A third argument, associated with critical legal studies, suggests a shift in the very nature of government. With deindustrialization, the welfare state gave way to the "penal" or "carceral" state. As neoliberal reforms dismantled the midcentury's institutions of welfare and public health, governments began using jails and prisons to manage forms of social insecurity—mental illness, drug addiction, and poverty—that had previously been addressed by other means (Simon 2007; Wacquant 2009; Dolovich 2011). Critical prison studies has begun to advance the radical proposition that the penal system no longer maintains *any* meaningful connection to popular conceptions of justice, whether reformist or retributive, but operates instead to identify disorderly groups and to redistribute bodies in geographic space, warehousing them in a state of *incapacitation* (Feeley and Simon 1992; R. Gilmore 2007). The prison, in these analyses, is the centerpiece of a penal system that has shifted its focus away from the offender and toward target populations, away from justice and toward security, away from rehabilitation and toward the smooth functioning of its own institutional machinery. Prison today names both the principal implement of domestic state violence and the object of an intensifying critical resistance.

2014/2020

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Queer

Siobhan B. Somerville

"Queer" causes confusion, perhaps because two of its current meanings seem to be at odds. In both popular and academic usage in the United States, "queer" is sometimes used interchangeably with the terms "gay" and "lesbian" and occasionally "transgender," "bisexual," or "Two-Spirit." In this sense of the word, "queer" is understood as an umbrella term that refers to a range of sexual identities that are "not straight." In other political and academic contexts, "queer" is used in a very different way: as a term that calls into question the stability of any such categories of identity based on sexual orientation. In this second sense, "queer" is a *critique* of the tendency to organize political or theoretical questions around sexual orientation per se. To "queer" becomes a way to denaturalize categories such as "lesbian" and "gay" (not to mention "straight" and "heterosexual"), revealing them as socially and historically constructed identities that have often worked to establish and police the line between the "normal" and the "abnormal."

Fittingly, the word "queer" itself has refused to leave a clear trace of its own origins; its etymology is unknown. It may have been derived from the German word *quer* or the Middle High German *twer*, which meant "cross," "oblique," "squint," "perverse," or "wrongheaded," but these origins have been contested. The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that while "queer" seems to have entered English in the sixteenth century, there are few examples of the word before 1700. From that time until

the mid-twentieth century, "queer" tended to refer to anything "strange," "odd," or "peculiar," with additional negative connotations that suggested something "bad," "worthless," or even "counterfeit." In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the word "queer" began to be used also as a verb, meaning "to quiz or ridicule," "to puzzle," "to cheat," or "to spoil." During this time, the adjectival form also began to refer to a condition that was "not normal," "out of sorts," "giddy, faint, or ill."

By the first two decades of the twentieth century, "queer" became linked to sexual practice and identity in the United States, particularly in urban sexual cultures. During the 1910s and 1920s in New York City, for example, men who called themselves "queer" used the term to refer to their sexual interest in other men (Chauncey 1994). Contemporaneous literary works by African American writers such as Nella Larsen (1929) and Jean Toomer ([1923] 1969) suggest that the term could also carry racialized meanings, particularly in the context of mixed-race identities that exposed the instability of divisions between "black" and "white." But it was not until the 1940s that "queer" began to be used in mainstream US culture primarily to refer to "sexual perverts" or "homosexuals," most often in a pejorative, stigmatizing way, a usage that reached its height during the Cold War era.

In the early twenty-first century, "queer" remains a volatile term; the *American Heritage Dictionary* even appends a warning label advising that the use of "queer" by "heterosexuals is often considered offensive," and therefore "extreme caution must be taken concerning [its] use when one is not a member of the group." The term has also carried specific class connotations in some periods and contexts. On the one hand, as one participant in a 2004 online forum put it, "'Queer' is a rebellion against those posh middle-class business owners who want to define gaydom as being their right to enjoy all the privileges denied them just cos they like cock" (Isambard 2004). On the other hand, these class connotations are unstable. "If I have to pick an identity label in the English language," wrote poet and critic Gloria Anzaldúa, "I pick 'dyke' or 'queer,' though these working-class words . . . have been taken over by white middle-class lesbian theorists in the academy" (1998, 263–64).

The use of "queer" in academic and political contexts beginning in the late 1980s represented an attempt to reclaim this stigmatizing word and to defy those who have wielded it as a weapon. This usage is often traced to the context of AIDS activism that responded to the epidemic's devastating toll on gay men in US urban areas during the 1980s and 1990s. Queer Nation, an activist organization that grew out of ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), became one of the most visible sites of a new politics that was "meant to be confrontational—opposed to gay assimilationists and straight oppressors while inclusive of people who have been marginalized by anyone in power" (Escoffier and Bérubé 1991, 14). In subsequent decades, queer political groups have not always achieved this goal of inclusiveness in practice, but they have sought to transform the homophobic ideologies of dominant US culture as well as strategies used by existing mainstream lesbian and gay rights movements, many of which have tended to construct lesbian and gay people as a viable "minority" group and to appeal to liberal models of inclusion (Duggan 1992).

The movement to gain legal rights to same-sex marriage demonstrated some of the key differences between a lesbian/gay rights approach and a queer activist strategy. While advocates for same-sex marriage argued that lesbians and gay men should not be excluded from the privileges of marriage accorded to straight couples, many queer activists and theorists questioned why marriage and the nuclear family should be the sites of legal

and social privilege in the first place. Because same-sex marriage leaves intact a structure that disadvantages those who either cannot or choose not to marry (regardless of their sexual orientation), a more ethical project, queer activists argue, would seek to detach material and social privileges from the institution of marriage altogether (Ettelbrick 1989; Duggan 2004).

Sometimes in conversation with activist efforts and sometimes not, queer theory emerged as an academic field during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, scholars who are now referred to as queer theorists argued that sexuality, especially the binary system of "homosexual" and "heterosexual" orientations, is a relatively modern production. As Foucault ([1976] 1990) argued, although certain acts between two people of the same sex had long been punishable through legal and religious sanctions, these practices did not necessarily define individuals as "homosexual" until the late nineteenth century. While historians have disagreed about the precise periods and historical contexts in which the notion of sexual identity emerged, Foucault's insistence that sexuality "must not be thought of as a kind of natural given" has been transformative, yielding an understanding of sexuality not as a "natural" psychic or physical drive but as a "set of effects produced in bodies, behaviors, and social relations by a certain deployment" of power (105, 127). Moving away from the underlying assumptions of identity politics and its tendency to locate stable sexual subjects, queer theory has focused on the very process of sexual subject formation. If much of the early work in lesbian and gay studies tended to be organized around an opposition between homosexuality and heterosexuality, the primary axis of queer studies shifted toward the distinction between normative and nonnormative sexualities as they have been produced in a range of historical and cultural contexts.

For this reason, a key concept in queer theory is the notion of "heteronormativity," a term that refers to "the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent—that is, organized as a sexuality—but also privileged" (Berlant and Warner 1998, 548n2). Heteronormativity, it is important to stress, is not the same thing as heterosexuality (though the two are not entirely separable); indeed, various forms of heterosexuality (adultery, polygamy, and interracial marriage, among others) and heterosexual practices (e.g., fornication, sodomy) have historically been proscribed in certain contexts rather than privileged (Rubin 1984; C. Cohen 1997; Burgett 2005).

Because queer critique has the potential to destabilize the ground on which any particular claim to identity can be made (though, importantly, not destroying or abandoning identity categories altogether), a significant body of queer scholarship has warned against anchoring the field primarily or exclusively to questions of sexuality. Instead, these scholars have argued, we should dislodge "the status of sexual orientation itself as the authentic and centrally governing category of queer practice, thus freeing up queer theory as a way of reconceiving not just the sexual, but the social in general" (Harper et al. 1997, 1). In local, national, and transnational contexts, such a formulation allows us to contest constructions of certain issues as "sexual" and others as "nonsexual," a distinction that has often been deployed by US neoconservatives and neoliberals alike to separate "lesbian and gay" movements from a whole range of interconnected struggles for social justice.

The field of queer studies has challenged this tendency by using intersectional approaches that begin from the assumption that sexuality cannot be separated from other categories of identity and social status. Whereas some early queer theorists found it necessary to

insist on understanding sexuality as a distinct category of analysis, one that could not be fully accounted for by feminist theories of gender, it is now clear that sexuality and gender can never be completely isolated from each other (Rubin 1984; Sedgwick 1990). Indeed, Judith Butler (1990, 5) has shown that our very notions of sexual difference (male/female) are an effect of a "heterosexual matrix." A significant body of scholarship, largely generated out of questions raised by transgender identity and politics, has productively revisited and scrutinized the relationships among sex, gender, and sexuality, with an emphasis on recalibrating theories of performativity in light of materialist accounts of gender (S. Stone 1991; Prosser 1998; Valentine 2007; Spade 2011).

If queer theory's project is understood, in part, as an attempt to challenge identity categories that are presented as stable, transhistorical, or authentic, then critiques of naturalized racial categories are also crucial to its antinormative project. As a number of critics have shown, heteronormativity derives much of its power from the ways in which it (often silently) shores up as well as depends on naturalized categories of racial difference in contexts ranging from sexology and psychoanalysis to fiction and cinema (Somerville 2000; Eng 2001). Heteronormativity itself must be understood, then, as a racialized concept, since "[racially] marginal group members, lacking power and privilege although engaged in heterosexual behavior, have often found themselves defined as outside the norms and values of dominant society" (C. Cohen 1997, 454). This insistence on putting questions of race at the center of queer approaches has been vigorously argued in a body of scholarship identified as "queer of color critique" (Muñoz 1999; Ferguson 2004; Reddy 2011; Rivera-Servera 2012). An allied body of scholarship has asked how queer theory and indigenous studies might be brought together both to address the specificities of Indigenous gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and Two-Spirit (GLBTQ2) lives and communities and to develop new critical accounts of gender and sexual normativity that take into account the workings of settler colonialism (Justice, Rifkin, and Schneider 2010; Morgensen 2011a; Driskill et al. 2011; Kauanui 2017).

Related work in queer studies has examined the dynamics of globalization, imperialism, and colonialism. Scholars have interrogated both the possibilities and the limitations of queer theory for understanding the movement of desires, bodies, and identities within a transnational frame as well as the necessity of attending to the relationship between the methods of queer theory and colonial structures of knowledge and power (Manalansan 2003; Gopinath 2005; Mendoza 2015; Pérez 2015). A growing body of work in queer critique has brought greater attention to settler colonialism, a specific form of power organized around seizing land, eliminating indigenous peoples, and replacing them with settler populations on a permanent basis. These studies have interrogated how the field of queer studies has inadvertently naturalized certain settler-colonial assumptions as well as how discourses of normative gender, sexuality, and race have been entwined with the histories and ongoing violences of US settler projects (Kauanui 2017; Morgensen 2011b; Rifkin 2011; Byrd 2017).

If the origins of the term "queer" are elusive, its future horizons might be even more so. While the term itself has a contested and perhaps confusing history, one of the points of consensus among queer theorists has been that its parameters should not be prematurely (or ever) delimited (Sedgwick 1993; Berlant and Warner 1995). While the field of queer studies has made inroads in a number of different academic disciplines and debates, some critics have asserted that the term has lost its ability to create productive friction. Pointing to its

seeming ubiquity in popular-cultural venues, others criticize the ways that the greater circulation of "queer" and its appropriation by the mainstream entertainment industries have emptied out its oppositional political potential. Whether we should be optimistic or pessimistic about the increasing visibility of "queer" culture remains an open question. Meanwhile, scholars continue to carefully interrogate the shortcomings and possibilities of "queer" approaches to a range of diverse issues, such as migration (Luibhéid and Cantú 2005; Chávez 2013), temporality (Edelman 2004; Halberstam 2005; E. Freeman 2010; Rohy 2009), region (Herring 2010; Gopinath 2007; Tongson 2011; Manalansan et al. 2014), disability (McRuer 2006; Kafer 2013); and environment (Chen 2012; Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 2010; Ahuja 2015). Whatever the future uses and contradictions of "queer," it seems likely that the word will productively refuse to settle down, demanding critical reflection in order to be understood in its varied and specific cultural, political, and historical contexts.

2007/2020

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Racialization

Daniel Martinez HoSang and Oneka LaBennett

In contrast to keywords such as "race" and "racist," "racialization" is relatively new to American studies and cultural studies. The term has a diverse lineage but is most often associated with the work of Michael Omi and Howard Winant ([1986] 1994), who helped make the concept of racialization a central analytic within both fields. Omi and Winant utilize the term to "signify the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group. Racialization is an ideological process, an historically specific one" (64). In contrast to static understandings of race as a universal category of analysis, racialization names a process that produces race within particular social and political conjunctures. That process constructs or represents race by fixing the significance of a "relationship, practice or group" within a broader interpretive framework. Working within this paradigm, scholars have investigated processes and practices of racialization across a wide range of fields, including electoral politics, music, literature, sports, aesthetics, religion, public policy, and social identity.

Any use of the term "racialization" requires some account of the theoretical status of race within popular culture and mainstream social science. Inherent in Omi and Winant's definition are three assumptions common to much of the critical scholarship on race in the United States since the 1970s: race functions as a signifier of social identity, power, and meaning rather than as a biological or hereditary characteristic; racial meaning