

Sexuality and the Nation-State

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Sexing the Nation, Nationalizing Sex: An Introduction

A 1906 article in the *Far East News* reported the arrest of thirty-year-old Kazutoshi in Dalian, Manchuria. Kazutoshi turned out to be of greater interest to the authorities than a common thief would have been. He was discovered to be “a cripple,” part male and part female. After classifying him a “strange double-sexed person,” government officials probed into his past. They discovered that Kazutoshi had been born with the name Fuji—and as a woman. The tale appeared in the newspaper under the title, “A Woman Found to Have Testicles” (Algozo 2011).

Kazutoshi’s story evoked a number of binaries (opposing categories that define each other through contrast)—man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, normal/pathological—that had become indicative of a modern understanding of sexuality by around 1900. This chapter traces the emergence of this modern understanding of sexuality and its relation to politics—in particular, the politics of nation building. It builds on the well-established assumptions that nation-building efforts the world over have been permeated with sex talk, and that sex talk has been permeated with themes rooted in the way the people view nation-states—both their own and others. As early as 1982, pioneer historian of sexuality George L. Mosse was insisting that scholars could no longer treat the nation and sexuality as discrete and autonomous constructs but must instead consider them

two of the most powerful, intertwined discourses shaping contemporary notions of identity (Mosse 1982; Parker et al. 1992, p. 1). This chapter illuminates this claim through the examples of three distinct nation-states—Japan, the United States, and South Africa. As we will see, in each case, notions of modernity and what it meant to be a *modern* nation-state were tied to establishing and maintaining the binaries that Kazutoshi's case evoked: man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, normal/pathological.

Of course, neither “sexuality” nor “nation” is a simple notion. Although many of us accept nation-states as part of the “natural” order (like sexuality), neither nations nor states have existed at all times and in all circumstances.¹ Moreover, postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha (1990) have insisted that no single model can adequately represent the myriad and contradictory forms taken by nation-states in the modern era. Nevertheless, we can fruitfully examine the interaction of nation building and the construction of modern sexualities in a wide range of possible configurations even if crafting a *global* historical narrative necessarily entails acknowledging differences and similarities in how various nation-states around the world have framed that interaction. Among other things, the nation-building process has often meant pitting scientific truths against religious beliefs, changing both in the process. Government officials cum public health experts have employed science speak and the “language of truth” in order to colonize ever more spheres of human life, including sex, and to manage ever smaller details of citizens' everyday existence. They have justified this intrusion in large part by invoking the rhetoric of liberation from the yoke of tradition, religion, and superstition—from an undesirable pre-civilized or premodern state of being. Modern life including sexual behavior, they have insisted, must be measured, counted, considered comparatively, reformed and, in some places, revolutionized.

Like nation, the concept of sexuality has a history. Once “sex” signified a vague amalgamation of biology, nature, and culture. In modern times, “sexuality” has become popularly understood as the biological marker of a supposedly essential identity, an inherent characteristic distinct from “gender” that has taken on the cultural traits that come from education, training, self-mastery, and daily performance (Butler 1990). Understanding sexuality as the “natural” source of human life and social renewal, scientists, reformers, and government officials everywhere have made it a principal target in their efforts to know, manage, and control national populations—a “linchpin of modernity” (in Michel Foucault's terms) in the nation-building project.



Figure 2.1 Nazi pro-motherhood poster depicts an Aryan-looking mother breastfeeding her baby while her husband plows in the background. The slogan reads “Support the Relief Organization, Mother and Child,” a social welfare institution for single and low-income mothers set up by the Nazi Party in 1934. Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels considered the organization (and healthy mothers and children) an essential component of Nazi population policy—and thus crucial to Germany's future. Source: © Mary Evans Picture Library / Alamy.



Figure 2.2 Indian family planning poster, 1996. The sign reads: “For a healthy family, wait for three years before your second child. You can get these family planning methods from government health workers, hospitals, and health centers for free.” The images at the top of the poster depict various forms of contraception. The inclusion of a female child represents government efforts to address male-preference in many Indian families, which has led to a significant imbalance in the ratio between men and women. *Source:* SIFPSA (State Innovations in Family Planning Services Agency).



Figure 2.3 One-child-policy tile mural in Nanchang, Jiangxi province, China, 2013. The text at the top of the mural says “flower of happiness,” a reference to the little girl. As in the Indian example (Figure 2.2), the inclusion of a female child represents government efforts to address male-preference. *Source:* © Lou-Foto / Alamy.

Examples abound: Military administrators around the world have routinely investigated conscripts' patterns of STD infection. Military physical exams have revealed which male bodies were fit and which unfit for that new mode of service to the nation-state, modern war. Public health officials have regulated prostitution along a continuum ranging from segregation to prohibition. A range of reproductive-rights activists, including socialists, feminists, doctors, and other health experts, have agitated for the legalization of abortion and various means of birth control. Medical professionals, religious leaders, and concerned parents have fiercely debated the issue of virginity as a hindrance to or expression of women's rights. The list goes on . . .

This desire to know the "truth" about sexuality and use that knowledge for nation building and nationalist ends has also driven interest in knowing more about nonconforming *others*, most prominently gender benders, hermaphrodites, those physically attracted to their own sex, and individuals variously labeled "perverts," "deviants," "indeterminates," "third sex," or "degenerates." Some investigators have focused their search for "others" elsewhere than on their own national sexual cultures.² These explorations are frequently double edged. While early Western ethnographers of sexualities often used their findings to reconfirm preconceived notions of other sexual cultures' primitivism and backwardness, many also employed their insights regarding other sexual cultures to criticize Euro-American puritanism, rigidity, and hypocrisy. Regardless, the production of sexual knowledge has connected like-minded activists, policy makers, social reformers, and ordinary men and women across national borders, which has led to new understandings and misunderstandings about sexuality. Someone as radically progressive as physician and sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, for instance, exoticized peoples around the world while, in the same breath, proposing in 1933 that "genuine love of people, love of whatever sort, mutual, nurturing love is the one and only bridge to overcoming existing differences and contradictions between person and person, people and people, and land and land" (Hirschfeld 2006, p. 436). As we will see, the intrinsically political character of the production and circulation of sexual knowledge has remained a central feature of the global story of sexuality and the nation-state.

The production and circulation of sexual knowledge have been intimately intertwined not just with internal nation building but also with overseas expansion—a process that further consolidated nation building at home. In many parts of the world, the formation of nation-states from the eighteenth century forward was a nationalist, militarist, and colonialist

pursuit that necessarily intersected with sex. Imperialist projects by Britain in India, European powers in Africa and around the world, and Japan in Asia, to name but a few, spurred the production of new models of citizenship grounded in new sexual regimes, often imposed by violence, be it the mass rape of women as troops advanced or retreated, or hate crimes against people of nonnormative sexual and gender identities. These new forms of citizenship—whether developed at home or abroad or in both places at once—were rooted in beliefs about the significance of national origin and predicated on ideals of social respectability, social reproduction, public hygiene, and the bourgeois family. And national and colonial authorities alike disseminated ideas about the duties and rights of citizenship through new modes of cultural transmission, including public education, mass conscription of young men, expanding print media, and improved technologies of communication and transportation.

This chapter illustrates a number of these complex relationships and crosscurrents between nation building and sexual regimes. As the story shifts from one locale where the nation-state took hold of sex to another, it is crucial for the reader to remain aware of differences and similarities, patterns and aberrations, normativities and transgressions. The journey begins in Japan, a key player in the intertwined history of sexuality and the modern nation-state. Japanese culture has a rich sexual tradition and *ars erotica* (erotic arts) that spanned several centuries prior to the restoration of the Meiji emperor in 1868, which initiated several decades of rapid modernization (Screech 2009). By the end of the Meiji period in 1912, Japan had assumed the role of broker of sexual knowledge between Europe (particularly Germany) and Asia (particularly China).³ A late and successful modernizer, Japan also became an anticolonial colonizer. Prominent members of the country's elite fashioned Japan as the engine that would bring modernity and science to Asia. At the same time, they promoted Japan as the legitimate, fatherly leader of the fight against the encroachment of Western imperialism. Similar to imperialist nation-states elsewhere, Japanese efforts at nation and empire building coincided with processes of knowledge production that created a series of "sexual questions." These efforts will be discussed in the first case study.

In the second case study, the discussion shifts to the United States. While early twentieth-century Japanese nation builders imagined their country to be racially (if not ethnically) homogeneous, a bloody civil war and contentious Reconstruction in the second half of the nineteenth century compounded by massive foreign migration in the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries ensured that the United States would continue to be imagined in racial and ethnic terms. And those terms proved unimaginable without a strong sexual subtext, which tied nonnormative sexual identities to nonwhite populations or washed them out of the national narrative altogether (Somerville 2000).

The third case study takes up some fascinating links between sexuality and race in contemporary South Africa. Although of long-standing interest to ethnographers who study sexual behavior, recent scholarship on sexuality in South Africa after the end of apartheid (legally sanctioned racial segregation) in the early 1990s challenges our assumption about how concepts such as sexuality and the modern nation-state travel across national and cultural boundaries. This case study thus explores the contrast between postapartheid South Africa's relatively progressive laws on sexuality and the everyday discrimination, including violence, faced by people whose sexuality fails to conform to social norms.

Brokering Sexual Modernity/Modern Sexuality: Japan

The restoration of the Meiji emperor in 1868 marked the beginning of serious efforts to modernize the Japanese state. These modernization efforts included the establishment of new institutions charged with the discovery, documentation, control, and management of sexuality. The impact of these institutions on sexual behavior in Japan serves as a vantage point from which I will pursue two intertwined arguments. First, that a variety of experts (social reformers, feminists, government officials) and state agencies (health administration, police, military) strategically tied new ideas, norms, and policies regarding sex to the pursuit of modernity in general. Second, that the establishment of a modern notion of sexuality relied on the international circulation and appropriation of ideas, norms, and policies regarding sex.

The advent of the modern state in Japan facilitated the collection of information that subsequently changed official and (to a certain extent) popular views of sexuality and sexual behavior. The 1872 introduction of the mandatory military physical exam for all males, for instance, became the medico-legal framework for learning about and categorizing human populations into a series of types and identities, labeling some conscripts as suitable for military service and others as effeminate, syphilitic, and hysterical or neurasthenic. Likewise, school health examinations within the

new context of mandatory elementary schooling for boys and girls facilitated the "discovery" of the masturbating child and the neurasthenic youth.⁴ From the 1890s onward, new legislation and control mechanisms regarding childbirth and registration made it much harder for midwives and pregnant women to perform an abortion or practice infanticide. And mandatory reporting brought a broad range of sexual activities—pregnancy, birth, venereal disease, the decision to enter the sex trade—under official scrutiny. The Japanese state even set up special bureaucracies to monitor these activities, such as the hygiene police, a division of the special police forces, and other similar state agencies in Japan proper, along with counterparts throughout the Japanese empire, which by the 1930s included Korea, Taiwan, Manchuria, and several Pacific islands.

As the empire expanded across eastern and southeastern Asia, Japanese authorities sexualized, nationalized, and modernized their new colonial



Figure 2.4 A 1926 Japanese advertisement for "Victoria" sanitary napkins from the magazine *Tsūzoku Igaku* (Popular Medicine). Sanitary napkins were seen as a huge improvement over the loincloth that Japanese women had previously used.

subjects in a variety of ways (Frühstück 2003). In their efforts to modernize the empire, Japanese scientists studied prostitution and venereal disease in Korea, tested the latest contraceptive methods on women in Taiwan, identified “perversions” in parts of Asia that were yet to be modernized, and proposed crossethnic mass marriages. Like Western colonialists, they were enthralled by the (often imagined) sexual practices and customs of the other Asians they studied and documented. The information and knowledge they produced fed an ongoing debate about whether to promote pan-Asian solidarity or Japan’s sense of racial and cultural superiority. Nostalgia for Japanese traditions—some only imagined, others imagined lost—both nourished and was nourished by the production of this knowledge. In the process, sexuality, especially as a marker of civilizational status, became overtly political.

Designed to police pregnancies, abortions, and prostitution, the control apparatus was oppressive wherever it reached. Consider, for instance, the risk of discovery in the case of an illegal abortion or infanticide, a discovery that could lead to years in prison. Imagine the dilemma of a seriously ill prostitute who was legally barred from working but pressed to do so by a greedy brothel owner. Envision soldiers threatened with military discipline because syphilis had rendered them too ill to fight.

At the same time, the sexual control apparatus was also productive. It accumulated massive amounts of data that policymakers used to formulate debates, implement policies, and make claims about normative sexual behavior. The “modern” obsession with data had important ideological effects. Nation building in Japan and elsewhere went hand in hand with claims about the importance of institutional rationality and scientific management, and the perceived need to push back against religious and superstitious beliefs (Muta 1996; Frühstück 2003; Silverberg 2009). The rise of statistical thinking in the late nineteenth century also helped to establish some sexual behaviors as normative while marginalizing others as pathological or criminal. This compulsion to normalize some sexual behaviors and marginalize others continued into the twentieth century, sometimes exceeding government control, as individual scholars and social reformers began to make significant contributions to the “discovery” of sex and sexuality, reiterate the need for scientific study, propose their versions of modern *Japanese* sexuality, and engage with researchers and reformers around the world, from Magnus Hirschfeld in Berlin to Margaret Sanger in New York. By the early twentieth century, then, a range of different actors were involved in the pursuit of the truth about sex and its social management. For all

Androstin

てしと劑ンホルホ性男の位本力効
し高も最用信に界薬醫の國各界世

力強
男性ホルモン

アンドロステチン

(藥丸ホルモンなるテストステロンの外雄激素類中の含有効成分を包含す)

老衰現象を豫防し神身の衰
退に伴ふ諸障害を恢復す

力價一定・効力迅速

精力・體力・精神力
の衰退・疲勞倦怠感
生殖器衰弱・性的神
經衰弱・高血壓・糖
尿病・視力減退・早
老症等に適用す
錠劑にても顯著に作用す
るは本劑の特長なり

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新發賣百錠入 金十一圓五十時

各外國家の買辦總店 大阪南東

區芝町三和ビル頂上バーゼビル

學工社會社日本學術野より郵送

共三・屋島・新西小區橋本日京東 品約特 店商藥共長田武 賣賣批店理代総本日

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their methodological and instrumental differences, governmental officials, scholars, and social reformers were connected by a common desire to understand, document, and regulate the sex lives of the Japanese populace and those under Japanese imperial rule, including Koreans, Taiwanese, and Chinese. And all parties sought to link sexuality research to their visions of the past, present, and future of the Japanese nation.

Take Yamamoto Senji (1889–1929), for instance, a prominent biologist, socialist, and member of the Unitarian Church. Yamamoto researched sexual experiences and practices in an innovative interview format that anticipated the much better known US-based Kinsey Reports (discussed in the following case study). By cataloging and quantifying sexual experiences and practices, he attempted to capture the richness and variety of actual sexual experiences in a manner reminiscent of earlier European sexologists such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, and Magnus Hirschfeld. At the same time, unlike doctors of the Japanese medical establishment, Yamamoto was a scientist *and* social reformer willing to challenge conventional scientific wisdom. For example, upon finding that more than 90 percent of the male university student respondents to his surveys had engaged in masturbation, he proposed that the practice was normal—in the face of public condemnation of masturbation as the source of a softening brain, weak spine, sexual neurasthenia, and a host of other severe mental and physical illnesses. Time and again he argued that, if the practice was commonplace in human populations, it must be physiologically and perhaps even psychologically normal. And, if a given sexual behavior or phenomenon could be established as normal, it should be accepted, not condemned.

In addition to being a pioneer sexologist and member of parliament for the left-leaning Labor-Farmer Party, Yamamoto was also a fierce proponent of legalized abortion and birth control, which he saw as important tools of class struggle because they improved quality of life for the underprivileged. So when the Japanese state and its agencies promoted Japanese emigration and pursued expansion into Asia using the excuse that the Japanese “lacked space”⁵—all the while propagating pro-birth slogans such as “procreate and multiply for the good of the country”—Yamamoto pushed for fewer children per family as a foundation for international peace and as a tool to undercut Japanese imperialist expansion.

Given the energetic exchanges then taking place between Japanese, German, and British medical experts, it is unsurprising that Yamamoto was

familiar with the work of his European colleagues.⁶ Moreover, Japanese sex researchers and social reformers such as Yamamoto brought international figures such as American social reformer Margaret Sanger (1879–1966) to Japan. A prominent birth control activist, eugenicist, sex educator, and nurse, Sanger had founded the American Birth Control League (later renamed Planned Parenthood) in 1921. The following year, in a speech at New York’s Carnegie Hall (Sanger 1922), she reported that the Japanese government had at first refused to let her set foot on Japanese soil but eventually relented, allowing her into the country to give five speeches on birth control.

Although eager to stay current with the latest advances in the sexual sciences, Yamamoto and his Japanese colleagues did not blindly adopt the views of Sanger and other international activists, especially when they perceived their calls for sexual reform to be patronizing, orientalizing, or racist. Then as now, global debates around sex and sexuality remained entangled in hierarchical notions of civilization, progress, national character, and race. For instance, Dr. Friedrich Salomon Krauss (1859–1938), an Austrian pioneer of sexual ethnology who had traveled from Vienna to Tokyo to collect material for a 1907 book on *The Sex Life in Beliefs, Morals, Customs and Common Law of the Japanese* (*Das Geschlechtsleben in Glauben, Sitte, Brauch und Gewohnheitsrecht der Japaner*), adopted the always condescending, sometimes admiring, perspective typical of European folklorists and ethnologists of East Asia, when he observed that:

the Occidental looks at Japan through Occidental glasses: He sees moral degeneration where there is in naked reality nothing but unmediated joy of life and irrepressible joy for sexual matters combined with a lack of any kind of hypocrisy. (Krauss 1911, p. 10)

On one hand, ethnographers such as Krauss directed their observations on “the joy of life” in Japan and other “foreign” cultures at the restrictive sexual order at home in Western Europe or the United States. On the other, they used ethnic others including the Japanese to generate and reinforce white Western sexual norms while at the same time identifying new groups of nonwhite, non-European peoples who might benefit from the lifting of outmoded taboos on sexual behavior—an act of sexual liberation that outside observers expected would make non-European peoples happier,

more natural, and less self-conscious or at least help them overcome supposedly violent and uncivilized sexual practices.

The racist implications of these judgments were obvious at the time. And early twentieth-century Japanese intellectuals often dismissed the Orientalist perspective of Western ethnographers such as Krauss in order to claim for Japan an equal status within the hierarchical order of world civilizations. For example, in his 1906 book *Our Fatherland Japan* (*Unser Vaterland Japan*), influential bureaucrat and statesman Nitobe Inazô noted that:

It is a general perception of foreign tourists (many of whom are *learned gentlemen*) that Japanese life lacks morality just as its flowers lack a scent. What a sad confession of the moral and intellectual imagination of these tourists themselves! (cited in Krauss 1911, p. 13, emphasis added)

Although different scholars reached different conclusions, the new sexual science had radically changed the study of sexual practices and attitudes around the globe within only a few decades. Western European sexologists such as Krafft-Ebing in Austria, Ellis in England, and Hirschfeld in Germany garnered most of the initial international attention, but by the 1910s and 1920s East Asian scholars were playing a central role. Among the most prominent were Yamamoto Senji and Yasuda Tokutarô in Japan, and intellectuals of the May Fourth New Culture period (1915–37) in China, who translated sexology and sex educational texts from Europe, Japan, and the United States and introduced them to Chinese readers (Rocha 2010).

In the early years, these intellectual exchanges took place almost exclusively among male scientists and policymakers. Beginning in the 1920s, however, women's voices became increasingly prominent, especially on issues such as love, motherhood, sexual freedom, birth control, and female suffrage. As happened with their male counterparts, the most influential female figures on the international stage were Westerners, such as Margaret Sanger and Swedish suffragist, educator, and writer Ellen Key. But Japanese women such as Yamada Waka, Hiratsuka Raichô, Yamakawa Kikue, Yosano Akiko, and Yasuda Satsuki participated as well, often speaking out in favor of progressive feminist measures such as a woman's right to abortion and birth control. These early Japanese feminists developed their ideas in dialogue with their Western counterparts but struggled to achieve consensus on the appropriateness of Western concepts of autonomy, emancipation, and equality for women in Japanese culture and society. For example, in a

debate over whether or not pregnant women and mothers should expect state support, renowned poet Yosano Akiko dismissed what she perceived as a Western feminist stance in favor of state support for women during pregnancy and birth, arguing that it would undermine women's limited independence by valuing them only as mothers. In contrast, fellow feminist Hiratsuka Raichô strongly advocated for state protection for women and forced sterilization for men with venereal diseases.⁷ Despite major differences of opinion, however, Japanese feminists generally treated sexuality as a domain of restriction and danger for women rather than as a source of self-exploration and pleasure.

Prostitution was another hotly debated sexual issue with substantial social and political implications. As early as 1900, members of the emerging abolition movement in Japan denounced both rural fathers for selling their daughters to brothels and the state for tolerating, if not supporting, the practice. They demanded better health services for prostitutes and ways for them to leave the "water trade" (the traditional euphemism for Japan's nighttime entertainment business). Japanese abolitionists initially debated the question of how to do away with prostitution; later, when that proved impossible, they argued over ways to better control prostitutes in order to protect the health of Japan's men and their "innocent wives and children." By 1940, most critics of prostitution came to agree that it was better, perhaps necessary, to sacrifice a few women in order to keep the social order from collapsing, to protect "innocent" women from male sexual violence, and to keep up soldiers' morale in the homeland and on the front. This Japanese debate and similar attitudes elsewhere encouraged the development of a variety of sexual slavery systems, ranging from so-called "comfort stations" for Imperial Japanese Army troops to Wehrmacht brothels all over Europe and rape camps within the concentration camps of the Nazi regime (Yoshimi 2000; Soh 2008; Harris 2010; Hedgepeth and Sidel 2010).

As this reference to Nazi Germany suggests, the era of "erotic grotesque nonsense" in 1930s Japan mirrored "the stimulation of affect and sensation to bind the people to fascist regime[s]" in Italy, Spain, the Third Reich and perhaps elsewhere as well (Herzog 2005, p. 10; see also Silverberg 2009). Only a handful of years after Hirschfeld's two-volume magnum opus, *Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges* (The Sexual History of the World War), was published in 1930, the great project of progressive sexology came to an end as military regimes began to replace liberal democracies in many countries around the world. The byline on the book's title page nonetheless hailed

the author as the principal creator of "the Sexual Sciences." Indeed, the litany of academic honors showered on Hirschfeld expressed in no uncertain terms the achievements of sexual research in Weimar (pre-Nazi) Germany: human sexuality was no longer to be understood through long-held beliefs but rather through scientific study, and it was no longer to be regulated by local communities but by government agencies. While many scientists, medical doctors, and other sociosexual reformers including Hirschfeld and Yamamoto had worked hard to protect sexual behavior from state intrusion, others had been equally keen to assist the state in its quest to organize, manage, and control sexual behavior. Regardless, the uneasy relationship between the sexual sciences and the state—cozy for some, contentious for others—would take a more ominous turn during the 1940s and 1950s, not just in authoritarian states such as Japan and Germany but also in liberal democracies such as the United States.

Racializing Sexuality/Sexualizing Race: The United States

The history of sexuality in the United States is inseparable from the internal politics of race and ethnicity. As historians John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman explain:

Ever since the seventeenth century, European migrants to America had merged racial and sexual ideology in order to differentiate themselves from Indians and blacks, to strengthen the mechanisms of social control over slaves, and to justify the appropriation of Indian and Mexican lands through the destruction of native peoples and their cultures. In the nineteenth century, sexuality continued to serve as a powerful means by which white Americans maintained dominance over people of other races. Both scientific and popular thought supported the view that whites were civilized and rational, while members of other races were savage, irrational, and sensual. These animalistic elements posed a particular threat to middle-class Americans, who sought to maintain social stability during rapid economic change and to insure that a virtuous citizenry would fulfill the dream of republicanism. At a time when middle-class morality rested heavily upon a belief in the purity of women in the home, stereotypes of immoral women of other races contributed to the belief in white superiority. In addition, whites feared the specter of racial amalgamation, believing it would debase whites to the status of other races. (D'Emilio and Freedman 1988, p. 86)

As D'Emilio and Freedman suggest, this potent mix of white racial and moral supremacy could take many forms. On the western frontier it appeared in Christian missionary efforts to teach Native Americans sexual restraint, including the proper "missionary" position for intercourse between married men and women, and to convince Chinese migrant workers to abandon polygamous marriage in favor of monogamy (D'Emilio and Freedman 1988, p. 92–3). When missionary efforts failed to convert "heathen" peoples to white Christian ways (often before they were tried), soldiers and settlers sometimes resorted to sexual violence against women of color as a means of retaliation, intimidation, and perhaps even genocide. In later years, medical experimentation, including forced sterilization, served similar ends (Smith 2005).

In the South, the institution of slavery conditioned sexual and racial relations in different ways than in the free states. However, the underlying dynamics of white men's racial, sexual, and gender privilege took a similar form as "southern moralists condoned white men gratifying their lust, as long as they did so discreetly with poor white or black women" (D'Emilio and Freedman 1988, p. 95). Some interracial and cross-class relations were consensual; many were not. With the end of slavery, sexual violence became a "weapon of terror," used to intimidate blacks and keep them from assuming social and political equality with whites. White supremacists deployed this weapon against black women and men alike whether by raping black women with impunity or lynching black men accused of raping white women. In the years following the Civil War, fear of race mixture or "miscegenation" led southern states to pass new laws to prevent interracial marriage (D'Emilio and Freedman 1988, p. 106).

By the turn of the twentieth century, fear of social degeneration through miscegenation had spread throughout much of the country. Inspired by social Darwinism and a desire to better the human race through eugenics (selective breeding), physical anthropologists, medical experts, and policy makers alike worried that race mixture would undo the centuries of racial "progress" that had culminated in white European and North American civilization. To counter its negative effects, they developed elaborate racial taxonomies with classifications such as mulatto, Malay, Mongolian, and Negro, which they used to determine suitable marriage partners. These purportedly scientific taxonomies produced multiple effects. As historian Alexandra Stern has argued, "the solidification of . . . racial hierarchies was integral to the entrenchment of Jim Crow segregation after

Reconstruction and the rise of Sinophobia and anti-Asian discrimination, and it helped to rationalize colonial ventures in Latin America and the Pacific" (2005, p. 13). Although genocidal Nazi eugenic policies during World War II discredited a field tainted by what critics have called "scientific racism," researchers working in the newly christened field of "social biology" turned toward genetic marital counseling at home and "retooled" eugenics with the export of Western-led modernization to the Third World" (Stern 2005, p. 4).

While racial and ethnic politics have been central to the story of sexuality and the nation-state in the United States, other factors have played a role as well—although they usually took on racial overtones in the process. Just as racial and ethnic minorities supposedly embodied a degenerate sexuality against which whites defined themselves, other "deviant" groups also threatened to undermine the social order. Concern about nonnormative sexualities, especially homosexuality, became especially acute in the latter half of the nineteenth century as fears about sexual deviance previously confined for the most part to the private sphere began to enter public discourse and public policy. As noted earlier, the twin themes of westward expansion and modernization saturated the foundation narrative of the United States from the beginning. By 1900, conventional national histories related how transplanted white Europeans had become Americans by moving triumphantly westward, taking possession of the wilderness, and subduing savagery. Nonnormative sexualities had no place in this story—at least for its principal (white) protagonists.

This widely accepted reading of America's frontier past as the heyday of white, heterosexual patriarchy might have appealed to the national imaginary but the historical reality was quite different. In stark contrast to this comforting foundational fiction—which proved its lingering discursive power in the controversy over the rugged cowboy lovers in Ang Lee's 2005 film *Brokeback Mountain*—we know from recent historical research that Western migrants and long-term residents often changed their gender and sexual identities for any number of reasons. These changes meant different things to different people (and in different cultural settings). As historian Peter Boag notes, the decision to change their gender or sexual identity "simply felt natural to some men and women, while women sometimes found it useful to dress as men in order to travel safely or make a decent income" (Boag 2011, pp. 7–8).

Turn-of-the-century sexologists had no trouble with the frontier myth of American triumphalism but worried that the onset of modernity in



Figure 2.6 Martha Jane Burke, better known as Calamity Jane, seated with a rifle. Calamity Jane was a scout in the American Indian Wars and a famed Western markswoman. Her unabashedly "butch" public image suggests that gender identities were not nearly as stable (or closeted) as the myth of the Western frontier would lead us to believe. Undated photograph. Source: © Bettmann / Corbis.

Eastern cities was undermining traditional gender roles, producing a condition they labeled “sexual inversion” in which men behaved as women and women behaved as men (Boag 2011, pp. 5–7; Somerville 2000, p. 3). As noted in the previous section, European sex researchers such as Hirschfeld, von Krafft-Ebing, Ellis, and others had shown a pronounced interest in nonnormative sexualities, including several different types of same-sex sexual behaviors. Scientific interest was accompanied by a growing public acknowledgment among educated Europeans that many people were attracted physically and emotionally to members of their own sex. And, in Europe at least, both sexologists and the educated public agreed that these types of sexual “deviance” were likely a product of the challenges that rapid urbanization presented to “traditional” lifestyles. This urbane frankness about the variability of human sexuality was not typical of attitudes in the United States at the time. While members of the American medical establishment had some knowledge of the latest advances in late nineteenth-century European sexology, for the most part they did not research sexual topics until later in the twentieth century, unless it was to expose the potential health threats posed by extramarital sex. Likewise, public discourse on sexuality carefully emphasized the benefits of chastity and abstinence by portraying the horrors of venereal diseases rather than dwelling on “unpleasant” topics such as sexual deviance. In the United States, these relatively conservative views on sex education and sexuality did not change much until after World War II.

Despite a prolific scientific and public discourse on sexuality in the United States characterized by fearmongering, disapproving reticence, and suggestive obfuscation, historical evidence suggests that by the 1920s many American cities had vibrant urban subcultures built around alternative sexualities. For example, University of Chicago graduate students working under one of the first American sociologists to carry out extensive research on homosexuality, Ernest W. Burgess, “discovered” an active gay community of cabarets and nightclubs on the Near North and South Sides of Chicago in the late 1920s and early 1930s (Heap 2003, p. 467). By 1930, a local magazine noted that as many as thirty-five “pansy parlors” had opened in just six months in Towertown, the neighborhood adjacent to the old Chicago Water Tower (Heap 2009, p. 88). The emergence of Chicago’s gay subculture was closely tied to an explosion of popular culture in the city’s growing racial and ethnic communities and the fashionable slumming on the part of adventurous white middle- and upper-class bohemians that accompanied both phenomena. After a series of 1938 visits to the Cabin

Inn, a popular interracial (“black and tan”) cabaret famous for its “painted boys,” a University of Chicago graduate student reported that “every night we find the place crowded with both races, the black and the white, [and] both types of lovers, the homo and the hetro [sic]” (cited in Heap 2009, p. 95). According to historian Chad Heap:

By 1938, Chicago sociologists’ association of homosexuality with particular urban spaces was so complete that Professor Burgess could expect students in his social pathology course to provide an affirmative answer to the true-false exam question, “In large cities, homosexual individuals tend to congregate rather than remain separate from each other.” (Heap 2003, p. 467)

World War II and the military draft brought together thousands of men from rural prairie states and seaside cities, exposing them to a range of new sexual experiences and possibilities, including sexual relations with other men (Bérubé 1990; Jarvis 2010, pp. 72–85). World War II also provided opportunities for women to live and work in all-women’s environments outside the purview of their families and communities. Efforts to police against “mannish” women in the Women’s Army Corps, and to enforce standards of white, middle-class feminine respectability among the ranks, reflected anxieties over shifting gender hierarchies, as these intersected with racial and class inequalities in the context of rapid social change. Leisa Meyer suggests that “while butch women were particularly likely to be targeted as lesbians . . . their visibility also served as both an anchor and rallying point for the formation of lesbian communities within the corps” (Meyer 1996, p. 9).

When economic prosperity returned to the United States after World War II, interest in sexuality research revived as well. At the forefront of this postwar revival was a team of researchers headed by Indiana University sexologist Dr. Alfred Kinsey and their soon-to-be-world-famous Kinsey Reports on *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953).⁸ Based on over eleven thousand confidential interviews with American men and women, the Kinsey Reports attempted “to accumulate an objectively determined body of fact about sex which strictly avoids social or moral interpretations of the fact” (Kinsey et al. 1948, p. 5). A zoologist by training, Kinsey approached the study of human populations with fewer preconceived notions (about sex) and less reticence than most of his predecessors. And, although his critics pointed out the “subjective” nature of his interview data, its massive volume and the study’s



Figure 2.7 Erotic photograph of two sailors kissing taken by an anonymous photographer in the 1940s. *Source:* The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender and Reproduction, KI-DC: 44270 (copyright holder unknown).

matter-of-fact tone tended to overwhelm their objections. The Kinsey Reports' widely reported findings provoked intense controversy within and outside the scientific community. For many, its "revelations"—that 37 percent of men and 13 percent of women had experienced orgasm with a partner of the same sex, that nearly 46 percent of men had had a sexual

experience with another man, that 10 percent of men and 6 percent of women were predominantly homosexual, that 11 percent of men had anal sex with their wives, that 92 percent of men and 62 percent of women had masturbated—were not just controversial but deeply shocking (Kinsey Institute 2013). For others, the Kinsey data provided long-overdue vindication after decades of American hypocrisy, prudery, and denial. Whatever the reaction, American understandings of sexuality changed dramatically after the publication of the Kinsey Reports.

With regard to homosexuality, Kinsey's analysis—supported by his unprecedented data set—reinforced the contention of earlier sexologists that same-sex attraction was common (and thus "natural") in human populations, sometimes manifesting as a youthful phase and at other times as a lifetime trait. As explained in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, "males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats . . . the living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects" (Kinsey et al. 1948). Moreover, the Kinsey Reports dispelled once and for all the myth that homosexuality was an urban by-product of modern life with the discovery that rates of same-sex behavior among men in rural communities, especially in the West, were higher than in cities (Boag 2011, p. 3). Perhaps most important, the work of postwar sexologists such as Kinsey and his colleagues put a definitive end to the "sexual inversion" model developed by turn-of-the-century European sexologists, replacing it with a more psychologically nuanced understanding of same-sex behavior that has (somewhat ironically) given rise to modern notions of homosexual identity (Laqueur 1992, 2004).

Even though scientific and popular understandings of human sexuality have shifted in the past few decades, the American preoccupation with homosexuality has remained a constant. As with race and ethnicity, the reason for this ongoing obsession is tied directly to the foundational fictions that continue to define the nation-state. As historian Jennifer Terry explains:

Because of the various ways that homosexuality has been figured as a transgression by those who either championed it or repudiated it, the subject came to be an agonistic rhetorical field of far-reaching cultural significance. . . . As such, homosexuality has allowed its advocates to launch liberatory critiques of oppressive features of the family, marriage, normative education, moralistic religious doctrines, and homophobic patriotism. At the same

time, the public presence of homosexuality has allowed its detractors to instigate vociferous attacks on “the homosexual lifestyle” and “the gay agenda” as emblematic of the downfall of civilization and all that is good about it. (Terry 1999, p. 4)

Put in the Foucauldian terms introduced at the beginning of this chapter, public debates about sexuality still produce powerful effects in American society. This has become even more apparent as civil rights legislation has ensured the legal (if not always actual) rights of racial and ethnic minorities. Although less directly racialized than before, the questions of citizenship and belonging raised by those with nonnormative sexualities have become even more central in recent years: Who can serve in the military? Who can get married? Who can teach in public schools? Who can parent children? Who can share health and retirement benefits? Or how to address neoliberal capitalism’s remarkable ability to repurpose differences of gender and sexuality without ending the inequalities those differences produce? Despite evidence on some fronts (e.g. military service, gay marriage) of increased tolerance or the erosion of traditional family values (depending on point of view), these fundamental questions are still very much up in the air. And they are more bound up in issues of sexuality than ever before. Halfway around the world, in South Africa, sexuality has become a matter of national politics and state formation in a dramatically different way.

Constitutionalizing Nonnormative Sexuality: South Africa

The Bill of Rights from the 1996 South African constitution includes this mandate:

The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.

The provision that immediately follows prohibits discrimination by persons on these same grounds; the next requires that national legislation “be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination” (Republic of South Africa 1996). A hallmark of the new postapartheid democracy, South Africa’s constitution was the first in the world to ban discrimination on the

grounds of “sexual orientation.” And, when Parliament neglected to pass a law allowing same-sex couples to marry, a Constitutional Court ruling on the 2005 *Minister of Home Affairs v. Fourie* case ordered legislators to remedy the situation (Constitutional Court of South Africa 2005). In response to the court order, Parliament passed the 2006 Civil Union Act and South Africa became the second country outside Western Europe (after Canada) to legalize same-sex marriage.

This section examines the central role of sexuality in nation-building efforts in contemporary South Africa. Although many of the links between sex and nation examined so far are evident in the South African case, it is in many ways unique. Nation building in places such as Japan, the United States, and Western Europe occurred more than a century before the movement for sexual rights, but in South Africa these two processes occurred more or less simultaneously. And both are linked in important ways to the decades-long struggle against apartheid, which remained in force until the early 1990s. Postapartheid South Africa, then, is an example of a nation imagined from the start as multicultural, multiracial, multisexual, and tolerant of difference. In this instance, the seemingly unavoidable intersection of sex and nation—so often a source of exclusions in nationalist discourse—has become a positive symbol of social progress and a proud new national identity.

Tensions between sex and nation have appeared throughout Africa in recent years, as postcolonial societies have come to grips with modern challenges to traditional gender and sex roles, challenges that have produced a variety of effects “including anxieties about pregnant schoolgirls in colonial Kenya, public discourse around homosexual rights in Uganda, and gender coalitions across race and class in South Africa” (Cole et al. 2007, p. 5). Only in South Africa, however, have public institutions responded in such a deliberately “progressive” way by granting full citizenship to all individuals irrespective of their gender and sexual identities.

This sudden embrace of progressive multiculturalism—usually associated with northern European social democracies—challenges long-standing assumptions about African societies that have changed little despite (and perhaps because of) the political decolonization movements that sprang up across the continent after World War II and lasted into the 1990s. As literary scholar Brenna Munro points out:

Europe’s “civilizing mission” constituted itself through attempts to eradicate indigenous social formations that were deemed deviant, from polygamy to

"female husbands," all while unruly new sexual cultures were being forged in the cities, industries, and institutions of a changing Africa. Ideas about what constitutes "sex," as well as the formation of sexual identities and the production of sexual taboos and desires, were thus shaped by these histories, on both sides of the colonial divide. (Munro 2012, p. xiii)

Postcolonial movements and scholarship have long questioned the sincerity of the "civilizing mission" and the validity of imperialist stereotypes, which reduced one of the most culturally diverse regions of the world to a single pan-African culture. But reductionist notions of African cultures—often grounded in anthropological (and sometimes feminist) arguments about inheritance, patriarchy, and incest taboos in "simple" societies—have continued to shape everything from domestic social policy to international foreign aid.

Preconceived notions of Africans as hypersexual and promiscuous have been especially evident in family planning and public health campaigns against sexually transmitted disease. Even though colonial regimes frequently created these public health problems in the first place, they also exaggerated and exploited them for their own political advantage. Colonial public health campaigns deployed science in ways that justified punitive, moralistic interventions that frequently worsened the sexual health conditions of Africans, not least through enforced urban racial segregation and strict control of women's mobility. Postcolonial regimes and their international allies often take similar approaches. For instance, communication scholar and LGBT activist Cindy Patton observes that 1990s international efforts to curtail the spread of HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa "invented a heterosexual 'African AIDS' that promotes a new kind of colonial domination by reconstructing Africa as an uncharted, supranational mass" (Patton 1992, p. 218). The Western invention of African AIDS, she argues, involves three misleading and ultimately dangerous "texts": "Africans won't use condoms"; "Africa has such poor medical care that they can't properly diagnose AIDS"; and "In Africa, AIDS is a disease of poverty" (Patton 1990, p. 26–7). According to Patton,

the insidious, unifying theme reiterated in texts one to three is that disease and the interruption of disease in Africa are of a different type altogether from disease in North America and Europe, and that science, a logical system requiring western "intelligence," can never be conducted by Africans. (Patton 1990, p. 28)

Moreover, Westerners construct disease in Africa as "natural," effectively invoking "an evolutionary view of geopolitics" that "enables the former colonial administrators to forget their complicity in the underdevelopment and exploitation that created the particular patterns of poverty that mark Africa today" and allows them to affirm that "Africa's problems can only be solved through civilizing forces—or, in the romantic version, through a withdrawal from civilization and a return to pristine "tribal ways" (Patton 1990, p. 28). The power of neocolonial tropes to shape public health policy in Africa has had pernicious effects because national government responses to crises such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic are almost always dependent on research models and data sets derived from international and internationally funded sources.

Western-inspired misperceptions of African sexuality (whether perpetuated by Westerners or Africans), especially the preposterous notion that it might be possible to generalize across the diversity of African societies and culture, have come under attack in recent years. With a careful eye to geographical, cultural, and historical differences, a new generation of African sexuality scholars have made us aware of everything from the subtleties of nonnormative sexual behavior in African communities to the obvious point—often missed by ethnographers—"that Africans' decision-making about sexual relationships cannot be explained simply by structures and functions but also involves such ephemeral issues as intimacy, love, spirituality, and self doubt, including masculine self doubt" (Epprecht 2009, p. 1271). In other words, African sexual practices and the social meanings they invoke are as complex, contradictory, and contested as anything in the Global North.

These scholarly critiques of the conventional wisdom on African sexualities took hold in South Africa as part of the intertwined struggles to overthrow apartheid and promote sexual rights—and helped foster a sense of solidarity between the antiapartheid and sexual rights movements. As we saw in the previous case study, the intersections between race, sexuality, and nation were strong in the United States with its long history of slavery and segregation. In South Africa, these historical links, especially between struggles for racial equality and sexual rights, were even stronger. As Munro explains:

Apartheid had been deeply entangled with histories of sexuality and stigma. It was built on an alliance between Anglo-South Africans and Afrikaners forged in part through early twentieth-century "Black Peril" panics about

the sexual threat that black men supposedly posed to white women, was driven by a phobic preoccupation with sexual "mixing," and was enforced through sexual violence against black people as well as the aggressive policing of interracial sex, and a strict, indeed militarized regime of heteronormative whiteness. (Munro 2012, p. xii)

Moreover, apartheid as an institution "was an *antimodernist* project that explicitly set itself against most of the rest of the 'developed' world" (Epprecht 2006, p. 223).

This unique convergence of intertwined liberation movements working in opposition to an antimodern, antiprogressive, segregationist nation-state set the conditions for a more inclusive South Africa, "a celebrated new political order that imagined the postcolonial nation as belonging equally to the descendants of indigenous peoples, colonizing settlers, transported slaves, indentured laborers, and immigrants—and it also specifically included gays and lesbians as citizens" (Munro 2012, p. vii). Despite powerful historical links, however, the convergence of political interests between the movements for racial equality and sexual rights was not apparent until the early 1990s. Before that time, South African gay rights groups such as the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA) were headed almost exclusively by white, urban, middle-class gay men; reflected their particular concerns; and embraced conventional Western constructions of homosexuality. Although GASA accepted black members—in part to placate gay rights allies abroad—the organization refused to oppose apartheid and even allied itself on occasion with the pro-apartheid National Party in an effort to garner support for gay rights (or at least forestall initiatives to repress the urban middle-class gay community). One of its few black members, Simon Nkoli, remembered his 1980s GASA experience this way:

The best thing about membership was that, apparently, your little pink card got you into clubs at discounted prices. I got my [card] in the mail, and it was a feast of possibility: The Dungeon, The Butterfly, Mandys. I tried Mandys and they said "no blacks." The Dungeon. "No blacks." I showed them their ad . . . "All GASA members welcome at a discount." "I'm a member of GASA," I'd say. "Yes," they'd reply, "but you're black. What if the police come?" The only place I managed to get into was somewhere in Jeppe Street. I was the only black person there and I felt so intimidated that I never went back. (Gevisser 1995, p. 52)

Routine discrimination within the organization was not the only problem. When Nkoli went to prison in the 1980s on charges of treason for his politi-

cal work, GASA made no effort to have him released despite his growing international notoriety as the "gay Mandela." In response, on his 1988 release from prison, Nkoli helped found a new sexual rights organization, Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW), which called on "All South Africans who are Committed to a Non-Racist, Non-Sexist, Non-Discriminatory Democratic Future" (Gevisser 1995, p. 74).

The experiences of GLOW cofounder Linda Ngcobo highlight another failing of pre-1990s white, middle-class gay rights groups in South Africa: their inability to understand (much less acknowledge) the nonnormative sexualities that characterized same-sex behavior in black communities. For Linda and the cohort of "gay" men who grew up in the black townships in the 1970s and 1980s, the sex/gender system revolved loosely around three highly gendered identities: *skesana*, a boy who behaves like a girl and "likes to be fucked"; *injonga*, a man or boy "who makes the proposals and does the fucking"; and *pantsula*, a "tough" man or boy who penetrates *skesanas* under the assumption or pretext that they are female (McLean and Ngcobo 1995). Families treated *skesana* sons as girls, assigning them women's work around the home, and *skesanas* often "married" men. Although on occasion *skesanas* switched roles as they became older—a pattern associated with male-only migrant labor camps—those who grew up in the townships often adhered to their female gender identity into adulthood (Donham 1998).

Political mobilization, beginning with the 1976 Soweto uprising, brought some acceptance for *skesana*-identified boys and their female counterparts. Interviewed several years later, Linda remembered that:

when the time came to go and march they wanted all the boys and girls to join in. The gays said: "We're not accepted by you, so why should we march?" But then they said they didn't mind and we would go to march in drag. Even the straight boys would wear drag. You could wear what you liked. (McLean and Ngcobo 1995, p. 180)

The timing was propitious for "gay" township participants because the Soweto uprising—initiated by black high-school students protesting the introduction of Afrikaans as a principal language of instruction—centered issues of black identity and resistance to reactionary state-imposed cultural symbols. In this context, the struggle against apartheid involved the symbolic casting off of oppressive traditions of all kinds (whether from outside or within the townships) and embracing the progressive agenda of national and international antiapartheid activists, including the African National

Congress (ANC), which used the Soweto uprising as a springboard into political prominence. Indeed, by the early 1990s, ANC's exiled leadership had incorporated sexual rights into the party platform and Linda could declare optimistically that:

The thing that has done the most for gays in the townships are the marches we have had for gay and lesbian rights. These have been very important and I hope that we will be legalized with an ANC government. Then maybe we can even get married in Regina Mundi [Soweto's principal cathedral] and they won't be throwing in the teargas. (McLean and Ngcobo 1995, p. 181)

The ANC's support for an end to sexual discrimination coincided with major cultural events such as the 1990 inauguration of an annual gay rights parade in Johannesburg, which "began to do much, through a set of such internationally recognized gay symbols as rainbow flags and pink triangles, to create a sense of transnational connections for gay South Africans" (Donham 1998, p. 12).

The 1996 constitutional prohibition on sexual discrimination and the 2005 Constitutional Court ruling on the *Minister of Home Affairs v. Fourie* case, which compelled Parliament to legalize same-sex marriages, were the direct result of the political alliance between racial justice and sexual rights advocates at the local, national, and international levels. The shared language of human rights, especially equality and dignity, is clearly reflected in the Constitutional Court's media summary:

The claim by the applicants in *Fourie* of the right to get married should be seen as part of a comprehensive wish to be able to live openly and freely as lesbian women emancipated from all the legal taboos that historically have kept them from enjoying life in the mainstream of society. The right to celebrate their union accordingly signified far more than a right to enter into a legal arrangement with many attendant and significant consequences, important though they may be. It represented a major symbolical milestone in their long walk to equality and dignity. The greater and more secure the institutional imprimatur for their union, the more solidly would it and other such unions be rescued from legal oblivion, and the more tranquil and enduring would such unions ultimately turn out to be. (Constitutional Court of South Africa 2005)

As this eloquent defense of Fourie and her partner's right to enjoy life "in the mainstream of society" attests, the ANC's political victory in the 1994

elections—which put a definitive end to apartheid—initiated a period of progressive nation building around multicultural, multiracial, multisexual ideals that stressed inclusion and tolerance in deliberate contrast to the exclusions and intolerance of the apartheid era.

At the same time, state endorsement of a progressive sexual rights agenda produced some dramatic changes in the sex/gender system prevalent in black communities in the previous decades, as female-identified *skesanas* like Linda began to promote Western-style same-sex identities and relationships. These ongoing changes in what it means to be gay (especially poor, black, and gay) in South Africa have involved "not so much the replacement of one cultural system by another, but the addition of a new cultural model to older ones" (Donham 1998, p. 17). Nevertheless, the centrality of universalist notions of same-sex sexuality—understood as more modern and progressive than those derived from traditional and repressive sex/gender systems—reminds us of the power of social categories to shape human subjectivity and to structure the way we perceive ourselves and the ways we are perceived by others, including the "authorities."

Despite constitutional protections, sexual rights remain highly controversial in South Africa (and throughout the continent). Prominent political leaders from Winnie Mandela to Jacob Zuma (elected president in 2008) have blamed Western imperialism for homosexuality, insisting that same-sex desire in African societies resulted from sex-segregated labor regimes and the seductive power of decadent foreigners (Gevisser 1995, pp. 69–71). Others have denounced homosexuality in Christian terms. During the constitutional convention debates, for example, delegate Kenneth Meshoe reminded his colleagues that:

in the beginning God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. To build a family Adam needed Eve not Steve. Even today Eve needs Adam not Madam to build a family. Nation-building cannot be possible while we try to legally destroy family values and the moral fiber of our society with clauses in the Constitution that promote a lifestyle that is an embarrassment even to our ancestors. (Republic of South Africa, Parliament 1995, p. 31; cited in Botha and Cameron 1997, p. 1921)

This overdetermined argument that homosexuality is both un-African and un-Christian, "an embarrassment *even* to our ancestors," as Meshoe puts it, has considerable traction in a country where, according to anti-gay-rights groups, most citizens still oppose gay marriage and sexual rights.



Figure 2.8 Paul Botha kisses his partner Albert Morton before their 2009 wedding in Cape Town, South Africa. While South Africa's openness to same-sex marriage has benefited some middle-class (mostly white male) citizens, observers worry that those benefits have bypassed many of the country's poorer black citizens. *Source:* Pieter Bauermeister / NYT / Redux / eyevine.

A recent spate of vicious hate crimes—gruesome murders involving castration, beheading, and immolation—against gays and lesbians in South Africa suggests that constitutional mandates against sexual discrimination have failed to translate into social acceptance and may even have contributed to homophobia in the country (Davis 2012). Moreover, sex crimes in general appear to be on the rise with reported rapes at fifty thousand in 2012 (women's rights groups estimate that only one in ten rapes is reported) and extremely low rates of conviction (one in twenty-five in Johannesburg). Included in these rape statistics are “corrective” rapes in which men and boys, usually in groups, rape lesbians in order to “correct” their supposedly unnatural sexual orientation. In 2007, for example, five men gang-raped and murdered sexual rights spokesperson and former national soccer player Eudy Simelane, stabbing her twenty-five times, because she admitted publicly to being a lesbian. And a 2008 South African Human Rights Commission report on violence in schools noted a growing acceptance of



Figure 2.9 A lesbian couple takes a break during a 2006 march in Soweto, South Africa, to protest ongoing oppression and bad treatment of LGBT individuals. *Source:* © Sipiwe Sibeko / X01918 / Reuters / Corbis.

corrective rape among school-aged boys. This growing acceptance is hardly confined to schoolboys. Accused of raping a lesbian anti-AIDS activist in 2006, President Jacob Zuma argued that, because the young woman wore a miniskirt and showed him her thigh during the interview, she was asking for sex and “in the Zulu culture, you cannot just leave a woman if she is ready.” The court dismissed the charges despite the protests of women's rights organizations (Hughes 2009).

As these examples make clear, the superficially idyllic relationship between sexually nonnormative individuals and the postapartheid South African state has been uneasy and complicated from the beginning. Progressive ANC activists such as revered first president Nelson Mandela came out firmly in favor of sexual rights and many have continued to offer strong support. These supporters do not include Mandela's presidential successors. Thabo Mbeki (1999–2008), for example, distressed national and international anti-AIDS organizations by publicly insisting that poverty rather

than exposure to HIV virus caused AIDS, a position that delayed the distribution of antiretroviral drugs and led to hundreds of unnecessary deaths. Mbeki's successor, Jacob Zuma, has been more overtly homophobic. In addition to his "she asked for it" defense against rape charges, Zuma had to apologize for a 2006 comment to a Soweto newspaper that same-sex marriages were "a disgrace to the nation and to God" (Munro 2012, p. xvii). This last comment—which then Deputy President Zuma explained was his personal response as a man rather than his official position as a public figure—gives some sense of the mixed messages often sent by supposed supporters of sexual rights. Moreover, the admission that "as a man" he felt same-sex marriages were a "disgrace to the nation" suggests that constitutional protections have failed altogether to ease the historical tensions between sexuality and that nation-state, even at the highest levels of government.

Conclusions

As the preceding case studies of Japan, the United States, and South Africa have shown, the historical and cultural changes at the intersection of sexualities and the nation-state have been various, fractured, and incomplete. The establishment of modern sexual regimes around the world has been driven by a variety of motivations that follow distinct local logics. Nation-state formation everywhere has invariably generated a great deal of anxiety around issues of sexuality as the perceived locus of a "modern" social order. At the same time, the significance of modernity has been hotly debated, as professionals and ordinary people alike fight to tie sexuality to the state or protect it from state intrusion. They have fought, too, over what would constitute "true" sexual knowledge. Meanwhile, an ever-changing rhetorical configuration of nature, liberation, and rights contributed to the shifting and the solidifying of the boundaries of socially condoned sexual behavior. New theories and new cultural anxieties have emerged at particular moments in response to specific dynamics within the overlapping histories of scientific invention, medical knowledge and treatment, political discourses regarding proper citizenship, and moral discourses about what constitutes normalcy. These new "technologies of power" have provided the basis for modern notions of sexual identity and politicized the production and circulation of sexual knowledge.

It has only been in the past century that scholars have begun to center the historicity of "culture"—to understand it as something highly malleable

and in constant flux rather than relatively stable and resistant to change. As this chapter has made clear, this insight applies to sexual cultures as well. An analysis of the emergence of "modern" sexualities necessarily engages differences in culture and history, nation and narration. There is no linear, uniform story of the formation of modern sexuality, just as there is no singular web of relations that connect sex and sexuality to the nation-state. The transfer and translation of sexual cultures across national boundaries and historical periods has been limited in some places, extensive in others.

Variations around the world notwithstanding, the nation-state, with its distinctive technologies of population management, has become the preferred model of social organization throughout the world. In the wake of nation building, various states and the populations governed by them have developed their own answers to questions pertaining to sex. These answers have changed as nineteenth- and twentieth-century "modernities" have played out differently in various parts of the world. Still, most modern sexual regimes share some striking characteristics. For instance, revolutionary attempts at modernization have encouraged the legal and medical professions to pursue social engineering through the use of specialized training and disciplinary expertise. In the modernizing world from Germany and Japan to the United States and South Africa, the flourishing of commercial culture and the expansion of urban life have contributed to the widening of public discourses about sex and sexuality. The highly politicized issues of culture, health, and sexuality have been debated in an increasingly diverse context as trained professionals have found themselves in conversation with a wide range of interest groups including social reformers, feminists, and political ideologues. Moreover, everyone from technocrats and policymakers to social commentators and sexual rights advocates has come to believe that our understanding of sexuality should not only be defined in medical terms but also draw from a number of emerging disciplines in the biological and social sciences. These understandings—complex, contested, and contradictory as they often are—are at the heart and soul of the modern nation-state.

Notes

- 1 Nation and state—while bound up together in complicated ways that are beyond the scope of this chapter—are distinct concepts. Anthropologist Benedict Anderson has famously described nations as "imagined communities"

- that are "imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 1983, p. 5), while states represent "a particular machinery for the exercise of 'government over a given population'" (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989, p. 5).
- 2 The term "sexual culture" includes both individual experience and collective interpretations of those experiences (Eder et al. 1999, p. 1).
 - 3 The study of sexuality in China is a growing field. See for example Dikötter (1995), Jeffreys (2006), and Jackson et al. (2008).
 - 4 Discovery was also invention. As Michel Foucault and others have noted, the desire to study sexual attitudes and practices was couched in the language of "seeking the truth" about sex and thus was closely intertwined with the *making* of a modern sexuality, or the transformation of sexual practice into a discourse about modernity (Foucault 1990).
 - 5 The political slogan "Volk ohne Raum," or "people without space," was popular first in the Weimar Republic and later in Nazi Germany. The slogan was originally coined by nationalist writer Hans Grimm, whose novel *Volk ohne Raum* appeared in 1926 and sold nearly 700,000 copies. The slogan implied that the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, which ended World War I, had deprived Germany of its colonial empire and subjected its "people without space" to lives of poverty, misery, hunger, and overpopulation.
 - 6 For decades, German scholars had come to Japan to teach at the country's most renowned universities and professional schools, while Japanese scholars and scholars in training went to Germany for study and research at some of its most reputable universities and research laboratories. Until well into the twentieth century, German prevailed in Japan as the international language of science and technology, and most Japanese scientists and medical experts learned German as their first foreign language.
 - 7 Although Hiratsuka Raichō first made her case for forced sterilization in 1917, the Japanese state waited until 1941 to implement eugenic legislation and most sterilization occurred in the 1950s and 1960s.
 - 8 Recent estimates put sales of the Kinsey Reports at close to 1 million copies, and they have been translated into over a dozen languages.

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