

OUI DISH 4 U

Miz Anthrope and Mrs. Gigi L'Amoure (married and proud of it)

1993

Contents

**Appendix - About The Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists Newsletter (SOL-
GAN)** 4

On SOLGA, the Future, and Queer Theory (1993) 5

- An Introduction, by Deb Amory 5
- A Message From the Co-chair, by Elizabeth Kennedy (SUNY-Buffalo) 7
- Comments by William Leap (American University) 8
- Comments by Will Roscoe 9
- Comments by Stephen Murray 11
- Comments by Esther Newton (SUNY-Purchase) 12
- Comments by Sue-Ellen Jacobs (U Washington, Seattle) 13

In this Issue, oui've decided to combine our talents and charms to bring you an extra special exciting gossip column. Yes! Oui combine the best that two anthropologists (one feminist, the other feminine) have to offer. Oui plan to make this a regular column, and you could be our secret source too! So be sure to send in your trash and oui'll dish 4 U, oui?!

- Speaking of CONVICTED KILLERS, as Gigi did in her last column, here's one oui all can rally behind: AILEEN WOURNOS, a lesbian sex worker whose only mistake was getting caught after she blew away a few worthless men in Florida. She calls it self-defense, a minor fact edited out of her videotaped confession for the jury. ANYWAYS, men get away with this all the time, but NO, women get sent away to the big house forever. SO, check out the movie, "The Aileen Wournos Story", now touring the country. Fan clubs are springing up everywhere. TALK ABOUT BETRAYAL, it was her girlfriend who turned her in. Can you relate? Go see that movie. Join a fan dub. You need to get out and meet some nice people.
- All the GIRLS at Stanford are sad now the season's over for 90210 (our sister school in West Beverly). Thank the goddess tearful TORI got to graduate which is more than oui can say for ourselves, this year. Our season continues on and on...
- Highbrow Gossip: Big New Yorker Event in San Francisco's Courtrooms — Jeffrey Masson who wanted to "turn the Freud Archives into a place of 'sex, women, fun'" has brought a \$10 million libel suit against a New Yorker reporter who called him an "intellectual gigolo". Feminist San Francisco collectively gasped at the revelation that CATHARINE MacKINNON (you know, consent-is-meaningless- MacKinnon) is his fiance. And guess who was *railed* as the expert witness for Masson?? Yes, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, who oui thought was safely tucked away in South Africa.
- News from the East Coast: Mrs Gigi got lost after the March on D. C. Fortunately for her, smart & gorgeous SOLGA member MARTIN MANALANSAN found her and took her to lunch. He paid. What more could oui ask of a man?!? Not just a book worm, Martin pointed Gigi in the direction of a quaint late-nite club where men bump into each other in the dark.
- SOLGA CELEBS TAKE SF BY STORM: Our co-chair LIZ KENNEDY and her coauthor, Madeline Davis (*Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*), packed Modern Times Bookstore with a crowd full of adoring, fawning baby dykes. Oui should all be so lucky. ELLEN LEWIN's appearance is June 17th for her book, *Lesbian Mothers*. And oui're all waiting with baited breath for ESTHER NEWTON's book on Fire Island. What a year it's been for us girls, eh?

Appendix - About The Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists Newsletter (SOLGAN)

Editor: Deb Amory
Stanford, CA

October 1988 through February 1994.

Eleven issue broken run, various pagination, 8.5x11 inches, comprised of sheets stapled upper-left corner.

Includes news, information, awards, announcements and notes, books and publications reviewed, calendar of events, application forms.

On SOLGA, the Future, and Queer Theory (1993)

An Introduction, by Deb Amory

The aim of this section is to continue some of the reflection, discussion, and debate that originated with the (rather unimaginative) AIDS & the Social Imaginary session at the AAA last December. In particular, I thought that a number of Important questions had been raised in the aftermath of the panel and our organizing around it [see last issue of the *SOLGAN*1. Towards this end, I sent out a letter that asked the following questions:

- 1) How can we respond to charges of the "balkanization of anthropology", i.e. the (rather facile) interpretation of identity politics whereby SOLGA is seen as asserting that only gays can study gays, lesbians lesbians, & etc.?
- 2) What would a queer critique of anthropology look like?
- 3) How do we deal with multiple oppressions in our field? That is, the fact that we encounter discrimination along the lines of race, class, gender, & etc., as well as sexual orientation?
- 4) How do you see the future of SOLGA?

The respondents addressed most or all of these issues in their replies. For anyone else who has opinions on these topics, I'd welcome your thoughts, and/or your responses to *this* section. My hope is that the newsletter can be a place where we can discuss and debate some of the important issues facing us as SOLGA members, as practitioners of gay/lesbian/queer theory, etc., as people who stand on the brink of this particular historical moment. And in the meantime, I would like to thank Elizabeth Kennedy, Esther Newton, Stephen Murray, Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Will Roscoe, and William Leap for their contributions, and Jared Braiterman for his editorial assistance.

The letter's first question, regarding allegations of the "balkanization of anthropology", was of course a trick question. Few people I know would categorically argue that only gays can study gays etc., and that certainly wasn't the point of our protests at the meetings — although simpler minds would seem to grasp *only* that point. I was actually looking for commentary on the kind of identity politics we might try to construct in the years ahead. In the collection of responses, Murray quite rightly notes that SOLGA has never asserted any such thing, and doesn't even require proof of membership in our special community to belong (but think of the possibilities there...). Leap admits something I would imagine many of us feel; that our anger at the continuing and difficult struggle we face as lesbians and gays often *tempts* us into making these kind of separatist claims. Roscoe proposes turning the charge on its head, noting that anthropology is already balkanized, i.e. dominated by heterosexuals doing their own heterosexual thing (my gloss). Finally, Newton and Kennedy place their responses in the context of broader considerations of identity politics. Yes, as Newton points out, untrue and unfair charges of "balkanization" reflect the *limits* of identity politics. Certain of those panelists got good and mad at us for challenging their authority with the one thing they will never have (not prestige, not power, not money — but the thrill of being queer in the 90s). Yes, as Kennedy points out, there are times when an identity-based challenge is appropriate, and others when it is not. All in all, it seems that invoking our identity as lesbians or gays can serve as a useful strategy, rather than the basis for a movement.

As for what a queer critique of anthropology might look like, Roscoe notes that the heterosexist bias in anthropology, as well as our own complicity, serves to keep the historical and cultural record

of homosexuality well hidden from view. Murray, in particular, eloquently highlights anthropologists' "eager complicity with domination" in its broadest sense, the true barrier to an anthropology that would be able to critique structures of domination. Kennedy highlights the benefits of queer theory's critique of identity politics, in particular its challenges to assumptions about fixed gender and sexual identities. She also advocates an analysis that explores the links between structures of heterosexuality and homosexuality.

Interestingly enough, the third question was the least answered. Murray points out that SOLGA's own house is not in order, i.e. that while gender parity has been achieved (a fairly recent accomplishment) our organization is still white-dominated. Leap also notes that SOLGA does not represent all gays and lesbians in the profession; that a more formal relationship with the AAA might help in this regard, and he urges us all to get out there and recruit(!). Newton, too, emphasizes the need to forge ties and build alliances with other identity-based groups, a particularly important point that I will return to.

Finally, as to the future.. Right now, the future for SOLGA does appear much more rosy than in the past, the result of everything from discussions about "coming out" within the AAA to the increased gay, lesbian, and queer visibility across the country. Leap makes an eloquent plea for continuing change and discussion around our differences as we find a way to enter this more visible future. Roscoe asks if we can reach a consensus on issues, comparing modest gains to real inclusion, and the question of our place in multiculturalism. Kennedy urges us to try and connect the study of sexuality to other social institutions, to reach a broader audience as we face the backlash of violent homophobia that seems to accompany increased visibility and economic recession. And finally, Newton calls for a generosity of spirit in the face of increased possibilities of "success".

Clearly, the issues and topics covered in this small collection of letters is broad and complex. I urge you to read the individual replies, as I've only tried to outline some of what I saw as the basic issues above. And apologies to anyone who feels misquoted in the process. But before I sign off, I would like to offer a few thoughts that occurred to me after reading the collection as a whole.

Two mentions are made in the collected responses to "female dominance" within anthropology as a discipline (an interesting play on *Myths of ...*.I. Murray rightly notes that it is mostly white women who have been "included" by the recent liberal emphasis on diversity, but I disagree with his characterization of anthropology as being dominated by women. The fact is that white boys still do control most departments, foundations, and everything else. To help me make that point, I've included in this section Jacobs' discussion of the AAA's disappointing record with regard to women. Roscoe, too, emphasizes the power of women in the discipline, and calls for a queer critique of the homophobia of various feminisms. In short, he seems to blame women, and feminists in particular. I would argue that lesbian feminists have long been in the business of critiquing the homophobia of (particularly white, middle class) feminism. And, as a woman in the discipline (and here I invoke my oh-so-womanly Identity), I can testify to the fact that it doesn't feel like an abundance of power to me, and I don't particularly think that feminists are the problem. I would point out that while *some* women are in positions of power, the "visibility" of women in the discipline, as with academia at large, is primarily due to women taking all those low-paying, part-time, no-benefits jobs. You know, the post-industrial service sector economy thing.

It seems to me that this point of contention reflects an important difference among us members of SOLGA, i.e. gender (as in, Man vs. Woman). And perhaps it most importantly highlights the difficulties of difference- if SOLGA is going to be able to meet the challenges posed by difference among us, we are all going to need to take a good long look at our own positions of privilege vis a vis others. That is, the privilege of skin color, of class background, or of always assumed male superiority (i.e. permanent phalluses, as : opposed to the temporary kind, for special occasions). We need to examine our privilege and figure out when it gets in the way of other people's experience.

Another example: in the April *AN*, I noticed that the Association of Black Anthropologists (ABA) is trying to decide how to protest what members identify as their exclusion by the current reorganization plans (as I read the report, they will lose representation on the Executive Board. I know we talked

about this briefly at our own business meeting, but I don't recall the *details*). On the other hand, the reorganization will make our visibility *more* possible, and so we are understandably enthusiastic. But, if we are seriously committed to racial diversity — in SOLGA and in the AAA — it seems crucial that we learn about the ABA's concerns, and then take a stand that includes our commitment to diversity. Which is not to negate the good work that folks have done on the reorganization issue, but simply to point out that more remains to be done.

And one final note: I know that SOLGA has made tremendous strides in the past few years in including new members, in winning gains for all of us. And I have only tremendous respect and appreciation for all of the hard work, and what I know to be the real sacrifices, of our earlier pioneers. It is my hope that these questions of diversity and representation can be seen as an outgrowth of earlier struggles, and not a condemnation of anyone in particular. Hopefully this debate simply may be viewed as part and parcel of a continuing commitment to justice.

A Message From the Co-chair, by Elizabeth Kennedy (SUNY-Buffalo)

As the new co-chair, I have been asked to comment on some of the issues facing SOLGA in the year ahead. Although I wasn't at the AAA meetings in San Francisco, I have read about the events, particularly the panel "AIDS and the Social Imaginary" in the

newsletter. I was delighted by the brave and courageous action members of SOLGA took to challenge the panel. All too often those kinds of slights go unnoticed and gay and lesbian researchers and their work remain invisible. The conversations before the panel, the T-shirts, the issues raised at the panel all seem to have raised consciousness about gay and lesbian anthropology, so I would judge the action a success.

The fear by some that we are arguing for a balkanization of anthropology and furthering simple identity politics seems to me to be ungrounded. We live in a complicated time, where we have come to know the limits and the benefits of identity politics, and are struggling to construct a politics that encompasses both. A politics based on identity, on being gay or lesbian, is needed because some aspects of oppression are based on identity. Gays and lesbians are discriminated against in departments of anthropology or are victims of hate crimes, because of our identity. But we also know that many of us are working towards a society that would not categorize sexuality in simplistic polarizations, and therefore we don't want to develop a politics simply based on identity. My own research in Buffalo has shown that this kind of ambiguity about identity has existed throughout this century, that some lesbians built their lives and actions around a fixed sexual identity, others around more fluid identities, and that both experiences have built twentieth century lesbian communities, although the fixed identities were more critical in bar resistance. In discussing contemporary feminism, Sandra Harding argues the benefit of recognizing the instability of feminist analytical categories at this time, and I think that would be a good model for Solgans to follow and to advocate to the AAA. In some situations, as in the case of the Social Imaginary panel, which reproduced and furthered the discipline's prejudices towards lesbians and gays, it is good to act on an identity based politics and in others it is not.

Queer theory explicitly critiques identity politics and I would hope that anthropology and SOLGA would be open to this trend of thinking. Queer theory has developed most in the disciplines of literary criticism and philosophy, but in my own mind is relevant to anthropology and in fact grows out of the social constructionist thinking to which anthropology and historians have been central. In a nut shell, queer theory challenges the idea of static sexual and gender identities and queries the assumption that heterosexuality is fixed and central to culture. It lead us to ask comparative questions about structures of heterosexuality, to look for and understand different forms of sexual expression, and to contemplate

the ways that homosexuality and heterosexuality are interconnected. Such research should be at the heart of future anthropology.

My own concerns for future research and action include but are not limited to queer theory. I think SOLGA needs to find ways to convey our results to larger audiences. It seems apparent that the right wing fundamentalist movement will continue to develop a virulent anti-gay platform while the Clinton administration slowly attempts to Implement a gay civil rights program. It is my worst fear that when the economy fails, because the debt continues to increase, gays and lesbians — along with others — will be scapegoated for the nation's problems. We need to do research, teaching, and lecturing, that can help to diffuse the potential for a wave of violent homophobia, and to slow down the polarization of society around issues of gender and sex. We need to learn more about the fluid nature of sexuality and about how politics and economics influence homophobia. And then we must be willing and able to talk about these topics in a variety of settings.

My dreams for SOLGA's future is that we continue to further cutting edge research about lesbians and gays while providing an open atmosphere for discussion and debate among our members and the AAA. I hope that we can continue to foster new approaches and yet still have respect for the understandings of our elders. That we can work to include as members those who do research on gays and lesbians whether they are gay.

lesbian or not, and to include gay and lesbian anthropologists whether they do research about and for gays and lesbians. It seems to me that the success of the action around the Social Imaginary panel is due partly to the combination of the more traditional tactics of old timers who knew the association and young people who brought in creative tactics developed in other venues. We need to foster an environment in our research and in our actions that continues dialogue and cooperation and offers support for gays and lesbians in a homophobic society. I will do my best to encourage this.

Fondly from your co-chair, *fhth*Heth Kennedy

P.S. I have been busy this semester so those of you who have written to me and haven't heard back, I hope you will take some comfort in knowing that I at least read and thought about your letters. I will make it a priority to respond to you this summer.

Comments by William Leap (American University) .

Regarding the future Of SOLGA; Evie is writing a summary of the meeting we had with AAA which, I believe, was truly successful and definitely historic. The door is open for SOLGA to become an a part of AAA organizational structure (an interest group), should the membership decide to do so. I hope the membership agrees, because I see SOLGA's primary mission as one of building visibility and legitimacy for Lesbian and Gay concerns in anthropology. I include intellectual (e.g. documenting the significance of lesbian and gay cultures, building a Lesbian/Gay research agenda in anthropology) as well as interpersonal (securing domestic partner benefits for Lesbian/Gay colleagues, supporting graduate students interested in Lesbian/Gay research, fighting discrimination in employment and tenure) issues under these concerns. Becoming "officialized" within AAA does not solve any of these problems, but it puts us in a stronger position to address them, if only because we now have access to AAA resources in ways denied us at the present time.

I am certain that there are members of SOLGA who will not support this proposal. I mean no disrespect to those colleagues when I make these suggestions. However, as I explained in a letter to the membership printed in this newsletter two years ago, this discussion cannot lose sight of the SOLGA members who do favor adopting this more public Stance. And we cannot overlook the need to outreach to potential members (particularly young people) who will not join a Lesbian/Gay organization which has yet to come out of the closet.

SOLGA does not, at present, speak for all of the Lesbian and Gay persons within anthropology. I doubt it ever will. I agree with Jared that SOLGA members need to do all they can to broaden

the composition and point of view of the membership. I have been working actively to that end for several years, and I am confident that Jared is equally involved in recruitment and other SOLGA-related promotional efforts. WE all have to be. If every SOLGA member brought one new person into the organization, we'd have enough members to be eligible for unit status (and all of its benefits) within AAA. Only our own inertia—itsself a subtle form of internalized homophobia—is stopping us from addressing this goal.

An increased SOLGA presence in AAA (and the profession as a whole) will have some consequences, not all of which are desirable. For one thing, there will always be some heterosexuals and some Lesbians and Gays who assume that SOLGA's purpose is to establish the domains of "correct thinking" in Lesbian and Gay anthropology, to argue that only Lesbians can study Lesbian issues, only Gay men can study Gay issues and so on. Given the amount of shit that has been written about us by uninformed heterosexuals (and by "sympathetic" het's, as well), I often find myself leaning toward this position in my own scholarship and teaching. I see it as the academic variant of queer anger.

But SOLGA has never formally endorsed such separatism. We need to be certain that we do not create the impression of this argument—unless it is our intention to establish such a claim. I do not think we can prevent others from making such an inference, if they wish to. Fear of such inference prevent cannot prevent us from pushing for increased Lesbian/Gay-positive scholarly and professional opportunities within anthropology.

Unavoidably, there is going to be a lot of tension within the SOLGA membership regarding appropriate goals and directions for SOLGA activity, whether we officialize ourselves within AAA structure or not. Jared's letter suggests some of that tension. The "social imaginary" session made visible other such elements.

Here again, I hope that fear does not become a barrier to opportunity. Disagreement, even when painful in the immediate moment, prompts reflection and change. I hope SOLGA never becomes so established that the membership loses its ability to look critically at options and to choose between them through informed, responsible struggle.

Comments by Will Roscoe

1) Balkanization. We must turn this issue completely around. Anthropology is already Balkanized; that is, dominated by heterosexuals practicing heterosexual anthropology, who refuse to acknowledge the partiality of their perspectives and the validity of others. I don't know of anyone who argues that anthropology can only be practiced by members of the groups studied obviously such a requirement would put us all out of business. But anthropology certainly can't be practiced by pretending that it is culture-free. The point of identity politics should not be the intellectual pigeon-holing of individuals by their race, gender, sexuality, and so forth, but the much more radical proposition that intellectual and ethical honesty requires all of us to acknowledge — in our scholarly writing — who we are as products of specific sociocultural and world-historical contexts. Now, this kind of marking off according to origins has ALWAYS been applied to non-mainstream perspectives/voices by the arbiters of master discourses; and to do it to ourselves does little to challenge intellectual power structures. However, requiring that members of the majority do it — whites and heterosexuals and males — is radical and very threatening to a power structure that wishes to cloak the class/race/sexuality-based nature of its knowledge. And so, in response to the charge of Balkanization, we must insist that the white heterosexuals who are raising it are themselves always-already practicing Balkanized anthropology — i.e., a "heterosexual anthropology" — and the exclusion of gay and non-white perspectives from the discipline amounts to saying that only those who are members of the mainstream are qualified to practice (heterosexual) anthropology.

Anthropologists perhaps more than other members of the academy have made it part of their professional identity to speak for others. Their right to do so, however, has come under increasing attack from the third world as well as internal minorities. We must join this attack — and "out" our fellow

anthropologists who are heterosexuals as the first step to getting them to give us the ground to speak for ourselves. Of course, the whole charge of Balkanization is an extremely cynical attempt to raise a smokescreen disguising that fact that NO heterosexual anthropologist has ever been prevented from writing about gays and lesbians, but gays and lesbians were most definitely excluded from the "AIDS and the Social Imaginary" panel. Charging US with exclusion amounts to what I believe Freud termed reaction-formation, a paranoid fantasy.

2) Queer critique. I think a queer critique of anthropology can be pursued along four lines.

First, an examination of the heterosexual hegemony within the profession would highlight the presence of heterosexual anthropological couples — husband-wife teams. They exist in many professions, but my impression is that anthropology has more than its share of them. Historically, this practice can be traced back to James and Mathilda Stevenson, who were observed working together at Zuni, and subsequently extolled, by the English anthropologist Tylor. I believe Boas and other early influential leaders of the profession also encouraged anthropological couples. Why? An examination of the assumptions involved would reveal that a heterosexual couple, from an ethnocentric Western perspective anyway, represents a kind of microcosm of the social universe — society reduced to its most basic elements, the biologically reproducing nuclear couple — and therefore were the ideal team for creating a total representation of the social universe of a given people.

A second point of a queer critique ought to focus on the complicity of anthropologists, in creating censored representations of other cultures in which reference to homosexuality and other sexual and gender phenomena are systematically suppressed and/or distorted. That is to say, more than scholars in other disciplines, anthropologists have been actively involved in the erasure of homosexuality and homosexual subjectivity from the cultural record. Of course, if you think about it, the practice of sending out a heterosexual couple so that "he" can talk to the men and "she" can talk to the women ensure that homosexuality, whatever its forms, will "fall through the cracks" — that is, be excluded or marginalised. In anthropology, other cultures are always-already written as heterosexual, with mutually exclusive "male" and "female" categories and the "natural" attraction between them as the template for already-written ethnographies of how a "man's world" and a "woman's world" together describe the totality of the social universe.

Thirdly, a queer critique of anthropology might look at the history of the profession, documenting, on the one hand, the widespread presence of lesbians and gay men, and, on the other hand, the historical episodes of anti-gay discrimination whose memory has served to intimidate them into invisibility. In the 1930s, for example, Ruth Benedict was threatened with lesbian-baiting, and even Margaret Mead did not support her. What is the impact of such episodes and their retelling on lesbian and gay men graduate students planning careers in anthropology?

And finally, a queer critique of anthropology might also become a queer critique of feminism, something I've become convinced is long overdue. I shouldn't have to recite here the many examples of homophobic feminisms (from the anti-sexual American feminists, who are unable to see the difference between gay male sexuality and heterosexual male sexuality, to the more sophisticated homophobia of French feminists like Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, to the many examples of residual heterosexism within feminist thought in general (e.g., that there are only two genders and, therefore, one sexual orientation, so that the possibility of multiple genders upsets canonical feminist just-so stories of universal female subordination and male domination, stories which leave little room for a productive role for lesbians and gay men). The question I would raise at this point is: why is it that anthropology, which I understand to be one of the most gender-integrated academic disciplines, with many feminists in positions of power, is also the least receptive discipline to gay/lesbian discourse and, arguably, the most homophobic? I have in mind the leading feminist anthropologist at Stanford who assured me that anti-gay discrimination was not a factor in my elimination from a recent employment search, but also admitted that she discourages gay graduate students from pursuing gay-related research. One of the major problems right now is that individuals who behave this way consider themselves our friends! We certainly need to raise our standards in this regard. We don't need "friends"

who urge students to succumb to a regrettable homophobic status quo, and do nothing to challenge that status quo-

4) Future. Most useful thing would be to get a consensus on desired outcomes. Are we willing to settle for simple social integration — e.g., domestic partner benefits, job protection, etc. — or is our goal to see to it that lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and so forth are visibly included, and gay discourse included, in the professional of anthropology and as part of the movement toward multiculturalism. Are we one of the "cultures" to be included in multiculturalism? Or do we belong to some other non-ethnic, non-racial, nongendered category ineligible for inclusion in multiculturalism? Obviously, I believe we should be included, that it's not enough for universities to merely tolerate the presence of lesbian and gay faculty, that openly lesbian and gay faculty doing gay-related research need to be a part of every discipline, every faculty, and every campus.

What's holding SOLGA back? Low expectations, a low level of demands, and, I suspect, a low level of self-esteem. I don't mean to make anyone defensive by this comment, because I think it holds true for lesbians and gay men everywhere — we're still settling for too little, selling ourselves short, allowing ourselves to be intimidated into silence. Having said that, I would hasten to observe that the overall environment of anthropology has been so hostile to lesbians and gay men that we can hardly be blamed for not being a stronger political force. I've learned that the road is literally littered with the corpses of gay anthropologists who have been driven out of the field or marginalized into embittered withdrawal.

Comments by Stephen Murray

(1.) This seems like a pretty easy question. I don't think that SOLGA has ever asserted anything at all. SOLGA membership does not require proof or even assertion of homosexuality (or of a sexual identity of any sort). Although I do not think a similar case can be made for lesbian study, gay men have welcomed research by lesbians (Esther Newton, Kath Weston), presumptively straight women (Evelyn Hooker, Carol Warren, Rose Weitz), and straight men (from Alfred Kinsey through Gagnon & Simon and Weinberg & Williams to David Greenberg) who have sought out and respected our views and lives without attempting to speak for us. There is no history of attempting to exclude those who are not gay men from doing research on gay men. What seem to me to be the corrosive attempts to delegitimize identity and to deny community have come from gay men who don't want to be defined/limited as gay: deconstructivist special creationists who also exhibit considerable arrogance to the possibility that anyone before the late 19th century and/or beyond the sway of modern medical texts recognized sexual desire or conduct as an important component of self.

(2.) The acceptance of whatever status quo exists in order to do fieldwork has hopelessly compromised social and cultural anthropology. Eager complicity with domination continues today. It was not an aberration of the colonial era but is an enduring foundation of anthropological practice. The hypersensitivity to the delicate sensibilities of rulers (who might deny the anthropologist further access to a "field") has and continues largely to forestall anthropology that describes (let alone analyzes!) domination. Discouraging research on homosexuality is part of a far larger deference (bordering on masochism and on prostitution) to the powers that be (wherever they may be found).

(3.) We must watch out for our own complicity with dominance in exchange for crumbs of recognition. In my years of participant observation of American anthropology, a shift from male dominance to female dominance has not been accompanied by any greater sensitivity of those left as "the Other" or by any commitment to extending inclusiveness beyond white women to other kinds of persons. A queer seizure of power (besides being difficult to imagine) might do no better. Our own house is not in order: SOLGA is rather too much like AAA in this and in other ways.

(4.) Having the comparative perspective of being a founding member of ARGOH (SOLGA's predecessor) and of the Sociologists' Lesbian and Gay Caucus, I have long wondered if straight American sociologists are more aware of gay oppression than straight American anthropologists, or whether the

failure of AAA to make attempts to deal with lesbian/gay Issues within the profession and within American society similar to those made by ASA (or APA) is the fault of the timorousness of its gay caucus (i.e., SOLGA) in contrast to the assertiveness of SLGC. I have long thought that the failure of AAA to take actions such as making a statement in support of lifting the military ban, like the ASA/APA one, is largely the fault of our supposed organization. SOLGA has not pushed AAA very often or very hard. Anthropologists' Factice of Fostration before organized authority undoubtedly has been internalized by gay/lesbian anthropologists. I recognize that by insisting on polling its membership, AAA is structured to ensure that no timely positions on anything can be taken, but I still think that the "make no waves" leadership of SOLGA must ber some of the blame for the backwardness of AAA in dealing with queer/lesbian/gay oppression inside and outside of the institutions of American anthropology.

Comments by Esther Newton (SUNY-Purchase)

1) Balkanization. There are dangers in every movement, strategy and ideology. Balkanization is one of the possible outcomes of identity politics, I don't think we can or should deny that. It is our responsibility to fight against total fragmentation by seeing our movement in the larger American and world picture. On the other hand, many people who level that charge want to see their own particular perspective as more universal and true and are mad at us for questioning assumed transcendence. On a more personal note, as a lesbian who has largely studied gay men, I would never agree that only like can study like. Saiga has awarded the Benedict prize to Serena Nanda for her work on Hijras — no one demanded that she be gay.

2) Current state of SOLGA and the future. SOLGA has grown and evolved tremendously over the last ten years. Our accomplishments are impressive — we have achieved near gender parity in leadership and attendance at annual meetings (I'm not sure about total membership). We are now attracting a significant number of young people with energy and ideas. The newsletter has maintained its high quality and even improved, and the prizes are going strong. Our planning, leadership and behavior around the AIDS and the Social Imaginary panel were exemplary. Our members legitimately objected to the session in a range of ways from polite letters to impolite zap notes and tee shirts, maintained discipline during the panel, spoke eloquently from the floor, and have defended ourselves afterwards. We are on the verge of getting a much greater degree of recognition of our issues from AAA via the planning group on discrimination which they have agreed to set up. As someone who has been around SOLGA quite a while, I can't express how gratifying it is to see the hard work and risktaking that has gone on over the last years pay off so handsomely.

On the downside, SOLGA is still predominantly white in a country which is moving in the opposite direction. We can't change the fact that SOLGA reflects who gets access to professional anthropology. We can move ahead to fight the discrimination against gays and lesbians which makes it harder for gay anthropologists of color to come out. And we should also make it a priority in the coming years to forge ties with the Black and Latino anthropology groups comparable to our own in pursuit of common goals. Not only will this strengthen all of our hands with the leadership of the AAA, but it will give courage to gay and lesbian anthropologists within those groups, and will help white members of SOLGA to see ourselves in a broader context.

On a different note, I wonder what will the effect of even modest successes, should these come to pass, as now seems possible? The majority of us, no matter what our age or rank, have had so little in the way of recognition, respect, research money, or even jobs, relative to straight anthropologists, that it has been easy to make common cause. In the last few years it has become much easier to publish, and very slightly easier to get a job. (Actually I think much easier for gays and lesbians who work on unrelated topics; much less if you work on gay topics or are at all politically active).

But perhaps we are on the threshold of expansion? If the efforts of gay students and intellectuals all over the country should create more opportunities for some of us, common sense suggests that it will

not be easy to repress envy and competition. We can't level' status hierarchy — that is already built into the structure of the profession, and if it would be bad to pretend it doesn't exist, worse still would be to concur in the nauseating self-congratulatory ideology of the "successful". It is fair to say that if some SOLGA members get a few goodies we have all to one degree or another been denied they amply merit them, but so do others.

Of course if this process proceeds far enough we will not be able to combat its effects, which to my way of thinking are turning the world of scholarship at large into haves and have-not-muches or nothings. But SOLGA is very far from being there — no endowed chairs, no think tanks, no departments, virtually no fellowships, still hardly any research money for the gay and lesbian. For now I would urge a generosity of spirit all around, and a commitment by those who may find more (well-deserved) opportunity coming their way to assume leadership in the project of working together so that we may enlarge our successes.

Comments by Sue-Ellen Jacobs (U Washington, Seattle)

I don't know what kind of genera *livable* solution the AAA can develop regarding matters of discrimination based on sexuality and gender. The process began formally in April at the AAA headquarters. But, as we learned in the efforts to reduce discrimination against (all) women In departments of anthropology, there really is nothing official the AAA can do. But it sure can get people talking about matters, and perhaps raise consciousness among the membership. Recall that there were questionnaires sent out to all departments of anthropology by COSWA (Committee on the Status of Women in Anthropology) over the course of at least 10 years - perhaps 20 by now. Departments were asked to document support for women students, hiring and promotion of women faculty, placement of graduate students, etc. The "big" universities did not always comply with the request for information - in fact, at AAA business meetings, the chairs of Chicago, Harvard, and several other notably sexist departments, had temper tantrums about the whole business. When the AAA decided to sanction departments who had either not replied to the questionnaire, or had not increased support for, promotion of, and hiring of women, these same "alpha males" just laughed. Sanctions by the AAA meant nothing to them. They continued to receive many applicants for admission to graduate study, many applicants for the few jobs they had, they continued to have women in part-time, non-tenured, service teaching positions.. .and so on. But other departments began to make efforts to reduce discrimination against women in all the ranks. There was a related issue that the AAA headquarters was asked to take action on. The AAA membership had voted not to hold AAA meetings in states where the ERA had not been ratified. But, ten years or so after this resolution was approved, we met in New Orleans - a vehemently anti-ERA, anti-Cholce state. I mention this because one of the resolutions to be proposed by SOLGA or a subset of the AAA asks the membership to agree not to meet in states with anti-sodomy laws.

In spite of my recounting of the failures of the AAA to eradicate discrimination against women (at all levels) in the profession and to follow through on sanctions, I know that in this time, we must still move forward to get the AAA working on removal of discrimination against homosexuals, bisexuals, transsexuals/transgenderals and their/our work at all levels in the profession. So that is why I am doing what little I can to facilitate these next moves. Because there are so many males (gay) in this movement, perhaps it will have more success in all areas than did the feminist movement within anthropology.



The Library of
Unconventional Lives

Miz Anthrope and Mrs. Gigi L'Amoure (married and proud of it)
OUI DISH 4 U
1993

SOLGAN (Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists newsletter)

thelul.org