Sex, gender and genesis: A Cixousian exploration of language in the gay marriage debates

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SEX, GENDER AND GENESIS: A CIXOUSIAN EXPLORATION OF LANGUAGE IN THE GAY MARRIAGE DEBATES

by

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ABSTRACT

Sex, Gender and Genesis: A Cixousian Exploration of Language in the Gay Marriage Debates

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How does language structure patriarchy? How are gendered language and creation story imagery evidenced in contemporary debates on gay marriage? Hélène Cixous suggests that Western thought is organized around binary, hierarchical oppositions -- the most fundamental of which are male over female and masculine over feminine. Language and its connections to psychological and her/historical origins are central to her work. Cixous suggests that the separation of male and female, masculine and feminine, result in a war of sexual difference. I explore these themes with a feminist deconstruction of Internet sites in support of and against gay marriage. I then utilize Cixous's feminine writing to approach these issues through short dramatic and autoethnographic texts.

My exploration suggests that the language and strategies of those supporting gay marriage actually serve to reinforce the same patriarchal structures that oppose gay marriage. In particular, the language of sex, gender,
and sexuality gives rise to confusion which serves the interests of those opposing gay marriage, and the oppositional nature of the debate bolsters modern black and white thinking rather than opening up multiple perspectives and possibilities. The study suggests that the work of Hélène Cixous be considered a resource to sociologists interested in finding ways past the impasse of modern dichotomous thinking.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

What would happen to logocentrism, to the great philosophical systems, to the order of the world in general if the rock upon which they founded this church should crumble?

If some fine day it suddenly came out that the logocentric plan had always, inadmissably, been to create a foundation for (to found and to fund) phallocentrism, to guarantee the masculine order a rationale equal to history itself.

So, all the history, all the stories would be there to retell differently… We are living in an age where the conceptual foundation of an ancient culture is in the process of being undermined by millions of a species of mole (Cixous and Clement 1986:65).

My inquiry is inspired by the words of Hélène Cixous. On this fine day, I propose in this project to investigate if and how the logocentric plan – that is, language in the Western world – does in fact found and fund the masculine order – that is, the hierarchical arrangement in thought and social reality of masculine over feminine, male over female. In particular, how do gendered language and creation story imagery (as the ‘original’ story of male and female) structure contemporary debates about gay marriage? More specifically, how do these debates – which are framed as an issue of ‘sexuality’ – relate to a more fundamental struggle over dominance of the masculine order?
Cixous's masculine order is based on oppositional binaries – mutually exclusive categories of thought such as male and female that, once identified, immediately oppose one another. Oppositional binaries, language and origins come together in Cixous' war of sexual difference. For Cixous, sexual difference refers to real/constructed/ perceived differences between male and female, as well as between masculine and feminine. Sexual difference – the most fundamental binary – 'originates' in Genesis and is maintained through language. Sexual difference is not a benign difference, rather it is a battleground. The masculine order consists of binaries and hierarchies in which the dominant must annihilate the other. The structures of sex/gender power are such that male/masculine oppresses and suppresses the female/feminine. The fundamental opposition of sexual difference, then, is like a war – "the eternal assassination that is misogyny" for Cixous (1997:xxi). How are oppositional thinking and the 'war' of sexual difference evident in the gay marriage debates?

War and hate interest Cixous. She suggests that hatred is infectious, like a plague (Cixous 1997:33). This is why it is difficult to 'fight' the war of sexual difference. Because the masculine order is premised on the oppositional thinking that annihilates the other, by 'fighting back', one simply attempts to become the dominant. In the process, the binary is reaffirmed and more importantly the masculine ordering of thought – binaries, hierarchies, war, winners and losers – are strengthened. Is it possible that both/all sides of the debate on gay marriage participate in the oppositional thinking of the masculine
order? If so, does this participation serve to strengthen the masculine order and the status quo of sex/gender power structures?

If language as we know it holds the status quo in place, then re-inventing language becomes critical for effecting change. If as Cixous suggests, I wish to become one of 'a million species of mole' undermining the dominant masculine order, then I will need the tools of new language to overturn the 'conceptual foundation' as we now know it. Cixous's feminine writing is intended to do just this, and feminine writing is central to this project. In this project, I will first perform a feminist deconstruction on texts dealing with the gay marriage debates. I will then enact Cixous's feminine writing – striving to open up new ways of thinking beyond what is conceivable inside the confines of the masculine order.

**Questions**

What holds the structures of (hetero)sex/gender power in place? By sex, I mean biological sex, corresponding to reproductive bodily functions. By gender, I mean the socially constructed meanings attached to sex. I problematize both with the prefix '(hetero)' to question whether in fact the institution of heterosexuality is critical to structures of sex/gender power. By structures of (hetero)sex/gender power, I refer to patriarchy. For decades, contemporary feminists have critiqued the history of Western patriarchal tradition in which males control significantly greater economic wealth and political power than do females; and in which men and women alike tend to value qualities labeled as
masculine while denigrating that which is labeled feminine (Jaggar 1988:8). Like Cixous, I believe that language is one the most significant means through which structures of patriarchy are sustained (Cixous 1981, Donovan 1988). Gender – a system of socially constructed meanings associated with biological sex – is created, communicated and maintained in powerful ways through language. Gendered language is a central focus of this project.

In addition I believe creation stories are a powerful force in structuring our ideas about sex, gender, and sexuality. There are important connections between language and creation myth. From a social constructionist perspective, when we name something in language, we create it in reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Our ability to perceive reality is filtered through our ability to name and know something in words. From a social constructionist perspective, there are not pre-existing men and women to whom we attach labels. Rather, we are able to know someone is a woman because we have a word ‘woman.’ In what ways, then, do creation stories in general and Genesis in particular relate to gendered language and ideas about sex, gender, and sexuality?

In order to examine these questions empirically, I chose what is perhaps the most hotly debated issue of sex and gender in contemporary American society. Gay marriage as a topic provides an excellent site to scrutinize language and explore imagery from Genesis – the story of the original ‘marriage’ of Adam and Eve. I question whether debates about homosexuality are fueled, perhaps unconsciously, by the ‘war’ of sexual difference. Specifically, are the arguments against gay marriage less about marriage or sexuality, and more about
maintaining the binary, hierarchical (hetero)sex/gender system? Dig out the question of gay marriage is generally seen as an issue of sexual orientation, marriage and/or morality, I suggest that the issue may reduce to a question of sex and gender. The gay marriage debate, then, becomes an interesting place to look at language and creation myth, how they each play a part and how they converge. How does gendered language structure the discourse on gay marriage? How is creation myth invoked, if at all, in the debates?

Cixous says that binaries and hierarchies structure all of Western thought in the masculine order. Each binary then creates an opposition where the dominant annihilates ‘the other.’ Male/female is the most fundamental binary. Such oppositions are pervasive, yet we take them for granted: mind/body, rational/emotional, sun/moon, day/night. Each component of the binary is consciously or unconsciously labeled masculine or feminine, then prioritized or hierarchized. The mind (associated with the masculine) is valorized while the body (associated with the feminine) is denigrated. Cixous points out that these binaries are always a ‘couple.’ Is the ‘heterosexual’ couple, man/woman, then the key ingredient for maintaining the masculine order and the very foundation of language and meaning? How are debates about gay marriage fueled in part by a struggle over maintaining the male/female hierarchy and the culture of binary difference?

This hierarchy is expressed in the Judeo-Christian creation story of Genesis. There is a distinct ordering of Adam and Eve. Although the story has been interpreted in various times and ways, it typically reinforces the hierarchical
structuring of male/female. Cixous's work is infused with imagery of the garden. She is interested in 'the bodily roots of language' and she is always going back to 'the sources' (Sarup 1993). In part this is a psychoanalytic perspective, as she is interested in human development prior to language. Cixous theorizes a sustaining bisexuality (a wholeness of self that is both what we call masculine and feminine) that existed in the psyche prior to a child's socialization into language. Her interest in returning to 'the sources' is also about humanity and returning to the historical development of language and the current order. (I use 'historical' consciously acknowledging the masculinity of the word – 'his story' – since, like Cixous, I would argue that the development of language has indeed been a masculine story.)

The idea that the development of language is a masculine story is evident in that Western language is steeped in a system of thought which is inherently that which we call 'masculine' – linear, binary, oppositional, hierarchical. How, then, is the story of Genesis symbolically or 'literally' the origin of existing linguistic and social structures and the masculine order? How does language continue to express the story of Genesis? How does Genesis continue to structure our understanding of sex and gender and sexuality?

**Project Map**

In this section, I will overview the project as a whole. I start with a review of the key questions guiding this project which were introduced above. I then provide an overview of the project in a chapter by chapter breakdown. The
chapters (following the introduction) consist of theory, methods, and three chapters of findings, each resulting primarily from one of my three methods.

Key Questions

The purpose of this inquiry will be to look at a series of questions involving gendered language, creation myth, and the 'war' of sexual difference in evidence in contemporary gay marriage debates. I begin this project with the following questions:

- How does the logocentric plan – that is, language in the Western world – in fact found and fund the masculine order – that is, the hierarchical arrangement in thought and social reality of masculine over feminine, male over female?
- In particular, how do gendered language and creation story imagery (as the 'original' story of male and female) structure contemporary debates about gay marriage?
- More specifically, do these debates -- which are framed as an issue of 'sexuality' -- relate to a more fundamental struggle over dominance of the masculine order? If so, how?
- What holds the structures of (hetero)sex/gender power in place with respect to contemporary debates around gay marriage?
- How does Genesis continue to structure our understanding of sex and gender and sexuality?
- How does language continue to express the story of Genesis?
How are oppositional thinking and the 'war' of sexual difference evident in the gay marriage debates?

Is it possible that both/all sides of the debate on gay marriage participate in the oppositional thinking of the masculine order? If so, does this participation serve to strengthen the masculine order and the status quo of sex/gender power structures?

Chapter 2: Theory

In chapter two, I will examine Hélène Cixous's connections to a diverse set of perspectives and theorists. First I will review Cixous's relationships to feminisms and to poststructuralism, then I will develop some specific ideas from Cixous's own work. In the section on feminisms, I will discuss the irony of labeling Cixous a 'French' feminist. I will explain that Cixous's rejection of the label 'feminist is more a rejection of modernism as a masculine paradigm than a rejection of perspectives and activism on behalf of women. I will discuss psychoanalytic feminism and note the centrality of language in Cixous's work. I will explain that Cixous's work has been labeled 'essentialist', but that I find instead an optimism for change in her writing. Finally, I will describe Cixous's feminine writing as a postmodern project - a work that enacts plurality and multiplicities. Cixous writes us out of/away from the binaries and hierarchies that are fundamental to traditional modern Western thinking.

In the section on poststructuralism, I will connect Cixous with other important thinkers. Cixous builds from and refutes the work of psychoanalyst
Jacques Lacan. Cixous agrees with Lacan’s ‘symbolic order’ or law of the father and the idea that gender is developed through language. Cixous explicitly connects gender to Jacques Derrida’s critique of Western metaphysics. Derrida points out the oppositional binaries that structure Western thought. Cixous points out that these binaries are structured explicitly and implicitly around sex and gender – that the most fundamental binary is male/female, masculine/feminine. Like Foucault, Cixous is interested in that which is excluded from acceptable discourse. As in the case with the work of Derrida, however, Cixous brings attention to gender. She points out that what is excluded from acceptable discourse, or from the masculine order, is that which is labeled feminine.

Foucault’s theory of power is one of networks that are complex and multidirectional. Cixous is interested in power and sexual difference, particularly in what she calls the ‘war’ of sexual difference. Cixous is frequently connected with two other thinkers under the label ‘French feminists’. Luce Irigiray, Julia Kristeva, and Cixous do share a common link with the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan -- although their responses/ uses of his theory are very different. All three theorize a new language as a subversive strategy for overturning the current patriarchal symbolic order.

In the section on Cixous’s own work, I will develop three overlapping and interrelated themes. I start with Cixous’s writing about binaries and hierarchies – the oppositional thinking of Western thought which is fundamentally structured around sex/gender, male over female and masculine over feminine. In chapter four, I will use her ideas about binaries to investigate whether the debates on gay
marriage might be organized around a deeper debate on this masculine order. The second theme is Cixous’s writing about language and origins – both the psychoanalytic origins of personal development, particularly in the pre-Oedipal stages, as well as the her/his-torical origins of humanity and/or language in the form of creation mythology. (I use ‘her/his-torical’ since Cixous is interested not only in the dominant stories of origins as allowed in the masculine order, but also other possibilities of a herstory before language.) Language is central to the entire project, including the deconstructive work in chapter four and the feminine writing of chapters five and six. The third theme is Cixous’s war of sexual difference. Cixous explains that the lived experience of male/female and masculinity/femininity as created in language becomes a battleground of sexual difference. Sexual difference can be described in terms of ‘war’ and even hate. Like Cixous, I will attempt to use drama in order to explore war and hate. Chapter five will be a drama dealing with the war of sexual difference.

Chapter 3: Methods

In chapter 3, I will connect the theoretical frame from chapter two and the research questions from chapter one to the specific data and methods of my project. The data choices involve both the selection of the topic of the gay marriage debates as well as the Internet as a site to examine the debates. I discuss why the gay marriage debates make an excellent site for examining my research questions, as the issue deals with basic questions about sex and gender and is framed both as discourse and debate. My overarching question
for this project questions whether language serves to maintain the masculine order in thought and society. That is, how does language maintain the structures of (hetero)sex/gender power? Gay marriage deals with the biological sex of who is allowed to marry, and brings to discourse some normally taken-for-granted assumptions about sex, gender, and sexuality. Additionally, gay marriage discussions as ‘debate’ make this a site to examine another important research question. Cixous has cautioned against participating in the war of sexual difference by opposing the dominant – that the attempt to oppose and ‘win’ simply reinforces the masculine order of dominating and annihilating that which is considered ‘the other’. I will consider whether the dynamics of ‘debate’ around gay marriage serve to bolster the masculine order and reinforce the status quo of (hetero)sex/gender power.

My second ‘data’ decision is to use the Internet as the site to explore the gay marriage debates. The postmodern/poststructuralist theoretical frame of this project make a postmodern ‘data’ site particularly appropriate. I will describe the Internet as a postmodern combination of text and life. Although it involves writing on a computer screen, there is a strong sense of interaction with the reader. Additionally, the text is continually changing and updating. Of the many possible sites that deal with gay marriage, I will explain why I choose two primary sites: FamilyResearchCouncil.org and FreedomtoMarry.org. It is these two sites which will be the text for my first research method in chapter four, feminist deconstruction. I also access other sites which are organized around controversial radio talk show host, Dr. Laura Schlessinger. These sites,
DrLaura.com, StopDrLaura.org, and Glaad.org will be sources of additional data for the drama of sexual difference in chapter five.

In this chapter, I also describe in detail the three overlapping methods I will use in this project. The first method is a feminist deconstruction of the debates. This will involve iterative readings of the texts (Roseneau 1992, Sarup 1993). I start with a series of questions and expect additional questions to emerge from the initial readings. Closely examining web pages in support of and against gay marriage, I will look for binaries and hierarchies organized around male/female and masculine/feminine. I will also look for tropes of Genesis imagery. Finally, I will consider Cixous’s war of sexual difference. I will scrutinize the controversy as debate. I will consider whether participation in the debate (regardless of perspective) serves to reinforce the masculine order.

My second and third types of inquiry utilize language as method – specifically, feminine writing. Writing drama and autoethnography, I will explore the possibility of writing a way out of the binding structures of gendered language. Cixous’s feminine writing is difficult or impossible to codify, however it is a reinvention of language, playfully (yet seriously) subversive to the masculine order (Rabine 1987-88). It is a tool for the ‘million species of mole’ undermining our ancient conceptual foundations.

The second method combines this feminine writing with drama. Using the findings from the work of chapter four, I intend to write a drama of sexual difference in chapter five. Cixous, who writes poetry, fiction and drama along with critical/theoretical work, says that she can only deal with war and hate in the
theater (Cixous 1997:xxi). In writing this drama, then, I intend to deal with aspects of the gay marriage debates that relate to war and/or hate. The third method will be autoethnography and feminine writing. In chapter six, I will write an autoethnographic account of my own experience – this will connect my research experience to my own biography. The writing of chapters five and six, then, is guided partially by postmodern ethnographic methods and inspired by the feminine writing of Cixous. The goal of these chapters is creative. My hope is to write a way into radical new possibilities.

Chapter 4: Deconstructing Gay Marriage Debates

In chapter four, I will describe the findings of the feminist deconstruction of web sites for and against gay marriage. I will review the methodology which consists of iterative readings of the texts. I will review the initial set of questions with which I approached the text, and describe additional questions which emerged from the analysis.

The chapter is broken into a matrix of sections. For each of the two web sites, FamilyResearchCouncil.org and FreedomtoMarry.org, there is a sub-section on the three themes from Cixous: binaries and hierarchies; language and origins; and the war of sexual difference. I will explore the findings of deconstruction within each of themes from each web page, then compare and contrast the findings between the 'opposing' views.
Chapter 5: Tell Me About the Dream: A Drama in Four Scenes

This chapter will be informed both by the findings from chapter four, as well as by additional data from web pages organized around controversial radio talk show host Dr. Laura Schlessinger. The intent of this chapter is to explore the aspect of the debates that are manifested as warlike – particularly around the focal point of Dr. Laura. In the drama, I will utilize the feminine writing of Hélène Cixous. The writing of this chapter is also informed by the work of new ethnographers.

Chapter 6: A Note from Nancy: Autoethnographic Fragments

Like chapter five, this chapter will enact the feminine writing of Hélène Cixous. In particular, this chapter is inspired by Cixous's explicit and acknowledged connections between her lived biography and her writing. Simultaneously, it will be informed by the work of autoethnographers. The fragments will consist of short autobiographical narratives as related to the research, giving the reader access to my own personal background as researcher. The fragments will be framed as brief answers to questions that a reader might want to ask.
CHAPTER 2

THEORY

In French, the word for apple is ‘pomme’. Potato is ‘pomme de terre’ – literally, apple of/from the earth. So close. If it had been the forbidden pomme de terre, what might have been different? Might the serpent have tempted Adam? Would he have dug in the soil to take a bite from the potato? What kind of knowing might have come from unearthing the potato? What a difference a little dirt makes.

Apples from a tree evoke a linear development process. The apple from the branch, branch from trunk, trunk from root in an orderly fashion. In Deleuze and Guattari’s “On the Line”, they offer the rhizome as an alternative model of thought to the western norm of a tree (1983:11). Rhizomes, unlike trees, are not linear. Potatoes are rhizomes. The potato extends itself/is extended in many directions at once. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1983), an important characteristic of the rhizome is that any point may connect with any other, and in fact does.

This chapter will not trace the apple-tree lineage of the work of Hélène Cixous back to some foundational roots. Rather, it will explore rhizomatic connections to a diverse set of perspectives and theorists. Specifically, I will look
first at Cixous’s relationships to feminisms and to poststructuralism. In the following section on feminisms, I will discuss the irony of labeling Cixous a ‘French’ feminist. I explain why Cixous has actually rejected the label ‘feminist’. Her rejection of the label is more a rejection of modernism as a masculine paradigm than a rejection of perspectives and activism on behalf of women. In a discussion of psychoanalytic feminism, I locate the centrality of language in Cixous’s work. For Cixous and others, gender is man-made through language. I disagree with those who find Cixous’s work to be essentialist and find instead an optimism for change in her writing. Finally, I find Cixous’s feminine writing to be a postmodern project – a work that enacts plurality and multiplicities. Cixous writes us out of/away from the binaries and hierarchies that are fundamental to traditional modern Western thinking.

In the section on poststructuralism, I discuss linkages of Cixous with other important thinkers. Cixous both builds from and refutes the work of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. His ‘symbolic order’ or law of the father is critical to Cixous’s belief that gender is developed through language. Gendered language will be critical to the deconstructive critique in chapter four. Additionally, feminine writing – Cixous’s subversive attempt to write out of the symbolic order – will be the method of chapters four and five. Cixous notes that gender is the most fundamental binary and hierarchy in the structures of Western thought identified by Jacque Derrida. It is his project of deconstruction which the work of examining the gay marriage debates in chapter four. Unlike Derrida, Cixous believes we can escape the imprisonment of Western metaphysics. It is
her escape route of feminine writing which I undertake in chapters five and six. Cixous shares with Michel Foucault an interest in that which is excluded from acceptable discourse, although Cixous emphasizes the gendered nature of inclusion and exclusion. What is included is defined as masculine and associated with the male, while what is excluded is defined as feminine and associated with the female. Foucault also theorizes networks of power that are complex and multi-directional. This will be relevant to writing about Cixous’s war of sexual difference in chapter five. Cixous is often grouped with two other thinkers under the label ‘French feminists’. These are Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. All three connect with the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan in different ways, and theorize a new language as a subversive strategy for overturning the current patriarchal symbolic order. In true rhizomatic fashion, the more in-depth discussions below will begin where they will end – with ‘French’ feminism.

**French-/anti-/post-/Psychoanalytic-/Radical-/Postmodern-Feminist:**

**Hélène Cixous’s Relationships to Feminisms**

Hélène Cixous has had a diverse set of prefixes attached to the label feminist in reference to her work. She has been called alternatively and simultaneously French-/ anti-/ post-/ Psychoanalytic-/ Radical-/ Postmodern- feminist. “French” is perhaps my favorite qualifier of those applied to Hélène Cixous’s feminism. More than other prefixes, ‘French’ is reminiscent of Simone de Beauvoir (1952) in *The Second Sex* when she describes the phenomena of
woman as the original 'other.' The irony of feminist othering is in evidence in the prefix 'French.'

For myself, I shall be cautious of describing Cixous's feminism as emerging from the rib of mainstream (British and American) feminism. This is particularly 'tempting' as British and American feminisms are most often based in the modernist perspectives of liberal/Socialist/Marxist feminisms, whereas French feminism is associated more with 'exotic' postmodern views. I intend to demonstrate below, however, that Cixous (as a French feminist) is not the mysterious and unknowable Eve to 'normal' feminism's Adam.

Toril Moi notes that "the myth of the French as the dangerous (or fascinating) Other became an all-too common cliché of our own intellectual scene(s)" (Moi 1987:5). She provides an historical account of the initial reception of French feminism into the English-speaking scene. She points out that the French feminists were steeped in a very different intellectual tradition than their English-speaking counterparts. It is not surprising, then, that the initial image of French feminist theory was "the terrifying negative of our own (British or American) practice" (Moi 1987:5).

The cliché of French feminism in general, or of Hélène Cixous in particular, as a mysterious negation of English-speaking feminism is, of course, unwarranted. In this section, I hope to outline some of the many connections between Cixous's writing and the perspectives of diverse feminist theories. First, I will discuss Cixous association with the radical group Psych et Po and her rejection of the label 'feminist' for herself. This rejection has more to do with a
rejection of modernist terms of struggle than with a rejection of a perspective that is centrally interested in women. Next I review the psychoanalytic feminism of Cixous. She at once extends and refutes work of both Freud and Lacan, and creates a feminist model of psychoanalysis which is central to her work. Cixous's model describes how the self is 'man-made' through language. Cixous is sometimes accused of essentialism and has been linked to some of the precepts of radical feminism – specifically to the assumption of radical feminism which celebrates women's bodies as different from men's giving them special advantages. I disagree with the accusation of essentialism and agree with Weedon (1997) who argues that Cixous's position on sexual difference and the body is ambivalent. Finally, I will discuss how Cixous's feminine writing enacts the multiplicities which are an important component of self and identity in postmodern feminism. The discussion of postmodern feminism will conclude my discussion of Cixous's relationships to feminisms and lead to the next set of connections – linkages with other poststructuralists.

Anti-/Post-Feminism: Why Cixous rejects the label "feminist"

The label anti-feminist which has been applied to Cixous (Duchen 1987) should not be construed as anti-woman or conservative. Cixous's decision to reject the label 'feminist' is connected to her long-term association with Psych et Po (Psychoanalysis and Politics), a radical group asserting themselves as the women's liberation movement in France. This group intentionally distanced themselves from mainstream feminism. Psych et Po held that feminism denied
women's differences and attempted to integrate women into a misogynistic and
male-dominated world (Duchen 1987:15). Psych et Po defined feminism as a
"reformist movement of women wanting power within the patriarchal system", and
staged anti-feminism protests during the group's hey-day in the mid-1970s (Moi
1987:3). This stance is illustrative of the divide between modern and postmodern
feminist perspectives. This lack of will to power on behalf of postmodern
feminists, however, should not be misconstrued as a conservative stance. In
fact, the motives of many are revolutionary.

Antoinette Fouque, the founder of Psych et Po, in an interview with a
French newspaper, stated that “Feminism is not the goal of our revolution. We
are neither pre- nor antifeminist but post-feminist” (in Clement 1987:52). Clearly
there is a political, activist stand in Fouque's words 'the goal of our revolution.'
As a post-feminist, Hélène Cixous is interested in a changed world that is better
for women and all people. This is not to be accomplished, though, through
emancipation which is essentially a modernist project. Efforts toward 'liberation'
would serve simply to maintain a masculine order. Rather change would be "the
effect of a 'great leap outwards' toward independence" (Fouque in Clement
1987:52). Cixous's connection with post-feminism is not a conservative position,
but a revolutionary one. Her own activism is in the form of her feminine writing. I
will discuss this important aspect of her work in the chapter on methods.

Additionally, Cixous's aversion to engaging in a modernist project to wrest
power from male hands connects to the ideas of sexual difference and war which
I will explore later in this chapter. Cixous wishes to avoid engagement in the kind
of opposition which will have her perpetuating the masculine order which is based on the annihilation of the other. Cixous's post-feminism critiques modern versions of feminism while simultaneously extending the project in radically different ways. For Cixous, feminine writing is a politically subversive, even revolutionary, act. Her refusal to engage in the war-styled struggle of a modernist feminist effort is a perspective I use to review the debates on gay marriage.

Psychoanalytic-Feminism: How Gender is Man-made through Language

The radical group Psych et Po was explicitly interested in connecting theories of psychoanalysis with political activism. French feminists developed theories extending and/or refuting the psychoanalytic work of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Hélène Cixous is intimately familiar with the theories of both men. Her work rejects the male-centered bias of their models. Where she agrees with Lacan, however, is on the critical importance of language in the development of gender. "For as soon as we exist, we are born into language and language speaks (to) us, dictates its law, a law of death" (Cixous 1981:45).

Briefly, Freud theorized the development of sexual identity as oriented around the experience of or lack of a penis. A boy's Oedipal crisis consists of his desire to sexually possess his first love object – his mother – and kill his father. Seeing that the mother and others have no penis, the boy is fearful that this castration might happen to him. Eventually, the boy resolves the Oedipal complex as he begins to align himself with the power and authority of the father,
simultaneously distancing himself from his mother. The girl's experience is quite different. She, too, initially desires the mother. However, upon noting the evidently 'superior' penis on males, she is struck by 'penis envy' (Freud 1968:187-192).

Lacan's theory is similar, although the phallus in Lacan's model is not anatomical but symbolic. "Freud's hypotheses and observations... described what is essentially the 'fall' of individuals into consciousness, into language, into the realm of the symbolic, which is the patriarchal state" (Donovan 1988:112). The law of the father is the symbolic order – language – which the child craves. The phallus is symbolic of unattainable wholeness which the child hopes to attain through the control of language.

Cixous rejects both models – Freud's literal penis and Lacan's symbolic phallus – as theories based around a masculine bias (Sarup 1993:111). She is particularly interested, however, in Lacan's idea of language as the basis of sexual / gender development. Cixous "stresses the Lacanian emphasis on language as the seat of patriarchal oppression" (Donovan 1988:113). Additionally, she is interested in the pre-Oedipal, pre-linguistic state. These interests in language and origins coincide and become a theme in her writing. The psychoanalytic version of origins in the individual enlarges in her work to metaphoric origins such as creation myth. In my deconstruction of gay marriage debates, I will pay attention to gendered language, as well as explicit and implicit references to origins.
Radical-Feminism: Why Cixous is Accused of Essentialism

Tong (1998) defines essentialism as "the conviction that men are men and women are women and there is no way to change either's nature" (88). Cixous connects feminine writing to the female libido and sexuality. She has been criticized, and even dismissed, for her emphasis on difference as an essentialist position (Guillamin 1987:55). Weedon (1997) is concerned with the leanings toward essentialism in Cixous's feminine writing, however, she suggests that Cixous is ambivalent in her connection of the feminine libido to feminine writing under patriarchy. On the one hand (in what Weedon calls 'essentialist'), Cixous connects the feminine libido to female sex organs. On the other hand, in a more historical move gaining Weedon's approval, Cixous suggests that both masculine and feminine libidos are constructed in particular, but not universal ways under patriarchy (65).

For Jaggar (1988), the question of how much attention Cixous gives to women's bodies would no longer be grounds for critique. Jaggar groups Cixous with some of the most radical feminists who problematize not only the categories of masculinity and femininity - but also the existence of the male and female sexes. From this perspective, men and women do not exist and become gendered - men and women and their sexed bodies are created through patriarchy.

The accusation of essentialism is rooted in the desire for change. That is, the problem with essentialism is that if there are biological or psychological determinants, then the possibilities for transformation are limited. As discussed
previously, Cixous's writing is explicitly intended to subvert the existing order — whether that is the masculine order in language, or more radically, the cultural inscription of sex types on bodies. I argue that the accusation of essentialism in the work of Cixous is an empty one. Rather, Cixous is attempting to create revolutionary transformation through her feminine writing. It is this same radical path that I will attempt to follow in using feminine writing to explore the gay marriage debates.

Postmodern-Feminist: How Feminine Writing Enacts Multiplicities

Tong (1988) calls the relationship between feminism and postmodernism "an uneasy one" (193). Even the term "feminist" can be viewed as problematic, as discussed earlier in the context of Cixous's rejection of the label. Nicholson (1990), however, sees feminism and postmodernism as "natural allies," noting that both perspectives question the supposed neutrality and objectivity of traditional western claims of truth (5). Such claims of neutral or universal subject positions are critiqued as masking underlying masculine foundations. Postmodernism critiques the modern concepts of a unified stable, subject; and binary, hierarchical categories (Roseneau 1992). These critiques are reflected in Cixous's feminine writing.

Sarup suggests that a primary interest of Cixous is in "forms of writing that disturb the notion of individual subjectivity as unified and stable, and explode the boundaries of the self" (1998:113). Cixous believes that writing is a "privileged space" for exploration of a sustained bisexuality — the presence of both
masculinity and femininity in each individual. "She favours texts that are excessive in some way, texts that undermine fixed categories" (Sarup 1988:111). Cixous's writes from her own plural identities. She enacts the postmodern idea of multiplicities as an alternative to binaries. In my effort at feminine writing in chapters 5 and 6, I will strive to write from my own plural identities and to weaken the hierarchical binaries which frame the debates on gay marriage.

While not identical, postmodernism is closely related to poststructuralism. An important component of each perspective is the instability of meaning and language. This is central to Cixous's work and to this project. Meaning, as it turns out, is 'meaningless' without context. Is it a pomme or pomme de terre? Poststructuralism reminds us that the apple is just as slippery in English as in French.

Poststructuralism (Postmodernism): Cixous's Connections to Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, and French Feminists


Central to the work of the poststructuralists is the instability of meaning. Earlier work of structuralist Ferdinand Saussare pointed out the arbitrary sound image, or signifier, which represented the 'real' thing or concept, the signified. Poststructuralists argue that the signifiers, words, are only understandable in the
context of other words, other signifiers. In poststructuralism, the signified receives less attention and the signifier becomes most important (Sarup 1993:).

Meaning and language are central to my project. First, I will scrutinize language in the work of deconstruction in chapter four. Then, I will strive to create new meaning through new kinds of language in the feminine writing of chapters five and six.

In this section, I discuss how instability of meaning connects to characteristics of poststructuralism and postmodernism. I connect Hélène Cixous to important poststructuralists: Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and remaining French Feminists Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. Each of these thinkers shares the common context of the French intellectual scene. Their work overlaps and differs in rhizomatic ways. I map linkages to and from each to the work of Hélène Cixous and the methods of this project.

First, I will briefly discuss poststructuralism and postmodernism. The two terms are often used interchangeably although they are not identical (Agger 1991). The ‘post’ in each implies a critique without opposition. That is, poststructuralism critiques without opposing structuralism, just as postmodernism critiques without opposing modernism. The perspectives overlap and share many of the same assumptions. Sarup (1993) identifies three characteristic features of poststructuralism: a recognition of reading as a productive act; an emphasis on the signifier over the signified; and a belief that the human subject is structured by language (3). These are similar to important features of postmodernism described by Roseneau. Like poststructuralism, postmodernism
"privileges the text and elevates the reader" (Roseneau 1992:21). Because of the inherent instability of language and meaning, reading becomes a site where meaning is created, not ‘discovered’. The emphasis on meaning and language of poststructuralism relates to discussions of ‘truth’ in postmodernism. Generally, postmodernists reject large truth claims, accepting smaller, local stories as forms of truth. Per Roseneau (1992), this is due in part to the recognition of “truth's dependence on language [as] a serious restriction" (80). Finally, the instability of the human in subject is a common theme to both poststructuralism and postmodernism. For poststructuralists, “the human subject does not have a unified consciousness but is structured by language” (Sarup 1993:3). Roseneau (1992) argues that while some postmodernists argue for the death of the subject, others look for a new postmodern subject – both question the value of “a unified, coherent subject as a human being or a concrete reference point” (21).

Instability of meaning is a common thread to both postmodernism and poststructuralism. Generally, a greater attention to language and texts is an emphasis of poststructuralism. For the purposes of this project, I will collapse them together, and generally discuss poststructuralism.

In the following sections, I will review the connections between Hélène Cixous and other poststructuralists. Cixous has studied extensively the work of Jacques Lacan and his reinterpretation of Freud's psychoanalysis. Cixous rejects the model of the phallus as the basis for individual development, however, she agrees with Lacan's argument that the sexual self is fundamentally structured by language. It is Lacan's patriarchal symbolic order – the law of the
father – that Cixous strives to subvert through feminine writing. The work of deconstruction in chapter four will examine the gendered language of the symbolic order, and the feminine writing of chapters five and six will strive for a way out of the imprisonment of the law of father.

Jacques Derrida shares this emphasis on language with Cixous and Lacan. Like Derrida, Cixous recognizes that language is chain of endless signifiers – words referencing other words. She and Derrida both critique the system of opposing binaries that structure Western thought. Derrida’s differance opens up the possibility for writing multiple meanings, which is connected to Cixous’s project of feminine writing. Cixous’s feminine writing is her own optimistic solution to the prison of language. Here she differs dramatically from Derrida, who conceives of deconstruction as endless interpretation. For Derrida, there is critique of but no escape from the structures of Western thought. Like Cixous, I am more optimistic than Derrida, and I follow my own deconstructive work in chapter four with Cixous’s feminine writing in chapters five and six.

An important similarity in the work of Cixous and Michel Foucault is that they both are interested in what (masculine) reason excludes. For Foucault, these are madness, chance, discontinuity (Sarup 1993:60). Similarly, Cixous is interested what the masculine symbolic order silences: poetry, mysticism, madness, magic (Weedon 1997:9). Foucault, however, has been criticized for a blindness to sexual difference in both his work on discourse and that on power (Weedon 1997). Sexual difference and gender are central to the work of Cixous and to my own work. Foucault’s conception of power as diverse and complex is
relevant to chapter four on war and sexual difference. Additionally, in using feminine writing in both chapters five and six, I will strive to write through the boundaries of what reason and the masculine order would like to keep silenced.

Finally, Cixous shares with other French feminists – Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva – an interest in psychoanalysis, feminine writing, and feminine/female sexuality. Like the other poststructuralists, language is central to the work of these theorists. Each acknowledges the symbolic order of Jacques Lacan. Feminine writing is more tied to being female in the work of Irigaray than in Cixous, and less tied to biology in the work of Kristeva. Irigaray critiques the male bias in Lacan’s work, and she theorizes a distinct difference in both the sexuality and language of males and females. Kristeva makes no connection between the feminine writing and being female. She theorizes a ‘feminine’ subversive writing that is feminine only as it has been defined and excluded from the ‘masculine’ symbolic order. In my own work, I take Cixous’s thoughts more in the direction of the non-essentialist Kristeva. I suggest that Cixous’s feminine writing opens up the possibilities for multiplicity and the destabilizing of categories of gender, rather than advancing a particular femaleness next to a specific maleness.

Cixous and Lacan

Lacan’s project has been primarily the reinterpretation of the work of Sigmund Freud. Lacan’s theory involved major modifications to Freud. The most relevant to my project is Lacan’s ‘symbolic order.’ The symbolic order, also called the law of the father refers to language, and how symbols and signifiers
structure the social world. In particular, Lacan theorizes that the “man-making” of
gender occurs primarily through the symbolic order, the word of the father – that
is, through language (Weedon 1997:42-70). It is this aspect of Lacan’s theory
with which Cixous agrees. This is a critical point for my own project. Both Lacan
and Cixous claim that language fundamentally structures gender. A major focus
of my work is to investigate that claim. Using deconstruction and feminine
writing, I will delve into the debates on gay marriage, looking at language and
how language structures our ideas about sex and gender. The feminine writing
of Cixous becomes critical to follow the deconstruction, since as Lacan has
theorized, the symbolic order is already the law of the father. Without a radically
different language and writing, I would be doomed to continue operating within
that same symbolic order.

Both Lacan and Cixous theorize a pre-Oedipal, pre-linguistic state of
undifferentiated sex / gender. While Lacan simply acknowledges this as an
important part of his model of gender development, Cixous calls for a ‘sustained
bisexuality’ -- that is, a realization of the potential wholeness that existed in the
pre-Oedipal, pre-linguistic stages of development (Sarup 1993:111). This can be
accomplished by the inclusion of that which is excluded to create the patriarchal
symbolic order. A sustaining bisexuality at the level of the individual is the
optimistic (peaceful) solution to Cixous’s war of sexual difference. This ‘war’ is
structured in the symbolic order as if it is between 'men' and 'women'. However,
it cannot be 'won' by either side given this structure. Rather, it is letting the
'other' through individually which will move us away from the war of sexual
difference. Neither men nor women, neither masculine nor feminine can 'win'. Cixous's work is aimed toward individuals who allow the plurality of masculine and feminine to come through -- particularly through the use of language in writing. In chapter five, I will strive not to win a war of sexual difference, rather to write to open the possibility for multiplicities starting by writing my own plural self.

Closely related to the symbolic order is Lacan's concept of the 'phallus'. 'Phallus' refers symbolically to patriarchal power and the penis. Lacan suggests that as individuals find their place in the symbolic order, they desire to have control over meaning and language (an impossible task). The phallus symbolizes the power to have such control, and sexual or gender socialization occurs around the desire for the phallus (Sarup 1993:16). Lacan's metaphor relates quite directly at a symbolic level to Freud's castration anxiety and penis envy. Although, Lacan states that both boys and girls desire yet cannot have access to the phallus, many feminists critique the implied anatomical connection that continues to marginalize women (Weedon 1997:53). Cixous is one of these. While accepting Lacan's theory on language as central to gender socialization, she rejects his model of the phallus as male-centered and biased. Some feminist critics have pointed out that while the phallus may not describe a pre-existing reality, this type of psychoanalytic discourse may in fact constitute social reality (Weedon 1997:49). This is a point of investigation in my deconstruction of the gay marriage debates. Does the concept of the 'phallus' as a symbol of patriarchal power have a place in this discourse?
In her own writing, Cixous uses metaphors/images of female bodies and sexuality. She emphasizes the plurality of women's sexuality. In feminine writing, Cixous is writing her own self, writing her body. Feminine writing is theorized by feminists as being threatening to the existing patriarchal order. This will be another place for investigation in the deconstruction of gay marriage debates. Is there evidence of a more plural sexuality as a perceived threat? While this question might seem too obvious (of course there is evidence of a threat, that is what the gay marriage debates are about), I will look to see how this threat is constructed.

Sarup (1993) describes Lacan as sometimes difficult to read but worth the effort (6). The same might be said of Cixous's writing. Both theorists are convinced of the importance of language in structuring the social. Sarup suggests that Lacan's work often fuses 'the theoretical and the poetic.' He uses punning and word play extensively, believing that such strategies access the repressed unconscious. Cixous's writing is also extraordinary in her use of language. Certainly, the fusion of 'theoretical and poetic' could just as aptly describe her work. More than Lacan, however, Cixous is creating in/through/with/against language and breaking barriers. She is inventing new forms of language and writing. Whereas Lacan has theorized the phallus as an unattainable desire for wholeness and control, Cixous is writing her way toward a realizable greater wholeness -- the 'sustained bisexuality' discussed above. She writes to escape the symbolic order -- the law of the father. My own motivation in
writing chapters five and six will be the same. Through attempting radically
different writing, I hope to move outside the limits of the language that I/we know.

Cixous and Derrida

Like Lacan, Derrida places language at the center of his work. Derrida is
best known for his critique of Western metaphysics – its basis on some
foundational theoretical center and organization around oppositional, hierarchical
binaries (Sarup 1993:37-38). His theory of language is complex, and involves
several key concepts: binaries; ‘sous rature’; and ‘differance’. Derrida argues
that metaphysics is that thinking which relies on a foundation or ground – that
this foundation represents a longing for a signifiers which actually connects
directly to the signified, i.e. God, spirit, etc. He points out that these foundational
concepts are defined by what they exclude, i.e. spirit/body. According to Derrida,
this binary oppositional thinking structures all Western thought, and it is based on
the false premise that there is a stable foundation (Sarup 1993:37).

Derrida’s project of deconstruction works to ‘decenter’ this thinking, and
take apart the binaries – demonstrating how each part of a binary is dependent
on the other for definition. Cixous builds on the idea of binaries – demonstrating
the tie between this Western mode of thinking and gender. That is, she suggests
that these binaries start with man/woman and most structure themselves around
ideas of masculine/feminine (Cixous 1997:38). Critical to these binaries is the
hierarchy and ordering that comes with them. Man before woman and masculine
before feminine. In the deconstruction of the gay marriage debates, I will look for binaries in general, and gendered binaries in particular.

Derrida's concept of 'sous rature' – literally, under erasure – refers to the idea that words or signifiers are hopelessly inadequate yet necessary. This is signified in writing by use of strike-through marks: gay marriage (sic). The concept of 'gay marriage', for example, is inadequate yet necessary. An attempt to define 'gay', or example, would be either exceptionally limiting or endlessly inclusive. Does 'gay marriage' refer to the marriage of two men (what about two women)? Are the men gay? (What if one of the men was previously married to a woman?) Or, perhaps is it the marriage that is gay rather than the people?

Meanwhile, I have premised my questions so far on one meaning for 'gay.' What about gay marriage as a happy and carefree institution? I will stop here (by choice and not necessity.)

Delving into 'gay marriage' illustrates Derrida's concept of 'difference.' Derrida points out that not only is the signifier not related directly to the signified, but there is an endless process of differing and deferring in a chain of signifiers. Picture a child going to a dictionary to look for a word. She quickly realizes that definitions point to other words, which point to other words, etc.:

Derrida's notion of undecidability rests on his notions of difference and differance. Essentially, he argues that it is in the nature of language to produce meaning only with reference to other meanings against which it takes on its own significance… Word choice cannot do our thinking for us, nor solve major intellectual controversies. One is fated to improve on the undecidability (and sometimes sheer muddleheadedness) of language through more language (Agger 1991:113).
Derrida points out the impossibility of searching for ground or meaning under these conditions. He believes there is no escape from the “logocentric enclosure” of Western metaphysics (Sarup 1993:54). For Derrida, deconstruction is the endless interpretation of layers of text and meanings.

Hélène Cixous would agree with him up to this point. In the same infinite chain of signifiers, Cixous finds the potential for multiplicities (Sarup 1993:115). That is, she uses this inadequacy of language as an opportunity to develop meanings, to create and increase the possibilities of language. Where Derrida theorizes and acknowledges the confines of language, Cixous celebrates its limits and its uses. She sees the writing toward unattainable truth as a joyous process. In my own work, I will attempt to follow the path of Cixous. After deconstructing the gay marriage debates in chapter four, I will use language and different genres of writing to attempt to create or open up different possibilities than what currently exists in contemporary discourse.

Cixous and Foucalt

Foucalt studies discourses – language and practices – in particular institutions. He shares with Hélène Cixous a fascination for what reason excludes. For Foucalt, these are madness, chance, discontinuity (Sarup 1993:60). Foucalt looks at how insanity, for example, is defined and ‘treated’ historically. His interest in discontinuity informs his work. He demonstrates that discourses do not progress in a neat linear fashion, but rather that there are discontinuities and breaks. Cixous’s interest in what is excluded by the
masculine order – or as Foucault would say, by reason – is informed by her understanding of the fundamental gendering of thought. For Cixous, what is excluded is the feminine, is defined as the feminine. Her project is to write herself/ourselves into being.

Since her earliest writings on gender, Cixous has demonstrated acute awareness of the mechanisms of gendered power through language. In "Sorties", she noted that Western thought is structured with binaries and hierarchies that place male/masculine ahead of female/feminine (1997:38). Foucault, on the other hand, has been critiqued for his lack of attention to gender (Sarup 1993:85). Even his extensive work on sexuality has been criticized for male-bias. In his later work, however, he did begin to give attention to power. In particular, he looked at the relationship between power and knowledge in discourse. Discourse can be seen as a weapon, used to gain/maintain power through particular ways of constructing knowledge (Sarup 1993:65). It is this type of weapon that is used in Cixous's war of sexual difference. Foucault's contribution to understanding power is that he theorizes it more as a network of complex interactions, rather than a simple forceful repression. Cixous might find diverse power plays in the war of sexual difference. For Cixous, however, the attempt to gain power in the war of sexual difference aligns the player with the masculine order. That is, the feminine cannot 'win' for the drive to win is inherently masculine. The feminine can escape, however, and break through to new possibilities and multiplicities. It will be this different sort of narrative – not a
power play, but rather a play with power – that I will strive to develop in chapter five’s drama of sexual difference.

Cixous and French Feminists

Cixous is typically grouped with two other well-known French feminist poststructuralists – Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. What all three share beyond nationality is close ties with psychoanalysis, and particularly the work of Jacques Lacan. They each make language and/or writing central to their work. All three acknowledge Lacan’s symbolic order – the law of the father – and seek to move beyond it, although their strategies for doing so differ. Feminine writing is more tied to being female in the work of Irigaray than in Cixous, and less tied to biology in the work of Kristeva.

A feminist philosopher, Luce Irigaray’s work includes a critique of Patriarchy, especially in philosophy; a critique of psychoanalysis; and a theory of women’s language (Sarup 1993:116). Like Cixous, Irigaray finds all of Western thought and ‘reason’ to be structured in particular ways – defined as masculine. Irigaray argues that there is no ‘neutral’ position, rather that rationality is distinctly male. She connects with classical Greek thought as well as myth. Since Plato, for example, the mind has been valorized over the body and the mind/body split has been conceptualized as masculine/feminine. In Greek myth, Irigaray finds narratives of matriarchal systems in conflict with patriarchal systems – the result being the installation of the patriarchal symbolic order (Sarup 1993:117-120). In this project, the work of deconstruction will investigate how rationality and reason
connect with masculinity and maleness. Additionally, Irigiray's interest in Greek myth begs some important questions about Genesis. As I consider Cixous's fascination with language and quest for origins, I will look at the Genesis myth for its potential to describe a story of installation of the patriarchal symbolic order.

Like Cixous, Irigiray critiques the androcentric nature of Lacan's psychoanalysis – particularly the phallus metaphor. Irigiray is more essentialist than Cixous, however. Unlike Cixous (and Lacan), Irigiray does not theorize and undifferentiated pre-Oedipal bisexuality. For Irigiray, the male and female libidos are distinctly different (Weedon 1997:61-63). The difficulty with Lacan is that he ignores the female and the feminine. In a psychoanalytic analysis of Western culture, Irigiray points out the definition of feminine as 'lack' (Sarup 1993:118). Irigiray's critique of psychoanalysis leads to her theorizing that women need a language of their own. She makes an explicit link between female bodies and sexuality and feminine language. Feminine sexuality and language is autoerotic and plural:

But a woman touches herself by and within herself directly... for her sex is composed of two lips which embrace continually... Her sexuality is at least double and in fact plural... In her statements – at least when she dares speak out – woman retouches herself constantly (Marks and de Courtivron 1981:102-103).

Although I find Irigiray's metaphors of feminine sexuality to be an interesting way to think about possibilities for feminine writing, I will utilize the more ambivalent approach of Cixous. That is, I find it more helpful to theorize the connection between the feminine and the female to be his/herstorically specific.
Although female sexuality and language are repressed under contemporary social and material conditions, Cixous would suggest that feminine sexuality and language are possible for all humans, not just women. When Irigaray emphasizes the autoeroticism of woman's 'two lips', she simultaneously limits sexuality to the genitals – a move I would argue places her inside of patriarchal definitions of sexuality. A truly plural sexuality would recognize the erotic nature of the 'two lips' of the mouth, for example, thus opening up 'feminine' sexuality and language to all persons. In the deconstruction of chapter four, I will look to see if or how language implicitly writes male sexuality. I will also consider how the debates explicitly frame acceptable and unacceptable sexuality.

Just as clearly as Irigaray links feminine writing with the female libido and body, Kristeva insists that there is no inherent femaleness to feminine writing. Like both Cixous and Irigaray, Kristeva sees the symbolic order as patriarchal and masculine. As Sarup (1993) suggests, Kristeva does not have a theory of femininity, however, she does have a theory of "marginality, subversion and dissidence" (123). Feminine writing is an important revolutionary move, however, there is not a connection to an essential woman (Weedon 1997:66). I find Kristeva's insistence on decoupling feminine and masculine from essentialized notions of female and male to a more hopeful perspective in seeing beyond the binaries and hierarchies that are fundamental to Western thought. In my own deconstruction and attempts at feminine writing in chapters four through six, I intend to take Cixous's ambivalence about the body in the direction of Kristeva. I
consider the ideas of masculinity and femininity to be applied to rather than arising from particular kinds of bodies.

Kristeva was trained as a linguist prior to studying psychoanalysis. She has developed a “theory of signifying practice” (Weedon 1997:66). Using Lacan’s concept of the symbolic order, she theorizes that this has been superimposed over the semiotic – a pre-Oedipal state that coexists but is suppressed by the symbolic order. Like both Cixous and Lacan, Kristeva considers the pre-Oedipal state to be inclusive of both feminine and masculine libidinal energies – a site of bisexuality. Cixous is interested in what is excluded by the masculine order. Kristeva suggests that there are places where the semiotic “overflows” the symbolic, as in “madness, holiness and poetry” (Sarup 1993:124). Kristeva suggests that where these ruptures occur most frequently is in the work of the avant-garde. Interestingly, the avant-garde she identifies consists of men – which matches her contention that masculine and feminine are not tied to male and female. Kristeva argues that strengthening the semiotic will weaken traditional gender divisions (Sarup 1993:126). In reviewing gay marriage debates, it will be interesting to see if any of the discourse threatens to exceed the symbolic. If as Kristeva suggests, this happens in ‘madness, holiness, and poetry’, then ‘both sides’ of the structured debates are likely to simply reinforce the symbolic order. In chapters five and six, I will be striving in making use of feminine writing to create a break to allow the semiotic to come through. If, in the process, I am able to weaken traditional gender divisions, then my efforts would be a success.
Hélène Cixous writes in a particular her/historical moment. She is connected to the thinking and writing of feminist theories and especially to the poststructuralism of French intellectuals. She did not arrive a blank slate into this theoretical context, however. Cixous's own story — her own birth and birth into language — are perhaps as important to her writing as the context of other theorists. In the next section, I will briefly touch on Cixous's biography before exploring ideas from her writing that are central to this project.

**Hélène Cixous**

I ate a nectarine today. I took a sharp knife from the drawer and I sliced my fruit. The paper bag had ripened it. I bit. It was as good, no better, than it looked. Distracted by the slice in my mouth, I forgot the knife and tore another piece away from the pit. It tasted -- this second piece, this torn piece, this ripped without thinking from the whole piece -- it tasted better than the first. Why? Well, I think (and this always gets me in trouble) perhaps it is because I tasted with my hands as well as my mouth.

As I take a few slices from the life and work of Hélène Cixous, my hope is that you the reader might unthinkingly slide once or twice into the text and tear from it your own piece of her gift. In an interview, Cixous said that "there is a continuity in the living; whereas theory entails a discontinuity, a cut, which is altogether the opposite of life" (Cixous and Calle-Gruber 1997:4). Although I will cut into/out of/from the writing of Hélène Cixous, I also know that you the reader are actively creating meaning in your own interpretation her and my words. My
hope is that you might experience some of the pleasure with/ from/ about which Cixous writes. After all, isn’t delight sometimes worth a sacrifice of precision?

Slices of Life: Tidbits from the Biography of Hélène Cixous

Born of a Spanish/French/Jewish father and German/Jewish mother in 1937, Cixous was aware from an early age of having multiple identities. She describes her father’s death when she was eleven as being a critical and formative event in her becoming a writer. She talks about writing against loss. For Cixous, biography/fiction/theory combine and overlap. She writes against the loss of her father, against the loss of the feminine. Language simultaneously tells the story of loss and repairs against that loss: “Everything is lost except words. This is a child’s experience: words are our doors to all the other worlds” (Cixous in Sellers 1994:xxvii). Words are doors for Cixous. Life is continuity and movement. Cixous strives to write life, to write her self, to write her life.

Cixous was born a child of multiple nationalities during a decade between two world wars. Her nationalities overlapped ‘both sides’ of the conflicts, and her Jewishness connects her to the horror of the Holocaust (Conley 1992:xvii). Cixous will only write of war for the theater. Her personal connections to the European wars of her childhood demonstrate the complexity and futility of war -- and may even inform her views on what she sees as the war of sexual difference. Perhaps it is impossible to know ‘which side’ one is on. Perhaps the refusal to engage is the most responsible choice.
Cixous grew up speaking both German and French, while also hearing Arabic and Spanish around her. Cixous's experience with multiple identities informs her interest in multiplicities as a different possibility than binaries and hierarchies. Her exposure to different languages as a child sensitized her to nuances in meaning and the instability of meaning. This awareness may have added to her fascination with language. She played with language from a very young age. Born in the city of Oran (French for 'gold'), she remembers in childhood realizing that by putting herself ('je' in French) into the city she got 'oranje' (orange). She weaves the city and the orange into texts in a variety of ways (Shiach 1991:63). Metaphors of fruit show up in many places in her writing, along with garden imagery. She recalls a childhood incident where she first became aware of difference (painfully) in the garden at the officer's club in Algeria (Penrod 1996:1).

A lush garden would be an appropriate image for Cixous's writing. She has written at least forty books and more than one hundred articles — a colorful and varied assortment including fiction, drama, philosophy and feminist theory (Sellers1994:xxvi). It is from this medley that I will select a few pieces to seed my own theoretical framework for this project.

Bit(e)s and Pieces: Slices from Cixous's Writing

Selecting and focusing in on a few concepts from the work of Hélène Cixous is a difficult task in at least two ways. First, she is a prolific writer, so the potential themes/images/metaphors are numerous. In addition, Cixous' work
explicitly and implicitly resists the classification necessary for identifying specific
'concepts'. Her poetic style of writing intends in to evoke life rather than to
contain it. She differentiates her own writing from philosophical discourse, saying
the difference is "that I never dream of mastering or ordering or inventing
concepts. Moreover I am incapable of this. I am overtaken. All I want is to
illustrate, depict fragments" (Cixous 1997:xxii). Cixous is striving to illustrate
fragments of life. I am striving to illustrate fragments of her writing. Playing with
fruit imagery, I call the fragments I select 'slices'. For a moment, though, I ask
you to add a little dirt to the discussion – to return with me from the fruit to the
potato. Like all the discussions in this chapter, the slices from Cixous are
rhizomatic. That is, they overlap and connect.

I have 'cut' three slices. I will start with Cixous's writing about binaries and
hierarchies, as discussed in some of her early theoretical work and as explored
throughout later works. She argues that the opposition of masculine and
feminine as the founding couple organizes all of Western thought. In chapter
four, I use her ideas about binaries to investigate whether the debates on gay
marriage might be organized around a deeper debate on this masculine order.
My second cut is Cixous's fascination with language and with origins – both the
psychoanalytic origins of personal development, particularly in the pre-Oedipal
stages, as well as the her/his-torical origins of humanity and/or language in the
form of creation mythology. Language is central to my deconstructive work in
chapter four and the feminine writing of chapters five and six. The third cut
brings together the idea of binaries as well as the foundational structuring of
language in Cixous's war of sexual difference. Sexual difference is a battleground of war and perhaps even hate. Like Cixous, I will attempt to use drama in order to explore war and hate. Chapter five will be a drama dealing with the war of sexual difference. First, however, I will start with the foundations of the war of sexual difference — the binaries and hierarchies which structure Western thought.

A Slice from Cixous: Binaries and Hierarchies

Where is she?
Activity / passivity
Sun / Moon
Culture / Nature
Day / Night
Father / Mother
Head / Heart
Intelligible / Palpable
Logos / Pathos
Form, convex, step, advance, semen, progress.
Matter, concave, ground, -- where steps are taken, holding- and dumping-ground.

Man....
Woman

Always the same metaphor: we follow it, it carries us, beneath all its figures, wherever discourse is organized. If we read or speak, the same thread or double braid is leading us throughout literature, philosophy, criticism, centuries of representation and reflection. (Cixous 1997:38).

In her essay "Sorties", Cixous examines the endless binaries which organize our language, thought and reality. Nor do binaries remain separate but equal parts of a whole. Rather the division into mutually exclusive binaries is always followed immediately by an ordering, by hierarchy. Male over female,
masculine over feminine. In the process of division and ordering, the two sides are also set one against the other, in seeming inevitable conflict:

Thought has always worked through opposition, through dual, hierarchical oppositions. Superior / Inferior. Myths, legends, books. Philosophical systems. Everywhere (where) ordering intervenes, where a law organizes what is thinkable by oppositions (dual, irreconcilable; or sublatable, dialectical). And all these pairs of opposites are couples. Does this mean something? Is the fact the Logocentrism subjects thought – all concepts, codes and values – to a binary system, related to ‘the’ couple, man/woman? (Cixous 1997:38).

To which ‘the’ couple does Cixous refer? Is it the generic heterosexual man and woman? Or is it perhaps the ‘original’ couple – Adam and Eve? The work of deconstruction in chapter four will look for the binaries structuring the debates on gay marriage. I will investigate these binaries in a close look at the language of the debates.

A Slice from Cixous: Language and the Quest for Origins

“To live language, inhabit language, what luck and what venture” (Cixous 1997:xix). Cixous celebrates language. Although we inherit language with all its structures and even imprisonments, it is ours. We live with it and in it; it is ours to use. Cixous suggests that we delve into language, into its origins – whether this is the development of language in the individual infant, or the origins of language with the species.

In To Live the Orange, Cixous rejoices in her discovery of Clarice Lispector:

I asked ‘What have I in common with women?’ From Brazil a voice came to return the lost orange to me. ‘The need to go to the
sources. The easiness of forgetting the source. The possibility of being saved by a humid voice that has gone to the sources. The need to go further into the birth-voice.' (Cixous 1997:87).

In this passage, Cixous writes of the journey toward the pre-Oedipal, pre-linguistic state. She strives for the sustaining bisexuality which exists before gender is man-made in language.

Moreover, the origin of language in the individual psyche is in a sense analogous to a her/historical perspective. Language provides a 'living' link to the most ancient of times. "The miracle is that language has not been cut from its archaic roots — even if we do not remember, our language remembers, and what we say began to be said three thousand years ago" (Cixous 1997:xx). Language remembers. Language then, is linked to our earliest her/history — which, according to Judeo-Christian tradition takes us to the story of Genesis, to the original couple, Adam and Eve. Cixous points out that this remembering whether or not we are aware of it. "We are the learned or ignorant caretakers of several memories. When I write, language remembers without my knowing or indeed with my knowing, remembers the Bible, Shakespeare, Milton, the whole of literature, each book" (Cixous 1997:xxi). In chapter four, I will strive to become a 'learned' rather than 'ignorant' caretaker of the memories contained in language. I will look, in particular, to references to Genesis in the debates on gay marriage.

Cixous points out that the most basic structuring comes to us from the Genesis story: "It is the old story; because in spite of everything, ever since the Bible and ever since the bibles, we have been distributed as descendants of Eve and descendants of Adam" (Cixous 1997:132). The words and understandings
that come to us through language are not easily overcome. Cixous argues that if we were to change the words – masculine and feminine – that we would find new words to structure and contain us. She plays with the story of Genesis when she proposes a solution to the rigid categories of masculine and feminine: “So there is nothing to be done except to shake them like apple trees, all the time” (Cixous 1997:132). Cixous suggests that we may not be able to uproot the concepts of masculine and feminine, for new growth would simply replace them. We can however ‘shake them like apple trees.’ This is what I will attempt in the feminine writing of chapters five and six. This is also what Cixous does in discussions of sexual difference, the slice I explore in the next section.

A Slice from Cixous: Sexual Difference, War and Hate

Let’s imagine we love a woman who is a man inside. This means we love a man not exactly, but a woman who is a man, which is not quite the same thing: it’s a woman who is also a man, another species. These complexities are not yet audible. Although this is true, strangely enough we are still today at a clear-cut difference, we continue to say man and woman even though it doesn’t work. We are not made to reveal to what extent we are complex. We are not strong enough, not agile enough; only writing is able to do this (Cixous 1997:199).

Language is so limited/limiting when it comes to sexual difference. In the deconstructive work of chapter four I will look at language, sex and gender. The passage above hints at the question of sex (biology/anatomy) and gender (social behaviors) specifically. How, in the gay marriage debates are sex and gender separated, if at all?
These definitions and their limitations are not neutral terrain, however. The boundaries are guarded, and transgressions may incite psychic or even physical violence: "When we say to a woman that she is a man or to a man that he is a woman, it's a terrible insult. This is why we cut one another's throats" (Cixous 1997:200). The questions of sexual difference – the ambiguities which are real and the conflicts which are inherent to the structure – create a battleground: "Not only is there a war between people, but this war is produced through sexual difference... only sexual difference isn't what we think it is. It's both tortuous and complicated" (Cixous 1997:199). Sexual difference is created in/through language. In the deconstructive work of chapter four, I will look for evidence of the battleground. Through feminine writing in chapter five, I will attempt to write out/away from the war to different possibilities.

Working to dismantle the strictures of sexual difference is a project fraught with difficulty. Ironically, our usual means of engagement is already inherently structured by the dominant order. Cixous is wary "of adopting what she describes as masculine procedures in the struggle for equality" and warns against participating in a type of thinking which is dependent "on a process of differentiation entailing opposition to and annihilation of whatever is constituted as other" (Sellers 1997:xxviii). In chapter four, I will explore the 'debate' itself – questioning whether engaging in the debate somehow places both 'sides' on the 'side' of the dominant masculine order.

Engaging in a struggle may take us places we would rather not go. In particular, the war of sexual difference may engender strong emotions, including
hate. Cixous is interested in the ‘dark side’ of human nature. *Rootprints* includes excerpts from her personal notebooks. In one entry, she explores hate:

"Hate = it's the plague. One catches hate. Hate hurts the haters. One hates the person who 'gave' us the plague (sickness)" (Cixous 1997:33). Participating in a struggle over sexual difference, then, may also bring the risk of 'infection'. Hate is important, yet dangerous. Perhaps this is part of why Cixous has chosen to contain her dealings with hate through drama:

God knows that hate is a vast dimension of our existence; it is this which leads nations to the slaughterhouse and ourselves to the scene of the crime. Now hatred I can only admit and let it speak in the theater.

It is in the theater that I can take on our cruel daily enigmas… the sudden assassination, or the eternal assassination which misogyny is…
- Why only in the theater?

Sexual difference is a real drama played out daily on the world as a stage.

The struggle over sexual difference is a dangerous one. The pitfalls include the possibility of inadvertently fighting for the 'wrong' side, by simply buttressing the dominant masculine order. In addition, where hate arises in emotional battlefields, there is the danger of catching it, as well as spreading it, like a plague. In the deconstruction of chapter four, I will look not only for evidence of battle, but also of infection. In chapter five, I deal with sexual difference, war and hate as Cixous would suggest – in the form of drama. In chapter six, using autoethnographic feminine writing, I will be wary of my own choices – avoiding military strategies that take me places I don't want to go, and evading infection
from emotions I don’t want to acquire. I will discuss my plans for each of these chapters in greater detail next in chapter three, methods.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

I am moving to Tucson, Arizona next month. Next week I fly to Tucson for a few days to find an apartment. I have several maps. The first is a city map. It is detailed and inclusive. The next is a bicycle map. It is less detailed but contains important information about cycling. The third is an apartment map. It shows locations of apartments included in a guidebook. Each has important information, and each is lacking. None of them, for example, show which parks have a pond or lake in them. When I fly to Tucson to spend a few days visiting the city and checking out apartments, I will draw my own map.

A methods chapter is a bit like describing preparations for making a journey. First I need to know why I am going (to find an apartment), and then more specifically, what I am looking for. There are things I know I want to find – washer and dryer in the apartment, pool/spa, bike path, close to campus. However, I also know that some things that matter will not cross my mind until I visit – things that are hard to describe, and things I simply did not think about until I arrived. With all this information, I consulted lots of sources and planned my journey – prepared, as well, to be open-minded to things I did not plan in advance.
In this chapter, I outline for you my preparations for the research journey. I will start by explaining why I decided to take the trip. Guided by my theoretical questions and interests which I developed in chapter two, I am looking for certain things. At the same time, I want to be prepared to experience my journey with an open mind. My research, then, is partially inductive. In the first section, I discuss the research questions that motivate me — specifically, what is interesting and important about the gay marriage debates. Next, I describe the ‘data’ choices which are in a sense my destination. I will describe the ‘data’/destination of the gay marriage debates as they are in evidence on the internet. In the third section on multiplicities and multiple methods, I discuss the various ways that I traverse the journey. Starting with methods described by others, I develop my own plans specific to my questions. Finally, in the closing section of the chapter, I will return to where I started — why I decided to take the trip — and review the sociological relevance of the journey.

If, as Cixous suggests, all of Western thought is ordered around binaries and hierarchies and that these are most fundamentally connected to the ideas of masculine/feminine, then how is this structuring of thought evident in the discussions of gay marriage? If, as Cixous suggests, the danger of engaging in a war of sexual difference is that one unintentionally participates in and reinforces the dominant masculine order, then how might this be visible in the ‘debate’ around gay marriage?
Time to Travel: Questions to Guide the Journey

My central questions are: how do gendered language and creation story imagery structure the debate on gay marriage, and what are the social and political implications of this? Gendered language involves the binaries and hierarchies of male/female and masculinity/femininity. Creation Story imagery includes the tropes of Adam and Eve, the apple, the serpent, the garden and temptation. Further, does Cixous's war of sexual difference inform the use of gendered language and/or creation imagery in pro- and anti-gay marriage discourses?

In order to pursue these questions, I will use several methods of qualitative inquiry to look for the intersection of language and Judeo-Christian Genesis story symbolism in one of the most significant gender/sex-related issues in contemporary American society.

With a focus on gendered language, I will build on Cixous's fascination with the origins of language – both from psychoanalytic and her/historical perspective to look for evidence of the Genesis story in these discussions. The first method of inquiry will be a feminist deconstruction of the debates. Delving into five Internet sites in support of and against gay marriage, I will look for binaries and hierarchies organized around male/female and masculine/feminine. In addition, I will chart the tropes of Genesis imagery. Finally, I will consider Cixous's war of sexual difference by looking for aspects of the controversy that evidence themselves as violent rhetoric, contentious debate, or otherwise embattled discourse that reduces the issues to either/or dichotomous thought.
The next two types of inquiry will utilize language as method—specifically, feminine writing. Using drama and autoethnography, I will explore the possibility of writing a way out of the binding structures of gendered language. Building from the findings of the deconstruction work in chapter four, I intend to write a drama of sexual difference in chapter five. In chapter six, I will write an autoethnographic account of my experience investigating the issue of gay marriage, my reading of Cixous, my experiences with the garden of creation myth, and my travels through cyberspace researching this project. As Cixous has suggested, it is difficult or impossible to describe a procedure for feminine writing. Attempting to codify a set of linear guidelines by which one undertakes feminine writing would be an effort to contain feminine writing into the masculine order which it escapes. In the discussions on method below, however, I will consider methodological guidelines for writing ethnographic drama and autoethnography. The writing of chapters five and six, then, will be guided to some extent by postmodern ethnographic methods, while inspired by the feminine writing of Cixous.

**Mapping Coordinates: Organizing Concepts for the Project**

The key organizing concepts for this project are the 'slices' from Hélène Cixous developed in chapter two. When I discuss binaries/hierarchies, I refer to the oppositional thinking that Derrida called Western metaphysics, i.e. black/white, up/down, truth/lie. More specifically, however, I mean a Cixousian version of binaries/hierarchies in that I include the gendered nature of binaries.
and hierarchies: male/female, masculine/feminine. I use binaries/hierarchies, then, interchangeably with Cixous's masculine order -- which includes oppositional binary, as well as linear, thinking. These are related to the concept of gendered language. For this project, I operationalize gendered language to be all language that deals with sex, gender, and sexuality (i.e., 'sex', 'gender', 'female', 'man', 'masculine', 'lesbian'). In the feminist discourse analysis of chapter four, I look at the use and context of all such language. I am interested in how gendered language relates to creation stories. As an organizing concept, creation imagery in this project includes tropes of creation myth, primarily Genesis. These include Adam and Eve, garden imagery, fruit, temptation, and the serpent, as well as references to biblical or ancient morals. Along with Cixous, I wonder if the creation of sexual difference results 'naturally' in conflict. The war of sexual difference in this project takes the oppositional thinking of the masculine order one step further to its 'logical' conclusions, and considers ways in which debate rhetoric becomes violent or particularly contentious. Finally, it is the debate over gay marriage that I have chosen as my site for analysis. In this project, I refer to gay marriage as the subject of the contemporary American debate over whether legal marriage should be allowed for two women or two men. With these terms outlined, I will next discuss in greater detail the 'data' decisions of selecting the gay marriage debate and the Internet for this project.
Destinations/Data: Debating Gay Marriage on the Internet

E-mapping is one of the choices on the Internet pages for apartment rentals. Selecting e-mapping, I am shown a map of Tucson with the apartment complex location indicated. To the side of the map, there are places I can click to zoom in and out — focusing on just a few city blocks or 'backing away' to see the entire region of Southern Arizona. In the corner of the screen, I can click and email the apartment manager of the complex that interests me. Interactions over the Internet are an interesting combination of informal and impersonal. I emailed one locator service and received an email back from 'Nita.' Nita's email was friendly and seemed to respond to my request. After checking out the apartment suggestions, however, I decided that Nita was either incompetent or just a signature for a computer-generated response. None of the ten apartments Nita sent me met the basic requirements of my email request.

In ways that feel fundamentally different than turning the pages of a book or unfolding a paper map, interactions with the Internet have a sense of life of movement. There is a sense of 'place' on the internet. With a simple point and click, I can also 'talk' to someone involved in authorship of the text in front of me. Yet, to whom am I talking? There is a thoroughly different sense of identity, or lack thereof, in interactions over the Internet. In terms of sex and gender, we become dependent on masculine/feminine names (is Nita a woman?) as well as the 'honesty' of the other person. Cyberlore is rife with stories of people in chat rooms posing as different than they 'really' are. The Internet, then, is clearly a
different sort of 'place.' Its very differentness makes it the ideal place for this study.

Guided by the feminist poststructuralist perspective of Hélène Cixous, my project focuses on sex and gender in the postmodern world. The postmodern viewpoint is an important backdrop to my own theoretical framework. In the next two sections, I will discuss why debates around gay marriage are an especially appropriate site to consider the themes from Cixous's work discussed in chapter two: binaries and hierarchies, gendered language and creation imagery, and the war of sexual difference. I then discuss why the Internet makes an appropriate postmodern site for a postmodern project.

Choosing Gay Marriage: Sex and Gender – Discourse and Debate

The question of whether two men or two women should have the opportunity to legally marry is a hotly debated issue in American society at the present moment. Depending on the perspective/politics of the person discussing the issue, it may be called gay marriage (no quotations), same-sex marriage, same-gender marriage, “gay marriage”, “gay” marriage, gay “marriage”, or homosexual marriage. As with all language, each choice has political implications. The quotations and word choice in each variation attempt to legitimate or delegitimate a particular view.

Gay marriage as discourse seems an ideal site for investigating my key concepts from Hélène Cixous. Binaries/hierarchies of the masculine order are dependent on what is essentially a heterosexual couple. Gay marriage, as the
coupling of male and male or female and female, disrupts that order. It would seem likely that heterosexual marriage as an institution would draw heavily on Genesis imagery as the first 'couple.' This project is an opportunity to investigate that question. In addition, the idea of gay marriage seems an excellent place to explore the complexities of gendered language – particularly the interrelatedness of sex, gender and sexuality. Finally, the gay marriage issue as debate is an opportunity to consider Cixous's war of sexual difference.

Point and Click: The Internet as Text and Life

Why the Internet? The Internet as a site for research makes sense to this project in several ways. First, there is an enormous amount of information to be found on the topic chosen – gay marriage debates. Second, it is an interesting combination of text and life. That is, the internet is a text – with volumes of 'written' material – yet it is also dynamic, interactive, changing – closer than other text to movement or life. The methods to be used in this project include both deconstruction as well as ethnographic feminine writing. The Internet as text is the site for my feminist deconstruction. The Internet as life is the site for my ethnographic feminine writing.

In Feminist Media Studies, van Zoonen suggested that "mass media produce and reproduce collective memories, desire, hopes and ears, and thus perform a similar function as myths in earlier centuries" (1993:37). At the time of the book's publication, media studies was primarily concerned with television, film and print media. Less than a decade later, the Internet rivals these other
media as a site for the development of collective stories. It is an appropriate site for what van Zoonen calls "the main task of feminist media research [which] is to unravel both the dominant and alternative meanings of gender encoded in media texts" (1993:66). Moreover, the Internet combines large institutional media with the voices of anyone having access to a computer and a modem. The Internet is part of postmodern culture. It challenges our conceptions of space and time, as well as notions of individual identity. Denzin's arguments about ethnography in a postmodern world are relevant to this project:

American ethnography is deeply embedded in American culture. As that culture has gone postmodern and multinational, so too has ethnography. Difference and disjuncture define the contemporary, global, world cultural system that ethnography is mapped into (1997:284).

One 'place' that postmodern culture seems ideally evident is cyberspace. The Internet – with its multiplicity of voices in the form of web pages; its blurring of identities, both individual and institutional; its fast-paced technological advances; and its complexity of structure and linkages – reflects the many realities of contemporary American society. The Internet then is an ideal postmodern site for a study guided by insights of postmodern theory.

Entering the keyword phrase 'gay marriage' on any available search engine will yield literally hundreds of possible sites. This study will draw from a sample of five sites. First, for the work of deconstruction, I focus on two of the leading sites 'for' and 'against' gay marriage: Freedom to Marry's FTM.org, and Family Research Council's FRC.org. I have chosen these two sites as each contains a wealth of information on the pro- and anti-gay marriage campaigns.
They appear to be important and representative sites for the issue. Both have covered the question of gay marriage for several years or more. The Freedom to Marry web site is maintained by a national activist organization working to legalize marriage for gay and lesbian couples. Freedom to Marry is actually a small cover page linking to the “Marriage Project” within the Lambda web page. Lambda is a non-profit legal organization working on behalf of lesbians and gays. The Lambda site has information about its organization in general and a variety of issue pages on particular legal topics. The “Marriage Project” is a large subset of the total site. The “Marriage Project” pages include a history of court cases suing for the right to gay marriage, as well as legislative history of pro-gay marriage and anti-gay marriage initiatives. Also included are fact sheets and past press releases as background information to the issue.

The Family Research Council maintains a web site geared toward a conservative politics on issues considered to be related to families. The Family Research Council is a non-profit, non-partisan organization based in Washington, D.C. The web site includes pages about national politics, some family resources, and a variety of issues considered important to families. The web site includes a large sub-section under issues called “Homosexual Culture.” The information and resources are positioned explicitly against ‘homosexual culture’ and the ‘homosexual agenda’ generally, and against gay marriage specifically. In addition, the Family Research Council publishes a regular newsletter called “CultureFacts” which purports to keep the reader up to date with ‘homosexual culture. The “Homosexual Culture” page provides links to activist pages (i.e.,
support Dr. Laura's right to free speech), to previous issues of the "CultureFacts" newsletter, and to several papers authored primarily by staff people in the Family Research Council. The papers explain the dangers of homosexuality and of homosexual culture, and outline what is described as the homosexual agenda. It is these two sites – The Freedom to Marry and The Family Research Council – which will be the site for feminist deconstruction in chapter four. I will discuss the methods for this deconstruction in greater detail in the next section on multiple methods.

In addition to the first two Internet sites, I also include in my drama of sexual difference web sites related to the controversial views of Dr. Laura Schlessinger, a national radio personality. These additional web sites include her own DrLaura.com; the web site of the Gay and Lesbian Anti-Defamation League, GLAAD.org, which has organized against Dr. Laura; and a web site designed specifically to counter Dr. Laura called StopDrLaura.com. These sites provide further data for me to explore the dynamics of the 'debate', particularly in the drama component of the study. I selected Dr. Laura as a pivotal focal point in the most recent controversies over gay marriage. The conflict is evident in part on the Internet and received coverage in other media as well.

In the first six months of the year 2000, Dr. Laura became a focal point for some of the controversy connected to the judicial and legislative battles around gay marriage. In Vermont in December, the judiciary allowed for legal domestic partnership. In California, an anti-gay marriage proposition was hotly debated and then passed in April. Meanwhile, radio talk show host Dr. Laura signed a
contract with Paramount for a television show to air in the fall of 2000. Dr. Laura was well known for making anti-gay comments from what seems to be a combination of religious and scientific perspectives. Her most (in)famous comment is that homosexuals are 'biological errors.' There has been a great deal of activism to cancel Dr. Laura's television show, as well as in defense of Dr. Laura. Much of the activism has centered around web sites on the Internet.

Cixous suggests that lived sexual difference becomes a war of sexual difference. She also warns against participating in a type of thinking that is based on opposition and annihilation – since participation may serve to simply reinforce existing structures of power. These sites which are set explicitly against one another provide an excellent opportunity to explore the dynamics of debate as 'war.' Along with the findings from feminist deconstruction in chapter four, these web sites organized around the Dr. Laura controversy, will provide additional sources for the drama/feminine writing of chapter five.

Now that I have explained why I am limiting my analysis to the Internet and how I will analyze a select sample of sites, the question of how I will conduct my Cixousian analysis of my research questions can be addressed. In the next section, I will discuss in greater detail the multiple overlapping methods of feminist deconstruction, feminine writing, drama and autoethnography.

**Multiplicities: Multiple Methods to Investigate and Create**

I am excited about finding a new place to live. I started with the book. It listed lots of apartments and their features. It had most, but not all the
information that I wanted. I used the Internet. Sometimes I used the Internet to overlap with what I found in the book (usually to double check whether or not the apartment had a washer/dryer in it – this seems to be an uncommon luxury). Other times, I found new apartments on the internet that were not listed in my book. I also used the phone to check on the most promising listings. I have a lot of information. None of it, of course, is the same as visiting the apartments as I will do next week. Often, using more than one tool makes for a more thorough job or better quality work, whether the task at hand is locating an apartment or conducting sociological research.

Hélène Cixous's work emphasizes pluralities and multiplicities in contrast to binaries and hierarchies of Western thinking. It is appropriate that a project guided by ideas from her writing uses multiple methods of inquiry. In the Introduction to their Handbook of Qualitative Research, Denzin and Lincoln connect insights of poststructuralism and postmodernism to the importance of using a variety of research methods:

Poststructuralists and postmodernists have contributed to the understanding that there is no clear window into the inner life of an individual. Any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity... No single method can grasp the subtle variations in ongoing human experience. As a consequence... qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive methods (1994:12).

I will use three overlapping methods in this project. First I will use feminist deconstruction to delve into and take apart the previously named web sites on gay marriage. Although this research is inductively oriented, I admit to one generic hypothesis. That is, I expect that to varying degrees the terms of the gay
marriage debate will reinforce the existing masculine binary order – the status quo. My second and third methods are directly from Hélène Cixous. Starting from the findings of my deconstruction, I will attempt to write my way out of dilemmas discovered by enacting what Cixous calls feminine writing. Informed not only by Cixous's feminine writing, but also by the work of new ethnographers in Sociology, I will write a drama of sexual difference as my second methodology. My third method will be an autoethnography of my travels through the Internet language and images of the gay marriage debates.

More specifically, the feminist deconstruction will attempt to locate instances of gendered language and Genesis imagery in the gay marriage websites. The drama incorporating feminine writing will explore the dynamics of debate – which Cixous discusses in terms of war, hate and sexual difference. Finally, the autoethnography will tie together the work in a way that also gives the reader access to me as researcher. Each of these three methods is discussed at greater length in sections below.

Method 1: Investigating through Feminist Deconstruction

This project is feminist in its interest in gender, its critique of power structures, and desire for change. Deconstruction is in part a tool – the dismantling of language and discourse – to support those aims. Deconstruction is a theory and a method generated within with postmodernism and poststructuralism. Roseneau describes deconstruction as tearing a text apart:

*Deconstruction* involves demystifying a text, tearing it apart to reveal its internal, arbitrary hierarchies and its presuppositions. It
lays out the flaws and the latent metaphysical structures of a text. A deconstructive reading of a text seeks to discover its ambivalence, blindness and logocentricity (Roseneau 1992:120).

Weedon (1997) also identifies the search for hierarchies as central to deconstruction. She connects this specifically to the feminist perspective and an interest in gender: "deconstruction is useful for feminism in so far as it offers a method of decentering the hierarchical oppositions which underpin gender, race and class oppression" (160). Weedon also argues for the importance of ensuring attention to social and material context of texts. Feminist deconstruction must be attentive to the intersecting matrix of oppression around gender, race, and class – as well as the power relations in society which maintain oppressive structures.

Other researchers, in looking at the intersecting matrix of oppression, have recognized the critical connections between sex, gender and sexuality. An example of this type of analysis, which is also substantively related to my project, is work done by Kitzinger and Wilkinson. They deconstruct the term ‘heterosexuality’ in terms of gender and sex:

in considering gender divisions, heterosexuality is a key construct, and one that reinscribes gender divisions by its very definition: ‘hetero’ means ‘other’, ‘different’; heterosexuality means involvement with one who is other, one who is different – man with woman, woman with man... ‘heterosexuality’ marks what is seen as the fundamental ‘difference’ – the male/female gender division (Kitzinger and Wilkinson 1996:135).

They point out that ‘hetero’ does not refer to being involved with someone who is a different religion, ethnicity, social class or any other of a host of possible differences. Rather, ‘hetero’ refers to the biological sex of the partner. In this simple and elegant deconstruction of the term ‘heterosexual’, Kitzinger and
Wilkinson bring to light the embedded discourse of sex/gender – perhaps the most fundamental binary of Western thought. This example also illustrates the appropriateness of the gay marriage debates -- controversy surrounding sexuality -- as a site to examine the binaries/hierarchies of sex and gender.

Another researcher interested in feminist deconstruction, Judith Butler discusses the implications of deconstruction for understandings of gender. For Butler, "what the work of deconstruction will reveal is that there is no bedrock … of gender or sex at the bottom of the abyss. The relationship between sex and gender is a continuously self-deconstructing one which produces structures that are called natural only because we have forgotten that they are structures" (Elam 1994:50). Might gendered language and Genesis imagery be the false bedrock at the bottom of Butler's abyss? In reviewing the debates on gay marriage, this will be a question of inquiry.

Understanding that the work of feminist deconstruction centers on binaries/hierarchies of sex and gender, the question remains: just how does one go about the work of deconstruction? Potter and Wetherall (1994) attempt to provide helpful guidelines. They suggest that deconstruction is like a "craft skill… which is not easy to render or describe in a codified manner… Nevertheless, there are a number of considerations that recur in the process of analysis." They list five considerations:

1. using variation as a lever;
2. reading the detail;
3. looking for rhetorical organization;
4. looking for accountability;
5. cross-referring discourse studies (55).
The first guideline suggests attending to differences within and across different writers and/or text. This will be one perspective on examining the web sites. The third point on rhetorical organization has to do with what is emphasized and how arguments are strategically presented. This will be an important aspect of how I examine the web site discussions. The question of accountability deals with how "making one's actions and claims accountable can be viewed as constructing them in ways which make them hard to rebut or undermine, was which make them seem fair or objective" (Potter and Wetherall 1994:60). Not only will I be looking for ways in which 'both sides' present their arguments as objective, I will be questioning the extent to which this strategy reinforces existing masculine ordering of discourse regardless which 'side' uses this tactic.

With these guidelines in mind, my procedure for deconstructing the Family Research Council and Freedom to Marry web sites consists of iterative reading of the texts. I will read for some initial key questions, and then additional coding or questions will emerge from the initial readings. The following questions are my starting point:

- How is the word 'sex' used and in what context?
  - Same for 'gender', 'sexuality', 'gay', 'homosexual(ity)', 'marriage', 'partnership', 'masculine', 'feminine', 'man', 'woman', 'male', 'female'
- What binaries or oppositional thinking is evident?
- What explicit references to references to Genesis imagery are made (tropes of Adam and Eve, the serpent, the apple, temptation, etc.)?
- What is the structure of the arguments?
What examples, or narratives, are employed?

How is authorship evident or not?

How is the issue framed as a legal question?

Same for religious, moral, scientific, spiritual?

What pictures/images are used?

I will examine the web sites primarily in printed form. For Derrida, the work of deconstruction involves not simply taking a text apart, but looking for "a moment that genuinely threatens to collapse that system" (Sarup 1993:51). In my readings of the web sites, I will keep this idea in mind. Is there a moment in the rhetorical organization of the gay marriage debates that 'genuinely threatens to collapse' the structures of thought that even make the debate possible.

In concluding their article on discourse analysis, Potter and Wetherall (1994) argue that "more than any other kinds of social research, the evaluation of discourse analytic studies depends on the quality of the write-up... [therefore] it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between the process of analysis and the process of writing up" (64). In this study, the write-up of the deconstruction of web sites will extend into the writing as research – the work to enact the feminine writing of Hélène Cixous. This writing, a drama of sexual difference and an autoethnography, are discussed in the next two sections.

Method 2: Feminine Writing and Drama

Where the work of deconstruction is about taking apart and scrutinizing, feminine writing in the form of drama is about building. Language is central to
both methods. Where deconstruction investigates, feminine writing creates. For my project, I start with the work of feminist deconstruction – examining the binaries and hierarchies which structure the gay marriage debates. Informed by what I find through that inquiry, I will undertake the exploratory process of feminine writing. Cixous (1997) is exuberant about the creative potential of language:

What one can do with language is ... infinite... This may be why so many people do not write: because it's terrifying. And conversely, it is what makes certain people write: because it's intoxicating (22).

Finding my own way between terrifying and intoxicating, I will attempt to enact the feminine writing of Hélène Cixous. Extending the analysis of deconstructed web sites into creative terrain, I will write a drama of sexual difference. The writing will also reference additional web sites which are organized around the controversial views of Dr. Laura Schlessinger. In the discussion that follows, I will review why feminine writing is important and some strategies for feminine writing. I will discuss how the idea for drama is informed both by the work of Cixous, as well as by the postmodern leanings of new ethnographers. Finally, despite difficulties in doing so, I will describe the procedures that I intend to use in using feminine writing to create a short dramatic text.

Why feminine writing? The need for feminine writing arises out of the phallogocentric structure of Western discourse. “For Cixous and other practitioners of écriture feminine, the very structures of Western language exclude women and can function only through the silencing of women and the repression of feminine sexual drives (Rabine 1987-88:21).” Cixous’s creation of
new language "attempts to transform these structures by incorporating the bodily
signifiers of feminine erotic drives into the very texture of writing (Rabine 1987-
88:21)." Along with the texture of writing, myths such as the Genesis story of
Adam and Eve play an important part of feminine writing. Comell suggests that
"the inability to escape our genderized context explains why the role of myth in
feminist theory is essential to the reclaiming, and retelling, of 'herstory' through
the mimetic writing that specifies the feminine" (1999:172). Cixous refers to myth
in many places and in various ways throughout her writing. She is accessing
powerful narratives that structure our thought.

What exactly is feminine writing and how do I do it? Mark Zuss discusses
similarities in writers such as Audre Lorde, Maya Angelou, and Hélène Cixous.
He argues that "a breaking of generic regulation is one initial strategy and aspect
of an experientially based écriture feminine, a writing that intentionally combines
and blurs distinctions between traditional binary partitions" (Zuss 1997:662). A
foundational 'generic regulation' is the use of masculine and feminine
'appropriately'. In a review of Rootprints, Adele Parker (1999) discusses the
"interplay of gender that is so pervasive and important in Cixous's work.
Switching masculine and feminine articles is not simply a game but a systematic
opening of doors, of passages between the two" (10). In French, where all nouns
are gendered, there are more opportunities to play with gender than in English.
However, the opportunity to blur distinctions exists in English as well. According
to Patricia Mutch (1991), Cixous refers to feminine writing as dealing with sexual
or gender difference "not as something to be destroyed and merged into a single
monolithic ‘one’, but rather as something to be recognized, not in dichotomizing terms but in expanding, infinite terms... Cixous is not choosing between two options, masculine and feminine, rather, she is always on the side of movement" (77).

Thus, feminine writing is neither the complement of, nor the opposite of, masculine writing. Rather, feminine writing is about growth, movement, the opening of new horizons. Sellers suggests that feminine writing is about voicing that which would otherwise be silenced, and that this is a profoundly political act. "Loving, saving, naming what would otherwise be annihilated is political in a more immediate sense" (Sellers 1997:83). Although Cixous is accused of essentialism, feminine writing is potentially possible for men as well as women. Women are better suited at this historical moment due to the linguistic and material conditions of living in a woman’s body. For it is the body from which Cixous proposes that we write. "Writing ... does not come from the outside. On the contrary, it comes from deep inside... You must climb down in order to go in the direction of that place" (Cixous 1997:203-204). Cixous sees the work of feminine writing as an ascent toward the bottom.

Feminine writing is, perhaps most importantly, not writing in opposition to the masculine economy. “Challenging theory and its discourses is exactly what Cixous’s writing aims to do, but not through opposition. To oppose phallocentric symbolic systems would only, according to Cixous, perpetuate their own fundamental structure, that of metaphysical opposition" (Rabine 1987-88:27). To oppose phallocentric systems would be to engage in a battle, and it is the
engagement itself that reinforces the dominant order. Specifically, in the masculine economy, meaning only gets constituted in a movement by which one term is destroyed in favor of the other (Cixous 1981). Feminine writing does not fall into the trap of opposing the masculine order. Instead, says Rabine (1987-88), feminine writing plays with the system, disrupting and eventually transforming its structures (27-28).

Hélène Cixous writes poetic fiction as well as dramatic works. The feminine writing for this project will consist of a drama of sexual difference. From a methodological perspective, this writing will be informed by the work of new ethnographers. Building from web sites, as 'sites' for ethnographic fieldwork, I will write a dramatic piece incorporating both the Internet battles over gay marriage and the Genesis story of Adam and Eve. In an article outlining and discussing various types of performance ethnography, Coger and White define a "dramatic Script" as an "evocative text... fragmentary, composite, mess, natural, and autobiographical" (in Denzin 1997:96). The drama should include "a plotted dramatic action capable of stirring the imagination/and or emotions of an audience, bringing it to a state of awareness" (Coger and White in Denzin 1997:96). In The Sixth Moment, Norman Denzin agrees with this goal of inciting the passions of the audience: "good ethnographic theater stirs the critical, emotional imagination of the audience" (Denzin 1997:97). Perhaps it is for this reason that Cixous only deals with hate in the theater. Using the theater as a vehicle to affect the passions of her audience, she tackles some of the most difficult emotional subjects – war and hate.
It is difficult to plan a procedure for this method. Cixous has said that feminine writing cannot be codified. At the same time, like an unplanned day trip, I have thought a little about the possibilities. First, the drama will build from the findings of the deconstruction work in chapter four. Additionally, because Cixous has said that she only deals with war and hate in the theater, the drama will incorporate her idea of the war of sexual difference. In writing the drama, I will access additional 'data' in the form of the web sites which are explicitly framed in opposition to each other: Dr.Laura.com, StopDrLaura.com, and GLAAD.org. I hope to include the Genesis story in some form -- either in a retelling or new version of the story, or perhaps by simply utilizing the imagery in different ways. Throughout the writing of this drama, I will attempt to employ Cixous's playfulness with language. Using language, I will attempt to break through conventional ideas of sex and gender. The example of feminine writing throughout Hélène Cixous's work will be the most important guidance for this method, as well as for the next.

Method 3: Feminine Writing and Autoethnography

Both the drama of chapter five and autoethnography of chapter six will attempt to enact the feminine writing of Hélène Cixous. Autoethnography is a form of writing ethnographic work that explicitly includes the experience of the ethnographer. Both drama and autoethnography are related to the 'New Ethnographers.' New ethnography is informed by the postmodern critique. It legitimates the evocation of experience that can be found in dramatic fiction, and
acknowledges as crucial the experience of the researcher in the field. While drama is primarily organized around fiction, autoethnography attempts to write the experiences of the ethnographer. Both are narratives or stories. In drama, the storyteller is less visible, while in autoethnography she is central.

In a text about writing for diverse audiences, Laurel Richardson (1990) argues for the importance of narrative – whether autobiographical or other forms – as a writing strategy:

Narrative is the best way to understand the human experience, because it is the way humans understand their own lives. It is the closest to the human experience and hence the least falsifying of that experience, and it rejuvenates the sociological imagination (65).

In a thought similar to Richardson’s, well-known autoethnographer, Carolyn Ellis (1996) describes her motivation to “new ethnography.” She says “I wanted to be a storyteller, someone who used narrative strategies to transport readers into experiences and make them feel as well as think” (18). Narrative, like drama in the previous section, then, is in part a means to evoke an emotional response. Not only is emotion the source of passion which ultimately creates change in the world, emotion is also an important component of what is silenced and left out in the masculine economy – the ‘rational’ and ‘objective’ rhetoric of Western discourse.

This emotionality is inherent in the narrative work of autoethnographers. "On the whole, autoethnographers don’t want you to sit back as spectators; they want readers to feel and care and desire" (Bochner and Ellis 1996:224).

Ethnography is an appropriate method for exploring language – one of the
important themes from Cixious around which this project is organized. "When we say that ethnographers can't stand above or outside language, we mean that the world as we 'know' it cannot be separated from the language we use to explain, understand, or describe it" (Bochner and Ellis 1996:20). Feminine writing and creative writing engage language in writing autoethnography.

In the Sixth Moment, Norman Denzin (1997) calls these autobiographical writings as a window on the social 'mystories'. He suggests that "mystories are reflexive, critical, multimedia tales and tellings" (92). The 'mystery' connects the personal lived experience of the researcher and writer to the social issue at hand as well as larger background of collective stories. "The mystery is simultaneously a personal mythology, a public story, and a performance that critiques" (Denzin 1997:116). There is an emphasis on critical in his description of 'mystories.' Like all feminine writing, a 'mystery' attempts to both disrupt and transform.

The 'mystery' that I write in chapter six will combine my experience researching gay marriage on the Internet with my own lived biography. Again as Cixous has said, feminine writing cannot be codified. However, some strategies for writing effective ethnography are helpful to my own effort. Mitchell and Charmaz discuss five strategies for writing ethnography in interesting ways:

1. pulling the reader into the story, 2. recreating experiential mood within the writing, 3. adding elements of surprise, 4. reconstructing the experience through written images, and 5. creating closure on the story while recognizing it as part of an ongoing process (1996:144-45).
The autoethnography in chapter six will take the form of letters. The content of the letters, as well as to whom the letters will be addressed, will emerge from the deconstruction work of chapter four as well as the dramatic writing of chapter five. The autoethnography of chapter six will attempt to connect to — though not tie up in a neat package — the various strands of the previous chapters. Along with the example of Hélène Cixous's feminine writing, perhaps the most importance guidance for this chapter can be found in the autoethnographic musings of Carolyn Ellis:

Social science education did not prepare me to write from the heart, touch other people, or improve social conditions... Perhaps all of us should go back to where we were attracted to higher education in the first place, to our dreams and hopes ... to a place we inhabited before our creativity and imagination were discouraged by our professional socialization (1997:135).

This project deals directly with the issues that led me graduate school. I have always been fascinated by the structures of gender and power -- as well as by the limits and possibilities of language. In this autoethnographic account, I will have an opportunity to connect to my own enthusiasm for these topics and bring that passion to my writing and to the reader.

Methods and Postmodernism: Mapping a Sociological Path

I moved to Las Vegas in 1994. I remember the move well. There are things that went well with that move, and things that I would do very differently. If I were to tell you the story of that relocation, I would not/could not tell you everything that happened in detail. What I could do, however, is highlight important things about the move. My story telling would be informed very much
by my upcoming relocation to Tucson. That is, I would be thinking about what is important and what I can learn. If I were to tell the story of my previous move, I would be in a sense making what Deleuze and Guattari call a 'map' not a 'tracing.' A map is a drawing which represents, albeit imperfectly or incompletely, a place in ways that is intended to be helpful as a guide for movement or finding one's way. A tracing is an attempt to provide an exact replica, to represent as completely as possible, a project deemed impossible by postmodernists (Roseneau 1992). In their 1983 article "On the Line", Deleuze and Guattari suggest the following approach for writing about the world: "make maps, not tracings" (25).

The work of deconstruction and feminine writing in this project is intended to be a map and not a tracing. I will not attempt to locate a singular, grand truth, but rather to find and create new ways of thinking about issues of sex and gender. The methods fit the postmodern/poststructuralist theories which frame this project. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest that 'experimental' work such as what I undertake in this project are appropriate for our 'new [postmodern] age':

we are in a new age where messy, uncertain, multivoiced texts, cultural criticism, and new experimental works will become more common, as will more reflexive forms of fieldwork, analysis, and intertextual representation (15).

While we find ourselves in a new age, many of our motivations and desires for research remain the same -- to learn and understand, to find meaning in the world. "In its many guises postmodernism addresses the same sorts of issues that have fired the sociological imagination since the inception of the discipline in the nineteenth century" (Dickens and Fontana 1994:10).
The deconstruction work of chapter four will attempt to take apart the fundamental binaries and hierarchies of Western thought -- particularly around sex and gender -- as they are evident in the debates on gay marriage. My deconstructive work will also examine Genesis story imagery and evidence of Cixous's war of sexual difference. Dickens and Fontana (1994) have suggested that postmodern methods are evident in important subfields of Sociology. One of the subfields they identify is feminist deconstruction: "feminist writers are employing deconstructionist techniques to analyze patriarchal discourse where sexual difference, embodied in the conceptual pair masculine/feminine, is used to establish meanings that are arbitrarily related to gender or the body" (8). This is the work which I will strive to accomplish in chapter four.

Dickens and Fontana (1994) have called "especially interesting" work that combines critique of ethnography with feminist deconstruction resulting in a "postmodern feminist ethnography" (8-9). This is the type of work which I undertake in chapters five and six. Drawing from the findings in chapter four, I will write a drama of sexual difference in chapter five, and an autoethnographic account of my experience exploring gay marriage debates in chapter six. The dramatic account will pay particular attention to Cixous's suggestion that engaging in debate (or war) actually reinforces the dominant masculine ordering of thought. The autoethnography, in the form of letters, will attempt to give the reader access to me as researcher and writer -- to provide the reader with a richer description of the issues, and more fully engage the reader in interpreting this text.
If the work of deconstruction and feminine writing for this project are intended to be a map and not a tracing, then what is the purpose of the map?

My goal in this research is explicitly sociological and political. Feminist deconstruction is an ongoing effort of feminist poststructuralism. Cornell suggests that this important effort is more than an exercise in texts and theory: "Ontology of gender identity, then, has been deconstructed not just to expose the normative injunction that lies at its base, but to protect the possibility of a different destiny" (Cornell 1999:205). A 'different destiny' is the goal of this project and of the work of Hélène Cixous.

The feminine writing of Hélène Cixous is also explicitly political. Feminine writing is not simply about the creation of new text. Mark Zuss (1997) considers the work of "authors as diverse and divergent as Anzaldua, Cixous, Lorde and Cliff [who] share a contemporary feminist project that attempts to refigure subjectivity, representation and agency... Their writings work to disrupt the material and discursive limits blocking the routes for the exploration of radical forms of difference and the expression of individual and collective agency" (659). According to Zuss, this writing disrupts not only the discursive limits of structure in language, but simultaneously impacts the material limits of social realities. Moreover, according to Cornell (1999), "the rewriting of the feminine can, in other words, be transformative, not merely disruptive" (2). That is, feminine writing holds the promise of transformation, the creation of new possibilities:

Cixous suggests that a feminine writing will bring into existence alternative forms of relation, perception and expression. It is in this sense that Cixous believes writing is revolutionary. Not only can writing exceed the binary logic that informs our present system and
thus create the framework for a new ‘language’ and culture, but, she stresses, through its transformations, feminine writing will initiate changes in the social and political sphere to challenge the very foundation of the patriarchal and capitalist state (Sellers 1997:xxix).

If in fact, the work of deconstruction chapter four is able to unearth in the gay marriage debates the foundational discourse of sex/gender opposition, then the feminine writing of chapters five and six may provide a path — not to win a battle — but to escape the war.

While the work of Hélène Cixous is explicitly political, my own work is both sociological and political. This project, through the methods outlined in this chapter, crafts a study directly informed by C. Wright Mills' sociological imagination. That is, my examination of the gay marriage debates is a means to connect a lived biographical moment with the larger forces of history. My methods — using feminist deconstruction and feminine writing in drama and autoethnography — align me with critical postmodern feminists, and engage me in the sociological and political project described by Weedon (1997): "Sexual politics and the transformation of patriarchy in all its forms remain the defining objectives of feminism. Feminist poststructuralism offers useful and important tools in the struggle for change" (180). Chapter four begins this work with the feminist deconstruction of Internet sites for and against gay marriage.
CHAPTER 4

UNRAVELING THE WEB: FEMINIST DECONSTRUCTION OF INTERNET SITES ON GAY MARRIAGE

'World Wide Web' – the name for the connections between computers around the world – is an interesting metaphor. Several things come to mind at once. First is the web of connections. It is fascinating to think about individuals around the world having access to the same information at the same time.

Next there is the spider web. This one does not quite seem to work. Spider webs, however large and complex, are spun by single spiders. Despite conspiracy theorist ideas to the contrary, a single author does not create the World Wide Web. Moreover, the World Wide Web is not comprised only of its threads, or connections. Rather, the web is comprised of both the connections and the connected – millions of pages created by individuals and organizations. 'World Wide Quilt' would really be a more appropriate label.

Continuing with another aspect of the spider web metaphor, however, it is interesting to think about the potential to become 'caught' in the web. Have you ever surfed a commercial site, and found it incredibly difficult to back out? Certain sites are programmed to bring new pages up when you attempt to leave them. Porn sites are notorious for this. In addition, it is simply easy in general to
become 'lost' in the web. Following links through point and click technology, it is easy to forget what you are doing or where you were headed.

In this chapter, I will attempt to 'unravel' the web sites in support of and against gay marriage using feminist deconstruction. To keep myself from getting 'lost in the web', I will follow a fairly simple plan discussed earlier in chapter two. The first two sections of this chapter consist of the separate deconstruction of my two primary web sites, FamilyResearchCouncil.org and FreedomtoMarry.org. Within each of these sections, I will first provide a descriptive overview of the sites. I then describe the findings of my deconstruction for each of the three 'slices' from Cixous's writing discussed in chapter one: binaries/hierarchies; creation stories, language; and the war of sexual difference. I performed the deconstruction work through close critical readings of the texts. Reviewing the web sites primarily in printed form, I made iterative readings considering particular questions which aligned with the 'slices' from Cixous. In this chapter's final section, I will compare, contrast, and combine the separate findings from both web sites.

Family Research Council (FRC.org)

"Family Research Council" and "Family, Faith & Freedom" are the titles at the top of the home page for the Family Research Council. Just underneath these titles is a circular emblem. In the center is the state capitol with an American flag waving in the background. Around the outer edge of the emblem is the organization's name again: "Family Research Council." Underneath the
titles, large square photo images provide eight menu choices: Issues in Depth, All About Congress, Washington Watch, Family Policy, Inside the Courts, Opportunities with FRC, Guest Book, Family: Friends & Foes. Down the left side of the home page, there are twelve more menu selections, each listed as text next to a star. The imagery throughout the FRC site is all-American and patriotic. There are a variety of combinations of American flags, stars, and the U.S. Capitol building.

The only menu selection included in both the large square listings as well as the sideline list of starred choices is “Issues in Depth.” By its dual listing as well as being listed first in the large square choices, “Issues in Depth” appears to be of central importance to the web site. This selection “provides a concise overview of the major public policy issues which Family Research Council champions on behalf of American families.” It offers the opportunity to access “topics for brief summaries and directions on utilizing resources” (www.frc.org/issues). The selection of topics includes eleven issues. The primary source for this project is the topic listed as “Homosexual Culture.” The “Homosexual Culture” page opens with the following:

FRC believes that homosexuality is unhealthy, immoral and destructive to individuals, families and societies. Compassion – not bigotry – impels us to support healing for homosexuals who want to change their orientation. FRC opposes any attempts to equate homosexuality with civil rights or to compare it to benign characteristics such as skin color or place of origin (www.frc.org/issues/homosexualmain.html).

The remainder of this overview page summarizes the FRC’s thoughts on issues such as the Dr. Laura controversy, gay marriage,
corporate policies dealing with homosexuality, and homosexual activism in schools. There are numerous links to more detailed information regarding these issues and others. The primary source of data for this project is the "Homosexual Culture" issues page along with the various links from this page. In the next three sub-sections, I will detail findings from these pages for each of my theoretical 'slices' from the work of Hélène Cixous.

FRC.org: Binaries and Hierarchies

For Cixous, binaries and hierarchies as a system of thought connects deeply to our ideas about sex and gender. That is, fundamentally there is the dominant (masculine) and the other (feminine). Binaries are evident on the FRC Internet site in a variety of ways. The point and click from the FRC home page to the "Homosexual Culture" page begins with a splitting the American flag into a dominant and other bringing a rainbow (gay pride) into contrast with the American flag. Additionally, the title of the FRC's newsletter – which is designed to keep track of homosexual culture – suggests a dominance of modern (masculine) science over other (feminine) aspects of society.

Throughout various papers and resources lined to the "Homosexual Culture" page, the binaries of gender and of sex are explicitly affirmed. One aspect of binary thinking is that the two categories are necessarily mutually exclusive. There is no blurring. The importance of maintaining binary categories of sex and gender is apparent on the FRC site in references to transgender identity as the most radical extension of homosexuality. Finally, an underlying
struggle for modernity and against postmodernity is evident in references to the binary of a singular, knowable truth in contrast to all other possibilities which are lies. In this section, I will discuss each of these in greater depth.

As discussed earlier, the welcome page for the Family Research Council shows a small circular emblem. The image inside it is the capitol building in Washington, D.C. with the U.S. flag flying behind it. The welcome page for "Homosexual Culture" shows an almost identical image, except the flag flying is split down the middle. First, on the left, is the U.S. flag. However, to the right is now the rainbow flag, a recognized symbol of gay pride. Gay pride, in this image, is made 'the other' to American pride. There is normal, (straight, heterosexual) all-American culture; and there is 'the other' abnormal (homosexual) un-American culture.

The FRC publishes a newsletter geared primarily to monitoring the un-American culture symbolized by the rainbow flag. The newsletter is called "CultureFacts." In this title, an oppositional binary is created. Whereas 'culture' is often considered the masculine associated with a feminine 'nature', in this case 'culture' is the feminine to the scientific masculine of 'facts.' This is evident in the italics (a softer look) for 'culture' and the plain (neutral, straight) text for 'facts.' In this couple, it is implied that culture consists of (unsubstantiated, uninformed, unscientific) norms, values, and beliefs of society. Facts come after and supersede what is believed in culture. Masculine scientific facts counter and overtake culture. 'Facts' on/about 'culture' will disarm/disrobe culture; will overtake culture and make it submit.
The title "CultureFacts" also connects to the FRC's choice of names for its own organization, as well as its name for issues of homosexuality. The Family Research Council implies in its name, specifically with the word "research", that it is a scientific organization bringing facts to the public. The FRC names the page on issues regarding homosexuality "Homosexual Culture", which the FRC explicitly opposes. Thus the title "CultureFacts" suggests an even more specific story of the FRC's victory over "Homosexual Culture." Moreover, this battle with a predesignated victor is a site for entertainment. A link from the "Homosexual Culture" page issues the following invitation: "We encourage you to subscribe to CultureFacts – it's a great resource to keep you tuned in to what's happening with the homosexual agenda" (www.frc.org/issues/homosexualmain.html). There is a sense of sport in the invitation, of spectacle. It would seem that 'the homosexual agenda' is part of an unruly culture that is fun to watch.

Many binaries within the FRC web site are more explicitly connected to gender and sex. One link from the "Homosexual Culture" page is to a statement of State Senator Loren Leman, an Alaska Republican called "Not by Unelected Judges." A binary system of gender is central to the Senator Leman’s arguments. He argues against gay marriage, and especially against judicial decisions in favor of gay marriage. He includes a quote from William Bennett, author of The Book of Virtues, which describes the binary of masculine and feminine in terms of men and women. Bennett ties this ‘different, complementary nature’ directly to the institution of marriage:

Marriage is not an arbitrary construct; it is an ‘honorable estate’ based on the different, complementary nature of men and women –
and how they refine, support, encourage, and complete one another (Bennett in www.frc.org/podium/pd98e1hs.html).

Unless Bennett means that men and women refine, support, encourage and complete one another through their reproductive organs, then he refers to gender and not sex. This quote demonstrates the premise of essential gender identity based on bodily sex identity which underpins arguments for the necessity of heterosexual marriage. Leman's gender essentialism is explicit in the following statement: "We can no more define marriage than we can redefine gender" (www.frc.org/podium/pd98e1hs.html). More importantly, however, this quote misses the hierarchical component of the binary it describes. Women, as other, complete men; men do not complete women. That is, men (masculinity) are the defined, the knowable, the dominant. Women (femininity) are necessarily everything else – the undefined, the unknowable, the debased.

The importance of maintaining a binary system of both gender and sex as an embedded motivation in the anti-gay marriage arguments is evident in Robert Knight's "Answers to Questions about the Defense of Marriage." Knight lists outcomes to expect if homosexual couples seeking marriage rights were successful. One of these outcomes is that there would no longer be sex-based distinctions in the law. He points out that this is just what was proposed in the Equal Rights Amendment which was rejected (www.frc.org/insight/is9662hs.html). For Knight, then, the institution of heterosexual marriage is the foundation for other sex-based distinctions in the law.
Both Leman's comments on gender and Knight's on sex-based distinctions in the law demonstrate the importance of maintaining a binary (hetero)sex/gender system as a critical aspect of the arguments against gay marriage. Another way that this is evident is in the framing of transgender or transexuality within the FRC web pages. Transgender is an umbrella term of possibilities which includes people who 'cross-dress', drag queens, and people who use medical treatments such as hormones or surgery to modify their bodies. When the FRC comments on transgender, it is as an extreme – worse, even, than the immoral, unhealthy behaviors of homosexuality. The "Homosexual Culture" web page links to several papers on homosexuality and public schools. In “Top 10 Strategies Used by Homosexual Activists in Schools,” Peter LaBarbera suggests that middle and high school “youngsters are being encouraged to 'come out' as 'gay,' 'lesbian,' 'bisexual' or even 'transgender' ” (www.frc.org/insigh/is99f4hs.html). Transgender, it would seem, is the worst offense of the possibilities. In the same article, an example of “radical teachings” which come from Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) in high schools was a panel titled “What is Transgender All About?” It would seem that affirming transgender is the most offensive possibility of the GSAs which LaBarbera calls “de facto homosexuality booster and propaganda clubs” (www.frc.org/insigh/is99f4hs.html). With a spotlight on transgender, the objections about gay marriage seem to be less about sexual behavior and more about maintaining clear and rigid gender definitions – definitions that are kept in place most fundamentally by the social institution of heterosexuality.
The need for clear and rigid binary (hetero)sex/gender definitions connects as well to oppositional binaries which define modernity. Modernity is premised on the idea of a singular, universal truth (Roseneau 1992). There is evidence in the FRC web pages of Cixous’s connections between our system of binary/hierarchical gender and the entire system of modern Western thinking. An underlying struggle between a modern requirement for binaries and the postmodern leaning toward diversity is evident in the call or truth in several places in the FRC web pages. If the institution of marriage as one man and one woman is challenged, then ultimately the idea of a universal, singular truth is at risk:

Destroying definitions does enormous damage not only to marriage but to the idea of truth. Calling two lesbians a ‘marriage’ is telling a lie, and official recognition of this lie breeds the sort of cynicism found in totalitarian societies, where lies are common currency (www.frc.org/insight/is945hs.html).

There is no room here for postmodern ideas of multiple truths depending on perspective (Roseneau 1992). There is truth and lie. Truth is singular, unchanging, dominant (masculine) and defined; lie is ‘the other’ multiple, changing, marginal (feminine) and amorphous. Truth and lie bring to mind the binary of good and evil. Knowledge of these is what came with eating forbidden fruit in the story of Genesis. Creation story imagery and language and the focus of the next section.
Might the Judeo-Christian story of Genesis provide the original story of binaries/hierarchies for Western thinking? In this section, I will explore creation story imagery as well as the use of language on the FRC web site. The story of Genesis is the Judeo-Christian creation story. One simple way that the FRC connects with creation story imagery is simply through identifying itself explicitly with Judeo-Christian tradition. In addition, there are some specific mentions of the Genesis story. More often, there are implicit references to Genesis in the form of identification with ‘ancient’ or ‘traditional’ morality – dating back ‘thousands’ of years. Finally, although there are no explicit references to it, the creation story of Pandora’s Box is woven extensively into the arguments against gay marriage. That is, the legalization of gay marriage would unleash untold troubles onto the world. In this section, I will discuss these instances of creation story imagery in detail.

In addition, I will explore language and its uses on the FRC web pages. Along with the legitimating language of history (‘thousands of years’) discussed above, one of the more interesting use of language on the FRC web pages is a defensive gesture. Specifically, all of the papers and pages on the FRC site use quotation marks around the language of homosexuality in order to articulate their opposition. With one exception, for example, the word ‘gay’ appears only in quotes. This use of quotations extends from various terms of self-identification in the gay community to language of the corporate world which recognizes the community. Along with this defensive posturing, there are some creative uses of
language – new terms which take a moral and political stance against homosexuality. Finally, the use of language is perhaps most interesting in the word ‘sex.’ This little word, with its use as both a category and a behavior, makes it possible to slide back and forth between the two meanings. This slide of meaning is used by the FRC in its arguments against gay marriage. Before discussing language, however, I return to the original story of ‘sex’ with the creation of Eve – a different sex from/for sex with Adam.

Creation story imagery in the Western world is mostly commonly known as the Judeo-Christian story of Genesis. The FRC’s mission statement explicitly connects its work to the Judeo-Christian tradition:

The Family Research Council exists to reaffirm and promote nationally, and particularly in Washington, DC, the traditional family unit and the Judeo-Christian value system upon which it is built (www.FRC.org).

Creation stories are a society’s answers to some of its most basic questions. The FRC connects to the basic foundational ideas in its mission statement. A main point of inquiry in this project, however, is to take apart these basic foundational ideas.

The most obvious creation story imagery in the FRC web pages is explicit reference to the Genesis story. The Minnesota State Supreme Court referred to Genesis in its ruling against gay marriage:

The institution of marriage as a union of man and woman, uniquely involving the procreating and rearing of children within a family, is as old as the book of Genesis... This historic institution is more deeply founded than the asserted contemporary concept of marriage and societal interests or which petitioners contend (Baker v. Nelson (1971) as cited in www.frc.org/insight/is945hs.html).
It is interesting that the court said 'man and woman' in this decision, and not 'one man and one woman' since historically marriage has often meant one man and many women. What is also as old as the book of Genesis, or at least is evident in that text, is the binary oppositional thinking that characterizes Western thought. Adam and his other (Eve) as sexual difference become the fundamental organizing principle of thought and reality.

Although explicit reference to Genesis is the most obvious creation story imagery, the most frequent mean of evoking creation story imagery on the FRC pages is the reference to ancient definitions, laws, or morality. In his statement, Alaska State Senator Loren Leman described marriage as "a cultural institution with profound importance. Our existing definition, or one similar to it, is one that has served us through more than 6,000 years of recorded history" (www.frc.org/podium/pd98e1hs.html). With his caveat 'or one similar to it', Leman gives nod to the definitions of marriage that have included polygamy and ownership of women of by men. In response to the first question in an article titled "Answers to Questions about the Defense of Marriage", Knight says "Marriage has been the foundation of civilization for thousands of years in cultures around the world" (www.frc.org/insight/is96c2hs.html). In response to a question about morals changing – the end of slavery and women having the right to vote as examples – Knight responds "Various social movements have succeeded because they were in accord with natural law and the basic precepts of the moral code" (www.frc.org/insight/is96c2hs.html). At this point, the reference to thousands of years of history also claims status as 'natural' and
'moral'. This connection is explicit in an article about strategies used by homosexual activists in schools. LaBarbera points out the "ancient Judeo-Christian view that homosexual behavior is wrong and unnatural", and notes that despite the attempt to legitimate homosexuality in schools today, "homosexual practices are as immoral, unhealthy and unnatural now as they were 2,000 years ago" (www.frc.org/insight/is99f4hs.html).

One unexpected type of creation story imagery that quickly became apparent in my analysis of the FRC web pages was the story of Pandora's Box. There are some similarities between Pandora's Box and Genesis. Whereas Eve bites the apple, Pandora opens the forbidden box and lets loose untold evils and difficulties in the world. In a variety of discourses and metaphors, the legalization of gay marriage becomes the frightening Pandora's Box on the FRC web pages. Most frequently, perhaps is the simple idea that if two women or two men can marry, then anyone/anything can marry. “Once the ‘one man, one woman’ definition is abandoned, there is no logical reason for limiting it to two people or even people” (www.frc.org/insight/is94f5hs.html). The idea of multiple partners is the first worrisome possibility. However, polygamy with its relatively recent history of legitimacy in the West is not frightening enough. We peek into Pandora's box to find society's favorite sexual taboos – if we legalize gay marriage, then: "why not a man and his daughter? Or a man and his dog?" (www.frc.org/insight/is94f5hs.html). Raising the specter of incest and bestiality becomes a scare tactic in the gay marriage debates.
In the same article, Knight uses a ‘broken window’ metaphor from crime scholar James Wilson. The ‘broken window effect’ referred to an example of a building in a rough neighborhood having all windows intact, despite broken windows in buildings surrounding it. Once a single window in the building was broken, however, all the other windows were soon broken as well. Legalization of gay marriage would be the first broken window in a building already in danger. “Plagued by a high rate of divorce, teen pregnancies and STD epidemics, America can only unravel the social fabric further by legitimizing homosexuality” (www.frc.org/insight/is94f5hs.html). The broken window is another metaphor for Pandora’s Box. What building is it, however, that is being defended? For Knight, it is the institution of marriage. As I discussed earlier, I would suggest the structure is that of a binary, hierarchical (hetero)sex/gender system.

What are the structure and the components of the defended building? As Cixous suggests, language is crucial to how gender is man-made. The power of language on the FRC web pages is perhaps most evident in the efforts to delegitimate the language of the homosexual culture which the FRC opposes. Most notable is a refusal to accept names which the gay community has chosen for itself. The FRC uses the terms ‘homosexual’ and ‘homosexuality’ throughout its pages. “Gay” and “lesbian” and “bisexual” and “transgender” appear in many places, always in quotes. The quotes dispute/refute the power that the words attempt to claim in language – identity, legitimacy, visibility. So thorough is this effort is that in several hundred pages of text, there is not one slip into using the word ‘gay’ for example without quotes. In a statement included on the web page
which is from Alaskan State Senator Leman, there is a place where
"[homosexual]" appears in brackets as part of his statement "[homosexual]
activist" (www.frc.org/podium/pd98e1hs.html). It seems likely that in his
statement, Senator Leman may have said 'gay activist' and that this was
corrected when the statement was published in the FRC web page. There is one
type of reference to the word 'gay' in the FRC web pages where it does not
appear in quotes. 'Ex-gay' appears in several places without the use of quotation
marks (www.frc.org/drlaura). Gay becomes a legitimate identity when one has
recovered from that identity.

The FRC's reasoning for using quotation marks for 'gay marriage' is
explicit: “'Gay marriage' is an oxymoron, an ideological invention designed to
appropriate the moral capital of marriage and family toward the goal of
government-enforced acceptance of homosexuality”
(www.frc.org/insight/is94f5hs.html). More often, the FRC refers to gay marriage
as 'same-sex' marriage or same-sex 'marriage.' There is such a thing as same-
sex couples, and there is such a thing as marriage. However, put together they
must be delegitimized. One or the other is always in quotation marks. In
discussions of corporate policies, quotation marks are used for 'diversity',
alternative 'families' and 'partner benefits.' Interestingly, on the FRC pages, this
tactic is the most evident use of language – a somewhat defensive gesture
delegitimizing the language of homosexual culture. However, there are some
creative uses of language as well. A 12/20/99 FRC press release referred to the
newly created registration of domestic partners in Vermont as a “sin registry.” In
several places, the FRC calls corporate domestic partner benefits "sex subsidies" arguing that such policies "redefine family to equate homosexual sex partners with married spouses" (www.frc.org/steward/family). Sex, the behavior, is emphasized in the case of gay partners and ignored in the case of married (heterosexual) partners.

This last example of language points out a key difficulty with the word 'sex.' There is 'sex' the category and 'sex' the behavior. However, the meanings do not separate well, and the easy slide between them becomes helpful in the argument against gay marriage. In several places, the FRC refutes the argument from gay marriage activists which equates the civil rights struggle to legalize interracial marriage with the struggle to legalize gay marriage. "The false equation of a benign, nonbehavioral characteristic such as skin color with an orientation based precisely on behavior finds no support within the law" (www.frc.org/insight/is94f5hs.html). The law does not prohibit people from marrying who exhibit a particular (sex) behavior, however. It prohibits those with a particular bodily (sex) characteristic from marrying. Where gay marriage advocates see a civil rights struggle, the FRC frames gay marriage as a moral and scientific struggle. Where the two sides agree is that there is indeed a struggle. It is the 'struggle' aspect of the gay marriage debates that I explore in the next section.
The work of the FRC as engaging in ‘warfare’ is in visible throughout the many pages on the gay marriage debates in particular and homosexuality in general. This is evident in several ways. First, there is an implied need for war. That is, invoking the ‘freedom’ component of the organization’s motto: “Family, Faith, and Freedom”, the FRC describes its work as defending against tyrannical activities of the homosexual activists. Second, the FRC acknowledges that the debates are a ‘fight’ by saying essentially that ‘the other guy’ started it. Third, discussions about gay marriage include extensive examples of militaristic language and images. Finally, looking closely at word choice and metaphor, I find the ultimate masculine/male fear and its associated need for defense. This last discovery is based on a psychosexual analysis. First, however, the FRC creates the need for defense at the level of society and politics by invoking memories of the American Revolution.

“If you want to find out more about Judicial Tyranny, click here” reads one of the links from the “Homosexual Culture” page. The decisions of Hawaii and Vermont judiciaries who have found sex discrimination in marriage laws are framed as ‘tyrannical.’ Alaska State Senator Loren Leman’s statement is titled “Not by Unelected Judges” (www.frc.org/podium/pde1hs.html). There is a need for democratic legislatures to ‘fight back’ against the tyranny of the judiciary. The decisions of these courts and legislatures are not seen simply as civil law. The gay marriage question is framed as an issue of ‘force.’ That is, the legalization of gay marriage would force others to recognize the union of gay couples. Robert
Knight reminds readers that George Washington once observed that the law is not suggestion, rather it is force (www.frc.org/insight/is96c2hs.html). Homosexual activists, then, are not seeking rights for a small group of people. Rather they are attempting to force their morals on society at large. In this, they are attempting to create a "totalitarian [society]" (www.frc.org/insight/is94f5hs.html). The language of tyranny is included in many different ways. Both judiciaries and homosexual activists are would-be tyrants. The need for war, the importance for fighting for freedom is clear.

Although there is clearly a fight, the FRC did not start it. That is the message communicated in several ways. The message is sometimes quite explicit as in the opening to the paper "Answers to Questions about the Defense of Marriage" by Robert Knight:

Ordinary people did not pick this fight. They are not the aggressors. They are merely defending the basic morality that has sustained the culture for everyone against a radical attack (www.frc.org/insight/is96c2hs.html).

Throughout the web pages, the FRC frames its work as defending the basic values of its slogan: 'family, faith, and freedom.' As the previous quote illustrates, the 'other guy' – the would-be tyrannical homosexual activists – have made it necessary to fight.

With the need for a fight established and the other side identified as the initiator, we can take a look at the machinations of war. There are both images and word choices that are militaristic. At the top of the "Homosexual Culture" page there is an emblem. It is quite similar to the home page for FRC in that it is a capitol building with a flag in the background. As discussed in the
binaries/hierarchies section, the flag in this picture is divided into the American and rainbow (gay pride) flags. Not only does this create a binary, it is also a military image. That is, countries go to war 'under' their national flags. This picture of two flags over the capitol building suggests the idea of a battle over control of the American legislature. At one point, homosexual activists are described as conducting "stealth" campaigns in schools (www.frc.org/insight/is99f4hs.html). Under a separate set of FRC web pages dealing with corporate policies, some companies are identified as "Top Aggressive Corporate Sponsors of Homosexuality" (www.frc.org/steward/family.html). The Human Rights Campaign (an activist organization which lobbies for gay rights) is characterized by the FRC as "militant" (www.frc.org/steward/family.html). This imagery of war and the need for defense is symbolized at the societal level – a battle over the morals and laws of the country.

This need for societal defense is paralleled by an underlying psychological fear associated with homosexuality. Legal scholar Mary Anne Case (1995) suggested that fear and loathing of male homosexuality do not center on the behavior of the active male. It is the receiving behavior of the male that is horrendous, and contradicts the requirements of masculinity. Fear of penetration is the ultimate fear of masculinity. The opening statement of the article called "Top 10 Strategies of Homosexual Activists in Schools" suggests that of all the progress made by homosexual activists, "perhaps non is more disturbing than the penetration of the nation's schools with messages and programs designed to
teach homosexuality as normative" (www.frc.org/insight/is99f4hs.html, emphasis mine). The language of this statement speaks to the psychosexual fear of being penetrated. This speaks to a deep psychological need to defend, and justifies a call to arms. Against whom has this defense been mounted? In the next section, I explore the web pages of those whom the FRC terms 'homosexual activists' – The National Freedom to Marry Coalition.

**Freedom to Marry (FTM.org)**

"freedom to marry" is the large title of the National Freedom to Marry Coalition's home page. Underneath the title is a large pink triangle with two linked wedding rings. To the left of the triangle are two grooms dressed in traditional tuxedos. To the right are two brides in gowns and veils with flowers. The subtitle reads "A nationwide coalition committed to winning and keeping the freedom to marry for same-gender couples" (www.ftm.org). Next is a link to the full text of the "Baker vs. Vermont same-sex marriage decision" (www.ftm.org). Finally, a graphic box provides links to the Marriage Project at Lambda Legal Defense organization. In a play on/with words, the text reads "want to get married? Get engaged!" (www.ftm.org). At the bottom of the page is another link to "The Marriage Project" at the Lambda web site. This cover page is all the information available on the web from the National Freedom to Marry Coalition. It links to the extensive information on the Lambda web site. For this project, I reviewed both this home page as well as the Lambda pages.
Clicking on the “Get engaged!” link from the FTM.org home page connects to an activism page within the Lambda Legal Defense’s Marriage Project. The heading of this page reads: “Want to Get Married? Get Engaged in the Fight to Win the Freedom to Marry!” (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/resources). This page is divided into a series of links grouped under subheadings: news, resources and action. Clicking on the “Marriage Project” leads to a more extensive listing of links. The Marriage Project page opens with the following statement:

Many lesbian and gay couples share in the same responsibilities as married couples but are denied the same legal and social support. The Marriage Project works to end this second-class status, as co-counsel in the landmark Hawaii marriage case and by spearheading a national coalition working to win and keep the freedom to marry nationwide (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/issues/record?record=9).

The links available from the Marriage Project page are grouped in sub-headings: Map, In Depth, News & Views, Resources, Press Releases, Memos, Publications, Decisions, and Cases. At the bottom of both the activism page and the project page, there are links to national headquarters and to regional offices, as well as links to remaining selections within the Lambda organization. In this project, I reviewed the FTM.org home page, the two main marriage pages within Lambda, and followed the links from the two Lambda marriage pages. In the next three sub-sections, I will detail findings from these sites as they align with my three theoretical ‘slices’ from Hélène Cixous.
FTM.org: Binaries and Hierarchies

The Freedom to Marry Internet site is an interesting place to consider Hélène Cixous’s binaries and hierarchies. The first way that binaries/hierarchies are in evidence is in an affirmation of both gender and sex as binary categories. As in the FRC pages, there is a slide between sex and gender that, perhaps unwittingly on the FTM pages, reinforces gender/sex essentialism. While transgendered individuals and bisexuals are mentioned a few times on the FTM web pages, they seem to be considered an extension of the lesbian and gay community. Transgender identity challenges the binary gender system in important ways, and the FTM web pages are silent on such issues.

The next way that binaries and hierarchies are created on the FTM web pages is in the positioning of the sides of the debate. The FRC claimed the status of dominant (in terms of all-American) and othered the homosexual community in its web pages. The FTM attempts to reverse the hierarchy by labeling the ‘opposition’ as ‘anti-marriage’, ‘anti-gay’, and ultimately ‘un-American.’ Interestingly, this claiming of the pro-gay-marriage position as ‘American’ (which is implied rather than made explicit) seems to claim a deeper identity with the project of modernity and classic liberalism. The FTM web pages contain multiple references to the debates as an issue of civil rights, equality, individual freedom, marriage rights and freedom. Rights, freedom and equality are universal truths within this modern system of thought. The FTM web pages also contain frequent references to the linear progress of modern thought – implying that since truth is on their side, victory is inevitable.
links to modernity, however, I will first consider how the FTM web pages affirm/confirm what Cixous suggests is our most fundamental binary/hierarchy – sex and gender.

The terminology ‘same-sex’, used extensively throughout the FTM web pages, refers to two people from the same category. This reinforces the two possible categories – the binary of male and female. In at least one instance, the idea of a heterosexual couple was called “opposite-sex” (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/record?record=41). This usage confirms not only the binary, but the oppositional nature of the categories male and female. Throughout the web pages are frequent references to ‘lesbians and gay men’ as well as ‘lesbian and gay couples.’ The term ‘lesbian’ always refers to women, while ‘gay’ is sometimes an umbrella term and sometimes considered male – parallel, of course, to traditional use of ‘woman’ and ‘man.’ While the intention for referring to ‘lesbians and gay men’ is likely to ensure the inclusiveness of women, the result is another reconfirmation of male/female as the most fundamental organizing binary. There are lesbians (females) and gay men (males.) Perhaps more worrisome, however, is the term ‘same-gender’ which is used less than but apparently interchangeably with ‘same-sex.’

Gender by most feminist and/or academic definitions refers to socially constructed characteristics assigned to bodily sex identities. Our most frequent understanding of gender occurs in the binary of characteristics we label masculine and feminine. The usage of ‘same-gender’ to describe gay marriage conflates sex and gender in a way that reinforces essentialism – that is, the
assumption that males and females are born with natural, social characteristics. As an example, the home page of the National Freedom to Marry Coalition conflates sex and gender through both words and images on its home page. The subtitle of the page refers to “same-gender marriage” while the next line provides a link to the Vermont “same-sex marriage” court decision (www.ftm.org). The images on the page, while no doubt intended to be fun and eye-catching, send a message of sex and gender conflation. To the left and right of wedding rings and a pink triangle are two gay marital couples. The men are dressed in traditional tuxedos, and the women in traditional bridal gowns with veils and flowers. What is affirmed is not only the mutually exclusive binary of male and female, but also that of traditional masculinity and femininity – and that these are linked, male to masculine and female to feminine.

The FTM web pages refer very frequently to lesbians and gay men, or lesbian and gay couples. Occasionally, reference is made more inclusive – lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual community. It is suggested that equal marriage rights will serve all of these people. Transgender identity challenges the binaries of sex and gender in important ways, and the FTM web pages are silent on these issues. For example, a woman and man can legally marry. If one of them undergoes a sex change operation, what happens to their marriage? Is it still legal? Bisexual identity also challenges the straight/gay dichotomy, suggesting that attraction or orientation is not that simple. By mostly ignoring the issues of transgender and bisexuality, the FTM web pages miss and opportunity
to challenge the binaries of sex and gender. As a result, the existing system is supported.

Along with reinforcing the binaries of sex and gender, the FTM web pages set up an 'us v. them' binary by attempting to claim the 'positive' position of the debates. The FTM pages do not generally use the term 'pro-marriage.' The pro-gay-marriage position is assumed on the pages by use of 'we' and 'us'. "Once we give non-gay people a chance to see married same-sex couples ... the will see ... that anti-marriage attacks on our families are un-American and wrong" (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/record?record=216). The opposition is othered, however, by describing them as 'anti-marriage' as well as 'anti-gay.' I will discuss the 'us vs. them' phenomena in more detail in the section on the war of sexual difference.

The claim to a 'positive' position in support of gay marriage also claims a particularly modern project. "Freedom to Marry" is both the national coalition's name and slogan. Throughout the web pages there is extensive rhetoric of freedom, equality, and rights: "Why deny gay people the equal opportunity to take on the commitment, protections, and responsibilities of civil marriage?" (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/record?record=259). There are calls or civil rights and marriage rights. There is an implication that truth is on the side of the civil rights struggle. There are frequent references to the linear progress of history – "as we move into the next chapters of this struggle" (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/record?record=216). The struggle for freedom to marry is framed as an unfolding narrative, moving forward
toward ultimate success – "our march toward freedom"
(www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents.recordz367). The implication of truth is that as peoples’ consciousness is raised, they will do the 'right' thing to grant gay couples the right to marry. By embracing modernity in this way, the FTM supports and reinforces the binaries of truth over lie and right over wrong. In this way, the FTM arguments maintain the binary/hierarchical thinking that has characterized Western thought for thousands of years and is described in the story of Genesis. Creation story imagery and language are the subjects of the next section.

FTM.org: Creation Story Imagery and Language

The first notable finding regarding creation story imagery in the FTM pages is that there is none. The story of Genesis is never mentioned. There are, however, multiple references to 'traditional' ideas about marriage which would seem to respond to the religious right. The idea of 'traditional' marriage is linked to and made parallel to other struggles over the institution of marriage, such as interracial marriage, rights of wives, and divorce law. Whereas the FRC web pages referenced tradition and history as a legitimating support for the anti-gay-marriage position, the FTM connects tradition and history with oppression in order to delegitimate such arguments.

Like references to tradition and history, the use of language in the FTM web pages is strikingly different from the FRC. There is not the defensive posturing to use quotation marks. There is a claiming of identity through
language with terms such as 'lesbian' and 'gay'. Interestingly, there is a connection to the binaries and hierarchies discussed previously. By claiming legitimacy through naming itself, the gay community also demonstrates awkwardness in naming the new ‘other.’ That is, the FTM web pages refer to heterosexual or straight couples and people in a variety of ways that tend to other them, such as ‘non-gay’. Like the FRC web pages, the FTM do not differentiate between sex and gender, and therefore, perhaps unwittingly participate in reinforcing ideas of gender essentialism. Perhaps as important as this sex/gender slide of meanings, there is a blurring or confusion about sex and sexual orientation particularly in discussions of court cases. Finally, the FTM web pages show a few creative uses of language both in villainizing the opposition, and in their overall ‘call to arms’ asking people to get involved in activism. In this section, I will discuss these uses of language in more depth, after first considering the presence (or lack) of creation imagery in the FTM web pages.

The FTM claims its historical connections to those of civil rights struggles, rather than to biblical or religious sources. Reference to the Judeo-Christian story of Genesis is not included explicitly anywhere. What is evident is reference to traditional marriage. Traditional marriage on the FTM web site is connected most frequently to historical restrictions on interracial marriage. That is, the importance of changing traditional, oppressive restrictions is emphasized. FTM web pages frequently draw a parallel between gay and interracial marriage,
pointing out the justifications which were used to defend laws against interracial marriage:

As lesbian and gay couples around the country demand their equal right to marry, it should not be forgotten that the same arguments used against same-sex marriages were once used, no long ago against those who wished to marry a person of a different race (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/record?record=44).

Thirty years ago, defenders of laws against interracial marriage claimed that such laws were aligned with divine will and protected the “natural order of things” (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/record?record=43). The FTM web pages point out other historical definitions of traditional marriage that have changed clearly for the better. For example, at one time marriage meant that men owned women as property (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/record?record=47). The institution of marriage, FTM web pages point out, has changed over time and needs to continue to change.

The institution of language is also subject to change. The FTM web site asserts a language of gay identity, community and culture throughout the pages, reflecting the development of language over the past several decades. The terms ‘lesbian’ and ‘gay’ are clearly claimed and are used extensively. ‘Same-sex’ in reference to couples and marriage is used often. The term ‘homosexuality’ is never used, and ‘heterosexual’ appears infrequently. It seems that by claiming a positive identity as ‘lesbian and gay,’ it becomes awkward to name the new ‘other.’ There are a variety of attempts to find a different name than ‘heterosexual’ or ‘straight.’ Some terms used are ‘opposite-sex’, ‘mixed-sex’, and ‘non-gays.’ While the intent may not be to privilege gay identity (‘non-
gay' is used most often in the phrase 'non-gay allies'), there is an implicit privileging of 'gay' when the other is termed 'non-gay.'

In several critical places, the FTM web pages conflate the ideas of sex and gender. As discussed earlier, the FTM home page lists 'same-sex' and 'same-gender' interchangeably. Most of the papers and links from the Marriage Project use the term 'same-sex.' However, the "Marriage Resolution," a key activism document which has been endorsed by hundreds of celebrities and organizations refers to marriage between those of the same gender:

The Marriage Resolution: BECAUSE marriage is a basic human right and an individual personal choice, RESOLVED the State should not interfere with same-gender couples who choose to marry and share fully and equally in the rights, responsibilities, and commitment of civil marriage (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/record?record=142).

By substituting 'gender' for 'sex', the whole notion of socially construction of gender is lost. The complexity of human characteristics is missed.

What is of at least as much concern as the slide of meaning between sex and gender, is a similar confusion between sex and sexual orientation. The word 'sex' is again problematic in its multiple meanings. Throughout the FTM web pages, the legal struggles are framed as striving for equal marriage rights for lesbians and gay men. The first resource paper is titled "Why Civil Marriage Laws Should Not Discriminate Against Lesbians and Gay Men" (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/record?record=46). This suggests that discrimination occurs on the basis of sexual orientation. In just a few instances, there are references to court decisions which find that prohibitions to gay marriage are a form of discrimination based on sex, such as an
“Alaska…court decision which found that the refusal to allow same-sex couples to marry … discriminates unlawfully on the basis of sex”
(www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/record?record=259). If the matter is considered at the level of the individual, then discrimination is indeed based on sex. That is, as a woman, I cannot legally marry a woman – whereas a man can. This is discrimination based on my sex. If the matter is considered at the level of the couple, then it may be described as discrimination based on sexual orientation. Orientation, however, must refer to the couple, not to the two individuals in the couple. Lesbians can and do marry men. Gay men can and do marry women.

Language is used creatively in several instances. One play on words is used to villainize the anti-gay-marriage proposition in California. Proposition 22, commonly called the 'Knight Initiative' for the bill's author, is termed the "Knight-mare" initiative on FTM web pages (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/record?record=505). The FTM's slogan, which is used throughout its pages, also uses a play on words. "Want to get married? Get engaged!" is the link to the FTM activism page (www.ftm.org). This word choice plays with several meanings at once. First, there is the idea of getting engaged to be married. Next, there is a call to get engaged in activism in support of the freedom to marry. The word 'engaged' also brings up images of engaging in battle or in war. It is this last meaning that I explore in greater depth in the next section.
FTM.org: War of Sexual Difference

Where creation story imagery was notable on the FTM pages by its absence, images of war are remarkable in their abundance. The freedom to marry effort is framed extensively as a military campaign. The FTM is 'engaged' in a fight, a war in terms of battles, threats and attacks. The goal of the war is partially defensive – to protect lesbian and gay families. At the same time, the war is revolutionary – to fight and win the freedom to marry.

Striving for the freedom to marry is a fight or a contest. The stated goal of the national coalition is "winning and keeping the freedom to marry" (www.ftm.org). A quick glance at the titles of links from the "Marriage Project" page indicates the militaristic framing of this effort: "Marriage Battle Gets Hot… Still Fighting… Freedom-to-Marry Battle" (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/record?record=9). A link to a U.S. map gives the impression of a war plan: "State-by-State Anti-Marriage Measures" (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/states/antimarriage-map). The map is color-coded by which states have anti-gay-marriage laws adopted or pending, as well as the few that have pro-gay-marriage laws pending. There is a territorial sense to the map – a sense of win/loss, of ground lost and to be gained. In one article from the resources links, this impression is made explicit: "the struggle for the map of the country continues" (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/record?record=41). In this same article, violent rhetoric is used to characterize the "relentless attacks" of anti-gay marriage activists, saying the "opponents scored a hit against us" (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-
bin/pages/documents/record?record=41). In a few instances, brutal imagery is combined with a metaphor of pro-gay marriage proposals as an infant in discussing a "backlash bill aimed at strangling our baby in its cradle" (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/record?record=41).

With the violent rhetoric characterizing the opposition, it is not surprising that the FTM sees a need to protect gay and lesbian families. Particularly in light of the backlash bills, the FTM sees a need to “protect our families and win the freedom to marry” (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/record?record=40). Marriage rights are sometimes framed as protection. That is, the freedom to marry means “marital protection for lesbian and gay couples” (www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/record?record=9). Although there is an element of protection in the FTM’s call to arms, the activism is framed more as a revolutionary offensive. That is, it is necessary to overthrow oppressive forces and fight to win the freedom to marry. The state-by-state activities in legislatures and judiciaries represent a series of battles in a larger war. In the next section, I will consider ‘both sides’ of this war as they relate to the ‘slices’ of Hélène Cixous. I will weave together the findings discussed so far, and consider whether this is in fact a war that can be won by ‘either’ side.
Connecting the Strands: Links and Language in On-line Gay Marriage Debates

I wondered as I 'surfed' these sites if it might be possible to get from one to the other directly – that is, without typing in a new address, using only links. Internet sites for organizations often include pages of related links. Both the FRC and the FRM did so. The qualification on the "Hot Links" page from FRC.org gave me hope: "linkages do not necessarily signify total or even partial agreement with the ideas or methodology of these organizations" (www.frc.org/hotlist). The FRC provides a links page as a service and convenience, but makes sure that the listing is not seen as an endorsement of material on the pages to which it provides links. The list of links for both pages is lengthy. I checked out many of them.

Like the rhizome of chapter two, theory, the web is a rhizome. One characteristic of the rhizome is that every point can link to every other, and does. I was excited when I found the passageway between the FRC and FTM web sites. Samesexpathfinder.org is linked both from and to both sites.

'Same-sex' is one of the terms where there is unexpected agreement between the FRC and the FTM. Through such language, there is indeed a path to be found between the two sites. In this section, I will explore the links and language between the FRC and FTM as related to Cixous's 'slices.' Despite their stated opposition to one another, and the many differences in their sites, I find that they are inextricably linked, in a common language and paradigm.
Hélène Cixous cautions against participating in a masculine order in which the attempt is made from binary pairs for one side to oppose, then dominate, then annihilate the other. The FRC has positioned itself as the all-American (heterosexual, mainstream) reasonable ‘side’ of the gay marriage debates. The FRC uses patriotic symbolism and scientific-moral language to establish its authority. Meanwhile, the FTM claims its own position as all-American, likening the struggle for freedom to marry with other civil rights struggles and the American Revolution itself. The FTM uses a political-moral language to establish its authority. It attempts to turn over the existing hierarchy which privileges heterosexuality by language that others both heterosexuals (‘non-gays’) and those who oppose gay marriage (as ‘anti-marriage’). Can ‘either side’ win this struggle? I will consider this question again in looking at the war of sexual difference. Meanwhile, however, it is clear that both the FRC and the FTM are participating in a debate based on a framework of right/wrong, truth/lie – binary hierarchical thinking.

Both the FRC and the FTM refer to same-sex couples. Same-sex implies that the sexes are the same. That is, those in each separate category are the same. Woman is woman are women. Man is man are men. The idea of same-sex couples does not challenge, and in fact reinforces the binary categories of male and female. Moreover, both on the FRC and FTM web pages, there is a slide of meaning between sex and gender. The concept of a socially constructed gender that is imposed over a bodily sex is missed completely in both. This implies a gender essentialism – usually understood as masculine and feminine –
that are naturally related to male and female. This gender essentialism is explicitly supported by the FRC, since complementary natures of men and women support the naturalness of heterosexual marriage. By failing to acknowledge to complexity of gender, the FTM (perhaps unwittingly) participates in this same gender essentialism which undermines their cause.

The idea that men and women have complementary natures is a message of the story of Genesis. Initially, the dearth of Genesis imagery in the Internet debates on gay marriage struck me as disappointing. However, I would argue that its absence actually speaks of its power. That is, the story of Genesis – of Adam and Eve – is so thoroughly embedded in our language and psyches that explicit imagery is unnecessary. The FRC frequent use of the simple phrase ‘thousands of years’ is enough to bring to mind the binary system of male/female (Adam/Eve), the hierarchy or ordering of Adam first, and the heterosexual union of the original couple. It is against this unspoken invisible enemy that the FTM positions itself for its long struggle.

The Genesis story is embedded in language. ‘Woman’ comes from the meaning ‘with man.’ Eve was created to be with Adam. The power of language in these contemporary debates on gay marriage is perhaps most evident in the use of quotation marks on the FRC web pages. Although the FRC clearly holds the dominant position at this time around marriage, it is in a defensive posture when it comes to language and what the FRC terms ‘homosexual culture.’ The gay community has been creating itself through language with terms that affirm
identity and claim power. The FTM is participating in this effort to build new reality through words.

Some words are particularly slippery in the gay marriage debates, and this is evidence both with the FRC and FTM. The word ‘sex’ refers to both a behavior (the activity of sex) and a bodily category of person (sex as male or female). The FRC uses this slide of meaning strategically when it insists that a ‘benign’ characteristic like skin color is not comparable to behavior that is a choice. This assumes that marriage restrictions are based on behavior. They are not. Marriage restrictions are based on the bodily category of sex of the two persons. Although the FTM web pages identify marriage restrictions as sex discrimination in a few instances, they generally frame marriage restrictions as discrimination based on sexual orientation. Thus the FTM participates in blurred meanings between sex (the behavior), sex (the category) and sexual orientation.

Blurring of meaning is perhaps the ‘natural’ order of things. When a friend first saw the FRC image of the American and rainbow flags flying together over the state capitol, she was fascinated. She was not sure at first ‘which side’ of the debate I was showing her. The flag image could just as easily been a picture on the FTM pages symbolizing a connection rather than a split. There is a closeness in combat. The FTM and FRC have positioned themselves in opposition to one another. The existing hierarchy of the FRC with the status quo on its side is evident in the tone of the debate on each side. While the FRC is clearly very serious about its mission, when it speaks of the ‘opponent’ there is an element of sport. This is evident in the invitation to its newsletter suggesting
that readers can "tune in" to what is happening with the "homosexual agenda" (www.frc.org/issues/homosexualmain.html). The FTM, on the other hand, as the underdog is very much in earnest. Even more so than FRC web pages, the FTM pages are full of militaristic images. Both sides have a clear intention of overtaking and annihilating the other.

I would argue that the fierceness of this battle is not so much about marriage as it is about the system of (hetero)sex/gender power that marriage supports. Leman quotes William Bennett as saying that recognizing gay marriage "would be the most radical step ever taken in the deconstruction of society's most important institution" (Bennett in www.frc.org/podium/pd98e1hs.html). This is, I believe, a critical insight. Where Bennett referred to marriage, however, as society's 'most important institution', I would suggest that what is in danger of deconstruction is Patriarchy – of binary/hierarchical and oppositional thinking the foundation of which are male over female and masculine over feminine.

Actually, however, I am not so sure it is in danger – at least not through the gay marriage debates. In several important ways, the FTM aligns itself with the existing order. This is not what we might expect. Certainly, the FRC explicitly embraces conservative ideas of masculinity and femininity and a traditional patriarchal society. The FRC clearly is entrenched in a modern worldview of science and universal truth. There is a tension in the FTM organization, however. This tension may be viewed as a modern/postmodern tension. An example is the overall presentation of the two web sites. The FRC is

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a 'Council' which focuses its efforts on Washington, D.C. as the U.S. capital. The FRC is centralized, providing facts and truth to be disseminated. The FTM format, on the other hand, is more decentralized. First, the FTM is a 'Coalition' which brings together people from around the country. Every page includes links to regional pages. Many of the pages within the site include contributions from organizations and individuals around the country. There is a sense of the postmodern multiplicity of perspectives. This does not match, however, the rhetoric within the FTM site on the debate around gay marriage. Where we might expect the FTM to resist and challenge the masculine order of hierarchical, binary oppositions, in important ways the FTM does not do so. In fact, the FTM in some ways joins its 'opposition,' the FRC, in the maintenance of the masculine order.

Through affirming the of sex as a simple distinction between male and female and ignoring the social construction of gender, both the FRC and FTM maintain the most fundamental binary/hierarchy of Western thought. By opposing each other in a kind of warfare, by each attempting to overtake the other, both the FRC and FTM utilize the same modern conception of truth over lie and right over wrong. The complexities of perspectives and multiplicities of experiences are silenced. I would argue that the FTM has unwittingly become caught in the web of Hélène Cixous's masculine order:

Their power, their craftiness – I was stung. Taken in. Their spidery legs. Their web of metaphors, smothered innuendoes... He was expecting me to join him in a quarrel whose origin I didn't know... I was struggling in the web... I felt I was turning into his fly. His food... But he himself was buzzing, writhing in the web (Cixous 1997:76).
Hélène Cixous 'argues' with the masculine order Angst. She suggests that the web of metaphors, of language, traps not just her, but 'him.' In this chapter, I have attempted to unravel — through feminist deconstruction — the language and imagery of Internet sites in support of and against gay marriage. It is my finding, however, that both the FRC and FTM are caught up in the same web — Hélène Cixous's masculine order which is characterized by binaries, hierarchies and oppositional thinking culminating in war — a web which is built through/in/with language. It is to language that I turn in the next two chapters. Through the feminine writing of Hélène Cixous, I hope to break free from the trap of the web.
CHAPTER 5

TELL ME ABOUT THE DREAM: A DRAMA IN FOUR SCENES

Act One, Scene 1: The Couch

The scene is a doctor's office. Dr. L is reclining on a traditional psychoanalysis couch. Dr. H is sitting behind a desk.

Dr. H: What brings you here today, Dr. L?

Dr. L: Well, my husband insisted I come... I think it is these hateful homosexual activists. I have tried to rise above them. They tried to cancel my TV show. That was one thing, but now they are ruining my sleep!

Dr. H: Tell me more.

Dr. L: I have this recurring nightmare about the Garden of Eden. It's awful, and I wake up completely out of breath.

Dr. H: Tell me about the dream.

Dr. L: {Sigh}. Well, I am standing there, with Adam and Eve. Eve just keeps looking at me with her eyes wide, but she can't talk. It's awful! And Adam won't shut up. He keeps saying over and over...

As Dr. L is speaking, misters begin sending mist down on the stage. The stage goes dark.
Act One, Scene 2: The Garden

With the misters continuing, the lights come back up to a beautiful garden scene. Dr. L is standing in front of Adam and Eve who are dressed in fig leaves.

Adam: {looking at Dr. Laura} Hi. I'm Adam, and I'm my kid's mom!

{looks out to the left} Hi. I'm Adam, and I'm my kid's mom!

{to the right} Hi. I'm Adam, and I'm my kid's mom!

{looks to the center} Hi. I'm Adam...

Dr. L: {interrupts Adam} Stop it! Why are you saying that? Stop it! That's not right.

Adam: Look! {smiling – he shows Dr. L a blanket in his arms – he opens the blanket and proudly shows her what appears to be a rib}

Dr. L: Yuk! What is thaa... oh my Lord, is that a rib? {disgusted}

Adam: {clearly distressed, covers the rib and clutches it} Are you saying my baby is a biological error?

Dr. L: What? {turns away from Adam to Eve} Eve! Don't just stand there. Speak up. Why are you looking at me like that? What is it you want to say?

{Eve tilts her head a bit and just looks at Dr. L.}

{Dr. L turns toward the audience and looks down at her clothes. Her black suit with a skirt has changed to a black suit with pants, and her collar is now a minister’s collar. She touches the collar and looks up toward the audience in confusion.}
{Heavenly music plays, and a scroll descends from above into Dr. L's hands. As it reaches her hands, a wedding march plays briefly. Dr. L opens the scroll and looks at it.}

Dr. L: What is this? It says “Battle Vows”?! {she looks up, a brief sound of trumpets in the background} What do you mean battle vows? Shouldn’t this say “wedding vows”?! {Adam and Eve reach behind them and put on military headgear with a white veil attached.}

Adam: We are ready when you are Reverend L.

Dr. L: Ready for what? What are you talking about?

Adam: The ceremony. I was a slut and got knocked up. Now there is a child involved and we don’t want to shack up. We want to do the right thing. We’re ready for the ceremony.

Dr. L: {with her hand to her head} Could somebody please just tell me what is going on here!

{enter Reverend P – an older man with a beard and white hair. He is carrying a large sign that says “GOD HATES HETS!”}

Rev. P: God hates hets!

Dr. L: Reverend P? What are you doing here? What do you mean God hates heterosexuals?! What are you talking about?

Rev. P: I’m here to protest this ceremony. God made the different races, and the different religions, and the different sexes. They were not supposed to mix. It isn’t natural! {He turns to leave.} God hates hets!
Dr. L: You are not making any sense. This is crazy. {turns to Adam}

Adam: Oh, don’t worry. He shows up at all the ceremonies. You should see his web site, Godhateshets.com. We’re ready for the ceremony whenever you are.

Dr. L: {looking at the scroll} But why does this say ‘battle vows’?

{enter Mr. K – in a business suit carrying a briefcase}

Mr. K: I’m here from the Council to bless this union.

Dr. L: Thank goodness! Finally someone talking some sense. You’re here to bless the marriage of Adam and Eve?

Mr. K: {with a quizzical look, opens his briefcase and consults his notes} Hmm, let’s see. No, I have here a union between a Mr. Adam and a Mr. Rib. Are they here?

Dr. L: {exasperated} That’s crazy! You’re crazy! There is no Mr. Rib. You need to leave!

Mr. K: {leaving the stage, shrugs} Ok, I’m sorry. I am just the messenger here. I don’t make this stuff up.

{enter Ms. G – in a business suit with slacks}

Dr. L.: Aren’t you Ms. G? You are the one trying to take my TV show off the air? Why did you follow me here? How did you get here? {emotional} How did I get here?

Ms G: Hello Reverend L. Yes, you are right, I am Ms. G. On the contrary, however, about your TV show, I want to be a part of it. In fact, Supreme Pictures is on its way to start taping right now.
{A spotlight illuminates movie set lights and a camera from the corner of the stage. Simultaneously the movie set lights switch on and shine brightly on Dr. L, Adam and Eve.}

Dr. L: What am I supposed to do now?

Ms. G: Why don’t you just go out and take on the day!

Dr. L: What?

Ms. G: Oh, I’m sorry. I mean… Go do the right thing!

Dr. L: Adam, talk to me.

Adam: {smiles} Hi. I’m my kid’s mom

Dr. L: Stop it! Never mind.

Dr. L: What are these battle vows? I don’t understand. {looks up, praying} Dear God, what have I done to deserve this craziness. I just want to speak truth and love regarding…

Voice: {the voice is large and echoing and feminine} What is your moral dilemma for me?

Dr. L: {startled, scared} Uh, God, is that You?

Voice: Is that your moral dilemma?

Dr. L: Oh, um, no! Well, I’m a little lost…

Voice: I assumed that’s why you called…

Dr. L: I don’t even know exactly what to ask. I know! God, why won’t Eve talk?

Voice: Did you read the script?

Dr. L: Which script?

Voice: {quickly, as soon as Dr. L says script} yours
Dr. L: My script? \{thinking\} script-yours... scriptyours \{sighing, looks at the scroll\}

If anyone here objects to this battle, speak now... \{looks at Eve. Eve tilts her head again and looks back at her\} or forever hold your peace... \{the stage goes dark except for a spotlight on the mute Eve and Dr. L’s last word “peace” echoes in the theater. Then the stage goes completely dark.\}
Act One, Scene 3: The Office

Back in the office. Dr. L is again lying on the couch. Dr. H is behind the desk.

Dr. L: And then I wake up with that voice in my head saying "or forever hold your peace" (she mocks the echoing sound of 'peace')... It's driving me crazy!

Dr. H: You're very upset. Isn't it your voice in your head?

Dr. L: Of course I'm upset. And yes it's my voice – at least I think it's my voice. I don't know. I'm upset. It's these militant homosexual activists. They are persecuting me, and now they're even invading my sleep.

Dr. H: So what do you think is the significance of the dream?

Dr. L: Aren't you supposed to be telling me that? Isn't that why I paid you to come here?

Dr. H: I didn't come here. I was already here. You came here.

Dr. L: You know what I mean. I don't know what the dream means. Everything is backwards, crazy, mixed-up. I just can't get Eve's eyes out of my head. It's like she wants to tell me something.

Dr. H: What do you think she wants to tell you?

Dr. L: I don't know! That's why it bugs me so much.

Dr. H: How do you feel about the dream?

Dr. L: Feel? Feel?! That is not the point. What was I thinking coming to a shrink! (she jumps up off the couch and begins to pace) What I feel is irrelevant. What I think is that this dream is really crazy and I want it to stop!
Dr. H: So you are angry.

Dr. L: Of course I'm angry. Wouldn't you be angry if you were dreaming this nonsense every night?!

Dr. H: One way to interpret dreams is to see yourself as every person in the dream.

Dr. L: Oh no! I don't see that at all.

Dr. H: Well, what about Eve. If you were her, what would you be saying?

Dr. L: I'd be saying get me the heck out of this loony bin! That's what I'd be saying.

Dr. H: I've noticed you don't like to talk about your feelings much.

Dr. L: Oh, here it comes. Don't start telling me I came from a dysfunctional family. Look, I want to talk about this in a logical, rational and intelligent manner. If that is too much for you, just let me know now.

Dr. H: You know, those characteristics are the ones we traditionally associate with masculinity. Perhaps the Silent Eve is your own silenced femininity.

Dr. L: What was I thinking coming to a shrink?! If you called in to my show I would have already had you for breakfast and been moving onto lunch.

Dr. H: You have a lot of hostility in your advice to your callers.

Dr. L: I have a lot of hostility?! I have a lot of hostility?! What do you call the mean people who scared everyone away from my birthday party, who badgered G&P into dropping their advertising on my TV show. And what about satirizing my own innocent mother on prime time TV?! I'm sorry, but

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last time I checked those activities sounded hostile. Certainly a lot more hostile than me speaking God's honest truth to callers!

Dr. H: Satirizing your mother in the sitcom was unkind. Why don't you talk to your mother anymore?

Dr. L: How do you know that? I didn’t tell you that. I am not here to talk about my mother. I just want to know how to make this dream stop!

Dr. H: Only you can make the dream stop.

Dr. L: But how? I am going crazy.

Dr. H: What about God?

Dr. L: What do you mean, what about God?

Dr. H: What was God telling you in the dream?

Dr. L: I’m not sure. It was confusing. \{quieter, sad\} I think God wanted Eve to speak. \{she sits back down\}

Dr. H: Do you think the dream is somehow about gay marriage?

Dr. L: Yes... and no.

Dr. H: Yes and no? Now that doesn’t sound like you.

Dr. L: Don’t you think I know that. That’s what confuses me so much about the dream. When I am in it, I feel so trapped. And when I tell you about the dream, it seems like, of course it is about gay marriage. But something is nagging at me. I’m sure there is more to it, and I am not getting it.

Dr. H: So maybe there is more to it. But, just for the heck of it... What if gay marriage were OK with God? What if God made Adam & Eve, and Kevin & Steve?
Dr. L stands up and begins to pace. She is restless and distressed. She runs her fingers through her hair and puts a hand on her forehead with her eyes closed, as if she has a terrible headache.

Dr. L: What?! What are you talking about. Did I or did I not pay you good money to help me? I did not come here to hear you spout garbage from the homosexual agenda.

Dr. H: But you didn’t come here. I came to you. You were already here.

Dr. L: {makes a face and turns toward Dr. H at the desk.} Whaa...?

She glances down at Dr. H’s desk and sees a picture frame. An intense spotlight hits the frame, simultaneously a large screen is lit up at the back of the stage, displaying the picture frame so that the audience may see it. The photo is Dr. H and Eve in what appears to be their wedding ceremony. Dr. L gasps as the set goes dark.

The couch is quickly converted to a double bed. Dr. L joins Mr. L under the covers during the instant of darkness.

Act One, Scene 4: The Bedroom

The bed is illuminated by spotlight with Dr. L and Mr. L sleeping. As soon as the spotlight comes on, Dr. L sits up straight and gasps.

Mr. L: {sleepy voice} What is it dear?

Dr. L: Go back to sleep. I just had the awful nightmare about the lesbian doctor again.

The End, (for now)
CHAPTER 6

A NOTE FROM NANCY: AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC FRAGMENTS

In Chapter 5, I imagine the inner world of Dr. Laura Schlessinger -- a private war of sexual difference if you will. It seems only fair that in this chapter I explore territory I can speak/write about more fairly. Like Cixous, I am sure that writing comes from inside. Although this chapter is explicitly my story, to some extent, isn't every chapter?

Chapter 5, by the way, came to me. For a very long time I struggled with how to incorporate war and hate, Dr. Laura and (preferably) creation story imagery all in a dramatic text. All the while I knew that I was not, at least no more so than all researchers, a writer of fiction. When there was no time left to find an idea, I woke at 4:14 a.m. with the idea of Dr. Laura and the dream. Honest. I find my life to be way too interesting to bother making things up. Did I dream it before I wrote it? I don't know. I do have the scribbled notes from the wee hours of the morning. Was the dramatic text about Dr. Laura or about me? Most definitely.

"Don't be afraid to make ethnography dangerous, political, personal. Take risks. Write from the heart as well as the head" (Bochner and Ellis 1996:242). My mother is always giving me personalized stationery. I have a lot of it. This
chapter in a sense is a 'note from Nancy' – a letter from me to you, the reader. It is far more 'auto' than 'ethnography.' That is, I interrogate my own biography as it relates to my project, rather than describing my experience with the research itself. In writing chapter 5, I realized the most important war of sexual difference may be the one that is fought is within. Like Cixous, I am fascinated with the connections between the individual psyche and the larger social world. This 'note from Nancy' will attempt to connect the two.

The First Question

In the words of Melissa Ethridge, “Yes I am.” I ‘came out’, as we of the homosexual culture say, at the age of thirty-one. My junior high French teacher once called me and my small group of socially-unskilled friends 'late-bloomers.' It angered me terribly at the time. I thought of her at age thirty-one. I guess she was right.

I was interested in issues about sexuality before I came out. Sometimes I miss being able to talk about sexuality from a position of privilege – from my previous straight identity. I cannot pretend that the site of gay marriage is not intensely connected to me personally. Raised as a woman in this culture, I was bound to feel deeply the dream of a wedding and lifelong love and companionship in marriage. Hélène Cixous says that all writing writes against loss. My writing for this project is to some extent writing against the loss of a dream.
Gender has fascinated me from my earliest memories. In the upstairs sitting room of the house where I grew up, there was a large white placard with blue lettering – 'It's a Boy!' My brother was born three years after me, the fourth and last child in my family. I have two older sisters. With adult eyes, I can look back and see the sign upstairs as simply left over from the last baby being born in the family. As a child, however, I credited the sign with greater significance.

The story I told myself was that I was supposed to be a boy. The first child was born and everyone was happy because she was first. The second was born and they wanted a boy, but they were still happy and thought surely the next one would be a boy. As the third child, I was truly expected to be a boy, and therefore I did not come out quite right. As evidence to my theory, our neighbors – the same ones who made the placard and whose kids we played with all the time – had six children, five girls followed by the youngest who was a boy. It seemed they were particularly determined. The neighbors across the street had three girls only (and apparently gave up). The neighbors to another side, however, had two boys and one girl, and always struck me as a little smug as a result.

When I was eight, I began to attend summer camp. Many campers chose 'camp names.' Some camp names were 'Rabbit', 'Frog' and 'Mouse.' I chose a name I had heard about from my older sister that had belonged to one of her favorite counselors back in her summer camp days. I was 'Pete.' I used to take on a different personality at camp – tough and confident. Especially, as I got
older and into pre-adolescence and adolescence, I was fairly backward socially in school. At camp, though, I was popular and 'cool.' Looking back, it is fascinating to me that at Girl Scout Camp – a camp of all girls – my 'Pete' personae was popular and respected. Valorization for masculinity, apparently, was alive and well at girl's summer camp.

There is a missing story here somewhere between summer camp of the 1970s and my return to graduate school in 1996. Somewhere along the way, I read or realized that patriarchy and/or misogyny was not so much about males perpetuating oppression on females. Rather, the most important misogyny may be the internalized kind. I recognized in myself the value I placed on masculinity and my disparagement for femininity. From this missing story, I fast forward to a graduate seminar.

It was a seminar in Feminist Theory (a great class.) We had about six or eight women and a couple of men. The women were smart and educated. We were involved in a seminar in which we were thinking about gender in complex ways. One day, in casual conversation prior to class, we were discussing what we were like as children. Each woman described herself as some level of 'tomboy.' There was talk of liking overalls more than dresses, toy trucks rather than dolls. It is one of those moments caught clearly in memory for me. It seemed each woman had to establish herself in masculinity – and simultaneously distance herself from femininity. I thought to myself how incredibly powerful this stuff is – if these women, in this context, can have this conversation.
This is one of the reasons Hélène Cixous appeals to me. Although I am definitely concerned with structures and institutions of power, I am fascinated by the reflections/creation of our social order in the individual psyche – my own included. The idea that a dominant masculinity and debased femininity are alive and well inside myself – the idea that I/we are trapped in the daily violence that is misogyny – this is what attracted me to the work of Hélène Cixous.

**Why Cixous?**

I could not say for sure if it is her ideas on gender or her writing that made Cixous so compelling to me. Cixous writes with a joy and playfulness that is extraordinary. Cixous's sustained bisexuality is not so much about what we Americans call sexuality to refer to homo/heterosexuality. Rather, she looks for the fullness of being human that is limited by our rigid system of gender as established in language. This also fascinated me.

It seems appropriately confessional, however, to admit my struggles with Cixous. She is often not easy to read. Her feminine writing is intended to disrupt and be uncomfortable. As I worked through many of her texts, I was aware of my own connections to particular types of narratives and language – my own comfort if you will in the masculine order. I found the idea of attempting to enact feminine writing particularly daunting (and frankly, even as I write this, I still do.) Yet the hope for the possibility of writing a way out of language was ever so slightly more enticing than terrifying, and so I took the risk.
Why Genesis? Why language?

My ex and I used to love to talk about God, or Allah in my ex's case. An Egyptian Muslim, he was passionate about his religion. We agreed on many spiritual principles. The most notable disagreement we had, however, was on the Koran. He, of course, believes it is the word of Allah. I argued that it would be simply impossible to ever truly express God directly in words. Language is just too limiting. Scripture, I would say, may be inspired by God, but it always comes through man/language.

Genesis in particular fascinates me. From a very young age, I reconciled the seven days of Genesis with the evolution of my schooling. I simply thought the word 'day' was all that was at issue. Different type of 'day.' No big deal. The Adam and Eve part was a little less reconcilable.

As I began to be exposed to the theories of poststructuralists and Cixous in particular, I reconsidered the Genesis story. Reading an anthropological text of creation myths from around the world, an idea began to develop. Some feminists have interpreted the Genesis story as describing something different than its overt meaning, such as a triumph of patriarchy over matriarchy. I began to wonder if Genesis in particular, and creation myth in general, actually tell of the creation of language.

What if the myth tells the story, not of the creation of humanity, but rather of the advent of language? Language separates us. Whether it is the infant learning that she is different from her mother, or society identifying different
'types' of people, language attempts to capture the uncatchable, as Cixous might say. Perhaps creation myth tells us the story of our birth into language.

**What about Dr. Laura?**

I sometimes picture Dr. Laura reading things I have written for this paper and rolling her eyes -- that is, if she wasn't reading it aloud and taking it apart on her radio show. In a way that happens, however, when you spend a great deal of time with someone, I feel rather fond of her. Two close friends of mine were big Dr. Laura fans. I had never heard her, only seen the title of one of her early books “10 Stupid Things Women Do to Mess up Their Lives.” The title did not attract me to either the book or the author. I was fairly skeptical. However, with two friends saying they really enjoyed her, I decided to begin listening to her radio show.

I am acutely sensitive to angry people, and Dr. Laura struck me as very angry. Moreover, as I discussed in the section about gender, I notice the valorization of masculinity over femininity. Her program to me seemed to center around the masculine values of rationality and logic, black and white thinking in an appropriately authoritarian format.

I listened for about a month in what I think of as horrified fascination. I should say that I did at times hear what I thought was true concern and even compassion for callers. I did, as well, sometimes agree with her advice. However, I began to actually have an upset stomach while listening to her. This was amazing to me as I only experience this in the most rare stressful situations.
When I realized that I had stomach pain connected to her show, I stopped listening.

This was almost two years ago. Her attitudes toward homosexuality were much more tolerant. At the time, she felt lesbians, like all unwed mothers, should not give birth as that would be selfish. However, she did support gay parents adopting children who did not have homes.

For my research, I used mostly printed material downloaded from the Internet. The transcripts of Dr. Laura's statements about homosexuality were frustrating to read. However, the attacks against her on some fringe web sites were deeply disturbing. There were pictures of her defaced to look like Satan, 'comic strips' that went further than satire in demeaning her, and written attacks calling her a "dingbat" and wanting her to be plagued with "painful skin eruptions, hemorrhoids, hair loss and perhaps disease in a vital organ" (www.sonomacountyfreepress.org/liver/dr-laura.html). I was appalled by the personal attacks on her and found a level of compassion for her own struggle as a result.

I found it interesting the level of organization against Dr. Laura interesting as well. The GLAAD web page lists nineteen public figures as key members the ultra-conservative right-wing. Dr. Laura is the only woman. She has clearly received, however, in the past year an enormous amount of attention. While Dr. Laura feels persecuted for her religious moral stand, I wonder if some of the vehemence of the attacks against her might not relate to her being a woman.
What is especially missing for me in Dr. Laura's public moral/religious stance is humility. However, I have no access to her inner self (despite my imagining it in chapter five.) I cannot know her inner struggles. I think about her anger, however, and imagine different possibilities. In her early career, Dr. Laura considered herself a feminist and was open-minded to homosexuality. No doubt important experiences shaped her changed views, and perhaps future life experiences will reshape them. I can imagine a Dr. Laura whose anger is directed to resisting the masculine order rather than maintaining it.

**Why Autoethnography?**

Well, that is a question I asked myself many times as I wrote this chapter. It is truly frightening to write yourself. I write and then I am there, exposed and vulnerable. A trip to Kinko's and there is no turning back.

Having read many articles about the postmodern turn in ethnography, I am acutely aware of the potential accusation of narcissism. This will be my shortest chapter. At the same time, I do believe that stories evoke experience and lived reality in ways that more traditional texts do not.

I can describe Dr. Laura's radio show as disturbing or I can tell you it gave me a stomachache. I can say that I came to see ways in which masculinity is valued over femininity, or I can tell you how young and macho 'Pete' was among the most popular campers at Girl Scout camp. I can describe writing autoethnography as frightening, or I can confess to crying to a friend on the phone from the computer, even though I was in the public space of the library's
graduate student lounge. I can say that all research is unfinished as it points toward future inquiry, or I can admit that my ‘mantra’ in the final days of writing was given to me by a highly successful recent PhD: “A good thesis is a done thesis.” This research – both in substance and in process – has been an intense personal experience. But isn’t all research? Isn’t the only difference between this and most traditional research is that I am admitting it?
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

How does language maintain the structures of patriarchy, of (hetero)sex/gender power? How do gendered language and imagery from Genesis play a part in the contemporary debates on the legalization of gay marriage? The gay marriage debates are framed as a question of sexuality. Is there, however, within the gay marriage debates a deeper struggle over the masculine order – the organization of thought and social reality into hierarchies starting with male over female, masculine over feminine? How does the story of Genesis influence our contemporary ideas on sex, gender and sexuality? Are the gay marriage debates structured in such a way as to evidence oppositional thinking – a view of difference that requires dominance over and annihilation of the opposition defined as ‘other.’ Finally, if this is so – if the gay marriage debates are organized around oppositional thinking – then does the participation of both sides actually strengthen the masculine order?

These are some of the questions with which I approached this research. The work of Hélène Cixous informed these questions. Cixous proposes that gender is man-made through language, and that patriarchy is supported significantly through language. My purpose in this project was to investigate

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these ideas, using the debate around legalization of gay marriage as a site to explore these questions of gender and language. Themes, which I call 'slices', from Cixous's work organize my inquiry. The first is the idea of binaries and hierarchies – a system of thought which creates two mutually exclusive categories in which one must dominate – the most fundamental of which are male/female and masculine/feminine. The second is a combination of creation stories and language. Cixous is interested in the pre-lingual human psyche as a site for imagining a sustained bisexuality, a wholeness/humanness that precedes the man-making of gender through language. Simultaneously I consider the parallel question of human history before language, and how creation myth relates to language. Finally, I consider what Cixous calls the war of sexual difference. She suggests that sexual difference is manifested in the masculine order as war. This war is both between/within people, and is an extension to violence (whether symbolic or literal) of the oppositional thinking characterizing the masculine order.

Using these slices from Cixous, I performed a feminist deconstruction of Internet sites in support of and against the legalization gay marriage. The deconstruction consisted of close iterative readings of these two key web sites. I then attempted to enact Cixous's feminine writing in a drama on the gay marriage 'war', as well as autoethnographic fragments related to my research experience. In this chapter, I will reconsider the Cixousian slices and findings from my feminist deconstruction. I will discuss the relevance of Cixous to Sociology, particularly to feminist new ethnography. I will also propose a
reconceptualization of the pro-marriage side of the gay marriage debates.

Finally, I will consider implications of my research for work in the future.

Cixous’s Binaries and Hierarchies

Cixous suggests that Western thought is organized into a system of mutually exclusive binaries which oppose one another: day/night, truth/lie, right/wrong. She points out the gendered nature of these binaries. The most fundamental binary is male/masculine as the known and dominant over the female/feminine as the unknown and unknowable ‘other.’ Thus mind is not only valued over the body (mind/body), the mind is associated with masculinity and males, while the body is associated with femininity and females.

This system of thought is evident both in language and social reality as the masculine order – a dominance of that which is labeled masculine. My first question, then, has to do with how language specifically structures the masculine order. That is, how are these binaries and hierarchies evident in the language of the gay marriage debates? Moreover, if the system of binaries is premised on a heterosexual coupling of male/female and masculine/feminine, then might the debates over gay marriage have deeper roots in a struggle over the masculine order?

Binaries and hierarchies are clearly evident in the terms of the debate itself. Both the Family Research Council (FRC) and National Freedom-to-Marry Coalition (FTM) position themselves as the American point of view against an un-American opposition. In a variety of patriotic imagery throughout its web pages,
the FRC claims its side as All-American (straight and normal) against an un-American (homosexual and abnormal) other. The FTM, however, makes the same claim with a different basis. The FTM aligns itself with the modern, liberal democratic ideals of freedom, equality and civil rights. From this platform, the FTM calls those who oppose the freedom to marry ‘un-American and wrong.’

These assertions involve each side claiming its perspective as truth over lie. On the FRC web pages, there is an interesting binary in the name of its newsletter which tracks the ‘homosexual agenda.’ The title of the newsletter is “CultureFacts.” The title sets up a binary which also demonstrates the importance of context for interpretation. Generally, culture is considered the masculine dominant when paired with nature as the other. In this case, however, both the use of Italics and the context of meaning demonstrate that a masculine facts dominates an unruly feminine culture. The FRC’s title for the organization aligns itself with the masculine scientific enterprise – with facts. The FRC explicitly opposes what it calls ‘homosexual culture.’ In the newsletter title, then, the masculine ‘cold, hard’ (in evidence by the normal font) facts follow and subdue the feminine – unsubstantiated, amorphous – (in evidence in the soft italics) culture.

The same masculine/feminine binary is in evidence more explicitly in the gay marriage debates in the language of ‘same-sex.’ Both the FRC and the FTM use the language of same-sex to describe gay marriage. What is maintained, then, is the fundamental organizing binary of sex – male and female. Moreover, the FRC supports an essential view of gender, connecting a particular
masculinity with maleness and femininity with femaleness. This essential view of
gender supports a necessity of heterosexual marriage in order for men and
women’s ‘complementary natures’ to complete one another. The FTM does not
challenge directly notions of essential gender identity. Although perhaps
unwittingly, the FTM participates in a slide of meaning between sex and gender.
One example is the organization’s home page, where ‘same-sex’ and ‘same-
gender’ marriage are used interchangeably, and where two traditional brides and
two traditional grooms appear as illustrations. Although the illustration was likely
designed simply to be eye-catching, it reinforces and idea of essential gender
identity. Thus the fundamental binaries of male/female and masculine/feminine
remain unchallenged, and are in fact reinforced.

The question of whether these debates connect to a deeper struggle over
maintaining the masculine order can be explored on both sides. The FRC
unsurprisingly is found to be highly invested in maintaining the binary system of
gender in particular. The subject of ‘transgender’ on the FRC web site brings this
to light. Interestingly, the FRC structures its opposition to homosexuality as
‘immoral, unhealthy behavior.’ However, in discussions about homosexuality, the
FTC points to ‘transgender’ as the most radical extreme of homosexual culture.
The importance of maintaining clear binary categories for sex and gender is
clear. This concern is also evident on the FRC web pages in a warning against
legalization of gay marriage. It is pointed out that the recognition of gay marriage
would mean the end of all sex-based distinction in the law. Once again, the
underpinning of the opposition to gay marriage as a defense of fundamental binaries of sex and gender is in evidence.

While the FRC's defense of fundamental sex and gender binaries matches its overall conservative agenda, one might expect the FTM arguments to challenge these structures. One surprising finding is that the FTM does not challenge these binaries and in fact reinforces them. The binary of greatest interest to the FTM is that of straight over gay. The FTM attempts to make the two equals rather than challenge the dichotomous category. The FTM site contains only very minor references to transgender and bisexuality. Each of these identities contains the potential to disrupt binaries of gender and sexuality. However, neither receives any significant attention on the FTM web pages. Through the language of 'same-sex' and the slide of meaning between sex and gender, the FTM actually reinforces the same masculine order which it means to oppose.

These findings are of significance to Sociologists in general and feminists in particular. The gendered language of binaries and hierarchies can act as a trap for those attempting to challenge existing patriarchal order. Rather than challenging binaries by attempting to overturn them, it will be more helpful to seek ways to disrupt them — to multiply possibilities. More specifically, the gay marriage debates are an important site for continued study for feminists and all Sociologists interested in gender.
Language and Creation Stories

Cixous suggests that language is so important to our lived reality that we in effect "inhabit language" (Cixous 1997;xix). She is interested in the idea of a sustaining bisexuality, a wholeness that exists prior to the man-making of gender through language. Her focus on the origins of the human psyche parallels her interest in the origins of humanity. The creation story most influential to Western thought is the Judeo-Christian story of Genesis. In this study, I explore how creation story imagery and gendered language structure the debates on gay marriage.

The FRC connects to the story of Genesis implicitly by connecting its work directly to what it calls traditional Judeo-Christian values and morals. While there are some explicit references to the Genesis story on the FRC web pages, the most common means of referencing Genesis is through small phrases such as 'for thousands of years.' Without referring to Genesis specifically, the FRC connects the institution of heterosexual marriage to its origins in the union of Adam and Eve.

The FTM never refers to Genesis directly. When the FTM discusses 'traditional' marriage, it connects the idea of traditional marriage to oppressive practices of the past, such as interracial marriage. At first the lack of Genesis imagery within the debates seemed surprising. However, I argue that the lack of Genesis imagery speaks to the power of the story. That is, that basic messages of Genesis related to sex, gender, and sexuality – binary sex and gender,
hierarchical ordering, and heterosexual union – are so embedded in language and the collective psyche that explicit reference is unnecessary. It is these fundamental beliefs that the FRC invokes with oblique references to ‘thousands of years’ of tradition. It is this invisible yet omnipresent ‘enemy’ against which the FTM has organized itself.

Imagery from a different myth is perhaps more explicitly evident on the FRC web pages than the Genesis story. The myth of Pandora’s Box contains some similarities to Genesis. Eve eats the apple and Pandora opens the box. The first results in the expulsion from the garden. Pandora lets loose untold troubles onto the world from the box. The imagery within the FRC web pages makes legalization of gay marriage the opening of Pandora’s Box. That is, there is a sense of unimaginable, uncontrollable chaos if this path is taken. Chaos must be contained; gay marriage must be prevented.

This defensive posture of the FRC is perhaps best illustrated in one use of language. The FRC uses quotation marks extensively to contain the language of homosexual culture. Throughout its web pages, every instance of the word ‘gay’ (with one exception) is enclosed in quotation marks. The FRC attempts to refuse the gay community the right to name itself. ‘Same-sex marriage’ is a phrase that alternately has one or both terms in quotation marks. The FRC takes a stand through the use of quotation marks that there is no legitimate ‘same-sex marriage.’ What is most interesting about this is that it actually illustrates the power of language. The FRC, in general, holds a position of dominance in the debate in that it sides (at least as far as legalization of gay marriage) with the

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status quo. The defensive posture of using quotation marks speaks to the inroads the gay community has made to our thought and social reality by claiming new language.

Some of the claimed language serves the goals of the FTM coalition and some does not. The word 'sex', in particular, is problematic. Sex is both a category and a behavior. The FRC uses this dual meaning to its advantage when countering claims to a parallel between the struggle for gay marriage rights and the overturning of interracial marriage restrictions. The FRC says repeatedly in its pages that there is not a parallel between a 'benign' characteristic like skin color and a choice of (unhealthy, immoral) behavior. The FTM, in a separate confusion between sex and sexual orientation, in effect provides support the FRC's argument. Specifically, the FTM tends to define the legal issue as discrimination against individuals/couples based on sexual orientation. Actually, the discrimination is based on sex (the category). That is, a man is not allowed to marry a man, although a woman is allowed that right. The man is discriminated against based on his sex. This point seems like a technicality however, I would suggest that it is critical in reframing this aspect of the gay marriage debates. I will discuss this separately in a section specifically about the gay marriage debates.

The language of 'sex' holds wider significance for Sociologists interested in all topics connected with sex, gender and sexuality. The use of the dual meaning for sex by the FRC and the slide between sex and sexuality with the FTM
illustrate the inherent difficulty with the word ‘sex’ in particular. New language may be helpful to Sociologists interested in these issues.

**War of Sexual Difference**

Cixous suggests that the complexities of sexual difference are forced into binary categories that do not work, yet we continue to use them. This creates a dynamic of conflict around sexual difference both between and within people. The opposition, which is part of the masculine order, extends to the point where it becomes a ‘war.’ Ironically, however, participation in the ‘war’ of oppositions serves to strengthen the masculine order. Cixous cautions, then, against struggles for equality which attempt to challenge the masculine order through opposition. This type of thinking or activism actually reinforces the dominance of the masculine order, by engaging in its basic dynamics. For this inquiry, I examined how oppositional thinking as ‘warfare’ is evident in the Internet debates on gay marriage. Specifically, I looked for militaristic imagery and violent rhetoric. I further questioned whether both sides of the debate participated in oppositional thinking and war. I considered Cixous’s suggestion that engaging in the war of sexual difference through direct opposition actually serves to strengthen the masculine order.

The FRC describes a need for war in various ways on its web pages. It describes the work of homosexual activists as attempting tyranny or creation of a totalitarian society. This makes clear the need to fight for ‘family, faith, and freedom.’ The FRC makes a point of establishing itself in a defensive position by
saying ‘the other guy’ started the fight. While there is some military language and imagery on the FRC web pages, it is limited and often used to characterize the other side. For example, the FRC characterizes efforts by homosexual activists in schools as ‘stealth campaigns.’ Where the FRC military imagery is limited, the FTM pages have an abundance of language and images of war. The freedom-to-marry movement is framed as a ‘battle.’ There is both the idea of ‘protection’ in protecting gay families, and revolution to overthrow forces that maintain unfair marriage restrictions. The rhetoric is often violent, as in the case of accusing the other side of ‘strangling the baby’ of pro-gay marriage laws ‘in its cradle.’

This participation in the rhetoric of war engages the FTM directly in the oppositional thinking of the masculine order. The FTM’s ‘map of the country’ demonstrates its desire to win out against the opposition. This need to dominate, to win, extends the project of the masculine order – the domination and annihilation of the other. The FTM, then, remains caught in the web of warlike oppositional thinking that comprises the masculine order.

The structure of debate here is significant to Sociologists and particularly those embracing a critical paradigm. Cixous’s ideas about the war of sexual difference perpetuating the masculine order as illustrated in the gay marriage debates illustrate a tension with modernism. The trap of the masculine order as inescapable through direct opposition points toward postmodern thinking as a more hopeful enterprise for critical theorists. That is, critical theorists may look to
a politics of disruption rather than a dialectic of opposition to seek changes from the status quo.

**Gay Marriage: Sexandgender, Bodies and Behavior**

Sexandgender. The gay marriage debates illustrate the inseparability of the two concepts. Both the FRC and FTM conflate the terms. This demonstrates a wider mainstream use of the terms as interchangeable. Morning radio shows have replaced "The Battle of the Sexes" with "Gender Jeopardy." The new show, of course, does not ask callers if they identify as more masculine or feminine. Rather, the shows have a male and female contestant. Gender, in mainstream usage, continues to mean man or woman. Perhaps it is the hope of transgender to actually disrupt the sexandgender impasse by creating multiple genders rather than reproducing binaries.

Meanwhile, the word ‘sex’ in particular has central importance in the gay marriage debates in several ways. First, the FRC uses the dual definition of sex as category and behavior in refuting the parallel of gay marriage with interracial marriage. The FRC argues that skin color is not a valid comparison to behavior. The law does not actually discriminate on the basis of behavior, however. Rather, the law discriminates on the basis of sex.

Central to the FTM's arguments for gay marriage is making a parallel between the struggle for gay marriage rights with that lifting of lifting the restrictions against interracial marriage. For the most part, the FTM argues that
laws are discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation. In this way, the FTM lends support to the FRC contention that the discrimination is based on behavior.

I propose the FTM movement reframe both the social and legal issues as a question of sex discrimination. However, as I have discussed previously, the word 'sex' may be too slippery to be effective. What could replace it? Perhaps 'body'. Although it sounds far-fetched, 'body-discrimination' is in effect what is meant by both race and sex discrimination. Both are socially-constructed characteristics inscribed on the body. Even as I propose the idea, I am wary of it. Creating a concept of bodily discrimination could very well essentialize social meanings attached to bodies, exactly what I wish to avoid.

Looking to the future, however, I do believe that those in support of gay marriage should reexamine key concepts and language. First, the potential for transgender identity to disrupt the binary sexandgender system should not be ignored. Next, I propose that gay marriage supporters reconsider the importance of framing sex discrimination as the basis of marriage restrictions. Finally, I suggest that gay-marriage advocates – as well as Sociologists interested in sex, gender and sexuality – reexamine the difficulties created by/through the word ‘sex’ and look toward the possibilities of a different language for these concepts. It is to language and learning that I turn in the next and final section.

Language and Learning: Writing the Future

Although she is not a Sociologist, Hélène Cixous offers Sociology key insights to the social world. Her attention to language as central to structuring

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the patriarchal systems of (hetero)sex/gender power is critical. As I have demonstrated through the deconstruction of gay marriage debates on the Internet, modern struggles through opposition serve to reinforce the masculine order of binaries and hierarchies. Language plays a central role in the plays for power of the social world. My research suggests several areas for additional inquiry.

The extent to which creation story imagery structures contemporary ideas about sex, gender, and sexuality deserves greater attention. A cultural studies approach to include textual analysis of media along with qualitative interviews with readers/viewers could yield helpful new insights. The parallel constructed between the struggle for gay marriage rights with that of interracial marriage deserves greater attention. I suggest that the struggle for interracial rights be examined in light of my findings regarding the war of sexual difference. My findings would suggest that if the struggle for interracial marriage was framed in oppositional or warlike ways, that the struggle could not be completely successful. Additional research should consider the language and framework of that struggle, as well as outcomes beyond lifting of legal restrictions.

Further work is indicated as well in regard to the enactment of Cixous's feminine writing as a means of sociological exploration. In chapter five, I attempted feminine writing using drama. I developed the war of sexual difference as played out in the individual psyche and simultaneously in contemporary debates. In chapter six, I included autoethnographic fragments as a small window to myself as researcher.
Through the process of attempting feminine writing, I came to see the inner psyche as a fruitful site for examining Cixous's war of sexual difference. Writing a drama incorporating the debate around gay marriage is one way to treat our rigid categories of gender as Cixous would suggest — and 'shake them like apple trees.' Both by imagining the inner world of Dr. Laura, and by writing my own inner self, I bring to the surface the masculinities and feminities that are played out on the world as a stage, and through ourselves as individual actors. The path for this type of work has begun to be blazed by postmodern new ethnographers and autoethnographers. This work should continue to be developed and simultaneously evaluated for its sociological usefulness.

The feminine writing of Hélène Cixous, which has been largely overlooked within our discipline, holds great promise for the future of Sociology:

Hélène has a genius or making the language speak, down to the most familiar idiom, the place where it seems to be crawling with secrets which give way to thought. She knows how to make it say what it keeps in reserve, which in the process also makes it come out of its reserve (Derrida 1997:vii).

As my analysis of the gay marriage debates indicates, our current language of sex, gender and sexuality, as well as tactics for opposition and debate all serve to reinforce the existing systems of (hetero)sex/gender power. Patriarchy and the masculine order with binary/hierarchical and oppositional systems of thought and social reality remain as the status quo. Even those who attempt to oppose the dominant order are caught in the quandary of bolstering it. Cixous's work provides us new ways to understand these systems of power as founded in language – the 'secrets' language 'keeps in reserve.' More importantly, however,
Hélène Cixous's feminine writing offers the promise of a way out — the hope of writing ourselves out and away from the prison house of language.
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