Anthropological Research on Homosexuality in Latin America and the Lesbian Drought

Angela M. Meyer
University of Kentucky

Follow this and additional works at: https://uknowledge.uky.edu/kaleidoscope
Part of the Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://uknowledge.uky.edu/kaleidoscope/vol2/iss1/5

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Office of Undergraduate Research at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in Kaleidoscope by an authorized editor of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu.
Angela M. Meyer

I am an anthropology senior at the University of Kentucky with minors in Women Studies and Latin American Studies. I am member and treasurer of the Lambda Alpha National Anthropological Honor Society and was the Lambda Alpha Dean's List Scholar Candidate, having made the Dean's list from the Fall of 1999 to the Fall of 2002. I also received the Charles R. Jenkins Award for Distinguished Achievement. This paper was written for a graduate Seminar on Gender (ANT 770) taught by my mentor, Dr. Monica Udvardy, who since my entrance into the Department of Anthropology has been my teacher, academic advisor, and friend.

My future academic plans coincide directly with the subject of this submission: ethnographic research on lesbian identity and liberation movements in Latin America. Some of my personal future plans involve extensive travel, self-reflection, and the continued efforts to improve my fluency in Spanish. I enjoy smoking tobacco, sipping tea with honey, and daydreaming. Travel, dance, film, people, music, and cemeteries both stir and satisfy me. Of course, nothing beats a battle with a mountain or rainy day porch stooping.

Mentor:
Dr. Monica Udvardy,
Associate Professor,
Department of Anthropology

Sometimes students reveal insights that seasoned faculty overlook. With an interest in gender and a background in Latin America and Appalachia, Angela turned south to explore the history, scope, and depth of extant anthropological research on gender relations in Latin America. She uncovered a dearth of anthropological work on homosexuality until the 1970s. But, more revealing is her exposure of the continued lacuna in the discipline in research on lesbianism south of the US border. Her review of the anthropological literature on homosexuality in Latin America is exceptional for its scope: she has documented the historical development of these studies, as well as their significant contributors, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks. She also makes astute recommendations for directions for future research on this increasingly diverse topic.

Anthropological Research on Homosexuality in Latin America and the Lesbian Drought

Abstract

The goal of this paper is to document the significant contributors, contents, methodologies, developments, and theoretical frameworks relevant to the anthropological study of homosexuality in Latin America. Among other data, this research project yields regional accounts of gay/lesbian liberation movements, transvestitism, HIV/AIDS, and the intersections of gender and power in countries such as Mexico, Brazil, Cuba, and Argentina. Also included in this review are critical assessments of academic sources, ethical dilemmas faced by ethnographers, and spaces available for original research on homosexuality in Latin America. Though this documentation is not totally comprehensive, one can conclude the scarcity of lesbian studies in Latin America and thus the opportunity for fresh ethnographic and applied fieldwork.

Introduction

Until recently, research on human sexuality within the social sciences remained a relatively silenced and invisible phenomenon. The development of research on sexuality within anthropology only surfaced to a significant (still not flourishing) level in the last two to three decades. Moreover, anthropological and/or ethnographic references to sexuality, homosexuality specifically, clustered around the gay/lesbian movements in the United States and Europe. However, in the second half of the twentieth century an international awareness influenced foreign academic circles as well as popular culture. Influences of social movements in the 1970s such as the gay/lesbian and feminist movements funneled directly to Latin America. Due to the increasing visibility of Latin American gay/lesbian movements, research on homosexuality in Latin America is now on the rise. Research and inquiry into male homosexuality, however, still dominates
the literature. Fortunately, several current anthropologists (in the subject area) recognize the dearth of information on Latin American lesbians and promote respective investigations.

The majority of ethnographic material on homosexuality in Latin America covers multi-varied regional accounts. The abundance of this localized material emanates mainly from the countries of Brazil, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, Argentina, Cuba, and Mexico. However, there exist several thematic commonalities among the anthropological accounts in Latin America. In general, there is an extraordinary focus on the gay/lesbian liberation movements (however underground) in association with the frequent political transformations common in Latin America. Other common topics include accounts of identity-based movements, life histories of gay artists (gay-cultural icons), social theory critiques, transvestitism and prostitution (particularly in Brazil), the influence of democratization and the West (United States and Europe), and HIV prevention. Indeed, political and economic anthropology remain at the forefront of research on homosexuality in this area. Symbolic, applied, and feminist anthropology also contribute significant information.

The goal of this paper is to document the significant contributors, contents, methodologies, developments, and theoretical frameworks relevant to the anthropological study of homosexuality in Latin America. Other sister disciplines such as sociology, psychology, women’s studies (gender and feminist), and history also provide significant collaborators and contributors. In order to understand such an array of topics, one must first look at general methodology as well as the history and associations between sexuality and anthropology.

### Methodology and Sexuality Research

Anthropologists use the traditional fieldwork methods of participant observation, personal interviews, and questionnaire surveys in sex research. Other methods include literature reviews and, recently, the use of the Human Relation Area Files (HRAF) to supplement their investigations (Davis and Whitten, 1987, p. 70). Anthropologists also use culture change models to describe sexuality cross-culturally. Other approaches include social dynamics, social networks, homosexual behavior, and emic categories (“emic” categories reflect the insider’s or subject’s perspective rather than the anthropologist’s view, which is termed “etic”). There exists, however, no empirical methodology specifically designed for sex studies in anthropology.

### History and Development of Anthropology and Sexuality

Davis and Whitten (1987) characterize the connection between anthropology and the study of human sexuality as a love-hate relationship. Early accounts often focused on human biology and evolution, reproduction and health and hygiene, and gender roles and status. The ideas of cultural evolution, promiscuity, and group marriage characterized the early nineteenth century. Accounts that noted sexuality or the topic of sex in general even created a short lived genre of anthropology called “ethnopornography” (Davis and Whitten, 1987). However, in the twentieth century, new waves of thought such as cultural relativism, feminism, reproduction, and minority rights influenced the study of sexuality. In retrospect, one can observe that, “the specific nature of cross-cultural sex research has typically been a function of how the West views sexuality at a given time” (Davis and Whitten, 1987, p. 70).

Historically, homosexuality is seldom mentioned in ethnographic literature. Truly, “the most glaring omission in professional research on sexual practice is certainly the area of homosexuality” (Davis and Whitten, 1987, p. 71). Among Amazonian cultures, Claude Levi-Strauss and Hugh-Jones try to explain away even observed genital stimulation as “friendship’ and ejaculate as ‘sentimental demonstrations’ and ‘ritual’ (Murray, 1997, p. 3). One can attribute the absence of this cultural facet to fears of deviance, ethical dilemmas, or lack of general acceptance in the intellectual community. However, several early anthropologists, such as Franz Boas, made efforts to understand homosexuality cross-culturally. Murray (1997) describes Arthur Sorenson, Gunter Tessman, and Louis Faren as other examples of early non-judgmental anthropologists on the subject of sexuality. In the late 1980s, anthropologists Davis and Whitten embarked on suggestions for a more inclusive research on sexuality. They made four significant suggestions for the improvement in this area. They stated,

First, anthropology needs an open, sensitive, and thorough debate on the ethics of sex research. Related are issues involving publication and dissemination of materials related to non-Western sexual practice. Second, more emphasis must not be placed on combining studies of heterosexual practices with studies of gender and symbolism; nor should the erotic and pleasurable aspects of sex be ignored. Third, anthropologists should study sexual practice in terms of both local norms and local variation ...

Fourth, more fieldwork is needed. HRAF studies, literature reviews, and mass surveys are no substitute for participant observation (Davis and Whitten, 1987, p. 79).

The history of anthropology and sex studies has also been largely dependent on other disciplines and ideas. Because anthropology has failed to devise its own theory of homosexuality, much of the literature produced contains traces of ethnocentrism (Davis and Whitten, 1987). Moreover, the study of female homosexuality in anthropology was virtually non-existent until the 1980s and 90s. One of the pioneers in homosexual studies in anthropology, Evelyn Blackwood, undertook research on homosexual behavior cross-culturally from the early eighties until
Academic Source Analysis


more recent generations of anthropologists — including openly gay and lesbian anthropologists — have been even more reluctant to research homosexualities ... nothing about ‘modern gay’ (egalitarian) homosexuality appeared in anthropology journals before the mid-1990s, and nothing about its globalization has appeared to date in them (1997, p. 2).

A significant number of relevant sources (7) appeared in the interdisciplinary journal, Latin American Perspectives (LAP). Florence E. Babb, a participating editor of this journal, praises LAP for its commitment to women’s issues and more recently to “interdisciplinary research and writing that considers the interconnections of globalized economies, cultural conservatism, and struggles for sexual democracy and self-expression” (Babb, 1987, p. 29). Other relevant theoretical transformations within the journal occurred in the special issues on “Women in Latin America” in 1995 (Issue 85) and 1996 (Issue 88). Some of those new topics include economic restructuring, neoliberal policy, democratization and citizenship, interrelationship of gender, race, and class, personal-like issues, cultural-identity-based struggles, and multiple feminisms (Babb, 1987, pp. 28-29). Babb notes that though LAP is not the forerunner among Latin American Studies journals on gender and sexuality, the journal is a prominent force on sexuality in the late twentieth century.

Other journals that provided information on anthropology and homosexuality include gay/lesbian journals, symposium publications, and sociological journals. Three significant gay/lesbian journals include the Journal of Homosexuality, Journal of Lesbians and Gay Studies, and Journal of Gay-and-Lesbian Social-Service. Two of these three provide information on Puerto Rico (gay and lesbian) and the other on ethnographic entanglements. Other applicable journals include Social Problems, Sexual Cultures and Migration in the Era of AIDS: Anthropological and Demographic Perspectives, and the Economist.

The bulk of material emerges from ethnographic books (12) and volumes (5) edited by anthropologists. Men still outnumber women in sex ratios for both that of the researcher and of the subject. Among these anthropologists and/or researchers on sexuality, fourteen are women and 21 are men. From this source analysis several fundamental questions for the discipline of anthropology arise. Why the lack of published research on sexuality (specifically homosexuality) in major anthropological journals? Why are more men than women researchers and subjects of research in anthropological studies on sexuality? What ethical dilemmas and fears do anthropologists face when conducting fieldwork on homosexuality? Indeed, several gay/lesbian anthropologists explore possible answers and rationales for these respective questions.

Gay and Lesbian Anthropologists and Ethical Dilemmas

On the whole, minorities frequently study minorities in most disciplines. Anthropology is no exception. Homosexual anthropologists produce most of the small amount of research done on homosexuality. However, both homosexual and heterosexual anthropologists face dilemmas when conducting research in this field. Anthropologists fear discrimination and/or academic non-acceptance from the disclosure of one’s sexuality or from guilt by association. For instance, Leap (1998) notes that lesbian/gay studies is still sparse because anthropologists do not like to be mistaken as gay or else real gays in the field do not want to risk disclosure. In relation to discrimination among gay anthropologists, Murray states that,

Since the 1970s, gay North American anthropologists have undertaken long-run ethnography on Latin American men who have sex with other men. None has been able to get a job in a North American anthropology department. Neither lesbians nor other female anthropologist have undertaken comparable research (1997, p. 2).

In the same light, Johnson (2000) writes of homophobic and heterosexual imperatives of funding agencies for anthropological work on homosexuality. Lewin and Leap in, Out in the Field: Reflections of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists (1996), provide excellent examples, documentation, and valuable personal perspectives on gay participation and ethics within anthropology. They chronicle the history of lesbian- and gay-identified anthropologists in relation to the American Anthropological Association (AAA), from a 1970 resolution supporting gay and lesbian rights and the study of gay and lesbian topics to the founding of the Anthropological Research Group on Homosexuality in 1974, and its replacement by ‘Lesbian/Gay and Identity and Fieldwork’ at the 1990 AAA meetings (Johnson, 2000). Lewin and Leap illustrate the importance of political contexts, stigmatized identities, and equal rights and opportunities within the discipline for gay/lesbian anthropologists.
Gay/lesbian anthropologists also face fundamentally different aspects of the fieldwork experience in comparison to heterosexuals. Rite of passage fieldwork and identity management are two pertinent examples. In fact, Lewin and Leap describe "Out in the Field" as part of the 'continuing experience of coming out' where 'the field' signifies both anthropological fieldwork and the discipline of anthropology (Johnson, 2000). In many ways, the gay/lesbian anthropologist is linked to his/her subjects through sexuality. Some contend that she or he has the advantage because they themselves have often been subjected to the invasive gaze and exoticized representation of 'science' (Johnson, 2000). Likewise, Roscoe writes that gay and lesbian anthropologists are well placed to develop these models not only because they are boundary crossers par excellence, but also because they themselves have often been subjected to the invasive gaze and exoticized representation of 'science' (Johnson, 2000).

Intimacy during fieldwork also poses ethical dilemmas for gay/lesbian anthropologists who study homosexuality. In fact, many anthropologists, such as Ester Newton, Ralph Bolton, and Stephen Murray, write about sexual encounters in the field. Bolton maintains that the only way to obtain reliable data about sex practice is to become a sexual participant (Johnson, 2000). Here, one finds a dangerous line between ethics and the methodology of sexual participant observation. Other anthropologists, such as Evelyn Blackwood and Kate Altork, create reflexive ethnographic works about the possibilities and limitations of same-sex relations in the field. Overall, Lewin and Leap provide important theoretical questions and invite reflection on one's own gendered and erotic subjectivities (Johnson, 2000). The discipline and researchers must realize that anthropologists are gendered beings and, thus, experience different inhibitions, anxieties, and identity struggles.

Latin America and Homosexuality Research

Although the literature is growing, the bulk of homosexual research focuses on male homosexual behavior in the urban areas of Brazil and Mexico. Power and gender imagery are common, as well as the "passive" and "active" constructions of male homosexuality. The concept of the penetrator as masculine (macho) and the penetrated as feminine largely defines spheres of sexuality in Latin America. A common Colombian saying actually claims, "Soy tan macho que me cojo otro hombre — I'm so macho that I fuck another man" ("Living la vida loca." Economist, 1999). Male transvestitism, cross-dressing, prostitution, bi-sexuality, and interfaces with machismo are all common foci within this area of study.

In general, one can make correlations between specific countries and the focus of study (within homosexuality). Cuban material includes topics such as exile, revolution, male homosexuality, AIDS, and machismo (Leiner, 1994; Lumsden, 1996; Ocasio, 2002). Transvestitism, prostitution, and male homosexuality are typical Mexican research topics, while Argentine research focuses on the Gay/Lesbian Movement (Higgins and Coen, 2000; Prieur, 1996; Signal, 2002; Stephen, 2002; Taylor, 1978; Brown, 2002). Brazil, like Mexico, emphasizes male homosexuality, prostitution, and transvestitism, but also includes HIV/AIDS, gay communities, Gay Liberation Movements, and the influence of the Carnival (Green, 2002, 1999, 1994; Kulick, 1998; Melhues and Stolen, 1996; Parker, 1997, 1999). In Puerto Rico, research has been done on the lesbian community, domestic violence between same-sex partners, and HIV intervention (Hidalgo and Elvia-Hidalgo, 1976; Toro-Alfonso, 1999). Thayer (1997) produced information on the Lesbian Movements, identity, revolution, and democratization in Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

Other countries such as Peru and Guatemala have been the source of information mainly on male homosexuality. In addition, there also exists some evidence for pre-Columbian practices of homosexuality in historical and/or archeological inquiries. One such example, "Gender, Male Homosexuality, and Power in Colonial Yucatan," by Signal (2002), discusses the connection between homoeroticism, colonialism, and discourse among the Maya. His argument centers mainly on the symbolic, ritual, and political uses of power and sodomy (Signal, 2002). Also, some research exists in the borderlands on Chicana lesbians (Trujillo, 1991; Zavella, 1997).

Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movements

A substantial amount of research on homosexuality in Latin American chronicles and/or analyzes the development of gay/lesbian liberation movements. The discussion of discrimination, oppression and repression, violence, exile, and internalized homophobia are several common topics. The common ebb and flow characteristic of politics in Latin American countries plays a major role in the analyses and descriptions of such social actions and movements. However, ethnographers differ in theoretical approaches, methodology, and ethnographic models.

Some take on active applied anthropological roles. For example, James N. Green not only participated in the Gay Liberation Movement in Brazil, but also served as a leader of the left wing from 1977-1981 (Green, 1994). Anthropologist Luis Roberto Mott, who was the founding president of Grupo Gay in Bahia (the country's largest surviving gay rights organization), collects data on the indiscriminate murder of homosexual men, lesbians, and transvestites in Brazil (Green, 1999). Horrifically, he finds that "a homosexual is brutally murdered every four days, a victim of homophobic that pervades Brazilian society" (Green, 1999, p. 3).

Other anthropologists take a more theoretical and less activist approach, such as Thayer who uses case studies from Costa Rica and Nicaragua to provide a theoretical breakdown and critique of the New Social Movement Theory (NSM) and addresses the importance of variation in...
identity-based movements. She argues that,

Three factors account for the differences in the way movements in distinctive national contexts construct collective identities: 1) economic structure/model of development; 2) state-civil society relations; and 3) the broader field of social movements (Thayer, 1997, p. 386).

She evaluates the importance of class diversification, feminist movements, internal vs. external models, public-private spheres, “lesbophobia,” academic community support, democratization, and political stability. In her conclusion, she gives particular attention to individual agency and, thus, regional variation in Latin American social movements:

Organizing lesbian movements anywhere in Central America, and many other places, requires the will to defy deeply rooted notions of sexuality and personhood, and the courage to imagine different kinds of relationships. But social movements are built, and the collective identities constructed, by particular people in particular locations at particular moments in history. These movements are as Snow and Benford argue, “signifying agents’ (1992, p. 136). What they signify and why, what they struggle for and how, these are questions which can only be answered by looking beyond structural shifts and the confines of formal political institutions to the sociopolitical relationships that shape the lives of the human beings who make them (Thayer, 1997, p. 405).

Brown (2002) reviews Argentina in his work, “Con discrimination y represión no hay democracia: the Lesbian and Gay Movement in Argentina.” He conducted field research that included in-depth interviews with social activism and participant observation. Brown, like Thayer, criticizes the absence of sexuality and gay/lesbian movements in discussions and syntheses of modern social movement theory. His main approaches include political-opportunity-structures, centrality of identity, and creation of activism and their respective organizations. Overall, he addresses change through time of the nature of lesbian and gay activism in Argentina. He, like Thayer and other politically focused anthropologists, links lesbian/gay movements to democratization, the influences of the United States and Europe, and feminism. He emphasizes the analysis of identity throughout and foresees for Argentina that “large-scale transformation might not occur anytime soon, but the lesbian and gay movement in Argentina is accumulating many small-scale victories along the way” (Brown, 2002, p. 135).

Cuba is also represented in anthropological works on gay/lesbian liberation movements. Ocasio’s, “Gays and the Cuban Revolution: the case of Reinaldo Arenas” (2002) examines political persecution of homosexuality and a persistent and strong underground gay world. His analysis draws on the life history of a gay icon and artist to illustrate the transforming relationship between the gay community and political entities. In Machos, Marines, and Gays: Cuba and Homosexuality (1996), Ian Lumsden provides analysis of machismo and homosexuality before the revolution, institutionalized homophobia, homosexuality and the law, sex education, erosion of traditional machismo, gay life in Havana today, and the impact of the AIDS epidemic.

The increasing focus on gay/lesbian liberation movements is a direct reflection of gay community visibility and the growing importance of sexuality studies. Academic discourse on these movements in anthropology addresses important issues relevant to homosexuality such as political stability, constructions of identity, influences of other social movements (foreign and local), and underground subculture lifestyles. On the other hand, the homosexual experience and liberation movements in Latin America reflect a regionally and differentially (thematically) diverse set of situations, strategies, and outcomes.

**Transvestitism and HIV/AIDS in Latin America**

In recent studies of homosexuality and Latin America, considerable attention has been given to HIV/AIDS and transvestitism, particularly in Brazil and Mexico. Lancaster effectively summarizes the climate and changes in which these studies have emerged:

The Latin American sexual culture is undergoing numerous changes, such as feminist movements, the impact of the AIDS epidemic on the region’s moral and sexual fibers, and the increasingly strong presence of organized gay movements amid the emergence of paramilitary death squads on the hunt for gay activists. These events should spark a wide body of work on male same-sex relations in the region (Lancaster, 1997a).

dis capacitated), and other popular cultures (or subcultures).

Transvestitism and prostitution is an intriguing cultural phenomenon in Latin America and, thus, a substantial amount of literature exists on the subject. Most of this research stems from Brazil, Mexico, and other urban centers. Several significant contributors include Kulick in his work, *Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture among Brazilian Transgender Prostitutes* (1998), Green's: *Beyond carnival: male homosexuality in twentieth-century Brazil* (1999), and the edited volume, *Machos, Mistresses, Madonnas: Contesting the Power of Latin American Gender Imagery* (Melhuus and Stolen, 1996).

Green addresses, in a chronological style, sex behavior and culture, violence and discrimination, identity shifts (rural to urban), and the overall impact of the Carnival on gender/sexuality constructions. Of the Carnival, Green says, "the contradictory images of permissive Carnival festivities and murderous brutality are startling, yet the tensions between toleration and repression, acceptance and ostracism are deeply embedded in Brazilian history and culture" (Green, 1999, p. 4). However, he contends that the overall impact of the Carnival has expanded social toleration toward homosexuals (especially through the media). Green also includes an analysis of the expansion of the middle class, categories of *homem* ("real man," penetrator) and the *bicha* (fairy, passive), and research on the interface of homosexuality and the religious practices of Candomble (Peter Fry, 1995; Ruth Landes, 1940; and Patricia Birman, 1995).

*Machos, Mistresses, Madonnas: Contesting the Power of Latin American Gender Imagery* (Melhuus and Stolen, 1996) challenges the stereotypical images of the dominating male and the subservient woman. In my opinion, this gender prototype is meaningful in understanding the Latin American macho: an attempt to undermine the unitary notion of the hegemonic Latin American male. The other two address power as a vehicle in which morality speaks. Overall, the book illustrates the multivocality of gender in Latin America and the influence of ethnicity, language, nationalism, and politics on gender issues.

**Latin American Lesbian Research**

As I have stated, anthropological research on Latin American lesbianism remains confined to a limited number of sources. The literature and research, however, is on the ascent. Most of what does exist documents liberation movements, identity constructions (in the face of machismo), and feminism. Thayer (1997) provides an account of lesbian movements in Nicaragua and Costa Rica. She stresses democratization, diversity of identity constructions, and associations with other social tides such as the feminist movement. One can also find anthropological work on the lesbian movement in Mexico in an edited volume, *Female desires: same-sex relations and transgender practices across cultures* (Blackwood and Wieringa, 1999). In this book, Norma Mogrovejo (1999) describes the difficulties of documenting lesbian movements in Mexico due to the variance and change in political, economic, and social spheres. In particular, she discusses the ethnic pluralism, multiculturalism, economic crises, and poverty. To study the development of a lesbian movement in Mexico requires Mogrovejo to draw not only from anthropological material, but also from historical, sociological, political, and archaeological data.

Zavella's article, "'Playing with Fire': The Gendered Construction of Chicana/Mexicana Sexuality" (1997) portrays personal identity struggles in the face of machismo and marianismo Mexican gendered concepts. Zavella analyzes the historical and religious origins of gender and most effectively provides examples of native language, behavior, and opinions (reflections) through direct quotes from case studies. Of particular interest is the relationship between machismo, power, and lesbianism. Zavella (1997) describes Maria Perez as drawn to the male gender and sexual script (machismo) and who through play was able to assert authority and power by assuming male roles. Perez herself admits that "in the effort not to feel fucked, I became the fucker, even with women" (Zavella, 1997, p. 400). Clearly, the concept of machismo inherently affects the creation of sexual identities for both males and females. Still more ethnographic research is needed on the connections and effects of machismo on lesbian identity in Latin America.

**Summary**

Table 1 summarizes the articles cited by country and by subject matter. The articles are indicated by their citation number in the complete bibliography. Table 1 clearly shows the concentration of research on the subject of homosexuality and on studies in Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico. It also shows the relative dearth of research regarding lesbianism in Latin America.

**Conclusions**

The growth of homosexuality research in Latin America opens new spaces for anthropological (especially for gay/lesbian bilingual anthropologists) inquiry and fieldwork. Most of the recent ethnographic information describes gay/lesbian liberation movements, transvestitism and HIV/AIDS, and constructions of male homosexual identities. Brazil and Mexico receive the most investigative attention. Other countries found in the literature include Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Argentina, and Cuba. Virtually nothing exists on homosexuality in other Caribbean countries, Central
American countries (Honduras, Panama, Belize, or El Salvador) or South American countries (Peru, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Colombia, Suriname, Bolivia, etc.). Indeed, more fieldwork and research on homosexuality is needed in Latin America. Specifically, accounts of same-sex sexual behavior need to answer questions about intra-cultural diversity, individual meaning, the individual or shared salience of categories, and what the relationship is between what people do and what they say (Murra y, 1997, p. 5).

Through this documentation of major contributors and subjects, one can also undoubtedly observe the under-representation of scholarly literature on lesbianism in Latin America. Fortunately, the emergence of feminist (often lesbian) anthropologists and gay/lesbian liberation movements worldwide in the last two decades has advanced the growth of Latin American lesbian studies in Anthropology. In fact, these recent avenues and spaces in anthropology directly coincide with my personal research interest. As a Spanish-speaking, lesbian, feminist anthropologist, indeed, Lesbian studies in Latin America offers extensive opportunities for original research.

**Acknowledgment**

I would like to thank Dr. Monica L. Udvardy for her endless streams of motivation and encouragement.

For the Bibliography, see the on-line version of this article at www.uky.edu/kaleidoscope/fall2003