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ARTICLE

Queer Economies

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ABSTRACT: Queer defies categorization and resists preset developmental trajectories. Practices of queering identities emerged near the end of the twentieth century as ways of resisting normalizing networks of power/knowledge. But how effective are queer practices at resisting networks of power/knowledge (including disciplines) that are not primarily normalizing in their functioning? This essay raises that question in light of expanding neoliberal discourses and institutions which, in some quarters at least, themselves undermine normalized identities in favor of a proliferation of personal styles susceptible to governance through market forces. Special attention is given to *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics* in this analysis.

Keywords: Foucault, queer theory, neoliberalism, entrepreneur of the self.

Early homosexual rights activists followed the sexologists of their day in reifying same-sex acts, relationships, desires, and pleasures into a type of personhood, the outcome of biological and/or psychological developmental processes. On that basis, most called for tolerance and acceptance of homosexual persons (although a few went further, celebrating homosexual personhood as a superior human type). Somewhere in the middle—between mere tolerance and exuberant veneration—lay a potential for equality implicit in the idea of what geneticists came to call "normal variation": Perhaps homosexuality occurs with a regular frequency in any given population; perhaps it is just a minority trait like blue eyes or the absence of wisdom teeth, and therefore is not to be viewed as pathological or even inferior to heterosexuality in any way.

In the main, this rhetoric of equality—like the rhetoric of pathological deviance—preserved the basic framework for thinking about differences in human groups that had been developing in biological and medical research at the end of the nineteenth and through the first few decades of the twentieth centuries. Any population evinces a set of statistical norms, which in the scientific sense just means the frequency with which some set of traits occurs. For example, in a given adult human population most individuals have (or at one time had) four wisdom teeth, so the trait "having four wisdom teeth" occurs with high frequency. But there are also individuals with only three, two, or no wisdom teeth. In

some perhaps less scientific discourses, relative infrequency of a trait may be thought to indicate that that trait is non-optimal or "abnormal." As a result, those individuals whose traits most approximate alternatives of highest frequency may be considered normal not only in a descriptive but also in a prescriptive sense, and those with less frequently manifested traits are considered more or less deviant, their differences likely produced by disruptions in the normal course of development brought about by trauma or disease.

Homosexual rights activists who asserted this kind of equality challenged the idea that heterosexuality was the single normal—healthy, natural—outcome in the development of sexual orientation. They suggested that some people can develop "normally"—that is, non-pathologically—as homosexuals, that homosexuality is not the result of deviation from normal sexual development but rather has developmental norms of its own. In other words, the trait of sexual orientation accommodates a range of "normal" variation.

It is abundantly clear why early (and even much later) activists took this approach. It is much easier to challenge discrimination within the conceptual framework in which it receives justification than it is to challenge the framework itself; challenging a particular justification is not nearly as difficult as challenging an entire justificatory regime. But by the end of the twentieth century, some activists and theorists were in fact mounting that much more difficult challenge. In the 1970s, Gay Liberation raised the question of why we have to lock individuals into sexual identities at all; liberationists encouraged all people to experience a full range of sexual possibilities and to question the demand for conformity that pervades our social world. Queer Nation continued this challenge with some modification in the 1980s.[1] And then, by the early 1990s, queer theorists were tracing the psychological and historical emergence of various identity categories and exposing not only their cultural and historical contingency but also their political and economic investments. Queer politics was not about conferring acceptance upon a wider range of identity categories than heretofore; queer politics was about displacing the whole notion of identities constructed out of deviations and norms. As sociologist Joshua Gamson writes:

> Queerness in its most distinctive forms shakes the ground on which gay and lesbian politics has been built, taking apart the ideas of a "sexual minority" and a "gay community," indeed of "gay" and "lesbian" and even "man" and "woman." It builds on central difficulties of identity-based organizing: the instability of identities both individual and collective, their made-up yet necessary character.[2]

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[1] For some discussion of the historical connection between Queer Nation and Queer Theory, see Joshua Gamson, "Must Identity Movements Self-Destruct? A Queer Dilemma," *Social Problems,* vol. 42, no. 3 (August, 1995), 393. For some political analysis of Queer Nation, see Lauren Berlant, and Elizabeth Freeman, "Queer Nationality," in Michael Warner (eds.) F*ear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 193-229.

[2] Gamson, 390.

Along with queer politics, queer theory, as Michael Warner suggests in his introduction to *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory,* was born in opposition to the normalizing power regimes that gave rise to those identities.[3]

The question to be considered in this article is what happens when normalizing regimes begin to shift and transform, giving way to (or being adapted to) forms of power not so focused on individual bodies and their development, as I believe is occurring with a transition from neoclassical to neo-liberalism, to regimes more primarily organized in terms of what Michel Foucault calls apparatuses of security and population management. If twentieth-century identities were, in large part, creatures of normalization and such regimes are losing their primacy, what happens to the project of queering identities? Are practices of queering as desperately needed as they were in previous decades? Are they even relevant? Is it possible for practices of queering to engage and resist regimes of security as effectively as they have engaged regimes of normalization? In this essay I cannot begin to answer all these questions, but I will articulate their significance and explore some possible routes toward answers here.

My analysis will begin with a brief overview of Foucault's discussion of biopower in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1.* I will draw additionally upon Foucault's lecture series of 1977-1978, published in English as *Security, Territory, Population,* to sharpen the distinction he makes between disciplinary normalization and population management conjoined with techniques of security. Then I will turn to his lecture series of 1978-1979, published in English as *The Birth of Biopolitics*, to trace the emergence of the management strategies that Foucault calls "neoliberalism." I will argue that neoliberal management tends to displace and even undermine normalized identities in some of the same ways that practices of "queering" do, and that for a variety of political and strategic reasons it is important for queer theory to distinguish itself carefully from, and develop a sophisticated critique of, neoliberalism.

Biopower, Normalization, and Population Management

In *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, Foucault speaks of two aspects or poles of power over life that emerged separately but came together in the nineteenth century to form biopower. The first to develop centered on the individual body and encompassed "its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls…"[4] These are the normalizing disciplinary regimes that Foucault had studied in detail in *Discipline and Punish*, published about eighteen months earlier. The second pole centered not on the individual body but on the "species body"[5] and concerned itself with regulating the

[3] Michael Warner, "Introduction," in F*ear of a Queer Planet,* xxvi.

[4] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 139.

[5] Ibid.

population as an entity unto itself—its rates of morbidity and mortality, birth, migration, consumption, and so forth.

> The disciplines of the body and the regulations of the population constituted the two poles around which the organization of power over life was deployed. The setting up, in the course of the classical age, of this great bipolar technology—anatomic and biological, individualizing and specifying, directed toward the performances of the body, with attention to the processes of life—characterized a power whose highest function was perhaps no longer to kill, but to invest life through and through.[6]

In the eighteenth century, these two poles of biopolitical development were still to be found in wholly separate institutions and practices, but in the nineteenth century they began to come together, not at the level of theory but "in the form of concrete arrangements" that would become "the great technology of power in the nineteenth century."[7] By the end of the nineteenth century, sexuality would be one of this vast biopolitical system's most important deployments (although certainly not its only one), for sexuality is constituted at the intersection of individual bodies and the species as a whole.

In this text, published in French in 1976, biopower includes disciplinary normalization. In later texts, however, Foucault seems to retain the label "biopower" for population management alone. Disciplinary power exercised upon individual bodies becomes increasingly distinct in his analysis in the lecture course of 1977-1978, published in English as S*ecurity, Territory, Population* in 2007. On the first page of the first lecture, Foucault defines *biopower* as "the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the eighteenth century, modern Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species."[8] Population management takes precedence in Foucault's analyses for the next few years, and, unlike many of his queer theoretical successors and fans, this proto-queer-theorist never returns to disciplinary normalization.

Instead, Foucault devotes himself to tracing the genealogy of population management. Population management obviously requires the object "population," which does not exist in any recognizable form in the classical age. Population emerges gradually through the work of eighteenth-century economists.[9] It forms in the midst of governmental techniques concentrated on facilitating the circulation of people and goods in and out of towns and, at the same time, minimizing the contagion, crime, and violence that open circulation risks allowing. These risks cannot be eliminated without compromising free circulation, so techniques of security must be invented and refined. These techniques focus on calculating

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., 140.

[8] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*, translated by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1.

[9] Ibid., 70.

probabilities and projecting acceptable trade-offs.[10] Thus, biopower (in this new formulation) contrasts starkly with both sovereign power and disciplinary normalization. Whereas sovereign power prohibits actions, and normalizing disciplinary power prescribes individual development according to model norms, techniques of security regulate flows.[11] These managerial techniques, along with the philosophy of utilitarianism, which Foucault claims constituted the theoretical instrument underpinning the government of populations,[12] enable "the game of liberalism."[13] By the nineteenth century, then, biopower and liberalism coincide.[14]

Foucault is careful to insist that mechanisms of security do not replace techniques of disciplinary normalization, any more than disciplinary normalization replaced sovereignty. "In reality you have a series of complex edifices in which, of course, the techniques themselves change and are perfected, or anyway become more complicated, but in which what above all changes is the dominant characteristic, or more exactly, the system of correlation between juridico-legal mechanisms, disciplinary mechanisms, and mechanisms of security."[15] But he does suggest in this and the next year's lecture series that as liberalism evolves and techniques of security become dominant in power regimes some aspects of disciplinary normalization become untenable.

> By definition, discipline regulates everything. Discipline allows nothing to escape. Not only does it not allow things to run their course, its principle is that things, the smallest things, must not be abandoned to themselves. […] The apparatus of security, by contrast, […] 'lets things happen.' Not that everything is left alone, but *laissez-faire* is indispensable at a certain level: allowing prices to rise, allowing scarcity to develop, and letting people go hungry so as to prevent something else happening […]. In other words, discipline does not deal with detail in the same way as apparatuses of security.[16]

Within a regime of sexual normalization where heterosexuality has been deemed the only non-pathological developmental outcome, every human body must become a genitally oriented heterosexual or be labeled deviant and subject to attempts at rehabilitation, confinement, and/or deployment as means for reinforcing the general fear of deviance. Discipline *prescribes*.[17] And when it runs up against what cannot be disciplined according to the prescriptions—its own "residuum," that is to say—it establishes new regimes of discipline

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[10] Ibid., 6, 11.
[11] Ibid., 47.
[12] Ibid., 74.
[13] Ibid., 48.
[14] For Foucault's discussion of his use of the term "liberalism" and its broad meaning, see Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*, translated by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 20-22.
[15] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population,* 8.
[16] Ibid., 45.
[17] Ibid., 47.

for those individuals, as Foucault discusses in the lecture course of 1973-1974.[18] Within a regime of liberal regulation, by contrast, what matters is that a statistically significant subset of the population presents a certain specifiable range of developmental outcomes; outliers will be tolerated without interference, if it is determined that the cost of tighter control is too high—that is, if intolerance and intervention are likely to impede the circulation of money and goods to too great a degree.[19]

Foucault marks this difference in the third lecture of *Security, Territory, Population*, where he introduces the word "normation" to name disciplinary practices of the type he described in *Discipline and Punish* and elsewhere and reserves the word "normalization" for techniques of security applied to populations. On the one hand, disciplinary "normation" posits an optimal model and then applies techniques designed to achieve conformity to that model; "the normal being precisely that which can conform to this norm, and the abnormal that which is incapable of conforming to the norm."[20] On the other hand, techniques of security normalize in the sense that they attempt to alter the frequency with which a trait or an event occurs within a given population. Foucault's extended example is the frequency of death from small pox.[21] Techniques, such as variolization and inoculation coupled with policies and systems for carrying them out, were deployed to reduce morbidity and mortality. The goal was not total conformity to a model norm, and the focus was not individual bodies; populations as statistically characterizable entities were the target of these efforts, and the goal was "to bring the most unfavorable [frequency] in line with the more favorable"[22] in a particular population.

As liberal security gains ascendency, then, subject positions formed as deviant within regimes of normalization will undergo some alteration (along with those deemed "normal"). Some formerly deviant homosexuals, for example, might be allowed to become the trendy (white, middle-class) gay couple next door—neither normal nor abnormal, just a variant within the general population. But, while this may look like a release from a regime of power—in other words, it may look and feel like freedom—in fact it cannot be accepted uncritically as precisely that, if by freedom one means freedom from power, for there is no outside to power, as Foucault has said; no society, community, or even friendship is utterly unstructured by relations of power. Instead, in this turn of events, power is simply re-

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[18] Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France 1973-1974*, translated by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 53-55.

[19] I do not mean to suggest that conflict is always inevitable. In many ways disciplinary regimes are essential to the success of neoliberal capitalism. "Investments" in "human capital" are in fact most often appeals to the use of disciplinary regimes. We invest in human capital by going to or sending people to schools and universities, for example. I would suggest, however, that there is less emphasis on single normalized trajectories for large groups of people, and more room for (even demand for) greater variety of disciplinary outcomes. Discipline is here to stay, but normalization is in some question.

[20] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 57.

[21] See ibid., 57-63.

[22] Ibid., 63.

forming itself; a new regime is shaping subject positions better suited for its goals and targets—which is not necessarily bad, but which should not be simply welcomed without critique. And, as I will show, there are reasons in this instance to be concerned.

In the lecture course of 1978-1979, *The Birth of Biopolitics,* Foucault suggests that liberal regimes of power transform through the twentieth century in some fascinating ways to become what he there terms "neoliberalism."[23] It is at this point, in the regimes of neoliberalism as they develop in the mid-twentieth century, that Foucault locates the type of subject positions under development in contemporary liberal apparatuses of security. And it is also at this point that I want to concentrate my own analysis

Neoliberal Governmentality

First, we must distinguish neoliberalism from classical and neoclassical liberalism. Foucault notes that neoliberals, in contrast to their predecessors, explicitly reject *laissez-faire*. Consider Friedrich von Hayek's comments in the neoliberal classic *The Road to Serfdom*: "Probably nothing has done so much harm to the liberal cause as the wooden insistence of some liberals on certain rough rules of thumb, above all the principle of *laissez faire*."[24] The classical liberals of the eighteenth century had held that economic activity is essentially exchange, existing in primitive form in barter; government should stay out of the way so that free exchange can occur.[25] Nineteenth century neoclassical liberal theorists rejected the classical account of economic activity as essentially the exchange of equivalences, substituting the idea that the essence of economic activity is competition and, therefore, that inequality is a necessary and perennial feature of the economic system. Government should stay out of the way, they held in common with their classical predecessors, but now its non-interference was in order to allow unfettered and, therefore, fair competition to occur. Neoliberals, in turn, follow their nineteenth-century forebears in seeing competition rather than exchange as the primary feature of economic activity, but they depart from both classical and neoclassical liberalism in their insistence that competition, at least of the sort they endorse, does not occur naturally in the absence of governmental activity. For neoliberals, government is a pre-condition of the free market's very existence and, thus, *laissez-faire* is nonsense. Foucault describes this view:

> The game, mechanisms, and effects of competition which we identify and enhance are not at all natural phenomena; competition is not the result of a natural interplay of

[23] Foucault uses the term, but he did not invent it. In fact, neoliberal Milton Friedman referred to his views as "neoliberalism" back in 1951 in an article entitled "Neoliberalism and its Prospects." This article was published in Norwegian in the journal *Farmand,* where it was entitled "Nyliberalismen og dens Muligheter." See Milton Friedman, "Neo-liberalism and its Prospects," [1951]. *Unpublished paper available in the archives of the Hoover Institution, Stanford* University; and Friedman, "Nyliberalismen og dens Muligheter," *Farmand,* Vol. 56 (February 17, 1951), 89-93.

[24] F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), 17.

[25] For an in-depth anthropological challenge to this story of primitive barter, see David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House Publishing, 2011), especially chapter 2.

> appetites, instincts, behavior, and so on. In reality, the effects of competition are due only to the essence that characterizes and constitutes it. The beneficial effects of competition are not due to a pre-existing nature, to a natural given that it brings with it. […] Competition is a principle of formalization. [It] has an internal logic […]. Its effects are only produced if this logic is respected. It is, as it were, a formal game between inequalities; it is not a natural game between individuals and behaviors. […] Competition is therefore an historical objective of governmental art and not a natural given […]. Government must accompany the market from start to finish. […] One must govern for the market, rather than because of the market. To that extent you can see that the relationship defined by eighteenth century liberalism is completely reversed.[26]

Foucault's description reflects views clearly stated in the works of both Hayek and Milton Friedman. Hayek writes, "The functioning of a competition not only requires adequate organization of certain institutions like money, markets, and channels of information—some of which can never be adequately provided by private enterprise—but it depends, above all, on the existence of an appropriate legal system, a legal system designed both to preserve competition and to make it operate as beneficially as possible. Private property has to be defined."[27] Friedman makes a similar point: "The notion of property, as it has developed over the centuries and as it is embodied in our legal codes, has become so much a part of us that we tend to take it for granted, and fail to recognize the extent to which just what constitutes property and what rights the ownership of property confers are complex social creations rather than self-evident propositions."[28] For this and other important reasons, Friedman asserts, "the organization of economic activity through voluntary exchange presumes that we have provided, through government, for the maintenance of law and order to prevent coercion of one individual by another, the enforcement of contracts voluntarily entered into, the definition of the meaning of property rights, the interpretation and enforcement of such rights, and the provision of a monetary framework."[29] Unlike their liberal predecessors, neoliberals see a major and foundational role for the institutions of government in markets. This means that not only is neoliberal government likely to be bigger than classical or neoclassical liberal government; it also has a different purpose and target. Older forms of liberalism drew a distinction between the domain of government and the domain of the markets, and they wanted government, as much as possible, to keep to its own sphere. For neoliberals, by contrast, there is no purpose for government except to secure markets.[30]

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[26] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics,* 120-21.

[27] Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom,* 38.

[28] Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 26.

[29] Ibid., 27.

[30] See Ibid., chapter II. Friedman does allow that government would also need to supplement private charity to protect the incompetent, "whether madman or child." (34) Of course, this idea that government's role in charity and community work should be and could be minimal and still sustain capitalism is highly questionable. For a critique, see Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), especially chapter 3.

Markets, not people, are the focus of neoliberal government. However, markets only exist as a result of multiple human decisions and interactions and the consequent circulation of goods and money. Any particular market's "behavior," therefore, is a subspecies of the collective behavior of many people. Governing for the market means, then, managing and channeling collective human behavior. And with this formulation we see clearly that the governance of markets is continuous with the governance of populations—populations, not individuals. It is not necessary that any given individual invest in a given financial venture or that any given individual purchase a given commodity, only that some do. Hence, disciplinary techniques applied across the board are not the right kind of tool to insure market viability. For markets to function efficiently and produce wealth, it is necessary only that sufficient numbers of people (whose individual identities are irrelevant) invest and purchase at optimal rates. And it is government's job (although not government's alone) to secure those rates, whether through monetary or fiscal policy or by a variety of other means, from anti-trust laws to regulations on advertising, and sometimes even to direct entitlement payments so that the non-productive can contribute to the Gross Domestic Product through consumption.[31]

Even when neoliberal policies do in fact enhance individuals' well-being, however, that is not their purpose. Individuals are simply not important as individuals; they are only important in aggregates as factors in markets. The behavior of this or that individual body necessarily decreases in importance as neoliberal governmentality spreads, which means would-be comprehensive disciplinary regimes targeting individual bodies decrease in significance. Insofar as a certain number of skilled and docile bodies might be needed for the market's sake, such regimes might retain some value in some sectors, but those sectors are limited. Compared to the vast and increasingly global mechanisms and networks of population management, networks for disciplinary normalization are parochial and fragmented. Foucault's careful studies of prison, hospital, asylum, and school discipline and their interconnections are revealing and both historically and philosophically valuable, but they are increasingly out of date. Instead of spreading, disciplinary networks may well be receding.

With the vast expansion of the carceral system in the US since the 1970s, however, this claim of disciplinary recession may well be questioned. As Bernard Harcourt and many others have noted, the number of Americans incarcerated in 1970 was about 200,000, but by 2001 the number was close to 2 million, an increase much greater than the increase in

[31] One of government's jobs may be to establish and maintain the institutions of discipline that will provide that sufficient number of people with the skills of production and consumption. However, if market incentives are in place, the more ambitious, resourceful, and intelligent individuals will decide themselves to "invest" in their own disciplining and will seek out private sector solutions for their needs. Thus discipline is privatized and market-driven, and its totalizing aspects may well be tempered or even in some instances abandoned. If so, it may not be correct to speak of *normalizing* discipline.

the US population.[32] Michelle Alexander puts the number by 2008 at 2.3 million, with another 5.1 million in "community correctional supervision," either probation or parole.[33] If we assume that incarceration, probation, and parole are essentially disciplinary mechanisms, then disciplinary normalization would surely be expanding rather than contracting. However, a closer look at current mechanisms suggests that a transformation has occurred. As Harcourt points out, early 20th century penologists were concerned with rehabilitation, and institutions and policies reflected that concern. However, in the last quarter of the century, institutions and policies from mandatory sentencing to fixed sentences, abolition of parole, federalization of crimes and criminal enforcement, and profiling practices reduced concern with both rehabilitation and the specifics of individual criminal lives and increased the resources spent on crime prediction among identifiable populations.[34] From a different angle, Alexander points to a shift from concern with developing prisoners' skills and character for return to the general labor force toward a concern with simply warehousing people deemed irrelevant to the global economy.[35] In Foucaultian terms, these changes amount to transformation of the mechanisms from primarily disciplinary techniques to primarily techniques of security; the expansion of the carceral is, precisely, an expansion of techniques of security at the expense of techniques of discipline. I would argue that some similar changes have occurred during the same time period in public education. This is not to say that disciplinary normalization no longer has a role to play; the two sets of techniques are not at all antithetical in some contexts.

In fact, most disciplinary institutions in the US have been systematically neglected and under-funded for the last forty years, leaving many hardly more than containment facilities. Consider, in particular, public school systems in poor and working class communities. Capacities are not cultivated, and docility is achieved more often by force than by training.

In the Academy, we still see the effects of operative disciplinary regimes, because we serve a population whose skills in both production and consumption are still necessary for market functioning. But fewer and fewer people are able to enter the Academy, because of rising costs and increasingly poor high school training in many school districts. Likewise, fewer and fewer people are able to enter (or, since 2008 especially, re-enter) the job market. Many people who cannot finance their own training receive very little training to develop

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[32] Bernard E. Harcourt, "The Shaping of Chance: Actuarial Models and Criminal Profiling at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century," *The University of Chicago Law Review*, vol. 70, no. 1 (winter, 2003), 110.

[33] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010), 92.

[34] Bernard E. Harcourt, "The Shaping of Chance: Actuarial Models and Criminal Profiling at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century," *The University of Chicago Law Review*, vol. 70, no. 1 (winter, 2003), 105.

[35] See Alexander, *The New Jim Crow,* 207.

whatever potentials they may have. Neoliberal governmentality simply will not "invest" in any more "human capital" than markets require.[36]

Neoliberal Subjectivity

My focus in this article, however, is not population management but the types of subjectivity that are generated through population management within neoliberal apparatuses of security. In other words, who (or what) are we becoming? Foucault's work suggests that those of us who participate in markets are becoming entrepreneurs who invest in our own human capital in order to generate income streams. After explaining Foucault's claim, in this section I will argue that this process reshapes the notion of identity, seriously fraying its ties to normalized development and rendering its variants quite a bit less rigid than they were previously. Ultimately, my contention will be that within neoliberal regimes, the practice of queering identities is not as resistant to dominant power networks as it might seem or as we might want it to be, and in some domains it may actually facilitate neoliberal governmentality rather than resist it at all.

Neoliberal theory follows economist Lionel Robbins in his definition of economics as "the science of human behavior as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have mutually exclusive uses."[37] This definition, as Foucault points out, shifts the discipline away from analyses of processes and toward analyses of activities.[38] Production, for example, is no longer central; rather, income acquisition and allocation are. This shift seriously blurs the distinction between labor and capital. Laborers' wages are, simply, income, just as capitalists' rent, interest, and profit from sales are income. There may be a difference in quantity (in fact, of course there is a difference in quantity), but there is no difference in quality between various incomes. Furthermore, neoliberal theorists, following Irving Fisher, define "capital" as anything from which an income can be derived, and hold that minds and bodies themselves can be capital. *Voilà*, wage earners are capitalists! Or, to be more precise, wage earners are entrepreneurs. They invest in their human capital, market themselves, and sell their time, energy, knowledge, and skills. As Nobel Prize winning economist Gary Becker puts it, "Persons investing in human capital can be considered 'firms' that combine such capital perhaps with other resources to produce earning capital…"[39] Thus, "the basic element to be deciphered by economic analysis is not

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[36] This language was introduced into academic economic discourse by neoliberal economists Theodore Schultz and Gary Becker in the 1950s. Its best known early formulation is in Gary Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

[37] This is from Lionel Robbins, *Essays on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science* (London: Macmillan, 1962), 16 (originally published in 1932). Gary Becker quotes it on the first page of his *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976). Foucault quotes it in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 223.

[38] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics,* 223.

[39] Gary Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 115-6.

so much the individual, or processes and mechanisms, but enterprises," Foucault writes. "An economy made up of enterprise-units, a society made up of enterprise-units, is at once the principle of decipherment linked to liberalism and its programming for the rationalization of a society and an economy."[40] In other words, these entrepreneurs-of-themselves are both theoretical assumptions that neoliberal theorists make in order to describe human market behavior and, at the same time, neoliberal prescriptions for how human beings should behave. Neoliberalism is both analytic and normative.

Good neoliberal subjects, then, are more or less successful enterprise-units.[41] The income streams they generate enable them to maximize their utility functions (or, at least, the purpose of generating income streams is to amass the resources necessary to maximize utility, whether this is realized or not). Ultimately, what these enterprises produce (or at least endeavor to produce) is their own preference satisfaction. The income stream may be used to purchase (or attract) the raw materials—shelter, groceries, a mate, etc.—which may be combined with non-market labor to produce whatever the neoliberal subject wishes to consume (warmth, nutrients, orgasm, etc.).

This way of construing human activity makes of each individual a self-interested bundle of *sui generis* preferences calculating the costs and benefits of every available option for conduct and relationship in view of his or her own likelihood of satisfaction. Everything we do is to be understood as utility maximizing behavior based on preferences and calculation. Even our most intimate associations—with our parents, with our spouses, with our children—are explicable on this model, according to Becker.[42] Generosity and self-sacrifice are investments; genetically related offspring are commodities for which close substitutes are scarce;[43] and friendships are valuable insofar as they maximize one's utility function.

Becker is famous for having analyzed criminal behavior in this way. Law-breaking, he argues, be it parking in a tow-away zone or selling narcotics, is market behavior, and if authorities want to reduce it, they have simply to reduce the incentives to engage in it. There is no qualitative difference between people who break laws and people who do not; the "delinquent" is not a special kind of person.[44] Repetitions of the choice to break laws leading to multiple arrests and incarcerations might generate the label and even the sub-

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[40] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics,* 225.

[41] I take this to be an analytic statement. Insofar as one is a neoliberal subject, one is an enterprise unit. I do not believe neoliberalism is so prevalent that we all are, in fact, neoliberal subjects. I believe neoliberal governmentality attempts to produce neoliberal subjects and that it is succeeding to some extent.

[42] Gary Becker, *A Treatise on the Family* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

[43] Ibid., 8.

[44] Andrew Dilts has argued that this analysis is probably what drew Foucault to a study of neoliberalism in the first place; this account of criminal subjectivity—that is, a denial that there is such a thing as specifically criminal subjectivity—directly challenges Foucault's claim in *Discipline and Punish* that the carceral system produces delinquents as a type of subjectivity. See Andrew Dilts, "Michel Foucault Meets Gary Becker: Criminality Beyond *Discipline and Punish*," *Carceral Notebooks,* vol. 4 (2008), especially 78-79 and 88-89. Web: Accessed December 20, 2011 at http://www.thecarceral.org/cn4_dilts.pdf.

jective experience of oneself as "criminal" or "delinquent," but those identities are simply shorthand for aggregated preferences as expressed and implemented choices over time.

Obviously, the same case can be made for the "homosexual," as well as for any of the other sexual identity categories generated through the twentieth century. Everybody starts with their own set of personal preferences. Neoliberal theorists are not interested in the whence and wherefore of those preferences; it simply does not matter (although advertisers are very interested in how to generate new preferences for market purposes). As neoliberals see it, we all make predictions regarding what will satisfy our preferences and enhance our utility, and then we calculate the costs and risks of attempting to achieve satisfaction in each of the ways available to us at a given time. Our lives are made up of these thousands of calculated choices. Our identities are to be understood not as some underlying truth that comes into the world with us at conception or birth, or even as the names for biological and psychological developmental outcomes, but simply as names for relatively long-term patterns of behavior that can be thought of as manifestations of choice and strategy.[45]

For identities to have any value or meaning in neoliberal regimes, they must play some role in markets. And they do. "Lesbians" are a population with certain preferences cohesive enough to form a market—for four-wheel drive vehicles, Birkenstocks, power tools, wedding planners, and reproductive technologies. Likewise "gay men" are a population with certain preferences (and statistically, being [white] men, with about 30% more income to allocate than lesbians); so they are a market—for vodka, magazines, sophisticated household furnishings, men-only cruise lines.[46] We call these stereotypes, which make them seem detrimental, and they do have detrimental effects. But unlike older stereotypes, the detrimental effects fall not so much on those who do but rather on those who do *not* fit them. Whereas it was terrible to be a limp-wristed sissy, it is not so bad to be an urban sophisticate with artistic flare; in fact, it might greatly increase one's income stream. What

[45] Neoliberal theorists do not hold that people actually consciously calculate all the time. Rather, this description of human life is a model of behavior rather than of mental activity. Gary Becker, for example, makes clear that maximizing behavior need not be conscious or deliberative. He holds that we can use a maximization model to describe, literally, *all* human *and* nonhuman animal behavior. See Becker, *A Treatise on the Family*, x. This is consonant with Becker's earlier claim that there is no such thing as "free" time; all activity is to be understood as geared in one way or another to maximization of utility. See Becker 1965, 513. Milton Friedman had already asserted the irrelevance of actual human decision-making processes in his 1953 article "The Methodology of Positive Economics," where he asserted that even the growth of leaves on a tree could be understood theoretically as maximizing behavior. What is important is not whether rationality is actually a factor in the process but the fact that, as Friedman puts it, "…under a wide range of circumstances individuals will behave *as if* they were seeking to maximize their expected returns…" (Milton Friedman, "The Methodology of Positive Economics," In *Essays in Positive Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 21.

[46] Scare quotes indicate not only that I am speaking here of labels but that I am *not* speaking here of actual people. "Lesbians" and "gay men" in this paragraph are simply terms in market analyses and advertising discourses.

is terrible is to be bullied out of an education, to try to survive among the ranks of the working poor, to be ill without insurance, or to raise children or care for a disabled partner without the civil rights necessary to protect their interests.

Neoliberalism has an answer to whatever discrimination people suffer, however. It is to let the market handle it. Some people have a taste for racism or homophobia, a preference for avoiding contact with blacks or Jews or gays. They calculate the costs and risks of satisfying that preference, and then they do so in whatever manner best maximizes their utility. However, as Milton Friedman notes, "The man who exercises discrimination pays a price for doing so."[47] If he happens to be an entrepreneur, this price interferes with operational efficiency. "A businessman or entrepreneur who expresses preferences in his business activities that are not related to productive efficiency is at a disadvantage compared to other individuals who do not. Such an individual is in effect imposing higher costs on himself than are other individuals who do not have such preferences. Hence, in a free market they will tend to drive him out."[48]

Indeed, markets have remedied some discrimination against non-heterosexuals.[49] As of 2008, according to an Equality Forum survey, 473 of Fortune 500 companies included sexual orientation in their non-discrimination policies.[50] Increasingly, such companies offer partner benefits to employees in same-sex relationships. And the job market is not the only market to address discrimination. For example, for many years the Commonwealth of Virginia prohibited insurance companies from selling domestic partner health insurance policies in Virginia. Having discovered a lucrative market niche outside the state that they felt sure could be replicated within it, the companies lobbied hard to change the law. In fact, when gay and lesbian activists attempted to attend the General Assembly hearings on the question, insurance representatives urged them to stay away, so as not to confuse a free market issue with a social issue; the companies' spokespeople would handle everything. And they did. The legal change that ensued was thus a result of market pressure, not of demands for equality or justice.

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[47] Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom,* 110.

[48] Ibid., 109-110. This is a common neoliberal claim, but it is clearly false, at least in many domains. In the Deep South in the 1950s businesses would have lost white middle-class customers if they served blacks, and thus they would have lost money (the disposable income of the two groups being unequal). Similarly, many Christian businesses would suffer if they served queer people. Discrimination in some markets does pay and will continue to do so.

[49] This is not to say that market forces operating in complete isolation from other forces brought about changes. I doubt that it is possible to isolate market forces from political or material or moral forces, although I suspect neoliberals would disagree. What does seem to be clear is that market forces have played a significant role in some of the positive changes that have occurred for queer people in the US and elsewhere, just as market forces have played a role in promoting some aspects of feminist agendas over the last fifty years.

[50] This information can be found at http://www.equalityforum.com/fortune500/, which was accessed on December 15, 2011.

Of course, this market approach only works to end discrimination if inclusion of the groups of people in question is profitable. When it is not, there simply is no remedy. Those lesbians and gay men, transpeople and queers of all sorts who are without sufficient human capital and resources to allocate in markets may well still be subject not only to discrimination but to harassment and violence.

But to return to the question at hand, within a neoliberal framework, an identity is not coincident with a subject position. Neoliberal subjects are (or should be, if they are rational) self-entrepreneurs; it is up to them to acquire whatever discipline is needed to enhance their human capital and compete in the marketplace. Identities, when they come into play at all, are simply labels imposed on aggregated choices, which in turn are based on *sui generis* preferences; they are not the names of developmental trajectories, as they are in regimes of disciplinary normalization. Consequently, they will not be strictly enforced on every individual human body. And this brings us back to queer theory and politics.

Queering in the Absence of Firm Identities

The project of queering identities began in the early 1990s as a way of breaking down rigid delineations of experience and desire. Queer theorists pointed out numerous examples of ambiguous or veiled homosexual desire in apparently heterosexual images, tropes, characters, and plot lines in classical literature, drama, and film, as well as in popular culture. They showed us that our own real-life sexual and gender identities were simulacra, constantly requiring reenactment, reiteration, and representation to bolster and sustain themselves. They resisted and challenged homogeneity of identification by inciting identities to proliferate and endlessly differ from themselves. In short, where our normalized identities defined and imprisoned us, they excavated exits and melted bars. They showed us that those identities had histories and political investments and interests that transcended and sometimes opposed our individual lives and well-being. They laid bare the mechanisms of disciplinary normalization. They encouraged us to experience dis-identification and estrangement. In Foucault's terms, they helped us to get free of ourselves.[51]

[51] Eve Sedgwick's work may be the premiere example of queer interrogations of literary culture. See especially her 1994 book *Tendencies* (Duke University Press). Another example is Alexander Doty's 1993 book *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture* (University of Minnesota Press). Of course Judith Butler's 1990 *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge) must be cited as an example of exposing gender identities as enactments or simulacra, but one could also point to queer performance artists such as comedian Eddie Izzard. Proliferation of identities is one avenue for displaying accepted or "normal" identities as historically constructed. Historical accounts of the construction of and political investments in various normalized identities are given in a variety of queer contexts. Jennifer Terry's "Theorizing Deviant Historiography," in the Summer, 1991, issue of *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, which was devoted to Queer Theory (Vol. 3, no. 2, 55-74), disrupts standard sexual identities in this way. Martha Vicinius' work, particularly her article in Routledge's *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* entitled "'They Wonder to Which Sex I Belong': The Historical Roots of the Modern Lesbian Identity," has similar effects, as does Jonathan Goldberg's study of European responses to Native American sexual practices in "Sodomy in the New World: Anthropologies Old and New" in Michael

Now, however, if disciplinary normalization is receding where it is in tension with expanding regimes of security wherein circulation (of money, commodities, information, human bodies, etc.), not development, is paramount, how are queer theory and politics situated? If "queer" resists the forces that would contain us in normalized identities, can "queer" also resist the forces that would transform us into utility maximizers operating as entrepreneurial firms? Or is it more likely just to render us all more open to marketing across what used to be our normalized identity boundaries?

The question is pressing because, on some fronts at least, it looks like queering identities facilitates the expansion and multiplication of markets. To attract a desired mate, a straight man might need to invest in his human capital by learning from—and then by purchasing the same products as—men with fashionable "queer eyes," as depicted on an early twenty-first century reality TV show, "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy." Straight masculinity needs to be softened or refined; hence, a little queerness is good for everybody. In some queer youth cultures, boundary breaking and gender-bending strategies rely very heavily on deploying purchased products; one announces one's challenges to identification through clothes, jewelry, hair styles, tattoos, personal electronics, and similar accoutrements and often through relatively rapid changes in these modes of personal stylization. After all, in a neoliberal world, what does refusing to be contained in an identity mean other than refusing to make consistent consumer choices?

It will be argued that this popular culture appropriation of "queer" has little or nothing to do with the queer politics of the 1970s and 1980s or with the queer theory and politics of the 1990s. And there is merit in that argument. My point is not that the work done in those decades was misguided, only that, with the changes in notions of identity that have occurred with the advance of neoliberalism over the last four decades, that sort of work now will inevitably be appropriated and, to use a very old word, co-opted. It does not challenge neoliberal subjectivities directly enough not to be; its focus was disciplinary normalization. But can we turn queering into resisting neoliberalism? I believe so, and I believe we should.

First, why should we? I will not make a comprehensive argument here. Instead, like Foucault in the first lecture of the 1977-1978 series, I will assert a "conditional imperative"[52]: If we want to resist domination, if we want to resist the current political tendency to lock people down in a single grid of intelligibility and mode of living (and surely that is essentially what queer politics and queer theory have aimed to oppose all along), then in addition to resisting what remains of normalized disciplinary identities, we must resist and challenge the neoliberal reduction of people to calculating, self-interested entrepreneurs of themselves. This is the way of thinking and approaching life that we all are being pressed into within neoliberal regimes of power. For those few who actually succeed

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Warner's anthology *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (University of Minnesota Press, 1993). Scores, if not hundreds, of other books, articles, performers, and political actions could be listed here as well. This note is far from exhaustive.

[52] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population,* 3.

in turning themselves into self-entrepreneurs, viewing every aspect of their existence in terms of competition, investment, and profitable exchange, such a life is likely to be impoverished in every way except financial. And for those who fail—which is likely to be a large majority of people on our planet, including a majority of North Americans and Europeans—the material, if not also the psychological, results are little short of terrifying. What we must queer now, I believe, is not so much normalized identity but neoliberal subjectivity. If neoliberalism is able to impose its conception of human being fully, the world will be a much worse place, in my view, than it is now. Relationships, including communal and civic relationships, will be devalued to the breaking point, and material scarcity in the absence of those relationships will drive people to desperation.

So, how can we queer neoliberal subjectivity? Queering, like queer "itself," never appears in unity. There will be many approaches and possibilities, and they will not obey common distinctions between theory and practice. With that word of caution, I will conclude this essay by discussing three closely related courses of action. The first begins with a policing of our language. Let us pause and consider each time we find ourselves about to describe an action as an "investment." This, I think, would be the first step in resisting the neoliberal financialization of lives and selves. Sometimes people do invest, such as when they allocate some of their incomes to 401(k)s. But why think of taking classes as "investing"? Why think of maintaining one's home as "an investment"? Why think of getting to know colleagues at conferences as "investments"? There are other ways to describe these activities. In fact, all these things usually involve some pleasure in the moment and have many desirable effects besides increasing one's net worth in the marketplace. Interrogating the use of financial language in everyday life is crucial for identifying the ways in which neoliberal discourses and values are shaping us and our relationships. I suspect, furthermore, that a sustained resistance to financial language might also lead us eventually to undertake a critique of neoliberal temporality with its multiple postponements into an apparently unending futurity of projected returns.[53]

A second, probably closely related practice of resistance to neoliberal domination might begin with simply taking note of desires and pleasures that are neither market-based nor market-valued. Non-(re)productive sexuality might be a prime example, as might friendship and communal relationships outside the kinship systems that are taken to be the fundamental units of capitalist consumption. To be sure, there are ways of construing such things in market terms if we choose to, as Gary Becker's work makes clear, but if we pay close attention to what really brings us joy in those activities and relationships and find ways of expressing that joy or pleasure or desire in non-financial and non-market terms,

[53] For a preliminary discussion of the possibilities of queering contemporary economic temporality, see Shannon Winnubst, *Queering Freedom* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), particularly the end of chapter 4 and chapter 5. Furthermore, for potential resources for a complete rethinking of temporality, see Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

collectively we may generate a basis upon which to live in resistance to neoliberal domination.

Finally, in addition to examining the ways we speak of our own actions in everyday life and the ways we understand and live in relation to others, we might actually take a more activist stand against gay and lesbian market identities. By this I mean something more than simply challenging stereotypes, which has been done for decades. I mean, also, challenging the gay and lesbian organizations that promote our communities as markets and that buy into the idea that what justice for all amounts to is assimilation into the dominate market economy. Let me quickly add that I am not advocating a withdrawal from market economies (I believe that would be impossible), nor am I suggesting that we relinquish the gains made against discrimination in employment. Instead, I am suggesting, in a Foucauldian vein, that we problematize those goals and do what we can to render them questionable. As David Harvey wrote recently, "We are, often without knowing it, all neoliberals now."[54] We have already been re-shaped to a great extent, and alternatives to neoliberal language and concepts are no longer readily available. But they can emerge if the radical contingency of our own ways of being make themselves felt in our questioning. In other words, alternatives can form and domination can be opposed through an anti-neoliberal practice of queer.

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[54] David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).