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Article abstract

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READING IN THE “GRAFTED SPACE”: Public/Private Pleasure Reading and Sexual Identity¹

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ABSTRACT

From research on pleasure reading, it is understood that reading “not to feel alone” is a role of reading for those who need to reconcile differentness or avoid stigmatization. This paper aims to explain the dynamic between social and solitary reading for female, adult readers who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. This qualitative work uses in-depth, open-ended interviewing and analysis follows the principles of naturalistic inquiry including emergent, inductive methods. The interconnectedness of participants’ solitary and social reading as related to identity is explored through the ways in which the readers connect their private reading to various levels of their public selves. This work presents an original contribution to reading research—the *grafted space* of reading, where the social and the solitary are inseparable. Reading in the grafted space is as much about the personal identities of the reader as it is about connecting with others and reinforcing social relations.

RÉSUMÉ

On lit pour « se sentir moins seule ». C’est l’un des rôles qu’assume la lecture dans la vie de celles qui s’adonnent à cette activité, celles qui sentent le besoin d’accepter leur marginalité ou d’éviter la stigmatisation. Voilà ce que nous apprennent les recherches sur les plaisirs de la lecture. La présente étude a pour but d’expliquer la dynamique entre la lecture sociale et solitaire, pratiquée pour leur par les lectrices adultes qui se décrivent comme lesbiennes, gays, bisexuelles, ou homosexuelles. Ce travail de recherche qualitative est basé sur des entrevues approfondies et incitatives, et sur une analyse suivant les principes de l’enquête ethnographique, incluant les méthodes inductives émergentes. Cette étude apporte une contribution inédite à la recherche sur la lecture: c’est un « espace unifié » qu’occupe la lecture, où le social et le solitaire sont inséparables. La lecture dans cet espace unifié façonne l’identité personnelle de la lectrice et renforce ses liens avec les autres ainsi que les relations sociales qu’elle entretient.

The practice of pleasure reading is commonly understood two ways, through the polarized perspectives of reading as solitary and social. Alan Kennedy says that reading for pleasure is “a solitary affair, involving one person and a book.”² Bloom also supports this view of reading as personal and solitary by stating, “reading is a solitary praxis” and “the pleasures of reading are selfish.”³ These perspectives, however, contrast with more socially focused reading endeavours, such as book clubs, mass-reading events (Canada Reads, Seattle Reads, or other One City, One Book literary events), and the Oprah Book Club, which are perpetuated by readers and others, including markets and literary authorities, in our cultures. These same social reading activities are some examples of research topics that have proven to be of interest to scholars.⁴ Given how these polarized perspectives exist as related to reading, I was interested in exploring the relationship between social and solitary reading in the lives of adult women who claim non-mainstream sexual identities and identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer (LGBQ).⁵ This community, which is often marginalized and exists outside of the mainstream, was selected because it offers a distinctive focus that reflects diverse self- and cultural representations from the perspective of the participants. Those who identify themselves as being outside of mainstream sexual culture may find themselves alone and seeking others who identify as they do.

Conceptual Framing from the Research

This work is primarily conceptualized through stories and shared meanings that shape identities and result in wider social connections, and through Louise Rosenblatt’s reader response theory. Research that focuses on lesbian and queer reading also shapes it.

Definitions of self and community are intricately interrelated. For its part, sexual identity is multifaceted, complex, and subject to social construction and reconstruction. Steven Seidman understands identity formation as both individually self-determined and arising from cultural interactions, and to this end, he writes, “Identities refer to the way we think of ourselves and the self image we publicly project [...] we fashion identities by drawing on a culture that already associates identities with certain behaviours, places, and things.”⁶ Identities, therefore, are variable and shaped by one’s interactions and interpretations, including interactions with books and reading materials.

This understanding of identity leads to the examination of communities, which Benedict Anderson characterizes as “imagined” through his examination of the daily newspaper.⁷ These communities exist through direct interactions and by indirect means of being conscious of others, through the sharing of identities, lifestyles, and interests (shared meaning). The stories that individuals share are significant for the building of community, especially communities that are difficult to define, such as the LGBTQ community. Kenneth Plummer argues that stories or personal narratives are essential for the making of self-identities and community, especially for the non-heterosexual community. He writes, “for narratives to flourish, there must be a community to hear; [...] for communities to hear, there must be stories which weave together their history, their identity, their politics. The one—community—feeds upon and into the other—story.”⁸ Thus Anderson’s theory of community rests on print and Plummer’s on story, and I see these understandings of the perpetuation of identity and community as the most appropriate for the study of the solitary and social aspects of LGBTQ reading.

Following upon the grounding of identity and community in story, the practice of pleasure reading is understood through Stephen D. Krashen’s definition of what he calls “free voluntary reading,” that is, an unimposed and unprescribed activity of reading that people do because they enjoy it.⁹ In deepening the understanding of this voluntary practice of pleasure reading, I look to Rosenblatt’s reader response theory.¹⁰ Rosenblatt aims to explain what happens when people make sense of a text. She views reading as a dynamic event, a transaction involving reader and text. In her theory, the reader’s interpretation is privileged as she makes her own meaning by drawing on her emotions and her lived experiences while proceeding through the text.

Other researchers have privileged the personal interpretation of the text and considered the reading practice as solitary and social. Focusing on the experiences of contemporary, individual readers rather than the text, Janice Radway was one of the first researchers to investigate the meaning of reading from the perspectives of readers of popular fiction. Radway’s examination of female romance readers “became [...] less an account of the way romances as texts were interpreted than of the way romance reading as

a form of behaviour operated as a complex intervention in the ongoing social life of actual social subjects.”¹¹ Like Radway, Catherine Ross, a Library and Information Science scholar, privileges the position of the reader in her study of avid readers.¹² She studied the experiences of 194 avid readers along with her Masters students, and explored what reading means to them. From this research she discusses certain “helps” that come from reading including offering new perspectives, models for identity, reassurance, connections with others, courage to make change, acceptance, and a disinterested understanding of the world.¹³ Her research reinforces the significance that reading holds for those who read for pleasure with personal and social outcomes. In her research, Linsey Howie reflects on the development of women readers’ identities in relation to the community of the book club.¹⁴ Howie’s findings suggest that reading with the book club is a method of readers reading to understand themselves in relation to the text and to other club members in the safe space of the book club. This analysis acknowledges that elements from fictional and real worlds are integrated into group discussion and identity formation. These perspectives of reading research with solitary and social themes assert the privileging of meaning making and interpretation for the reader with regard to identity formation and community building.

This work focuses on participants who claim non-mainstream sexual identities, and it is therefore necessary to understand how this theme is situated in the research. Stephanie Foote and Meredith Miller study print culture, especially pulp fiction, as useful in the formation of lesbian identity and culture.¹⁵ Others analyze their own personal reading histories as significant for lesbian self-identity and self-formation, often while “reading against the grain” of the text.¹⁶ The theme of reading “against the grain” is evident in the work of Sally Munt, who suggests that “lesbians are particularly adept at deconstruction, patiently reading between the lines, from the margins, inhabiting the text of dominant heterosexuality even as we undo it, undermine it, and construct our own destabilising readings.”¹⁷ The idea of the destabilization of reading is also evident from the theory of polar reading established by Jean Kennard. In focusing on the lesbian reader, Kennard suggests that the lesbian reader reading a heterosexual character or text, “lean[s] into the character, identifies with him as fully as possible, in a sort of willing suspension of belief; without fear of experiencing schizophrenia, she allows the polarities to coexist, forcing

concentration on the heterosexual until the lesbian in her is pulled forward to the surface of her consciousness.”¹⁸ Polar reading does not require the reader to deny herself in her reading but instead allows for the agency of the individual reader who asserts herself through her reading experience.

Little empirical research exists which explores pleasure reading in the lives of LGBTQ adult women. Paulette Rothbauer explores the reading practices of lesbian, bisexual, and queer young women (ages 18–23). In her analysis, Rothbauer discusses the implications of reading for escape, reading for possibility, and reading to engage with others in order to participate in wide social communities.¹⁹ Sheila Liming also examines a younger demographic in her study which focuses on using lesbian literature in constructing identity for young, lesbian women. Liming argues that lesbian readers read with a lesbian perspective, finding meanings that are personal to their lives through making inferences from heterosexual texts.²⁰

Grounding this work in these areas of stories, shared meanings, reader response theory, and research on sexual identity and reading helps to explain reading for participants who claim non-mainstream sexual identities from their perspectives and through their voices. I developed a qualitative research study in order to situate this investigation of the ways in which reading is understood in the lives of adult women who claim non-mainstream sexual identities and the ways in which these participants demonstrate social interactions and community from their personal reading practices. The following two research questions help frame the work: What meanings do the readers themselves construct from their reading practices? In what ways, if any, does this meaning affect their everyday lives? In the lives of adult self-identified LGBTQ readers, what, if any, relationship is there between social reading and solitary reading practices? In this work, I discuss one finding that helps to explain the relationship between social and solitary reading, as participants connected their individual readings to various levels of their solitary (private/personal) and social (publically interconnected) selves.

Method

Because I wanted to understand the relationship between solitary and social reading from the experiences of LGBTQ readers, I adopted qualitative and

ethnographic methods, including in-depth interviewing, which is appropriate for gathering a “deep understanding” of people’s perspectives.²¹ I interviewed 19 women who claimed a non-mainstream sexual identity and who self-identified as a reader. The in-depth, open-ended interviews took place between 2004 and 2006 in Southern Ontario, Canada. Most interviews were conducted in-person in cafes, libraries, university spaces, and in one case, a participant, Eve, opened her home to me for the purpose of the interview.²² Three interviews were conducted on the telephone because of geographic distance between the participant and myself. All of the interviews were digitally audio-recorded. During the interviews, readers were asked both “grand tour” type questions to help foster rapport and then the conversation moved to more focussed explorations about the meaning of reading in their lives.²³ The flexible method of open-ended questioning allowed for the discussion to shift depending on what participants shared with me and the flexibility of method worked to elicit further explanations that shifted narrative responsibility to the participant, who, through the telling of her story, continued to make sense of her own life experiences.²⁴

Participants were recruited through snowball sampling using my personal network and convenience sampling. Recruitment strategies included placing notices and announcements in bookstores, queer-community newsletters, and at queer literary events. Research participants ranged in age from 24 to 75 years and 11 of the 19 were involved in intimate relationships with a significant other(s). All participants had some type of post-secondary education, and at the time of interview four participants were working on undergraduate or graduate degrees. Those who were not students were working and careers were various. Participants were teachers, including one who worked in sexuality education, and administrative staff. Others were involved in business, finance, and engineering. One woman was a police officer and one identified as retired. These participants read a range of genres, including popular and literary fiction, comics and graphic novels, and works of lesbian romance.

I transcribed each interview myself and kept detailed field notes of each encounter. Transcription was detailed as it was important to preserve an accurate representation of the experiences, practices, and knowledge from the voices of the participants. Regarding analysis, I followed the characteristics of naturalistic inquiry set out by Lincoln and Guba and

analyzed my data set from an emergent, grounded theory perspective.²⁵ I chose this inductive method of analysis because it “means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis.”²⁶ I used an open-coding method, but always kept in mind the guiding research questions developed for this study.²⁷

The “Grafted Space” of Reading

Analysis of the dataset revealed that reading for participants is solitary and social, but it exists in another way that is separate yet connected to the personal and communal. In his book, *The Story Species*, Joseph Gold writes about the healing capacity of reading for pleasure and suggests that “new reading experiences will be *grafted onto* [a reader’s] own narrative construction of [her] own life story”²⁸ and this will modify her existing narrative. Gold is discussing reading as information that changes a reader’s approach to life issues and alters one’s understanding. This meaning-making process, the cumulative grafting of new insights onto a prior self, bridges the gap between solitary and social reading so thoroughly that the two can no longer be separated. I call this bridging the “grafted space” of reading based on Gold’s explanation. In these sites, the social and the solitary are inseparable, as reading in the grafted space is as much about the needs of the reader affirming her own claims as it is about connecting with others. In the following examples, the interconnectedness of participants’ solitary and social reading as related to identity is explored via different intersections of the public and the private: individual readers and the text, personal book collections, and bookstores and resource centres.

Individual Readers and the Text

Participants used the stories they read and the interpretations they made of these stories to feel connected to a wider community and not to feel alone with their claimed identity. This type of connection allowed readers to connect to one another through the community imagining that Anderson describes. Readers amplified the “not alone” theme by providing examples of titles that helped them come to terms with their sexual identity and sexual communities. Sara and Jean found community with the characters in and the authors of texts that they read. Chloe told me about reading *Desert of the*

Heart by Canadian author Jane Rule (Toronto: Macmillan, 1964). In this novel, characters Ann and Evelyn form a friendship that evolves into a romantic relationship, while Evelyn negotiates her impending divorce and confusion around her sexual identity. In discussing the way in which this book, which tackles identity exploration and first relationships, remains meaningful to her life, Chloe said,

Chloe: I guess I will always remember the first kind of lesbian fiction book I read and that was *Desert of the Heart*. I think that is probably one of the things a lot of people encountered. Umm, and I was just completely swept into that story, it was great and I think that one is significant to me because it was the first thing I found when I went out seeking literature that I could identify with as a lesbian.

Researcher: Yeah.

Chloe: ... [I] think whenever there is a hurdle stage in your life if you read something that really speaks to you at that point it really sticks.

Chloe acknowledged the importance of reading material that allowed her to recognize herself and her life. In a reading experience that she sought out, she found within the pages of a narrative helpful representations of the struggle to claim a lesbian identity. Chloe emphasized the heightened importance of books that speak to one at a “hurdle stage” of life, when dealing with the challenge of negotiating one’s sexual identity.

Leigh told me about coming to identify with the sado-masochism (SM) community, a community to which she belongs, and her enthusiasm when she first found written depictions of this community and the interactions within it. In reading material about the SM community, particularly Patrick Califia’s *Macho Sluts: Erotic Fiction* (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1988), Leigh found others who belong and participate as she does. She explained the importance of finding others who are SM-identified:

Leigh: So umm, I know that it’s almost a cliché to pick this particular one but for example the book *Macho sluts* by Patrick Califia, umm I was into SM way before I ever discovered that book and it certainly didn’t make me any more or less so than I already was. But boy was it ever

fucking cool to read that somebody years before I ever got around to figuring this stuff out had already thought about this stuff and wrote a depiction of it.

Researcher: Oh neat.

Leigh: And sort of go “oh it’s not just that I’m—I’m this way” but I’m almost joining—I don’t know, it’s going to sound cheesy but like joining a sisterhood that’s already there by discovering this piece of myself and knowing that it’s out there going “hey I’m not alone!” It’s not that I necessarily thought I was but look at how incredibly articulate this person is and look how they’ve already put words to things that I’m still formulating. It was really like aha! There’s beauty here, it isn’t just prizes, it’s passionate and political and community.

Researcher: Umhmm...

Leigh: There was something really multifaceted in reading it except that it wasn’t fiction because it’s real life too, you know?

Reading a textual representation of an aspect of sexual politics and identity provided Leigh with the shock of recognition of her “real life” that she characterizes variously as an “aha” experience, the joining of a “sisterhood,” and a voyage to discover “this piece of myself.” She is “not alone” as she wrestles with the ideas, concepts, and politics surrounding SM practice because an articulate author has already mapped out the terrain, putting into words “things that I’m still formulating.”

Finding another who is similar to oneself or with whom one identifies is a common theme in lesbian-related literature. Tamsin Wilton discusses the importance of autobiography in the reading lives of lesbian readers: “For many lesbian readers, lesbians in books are the only other lesbians to be found. Autobiography then, and specifically autobiography which foregrounds the author’s experience of herself as a lesbian, fulfills a poignantly crucial function.”²⁹ Similarly, Liming, in her study of reading in the lives of young adult lesbian women as related to personal identity and conception of lesbian culture, reinforces the idea of reading for “people like me.”³⁰ Finding others who can form and understand this “sisterhood” is a

real and sustained outcome of reading. These readings, for participants in this research, were a grafting between the solitary and the social, as participants sought out connections to authors and representations of fictional characters in texts that could be identified with and connected back to their own true life experiences.

Personal Book Collections

Personal book collections and the strategic placement of these collections within the home is another way for participants to connect with others. Books and book collections act not only as silent objects that deliver a message when the cover is opened and the stories are read, but also “perform” to those who observe them. These performances include reflecting the self and exhibiting elements of identity and community for the reader. Many of the individual readers in this study kept books and other reading materials within their home. This was not always a comfortable practice. For some lesbian women the home can be a place of solace where women are able to be free with their identity, but for others “it is still a location where this identity comes under the surveillance of others, especially close family, friends and neighbours. It is not necessarily a place of ‘privacy.’”³¹ Illustrating this idea of performance within the home, Julie told me about her book collection and how she organized her books within the home she shared with her partner. She said that books with obvious lesbian and gay themes were kept on the bookshelves in her home office, which is a more private space within their home, so that they would not potentially offend other family members who visited. Keeping gay-themed materials in a private space shielded Julie from the judgments of those who might not be accepting of the sexual identity displayed in the books. Conversely, Marion preferred to keep her books and reading materials in the public areas of her home (for example, her living room). Marion was clear in telling me that she believed books (and other materials of reading culture) allowed outsiders a glimpse into the character of the reader. Marion said she was careful about whom she welcomed into her home, because many of the items on her bookshelves communicated lesbian themes. She welcomed into her home only those with whom she was sufficiently comfortable to want to reveal her sexual identity because her personal library performs a coming out.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, and Amos Rapoport, note that books reflect elements of the self and communicate an identity that can be read by others.³² The scenarios discussed by Julie and Marion reveal the public and private nature of reading as related to the act of coming out. Because these reading-related items reflect the non-heterosexual identity of the reader and perform queerness, they are equivalent to the speech act of coming out.³³ These books allow others to learn more about the reader, exposing and perhaps stigmatizing the reader to those who are negative outsiders and, conversely, collectively bringing insiders closer together. These personal book collections and their semi-private status and placement within individual readers' households represent a grafting of solitary and social reading: the placement and performance of titles allowed others to be drawn into social circles or conversely excluded.

Bookstores and Resource Centres

Through negotiating the public spaces of the bookstore or feminist resource centres, participants in this study were able to feel connected to a wider gay, lesbian, and queer community. Some participants spoke about using bookstores (especially women-centred establishments) to find material that matched their reading interests. Others connected to the non-heterosexual community by attending author readings hosted by bookstores. Emily and Leigh spoke respectively of a feminist resource centre (which had a significant library collection) and a bookstore in which they found comfort and a sense of belonging. Emily told me that she came from a conservative small town where she was not able to find the resources she needed. She described the sense of homecoming she experienced after she moved away from her small town and found a feminist resource centre: "When I walked into the [feminist resource centre] there [were] so m[any] different opinions and politics and things that was floating around that I really felt at home in that kind of atmosphere. And it was also the first time that I think queerness was something that was accepted and normal, and normalized." The space and collection housed by the resource centre allowed Emily the safety necessary to explore ideas in a way that she was unable to do in her hometown. This public area of the feminist resource centre offered the safety of a home, which is a "place of emotional and physical well-being ('hearth' and 'heart')." ³⁴ In this case, she had the sense of being "at home"

in a space that offered comfort where she was not an outsider but where queerness was accepted, normalized, and embraced.

For Leigh, similarly, the space of a queer bookstore was empowering. Learning about the queer bookstore from a women's studies professor, Leigh characterized it as "such an incredible resource for me" with respect to her developing sexuality. Describing her first visit, Leigh said:

The minute I walked in I was like 'oh god this is a big deal' and, and at the time I wasn't yet out of the closet. I purchased my first sort of gay-themed book there and there was something—I could have just looked at them or looked through them to get the quote for the paper I was writing or whatever, taken down titles and gone to the library but *I bought them*—there was something about knowing that this wasn't just out there in theory it was in my hands, it was mine.

Possession of the book "in [her] hands" was an important way of taking ownership of ideas that otherwise seemed abstract and theoretical. Leigh went on to say:

Leigh: It was really true—that store in a lot of ways that I learned enough about myself to come out really? You know?

Researcher: Wow!

Leigh: To sort of get that, not just information, but that sense that there were other people out there feeling the same way or engaging in the same ideas. I'm really lucky, by the time I was getting around to coming out, there were books in the stores, you know, by Carol Queen and people who really thought about gender and identity and sexuality in ways that go *way* beyond the sort of standard binary. So there were ideas... they sort of inspire me in thinking okay well, you know I may be along the, in the sort of margins of what's out there but the margins are right here in the store! And that was really powerful for me.

In the course of our conversation, Leigh mentioned as meaningful to her life one book edited by Queen (a writer and sexologist) in conjunction with

Lawrence Schimel, *Switch Hitters: Lesbians Write Gay Male Erotica and Gay Men Write Lesbian Erotica* (Pittsburgh: Cleis Press, 1996). Talking about one story in this collection, “Dress Leathers” by Robin Sweeney, Leigh said it was important to her because it combined the personal issue of sexuality and the public political issue of dealing with the death of people from AIDS. Finding in the queer bookstore Queen’s materials and others offering similar themes, Leigh was able negotiate her coming-out experience and gather information on gender studies and sexual identity that specifically suited her experience. The bookstore performed for Leigh the work of reversing centre and margins. Her ideas and experiences might be considered marginal by some “out there,” but in here (in the bookstore) these ideas are at the centre—“right here in the store.”

Kathleen Liddle suggests that feminist bookstores are vital to the lesbian community and significant because they provide accessibility to materials and a more comfortable space for exploring books and ideas. This claim can be extended to feminist resource centres. Liddle says, “Although we could think of feminist bookstores as being comprised of both community and merchandise, in essence the books being sold are *part* of a dispersed lesbian community.”³⁵ Both Emily and Leigh read in the grafted space in that they were able to use the dispersed queer community found within the walls of the queer bookstore and feminist resource centre as a way of being personally connected to “other people out there feeling the same way.”

Conclusion

The observations above clearly illustrate the participants’ connection of their personal readings to various levels of their public selves. Readers found themselves—their identities and the communities in which they fit—through a culture of reading. What they found in the books and in the broader reading community (validation, acceptance as normal, confirmation, and sisterhood) they were able to incorporate into their understanding of themselves, which let them take the next step. This understanding is more than the recognition of one’s self: it is the placement of the self in a wider context. Here we come to understand that reading is more than one book, more than one reader, more than one identity, and more than one community. Reading is an integrative practice that bridges the self and community, personal and public, or solitary and social. This integrative

reading occurs in the grafted space, a concept that provides an understanding of the practice of reading in which the social and the solitary elements are entwined for readers and cannot be separated.

This work contributes to the body of research regarding contemporary reading practices and what happens for the reader when reading for pleasure. The concept of the grafted space sheds light on reading as a practice that delivers feelings of togetherness, community, and identity, including sexual and cultural identity. Interactions with books and other “elements of reading culture”³⁶ allowed the participants who claim non-mainstream sexual identities to find another (likeminded individual or community) through their reading practices. While this article has introduced and described the concept of the grafted space as related to reading practices, it is important to remember that the originating study focused on reading and sexual identities and sexual communities. Therefore, further research is necessary to explore how the grafted space is applicable to reading research conducted in other contexts. Exploring other ways that this concept can be understood will strengthen what is known about reading research as related to the solitary, the social, and the area where these are integrated—the grafted space.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE

Jen L. Pecoskie, MLIS, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the School of Library and Information Science at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. Her research focuses on how pleasure reading, readership, and wider reading culture form a part of information worlds and practices. More specifically, her interests focus on readership studies—especially as related to understanding the social and personal elements of reading culture that are influential in the practice of pleasure reading, the practice of readers’ advisory in libraries, and libraries as centres for teaching. A project she is currently working on explores the traces recorded in the paratexts of published works and what implications exist for understanding information worlds and publishing culture.

Notes

¹ Acknowledgements: The author expresses her sincere thanks to all research participants, for without their enthusiasm for their reading practice and desire to contribute to the research this article would not exist.

² Alan Kennedy, *The Psychology of Reading* (London: Methuen, 1984), 140.

³ Harold Bloom, *How to Read and Why* (New York: Scribner, 2000), 22.

⁴ Elizabeth Long, *Book Clubs: Women and the Uses of Reading in Everyday Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Cecilia Konchar Farr, *Reading Oprah: How Oprah's Book Club Changed the Way America Reads* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005); DeNel Rehberg Sedo, "Badges of Wisdom, Spaces for Being: A Study of Contemporary Women's Book Clubs" (Ph.D. diss., Simon Fraser University, 2004).

⁵ The phrase, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer (LGBQ), is used in this work as it best explains and represents the complex and multifaceted nature of sexuality as understood and articulated by participants in this research.

⁶ Steven Seidman, *Beyond the Closet: The Transformation of Gay and Lesbian Life* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 9.

⁷ Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London; New York: Verso, 2006).

⁸ Kenneth Plummer, *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, Change, and Social Worlds* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 87.

⁹ Stephen D. Krashen, *The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research*, 2nd ed. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2004).

¹⁰ Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed. (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1995).

¹¹ Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 7.

¹² Catherine Sheldrick Ross, "Finding without Seeking: The Information Encounter in the Context of Reading for Pleasure," *Information Processing & Management* 35, no. 6 (1999); Catherine Sheldrick Ross, "Making Choices: What Readers Say About Choosing Books to Read for Pleasure," *Acquisitions Librarian* 13, no. 25 (2001); Catherine Sheldrick Ross, Lynne McKechnie, and Paulette M. Rothbauer, *Reading Matters: What the Research Reveals About Reading, Libraries, and Community* (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2006).

¹³ Ross, "Finding without Seeking," 797.

¹⁴ Linsey M. Howie, "Speaking Subjects: A Reading of Women's Book Groups" (Ph.D. diss., LaTrobe University, 1998); Linsey M. Howie, "Speaking Subjects: Developing Identities in Women's Reading Communities," in *Reading Communities from Salons to Cyberspace*, edited by DeNel Rehberg Sedo (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 140–58.

¹⁵ Stephanie Foote, "Deviant Classics: Pulp and the Making of Lesbian Print Culture," *Signs* 31, no. 1 (2005); Meredith Miller, "Secret Agents and Public Victims: The Implied Lesbian Reader," *Journal of Popular Culture* 35, no. 1 (2001).

¹⁶ Alison Hennegan, "On Becoming a Lesbian Reader," in *Sweet Dreams: Sexuality, Gender, and Popular Fiction*, edited by Susannah Radstone, (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988), 165–90; Lee Lynch, "Cruising the Libraries," in *Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions*, edited by Karla Jay and Joanne Glasgow (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 39–48; Sherrie A. Inness, *The Lesbian Menace: Ideology, Identity, and the Representation of Lesbian Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997).

¹⁷ Sally Munt, *New Lesbian Criticism: Literary and Cultural Readings* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), xiii.

¹⁸ Jean E. Kennard, "Ourself Behind Ourselves: A Theory for Lesbian Readers," *Signs* 9, no. 4 (1984): 654.

¹⁹ Paulette M. Rothbauer, "Finding and Creating Possibility: Reading in the Lives of Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer Young Women" (Ph.D. diss., University of Western Ontario, 2004).

²⁰ Sheila Liming, "'Reading for It': Lesbian Readers Constructing Culture and Identity through the Textual Experience," in *Queer Popular Culture: Literature, Media, Film, and Television*, edited by Thomas Peele (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 85–102.

²¹ John M. Johnson, "In-Depth Interviewing," in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method*, edited by Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 103–19 (106).

²² All names of participants are pseudonyms. This research conforms to the ethics practices from the University of Western Ontario and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada for research with human subjects.

²³ James P. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979); Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1985).

²⁴ Susan E. Chase, "Taking Narrative Seriously: Consequences for Method and Theory in Interview Studies," in *Interpreting Experience: The Narrative Study of Lives*, edited by Ruthellen Josselson and A. Lieblich (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995), 1–25.

²⁵ Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, 39–42.

²⁶ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation Methods* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980), 306.

²⁷ Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967); Anselm L. Strauss and Juliet M. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998).

²⁸ Joseph Gold, *The Story Species: Our Life-Literature Connection* (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2002), 130.

²⁹ Tamsin Wilton, *Lesbian Studies: Setting an Agenda* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 123.

³⁰ Liming, “Reading for It,” 93.

³¹ Lynda Johnson and Gill Valentine, “Wherever I Lay My Girlfriend, That’s My Home: The Performance and Surveillance of Lesbian Identities in Domestic Environments,” in *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities*, edited by David Bell and Gill Valentine (New York: Routledge, 1995), 99–113 (112).

³² Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Amos Rapoport, “Identity and Environment: A Cross-Cultural Perspective,” in *Housing and Identity*, edited by James S. Duncan (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 6–35.

³³ Deborah A. Chirrey, “‘I Hereby Come Out’: What Sort of Speech Act Is Coming Out?” *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 7, no. 1 (2003).

³⁴ Johnson and Valentine, “Wherever I Lay My Girlfriend, That’s My Home,” 112.

³⁵ Kathleen Liddle, “More Than a Bookstore: The Continuing Relevance of Feminist Bookstores for the Lesbian Community,” *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 9, no. 1/2 (2005): 145–59 (150).

³⁶ Jen (J. L.) Pecoskie, “The Solitary, Social, and ‘Grafted Spaces’ of Pleasure Reading: Exploring Reading Practices from the Experiences of Adult, Self-Identified Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Queer Readers and Book Club Members” (Ph.D. diss., University of Western Ontario, 2010).

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