce McGregor, "Same-Sex Divorce Options Explored by Harper Government," *CBC News*, January 12, 2012, <http://www.cbc.ca/1.1194363>.

¹⁷⁷ Warner, "Faith, Politics, and the Transformation of Canada," 107.

¹⁷⁸ "When Lobbyists Speak in Tongues," *Ottawa Citizen*, April 12, 2008, <http://www.canada.com/ottawacitizen/news/observer/story.html?id=ac152c58-7ae5-4fec-8127-b1e3b6365c1f>.

is hollow. For instance, his lukewarm support for same-sex marriage and his government's defense of lesbian and gay rights on the world stage is inconsistent with funding cuts to women's rights organizations and the persistent rejection of the enactment of a transgender bill of rights.¹⁷⁹ In reference to Harper's indirect endorsement of same-sex marriage, Adam Goldenberg writes that

silent acceptance will never be the same as support, and indifference will always be a pathetic substitute for tolerance. Besides, tolerance itself is insufficient where equal rights are concerned. So Stephen Harper should come right out and say it: I was wrong [...] He has already almost certainly assured himself an historical footnote, as the last prime minister ever to oppose marriage equality, and the last federal party leader ever to fight an election on a promise to put the equality of Canadian citizens to a vote in the House of Commons. He should not let that be the end of the matter.¹⁸⁰

Overall, the Harper government has successfully balanced its appeal to both anti-gay and pro-gay voters without causing significant disturbance on either side. If Harper were to overtly condone same-sex marriage, it could win over skeptics at the cost of support from anti-gay conservatives; whereas condemning marriage equality could be politically disastrous, as a majority of Canadians support the *Civil Marriage Act*.¹⁸¹ When it comes to domestic lesbian and gay rights, which has taken the form of same-sex marriage, Harper's middle-ground approach has proven advantageous. Despite the risk of alienating socially conservative voters, support for the Conservative Party has not decreased. A 2003 study,

¹⁷⁹ Although sexism, homophobia, and transphobia are not identical and should not be conflated, they are each rooted in essentialist understandings of sex; "Tories Shutting Status of Women Offices," *CBC News*, November 29, 2006, <http://www.cbc.ca/1.590706>; Josh Wingrove, "Transgender Rights Bill Opposed by Harper May Be Sidelined in Senate," *The Globe and Mail*, September 29, 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/transgender-bill-may-face-further-delays-in-the-senate/article20822849/>; Janyce McGregor, "Transgender Rights Bill Gutted by 'Transphobic' Senate Amendment," *CBC News*, February 27, 2015, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/transgender-rights-bill-gutted-by-transphobic-senate-amendment-1.2975024>.

¹⁸⁰ Adam Goldenberg, "What Stephen Harper Won't Tell You about Same-Sex Marriage," *Macleans Magazine*, June 15, 2013, <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/what-stephen-harper-wont-tell-you-about-same-sex-marriage/>.

¹⁸¹ Forum Research Inc., "One Twentieth of Canadians Claim to Be LGBT."

which was conducted prior to the merger of the Alliance and Progressive Conservative parties, indicated that 44 percent of Canadians who supported the Progressive Conservative Party approved of same-sex marriage, while 34 percent of Alliance Party supporters were in favour of legalization.¹⁸² Nearly a decade later, a similar public opinion poll revealed a marginal increase: 45.8 percent of citizens who preferred the Conservative Party claimed to be in favour of marriage equality.¹⁸³ According to a former staffer of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Conservative Party has been forced to adapt in the face of public pressure and changing societal values on lesbian and gay rights.¹⁸⁴ In 2011, following the annual Party convention, an unofficial “fabulous blue tent” event was hosted in Ottawa to “[celebrate] the prominence and prevalence of gay Conservatives.”¹⁸⁵ The event, which has since been promoted by cabinet ministers and hosted in subsequent years, aims to highlight the point that conservative and lesbian and gay identities are not incompatible.

Additionally, the Conservative government’s changing stance on lesbian and gay rights has been made evident through its foreign policy commitments.¹⁸⁶ This has largely entailed condemning laws which criminalize homosexuality,¹⁸⁷ such as a recent piece of Ugandan legislation. In February 2014, the government of Uganda enacted the *Anti-Homosexuality Act*, following years of controversy after the bill’s initial proposal in 2009.

¹⁸² NFO World Group, “Public Divided About Definition of Marriage,” September 5, 2003, http://www.cbc.ca/news2/background/samesexrights/gay_rights_poll2003b.pdf.

¹⁸³ Forum Research Inc., “One Twentieth of Canadians Claim to Be LGBT,” 9.

¹⁸⁴ Tristin Hopper, “Warriors for Gay Rights: The Conservatives Have Become Unlikely LGBT Supporters,” *National Post*, September 22, 2012, <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/warriors-for-gay-rights-the-conservatives-have-become-unlikely-lgbt-supporters>.

¹⁸⁵ Laura Payton, “‘Fabulous Blue Tent’ Showcases Gay Conservatives’ Power,” *CBC News*, December 30, 2013, <http://www.cbc.ca/1.2466057>.

¹⁸⁶ Although the global defence of lesbian and gay rights is not an explicit or formal foreign policy priority, it falls under the government’s commitment to the protection of human rights.

¹⁸⁷ I address this development at length in Chapter 3.

Support for the law has been stimulated by the idea that homosexuality is a psychological affliction native exclusively to the West, from which Uganda endeavoured to protect itself.¹⁸⁸ While the federal government has scrutinized the law's criminalization of homosexuality, discussions pertaining to (neo)colonialism are often absent. Until 1962, Uganda was part of the British Empire, making it a subject of colonial rule for nearly a century. Homosexuality was first introduced as a crime in Uganda under the 1950 British Penal Code, which has long since impacted the country's unfavourable perception of homosexuality.¹⁸⁹ To blame Uganda alone for enacting its controversial 2014 law would be to deny the lasting impact of Western colonialism and its construction of the foundation from which the law has arisen. It would also deny the imperialist implications of Christian missionary work that has been carried out in Uganda by Westerners, including Canadians.¹⁹⁰ In 2013, the federal government of Canada was scrutinized for granting funding to an Ontario-based evangelical organization which conducts missionary work in Uganda, in part to teach citizens about the sinful nature of homosexuality.¹⁹¹ Such work demonstrates that imperialism has continued in Uganda, long after 1962.¹⁹² While Foreign

¹⁸⁸ Rodney Muhumuza, "Uganda's Anti-Gay Bill Drops Death Penalty Clause," *The Toronto Star*, November 30, 2012,

http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2012/11/30/uganda_antigay_bill_drops_death_penalty_clause.html.

¹⁸⁹ Sarah Elspeth Coughtry, "Patriarchy and the Trap of Masculinity : A Post-Colonial Analysis of Violence against Sexual Minorities in Uganda" (Thesis, Smith College, 2011), <https://dspace.smith.edu/handle/11020/22971>; see also: Subir K. Kole, "Globalizing Queer? AIDS, Homophobia and the Politics of Sexual Identity in India," *Globalization and Health* 3, no. 8 (July 11, 2007).

¹⁹⁰ Some, however, deny the imperialist implications of such missionary work; see: Neil Macdonald, "From Uganda to the U.S. Bible Belt, the Proliferation of Gay Discrimination Laws," *CBC News*, February 27, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/1.2552797>.

¹⁹¹ Fannie Olivier and Lina Dib, "Anti-Gay Religious Group Gets Funding from Ottawa to Work in Uganda," *The Toronto Star*, February 10, 2013, http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2013/02/10/antigay_religious_group_gets_funding_from_ottawa_to_work_in_uganda.html.

¹⁹² As I have addressed in Chapter 1, Gayatri Spivak makes a similar point about postcolonialism in India; Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

Affairs Minister, John Baird, later condemned the group's agenda, this example typifies the ways in which Western countries have historically and contemporarily cultivated the very issue in Uganda that lesbian and gay rights advocates continue to critique as a specifically Ugandan problem. In 2014, Baird stated that "this act is a serious setback for human rights, dignity and fundamental freedoms and deserves to be widely condemned. Regrettably, this discriminatory law will serve as an impediment in our relationship with the Ugandan government."¹⁹³ This is not the first time that Baird has spoken out about foreign homophobia on behalf of the government. In 2012, he castigated other African and Caribbean countries for their criminalization of homosexuality, referring to them as "draconian punishments on gay people simply for being gay."¹⁹⁴ He also remarked that such laws are a "hangover" of colonialism while calling upon the rest of the world to adopt Canadian policies pertaining to lesbian and gay rights.¹⁹⁵ Although Baird's comments do in fact demonstrate a display of support for sexual minorities, they also speak to a wider misunderstanding of imperialist implications.

In light of the federal government's condemnation of anti-homosexuality laws, Gurney asserts that it would be overly presumptuous and irrational to advance the argument

¹⁹³ Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, "Canada Strongly Condemns Ugandan Anti-Homosexuality Act," *Government of Canada*, February 24, 2014, <http://www.international.gc.ca/media/aff/news-communiques/2014/02/24b.aspx?lang=eng>; A response from the Canadian Prime Minister's Office was released, stating: "Canada has clearly spoken out against human-rights violations committed against persons on the basis of their sexual orientation and we urge states to take all necessary measures to ensure that sexual orientation and gender identity may under no circumstances be the basis for criminal penalties, in particular executions, arrests, or detention," Geoffrey York, "Uganda's Anti-Gay Bill Causes Commonwealth Uproar," *The Globe and Mail*, November 29, 2009, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/ugandas-anti-gay-bill-causes-commonwealth-uproar/article4196948/>.

¹⁹⁴ Jeff Davis, "John Baird Points Finger at Gay Rights Abuses in African, Caribbean Countries," *National Post*, January 23, 2012, <http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/01/23/john-baird-points-finger-at-gay-rights-abuses-in-african-caribbean-countries/>; see also: Justin Ling, "Baird Battles Ugandan Politician over Gay Rights | Daily Xtra," *Daily Xtra*, October 25, 2012, http://www.dailyxtra.com/canada/news-and-ideas/news/baird-battles-ugandan-politician-gay-rights-51133?_ga=1.220102682.2042267154.1429395709.

¹⁹⁵ Davis, "John Baird Points Finger at Gay Rights Abuses in African, Caribbean Countries."

that the Harper government has a secret anti-gay agenda, as he notes that “[w]hat’s more likely is that gay rights and Conservative ideology have finally aligned in Canada.”¹⁹⁶ While it is entirely probable that members of the Harper government do not actually support lesbian and gay rights, it would be trivial to dismiss the administration’s actions on such grounds. To improve the accuracy of Gurney’s statement: what is more likely is that the Conservative government has adjusted its stance on lesbian and gay rights¹⁹⁷ to align its priorities with public opinion. This is where I disagree with Puar about the ominous nature of lesbian and gay identities becoming available to conservative political imaginaries. It is not that the Harper government has manipulated the lesbian and gay rights movement to suit its foreign policy initiatives; rather, the movement itself has influenced Canadian society, law, and politics, which in recent years, has included the Conservative government.¹⁹⁸ The movement achieved success in Canada, not by waiting for the federal and provincial governments to implement change on their own terms, but through a series of legislative and policy challenges in the legal system.¹⁹⁹ The federal government’s defence of lesbian and gay rights on the world stage is the direct result of wanting to appeal to Canadian values, which have been shaped by the success of the lesbian and gay rights movement.

¹⁹⁶ Matt Gurney, “If the Tories Hate Gays, Why Are They Standing up for Them Abroad?,” *National Post*, January 18, 2012, <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/matt-gurney-if-the-tories-hate-gays-why-are-they-standing-up-for-them-abroad>.

¹⁹⁷ I avoid using “LGBT” here, as it is clear that the Conservative government does not support trans rights. When a trans bill of rights was proposed in the House of Commons in 2012, Harper personally voted against it, while the bill was supported by only 18 Conservative MPs; Wingrove, “Transgender Rights Bill Opposed by Harper May Be Sideline in Senate.”

¹⁹⁸ Puar, “Rethinking Homonationalism,” 337.

¹⁹⁹ Sylvain Larocque et al., *Gay Marriage: The Story of a Canadian Social Revolution* (James Lorimer & Company, 2006).

Canada has a historical reputation of being recognized as a humanitarian country, but the lesbian and gay rights movement in particular has made Canadians care about ‘saving’ foreign queers. The Harper government’s new approach has been particularly beneficial to the Conservative Party, as it has led to the possibility of tapping into a niche of voters who have historically supported opposition parties.²⁰⁰ It is worth noting that this does not mean that members of the Conservative government do not genuinely support lesbian and gay rights, but one must not assume that the government’s international approach is without flaw. Although it is unclear whether this policy endorsement will necessarily translate into more votes for the Conservatives in the future, it nonetheless underlines the perceived evolution of the Party, which has mutually satisfied the Conservative government and many lesbian and gay rights activists.

To answer the question of whether the Conservative Party has turned over a new leaf by embracing lesbian and gay rights, as far as policy decisions go, the answer is irrefutably yes. While speculation exists that the Harper government does not genuinely care about gays and lesbians, the more important point to consider is the impact that public support for lesbian and gay rights has had on the Party. The federal government has had to balance appeasing anti-gay voters with adapting to changing national values. In practice, this has meant not engaging with related domestic issues, as demonstrated by Harper’s silence on same-sex marriage, while participating in removed advocacy by focusing on lesbian and gay rights outside of Canada. Although openly supporting a transgender bill of

²⁰⁰ Natasha Barsotti, “Canada Must Do More to Defend Global LGBT Rights, Gov’t Told,” *Daily Xtra*, May 16, 2014, http://www.dailyxtra.com/world/news-and-ideas/news/canada-must-defend-global-lgbt-rights-gov%E2%80%99t-told-85044?_ga=1.129273743.2042267154.1429395709; Gilleen Witkowski, “LGBT Rights Under Attack in Russia; Canadian Civil Society Demands Collective Action on Sochi Olympics,” *Egale Canada*, August 22, 2013, <http://egale.ca/all/lgbt-rights-under-attack-in-russia-canadian-civil-society-demands-collective-action-on-sochi-olympics/>.

rights or expressing approval for same-sex marriage would likely cause upset among social conservatives, defending lesbian and gay rights internationally is less controversial.²⁰¹ It does not result in legislative change domestically, and as Gurney remarks, even those who oppose lesbian and gay rights are likely to hold the “patriotic belief that their country has superior values worth exporting.”²⁰² While homonationalist analyses of the United States and Israel draw upon the manipulative interaction between conservative politics and lesbian and gay rights, within the context of Canada, the latter is driving the former. Developing a homonationalist critique of Canada must take into account the political climate, but just as importantly, imperial implications must also be considered in relation to the lesbian and gay rights movement itself.

²⁰¹ There has, however, been criticism from the social conservative advocacy group REAL Women of Canada. See: Gwendolyn Landolt, “John Baird’s Abuse of Office,” *REAL Women of Canada*, August 7, 2013, <http://www.realwomenofcanada.ca/real-women-of-canada-media-release-john-bairds-abuse-of-office/>.

²⁰² Gurney, “Matt Gurney.”

Chapter 3: Western Imperialism and the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics

In the six month period between August 2013 and February 2014, Canadian politicians from every major political party and from each level of government condemned a newly enacted Russian law that criminalizes any public act deemed to propagandize homosexuality as socially acceptable.²⁰³ While the law itself is undoubtedly worthy of condemnation, the Canadian response has been framed as valiantly striving to protect the liberties of global sexual minorities, which aligns with the goals of the mainstream LGBT rights movement. Opposition to this act of benevolence has been discursively equated with homophobia, effectively limiting space for constructively addressing the imperial implications of the Canadian approach. It is not my intention to discredit the sincerity of Canadians wishing to help queer Russians from being persecuted, nor do I wish to defend the law in question; however, I do aim to demonstrate the sense of cultural superiority encompassed within the Canadian political response. Although Canada's initiative to defend lesbian and gay rights on a global basis is dominantly understood as progressive, I contend that the expanding intertwinement of lesbian and gay rights with Canadian foreign policy is marked by a deeply imperialist undercurrent. As outlined in Chapter 2, protecting lesbian and gay rights, both domestically and internationally, has come to serve as a political project by which Canada proudly defines itself on the world stage.

Most significantly, Canada's progressive gay-friendly image was showcased through the medium of its response to the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia. The events were conceptualized as the opportune venue to generate multinational solidarity

²⁰³ Russian State Duma, *For the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values*, 2013.

in the name of globally defending lesbian and gay rights. In the months leading up to the Sochi Olympics, Russia became the subject of immense criticism from the Western world, following the state Duma's decision to criminalize the dissemination of "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations."²⁰⁴ The subsequent cloud of controversy surrounding the Sochi Olympics has demonstrated the ways in which countries like Canada continue to oversimplify global divergences in political, social, and historical developments, which has resulted in a failure to consider the complexities of Russian homophobia. This oversight not only presupposes that homosexuals in every region of the world espouse the Western gay or lesbian identity, but more problematically, suggests that they ought to.

I begin by outlining the controversial Russian law in relation to the political climate of the Olympic Games. In so doing, I consider the implications of national pride and the emergence of lesbian and gay identities in Olympic narratives. Next, I address key Canadian political comments and gestures pertaining to the condemnation of the Russian law. In this regard, I analyze the Canadian response to Russia as a case study by providing snapshots of key political moments in the unfolding of Canadian homonationalism. Finally, I address the imperialist implications of the pro-gay and lesbian Canadian response to the Sochi Olympics, which entails an overview of the historical and social contexts of Russian sexual identities. Although I consider the problematic nature of Canadian homonationalism, I do not claim to expose hidden motivations and unnamed conspiracies underlying its development as there is no evidence of malicious intent.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

Olympic Pride versus Russian Homophobia

In June 2013, the Federation of Russia enacted a national piece of legislation aimed at limiting the “promotion of homosexuality as a behavioural norm.”²⁰⁵ The law, referred to as the “anti-propaganda law” by Russian officials, is the latest development in the enactment of similar region-specific laws. Most notably, in November 2011, St. Petersburg made international headlines for the proposal of a law that criminalizes acts definable as promoting homosexual propaganda to minors.²⁰⁶ While the law, later enacted in 2012, has been met with contempt from Western human rights advocates, the degree of international controversy it generated became amplified by the wide-scale federal law that proceeded it. The 2013 law, *For the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values*, has effectively turned the regional St. Petersburg law into national policy.²⁰⁷ Due to a supposed fear for the safety of Russian children, it is now a criminal act for anyone in Russia to promote equality for sexual minorities in a place where children could be reasonably expected to be present.²⁰⁸ In practice, this law restricts queer activism from the entirety of the Russian public sphere. Russians who fail to comply are subject to monetary fines that vary depending on political affiliation, while non-Russians may face deportation or imprisonment of up to 15 days.²⁰⁹ In wake of the law’s enactment, Canadian politicians were quick to brand the law as “anti-gay.” Such criticisms became inseparable from discussions of the Olympics as the 2014 Winter Games were set to be hosted eight months later in Sochi, Russia. Political anti-gay controversy fused with

²⁰⁵ Ibid., sec. 2.

²⁰⁶ Russian State Duma, *For the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values*.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

notions of nationalism and the “Olympic brand”²¹⁰ produced the ideal climate for the continued unfolding of Canadian homonationalism.

Far from simply being an outlet for athletic competition, the Olympic Games serve as a worldwide platform for demonstrations of national identity.²¹¹ This is especially true for host countries that revel in the international spotlight by showcasing their best in athletics and culture; however, the Olympics also provide a venue for participating nations to sell their image to both global and domestic citizens.²¹² Competitors are conceptualized as ambassadors, representing their respective countries and striving to achieve excellence in their engagements with foreign representatives. Nations are celebrated by their degrees of success, humbled by their number of failures, and united in support of the confidence they place in their athletes. The Olympics are imagined as an impartial medium that reveals how countries stack up against each other in terms of talent, strength, endurance, and dedication. From this notion flows the belief that the Olympics are a “transcendent human experience,”²¹³ bound by fairness and neutrality. The *Olympic Charter*, which outlines seven key principles, states the International Olympic Committee’s (IOC) commitment to “social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles” in addition to the “promotion of a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.”²¹⁴ The promise of maintaining these values attempts to ensure equal access to athletic participation, and above all else, guarantees the professional and humanitarian

²¹⁰ See: Boykoff, “The Anti-Olympics.”

²¹¹ Tomlinson and Young, *National Identity and Global Sports Events*.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Helen Jefferson Lenskyj, “Gay Games or Gay Olympics? Implications for Lesbian Inclusion,” *Canadian Woman Studies* 21, no. 3 (2002): 25.

²¹⁴ International Olympic Committee, *Olympic Charter*.

integrity of the Games. For the Olympics to thrive, the Olympic dream and the Olympic brand must appear possible and credible to all global citizens.

Specific to the *Charter* is the promise of equality for sexual minorities. In September 2014, following the Sochi controversy, Principle 6 was added in order to directly address sexual orientation. It affirms that “the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in [the] Olympic Charter shall be secured without discrimination of any kind.”²¹⁵ While Olympic reaction against Russia’s anti-gay law has been centred on the protection of lesbian and gay athletes, it contributes to wider debates regarding equality for all gays and lesbians. Over the past few years, LGBT rights and Western lesbian and gay identities have become incorporated into the Olympic brand. In 2010, a Pride House was organized as an attraction at the Vancouver Winter Olympics with the purpose of providing a venue for LGBT athletes and spectators to meet and socialize. The city of Vancouver’s queer advisory committee supported the development of the Pride House in order to showcase the city’s LGBT-friendly image.²¹⁶ The duration of the Olympics was considered an opportune moment for Vancouver, and Canada more broadly, to demonstrate to the world their progressive stance on lesbian and gay rights. Phil Hubbard and Eleanor Wilkinson document a similar attempt made by England during the 2012 Summer Olympic Games in London. An organizer of the London Pride House explained that the venue would serve as “a symbol of how London remains one of the most truly cosmopolitan and

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ “Vancouver Pride House Planned for 2010 Games | Daily Xtra,” *Daily Xtra*, October 21, 2009, <http://www.dailyxtra.com/vancouver/news-and-ideas/news/vancouver-pride-house-planned-2010-games-7011>.

accepting cities in the world.”²¹⁷ Although major plans for the London Pride House were ultimately scrapped as a result of poor funding and assertions by organizers that non-homonormative gays and lesbians mar the LGBT movement,²¹⁸ the Chief Executive of the London Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games continued to described the Olympic movement and the city of London as gay-friendly, stating England’s “support for a sporting environment built upon equality and inclusion.”²¹⁹ Hubbard and Wilkinson acknowledge that while “the Olympics is potentially a place to raise awareness around issues of lesbian and gay rights, the type of narrative surrounding campaigns for global gay rights can easily slip into a language of neo-imperialism.”²²⁰ In the case of the 2014 Sochi Olympics, the potential of this threat materialized into reality.

With the development of the Olympics becoming associated with lesbian and gay rights activism in Vancouver and London, the Sochi Games were destined to generate international controversy the moment Russia enacted its propaganda law.²²¹ In the months leading up to the Olympics, various Canadians and lesbian and gay rights activists called for an outright boycott of Russia,²²² thereby demonstrating frustration with both the country’s intolerance and the IOC’s failure to make more of an effort to protect “the safety

²¹⁷ James Park, “Plans for London 2012 Olympics Pride House London to Be Unveiled Tonight · PinkNews,” *Pink News*, December 9, 2011, <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2011/12/09/plans-for-london-2012-olympics-pride-house-london-to-be-unveiled-tonight/>.

²¹⁸ It should be noted, however, that related Pride House events were later organized; Stephen Gray, “New Pride House Launched for London Olympics,” *PinkNews*, July 13, 2012, <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2012/07/13/new-pride-house-launched-for-london-olympics/>.

²¹⁹ Phil Hubbard and Eleanor Wilkinson, “Welcoming the World? Hospitality, Homonationalism, and the London 2012 Olympics,” *Antipode* 47, no. 3 (February 1, 2014): 6.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

²²¹ For more literature on lesbian and gay rights and international sporting events, see: Judith Davidson, “Sporting Homonationalisms: Sexual Exceptionalism, Queer Privilege, and the 21st Century International Lesbian and Gay Sport Movement,” *Sociology of Sport Journal*, no. 1 (2013): 57–82.

²²² Theresa Do Trinh, “Canadians Protest Russia’s Anti-Gay Law with Letters to Government - Politics - CBC News,” *CBC News*, February 21, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canadians-protest-russia-s-anti-gay-law-with-letters-to-government-1.2546095>.

of all LGBT people in Russia, not simply those visiting for the Olympics.”²²³ Additionally, technology giant Google immersed itself in the controversy by extending support to lesbian and gay athletes and fuelling opposition to the Russian law. During the Olympic Games, Google’s homepage featured a graphic of athletic competitors illustrated in the colours of



"The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play." –Olympic Charter

Figure 3.1. A February 2014 Google doodle citing Section 4 of the Olympic Charter

the rainbow flag, a symbol of equality for gays and lesbians. The gesture both strengthens Western values and identities and the Olympic brand. This works to convince Westerners, especially gays and

lesbians, to continue believing in the brand. The point I wish to address here is not whether corporate stances on lesbian and gay rights are capable of being authentic, but how the politics of lesbian and gay rights have become blended into the IOC’s public image. Further to this point, Russia’s anti-gay law was widely conceptualized by Westerners as being uncharacteristic of the Olympic brand.

Despite the emerging relationship between lesbian and gay rights activists and the Olympics, the IOC has had to defend itself against harsh criticisms from Westerners who oppose homophobia in Russia. While major plans for the London Pride House failed to materialize, Hubbard and Wilkinson explain that the city was still successful in marketing

²²³ Sarah Muller, “Gay Activists Call for Boycott of 2014 Olympics – and Russian Vodka,” *MSNBC*, October 2, 2013, <http://www.msnbc.com/the-last-word/gay-activists-call-boycott-2014>.

itself as gay-friendly.²²⁴ During the Sochi Olympics, however, the absence of a Pride House was popularly understood as yet another marker of widespread homophobia, for which the IOC was partly blamed.²²⁵ Two years after the Vancouver Games hosted the first Olympic Pride House, a Russian judge ruled that similar events would be prohibited in Sochi. Advancing the same rhetoric used to support Russia's 2013 anti-gay law, the judge noted that organizing a Sochi Pride House and promoting the social acceptance of homosexuality would "undermine the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation due to the decrease of Russia's population."²²⁶ The decision, which was later upheld in 2013 by a higher court, draws a clear link between the Russian national imaginary and resisting homosexuality and related Western identities. As Baer writes, there exists "a fundamental incompatibility between [Russian] national pride and gay pride across the political spectrum."²²⁷ If Russia had allowed the organization of a Pride House during the 2014 Olympics, the act would have been conceptualized as the state undermining its own sovereignty at an international event renowned for boasting host countries' national image. In response to criticisms of the court ruling, the IOC clarified that it is not responsible for organizing Pride Houses; rather, such work falls to national Olympic committees of host nations or organizations involved in host cities.²²⁸ While support for Pride Houses was apparent in Canada and England in 2010 and 2012 respectively, Russian officials made it

²²⁴ Hubbard and Wilkinson, "Welcoming the World?," 6.

²²⁵ Bruce Arthur, "IOC Refuses to Stand up for Gay Athletes," *National Post*, August 10, 2012, <http://news.nationalpost.com/sports/olympics/pride-house-a-necessity-for-all-olympics-not-just-sochi>.

²²⁶ The decision was delivered by Svetlana Mordovina. Due to language barriers, I have been unable to provide a full case citation; Jim Buzinski, "Gay Games to Skip Sports Conference in Russia out of Fear for Safety," *Outsports*, October 11, 2012, <http://www.outsports.com/2012/10/11/4053792/gay-games-to-skip-sports-conference-in-russia-out-of-fear-for-safety>.

²²⁷ Brian James Baer, "Now You See It: Gay (in)visibility and the Performance of Post-Soviet Identity," in *Queer Visibility in Post-Socialist Cultures*, ed. Nárcisz Fejes and Andrea P. Balogh (Bristol; Chicago: Intellect Ltd, 2013), 47.

²²⁸ Arthur, "IOC Refuses to Stand up for Gay Athletes."

clear that such support was neither prevalent nor welcome in Sochi. As a result, Westerners have been left with conflicting perceptions of the Olympic brand: one that embodies fairness and equality for sexual minorities, and another that is understood as being complicit in the promotion of homophobia. The amount of controversy generated from the anti-gay law looming over the Sochi Olympics eventually led to the IOC taking a definitive stance on the issue by introducing Principle 6 to its *Charter* in 2014. The decision has been well received by many lesbian and gay rights activists who understand Principle 6 as compensation for the IOC's hesitation to explicitly condemn homophobia during the Sochi Games.²²⁹ The new clause effectively solidifies the link between the Olympic brand and lesbian and gay rights in order to "prevent a replay of Sochi" at future Games.²³⁰

Canadian Political Reactions to Russia's Anti-Gay Law

The Sochi Olympics have come to represent a pivotal moment in Canada's history of globally defending lesbian and gay rights. The international venue of the Olympics has given Canada the opportunity to exhibit its image of humanitarianism by defining itself in part by the ways in which it treats gays and lesbians, and more importantly for its reputation, how it does not. Although homonationalism may not be as apparent in the Canadian context as it is in the United States and Israel, one must not mistake the lack of military intervention and accusations of apartheid for an outright absence. In this section, I examine key Canadian political gestures and statements made in response to Russia's anti-gay law that demonstrate a nearly unanimous national approach. It is my intention to provide an overview of events which outline the ways in which politicians from every level

²²⁹ "IOC Moves to Forbid Discrimination in Future Olympics," *CBC News*, September 25, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/1.2777610>.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

of government across the country openly condemned the law in the name of protecting the rights of gay and lesbian athletes and queer Russians. Consequently, the national narrative has reinforced the belief that Western conceptualizations of sexuality are universally true.

A month following the enactment of Russia's anti-gay law, the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Baird, became the first government official to publicly condemn the law. Baird revealed that as early as January 2013, the Canadian government had been pressing Russian officials to scrap the law.²³¹ In light of the failure of such negotiations, Baird expressed his optimism that the Olympics would serve as a "spotlight to bring pressure to bear on the Russian government."²³² This initiative, which came to life in February 2014, entailed a combination of idealized perceptions of the "Olympic spirit" with the promotion of Canadian values.²³³ Baird's concerns over the controversial law were later reiterated in a December 2013 letter to the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs. Writing on behalf of the federal government, Baird noted

"[w]e encourage the Russian Federation to extend to all of its citizens – as well as foreign visitors – full human rights protections, including freedom from violence, harassment or discrimination based on sexual orientation,"

thereby demonstrating that Canada's interest in challenging the law extended beyond simply ensuring the protection of Canadian athletes and travellers from violence or criminal charges.²³⁴ Echoing Baird's apprehension of the violation of human rights in Russia, Prime Minister Stephen Harper immersed himself in the growing international

²³¹ Mike Blanchfield, "Baird Blasts Russia's 'Hateful' Anti-Gay Law after Private Push for Change," *CTV News*, August 1, 2013, <http://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/baird-blasts-russia-s-hateful-anti-gay-law-after-private-push-for-change-1.1394070>.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Baird stated that "the Olympics is a great celebration of international sport, of international co-operation. This type of law being enforced flies in the face of the entire Olympic spirit," Ibid.

²³⁴ Gloria Galloway, "Baird Denounces Russia's Anti-Gay Law in Lead-up to Sochi Olympics," *The Globe and Mail*, December 29, 2013, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/baird-denounces-russias-anti-gay-law-in-lead-up-to-sochi-olympics/article16121270/>.

controversy. Harper affirmed Canada's opposition to the law, stating that Canada's position is that "we don't imprison or kill people for acts committed freely between adults [which] represents the position of Canadians and they expect that we speak in favour of these rights."²³⁵ Although somewhat ambiguous, Harper's comments highlight the dominant Canadian position that lesbian and gay rights, and by association identities, should be legally protected – a value meriting worldwide export. Harper also draws on the direct link between his government's approach to the Russian law and the concerns of the Canadian population, which, as discussed in Chapter 2, are reflective of the successes of the LGBT rights movement in Canada. In other words, Harper was not just speaking on the behalf of Canadians, but also on the behalf of global LGBT activists. Although the comments made by Baird and Harper are not explicitly xenophobic, they do, however, contain connotations of Western modernity and cultural superiority that demand Russian conformity to Canadian social and legal standards regarding gays and lesbians. Here, there is evidence of the presumption that a Westernization of Russia would necessarily benefit Russian queers. This perspective fails to take into account social organization and political activism in Russia, which are highly resistant to Western influence.²³⁶ The Canadian government's failed attempt to prevent the enactment of the Russian law is therefore unsurprising. What Baird and Harper were successful in doing, however, was appeasing the concerns of Canadians and further legitimizing the myth of the global gay.²³⁷

²³⁵ "Harper Joins Controversy over Russia's Anti-Gay Law," *The Globe and Mail*, August 9, 2013, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/foreign-minister-baird-concerned-for-olympic-athletes-going-to-russia/article13690657/>.

²³⁶ I elaborate on this point in more detail in the following section. See: Baer, "Now You See It: Gay (in)visibility and the Performance of Post-Soviet Identity."

²³⁷ See: Binnie, *The Globalization of Sexuality*.

In addition to the statements issued by Baird and Harper, every provincial government expressed its contempt for the anti-gay law, demonstrating a national political consensus.²³⁸ This largely consisted of rainbow flags being raised at provincial parliament buildings, along with individual Premiers speaking out against Russian homophobia.²³⁹ Nova Scotia Premier, Stephen McNeil, furthered this national narrative, stating that Nova Scotians “believe in tolerance and acceptance and we are proud to join with other provinces and cities across Canada and around the world in this show of solidarity against discrimination.”²⁴⁰ In British Columbia and Newfoundland and Labrador, the rainbow flag was raised on the provincial legislatures for the first time in either province’s history.²⁴¹ A member of the official B.C. opposition party claimed “we will be flying the rainbow flag as a way to show solidarity with lesbian, gay, bi, and transgender Russians, and our athletes over in Sochi. It’s a way of showing solidarity and that B.C. stands against hate.”²⁴² On February 7th, the province of Alberta followed suit, which Canadian political scientist,

²³⁸ While it is unlikely that every individual Canadian politician strongly opposed the law in question, political opposition to Canada’s stance on the law was minimal. I elaborate on this point on page 77.

²³⁹ “Rainbow Flag to Fly at B.C. Legislature during Sochi Games,” *CBC News*, February 13, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/1.2536011>; Patricia Kozicka, “City of Edmonton, Alberta Legislature Raise Pride Flags for Duration of Sochi Olympics,” *Global News*, February 7, 2014, <http://globalnews.ca/news/1135739/city-of-edmonton-raises-rainbow-flag-for-duration-of-sochi-olympics/>; “Saskatchewan Legislature to Fly Rainbow Flag during Olympics,” *CBC News*, February 9, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/1.2529386>; “Pride Flags Fly across Canada in Support of Gay Athletes,” *CTV News*, February 7, 2014, <http://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/pride-flags-fly-across-canada-in-support-of-gay-athletes-1.1676241>; “Pride Flag to Fly above Queen’s Park for Rest of Olympics,” *CBC News*, February 18, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/1.2541849>; “Rainbow Flags to Fly in Montreal, Quebec City for Olympics,” *CBC News*, February 6, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/1.2525591>; “Pride Flag Raised at N.B. Legislature during Olympics,” *CBC News*, February 12, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/1.2533917>; “Province Raises Pride Flag in Support of Olympic Athletes,” *Nova Scotia*, February 10, 2014, <http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20140210004>; “Rainbow Flag Raised at Charlottetown City Hall, Province House,” *CBC News*, February 11, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/1.2532895>; Justin Brake, “Province Marks Historical First, at Fore of Canada’s Message to Russia,” *TheIndependent.ca*, February 8, 2014, <http://theindependent.ca/2014/02/08/province-marks-historical-first-at-fore-of-canadas-message-to-russia/>.

²⁴⁰ “Province Raises Pride Flag in Support of Olympic Athletes.”

²⁴¹ “Rainbow Flag to Fly at B.C. Legislature during Sochi Games”; Brake, “Province Marks Historical First, at Fore of Canada’s Message to Russia.”

²⁴² “Rainbow Flag to Fly at B.C. Legislature during Sochi Games.”

Robert Murray, described as being indicative of the fact that “if there’s one value that is uniquely Canadian in the last 20 years, it has been support for the LGBT community.”²⁴³ Murray’s statement is reflective of the overall national unity on the matter of lesbian and gay rights, which has been made particularly apparent by the solidarity of provincial governments in their individual decisions to mount pride flags.

Various cities and municipal representatives from across the country also became actively involved in the national denouncement of Russia’s anti-gay law. Two months prior to the Sochi Games, the city of Vancouver made its aversion to Russia’s anti-gay law unequivocally clear. In response to the controversial Russian law and the banning of a Pride House at the Sochi Games, it was announced that Vancouver would be represented at the 2014 Winter Olympics by openly gay city councillor Tim Stevenson.²⁴⁴ The decision, intended to serve as “a finger in the eye of the Russian government and the IOC,” was made on the belief that Stevenson could more adequately represent the city and its LGBT-friendly image than Mayor Gregor Robertson.²⁴⁵ While in Russia, Stevenson was denied a meeting with Sochi Mayor Anatoly Pakhomov over the Pride House controversy; however, Stevenson did meet with the IOC to advocate for the inclusion of LGBT rights in the *Olympic Charter*. The Vancouver delegate has been accredited with playing a hand in the development of Principle 6.²⁴⁶ The authority underpinning Stevenson’s actions is directly tied to the 2010 Games and the success of the Vancouver Pride House, which effectively

²⁴³ Kozicka, “City of Edmonton, Alberta Legislature Raise Pride Flags for Duration of Sochi Olympics.”

²⁴⁴ “Gay Vancouver Councillor Tim Stevenson Going to Sochi Winter Olympics,” *CBC News*, December 10, 2013, <http://www.cbc.ca/1.2459062>.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ Jesara Sinclair, “Tim Stevenson Applauds International Olympic Committee LGBTQ Vote,” *CBC News*, December 8, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/1.2864319>.

symbolized Canada's stance on lesbian and gay rights.²⁴⁷ In this regard, Stevenson not only represented Vancouver, but Canada as a whole. The first Olympic Pride House, described by its founder as a Canadian legacy that aims to support global LGBT people,²⁴⁸ has been conceptualized as setting a precedent for future Games. Its reputation as "a minnow in the Olympic ocean, but an important one"²⁴⁹ was proven by the demand for its inclusion at the London Games, which gave further weight to both the legitimacy of its inception and the desire for its continuation.

In contrast to the growing national narrative, Toronto mayor, Rob Ford, became one of the few Canadian politicians to openly disagree with condemning Russia's anti-gay law as he spoke out against a pride flag being raised at city hall. Ford, who attempted to have the rainbow flag taken down at Toronto city hall, insisted that Canada not attempt to challenge the Russian law, remarking: "this is the Olympics. This is about being patriotic to your country. This is not about your sexual preference." Protesters quickly interpreted Ford's stance as evidence that he is homophobic, an accusation that has been made against him numerous times in the past.²⁵⁰ Although Ford's position did not conform to the mainstream political approach, his statements did reveal the difficulty of critiquing the overall Canadian response. Although it is entirely plausible that Ford's stance against using the Olympics to protest the anti-gay law was influenced by homophobia, a more

²⁴⁷ "Gay Vancouver Councillor Tim Stevenson Going to Sochi Winter Olympics."

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Arthur, "IOC Refuses to Stand up for Gay Athletes."

²⁵⁰ "Rob Ford Continues Protest against Rainbow Flag at City Hall," *CBC News*, February 11, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/1.2532600>; Natalie Alcoba, "Rob Ford Asks for Pride Flag -- Just Raised at City Hall to Support Gay Rights at Sochi -- Be Taken down," *National Post*, February 7, 2015, <http://news.nationalpost.com/toronto/rob-ford-wants-pride-flag-just-raised-to-support-gay-rights-at-sochi-taken-down>; Natalie Alcoba, "Rob Ford Skips Pride Kickoff for Second Year," *National Post*, June 25, 2012, <https://www.google.ca/#q=ford+skips+pride>.

constructive point to consider is how reactions to the law were either framed as challenging or bolstering homophobia. For politicians to follow the trend of denouncement meant appearing to be an ally of LGBT rights and upholding Canadian values.²⁵¹ While socially conservative Canadians opposed to lesbian gay rights sought greater political representation for their beliefs,²⁵² such concerns were outweighed by the advantage of defending LGBT rights on the world stage. Regardless of personal support for lesbian and gay rights, the advantage of publicly denouncing the law ensured that politicians could appeal to a majority of Canadians. As proven by the public backlash against Ford, even objecting to the raising of a pride flag was equated with homophobia, resulting in parallels being drawn between the Toronto mayor and Russian President Vladimir Putin.²⁵³ Subsequently, politicians were imagined as falling into one of two categories: allies or homophobes. To criticize the growing Canadian political trend meant being identified as the latter, with the only exception being the demand for an even greater response.²⁵⁴ Given this reality, it is likely that if any politician had raised the question of imperialism, their actions would have been popularly interpreted as either anti-patriotic or as defending the anti-gay law, but certainly unintelligible in any case. As a result, the Canadian response has effectively evaded critique.

²⁵¹ It should be noted that while the term “LGBT” was popularly cited by politicians in their denouncement of Russia’s anti-gay law, the entirety of the focus was placed solely on gays and lesbians.

²⁵² See: Landolt, “REAL Women of Canada Media Release.”

²⁵³ Alcoba, “Rob Ford Asks for Pride Flag -- Just Raised at City Hall to Support Gay Rights at Sochi -- Be Taken down.”

²⁵⁴ Meagan Fitzpatrick, “Baird Hopes ‘Decency Will Prevail’ at Sochi Olympics,” *CBC News*, August 9, 2013, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/baird-hopes-decency-will-prevail-at-sochi-olympics-1.1336367>; Witkowski, “LGBT Rights Under Attack in Russia; Canadian Civil Society Demands Collective Action on Sochi Olympics.”

On the eve of the Olympic opening ceremonies, the city of Ottawa also raised a rainbow flag at city hall as a symbolic gesture of support for lesbian and gay athletes and Russians. When Ottawa Mayor, Jim Watson, was criticized for supporting the city's decision, he responded by telling constituents that if they disagreed with his stance, he would not want their electoral support in the municipal election set to be held later that year. Watson was thus confident enough that a majority of Ottawa residents would support his position and the national narrative that he was willing to risk the alienation of anti-gay voters. He noted that the collective Canadian stance "sends a signal to the Russian government that, in this day and age of respect for human rights, [the law] is a complete throwback to another era — another unacceptable era."²⁵⁵ Implicit in Watson's comment is the belief that Canada is a modern nation, whereas the law in question is reflective of a time in *Canada's* past, prior to the advancement of lesbian and gay rights. By association, Russia itself is illustrated as homophobic and less modern of a nation due to its continued persecution of sexual minorities. Although Watson was optimistic to believe that Canada's stance against the law would "send a signal to the Russian government," what I wish to draw attention to is how the Canadian response appealed to the values of Canadians and further validated the belief that their conceptualization of sexuality is, and should be, universal. The issue with this understanding is that it actually hinders the capabilities of Canadians to effectively assist foreign queers with the challenging of homophobia, as it omits the factor of cultural knowledges from the equation. As I address in the following

²⁵⁵ Although it is unclear how many voters were aware of this statement, how many took it seriously, and how many considered the issue to be significant enough for it to impact their decision on election day, it is worth noting that Watson was re-elected with 76 percent of the popular vote in October 2014; "Jim Watson Tweet in Support of Pride Flag Goes Viral," *CBC News*, February 7, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/m/touch/canada/ottawa/story/1.2527649>; "2014 Election Results," *City of Ottawa*, 2014, http://ottawa.ca/election/index_en.html.

section, reading Western knowledges and identities into the cultures of other nations not only fosters sentiments of Western superiority, but can lead to social and political resistance.

Assessing Russian Homophobia

[In the West] we speak about identities as though they reside outside of time and culture, floating in some metaphysical truth that merely awaits our discovery.

- Laurie Essig

The issue at the core of Canada's patterned condemnation of Russia's anti-gay law is not the desire to challenge homophobia, but the belief that lesbian and gay identities exist identically in Russia. This presumption glosses over the culturally unique development of lesbian and gay identities in the West as the result of centuries-old pathological and moral discourses of sexuality.²⁵⁶ Although the protection of lesbian and gay rights have become folded into narratives of Canadian nationalism, it is important to acknowledge that this development has arisen from the *domestic* protection of sexual minorities. In other words, the sense of national pride surrounding the evolving social equality for gays and lesbians is rooted in the achievement of sexual rights in Canada. Gay pride events are, in part, celebrations of the victories of the lesbian and gay rights movement. The sense of national pride associated with such successes makes sense within the context of what lesbian and gay identities represent in the West: markers of diversity and equality. With regard to Canada's response to the anti-gay law, however, Canadian gay pride was applied to the Russian context without consideration for the significant cultural differences in the

²⁵⁶ See Chapter 1.

conceptualizations of sexuality and identity. For many Russians, the sexual identity categories of gay and lesbian are widely rejected in the name of resisting Western imperialism.²⁵⁷

In the West, and certainly in Canada, the terms “homosexuality” and “gay” or “lesbian” are commonly used interchangeably. While the linkage between sexual acts and sexual identities has proven useful for political organization and corresponding social change, as demonstrated by the legal successes of the lesbian and gay rights movement, this is not to suggest that espousing the gay or lesbian identity is always necessary or liberating.²⁵⁸ For some, such identities are understood as part of a larger imperialist project. Associating oneself with the inherently Western lesbian and gay rights movement may offer the promise of relief from homophobia, but it may also come at the price of depleting one’s culture. Within the geographic boundaries of Canada, this is the case for many queer Indigenous people. The two-spirit movement attempts to prevent this trade-off by addressing Indigenous understandings of gender and sexuality as part of the decolonization process.²⁵⁹ Although indigenous cultures have historically embraced non-binary gender identities and same-sex desire, such conceptualizations have eroded since the beginning of the colonial period.²⁶⁰ The two-spirit movement thus provides an opportunity for queer indigenous people to protect their cultural knowledges while simultaneously challenging sexual discrimination. Just as considerations of this movement have been lost in the discourse of lesbian and gay rights, which conflates not coming out with repression, so too

²⁵⁷ Baer, “Now You See It: Gay (in)visibility and the Performance of Post-Soviet Identity.”

²⁵⁸ I address this point in more detail in Chapter 1.

²⁵⁹ Morgensen, “Queer Settler Colonialism in Canada and Israel,” 170.

²⁶⁰ Martin Cannon, “The Regulation of First Nations Sexuality,” in *Queerly Canadian: An Introductory Reader in Sexuality Studies*, ed. Maureen Fitzgerald and Scott Rayter, 1st edition (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc., 2012), 51–63.

have Russian understandings of sexuality been omitted from Western initiatives to combat global homophobia.

Although in the West sexuality and identity are thought to be inseparable, the same is not necessarily true of Russia.²⁶¹ Michel Foucault's work traces the Western historical development of the homosexual being categorized as a species to 1870,²⁶² but as Essig explains:

In Russia, despite the development of a similar matrix of disciplinary sciences, the birth of the homosexual species was much more belabored. Homosexual acts did not metamorphose into the homosexual person until much later and even then, the homosexual was seen as a temporary aberration, always capable of being cured or eradicated with the advance of socialism.²⁶³

Baer echoes this point, noting that during the USSR era of Joseph Stalin's leadership, "in official Soviet discourse homosexuality was not presented as a thing in itself, it was, at best, a fleeting condition" tied to "bourgeois decadence."²⁶⁴ Thus, engagement in homosexuality did not denote a type of person, it was merely regarded as a temporary transgression of social norms. This remained the dominant Russian understanding until 1933 with the recriminalization of male homosexuality, which "transformed same-sex desire into a sort of person: the homosexual," six decades following the same conceptualization in the West.²⁶⁵ Dan Healey has traced the existence of homosexual

²⁶¹ See: Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*; Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*.

²⁶² Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, 43.

²⁶³ Essig, *Queer in Russia*, 4.

²⁶⁴ Baer, "Now You See It: Gay (in)visibility and the Performance of Post-Soviet Identity," 38; also see: Essig, *Queer in Russia*, 6.

²⁶⁵ Male homosexuality was initially criminalized in 1716; however, the law was effectively struck down in 1917 following the success of the Russian Revolution. Additionally, Essig explains that in 1933, "legal experts created the homosexual criminal and they created him male. Transgressive female desires were not the object of legal knowledge, women were not subjects before the Law;" Essig, *Queer in Russia*, 22–23.

subculture in Russia to the 1920s, which he suggests prompted the 1933 law.²⁶⁶ While urban collectives of homosexuals grew in US during the same period, which preceded the formation of contemporary lesbian and gay identities, the political climate in Russia produced a starkly different social context.²⁶⁷ Healey claims that the “concealed sociability among homosexuals persisted” well after 1933; however, such relations were not known by the general public.²⁶⁸ Essig notes that “under the Soviet regime, identity was not a major organizer of social and political action [...] in part because few identities were publicly ‘allowed’ in Soviet Russia.”²⁶⁹ Consequently, with the criminalization of homosexuality and state limitations on freedom of association, “public gatherings of homosexuals were forbidden.”²⁷⁰ For Stalin, the establishment of a true communist system would produce a utopian state. Among other things, the attainment this goal meant the erasure of capitalist behaviours, which was believed to include homosexuality.²⁷¹ For this reason, despite the global prevalence of same-sex desire, homosexuality was effectively rendered invisible by the Soviet state.²⁷² During the period of time between the 1920s and the 1969 Stonewall riots, although homosexuality was widely condemned in the West, homosexuals were less capable of mobilizing than in Russia. As Essig claims, following her ethnographic research in Russia during the 1980s and 1990s, “[t]he Russians are not hurrying down the path of

²⁶⁶ Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (University of Chicago Press, 2001), 359–362.

²⁶⁷ D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity,” 470; Nrcisz Fejes and Andrea P. Balogh, eds., *Queer Visibility in Post-Socialist Cultures* (Bristol; Chicago: Intellect Ltd, 2013).

²⁶⁸ Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia*, 364; Baer, “Now You See It: Gay (in)visibility and the Performance of Post-Soviet Identity”; Essig, *Queer in Russia*.

²⁶⁹ Essig, *Queer in Russia*, 56.

²⁷⁰ Baer, “Now You See It: Gay (in)visibility and the Performance of Post-Soviet Identity,” 37.

²⁷¹ Baer, “Now You See It: Gay (in)visibility and the Performance of Post-Soviet Identity”; Essig, *Queer in Russia*.

²⁷² For example, “in translations of ancient Greek and Roman poetry, homosexual references were ‘heterosexualized;’” Baer, “Now You See It: Gay (in)visibility and the Performance of Post-Soviet Identity,” 37.

U.S. gay/lesbian activism. I do not see Stonewall in Russia's future, nor in its past."²⁷³ This assertion highlights the contrasting social contexts of sexual conceptualization in the West and in Russia. While the Stonewall riots drew attention to the existence of homosexuality and growing gay and lesbian identities in the West, the same explosion of public awareness regarding Russian homosexuality did not occur in Russia until the collapse of the Soviet Union.²⁷⁴ Further to this point, Baer writes that "it is not uncommon today to hear Russians who grew up in the Soviet Union insist that they had no idea there were any homosexuals in the USSR."²⁷⁵ In the years following 1991, Russians have been forced to make the acknowledgement that homosexuality does in fact exist in Russia, but this has not widely entailed an acceptance of Western identities.²⁷⁶

Addressing the historical context of sexual censorship in Russia is cardinal to considering the limitations of Western responses to Russian homophobia. In contrast to Canada, where national identity and the protection of lesbian and gay rights have become intermeshed, Baer remarks that "the erasure of homosexuality as a political identity has in fact become a central component in the construction of contemporary Russian identity."²⁷⁷ These opposing national narratives underline Canada's contempt for Russia's 2013 anti-gay law, in addition to highlighting the historic and contemporary incompatibility of homosexuality with the Russian national imaginary.²⁷⁸ While the same incompatibility was true of Canada prior to the growth of public acceptance of lesbian and gay rights in the

²⁷³ Essig, *Queer in Russia*, xii.

²⁷⁴ Fejes and Balogh, *Queer Visibility in Post-Socialist Cultures*.

²⁷⁵ Baer, "Now You See It: Gay (in)visibility and the Performance of Post-Soviet Identity," 37.

²⁷⁶ Fejes and Balogh, *Queer Visibility in Post-Socialist Cultures*.

²⁷⁷ Baer, "Now You See It: Gay (in)visibility and the Performance of Post-Soviet Identity," 39.

²⁷⁸ As Baer notes, there is a "fundamental incompatibility between national pride and gay pride across the [Russian] political spectrum;" Ibid., 47.

2000s, one must not assume that there exists a singular, universal continuum of modernity upon which Canada has advanced at a more rapid pace than Russia. This limited perception, which favours the West, imagines Russia as existing in the past and being in need of Western cultural modernization. In contrast to this understanding, in which the civility of Russia is measured by its similarities to the West, it is important to note the reasons for which Russian conceptualizations of sexuality differ from the West. Following the Russian Revolution in 1917, the nation sought to reinvent itself through distinction from its tsarist autocratic past and from the West, which entailed a rejection of Western cultures and capitalism. This was justified, in part, through the popularization of the belief that “[c]apitalism’s exploitation of labor incubates social disease,” including homosexuality.²⁷⁹ The attempted erasure of homosexuality, which materialized into criminalization in 1933, was thought to serve as a safeguard against capitalism and Western cultural influence.²⁸⁰ Thus, “[i]n Stalinist Russia, the pervert was never a patriot” as homosexuality was effectively equated with the West.²⁸¹ Contemporarily, resistance towards homosexuality and Western cultures has continued to shape Russian national identity, as “the gay community, described [by Russians] as crude, selfish, and vulgar, serves as a metonym for [Western] culture at large,” which demonstrates the link between Russian homophobia, Russian nationalism, and anti-Western sentiments.²⁸² Further to this point, Russian homophobia must be understood as more than simply an aversion to queerness, but also as resistance to the threat of Western cultural domination. Baer asserts that this position of dismissing queer activism in the name of fostering Russian nationalism is supported by

²⁷⁹ Essig, *Queer in Russia*, 6.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 5.

²⁸² Baer, “Now You See It: Gay (in)visibility and the Performance of Post-Soviet Identity,” 49.

both liberal and conservative political elites, in addition to known homosexuals in the public eye.²⁸³ He claims:

[t]he fact that Russian gays and lesbians, at least those in the public sphere, actively participate in this performance [of rejecting a gay political identity] underscores just how important Russian cultural citizenship is and how fundamentally incompatible an activist movement is with that performance. Western observers must understand that the dominant binary opposition organizing post-Soviet discourse on minority activism is not gay versus straight or gay versus queer, but rather Russian, imagined as universal, spiritual, and intellectual, versus Western, imagined as egotistical, materialistic and vulgar.²⁸⁴

This defense of Russian national identity is not premised on homophobia; rather, Russian homophobia has been further legitimized through its folding into a larger national and anti-Western narrative. Although the association between queerness and the West neglects the fact that same-sex desire – not to be confused with gay and lesbian identities – transcends cultural and historical contexts, it nonetheless raises an important point about Russian skepticism of Western-oriented global LGBT activism.

It stands to reason that if the Russian public discourse on homosexuality rejects queer activism due to its association with the West, then pro-Western political initiatives to diplomatically challenge Russian homophobia are unlikely to be convincing. This has, however, been the approach of the Canadian government. In addition to Stevenson's request to meet with Pakhomov being denied, meetings that were held between Canadian and Russian officials to discuss the anti-gay law failed to prevent the law's enactment.²⁸⁵ My point here is not to dismiss the usefulness of diplomatic negotiation, but to highlight its ineffectiveness within the context of Westerners pushing Russian politicians to be more

²⁸³ Ibid., 51.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ "Gay Vancouver Councillor Tim Stevenson Going to Sochi Winter Olympics"; Blanchfield, "Baird Blasts Russia's 'Hateful' Anti-Gay Law after Private Push for Change."

gay-friendly. If Russian homophobia is to be adequately challenged, the greatest likelihood of success would not arise from Westerners looking to save Russian gays and lesbians – an approach that entails the imagined universality of Western sexual identities – but from the leadership of local queer activist organizations. While Russians in the public sphere largely denounce queer activism, this is not to suggest that there exists no queer mobilization in Russia. Melanie Rickert’s ethnographic research examines the contemporary Russian landscape of queer activism, and while she notes that many groups such as Vykhod tend to be small-scale advocacy organization, there is certainly a growing Russian queer desire to promote social justice.²⁸⁶ What Canadian politicians and Western LGBT activists must realize is that the fight for such equality can be advanced without the adoption of Western sexual identities, similar to how the two-spirit movement aims to resist cultural imperialism while promoting social justice. Challenging Russian homophobia may be all the more successful if local queer activists are able to differentiate themselves from the Western LGBT rights movement, in addition to demonstrating that homosexuality has historically existed in Russia independently of Western cultural influence. While Aleardo Zanghellini considers the promising nature of the global LGBT rights movement for native queers, Baer’s research suggests that in Russia, association with the global, Western-oriented, movement would prove to be a hindrance.²⁸⁷ In 2015, the Canadian federal government announced \$886,000 in funding to foreign queer rights organizations in 34 countries, which may be a step in the right direction towards acknowledging the autonomy of local

²⁸⁶ Melanie Rickert, “Propaganda? What Propaganda?: Discourse, Identity, and Queer Activism in St-Petersburg, Russia” (Carleton University, 2014).

²⁸⁷ Zanghellini, “Are Gay Rights Islamophobic?,” 8; Baer, “Now You See It: Gay (in)visibility and the Performance of Post-Soviet Identity.”

groups.²⁸⁸ It is worth noting, however, that the mere existence of such funding does not necessitate an absence of imperial undertones.

The Canadian political response to the Sochi Olympic controversy has served as a marker of national values. As opposed to taking into consideration the historical and social contexts of Russia's aversion to queer political activism, Canadian politicians have fostered sentiments of national pride and reinforced limitations of the global LGBT rights movement. Specifically, the Canadian response has perpetuated the belief that Western lesbian and gay identities are necessary for the liberation of global queers, despite the prevalence of anti-Western sentiments in Russia that have, in part, underpinned the state promotion of homophobia. Acknowledging this reality is necessary for considering the non-universality of Western lesbian and gay identities and the imperialist implications of reading such identities into foreign cultures. I contend that the Canadian response has congratulated Canadians for their support of lesbian and gay rights, but in doing so, has validated limited perceptions of modernity and Western cultural superiority.

²⁸⁸ It is unclear whether such funding will continue following John Baird's resignation in February 2015; Rob Salerno, "How Canada Is Funding Global LGBT Rights | Daily Xtra," *Daily Xtra*, June 25, 2015, <http://www.dailyxtra.com/world/news-and-ideas/news/canada-funding-global-lgbt-rights-110057>.

Conclusion

In recent years, lesbian and gay rights have become a definitive marker of Canadian national identity. Through the state's evolving support of equality rights for sexual minorities, the growth of favourable public opinion, and the development of the federal government's stance on foreign homophobia, Canada has asserted its gay-friendly image to itself and to the rest of the world. By adopting Jasbir Puar's analytic tool of homonationalism, which has emerged out of literature on post-colonialism and queer studies, I have examined how lesbian and gay rights have influenced Canadian politics and fostered sentiments of Western cultural superiority. Public support for lesbian and gay rights has grown considerably in Canada since the 2005 legalization of same-sex marriage, which has resulted in greater political representation of pro-gay-and-lesbian interests. Even Canada's most prominent socially conservative political party, which rejected equality rights for gays and lesbians as recently as 2006, has strengthened the protection of lesbian and gay rights as a national value. Since then, the Conservative Party of Canada has shifted its stance on same-sex relationships, incorporating the defense of lesbian and gay rights into its foreign policy priority of protecting human rights. Moreover, in a prominent national display of support for global queers, Canadian politicians from every level of government strongly condemned a 2013 Russian anti-gay law that was enacted a matter of months prior to the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi. At first glance, the Canadian response appears to have challenged Russian homophobia in the name of protecting Russian queers. While these actions may have been well-intentioned, my research has demonstrated the ways in which the Canadian government has legitimized the limitations of the global LGBT rights movement by perpetuating the myth of the global gay.

Consequently, the situated knowledges of Russian queers and the popular rejection of Western cultural influence have been underexamined, resulting in an ineffective model for challenging homophobia. The Canadian political unanimity and resulting national narrative regarding the condemnation of Russia's anti-gay law has merely served as an authentication of the belief that Western conceptualizations of sexuality are vital for the achievement of queer social justice. This oversimplification of foreign cultural realities misses an opportunity to adequately assist with dismantling state sponsored homophobia, in addition to running the risk of emboldening xenophobia and cultural imperialism.

As an avenue of future research, I will be interested to follow the unfolding implications of the International Olympic Committee's recent *Charter* adoption of Principle 6, which guarantees that "the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in [the] Olympic Charter shall be secured without discrimination of any kind."²⁸⁹ Specifically, it remains to be determined whether Principle 6 will effectively ban non-gay friendly nations from hosting Olympic events. While I have examined the incorporation of the Western-oriented global defense of lesbian and gay rights into Canadian politics and the national imaginary, it will be worthwhile to observe the pending imperial implications of the IOC's position regarding the rights of sexual minorities, especially given the organization's NGO status and its brand of global harmony. On the surface, the IOC's decision appears to be a triumph for social justice issues; however, one must consider how the new regulations could merely serve as another mouthpiece for Western cultural imperialism.

²⁸⁹ International Olympic Committee, *Olympic Charter*.

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